



The **Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies** is based at the University of Bristol and is coordinated by **Professor Susan L. Robertson**.

### **On-Line Papers – Copyright**

This online paper may be cited or briefly quoted in line with the usual academic conventions, and for personal use. However, this paper must not be published elsewhere (such as mailing lists, bulletin boards etc.) without the author's explicit permission.

If you copy this paper, you must:

- include this copyright note.
- not use the paper for commercial purposes or gain in any way.
- observe the conventions of academic citation in a version of the following:

Dale, Roger and Susan L. Robertson, 'New Arenas of Global Governance and International Organisations: Reflections and Directions', published by the Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies, University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1JA, UK at: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/people/academicStaff/edslr/publications/08ird/>

## **New Arenas of Global Governance and International Organisations: Reflections and Directions**

**Roger Dale and Susan L. Robertson**

Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies  
University of Bristol, UK

In (2007) K. Martens, A. Rusconi and K. Lutz (eds)  
*Transformations of the State and Global Governance*  
London: Routledge

## **Introduction**

The chapters making up this book provide an outstanding and rich range of case studies of international organizations (IOs) and market actors and their relationship to education policies. Each of them individually, as well as the collective synergies they offer, forces us to reassess and reorient not only the ways that we have conceived of the forms, meanings and the sources of education policy, but also its scope, ambit and foci. The crucial point, here, of course, is that following such studies we can no longer maintain the illusion that education policy is an exclusively national responsibility or enterprise, but that increasingly, the work of national education systems is now being redistributed across a range of scales, including the global. But that in itself is quite breathtaking. Education has traditionally been regarded as the most national of activities. It is the institution through which new members of a society are socialized into its ways and understandings, and learn the values and the rules of appropriateness of the society. It thus represents a major test of some forms of ‘globalization’ arguments; if even education is now bound up with supranational forces and institutions, then surely it is difficult to deny that something new and different is happening.

In our overview we reflect upon some key themes that crosscut the case studies of different organizations, policies and practices presented in the foregoing chapters and identify some new directions for work in this area. We will concentrate on three main themes: the nature and operation of IOs and market actors in the field of education; what might be learned from the case studies about governance in education; and what are the possible consequences for our conceptions of the nature, purposes and governance of education, in particular as it relates to the state.

### **The nature and operation of IOs and market actors in the field of education**

Two things strike us about the organizations discussed in the separate chapters: that they are very different from each other in a range of ways, and that they are all reported as having changed significantly over recent years, or have emerged relatively recently in the field of education policy making. Added to this, it is clearly no longer possible to think about IOs as only including those that have traditionally comprised the ‘global’ landscape. The various multilateral organizations have been joined by an array of new market actors on the global stage; private-for profit universities, multinational firms, credit rating agencies, and so on, all with interest in capitalizing on the education sector; these are variously elaborated in the chapters by Knight, Hentschke, Sackmann and Scherrer. This leads us to question whether there is anything uniting the IOs and market actors discussed, beyond their non-national bases and a common label, and if so, what that might be.

The chapters on IOs offer a range of theoretical explanations for why these organizations have become powerful actors in education, though several of them—for example those by Jakobi, Martens, Balzer and Rusconi—draw on neo-institutionalist theories that see them as epistemic communities diffusing the norms and values of a world polity based on the values and assumptions of Western modernity. The question of how institutions that are formally powerless get their way on the global stage is a fascinating one that is addressed directly or indirectly in all the case studies. When we look at the mechanisms through which the IOs work, we find a wide range of

alternatives. Existing comparisons of their work (for example, Schäfer 2006; Noaksson and Jacobsson 2003) produce cross organization concepts, such as ‘multilateral surveillance’ or the ‘socialization of seconded nationals’, but these do not represent a comprehensive categorization of mechanisms. As the case studies show, any such categorization would also have to include conditionalities (World Bank) (see in particular Mundy’s chapter), conventions (International Labour Organisation (ILO)—see Jakobi’s chapter), rules (World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Scherrer, Hartmann), ‘norm creation’, indicators and peer review (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD—see Martens’ chapter) and meta-regulation (European Union (EU), addressed by Rusconi and Leutze), while central to many discussions of the way that IOs work is an emphasis on the role of ideas, knowledge, expertise, discourse, agenda setting all of which are mechanisms of power of one sort or another. A key feature of the different case studies is that they show how important it is not to adopt a one size fits all assumption, but to probe beyond classifications and examine questions of what mechanisms work, in what ways, for whom and under what circumstances. In other words, it is important not to see the global institutions as similar actors with similar interests on a similar stage, but to view them as part of a complex set of social forces and patternings which change over time.

