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Securing organisational survival

a historical inquiry into the OECD's work in education during the 1960s

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Securing Organisational Survival

– a historical inquiry into the OECD's work in education during the 1960s

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Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has risen to prominence as one of the most influential international organisations (IOs) in the world, in large part due to its country reviews and comprehensive comparative testing portfolio.[1] In addition, through its work, the organisation has been instrumental in shaping the global education space.[2] While most scholarly research recognises the OECD's supremacy as an education policy trendsetter, the majority of this research focuses on its recent, and especially post-PISA success. On the contrary, relatively little effort has been put towards gaining an understanding concerning the historical context and events that resulted in the OECD acquiring this important capacity as a policy enabler and mediator in the first place. Following a historical sociology perspective, this article aims to contribute to this effort, by investigating this historical background and in particular by focusing on the early years of education research at the OECD and its early relationship with the other large IO in education, UNESCO. Apart from contributing to substantive knowledge of the field, the article also aims to highlight the key role of using a historical approach to develop multi- and interdisciplinary analysis of education policy trends, especially through the merging of historical analysis with sociological theory.

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[1] The OECD is technically an inter-governmental organisation (IGO).

[2] Farzal Rizvi and Bob Lingard, *Globalizing Education Policy* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

In more practical terms, the article builds its argument on the work of Regula Bürgi, who argues that understanding the processes behind the OECD's rise to prominence in the field of education requires a nuanced picture of the organisation – one that accounts for the various institutionalisation processes, the key agents and networks, and the ruling paradigms.[3] Second, Kerstin Martens argues that the "comparative turn" in global education policy that the OECD advocated and promoted must be understood as the result of a historically instituted paradigm of cross-national comparison being a powerful engine to promote educational quality.[4] Third, the article also builds on Daniel Tröhler's work that has pointed out that a paradigm of social engineering and statistical planning sprang from the United States in the aftermath of World War II, which was instrumental in triggering the type of technocratic culture characterised by such entities as the OECD.[5]

While this article draws on the insights provided by these works, its research builds on two interdependent premises to study the case of the OECD in its work of producing educational studies and policies that we believe will advance the literature of the discipline and respond to Bürgi's recent call for more research on the "(...) structural if not existential

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[3] Regula Bürgi, *Geplante Bildung für die freie Welt: Die OECD und die Entstehung einer technokratischen Bildungsexpertise* (Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg, 2015). In terms of institutionalization processes, Bürgi emphasizes the establishment of the Comittee for Scientific and Technical Personnel (CSTP) in 1958, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) in 1968 and the role of the Ford Foundation. Some of the key agents are Alexander King, described by some as the "Organisation's long-time science director and unofficial intellectual leader", and Ron Gass, head of the CSTP. In terms of paradigms, Bürgi points to importance of the paradigms of growth and development amalgamating with educational thinking in the 1950s and 1960s; Regula Bürgi, "Engineering the Free World: The Emergence of the OECD as an Actor in Education Policy, 1957–1972." *The OECD and the International Political Economy Since 1948*, edited by Matthieu Leimgruber and Matthias Schmelzer, pp. 285–309. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-60243-1_12.

[4] Kerstin Martens, "How to Become an Influential Actor – the 'Comparative Turn' in OECD Education Policy", in Kerstin Martens, Alessandra Rusconi, and Kathrin Leuze (eds.), *New Arenas of Education Governance – The Impact of International Organizations and Markets on Education Policy Making* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 40–56.

[5] Daniel Tröhler, "The Medicalization of Current Educational Research and Its Effects on Education Policy and School Reforms", *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 5 (20 October 2015): 749–64.

interdependencies between the national and international bureaucracies and on the interplay between them."[6]. In addition, the article builds on Bürgi's work to suggest that very often, as we will see in the detailed analysis below, the interdependencies in the work of IOs relate to their identity as technocracies, in charge of the production of evidence and metrics that shape the governance of education.

First, our work starts from the proposition that fields of tension and antagonisms lie beyond the universalistic rationality of the consensual world-visions apparently supported by such powerful policy actors as the OECD. As argued by, among others, Carrol and Kellow[7], the OECD should not be treated as a homogeneous and univocal organisation; internal organisational structures and struggles have often proven to be significant in its history. Yet it is not also the sole international organisation working on the global educational scene. The OECD has always been locked in a competition with other IOs (e.g., the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)) in its education research and provision, and thus, similar to them, the OECD has never wavered from its commitment to act strategically to secure its organisational survival by providing member-states, partners, and decision-makers with sought-after solutions to various sociocultural issues. In his recent article, Lewis points out that "OECD's sway" over education can "only be maintained by continually producing new and relevant policy tools".[8] We argue that these fields of tension and antagonisms are decisive to the ways the OECD has structured its work programme since the 1960s. Second – and linking with the first proposition – we find that, at least in the

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[6] Bürgi, Engineering the Free World…, p. 304.

[7] P. G. H. Carroll and Aynsley J. Kellow, *The OECD: A Study of Organisational Adaptation* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2011).

[8] Steven Lewis, "Policy, Philanthropy and Profit: The OECD's PISA for Schools and New Modes of Heterarchical Educational Governance", *Comparative Education* (23 May 23 2017): 1–20, 10, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2017.1327246.

field of transnational education policy, the role of quantification has played an essential part in shaping and thus governing the field.[9] Education metrics have infiltrated not only organisational cultures and the environments these organisations inhabit, but also, crucially, they continue to reshape the ways IOs compete and survive in an increasingly quantified albeit uncertain world.

