
A Comparative Analysis of New Governance Instruments in the Transnational Educational Space: a shift to knowledge-based instruments?

ALEXANDRA IOANNIDOU
University of Tübingen, Germany

ABSTRACT In recent years, the ongoing development towards a knowledge-based society – associated with globalization, an aging population, new technologies and organizational changes – has led to a more intensive analysis of education and learning throughout life with regard to quantitative, qualitative and financial aspects. In this framework, education policy is no longer merely an affair of the nation state; on the contrary, a range of significant actors (international, supranational and non-governmental organizations) play an important role in policy formation and construct a transnational educational space. In a research project being carried out at the University of Tübingen, the education policy initiatives of an international (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]) and supranational (European Union [EU]) organization concerning the concept of lifelong learning are being examined with emphasis on its implementation into national forms of monitoring and reporting systems. A part of the study concerns issues regarding the influence of the OECD and EU on national policy formation and their managing capacity. This article focuses on the emergence of new governance instruments used by the OECD and EU in the transnational educational space, their characteristics and their impacts, applying, as a conceptual tool, Willke's analytical distinction of regulative media into power, money and knowledge.

Introduction

Until the 1960s it was common to talk about policy control within the nation state. The modern nation state was analysed in terms of a state-centred approach: there was much faith both in the capacity of the nation state to manage, regulate, guide and control societal development as well as in the ability of the society to be efficiently managed, regulated, guided and controlled by the nation state.

However, during the late 1960s, and particularly in the 1970s, many sociologists and political scientists argued vigorously against these propositions. According to Renate Mayntz (1997), the reasons for this disillusionment were twofold:

(1) In the theoretical field, the growing influence of systems theories and differentiation theory was significant. These theories seriously question the hegemonic role of the state and consider the political system as a system among other functional systems which coexist, self-referential and self-managed, without any hierarchical order. According to systems theory, functional systems are loosely coupled with each other and they have the ability to communicate with each other. However, they do not have the ability to intervene in other systems. Therefore, the political system and thus the state do not have the capacity to control directly other functional systems such as the economic, judicial or education system.

(2) In the practical political field, a number of empirical policy analyses investigated the complex set of relationships and interdependencies between state and non-state authorities and networks of power. These analyses revealed the real difficulties in the implementation of political concepts

in various fields (for example, in health or environmental politics) and led to the acknowledgement of the limited managing and controlling capacity of the political system.

These developments evoked a deep scepticism towards the controlling capacity of the state at the practical level and led to a shift in the notion of controlling at the theoretical level. Politics is seen to be increasingly involving partially cooperative, partially conflicting exchanges and interactions between the state and a range of private, public and voluntary organizations (Mayntz, 1997, p. 278). The traditional term of 'controlling' no longer reflects the patterns that have emerged as a result of these interactions and interdependencies among various actors, of which the state is only one. The term 'governance', which was proposed to replace the term 'controlling', recognizes this new dynamic that has arisen from the emergence of policy actors at various levels (local, regional, national, transnational) and emphasizes the variety of patterns of interaction (networks, coalitions, majority rule, negotiations) between them. Policy actors under the governance perspective work as a non-hierarchical, multilayered governance without clear sovereign authority but with the capacity of policy shaping (cf. Mayntz & Scharpf, 1995). Even if the concept of governance is still vague and inclusive, and embraces different approaches and theories – both normative-descriptive as well as political-strategic – it seems to dominate the current political debate and underline a qualitative shift in issues of political regulation and governing (cf. Benz, 2004).

Emergence of a Transnational Educational Space

Education and education policy have been set up and run under the control of individual nation states since the origins of modern education systems. Education policy not only followed economic and utilitarian goals, such as providing human resources for the economic development of a country, but it also served to legitimize the nation state and integrate its citizens through guaranteeing a level of social order. Different economic and political structures as well as historical and cultural traditions have resulted in national and historical differences, and have influenced the development of national education systems over the years. Thereby, they have determined substantial differences in their institutional structures and in their modes of organization and regulation. Nevertheless, in spite of structural and historical differences, common trends and developments towards cross-national convergence in the educational realm have always existed, albeit to a lesser degree than can now be observed. Through educational borrowing and lending, copying and transferring, 'best-practice' models have been diffused all over the world and have led to more transnational convergence in the education field, reducing, in a way, the 'uniqueness' of national education systems.