A proliferation of discussions of divergent mechanisms, however, may threaten to divert attention from what seems to us the more important: whether they have a common agenda. Our view is that such a common (or hegemonic) agenda does exist when it comes to education and that it has very far-reaching consequences for how we currently conceive of the relationships between IOs and education policies. Common to all of the organizations discussed is a world-view based on the cognitive assumptions of the dominant strands of the economics profession, the existence of a global market and the need to expand it to create further opportunities for the preferred market-based solutions, as well as the central importance of education in contributing to economic development. Moreover, all IOs considered assume the importance of education as a part of productive social policy. This set of assumptions is not merely ‘diffused’ by IOs, but to a great extent, produced or sponsored by them through the expertise of those they choose to employ.

More abstractly this agenda might be seen as providing the substance of what Bernstein referred to as the ‘rules of recognition’ of the global system; that is, the rules that describe what that system is, or in Lukes’ (2005) framing of the third face of power – the rules of the game. Bernstein complements these ‘rules of recognition’ with what he calls the ‘rules of realization’, which tell us what count as a valid expression or exemplification of the rules of recognition. It is crucial to recognize that the rules of recognition spread by IOs do not apply only to the content of education but also to its governance, and in particular to the role of national states in that process; we allude here to the spread of neo-liberal constitutionalism, which we discuss in more depth below. Using this approach, we might see IOs as constituting a set of rules of realization of the rules of recognition that dominate the system. This enables us to circumvent tendentially fruitless discussions about whether IOs are cause or effect, for instance, and to context discussions of how their operations and effects vary across different locations.

The second factor we noted above was the common reflection that the ‘traditional’ IOs had changed significantly and were now doing different things, and that a range of new and different actors had entered the scene. Most of the IOs considered in the chapters

have been around for a long time (the main exception, the WTO, confirms the existence and nature of the wider changes they reflect), but they have changed qualitatively in the last decade and a half, both in the nature of their functioning and their mandates across the board, and in the increasing emphasis they have placed on education; the clearest example of this is the OECD, where education has moved from being a Cinderella function, a small and relatively disregarded part of an umbrella Economic and Social Directorate, to becoming a separate Directorate in its own right (see Papadopoulos 1994; Martens in this volume).

A major part of the explanation of these is to be found in the nature of the relationship between rules of the recognition in the world system over the last 30 years, which Harvey (2003) sees as a new phase of imperialism, and the changing form and function of the national state as they responded to that new set of rules. That shift is most effectively registered in Jessop's (1999; 2002) contrast between the Keynesian Welfare National State and the Schumpeterian Workfare Postnational Regime. In reflecting on what is different now (compared to when Poulantzas [1973] was writing on internationalism and the national state in the 1960s and 70s), Jessop argues that not only does globalization, like internationalization, involve uneven development, but this present phase involves a much more 'complex and tangled interplay of different spatial scales in which accumulation can occur' (2002: 200). The emerging Schumpeterian workfare postnational regime involves quite different state activities and 'a shift in the sites, scales and modalities of their delivery' as well as 'a redefinition of the economic sphere to include not only an extensive range of long acknowledged economic factors but a broad range of non-economic factors' (2002: 203). Discourses of competitiveness, the knowledge economy, entrepreneurialism, knowledge transfer, innovation and intellectual property, are all examples of the redefinition of the economic sphere to embrace what Offe (1975) once included in his famous 'Theses on the theory of the state' as *decommodified* state activity.

