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Governing education in the European Union: networks, data and standards

Governança da educação na União Europeia: redes, dados e standards

*Gobernanza de la educación en la Unión Europea: redes, datos y
normas*

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Abstract: The broad area of education in the European Union was generally seen as a national question and responsibility, an area of subsidiarity, but over time there is a convergence of policy across the nations. The EU does not command convergence; indeed, it is unable to, but it does govern the area of education of education at all stages more and more. The problem of governing, how it can operate and what tools to use, is an interesting case of an ambiguous area within the EU and about calling an area into creation so that it can be managed effectively and quietly. In doing so, the governing technologies that are used are of as much interest as the actual policies proposed and so are the range of actors who participate in the construction and regulation of European education. Complex networks of public and private experts, using new data technologies and producing analyses and new benchmarks and standards, are brought together through various funding schemes into a system of attraction and persuasion, soft governance. Significant numbers of professionals have been willingly producing new political technologies, including data systems and standards, and the complex material production of new systems of education, and incorporate political technology, data production, experts and labour processes. The system has worked well but is it more than just coping with the ordinary present?

Keywords: Governing. Experts. Data. Standards.

Resumo: A área da educação na União Europeia (UE) geralmente é vista como uma questão e responsabilidade nacional, uma área subsidiária, mas ao longo do tempo foi ocorrendo uma convergência de políticas das nações. A UE não comanda esta convergência; nem é capaz de fazê-lo, mas, cada vez mais, governa a área da educação em todos os estágios. O problema da governança, como opera e que ferramentas utiliza, é um caso interessante de uma área ambígua dentro da UE e de chamar uma área à criação para que possa ser gerida de modo eficaz e silencioso. Ao fazê-lo,

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as tecnologias governamentais usadas são de interesse como as políticas propostas bem como a gama de atores que participam da construção e regulação da educação Europeia. Redes complexas de experts públicos e privados, usando novas tecnologias de dados e produzindo análises e novos benchmarks e standards são reunidos por meio de vários esquemas de financiamento de um sistema de atração e persuasão, soft governance [governança suave]. Um número significativo de profissionais tem voluntariamente produzido novas tecnologias políticas, incluindo sistemas de dados e standards, a complexa produção material de novos sistemas de educação, incorporam tecnologia, produção de dados, experts e processos de trabalho. O sistema tem funcionado, mas oferece algo mais do que apenas lidar com o ordinário presente?

Palavras-chave: Governança. Experts. Dados. Standards.

Resumen: El ámbito de la educación en la Unión Europea (UE) generalmente se considera como una cuestión de responsabilidad nacional, un ámbito subsidiario, pero a lo largo del tiempo se ha producido una convergencia de políticas de las naciones. La UE no comanda esta convergencia; ni es capaz de hacerlo, pero, cada vez más, gobierna el área de la educación en todas las etapas. El problema de la gobernanza, cómo funciona y qué herramientas utiliza, es un caso interesante de un área ambigua dentro de la UE y de llamar un área a la creación para que pueda ser gestionada de manera eficaz y silenciosa. Al hacerlo, las tecnologías gubernamentales utilizadas son de interés como las políticas propuestas, así como la gama de actores que participan en la construcción y regulación de la educación europea. Las redes complejas de expertos públicos y privados, utilizando nuevas tecnologías de datos y produciendo análisis y nuevos benchmarks y estándares se reúnen a través de varios esquemas de financiamiento de un sistema de atracción y persuasión, soft governance (gobernanza suave). Un número significativo de profesionales han generado voluntariamente nuevas tecnologías políticas, incluyendo sistemas de datos y estándares, la compleja producción material de nuevos sistemas de educación, incorporan tecnología, producción de datos, expertos y procesos de trabajo. El sistema ha funcionado, pero ofrece algo más que sólo tratar con el ordinario presente?

