RESEARCHING THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION IN EDUCATION – REFLECTIONS ON SOME COMPARATIVE ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION IN THE AUDIT SOCIETY

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Quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) is increasingly important nationally and transnationally in education. It is steering policy and practice at all levels and in all sectors of education in national systems, and may be understood as a new form of governance of education. In this paper, our aim is twofold. We want to shed some light on our subject, QAE in education, and especially on the political effects. Secondly, we wish to contribute to the recent discussion on comparability, especially from the perspective of sociology and the politics of education.

It appears to be generally accepted that metaphors such as the *quality revolution*[1], the *evaluation industry*[2] and the *audit explosion*[3] are powerful descriptions of the role of quality assessment and evaluation in late modern societies. Developers in the field are celebrating the appearance of the fifth evaluation wave, and the new professionals are empowering themselves.[4] Evaluation as an independent academic discipline and a society with its own journals and conferences has been taken more and more seriously.[5]

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1   Jethro Newton, "Views from Below: Academics Coping with Quality", in: *Quality in Higher Education* 8 (2002) 1, pp. 39-23.

2   Francis L. Leeuw, "Evaluation in Europe 2000: Challenges to a Growth Industry", in: *Evaluation* 8 (2002) 1, pp. 5-12.

3   Michael Power, "Evaluating the Audit Explosion", in: *Law & Policy* 25 (2003) 3, pp. 185-203.

4   Egon G. Guba, & Yvonne S. Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989).

5   Michael Scriven , *Evaluation Thesaurus* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1991).

Given its importance as a social, political and cultural phenomenon, it is striking how limited and one-sided the research on evaluation and its political, social and cultural effects has been. The unintended and undesirable side effects are often mentioned in the context of efficiency, but the focus is still on whether the stated aims and objectives have been fulfilled. One might say that the mission has been to serve the commissioners and the evaluators rather than to say something scientifically coherent about evaluation as a social phenomenon. Research has been *for* evaluation rather than on it.

The distinction between policy, politics and the political made by Peter Dahler-Larsen[6] is significant here. He points, first, *to evaluation policy* as an agreement on how it is to be carried out: it refers to content. Secondly, Dahler-Larsen emphasised *evaluation politics* as a political power game to see 'who gets, what, when, and how', referring to conflicting interests. Thirdly, *the political in evaluation* covers wider issues such as values in society, the regulation of human relations, meaning-making, and conceptions of the surrounding world. It refers to its role in shaping human thinking, speaking and acting.

We are share the view of Dahler-Larsen that evaluation policy, and also to some extent evaluation politics, have both been made explicit, but that the political aspect has been sadly ignored.

It is hard to define what we mean by quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) in education. During the audit explosion, evaluation as a concept swallowed many other neighbouring concepts, such as follow-up and planning, quality development and assurance, inspection and auditing. It could be said that QAE is a part of evaluation of accountability. Rather than offering a stricter definition here, we will refer to two notions we consider essential: first, some concepts might be more important in terms of what they do rather than what they mean[7]; secondly, the fuzzy, amoebic and scrappy character of evaluation might reflect its presence rather than its problem.[8]

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6   Peter Dahler-Larsen, "Det politiske i evaluering", in: *Studies in Educational Policy and Educational Philosophy*, E-Tidskrift, 2 (2003) 1, pp. 1-12; see also Christina Segerholm, "Researching Evaluation in National (State) Politics and Administration: A Critical Approach", in: *American Journal of Evaluation* 24 (2003) 3, pp. 353-20.

7   Nikolas Rose, "Governing Liberty", in: *Governing Modern Societies*, ed. by Richard V. Ericson & Nico Stehr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 141-176

8   Michael Power, *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

TOWARD A MORE HISTORICAL-GENEALOGICAL COMPARA-TIVE APPROACH: POLICY, POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL

One of the main inspirations for this ventilation comes from a recent paper by António Nóvoa and Tali Yariv-Mashal.[9] They put forward three notions. First, they claim that "comparative educational studies are used as a political tool creating educational policy, rather than a research method or an intellectual inquiry." Secondly, an effective cure for this, they see as a need for a special comparative historical approach. And finally, the very focus of comparative research in education should be on 'problematisations' rather than on 'facts' and 'realities'.

Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal emphasise the need for a deeper historical perspective in comparative studies in the field of education. The notion of history they refer to is one portrayed by Michel Foucault: a history of problems and problematisations located in the present:

> The question I start off with is: what are we and what are we today? What is this instant that is ours? Therefore, if you like, it is a history that starts off from this present day actuality. […] I will say that it's the history of problematizations, that is, the history of the way in which things become a problem. […] So, it is not, in fact, the history of theories or the history of ideologies or even the history of mentalities that interests me, but the history of problems, moreover, if you like, it is the genealogy of problems that concerns me.[10]

Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal's main conclusion is that there is a need for a radical re-conceptualisation of the focus of comparative study:

> The focus of comparative education should not be on the 'facts' or the 'realities', but on problems. By definition, the facts (events, countries, systems, etc.) are incomparable. It is possible to highlight differences and similarities, but it is hard to go further. Only problems can constitute the basis for complex comparisons: problems that are anchored in the present, but that possess a history and anticipate different possible futures; problems that are located and relocated in places and times, through processes of transfer, circulation and appropriation; problems that can only be elucidated through the adoption of new zones of looking that are inscribed in a space delimited by frontiers of meaning, and not only by physical boundaries.[11]

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9   António Nóvoa & Tali Yariv-Mashal, "Comparative Research in Education: A Mode of Governance or a Historical Journey?", in: *Comparative Education* 39 (2003) 4, pp. 423-439.

10   Sylvere Lotringer, (ed.) *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews 1961–1984* (New York: Semiotexte, 1996), pp. 411-414.

11   Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, "Comparative Research in Education: A Mode of Governance or a Historical Journey?", op. cit. (note 9), pp. 436-437.

In what follows, we shall take a step towards concretising and testing this conclusion, albeit in a modest and very tentative way. Thus, we are asking if it is really possible to re-focus the comparative study of education in a fruitful way through problematisation. We have structured this presentation according to Dahler-Larsen's tripartite distinction mentioned above. We want to know what kind of problematisations are to be found in the dimensions of policy, politics, and the political in QAE.

Policy: wishful goal-rationalism in QAE

As we mentioned above, Dahler-Larsen claimed that the policy dimension has been reasonably well studied. It appears somewhat self-evident to say that this arises from the new forms of QAE in education. Its application is seen to be producing the more cost-effective, socially efficient and individually supportive educational system that is necessary in order to create a knowledge-based economy, to support the learning society and to maintain national competitiveness in a global arena. These new forms are also considered necessary for making public organisations more responsive to the needs and concerns of users and clients, and to generate commitment to continuous improvement and self-development at all levels of the educational system.

It is no wonder, then, that the focus is on whether or not the stated aims and objectives of the evaluation have been fulfilled. The discussion is centred on issues such as what the goals are, the means of reaching them, and how to evaluate this adequately. Very little attention has been given to unintended and undesirable side effects, not to mention the consequences and impact of evaluation that go beyond its aims.

How should we understand this focus of problematisation? In answering this question we will take a short excursion to the history of educational reforms. Our reasoning is two-fold: first, QAE can be conceptualised as a reform movement in education, and secondly, education can be considered one of the oldest evaluation forums. In fact, it was in the assessment of school achievement that evaluation first came to the fore.

Two experienced U.S. historians of educational reform, David Tyack and Larry Cuban[12] conclude that we should focus on how schools change reforms rather than on how reforms change schools. Historically, it seems that reforms do promote change, but often not in the intended direction. According to Tyack and Cuban, there are at least two blind spots that explain

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12 David Tyack & Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia a Century of Public School Reform* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995).

this failure. First, the 'street-level bureaucrats', the school teachers, have their say in the implementation in everyday practice, and secondly, top-down reforms appear to ignore the school and schooling as a historically constructed socio-cultural and institutional context.

How has it been possible to ignore such essential issues as the actors and the context? It has been attempted elsewhere[13] to understand this mystery through tracing the discursive basis of educational reforms. We call this logic of reform discourse as *Wishful Rationalism*, the basis of which lies in one of the most influential modern models of educational planning, the well-known Tyler Rationale.[14] Although heavily criticised over the years[15], it has maintained its position, especially outside the purely academic field, as a paradigmatic notion according to which educational planning must start from the formulation of goals. Once determined, they guide the other curricular decisions on learning experience, organisation, and evaluation.

