

Center for ED Transition Gains Trap Strategies

You may have clicked on '[Transition Gains Trap Strategies](#)' out of consternation. What's a 'transition gains trap' (TGT) and what does it have to do with reforming education policies? Clicking the link above will yield some TGT discussion and a link to the journal article that formally identified and named the TGT concept.

TGTs are a key source of policy inertia. "The government takes an action that initially benefits a particular group, although at the expense of imposing an inefficient policy on the public. But over time, even that special interest group will not benefit from the government program. Yet [that group will fight hard to prevent the program from being eliminated](#), since eliminating it might make that group worse off."

A key education example: Many families choose a school for their children by deciding which traditional public school (TPS) attendance area to live in. The competition for homes in the attendance areas of the better TPSs raises housing costs / property values near the better schools. School choice expansion diminishes the importance of that competition, which could reduce the value of homes near the better TPSs; perhaps a TGT. The fear of property value loss causes some families to oppose school choice expansion.

Think about that! The exercise of many families' only means of school choice – limited to choice among uniformly comprehensive TPS through relocation - produces effects that lead to opposition to school choice expansion that includes charter schools and/or private schools.

Explicit attention to TGT challenges, and Accountability broadly defined to include intellectuals and journalists, is one of the distinguishing virtues of the IOPA approach to policy assessment.