Chapter 6

Studying Globalisation and Europeanisation in Education: Lisbon, the Open Method
of Coordination and Beyond

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This chapter falls essentially into two halves. The first half elaborates some of the
themes of chapter 1, focussing in particular on the theoretical and methodological
discussions of the qualitative distinction that has to be made between the analysis of
national and European education policies. It does this through a consideration of the
assumptions that lie behind analyses of national, education, systems, and the ways in
which they relate to analyses of European education policy. In the second half of the
chapter, I take up the question of the Open Method of Coordination, the means
designated for the 'implementation' of the Lisbon agenda in education. Here, I argue
that the OMC works as a 'paradigm', and a 'programme ontology' rather than in the
'programme' mode which we have come to expect—even assume—will characterise
'policy-making' in education. The chapter concludes with some speculations about
the emergence of a separate 'education' sector at European level.

Europe and National education systems

The assumptions in terms of European Education on which this chapter is based tend
to run against what seem to be taken—frequently implicitly-- as common currency in
discussions around the question, and may be most usefully disclosed through
comparison with those common assumptions..

The first piece of common currency is the assumption that, as elaborated in Chapter 1, that European education policy is in most relevant dimensions similar to national education policies. Policies are made in the same way, by similar bodies, for similar purposes, and cover similar kinds of areas, and occupy the same place and space as they do in national systems. This means that the national can be scaled up to the regional with no loss of meaning.

The second piece of common currency is that the main purpose/goal/objective of European education policy is to replace or at least (more commonly) to modify national education policies, in whole or in part, in the sense of having effects on them that would not otherwise have come about (in other words, very much like the highly popular academic tendency to see, and/or look for, evidence of Europe's' influence through its effects on domestic policies). This is not to say either that there are no such effects, or that they are not important, or that it is not important to look for them; it is, though to say that confining ourselves to such searches unnecessarily, and misleadingly, limits our capacity to understand the nature of European education policy

This leads directly to the third assumption, that European education policy exists only in so far as it can be shown to have achieved these things.
And finally, implicit in all the above is a zero sum assumption about the relationship between Europe and MS education policies; they are either European or national.

By contrast, the approach advanced here suggests that, as argued in Chapter 1 we need to see the relationship as not only 'both and' as well as not 'either or', but also that we have to be open to the emergence of a new entity, a European education space and European education policy, which are qualitatively distinct from MS national education systems, in terms of their scope, mandate, capacity and governance. So, the entity we intend to approach is European education space and European education policy, and not Education policy (or policies) in Europe. As we argued in Chapter 1, the European education space is formed by the unique governance system of the European Union; it overlaps with, but is not confined to, the education spaces of MS, individually or collectively. European education policy is a response to—or rather, as will be argued in this chapter—a shaping or framing of, problems perceived as

distinctively 'European' problems, or of distinctively 'European' elements of other problems encountered in common by MS.

Perhaps the best way of developing this argument is to contrast the EES and EEP with each of the components of the common term, *national, education, system.* In elaborating this argument I will draw on the need to identify and go beyond what Susan Robertson and I have referred to as methodological 'isms' in the study of 'education'; these are methodological nationalism, methodological statism and methodological 'educationism' (Dale and Robertson 2007; Robertson and Dale 2008).

First, and almost by definition, it is difficult to see European education policy as 'national'; there may be issues of whether it is multinational or transnational, but it clearly cannot be 'national', especially if we accept Chernilo's argument that methodological nationalism 'can be simply defined as the all-pervasive equation between the idea of society and the formation of the nation-state in modernity' (2007, 1) However, the tendency to scale up the national to the regional in studies of European education policy does run a severe danger of adopting methodological nationalist assumptions at a regional level, whenever and in so far as it identifies the 'society' that hosts or is 'affected by' 'education policy' with a territorial-political entity. This results from what Ruggie has called "an extraordinarily impoverished mind-set…that is able to visualise long-term challenges to the system of states only in terms of entities that are institutionally substitutable for the state" (1993: 143).

We should also note that, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, this tendency is likely to be reinforced by the fact that a major element of European education policy is precisely the attempt to promote and thicken the idea of Europe as a distinct 'society', different from its individual MS and from the sum of their parts. And we should also note that it is not 'methodologically nationalist' to recognise the fundamental importance of national education systems, or to appreciate 'Europe's' ambitions in this area. Problematising methodological nationalism does not mean ignoring and reducing the importance of what occurs at a national level; it concerns the equation of 'society' with a particular politico-territorial entity. It is as important to emphasise methodologically as it is to do so theoretically and empirically that national education policies will persist, and may well *look* very much as they did in the last quarter of the

last century. However, though they may appear and be experienced similarly, they will not mean the same in all respects. Gavin Smith's suggestion that 'a whole series of key concepts for the understanding of society derive their power from appearing to be just what they always were and derive their instrumentality from taking on quite different forms' (Smith, 2006: 628) is probably nowhere more true or more relevant than in the case of education, which is everywhere enormously important to, intensely debated by, and utterly familiar to, more people within national societies than any other topic—which means that we have to be all the more aware of, and responsive to, Smith's point.

