The Open Method of Coordination as practice - A watershed in European education policy?

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Abstract

This paper asks whether the application of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) represents a fundamental change in how cooperation takes place within education as a policy area at the European level. Based on a case study of a process that eventually would lead to the "Education and Training 2010" programme of the EU, the paper analyses how the OMC was turned into practice in European education policy. It argues that with the introduction of the OMC a new political space was created in this policy domain. The paper analyses the practices of the OMC in terms of the actors and roles that have been activated at the European level, the role of OMC education in a larger order, and its operative dynamics. The different elements of OMC show varying degrees of institutionalisation. Parts of this process have been experimental, especially as a venue of policy learning and peer reviewing. On the other hand the attention and agenda of EU institutions involved in education policy have been coordinated over time through the routines established around the goals and objectives of the OMC process. The use and development of indicators have also become well established as one of the main components of European cooperation in this field.

1. Introduction*

When the European Council launched the open method of coordination (OMC) to reach the ambition of becoming the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy within the year 2010, the effects were soon felt in European cooperation in education policy. Does this represent a fundamental change in how cooperation takes place within this policy area – is it a watershed in European education policy? This paper addresses this question by examining whether a new political space has been created in this policy domain that differs from the traditional modes of European education cooperation. Political space in this context refers to organised political arenas that frame participation and ways of interaction among actors (Stone Sweet, Fligstein and Sandholtz 2001:12-13).

The aim of this paper is not to go deep into the discussion of what the OMC stands for as a principle and the theoretical expectations that have been attached to the method as a mode of governance[1]. On an introductory note I only point to the main elements of the OMC as a template branded by the Lisbon European Council: 1) identifying and defining common goals for the Union with specific timetables for achieving them,2) establishing indicators and benchmarks for assessing progress towards the goals, 3) translating common objectives to national and regional policies taking into account national and regional differences, and 4) engaging in periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes[2].

Instead this paper provides an empirical account of what the introduction of this method has entailed for European education policy based on a case study of a process that eventually would culminate in the "Education and Training 2010" programme.

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[1] See Gornitzka 2005

[2] European Council 2000, Presidency conclusions from the Lisbon European Council §37.

This process was spurred by the Lisbon Council meeting in 2000 where the Heads of States and Government asked for a modernisation programme for European education systems as part of the Lisbon Strategy. The purpose here is to go through some of the preliminary findings of this study with a focus on the processes as they have unfolded at the European level[3].

What constitutes a watershed? The main question of this paper requires a delineation of how can we know if a fundamental change has happened in the way that cooperation and coordination take place at the European level[4]. Rooted in an institutional perspective on European integration, I seek to identify changes in the organisation of coordination and cooperation in this policy domain and the extent to which the introduction of OMC in this area has created a novel, distinct and viable political space.

According to an institutional perspective, institutional arrangements will be path dependent and not readily changed according to shifts in political will and power constellation, deliberate design and reorganisation, or environmental "necessities"[5] (March and Olsen 1989). From such a perspective we would expect that the past history of the European community in a specific policy area would be an important factor for understanding and identifying changes in the current institutional structures and organisation of cooperation in that area (Egeberg 2006: 27-29). Hence the first part of this paper presents a brief outline of the basic characteristics of the way European cooperation has been organised and the development of a European governance level in this sector prior to the Lisbon summit and the introduction of

[3] The study is based on the analysis of official documents, minutes from meetings and interviews with people who have taken part in the process (16). The analysis also draws on studies of OMC in other sectors in order to identify the characteristics of this process compared to similar processes in other policy areas.

[4] This paper has no ambition of assessing the extent to which the OMC is a sea change in its substantive effects on national policies, local practices or the performance of education.

[5] The theoretical argument is presented and elaborated in Gornitzka 2006a.

the OMC. This also presents the comparative baseline against which the transformative implications of OMC are subsequently assessed.

In general collisions or tensions between different institutional spheres and policy sectors can be a major source of change (March and Olsen 2006:14-15). For instance when the logics of one sector are perceived to be challenged by another, sectoral defence may take the shape of dispute and contestation, but also enhanced cooperation within a policy field (Olsen 1997:206-207). In empirical terms this means that it is important to attend to the wider context within which change takes place at the European level. Consequently I situate the case of OMC education in the context the EU's Lisbon Strategy. This contextualisation is used in the second part which examines some core characteristics of the processes that lead to the E&T 2010 and discusses how and why OMC gave rise to the establishment of a new political space at the European level. As such it gives an account of the main factors that enabled the *inception of the OMC* in this policy area.

Next, the subsequent practices of OMC after it was introduced to the education sector is analysed to see whether they represent a fundamental and viable change in the organisation of cooperation in the field of education policy. In general there are three signs that indicate whether a governance arrangement or organisation is established as a stable and viable mode of interaction. Institutionalisation of political space implies establishing rules and repertoires of standard operating procedures, attaching capabilities and resources to it, and seeing practices and procedures as appropriate and legitimate (Olsen 2001). The extent to which we find this to be the case for OMC education depends on the OMC having established a distinct space with enduring and (partly) autonomous practices and procedures for interaction. This discussion is organised along the following dimensions in the way the OMC is practiced in this sector:

The characteristics of the participatory structure of the E&T and the actors and roles that have been activated in this process: Have the practices of OMC entailed

new patterns of participation and changed the roles of the EU institutions, the Member States' representatives and the participating stakeholders?

OMC as practice in a larger order: Has the OMC process in this sector found a place in the existing cooperative structures within and outside the field of education? If OMC education has created a distinct political space within existing cooperative arrangements this could be taken as an indication of the transformative implications of the OMC.

The operative dynamics of OMC: Has the OMC implied an institutionalisation of new procedures and modes of interaction taking place at the European level in this field? Disentangling the different parts of OMC education, this part of the paper discusses what the knowledge on how they have been practiced can tell us about how established such practices have become. The discussion singles out the following five elements of the OMC: 1) framing: setting goals, agendas and timetables 2) quantification: benchmarks and indicators; 3) procedures for accounting for performance; 4) policy learning; and 5) social sanctioning.

2. The rise of a European governance level in education

Much of the history of the EU/EC's involvement in education as a policy area has tended to be described as the national defence of the systemic borders and the sovereignty of nation-state systemic control (cf. e.g. de Wit and Verhoeven 2001, Murphey 2003, Corbett 2006). Education has been perceived as an area of legitimate national diversity. In Europe education has historically been closely associated with nation- and state-building[6]. The considerable national systemic diversity – both in terms of structure and content - reflects national traditions and links between

[6] Cf. Gornitzka 2006b for a further elaboration of what constitutes the basis of national sensitivity and legitimate diversity in this policy area.

education and the nation state. Education is part of the rights/obligations relationship between state and citizen. Schools and universities are also key socialising institutions of the modern nation-state. In their democratic role, schools and higher education institutions provide youth with civic education which is a necessary component of a well-functioning democracy and a critical public sphere. At the level of tertiary education, one of the basic functions of the university has traditionally been to educate national elites and prepare them for entry into core national institutions, in particular the civil service and the national legal system. In the development of the welfare state, access to education at all levels has been seen as an instrument for social equity. And notably national policy for education has a strong economic rationale as educational attainment has been seen as a core factor for national labour markets, industrial modernisation, economic development and innovation.

Efforts to establish a European dimension to education and a common policy approach to education have traditionally met with some fundamental challenges. Integration of education systems has been off limits in terms of legal harmonisation. Education was also seen as of marginal interest for the European integration and to be found under the label "other matters" (Corbett 2005: 133-141). The boundaries of education systems and the public responsibility for education by and large coincided with the boundaries of the nation state. The boundaries have been least penetrable in the area of compulsory education and more porous in higher education, especially with respect to the universities. The European level's responsibility has been focused on mobility, i.e. dealing with the implications of and encouraging the crossing of systemic boundaries. The decisions to establish the ERASMUS and later on the SOCRATES programme were core events.

Education has also proven itself as least nationally sensitive in its economic rationale compared to when it is culturally and to some extent socially argued. The EC/EU has a stronger legal foundation in the area of vocational training (article 150 of the

Treaty) compared to other areas of education. This illustrates how vocational training and the issue of free flow of skilled manpower, with its link to European integration as a market building project, have historically been seen as an appropriate part of European integration (Murphey 2003, Shaw 1999). Nonetheless, the European involvement in the area of education/vocational training has not solely been argued on economic terms. Already in the very early history of the EC the proposal to establish a European university, for instance, had a clear reference to the idea of building/creating a European identity. Also the European education programmes have rested on a cultural rationale and were argued as a contribution to strengthening "the European dimension" (Corbett 2005).

The nation-state as the dominant level of governance in European education has been to some extent challenged in the course of the last 15-20 years. In this sector, as in other public sectors, the development is moving from state dominance to an organised multi-level system. Few would argue that the national governments have abdicated in their role with respect to education. Yet there are some rather clear signs that national governments across Europe are repositioning themselves in this sector, with respect to the regional level, to private market actors, and not in the least with respect to the institutional level (cf. e.g. Gornitzka et al 2005, Maassen and Olsen 2007). Over the years the European level has surfaced as a governance level of some consequence, especially in the area of vocational training and higher education.

