The G20 and the Think 20 as new global education policy actors? Discursive analysis of roles and policy ideas

Ivan Matovich
CIPPEC, Buenos Aires, Argentina and
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, and
Prachi Srivastava
University of Western Ontario, London, Canada

Abstract

Purpose – The Group of Twenty (G20) has substantial influence in global economic policy but has been peripheral in global education governance. There is intensification of education policy-relevant engagement within the Think 20 (T20), the "ideas bank" and official engagement group of the G20. The authors analyse the evolution of education as a policy domain within the T20, the ideas and discursive framing of education and global education policy "solutions" and assumptions about the G20 in education policy engagement.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors view the T20 as an external actor that can mobilise policy-relevant ideas to G20 actors responsible for internal policy selection and translation. The analysis covers the period 2018–2021 when education became an explicit T20 policy area. The authors screened all 461 T20 policy briefs across all domains. Of these, 32 briefs and four final T20 Summit communiqués were reviewed using critical discourse analysis. Data were supplemented via organisational websites and tacit professional knowledge.

Findings – Three assumptions on the G20 as an actor prevailed: (1) policymaker, (2) policy shaper and (3) knowledge mobiliser. The framing ideas on education were linked to assumptions on drivers of education system reform as intertwined with, or to enable: (1) economic adaptation, (2) technical adaptation and (3) socio-political adaptation of individuals and societies.

Originality/value – Accelerated education engagement within the T20 and its direct reach to G20 leaders makes it, and the G20, analytically unique and new unexamined actors of potential influence. The authors conclude that the T20 is positioned as a unique actor, both that can mobilise education policy-relevant ideas to G20 leaders, and legitimised as the actor from which G20 leaders and policymakers should adopt ideas.

Keywords Education policy, Global education, G20, International organisations, Education governance, Policy borrowing

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The Group of Twenty (G20) was created in 1999 as a meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors of "the 19 most systemically significant countries and the European Union"

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(Kirton, 2013, p. 3). It was elevated to the status of a leader's summit in 2008 (Debaere & Orbie, 2013; Downie, 2022). Unlike formal international organisations (e.g. UNESCO, United Nations, WHO, etc.), the G20 is an informal international organisation. The secretariat rotates annually and is housed in the country of the G20 presidency. The G20 does not have legal authority. Nonetheless, it has substantive policy influence in a range of economic and social policy domains (Debaere & Orbie, 2013; Downie, 2022; Stuenkel, 2022).

Unlike other GX fora, the G20 is relatively more diverse in regional representation and has membership from large economies of the Global South and different country income groups. Despite the normative incongruence of its members on international issues (Luckhurst, 2016), a distinguishing feature of the G20 is its plurality, which, in an idealised sense, signals the potential for a multilateral governance structure to further the vision of a multipolar global system (in contrast to the G7, for example). The G20 has been described as a promising forum to mobilise the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Chun, 2016), and to enable strategic country engagement between members (Luckhurst, 2016). However, it has been questioned regarding its effectiveness and legitimacy (Lei & Rui, 2016; Slaughter, 2020), precisely because of its informal nature and power imbalances within its membership (Naylor, 2022), and regarding its capacity to balance national interests with a genuine commitment to the global common good (Fues & Messner, 2016; Naylor, 2022).

Nevertheless, given its substantive engagement following the 1997 East Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global economic crisis, some have gone as far as to say the G20 has become "in practice as well as proclamation, the centre of global economic governance for a globalised world" (Kirton, 2013, p. 373). In global education governance, however, the G20 and its official engagement groups have, thus far, been peripheral, in contrast to the longer more ensconced involvement of international organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other agencies and donors. There has, however, been some intensification in education policy-relevant engagement within the Think 20 (T20), an official engagement group of the G20, and between the T20 and the G20. This is, as yet, unexamined.

At the time of writing, the T20 was one of ten official G20 engagement groups, the others being: Business 20 (B20), Civil Society 20 (C20), Labour 20 (L20), Parliament 20 (P20), Science 20 (S20), Supreme Audit Institutions 20 (SAI20), Urban 20 (U20), Women 20 (W20) and Youth 20 (Y20) [1]. Established in 2012, the T20 describes itself as "bringing together leading think tanks and research centers worldwide. It serves as the 'ideas bank' of the G20 and aims to provide research-based policy recommendations to the G20 leaders" (T20 Indonesia, 2022). Like other G20 engagement groups, the composition of the T20 changes according to the G20 presidency. Pal (2021) thoroughly traced the development of the T20 from its origins to its key point of structural change under the 2017 G20 Germany presidency, during which two German think tanks (German Development Institute [*Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik*] and Kiel Institute for the World Economy [*Kiel Institut für Weltwirtschaft*]) were appointed to coordinate the T20. The general structure of appointing local country think tanks and research institutes/centres as coordinating bodies for the T20 has been retained. The visibility of the T20 and the number of associated high-level and T20 side events and the T20 Summit have steadily gained strength.