When we move to consider education *systems* we become vulnerable to methodological statism, because education systems are not only as seen as nationally located but also as organised in a more less common set of political, administrative and organisational arrangements that commonly are regarded as comprising 'the state'; it is their state basis which adds 'system' to national education systems. However, once again, it is crucial to interrogate and expose that nature of the assumptions on which this idea of 'state system' rests.

By 'methodological statism', I refer to the assumption that the state is the source and means of all governing activity, which, though it is typically taken for granted, is essentially contingent not necessary. Fundamental to methodological statism is the idea that it is the state that (necessarily) governs 'its' society, with an assumed unity between territory, society and political organization. One implication of methodological statism is the assumption that the state continues to govern not only the same territory, but the same things and in the same ways that it has done historically—which in this case has been taken to be the 'Golden Age' of the post war social democratic state form found in Western Europe until its gradual and accelerating erosion that began in around 1975 (see Zurn and Leibfried, 2005, 11). While this was pre-eminently a national state, the scope of state activity was very wide, from intervention in the economy, to the monopoly of provision of welfare services. The state would mitigate the worst excesses of capitalism and ensure at least a minimum of social protection It governed, from above, implicitly alone, and primarily through making policy. What is surprising is that despite the thorough

critiques of this view of the state, some of these central assumptions continue to inform academic accounts, especially perhaps the idea that the state governs through policy; if things are to be changed, it is to the state that we expect to look to bring about those changes.

As was pointed out in Chapter1, none of these things hold in the current era. For instance, the state can no longer be assumed to hold sovereignty over 'its' territory; sovereignty and territory no longer necessarily reinforce each other (see Dale 2003). The state now governs through means other than 'policy' and in concert with a range of other institutions rather than alone. This has given rise to the term 'governance rather than government'. And this leads to a need to make the state explanans rather than explanandum in our analyses (see Dale, 2007)

We may infer two main points from this discussion. First, and less relevant in this context, it suggests that some well established approaches to studying education policy at a national level might need to be reviewed. Second, empirically and theoretically, it is readily apparent that we are not dealing with an entity like the Golden Age state when we discuss the EU and its relationship to education policy, and hence that different theoretical assumptions and tools are necessary.

We pointed out in Chapter 1 that the EES is strongly framed by the EU's formal competence under Article 149 of the Treaty which makes it clear that education (apart from vocational education) is a national competence, subject to subsidiarity, and in that sense, it does not act like a 'conventional' state. However, if we separate out the methodological nationalist and statist assumptions and instead focus on the activities that formal competence has been used to generate around education, it becomes clear that it has constructed an EES and has ambitions to fill it with an EEP. This is largely brought about by the Open Method of Coordination, which we will discuss in the second half of this chapter.

What this brief consideration of the 'system'-like nature of European education policy leads us to recognise, then, is that once we shed the shackles of methodological

statism in thinking about what counts as education policy and how it is made—if we do not assume that it has to be scaled up national policy making—we are in a position to consider the possible substance of European education policy—but again, only if we problematise the methodological educationism that has characterised thinking about education policy.

So, the final element to be discussed is what is meant by 'education' when we speak of national education systems. This, too, may be rendered in the form an ism; 'educationism' refers to the tendency to regard 'education' as a single category for purposes of analysis, with an assumed common scope, and a set of implicitly shared knowledges, practices and assumptions. It occurs when education is treated as abstract, fixed, absolute, a-historical and universal, when no distinctions are made between its use to describe purpose, process, practice and outcomes. Particular representations of education are treated in isolation from each other, and addressed discretely rather than as part of a wider assemblage of representations -- for there is no suggestion that the different representations of education have nothing in common with each other, or that the label is randomly attached. At the same time, 'Education' has accreted an extremely wide range of responsibilities that have little in common with each other except that education is the means of solving them. And this in turn means that education develops a range of solutions that have little in common with each other, that are selectively incorporated into education as a set of discourses and practices. Over the centuries, these practices have become themselves solidified into what has been called the 'grammar of *schooling*' (Tyack and Tobin, 1994), which pervades certainly all Western education systems..
The central point here is that in that time, 'education' has become identified with the dominant organizational means of delivering some of its more salient responsibilities effectively and efficiently, that it is to say, 'schooling' (Dale and Robertson 2007).