Palabras clave: Gobernanza. Expertos. Datos. Estándares.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The European Union has grown in number – member states – and in activity – policy and administration – over time, and its dominant feature are the key treaties which have steered the growth of the European Union (EU) and its direction. The area of education, in

all its forms, has had an irregular relation with the governing of the EU. State education was described as a subsidiarity, that is, it is still the responsibility of the member state, but over time this has been reshaped: first, vocational education, and its later form, lifelong learning, were steered by the EU, and then universities, through funding and ranking, and schools, through various programmes, have been influenced as well. As the EU saw itself as more than a federation of states and more like a significant regional power, it developed initiatives which improved its economy, stability and power, and in doing so created its own policies. More than that, it aimed to produce a Europe of meaning.

The broad area of education in Europe, to a greater or lesser extent in its sectors, usually steered and not determined or commanded by the EU, following democratic agreements. But in this policy area, the problem of governing, how it operates and what tools it uses, is an interesting case of an ambiguous area within the EU, as it is both national and transnational. So, at its heart, it is about calling an area into creation so that it can be managed effectively and quietly. In doing so, the governing technologies that are used are of as much interest as the actual policies proposed. To understand governing through a new policy space in EU, the paper will follow the new political sociology of Europe in searching for productive ways to research the idea of a fragmented and complex government, involving a range of actors who participate 'in the construction and regulation of European problems' and assuming a constructivist and relational approach, with a focus on problematization and politicization (SMITH, 2009, p. 259). The term 'transnational' captures the complex patchwork of networks, operating at variable scales, which together comprise the contemporary system. As Cox (2005, p. 149) argued: "The old state system is resolving itself into a complex of political-economic entities: micro-regions, traditional states and macro-regions with institutions of greater or lesser functional scope and formal authority."

The education area or space had a series of organizing initiatives, which usually follow similar attempts in other fields or just benefit from larger field policies. A constant element of Europeanization, from the 1950s, was the cultural strategy of creating a common identity, a new identity, "a European model of culture correlating with European integration." (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 1987, p. 11). A shared identity of Europeaness, representing membership of an "exceptional source of development, progress and culture" (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 1987, p. 11) contained within the nation state, demanded a new language of identity, which was to be established through education as cultural cooperation: its common space began by policies connecting museums, with town twinning and then school linking and collaboration across Europe.

Professionals and experts were mobilized through attraction, funding support and opportunity, and the creation of meaning, produced by shared understandings or devices, and even their common desire for a 'European education space'. The creation

of regional meaning and of common European meanings involved expertise, deliberation, collective actors and regular procedures. This is a governing process, but a governing that attracts as much as it disciplines and controls. It works across complex networks, which span intergovernmental, producer, professional and expert forms, and represent highly organized industry, voluntary sector groups or loosely-knit but important specialized academic associations (LAWN, 2015; LAWN; GREK, 2012; LAWN; SEGERHOLM, 2012). Increasingly, it appears that these networks, woven into sets of linked relations, represent a form of governance unique in Europe, crossing state boundaries, old government divisions and traditions of work and administration. The informality of their organization, the complexity of their knowledge relations and exchanges, the hybridity of their institutional association, combined with their overall inter-dependence to produce a distinctive form of governing in Europe. This 'thick', cross European network of networks, although sometimes unstable, creates a bedrock upon which the creation of standards and data is produced, embodied and enacted. Skills are developed and suitable practices evolved.