A structured approach to form T20 Task Forces (TF) on theme-based policy issues was established during the 2017 German presidency (Pal, 2021). The first TF on education was formed in 2018 under the Argentina presidency, during which time the G20 Education Working Group was also created. Thematic priorities and TFs change with each G20 presidency and reflect internal negotiations between G20 authorities, T20 co-hosts and other actors, particularly, local think tanks with policy influence. The role of think tanks in influencing early social development discourse in the G20 (McGann, Viden, & Rafferty, 2014) and the T20 (Pal, 2021) has been noted. This aligns with broader literature on the global proliferation of think tanks in diverse policy activities across the political spectrum (McGann & Sabatini, 2011),

and with varying degrees of independence from government, political parties, or corporations (McGann *et al.*, 2014); and the rising influence of think tanks and their role in framing domestic and international discourse on foreign policy and geopolitics (Abelson, Brooks, & Hua, 2016), social development policy (McGann *et al.*, 2014) and global and domestic education policy (Lubienski, Brewer, & La Londe, 2016; Thompson, Savage, & Lingard, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is not to conduct a comparative analysis of the T20 with other G20 engagement groups. This may be a fruitful exercise but is outside the scope. Mobilising and articulating ideas and discourse are central to understanding the potential of any new policy actor (Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the unique self-articulation of the T20 as "the ideas bank" of the G20 as distinct from other engagement groups prompts its analysis. We take our cue from scholars in this area to add to the small emerging literature on specific G20 groups (e.g. Chodor, 2020 on the C20; Louis, 2016 on the B20 and L20; Pal, 2021 on the T20) and the engagement of G20 groups in particular policy domains, and to build on our long-standing interest in global education policy governance. Additionally, in contrast to the established formal international organisations in education referenced above, while the T20 is both young and informal, its links with the G20, and ostensibly, the direct connection of the T20 and the G20 to G20 leaders and policymakers provide compelling rationale to analyse them as new global education policy actors with potential influence. We analyse the evolution of education as a policy domain within the T20, discursive framing and ideas of education and proposed global education policy "solutions" and assumptions of the perceived role of the G20 in education policy engagement.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we situate our analysis within the policy borrowing and policy diffusion literatures. Next, we discuss how we applied the methodological approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA), particularly, our guiding assumptions on the relationships between discourse, policy, and ideas. The following section traces the evolution of education as a policy domain in the T20. The next two sections present the core results of our analysis – first, on the perceived roles of the G20 as education policymaker, education policy shaper and education knowledge mobiliser; and next, on the embedded ideas of education and policy recommendations along the frames of economic, technical and socio-political adaptation. We end with four summative conclusions.

The T20 through the lens of policy borrowing and policy diffusion
As the T20 is embedded within the institutional structure of the G20, its potential influence should be understood in relation to the operations of the larger structure. We are partial to the characterisation of the G20 as an informal international organisation with influence through indirect governance, which is achieved via "'orchestration' . . . a focus on the process whereby states or IOs [international organisations] enlist intermediaries to further their governance objectives" (Downie, 2022, p. 954). A key example is how the G20 enlisted the IMF to enact policy programs in response to the 2008 crisis. We see this as anomalous to the typical workings of the G20 and on its influence. We contend, while the global financial crisis may have been a "watershed moment for the G20" (Pal, 2021, p. 151) that positioned it as an actor of global influence, more central to the G20 is its role in influencing policy diffusion by assembling a range of diverse domestic, international and transnational policy actors and articulating ideas, rather than bringing to fruition global, regional or domestic policy prescriptions. This characterisation also applies to the T20.

The substantial literature on policy borrowing from comparative and international education (e.g. Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, 2016), is more commonly employed in global education policy research. It has "often been criticised, with commentators at different times preferring alternative descriptors including 'copying', 'appropriation', 'assimilation', 'transfer', 'importation', etc." (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p. 451), a criticism similarly made of policy diffusion literature (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2020; Obinger *et al.*, 2013). We note the same fuzziness, and further, on the conceptual connections between policy

diffusion and policy borrowing literature. Outside the scope here, we do not enter into detailed disentanglements. Instead, like Gilardi and Wasserfallen (2019) regarding policy diffusion, and Phillips and Ochs (2003) and Steiner-Khamsi (2016) regarding policy borrowing, we take a stylistic approach and focus on the main ideas of relevance to our analysis underlying both literatures.

Steiner-Khamsi (2016) distinguishes a bifurcation between "a normative and an analytical direction" (pp. 381–382). The normative approach "uses comparison to identify best-performing educational systems from which lessons or 'best practices' should be learned and transferred. . .[the analytical approach] analyzes why and when such external references are made and examine[s] the impact of such imports on existing policies and power constellations" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016, p. 382). She identifies two key stages on which most analyses focus: (1) reception, initial contact with the global education policy at the local level and focussing on the selection process, and (2) translation, which addresses local adaptation of global education policy (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016, p. 382). Phillips and Ochs (2003) contend that policy borrowing has four principal stages through which policies are incorporated: (1) cross-national attraction (impulses and externalising potential), (2) decision, (3) implementation and (4) internalisation/indigenisation (pp. 451–452).

Regarding diffusion, "it has become conventional to define diffusion as a process of interdependent policy making where the analytical focus is squarely on 'external determinants' (Berry & Berry, 1999)" (Gilardi & Wasserfallen, 2019, p. 1246) in contrast to domestic factors ("internal determinants"). Policy diffusion is generally described using a typology with four mechanisms: competition, emulation, learning and coercion (Kuhlmann et al., 2020). There is significant discussion to more fully develop aspects of these mechanisms (Gilardi & Wasserfallen, 2019; Kuhlmann et al., 2020; Obinger et al., 2013), including political processes, historical contextualisation and colonisation (Kuhlmann et al., 2020) and networks in setting education policy pathways (Seitzer, Besche-Truthe, & Windzio, 2022). A cogent critique is that policy diffusion literature "downplay[s] the agency involved in disseminating innovations or reforms" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 10) and that new research on networks can help "to identify actors of transfer" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 10). This is the springboard for our analysis.