The European governance level of governance in education consists of several elements. The supranational level has institutionalised education as a policy area through the establishment of the European Commission's DG for education (now DG EAC). Compared to other portfolios in the Commission's services and national administrations in education in particular, this does not represent a huge administrative capacity. Yet it implies that education has become subject to sustained attention and policy making capacity at the European level. Even though, in terms of European budgets, the European Union still "accords more importance to a cow

than a hundred students"[7] (Corbett 2006), the education programmes have expanded in scope and size. And they have been the basis for establishing many of the networks the Commission has with national administrations, transnational and sub-national levels actors (Gornitzka 2006b)

At the European level the Commission's DG for education has been far from the only actor in education policy. The DG for education has been in interplay with other European institutions, with the Education Council, and with the education committee in the European Parliament. In the difficult decision concerning the education programmes (both the Erasmus and Socrates decisions), the Commission has reportedly formed an alliance with the European Parliament to face the Council of Ministers (de Wit and Verhoeven 2001, Benedetto 2005, Steunenberg and Selck 2006: 70-76). Also the European Court has played a very important role in defining the role of the European level (Shaw 1999).

In sum the European governance level represents a composite set of processes and actor constellations. It is nevertheless a level that cannot rival the legal and financial means of governance nation states have at their disposal or what is found in other policy areas of the EU. In particular, nothing in the formal legal parameters has changed in the Treaty when it comes to the principle of subsidiary and to respecting the national prerogative in education. The TEU articles 149 and 150 still assign the EU the role of encouraging the Member States to cooperate in education and in the area of vocational training to support and supplement the Member States.

[7] Comment made by the Commissioner Marin in connection with the Erasmus decision in 1986-87, quoted in Corbett 2005: 140.

3. The inception of the OMC in European education policy

3.1. Education in context: the Lisbon strategy

The development of a governance level relevant to education at the European level is important for understanding how the OMC concept was received and interpreted in this sector. Nonetheless it is of relevance to point to two non-sector specific processes as a backdrop for understanding OMC in education. The Lisbon European Council represents the confluence of two general processes – the process that lead to the Lisbon diagnosis of the shortcomings of the European knowledge economy and the acknowledgement of this as a common European concern, and the search for new modes of governance in the European Union.

How OMC in education evolved cannot be seen in isolation from the development of the EU as an economic and social project that was expressed in the Lisbon Strategy. As we have seen the EU's involvement in European education was not an invention of the Lisbon European Council. Nonetheless, the Lisbon process is a landmark for European education policy. It is also an illustration of the way in which the education sector is linked to and influenced by developments in other policy areas – as when education is in the interface between the economic, cultural and social policy. Education received attention in Lisbon as part of a much larger agenda and political project. The whole knowledge and skills area was defined in Lisbon as a necessary component of an economic and social reform strategy. The condition of the European knowledge economy was described as in dire straits. The Commission has also in the education sector's contribution to the Lisbon strategy used a similar urgent tone of voice. Arguably, the Lisbon strategy has both implied a strengthening of the visibility of the education sector at the European level as well as an opening up of the sector to influences from other policy areas. The main point in the context of this paper is to underline the importance of considering the link to

other policy areas for understanding the inception and evolution of the OMC in education.

A second parallel general development of relevance concerns the European level search for new, complementary and alternative modes of governance with a background in what was defined as crises or blind alleys of EU's decision-making processes. Prior to the Lisbon European Council Member States had been unwilling to transfer further legal competencies to the European level while at the same time there was an expectation for the Union to take common action and "deliver" (NEWGOV 2006: 10). The search for new modes of governance was not restricted to the European level, but also occurred at the national level. The general search for new ways of steering has been identified as a development from *government,* characterised by hierarchical decision making dominated by public actors, to *governance* with non-hierarchical decision making and participation from both public and private actors (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006). Yet with the focus on the EU's democratic and performance deficit, the governance debate at this level was acute. In the literature on European governance, the term governance is specifically linked to the idea of supplementing and developing alternatives to the Community Method and to the emphasis on hard law as means of integration.

New modes of governance, such as the OMC, share their genealogy with new ideas of public governance also at other levels than the European. Concerning the national level the claim, especially in the British governance literature, has been that the state's ability to steer and control has been weakened by the emergence of networks of private, sub-national and state actors, and that the state is eroded by market oriented reform and the introduction of quasi-markets within the public sector (Rhodes 1997, Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003). In education policy the governance challenges for the European level rest in particular on the fact that Europe cannot operate with new modes of governance in "the shadow of law or hierarchy". While national governments with respect to education can experiment with and turn to

networked governance and market oriented reforms, they can still have significant control over public spending on education and over its legal framework. If voluntariness and networking do not work at the European level, there is very little European legal recourse. So the governance challenge at the European level has different parameters than at the national level. In the story of the OMC, the Lisbon summit became the opportunity to launch a method that in principle could enable a common European approach also in education, an area of national sensitivity and legitimate diversity.

3.2. Establishing the "Objectives Process" and E&T 2010

Launching a principled method and announcing OMC processes do not necessarily imply that they become practice. Initially the OMC process in education materialised as what was referred to as the "objectives process". This process was spurred by the Lisbon European Council invitation to the Education Ministers of Europe to formulate the future goals for the education sector. In 2001 three strategic objectives were adopted that concerned the improved *quality and effectiveness* of education, *access* to education and to the goal of *opening up* national education and training systems to society and "the wider world"[8]. This was turned into a 10 year work programme were 13 objectives were specified[9]. Subsequently a work organisation was set up around these objectives, and from early 2004 other parallel processes were added to the process in order to include the EU and Member States' work with the Bologna process in the area of higher education and the Copenhagen Process for vocational education and training (see below). From then on the OMC process in education was referred to as "Education and Training 2010".

[8] Adopted by the European Council, Stockholm 2001 (Presidency conclusions 23/24 March 2001).
[9] Cf. European Commission: Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe, adopted by the Education Council and the Commission on the 14th February 2002. OJ C 142. Brussels 14 June 2002). Work programme approved by the European Council 2002 (Presidency Conclusions 15/16 March, 2002)

Compared to the EU's previous decision-making concerning education, the Education Council was remarkably agile in coming to an agreement on the three strategic goals. This was done on the basis of the Commission's preparatory work. Already one year after the Lisbon summit, the European Council formally adopted the three strategic goals. In 2002 these were translated into a 10 year work programme for the modernisation of European education. Compared to the hesitant (verging on downright hostile) attitude towards committed cooperation in this sector only 15-20 years earlier, the will to agree on common goals was seemingly taken to another level[10]. In the early 2000s the question was apparently no longer whether it was a good idea to coordinate Member States' education policy, but how this could be made possible. The goals that education ministers agreed on were nonetheless at a very general level and hardly touched any controversial or sensitive issues. Contrary to the decision on size and profile of education programmes, these decisions did not concern any obvious and immediate distributional effects of the Community's budget, and thus carried less potential for political controversy. Underlying the process was also the reference to that this was done respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the Treaty provisions concerning education and training.

The establishment of OMC education seems to indicate a change of attitude towards European coordinating efforts among European Ministers of Education. Attitudes had been made "tender" through years of cooperation at the ministerial level and at the level of directors general. By the end of the 1990s the Council configuration for education had shown some frustration over a lack of a common and sustained agenda. Rotating Presidencies implied that the agenda for the meetings of the European Ministers of Education was ruptured every 6 months. Issues were raised

[10] The decisions to establish Comett and Erasmus from the late 1980s, had the willingness of Education Ministers to cooperate commented upon in the following way: "Ministers of education had not been willing to make any type of Community decision –even the non-binding instruments used in education - since the directive on 1977 on education of migrant workers' children" (Hywel Ceri Jones, former Director for Education in the Commission quoted in Corbett 2005: 132).

and lowered according to the Presidencies' varying priorities. Similar frustrations were noted within the DG EAC[11]. During the Finnish presidency (fall 1999), the Education Council had already made a resolution to introduce what was referred to as the "rolling agenda model" as a new working procedure for "a number of common problems [that] had been identified on which – notwithstanding the diversity of systems – Member States could work together"[12]. This model included a focus on the possibility of developing common indicators and benchmarks.

A second element in the inception of the OMC in education concerns European cooperation in the field of employment policy. Prior to the Lisbon European Council, the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the Luxemburg Process had already included lifelong learning as an area of cooperation (Pochet 2005:47). This implied that education as a policy area was defined as part of the employment strategy and the decisions with implications for core educational issues were not decided by Education Ministers, but by national ministers running the employment portfolios, and prepared by DG Employment and not the DG EAC[13]. The skills and educational "elements" of the EES were then also followed up nationally (in the National Action Plans) primarily by the Ministries of Labour, not the Ministries of Education. Cooperation in the field of employment also has a different Treaty basis that allows the EU to issue guidelines under the Employment Title of the Amsterdam Treaty.

There were also differences in how issues were framed. Especially the concept of lifelong learning seems to have had a different meaning when defined as part of employment policy rather than when seen as a generic education policy issue. The DG EAC used a wider definition of lifelong learning that included all levels of education, schools, universities and vocational training, as well as non-formal learning. When Ministers of Education in the EU became aware of this, the need to

[11] Informant interview, December 2005.
[12] 2224th Council meeting – Education 13453/99 (Press 378), p. 8.
[13] Informant interview, December 2005

"reclaim" European cooperation in the area of lifelong learning from the EES became a spur for the educational cooperation that was boosted by the introduction of the OMC[14]. Also the DG EAC had already worked extensively on a lifelong learning agenda: In 2001 the Commission came with a Communication on Lifelong Learning[15], based on the work on a lifelong learning strategy for the EU that had taken place from the mid-1990s on[16]. This agenda had also been subject to an extensive consultation process with Member States and stakeholders. The establishment of OMC education could then be read as a sector defence enacted by the core European institutions in the field of education. The "collision" that contributed to creating new political space in the case of OMC education was between the cognitive and normative understanding of "education and learning" as part of labour market policy, rather than framed as an education policy issue. Education ministers and the DG EAC headed the defence of the sectoral logics by the opportunity provided by the concept of the OMC.