The fabrication of a European policy space has been approached and described from different angles. The Open Method of Coordination, a key element of governing ideas since 2000, has been defined as a 'soft' mode of governance of a 'non-legislative nature' (BORRÁS; RADAELLI, 2011, p. 10), which provided a new framework for cooperation between the European Union and Member States that included coordination activities, action programmes, benchmarking and sharing of best practices. Its liturgy pushed national policies to agree on common objectives (NÓVOA; LAWN, 2002) with the intention of reforming national educational systems (BAKER; LE TENDRE, 2005) under the impulse of the globalization of cultural, economic and political structures (KAMENS; MCNEELY, 2009). Overall, the Lisbon Strategy, as it developed, complemented by a set of well-defined benchmarks of 'policy performance' and indicators monitoring the progress towards measurable objectives, is one clear example of 'governing by numbers' - with a clear reference to the abundant use of "rough quantitative data". In line with this definition, the European education policy has been described as a mode of 'governing by statistics' or 'governing through data' (OZGA, 2009), 'governing by standards' (LAWN, 2006; LAWN; GREK, 2012), 'by blueprints' (BORRÁS; RADAELLI, 2011) and 'governance by persuasion' (NOAKSSON; JACOBSSON, 2003), which stresses "multilateral surveillance" through a very thorough examination and long preparation process, and occasions for consultation and dialogue with the stakeholders.

EU governance in education not only involves a mixture of state and non-state agencies, and the coordination of non-governmental and non-legislative policy tools, but is being undertaken by independent agencies and actors not formally involved - in the sense of being funded or coordinated - in EU-sponsored projects. Also, "education" has gradually mutated in policy documents into "learning". Learning operates as a discourse across areas of policy, through its close association with ICT, and it operates as a commodity, marketed

across Europe by private companies and entrepreneurial organizations. It has another aspect, an important one, which it is important to recognize. "Learning" is a persuasive and useful idea to many European actors – experts, professionals, commercial companies and citizens. "Education" is related to nation states, systems, subsidiarity and the past, while learning is a cross border term, with a future orientation, flexible meanings and strong systems of recording and assessment.

The "imagined community" of European education may be discursively bound together by objectives and indicators, but it is shaped by constant interaction between groups of linked professionals, managers and experts. This space is formed between state and EU offices, between agencies and subcontractors, between academics and policy managers, between experts and officials, and between voluntary and public sector workers. It is a growing *culture*, which exists in formal operations, and the interstices between them, in the immaterial world. Networks are constantly mobilized to deliver or effect "learning" in many ways, and use "learning" to find new possibilities. So, in the fabrication of the European policy space, soft governance has been based on a persuasive power, with the construction of non-threatening standards, and it has been a very distinctive aspect of governing in the EU:

The European Space is more than an ill-defined space of regulation or flows; it is a space of attraction and meaning, in which soft power is at work, creating a space in which actors are drawn to work within and produce it. The construction of Europe is taking place through the cultivation of support and the creation of meaning, just as much as by trade, regulation, soft law or cross-border agreement. A key element has been the production of an attractive idea; the ambiguous, modernizing and mobilizing idea of a project, and a concomitant 'space' to be created. (LAWN, 2006, p. 272).

Education actors exist within complex networks, which span intergovernmental, producer, professional, academic and expert forms, representing highly organized industry, voluntary sector groups or loosely-knit but important specialized academic associations. These networks, woven into sets of linked relations, represent a form of European Union governance, crossing state boundaries, old government divisions and traditions of work and administration.

The shift from a fixed idea of Europe, particularly the idea that it was a collaboration between nation states, developed into the idea that the European Union was a stable, bounded governing state in itself. From the mid 1990s, specific cross border mobilizations in practical and policy networks and research projects in education, involved a range of old and new public, semi-public, and private actors, were developed. The effect of multiple actions meant a prefigured or shadow and informal European educational space was in

process of creation. National agencies and associations began to link together in Europe. The governing of a European space of education appeared to be moving beyond tradition and national systems and creating a new body of Europeanized experts. This space is a governing process, attracting, disciplining and controlling the professionals and experts it mobilizes. It supported them with funding and opportunities, and also through the creation of meaning, produced by shared understandings and their common desire for a "European education space". In addition to persuasion and attraction, the EU used a number of new soft governing instruments including regulation – precise, legally binding obligations – and forms of standardisation and networking to build this 'space' and incorporate these new experts and professionals.