Thus, the article takes a historical sociological perspective in analysing and substantiating these propositions during the first decade of the OECD's existence: the 1960s. Our focus is on the first OECD conference on education held in Washington, DC, in 1961, and the educational programmes surrounding this conference. We also consider interorganisational relations with UNESCO, a competing organisation in terms of defining and shaping education internationally.

The 1960s is an interesting decade to analyse in terms of increasing our understanding of the cradle of what many have termed the "global testing culture".[10] During this period, we find the shock reverberations from the 1957 Soviet Sputnik satellite launch, a critical event

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[9] Manuel Cardoso and Gita Steiner-Khamsi , "The Making of Comparability: Education Indicator Research from Jullien de Paris to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 47, no. 3 (2017): 388–405, DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2017.1302318; Martin Lawn, "The Internationalization of Education Data: Exhibitions, Tests, Standards, and Associations", in M. Lawn (ed.), *The Rise of Data in Education Systems – Collection, Visualization, and Use* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2013): 11–25; Jenny Ozga, Peter Dahler-Larsen, Christina Segerholm, and Hannu Simola (eds.), *Fabricating Quality in Education: Data and Governance in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[10] William C. Smith (ed.), *The Global Testing Culture: Shaping Education Policy, Perceptions, and Practice*. Oxford Studies in Comparative Education (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2016); Christian Ydesen and Karen Egedal Andreasen. "Los Antecedentes Históricos de La Cultura Evaluativa Global En El ámbito de La Educación." *Foro de Educación* 17, no. 26 (January 1, 2019): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.14516/fde.710. The global testing culture is closely affiliated with the so-called Global Education Reform movement (GERM). The GERM is an education reform approach that broadly follows the tenets of New Public Management and, accordingly, is structured around a common set of policy ideas including standards-based management, performance evaluation, and accountability, see Pasi Sahlberg, *The Global Educational Reform Movement and Its Impact on Schooling*, in Antoni Verger, Mario Novelli, and Hülya K. Altinyelken, eds. *Global Education Policy and International Development: New Agendas, Issues and Policies*. Second edition. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2017, pp. 128-144.

in terms of how education planning in the Western world was construed. The 1960s is also the decade during which the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) transitioned into the OECD as well as the period when a subdivision dedicated to work in education was established (i.e., the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)). Examining the historical junctures of the OECD in education during this decade, the article poses first an empirical research question: In its early years, how did the OECD struggle to launch and secure its work in education? And following from this, we pose a theoretical research question: how can we understand the role of IOs in transnational education governance?

In pursuing answers to these questions, this article examines the configurations of the OECD's work in education as an emerging player in the field, one that had to strive for funding, place, and legitimacy in competition with other IOs in general and UNESCO in particular. Thus far, as already suggested, little scholarly attention has been paid to the processes of problematisation (the construction of the "problem") and institutionalisation (the moment the "problem" enters institutional agendas and gains recognition from the environment) emerging from those early, yet crucial, venues, actors, and activities.

The structure of the article reflects the above explication. The first section elucidates the theoretical underpinnings and historiography. This will allow us to position our investigation in relation to state-of-the-art research and to illuminate the specific contributions to knowledge this article offers. The following sections present an analysis of the OECD's work in education during the 1960s including its relations with UNESCO, drawing on archival source material from the OECD and UNESCO archives in Paris and the Danish National Archive in Copenhagen. In our conclusion, we discuss our analytical findings in light of the

theoretical framework, relating them to the empirical and theoretical research questions

stated above.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Historiography

Our theoretical underpinnings consist essentially of a critical perspective on the internal and

externals processes and interactions during the OECD's early work in the educational field

(what we call the "struggle for survival" perspective discussed above). The article follows a

historical sociology perspective; the historical dimension here is not simply an

epiphenomenal add-on to the sociological analysis. We argue that historical sociology is a

way of 'dispelling the illusions of false necessity'[11]. The historical dimension is central to our

understanding of the workings of transnational educational governance for several reasons:

a) social realities are not immutable and universal; they are always arbitrary and contingent

and are shaped by their genesis and historical constitution; b) in order to make sense of the

present, one has to continuously revisit the unique and contingent historical junctures and

events that shape contemporary phenomena. In other words, and because most policy

literature has largely focused on the influence of international organisations in the shaping

of transnational education governance primarily as if this was merely a contemporary

development, an in-depth historical analysis of its genesis and formation is absolutely

essential. On the other hand, it is also essential that historians do not simply retreat to the

study of the past, but engage with sociology in a dialogic, open-ended discussion so as to

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[11] Craig Calhoun "Why Historical Sociology?" Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin, eds., *Handbook of Historical Sociology*. (London: SAGE 2003), pp. 383-393, p. 384.

engender new historiographies, as well as new concepts and theories that can cast light both on historical phenomena but also current developments and events.