Third, one should not be oblivious to the fact that just prior to the Lisbon 2000 summit the European ministers of education had embarked on a grand scale experiment in the coordination of higher education systems to establish the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna process. It is likely that this might have had an effect on the will to enter a cooperation programme such as "the objectives process" and the E&T 2010 (cf. below on the relationship between the Bologna process and OMC education).

The fourth factor that seems to have been important for how the OMC concept was received in this sector is the presence of "OMC-champions" within DG EAC. The whole process of establishing and elaborating the OMC education was all along

[14] Informant interview December 2005.
[15] European Commission 2001: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality. COM (2001) 678 final. Adopted by the Commission on 21 November 2001.
[16] Cf. especially the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning and the Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning from 200, SEC (2000)1832. Thanks to Jens Bjørnavold for pointing out this aspect.

anchored in the Education Council, with also the European Council playing a catalytic role. But already from the very start the everyday engine of the process was located within the DG. Part of the DG seems to have been very attentive to the Lisbon Council and especially the messages given on the "new method"[17]. The Lisbon summit also provided a diagnosis of a Europe challenged by globalisation and the new knowledge-driven economy: European education systems would have to adapt to the demands of the knowledge economy/society, in particular in terms of investments in human resources, increasing education attainment levels, new basic skills and mobility[18]. DG EAC in its follow up activities to the Lisbon Strategy used a dramatic language to accentuate the need for common action to modernise European education – it "hinges on urgent reform". The modernisation of European education became linked to an overhaul of Europe envisaged in the Lisbon strategy.

With the resonance the message got in the DG EAC, there was a ready "translator" of the OMC concept. It prepared, organised and orchestrated the practical implementation of the OMC education. The initial organisational set-up for the OMC in education was the work of DG EAC. It comprised a set of thematic working groups under the Commission, and a core working group for indicators and benchmark. The practical organisational capacities attached to the process were drawn from the DG. The Commission also found a budget line in the SOCRATES programme to finance the OMC activities at the European level. The practical and administrative framework for the construction of a new political space in European education policy was quickly erected compared to the OMC processes in other sectors where OMC had been announced as a working method, such as in health policy, immigration and asylum (cf. Laffan and Shaw 2005).

[17] Informant interview December 2005
[18] Lisbon European Council 2000, Presidency conclusions paragraphs 25-27

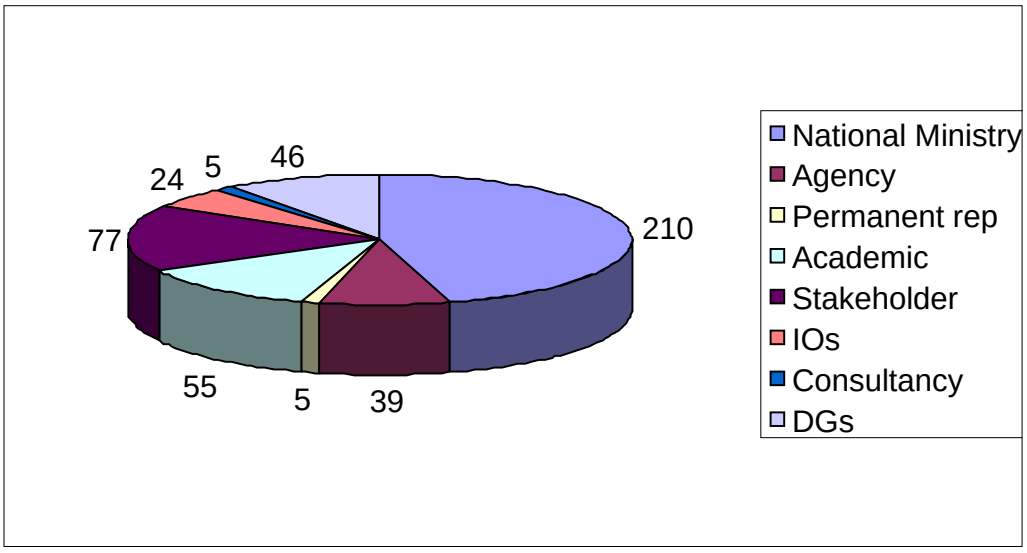
4. Actors and roles in OMC education

The pattern of participation in these processes can teach us some indicative lessons about what kind of political space the OMC brought about. There are many different theoretical interpretations of the OMC as concerns what kind of actors are activated and what role they can play with the OMC as a mode of governance. The OMC could on the one hand potentially open up for broad participation from various types of actors from different levels (cf. De la Porte and Pochet 2005 for a critical examination). One strand in this literature argues that the OMC with its insistence on soft coordination and voluntariness comes very close to traditional intergovernmental cooperation putting the Member States and the Council in the driver's seat, sidelining the Commission (cf. for instance Kassim and Menon 2004). The OMC has also been seen as contributing to the democratic deficit of the EU by restricting participation of the European Parliament and national parliaments and making European integration into a technocratic endeavour (Mörth 2005).

With respect to OMC education the process has involved many and a rather wide range of actors so far. Counting the formal representation in the thematic working groups that were in operation up until 2005, around 500 representatives met on a regular basis, although with varying intensity. Figure 1 summarises the participatory structure in the work organisation of the OMC in education prior to 2005[19] and below some main patterns of participation are highlighted.

[19] Systematic quantitative information on the participation under the reorganised work organisation of the E&T is not yet available.

Figure 1: Participants in OMC education thematic working groups according to organisational affiliation



Note: based on list of participants in the working group report from 2003/04, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html

4.1. EU institutions as actors in OMC education

Although representatives from the DGs are outnumbered by other actors in the working groups (cf. figure 1), there is little cause for claiming that the Commission has been sidelined by the OMC. Rather on the contrary, it may seem that the DG EAC now has more leeway as an arena and hub for education policy in Europe compared to the pre-Lisbon situation[20]. DG EAC has actively promoted the "objectives process" and later the E&T 2010 as an OMC process. It has been the organiser that has carried the process and pushed it at the opportune moments[21]. DG EAC has also used its formal instruments actively and filled the process with Commission Staff Working Papers, Communications and Draft recommendations of

[20] It could also be argued that the OMC has made an impact in the internal organisation of the DG – a recent reorganisation of DG EAC made an explicit distinction between policy orientated units versus units dealing primarily with the education programmes.
[21] Informant interview August 2006.

the Council and the European Parliament[22]. According to a survey by Laffan and Shaw (2005: 23), 11 Communications in the area of education and training made explicit reference to the OMC in the period from 2000 to 2005. DG EAC seems to be more centrally positioned compared to other OMC processes, such as the OMC for the 3% investment target in research (cf. Gornitzka 2006a). The EU agencies in the area of vocational education and training have also had a role in the E&T 2010: CEDEFOP's involvement and the European Training Foundation's work for the new Member States constituted a basis for the E&T[23] especially in view of the consequences of enlargement.

The Commission's DG EAC has, however, sought the endorsement of and operated with backup from the Council. This is *inter alia* evident in the Joint Reports of the Council and the Commission on the progress under the E&T. Since the 2000 Lisbon European Council, OMC education has been a persistent item on the Council's agenda and that is also reflected in the number of Council acts in the area of education and training referring to OMC (Laffan and Shaw 2005:22). And this agenda has been fed by the Commission. Aside from issuing opinions, the European Parliament does not seem to have any particular important role in the process. That does not differ much from other OMC processes. Also on the basis of the OMC in education a case can be made for seeing the OMC as "bad news" for the European Parliament (Raunio 2005:9). For OMC education we can note, however, some attention and support from the European Parliament. Its committee for education produced the report "Education: cornerstone of the Lisbon Strategy". This committee is also represented in the European Parliament's working group for the Lisbon Strategy (cf. Sifunakis, Chairman of the European Parliament's education committee[24]).

[22] Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/compendium05_en.pdf for list of the main Commission documents from 2000-5 under E&T 2010.
[23] Informant interview August 2006.
[24] Interview in EurActiv, 10th June 2005

4.2. "Nationality", politics and expertise

The establishment of the original thematic working groups, Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmark (SGIB) and the current groups operating within OMC education has strengthened the networked character of the European governance level in education. Of the 80 expert groups under DG EAC listed in the Commission's register of expert groups for November 2006 about 20 per cent have been established in connection with OMC education[25]. As we can see from figure 1 the majority of the experts in the OMC working groups in the first phase of OMC education were experts from national Ministries of Education. The point of departure for this process was the politically determined common objectives and the political intent to embark on a modernisation of European education. In OMC education the link to Member States' policy making level has been present all along. How close these representatives are to national policy making in education is hard to tell from the preliminary data. The range of themes covered by the numerous working groups and activities organised via the European level could be seen an indication that the OMC has forged more links in new thematic areas between the national and supranational levels of governance in education.

The Commission's DG EAC has taken the responsibility for writing most of the documents that have been produced in this setting, yet the actual manpower assigned from the Commission has been very limited. The Commission for instance outsourced part of the work on assessing and systematising the national progress reports delivered in 2005. In OMC education, the Commission depends on establishing networks for policy development and implementation, as is the case in so many other areas (Egeberg 2006). Through the work of the thematic working groups and the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks the European governance level has strengthened its administrative and expertise capacity. National

[25] See http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert

experts and representatives of NGOs are part-timers in European policy making; nonetheless they represent a significant "work force".

