
Governance and the European Education Area: Regulating Education and Visions for the 'Europe' Project

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Governance and the European Education Area: Regulating Education and Visions for the 'Europe' Project*

The “indirect effects” of the dynamics of globalisation in the field of education are visible both in the changes in the process of designing education policies and in the reconfiguration of education governance. Thus, where the Bologna Process is concerned, what seems to be on the agenda is a convergence with the model of market regulation, through the creation of mechanisms and bodies such as quality assurance and accreditation systems and agencies. In addition, the form of regulation determined by objectives represents a decisive development in processes of management of social and educational change in different sectors of education systems. The flagship-project of constructing a European Education Area and the lifelong learning paradigm appear to partake of the new legitimising myths that derive from the desire to envelop in the same sweep the planning of the physical, social and symbolic territory and the creation of subjects.

Keywords: Globalisation; education policies; governance; regulation; Bologna process; European Education Area.

Introduction

The decision-making field in education has undergone profound transformations in the past few years: on the one hand, it has become broader and more complex, including modalities and actors of the supranational (and subnational) space; on the other hand, it is now curtailed and emptied at the national level and where some areas are concerned, in which process and procedures, legitimate decision-making entities, spaces and *fora* have been circumvented, surpassed, ignored or reactivated under a different status, notably as spheres for ratifying, developing or implementing the options and decisions made at supranational levels.

The starting gun went off and we now find ourselves in a process taking us far from the decision-making models, forms and processes which we considered to be typical of pluralist Western democracies, built up over decades within national territories and political systems, namely the European: negotiation with legitimate representatives of social partners, more or less broad public debate, political debate – prior and inherent to any decision-making, whether parliamentary or otherwise – among the different political groups, party political or other, have been absent, or highly diminished, in recent important decisions. I refer here to the so-called *Bologna Process* and the *Education & Training 2010 Programme*,

* Article published in *RCCS* 75 (October 2006).

the latter further including the *Bruges-Copenhagen Process*.

Impacting more or less immediately, with greater or lesser effects, these different constellations of options and political decisions, mostly or exclusively involved the Education Ministers and/or Heads of State and of government who drew up and/or approved statements, measures, programmes and action lines. In the more recent stages of the Bologna Process, debates and working groups have included the participation of European associations of higher education institutions and student unions, with teachers and researchers having been entirely excluded up to the fourth Ministerial Conference held on 19 and 20 May 2005 in Bergen, Norway. As will be shown below, this new architecture and new cast in the field of education is not removed from the deliberately sought effect of *deregulation* (through the summary and extra-legal elimination of democratic controls inherent to the political processes set up in the national systems), produced by the expeditious, weakly institutionalised *Ad-hoc Processes* for intergovernmental political decision-making based on voluntary adherence (cf. Antunes, 2005a; 2005b).

Thus, although the political cycle can still be analysed as comprising traditional arenas of action – the *context of influence*, the *context of policy text production* and the *context of practice* (cf. Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) – it now involves very different processes and actors.¹

2. The agenda for education: Constitution and contents

With a view to studying this phenomenon, which re-directs the process of education policy-making towards a supranational level, I will call upon a distinction put forward by Roger Dale between the “politics of education” and “education politics.” From an analytical point of

¹ The *context of influence* represents the arena where the multiple interests of different actors and entities mobilise to mark out the definition and the purposes of education; the discourses and concepts on which education policy will be grounded take shape at this level. The *context of policy text production* has a close, though often difficult, relationship with the former: on the one hand, these texts set out to express policy, at times officially, at others in more informal ways; on the other, they do so by using a language which seeks to base itself on a purportedly general public good. Thus, the commitment to and the clash between different values, principles and interests, as well as the incoherence and inconsistency within and between texts are the salient mark of this second arena of action. The *context of practice* re-creates policy by interpretation, by the conflict between divergent readings, and by the interaction of these processes with the history, experiences and established practices that shape the contexts which policies address. It is the actors and the social relations active in this sphere that construct the more or less selective appropriations which shape policy in action (cf. Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992: 19-23).

view, we may consider the supranational agenda for education in accordance with these two planes: “the processes and structures through which [an agenda for education] is created” (drawing up the agenda, defining objectives, issues, priorities); and “the processes whereby this agenda is translated into problems and issues” (the contents of the agenda) (Dale, 1994: 35) and developed “by means of (re)structuring education institutions, processes and practices” (Antunes, 2004: 40). As a first step, I will concentrate on the plane of the *constitution* of the agenda for education, as it is currently being developed in the regional bloc which includes Portugal, the European Union, and on the quasi-continental intergovernmental political platforms in which the EU countries and institutions are incorporated, such as the so-called *Bologna Process* (and the *Bruges/Copenhagen Process*). Then, I will put forward an understanding of how this agenda translates into problems and issues that embody a content for the restructuring of education. Thus, according to the above analytical proposal, my focus will be those elements that represent the *context of influence* and the *context of policy text production*.

2.1. Desired effects: Aligning education in Europe

Roger Dale (2005) proposes that we apprehend the relations between the nature, the role and place of the State in Westernised countries and the processes of globalisation, bearing in mind the direct, indirect and collateral “effects”² of these dynamics. Taking the second of these latter categories, emphasis is placed on the fact that the indirect effects of globalisation on the governance of education include those consequences which, while not being specifically sought for, nevertheless deeply alter education systems. These phenomena are rooted in three developments: (i) “neoliberal constitutionalisation” (its institutionalisation within the governments and political-economic systems of several countries through treaties, accords and multilateral conventions – for example, the set of measures known as the Washington Consensus, the setting up of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the

² The term “effects” registers how these processes tend to be experienced by persons at a national level. However, the author highlights the idea that these are not dynamics which affect States as entities and political actors; on the contrary, they are one of the categories of actors that are most visibly and actively involved and interested in, as well as committed to, the promotion of globalising processes. The direct effects of ongoing globalising processes are intentional/requested/wished for; predictable and specific; indirect effects are wished for, predictable and non-specific; collateral effects are not wished for, non-specific, but predictable (Dale, 2005).

European Monetary System, New Public Management); (ii) the progressive broadening of the “network state” and the setting up of supranational political-economic bodies (at regional or other levels) such as the European Union or the World Trade Organisation; (iii) the globalisation of production. The effects of these dynamics make themselves felt most acutely in changes in both the pattern and the scale of governance, setting up a *globally structured agenda* for education (Dale, 2000; 2005: 57-59; Antunes, 2001; 2004).