Here, Pal (2021) articulation of the T20 as a "global neural network of discursive contributions" (p. 161) is key. Pal extends its potential discursive power to influencing a new global hegemonic order through T20 and G20 processes. We believe its power is likely more limited, but potentially significant, nonetheless. We are aligned with conceptualising the T20 as a supporting networked structure to frame and mobilise ideas and discourse consisting of an array of actors that "consistently "think" and "imagine" that order and indeed constitute it through their publications and debates, their statements and restatements" (Pal, 2021, p. 149). However, there are two particularities of the T20 with which we must contend. First, as outlined above, as the T20 is tied to the G20 presidency, its composition is dynamic by design. Second, policy recommendations *to* the T20 are made via and in TFs by teams of researchers and experts from an array of organisations through competitively selected policy briefs; and *by* the T20 to the G20 via the coordinating T20 co-chairs and T20 authorities. These processes can be opaque.

We re-orient analysis of both policy borrowing and policy diffusion literatures to focus on the T20 as an embedded actor within the G20 constellation, one of a continually shape-shifting form, but that retains the agency to disseminate policy recommendations and "solutions" from year to year directly to G20 leaders and education policymakers despite the particularities of its form. That is, rather than focussing on the actors implicated in selecting or translating education policies within a country (or any unit), *we are interested in the T20 as an external actor, which while informal in the strictest sense and amorphous, can mobilise policy-relevant ideas to the actors directly responsible for internal policy selection and translation.* The T20 is informal because the G20 is informal. This *de facto* implies that it can

have influence through soft governance mechanisms. It is shape-shifting because it is tied to the changing G20 presidency. But the T20 simultaneously has and retains the potential of direct routes of access to G20 leaders and policymakers also precisely because of the G20 structure.

If we conceive of the T20 as an external, albeit amorphous, actor that can influence internal domestic policy for G20 countries (or policy of G20 OECD donors, like the EU and member states with bilateral official development assistance (ODA) education programs), this analysis can be seen as an *a priori* step to uncovering new actors and ideas that may influence internal actors in the first step in policy borrowing models of cross-national attraction (as in Phillips and Ochs's characterisation) or reception (as in Steiner-Khamsi's), and any of the four mechanisms of competition, emulation, learning and coercion in the classical policy diffusion typology, "namely how [and which] ideas, concepts and instruments are diffused" (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2020, p. 82).

Aims, analytic assumptions and method

Analytic objectives and questions

We are primarily interested in the discursive framing of education and global education policy "solutions", and in the underlying assumptions of the perceived role of the G20 in education policy engagement. Our higher-order questions are: How are education policy ideas framed for the G20? How is it perceived that the G20 may act in receipt of these ideas? This paper answers the following questions:

(1) What is the evolution of education-related policy activities within the T20?

(2) How is the G20 conceptualised regarding its role as a global education policy actor?

(3) How is education conceptualised?

(4) How are education policy recommendations framed?

The analysis covers the years 2018 to 2021 (inclusive), beginning with the introduction of education as a specific policy area in the T20 process, until the latest at the time of writing. A major intervening context during this time is the COVID-19 pandemic. We additionally compared policy discourses before the pandemic (2018, 2019) with those during the global education crisis caused by the pandemic (2020, 2021).

Discourse analysis: assumptive explication on the relationships between discourse, policy and ideas

We use CDA as the methodological approach for analysis, centring on discourse as both relational and dialogical (Fairclough, 2013). CDA takes as one of its tenets, the relationships between legitimacy, authority and power, and how language is used by different actors to create framing discourse to spread ideas. This resonates with analyses of global education policy that stress the role of "mobilizing frames" in articulating or stitching together fragments of discourse and ideas to create or highlight issues as "education problems", to gain legitimacy for proffered (usually, simplistic and technicist) "solutions" (Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Srivastava, 2010). As discourse is relational, we briefly explicate our assumptions on the relationships between discourse, policy and ideas informing our analysis.

Our first assumption is that discourse moves policy (Ball, 1998; Cowen, 2009; Srivastava, 2010; Lingard & Sellar, 2013). This is now a commonly accepted assumption in critical global education policy analysis. We acknowledge that the discourse of global education policy "solutions" is itself contentious. The argument from a critical theoretical perspective is that proposed solutions are framed to prioritise domestic economic productivity and labour

market competitiveness (Ball, 1998), and are prone to decontextualised, narrow technicist standards and indicators aimed at achieving nominal measures of education quality, and less on underlying normative patterns of education inequalities and systems-level process-oriented change (Gorur *et al.*, 2019; Srivastava, 2022). Identifying this distinction became one of the main analytic focusses.

Related to the assumption that discourse moves policy, is our second assumption that ideas matter for policy articulation, and that ideas shape, and are shaped by, discourse. The connection between the flows of ideas and the implications for informal normative and formal governance practices is crucial. Part of this perspective is informed by the thinking that: "Ideas are the generation and transmission of distinctive intellectual constructs in any field that can impact production systems, organizational and management practices, governance practices, legal norms and technological trends" (Goldin & Reinert, 2010, p. 329), and informal normative practices. Our assumption is further grounded in Appadurai's (1990) now classic formulation of the five flows of globalisation – ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes – which are, by his definition, "*perspectival* constructs". Ideoscapes are political in nature and consist of a multitude of ideas, images, ideologies and crucially, "*semantic keywords" that signal* ideals and metanarratives (Appadurai, 1990). Thus, our view is that the link between ideas and discourse is essential to understanding the underlying (negotiated) worldviews between different actors in analysing the content, form and processes of global education policy.