2 STANDARDS WITH DATA AND NETWORKS

European governing is particular to the European Union and it has emerged and developed over time, but it can't escape the norms of its time, and indeed may embrace them. So, for example, the way that industry has evolved: "as Supply Chain Management became more and more commonplace, did standards begin to proliferate. Initially, these were standards for products, but as trade has become more and more global in character, process standards as well have begun to appear." (BUSCH, 2007, p. 4).

The development of standards across the different fields of policy, statistical calculation and commerce underpins and extends the creation of policy spaces. Europeanization processes in education have some subtle and yet powerful features created through measurement and standardization. They may have a technical form but they are knowledge based and policy driven and exclude politics. Europe is at the leading edge of new forms of governance in education.

Through the construction of European policy spaces, the EU makes Europe governable. The means and acts of governing in Europe are reflections of the problems of diverse statist jurisdictions, network organization, market solutions and politics. The field of education is one element in this governing problematic and it appears to be represented by soft governance, the use of persuasive power (LAWN, 2006), and an instrumentalization of new forms of non-state power to govern "at a distance" (ROSE; MILLER, 2008, p. 205). As education was originally a sensitive area of policy, where hard regulation would infringe national sovereignty, there was a politics surrounding this policy area. This has been overcome with the use of experts and a precise focus on their creation of data through common tools and categories (OZGA et al., 2011), and their production of standards, through networked processes

and technological innovation. The governing of European education depends on the production of abstract and commensurable units, enabling exchange across borders and places, and producing a newly transparent domain. The production and use of standards creates an apparently “loose” form of governing in which “professional and organizational knowledge-practices are reinvented in increasingly formalized, universalized and standardized ways.” (HIGGINS; LARNER, 2010, p. 1).

The adoption of EU policy goals in lifelong learning, citizenship and the knowledge economy determined the characteristics of the policy space in education with the urgent aim to “become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”. The European ‘education’ or ‘learning’ area has been structured and deepened as a result of the overall policy aim of a knowledge economy, the need to develop governing data as the Open Method of Comparison form of constant evaluation and comparison has been introduced to it. Such ideas play an important role in contemporary transnational governance. In the broadest sense, transnational norms identify what a modern state ‘is’ and thus sanction appropriate modes of internal and external conduct (PORTER; WEBB, 2008). In policy terms, the ideas sanctioned by international organizations help to identify problems and to map out the range of ‘best practice’ solutions. So, “members’ performance is gauged against the best practices and recommendations that emerge from the organization’s meditative activities.” (MAHON; MCBRIDE, 2009, p. 86).

Soft governance continues but it is increasingly strengthened by the use and display of calculating devices and a new governing architecture of public and private actors and sites.

Governing by standardizing appears to be apolitical and relies on experts while offering workable solutions to the problems of governing and being governed in Europe. Standards work to bring into being and shape the social world and its subjects, and make them governable through arrays of interlocking standards, and do this in relation to the field of education/ learning, a field which is often rendered invisible through the dominance of other forms of EU study and subjects, particularly in political science, law and international relations.

In governing the social, standards set performance requirements and allow comparisons to be drawn between areas. Standards are used to govern across a policy space, which is being allowed or encouraged to emerge; so, with the use of indicators, benchmarks and comparison, the European education space can be made transparent and governed. Standards also underpin the collection of data which are needed to monitor progress; they guarantee the trustworthiness of the data collected. At the same time, the benchmarking of progress, the goal to be achieved, represents whole sets of standards in attainment data and their crystallization into one new standard. This standard is a comparative one, produced by a constant process in which relative comparisons or judgements are made. Standards are

involved in what has to be achieved and how progress is to be judged. In governing today, these are continuous acts. Standards are a vital governing tool in the formation of a common governable and operational Europe.