Thus, Dale proposes that, for instance, analysis of the policies involved in the promotion of privatisation of, choice in, and markets for education should be done within the frame of an approach which examines the politics of education, querying the way educational resources and benefits are allocated (Dale, 1997a; 1997b). From this point of view, what is at stake is the *pattern of governance* in education, defined by a given combination of the dimensions of governance (activities: funding, provision, regulation, property; social forms of social coordination: the State, the market, the community, the family; scale: supranational, national, subnational) (Dale 1997a; 2005). In this sense, it is hypothetically possible to find different patterns of governance in the field of education.

Given its importance and multiple connotations, I will attempt to outline the theoretical-semantic field of the concept of regulation, since it is here that the problematics under discussion largely focus, find their inspiration or references. Thus, based on the theory of the French Regulation School, I will define the *mode of regulation* as the network of institutions which favour the congruence of individual and collective behaviour and mediate social conflicts, succeeding in producing conditions for stabilisation (always temporary and dynamic, albeit prolonged) of a given regime of accumulation (cf. Boyer, 1987: 54-5; 1997: 3; Aglietta, 1997: 412, 429); therefore, it represents “a set of mediations which maintain the distortions produced by the accumulation of capital at limits compatible with social cohesion within nations” (cf. Aglietta, 1997: 412). In this sense, regulation may be understood as a set of activities tending toward stabilisation and institutionalisation, temporary, dynamic, but prolonged. For Roger Dale, regulation signifies, in the context of education, activities of control, i.e. activities defining the framework for the provision of education services which the State undertakes through policies and legal sanctions (Dale, 1997a: 277). Although this formulation suggests that regulation is an exclusive attribute of the State, it is nevertheless possible to admit that other bodies or entities likewise play a role here in areas defined, and possibly delegated by, the State. Regulation thus entails defining standards and rules that

make up the framework within which institutions operate (Dale, 1997a).³ Roger Dale has, however, argued that the State did not retain control over regulation, but rather set itself up as a “regulator of last resort,” that is, it has kept “authority” and “responsibility” for the governance of education, although it does not control the ways in which the activities concerned are coordinated (Dale, 2005: 67).

For Barroso, “in a complex social system (such as the education system) there is a plurality of regulation sources, objectives and modalities depending on the diversity of actors involved (their positions, interests and strategies).” Thus, “the coordination, the equilibrium or the transformation of the educational system result from the interaction of the multiple regulatory devices” (Barroso, 2003: 10). This author discerns three regulatory modalities based on different alliances among pivotal actors in the educational field: bureaucratic regulation, built up over the duration of the process of educational system development, which corresponds to an alliance between the State and teachers; market-based regulation, visible in many, mainly English-speaking, countries, from the 1980s onwards, which involves an alliance between the State and parents, particularly those of middle-class status; community-based regulation, essayed in processes developed at local level, for example, in Portugal over the past few years, which is based on alliances between teachers and families (Barroso, 2003: 11-2).

I will, therefore, consider regulation in the field of education as: (i) the set of mechanisms set off to produce congruence of individual and collective behaviours and to mediate social conflicts, as well as to limit the distortions which might threaten social cohesion, including especially (ii) the definition of standards and rules that set up the framework for institutional functioning.

According to Dale, the nature and the meaning of regulation have changed over the past few years: on the one hand, there has been a shift from what has been perceived as a *rule-governed form of regulation*, which operates *ex ante*, through the *inputs* – that is, the conditions (norms, directions, resources, policies, etc.) provided to the educational system – to a *goal-governed form of regulation*, which operates *ex post*, grounded on certain *outputs* of the system (Dale 1997a: 279; 2005). But the change has now apparently reached another level, where the basis of regulation resides in the outcomes determined for the system. Thus, the results required of the functioning of educational systems must

³ Dale develops his argument based on Hood (1995) and Majone (1990).

be translated into immediate performances/ products/outputs displayed by schools and by which they will be evaluated. Dale argues that the supranational agenda for education and training has already reached this latter form of regulation and that evaluations such as PISA illustrate this mechanism for controlling outcomes.⁴

On the other hand, in accord with the analysis which signals the emergence and importance of the *Articulating State* (Santos, 1998; Antunes, 2001), Dale spells out a shift in the role of the State, from control of regulation to authority over regulation. As also argued by Santos (1998), it is now in charge of *meta-regulation*, that is, of defining the contexts, conditions and parameters for negotiating and confronting social interests; in other words, it must take on the task of setting up the rules of the game and be ultimately accountable for the failures and abuses of regulation (Dale, 2005).

2.1.1. *Bologna, deregulation and alignment*

Some of the most important changes in the governance of education have been advanced by means of three strategies: deregulation, juridification and New Public Management (Dale, 1997a). The supranational agenda that has been developed through European-scale processes, with the European Union and the Commission's strong lead and support, consists largely of advancing these dynamics. Deregulation aims to remove barriers and obstacles to the free circulation of a given product or service and to consumer choice. This entails eliminating existing forms of control, of a bureaucratic (contests, etc.) or a democratic nature (multilateral entities, representative bodies), perceived as threats to the liberalising programme. Typically, deregulation liquefies political-geographical and territorial frontiers in order to maximise exchange value, and thus enhance the power embodied in economic and cultural capital and/or individual and collective status.

The programme currently running in tandem with the so-called Bologna Process includes a *sui generis* facet of deregulation that attempts to eliminate national specificities and autonomy, replacing them with a rigid supranational regulation. In effect, conditions

⁴ This is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), developed by the OECD from 2000 in order to measure the skills of 15-year-olds; the aim is not to evaluate knowledge gained from schooling, but performance when faced with tasks, defined by OECD technical staff as demonstrating important skills. The first PISA evaluations, in 2000, covered a sample of 15-year-olds in 43 countries (28 of which were OECD members) and focused primarily on reading literacy; PISA-2003 focused mainly on the areas of mathematics and sciences and involved 41 countries (cf. OECD, 2001; Cussó and D'Amico, 2005; http://www.pisa.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_32252351_32236225_1_1_1_1_1,00.html).

generally sought through deregulation programmes (free circulation, competitiveness and choice of a given product) are in this case supported by means of a most muscular and stringent programme formatting courses and degrees. As in other areas, this entails a two-pronged process: removal of barriers threatening liberalisation objectives (singularities, political-cultural and institutional ties and resources) and the imposition of new parameters that are compatible with this aim. Amaral and Magalhães point precisely to this risk of de-characterisation and uniformisation, convincingly basing their argument on less trumpeted developments such as the suggestion for designing European core programmes or curricula (Amaral and Magalhães, 2004: 88).