However, this is an inappropriate guide to, or means of considering, what education might mean at the level of the EU, if only because the key differentia specifica of EU education space and policy is precisely that it is not confronted with 'an extremely wide range of responsibilities that have little in common with each other except that education is the means of solving them'. This is especially important when we

consider that 'schooling' has emerged as the means of dealing with the whole congeries of problems accreted by education systems, and that therefore it may be seen as a poor guide to what might be attempted/achieved in the quite different context of an education project with a quantitatively and qualitatively different set of responsibilities and emergent issues.

However, while the policy space of education may be framed and filled in very different ways, it will do so following the same basic analytic format. 'Education'—and any other collectively provided and focussed activity—must necessarily, and however tacitly, contain three distinct moments; a mandate, what it is considered desirable for it to achieve/attain; a capacity, the feasibility of achieving that mandate; and a means of governance, coordinating the activities seen as desirable and feasible.

The argument is, then, not to suggest that EU does not have something that might be seen as an education policy, both formally and substantively. Formally, it might be seen as taking 'education' at a rather different level; at its most fundamental level, the place held by 'education' in EU policy is the fundamental formal contribution it makes to modernity, as the best available means of bringing about forms of social change, the key modernist institution for installing modernist values and practices. Substantively, it is based on the achievement of what have been identified in these chapters as its key goals; maximizing the contribution of 'education' to the Lisbon process, strengthening the European Social Model and thickening the idea of Europe.

In terms of the latter, it is interesting to note the approach to the substance of education policy within the EC. Interestingly, the mandate for a European education space has been since the Lisbon declaration considerably more explicit than might seem possible on the basis of the Treaty. That declaration not only advanced three 'Concrete Future Objectives' of education systems, but insisted that they could only be met at the level of the Community, rather than MS level. Those objectives were attached to, and seen as the means through which education could contribute to the achievement of the goals of the famous Lisbon agenda—that 'by 2010, Europe would

become the most competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained growth, with more an better jobs and greater social cohesion'. The Lisbon agenda evidently set a multiple, and potentially contradictory, mandate for education systems, around the themes of competitiveness and social cohesion, though again we should note how comparatively narrow it is vis a vis MS education systems.

Extremely briefly (because this has been the topic of a large number of papers on education in the EU), its mandate is essentially organized around a view that sees MS education systems as deficient in a range of ways related to the achievement of the Lisbon goals (it should be noted that here I refer to the *intrinsic* shortcomings of the orthodox and taken as universal *form* of education *sectors* of MS (i e, educationism), rather than of policies adopted) The need to change is 'urgent'; the failure to do so threatens the achievement of the Lisbon goals (see CEU 2004). The nature of change is also quite fundamental; the old solutions do not work any longer. This requires quite different capacity from MS education systems, but the claim is that that capacity has to be organized by, and can only be delivered at, the level of the Union, not of the MS, individually or collectively. Here, the EU, like all MS governments, runs up against the practices taken as constituting 'education' as set out in the discussion of educationism. Recognising educationism does not mean rejecting wholesale the 'traditional' assumptions on which it rests, which are deeply embedded in national social fabrics, especially their annual timetables; just think of 'la rentree'. The practices based on those assumptions are the basis of the professional identity of the education profession, and hence very difficult to budge. To a considerable degree, any attempt to change the assumptions of educationism will run up against the embedded assumptions of what 'education' consists of and entails. (Interestingly, this provides some common ground between politicians at regional and national levels, who share the frustration at the difficulty of changing education. And it also goes some way to explaining MS governments' relative lack of affront at having their education systems criticized, or identified as deficient, as they are in many EU documents; they may be quite happy to use 'disappointing' results from international comparisons as a stick with which to beat their education systems, and to deploy such criticism as leverage to bring about changes that have previously been resisted by the education profession).

And third, in terms of governance, the EU will be the coordinator in chief, simultaneously driving the 'repair' project and establishing its own competence (in both senses of the word) in the area of education---largely through the Open Method of Coordination, to which we now turn.

