The governance of education in many countries and regions of the world is currently in transition, challenging histories, remaking subjectivities and shaping possible futures. This book provides an up to date analysis and discussion of the cutting edge theme of educational governance from an international comparative perspective. The volume explores the landscape of ‘educational governance’ in its broadest sense; considering new forms of steering, leadership and management, assessment and evaluation, teaching and learning, knowledge creation and the realities and possibilities for different forms of political engagement. The new spatial dynamics of education are explored in institutional settings such as schools and universities and via professional groupings such as teachers, administrators and leaders.

The chapters in this book are based on the best peer reviewed papers and keynote speeches, which were delivered at the XXVI Conference of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE) in June 2014 in Freiburg, Germany. Comparative Education is uniquely situated to explore the emerging dynamics of educational governance within changing and newly emerging educational spaces because it provides the opportunity to learn more about different local, national or regional educational processes and trajectories and to share knowledge about the logics, ideologies and impacts of different techniques and regimes of governance across Europe and beyond.

Hans-Georg Kotthoff is Professor of Comparative Education and School Pedagogy at the University of Education Freiburg, Germany and President of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE) since 2012.

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Governing Educational Spaces
The Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE) is an international non-profit making association of scientific and educational character. CESE was founded in 1961 in London and is a founding society of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES).

CESE has traditionally promoted a space for dialogue amongst scholars, specialists and young researchers from the field of education and other disciplines. More specifically, its purpose is to encourage and promote comparative and international studies in education by:

- promoting and improving the teaching of comparative education in institutions of higher learning;
- stimulating research;
- facilitating the publication and distribution of comparative studies in education;
- interesting professors and teachers of other disciplines in the comparative and international dimension of their work;
- co-operating with those who in other disciplines attempt to interpret educational developments in a broad context;
- organising conferences and meetings;
- collaborating with other Comparative Education Societies across the world in order to further international action in this field.

Every two years CESE organises an international conference of high scholarly standards which attracts academics, scholars, practitioners and students from all parts of Europe and around the world. Throughout its history, CESE has organised twenty-four such conferences, a special conference for the 25th anniversary of the Society, a symposium, and two ‘CESE In-Betweens’. In-Betweens are international symposia organised between the biennial conferences. A web site of CESE is maintained at http://www.cese-europe.org/

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Governing Educational Spaces
Knowledge, Teaching, and Learning in Transition

Edited by

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and

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PREFACE

This present volume includes a selection of paper contributions, which were given during the 26th Conference of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). The Conference was held at the Freiburg University of Education, Germany (June 10-13, 2014), and its theme “Governing Educational Spaces: Knowledge, Teaching, and Learning in Transition” also gave this book its title.

The conference theme attracted more than 240 participants from 42 countries from all parts of the world. The combination of the cutting-edge theme of ‘educational governance’ with ‘educational spaces’, one of the classical ‘unit ideas’ in the field of comparative education proved to be highly attractive for many scholars in the field of comparative education and other related field such as sociology of education, policy studies, political sciences etc. The overwhelming response to our call for papers meant that the Local Conference Organising Committee was not able to include all applications for paper presentations. From the final selection of 200 presented papers, which were delivered in 58 working sessions in Freiburg, the CESE Executive Committee and the editors of this volume chose eight papers and three keynote lectures for this volume.

The realisation and the success of this conference would not have been possible without the strong, committed and continuous support of a whole range of colleagues and institutions, to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude here.

First of all, I would like to thank Eleftherios Klerides, who not only worked closely with the CESE Executive Committee on the development of the conference theme and coordinated one of the Working Groups (WG), but was also instrumental for the development of the conference website and deeply involved in the preparation of the three CESE Freiburg conference publications.

Secondly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the members of the CESE Executive Committee, who have been instrumental in the planning and organising of the Freiburg CESE conference. As always, the theme(s) of the conference and the working groups were jointly developed by the members of the Executive Committee, who also coordinated and led the Working Groups: Stephen Carney, Vlatka Domovic, Terri Kim, Anselmo Paolone, and Miguel Pereyra. In addition, I would like to thank Robert Cowen, Past President of CESE, who was very supportive throughout the planning process and who thankfully accepted our invitation, without hesitation, to coordinate one the WGs.

For the first time the CESE WG Chairs were supported by ‘Local Chairs’, who helped co-ordinate the WGs and (co-)chaired numerous WG sessions during the conference. Therefore, a special word of thanks goes to those colleagues, who supported this conference through this important voluntary work: Karin Amos, Sabine Hornberg, Olivier Mentz, Jutta Nikel, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Christine Riegel and Imke von Bargen.
PREFACE

In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues at the Department of Education at the University of Education Freiburg and in particular Natascha Hofmann, who made an important contribution to the realisation of the conference. In this context I would also like to mention our students in Freiburg, in particular Pascal Neumann, who made this conference their own and thus contributed significantly to the conference’s success.

On a personal level I would like to thank my wife Helen Kotthoff, without whose never-ending support and enthusiasm the conference would not have been possible.

Considerable financial support to the 26th CESE Conference was granted by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG), by the Rector of the University Freiburg, the Faculty of Education as well as the City of Freiburg.

One of the most important results of successful scientific conferences are publications, which are (hopefully) well received in the scientific community. Therefore I would like to express my gratitude to Teresa Woods-Czich and Helen Kotthoff, who have been responsible for the proofreading of the draft manuscripts for this publication.

Finally, however, I would like to thank all those colleagues, who contributed to the CESE conference in Freiburg and whose contributions made this volume possible.

Freiburg, August 2015

Hans-Georg Kotthoff
President of CESE and Chair of the Freiburg Local Organising Committee
RESEARCHING GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION: SYNERGIES AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDAS

The governance of education in many countries and regions of the world is currently in transition, challenging histories, remaking subjectivities and shaping possible political futures. The role of transnational actors and commercial interests in reform movements is acknowledged by policy makers and scholars alike. Indeed, the pervasive nature of economic discourses that prioritize certain forms of knowledge, teaching and learning, is changing the very nature of education itself and its potential as a vehicle for societal and personal transformation. However, national and regional economic forces do not act in isolation and must be examined in the broader context of the changing contours of the global cultural economy. Rapid and uneven processes of modernization across Europe and in many other places, for example, in North America, East Asia, North Africa and Latin America, interact increasingly with deterritorialised policy agendas, at a time when local, national and regional identity projects are in flux. These dynamics are at the centre of emerging ‘spaces’ in education (e.g. ‘European educational spaces’) in which governance can be viewed as a key field of action in which long-running political efforts to shape and order social life are consolidated, contested and remade. In the emerging educational space, governance is not simply one facet of education but, rather, the new context in which education might be envisaged and realised.

The main aim of this publication is to make visible and to generate synergies between different fields of study and research communities engaged in the analysis of governance in education in order to explore the changing forms and modalities of governance of education in the broadest way possible and thus to deepen and to enrich our understanding of this global phenomenon. This cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural and transnational comparative approach to the study of governance in education, which has been the guiding principle in the preparation of this volume, is reflected in the following decisions.

Firstly, and as indicated by the title of this volume, the publication deliberately chooses to link two intensely debated concepts, which originate from two different fields of study. On the one hand, the concept of ‘Educational Governance’ has recently gained much attention and is currently not only intensely debated in education, but also in related disciplines and fields such as sociology of education, political sciences and policy studies. On the other hand the concept of ‘Educational Spaces’ belongs to the well-established ‘unit ideas’ of comparative education. However, just like other well-established concepts in comparative education, for example ‘educational systems’, the ‘nation-state’ and ‘educational transfer’, the notion of ‘space’ has recently experienced a shift in meaning. Local, regional,
national and supra-national spaces are changing and new spaces are emerging – for example the ‘European Educational Space’ or virtual space.