In relation to the core analysis of the article and in the tradition of Barnett and Finnemore's seminal work, this article questions some international relation (IR) studies' conceptualisation of IOs as passive entities merely distributing "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures", as the more economistic, rational-theory analysis would have viewed them.[12] Instead, building on sociological institutionalism, Barnett and Finnemore see IOs as powerful agents with "power independent of the states that created them". Thus, they are purposive actors: "They define shared international tasks (like 'development'), create and define new categories (like 'refugee'), create new interests (like 'promoting human rights'), and transfer models of political organization around the world (like markets and democracy)".[13] Given the prominence of IOs in IR literature, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to the interplay, struggles, organisational overlaps, and mutual dependencies of these organisations. Quite often, IOs are dependent on one another within the transnational climate where they operate. In addition, staff mobility in IOs is very high: "A large part of staff … is employed on fixed-term contracts which generally run up to three years with the possibility, but not the obligation, of renewal".[14] In fact, the case of the OECD is particularly interesting, since it has had "annual turnover rates sometimes as high as 40 per cent for certain staff".[15] Therefore, the "revolving doors" of IOs thus seem to suggest

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[12] Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations', *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 699–732, 699; Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[13] Ibid. 699

[14] C. Ringel- Bickelmaier and M. Ringel, "Knowledge Management in International Organizations", *Journal of Knowledge Management* 14, no. 4 (2010): 524–539, 525, http://doi.org/10.1108/13673271011059509.

[15] Ibid., 526.

that staff often move among the agencies or may even occupy multiple positions simultaneously.

More so than international relations, organisational sociology has been primarily focussed on the ways organisations may become interdependent in their quest for survival. Starting with Weber's "ideal type" of organisations as being highly politicised, seeking not only efficiency but also legitimacy, March and Simon suggest the notion of "bounded rationality" to reflect the uncertainties organisations face due to limited information and cognitive barriers.[16] Following the logic of appropriateness, new institutionalists have offered theories exploring how organisations seek legitimacy from their environments by conforming to normative expectations.[17] In resource dependency theory, Pfeffer and Salancik argue that organisations were highly dependent on their external environment; by continually assessing technological and environmental contingencies, organizations could adapt, evolve, and survive.[18] Rational choice theorists in management and economics view organizations as a nexus of contracts, seeking to maximise efficiency gains, while Marxists believe that organisational dependencies solely represented the rise of the global capitalist class.[19]

To conclude this section on the article's theoretical underpinnings, while scholarship in the fields of IR and organizational sociology has been produced, the results from it have done little to enlighten us about the *politics*, *processes,* and *practices* of the interdependence, struggles, and interplay experienced by and within these organisations. On the one hand, IR

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[16] March, J. and Simon, H. (1958) *Organizations*, New York: Wiley

[17] March, J. and Olsen, J. (2006) 'The Logic of Appropriateness' , in M. Moran, M.Rein, and R. E. Goodin (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

[18] Pfeffer, J. and G. Salancik (1978) *The External Control of Organizations*, New York: Harper and Row

[19] Fama, E. (1980) 'Agency Problems and the Theory of the Firm', *Journal of Political Economy*, 88, 288-307; Useem, M. (1984) *The Inner Circle*, New York: Oxford University Press; Mizruchi, M. and Schwartz, M. (1988*) Intercorporate Relations: The Structural Analysis of Business*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

scholars have emphasised the role of IOs in transnational governance but did so with an emphasis on the notion of treaty regimes, and later by adopting primarily rational theory perspectives. Thus, they often failed to examine qualities of IOs that relate to their constitutive powers as independent, yet interconnected, actors in their abilities to shape global policy agendas via their expert knowledge work, including the education metrics they produce. On the other hand, organizational sociology, although entertaining a rich intellectual history of competing views about how organisations work, has yet to examine the role of conflictual interactions in reshaping organisational behaviour. As we suggested above, an insistence on separating internal organisational cultures from external ones fails to account for the actual meanings of such interactions and struggles to survive, as well as their importance to these organisations and how these meanings can affect the work that IOs produce. Thus, we argue that a historical sociological analysis of those first encounters between large IOs in the field of education and its planning and delivery, are necessary to understand the roots and development of transnational education governance. It is to these historical events that we will now turn.

OECD and Education during the 1960s

In 1961, the first OECD conference on education was held in Washington, DC.[20] The title of the conference, "Economic Growth and Investment in Education", is indicative of the utilitarian approach to education the OECD cultivated at that time. As Walter W. Heller, chair of the Council of Economic Advisers – a key speaker at the conference – noted, "May I

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[20] H. L. Elvin, "Education and Economic Growth. O.E.C.D. Conference Washington, October 1961", *International Review of Education* 7 no. 4 (1961), pp. 484–86.

say that, in this context, the fight for education is too important to be left solely to the educators".[21] If anything, the quotation signals that considerations other than pedagogy and didactics had found their way into the educational sphere. This insight must be understood in the context of the Cold War in general and the Sputnik shock that had taken place only four years earlier in particular. A 1960 OEEC publication eloquently captures its successor's early approach to education: "Vigorous economic growth in the world of tomorrow will depend largely upon an adequate supply of trained scientists, engineers, and technicians".[22] The OEEC director, Alexander King, described these activities as an "essential prerequisite to the elaboration of *sound* educational programmes".[23] To ensure that this characteristic of *soundness* would be present in the educational programmes, King suggested that the work would be based on quantitative measurements and the relationship between the main 'inputs' into the educational system.[24] This meant emphasising statistical indicators and employing "qualified personnel in the economy".[25]

Shifting to a "struggle-for-survival" perspective, we learn that the OECD put great effort into reinventing itself in the years after it had lost its original purpose at the end of the Marshall plan in the early 1950s.[26] Education became one of the new points of orientation for the organisation as the area was becoming increasingly politicised, one also beginning to serve as a battlefield in the context of the Cold War. As pointed out by an OECD operative, Mr.