The interviewees and the written documentation from the process leave traces of role ambiguities attached to being a "national expert". National civil servants that have participated in the OMC process as national experts at the European level are rarely unequivocally either putting the weight on "expert" rather than "national" or vice versa. The two aspects of the role of those who have participated blend the two sides of participation in different mixes. Most of all, the expertise of national experts encompasses insight into national *political* conditions and interests, i.e. knowing what is interesting and politically acceptable within national ministries and political leadership. Not unlike other expert groups under the Commission (Egeberg et al 2006), a dual role of the national experts is present also in the OMC working groups. They bridge on the one hand the European and the national ministerial level, and they represent and present the national ministries to their Member States' colleagues and the Commission's DG. There is also a difference between national experts from Ministries and the (relatively few, cf. figure 1) experts that come from academic institutions. The latter are more outspoken and tend to emphasise the professional aspects more than the civil servants. They are also, nonetheless, fully aware that this is about policy of education – arguing and discussing education policy instruments is something different from academic cooperation[26].

The Standing Group on Benchmarks and Indicators (SGIB) went in the beginning through some basic discussions on the relationship between politics, expertise and national interest representation. The Commission had already in the call for nominations as national experts to the SGIB, underlined that "This expert should not only be competent in the field of indicators, but given the central role that the standing group is expected to play within the open method of co-ordination, he or

[26] Informant interviews, September 2005.

she should also be close to the political decision-making process"[27]. The balancing of political and technical considerations is also part of how the Commission representative explicated the role of national experts in this group in the early stages of the Standing Group's work. "The SGIB should be aware of the political sensitivity of the issues at stake and that technical advice should be given taking into account that sensitivity. As such, the Standing Group is an advisory group of the Commission services" (SGIB minutes 1st meeting, p.2).

4.3 OMC and stakeholder participation

The participatory patterns in OMC education seem to have opened up a political space in European education that not only includes the experiences and interests of national governments and sectoral administrations. The OMC process has to a significant extent also incorporated main European stakeholders in education into its working organisation (cf. Figure 1). Until 2005 around 80 representatives from 35 stakeholder associations and social partners in education and lifelong learning were involved in thematic working groups at the European level. These NGOs are a very mixed set of associations, ranging from Unions with formal rights of participation as recognised social partners (ETUCE, UNICE) in the EU's social dialogues, to expertise networks (see appendix for list of NGOs included in OMC education). After the 2005 reorganisation the social partners' participation was secured in the newly established Coordinating group of the E&T.

The OMC's democratic legitimacy has been claimed to depend on the extent to which its processes are open to broad participation, also from social partners, civil society and regional/local actors (Smismanns 2006). Such participation can be argued in several ways: consideration for procedural legitimacy, for securing access of information and experiences and points of view from a broad range of actors, increasing public accountability and transparency and citizens' rights to be informed

[27] Letter dated Brussels 14-10-2002-EAC.A.4/AV/ sep D(2002)21117.

about the basis for public decision making (Zeitlin 2005:460-470). Studies of interest representation and participation from civil society in the EU in general show that instrumental arguments dominate at least the rhetoric of such participation both on the side of EU institutions and the interest organisational and civil society associations (cf. e.g. Eising 2005, Ruzza 2005). The concept of OMC and the way it is practiced in education underscores the instrumentality of such participation: the insights and experience of non-state actors are important input to mutual learning processes and in terms of securing implementation of the Lisbon agenda on the "shop floor". Stakeholder groups such as teachers- and parents' associations as end implementers can provide locally adjusted solutions. They can also contribute the raising local attention given to "modernisation of European education" in a way that neither national governments nor EU institutions can do. The Commission has in the framework of the OMC also encouraged the social partners to put pressure on national governments in pursuing the Lisbon agenda: "Pressure should be put on national governments, and the Commission strongly urges the social partners to take up the issue [the need for action in the national follow-up structures when reviewing the Lisbon Strategy] with the Ministries of Education in their country"[28].

At least at the European level, the formal participation of stakeholders has been strong, also compared to OMC processes in other sectors. In research policy, for instance, stakeholder participation has been practically absent from the "day to day" operations of the OMC for increasing the investment in R&D ("the 3% target"). In the expert groups established for coordinating this process, there is no representation from such actors. Nevertheless, the OMC research policy has organised open seminars and conferences with much broader participation, including participation from industry, research institutions and other actors in the research and innovation systems across Europe, most recently in Vienna May 2006. OMC for social policy, on the other hand, resembles the approach to stakeholder participation found in

[28] Head of Unit DG EAC Anders Hingel, 29. November 2004, quoted in "Social Dialogue in Education, training seminar", Brussels 29-30 November 2004. ETUCE Report 3/2005.

OMC education. In the coordination of policy for health and safety in the work place, for instance, civil society and social partners have been very positive to the OMC. These NGOs see the OMC as a potential opportunity for them to hold national governments accountable for lack of performance on core indicators The OMC processes in this policy area have so far been weakly institutionalised. Consequently there is little evidence on the actual participatory practices, and how that compares to the participatory practices for such NGOs in the Community Method (Smismans 2006).

In social inclusion policy the process is more settled and here the NGOs claim to have strengthened their position through the introduction of OMC, also because associations, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network have not had any formally established rights of participation in EU policy making (De la Porte and Pochet 2005). Interest organisations in labour market and employment policy have formal rights of consultation as part of the employment guidelines and have been core actors in the EES. However, at the national level these organizations have been more hesitant and ambivalent towards participating in the EES. These organizations have had concerns as to how participation in the EES may affect their bargaining autonomy (Zeitlin 2005:461-462). The participation of the NGOs in OMC education so far does not suggest any comparable qualms about participation, at least at the European level. An important actor, such as the ETUCE, clearly sees the participation as a confirmation of its role in European education[29].

The extent to which NGO participation is reproduced nationally or sub-nationally in the follow up to the Lisbon strategy remains under-researched. In the national progress reports for the E&T in 2005, several ministries claim to have involved the interest organisations in their national Lisbon agenda. Studies of OMC in the EES indicate that such organisations are at least consulted when national action plans are

[29] Fredriksson, Birkvad and Heise, ETUCE, 29. November 2004, quoted in "Social Dialogue in Education, training seminar", Brussels 29-30 November 2004. ETUCE Report 3/2005.

developed, but that this consultation is not necessarily reflected in the content of these plans (cf. Zeitlin 2005). From the higher education sector we know that the way in which social partners are included in the Bologna process varies tremendously from country to country. Some have very close communication and consultations in the national follow-up to the Bologna declaration, whereas in other countries unions have had no access at all (cf. Gornitzka and Langfeldt 2005). This reflects most likely general national traditions and rules regulating the participation of interest groups in education policy making and implementation at the national level.

5. The place of OMC education in a larger order

As pointed to above, the EU has incrementally built a supranational administration specifically for education as a policy area. Through the DG EAC there is a certain level of organisational capacity for policy development and policy making. This level relies heavily on the networks that tie together levels of governance and actors in European education (Gornitzka 2006b). The relationship between the new political space created through the instigation of OMC education and how it has evolved, also implies that it has placed itself within existing cooperative structures both inside and outside the field of education. Within the EU institutions the OMC process seems to appropriate existing cooperative structures found within this policy domain (such as the education programmes) as well as generate new activities in other areas and policy development where the DG EAC can draw on the work done within the framework of the OMC. E.g. the new generation of programmes prepared for the period from 2007, are intended to be more closely integrated with the overall objectives of the EU[30]. The ambition seems to be to integrate the EU's traditional incentive based educational programmes with the coordination process that the Lisbon Strategy has activated. As noted earlier in this paper, OMC education can be

[30] The Council e.g. underlines "the importance of ensuring that the programmes better support policy developments at the European level in education and training, notably in relation to the Lisbon strategy and to the strategic objectives provided in the 'Report on the concrete future objectives of education and training systems'"(Council 2004: 25).

interpreted as a sector defence and where the European actors in the sector grabbed a hold of coordination processes relative to their own sector. OMC education was also framed explicitly as education's contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission and the Education Council have sector ties and common interests in lifting the position of the sector within the Lisbon strategy and securing its rightful place. This bears likeness to a sector alliance between the EU institutions in education that also enlists the European Parliament's education committee. Education as a sector should prove its value to a much larger political strategy for Europe by "delivering" results[31].

5.1. OMC education and parallel processes of coordination

Prior to and parallel to the OMC process, two processes were set in motion. Education Ministers of 31 European countries (Member States, candidate countries and EEA countries) adopted the *Copenhagen Declaration* on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (30 November 2002). The declaration gives a mandate to develop concrete actions in the areas of transparency, recognition and quality in vocational training. The Copenhagen Process was initiated to mirror the Bologna Process and accomplish for vocational training what the Bologna Process was intending to do for higher education. The Copenhagen Process, however, has all along been an EU process.

For higher education the *Bologna process as a political arena* has been a site of inspiration, competition and support for the Lisbon process in education. Also the Bologna process – despite its extra-EU character and its pan-European scope – may have served to support European cooperation in other areas of education, the E&T included, because of its aura of being a successful and extraordinary instance of

[31] A point for further investigation is the link between the E&T 2010 and the EU's structural funds. If there is a strengthened association between the two then this could imply that the modernisation programme for European education would be backed by "harder" European level instruments.

European integration in very nationally sensitive areas (Racké 2005). The development of the EHEA related directly to fundamental and sensitive issues, such as the structure of higher education systems and quality assurance. As the Lisbon and Bologna processes have progressed, the two processes have become attached to each other (Maassen and Olsen 2007). The Bergen meeting's emphasis on the third cycle and doctoral education made the link with the *European Research Area,* which in turn is seen as the research sector's key contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. Apart from that, the EHEA and the ERA have lived separate lives. The Bologna process has also found its way to the Lisbon process (or vice versa) by way of OMC education. To start with the thematic foci points (indicators and the 13 objectives) the OMC education was tilted more towards other areas of education than higher education, but from 2004 the Bologna and Copenhagen process were linked with the "objectives process" in the E&T 2010 as EU's integrated policy framework for education and training. From then on higher education reform became a core object of the OMC process. The relative absence of higher education from the OMC process in the beginning can be explained through the non-EU Bologna process' "capture" of the higher education reform agenda in Europe. Although OMC education initially left the higher education agenda to the Bologna Process, the Commission had prepared its higher education policy position through the work on the Communication "The Role of the Universities in a Europe of Knowledge"[32].