Data sources
Documents: The final review included 32 T20 policy briefs from nine TFs and the final T20 communiqués from each T20 Summit (2018–2021) (Table 1). The latter are seen as the main dissemination output from the T20 for the G20. Policy briefs were produced in theme-based TFs to inform G20 country leaders. TFs were coordinated by the local T20 secretariat, constituted every year according to priorities and objectives of the G20 presidency. All policy briefs are publicly available [2]. We authored a total of three education policy briefs during the period under analysis [3]. They were not excluded given the smaller number of relevant briefs in 2020 and 2021. Table 2 presents the organisational affiliations of the authors from the selected policy briefs.

Organisational websites: The following websites were consulted to gather supplementary and confirmatory data on G20 and T20 interactions, activities, self-definitions, histories and

T20	T20 task force	Documents (*n* = 36)
2018 T20 Argentina	TF 1: The Future of Work and Education for the Digital Age	9
	T20 Communiqué 2018	1
2019 T20 Japan	TF 1: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	6
	TF 1: The Future of Work and Education for the Digital Age	5
	T20 Communiqué 2019	1
2020 T20 Saudi Arabia	TF 4: Social Cohesion and the State	1
	TF 7: G20 Support for SDGs and Development Cooperation	3
	Special TF 11: (COVID-19) Multidisciplinary Approaches to Complex Problems	2
	T20 Communiqué 2020	1
2021 T20 Italy	TF 1: Global Health and Covid-19	1
	TF: 4 Digital Transformation	1
	TF 6: Social Cohesion and the Future of Welfare	4
	T20 Communiqué 2021	1

Table 1.
Selected T20 education
policy documents for
analysis

	2018 and 2019 (pre-pandemic)	2020 and 2021
Bilateral organisations	5	0
Domestic NGO	0	1
International organisations	0	16
Multilateral organisations	1	0
Network organisations or platform	1	7
Private corporations	2	0
Private foundations	2	6
Regional organisations	2	3
Think tanks and research centres	31	26
Universities	19	16
Total	63	75

Note(s): Authors are counted each time they appeared as an author/co-author in an education policy brief. The same author may have authored/co-authored more than one policy brief during any year

Table 2.
Education policy brief authors –
organisational affiliation

structure: 2018 Argentina, 2019 Japan, 2020 Saudi Arabia and 2021 Italy G20 and T20; G20 Insights; G20 Information Centre; Global Solutions Initiative.

Informal professional dialogue: Insights were supplemented with reflexive informal dialogue between both researchers to capitalise on professional tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000) from engagement with T20 processes. During the period under analysis, Matovich was an employee of the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC), one of the coordinating think tanks of the 2018 T20 Argentina. Srivastava was an unpaid external expert who led the authorship of two T20 education policy briefs (for 2020 T20 Saudi Arabia and 2021 Italy), and a third not under review (for 2022 T20 Indonesia). Matovich was a co-author of these briefs. In the course of collaborative professional work over three years, Srivastava engaged in a number of informal dialogues on the evolution of education engagement and the T20. During the formal analytic phases for this paper, insights were interrogated, tested, challenged and refined against published academic literature on the G20 and T20 and organisational websites to guard against potential threats of inaccuracy or bias of professional tacit knowledge (Crowley, 2017). Given that the G20 and T20 are new under-researched actors in global education policy, our involvement enabled us to apply insider insights to deepen the analysis.

Review procedure

Structure of briefs: T20 policy briefs generally follow a common template: abstract (100 words); challenge, articulating the issue (500 words); and proposal, detailing policy proposals and recommendations (2500 words). These three components are consistent, although there may be some minor variations in structure and word length. This made the process of reviewing, particularly in the scanning and screening stages, relatively standardised for more consistent comparison across briefs from different TFs and across years.

Scanning and screening: Policy brief titles and abstracts ($n = 461$) from all T20 TFs (2018-2021) ($n = 42$) were scanned. Briefs explicitly stating at least one issue of education policy in any education sector were included (54 possible briefs). In the screening stage, the challenge and recommendation sections of scanned policy briefs were more closely assessed to confirm that the main content addressed at least one issue of education policy. We used the UNESCO thesaurus definition of educational policy as: "Official statements of goals to which the system of education is directed" (UNESCO, 2022).

Coding: Codes were developed to conduct a focussed review directed by the following analytic questions: What is the perceived role of the G20 regarding global education

governance? How is education conceptualised? Are education challenges and recommendations framed in technical, social, political, economic or other ways? We followed an iterative approach to develop a coding framework over several rounds. The working set of codes were applied by both researchers to a small number of policy briefs and refined as appropriate. Codes were grouped according to overall themes for analysis. In addition to our coding, a third analyst independently coded and analysed briefs we authored to enable trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The analyst was a researcher in international education and a member of Srivastava's larger research team. Coding and review were done in Taguette, an open source, open-access textual analysis tool.