The Open Method of Coordination

The OMC was the means chosen for the implementation of the Lisbon agenda, but its influence is very much wider than might be assumed from that statement, both politically and theoretically. In particular, in both these areas the complexities of the OMC expose the limitations of 'implementation' as a means of conceiving of the 'policy process', where a 'policy' is devised by groups legitimated to do that, and 'implemented' in a polity through the capacities of a governing body with legitimate authority and sovereignty. None of these features is found in the OMC, and approaching it and seeing it as a form of implementation in this 'traditional' sense is somewhat misleading. And while we do recognise something that can be referred to as a EEP, its relationship to the OMC is qualitatively different from 'policy implementation' as traditionally conceived. Indeed, it is probably mistaken to think of it as merely 'implementing' the Lisbon agenda, or even to see its consequences restricted to its association with that agenda. As was argued in Chapter 1, the OMC shapes both European education space, and how it can be filled. The position taken here is that, certainly as far as education is concerned, the OMC in effect is a central means of defining relationships between the EU and MS, and of shaping the scope of the Union itself. Thus Radaelli's suggestion that the OMC 'constitutes convergence at the level of beliefs about what the European Social Model should be' (2003, 54), is quite correct but the statement's implications have to be traced out with care, for the OMC does not, and could not, fulfil that role as a 'mere' instrument. On the one hand, 'convergence' is a relatively distinct term in the Euro-lexicon, differentiated from harmonisation and regulation, for instance. However, we also need, as Colin Hay

(2000) has pointed out, to ask *what* is converging—in addition to Radaelli's 'beliefs', he mentions inputs, outputs, processes, policies—and over what period. On the other hand it requires us to reflect on the assumptions it contains about the nature of 'Europe' as an entity capable of defining the overarching aims and structure of social policy among MS, and claiming the authority to do so.

It is very revealing in the case of the OMC, in Education as elsewhere, to ask Hay's question, 'what is converging?'. The OMC in Education clearly seeks greater convergence in outputs, such as the percentage of early school leavers, and seeks to influence inputs, at least rhetorically, through urging MS to spend more on education. At the same time, there is an explicit emphasis on 'common goals, divergent means', which seems to rule out attempts to seek process convergence. However, in this context the issue of *policy* convergence is paramount, and it is here that the OMC most crucially shapes the European Education Policy Space.

It might be objected that, strictly, policy convergence is excluded not only by subsidiarity rules but also by the 'divergent means' argument. However, the nature of EU governance also imposes a further responsibility on the OMC, a strategic responsibility. As Renaud Dehousse points out, the OMC's

> 'purpose is not simply to permit the implementation of reforms in a number of domains but also a balanced progress toward sometimes contradictory goals: economic competitiveness, social cohesion and environmental protection. This ambition, which is the source of the complex architecture put into place at Lisbon, is itself the sign of weakness. Unable to agree on clear priorities, Europeans decided to tackle a number of issues at once. Thus, the attention directed at methodological questions: it was intended not only to insure the coherence of the whole construction, but also to conceal behind an innovative discourse, the difficulty to make clear political choices in a system of decision by consensus like the EU''. Dehousse 2002, 6

The response to this dilemma might be seen as effectively threefold. First, the problems the OMC was set up to address (essentially the Lisbon agenda) are represented not as MS' individual national problems, or even the aggregate of those separate problems, but as *common* problems, shared at the level of the Union; here, any convergence is around the identification of those common problems. Second, the ability to act on common problem identification also involves convergence around the idea that 'Europe' is the appropriate level to develop policy to address those common issues, i e, that there should be some form of 'European education policy'. And third, any response should not be overtly 'political' The argument to be made here is that it is those three convergences, especially the first two, since the third is essentially conditional, that set the parameters of the EES.

The parameters of the EES are made up of three elements; *formally*, they are bounded by the rules of subsidiarity; *substantively*, they are shaped by the dual agenda set for education at Lisbon, pursuing the Lisbon goals and contributing to the European social Model; and *processually*, through the importance of embedding the message that 'Europe' is a key actor in these matters.

The first of these was spelled out in Chapter 1, where possible flexibilities in the Treaty clauses relating to education were discussed.

The second, substantive parameter both limits and directs legitimate European intervention in Education We have already emphasised the centrality of the 'master discourse' of Lisbon, competitiveness, as far as education policy and efforts are concerned. However, we should recall that Lisbon also saw a key role for education in contributing to the European Social Model and European social policy, where the central features are 'investment in people' and 'building an active welfare state'. The first of these means that 'Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need of an improved level and quality of employment' (CEC 2000, para 25).

The OMC, the EES and the EEP

We turn now to examine in more detail the nature and consequences of the relationship between the OMC and education. There are four elements to the argument here. First, that the framing conditions just set out mean that anything 'policy-like' will be in the form of 'policy paradigms' rather than policy reforms. Second, that EEP developed through the OMC will take the form not of 'programmes', but of 'programme ontologies'. Third, that such outputs, though necessarily 'political', will be 'depoliticised'. And fourth, that they will be directed at the level of MS education systems not at education policies in MS, with national education systems 'recontextualsiing' policies rather than constructing them anew.