Presently, economic globalization in the form of global labour and world markets forces economic restructuring and changes in industrial and occupational structures, and promotes the idea of denationalization. For Dale (2003), globalization 'does represent a new and distinct shift in the relationship between state and supranational forces and ... has affected education, profoundly and in a range of ways' (p. 90). In addition, modernization and transformation processes have been carried out in all modern societies in a similar way, though not necessarily at the same time or pace. It has been suggested that 'global modernization and functional differentiation processes transcend national boundaries and evoke similar responses from national educational systems' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003, p. 160). Despite the fact that official European discourse insists that education will remain a national policy domain, a gradually strengthening movement towards supranational policy formation in Europe has become visible. The ambitious policy objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, 'making the European Union the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world', thrust education into the centre of policy interest.

The aforementioned developments have given rise to a range of complex issues relating to the future of nation states, their relation to international and supranational bodies, and their capacity to control and govern their own policy destinies and set their own agendas. On the educational research agenda, issues concerning the effects of globalization and Europeanization on national education systems, convergence and standardization in the educational field, and educational governance have attracted increasing attention over the past years, although they still have not yet been sufficiently investigated (cf. Green et al, 1999; Amos et al, 2002; Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Dale, 2003; Meyer & Ramirez, 2003; Schriewer, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2003; Martens & Balzer, 2004; Altrichter et al, 2007).

It seems to be undisputed that the primary driving forces of current policy reform in national education systems are actually external to the national systems themselves: global labour and world markets, modernization and transformation processes, regional integration processes (primarily within Europe), demographic trends and changing patterns of work, leisure and family life, common societal problems and the diffusion of world cultural principles. These forces reciprocally influence and strengthen each other, and lead to the emergence of a post-national educational space with special characteristics and dynamics. In this emerging 'transnational educational space' (Lawn & Lingard, 2002), new global challenges meet old historical paths, trends to convergence simultaneously exist with trends to divergence, and new and emerging policy actors (international and supranational bodies like the European Union [EU] or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], along with transnational non-governmental organizations) interact with old and established ones (national states) concerning the mandate, the capacity and the governance of education. As Dale (2003) argues, the mandate of education refers to 'what is desirable for the education system to achieve; its capacity – what is considered feasible for it to achieve; and its governance – how those objectives are realized' (p. 102).

The phenomenon of this emerging transnational educational space with its characteristics and dynamics has been addressed in recent years as an issue of theoretical interest and an object of empirical research by various scholars. In order to provide an explanatory framework for the observed trends towards convergence and standardization in education, a range of theoretical and, at times, contradictory explanations have been developed. John Meyer and a group of scholars from Stanford University developed one of the most prominent concepts, the 'world-polity' concept, founded on the new institutionalism approach, which highlights the importance of institutions and the role of ideas, norms, symbols and values. They emphasize the importance of world cultural principles based on the rationalized modern sense and their diffusion as well as the leading role of international organizations and their educational models and agendas in order to explain standardization in education (cf. Meyer & Ramirez, 2003; Meyer, 2005). The 'world-polity' concept pinpoints that standardization as a 'tendency to become alike' and institutional isomorphism as the tendency of educational institutions to increasingly share similar features cannot be explained by national factors. Following another theoretical approach founded on systems theories, Jürgen Schriewer (2003) limits the extent to which convergence and homogeneity in education can be reached. He conceptualizes internationalization not as a linear process which leads to more standardization, but as a complex set of interdependencies between global forces and national path dependencies; the former drive standardization, the latter reduce or even interrupt convergence processes. Analyses from comparative educationalists with a mostly historical point of view reveal findings which reinforce the role of historical and idiosyncratic factors upon reception and adaptation of global models and trends, and underline the fact that different countries respond in different ways to similar or even the same problems (cf. Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Independent from the different approaches and the theoretical reasoning used to explain these phenomena, a general consensus seems to exist that a new, post-national educational space is emerging as a new policy arena in which a blend of actors at different levels (local, regional, national, transnational) interact in various patterns (networks, coalitions, negotiations, mutual adjustment) and influence policy formation at the international as well as the national level (cf. Lawn & Lingard, 2002).

