

The European Educational Space: New Fabrications

Introduction by *Martin Lawn & António Nóvoa* (Editors)

INTRODUCTION

In October 2000, an invitational seminar sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was held in Lisbon. The underlying theme of the gathering was «Rethinking the European Educational Space». Our main intention was to discuss the possibility of a European public space for education or public spaces linked to education that have emerged from new material and cultural circumstances, and fresh ways of interpreting these new developments.

During the year 2000, the European Council approved the well-known Lisbon Strategy aimed at making «Europe, by 2010, the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world». The reason for the meeting was to examine the new opportunities to be gleaned from Europe's public and institutional spaces, and discuss the lack of impetus that exists within education to shoulder the task of creating analyses and producing responses. In other words, our aim was to light a spark.

In 2002, Kluwer Academic Publishers produced *Fabricating Europe – The Formation of an Education space*, edited by António Nóvoa and Martin Lawn as a result of our seminar. A French version of the book was published in 2005 by L'Harmattan: *L'Europe réinventée – Regards critiques sur l'espace européen de l'éducation*.

Since last year, a general consensus has developed that the Lisbon Strategy has not succeeded. As Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt stated in 2009, «Even if progress has been made, it must be said that the Lisbon Agenda, with only a year remaining before it is to be evaluated, has been a failure».

Furthermore, since 2010, Europe's social crisis has led to new questions and discussions on the European Union and the role of education in European policy. Unsurprisingly, a new strategy was launched, Europe 2020, which is viewed as an updating of the previous Lisbon Strategy for the new decade. Once again, the European Commission defined «developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation» as the main priority. Education is dealt with under five headline targets, in terms of employability, R&D investment, compulsory schooling and higher education.

We believed it was once again time to engage in critical discussion regarding the European educational space, in an attempt to understand how education and knowledge are being broached in the European arena. Debates currently underway are being fuelled by transnational governance, networks and cultural and economic projects. They involve national and state collaboration, European Commission guidelines and products, academic networks, social movements, business links and sites, «city states», virtual connections and meetings such as ours.

In April 2011, a new invitational seminar took place in Lisbon. The informal meeting was financed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the University of Lisbon. Invitations were sent to well-known academics in different countries, some of whom did not work in the educational studies field per se. The meeting was interdisciplinary and brought together academics interested in discussing the broader implications of education in Europe.

The gathering was organized by António Nóvoa (University of Lisbon) and Martin Lawn (University of Edinburgh). Invitations were extended to a wide range of professionals and practitioners, since our aim was to spark creative thinking that might point to new directions in research rather than contribute to an unproductive, growing mountain of paper.

In addition to the authors participating in this special issue, several other colleagues attended the Seminar including Göran Therborn, Daniel Innerarity and Adelina Sánchez Espinosa. A number of other specialists have kept in touch and engaged in dialogue with us before and after the Seminar.

This special issue of *Sisyphus* brings together five contributions on new fabrications in the European educational space. All of them seek to describe the educational problems facing Europe today and analyze the complex issues that underlie the European debate on education. We have also decided to include Francisco Ramirez's revealing reflection on universities. Though it centres on an analysis of American universities, Ramirez's essay nevertheless explains many of the developments that are taking place in European universities and in the European Higher Education Area.

1. *The Understories of European Education: The Contemporary Life of Experts and Professionals*, by Martin Lawn (University of Edinburgh, UK)

The first article acknowledges the fact that the European Union is faced with dramatic crises as a result of its own contradictions, national failings and banking system breakdowns. Dramatic summits, tight financial regulations and complex political solutions have fragmented the continuing growth and consolidation of the EU. Its institutions and procedures look very fragile. Yet there are other stories existing in this time and space, and the assemblage of a European education space or area continues in low key, unspectacular, expert and professional ways. This is an understory in the EU. The tall trees in the European forest are clearly visible, but underneath them, sustaining their growth, are the microclimates of the understory. Beneath the canopy of the forest, the life of the understory is lived in the shade but in favourable conditions for growth. It is a form of mutual, cooperative, voluntary and even «niche life».

Martin Lawn tells us about these understories, describing an environment in which governance in Europe is developed through public-private partnerships, knowledge-based organizations, agencies, associations and markets. He asserts that the governing of Europe depends on the activity taking place in the understory. It is often out of sight and excludes politics. It thrives among a new elite of technocrats, professionals and academics with specialized knowledge and skills, who are working both in public and private organizations. To illustrate how the understory has grown and expanded, how standardization occurs and how knowledge is generated, he explores the work of European educational associations: first, the European Educational Research Association and second, the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates.



2. «Now We Are European!» *How Does it Get That Way?*, by Thomas S. Popkewitz (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA) and Catarina Silva Martins (University of Porto, Portugal)

The second article looks at «the European», which is seen as a kind of person and an autonomous subject in contemporary policy and research. The idea gained strength from the 1970s onwards as a cultural concept to examine collective desires and fears of the dangers that may occur if society and people are not properly organized. In the social and educational sciences, the European as a kind of person intersects with national discourses in studies on schooling, crime, family, community, economy and citizenship. It embodies narratives and images about who people are and how to act with particular populations. It also serves as the basis for cultural theses outlining how people themselves should act.