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1. *The OMC as Paradigm*

In an extremely influential article, Peter Hall, from an explicitly Kuhnian perspective, contrasts two models of policy making, what he calls 'normal policymaking' and paradigm shift' (Hall 1993). As he puts it, 'policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing….. I am going to call this interpretive framework a policy paradigm." He identifies two kinds of changes to this model, what he calls 'normal' policymaking, by which he means" a process that adjusts policy without challenging the overall terms of a given policy paradigm, much like "normal science." By contrast, what he refers to as a 'paradigm shift in policymaking, 'is likely to reflect a very different process, marked by the radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse' (279).

This form of policymaking seems to fit very well with both the aims and the necessary processes of EU education policy. (A similar argument has been advanced by Mabbett 2007). It reflects the necessity of constructing 'policy' that does not and cannot seek either to implement or to modify existing paradigms, or to cover the same areas that they do. And while Hall talks about *replacement* of one paradigm by another, that is not what is being suggested here. Rather , what we might see is the attempt to construct a 'parallel' paradigm, which is restricted both in its mandate and

capacity by the fundamental differences in scope between EU and MS education policies that we have mentioned above 'Europe' here is less an external context with the potential to affect national policies, which is how it is typically perceived in the literature, and more a common space where MS (under the coordination of the EC) shape and frame not so much distinct education policies but a parallel sector.

It is, of course, crucial to note that this does not mean that the activities associated with the 'EU paradigm' will be fundamentally different from those associated with existing MS policies. It does, though, mean that they are likely to be embedded in a different discourse, one that prioritises the Lisbon agenda and seeks to associate all activities with the pursuit of that agenda. And, of course, as will be elaborated below, the clearest example of this paradigm shift is the development of the EU education agenda under the umbrella of Lifelong Learning, which fulfils all the characteristics of a paradigm shift that does not cause upheavals in practice, the fundamental condition of EE Policy.

Two consequences flow from this, one theoretical, one methodological. Theoretically, it means that we need to distinguish not only which type of convergence and policy we are studying, why, where it comes from, what it seeks to do, but also *how it is conceived to achieve its ends*. This last point is especially important, and somewhat neglected in studies of European policy making, which tend not to have well developed theories of how the European level will influence the national. This gap is especially significant in studies of the OMC and education; how might a European education policy work (given the parameters within which it is located)? This question is, of course, extremely important methodologically as well as theoretically. I f we do not know how the OMC is supposed to work, how is it possible to analyse it? More fundamentally, we might ask what is the status of the OMC in the policy making process—is it itself to be seen as a policy, an instrument, a programme? We need also to consider the consequences of the OMC operating as paradigmatic rather than normal policy making. Are the mechanisms through which it is to work (as set out in its original specification) assumed to work through exhortation, pressure, incentives, persuasion—all of which might be found in the 'normal' mode. The methodological consequences of this are that we need to know how the instruments/mechanisms relate to the OMC itself works, recognising (a) that

instruments do not mean the same thing in all circumstances (e g benchmarking); and that (b) the OMC is in any case more than the sum of, and not reducible to, its mechanisms.

2. OMC as Programme Ontology

One very effective approach to tracking these issues is through the concept of 'Programme Ontology' , which was developed by Ray Pawson, originally in the context of evaluation research. Briefly, Pawson's argument is that in attempting to find a basis for generalization of successful (or rejection of unsuccessful) social interventions and innovations, such as anti-crime initiatives, it is crucial to distinguish between what he calls the 'Programme' and the 'Programme Ontology'. Basically, the Programme is the intervention, or policy, or innovation that is being introduced or implemented with the intention of bringing about beneficial changes in some social phenomenon. The 'Programme Ontology', by contrast, accounts for *how* programmes, policies, etc, actually work. It is essentially the 'theory' of the programme as opposed to its content (and 'the theory' is typically quite likely to be implicit). According to this perspective 'it is not 'programmes' that work: rather it is the underlying reasons or resources that they offer subjects that generate change. Causation is also reckoned to be contingent. Whether the choices or capacities on offer in an initiative are acted upon depends on the nature of their subjects and the circumstances of the initiative. The vital ingredients of programme *ontology* are thus its 'generative mechanisms' and its 'contiguous context''. (Pawson 2002 342)