According to Dale (1997a), one of the most significant changes has taken place at the level of *pattern of regulation*. European countries are leaving behind that which was their typical orientation of State intervention, whether directly, or by means of legislation, to take up the more typically American model of handing over a substantial part of these functions to entities which purport to be independent in the sense that they do not have ties (for instance, at contract level) with any of the regulated parties (see, in Portugal, the months-long paralysis of the body responsible for regulating the health sector or the authority which regulates competition). Thus, the predicted establishment, at European and national level, of evaluation, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, namely in the fields of vocational education and training and of higher education, is the step required for the transition to this regulatory pattern closely copied from the American market organisation model.

The restructuring of the cultural, political and social nature of certain spheres of collective life by enshrining in law the directions and constraints which take on certain partial interests as constitutive elements of the community itself, and as such imperative in their very substance, represents the process of expressive and extensive *juridification* of social life (cf. Dale 1997a: 278; Santos, 1998: 27-8). This development withdraws ample areas from the dynamics of representation, management and negotiation of interests and of political confrontation and conflict; in this sense, it is part of the wider process of the limitation of democracy, as an attempt to deal with the growing demands and claims of populations without unsustainable loss of legitimacy (the creation of the European Central Bank and of the Stability and Growth Pact are well-known examples of such a strategy, of which the so-called Bologna Process is a simulacrum displaying peculiar features and consequences).

Juridification is absent from the dynamics surrounding the Education & Training 2010 Programme, while in the so-called Bologna Process we witness a political agreement – at ministerial level and with the force of an intergovernmental conference and declaration, the latter being presented internally, and in many cases perceived, by the majority of political actors as a binding State commitment, with legal force and, therefore, of an imperative nature – which is translated into legal texts and, finally, imbued with legal force, reached at the end of the process, even if invoked from the start. I would suggest that this is a *sui generis* process, in which the effects of *de facto* juridification precede and generate a process of *juridification in law*: a commitment (purportedly carrying the force of legal legitimacy) is invoked in order to justify bypassing established political procedures within national democratic systems, which are carried out merely to lend legal cover to prior decisions understood as definitive.

This type of (*ex post*) juridification, bringing real consequences, is, as has already often been signalled, a manifestation of the so-called *democratic deficit* which characterises processes, institutions and political systems in Europe/the European Union (see, for example, Santos, 1995: 286). Several voices have raised the issue of the attempt to silence and prevent dissent, replacing debates and discussion documents with celebratory events and proclamations (see Amaral and Magalhães, 2004) that concur with this “exclusive and excluding” “bipolar model” which characterises “the new architecture and the new cast of actors in the field of education” in the European context (Antunes, 2004; 2005b).

The emphasis (typically inspired by the edicts of New Public Management) on accountability – to the European Council, the European Commission (in the case of the Education & Training 2010 Programme) and the Follow-up Group (in the case of the Bologna Process) – suggests the development of different trajectories within the same dynamic. In the first case, there is a sharp emphasis on achieving explicit and measurable results on the part of education and training systems, which is analogous to the obsession with accountability in terms of results to the governing entities of the Programme and not to its users.

In the second case, we still witness a form of *goal-governed regulation*, although in this phase goals are not yet expressed in terms of results obtained by education systems. However, the implementation of the action lines defined at the regular meetings that take place during the Ministerial Conferences is minutely monitored, with requests being made

for national reports, requests for information addressed to the responsible bodies and the drawing up of multiple reports presenting performance indicators, achievement graphs, scorecards, comparative performance lists and tables – in sum, an impressive production of control instruments, procedures and methodologies on the part of extra-national bodies, contrasting stridently with the virtual lack of follow-up, accountability to, or even regard for the actors, groups or categories involved in the field of action, who carry out institutional and national educational missions, functions and policies day after day.⁵

In like manner, if we analyse the Education & Training 2010 Programme, there has been a persistent concern since 1999 with *concrete future objectives*,⁶ later defined for the educational and training systems of the signatory States (numbering 31 since January 2003). To achieve these objectives, reference parameters for education and training were set up and “reference levels of European average performance” defined in respect of five parameters to be put in place “as an instrument to monitor implementation” of the programme (cf. European Commission, 2002; Education, Youth and Culture Council, 2003: 7). Thus, the method for putting in place the policy/programme includes as a crucial element the definition of procedures for controlling its degree of success. This logic derives from the option taken in favour of resolving “political deadlocks through recourse to technical instruments” and through re-directing “political issues to the more diffuse domain of governance,” where “indicators and benchmarks, regulatory agencies, expert networks, mutual accountability, partnership accords, best practice exchanges” rule (Nóvoa, 2005: 199).

The indirect effects of globalisation processes in the governance of education are openly visible in some of the most important ongoing dynamics in the supranational context, notably in the above-mentioned Education & Training 2010 Programme and the

⁵ Just to give a rough idea of the monitoring data produced for the May 2005 Ministerial Conference, in Bergen, the following can be listed: (i) national reports drawn up for the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG); (ii) *From Berlin to Bergen*, the General Report of the BFUG; (iii) *Bologna Process Stocktaking*, a report produced by the working group set up by the BFUG; (iv) *Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna*, a report drawn up under the European University Association; (v) *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe*, a document drawn up by the Eurydice network covering the 40 countries which signed up to the Bologna Process; (vi) *The Black Book of the Bologna Process*, a report prepared by ESIB, the body which represents national Student Unions in Europe (to access these documents, see <http://bologna-bergen2005.no/>).

⁶ The Stockholm European Council of 23/24 March 2000 adopted the Report from the Education Council to the European Council on *The Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems*, which defines “three concrete strategic objectives” and thirteen associated objectives to be pursued by means of political cooperation, using an “open method of co-ordination” (cf. Comissão Europeia, 2002).

Bologna Process. The developments I have analysed, such as “the constitutionalisation of the neoliberal project,” the broadening of areas and the intensifying of the frequency with which States act according to the “network state” model, represent the source from which spring diverse moments and facets of these processes. We thus find projects for change in the *regulation* (and, therefore, in the *governance*) of education, both in respect of dividing and combining the scales in which they are embedded, and in the pattern of governance and of regulation: in this way, supranational entities take on given activities (the definition of the *pattern* and *form of regulation*, of the systems’ objectives, of results and of control modalities and procedures), whereas national and local levels are naturally expected to put in place political measures and processes which follow the supranational agenda. Again with regard to the *regulation pattern*, and namely where the Bologna Process is concerned, the General Agreement on Trade in Services appears to be on the horizon, as is the internal services market of the European Union, and both serve as inspiration for an approximation to the North-American market regulation model, through the creation of devices and bodies which head regulation (such as quality assurance and accreditation systems and agencies). On the other hand, the *goal-governed form of regulation* has gained ground and impact, a development which can clearly be seen in the management processes of social and educational change currently under way with respect to the different sectors of the educational systems concerned.