The most lasting expression of this linear model, at least in Finland, has been a diagram called the 'Basic Model of Instruction'. This has been presented since the 1970s in a classic form both in committee texts and in textbooks on teacher education[16] as follows:

GOALS ▶ ORGANISATION OF INSTRUCTION ▶ LEARNING ▶ EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

This linear model strongly emphasises three elements of educational planning: the goals and objectives of the action, the instruments and means for reaching those goals, and conclusions about their attainment based on evaluation and feedback.

What is most notable here is the absence of the actors and the context. According to the Tyler Rationale, they are not essential in the planning of

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13 Hannu Simola, "Firmly Bolted into the Air: Wishful Rationalism as a Discursive Basis for Educational Reforms?", in: *Teachers College Record* 99 (1998) 4, pp. 731-757; republished in *Sociology of Education: Major Themes*, ed. by Stephen J. Ball (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000), vol. IV, pp. 2112-2138.

14 Ralph W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950).

15 See, e.g., Herbert Kliebard, "The Tyler Rationale", in: *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists*, ed. by William F. Pinar (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1975); Herbert Kliebard, "The Tyler Rationale Revisited", in: *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 27 (1995) 1, pp. 81-88.

16 See, e.g. Erkki Lahdes *Peruskoulun uusi didaktiikka* [The New Didactics for the Comprhensive School] (Helsinki: Otava, 1997).

instruction. It is worth recalling that the Tyler Rationale does not determine a rigid framework, but rather gives a general direction, a motive, and justification for action. It is not through censorship, limitation and repression that authoritative expert discourse functions in modern societies, but rather through positive thinking and productivity, invitation and induction. It is a calling rather than a command. This kind of goal-oriented thinking easily underrates the importance of actors and the context, or rather takes them for granted, as natural and beyond influence.

Moreover, the new management thinking that has prevailed in education since the late 1980s, first by objectives (MBO) and later by results (MBR), revitalised the Tyler Rationale while strongly differentiating between goals and their realisation. This was captured beautifully in a speech by the then head of the National Board of Education, an architect of new management in Finnish education:

> Genuine management by results in the educational sector has two fundamental elements: first, a steering unit that states the goals and gives resources and, second, a level that creates the products and services, i.e., the schools.[17]

This was written 15 years ago and still in those days evaluation was not mentioned a single time. But times have changed. The new Finnish National Basic Curriculum Framework for Comprehensive Schools shows that evaluation has become now the third fundamental element of the policy rhetoric: the term 'education' was mentioned 36 times, while there are 380 references to 'evaluation'.

In sum, it may be simplistic, but it is useful to hypothesise that the Tyler Rationale still offers a very basic strategic logic or paradigmatic notion, especially in the area of QAE administration and policy in education, for structuring the division of work and the foci of different agencies.

Politics: unintended and undesirable consequenses of QAE

It seems 'natural' to take another example of problematisation from voices that are more critical of QAE. It is symptomatic that one such voice comes from the very heart of the industry. Francis L. Leeuw, the former president of the European Evaluation Society, entitled his farewell speech 'Evaluation in Europe 2000 – Challenges to a Growth Industry'. He warned that evaluation seemed to have been "turned into an 'industry' of its own" that was not "for people who are regulated, for people who are managed, and for people doing their jobs" but rather for "managers, stakeholders and

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17 Vilho Hirvi, "Koulutuspolitiikan suuntaa täsmennettävä" [Direction for education policy must be specified]. A statement for the media 12.8.1991.

stockholders, politicians, regulators, auditors, industry, quangocrats and bureaucrats[18]."

At the same time, the field of evaluation seems to be dominated by professional interests. One experienced Finnish researcher characterises evaluation as a field of knowledge that is

> (...) deeply divided by its philosophy, theoretical and disciplinary origins, methods, techniques, and fields of application. …Different groups do battle for creating and maintaining their own fiefdom of evaluation and pontificating about what it legitimately incorporates. No matter if it is about approaches or methods or pursuits, the entrenchment, the struggle to retain the monopoly and the territory, intensifies before it inevitably fades away.[19]

These problematisations clearly refer to the politics of evaluation: to the political power game about 'who gets, what, when, and how'. We are now in a terrain of conflicting interests.