The argument we want to make from here, then, is that the OMC does not work only as either a paradigmatic means of making policy, or as a set of instruments that enable that, but can itself be seen as a programme ontology in the terms in which Pawson describes it. That is to say, it is more usefully seen as 'offering subjects (here, MS) reasons and resources that will enable them to generate change', given (a) their 'nature' as subjects (political entities with discretion to act), and (b) the circumstances of the initiative (Lisbon), than as either a particular programme package or a collection of instruments and mechanisms. The way that this works may become

clearer if we translate the 'vital ingredients' of programme ontology, its generative mechanisms and contiguous contexts, into the structure and logic of the OMC

We can deal quite quickly with the contiguous contexts, as they have effectively been addressed through the discussions of the EES and EEP in Chapter 1.

However, it will be important to consider the 'generative mechanisms' in more detail. They might be seen to be made up of the 'reasons and resources'.

A *The underlying reasons* are:

 (i) above all, *the desire to proceed with Lisbon as far as possible*,

The cognitive and normative framework of the OMC is very powerfully informed by the Lisbon agenda, and particularly by the 'master discourse ' of 'competitiveness' (Radaelli, 2003). It frames a conception of the European Social Model that ties it closely to the idea of productive social policy, and it is largely through this means that attempts to address the apparent contradictions in the Lisbon agenda between economic and social aims are to be addressed. As Caroline de la Porte points out, 'the areas dealt with under the auspices of the OMC are politically linked to the overall strategic objective of the EU as defined at Lisbon. Therefore, although the social dimension of the Union has been boosted, it continues to be linked to the economic project of the Union. Indeed, it appears there is a tension between the top-down objectives agreed during the successive sessions of the European Council, and the need for the OMC to take on a life of its own in their individual spheres' (2001, 360).

(ii) the need to establish Europe as a competent (in both senses), actor but in circumstances where, given the impossibility of using the Community method, the EU lacks the political and possibly administrative capacity to do that.

This has possibly been the main area of research scrutiny around education policy. The contribution most directly linked to the EES has been made by Ase Gornitzka. She argues that the European level in areas like education is essentially brought into being by the activities promoted by the OMC; without the OMC, 'Europe' would not

exist in the form(s) that it does. Similarly, the same devices of benchmarking, sharing of best practice, etc, are not only the means through which the national and European 'universes' are constructed, but also the means through which they are linked to each other; the OMC provides the means of both constructing (European) 'unity' and enabling (national) 'diversity' in subscribing to that unity.

Gornitzka also provides detailed evidence of how the European level is constructed in education through the OMC. She points out, for instance, that the five benchmarks for the improvement of education and training in Europe up to 2010 (reducing rates of early school leaving and of poor academic performance; increasing the numbers of graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology, of the proportion of the population completing upper secondary education, and of rates of participation in Lifelong Learning), 'are not concrete targets for *individual* countries to be reached by 2010. They are defined by the Council as "reference levels for the European *average* performance'' (2005, 17, emphases in original).

She also makes the crucial point alluded to above that with the OMC, the question has shifted from the desirability to the feasibility of European education cooperation. (2006, 48-9)

B *The 'Resources' element of the Generative Mechanisms*

We might see the *resources* to generate change that the OMC offers as comprising the list of its 5 characteristics; as stated in the Bulletin on the Conclusions of the Portuguese Presidency, 'the open method of coordination, which is designed to help the Member States to progressively develop their own policies, involves:

- fixing *guidelines* for the Union combined with *specific timetables* for achieving the *goals* which they set in the short, medium and long terms;
- establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative *indicators* and *benchmarks* against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of *comparing best practice;*
- translating these European guidelines into *national and regional policies* by setting *specific targets* and *adopting measures*, taking into account national and regional differences;

- periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review as *mutual learning* processes. (emphases added). (CEC 2000, para 37)

It is important to note though these are set out in forms that seem to privilege quantification of strategies and outcomes, it is the taxonomy contained within, and reflected by, the indicators, benchmarks, and so on that is crucial rather than the quantification itself(see Desrosieres in L+L). The OMC principles have the effect of putting all MS on a single metric—they are all compared against the same standards. Above all, it makes all MS education systems commensurable and makes them susceptible to the possibilities of comparison, which, as Novoa and Yariv-Mashal point out makes comparison a powerful tool of governance. Bruno Theret makes a similar point; 'International comparison is for the Commission an essential weapon in the competitive struggle it wages with Member States over developing its political competences. It implies the construction of a common language of definition of problems chosen for the possibility of their becoming an object of joint action at Community level, a language that makes Member States comparable, if not homogeneous' (2005, 78, author's translation).