2.2. Aligning education in Europe: Meanings, instruments and projects

If we analyse the supranational agenda for education now on the plane of *education politics*, we can consider “the processes whereby this agenda is translated into problems and issues” (the content of the agenda) (Dale, 1994: 35) and is developed “through the (re)structuring of educational institutions, processes and practices” (Antunes, 2004: 40).

2.2.1. Probable meanings: The market and cosmopolitanism

Taking as reference points the ten action lines defined in the Bologna (1999), Prague (2001) and Berlin (2003) declarations,⁷ we can identify five categories that relate to diverging

⁷ See the following documents: Bologna Declaration (1999). Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education Convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999, at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF (consulted on 22 June 2009); *Towards the European Higher Education Area, Communiqué of the Meeting of European Ministers in Charge of Higher Education in Prague on*

directions for the project of erecting the European Education Area(s) (in higher education and research). What these European projects consist of is open to debate; however, they appear to point to a diluting of several frontiers between systems, institutions, spaces and trajectories. I believe, however, that this diluting of frontiers marks processes which are highly differentiated and ambivalent, that it testifies to phenomena displaying contradictory directions, with significantly different origins, degrees of intensity and consequences. Thus, both the setting up of a market grounded on more exacting or minimalist regulation, and the deepening of cooperation or even the erecting of a European form of cosmopolitanism in the educational field present themselves as possible directions, albeit not equally probable, of the developments proposed and set under way. In this manner, the ten action lines can be grouped under the following categories: mobility; convergence; regulation; cooperation/cosmopolitanism; the market.⁸ As we can see, this brief outline of the action lines suggests the potential ambiguity of these directions. The case of convergence provides a particularly apt illustration: if cooperation among European higher education institutions is encouraged with a view to erecting a cosmopolitan scientific-cultural space, it is dispensable; if, on the contrary, the agenda is dominated by the establishment of a competitive market, it is an unavoidable goal.⁹ Thus, the scenario I have outlined suggests and reinforces the

19 May 2001 at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/010519PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.PDF (consulted on 22 June 2009); "Realising the European Higher Education Area," *Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003*, at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/030919Berlin_Communique.PDF (consulted on 22 June 2009).

⁸

Objectives (stated or suggested)	Mobility	Convergence	Regulation	Market	Cooperation/ Cosmopolitanism
Action lines	1	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2	3
	3	3	3	3	4
	4	4	5	6	6
	10	10	10	7	7
				8	10
				9	
				10	

The action lines defined for the Bologna Process are as follows: 1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; 2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles; 3. Establishment of a system of credits; 4. Promotion of mobility; 5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance; 6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education; 7. Lifelong learning; 8. Higher Education institutions and students; 9. Promotion of attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area; 10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). It should be pointed out that official documents tersely state that the *social dimension of higher education* (an action line put forward and repeatedly requested by the National Unions of Students in Europe as a consulting member in this process) is to be understood as an overarching or transversal action line, with no additional explanation being provided for its concrete application. (cf. Work programme 2003-2005 for the Bologna Follow-Up Group, 24 March 2004, http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Bologna/maindoc/BFUG_workprogramme2003-05.pdf)

⁹ A typology of "policy rationales and approaches to cross-border education," drawn up by the OECD, presents

interpretation that creating conditions for competition among economic-political institutions and spaces determines the nature and rhythm of the Bologna Process (see, among others, Amaral and Magalhães, 2004; Neave, 2004).

2.2.2. A new trilogy: Quality assurance, accreditation, recognition

The Bergen Conference of Ministers defined three major policy development areas directed at achieving the goals agreed upon for 2005-2007, presented as “key characteristics of the structure of the EHEA” (cf. *The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals*, pg. 6). Thus, the intense activity taking place in erecting a new regulation framework in which institutions operate (Dale, 1997a) involves: a) a converging model grounded on the definition of a measurement unit (the European credit) used in the area of vocational training and in higher education, which allows similar or matching standards to be defined for a large number of courses, diplomas and institutions; b) defining a single system of degrees which may display minimal variations, nevertheless countered by the suggestion of a preferred Anglo-Saxon version of 3+2 years, or 180+120 European credits, for the first two cycles; c) the endeavour to establish evaluation, quality assurance and accreditation systems grounded on bodies and procedures to be articulated at both national and transnational level (cf. Antunes, 2005b).¹⁰

The central position taken by standardising, codifying and measuring operations in the learning process (the ubiquity of European credits, as a measuring unit, and of outcomes as codification and standardisation of learning) heightens the suspicion that the direction of this process will result first and foremost from the commercial, rather than essentially cultural, exchanges thus made possible. Quality, transparency and comparability, as key aims of the European Higher Education Area, are terms divested of cultural density, incapable of describing, expressing or mobilising cultural exchanges and fertilizations which are mutually desired and enriching, in consonance with a project committed to cooperation and cosmopolitanism. Establishing a measuring unit claiming eventually to become a universal

four modalities: (i) mutual understanding (carrying a long history, of which the Socrates-Erasmus programmes promoted by the European Union are, among other, presented as examples; (ii) skilled migration; (iii) revenue generation; (iv) capacity building (these approaches, which emerged in the 1990s, have a strong economic emphasis) (cf. OECD, 2004: 4-5)

¹⁰ Andreas Fejes argues that the Bologna Process is a standardising technique (of which the European Credit Transfer System [ECTS] and the supplement to the diploma are part) associated to the technique for determining objectives, both representing modes of governing, i.e. of constituting and managing subjects (universities, nations, states, citizens) (Fejes, 2005: 14 e ss.).

translation of educational and learning processes threatens to slide quickly from the outline of a caricature to a dangerous and powerful means of emptying and impoverishing the complexity of educational dynamics and of intercultural relations. In this sense, the prospect of a (*global*) *casino culture*, based on commercial exchanges in learning processes which, as Bernstein argues, circulate without ever affecting subjects (Bernstein, 1998), appears as the ever more likely horizon as a result of developments and courses of action at present effectively in place.

For their part, the systems of quality assurance represent, according to some specialists, a new *evaluative and normative stratum* between institutions and administration, whose “strategic goal” is to “inject the principle of competition between individual universities,” representing an expression of that “curious European paradox” which consisted of the State “injecting the market principle into higher education” (Neave, 2004: 8, 9; Afonso, 1998: 76).

