

## Editorial

### **Special issue – The Learning Society from the Perspective of Governmentality**

This is a special issue of the journal in more ways than one. First, in the conventional sense it is a guest edited issue by Jan Masschelein, Maarten Simons, Ulrich Bröckling, and Ludwig Pongratz. Second, it is special for this journal by virtue of the fact that these editors and all but one of the contributors (Tom Popkewitz) are not from the English-speaking world of philosophy of education. They are European and as their biographies reveal come from Belgium, Germany and Sweden. Third, the issue is special because it combines work by educationalists, philosophers, historians and sociologists on the topic of the learning society from the perspective of governmentality, utilizing, developing and extending an approach by the late Michel Foucault. Thus the issue provides a novel perspective that demands an interdisciplinary approach to the core concept of the *learning society*.

I shall not document or comment on the theme of the issue or the approaches adopted by individual contributors as this has been done already by Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons in their introduction where they detail Foucault's notion of governmentality, the rapidly growing secondary literature on studies of governmentality, its development in the field of education, and the scope of the issue including the individual contributions. The issue thus brings together European perspectives with the Anglo-American literature focused precisely on the concept of the learning society, a concept that has loomed large in both national policy documents and conceptions promulgated by world policy agencies as a notion 'expressing principles of a universal humanity and a promise of progress that seem to transcend the nation', as Masschelein and Simons put it.

The learning society maps onto 'lifelong learning', informal education, cosmopolitan ideals, spaces of European higher education and, indeed, helps in refashioning the new Europe of the EU and, as the contributors to this issue ably demonstrate in novel ways, ultimately to questions of governance and governmentality. It is to be hoped that the issue will lead not only to further discussion and debate but also to greater international collaboration and understanding of the governmentality approach in all its possibilities and applications.

As is now well known and as the editors to this issue indicate, in his governmentality studies in the late 1970s Foucault held a course at the Collège de France on the major forms of neoliberalism, examining the three theoretical schools of German *ordoliberalism*, the Austrian school characterised by Hayek, and American neoliberalism in the form of the Chicago school. Among Foucault's great insights in his work on governmentality was the critical link he observed in liberalism between the governance of the self and government of the state—understood as the exercise of political sovereignty over a territory and its population. He focuses on government as a set of practices legitimated by specific rationalities and saw that these three schools of contemporary economic liberalism focused on the question of too much

government—a permanent critique of the state that Foucault considers as a set of techniques for governing the self through the market.

Liberal modes of governing, Foucault tells us, are distinguished in general by the ways in which they utilise the capacities of free acting subjects and, consequently, modes of government differ according to the value and definition accorded the concept of freedom. These different mentalities of rule, as a number of commentators have observed, turn on whether freedom is seen as a natural attribute as with the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, a product of rational choice making, or, as with Hayek, a civilizational artefact theorised as both negative and anti-naturalist. A foucauldian account of the market in relation to the concept of freedom lies at the center of questions of government and governmentality, of government by and through the market, a feature that we have experienced in a variety of different forms since the impact of globalization and the end political model of the welfare state.

Foucault's account of German *ordoliberalism*, a configuration based on the theoretical configuration of economics and law developed at the University of Freiberg by W. Eucken and F. Böhm, emphasizes the view that the market develops historically within a judicial-legal framework. The economy is thus based on a concept of the Rule of Law, anchored in a notion of individual rights, property rights and contractual freedom that constitutes, in effect, an economic constitution. German neoliberal economists (Müller-Armack, Röpke, Rüstow) invented the term 'social market economy' which shared certain features with the Freiburg model of law and economics but also differed from it in terms of the 'ethics' of the market (as did Hayek in *The Constitution of Liberty*). This formulation of the 'social market economy' proved significant not only in terms of the post-war reconstruction of the (West) German economy but through Erhard, as Minister and Chancellor, became important as the basis of the EEC's and, later, EU's 'social model'.

It is fitting that the issue should advance various understanding of the 'economization of human life' (Simons) and especially of education render as the ideal of a learning society from the perspective from and with a focus on Europe. I wish to thank the guest editors for a provocative, stimulating, and thoughtful analysis of the learning society that at once extends the compass of governmentality and demonstrates its clear implications for education.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address a number of matters concerning the journal. First, the journal has a new submission system for manuscripts, the guidelines for which can be found on the journal's website (<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0013-1857>), and a new submission site at Manuscript Central (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/epat>) that will streamline the submission and review process. The site contains instructions to authors, the license form and the journal style sheet. We will be running two parallel database systems during the transition period. Second, the journal has a new Reviews Editor in David Beckett ([dbeckett@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:dbeckett@unimelb.edu.au)); and third, the journal will incorporate PESA News column to keep members and readers informed of relevant events such as upcoming conferences edited by Felicity Haynes ([fhaynes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:fhaynes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)).

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