After having initially been sidelined, the Commission has also gained a stronger role in the Bologna process. The Commission explicitly linked the Lisbon agenda to the European Higher Education Area. This link is also evident in the national progress reports of E&T 2010 from 2005. In these documents, and the Commission's analyses of them, the accomplishments towards establishing the European Higher Education Area are cashed as part of the education sectors delivery for Lisbon. In 2005 the Commission established a group for coordinating E&T 2010 in the area of higher education. More recently the Commission has explicitly singled out the Universities

[32] COM(2003) 58 final

and their role in the Lisbon process[33]. Higher education and the universities may be argued to be in a special position within the Lisbon process as the focal point of Europe's research and higher education policy. The Presidency Conclusions of the March 2006 meeting in Brussels also focussed on European universities and the need to raise the level of private investment in higher education[34]. The Education Council's input to the same meeting, on the other hand, emphasised the entire education spectrum and "key competencies" as the priority in the following up of the Lisbon strategy[35].

The OMC process in education seems then to have been a magnet attracting other processes of coordination in European education. As from 2004, higher education and vocational training joined the modernisation programme for European education that operated with the OMC at its heart. This also marked a change in the work methodology of the process. The OMC's basic work organisation underwent an overhaul at the European level when most of the thematic working groups were replaced with Clusters and peer learning activities[36] and the Education and Training 2010 Coordination Group was established. The list of objectives was no longer the single organising principle of OMC education.

5.2. OMC education in the international order of education statistics

OMC processes in other areas, such as tax, youth, health care and immigration, seemingly stalled at the definition of common indicators (Laffan and Shaw 2005). OMC education, on the other hand, delved straight into developing and using

[33] European Commission: "Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling higher education to make its full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy" COM(2005) 152 final.
[34] Brussels European Council 23/24 March, Presidency conclusions §23,24, and 25, 7775/06 CONCL1
[35] Council (education) 2006, Council of the European Union 6150/06 (Presse 42), Press release 2710th Council Meeting, Education, Youth and Culture, Brussels, 23 February 2006: p.8.

quantitative indicators. OMC education started with the clear message of building on existing data. Nevertheless, a core activity was identifying statistical blind spots and indicators adjusted to the political project of education in the Lisbon Strategy. Through OMC education, the EU has been strengthened as a "centre of calculation", especially relative to the indicators the OECD provides in the area of education. With the instigation of OMC education, the EU entered an already established indicator- and statistical order that encompassed national, European and international cooperation in the production of educational statistics and indicators. This established order includes first of all the OECD as a producer of international educational statistics and surveys, the common OECD/UNESCO/Eurostat data (UOE) based on national statistics, including key data on public investment in education, data on teachers, students and candidates. It comprises Eurostat's own surveys (especially Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Labour Force Survey, EU-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), and also the collection of secondary national data of special European interest beyond the UOE. Eurostat also conducts it own Adult Education Survey (cf. TF AES (Task Force on Adult Education Survey) 2005). Outside the EU, the OECD's PISA studies and IEAs (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) TIMMS study are well-established international studies on learning outcomes.

These international statistical organisations cooperate; they nonetheless represent different regimes for international cooperation. With the strong focus that was put on using and developing quantitative indicators, OMC education was brought straight into the complex relationship between national producers of statistics, Eurostat, the intergovernmental cooperation in statistics (OECD) and transnational actors in educational surveys (IEA). This has proved to be not an altogether easy relationship, especially not with respect to the dominant international actor in this field, the OECD. OMC education has had to define its relationship towards this actor and how to juggle the (mutual) dependencies between the EU and the OECD.

OMC education represents undoubtedly an important step for developing a numerical information system at the European level in the education area. Such a numerical system is in turn an essential component for making the EU an effective and legitimate polity (Sverdrup 2006: 103). The dynamics of indicator development and use in OMC education resemble the dynamics of EU's statistical history. Eurostat's institutional history is marked by the gradual use and cultivation of existing national and international institutions producing statistics rather than the grand design of a European statistical system (Sverdrup 2006: 121). OMC education's work on developing new indicators illustrates the complexities involved of bringing together technical expertise, political support and political considerations. The perfect match between the political wish list for relevant and acceptable indicators will rarely match the technical requirements and limitations (cf. e.g. TF AES 2005:5). There are sensitive questions of control over statistical. In OMC education there has been an explicit requirement that quantitative data should be politically relevant.

Political relevance is no novelty in the area of international indicator development in education. The very definition of an indicator as opposed to "mere" statistics refers to its political and societal instrumentality for measuring social progress – indicators are statistics of "direct normative interest which facilitate concise, comprehensive and balanced judgement about the condition of major aspects of society" (Godin 2001: 6). OECD's educational statistics have also been the story of how different views on the use and development of statistics have collided and changed over time. OECD's organisation of education indicators was first established during the 1980s (INES in 1988) after pressure from the US and not without controversy. For a long time, there was especially very strong scepticism about the possibility of establishing meaningful output indicators that would be internationally comparable (Martens et al. 2004:11-13).

In the early days of the "objectives process" the OECD was invited to join the meetings of the SGIB, but the OECD secretariat does not seem to have sustained its participation over time. Without exaggerating the potential turf fights between the OECD and the EU as indicator and statistics producer, a certain domain demarcation and contestation can be detected. This is not unique to OMC education, also the focus put on indicators and quantification in the OMC as a template would arguably raise questions about cooperation and conflict with pre-existing producers (Barbier 2005). Some of the core actors in OMC education perceive the OECD as dominated by the US and lacking the profile that is specifically adjusted to European needs[37]. To them developing and strengthening the EU's "own" indicators are seen as highly appropriate.

6. Operative dynamics: Between Institutionalisation and Experimentation

The OMC in education is one of the most institutionalised of all the OMC processes that have been set in motion after the Lisbon European Council (Cf. Laffan and Shaw 2005). But all elements of the OMC template for European coordination were not equally well received and institutionalised through the "objectives process" and E&T 2010. The thematic working group structure prior to 2005 did not run according to well established routines. Several of the interviewees say that there was a sense of unpredictability to the processes. Especially in the beginning of the process, the participants were searching for a definition of what this process should be about. In some groups there was uncertainty as to whether the work of the groups should be different from other expert groups the participants had prior experience with. The experimental character of the work is also found in other OMC processes. Instruments such as Joint Reports, indicators, good practice, peer

[37] Informant interviews, December 2005 and March 2006.

review and so on, have been novel to several of these settings and needed to be tested (Pochet 2005:51) which also has been the case for OMC education.

Below the way in which the various elements have materialised in the OMC process in education are elaborated and discussed with respect to how routinised or experimental they have appeared to be. This is used as a basis for making a preliminary assessment of the novelty and sustainability of OMC in European education policy.

6.1. Framing: setting goals, agendas and timetables

The OMC processes that have been launched all take common objectives as a starting point (Laffan and Shaw 2005:15). In this respective OMC education with its three strategic objectives is no different – yet compared to many other areas where OMC processes have been announced, the OMC in education is characterised by the establishment of *one package* and the E&T as the OMC embodiment of a programme for the "modernisation of European education" that identified a set of specific objectives. Common goals and specified objectives are a new element to the sector. We have already pointed to that this is an indication of change in the political will to define common problems in European education. Such identification can also unleash the expected coordinating capacity of the convergence of ideas (Dehousse 2002: 15; Radaelli 2003).

Framing of beliefs and cognitive structures in the case of OMC contain several elements. One of them is the procedural aspects of the OMC that cater for the coordinating forces of *agenda setting and structuring of attention*. This includes the impact of repetition and time schedules set by the OMC processes. The organisational characteristics of the processes may influence coordination by creating routines and schedules that have to be attended to and that confine actors to a specific logic and time table from which it could be difficult to escape (Dehousse 2002: 20).

With respect to OMC education there is little doubt that this OMC process has made a difference in terms of setting the agenda in European education and for structuring attention of policy makers and key EU institutions. In the larger EU context, education as a policy area has seemingly received more attention as a result of the Lisbon agenda, and this may also be due to the format of the OMC. The comprehensive programme in the shape of E&T is formally addressed by EU institutions. Within the sector's own institutions this agenda is iteratively attended to by the Education Council and the DG EAC. This kind of *coordination over time* should be ascribed to the OMC template. The extent to which such agenda setting and attention structuring effects are duplicated at the national – or other – levels is yet to be accounted for. The study of the oldest pre-Lisbon OMC process, the EES, has concluded that it has contributed to changing the overarching perspective in employment policies at the national and European level (Zeitlin 2005). I cannot so far make the same kind of firm conclusion about the effects of OMC education. A question worth pursuing is whether we see the contours of a watershed in policy content when the education policy has been systematically attached to a European policy for economic growth and social cohesion. At least, the varying effects of policy framing have been convincingly argued for other sectors, also outside the study of the OMC[38].