Secondly, the attempt to relate the fields of comparative education and educational governance to each other in this volume, and thus to create synergies between the two fields, is based on the assumption that this process will be mutually beneficial for both fields. Although comparative education and educational governance research do not only share similar research interests (e.g. analyses of international educational policies), but also share, as we hope to make evident in this introduction and volume, similar epistemological assumptions, the findings of these two fields have not yet systematically been brought together. This is even more surprising given the fact that representatives from both fields of study have repeatedly stressed the overlapping research interests of these two fields for many years. For example, for the field of comparative education, Novoa and Yarif-Marshalt warned more than 10 years ago, that comparative education studies are in danger of being abused as a “mode of governance” (Novoa & Yarif-Marshal, 2003). More recently, a similar observation was made by Lawn and Ozga (2012), who suggested, that although the generation of student performance data and their use by educational policy-makers is a significant process in itself, this process unfolds its decisive effects only when the student performance data is compared to other sets of student performance data. This continuous comparison, provided for example by the international large scale assessment studies of the OECD, has been identified by Martens (2007) as the ‘Comparative Turn’ in OECD education policy.

Thirdly, by selecting very diverse and globally distributed scholars in this volume, who bring a wealth of different backgrounds, cultural perspectives and experiences to the theme of educational governance, the chosen contributions allow us to see how similar governance models, modalities and instruments are functioning in different settings. We believe that the field of comparative education is uniquely situated to explore the emerging dynamics of educational governance within changing and newly emerging educational spaces. International and comparative studies on educational governance provide the opportunity to learn more about different local, national or regional educational processes and trajectories, considering them comparatively. In addition, comparative studies allow us to share knowledge about the logics, ideologies and impacts of different techniques and regimes of governance across Europe and beyond, and, finally, to consider the extent to which these phenomena can be conceptualised as part of distinctive national or regional responses to the challenge of global educational governance. Thus, it is hoped that the comparative analyses of varying forms and modalities of educational governance, which have been included in this volume, will lead to new insights or – at least – confirm or challenge traditional assumptions in this field of study.

Fourthly, by selecting contributions from different research communities, often separated by language barriers and epistemological traditions, this publication aims to intensify the mutual perception, communication and cooperation between scholars and researchers from different national and cultural backgrounds. The
intensified mutual perception seems to be particularly urgent and potentially beneficial in the field of educational governance, a field which seems to be characterised by national or regional research communities, apparently working rather independently of each other. This observation can be substantiated with reference to the German-speaking research community on educational governance in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. Although educational governance research in the German speaking countries in Europe is currently very high on the research agenda, it does not have a very high profile in the Anglo-Saxon research community. Similarly, theoretical and empirical results from Anglo-Saxon research on governance in education are not systematically received and utilised in the German-speaking research community. This lack of mutual perception is rather unfortunate, because the two communities could profit from each other, as their main theoretical assumptions, concepts and empirical research results are in many respects different, however also, as the following three observations suggest, complimentary.

International research in educational governance deals primarily with the relationship between the public and the private sphere as well as the relationship between the national and the transnational level (Dale & Robertson, 2009). In contrast to this, in German-speaking areas the focus of educational governance research could be said to be more exclusively directed towards instruments and mechanisms of educational governance and their political use or even utility (Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2015), thus complementing the macro-level analyses of the international research community.

Similarly, with regard to their theoretical and methodological approach to educational governance, the two research communities complement each other. While the German-speaking research community takes its theoretical points of departure and concepts primarily from the legal and administrative fields as well as political and social sciences, international research on educational governance, on the other hand, seems to be much more influenced by perspectives from the sociology of education and power.

Finally, in both the Anglo-Saxon and the German-speaking research communities, the term ‘governance’ is understood as a reaction to the same phenomena: that is, the failure of political planning in the 1960s and 1970s and the resulting new positioning and balancing between the state, society and the market. However, in international research communities, new forms and modes of educational governance are seen in a closer relationship with developments towards the “Europeanisation of education” (e.g., Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Dale & Robertson, 2009) and the “governance of the European education space” (Grek, 2009, p. 23). This very productive additional dimension has unfortunately not a very high salience in the German-speaking research community.

The main aim of this volume, to identify and create synergies between different fields of study and research communities in order to explore the changing governance of education in the broadest way possible, underpins the selection of papers and the structure of this book, which falls into five sections. While the first section deals explicitly with the role of data, evidence, and accountability in the
governance of education and thus focuses on ‘new’ forms and modalities of
governance, the second section explores these ‘new’ forms of governance in
different institutional settings (i.e. schools, school administration and school
inspection). The third and fourth section change the focus of analysis by moving
the roles of different professional groupings and actors involved in the governance
of education into centre stage. More specifically, the third section analyses the role
of teachers, teacher professional development and teacher education, while the
fourth section widens the perspective beyond the borders of national education
systems by analysing the role of European and global actors such as the EU and the
OECD Directorate of Education in the governance of education. The final section
is dedicated to the analysis of the impact, which these new regimes and modalities
of governance have on research in higher education and the creation of knowledge.

The first section aims to frame, conceptualise and systematise new forms and
modalities of governance empirically and theoretically. In the first chapter of this
section Jenny Ozga focuses on the relationship between knowledge and
governing, drawing on recent research on data use and on inspection regimes in
Europe. Her research suggests that as governing has become more networked, less
bureaucratic, more flexible and interdependent, so too has knowledge changed to
more problem-based forms, involving new actors and including developments in
data use and in school inspection processes in which comparison is a fundamental
principle. Ozga argues that these changes have the effect of reconstituting
knowledge as a policy-forming, rather than a policy-informing activity, and that
increased reliance on new forms of data tends to displace expertise (as exemplified
in the process of inspection in England). Thus data play a key role in governing
education through their contribution to the production of ‘governing knowledge’,
and as a consequence the mediating role of professional inspectors is reduced or
replaced.

In the second chapter Christian Maroy is proposing a typology of new forms of
accountability, which have emerged over the last twenty years in the field of
education. The typology is based on four dimensions, two of which bear on the
properties of policy tools deployed to establish policies (the alignment of
instruments and stakes), and two others on the characteristics of regulation theories
drawn upon and implicit in the deployment of these instruments (the actor’s
conception and the conception of the process of regulation). Four types of logic
with a varying mix of “rendering of accounts” and “actors assumption of
responsibility” are employed: regulation through ‘hard’ accountability, regulation
through neo-bureaucratic accountability, regulation through reflective
responsibilisation and accountability, and ‘soft’ accountability. These ideal-types
are reflected in the policies of four European and North American educational
systems: Texas, Québec, Scotland and French-speaking Belgium. In his conclusion
Maroy discusses the effects, stakes, limits and pitfalls of these accountability
policies not only from a functional and instrumental, but also from a critical and
political perspective.

The second section focuses on the governance of education in different
institutional settings, which are, however, all related to the governance of
schooling and schools. In the first chapter of this section, titled ‘Locating
governmentality in the spread of educational leadership’, Cathryn Magno
investigates the role of educational leadership in the governance of schooling and
schools. According to Magno, educational leadership programs, and policies to
support them, have emerged since the turn of the 21st century in many countries
where they had never existed before. The purpose of this paper is to question why
there is new interest in how schools are governed and how that interest is taking
shape across five seemingly disparate country contexts (United States, Switzerland,
Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Pakistan). The paper considers the educational leader as
a particular subject of ‘governmentality’ in the current era of global (neoliberal)
accountability. Research questions investigate how and why ministry
policymakers, school principals, universities, international aid agencies, and non-
governmental organizations decide to invest in setting criteria (normative
frameworks) for school leadership and establish training for school leaders. The
study also investigates leadership practice in schools, in order to see how policy
translates into implementation ‘on the ground’.