Policy Actors in the Transnational Educational Space

There are a number of organizations which act as key actors in this emerging transnational educational environment (cf. Parreira do Amaral, 2006; Schemmann, 2007) and are implicated in policy making at three levels: 'as instruments of policy; as policy making arenas; and as policy actors in their own right' (Archer, 1994, quoted in Henry et al, 2001, pp. 39-40).

In general, policy actors in the transnational educational space can be differentiated according to their regulative capacities over their members:

(a) *International actors* such as UNESCO or the OECD, which are intergovernmental organizations with no regulative capacities over their member states; their power derives from their agenda-setting capacity and their existence as policy-making arenas.

(b) *Supranational organizations* such as the EU, which have regulative capacities over and beyond their membership and also the legal power to shape national policies in some fields (for example, economics or the labour market). The EU has no legislative competencies in the education field according to the Treaties of Maastricht (Articles 126 and 127) and Amsterdam (Articles 149 and 150), but it can strongly influence national education policy through policy formation in other fields.

(c) In addition to these well-known and 'established' organizations, there are a number of *non-governmental organizations* such as the European Educational Research Association, the Consortium of European Research and Development Institutes of Adult Education, and the European Association for the Education of Adults, which operate as self-organized networks of linked professionals at an individual or collective level without governmental interference and without any sovereign authority.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the role of two particularly active players in the educational field, the EU and the OECD, and to discuss the modes and instruments they use in order to increase their influence at a national level. The analysis is based on preliminary findings from a comparative research project in three countries (Finland, Germany and Greece) which is being carried out at the University of Tübingen concerning education policy initiatives of the EU and OECD and their impacts at the national level.[1]

Over the last three decades, the activities of the OECD, which is primarily an economic organization, have been broadly extended to the field of education (cf. Papadopoulos, 1996). These new educational activities find their theoretical background and their legitimacy in the human capital theory, which implies a clear link between the competencies and qualifications of individuals at a micro level and economic growth at a macro level. The OECD secretariat, together with the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), produces and disseminates a wide range of work in the educational field including comparative country reports, thematic reviews (for example, the Thematic Review on Adult Learning), educational statistics (for example, the annual publication *Education at a Glance*) and international comparable assessment studies for students (Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA]) as well as for adults (International Adult Literacy Survey [IALS]). The OECD has received worldwide attention for its publications and has become, increasingly, a reference point for a number of states, not only for its members. In fact, the organization acts as a 'globalizing' agency in the transnational educational field.

The EU, on the other hand, which also originated as an economic organization, has gradually extended its political power to a range of different fields. Its interest in guaranteeing the mobility of markets, products and human capital led to regulations in the field of vocational education and training. It is not surprising that the EU also follows the argumentation of the OECD concerning the human capital theory, and considers the qualifications and competencies of its citizens as the key for a successful economy. Since the Lisbon summit (23-24 March 2000) and the formulation of the strategic target to make the EU by 2010 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world', the EU is strengthening its efforts in the educational field by introducing new governance instruments, organizing meetings and conferences, producing communications and reports, and making extensive use of its educational funding programmes. Thus, it is becoming a main reference point for national educational policy and acts as a 'Europeanization' agency in the transnational educational space.

Regulative Media in the Transnational Educational Space

The starting point of this article for investigating governance instruments in the transnational educational space will be Helmut Willke's distinction of regulative media. In his book about systems theory (cf. Willke, 2001), he distinguishes between three regulative media, namely power, money and knowledge, and illustrates the problems of steering and coordinating complex social systems by revealing the different effects which result from the use of different regulative media (Willke, 2001, p. 150).

The existence of these media and the recognition of their capacity to guide and control societal development is not really new. The current emphasis on the examination of the

relationship between them is substantial: they are obviously interrelated but this relationship varies from society to society and over time. With respect to the latter, Freiburghaus (1991, quoted in Willke, 2001, p. 272) relates regulative media to time and reveals a shift in their usage over time: from the fifteenth to seventeenth century the prevalent medium was power in the form of 'violence', whereas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a shift to 'legislative power'. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'money' took a predominant position and then, beginning in the twentieth century and increasingly in the twenty-first century, 'information' has attained an overwhelming predominance as a regulative medium. In addition to time, the force and the impact of these regulative media are highly variable according to the functional system within which they appear. In the political system, the prevalent position of power as a regulative medium is self-evident, while the same is true for money in the economic system and knowledge within the scientific system.