Reviewing: All documents were reviewed using the coding framework. We followed an iterative process of "progressive focusing" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009) where the text was revisited multiple times to analyse and connect emerging themes with refined insights. This unearthed varied insights on the conceptualisations of different roles of the G20 (education policymaker, shaper and knowledge mobiliser), underlying visions of education (economic, technical and socio-political adaptation), and the links between them and proposed recommendations. It further allowed more specific insights on nuances within the themes.

The evolution of education as a policy domain in the T20

The government of the G20 presidency typically mandates local think tanks and research organisations to chair and coordinate T20 activities (Table 3). Pal's (2021) historical account of the evolution of the T20 shows a "network in rapid formation with evolving and often quite plastic structures" (p. 154). Our analysis confirms this assessment. We further found the evolution of education as a policy domain within the T20 and T20 engagement on education policy with the G20 to have accelerated at a quicker pace and within a more constricted timeframe.

The notable change came in 2018 with Argentina's presidency. Education was explicitly considered in TF 1 The Future of Work and Education for the Digital Age, shifting focus from its precursor, the 2017 Germany T20 TF The Future of Work. The TF name was retained as the same in 2019 T20 Japan, where education was additionally included as a topic in TF 7 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2020 T20 Saudi Arabia, amidst the pandemic, education was a focus of three TFs: TF 4 Social Cohesion and the State, TF 7 G20 support for SDGs and Development Cooperation and Special TF 11 (COVID-19) Multidisciplinary Approaches to Complex Problems. In 2021 T20 Italy, education was included in another three TFs: TF 1 Global Health and COVID-19, TF 4 Digital Transformation and TF 6 Social Cohesion and the Future of Welfare Systems.

The rapid development of wider engagement on education was also evident by the T20 with the G20. Perhaps the most important development is the G20 Education Working Group (G20 EWG), formed during Argentina's presidency to promote: "an education agenda that continues building the consensus necessary for global development" (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología and G20, 2018). The EWG maintained activities

2018 T20 Argentina	Centre of implementation of public policies for equity and growth (CIPPEC)
	Argentine council for international relations (CARI)
2019 T20 Japan	Asian Development Bank Institute
	Japan Institute for International Monetary Affairs
2020 T20 Saudi Arabia	King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center
2021 T20 Italy	Italian Institute for International Political Studies
	Istituti Affari Internazionali
	Università Bocconi, Milano

Source(s): G20 Insights https://www.g20-insights.org/about/ Accessed 4 July 2022

Table 3.
Lead government-mandated organisations of T20 activities (2018–2021)

throughout 2018 to 2021, convening education ministers and government education teams from G20 countries. The relative degree of interaction between T20 education experts and the G20 EWG has varied. T20 education policy recommendations were presented to G20 EWG members for their consideration in official statements during the 2018 T20 Argentina and 2019 T20 Japan processes [4], and for declarations by G20 ministers responsible for education as part of the G20 Argentina, Saudi Arabia and Italy processes.

Since 2018, education has gained visibility in T20–G20 engagement. In 2017, education was subsumed in the T20 summary of recommendations as part of a "new global vision": "learning to stabilise and manage the global commons (climate systems, interconnected financial systems, but also universal access to education, health and housing)" (Pal, 2021, p. 152). From 2018, various T20s have released education-related calls and statements for G20 leaders and ministers, sometimes with collaboration from other G20 engagement groups. Examples include the *B20 C20 L20 T20 W20 Y20 Joint Statement on G20 Global Pandemic Preparedness: Attending to Access to Education and Employment* (for 2020 Saudi Arabia) and the *T20 Statement for the G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting*, which drew on a joint meeting of G20 education ministers and labour ministers (for 2021 Italy). Additionally, all 2018-2021 T20 final communiqués featured education-specific recommendations.

The total number of education policy briefs was greater in 2018 Argentina T20 (9) and 2019 Japan T20 (11). However, education was explicitly addressed in more TFs in T20 Saudi Arabia and T20 Italy. Including education in TFs addressing social cohesion, SDGs, and the pandemic is notable and points to some potential for cross-sectoral approaches. However, the integration of education policy issues with labour and employment and digital technology remained strongest across all T20s. Many high-level T20 and G20 declarations and communiqués mention education exclusively or primarily with its links to employment, labour market skills development, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and digitisation or education technology. Diversified recommendations on multilateral cooperation, education and the SDGs and inclusion and equity are less evident in high-level dissemination documents. These themes were also less frequently addressed in education policy briefs.

The G20 as education policymaker, policy shaper and knowledge mobiliser

While not explicitly stated in the majority of cases, three assumptions about the perceived role of the G20 as an actor to influence global education policy prevailed – the G20 as: (1) education policymaker, (2) education policy shaper and (3) education knowledge mobiliser. Roles were not conceptualised as mutually exclusive and were incongruent in some respects.

G20 as education policymaker

The G20 was conceptualised as a forum with the capacity and political authority to develop and directly enact policy. The T20 was projected as a space in the policymaking process comprising experts that could offer technical knowledge. The assumed authority of the G20 was typically domestic but was extended regionally and transnationally. In this vein, the G20 was seen as empowered to formulate and deliver "common" education policies for G20 and non-G20 countries and to have the legitimacy and authority to do so. Examples include areas of policymaking on domestic and international education finance, national digital infrastructures for education and curricular reform and content-specific programs (e.g. financial literacy).