The role of educational leaders in the governance of schooling and schools is
taken up by Judith Hangartner and Carla Jana Svaton, who research a recent
governance reform of public schooling in the canton of Bern, Switzerland. The
reform rearranges governance relations on the local level and introduces new
procedures of supervision that are informed by an evaluation-based model of
steering. In an ethnographic study, based on participant observation in four case
studies, the two authors examine local governance practices under new policy
conditions and analyse in particular the new supervision practices of cantonal/state
inspectors. The ethnographic enquiry of the interactions between the cantonal/state
inspectors with headteachers and local school boards’ representatives within the
new controlling procedures shows how the controlling event is performed in a
familiar atmosphere. The practices of control are analysed as a pastoral mode of
supervision, in which headteachers are obliged to confess their failings while the
inspectors take care of their salvation. Thus, the example of the canton of Bern
shows that the evaluation-based governance reform in Switzerland does not simply
replace traditional modes of supervision by new managerial rationalities, but is
rather subjected to a locally-rooted pastoral governmentality.

The fact that the last chapter in this section also deals with the role of school
inspections and inspectors in the governance of schooling and schools reflects the
importance that this instrument of governance has recently gained in the German-
speaking education systems. In their study on the purpose of school inspections
in the German education system Fabian Dietrich, Martin Heinrich and Malke
Lambrecht analyse the function of school inspections. Within the framework of
the official discourse about the so-called ‘New Steering’ or ‘New Governance’,
school inspections are considered as contributing to quality assurance, quality
development and quality improvement in schools in terms of an evidence-based
policy. However, based on the findings of their interview study with a Ministry
official, the authors argue that within the cyclical model of evaluation-based
governance, the control function of school inspections remains latently present,
namely in its standardising and normative form. This normative function of school inspections is achieved through the establishment of a so-called quality framework, which serve as normative criteria for good teaching and good schools and which school actors are advised to adopt as criteria for the judgement of their own practice through so-called self-evaluations.

The third section shifts the focus from the governance of institutional settings to the role of different actors involved in the governance of education. In the first chapter of this section Stavroula Kontovourki, Eleni Theodorou and Stavroula Philippou explore some of the techniques how teachers were constructed as professionals in official discourse that framed the educational reform and curriculum change in the Republic of Cyprus between 2004-2013. As these techniques emerged primarily in the official discourse regarding teachers’ professional development (PD), rendering PD a key technology of governing, the authors argue that ‘governmentalisation of PD’ occurred. Drawing on the Foucauldian notions of governmentality, the authors offer a genealogical analysis of teachers’ subjectivation as ‘autonomous professional pedagogues’ to argue that, as official rhetoric was gradually materialised to practice, teachers were re-constituted as docile, self-surveilled, and self-governed subjects. Looking across official documents and regimes of practice, including teachers’ PD, the authors thus illustrate how teacher bodies and the teaching body were governed.

In her chapter on ‘Governing teacher education through digital media’ Inés Dussel presents the findings of a recent study that deals with the introduction of ICT in teacher education in four Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), and which intends to provide more solid arguments on the role of global forces in the reshaping of teacher education. The research project was set to map policy strategies, pedagogical discourses, and relevant actors in ICT policies and practices in teacher education in each country, taking into consideration the local, national, and regional scales as important mediators in policy implementation and technological change. The results of this research contradict the claims of a digital global movement which sweeps away traditions, and argue for a more cautious approach to what is ‘new’ in the new social geography of teacher education. National educational technology policies, prevailing pedagogical discourses, and institutional and political arrangements, including the deeper level of the institution of schooling, mediate the policy strategies and the uses of digital media in institutions of teacher education.

The fourth section widens the analytical perspective beyond national systems of education by analysing European and global actors and networks of educational governance. In the first chapter of this section Urška Štremfel analyses the influence of European educational governance on the development of the Slovenian educational space. The transformation of the Slovenian education system provides an interesting case because it can help to further our understanding of how Western (neoliberal) policies and practices are received at the national level and how these influence the transformation and development of post-socialist education systems. The results of this qualitative study, which is primarily based on document analyses, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Ministry
officials in Slovenia and representatives from the Directorate General for Education and Culture in Brussels, show that in the ten years since Slovenia joined the EU, Slovenian educational space has been shaped by OMC-driven external monitoring and cross-border comparative technologies. The case study on Slovenia therefore provides important insights into the effectiveness of EU educational governance and its policy-making tools, which seem to have a strong impact on the development of the national educational spaces in the new EU member states.

In the second chapter of this section Simone Bloem analyses the transformation of the OECD Directorate for Education into an important and independent global knowledge producer through PISA. According to Bloem’s analysis this transformation is mostly caused by the shift of data analysis from external consultants to analysts within the OECD Directorate for Education. The largely descriptive presentation of PISA results in the first cycles has been supplemented by new forms of data analysis since PISA 2009, which can be more easily exploited politically. The study, which draws on knowledge and experiences which the researcher has gained through ‘observing participation’ in the OECD Directorate for Education and expert interviews with OECD staff members, shows that the performance of data analysis at the OECD and the stronger link of PISA to policy advice is a strategy of the OECD Directorate for Education to increase the political relevance of the study. In this way, the OECD Directorate for Education occupies an increasingly important place within the ‘epistemic community’ around PISA.

The fifth and final section of this volume is dedicated to the theme of governing research and knowledge and concludes with theoretical reflections on the question, how the governance of knowledge through language affects the field of comparative education. In the first chapter of this final section Carlo Cappa analyses the transformations of doctoral studies in Italy during the last thirty years, in the framework of the European educational policy and with reference to trends which can also be detected in other European countries. The Italian university, which is still today the most important place for scholarly research in Italy, is facing a multitude of different or even contradictory demands: on the one hand, the university is receiving social as well as economical requests which have never been so challenging; on the other hand, the vision of scholarly research more closely linked to the traditional Italian university still persists. In his analysis of these tensions and contradictions the author takes three different dimensions into account: the historical dimension, in particular considering the image of scholarly research, which was at the heart of doctoral studies until the last decade; the institutional dimension, examining the different laws that have shaped this cycle of higher education; and the theoretical dimension, regarding the changing idea of knowledge and the profile of research carried out at university. The result of his analysis shows that the present, very pronounced governance of research and doctoral studies is not merely aiming towards the rationalisation and quality promotion of the university system. Instead, as Cappa concludes, through the ever-increasing standardisation and the permanent rise of laws and regulations, the
university is being forced to accept a radical mutation of its original function, which puts its traditional vision clearly at risk.

In the final chapter of this volume, Donatella Palomba examines some important issues related to the use of English as lingua franca in the international educational discourse, the exertion of power that this implies, the influence on the conceptualisation of educational issues, and, finally, how the governance of knowledge through language affects the field of comparative education and its developments. While the risks of the predominance of one language of communication (English, in the present historical moment) have been widely investigated, Palomba’s study stresses specifically the impact on the nature of the knowledge thus produced, and the influence on the structure itself of the thought, causing a ‘loss’ of thinking along different lines. The governance of knowledge through language is illustrated with reference to two very different cases, one drawn from recent Italian cultural history, the other from the history of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE) itself as an academic society. Palomba concludes, not by advocating a return to Babel, but by referring to Umberto Eco’s concept of negotiation and Barbara Cassin’s concept of comparatif dédié, which, as Palomba shows in her conclusion, provide promising food for thought for educational comparison.

The wide spectrum of research studies presented in this volume by no means claims that it covers the diverse landscape of ‘global educational governance’ to its full extent. On the contrary, there are clearly important gaps in our selection of papers, which remain firmly on the future research agenda of studies in governance and which shall be identified here to serve as ‘markers for orientation’ for further research in this area.