Willke does not seek to solve the problem of efficient managing of complex systems with his theory, even less that of the post-national education system. Moreover, he considers the provision of suitable instruments for the observation and analysis of problems concerning managing and controlling as the main function of the theory (Willke, 2001, p. 10). In consequence, the application of his distinction of regulative media in the context of educational governance in the transnational space has mainly a heuristic function. It is used as a conceptual tool with analytical advantages. First of all, it allows a systematic approach to the investigation of the managing capacity of the two organizations under examination, the EU and the OECD. Second, it applies a useful framework for identifying and integrating governance instruments which are emerging in the transnational educational space. The main questions which arise in this analytical framework, and which will be examined in this article, can be pinpointed as follows:

- Who uses these media, how are they used and with what consequences?
- Is there a shift in the use and emphasis of these media?

Undoubtedly, all three of the aforementioned regulative media can be easily identified in the transnational educational realm: (1) *power*, in the form of regulations and legally binding acts for member states, for example, in the field of vocational education and training (EU); (2) *money*, in the form of funding capital through educational programmes (EU, UNESCO) or as credit transfer (the World Bank); and (3) *knowledge*, in the form of the generation and dissemination of knowledge and expertise derived from evaluation processes (OECD), quality management processes (EU) or project implementation (UNESCO).

In the case of the OECD, it is obvious that the media 'power', in terms of legislative power, and 'money' are not crucial as regulative instruments in influencing the educational policy of its members. Operationally, the OECD has neither legal, political clout nor a prescriptive mandate over its member countries like the EU does – nor does it have the financial clout of the World Bank. The OECD's educational programmes and activities are supported either fully by the core funding of its member states or partially, or even fully, by participating governments or institutions (for example, PISA and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies [PIAAC]). Consequently, the OECD's work and power of influence is actually based on generating and successfully disseminating knowledge.

In the case of the EU, the media legislative 'power' and 'money' still play an important role. The EU has regulative capacities in the field of vocational education and training (Article 150, Treaty of Amsterdam) and can, according to the subsidiary principle, support educational policies at a national level. Through the funding of certain actions and measurements at both the European and national level, the EU can set priorities in the educational policy agenda and decisively influence national policy making. In addition, the so-called Lisbon Strategy, established after the Lisbon summit, introduced a new form of governance: the open method of coordination (OMC), which is based on reciprocal learning between member states.

Presently, both the EU and the OECD demonstrate in their educational activities an increasing interest in (a) monitoring, measurement and comparison of educational data, (b) the evaluation of learning outcomes and systems performance, and (c) the governance of educational systems using comparable empirical data.

The general proposition put forward here is that these educational activities are mainly based on knowledge and expertise. Knowledge and expertise seem to have become the new crucial

instruments of governance in the modern transnational educational field in which these organizations operate. In view of this, the following analysis is in two parts. The first part describes emerging new governance instruments in the educational field on the part of the OECD and the EU, and the second is an analysis of their characteristics and their impact.

New Governance Instruments in the Educational Field

At this point it should be noted that the term 'instruments' is used henceforward instead of the term 'media' (which is more general) in order to identify concrete means, mechanisms and tools which are used in order to achieve certain policy objectives and through which the coordination of education in the transnational space on the part of the organizations under examination is brought about. Drawing on this distinction, the following instruments can be identified as being mainly based on the medium 'knowledge': (a) regular monitoring, comparing and reporting on education systems, (b) evaluation by peers (peer review process), and (c) large-scale international comparative assessment studies.

These instruments have been extensively used in recent years to support governance efforts, both on the part of the EU and the OECD, to shape transnational educational policy and influence national educational policy. It is clear that they coexist along with more 'classical' instruments (regulations, project funding) based on the media 'power' and 'money'.