There was little reference to the global education governance architecture, that is, existing actors and frameworks and their interplay at local, national or global scales. For example, the potential of international organisations, multilateral agencies and even the G20 EWG to be

part of or to mitigate G20 education policymaking processes were not addressed in the main. The omission of the G20 EWG may be due to the relatively opaque and transitory structure of the T20 and the G20. We did note a change between the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods regarding existing global actors and structures, most evident in the area of education finance.

There was some acknowledgement of institutionalised financial channels and actors in international cooperation, such as ODA and existing humanitarian funds. The G20 was seen to have the capacity to enact measures to finance "what works" for recovery through these structures. Overall, however, conceptualisations of the G20 as policymaker reflected limited understandings on its nature as an informal international organisation and multilateral forum with soft normalisation power, rather than with the capacity to direct member or government behaviour (Chun, 2016). Instead, idealised notions of the potential of an expanded role for the G20 as policymaker and of its authority were more evident.

G20 as education policy shaper

As a policy shaper, an actor may be seen as a "policy technician" with a high level of expertise and capacity to design, influence and seek consensus on policy, and to seek evidence and assess pragmatic considerations of policy options (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013). A policy shaper must be integrally embedded in the policymaking context and have such power that it can legitimately advise and enable proposed policies to be institutionalised through normative soft, or more direct, intervention (Elfert, 2021). Our analysis found that the vision of the G20 as policy shaper was closer to the normative aspects. In this role, the G20 was seen as a high-level consensus-building forum to set general education policy directions, rather than with the political authority to implement policy. This was incongruent with its perceived role as education policymaker, which assumed formal authority to enact policy.

Views were relatively aligned with Luckhurts's (2016) description of the G20 as a "'loose club', whose members cooperate on an informal, consensual basis as a self-selected group, due to shared interests" (p. 3). Some concrete examples of suggested G20 policy shaping activities were to promote cross-sector educational policies, facilitate and promote "partnerships" between public and non-state sectors and design policy frameworks for specific educational areas, notably, early childhood development and gender equity.

Comparatively, the G20 as policy shaper was more prevalent in the pandemic period. This period was distinguished by a clearer appeal in T20 education policy briefs on the G20's "advocacy potential" and "watch-dog" capacity to monitor country investments and global coordination efforts for education recovery. The G20 was assumed to have significant legitimacy as a policy agenda-setter and potential coordinator for education and development, with an underlying assumption that policy efforts lack political consensus and guidance.

G20 as education knowledge mobiliser

The G20 as education knowledge mobiliser centred on education policy relevant knowledge management and mobilisation. Arguably, this role is most intimately tied to that of the T20 itself, and to its main influence on diffusion to the G20. The dialectical relationship between the T20 and the G20 was most evident here – the T20 as the key education policy relevant knowledge producer, and the G20 as both the user and mobiliser of that knowledge. Firstly, the semantic choice of the name "Think" 20 positions it as the designated intellectual or thinking hub or brain of the G20 amongst the G20 constellation, the neural network. Secondly, legitimacy is conferred to the knowledge actors in the engagement group. If we recall, in its stated self-description, the T20 "brings together leading think tanks and research centers", specifically to address G20 policy issues. Thus, proclaimed as the "ideas bank" of the

G20, the T20 is promulgated as the central knowledge producer of G20 policy relevant knowledge. Thirdly, T20 policy briefs are positioned as credible, legitimate and tailor-made sources from which G20 leaders and policymakers should draw.

Semantic keywords described T20 briefs as providing "research-based" recommendations for G20 leaders. The briefs are stored for longevity on an online knowledge platform, G20 Insights, established by the T20. T20 policy briefs in the main, and other related documents on G20 Insights are stated to "reflect important threads of the G20 work agenda that are of interest to G20 policy makers" (G20 Insights Platform, 2022). However, policy briefs are positioned by the T20 according to a relatively simple model that policy action (or inaction) responds to the use, application, absence or insufficiency of knowledge and access to knowledge. There is little engagement with the politics of how knowledge and evidence are filtered, used or rejected in enacting or influencing policy (Bacevic, 2021; Parviainen, Koski, & Torkkola, 2021; Srivastava, 2022).

The G20 was seen as a key vehicle to encourage the use of T20-produced knowledge amongst leaders, and to curate and diffuse that knowledge. There were also calls for the G20 to strengthen knowledge markers such as education policy relevant datasets (e.g. financing, philanthropic participation, early childhood, TVET, etc.); to create an "ideas and good practices bank" with curated content by education experts; to organise spaces for dissemination and discussion of educational policy (e.g. congresses); and to establish assessment mechanisms to monitor policy implementation. The role of the G20 as education knowledge mobiliser was seen as complementary to its roles as policymaker and policy shaper. It was predicated on a view that the G20 had the potential to improve international education policymaking processes through an integrated role to bridge gaps with "what works" and to shape education policy agendas with that knowledge.

Education and economic, technical and socio-political adaptation – framing ideas and recommendations

Although notions of "narrow" and "broad" are relative, we use these as illustrative terms to describe ideas framing education that captured single-issue-based, transactional and utilitarian functions of education in the first instance, relative to higher-order institutional, normative and societal purposes in the second. On balance, policy briefs referred to a range of purposes of education regarding social equity and rights, democratic engagement, environmental sustainability amongst others; however, they were treated primarily as contextual in the majority of briefs. There was a slight discernible shift in the core focus amongst some briefs from narrow single-issue-based, and often technical, perspectives to occupying wider systems-level and societal scope in the pandemic period.