Leeuw referred to the unintended and the undesirable side-effects of evaluation that jeopardised effectiveness and efficiency in all sectors. First he mentioned the increasing costs and burgeoning bureaucratisation in the audit society, "The audit society expends a huge amount of resources in assurance activities whose most immediate consequence is to increase bureaucratization[20]."

Secondly, he pointed to what he called 'perverse effects' and 'collateral damage':

> Reviewing studies in this field over the last 5–10 years (...), I conclude that it is reasonable to assume that evaluation, however well intended, will have unintended and undesired side effects that jeopardize the effectiveness and efficiency of the public, the private and hybrid sectors. Some compare these 'perverse effects' with 'collateral damage'.[21]

Finally, turning to evaluation and trust in organisations, he referred to the fashionable conceptualisations of the network society, the collaborative state, and 'partnering arrangements' between organisations as surrounded by trust, commitment and reputation. He then alluded to comments suggesting that "evaluating trust(-based) relationships leads to unintended side

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18 Leeuw, "Evaluation in Europe 2000: Challenges to a Growth Industry", op.cit. (note 2), p. 5.

19 Pertti Ahonen "Evaluaatio-oppia edistyville" [Evaluation studies for the advanced], in: *Hallinnon Tutkimus – Administrative Studies* 20 (2001) 3, pp. 102-117, in particular p. 103.

20 Leeuw "Evaluation in Europe 2000: Challenges to a Growth Industry", op.cit. (note 2), p. 9.

21 Ibid., p. 10.

effects and can even kill trust. Evaluation then acts as a trust-killer."

It has to be said that the general tone of the speech was optimistic and forward-looking. He saw the main challenges for the growth industry in, first, bringing evaluation to the people, secondly, evaluating collaborative state and partnering arrangements, thirdly, foregrounding explanatory and programmatic theories, and finally and most problematically, eliminating the unintended and undesirable side effects.

Returning to the Tyler Rationale as an organiser with professional interests and responsibilities, we apply it to outline the following 'consensual community' of QAE in education. The goals, means and evaluation of this 'consensual community' are influenced by the professional interests and responsibilities of its actors.

- *Goals*

First, there are educational politicians and officials whose primary interest is in formulating and stating politically correct, ambitious and visionary goals for QAE reform. Their passion is to create the policy.

- *Means*

In the second place is an army of quality professionals, mainly administrative and pedagogical planners and designers, whose task it is to implement the reform. Their professional interests are in maintaining and fostering their position through administrative and pedagogical means and instruments.

- *Evaluation*

Thirdly, there is the growing army of evaluation professionals whose interests are basically bound to their technical and theoretical know-how and to its legitimisation.

In this scenario it seems reasonable to assume that the main concern of any of these three bodies is not with the context or the actors. On the contrary, the wretched effects of reform tend to be left to those on the shop floor to deal with; in the case of schooling, the classroom teachers[22], in the case of higher education the 'front-line academics'.[23]

What all concerned share, however, including those on the grass-roots level, is the task of creating an image of education as a dynamic and pro-

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22 Cf. Tyack & Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia a Century of Public School Reform*, op. cit. (note 12).
23 Cf. Newton, "Views from Below: Academics Coping with Quality", op.cit. (note 1).

gressive phenomenon. By sweeping the institutional limitations of mass education under the carpet, it is possible to make it appear omnipotent and advanced, fulfilling its tasks and thus deserving of continuous public faith.[24]

In the same vein, Lee Harvey, the editor of Quality in Higher Education and a professional primus inter pares, recently wrote an alarming article on 'the politics of quality' entitled "War of the Worlds: Who wins in the battle for quality supremacy?". He asks, "Who benefits from the extension of quality monitoring beyond national (and sub-national) boundaries?"

He suggests that the proposed supra-national World Quality Register reflects the 'imperialistic nature of quality evaluation', and is based solely on the interests of exporters of higher education and the emerging quality-assurance profession. He ends by asking: "[I]s there any evidence or potential that any form of internationalisation of quality monitoring will benefit the learning experience of students?[25]"

This alarm bell sounded by Harvey and the military terms frequently used in the field – war, strategies, tactics, collateral damage, killers and so on – remind us of another term, the military-industrial complex, introduced by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his Farewell Address to the Nation on January, 1961. He was referring to the 'iron triangle' of the U.S. armed forces, the arms industry and associated political and commercial interests, all of which were growing rapidly in scale and influence in the wake of World War II.