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[21] OECD, *Policy Conference on Economic Growth and Investment in Education: Washington, 16th–20th October 1961* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 1961), p. 35.

[22] OEEC, *Forecasting Manpower Needs For The Age Of Science* (Paris: OEEC Publications, 1960).

[23] Ibid., 7 (our emphasis).

[24] Lyons, The Mediterranean Regional Project…, 15.

[25] Ibid. 21.

[26] Matthias Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth: The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 29.

Raymond Lyons, the OEEC (from 1959) and later the OECD aimed at securing 'recognition and policy action' by member governments of the need to plan education, and particularly 'scientific and technical education, as part of a policy for achieving substantial and balanced economic growth".[27] In other words, education was an area an IO might use to leverage its *raison d'être*.[28] The OECD sought to secure for itself a place in this area, which would allow it to make a substantive impact on global affairs. At the 1961 conference in Washington, DC, Philip Hall Coombs, US Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, head of the US delegation, and chair of the conference, communicated this objective with simplicity: "Our aim is not simply to have stimulating talk but to clarify ideas which can shape policy and action, ideas with the power to make a beneficial difference in the course of human events".[29]

Thus, the challenge for the OECD's educational agenda was "(…) to obtain a fresh view of the tasks of the educational system seen from the standpoints of economic growth and to obtain the cooperation of the educational sector".[30] However, the OECD's educational agenda often was not received well by either educators or even some ministries of education. The economist Coombs, who also headed the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE) and participated in the 1961 conference on education, described this schism as being conflictual between the promotion of the growth and freedom of the individual versus serving the society as a whole.[31]

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[27] Lyons, The Mediterranean Regional Project…, 13.

[28] G. S. Papadopoulos, "The OECD Approach to Education in Retrospect: 1960–1990", *European Journal of Education* 46, no. 1 (2011), 85–86.

[29] OECD, *Policy Conference on Economic Growth…*, 24.

[30] Lyons, The Mediterranean Regional Project…, 14.

[31] OEEC, *Forecasting Manpower Needs…*, 27.

This notion of education as an important factor in achieving economic prosperity – an economistic and highly utilitarian perspective leaving little room for the intrinsic value of education[32] – meant that the OECD educational agenda often implied a reshuffling in the power dynamics among ministries in the member-states. This also meant that financial and security concerns played more prominent roles, tantamount to what Bourdieu and Wacquant have termed the struggles and rivalries within the anatomy of the state in the post-1945 world, implying a movement from the so-called caring "left hand" (state departments and agencies offering social support such as public education and health services) towards the disciplining "right hand" (state departments and agencies that meted out correctional actions such as the Ministry of Justice).[33]

The OECD articulated its frustrations about precisely the workings of this particular state anatomy in connection with its retrospective reflections on the Mediterranean Regional Project: "Departmental and inter-ministerial isolation represent a major weakness in some Mediterranean countries as far as the study of key problems concerning educational planning and [the] elaboration of sound solutions to them is concerned".[34]

In 1962, the programme for Educational Investment and Planning was launched. Its full name was the Programme for Educational Investment and Planning in Relation to Economic Growth, an offshoot of Resolution No. 9 on investment in education passed by the European

[32] Joel H. Spring, *Economization of Education: Human Capital, Global Corporations, Skills-Based Schooling*. New York; London: Routledge, 2015.

[33] Andrew Woolford and Amelia Curran, "Community Positions, Neoliberal Dispositions: Managing Nonprofit Social Services within the Bureaucratic Field", *Critical Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2013): 45–63, 47; Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: On the Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field", *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–19.

[34] Lyons, The Mediterranean Regional Project…, 14.

Ministers of Education at their third conference held in Rome in October 1962.[35] Among

other things, the programme called for assembling comprehensive statistical data from

member countries, especially to use in making prognoses for educational investment.

In Denmark, one of the first OECD member-states, an economic and statistical section was

established in the Danish Ministry of Education effective April 1963, in response to the

OECD request. Apart from providing data to the OECD, for example, on teacher/pupil ratios,

factors affecting student choice of educational programmes, and progress reports on

educational investment planning, the section was tasked with advising local and central

authorities concerning educational planning.[36] The EIP programme reflected the perspective

that education needed better planning, which could be achieved by applying the latest

quantitative methods for the purposes of optimisation as they related to economic growth

and winning the technology race with the Eastern Bloc. The example is interesting because

it documents the concrete impact OECD policy suggestions can have in the global

educational sphere, and it testifies to the role and importance ascribed to education

metrics.

One of the key concerns of the programme for Educational Investment and Planning was

developing comparative data for the OECD countries. This is among other places reflected in

the agenda for the Fourth Meeting of Directors and Representatives of National EIP Groups

[35] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Letter from Mr. Alexander King, Director General of scientific affairs at the OECD, to Mr. M. E. Bartels, head of the Danish delegation to the OECD entitled "Meeting of Directors of National Teams under the Programme on Educational Investment and Planning in Relation to Economic Growth", dated 10 December 1962.