The present volume is clearly short of historical studies on the development of different patterns, forms and modalities of educational governance in the past and over time. Those historical studies are highly relevant because they could, as we have recently argued, “challenge us to consider that some of today’s globalizing forms of governing education may not be as new as we think” (Klerides & Kotthoff, 2015, p. 192). The recently published collection of articles on the theme of “Governing educational spaces: historical perspectives”, which was also based on papers delivered at the CESE conference in Freiburg, points to the fact that there is “a real life possibility […] that some methods and techniques of transnational or even global governance may have emerged at a particular historical moment in a specific space or place and in the course of time, may have changed their forms and meanings […]” (Klerides & Kotthoff, 2015, pp. 194-195). This ‘real life possibility’ suggests a highly relevant research agenda, especially for scholars in the field of comparative education, which consists of at least of two items: “first, to investigate globalizing forms of governing education in different historical moments, and second, to explore whether newly-emerged governing technologies in the globalisation moment co-exist with earlier ones, how they are combined, whether they create hybrid governing forms, and what are the effects of hybridization” (Klerides & Kotthoff, 2015, p. 193).
Although this volume and an accompanying special issue on the theme of “Education Systems and New Governance” [editors’ translation], which is also based on papers presented at the CESE conference in Freiburg (Kotthoff & Rakhdochkine, 2015), present a multitude of empirical studies, which analyse and compare the effects of evidence-based governance strategies and regimes on different levels and actors of various education systems, there is however still a need for further empirical studies. This need arises because one group of actors in particular remains seriously under-researched and these are the teachers. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that research studies on the important question of how the new regimes and modalities of governance in education affect teacher professionalism and the organisation of the teaching-learning process itself are not to be found in this volume. This is a serious gap because, as we know from educational governance literature, the ‘re-contextualisation’ (Fend 2008) of school reforms happens on all levels of the education system and the teacher is probably one of the most important actors in this context. However, interestingly, most studies – including the studies in this volume – which intend to look at the effects of ‘new’ governance on teachers, stop their analysis at the level of the headteacher, whose presence in the classroom and in the organisation of the teaching-learning process is obviously restricted. Comparative studies on teachers (not headteachers or inspectors) on how they deal with changing governance regimes and modalities, could probably tell us a great deal about how different forms and instruments of governance are re-contextualised, resisted, changed and ‘hybridised’ in different contexts.

Further empirical studies are also necessary because most current studies focus on individual governance instruments (e.g. school inspections or state-wide exit exams) without considering their particular function within their broader system of governance and without analysing empirically the coordination of different actors and levels in that given education system. This leads, according to Altrichter and Maag Merki, to a “very fragmented image and understanding of the effects of the analysed governance instruments and possible governance configurations and raises the problem of generalisability of singularly identified findings” [editors’ translation] (Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2010, p. 404). Following Altrichter and Maag Merki’s assessment of available governance studies, the generalisability of the current research findings is also quite restricted, because most studies are cross-sectional and rely primarily on the self-assessment of the researched actors. While it is certainly possible to capture the subjective attitudes of individual groups of actors towards ‘new’ governance modalities and instruments at a given point with the help of semi-structured interviews or questionnaires, the identification of medium and long-term processes and effects necessarily requires longitudinal studies, which observe the effects of ‘new’ governance mechanisms and instruments over a longer period of time (Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2010, p. 406).

A third gap can be identified with regard to theoretical and conceptual studies, which try to systematically relate the fields of comparative education and educational governance research to each other. As we already pointed out in this introduction, the findings of comparative education and educational governance
research have not yet been systematically brought together, although they share similar research interests as well as epistemological assumptions. These shared assumptions can be exemplified with reference to the importance of ‘context’. The highly developed sensitivity for the importance of ‘context’ for educational reforms does not only belong to the main epistemological assumptions of comparative education, but it is also an important point of departure for educational governance research. Thus, educational governance research is particularly interested in the question, how different mutually interdependent actors ‘re-contextualise’ educational reforms in a multi-level education system and how these processes of ‘re-contextualisation’ (Fend, 2008) lead to intended and unintended effects of governance reforms.

Finally, according to Parreira do Amaral (2015), a “cross-fertilization” of the two fields of study advocated in this volume, could be beneficial for both fields because “Educational Governance provides a suitable analytical framework and differentiated conceptual instruments, which, through the integration of the two research fields, could promote the contemporary research of international education policy” [editors’ translation] (p. 378). This has, for example, been illustrated by recent studies which have analysed the role of international organisations in ‘evidence based governance regimes’ (e.g. Grek, 2010, or Bloem in this volume). In addition to these studies, comparative studies on the impact of governance instruments, such as school inspections across six European countries (e.g. Ehren, Altrichter, McNamara, & O’Hara, 2013), show how productive the cooperation of these two fields can be. It is therefore hoped that further research studies of this kind will follow and that this volume will contribute to an intensified ‘mutual perception’ and thus cooperation of both fields of study.

REFERENCES


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Section I

Governing Education: The Role of Data, Evidence, and Accountability
JENNY OZGA

1. WORKING KNOWLEDGE

Data, Expertise and Inspection in the Governing of Education

INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws on research with a number of colleagues during the last decade that has focused on specific issues (for example the rise of data in education, or the shifting relationship between knowledge and policy) that together offer a way of understanding the changing governing of education in the contemporary context. This long-standing pre-occupation with how education is governed – and how it is used to govern – provides an overarching direction for what is, in effect, a research ‘project’ in the wider sense of the term, that has attempted, over the years, to achieve the following interconnected objectives:

(i) To investigate education/schooling/learning as a key policy field in Europe, and a site of policy activity of the European Commission. Included in this aim is the attempt to make the education policy field visible to political science as, for the most part, political scientists – including those studying Europeanisation – tend to overlook education, while focusing on traditionally more important policy fields such as trade and defence. The aim of including education in the field of Europeanisation is developed through the use of selected concepts from political science and policy sociology;

(ii) To identify the processes through which the European Education Policy Space (EEPS) is ‘made’ – with particular attention to the construction of indicators and benchmarks, to practices of standardisation, and the growth of data in making and shaping this policy space;

(iii) Finally, and more recently, to explore and analyse the work of policy actors, mediating and brokering the processes outlined above, and especially those doing ‘political work’; i.e. work that: ‘both discursively and interactively seeks to change or reproduce institutions by mobilising values’ (Smith, 2009, p. 13). This is the element of the ‘project’ on which this chapter concentrates, and the actors discussed here are Inspectors of Education – understood as a paradigmatic case of actors doing political work in brokering relationships between data-based regulatory instruments and policy.

In pursuing these overarching aims, we have worked with the understanding that new forms of knowledge, especially knowledge expressed in data, may best be understood as ‘governing knowledge’ and that it has developed in relationship with performance management regimes, alongside decentralisation and deregulation. Data-based knowledge is vital to these regimes, as it enables target-driven steering of outputs and outcomes, across a range of actors – including private providers of
services – accompanied by intensive monitoring of performance. Thus knowledge and information play a pivotal role both in the pervasiveness of new governing relations and processes (through constant collection, monitoring and comparison) and in making new governing forms – which often involve apparent de-regulation – possible.

In this chapter I discuss some of the key ideas that we have developed in this overarching ‘project’ with a focus on the relationship between governing and knowledge. I first review our approach to changes in governance, and then set out associated changes in knowledge, before considering the ways in which data use has developed during the period of our research. The last section of the chapter attempts to illustrate these ideas through the presentation of selected evidence from recent work on the English inspectorate. The intention here is to show how inspectors, who once had considerable capacity to mediate between data and policy based on their professional expertise, now find their judgements increasingly determined by data-based evidence and by strong framing of their knowledge-based regulatory work. Within the constraints of space of this chapter, it is not possible to offer detailed discussion and illustration of the research that supports these arguments: more detailed reporting of the research can be found in Ozga et al. (2011) and Grek and Lindgren (2015).