Since the 1990s, the governing of European education has depended on the production of abstract and commensurable units, enabling exchange across borders and places, and producing a newly-transparent domain. The production of standards in the EU has been developed through inclusive, expert and technical processes such as networking, seminars, reviews and expert groups. It has produced an intertwined and captivated Europeanized population of experts, practitioners and professionals, especially within the field of education. Its virtue is that power is not wielded, if anything it aims to attract, and uses 'incentive acts'. The main standardization process – the production of benchmarks and indicator data – follows the EU creating its own centres of calculation and working closely with the OECD, which it supports financially. The production and exchange of standardized data shapes the future by shaping systems, institutions and people. But rapid and extensive data collection in aid of performance is not the only way in which standardization works across education. The Education Space has to materialize and does through the continuous stitching together, through standards, of cross-border platforms.

The modern state, in the acts of governing, relies upon these forms of knowledge. This produces a necessary simplification of the problem, the task at hand or the object to be governed, but this process of simplification turns complexity into a measurable and calculable form. The combination of many such processes produces a governable space: "An overall, aggregate, synoptic view of a selective reality is achieved, making possible a high degree of schematic knowledge, control and manipulation." (SCOTT, 1998, p. 11).

The gradual rise of the rule and framing of education over time by the modern state has enabled it to be tamed, to be reduced, to be rendered transparent, to be turned into aggregated units, and to be tested. The new European Semester policy, post 2008 financial crisis, is an annual cycle of policy coordination, presented as a 'treatment' for the crisis in the economy in Europe and beyond, following global prescriptions in pursuit of growth. Moreover, the need for 'stronger' (economic) governance and 'better' policy coordination *between* the EU member states is highlighted, and the ES is being offered as the solution. In the area of education, it involves an increasing international comparison of educational performance, used to measure the economic performance of nation-states. This function of education as a marker of national competitiveness may well be explained as part of the growth of neoliberal practices that emphasise accountability, managerialism, competition, evaluation and 'governing by numbers' (ROSE, 1991).

3 DATA – THE NEW PRODUCTION OF GOVERNING KNOWLEDGE

Finding ways to organize and arrange common units of measurement has continued since the early 20thC, particularly in the United States, to create a calculable sphere of education; for example, the most effective desk design, an optimum light for learning, and efficient forms of examination. In the US, in the first two decades of the 20thC, there was a large rise in the number of new experts in the measuring and surveying of schooling, and in turn, in the training of education managers in their techniques. Measuring schooling to increase its efficiency and to govern it effectively constituted a powerful movement:

so completely has the idea of measurement permeated every aspect of educational theory and measurement...[broadly] the movement represents virtually a new philosophy of education of education [and in a narrower sense] a new technique, a new set of devices for use in the study of education. (SCOTT, 1998, p. 117).

Measuring is not an objective act, although it involves objective techniques and tools, as it changes the object or process studied. It is a consequence of the act of measuring that the governing of the object or process increases. This insight was generated among car workers in Detroit following the techniques of Taylorism in measuring their work and then recalculating its speed.

The flow of performance data needs expertise and technical systems, working to collect, transmit and analyse patterns of performance. A 'benchmark' is a contemporary term for 'standard' and 'benchmarking' is a process of making relative comparisons. Benchmarking performance allows systems to be steered in new ways; performance standards are embedded in systems; they are constantly revised; they allow interoperability; and they rely on shifting indicators.

Continuous, market-driven innovation is the key to competitiveness, and thus to economic growth, in the knowledge economy. This requires not only a strong science and technology base, but, just as importantly, the capacity to link fundamental and applied research, to convert the results of that research to new products, services processes or materials and to bring these innovations quickly to market. (WORLD BANK, 2002, p. 21).

A standard represents a model specification, a technical solution, with which a market can trade efficiently and effectively. It codifies best practice and is usually state of the art. In essence, standards relate to products, services or systems, and the more

they are used, the greater convergence and interoperability is produced. The development and enforcement of standards and the improvement of measurement techniques has been accelerated by the rise of the audit State.