3. The political nature of the outputs

As Renaud Dehouse suggests, differences between MS in areas of policy meant that something that was relatively 'content free', and (apparently) non-political, was necessary to ensure a common platform. (see Dehousse, 9, 10)

This was in a sense intrinsic to the OMC and was a feature particularly of the numerical/statistical approaches at the core of the OMC. The fact that 'objective indicators, typically drawn up by 'a-national' experts, has led many people (including me at an earlier stage) to infer that the process was somehow 'a-political', or 'depoliticised'. However, as Radaelli put it, 'To choose a set of indicators, to designate an innovation as 'good practice', to undertake a benchmarking exercise, and to write guidelines are all political processes. They establish hierarchies of domestic solutions, they put pressure on some versions of the 'European social model' but not on others, or, in the case of taxation, they alter the comparative advantage of all

Member States. To assume that a depoliticised, positive-sum game learning is the most common feature of the OMC is simply wrong' (2003, 40) That is to say, indicators and benchmarks necessarily have 'political' consequences, even if (which may be unlikely) they are not chosen with a view to 'political' advantage, or structuring of playing field---though, given the pervasiveness and taken for grantedness of the dominant paradigm, this would be done 'unconsciously'. However, Barbier argues that, 'increasingly, EU policies …. contribute to the *de-coupling* of the sphere of policies from the sphere of politics. More and more, at the EU level, cognitive and normative frameworks are established, which have an important cognitive influence on the way national programmes and policies are designed', (2007,8) though, as he points out elsewhere, to assume that this means that they can be seen as merely 'technical', or 'a-political' is wrong' (2004,3) . Writing about the European Employment sector, but with clear resonances for Education and all other social sectors, Barbier argues that 'the standard political discourse is very appropriately consistent with what has come to be the mainstream policy-mix in Europe. This discourse is anything but neutral, anything but technical and it conveys a specific normative choice among other possible policies, including macroeconomic policies. However, as the EES discourse *exemplifies a consensus* which has been shared by all governments since the 'paradigm' change in economic policy (Hall 1993; Jobert 1994), it has been possible to present it as a relatively *de-politicized discourse*, irrespective of the partisan colours of the national governments in place Barbier 2007, 14, emphases in original). However, Dehousse suggests that there was some convergence at a political—possibly a paradigm—level; 'The symbolic value of the Lisbon strategy should also be underlined. After having invested much political capital in monetary unification, it was important for the left of centre governments (which were in the majority during the second half of the 1990s) to display their commitment to social issues. In this context, it was obviously tempting to develop a method which would borrow its vocabulary and its instruments from the EMU' (Dehousse, 7)

4 System Management or Policy?

Here, we draw again on the work of Gabor Halasz. He argues that the Treaty makes the harmonisation of systems of education, in the sense of curriculum or school organisation impossible, but suggests that what happens instead is 'the harmonisation of policies directed to systems of education' (Halasz 2003, 2), what we may see as a kind of 'meta-harmonisation'. He extends this argument to the use of the idea of quality in EC education work, suggesting in particular the need to 'make a clear distinction between the indicators of educational quality and the indicators of the quality of education policy' (10), suggesting that the use of indicators in the OMC is directed very much towards the latter rather than the former. And he concludes from this that ' the question of applying OMC in education could be seen….not only as a question of hw far we go with the Europeanisation of our national education policies, but also one that can help us renew our national ways of governing our own education systems' (6). This fits very well with the suggestions above about the 'paradigm' nature of the OMC's contribution, and the treatment of it as a programme ontology

Towards a new Sector?

I want, finally, to offer some brief speculation about the possible future of the governance of European education. As hinted above, that speculation involves suggesting that the combination of the problems EU 'Education' is to address, and the means available for addressing them, may lead to the construction (whether formally or effectively) of a separate sector at the European level, which would in a sense run parallel with the education sectors of MS. To put it another way, the EES and EEP may come together to form a new European education sector.