In extending this metaphorical association, we ask, hypothetically of course, whether some kind of consensual community might be developing among the main agencies of QAE – something that could be characterised as 'The QAE-industrial complex'.

This 'iron triangle' would include neo-liberalist politicians, education officials and QAE professionals; its division of labour would be based on the goal-rationalist Trinity of goals – means – evaluation; and its discursive consensus would rest on the concept of New Public Management. If we cared to find one more triune to replace NPM, we could refer to the three main 'policy technologies' of governance proposed by an English researcher on education policy, Stephen J. Ball: managerialism, market form and

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24 Karl E. Weick, "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems", in: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21 (1976) 1, pp. 1-19.

25 Lee Harvey, "War of the Worlds: Who Wins in the Battle for Quality Supremacy?", in: *Quality in Higher Education,* 10 (2004) 1, pp. 65-72, in particular pp. 70-71.

performativity as policy technologies of governance.[26] With all these Trinities, Triangles and triplicities, it is more than necessary to emphasise one thing. The QAE industrial complex is not portrayed here as conspiracy or collusion: it is rather considered a discursive community that shares something Foucault would characterise as problematisation and positive unconsciousness rather than an ideology or programme.

The political: the new mode of governance

In this last section we shall consider the political in QAE. According to Dahler-Larsen, this refers to how evaluative activities shape our understanding of ourselves, modern organisations, education, teaching and learning. Thus defined, it strongly suggests culture, values and identities.

On the political level, we might thus see evaluation as a mode of governance. Mitchell Dean[27] made his contribution in his book entitled Governmentality. Power and Rule in Modern Society. His 'analytics of government' does not stop at apparent or programmatic problematisations of action, but rather considers its intrinsic or strategic logic to be "constructed through understanding its operation as an intentional but non-subjective assemblage of all its elements[28]."

The essential concern in this "very simplified framework" is "how we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate and are transformed[29]."

Dean distinguishes the following four dimensions that we will apply here: specific forms of knowledge (*episteme*), types of visibility (*theasis*[30]), ways of acting (*techne*), and kinds of identities (*ethos*).

First, *episteme* as a form of knowledge refers to the distinctive ways of thinking and questioning that are supported and constructed by QAE in education. They rely on specific vocabulary and processes for the production of truth. One should ask here what forms of rationality and expertise

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26 Stephen J. Ball "The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity", in: *Journal of Education Policy* 18 (2003) 2, pp. 215 – 228; and "Performativities and Fabrications in the Education Economy: Towards the Performative Society", in: *The Routledge Reader in Sociology of Education*, ed. by Stephen J. Ball, (Abingdon: Routledge Falmer, 2004), pp.143-155.

27 Mitchel Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Pule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999).

28 Ibid, p. 22.

29 Ibid, p. 23.

30 Greek concepts are used by Deanin (1999), except *theasis* that seems to cover what in English is meant by *visibility*.

are employed in QAE. As emphasised by Dean, "[o]ne of the features of government, even at its most brutal, is that authorities and agencies must ask questions of themselves, must employ plans, forms of knowledge and know-how, and must adopt visions and objectives of what they seek to achieve[31]."

Secondly, *theasis* concerns the types of visibility that are necessary to the operation of QAE. Here we might ask what the field of visibility is that characterises government by how it illuminates and defines certain objects and obscures and hides others. We could take as examples the various statistics, indicators, ranking lists and comparisons that relate to and illustrate these objects. These all make it possible to 'picture', in relation to QAE, who and what is to be governed and how relations of authority and obedience are constituted in space.[32]

Thirdly, *techne* points to the technical aspect of government through QAE. We might ask by "what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished" or "how are specific ways of acting, intervening and directing, made up of particular types of practical rationality[33]."