The work of the thematic groups in OMC education can give us some indications of the potential ideational effects of this process. Especially in the beginning, the working groups devoted time to conceptual discussions. Concepts such as "Mother tongue plus two" (from the working groups "language learning") were not invented by OMC education but through that process they have been fortified as a legitimate objective for education policies to pursue. The work of the thematic groups and the Commission tried to translate the very broad agenda of the "objectives process" into

[38] See e.g. Knill 2001: for a discussion of Europeanisation by framing and Ugland 2002 on the effect of policy recategorisation

more specified definitions of problems and solutions and to frame it in a policy language that was common for education policy in Europe. With the central role of the Commission, it has been an arena for the DG EAC to gather new ideas *from* and to transmit their ideas *to* networks of national ministries and transnational actors. The ideational power in such processes resembles the already modus operandi of the Commission in education (see Gornitzka and Olsen 2006) - yet with OMC this has become more organised and expanded in scope.

The OMC process has involved surveying the knowledge status in core areas of education policy and also defining the information needs adjusted to "Lisbon and education" as a political project. This has been guided by the question: "What do we need to know in order to answer the call for a 'radical transformation of national educations systems' "? OMC education is also characterised by the effort to define the rather vague "policy theory" underlying the Lisbon Strategy of what it takes to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, and what role education can play. It is not obvious how the different elements of the 13 objectives of the OMC education are linked and how they work together. The Lisbon strategy and the method it carried follow a logic that assumes that overarching goals can be organised in objectives, subgoals and instruments, and that indicators can to some extent translate goals into measurable entities. How different elements of a strategy are linked and what the causal connections are, remain uncertain. This became especially evident in the attempts to establish composite indicators in the OMC process (Kaiser 2004). The uncertainty of tasks and procedures found especially in the early stages of the process was seen as related to the fact that the work organisation was structured according to the objectives. Some of these objectives were not readily translatable into a mandate for the expert groups and they were seen as "talking shops". In comparison the expert groups that have been involved specifically for the Copenhagen process in the area of vocational

educational and training operated with more specific mandates and timeframes and with the aim to contribute with tangible outcomes[39].

6.2. Institutionalising quantification: benchmarks and indicators

Through OMC education, work with indicators for education policy at the European level is in a different position compared to the pre-Lisbon situation. The quantified aspects of the OMC process have been most deeply institutionalised, and this is the most well-established part of the OMC in education, also compared to other sector OMCs. The Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks has had persistently high attendance rates and a legitimated and visible role in the E&T 2010 programme. The work of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks was guided by the Commission insisting on prioritising quantitative data in order to give a "strong, policy relevant message"[40]. OMC as a soft mode was seen to rely on availability of "hard facts". The significance attached to indicators was confirmed by the establishment of a centre (CRELL) as part of a Commission JRC in Italy in 2005 in order to support the EU's indicator development in the area of lifelong learning. This can be directly attributed to the OMC process. Furthermore, in 2005 the Council decided on new indicators and the following year the legal basis for Eurostat education statistics was strengthened. In 2006 the EU institutions decided to undertake an "OMC specific" survey in the area of foreign language competencies[41].

[39] Informant interviews August 2006 – these outcomes include Euro pass (cf. Decision no 2241/2004/EC), Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (May 2004), development of a European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET), and European Qualifications Framework (http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st14/st14478.en06.pdf)

[40] SGIB minutes 15. July 2005:5.

[41] The European Indicator of Language Competence. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (August 2005) COM(2005) 356 final. Council (education) 18-19 May 2006. Outcome of proceedings.

Benchmarking is in general defined as a systematic process for measuring and comparing work processes in an organisation with processes in other organizations (Arrowsmith et al. 2004). Transferred to OMC education, benchmarks were seen as reference points for where the EU would like to be in 2010. The benchmarks pin point the areas in need of special efforts in order to raise the quality of education and training in Europe. These benchmarks and the rest of the list of quantitative indicators are not only testimonies of the status of numerical information in the field of education, they signal also the political intentions and what was defined and agreed upon as common concerns.

We have already seen that with OMC education, the EU entered into domain contestation with the established statistical order. Indicator development involves politically significant decisions and cannot be reduced to technical issues. Europeanisation "by figures" (Bruno *et al* 2006) makes decisions on indicator use and development important as political decisions – who, and on the basis of which criteria, should determine what aspects of social life are to be made numerically comparable across national systems? These are not trivial questions. Any political system depends on information. The informational basis for political decision making and public policy making is not irrelevant to the quality of them (March 1990). In E&T 2010 this also concerns defining common European standards for what EU institutions, national government and the public will have quantified information about. Indicators create a common numerical language which in turn enables Member States and other actors to monitor each others performance.

In terms of ideational based governance, indicators are significant because they black-box certain world views. Once a statistical category is established, the priority given to longitudinal comparison makes it hard to change. Statistical categories represent significant investments and "sunk cost". In E&T these considerations have come to the surface in the attempt to establish indicators adjusted to European needs and the ambitions harboured in the Lisbon strategy. Indicator work undertaken in

OMC education did not stay clear neither of technical problems nor of political controversy. Quality and efficiency in education are not politically neutral categories, nor are they easily measured. The main point to be made here is that the numerical information that has been used and developed in OMC education is in most likelihood going to structure what European education systems know about themselves and others in the future. It represents strong frames of reference for policy development and discussion.

6.3. Accounting for performance: reporting

The periodic monitoring and regular/annual national reporting that is part of the OMC-procedures at the European level, can be assumed to influence the attention structures in national policy-making processes as well as at the European level. They impose a specific task on the national policy-makers, especially by setting deadlines at which point national governments are expected to produce reports that can be fed back into European level OMC processes. In the education sector, routines for reporting on the progress to the Council and the European Council have been set in place at the European level, with documents prepared by the Commission. DG EAC is responsible for writing the official documents that go to the Education Council. The documents going to the European Council are written jointly by the Commission and the Education Council, among them the core documents on the progress towards the Lisbon education objectives[42]. The Commission's draft for the first joint interim report contained a serious and rather pessimistic picture of the progress made towards reaching the goals set for Education and Training systems in Europe[43]. This document called, amongst other things, for Member States to submit each year from 2004 a consolidated report on all the actions taken to increase "the impact and efficiency" of the OMC[44]. The joint report of the Council and the Commission also contained similar references to the need for a more coordinated

[42] "Modernising education and training: A vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe" Council 01/04/06 C79/01, "'Education and Training 2010' – The success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms" Council doc 6905/04 EDUC 43.
[43] COM(2003) 685 final/ SEC(2003) 1250.
[44] COM(2003) 685 final: 17

reporting in order to monitor progress and strengthen cooperation. The first four years of the process only two member states (Sweden and the Netherlands) and one EEA member (Norway) had in some measure responded to the call for reports on how the "Education and Training 2010" was implemented nationally. The process was very far from having a routinised national reporting system similar to the National Action Plans of the European Employment Strategy. However, in 2005 all national Ministries of Education produced national progress reports on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 programme. The very format of the national progress reports was standardised according to the "guidance notes" provided by the Commission[45]. This is a further indication of OMC on the pathway to institutionalisation.

Having thus established a reporting system signals a certain anchorage of the E&T 2010 with national education administrations. No conclusions, however, can so far be made as to whether such national reports are attached or detached from the domestic policy making. Yet they seem to have had an effect on European policy making processes. Interviewees report that the process of writing the common Commission/Council progress report was made smoother and less tense when the Commission could base its Draft Joint Interim Report on national self-reporting as was the case in 2006 unlike two years earlier[46].

6.4. OMC and organised learning

In the study of policy making, policy learning has been seen as "a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information. Learning is indicated when policy changes as the result of such a process" (Hall 1993: 278). Mutual learning is a core aspect of the OMC as a principled mode of governance. Within the concept of the OMC, mutual policy

[45] The national progress reports are structured around the main priorities identified in the report of 2004 (Joint interim report 'Education and Training 2010: the success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms" 0303 2004, (doc 6905/04)
[46] Informant interview August 2006.

learning also assumes that learning can take place across countries. Through the OMC process policy decisions at the national level can be better informed as decision-makers learn from the experience of others. Policies can be coordinated through diffusion of experiences that provides incentives for learning and sharing knowledge in interactive and iterative processes (Hemerijk and Visser 2001). Potentially the OMC represents the opportunity to establish "institutionalised learning capabilities" (Olsen and Peters 1996: 13-14). In principle there is an expectation harboured in the OMC template that despite different traditions, significant systemic differences, and lack of legal means of integration, Member States can learn from each other and improve their policies for the purpose of reaching common goals. The implication of the OMC is that the organised and routinised interaction between Member States will give more effective learning than bilateral or unorganised policy import or mimicry (Holzinger and Knill 2005).

The following quote posted at the website of IEA aptly captures the essence of policy learning as an idea in the area of education.

> *If custom and law define what is educationally allowable within a nation, the educational systems beyond one's national boundaries suggest what is educationally possible* Arthur W. Foshay in: Educational Achievement of Thirteen-year-Olds in Twelve Countries[47]

The organisation and practices for learning and peer reviewing in OMC education have lived in a tensile balance between institutionalisation, experimentation and disintegration. At the European level the organised learning through peer review and exchange of good practice of the OMC was intended to find a home in the thematic working groups. Some of the reports included examples of good practices from various national settings. Most working groups explicitly presented their work as undertaken within "the framework of the Open Method of Coordination". This referencing legitimised their work and their existence. This did not, however, imply that the thematic working groups immediately displayed an obvious understanding of what it meant to "do the OMC". The DG representatives were crucial in

[47] http://www.iea.nl/brief_history_of_iea.html

determining the content and working procedures of the OMC groups. Yet, especially in the beginning the national participants who were sent to Brussels for working group meetings described the experience as sitting there with the OMC "landing in their lap"[48] or being part of political "extreme sport" [49]not knowing what they were in for and where the work was heading.

