***Austerity and the remaking of European education.* Edited by Anna Traianou and Ken Jones. (2019). London/ New York: Bloomsbury Hardback \$85.40. ISBN 978-1-3500-2848-7, e-book \$ 60.39. ISBN 978-3500-2849-4.**

Whilst the primary focus of this impressive edited volume is on the ‘long moment of crisis’ arising from the 2008 financial crash and the consequences arising from the decision of national and European Union leaders to respond to it with measures of austerity, Anna Traianou, Ken Jones and their collaborators trace the evolution of education policy making in Europe from the post-war period in which education was a long way from the labour market to its current role across Europe as handmaiden to the market.

They describe a wide consensus in the 1950s and 1960s when education was clearly a devolved responsibility of nation states, citing the British Robbins report which argued that education ‘ministers to ultimate ends’, and that higher education was not just about ‘making good producers but also good men and women’. It was a period when the dominant influence on educational thinking came from UNESCO, as Maren Elfert showed in her account of the battle of ideas about the key function of education between UNESCO’s human rights focus, and the OECD and World Bank’s human capital perspective (Elfert 2018). Traianou and Jones identify two key ‘formations’ or shifts of education policies across Europe, as human capital perspectives came to dominance. The first, in the wake of the 1973 oil shock, and the development of an EU education policy sought to rebalance education to support global competitiveness and the reduction of social inequality, was again an approach broadly endorsed by nation states. It was characterised by the neoliberal turn of the 1980s and 1990s, where education policies took on new objectives, and reorganised ways of working.

As Alexiadou and Jones argue in their chapter on EU education policy 1986-2018, the adoption of a lifelong learning discourse:

shifted the emphasis from the personal, cultural and social values of education towards its capacity to contribute to employability and pro-market economic growth.

The second turn identified in Traianou and Jones’ overview arose when European educational systems ‘fell short of political expectations’, when the changes adopted did not resolve unemployment and especially youth unemployment, did not lead to productivity increases nor lessen social inequalities. This led to an intensification of neo-liberal strategies, and to the adoption of austerity measures in the wake of the 2008 crash.

The EU’s commitment to equity, and the inclusion of marginalised groups was now combined in practice with mechanisms that worked against such commitments. At the heart of neoliberal thinking is that the size of public spending needs to be

reduced. Traianou and Jones cite Angela Merkel arguing that 'Europe has 7% of the world's population, 25% of its GDP and 50% of its social spending', and that this cannot continue.

Features of this second turn, post 2008, included at the level of the State a belief in the primacy of the market, and the privatisation of State services. For education it led to the reduction of professional autonomy for teachers, the weakening of collective representation, and an increasing focus on holding individuals responsible for their own learning, increased competition between institutions and national systems, an increased focus on external measurement (particularly following the development of the OECD PISA standardised tests of schoolchildren's literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills), of league tables, and the tendency for what is taught to be homogenised. The process they describe is one where education is seen primarily in relation to the labour market, where the language of education migrates to the language of skills.

The result, the authors argue, of coupling neoliberal approaches with the austerity policies adopted after the 2008 financial crisis has been a marked rise in inequality both within and between countries. Austerity was introduced at a time when there were mass migrations into Europe, a renaissance of nationalism, and xenophobia, and reinforced the impacts already felt by globalisation, in which unemployment, marginalisation and precarity affect increasing numbers of adults, particularly but not exclusively those with low skills. There have been markedly different impacts on the countries of Southern Europe and the 'peripheral' states than on the industrial heartlands of northern Europe. These impacts helped fuel the emergence and success of authoritarian and populist politics that impact directly on what is expected of educators. As the authors suggest:

It is in this context -in which the many pressures of austerity are combined with a cultural, legal and social politics in which questions of race and religion, nation and identity, loyalty and authority are a forceful presence - that educational institutions continue to experience a reshaping of their structures, governance and ethos. (p15.)

It is a devastating critique, argued with brio, of policy failure on a continental scale. However, what is most striking about the collection's overall analysis and the detailed accounts of developments over time in five European countries - England, France, Sweden, Hungary and Greece - is how distinctive and different the outcomes have been in each country, and how broad strategies have engaged with the cultural circumstances, the politics, and the forms of resistance to these external forces experienced in each. Context, they argue, matters, and as Traianou and Jones point out, 'neoliberalism is indifferent to cultural difference'.