Finally, *ethos* refers to what characterises QAE in the formation of subjects, selves, persons, actors and agents. Through what individual and collective identity does government operate and what specific practices and programmes is it attempting to develop? What types of person, self and identity are presupposed by different QAE practices, and what sort of transformation do these practices seek?[34]

The so-called governmentality school has been criticised[35] for producing interesting and felicitous descriptions, but failing to make the connections to political and economic structures and societal struggles. However, this criticism does not sit very well with Dean and his insistence that "political reason is not equivalent to governmental reason, and it is misleading to use the terms interchangeably":

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31 Dean, *Governmentality; Power and Rule in Modern Society*, op.cit. (note 27), p. 32.
32 Ibid, p. 30.
33 Ibid, p. 31.
34 Ibid, p. 30.
35 See, e.g., Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1987); Anu Kantola, *Markkinakuri ja managerivalta* [Discipline of Market and Managerialist Power] (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto / Loki-kirjat, 2002); Ilpo Helén, "Welfare and its Vicissitudes", in *Acta Sociologica* 43 (2000) 2, pp. 157-164.

> (...) our study does not amount to a study of politics or power relations in general; it
> is a study only of the attempts to (more or less) rationally affect the conduct of others
> and ourselves. Thus analytics of government approaches the study of politics from
> a single, and in that sense narrow, viewpoint; that of how the political construct of
> collectives and individuals is governed.[36]

It is clear that the governmental teased out here must be articulated through political language that we are trying to do, in a very tentative way though, in the previous section on politics.

FINAL COMMENTS

We have arrived at two conceptualisations of the political effects of QAE in education. First, by bringing together the policy and the politics, we envision the QAE industrial complex as a discursive or consensual community in education; especially in HE. Secondly, on the political level, we have depicted QAE as a mode of governance constituted by *episteme*, *techne*, *theasis* and *ethos*.

Are these conceptualisations comparable to those presented by Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal? Do they offer us a springboard or a 'heuristic device'[37] for a comparative-historical journey that would rid us intellectually, analytically and theoretically of "rationalistic theories built into modern educational systems themselves[38]", **of descriptive categories drawn "from vocabulary of the naming of the parts of public educational systems?[39]"** Do the foci outlined here allow for the re-conceptualisation of relations between

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36 Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, op. cit. (note 27), p. 198.

37 Sakari Heikkinen, Jussi Silvonen & Hannu Simola, "Technologies of Truth: Peeling Foucault's Triangular Onion", in: *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 20 (1999) 1, pp. 141-157; Hannu Simola, Sakari Heikkinen & Jussi Silvonen, "Catalog of Possibilities: Foucaultian History of Truth and Education Research", in: *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education*, ed. by T. S. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998), pp. 64-90.

38 John W. Meyer, "Types of Explanation in the Sociology of Education", in: *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* ed. by J. G. Richardson (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 341-359.

39 Robert Cowen, "Comparing Futures or Comparing Pasts?", in: *Comparative Education* 36 (2000) 3, pp. 333-342, in particular p. 341; Risto Rinne & Joel Kivirauma, "The Historical Formation of Modern Education and the Junction of the `Educational Lower Class´", in: *Pedagogica Historica* 16 (2005) 1&2, pp. 61-78. .

space and time, global and local, national and trans-national, causes and effects?[40]

Answering these extremely demanding questions is far beyond the scope of our task here. Our intention is to contribute to the discussion on the re-conceptualisation of the focus of research in favour of a comparative-historical approach. We will end by citing Robert Cowen:

> What if our core question [for comparative research in education] becomes something like: what are the *codings of educational processes and educational sites* and how may they be described and explained, comparatively, in a way that captures the intersections of the *forces of history, social structures and the pedagogic identities of individuals*? (...) What if we insist for a while that much 'comparative education' should be done *self-consciously* from inside and as part of the conversation of the *intellect* formerly important in the university? (...) And that such a conversation is different from the conversation about action held in *agencies*?[41]

This questioning by Cowen demands an affirmative response if comparative education is to be more than just a cog in the wheel of the international spectacle of mutual accountability.

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40 Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal "Comparative Research in Education: A Mode of Governance or a Historical Journey?", op. cit. (note 11); Johanna Kallo & Risto Rinne (ed.), *Supra-national Regimes and National Education Policies – Encountering Challenge* (Turku: Finnish Educational – Research Association Research in Educational Sciences vol. 24, 2006); Risto Rinne & Jenni Koivula "The Changing Place of the University and the Clash of Values", in: *Higher Education Management & Policy* 17 (2006) 3, pp. 91-124.

41 Robert Cowen, "Comparing Futures or Comparing Pasts?", op. cit. (note 39), p. 336; all emphasis ours.