Regular Monitoring, Comparing and Reporting on Education Systems

The OECD has a long history of compiling statistical information on education. Since the 1960s, interest in the use of statistical information has gradually grown until the 1990s, where we witness some remarkable shifts in the development of *educational indicators* within the OECD:

from philosophical doubt to statistical confidence; from covering some countries to covering most of the world; from a focus on inputs to a focus on outputs; and from occupying an experimental status to being a central part of the Organization's educational work. (Henry et al, 2001, p. 90)

The project on educational indicators has become a highly significant part of the OECD's work in education over the last decade. Its main product, *Education at a Glance* (cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005a), is an annual OECD/CERI publication which, since 1992, has been widely disseminated across OECD countries and has become an important reference point for international comparisons. Educational indicators are derived from a particular understanding of education drawn from the human capital theory that focuses on the utility and functionality of education for economic development. Comparative educational indicators are utilized to provide information on a system's progress towards achieving certain outcomes, and to contribute to educational policy development and reform: 'The purpose is to measure education's current effectiveness, or at least provide information of help to policy makers in making course corrections to predict future performance' (Henry et al, 2001, p. 92). Even though the OECD warns that indicators should not be viewed as dictating benchmarks for performance or be perceived as lists of countries ordered by rank, the way indicators are presented generates peer pressure and a culture of 'performability' among member states which cannot be ignored.

The *open method of coordination* is an experimental approach to EU governance based on monitoring and benchmarking national progress towards common European objectives. This method originated in the European Employment Strategy, was officially introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam and was elaborated at the Lisbon summit as a new instrument of policy making to realize the goals set by the Lisbon Agenda. Since then, it has been applied across a growing range of policy areas, including employment, social inclusion and pension reform. The OMC can be found particularly in policy domains where the EU has limited legal competence and weak policy instruments: for example, in education. The OMC commits EU member states to work together towards shared goals and benchmarks. Its purpose is to increase supranational influence on national policies without developing fully fledged EU policies or homogenizing member states' policy regimes and institutional arrangements. The OMC obliges member states to pool information, compare themselves to one another, and reassess current policies against their relative

performance. It implies action in four stages: first, the Council of Ministers agrees on general guidelines and policy goals; second, member states translate the guidelines into national and regional policies; third, specific benchmarks and indicators are developed and agreed upon in order to monitor progress and to measure best practice; and, finally, in the fourth stage, results towards the realization of the common goals are evaluated on the basis of the agreed indicators and benchmarks.

Generally, the OMC is more intergovernmental and it is viewed as a new mode of governance that promotes experimental learning and intentional problem solving across the EU. The OMC can be classified as a 'soft' mode of governance in contrast to 'hard' policy instruments such as regulation, and it is designed to trigger adaptation and adjustment within member states on the basis of mutual policy learning (cf. European Commission, 2001).

It is important to note that the OMC applies instruments that have been quite successfully used in the OECD's work for over a decade: development of shared goals and benchmarks through a process of consensus building, usage of comparable statistical data and indicator-based reporting systems, dissemination of best-practice models, reciprocal evaluation and mutual learning by peers.

J.W. Guthrie considers this expansive trend for monitoring and reporting systems by international agencies as an aspect of international convergence of educational policy and reform. He points out that:

new or substantially enlarged, government and quasi-government bureaus [are] responsible for collecting, compiling, synthesizing, analysing, and reporting education-related data. ... A major component of this added emphasis upon data collection and analyses is the attention given to intra-national comparison. (Guthrie, 1997, pp. 880-881)

Evaluation by Peers

The *peer review process* is another instrument, along with reporting and data collection, which can ensure compliance with internationally consensual policies and norms. It is a working method most closely associated with the OECD. Although several other international organizations make use of it as well (for instance, United Nations bodies, the World Trade Organization and the EU), it has not been as extensively developed elsewhere as it has in the OECD. Within the OECD context, it is defined as 'the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed State improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles' (Pagani, 2002, p. 4). A country may be assessed within one or more subject areas (for example, education, health or the economy) against agreed-upon standards, principles and criteria which vary in character and scope. These may include: policy recommendations and general guidelines and their implementation within a member state, specific indicators and benchmarks that provide numerical targets to achieve, and legally binding principles which ensure compliance with international norms (Pagani, 2002, pp. 8-9). All peer review processes include: (a) an agreement on the procedures which will lead to the final results, (b) an agreed-upon set of principles and standards against which the country's performance will be reviewed, and (c) the designation of the actors who will carry out the peer review.

In some sectors, peer review can be carried out thematically, for instance, the Thematic Review on Adult Learning within the education sector.

The peer review method takes place in three phases:

(1) The preparatory phase: countries prepare a descriptive Background Report on the status of adult learning in the country with a kind of self-evaluation.

(2) The consultation phase: an OECD review team visits the country and consults representatives of the government and administration, interest groups and experts as well as representatives of civic society.

