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## Introduction

- 1 On the centennial anniversary of the publication of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (MW 9),<sup>1</sup> the article takes this book as the point of departure for critically examining the transnational education policy that emerged from the 2000 agreement on the Lisbon Strategy within the European Union. A basic aim of the Lisbon Strategy was to create a transnational space for learning within the EU's core areas, which also had clear implications for the formation of a common European education policy. The purpose of the present study is to analyze the EU policy documents, with a focus on compulsory schooling, through the lens of core concepts from *Democracy and Education*, to explore whether, and how, the EU has managed to balance society's need for cohesion with the market's need for economic efficiency. This analysis is based on the assumption that Dewey's groundbreaking book still serves as an important starting point for a critical analysis of national and transnational education policies. To guide the inquiry, the following research question was formulated: How can we use the basic concepts of Dewey's pedagogical philosophy on democracy and education as analytical tools for exploring the democratic potential in a transnational education policy within today's European risk discourse?
- 2 In the first part of the article, the Lisbon Strategy is introduced. The period of time is 2000-2014. In the second section, a theoretical framework is developed, based on certain core concepts from Dewey's *Democracy and Education*: socialization, social efficiency and social control. Further, the methodological framework of critical discourse analysis is introduced. Thereafter, four main themes within the Lisbon Strategy are explored through the lens of the analytical concepts developed from *Democracy and Education*. In

the fourth and final part, the results of the analysis are critically examined and discussed in terms of what sort of language is needed for handling different situations.

## 1. The Lisbon Strategy and Afterward: A Brief Background

- 3 In March 2000, the European Council held a special meeting in Lisbon, Portugal. Since the EU was facing challenges due to globalization and “a new knowledge-driven economy,” the European Council recognized an urgent need to set up a program for building knowledge infrastructures to modernize the social welfare and education systems, with the aim of Europe becoming “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” with “greater social cohesion” (European Council 2000: § 5). In order to implement this strategy, the European Council introduced “a new open method of coordination,” henceforth OMC (*Ibid.*: § 7). European educational cooperation is not a new phenomenon; to some degree, there have always been influences across borders concerning education systems and policies. However, the Lisbon Strategy for fostering a competitive Europe and its OMC turned these influences into more explicit cooperation between the EU member states, including establishing common goals and common monitoring of processes.
- 4 With reference to Lawn and Grek (2012), we can discuss a European space for education – a space that one might understand as an imaginary Europe, blurred and indistinct, but nevertheless an arena of its own, distinct from the member states’ national education systems but where the EU at the same time influences national education policies in significant ways (see also Dale 2009a).
- 5 It is not only that soft governance, similar to the OMC, includes the idea that the member states should learn from each other. It is also how the complex network of systems of schools and university projects, education managers and information and communication technology projects, etc., helps establish the meaning of the European space for education. Lawn and Grek (2012) distinguished a second wave in EU education policy between 2000, with the decision to pursue a common goal for Europe, and 2010, and the emphasis on lifelong learning and comparisons of data as the basis for a converging European education policy. A third wave in EU education policy began in 2007, characterized by increasing interest in, and acceptance of, the EU’s involvement in national systems for compulsory schooling, school curricula and national assessment systems (Wahlström 2016b).

## 2. Concepts for Understanding Risk and Social Cohesion: A Theoretical Framework

- 6 The initial positive movements in terms of Europe’s ability to rapidly develop into a competitive and sustainable economy with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion were transformed in 2005, when a theme of crisis emerged. Globalization and rapid changes legitimized the crisis discourse, creating a sense of urgency and a point of no return (Nordin 2012, 2014). Thus, the image of crisis, in turn, legitimized the need for radical change in terms of comprehensive reforms in the EU member states (Robertson 2008). Today, Europe is experiencing several external crises – including Greece’s