There are a number of reasons supporting this speculation:
1. The difference in the scope and range of responsibilities of European education makes it unnecessary, and unhelpful, for it to attempt to follow MS sectoral definitions and boundaries. At EU level, education is not part of state-

building and group identity and placement as at national level, but provides the underpinnings for a European project based around competitiveness and the European Social Model

2. European education is strongly circumscribed by its Treaty status. Consequently, to be effective requires finding ways around the difficulties posed by that status

3. It is confronted by the same embedded assumptions and practices in the sector that are experienced by MS education systems

4. At the European level sectors become themselves what is at stake, as existing MS education systems are perceived to be 'unfit for purpose' in a global knowledge economy. It is for this reason that we see the development of a European capacity in education, with a particular agenda to reform, reconstruct or transform the representation, the governance and the technology of education

5. The OMC is intrinsically sector based and consequently has the capacity to reshape the sector.

Very briefly, reason (1) suggests that the basis of a distinct sector already exists and that it would be more effective to be able to concentrate on that. The construction of a new sector that does not exist in any MS is encouraged by Reason 2. Similarly, Reason 3 points to advantages to be gained by breaking away from difficulties that are entrenched in the existing sector. Reason 4 suggests that the value of continuing with existing sectors is doubtful, and that there is a strong case for reconstructing them. And finally, the OMC

process in education is effectively concerned with a process of assembling a separate set of common definitions and roles, not reducible to the aggregate or average of MS practices. It is the key means of demonstrating EU competence in education, of identifying European level problems (or redefining existing problems by shifting their scale) that can only be addressed at European level. It thus offers a means through which such reconstruction might be organized, particularly if it is seen in the ways suggested above, as being concerned less with 'implementing programmes' and more with operating through the creation of new paradigms, taxonomies and programme ontologies.

This is by no means a wholly original argument. Similar ideas have been advanced for the Social Policy sector. Daly, for instance has argued that 'the significance of EU social policy lies in how it serves to construct and create a social sphere or space for EU action which in turn has dynamic effects on European identity and European society'(2006, 465-6) that creates new areas of EU activity, competence, while avoiding issues of subsidiarity and enables added 'Euro-value' by synergising national capacities, while Savio and Palola's have suggested that 'the Lisbon strategy and the open method of co-ordination (OMC) can be regarded as signs which show us that the EU social policy has left its customary place and has *become a project to invent the social within the confines of the European Union*,…(and that) 'After Lisbon, it has no longer been relevant to make a distinction between EU-level and national level social policy, as this division, based on the Treaties' definition of competences in the area of social policy, is not recognised in the efforts to modernise social protection by means of the OMC'.

Moreover, there is clear evidence that such a project may be in course, in the form of what might be called a 'Knowledge Economy and lifelong Learning' (KnELL) sector, , with different purposes, substance and values from those of MS 'Education' sectors, and linking (different forms of) education to Social Policy and Knowledge Policy sectors (see Dale 2007). Strategically, LLL is not a 'sector' in any MS (and may be distributed across different sectors in some of them), and the new generation of EU DGEAC programmes is being coordinated under the heading of LLL (see, e g, CEC 2004). A key element of the LLL agenda is its capacity to weld together the competitiveness and social cohesion components of the Lisbon agenda through the policy of 'productive social policy'. The EU's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning states that 'Lifelong Learning is no longer just one aspect of Education and Training; it *must become the guiding principle* for participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. It emphasizes the 'need to accelerate the pace of reform..in Lifelong Learning, which is seen as a 'sine qua non of achieving the Lisbon goals while strengthening the European Social Model', and calls for 'Effective inter-Ministerial synergy between 'knowledge policies' (education, training, employment/social affairs, research).

The intention that the sector should mark a shift away from existing conceptions of education sectors is also evident in the clear content' intentions that the LLL documents contain and assume, where it differs from the national sectors in several respects. In terms of focus, it is concerned with (see Dale 2007):

- 'Learning' rather than 'education'
- Competence not content
- The key importance of its involvement of/with ICT
- A specific, employment related focus rather than comprehensive social policy, nation building etc scope
- A 'Lifelong' system of provision that is confined neither to specified age-defined stages of an educational career, nor to existing 'educational' institutions

Finally, we might speculate further, and suggest that the possible new sector will be linked with existing sectors through an emergent functional,scalar and sectoral division of the labour of education governance (see Dale 2003). Here, we might expect issues around economic competitiveness and the European Social Model (respectively the 'knowledge sector and social policy sector) to shift 'upwards' to become part of the new KnELL sector, and issues around education's role in the distribution of opportunities within national societies, etc remaining at the national level, or moving 'downwards' to sub-national levels.

Thus, overall, we might suggest that the changes brought about by the construction of an EES and EEP have involved a movement from 'Education' as an exclusively and taken for grantedly distinctive knowledge/administrative space, deriving from and reinforcing coherence and cohesiveness within a national (and often provincial)-historical formation and division of labour of governance (e g, Ministries of Education) to 'KnELL' as also possibly a distinctive knowledge/administrative space, deriving from and reinforcing coherence and cohesiveness within a supra- or sub-national division of labour of governance (e g, European Education Space)

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