Not only have the traditional IOs been transformed, but the same processes responsible for those changes have also created spaces and conditions for the emergence of a rapidly growing number of new market actors who are involved in various ways in providing education services; Hentschke's and Sackmann's chapters provide rich detail of some of these new players. While still small in comparison to the overall education sector, their year on year growth suggests that this is an increasing and potentially substantial activity that warrants serious attention by researchers. These companies operate differently to traditional education institutions; many are publicly traded, and as Henschke's chapter reveals, their growth is through differentiation rather than offering across the board services and global expansion in order to achieve economies of scale. These enterprises are not simply symptomatic of the growing market dimensions of education, but their presence is being shaped by state policy (as a result of subsidization, vouchers and so on) at the national and supranational scales. Many of these actors are also involved in promoting their own interests through, for example, the GATS, or through World Bank contracts in the developing world.

Accompanying (and driving) this transformation is a debate over whether education is, or should be, conceived as a public or private good, and if a private good, what costs should be borne by households (see the discussion in the chapter by Kohlrausch and Leuze). Such debates, scarcely thinkable 30 years ago, play into the development of education as a global industry. That we do not challenge the rather narrow ontological and epistemological bases of these debates (that is conceptualizing education in narrow

economic terms) tells us how far neoliberal ideas have penetrated the semiotic arenas of intellectual life. At the same time, it is important to underline the deeply contradictory nature of neoliberalism as a political ideology, as well as the contradictory and conflictual nature of unfolding social relations.

The process of redefinition of the economic is ongoing and dynamic, and requires not only different lenses to the still dominant methodologically nationalist and embedded statist (Dale 2005) ones, but as we have argued, an awareness that new actors are operating on new scales and in sites that have, until recently, been dominated by largely state-dominated and regulated actors. This is particularly evident in the rapidly expanding for-profit sector of education, which is beautifully documented in several of the chapters (see chapters by Henschke, Sackman and Knight). New actors have arrived on the scene engaged in supplying a highly differentiated range of services, including testing services, tutoring, and specialized knowledge. Thus, not only is there evidence of an emerging 'globalizing education industry', but this industry runs parallel with the existing sector, at the same time transforming that sector.

### **Global Governance of Education by IOs and Markets**

The distinction between rules of recognition and rules of realization also clarifies somewhat the contribution of the case studies to our understanding of global governance. A central part of our argument here, again drawing on Jessop's distinction, is that over the last 30 years the rules of recognition have operated at global rather than national scale. National forms of governance and policy may be seen as particular realizations of those global rules, which are effectively instantiated in the operation of IOs. It is crucial, however, to recognize that there is no zero-sum relationship between global and national or subnational forms of governance. IOs do not replace national states but 'create an additional and informal structure of authority and sovereignty besides and beyond the state (through providing) means of communication, socialisation, institutionalisation and integration' (Overbeek 2004: 15-16). As we have noted elsewhere, the relationship between scales is better seen as arising from a 'functional, scalar and sectoral division of the labor of educational governance' (Dale 2005). In this division of labor, we may expect to see those elements of national state education systems that are most directly associated with the transmission of national culture, values, etc, and with the embedding of societal cohesion, to remain entirely at the national scale, since they have little to do with the current rules of recognition that now promote the economic over the social. It is in the areas of education systems that are most directly related to the economy that we may expect to find the greatest effects on scales of educational governance.

### **Formal Issues of Global Governance**

In this regard it is important to differentiate between formal and substantive issues of education governance. The first concerns the 'specificity' of education as an area of international governance. We have already alluded to the deeply and distinctively national nature of education historically, and suggested that this makes it a good case through which to study the work of IOs and globalizing actors because 'resistance' to external influence may be deeply entrenched. There is, however, another way of looking at this issue that would suggest that education is, in many ways, a prime case for