Not all working groups under the OMC procedure had strong energy levels attached to them – especially those groups that were characterised by unclear cognitive structures and little common understanding of the agenda were killed softly by waning energy from the participants and the DGs informal assessment of their operations. Other groups could operate on the basis of strong cognitive and normative structures and were able to perform stocktaking, provide information and "deliver". The viability of the working groups, what later turned into clusters[50], was predominantly determined by the informal assessment made by the DG EAC. Several interviewees report what they felt as inexplicable ruptures in the work of the thematic working groups. For the expert groups "doing the OMC" five years after its instigation was partly still an experiment within its wider concept. This has in particular to do with the ambiguities of practicing organised learning and peer reviewing. Within the cluster organisation that is the current modus operandi, there is also a spirit of experimentation.

The Commission has been searching for a good organisational set-up for such learning to take place. Nevertheless, the Member States have learned one important lesson from OMC education – they and EU institutions now know more about what comparable information is available about education systems' performance in Europe. Surveying the knowledge and information status has been a core element of

[48] Informant Interview, March 2006.
[49] Informant interview, June 2005.
[50] In 2005 the OMC structure was partly reorganised with the thematic working groups resurfacing as learning clusters and Peer Learning Activities, that includes site visits of good practice and in situ peer reviewing.

the work on indicators and major blind spots have been identified. The thematic groups have also pooled information on national policy measures and experiences into compilations of "soft facts". Some of the working groups for instance produced rather extensive collections of policy measures in areas such as ICT in education and efficiency in education. Several of the interviewees see participation in the OMC process as important in order to access this kind of information, information about what is going on within the EU structure and European education systems. Such access has in itself been an incentive for Member States to participate. National administrations and other participants are exposed to information about other Member States' policies in an organised manner.

If it is so that exposure to information is a necessary – yet not sufficient - condition for learning, then the OMC process has laid the groundwork for mutual policy learning. The OMC education process has provided systematic insight into the performances of the Member States' education systems. At least this information is more readily accessible, organised and disseminated than prior to the OMC process, although there are partially competing and overlapping publications coming especially from the OECD that predate the OMC education progress reports. As with OECD's *Education at a Glance* the quantitative information provided through OMC education gives an indication of what is "educationally possible". The 2005/2006 progress report from the Commission that is based on the national progress reports also brings the process further towards giving a systematic overview of policy developments in the Member States' education systems[51].

Nonetheless, Member States' education ministries seem to learn more about their own system than learning directly from other countries experiences. This is both a plausible theoretical assumption and an empirical observation. There are more elements that can derail the learning cycle involved in learning from one country to another than when education ministries learn about themselves and adjust their

[51] Draft joint progress report with annex COM 2005 549 final/2

perception of "self" confronted with quantified and internationally comparable information. With the progress report of the E&T, Member States can at least begin to answer some rudimentary questions about the performance of their own education system. This may confirm national perception of the state of affairs, but also seriously challenge such perceptions (Mosher and Trubek 2003:76-77). The PISA study is of course the primary illustration of international surveys that destabilise collective readings of the quality of national schools and students. The effects of the PISA studies have probably not gained a lot of extra clout by being included in the framework of the E&T. But with the common programme for the modernisation of European education systems, also the PISA results are put into an overt political setting and an extended political agenda. The data are filtered and commented in connection with other developments in education. These are in turn made subject to political discussions, also at the European level. The PISA studies might even have changed some of the Member States' attitudes toward common European efforts in the area of education.

A prerequisite for transnational learning to occur is that information is subject to assessment and interpretation. This is also a rationale for actively using peer review as an organised part of this type of mutual learning. Peer review in international policy cooperation is defined as "the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state to improve its policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles" (Pagani 2002: 15). As is the case in the peer reviewing in academia, peer reviews vary according to who are doing the reviewing (definition of "peers"), the criteria used, and ways in which peer review processes are organised (Langfeldt 2002). There is no one standard that can be applied to international peer review of national policies. Nonetheless, what is referred to as peer review has become common practice in several international organisations, such as the UN, IMF, WTO and especially the OECD. Peer review as OECD's "bread and butter" is practiced differently in the policy areas covered by the OECD. For instance, the

OECD's Education Committee does not organise the same type of iterative reviewing that the OECD is so prominently involved with in economic policy (Schäfer 2005). There are different answers to the question of who is involved (international teams, involvement of IOs secretariat and assessments in intergovernmental fora), the procedures for when and how countries are peer reviewed (by invitation, by request, by timetables) and what is being reviewed (reviews of specific issues, thematic reviewing of a number of countries, system wide reviews, etc) (Pagani 2002, Martens et al. 2004).

The OMC concept does not in itself provide a template for how to practice peer review. To the extent to which peer review has been part of the OMC processes, it varied considerably from process to process. In EES each National Action Plan is supposed be reviewed by the Commission on a bilateral basis. In addition the Commission has encouraged the Member States to organise reviews of their own employment programmes and policy measures, and to take part in the reviewing of other Member States. The latter form of peer review has been organised as two-day events, often including site visits (Casey and Gold 2005: 26). This resembles some of the intentions underlying E&T's Peer Learning Activities.

In OMC education, as organised until 2005, reviews were also part of the process. Yet these assessments were not comparable to the formal review procedures practiced elsewhere. Several of the thematic working groups actively attempted to identify good policy practices, and the transferability of policy/practice from one national context to another was often deemed as limited. Interviewees point in particular to some key obstacles to transnational learning. In a setting like OMC education the participants are in a European policy classroom where there is no obvious established and certified "curriculum". Several of the interviewees point to how a lack of systematic assessments and peer reviewing made it difficult to establish "good practice". There were no ready made and accepted criteria for certifying the experiences of other countries as good examples to guide national policy reform or adjustment. Some of the groups spent energy and time to try to establish such

criteria, and impromptu assessed the quality of candidates for good practice that national experts introduced to the group.

Characteristics of information provided by national experts seem also to have been an impediment to transnational learning. National experts experienced at times cross pressure from on the one hand being expected to present national measures as attractive, while having first hand insight into the less attractive realities of prestigious policy measures. Incentives for learning can also be reduced as measures have long term or uncertain effects. The logic of the Lisbon processes demands visible and measurable effects within the deadline of the progress report, or at least within the year 2010.

Limited transferability from one context to another is linked significantly to the "learner". Most of those who have participated in the OMC process so far have been national experts with very good insight into the institutional conditions of national educational policy making. They make their assessments of the potential for transnational lesson-drawing in light of this insight. National laws, regulations, and traditions condition the possibility for transnational learning. Practices from "the best student in the class", such as Finland in the area of reading literacy, are not entirely replicable, and may require changing conditions beyond the control of education ministries. There are also cost factors that transnational learning runs up against, as when "best practice measures" in ICT require public investments beyond the realities of most education systems in Europe. Finally, transnational lessons have to be reviewed in light of what is politically acceptable domestically. A prime example is the Nordic countries' response to student fees as a potential best practice to increase investments in higher education.

Mutual learning within the framework of E&T also stalls at other well-known barriers to learning, especially ruptures in the link between what individuals learn and what the organisation he/she represents does. All interviewees say they have learned a lot from participation in working groups and events organised within the

OMC process. Yet several see a weak link between individual learning and ministerial action. This concerns general questions of information dissemination within complex organisations, as well as how participation in European fora is organised and anchored in domestic ministries and agencies. Participation in meetings in Brussels and elsewhere, taking part in site visits, investing in time to read documents and prepare national input are all "costs" of transnational mutual learning. Channelling learning experiences back into the domestic setting also takes effort and time if it is not a part of the regular "information behaviour" of national administrations. Domestic processing of European information seems to have been less invested in than the former "cost category". This is similar to very common phenomena in organisational learning (March 1999, Strang and Meyer 1993, Simmons and Elkins 2004, Greve 2005) and there is little reason to believe that transnational learning within the framework of E&T would be less affected by breaches in the learning cycle both within and between organisations. However, substantiation of this point with respect to the learning effects of E&T 2010 requires much further analysis of domestic level data.

According to the definition of policy learning referred to above, learning takes place when changes in policy can be identified. This is a "strong" definition of learning and use of information in public policy making. Exposure to new information about how other countries are handling core policy problems may just as well be justified as "surveillance" and knowledge accumulation. National ministries that "know more than they use" are not simply cases of wasted investment in information gathering, but a natural aspect of information behaviour in complex organisations (Feldman and March 1981). Even though insights into the experiences of other education systems are - for many reasons – not readily translated into to domestic policy change and adjustments, one should not exclude the possibility of learning *over time,* if such knowledge is activated at a later stage. National ministries participating in the OMC process may thus have accessed reservoirs of information.

6.5. The ambivalence of social sanctions as coordinating mechanism in OMC

In addition to being a site of learning, OMC in principle has been highlighted as potentially representing a podium where badges of honour and shame are awarded through the presentation of national performance data in league tables and scoreboards. Even in the absence of legal or economic sanctions, certain social sanctions and a reputational mechanism can come into play in an OMC process. The normative pressure stemming from a desire to look good or fear of being embarrassed may be a coordinating mechanism. In practice, the OMC in education shows little evidence of *overt* use of the coordinating power of social sanctions based on that type of quantified information. The formal documents that have been produced in the process have not underlined the identification of culprits and heroes, even though the Commission has in the progress reports "shamed" the Member States as a collectivity. The Commission states clearly that "the objective of benchmarking of performance and progress in the field of education and training is not to rank Member States, but rather to identify countries which perform well, so that expertise and good practice can be shared with others"[52]. So when the 2005 report identified the three leading countries in each benchmark it was done for reasons of learning rather than according to a name-shame logic.