(3) The assessment phase: the review team prepares a Country Note analysing the main issues concerning adult learning and policies in the country under review. After discussions with officials, there is a final report that addresses priorities and policy responses in a comparative perspective.

The effectiveness of the peer review method mainly relies on the pressure which is generated between peer states (peer pressure). The publication of the reports as well as the follow-up monitoring progress of the performance of the state increase pressure. The effectiveness of this method, according to Pagani, depends upon the combination of a number of factors such as value sharing, adequate level of commitment by the participating countries, mutual trust and credibility (Pagani, 2002, pp. 12-13).

Peer review also emerges in the EU framework as an effective instrument to identify good practices and support mutual learning. It was used in the European Labour Strategy and now it is suggested for use as one method, among many, in the field of quality assurance agencies.

Large-scale International Comparative Assessment Studies

Over the last decade, large-scale international comparative assessment studies have been developed which seek to measure access to education and to evaluate student and adult competencies. The OECD has developed, for instance, a number of large-scale international surveys such as the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003), the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) (cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005b) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which have been well reported in various countries. Some of them (PISA, for instance) have produced a resounding echo in some countries (for example, Germany and Finland) and have become a major reference point for educational policy and reform. These kinds of international studies are the product of the OECD's and CERI's long work history on educational indicators. They also reflect the OECD's central presupposition of global progress in terms of education and economic growth, and the feasibility of monitoring this progress through comparable surveys and common indicators. The increasing interest in international comparisons is linked to the theory of human capital and the 'classical' neo-liberal OECD thinking on the economic returns of educational investment. In an era of global competitiveness and financial constraints, it is plausible that the expectations of the outcomes of education are getting higher and higher.

International assessment surveys define key competencies for students as well as for adults (for example, literacy, numeracy, problem-solving capacity), evaluate them using common acceptable tools and set the standards in this way.

The results of such surveys are presented in tables and lists which imply a ranking among participating countries and evoke an unmistakable message: the level of performance of a country is seen as an indicator of 'effective' or 'ineffective' educational policy and as a prognostic tool for the competitiveness, economic growth and progress of the country. The embodiment of these surveys in the logic of ever increasing performance supports corrective tendencies in the countries and the surveys can be seen as new forms of educational governance.

The EU, following the example of the OECD, has initiated European-wide comparable studies such as the Continuing Vocational Training Survey and the forthcoming Adult Education Survey in order to monitor access to and participation in adult education and training. At a later stage, it is intended that these kinds of data will be complemented by data on educational outcomes (cf. European Commission, Eurostat, 2004).

Characteristics of the New Governance Instruments

There is a certain *convergence* in the *use* and the *reasoning* of these instruments among international and supranational organizations. The OECD and the EU cooperate very closely and use a blend of harmonized data collection and reporting systems on education in order to pool information, compile it, monitor progress and support decision making. Peer reviewing and large-scale international comparative studies are instruments which originated in the OECD's working modus but, since the Lisbon summit, they have also become increasingly relevant in the EU framework. The reasoning and the arguments are quite similar: data monitoring and reporting systems provide information and transparency on educational systems and allow comparisons between countries. Peer review processes support mutual learning and cross-national mimetic processes. And

international comparative assessment studies make educational outcomes visible and thereby support corrective tendencies within the countries.

The instruments referred to here are *based on consensus and shared values*. Indicators and benchmarks that must be reached and principles and standards according to which performance will be evaluated are defined and agreed in consensus among participating countries. The OECD's educational activities, due to the intergovernmental character of the organization, have always been based on a policy of consensus among peers. Likewise, the EU, due to a lack of legal competencies in this realm, acts as an international rather than a supranational organization and focuses on 'soft law', consensus, shared values and mutual commitment instead of 'hard' legislative instruments.

All these instruments are *based upon knowledge*. Data reporting systems, peer review processes and international comparative studies provide information and build a knowledge-based infrastructure which can be widely used by different countries. The OECD and the EU act in this case as 'knowledge mediators' who collect and transform information into use-inspired knowledge and expertise. Through its educational indicators programme, the OECD provides relevant information for policy makers and, with the peer review process, it provides a sophisticated tool for learning from peers. The EU seeks to institutionalize mutual learning among member states through the OMC, which is based upon knowledge of the relative performance of each country and its comparison with others. However, the effects of knowledge as a regulative medium – not only in this context – are not indisputable (cf. Willke, 2001, pp. 256-357). Knowledge generates 'valid definitions for the reality and valid definitions for the meaning of this reality' (Willke, 2001, p. 253). According to Willke, knowledge does not reveal perpetual truths but provides 'interpreting observations', which depend upon the sensorium and the instrumentarium of the observers (2001, p. 253).