[36] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, General Memorandum, dated 9 November 1964, Working Programme for the EIP-team in the Ministry of Education in Denmark, 3; letter from Danish Ministry of Education to Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 21 January 1963.

held at the Château de la Muette in November 1963.[37] The significant issue under scrutiny was that data collection requirements differed across member countries, making it difficult to draw meaningful comparative value from the collection. We cite the *Manual on the Measurement of Research and Development Activity*, which accurately sums up the situation at that point:

> In this context, thorough and internationally comparable statistics on research and development activity are essential for more rational policy making at the national level and for more effective exchange of information and experience internationally. These statistics are still grossly inadequate. (…) These differences make international comparisons difficult and have led to an increasing need for some attempt at standardisation.[38]

The other key OECD educational programme during the early 1960s was the above-mentioned Mediterranean Regional Project that the OEEC Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel (CSTP) had adopted in 1960 and over which the OECD subsequently took control. It was "(…) aimed at the drawing up of a planning framework for the allocation of resources to education in Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Yugoslavia in relation to the requirements arising out of economic, demographic, and social development up to 1975".[39] At the core of the programme was the establishment of working teams of economists, statisticians, and educational experts that would prepare detailed reports to be

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[37] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Proposed Agenda for meeting of E.I.P.

[38] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, Statistics for Educational Investment Planning, note by the Secretariat, Appendix, dated 24 February 1965, 4.

[39] Raymond Lyons , "The OECD Mediterranean Regional Project", *The American Economist* 8, no. 2 (1964): 11–22.

submitted to education Ministers, in relation to economic growth, and also guidance on how to best achieve those objectives.[40]

To a high degree, the two programmes constituted a bifurcation on the same theme of educational investment in relation to economic growth. Furthermore, they shared the same methodological problems and requirements for statistical data.[41] Some of the issues discussed in the programmes were the "Spatial Distribution of Global Educational Plans" and "The Quantitative Efficiency of the Educational System".[42] At this point, the OECD still had not given up on the plan to allow national agencies to collect data based on definitions to which all parties agreed. As pointed out by Martens, the OECD created the Indicators of Education Statistics (INES) programme in the late 1980s, largely in response to pressure from the United States and France, whose representatives stressed the need to develop statistical capability to compare students' educational performance.[43] The INES programme may be viewed as a precursor of the Programme for International Student Assessment, and its use signals a clear ambition on the part of the OECD to gather and sustain its own statistical database.[44] Collecting statistical data was a crucial requirement that allowed the organisation to generate useful studies and reports. This need had been apparent for decades as in the mid-1960s, the Fourth Conference of European Ministers of Education in 1965 had passed a resolution recommending

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[40] Lyons, The Mediterranean Regional Project…, 13.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Directorate for Scientific Affairs, Mediterranean Regional Project and Educational Investment Programme, Working Meeting on Methodology and Research Needs for Education Planning, dated 9 December 1963.

[43] Martens, 2007.

[44] Sotiria Grek & Christian Ydesen, *Paving the Way for PISA - The OECD's International Education Indicators Project (INES)*, Journal of Education Policy (forthcoming)

(…) the establishment of national mechanisms to collect the data required for a policy of expanding and directing educational activities and of integrating them with economic policies and plans. The Committee has noted that the E.I.P. (Educational Investment and Planning Programme) and the M.R.P. (Mediterranean Regional Project) constitute a major existing contribution to such objectives since they are based on national groups established precisely for this purpose.[45]

Another focus was addressing the measurement problems inherent in how to assess the contributions made by education and science, and how such contributions function in moving society further along the path of economic growth. The collaborations at this point were with the Study Group in the Economics of Education, set up by the CSTP, which the OEEC had established in 1958. The outcome was a proposed road map calling for the construction of specific standards and definitions and a plan of how national experts would eventually reach agreement in relation to them[46].

Despite these efforts, the problems of data comparability persisted. To strengthen the focus and initiatives regarding educational improvements, the OECD founded the sub-organisation

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[45] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Fourth Conference of European Ministers of Education, OECD Work Relevant to Resolution no. 2, Report to the Council by the Committee for Scientific and Technical Research, dated 2 January 1965, 1f.

[46] The directives were the following: 'i) the careful preparation within the Secretariat of a first draft of the manual establishing proposals for standards and definitions;(ii) an attempt to apply those definitions to the collection of data in a small number of selected countries using the machinery of the Mediterranean Regional Project and EIP national teams;(iii) the revision of the draft in the light of the results of these pilot studies, in close cooperation with representatives of the national teams;(iv) the convening of an experts' conference of educational policy makers and statisticians to reach final agreement on the definitions and to obtain a commitment to them from all the OECD member countries. It is hoped that this conference could take place in the first half of 1965;(v) the regular collection of comparable data by all the OECD countries, in ways to be determined. Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 2 1963 – 4 1963, Educational Investment Planning, Statistical Needs, Proposed Programme of Work, dated 10 June 1964, p. 7

CERI in 1968.[47] In writing about the formation of CERI in 1968, the institution's former head, Jarl Bengtsson, noted that a feature of the context was "the emergence of education as a nascent field of research and analysis at a time of rising investments and expectations for education".[48] CERI thus had been established during a period when the role of education in the democratic welfare states had become obvious, with this sub-organisation and its work explicitly aimed at performing policy research.[49] While the CERI took up a somewhat "detached" position in the organisation, the purpose of CERI is described in OECD reports; these explain that "a large body of CERI work has been founded on the need for educational decision making to be better informed by evidence, by awareness of what is taking place in other countries".[50] Since that time, the OECD has gathered and constructed a huge database of statistical data on both member and non-member countries in the field of education.

As argued by Addey et al., the comprehensive nature and the quality of the OECD statistical database is a core component behind the authority that the organisation wields.[51] Thus, in this case, we argue that a clear picture can be drawn of numbers and data exercising power. In a "struggle-for-survival" perspective, the persuasiveness of an entity's numbers and data

[47] Tom Schuller, "Constructing International Policy Research: The Role of CERI/OECD", *European Educational Research Journal* 4, no. 3 (2005): 170–80, doi:10.2304/eerj.2005.4.3.2.