GOVERNING KNOWLEDGE

First, I offer a brief account of our approach to changes in governance. We believe that the generally-acknowledged changes in governance and their consequences for relations between the supra/transnational, the national and the local are best understood not as vertical, neatly ordered, nested levels, scales, or tiers, as some multi-level approaches suggest, but rather as a new ‘architecture of governance’ (Ball, 2006) or as ‘assemblages’ of apparatuses, personnel and practices (Clarke, 2012). We understand such assemblages to be made up of spaces such as the European Education Policy Space (EEPS) that are dynamic, varied in scope, involving many agents within and across borders and levels, and shaped and reshaped in action. Governing is now the shared concern of different agents and interests, and not just of a single entity – the state. This requires us to think about how governing works on and across categories – nations, levels, sectors, agencies, cultures, and to be attentive to the processes of reworking of these categories in the processes of governing.

The key factor driving changes in governing and knowledge and their relationship is the centrality of widely-distributed knowledge and information (especially information about comparative performance) to the neo-liberal project (Hayek, 1969). In the neo-liberal imaginary, society is organised in networks held together through the flow of comparative knowledge expressed as data: standards, benchmarks and indicators create order in the complex landscape created by adherence to the principle of diversity in provision (so that choice and competition can operate appropriately) that produces an increasingly varied set of activities and institutional arrangements. Public-private hybrids offer education services,
provision is shaped by parental choice and other new public management methods, and this ‘systemless system’ (Lawn, 2013) requires the production and circulation of apparently objective data – thus making statistical data a key governing device in Europe and beyond (Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, & Simola, 2011; Lawn & Grek, 2013).

Objective, comparative and de-contextualised data become the basis of governing action: these data actively construct policy ‘problems’, they no longer appear in the external environment but rather are ‘called into being’ (Stehr, 1994, p. 10) through their statistical representation, from which solutions are (apparently) also derived. As more and more data are produced and combined (Barber, 2014), so that new relationships are revealed, this, along with the increased capacity of data to travel, produce an interdependence between knowledge and governing. As a recent OECD publication puts it: ‘the key question posed is: how do governance and knowledge mutually constitute and impact on each other in complex education systems?’ (Fazekas & Burns, 2012, p. 6). This quotation also highlights the increasingly active role of transnational agencies such as the European Commission and the OECD in creating apparently coherent policy spaces through horizontal communications and knowledge-based policy instruments that generate and use comparative knowledge and data to govern within and across the national.

The nature of the mutually constitutive relationship of knowledge and governing is indeed the key question, but the political science literature has been slow to move beyond recognition of a shift from ‘government’ (the practice of politics, policy and administration within the state-form) to ‘governance’ (understood broadly as co-produced governance by many agents and agencies). The co-production of governance implies increased permeability of states as institutions and a plurality of agencies involved in governing along with a shift from hierarchical, authoritative or bureaucratic forms of social coordination towards the modes of markets and networks.

The governance literature misses the significance of these changes, especially in their creation of a need for data and knowledge-based regulatory instruments (Van Zanten, 2009; Carvahlo, 2012) and for policy actors able to act as mediators or translators of data and broker relationships and outcomes among the complex network of actors now active in policy making. Indeed the mainstream literature retains an institutionalist view of agencies and practices; moreover it typically operates with a ‘thin’ conception of the social and so tends to ignore or underplay the extent to which new actors and new policy instruments disrupt hierarchical relations and destabilise the ‘levels’ through which governance is conventionally understood to operate. Rather than assuming the multi-level-ness of governance, we think of the EEPS as operating across borders, in different scales, and – crucially – as shaped and reshaped in action so that ‘the object of governance is constructed in the process of governance – whether this object is a space, a group or an institution’ (Clarke, 2009, p. 3).

In our previous work (Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Simola, & Segerholm, 2011), we found support for our emergent analysis in the literature on governmentality as a way of thinking beyond governance, but governmentality has its own inherent
problems: for example, the difficulty of combining attention to the detail and variety of empirical evidence with the ‘epochal’ analyses of liberal governmentality and the tendency of some analyses to assume the ‘success’ of governmental projects in practice (Clarke, 2012).

Our focus on data and related changes in knowledge production and use has supported a preference for what John Clarke (2011, p. 5) has called ‘the more theoretically agnostic term’ governing, which captures the complexity, active mediation and translation of governing practices. Governing also avoids the settled and structuralist tendencies of institutionalist-based references of governance and the deterministic undertones of governmentality. So we consider inspection as a governing practice, and conceptualise governing as including ‘assemblages of apparatuses, processes and practices, rather than only institutions, discourses or strategies’ (Clarke, 2011 p. 7).

We take from political science the key idea that governance involves different agents – individuals, groups, organisations – and we thus locate inspection in a web of relationships drawing on different kinds of authority and expertise (or claims to expertise). In the new governing context, actors need to possess or acquire the relevant ‘expertise’ to govern and their skills in ‘governing’ are expressed through their capacity to ‘translate’, mediate or interpret (Newman & Clarke, 2009; Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Jacobsson, 2006). As Clarke puts it:

[...] new governance arrangements create the conditions in which new knowledges, skills and roles may flourish – ones that emphasise cross-boundary working. Transacting, translating, mediating and brokering characterise these new ways of working that are central to the forms of governance as partnerships, networks and collaborations. (Clarke, 2008, p. 130)

I return to these forms of expertise and the constraints on them later in the chapter, but before doing so I want to illustrate changes in governing and knowledge, drawing on data from a recent research project that studied changes in governing and associated changes in knowledge in the health and education sectors in eight European countries: Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Romania, France, Norway, Portugal and Scotland. Referencing ideas developed by colleagues in that project, I take knowledge to be socially constructed (Smith-Merry, Freeman, & Sturdy, 2008) and to emerge in close proximity to social, economic and political contexts (Grundmann & Stehr, 2012, p. xiii).

Tables 1 and 2 summarise changes in governance (conceptualised in the knowandpol project as a shift from bureaucracy to post-bureacracy) and related changes in the nature of knowledge.
Government bureaucracies were conventionally based on local, simplified, static and centrally controlled knowledge available only to those who produced and worked with it, but post-bureaucratic networked governing is decentralised, future-oriented, processual, autonomous and fluid (Issakyan, Lawn, Ozga, & Shaik, 2008) and generates similar knowledge forms.

This new form of knowledge, characterised by fluidity, flexibility and rapid transfer, is most easily contained in, and represented by, data. I now turn to a short summary of data use in the governing of education.
Here I focus on data – the rise of data in education was the main focus of the research project ‘Fabricating Quality in European Education’ from 2006-09. At that time the main concern of the research was to find out where the data were and how they were being constructed. It seemed important to record the sudden and massive increase in data capacity, and to illustrate the grip that a data dream had on the imagination of policy makers in many countries (in this research Denmark, Scotland, England, Sweden and Finland) (Ozga et al., 2011; Ozga, 2009). In the first phase of data growth, it seemed that data were expected to relieve policy makers of the need to make policy – policy could be ‘found’ in the data – and problems would be simultaneously revealed and solved. This kind of thinking still informs the growth of ‘big data’.

In the more recent work exploring the involvement of new actors in governing education, the focus has broadened to include the extent to which commercial interests are working in education. As Martin Lawn puts it:

Software and data companies are the ‘hidden’ new managers of the virtual educational landscape. The governing of education systems is increasingly connected to the capacity of data servers, software development, data-mining & analytics tools. (Lawn, 2013, p. 240)

Our research has also revealed very substantial increases in data capacity – in government organisations, in schools and among individual teachers. This is not just an increase in data volume but in the ways in which data operate in real time to track activity. This development in the capacity of data supports the turn towards responsibilisation as data-based knowledge enables responsible self-government by citizen-consumers (through reforms in health provision, choice-driven education provision, the (self) monitoring of performance) and widespread use of ‘self-assessment’ to encourage responsibility and autonomy (thus enabling governing at a distance).