Still according to other scholars, the accreditation model adopted in the context of the USA higher education system, currently undergoing a crisis and the target of wide-ranging critiques, appears to be the object of emulation selected to be included in the so-called Bologna Process. The US model of accreditation is congruent with a higher education system in which “the market plays a dominant role, while the federal government is absent from the system’s regulation,” and has been the object of persistent attempts to make it appear consensual in official documents, despite the fact that such proposals have been greeted by heads and representatives of institutions with opposition, controversy and discord (see Amaral and Magalhães, 2004: 89-94). Thus, according to Amaral, combining regulation by “defining ‘outcomes’ subject by subject” with “European accreditation systems will create an intolerable and stifling bureaucracy” (Amaral, 2004: 6).

The trilogy of instruments (quality assurance, standards and guidelines, recognition and accreditation) which we find in the making within the context of the Bologna Process, is associated, in the Bergen Ministerial Conference programme, to the creation of a new reality which is the provision of education services across borders. This entails preparing Europe for this expanding universe, in which education is a component of the service sector whose governance is in the process of mutating. In the Bergen document, the change in the pattern and scale of *governance* are presented as givens (a pattern of governance in which the State is not a central protagonist, in which the market becomes an important, if not the major, element of social coordination, in which supply and regulation encompass the supranational

level); what is being debated is the form and the pattern of regulation, in the above-mentioned senses. Alternatives appear as circumscribed between, on the one hand, the construction of a consolidated structure of regulation grounded on the three pillars of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition, and, on the other hand, a minimalist form of regulation determined by the requirements of the workings of the market and grounded on the interactions and agreements ensuing from this process. Thus, the view is held that creating a “common quality base” in the European context is “a prerequisite for the European Higher Education Area,” that quality assurance is part of the “responsibility [of] the individual institutions,” that recognition concerns “individuals and their need for portable qualifications,” and that accreditation establishes “a common set of norms.” The statement of “the need for a quality consensus” is combined with a call for a “global recognition system” and its associated challenges and risks: (i) management and protection of national educational policies; (ii) the sustained assurance of quality in education in regard to “commercial providers who are reluctant to accept responsibility for the educational environment they inhabit”; and (iii) the globalised trade in higher education services, which has “already become a significant segment of world service trade,” so that “in the GATS context many are concerned about the fact that issues of quality in education might be ignored and pushed to the margins.”

In this context, we find depoliticised and non-discussed options (education is a service whose nature allows it to be integrated in the set of services which are being fully liberalised; the global education market will continue to expand; in this context, regulation should rest on the pillars of quality assurance, recognition and accreditation), as well as seasoned debates and grounded choices: politically sustained and legitimated supranational education regulation has clearly been adopted as an alternative to regulation forms determined by the workings, interests and forces of the market, incapable of safeguarding “the special of quality aspects of education – specifically the interests of the weaker countries that are the potential victims of low-quality and/or for-profit education across borders” (Conference Programme, 2005: 9, 10).

As remarked by Mathisen (2005: 16, 17),

One may argue that the UNESCO conventions could constitute an alternative legal framework to GATS in higher education. The conventions are legally binding instruments that have been ratified by over 100 member states covering every region of the world. [...] The fundamental difference between the GATS and UNESCO lies in their purpose, the first promotes higher

education trade liberalization for purposes of profit; the UNESCO Conventions are concluded with the intention of advancing internationalization of higher education.

The mix adopted for this new regulation framework includes a *rule-governed form of regulation* (harmonising the credit system and the degree system) which operates *ex ante*, as well as a *goal- and outcome-governed form of regulation*, with *ex post* control (the *evaluative stratum* of quality assurance systems). The possible, and foreseeably most likely, widespread adoption of forms of accreditation at the European level (Amaral and Magalhães, 2004), or even at national level, will strengthen the normative power of such intermediary bodies with regard to the options made for the management and functioning of institutions. These are liable to deepen the impact of mercantile and competitive rationales in the sector and reduce to a minimum the values, logic and powers associated with academic work.

I argue that the Bologna Process sets off the erecting of a *new regulatory framework* in the higher education system; I further suggest that building up the European internal market, spotlighted by the polemical Bolkestein Directive and the General Agreement on Trade in Services, represent horizons directing the options concerned. The convergence around a system of degrees, the establishment of common guidelines and standards for quality assurance systems and of common norms for degree recognition suggest that we are faced with the creation of conditions both for the removal of controls and features (of a democratic and bureaucratic nature) which prevent free circulation, competitiveness and choice between courses and institutions (*deregulation*), as well as for the setting up of rules and parameters under which institutions operate (*re-regulation*), which are compatible with creating a market eventually invested with a demanding form of regulation. The change in the State's role is being completed in the context of the fledgling European Higher Education Area. As highlighted above, in this framework, it appears to be up to the public political authorities, States or inter- and supra-State bodies, to carry out *meta-regulation*, that is, setting the rules of the game and assuming ultimate responsibility, in view of the failure and abuses of regulation (Santos, 1998; Dale, 2005).

2.2.2.1. Bologna times: Echoes of days going by

In Portugal, the restructuring of the degree system has been ongoing since 2004. Its first stage has been irregular and marked by fits and starts, with minimalist involvement on the

part of institutions, their bodies and actors, under explicit pressure from the relevant authorities as regards the urgency of the measures to be taken, and with sparse public echoes with respect to a political process based on performing the obligatory rituals of information and consultation.¹¹ The reform which hopefully will thus be put in place will achieve the success which can be produced from the lack of knowledge, the lack of understanding, the distancing and the adherence deliberately wrought during the course of the few years of its gestation.

More recently, the development of the set of measures agreed upon in Bergen was publicly presented at the end of 2005 by the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, Mariano Gago, who announced the following: (i) “a global evaluation of the higher education system and of the policies concerned,” to be carried out by the OECD; (ii) “the evaluation of ongoing processes and practices of quality assurance, accreditation and assessment of higher education,” to be effected by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); the latter is expected to produce “recommendations that will lead to the establishment of a national system for accreditation and of practices which dovetail with the standards and directives for quality assurance in the European higher education area”; (iii) “a voluntary programme of international assessment of Portuguese establishments of higher education, at public and private university and polytechnic level, and their respective units,” to be carried out by the European University Association (EUA) in cooperation with the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

The legal text that enshrines these measures testifies vividly to the concerns, assumptions and directions that guide this set of options. It is a matter of preparing the country for “the challenges inherent to quality assurance, ability to meet requirements, and international competitiveness within the sphere of higher education,” an understanding confirmed at various stages, as illustrated by the discussion of “strategies” and “scenarios” with respect to