Framing ideas on education were linked to assumptions on the drivers of education system reform, which were in turn, closely related to the main themes on proposed policy recommendations. Our analysis uncovered three main ideas on education and education systems as intertwined with, or to enable: (1) economic adaptation, (2) technical adaptation and (3) socio-political adaptation of individuals and societies.

Economic adaptation

Challenges oriented to economic adaptation framed educational policy aims around the need to move from "obsolete" education systems to ones adapting to economic change. Educational reform was motivated to adapt to wider economic forces and was most often expressed in terms of labour market changes, skills gaps and disruptions, and the effects of digital technologies on productivity. While comparatively, ideas on economic adaptation were more prevalent in the pre-pandemic period, addressing the future of labour and

employability emerged as a guiding criterion underpinning education policy recommendations in the majority of briefs.

The underlying focus was to alert G20 leaders about potential mismatches between education and economic sectors, proposing new ways to link them. This was also the subject of high-level T20 and G20 statements and declarations and highlighted in all T20 communiqués. From this frame, planning education reforms was proposed as joint ventures with national economic agencies to institute mechanisms to meet market-oriented future demands. Such recommendations sought to "improve" education under the premise of "ill"-matched education systems and labour markets (T20ARGPB1, p. 3) [5].

Recommendations focused on providing avenues for new individual skills development, and adapting education systems to meet changing labour market demands and to be responsive to transformations introduced by digitalisation. A number of briefs attributed the divide between the two sectors to transformations spurred by digital technologies in new forms of production: "new technology increases demand for high skills in complex jobs, it may reduce labor demand or 'deskill' workers in low-skill and routine jobs. Emerging digital age leads to a major rethinking of education and skills training" (T20JAPB8, p. 4). Skills development aimed at "the right skill mix for future jobs" (T20JAPB8, p. 5) played a central role in the discursive articulation of recommendations oriented to education-labour alignment. Semantic keywords such as: "skilling", "upskilling", "re-skilling", "low-skilled", "digital skills" and "skills needs" were common to discourse on perceived outcomes of recommendations.

At the same time, there were examples of recommendations to create alternative models to bridge formal and non-formal education with broader economic development goals, to "facilitate innovation across the educational system to close the gap between learning, schooling and employability" (T20ARGPB5, p. 5). Another set of recommendations addressed this gap by providing policy ideas on specific education levels, particularly, TVET (T20JAPB9, 2019). A smaller number of briefs related digitalisation and workforce preparedness and educational policy with fulfilling rights, reducing inequities, wealth generation and economic and social inclusion (T20ARGPB5, 2018).

Technical adaptation
Ideas on technical adaptation assumed the need to better align education systems with current education policy knowledge to address systems capacity issues for education delivery. There were diverse underlying views from this frame. From one perspective, there were relatively rapid "solutions" that could be implemented to reform education systems to achieve internal effectiveness and efficiency by employing available standards, measurement practices and technologies. This was more indicative of briefs in the pre-pandemic period. Another perspective put forward ideas on expanding systems capacity to address broader issues of equity and inclusion through education. This emerged more strongly during the pandemic period. Expanding technical capacity to meet new educational planning and equity-focused data collection efforts and collaboration were also evident in the pandemic period.

Recommendations from the former perspective typically aimed to address single issues or functions, for example, improved delivery for a particular education level or sub-sector (e.g. TVET, pre-primary), address curriculum and non-formal education gaps with specific industries (e.g. creative industries), one curricular area (e.g. digital literacy) or one specific policy domain (e.g. financing). A more expanded focus was adopted in some policy briefs that saw the expansion of technical capacity to achieve equity-oriented aims. Examples included instituting policies aimed at considering "progressive universalism" (T20ARGPB2); improving education financing for inclusive, equitable and quality learning outcomes' (T20ARGPB6) and for "equitable investment"; supporting gender equity policy frameworks (T20JAPB3); and focusing on the most excluded (T20JAPB1). A few briefs recommended improving education systems capacity to address inequities regarding internal efficiency.

Socio-political adaptation

The most expansive ideas were on socio-political adaptation, stemming from an underlying assumption on the centrality of wider social and political goals of education and drivers of education reform. However, this frame was the least commonly employed. Socio-political framing extended beyond articulating education to respond to the "pressing" need to adapt to "new" economic forces, or to implement more extensive technical processes. From this perspective, challenges facing education are essentially political and the G20 is a forum with the capacity to reorient government commitments to achieve higher-order education goals. Although underlying conceptions were non-exclusive to any one period, ideas from this framing were relatively more embedded in policy briefs during the pandemic period.

The underlying vision of socio-political adaptation referred to societal inequities and their effects on education; however, the scope varied between periods. Briefs with this perspective published prior to the pandemic addressed specific inequities or discrete sub-sectors, for example, gender inequities in secondary education (T20JAPB3), unequal access to early childhood education and care (T20JAPB2) and targeted investment for inequities reduction (T20ARGPB9; T20ARGPB6). Briefs using socio-political framing in the pandemic period articulated equity approaches using a multi-dimensional approach and referred to vulnerable groups with a range of socio-economic background characteristics, their inter-relationships and new exclusions (T20SAUPB6, T20ITAPB6 and T20ITAPB3). This extended to equity-oriented policies for digital infrastructure to ensure education continuity (T20SAUPB3) and guarantee universal access to high-quality early childhood education and care (T20SAUPB1).