Data software ‘captures’ people (pupils/learners/teachers) and translates them into quantifiable, enumerable, calculable and encodable characteristics; it enables the classification and sorting of people and generates individualisation, personalisation, & differential treatment (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). Such recording is not new; the monitoring of populations was the basis of government administrative systems and government record keeping, and indeed the monitoring and evaluation of conduct and behaviour have long been key indicators and registers of identity. What is new is the digitization of these records, the possibility of real-time tracking of transactions and the potential to join up transactional data distributed across government sites and functions. New forms of data thus enable a shift from collectivised governing strategies – applied to the ‘school population’ or to ‘ethnic minority pupils’ – to individualised, targeted practices that recognise how people move and change and ‘keep up’ with them. These capacities transform and enable governing practices, but they also generate problems, especially in the
role of mediation and translation of such complex knowledge into actionable knowledge.

KNOWLEDGES AND EXPERTS

There is increased pressure from policy-makers faced with the mass of information available, for clear guidance on policy choices. In Grundmann and Stehr’s words, policy makers are looking for:

[...] knowledge that ‘includes the policy options that need to be manipulated’
[...] knowledge that identifies the levers for action. (Grundmann & Stehr, 2012, p. 179)

Thus the nature of knowledge is changed: it is not only that it comes from new sources, and is moving more rapidly, based on large, interconnected data sets that are constantly updated, it also needs to contain guidance on what needs to be done, on ‘what works’. At the same time, because so many sources of knowledge and information are widely available, the issue of interpretation becomes paramount. Again, Grundmann and Stehr draw our attention to the tendency to simplify complex knowledge and information in order to arrive at a basis for action, and highlight the role of experts in doing this:

The rapid growth of experts, advisers and consultants in education arises from the rapid expansion of knowledge/information, this provides opportunities for simplification of the problem of endless competing interpretation in order to provide a basis for action (Grundmann & Stehr, 2012, pp. 20-21).

The need for simplification offers opportunities to particular groups of actors who are positioned at key points of intersection of knowledge production and practical problem-solving. Their work demands skills in translating information into ‘practical knowledge’, in mediating conflict and brokering interests (Clarke, 2008). There is a growing literature on the influence, interconnections and work of networks of experts (Ball & Junemann, 2012), who promote cognitive consensus that makes political action easier. These experts are:

[...] more than the diffusers of ideas; they develop conceptual knowledge in order to promote educational reforms, drawing on their substantial experience as policy advisers to governments and IOs. (Shiroma, 2014, p. 2)

Moreover:

[...] 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. 2)

The ideological dimension of expert guidance or intervention is also obscured by the highly technical language and processes in play in the construction of knowledge-based regulation tools for education. For example, in the construction
of OECD’s PISA, as one of our informants illustrates below, there is little opportunity for discussion of alternatives, as the direction is already set. The quotation captures her experience as a policy officer participating in the construction of the PISA tests:

There’s a lot of talking, an awful lot of talking around the table […] I seldom remember any debates on that level. It was more about Andreas Schleicher driving the whole agenda along as a process – very controlled, time controlled and then just people contributing to particular issues of decision making. It was a decision-making forum. (Policy Officer 86)

Discussion of alternatives is also restricted by the focus on technical issues, conducted in technical language which is promoted by those fluent in it as objective, precise, and not open to interpretation:

The guys in ACER, they have a strong role. They would turn up in these meetings but they would come and talk technical language […] national representatives […], with some exceptions, they would just be sitting, just taking on trust that this was the way to go. There was very limited – in my experience – challenge of anything on the technical side. (Policy officer 86)

COMPARISON AND GOVERNING KNOWLEDGE

The growth of technical expertise and the influence of technical experts is combined with a further feature of governing knowledge – its comparative character. Comparative data are attractive to policy makers because, as Grundmann and Stehr suggest, in current conditions, knowledge claims are most powerful if they are trans-historical and trans-situational, and:

[…] the decline or loss of the context-specificity of a knowledge claim is widely seen as adding to the validity, if not the truthfulness, of the claim.

(Grundmann & Stehr, 2012, p. 3)

The de-contextualisation of knowledge – its ability to illustrate apparently shared policy problems and offer transferable, portable solutions – is an essential characteristic of governing knowledge, and comparative knowledge, especially comparative data on performance, is essentially de-contextualised. As Luis Miguel Carvalho has demonstrated, working with data from the knowandpol project, comparison frames knowledge-governing relations through establishing three key principles:

(i) that regular and systematic assessments are truthful practices for the improvement of national education systems;

(ii) that such improvement has to be analysed in relation to the pace of change of other countries;
(iii) that international comparison of student performances develops the quality of national education systems while capturing educational complexity and diversity. (Carvalho, 2012, p. 172)

The principle of comparison is not limited to the international but is also important within the national: as our research reveals, there is increasing use of international comparisons to justify more and more detailed comparisons of schools and head/teachers/learners within the national frame (Grek, 2012).

The possession of comparative knowledge about national system performance enables international organisations to claim objective and accurate understanding of national policy spaces. They are, they claim, not only informed about comparative performance, but about the national as an entity in itself. From a distance the IOs ‘see’ the national space more clearly than do those working within it:

[…] because when you sit up to your neck in the Scottish system, everything is Scottish. Everything is Scottish. [You feel] This is our system, we defend it as a fortress and all these influences from outside, they should be kept away. By sitting here and making comparative analysis, we identify what is specifically Scottish to the Scottish system. What is it that you should actually defend to keep these roots in national culture and national institutions […] We know it, we have the information, we have this distance that is necessary to do it. And we can compare and find out what is it that shines in the Scottish system. (Senior EU Analyst)

The danger to the scholarly field of comparative education presented by such approaches to comparison was highlighted in 2003 by Antonio Novoa and Tari Yariv-Maschal in their important article ‘Comparative research in education: A mode of governance or a historical journey?’ in which they attribute the recent growth of comparative education as a field of study to its usefulness in identifying ‘problems’ that require shared governing solutions:

The recent popularity of comparative education must be explained through this internationalisation of educational policies, leading to the diffusion of global patterns and flows of knowledge that are assumed to be applicable in various places. (Novoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003, p. 426)

They go on to say that the field faces a choice between acceptance of that role in producing governing knowledge, or an explicit refusal of it. Such a refusal – they suggest – would contribute to its intellectual renewal, through challenging the use of comparison in generating governing knowledge, by developing more sophisticated historical and theoretical references (Novoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003, p. 426). The danger to the field posed by ‘experts’ and consultants, has increased since 2003, as they proliferate. Consultants and experts combine technical and symbolic elements in practices of comparative knowledge production in such a way as to displace or conceal politics (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 6). At the same time, through this process, there is a close alignment of the framing of governing problems with political priorities, so that knowledge production (by
In summary, what I suggest here is that these new governing forms, which seek to integrate knowledge production with governing work, and which are preoccupied with enabling ‘imposed consensus’ (Sassen, 2007) around the ‘levers for action,’ require different kinds of skills from their key workers, including inspectorates in the field of education, and that the work that inspectorates do may be more fully understood from this perspective. The next section looks in more detail at inspectors in England and their relationship with data, with the intention of highlighting their governing role.