Specifically, regulation shifted once again, from government scientists and direct inspection to private scientists and indirect audits. The shift from a regulatory to an audit State is hardly complete and it is certainly not inevitable (BUSCH, 2007, p. 1).

The rise of the production and evaluation of data (DESROSIERES, 1998; PORTER 1996; SCOTT 1998) is linked to audit (POWER, 1998) which can be understood as a policy technology (LASCUMBES; LEGALÈS, 2007) promoting a new calculative rationality (BAUMAN, 1992) of modern governance, accompanied by the emergence of public and private partnerships, delivering data systems and services (KOOIMAN, 1993; BALL, 1998, 2009). This is also a description of the way that the European Union has developed in the last decades. Data has emerged as a significant cloaking of political actions and consequences in our period of liberalization, hiding its real consequences.

The engineering of economic liberalization and the increase in the private/ public partnerships in the governing of national systems across Europe tended to be obscured initially in the field of education by the continuation of national traditions, pathways and languages. The new languages of technology, data and space have replaced descriptions of national systems and appear as key elements of international governance in education. Instead of discussions about local democracy, administrative traditions or state 'worker' organisations, the politics of governing education has been replaced by reference to comparative quantified information, data systems and a big data discourse.

The new landscape of education is an imagined space, constituted by shifting categories of data collection or analysis, and understood only by data experts, a new class, who see order and relations where most see none. In dealing with governing by data, with its enormous normative power, we can call upon a range of useful theorising which explain the shaping and political effects of technologies, "[...] their attributes as experts and consultants tend to obscure the ideological and political dimension of their activities of knowledge production for policy." (SHIROMA, 2014, p. 101).

The politics of education is now embedded in the objects, categories, experts and organisations which attempt to govern education. They have created a parallel landscape of education which is a fluid and shifting space, and which is gradually creating a new order, disruptive of the older systems of education. New categories and procedures are not just imposed on schools, they are re-ordering and re-purposing schools themselves.

But there are also the displaced in this landscape – those who work through personal relations, who offer professional experience, who confuse buildings with stability of purpose, who see only the material landscape, and whose knowledge is local and intimate.

4 THE EUROPEAN OUTLIER

The commodification of knowledge, its recreation as data and its woven form as standards are binding together into a unitary policy space. The European Union is a site for the creation of policy which in turn means that its Council of Education Ministers both promote and reject, and may ignore, practices that are discussed there, particularly their own national practices and inclinations. Over time, orthodoxies are generated, and these are aligned with OECD programmes, which may have been funded by the EU anyway. One of the most extreme of the data and standards regimes within the EU is that of England and Wales, within the UK, and a significant influence in EU education. Over the last decade, powerful technologies and software have enabled a new way of governing education through performance data. This has allowed the landscape of education to be reshaped. Its surface features continue but underneath new connections are made and older relations severed. Data flows travel between schools and central government through private company conduits. A 'what works' policy has borrowed ideas and technologies from the private sector. Beginning in education, and later across all government departments, the key idea was the 'delivery chain'. This was expressed as connecting the child to the government through a series of upward links through the teacher, head teacher etc. This is an engineering model, where data is produced, moved along a value chain and the analysis is then used to intervene at school level: the process is continuous. The goal is regular, reliable real-time data. This is not a description of state statistics, the historical inventory of a system, but a rapid action tool for intervention and predicting future performance. Officials could connect, with a single line on a graph, the point indicating current performance to the point where the target suggested it should be in three, four or five years' time.

Although the EU is not at this stage and may never be, it is a direction that arguments for a cohesive Europe would recognise. In this version, the rise of data has created a system transparency never achieved before, even though it has heavily distorted education itself. The political technologies which enabled data collection, transmission and analysis, produced a new class of experts and a wider class of devotees, and a group of powerful software and processing companies, had achieved European status.