[48] J. Bengtsson, "OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation – 1968 to 2008" (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2008), 1.

[49] Schuller, "Constructing International Policy Research…", 170.

[50] T.J. Alexander, "Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Education Activities", T. Husén & N. Postlethwaite (Eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Education*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994); OECD, *Trends Shaping Education 2016* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/trends_edu-2016-en, p. 18.

[51] Camilla Addey, Sam Sellar, Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Bob Lingard, and Antoni Verger, "The Rise of International Large-Scale Assessments and Rationales for Participation", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 47, no. 3 (4 May 2017): 434–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2017.1301399.

is crucial to an IO. This point is supported by Addey et al. who argue that "in the early-1990s, UNESCO found itself without statistical legitimacy in education".[52]

Pursuing this point drawn from the first part of our historical analysis, we will next examine the relations between OECD and UNESCO during the 1960s.

OECD and UNESCO during the 1960s

On 4 November 1963, a formal agreement establishing relations between the OECD and UNESCO went into effect.[53] In the letters exchanged between the two secretary-generals, their discussion concerned establishing a "(…) reciprocal basis, to an exchange of information and documentation on questions considered by the two parties to be of common interest".[54] However, a dispatch from the Danish delegation to the Danish Ministry of Education specifically states that collaboration between the two organisations would be strictly at the secretariat level and would not include observer exchanges drawn from committee meetings. In fact, according to the OECD Secretary-General, the OECD was to avoid any such expansion of the collaboration.[55] The Danish dispatch seems to indicate that all was not blissful between the two organisations and that their ability to maintain a critical distance was the order of the day.

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[52] Addey et al., "The Rise of International Large-Scale Assessments…", 3.

[53] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 53 1963 – 3 1964, press release from OECD (Press/A (63)70), dated 6 November 1963.

[54] OECD, "Acts of the Organisation", vol. 3 (Paris: OECD Archive, 1964), 367ff.

[55] Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, International Office, 1959–1970, Cases Concerning International Organizations, OE 53 1963 – 3 1964, report from the Danish OECD delegation to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 30 October 1963 (reference number 95.B.1, no. 5505).

This could have explained, in part, the convergence of the geographical location between the two organisations. In July 1962, the Swedish OECD delegation wrote a letter to the Secretary-General stating that "the OECD – no longer a solely European organization – should in our view adapt their salaries to the levels and scales applied by UNESCO for their staff in Paris".[56] The writer observes that due to the two organisations having based their operations in the same location, a certain level of competitiveness had been noted between the OECD and UNESCO in terms of their abilities to attract staff.

If we follow these indications of what appears to have been a problematic relationship and move to UNESCO's perspective on the OECD, a cautious and even more critical picture can be painted. UNESCO quickly took notice of the new IO when OECD was founded in 1961 and, in particular, the Mediterranean Regional Project. UNESCO leaders decided to call for an informal meeting between the two IOs to include the directors of the departments of education, natural sciences, and social sciences, which was held on 19 December 1961. In preparing for that meeting, UNESCO stated in an internal memo that "(…) it would be desirable to study possibilities for establishing working relations and being informed of their [i.e., the OECD] activities".[57] In the same memo, Mr. H. Phillips of the UNESCO social science department drily opined that the OEEC had not been slow "in utilizing our ideas and incorporating them in its own programme. They had many more specialists than UNESCO involved in the economics of education and were marching rapidly ahead in this field".[58]

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[56] OECD, "Acts of the Organisation", vol. 2 (Paris: OECD Archive, 1963), 341.

[57] Memo entitled "Meeting in Preparation for a Meeting with OECD Officers", dated 7 December 1961, ODG/RIO/Memo/25.401, UNESCO archive, Paris.

[58] Ibid.

Some UNESCO staff did indeed view the situation as dire. In 1966, Mr. Hans-Heinz Krill de Capello of the UNESCO external relations office noted: "OECD imitates systematically our work. The situation is very serious, [a] 'life or death struggle'. Difficulty: OECD Member States are the financing States of UNESCO".[59]

But the OECD may also have viewed UNESCO as an offensive player. In response to the OECD's programme for Educational Investment and Planning, UNESCO secured funds from the Ford Foundation and founded an International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). As pointed out by Bürgi, the IIEP "(…) had a particular focus on developing countries (and) was granted a semi-autonomous status by UNESCO. The latter fast-tracked its establishment to steal a march on the OECD—laying bare the significance of interorganizational rivalry."[60]

In subsequent years, a number of overlapping programmes in education occurred between the two organisations. P. Bertrand of UNESCO complained to Mr. Monnier, Chief of the External Relations Division of the OECD about very late invitations to OECD events.[61] In 1966, steps were taken to have a meeting "(…) to 'break the ice' in the UNESCO–OECD relations – in the educational sector at least – and, through a more constructive climate, avoid the present overlapping".[62] A key concern for UNESCO was how its own member-states acted in relation to the OECD; UNESCO monitored this development closely, fearing it would end up on the losing side in the priorities of any overlapping member-states.[63]

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[59] Note entitled "UNESCO/OECD Relations", written by Mr. Hans-Heinz Krill de Capello of the UNESCO external relations office, 330.2 A 01 OECD 18 Part I, May 1965–April 1966 (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1966).
[60] Bürgi, *Engineering the Free World…*, p. 292

[61] Confidential note entitled "Relations OECD-UNESCO", dated August 1965 from P. Bertrand to A. de Silva, 330.2 A 01 OECD 18 Part I, May 1965–April 1966 (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1966).