GOVERNING BY INSPECTION

Inspectorates may be understood as epistemic communities (Haas, 1992), with strong claims to expertise: they are positioned as mediators and translators of information, because of their particular and unique positioning in the work of governing. As Clarke (2011) has pointed out, there are three distinctive aspects of inspection as a mode of governing: (i) it is directly observational of sites and practices. That is, in the case of schooling, inspectors are empowered (and required) to enter the world of the school and observe what takes place within it; (ii) it is a form of qualitative evaluation, involving the exercise of judgement rather than only the calculation of statistical regularity/deviation. Judgement is at the core of the activity and thus raises questions about the articulation of knowledge and power and (iii) it is embodied evaluation: the inspector is a distinctive type of agent whose presence is required at the site of inspection and who embodies inspectorial knowledge, judgement and authority.

Inspectors come to these tasks with varying degrees of historically-framed experience and expertise. They bring their expert judgement and ‘objective’ data into relationship with one another, within more or less prescribed parameters; they are responsible for making knowledge about system performance available for translation into use by policy makers at all levels, and by practitioners; and they are also to a greater or lesser degree engaged in building improvement and knowledge about improvement within and across systems.

The work of inspectors is strongly influenced by the growth of data. In England, the commitment to data use in governing education has been particularly strong (Ozga, 2009), as has been the role of the central government department in monitoring the system. As a senior Department for Education official comments:

[…] it’s interesting to reflect on how the work of a central government policy department has evolved… In fact actually we’ve been developing a concept here in the department which we’ve called ‘the bridge’ where we corral all of this data and information and at a glance now across all local authorities in England you can go downstairs and look at a big screen and you can look across all the key performance areas and that’s actually across all the social care areas as well as education … So we’re doing quite active performance
management of the system and that’s quite a powerful tool. (Senior DfE official)

The origin and growth of the data system owes much to the New Labour government’s commitment to technology and targets summed up in the ‘Transformational Government’ strategy (Cabinet Office, 2005). The UK coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that took office in 2010 set out an agenda that stressed commitment to data and its distribution and use by citizen-consumers – perhaps especially in schooling:

We will dismantle the apparatus of central control and bureaucratic compliance. We will instead make direct accountability more meaningful, making much more information about schools available in standardised formats to enable parents and others to assess and compare their performance. […] In future: parents, governors and the public will have access to much more information about every school and how it performs. (DfE, 2010, p. 72)

The development of data resources in England from the early 2000s is not simply a story of increased technical capacity, but connects directly to successive governments’ prioritisation of attainment (measured by national tests at fixed intervals in the school career, the results of which are published) and to a determined effort to shift school cultures so that data monitoring and active data use become the driving force of school activity. This is a highly significant development in terms of governing work – as indicated earlier, the possibility of real-time tracking of activity has greatly increased pressure on schools to be actively engaged with their data and to be able to demonstrate their engagement through constant attention to maintaining and updating their various data systems. This state of permanent engagement creates what Thrift and French call an ‘automagical’ system of regulation in which pupil and teacher values, eligibility and rewards are constantly calculated and re-calculated (Thrift & French, 2002). This constant work of coding places very considerable pressures on schools, on teachers and, indeed, on inspectors in arriving at judgements that are supposed to enable ‘levers of action’ to be identified and operated.

Some examples from the range of data systems in play in schooling in England help to illustrate this point. There is, for example, a National Pupil Database, a pupil level database which matches pupil and school characteristics data to pupil level attainment. The School Census is the key source of data for individual pupil characteristics. This dataset includes ethnicity, a low-income marker, special education needs (SEN), attendance, exclusions and a history of schools attended. Pupils’ Key Stage attainment records can also be accessed. Pupils can be tracked across schools and followed throughout their school careers. It provides a very detailed set of data on school characteristics, and includes details of the peer group (the school-cohort) of any particular child. In addition it is possible to link the data from other related datasets such as those on higher education, neighbourhoods and teachers in schools.
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The school data dashboard (http://dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk/index.php) is a data device that constructs comparator schools so that teachers can see how ‘similar’ schools perform on a range of measures. Each school has its own group of similar schools for each measure on the dashboard. These data are official, in that they come from government and its agencies (in this case Ofsted) but commercial companies are also heavily involved in the collection and dissemination of data – see for example the site ‘Schoolfinder,’ operated by Research Machines: http://home.rm.com/schoolfinder/

This site provides data on pupil attainment, inspection results, pupil characteristics, teaching staff and the chances of getting a place at a particular school, described as ‘the million dollar question.’

The point I wish to stress here is the prevalence of data, and its variety and scope. These data codify the world of the school into sets of rules, procedures, algorithms and databases that work to govern education through their structured and structuring demands on parents (who must make considered choices) pupils, teachers, headteachers – and inspectors. In the next section I look at the framing of inspectorial judgement.

FRAMEWORKS OF JUDGEMENT

There are two basic models of inspection judgement. One is the evidence-based policy model that derives from supposedly objective and neutral judgments. The other model builds on the idea that embodied and encoded expert knowledge (a kind of inspector-connoisseurship or artistry) forms the most appropriate basis for judging schooling (Lindgren, 2014). In the first model, reliability and stability are secured by the quality of instruments and techniques themselves. As Lindgren and Clarke suggest, the judgement is secured by eliminating the effect of the human actor:

Judgements are based on comparisons based on standards and ideas on a normal distribution. Data are seen as both evidence and the absolute basis for making judgments.

In contrast, inspectors’ claims to professionalism stress human qualities:

The validity of professional judgment, in contrast, is tied to the background, training and, most importantly, the experience of the inspector, and builds on standards that are internalised versions of corporate or collective judgments.

(Lindgren & Clarke, 2015)

There is, then, potential tension between embodied evaluation and disembodied, de-contextualised performance data in arriving at a judgement, and this tension may be increased as data come to dominate the inspection event. As one of the contract inspectors (that is an inspector working for one of the three commercial companies that deliver the bulk of school inspection in England) put it:
I think in England we have too much data and a lot of the inspectors don’t really understand it. [...] I mean data – you can make it say anything you want it to and it’s difficult to refute in an inspection, or to say something different from what the data appear to be saying. (Contract Inspector 14)4

A brief background note on the changing nature of inspection is offered here. Indeed, change is a constant in the recent history of inspection in England. Though Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) of Education in England traces its origins to the 1830s, Ofsted is a much newer creation, established in 1992, which came into being because HMI were seen by the modernising governments in the late 1980s and 1990s as elitist, as insufficiently focused on improving school performance, and as vulnerable to producer capture. Ofsted came into existence with the promise that every school (primary and secondary) in England would be inspected within four years, and would then receive repeated inspections. The much-expanded scope of inspection required a change in personnel: HMI were reduced from over 500 to around 300, and the bulk of the work of inspection was sub-contracted. The recruitment of this new inspection force, employed initially by a large number of commercial contractors and, from 2005 by just three – SERCO, TRIBAL and CfBT – required efforts to ensure standardisation and consistency across the system, in the absence of the coherence previously achieved through unwritten rules, professional expertise and social cohesion of HMI.

As a result there was a massive increase in inspection documentation, including inspection frameworks and handbooks – a shift that is also a shift in the governing knowledges that are being mobilised and circulated. There is a move away from judgement based on professional experience and (at least in some cases) subject or pedagogic expertise, to the following of rules constructed elsewhere, and applicable to increasingly varied school types. At the same time, as indicated earlier, data systems are becoming more and more complex.

There were constant changes to inspection frameworks within the period 1992-2010, accompanied by changes in the accompanying handbooks and web-based documentation. Analysis of these key texts (Baxter, 2013; Florez, 2014) reveals quite sharp contradictions in the knowledge claims and their relationship to governing that they contain: there is oscillation between tighter and looser forms of regulation, and an unresolved tension between data use and inspection judgement. The picture is complicated by the entry of commercial, competitive agencies into the field; this means that the frameworks attempt to impose consistency and quality control alongside pressures to minimise costs and maximise profit.