supranational governance. This rests on three, fairly distinct, premises. The first is that the very 'nation-boundedness' of education could itself constitute a major obstacle to the development of global governance in the area, at a time when both the nature of its importance was changing, and other areas were shifting from national to postnational, or supranational governance. Second, there is no agreed 'best' way to do education (largely because of the confusing and contradictory proliferation of definitions of education). In order to compare systems of education, or evaluate different education systems, sets of proxies for 'education', increasingly often in the form of indicators and benchmarks, have been set up. The development of such instruments has become fertile ground for IOs, indeed, their most productive and effective means of intervention in education. It enables them to effectively define what 'education' is, a goal that would be more difficult to achieve in any other area. The recent PISA shock in Germany, where Germany was ranked low, set off a panicky debate publicly about the need to change the education system. This reaction highlights the powerful nature of these practices, opening up education systems to internal as well as external pressures for change. Finally, another consequence of the lack of any agreed definition or codification of education was that it became easy prey to 'provider capture', or control at national level by the professionals rather than by politicians or consumers. Indeed, the perceived need to eliminate provider capture was instrumental in the attack on it being such a major stimulus to the development of New Public Management, itself a key element of the rules of recognition that embrace the shift from government to governance, for instance. It is important to take these three 'internal' pressures into account in explaining the extension of international governance in education.

While all the case studies make it clear that claims that the IOs are apolitical or neutral mediators are important to their legitimacy but ultimately unsustainable, they are less explicit about the depoliticizing effects of the processes through which the IOs operate. While their strategies deliberately conceal their political origins and purposes, it is important to recognize the way that their processes undermine politics. In most of the cases, the claim to be apolitical is backed up by, indeed, apparently justified by, the fact that their prescriptions are decided by 'anational' experts and/or through a process of consensus, rather than by political representatives in a process of disputation. The importance of this issue is perhaps clearest in the matter of the nature of the indicators and who chooses them. Room (2005), for instance, has contrasted the EU's use of indicators as tools of 'collective discipline' (leading to/assuming a single common future that can be defined by reference to common technical and economic requirements, and where national politics is only about adjusting to these requirements) with their potential use as a means of developing 'coordinated intelligence'.

As we have argued, and the cases demonstrate, processes of globalization have significantly altered the sites and scales for the location of education; this also includes whether some scales take precedence over others and which organizations operate at what scales to promote their own interests. The result is new struggles over boundaries and the terms of political debate. Two consequences have followed from this. One is that neoliberalism has dispersed greater power and responsibility to the market rather than the state in the coordination of public goods and services and signals the dominance of economism. This results in "...a form of economic constitutionalism that gives a juridical cast to economic institutions, placing these institutions beyond politics" (Jayasuriya 2001: 443). Jayasuriya argues not only is sovereignty transformed, but that the very nature of these governance changes results in a transition from political constitutionalism to a kind of economic constitutionalism (Jayasuriya 2001: 443). Put

another way, contracting out public education services to the private sector and community not only constructs them as economic relationships thus depoliticizing them, but they are legally protected 'beyond' politics. Second, economic constitutionalism is not confined to the national level. GATS, by transforming education into a global service sector and industry, and locating its governance in global regulations that first and foremost protect investors and profits rather than citizens and knowledge, also constitutionalizes the economic over the political at the global scale. Similar processes have taken place at the regional scale, for instance with NAFTA and the FTAA. Not only is education and its transformation into a commodity removed and insulated from popular scrutiny or democratic accountability within the political realm, but the regulatory instruments, such as the dispute settlement processes, work in favor of particular agents and their projects (Gill 2003: 132); the transnational for-profit firms, or the powerful countries or blocs such as the USA, EC and so on.

The transformation of education through commoditizing and rescaling has direct implications for rights of citizenship (see Robertson, 2006). On the one hand, rights as Kohlrausch and Leuze (this volume) show are constructed in consumer terms; as information to facilitate choices about which education provider to choose in the local, global or regional marketplace. The only 'right' that can be protected by nation states is the right to choose, not an equal ability to realize this choice (Ball 2003). Paradoxically, while the right to (free primary) education is recognized in several international instruments, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) which all countries are signatories to, there is no way to force governments to meet its commitments. However, if a company trading in education services loses its right to trade in a particular country, the country where the company is based will have, according to the WTO rules, the right to compensation. Rules concerning trade seem to be much stronger in international law than rules concerning human rights (Fredrikssen 2004: 422).