A preliminary analysis of interviews with experts from education policy and administration in three countries (Germany, Finland and Greece) in the framework of a comparative empirical study that is being carried out at the University of Tübingen shows that the OECD's expertise is so well established and acceptable that the organization can afford the initiation of very expensive surveys, such as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)[2] (cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005c), and be sure that at least some of the member states will take part in such surveys without receiving any economic incentives and without any legally binding framework. In this case, knowledge seems to successfully supersede money and power, and be the undisputed regulative medium in this organization. The experts in various countries do not attribute the same expertise to the EU and they reconfirm the EU's legislative power as well as funding mechanisms as central regulative media in this context, which continue to coexist with emerging knowledge-based instruments. European surveys begin, for example, as a 'gentleman's agreement', with some financial support on the part of the European Commission, but they become mandatory after a time through regulations (examples of this are the Continuing Vocational Training Survey and the Adult Education Survey). Money still plays a major role in the education policy of the EU: the new integrated educational programme Lifelong Learning, which seeks to support learning opportunities 'from early childhood to old age in every single life situation' has a budget of 6.97 billion euros for the period 2007-13. Increasingly, knowledge generated by EU-wide surveys and by the implementation of EU-funded projects and actions takes a central position and supports decision making and reform efforts at the national level. It appears that, in the EU framework, all three regulative media remain influential with a slight shift towards more knowledge-based instruments and without any traces of the suppression or neglect of more classical instruments (such as regulations or funding) based on power and money. Indeed, it would be rather striking if organizations sacrificed regulative potentials or the opportunity to maximize their influence by not making use of all possible instruments at their disposal.

Impacts of the New Governance Instruments

In general, a *qualitative improvement* of data monitoring and reporting systems at an international as well as at a national level has been addressed as a consequence of the demands of the OECD and the EU for valid, reliable and comparable data (cf. Schemmann, 2006, pp. 242-262). Greece, for

instance, has created a special department in its Ministry of Education in order to provide reports for Eurostat (the Statistical Office of the European Communities) and the OECD; and France modified its existing statistical collection system in order to be more compatible with OECD demands. In actual fact, these organizations transfer their work practices to all countries where they operate, and sometimes even beyond.

It is clear that established common indicators and comparable data force *quantification and standardization*: they enable different national systems to standardize themselves. '[Q]uantification standardizes the object, but it also standardizes the subject of measurement: the act of exchange is no longer dependent on the personalities or statuses of those involved' (Porter, 1996, quoted in Rose, 1999, p. 207). Educational indicators not only define what can and cannot be measured, but also the methods by which complex phenomena such as 'returns from education' and 'lifelong learning' can be measured and the ways in which phenomena can be interpreted after they have been measured.

Undoubtedly, numbers and figures are not unproblematic: they have a *normative power* that arises from their '*ordering capacity*' (cf. Cline-Cohen, 1982, quoted in Rose, 1999, p. 205). For instance, the way complex information is presented in the form of single figures in a table reduces, on the one hand, complexity and implies, on the other hand, objectivity and fairness that do not necessarily exist. It is clear that figures do not merely describe an existing reality: they constitute it. Due to the normative power and ordering capacity of numbers, peer *pressure* is increasing. Indisputably, the results of a peer review exercise peer pressure but since reports and recommendations are written in consensus with the country under evaluation, they can never have the power that single numbers or indicators (particularly those which reveal 'bad' performance) can have. Porter made an important note in his work on the politics of numeracy and quantification: he highlighted that numbers are especially vital 'in order to settle or diminish conflicts in a contested space of weak authority' (Porter, 1996, quoted in Rose, 1999, p. 208). None of the policy actors identified in this article have a sovereign and indisputable authority in the transnational educational space.