¹¹ See, for example, *umjornal*, 2 July 2004, pg. 7: “The Rector [of Minho University, Guimarães Rodrigues] states that the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education appointed a working group from the different areas of knowledge without consulting the rectors, who were not informed of the matter.” *Público*, 9 November 2005, pg. 28, also reported that “Beira Interior students call into question the implementation of Bologna,” contesting the fact that some teachers were applying rules of assessment that “have not yet been approved by the Senate, and which are based on the Bologna Declaration.” On 24 January 2006, pg. 22, the same newspaper reported that “On 11th January, the Minister Mariano Gago summoned the main partners in order to hand over three Decree-Law proposals, the documents required to regulate the Bologna Process. The Minister allowed less than two weeks for the partners to discuss and submit their views.”

quality assurance in light of the “remarkable growth in recent years in the field of transnational education and in what has been designated as new education modalities: distance learning programmes, university branch campuses, franchises, among others” (Resolution no. 484/2006 [2nd Series]: 333, 332 336]. However, since the future emerges as plural and carries within it a multiplicity of possible, or even probable, directions, we are in need of public information and debate – at national, parliamentary, and institutional level – on the horizons, alternatives, scenarios and implications of the choices made by the Portuguese government. We also need to know more about the reasons behind the government’s concerns and options, since the paucity of information gleaned from the legal text regarding the grounds that legitimise the decision made merely clarifies the nature of the political practice in place.

In early 2006, institutions were faced with the possibility of immediate completion of certain stages of the process of aligning higher education with the Bologna model. Approval of the legislation altering the Basic Law of the Educational System in the Portuguese Parliament (in mid-2005) was then followed by an exceptionally speedy process of regulation and implementation, which resulted in about six hundred proposals for course restructuring being handed in to the Directorate-General for Higher Education, up to 31 March, with a view to registering *adaptation* to Bologna or requesting authorisation for running courses, based on a Decree-Law dated 24 March and on technical directives published thereafter. Attempting to glean echoes of this period in the media, what is striking is the paradoxical feeling of vertigo and normalcy emanating from the reports produced. With respect to the Process, we find considerations that run the gamut from euphoric-expectant adherence to dysphoric-resigned quasi-laments. These reactions, however, tended to concentrate on the more immediate contours of the reformulation of the degree system or the much-invoked pedagogic reorientation, hyperbolically called by some the *Bologna paradigm*.¹²

In truth, the references which emerged in the public arena centred around a few aspects of the Process: (i) its multiple *agendas*, from the most explicit, regarding mobility, employability, competitiveness, to the concealed but ubiquitous issue of funding; (ii) *the*

¹² Some of the terms and expressions I have italicised (*adaptation to the Bologna model*, *paradigm*, *Bologna training* or courses) repeat references used in legal texts and/or press releases, whether quoting the main actors involved, or reporters. I use these terms to underscore what appears to be the official and widespread understanding of the developments concerned (cf. Decree-Law 74/2006, of 24 March).

political process developed in Portugal; (iii) the *perversion* of the objectives or the scope of the reform; (iv) the foreseeable *consequences* (positive or negative) for students.

Those responsible for higher education institutions often invoke this double agenda, underscoring especially the first facet I mentioned, although they have also called attention to the penalising effects of the much-feared reduction in resources. Faced with the vertigo that prevailed throughout the entire process of *adaptation to Bologna* at the beginning of 2006, some contested the style in which the Minister in charge acted: “This way of working is not in keeping with the normal functioning of a law-based State,” accused Luciano de Almeida, Chair of the Coordinating Council for Polytechnic Institutes (CCISP);¹³ headlines and opinion pieces published in the press also foregrounded the alienation of students and society in general from the whole process. Revisiting these opinions highlights the reiterated occurrence of such developments, which reproduce and amplify in the national and institutional space the continued, insidious corrosion of the substance of democracy, notably in the area of policy-making and development.

Other opinions tended tersely to stress that conditions on offer in Portugal for putting Bologna in place risked converting it into a missed opportunity: be it, on the one hand, because priority was given to the production of results for external and internal display as regards the reformulation of courses,¹⁴ or, on the other, because the Ministry seemed to have little inclination to provide the necessary support and resources to enable the institutions to undertake the reform (FenProf, 2006: 4-5). A glimpse can be caught in this reading that a high price would be exacted in the immediate future for these options.

Lastly, the press also registered feelings of apprehension and pessimism on the part of students, who were totally or partially kept in the dark, and who above all expressed concern and insecurity as to the value of Bologna training and diplomas: “There’ll be more and more people graduating and it’s going to be more difficult to find a job” (*Académico*, no.

¹³ The quotation is to be found in the following (con)text: “On the 13th, the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education sent out a document, marked as urgent, containing the proposals for norms to organise the files on registration of changes in courses and new degrees. The Ministry expected replies from schools to be forthcoming two days later. A difficult deadline to meet, since these have to convene several bodies in order to analyse the proposals. Two weeks later, the norms have not yet been published in the *Diário da República* [the official journal of Portugal], which means that schools prepared the files without knowing whether the law will be the same as the proposal” (*Público*, 31 March 2006, pg. 26).

¹⁴ “If we add to the formal act of law approval the hitherto unheard-of exacerbated urgency conveyed by the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education, in seeking adaptation to the new legal framework, it is easy to understand the drifting of the process as regards its main objectives. Accepting this drifting, there is nothing left to do. Everything has been done” (Peixoto, 2006: 11).

20, pg. 3); “Less time to study, less preparation, fewer job openings” (*Público*, 24 March 2006, pg. 22).

This brief account of the climate of opinion in which the adaptation of higher education courses to Bologna has been taking place, can at present only lead us to raise questions: why have so many institutions eagerly mobilised to be at the frontline of Bologna courses, in such precarious conditions and with no backing for their efforts? What are the consequences, now and in the times to come? How much longer will we still be debating Bologna in this circular and opaque continuum ranging from euphoria to dysphoria, from expectant adherence to disenchanted critique, without asking those who make the decisions about the grounds and meanings of their decisions?¹⁵

2.2.3. Projects for education in the European Union

2.2.3.1. Useful visions: The European Education Area and lifelong education

Nóvoa singles out quality and lifelong learning as the two themes that redundantly run through the Education & Training 2010 Programme and organise its three strategic objectives: “improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU”; “facilitating the access of all to education and training systems”; “opening up education and training systems to the wider world.” On the one hand, as underscored above, we find the association between *quality*-evaluation and comparability as a way of defining policies. On the other, *access for all* is intimately linked with the multiplying of means and modalities in education and training and with the assumption that *employability* depends on each individual’s capacity for valorising him/herself as a human resource and as human capital. *Opening up to the wider world* includes a number of items which point either to the world of work, or to mobility and cooperation inside and outside the space of the European Union (Nóvoa, 2005: 215-222). We can thus recognise the stamp of two vast projects in which the planned educational policies are included: the European Education Area and lifelong education/learning.