economic crisis, the influx of refugees feeling war and terror in the Middle East and parts of Africa, and the Russian incursion into Ukraine. However, as Beck (1992) stated, the risks are not exhausted as a result of the consequences and effects that are already a reality. Risks include potential future factors pointing toward future destruction that has not yet occurred but that threatens to happen. Risks are “irreal” in the sense that they are real and unreal. The centrality of the awareness of risks lies not in the present but in the future, in the form of projected future threats. Drawing on Beck (1992), Europe is moving from a class society to a risk society. In a class society, the political subject was the proletariat. A risk society lacks a corresponding focus; instead, a risk society is about threats that more or less affect all. This shift between two different social rationalities implies that the characteristics of cohesion change. Although the driving force for development in a class society was an egalitarian ideal, the dynamics of development in a risk society are related to safety. An unequal society has been succeeded by an uncertain society as the norm.

### 3. Europeanization and the Risk Society

- 7 The process of Europeanization must be understood as a transition from first to second modernity. The project is not only about the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital but also about a new form of transnational society, characterized by its potential, dynamics, contradictions and crises. The ambivalent story of Europe and its paradoxes can be understood as shaped by unintended side effects, instead of as a well-thought-out political project. Europeanization is a result of political decisions and their unintended long-term impacts. According to Beck and Grande (2007: 37), “Europeanization ‘takes place’ and ‘operates’ in the specific mode of institutionalized improvisation.” Drawing on the politics of side effects, Beck and Grande (2007) refer to John Dewey, who, in his 1927 text *The Public and Its Problems*, foresaw the importance of side effects. The public does not define itself in relation to collectively binding decisions but instead in relation to the consequences of decisions that are felt as problematic or unintended.

To the question of how political action is possible in multi-ethnic, transnational and cosmopolitan contexts, Dewey answers that the political – its binding power, its sensorium and nervous system, which generates and binds attention, morality and the willingness to act – emerges *only* in public controversies over consequences. (Beck & Grande 2007: 38)

- 8 Thus, the public is formed as a consequence of the disturbing side effects of decisions reached by consensus among governments. The politics of risk includes the politics of risk construction and the politics of risk minimization. The social construction of risks contributes to defining the scope of action; it involves a definition of reality and leads to certain political actions (Beck & Grande 2007: 201). The underlying assumption of crisis and risk in the EU discourse of reality and identity constitutes the background against which we understand our analysis of the transnational education policy documents within the EU.
- 9 Dewey provided a way of knowing about the world that goes beyond the dualisms of mind – world and objectivity – subjectivity. By placing what we can know about the world at the center of the interactions – and later on, the transactions – between people, Dewey “moved” the center of the discussion about how to gain knowledge of the world from the

mind to all indefinite interactions between living organisms and their environments (MW 9; LW 16: 242-56). The key concept in this change of the focal point for knowing is the concept of experience. For Dewey, the transactional view of experiencing always concerns the relationship between actions and consequences. According to Dewey, knowledge is constructed and real (Biesta 2014). Thus, Dewey argued for a “piecemeal realism” concerning the human actions involved in the process of inquiry. There are things that are existentially real, but they are not real in any essentialist way; instead, they are contingently real objects, not permanently real ones (Westbrook 2005; Sleeper 2001). In Dewey's concept of “transactional realism” (Sleeper 2001) as a continuation of his naturalism, there is no gap between human beings and the world; knowing itself is an activity concerned with conditions, relations, reflections, inferences and consequences.