The chapter on developments in England note that whilst there has been a broad consensus on the need for neoliberal policies across party lines throughout the

period from the late 1970s, there has been little active dialogue between English policy makers and the wider EU agenda. In part this has been Jones argues because of English exceptionalism, the focus on national sovereignty and scepticism about Brussels in British political debate reflected in the 2016 decision to leave the EU; in part, too, it is because the financialisation and de-industrialising of the UK economy make its challenges distinct from its neighbours. I would have liked to see in this account some attention paid to the role of colleges and wider vocational education and training policy, alongside its sharp analysis of developments in school and university policy - but nowhere else in Europe has there been quite as much tinkering with policy levers, such a multiplicity of forms of external accountability, or such wholehearted obsession with testing at every stage of the education cycle.

In France, policy has focused since 2000 on achieving the EU's Lisbon goals, yet as Guy Dreux shows, the French educational system reproduces and reinforces social inequality. More than elsewhere in Europe the socio-economic status of your parents impacts on your educational success, despite the aspirations of politicians. As politicians have struggled to adopt educational policies that address France's weak productivity, and as wider policy sought to reduce rigidities in the labour market, there has been a shift towards orientation, or guidance, as a way of addressing widespread unemployment among higher education dropouts. They recognise that the authority of the baccalaureate, the high school leaving certificate, has declined. Traditionally held in high esteem, it was taken by a small proportion of French children and offered not only access to university, but to high status employment. Following the democratisation of high school education in the 1980s there was a massive increase in students taking the bac, guaranteeing them access to higher education, but not to the same status of jobs. The chapter describes a tension between policy aspiration and outcome on the ground at once distinctive to France, but common to other countries.

Nafsika Alexiadou and Linda Ronnberg show in their account of developments in Sweden that despite successive governments introducing neoliberal policies in response to the pressures arising from globalisation, the underlying cultural consensus in Swedish society have seen their impact grounded in the country's solidly social democratic context. They describe the relationship between the EU policy initiatives and domestic debates in Sweden as a matter of 'silent Europeanisation' as popular concerns about sovereignty inhibit more explicit engagement. They explore, too, in detail Sweden's response to the EU initiative to develop strategies to improve the outcomes of Roma people. Sweden's response was that explicit targeting of the interests of Roma was inappropriate since its education system was accessible to all - whilst at the same time providing modest additional support for Roma children. The authors suggest this leads to a 'myth of equality' not so different from the policy and practice gap seen in France.

In contrast to the experience of England, France and Sweden, Estzer Neumann and Gyorgy Mezsaros describe the way policy in Hungary responded to the 2008 crisis as shaped by its relative economic vulnerability, as a semi-peripheral, under-capitalised European economy. The marked rise of neoconservative force, the rising xenophobia evidenced in the response to the refugee and migrant crises, and the increased authoritarianism of Orban's government are paralleled in its education policy. In rejecting the socialist and liberal policies of the early 2000s, the government allied strongly with the Orthodox church, adopting a policy of 'public upbringing' and a Christian education, where education shares with parents the moral and cultural responsibilities for growing citizens steeped in traditional values and knowledge. There is just enough compliance to avoid major confrontations with the EU, but domestic policy is strongly shaped by anti-EU rhetoric. In this, they have been resisted by the pro-European education practitioners and their unions, and by grass roots organisations. Church schools have grown dramatically, and middle class parents have increasingly opted for private education. Meanwhile the State has focused on strengthening vocational education and training as a route to re-industrialization.

In Anna Traianou's account, the Greek story is shaped first by its experience of dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s, from which it emerged with children having just six years of schooling. The 1974 constitution guaranteed equality of opportunity in education - a right that was actively defended by an activist student movement under successive governments. Following Greece's accession to the EU in 1981 there were significant tensions between Greek policy aspirations and the direction of EU policy, but low productivity allied to considerable job security led to rising debt, and the Greek government turning to the EU for assistance. This situation was exacerbated by the 2008 crisis, but the impact on education was reinforced overwhelmingly by the fiscal measures imposed on Greece by the triumvirate of the EU, the European Central Bank, as they sought massive reductions in public spending to bring down Greece's structural debt. Mass unemployment, and youth unemployment in particular followed, and a radical government was elected to resist EU policies, only to fall in line with EU demands. Meanwhile, policies designed to 'normalise' Greek education, to bring it in line with the best of European practice brought a shift from a pedagogy strong in the humanities to the utilitarian neo-liberal focus characteristic of the wider EU agenda.

Taken together, the studies show how the wide consensus of European education policymaking plays out in dramatically different ways in the cultural and political context of different nation state. They make clear that whilst all countries face similar challenges in a globalised economy, moves to homogenise education systems, and to impose neoliberal policies can be resisted, and that where resistance is grounded in local and national traditions and expectations it is vibrant and resilient.

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Elfert, M. (2017) *Unesco's utopia of lifelong learning*. London: Routledge.

(Gyorgy - needs umlaut over the o

Meszaros - needs acute accents over the e and a.

Ronnberg needs an umlaut over the o) - sorry I can't get my machine to do them.