¹⁵ A student newspaper reported on a demonstration by Coimbra University students outside the Parliament building on 23 March 2006. According to this report, “The target of the protests was always the Government, for not providing conclusive explanations on the repercussions that the reform may have on academic life – “No one answers us, Portugal is adrift,” protested the Union leader. [...] The banners bore messages such as “No to Bologna, yes to education” and “Against privatisation and elitization of education”” (*Mundo Académico*, 27 March 2006, pg. 3).

I have been outlining an understanding of the contours and scope of these two flagship projects that have emerged in the context of the European Union. Seduction and ambivalence, which have represented the very core of these projects, have already been highlighted, as well as some fundamental meanings that appear to coagulate a large part of their potentialities (Antunes, 2005b). Thus, we are faced with probable trajectories involving the rupture, erosion, absorption, perhaps the replacement of current national educational systems, with the institutional consistency, coherence and permanence which we attach to them, and of the school and biographical trajectories as we know them. The incompleteness, the selectivity and the bias of such developments are continually laid bare by processes and facts that unfold before our eyes. In this way, indefiniteness, miscegenation and turbulence of contours are currently insurmountable terms to designate certain dimensions of educational institutions, while others remain as grimly policed and pronounced as ever. Following this reading, I place great value, as a theoretical-methodological warning and inspiration, on Bernstein's suggestion that the meanings of social change should be sought in the relations between the frontiers which are brought down, those that end up strengthened and those that erupt (Bernstein, 1998). From this perspective, the liquefying of some of the contours of the educational system goes together with its internal fragmentation and with the crystallising of other segmentations, limits and territories, sketching what I have been pondering as a *school of variable geometry* (Antunes, 2004).

In any event, it is important to recall that the relations between education and training, between education/training and work, and between production and education/training systems have been marked by instability, uncertainty, overlapping and miscegenation over the course of several decades, but this does not preclude recent developments from having taken on significant importance. Individualisation and privatisation, individual accountability and State disaccountability have been the directions most often associated with the lifelong education/learning project (see, for instance, Lima, 2003; Nóvoa, 2005). Available analyses tend to show some, already accumulated, consistency and much hesitation and uncertainty. Thus, consonant with the stated readings, the project of lifelong learning has been interpreted either as the embodiment of a new pact between the State and civil society – with the former distancing itself from sustaining social welfare and with the latter taking on a more pronounced role in certain areas (Field, 2000) – or as testifying to a new attribution of responsibilities and risks with regard to education (the State takes charge of initial

education, employers the vocational training of their employees, and individuals take on the quota of lifelong learning) (Hake, 2005). From another perspective, Hake argues that lifelong learning has become the “societal, organizational and individual” condition for survival in this period of *late modernity* because of the *globalisation* of access to communication and knowledge, the *de-traditionalisation* of social life, the institutionalisation of *reflexivity* (Giddens, 2000) – as an application of knowledge to every aspect of social life – and the emergence of the *risk society* deriving from the change, uncertainty, ambivalence and ambiguity of collective life in our time (Beck, 1992). Hake also points out that, both in North-America and Europe, there seems to be an assumption that “knowledge and skills to enhance employability are now available to every individual consumer in the globalized market place through open and distance learning”; he states, nevertheless, that new “exclusionary social allocation mechanisms” have emerged, evincing “the development of significant risk situations” which “affect the opportunities” of significant social groups “to participate in education and training” (Hake, 2005: 5, 6, 14, 10).

A new paradigm of lifelong learning does not necessarily have to take on these contours (17);¹⁶ there are developments and initiatives that follow different, and more promising, goals and trends, bearing in mind social development and the deepening of citizenship. However, the European Union’s directions, proposals and programmes tend to be characterised by the guidelines and by the ambivalence to which I have pointed. The flagship-projects for instituting a European Education Area and establishing lifelong learning entail a challenge which is without guaranteed returns or results: the reconfiguration, at a territorial level, of the institutional model, of the biographical trajectories and of the education paradigm, reinventing and consolidating its nature as a distributive and democratic social and cultural politics (and practice).

2.2.3.2. The quest for ‘Europe’. A common space, a destination community, a citizen-subject: New legitimising myths?

Among other scholars, Martin Lawn presents a reading of the political object and process constituted by the European Education Area that underscores its vital link to the project of

¹⁶ I will not discuss here the distinctive meaning of the concepts of *lifelong education* and *lifelong learning*, not because such a discussion would be irrelevant, but because, on the one hand, there are authors and languages (French, for instance) in which the expression used is *éducation tout au long de la vie* (see, for example, Nóvoa, 2005) and, on the other, this discussion has been developed by other analysts (see, for example, Lima, 2003).

erecting 'Europe' as a political entity. Thus, for Lawn, carrying out this design represents "a strategy of governance," "a mission" and "a distinctive form of meaning-production"; according to some analyses, a new form of governance is to be ushered in, free from State and national structures and institutions, and modelled on the interactions between groups of experts, professionals, politicians and technical staff, lacking "a constitutional position, a legislative legality, a fixed place of work or a regulated civic or business mission." We are faced with the attempt to generate an identity for Europe through the creation of a fluid and opaque form of governance which jointly shapes lifelong learning, citizenship and the knowledge economy. The assertion of this "visionary discourse" breaks with institutional and national frameworks to link up with the individual, associating education, work and citizenship (Lawn, 2003: 330, 335, 332; Lawn and Lingard, 2002: 292).

Other authors stress the creation of the "Europe-Nation" and of "a common educational space" as a hybrid process combining both a persistent and "pragmatic approach," whose effects are more visible in the everyday lives of Europeans, and an "identity approach," characterised by ideas and intentions of a heroic cast. According to these authors, the European Education Space is thus characterised by a more operational facet that involves measures, programmes and designs (methods, objectives, time frames, comparison instruments, reference levels, procedures, mobility-enhancing devices), as well as by a more symbolic facet (the values, the common cultural heritage, the construction of the European citizen) (Nóvoa, 2005: 200-3). Yet others see in the flagship project of the European Education Area the building up of an entity – grounded on knowledge, on citizenship based on shared common values, and on belonging to a common cultural and social space – congruent with the "internal market," and, to that extent, higher education and knowledge would tend to be treated as goods within that space (Karlsen, 2005: 3-4).