Recommendations from this approach also aimed to bridge education policies through multilateral and cross-sectoral engagement, for example, promoting sustainability through institutional mechanisms (e.g. stakeholder participation in partnerships) (T20SAUPB5) and interconnections between education and the SDGs (T20ARGPB2, T20JAPB2, T20SAUPB4 and T20ARGPB6). Cross-sectoral interventions for health and safety, mental health, child protection and other related services, such as hot meals provision was more prevalent during the pandemic period. Such measures were directed to ensure access during first- and recovery-responses, including safer and more continuous access for learners and education personnel (T20SAUPB3; T20SAUPB6), education continuity through a diversity of methods beyond digital access (T20SAUPB6) and educational planning to ensure educational opportunities for vulnerable groups (T20ITAPB6).

Notably, this perspective highlighted community and citizen engagement in education, such as enhancing democratic development and community participation by "cross-sector articulation", "ties with families and communities" (T20ITAPB3), "community participation in local decision-making" (T20ITAPB5) and monitoring policies to achieve SDG 4 target on global citizenship education (T20SAUPB2).

Conclusions

We examined the T20 and G20 as potentially new high-level actors in the global education policy space. We analysed the discursive framing of education and global education policy "solutions" by the T20 for the G20, and the perceived role of the G20 in education policy engagement. Our research was guided by two assumptions: (1) discourse moves policy and (2) ideas matter for policy articulation and ideas shape, and are shaped by, discourse. We draw the following conclusions.

Firstly, despite its relatively muted global education policy engagement thus far, we see the T20 and the G20 as actors with potential to gain influence given the rapid evolution of education as a policy domain since the 2018 Argentina presidency. We posit that the roles of the T20 and G20 have been limited partly due to their much newer history compared to established international organisations (e.g. UN agencies, World Bank, OECD) which are firmly entrenched in global education governance; and, regarding the T20, partly because its

precise membership is reconstituted every year according to the G20 presidency. This confers a level of impermanence and fluidity that may hamper engagement for newer entrants. However, the accelerated education engagement within the T20 and its direct reach to G20 leaders makes the T20, and the G20, unique and analytically unexamined actors of potential influence that merit continued interest.

Secondly, as the self-designated "ideas bank" of the G20, the T20 is positioned as the intellectual and thinking hub within the constellation of G20 engagement groups, poised to make tailored recommendations for G20 leaders in policy domains of mutual interest. We found semantic keywords in self-descriptions of the T20 and in the G20 forum to confer the T20 legitimacy as *the* credible source of policy-relevant ideas for the particularities of G20 policy contexts. Thus, not only is the T20 positioned as the actor that *can* mobilise education policy-relevant ideas to G20 leaders, it is legitimised as the actor from which those directly responsible for internal policy selection and translation *should* adopt policy ideas. The "can" speaks to the agency of the diffuser (T20), the "should", to its legitimised influence on the agency of the adopter/borrower/translator (G20 leader, policymaker). Whether this ultimately happens, and to what extent, is an open question for future research.

Thirdly, there were some incongruencies in embedded perspectives regarding the three perceived roles of the G20 as, education: (1) policymaker, (2) policy shaper and (3) knowledge mobiliser. On the one hand, there were limitations in understanding the nature of the G20 as an informal international organisation, and thus, in its constrained capacity and political authority to enact policy across G20 members as policymaker. On the other, the conceptualisation of the G20 as an education policy shaper rested on soft normative functions and consensual "club". The role of the G20 as education knowledge mobiliser was perceived as having a dialectical relationship for interaction with the T20 as the expert knowledge producer, the products of which should be mobilised by the G20.

Finally, we found education and education systems to be characterised as intertwined with, or to enable: (1) economic adaptation, (2) technical adaptation and (3) socio-political adaptation of individuals and societies, strongly associated with accompanying logics of education reform. The analysis uncovered a slight but discernible shift in the pandemic period of policy proposals to move beyond a discrete, single-issue narrow scope to broader systems-level and societal concerns and relationships. While the focus on economic and technical adaptation remained prevalent in the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods, they were also addressed more comprehensively with a multi-dimensional understanding and broader focus on equity and inclusion in the pandemic period. Overall, however, while the socio-political framing was the most expansive on the multifaceted nature of education, it was the minority perspective across policy proposals. Furthermore, as a whole, policy proposals presented an atomised agenda.

The dual nature of the G20 as at once, a high-level but informal international organisation, and with direct regular access to, and involvement of, strategic country leaders make it and its engagement groups, like the T20, unique actors implicated in blurred, soft multilateral governance. The precise composition of their networks and potential of these actors to influence global education policy are compelling areas of future analysis.

Notes

1. During the revision period for this paper, "Startup 20" was proposed as a new engagement group during India's presidency of the 2023 G20.

2. Policy briefs were extracted from T20 and organisational websites (T20 Argentina, 2018; Asian Development Bank Institute, 2019b; Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2019; T20 Saudi Arabia, 2020; T20 Italy, 2021)

3. Of these, Srivastava led authorship of two education policy briefs (with Matovich and other co-authors) and Matovich co-authored a third as part of a different author group.

4. Educational policy recommendations were compiled in a number of books during T20 Argentina (Cardini, 2018) and T20 Japan (Asian Development Bank Institute, 2019a; Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2019).

5. Documents analysed are referenced by code.

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Corresponding author
Prachi Srivastava can be contacted at: prachi.srivastava@uwo.ca