## 4. Social efficiency and social control

- 10 In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey places the institution of school as a superficial space for tuition compared to society as a whole. From the start, the individual is already embedded in society, like an organism in its environment. For Dewey, society has connotations with “common,” “community” and “communication” (MW 9: 7). It is through society we get something in common and we live in societies because of what we have in common in beliefs, aspirations and knowledge. The way we acquire this common frame of reference is through communication. “Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication” (MW 9: 7). Accordingly, society is the indispensable environment that provides the basis of every individual. Through this transmission in society, socialization of the individual inevitably occurs. This is the main source for tuition for every individual. As Hickman (2006) points out, socialization is the model for all teaching according to Dewey. However, all socialization cannot be described as ‘good’ and does not necessarily lead to the growth of the individual and, by extension, to the development of society. Growth occurs only when socialization is created in a social context where “a child is socialized in ways that expand his or her intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic horizons” (Hickman 2006: 69). In chapter seven in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey emphasizes that education is a social process. To be able to know whether such social interaction leads to an individual's growth, Dewey proposes two criteria: To what extent do all members in a group share the same interest? To what extent is there full and free contact and interchange with other groups and associations? These indicators of educational socialization are also the two indicators for democracy (Englund 1999; Hook 2008; and Wahlström 2016a). This is not a coincidence. For Dewey, democracy is about individuals' growth and development and is therefore imbued with educational elements. The freedom to develop new interests, both common and personal, in a society, as well as in a group, characterizes democracy and education.
- 11 Hickman (2006) shows how social control and social efficiency are connected with the two criteria for socialization by the human capability to interact with others. In today's school and public debate, the word control often brings to mind an external check of something, such as national tests or school inspections. Dewey's understanding of the word is instead that genuine social control means “a way of *understanding* objects, events, and acts which enables one to participate effectively in associated activities” (MW 9: 41). Social control has nothing to do with being authoritarian, but is about being engaged in an

understanding of matters as they are. The experimental way of handling things and situations in the world led Dewey to use the word “control” in inquiries about situations that are problematic in one way or another. Similarly, social efficiency in Dewey’s terms is not associated with the measurement of products or output but instead with a moral obligation “that a social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities be afforded all” (MW 9: 129). If democracy is understood in its moral and ideal sense, social efficiency is the way to jointly manage and share what is common.

- 12 In Europe today, socialization, social efficiency and social control are all key concepts that can be interpreted in at least two different directions. In 2015 Europe, the term socialization is largely associated with the ability to see Europe as a common society and the opportunity to integrate refugees from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa. For that purpose, the meanings of social control and social efficiency are topical. The first interpretation is called a “democratic” interpretation, taking Dewey’s philosophy of democracy and education in consideration. The second way to interpret these key terms is to understand them from a “human capital” perspective. The origin of the human capital concept can be traced back to the work of Adam Smith in the 18th century. Smith emphasized the benefit for the whole society in developing the skills of each individual. However, it was not until the 1960s that the concept of human capital was recognized by economists, as an explanation of large differences in economic outcomes between different countries. In the present time, when the impact of a knowledge-based economy and increasing globalization have become more significant, for the individual as well as for the national economy, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, henceforth OECD, has gradually expanded its definition of human capital. In 2001, the OECD defined human capital as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals *that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being*” (Boarini *et al.* 2012: 10). The fundamental core of human capital is that it is related to economic activity. In the following analysis, we contrast these two ways of understanding social efficiency when exploring the themes of economic growth and social cohesion in Europe (European Council 2000) and the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results (European Commission 2012).

## 5. Communication as a Process of Social Coordination and Cooperation

- 13 Although Dewey’s understanding of communication is above all related to his work *Experience and Nature* from 1929, this basic idea is clearly formulated in the 1916 *Democracy and Education*. Biesta (2006) suggests that *Democracy and Education* does not symbolize the culmination of Dewey’s thoughts on communication as the basis for all human interaction and particularly distinctive for education. Instead, this text represents the beginning of a “communicative turn” in Dewey’s philosophy on democracy and education. For communication, as for socialization, the notion of environment plays an important role. For Dewey, “environment” is a medium that differs in meaning from the term “surroundings,” denoting what encompass an individual. Environment “denote[s] the specific *continuity* of the surroundings with his own active tendencies” (MW 9: 115). Neither has environment anything to do with geographic proximity in Dewey’s interpretation of the term.