On the other hand, according to Lawn (2003), the lifelong learning programme appears to be decisively "useful" for delineating the European Education Area. This author holds that this political banner is at the heart of this project, since it embodies the trend to minimise formal, institutional influences, procedures and rules and relocate emphasis onto learners and issues of performance and comparison. The outline thus appears of the mutual involvement of ("lightened up," "plural," discontinuous, "densely populated") forms of governance and of learning, weaving a link of necessity and symmetry between physical, social and symbolic territorial planning and the creation of subjects. As if learning – re-

signified as an individual need and responsibility, located in learners, retaining feeble and multiform institutional links – could play the leading role, for ‘Europe’ as a political object and project, in this strategy and mode of connection, considering the relevance that education (as a public good and responsibility, located in interactions with the other, the collective, the community, with a strong institutional embeddedness) had for the establishment of nation-states. According to Lawn, the lifelong learning programme restructures the field of education, seen as a transmission of knowledge, organised in reference to the national space, through specialised institutions that are specifically adapted to this purpose. The educational field now becomes broader, including multiple functions, it is centred on the learner and focuses on performance and comparison. In this sense, Lawn seems to suggest that lifelong learning and the European Education Area take on the contours of new *legitimising myths* (Ramirez and Boli, 1987) and buttress political-cultural artefacts emerging beyond the borders of nations and States. However, scepticism seems to be the order of the day as to the possibility of these flagship projects becoming pathways and reserves for resources capable of engendering forms of governance, identity features, and sources of meaning to create ‘Europe’ (Lawn, 2003: 335).

3. Indirect effects: The European Education Area/Market and lifelong learning

The “indirect effects” of the dynamics of globalisation in the field of education are manifold and patently visible both in the reconfiguring of education governance and in the mutations in the process of drawing up educational policies. The politics of education (drawing up the agenda), as it can be gleaned from analysing the Bologna Process and the Education & Training 2010 Programme, suggests a strong congruence, if not a bond, with the setting up of the European Union internal market of services and the development of GATS, as well as with the principles and rules of New Public Management, developments which are associated with the process of “neoliberal constitutionalisation.” Setting up the European Education/Higher Education Area as a privileged strategy for responding to and advancing social and educational change, is the engine of the current endeavours to achieve the competitive integration of the ‘Europe’ bloc in the world. In this context, a *globally structured agenda* is under development through changes concerning:

- (i) the *pattern of governance* – combining scales (supranational, national, subnational), namely for regulation activity;

- (ii) the *form of governance* – a pattern and form of regulation compatible with *market* social coordination, especially with regard to higher education and the Bologna Process, but also to vocational education and training and to the so-called Copenhagen Process, included in the Education & Training 2010 Programme.¹⁷

This trajectory involves pronounced forms of democratic deficit, whereby little by little the field of public political decision-making has been reconstructed over the intervening years. The Education & Training 2010 Programme, and especially the Bologna Process, are clear examples of how nowadays the process of educational policy development is distancing itself immeasurably, in its form, direction and substance, from what we might still consider as being the principles of democracy (representativity, legitimacy, negotiation, etc.) to become illustrations of what one analyst writes: “Held against the benchmark of representative democracy, the Union shows a deplorable tendency to place legitimacy where there is no power, and power where there is a lack of legitimacy” (Nestor, 2004: 131). Thus, over the past few years, we have seen the following developments: a) *new institutional arrangements*, which are more or less feeble and/or *ad hoc*, and markedly supranational, now comprising the contexts of influence and of production of policy texts; b) the (summary and extra-legal) *reconstitution* of the range of *interests* involved, of their forms of organisation and expression, of the spaces and rules of their engagement, influence and negotiation; c) the tendency to reduce the influence of national and subnational actors and interests to the carrying out of policies.

The lack of connection between legitimacy and power, to which I have pointed, currently represents a fundamental challenge to representative democracies, and is a prominent feature of the so-called *new politics* and/or *new governance*. Even if not necessarily sharing the same theoretical-political views in their analyses, specialists coincide in underscoring the dramatic changes in the processes of policy-making, as well as the discretionary nature of participation criteria and issues of transparency and public accountability (Burns, 2004: 154ff.; Santos, 2005: 13-23).

¹⁷ I espouse the view that the *form of governance* derives from the (combination of) existing or dominant form(s) (the State, the market, the community, the family) by means of which the different activities (and scales) of governance are socially coordinated (see Dale, 1997a; 2005).

The very real impossibility of knowing in a timely fashion what the measures are which will shape the socio-political setting in the immediate future in order to make sense of it, represents the most vivid experience we have had of the dizzying changes cascading down which now lend greater depth to this “silent revolution in the field of education” (Newsletter, 2003), a situation we unconsciously tend to naturalise.

With regard to *education politics* – that is, the contents of the agenda for education, the problems and issues thematised which point to the restructuring of educational institutions, processes and practices – we find, where the Bologna Process is concerned, a set of action lines whose features reinforce the interpretation that the development of relations of cooperation and cosmopolitanism is far from representing an important aspect of the initiative, which presents itself rather, as I have endeavoured to argue, as profoundly linked to competition between institutions and socio-economic spaces. Analysing the measures announced for 2005-2007 shows that work continues on putting in place a regulatory framework congruent with the liberalisation of the sector, able to potentiate competition between institutions and courses and, further, to set rules, standards and parameters for the organising and running of the systems, possibly seeking to safeguard a demanding form of regulation. This emerging regulatory framework rests on a trilogy of instruments directed at providing education services across borders, reinforcing the relevant *evaluative stratum*: (i) systems of quality assurance; (ii) recognition of degrees and periods of study; and (iii) accreditation. The changed role of the State (of public political authority) is thus made clear, reserving ultimate responsibility for and authority over regulation, but transferring direct exercise and control of same to other entities and actors (for example, evaluation, certification and accreditation agencies).

The European flagship projects for building a European Education Area and putting in place lifelong learning are characterised by various ambiguities and ambivalences, which prominently betray the emphasis on individualisation of social and economic issues, a new pact between the State and civil society with a sharply-defined distribution of risks and responsibilities between public authority and individuals as regards education and social welfare. We are perhaps witnessing the attempt to engender – by means of these projects – new legitimising myths capable of sustaining political-cultural artefacts beyond nations and States. The desire to envelop in the same sweep the planning of the physical, social and symbolic territory and the creation of subjects appears to be at the core of these projects.

Some analysts doubt that these flagship projects will constitute pathways and reserves of resources capable of generating forms of governance, identity features and sources of meaning in creating 'Europe'.

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Revised by Teresa Tavares

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