### **Substantive Issues of Global Governance**

The substantive issue concerns the possible outcomes of the work of IOs in education. This is not an issue that the authors made central, but it does seem to us an important one. The key point is that the rules of recognition that frame the IO activities we have been looking at, also frame what is expected of education systems. Our fundamental argument here is that the rules of recognition contain two key messages for education, both deriving from the changes to the global political economy that have been in motion over the last 30 years or so. The first is that 'knowledge' is now regarded as the key to economic well-being, and that 'knowledge' production is now become central to the work of education systems – in particular that kind of knowledge that will lead to ideas, innovations and value. The second is that alongside the redefinition of the purposes of education, there is also a need to restructure education systems that have grown to serve a very different set of needs and which are now regarded, particularly by IOs like the OECD and the World Bank, as no longer fit for the new 'economic' purposes of education (see Robertson 2005). In terms of the work of IOs, arguably these two new priorities for education are to be found in the dual focus that they all share on, on the one hand, the importance of the knowledge economy, and on the other, the importance of Lifelong Learning (LLL).

Knowledge here is about much more than what goes on in education systems as we have traditionally known them. Indeed, as we have noted, the education system as

currently conceived is seen as an obstacle to providing effective support for the knowledge-based economy and thus part of the problem not part of the solution. Similarly LLL as currently conceived is far from its liberal roots of enabling access to 'Recurrent Education' for all. Rather, as Coffield (1999: 495) argues, contemporary discourses on LLL embrace simplified versions of human capital theory and simplistic understandings of the cause of educational disadvantage. Yet, LLL and the idea of a knowledge economy have become master discourses aimed at bridging of the competitiveness-social cohesion paradox, which is in essence to be brought about by 'productive social policy'. In addition, it sets up a parallel discourse to that of traditional education systems, in that it is not confined either to one particular phase of life, or to a particular professional group or public sector as provider.

Together, the Knowledge Economy and Lifelong Learning (KnELL) agenda entails a major attempt to transform education systems as we have known them—and this may be seen as a key if not the key issue underlying all the work of the IOs discussed in the case studies. It is what gives coherence to their activities, varied though they are. However, it is also recognized that national education systems are deeply embedded in national states and extremely difficult to change at all, let alone to transform in the ways seen as necessary by the IOs. This is in part, too, because national states have used education for the purposes of securing their own rule through using education as a means for redistribution and thus legitimacy.

It might be argued that one often implicit strategy of IOs in education has been not so much to try to change education systems head on, but to 'outflank' them by constructing parallel discourses and practices that at first sight do not challenge national sovereignty but nevertheless provide alternatives. These alternatives are not advanced in respect of the kinds of areas of education we referred to in the last paragraph, but in areas where they might address perceived limitations on collective competitiveness. The Bologna Process (see Ruconi and Leutz's chapter) may be seen as one form of this. However, we can see this most clearly in the response to international comparisons, where the apparent, and most heavily publicized, point is not the basis of the comparisons but the nation's position in the league table. Here, the example of PISA is the most impressive. What PISA has achieved, almost by stealth, is a major shift in the focus of secondary education, from having at its heart the achievement of qualifications to the achievement of competences. This is perhaps part of the reason for the response from Germany, which was very instructive. It was not to point out the fact that what was being tested had changed, away from the traditional strengths of the German education system, and to emphasize the continuing value of those strengths, but to focus on the lower position in the league table and to say we have to do better in the league tables and the only way we can do that is by playing by the new rules, adopting the new criteria.

The other key part of this strategy is in the interpretation of LLL. This can be seen to have both formal and substantive elements. Substantively, LLL is the answer to unemployment. It is the keystone of productive social policy that ensures maximum flexibility and responsiveness in the work force and makes continuous self-improvement the precondition of – though not a guarantee of – continuing employment. Formally, it will have a considerable undermining effect on national education systems. On the one hand, it is made absolutely clear that it is not to be thought of as being delivered in traditional ways by traditional educational institutions; anyone can do it. On the other hand, in both its 'learner-centered' rather than 'teacher-centered' approach, and its