Both the EU and the OECD have the *power of definition* by setting the agenda that has to be discussed, by defining the issues that deserve to be monitored, and by developing the indicators that can measure complex phenomena and monitor progress. In other words, they define what is desirable for national education systems to achieve ('mandate', according to Dale [2003]), what is feasible for them ('capacity') and how these objectives can be realized ('governance'). Further, within their forums, the EU and the OECD circulate concepts, norms and models, and generate normative pressure upon their members by coordination and opinion formation (Martens & Balzer, 2004, p. 4). Paradoxically, it can often be observed that political discourses in these organizations quite quickly turn into technical disputes about methods and tools that enable researchers and governments to set standards and monitor progress.

Finally, the EU and the OECD enhance *knowledge and expertise* of a particular form, which is bound up with the emergence of a *specialist elite*. This new elite works through a blend of statistical data collection, uses statistical and calculative methods, and combines knowledge and managing capacities in the form of consultancy. It works in networks; it is in constant interaction with linked professionals and experts at a national level through participation in meetings, committees and task forces; and it acts as a transnational policy actor. Its medium of operation is knowledge and the relationship between its members is based on interdependency and complementary exchanges. This policy elite constitutes a new 'magistrature of influence', as Lawn & Lingard point out, which circulates and translates 'an explicit language of collection, comparison and evaluation, and of new generic skills and learning, which although of wider international usage than specifically European, appeared in particular forms in the Europeanising space' (Lawn & Lingard, 2002, p. 304). This 'magistrature of influence' distributes policy making in multiple centres and can decisively shape education policy at an international as well as at a national level.

Conclusion: a shift to more knowledge-based governance instruments?

This article highlights the emergence of a post-national, transnational educational space with special characteristics and dynamics due to globalization processes, modernization processes and the European integration process. In this context, issues regarding the effects of globalization and

modernization on national education systems have been outlined along with questions concerning the capacity of individual nation states to define their own education agendas. The creation of a post-national educational space has clearly brought new policy actors to this field (international and supranational bodies, non-governmental organizations and a transnational policy elite), who interact at various levels and in different patterns without clear sovereign authority but with the (still unarticulated) claim to shape education policy and the means to do so. Organizations such as the EU and the OECD, in particular, which were initially founded as economic organizations with no genuine education mandate, have evolved and become key players in this field, demonstrating increasing influence on national education policy. The EU and the OECD use all the instruments at their disposal in order to coordinate educational activities and maximize their influence in a contested space of weak authority – as the transnational educational space is. In an attempt to systematically approach and analyse the instruments used by the EU and the OECD, Willke's analytical distinction of regulative media into power, money and knowledge was utilized. The following were identified as new governance instruments: (a) the regular monitoring, comparing and reporting on education systems, (b) evaluation by peers, and (c) large-scale international comparative assessment studies. The analysis of these instruments and their impacts has shown that they are mainly based on consensus, shared values and knowledge. Even if it cannot be expected that the EU and the OECD will sacrifice regulative potentials by not using all the media (power, money and knowledge) at their disposal, it can be assumed that, in the future, increasingly more attention will be paid to the construction and further development of instruments based on the medium of 'knowledge', since this seems to be the most appropriate medium of operation in the emerging transnational educational space, which is multilayered, non-hierarchical and highly interdependent.

Notes

- [1] The project is partly funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation and aims to reconstruct the concept of lifelong learning with respect to its political and empirical aspects, and to examine its implementation into national and international data collection and reporting systems on education and training. Theoretically, it is based on the approaches of path-dependent development and actor-centred institutionalism, both emanating from political science. Using this theoretical framework, the OECD's and the EU's educational policies and empirical proceedings with respect to the measurement of lifelong learning are being analysed and compared to demonstrate their adoption among differently structured national systems (Germany, Finland and Greece) and to comment on their influence upon the evaluation, design and governance of national education systems. The methods being applied are document analysis, expert interviews and meta-analysis of data monitoring and reporting systems.
- [2] The estimated costs per country for the PIAAC are approximately €1.5 million for the first five years.

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ALEXANDRA IOANNIDOU is a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Tübingen, Germany. Her research interests are comparative education, education policy, lifelong learning, international organizations and education monitoring. *Correspondence:* Alexandra Ioannidou, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Institute for Education, University of Tübingen, Münzgasse 11, D-72070 Tübingen, Germany (alexandra.ioannidou@uni-tuebingen.de).