[62] Internal letter from Mr. R. Diez-Hochleitner, Director of the UNESCO Office for Educational Planning to Mr. Alfonso de Silva, Head of the UNESCO Division of International Organisations Relations, dated 15 March 1966, 330.2 A 01 OECD 18 Part I, May 1965–April 1966 (Paris UNESCO Archive,1966).

[63] Memo entitled "Participation of Finland and Yugoslavia in the work of the OECD" dated 7 November 1966 by Mr. Hans-Heinz Krill de Capello, RIO/org/Memo 1843 (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1966).

In May 1966, Krill de Capello, wrote a highly critical internal memo about OECD activities in education addressed to the head of the UNESCO Division of International Organisations relations, Mr. A. de Silva, documenting the problem as the intention of the OECD

> to initiate systematic activities in the whole field of "educational development", i.e., educational policy and planning, in the secondary and post-secondary level, school building, co-ordination of educational administration, and the effective utilisation of manpower, etc.[64]

Krill de Capello's main concern centred on the OECD's attempt to become the intergovernmental organisation for the co-ordination of educational development in Europe. He was so concerned that he suggested that the expansion of international organisations in the field of education could lead to overlapping duplication of work and mutual concurrence in many fields. The solution, he proposed, was to launch an examination of the competencies of different IOs, and he urged his superiors to "use the next report to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe for raising this problem". His superiors, however, did not follow his advice, out of strategic considerations. UNESCO was generally concerned about alienating member-states, and in this instance, the fear was also that the Western European member-states would choose to align themselves with the OECD instead of UNESCO. Krill de Capello's concern and irritation are, however, telling in terms of understanding the obstacles encountered in the OECD–UNESCO relationship.

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[64] Internal letter from Mr. Hans-Heinz Krill de Capello to A. de Silva entitled "The Programme of the OECD – Committee of Scientific and Technical Personnel for 1967 (Doc. STP(66)3, 29 April 1966)", dated 25 May 1966, RIO/ORG/memo 28.993 (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1966).

Around 1967, the situation seemed to have cooled down. An internal UNESCO note suggested that the "OECD is increasingly concerned with educational planning, and their points of view are approaching those of UNESCO. UNESCO has recruited several experts who are former OECD staff-members".[65] Increasingly, each organisation sent representatives to the other's events, and there seems to have been an increase in the level of mutual understanding experienced by the two IOs. This understanding may have resulted from the "revolving doors" aspect shared by the two organisations as mentioned above.

After the 1968 founding of CERI, the quality of the relationship between the two IOs once again declined. A 1969 internal UNESCO report contains meaningful reflections and analyses concerning the pair's troubled relationship:

> The analysis of OECD's programme policy in education and science confirms the impression that this Organisation has been developing – and will continue to do so – activities parallel to those of UNESCO…. An analysis of OECD's invitation procedure demonstrates that UNESCO receives invitations to attend and even participate in OECD's meetings when UNESCO's "important activities" in the field to be discussed are unquestionable (educational aid, planning, financing, statistics, science policy, application of education and science to development, etc.)….In order to change OECD's restricted attitude – and, perhaps, the agreement – it would be necessary for UNESCO… to *take the initiative* in *Europe* of launching a programme in education, science, and culture for the whole of the European region.[66]

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[65] Internal note entitled "Note of our current relation with the OECD", dated October 1967, 330.2 A 01 OECD 18 Part I (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1967).

[66] Internal report entitled "Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)", 330.2 A 01 OECD 18 Part I (Paris: UNESCO Archive, 1969).

We have chosen to cite the report at length because it quite clearly summarises the nature of the OECD–UNESCO relations as viewed from UNESCO's perspective.[67] The analysis of the report reflects how the tension between the two organisations is grounded in their differing natures and scopes. It is also important to recall that both the poor resources of UNESCO, the Cold War context and UNESCO's encompassing of countries from the first, second, and third worlds made the OECD a more attractive forum for Western countries.[68] In many respects, the OECD was a vehicle for coordination among Western countries in their quest for demonstrating the superiority of capitalism and the inferiority of communism.[69]

Concluding Discussion

As we have pointed out, a considerable body of research from various fields has already focused on the work of international organisations (IOs) in the field of education.[70] However, much of this research does not examine the interaction between them. International organisations are often seen as monolithic institutions, or actors with similar

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[67] On the earlier history of the educational work of UNESCO, also see Joseph Watras (2010) UNESCO's programme of fundamental education, 1946-1959, History of Education, 39:2, 219-237; and Charles Dorn (2006) 'The World's Schoolmaster': Educational Reconstruction, Grayson Kefauver and the Founding of UNESCO, 1942-1946, History of Education, 35:3, 297-320.