[S]ome things which are remote in space and time from a living creature, especially a human creature, may form his environment even more truly than some of the things close to him. The things with which a man *varies* are his genuine environment. (MW 9: 15)

- 14 This is a particularly important observation today, a hundred years after this text was written, because what affects our environment to such an extent that sometimes we can speak of isolated enclaves is migration and digitalization that can contribute to making the immediate surroundings less important for individuals' interaction.
- 15 Dewey's theory of education is not a theory of instruction but of communication. He was concerned about how meaning can be communicated, and his answer was that communication of meaning is not about transmission but about *participation* (Biesta 2006). Real participation occurs only when there is "a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession" that "modifies the disposition of both the parties who partake in it" (MW 9: 12). In addition, participation constitutes the difference between "training" and "education." Training is about behavioral changes in outer action without necessarily changing the individual's disposition, but educative teaching is concerned with the degree to "which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity" (MW 9: 26). Because education is understood in terms of practice, as a joint activity based on communication, environment plays a major role in Dewey's theory of education. "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment" (MW 9: 23). However, not only participation in a joint activity is central for education; it is also important to acknowledge the significance of things in the process of making meaning of the world. The meaning of the world is not found in the things and events themselves but in the social practices where things and events are important for human participation. As Biesta (2006: 32) notes, "meaning only exists *in* social practices, it is, in a sense, located *in-between* those who constitute the social practice through their interactions." Things gain meaning only through joint activities in a common environment, which is not the same as denying that things, like stones and apples and the like, also exist outside human activities (Wahlström 2010b).
- 16 In *Democracy and Education*, it first became clear the Dewey's philosophy is a philosophy of communicative action (Biesta 2006). Dewey's philosophy is grounded in his naturalistic approach that finds its foundation for communication in human nature. Dewey saw an indissoluble link between communication, social interaction and education in the following terms: "Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative" (MW 9: 8).

## 6. An Interest in Learning from all the Contacts in Life

- 17 For Dewey, the moral self is an approach that takes all relationships into account. As characteristic of Dewey, he draws no sharp boundaries between internal and external activities, between mind and action.  

The generous self consciously identifies itself with the *full* range of relationships implied in its activity [...] [and] it readjusts and expands its *past* ideas of itself to take in new consequences as they become perceptible. (MW 9: 362)
- 18 In Dewey's formulation, he makes no distinction between the moral experiences compared to other experiences. The nature of experience, Dewey writes "can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element" where the



active phase is termed “trying” and the passive phase “undergoing” (MW 9:146). In the active phase, examining relationships and possible consequences is central for the inquiry that precedes the inferences that are drawn, and that finally result in some sort of action. In the passive phase, we undergo the consequences of our actions. The moral self acts in the same way, taking all relationships and inferences into consideration, in an effort to readjust habits that are disagreeable. The moral value of a person's conduct depends on the implications of the behavior.

- 19 Education is moral in the sense that all education acquired under conditions in which the social significance of education is realized develops moral insights. Qualities for learning, such as open-mindedness, sincerity, thoroughness and the like, are all moral qualities (MW 9: 366). Thus, morality is built into education when education is conducted in a way that makes students participants in a shared, communicative exploration of a subject, in which relationships and consequences are put to the fore. Dewey concludes *Democracy and Education* with the following sentence: “Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest.” It is noteworthy that Dewey ends his text with this formulation. As Hansen (2006) suggests, the kind of interest a person takes also measures the moral quality. Thus, interest and self are inextricably linked. To realize your full humanity, and to support others in that process, you have to be in close contact with the world; regardless of whether these contacts are agreeable or conflict, you still have to engage in them.
- 20 There are at least two ways to understand a term such as social efficiency. We call the way that Dewey understands the term a *democratic perspective*, and the way the term often is understood in policy texts a *human capital perspective*. The crucial difference between these two perspectives is that the democratic perspective is based on an explicit philosophy on human relationships, experiences and meaning, while the human capital perspective is based on a pronounced theory of economic growth. We use this dualism as a denotation of the opposite ends of an imaginary continuum between the two perspectives in our conceptual framework for the analysis of the policy texts from the European Lisbon Strategy and onward. This is not to say that we do not acknowledge the importance of the economy for societal development and investments in education, collective as well as individual; what we note here is the difference in the basic starting points for what can count as important for developing national education systems in the democracies of Europe: economic theory or a philosophy on democracy. In the same way, communication can be understood as transmission as well as participation. Finally, education can be viewed from a perspective of (lifelong) learning adapted to the market and from a perspective of education permeated by moral aspects of personal growth.