Whatever the requirements of the different frameworks of inspection, the key criteria (pupil attainment levels in relation to national performance targets) continue to dominate. Furthermore, the pre-inspection process ensures that data dominate: inspectors use data to arrive at a baseline evaluation using centralised data banks that provide detailed pupil and class level information over time, on the schools performance against national targets and in relation to comparator schools. This forms the basis of the pre-inspection commentary (PIC) that guides the work of the inspection team.
Before the inspection event the lead inspector must analyse evidence that includes a summary of the school’s self-evaluation (if the school chooses to complete one), data from RAISEonline report, the sixth form performance and assessment (PANDA) report, the learner achievement tracker (LAT) and available data about success rates from the school data dashboard and the Level 3 Value Added (L3VA) data. The lead inspector must also consider the previous inspection report, the findings of any recent Ofsted survey and/or monitoring letters and responses from parents on Parent View (Ofsted’s online survey available for parents), along with information available on the school’s website, which may include a prospectus and other information for parents.

Before the inspection data analysis is required on pupils’ attainment in relation to national standards compared with all schools, based on data over the last three years where applicable, noting any evidence of performance significantly above or below national averages; trends of improvement or decline and inspection evidence of current pupils’ attainment across year groups using a range of indicators, including where relevant:
- the proportion of pupils attaining particular standards
- capped average points scores
- average points scores
- pupils’ attainment in reading and writing
- pupils’ attainment in mathematics

The inspection, then, is strongly framed by the pre-inspection procedures, especially the analysis of performance data. The inspection visit is intended to enable a judgement about the quality of education provided in the school, and inspectors are required to assess that quality on the basis of four key areas: the achievement of pupils at the school, the quality of teaching in the school, the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school. On the basis of this assessment inspectors decide whether the school is ‘outstanding’ (grade 1), ‘good’ (grade 2), ‘requires improvement’ (grade 3-changed from ‘satisfactory’ in 2011) or ‘inadequate’ (grade 4).

In addition to the effect of pre-inspection analysis of the data in framing the event, the reporting of the inspection is a powerful framing device. Report writing is very strongly framed and tightly specified, as this quotation illustrates:

An inspector finishes an inspection […] has to write a report the following day. No arguments, that’s the timeline set by Ofsted, the commercial timeline that we have to meet. That report is then subject to QA [Quality Assurance] reading. […] So we read the first draft of the report against guidance provided by Ofsted. […] there’s a number of musts: must be included on this, must say this, must say that, so the QA reader has a job to cross-check that. Then there is a compliance zone, things that must, must be in the report, any of those are missing…that’s a bit of a no-no really. Then we have things around the quality of the writing. And we have to meet those five criteria to make sure that the report is published. And essentially within that process the
QA is a day […] in the end what inspectors are doing is saying ok well I have to follow this rule […] there isn’t a rule but I have to follow it. (Contract Inspector 012)

To summarise: the basis of claims to authority made by the inspectorate in England has changed since the creation of Ofsted in 1992. The pre-Ofsted HMI mobilized particular social and cultural resources to support their claims to professional authority. To some extent these claims depended on professional status as expert and successful practitioners, as educationalists, and as members of a highly bureaucratic and hierarchical elite that embodied a particular performance of authority. Authority, for pre-Ofsted HMI, was embodied in self-presentation, enacted in its relations with others, and encoded in its invisible, inexplicit assumptions about good practice. As a former senior inspector put it:

[…] it was a certain kind of style I would characterise as militaristic and hierarchical. It was driven by the sorts of people who came into the inspectorate, certainly in the post-war period I thought it was both very powerful as a means of inducting people and giving them a very good professional grounding in the business of inspection. (HMI 01)

In terms of governing work, the knowledge basis of these activities was quite inexplicit: knowledge and authority were embodied in the HMI, and strong social and professional coding enabled the inspectorate to govern through a combination of hierarchy and connoisseurship. New governance needs more explicit processes: the increased complexity that follows from the nature of the neo-liberal project requires more explicit knowledge forms that identify the levers for action in complex governing contexts: hence inspectors in England are increasingly regulated, and their governing work is framed – and increasingly dictated – by data.

CONCLUSION

The context of neo-liberalism, consisting as it does of a combination of so-called ‘market forces’, accompanied by absences (of state responsibility) and enabled through a battery of regulatory instruments and management practices, creates contradictory demands on those political actors who are located at the intersection of governing practices and knowledge/data. These contradictions are sharpened by the increased scope and penetration of data, and by the structural tensions in neo-liberal system design between the fundamental commitment to reducing the role of the state and enabling system and self-regulation through the market, and the need to use state regulation in order to get the market to function ‘properly’ as a distributor of goods (including ‘public’ goods). This creates constant pressure for increased regulation and centralisation (for example in England in the centrally-driven push to create different kinds of schools, including Academies and Free Schools). At the same time, the commitment to information as the key to a well-
functioning market driven society in order to encourage intelligent choice making and rational action creates problems in terms of the management of information: complex performance data do not flow freely and require management at the very least, while the development of real-time data systems that require constant engagement leaves little scope for mediation on the basis of professional authority.

Our research on Ofsted reveals the insecurities experienced by inspectors in the constant revision and expansion that characterise Ofsted’s knowledge production from 1992 to the present. It also illustrates the dominance of data as a means of coding the world of schooling and as expressing a dynamic governing logic that both calculates and intervenes in the performance of individuals in schools, including inspectors. These data-based interventions are not generated by the data themselves. Data count because of the authority – or claims to authority – that stand behind them. As Fourcade puts it:

Behind each set of rational instruments always stands a particular political and economic philosophy, as well as particular social groups. (Fourcade, 2010, p. 571)

Inspectorates throughout Europe are under pressure to defend their position in the face of much-enhanced data production and use (Grek et al, 2013). Professional authority is vulnerable to claims of the greater objectivity of data and the search for transferable practical knowledge that contains the ‘levers of action’. Inspectorates may no longer be necessary to governing work, especially where their ceding of authority to data is most evident, as in England, and their capacity to resist political pressure also (and not coincidentally) reduced.

It is against that background – the rise of data, and its increasingly active role in shaping governing knowledge – that I return to Novoa and Yariv-Mashal’s question: is comparative educational research implicated in lending authority to these constant comparisons and thus reducible to a ‘mode of governance’ (Novoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003, p. 426)? Certainly, there are considerable opportunities for consultancy and policy transfer, based on de-contextualised, data-based knowledge, but perhaps the greater threat to independent enquiry in education comes from the absence of research and scholarship that connects more directly to the wider field of social science enquiry – to political science, policy sociology, and socio-technical studies, for example. Such connections might draw comparativists more directly into analysis of governing, and thus enable interrogation of the governing work that comparison may do. As an earlier but still relevant warning from a leading comparative educator suggests:

The danger that confronts mankind to-day comes not from the expansion of education but from specialization in some narrow corner of the field of knowledge. The specialist faces the world to-day as the blind man the elephant and fails to see life steadily and see it whole. (Kandel, 1938, p. 29)
NOTES

1. There are too many to list here, but I owe a particular debt to Luis Miguel Carvahlo, John Clarke, Sotiria Grek, Martin Lawn, Joakim Lindgren, and Eric Mangez.

2. See www.knowandpol.eu

3. This chapter concentrates on the case of England, partly because of constraints of space but also because England represents the most developed (some would say extreme) case of data use along with tight specification of inspectorial judgement.

4. We use role descriptions and numbers to protect the identity of our informants: a lead inspector is someone who has experience of leading an inspection team; informants identified as HMI are members of HM Inspectorate in England; other informants may be contract inspectors (i.e. employed in England by SERCO, TRIBAL or CIBT).

REFERENCES


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