[68] Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth…*

[69] OECD, *Policy Conference…*, 1961; Bürgi, *Engineering the Free World…*

[70] See, for example, Henry, M., Lingard, B., Rizvi, F. and Taylor, S. (2001) *The OECD, Globalization and Education Policy*, Oxford: Pergamon Press; Lawn, M. and Lingard, B. (2002) 'Constructing a European policy space in educational governance: the role of transnational policy actors', *European Educational Research Journal*, 1(2): 290-307; Ozga, J. and Lingard, B. (2007) 'Globalisation, education policy and politics', in: B. Lingard and J.Ozga (Eds) *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Education Policy and Politics*, London: RoutledgeFalmer, pp.65-82; Lawn, M. (2003) 'The "Usefulness" of Learning: the struggle over governance, meaning and the European education space', *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* 24 (3), 325-336; Martens, K (2007) 'How to become an influential actor –the 'comparative turn' in OECD education policy', in K. Martens, A. Rusconi and K. Lutz (eds) *Transformations of the State and Global Governance*, London: Routledge, 40-56; Pépin, L. (2006) *The history of European cooperation in education and training: Europe in the making –an example*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities; Shore, C. (2000), Building Europe: the cultural politics of European integration, London: Routledge.

interests in a similar context, without attention to the complex set of realities that bring them together and apart over time. This article has shown how the relationship of the OECD and UNESCO developed and altered; depending on the needs of member states and the changing historical conditions (e.g. The Cold war), we observe how the two organisations found themselves in a constant state of flux that made their education work interdependent, rather than autonomous.

Indeed, the article has discussed in some detail OECD's early work in the field of education, as well as its relationship with UNESCO during the 1960s, as both organisations strived for influence and dominance in the slowly emerging European education space. In order to critically understand this often neglected yet significant historical reality, we need to turn our lens to a discussion of the relationship between the production of knowledge and policy. Although most scholarship has been analysing the interaction of knowledge with policy as a relatively recent repercussion of the trend for evidence-based policy making, the historical background of the emergence of the OECD education research agenda and the antagonisms that it produced are key in the interpretation of the emergence of transnational education governance, as they point towards an analysis of knowledge production as central to policy formation and reform in post-war Europe. In addition, through the fluctuating relationship with UNESCO, we observed that knowledge production was never the monopoly of a single IO or other actor, but rather was most of the times *polycentric* and thus simultaneously international, transnational, subnational *and* national. As the OECD began to establish itself in the field of education through the parallel production of performance metrics and the discourses relating education with economic prosperity that accompanied them, it met with the expertise, interests and networks of another IO in the area, UNESCO. The two IOs began working closely in some instances but in

others less so; as the article has shown, their interactions were not somehow predetermined or set in stone, but largely depended on the career trajectories of different actors who either moved between them, or, depending on their career stage, aspirations or historical circumstances, either opposed or supported the collaboration. UNESCO was increasingly threatened by the OECD's work and, at least some of its actors, strived to contain the OECD authority and assert theirs; nonetheless, they were not successful in persuading their colleagues to follow this more radical approach.

Thus, the article makes clear that conflict and division lies also within IOs. Rather than internally stable, 'most of the time, […] at least some of the actors within an IO will be seeking to change at least some of its institutions, whilst others will work to retain their stasis'.[71] Examining how actors create alliances and mobilise other actors and institutions is hence vital in order to understand these relations – both upstream, i.e. the setting of rules and problem framing within IOs themselves, as well as downstream, namely the application and maintenance of rules amongst actors in different IOs who are all engaged in competitive relationships.[72]

Further, the discussion above about the role of member-states in choosing the IO they would work more closely with and the conflictual atmosphere between the OECD and UNESCO that this created, shows precisely the complex and multifaceted nature of educational governance in the 20th century. Through the in-depth historical exploration of the early OECD work on constructing education metrics and the changed policy landscape

[71] Jullien, B. and Smith, A. (2010) 'Conceptualising the role of politics in the economy: industries and their in-stitutionalisations, Review of International Political Economy, First published on 19 October 2010 (iFirst), DOI: 10.1080/09692291003723615; 4

[72] Ibid.

produced in the Mediterranean Regional Project and the programme for Educational

Investment and Planning, we have shown how education governance was made by a

multiplicity of actors taking part not only in the policy process but – crucially for the focus of

this article – in the production of knowledge about education itself.

Thus, one of the key intermediary concepts that has mobilised the research behind this paper

is the notion of '*political work*'[73], as it is very rich at a number of analytical levels. First, when

one studies political work, institutions themselves are not the objects of study *per se*; rather,

the focus of the investigation is on the continual cycle of institutionalisation, deinstitutionali-

sation and reinstitutionalisation of ideas and values within the organisation in question. A

historical lens on the production of education metrics and their translation not only in policy

making but also policy struggles amongst competing organisations can become a particularly

fruitful context for such an analysis; in addition, historical accounts of those early venues,

actors and politics, can shed light on contemporary developments and trends. This way one

can examine 'political work' as those processes that engender the construction of new argu-

ments and the activation of new alliances or clashes.[74]

To conclude, the article argues that in order to understand the role of IOs in transnational

education governance, one needs to bring together two important, interdependent aspects;

first, a historical sociological analysis of knowledge as produced through the construction of

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[73] Smith, A. (2009) 'Studying the Government of the EU: The Promise of Political Sociology', Europa Institute Seminar Series, University of Edinburgh

[74] Jullien, B. and Smith, A. (2010) 'Conceptualising the role of Politics in the Economy: Industries and their In-stitutionalisations, *Review of International Political Economy*, First published on 19 October 2010 (iFirst), DOI: 10.1080/09692291003723615

education metrics; and, second, a historical sociology of the trajectories and positions of international and national education actors/experts in IOs that also 'make' the transnational education policy space, by being active mediators between and across IOs and nations.