Thomas Popkewitz and Catarina Martins examine the social and educational science technologies that are at work in constructing this new kind of person. The argument first briefly explores the human sciences as historical practices that link the individual to the community. These practices are reassembled and examined descriptively in the second section focusing on the making of the European as a particular kind of person from which a nation's daily life is to be organized. Research policy and research projects are examined as embodying particular narratives about a unified people who share universal ethics that give moral, scientific and historical exceptionalism to Europe in the arena of global competition. The third and fourth sections discuss the role cultural technologies play in fabricating the European.

3. *Governing Education, Governing Europe? Strengths and Weaknesses of the Lisbon Model*, by Anne Corbett (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK)

The third article begins with a reference to the Lisbon Strategy (2000) and to the EU updates and adaptations of the strategy for a second decade contained in Europe 2020. Critics view the Lisbon strategy – and especially the Bologna Process, which has been creating a European Higher Education Area – as an affront to the democratic institutions of the EU in that they virtually ignore the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice. The author inquires whether this is the reason the Lisbon Strategy for education was taken up so quickly. Within five years, education has moved away from the periphery and, with each review of the process, has become more entrenched as a policy the EU regards as crucial.



The article suggests that the question of how and why education has assumed such a place in the Europe 2020 strategy cannot be resolved without applying some middle-range theory and looking more closely at the policy-making that underlies the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020. The author also discusses how the open method of coordination (OMC) related to education may contribute to a wider spectrum of Europeanization literature. The basic assumptions of Corbett's analysis are that ideas will get nowhere without institutional support, and that mobilization of institutional support is not only determined by rules but is also context-specific. After tracing an overview of developments up to the present, the second half of the article looks at the factors liable to account for change. The final section returns to the issue of democracy and the strengths and limits of the European process.

4. *The Interfacing Approach for Investigation Beyond Boundaries*, by Vita Fortunati (University of Bologna, Italy)

The fourth article concentrates on the «crisis of the humanities», discussing how the neo-liberal, profit-oriented style of university management has produced negative consequences for the humanities by tending to dismiss them as unproductive and uncompetitive. All the emphasis seems to be on entrepreneurship, research & development and endless research assessment exercises. The author believes that certain keywords are essential when focusing on new strategies for overcoming the identity crisis in the humanities: networking, new epistemological paradigms and new perspectives.

Fortunati asserts that an integrated studies approach is needed if the deep-seated crisis in the humanities is to be overcome. It is a crisis that was brought on not only by financial problems, but also by the awareness that the complexity of the world surrounding us needs new approaches and new methods. Integrated knowledge is necessary in understanding the complexity of today's cultural environment. Science and the humanities are no longer two separate spheres of knowledge but two complementary and integrated fields. Science has to take into account epistemological and ethical issues and the humanities need to face and embrace scientific developments and new conceptualizations. On the whole, this approach will end up being of reciprocal benefit and provide fertile ground for both the sciences and the humanities. The author organizes her argument by examining the concepts of «interface», and «contact zones» and discusses the actions undertaken by European and national research councils and the European Science Foundation.



5. *The Blindness of Europe: New Fabrications in the European Educational Space*, by António Nóvoa (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

The fifth article explains that after a slow start during the 70s and 80s, European educational policies took on a new importance after the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Since then, numerous texts and documents gradually built a «European educational space». The Lisbon Strategy of 2000 is an important milestone in this process. The main reference point of the 21st century is the Education & Training 2010 Work Program, which sets a clear framework at the European level for education and training. Recently, there has been a new turning point with the approval of Europe 2020, and even more so with the launching of the Rethinking Education strategy. The article goes on to assert that we are facing continuities and changes that need to be analyzed carefully.

Nóvoa divides his paper into two main sections. In the first section, the author reexamines the major turning points of educational policy in the last two decades. The second section focuses on the new Education and Training 2020 program and the Rethinking Education strategy launched in November of 2012. His concluding remarks seek to spark broader reflection on the «new fabrications» that are taking place in the European educational space.

6. *World Society and the University as Formal Organization*, by Francisco O. Ramirez (Stanford University, USA)

The last article interprets the worldwide transformation of universities with respect to accounting-for-excellence activities. The first part of the article reflects on the rationalized university as an organizational ideal and its implications for accounting-for-excellence practices. Next, the article focuses on faculty assessments by looking at the annual faculty report and tenure protocol in a case study designed to illustrate common organizational practices within American universities. The author argues that these practices facilitate American university participation in national, and later, international university rankings. In the last section, Ramirez argues that American universities underwent earlier organizational rationalization and differentiation in part because they were less differentiated from other social institutions.

With the absence of the buffering authority of the state and the professoriate, American universities earlier on became organizational actors dealing with multiple stakeholders in search of resources and legitimacy. This earlier development paved the way for more current manifestations aimed at

accounting for excellence. These exercises have now surfaced within Western European universities, but they encounter greater resistance therein. Nevertheless, the rationalized university as an organizational ideal has spread throughout Western Europe. Ramirez's paper concludes by reflecting on why the current globalization efforts differ from earlier educational «borrowing» practices and why they are more difficult to resist. Although the article does not broach European affairs directly, it sheds considerable light on the workings of European universities and the intense debate that is taking place on the modernization of universities in Europe.



The editors would like to thank the authors for the fruitful exchange of ideas that took place during the editorial phase of this issue and for their contributions to understanding the «new fabrications» that are taking place in the European educational space.

They would also like to extend their gratitude to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for sponsoring the Lisbon meeting and for their support of this publication.

A final word of thanks is due to the University of Lisbon, which helped to organize the 2011 Seminar, and to the University's Institute of Education, which decided to devote the first issue of the new series of the *Sisyphus* journal to our work.

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