insistence that it covers learning from cradle to grave, including, but emphatically not confined to, the compulsory levels of education, it offers to redefine what has been understood by 'education' as a separate sector of state activity.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we want to suggest that this set of contributions on new arenas of global governance and IOs have been highly successful, both in providing a set of detailed, nuanced and sophisticated accounts of the nature of work of a crucial group of organizations in the field of international educational governance, and, at least as importantly, in establishing the need for a thorough theoretical revisiting, reconceptualizing and restructuring of the field. However, in order to carry out that shift, a number of crucial, fundamental and non sector-specific moves have to be made. The volume as a whole should not be seen as merely a valuable addition to, or modification of, existing understandings of transnational policy work in education (though it does achieve that), but as revealing a need to reformulate theories of international organizations. The weight of the volume as a whole reveals a world that cannot be understood as organized in ways signaled by the centrality of concepts like 'national' and 'international'. Instead, it points to the need for a reconceptualization of assumptions about the nature of, and relations between, states, public sector and policy, and about the scales of, and participants in, the governance and definition of the education sector. It also highlights the need to undertake systematic work on the emergence of new actors in the education sector—particularly the for-profit actors—that builds upon and extends the kinds of work being presented on the development of the education market and industry. Taken together, these contributions signal new divisions of labor between states and societies and between national, supranational and sub-national scales. In doing this, they give greater substance, specificity and purpose to the concept of global governance.

## References

- Ball, Stephen J. (2003) *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Class and Social Advantage*. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Coffield, Frank (1999) Breaking the consensus: lifelong learning as social control. *British Educational Research Journal* 25(4), 479-99.
- Dale, Roger (2000) Globalisation and Education: Demonstrating a "Common World Education Culture" or Locating a "Globally Structured Agenda for Education" *Educational Theory*, 50, 4, 427-48.
- Dale, Roger (2005) Globalisation, knowledge economy and comparative education. *Comparative Education* 41(2), 117-49.
- Fredrikssen, Ulf (2004) Studying the supra-national in education: GATS, Education and Teachers' Unions Policies. *European Education Research Journal* 3(2), 415-39.
- Gill, Stephen (2003) *Power and Resistance in the New World Order*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harvey, David (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jayasuriya, Kanishka (2001) Globalization, sovereignty and the rule of law: from political to economic constitutionalism. *Constellations* 8(4), 442-60.

- Jessop, Bob (1999) The changing governance of welfare: recent trends in its primary functions, scale and models of coordination. *Social Policy and Administration* 33(4), 346-59.
- Jessop, Bob (2002) Globalisation and the National State. In Aronowitz, Stanley and Bratsis, Peter (eds) *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 185-220.
- Lewis, Nicolas (2005) Code of Practice for the pastoral care of international students: making a global industry in New Zealand. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 3(1), 5-48.
- Lukes, Steven (2005) *Power: A Radical View*; Second Edition London: Palgrave/Macmillan
- Noaksson, Niklas and Jacobsson, Kerstin (2003) *The Production of Ideas and Expert Knowledge in OECD: The OECD Jobs Strategy in contrast with the EU employment strategy*, University of Stockholm: Score Rapportserie 2003:7.
- Offe, Claus (1975) Theses on the theory of the state. *New German Critique* 2(6), 137-47.
- Olds, Kris and Thrift, Nigel (2005) *Cultures on the brink: reengineering the soul of capitalism – on a global scale*. In Ong, Aihwa and Collier, Stephen J. (eds) *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics and Ethics as Anthropological Tools*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 270-290.
- Overbeek, Henk (2004) *Global Governance, Class, hegemony: A historical materialist perspective*. Working Papers in Political Science 2004/01 Vrei Universitet Amsterdam.
- Papadopoulos, George (1994) *Education 1960-1990: the OECD perspective*. Paris: OECD.
- Poulantzas, Nicos (1973) *Political power and social classes*. Translated by Timothy O'Hagan. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Robertson, Susan (2005) Re-imagining and re-scripting the future of education. *Comparative Education* 41(2), 151-70.
- Robertson, Susan (2006) *Globalisation, the Transformation of National Education Systems and Citizenship Rights*, Public Lecture, Bosphorus University, Turkey, 17<sup>th</sup> May.
- Room, Graham (2005) Policy Benchmarking in the European Union: Indicators and Ambiguities. *Policy Studies* 26(2), 117-32.
- Schäfer, Armin (2006) A new form of governance? Comparing the open method of coordination to multilateral surveillance by the IMF and the OECD. *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(1), 70-88.