Also the proliferation of indicators makes most countries perform well on at least some indicators thereby blurring the sharp portrayal of high performers and non-performers. At present there are no official leagues tables or single composite indicators that can be used to "shame individual countries into action". Apart from the "top three benchmark performers" in the 2005 report, countries are listed alphabetically and according to EU membership status. OMC in education has landed far from giving overt, public and country specific policy recommendations

[52] Commission Staff Working Paper. Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training. 2005 Report. Brussels 22.3.2005. SEC(2005) 419: 19.

that in any way resemble what has been attempted as part of the policy coordination of the EMU (Meyer 2004), understandably so, since there is no Treaty basis for doing it. OMC education has a wide range of objectives and indicators to measure performance, and it could be so that the OMC is weak when it operates with numerous goals. This is, for instance, the argument made by Mellander and Håkanson (2005) in their reanalysis of the indictors used in E&T. They claim that Member States deflect from the common strategy under such conditions. The ranking of countries is for most Members States sensitive to weight given to indicators and benchmarks and the relative weight given in composite indicators. Portugal and Ireland, for instance, do well when measured on average performance, but not in terms of contributing to progress towards the benchmarks. Some countries always come out on top (Sweden and Finland) or bottom (Greece and Poland) no matter the weighting formula used in composite indicators, whereas the remaining countries' rank is weight sensitive. From this Mellander and Håkanson conclude that the working ingredient of the OMC as a method is weak because unwanted behaviour and failure to perform in one or more areas can be hidden by good performance on some other indicator (Mellander and Håkanson 2005: 191).

Officially, OMC education has not underlined this mechanism; this is not portrayed as a game of keeping up appearance with minimal effort. If the E&T, nonetheless, were to carry elements of such dynamics, we should be able to observe at least that Member States would actively promote the use of indicators that present their education system in a favourable light and actively resist the ones that are "unflattering". There are certain indications that such a "national logic" has come into play as a consideration in the discussion on indicator development and use, as well as in the selection of benchmarks. But such elements are hard to document, and that in turn signals that this is seen as inappropriate behaviour. On the other hand, Member States may be less driven by issues of national prestige and image building than one might think – at least in the peer learning clusters there seems to be no shame attached to identifying oneself as a "learner".

A certain ambivalence towards the potential for and the role of ranking and social sanctioning can thus be detected in this process. There is to some extent an automatic shaming that can be read from the progress reports, because they profile the quantitative indicators. This information cannot be sugared by diplomatic language in the way that qualitative assessments can. The functions of performance metrics in the domestic context merit more scrutiny. The electrical shocks administered to national administrations in Europe by the PISA studies are a reminder of the potentials of social embarrassment among nations also in education policy. Furthermore it is not obvious how peer and public pressure work in different contexts. The domestic effects of the OMC as a social sanctioning mechanism are complex and context sensitive. For instance, in certain national settings being the best pupil in the European classroom may not be particularly rewarded (Jacobsson 2005, Vifell 2004). In the area of economic policy coordination such effects are deemed as dependent on the legitimacy of EU recommendations, how sensitive national actors are to EU criticisms, and how visible these processes are in the national public sphere (Zeitlin 2005: 476-483). The latter aspect is of high relevance – how much is the domestic embedding of OMC education dependent on the attention given to it and awareness in the local and regional policy communities and/ or in the general public? So far these national effects are among the most understudied aspect of OMC in education.

7. Conclusions

The impact of applying the OMC in the area of education must be understood against the history, traditions, institutional arrangements and legal competencies of the EU in this area. For a long time education was an area where the question was not "*can* policies be coordinated" – but "*should* they be". The latter question has moved closer to being answered in the affirmative within the framework of the OMC. This is a novel element compared to what has been the dominant view in the history of the European level's involvement in this policy area. Nonetheless, this

should not be seen as mainly a story of change in political will of education ministers. The larger context of the Lisbon Summit had important repercussions for cooperation in the field of education. It identified a template for cooperation that in principle was seen to enable the combination of a common European approach with the subsidiarity principle. The Lisbon process and the application of the OMC have created a platform for profiling the sector in the wider context of the EU, and for legitimating its place in European integration. The existing institutions – especially the established administrative capacity at the European level - have played a significant role by putting energy, attention and resources into establishing a new political space and providing the OMC concept with a "work organisation". With the pre-Lisbon story of European cooperation in education as a basis, core actors in this policy area used the OMC and the Lisbon strategy to establish a new framework for working at the European level. DG EAC's will and capacity to download the concept of OMC and translate it into practical terms are essential for understanding what the education sector did with the OMC template.

Permanent staff within the DG EAC has been assigned to keeping the OMC alive, over time reporting procedures have been established, and there is a budget item for which it is acceptable to finance OMC activities. National Ministries send their staff to Brussels in order to participate in activities that are legitimised to themselves and to outsiders by the reference to OMC. The political space organised under the label of OMC has opened up for the participation of non-governmental actors in the education sector – notably the social partners and associations that organise students, parents, and various other stakeholder interests. These types of actors are not unfamiliar with participation at the European level, yet their participation under the OMC has intensified. The way the OMC has been practiced in this sector seems to have strengthened DG EAC as a hub for policy networks in European education.

The OMC process has also made a distinct imprint in the larger order of European and international policy cooperation in education – this is evident in the way it has

attracted and been integrated with other parallel processes of coordination, in particular the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, and with respect to the international organisations and regimes that produce education statistics and indicators.

Compared to OMC processes in other areas the E&T programme has settled as a natural part of the European level cooperation in education – it is seen as having become the heart of it. That is a change compared to the 20 years where the mobility programmes were the centrepiece of the EU's involvement in education. Actors within this policy domain have to some extent come to have shared rules of procedure for what it means to practice the OMC, what kind of actors are to be involved and what kind of actions are acceptable and appropriate within this setting. It is one of the most established OMC processes at the European level compared to other Lisbon OMC processes.

Yet it is also a complex process with several elements that to varying degree have become institutionalised practices. The way in which some of the elements of the process are practiced is not evidence of a watershed. Not all elements that are possible to down-load from the template of OMC as coined in Lisbon are present in OMC education. The translation of common objectives into national and regional policies, or into the performance of education systems across Europe has not been the concern of this paper, but is in likelihood a core indicator of the potential watershed qualities of the OMC. This paper has on the other hand identified elements of the OMC as practice also at the European level that show few signs of durability, autonomy and taken for grantedness. The political space that was created has been characterised to some extent by the non-routinised interaction and uncertainty of what the "mandate" of the process is, and a search for a working organisational set-up. Direct and short term mutual learning and social sanctioning seem in particular weakly developed and institutionalised so far. It has represented an opportunity for the actors involved to *experiment* with ways of interacting and with

the organisation of political space, what has been termed "risk free path finding in new political territory" (Laffan and Shaw 2005:18-19). In OMC education this path finding has taken place also within the working groups and as an opportunity for DG EAC to test out what this new political space should look like. The core documents of the OMC education go through the regular decision making procedures of the EU, but for the rest the organisation of the OMC process seems to have been open and without many predetermined procedures and rules of participation. Modes of interaction can be changed without going through elaborate formal decision making procedures – that makes the method flexible but also vulnerable to shifts in attention and commitment among those who participate.

Some parts of the OMC in education show signs of a remarkable level and speed of institutionalisation. First, the attention and agenda of EU institutions involved in education policy have been coordinated over time through the routines established around the goals and objectives of the OMC process. Second, the use and development of indicators have become well established as one of the main components of European cooperation in this field. This novel element can be ascribed to the introduction of the OMC. The argument made in this paper underlines the potential transformative effects of ideational convergence, development of a "numerical language" through European statistical categories and standards, establishing a common pool of information, as well as common European agenda setting, timing and framing of education policy. These elements have been organised as a new mainframe of European cooperation in this area.

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Appendix Stakeholder representation in OMC education.

1	AEGEE	European Students' Forum
2	CEEP	European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest
3	CLUSTER	Consortium linking Universities of Science and Technology for Education and Research
4	CSR Europe	Corporate social responsibility
5	DARE	Democracy and human rights in Europe
6	EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
7	EDEN	European Distance and E-learning networks
8	EFER	European Federation for Entrepreneurship research
9	ENTP	European New Towns Platform
10	EPA	European Parents Association
11	EQUIPE	European Quality on Individualized Pathways in Education
12	ESHA	European School Heads Association
13	ESIB	National Union of Students in Europe
14	ETUC (CES)	European Trade Union Confederation
15	ETUCE	European Trade Union Confederation – Committee for education
16	EUA	European University Association
17	EUNEC	European Network of Education Council
18	EURAG	European Federation for Older Persons
19	EUROCHAMBERS	Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry
20	European Consumers Ass.	
21	European Schoolnet	International partnership of European Ministries of Education - educational use of ICT
22	European Youth Forum	
23	EVTA/EFVET	European Vocational Training Association/ European Forum for technical and vocational education and training
24	EWM	European Women in Science
25	IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
26	IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Performance
27	MENON	Education Innovation Network
28	OBESSU	Organising Bureau of European School Student Union
29	SEFI	Societé Européenne pour la Formation des Ingénieurs
30	STEDE	Science Teacher Education Development in Europe
31	TNTEE	The Thematic Network on Teacher Education
32	UNAPEC	Uninon nationale pour la promotion pédagogique et professionnelle dans l'enseignement catholique
33	UNICE	Union des Industries de la Communauté européenne
34	UEAPME (UNICE):	European Association of Crafts Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
35	WAPES	World Association of Public Employment Services

Note: Based on information provided in working groups' reports from 2003

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html#training