New policy technologies, managed by private companies and steered by government agents, have broken down the old systems of education. The city, the democratic authority with its longstanding control over its own schools, has become merely a way station in the transmission of data from local to central. From a big city with its own schools and traditions, it became just a conduit – for the Ministry or its agencies or contractors, cleaning the data it sends to them and receiving data in return. It had become an agency or contractor or stage in the delivery process, making sure that the chain worked, and at the same time, the city had lost its decision making over the local aims and performance in their own city. Now it tries to see itself a sort of broker in a set of uncertain relations. Generally, with a lot of effort, it can resolve most problems within its boundaries; this is done through personal relationships, helpful support, clear documentation, tailored city systems etc. In reality, there is no direct relation with a central government, but a series of contracted, mediating arrangements with private data companies. The integrity of the education service, and its teachers, is damaged. It may appear efficient but it is also fragmented and unstable, and teachers, though clearly viewable, are locked in. Numbers and their visions float free of material contexts, yet there are really significant material and political effects. Hidden effects include the mimicking of the practice of service industries, their customer relations and production processes and the opportunity of profit.

5 MEANING

This Europeanization of education “space” can be examined through a linking of social structures, networks and actors at the local, national and European levels and in turn, may reveal the formation of new European identities within emergent policy networks. The range of actors, their spaces of work and deliberation, their forms of engagement and their networks are essential building blocks for the new European Union. They are either experts in data processes and analysis or in standardization procedures and agendas. They are attracted to this European space for several reasons – opportunities, funding, collegiality – and much of their work is invisible or remote. They are essential workers in trying to produce a new area of meaning, a regional imaginary.

They appear to be self-governing networks of actors mobilizing capacities for action, appearing autonomous yet often relying, at some level, on governmental power. To create and manage policy, a range of partners, at different levels of government, has to be negotiated with; they exist within complex networks, which span intergovernmental, producer, professional and expert forms. The European union ‘provides sub national actors with additional resources and a philosophy of governance based on cooperative governing

which changes their ideas about how efficient governance can be achieved (KOHLER-KOCH; EISING, 1995, p. 6).

In a critical essay on globalization, Zaki Laidi stated that "Globalization has thrown the state into confusion; the state has shown itself incapable of telling us if globalization constitutes something good, bad, dangerous or advantageous, even though the demand for meaning is very strong." (LAIDI, 1998, p. 6).

In essence, he argues that the state has lost power and cannot manage or reduce uncertainties, and offers only markets. In this situation, collective projects are lost and meaning is lost. Laidi (1998, p. 7) argues that globalization has created a crisis for the state and a crisis of meaning.

The emphasis of the European Union has been to try to manage its weakness by encouraging and persuading professionals into its work. Soft governance is an attractive method of governing. It offers a vision of Europe, which in education, is built upon standards and data, as the building of Europe. However, it is not clear that pragmatism and empiricism can deliver and realise tangible and real meanings, but only the reverse, the production of doubt and a sense that the centres of power are directionless. Laidi (1998) suggest that the endless circulation of plans and partnerships are insufficient and will not create a new kind of public space for education in the EU. Instead, networks may function to extend the shift to a new transnational governance, partnered with commerce, in which dominant globalizing commercial pressures provide goods, and the public service provides increasing sets of quantitative data about its production and targets.

"Political actions no longer find their legitimacy in a vision of the future, but have been reduced to managing the ordinary present." (LAIDI, 1998, p. 7).

This an interesting final comment on the European governing of education. Value has been created even though it reflects a limited notion of education. Significant numbers of professionals have been willingly producing new political technologies, including data systems and standards, in the service of the Union and to be fair, in globalized systems. The politics of education has to be reconstituted as an international and transnational study of the complex material production of new systems of education, and incorporate political technology, data production, experts and labour processes, and of the provisional creation of meaning under globalisation by citizens who are the only ones trying to produce it.

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