## 7. A Methodological Framework

- 21 The study adopts the method of document analysis, and this method comprises two steps. In the first step, our understanding of discourses is based on critical discourse analysis, henceforth CDA, as outlined by Fairclough (1992, 2010) and Wodak (2008). Characteristic of this critical approach is the maintenance of a “weak boundary between theoretical practice and the practice it theorises” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 31). This framework applies a dialectical approach to the analysis, and given its emancipatory knowledge interest, positions itself within the very practice it theorizes. Our understanding of discourse is inspired by Fairclough's (1992: 64) definition: “Discourse is



a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.” Focus thus is placed on the communicative interactions between people in which they continuously make and remake their lives, the interplay between people and their environments. In political discourses, different positions are being negotiated, and in accordance with that, we see policy texts as ‘sites of struggle’ where the power balance between different positions differs over time (Wodak 2008). Texts are at the same time seen as materialized expressions of discourse and themselves part of an ongoing communicative practice extended in time and space. The term discourse also applies to what resources and/or constraints are present at a given time and space. We argue that the concept of discourse enables a deepened understanding of the contextual preconditions set up by different policy discourses, the power relations between different positions and how they change over time. Preconditions also affect people’s willingness to become part of a widened communicative environment and the possibility that they will as proposed by Dewey. The procedure for elaborating the empirical categories follows the analytical steps of content analysis: (a) reading closely and systematically to identify the main educational discourses in the texts, (b) comparing the discursive constructions of the categories in the texts (i.e., semiotic legitimization), (c) analyzing the shifts in the justification of the discourses in the texts, and (d) taking the discursive and sociocultural aspects into account in understanding the displacements or changes in the discourses. Furthermore, we analyze the construction of policy as a whole and make comparisons in terms of intertextuality during the period 2000-2014. We identify three basic documents: *The Lisbon Strategy* (European Council 2000), *Europe 2020* (European Commission 2010), and *Rethinking Education* (European Commission 2012). Our empirical analyses reveal four central themes as discursive strategies: (a) economic growth and social cohesion in Europe, (b) European crisis and global competition, (c) the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results and (d) moral argumentation for more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe. The first two discursive strategies concern Europe and the EU as a whole, but the last two argumentative discourses more specifically concern the EU member states’ school systems. Thus, the first two discursive strategies formulate the core values that constitute the prerequisite for the latter two more action-oriented strategies for schools and education.

- 22 In the second step, we analyze the empirically substantiated policy discourses and their underlying philosophical assumptions in relation to some of the core concepts of *Democracy and Education*, reflecting Dewey’s philosophy. Against the backdrop of Dewey’s two criteria for democracy, to have, as fully and freely as possible, communication within and between different groups, we identify three central concepts, or concept areas, as fruitful tools of analysis when exploring the transnational policy of compulsory schooling after the introduction of the Lisbon Strategy. The first concept is *social efficiency*; we use the concept discussed in Chapters 7, 9, and 3 respectively, in *Democracy and Education* as a critical lens to examine the themes of “economic growth and social cohesion in Europe” and “the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results.” Secondly, *communication* as a process of social coordination and cooperation from Chapter 1 in *Democracy and Education* provides a critical lens for examining the themes of “a European crisis and global competition.” Drawing on Dewey’s perspective of the quality of human interaction as a *moral interest* in engaging intelligently and ethically with a

changing world (Ch. 26) as a third concept, we explore the meaning of “moral argumentation for a more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe.”

- 23 This Deweyan reading of some of the main policy documents, starting with the Lisbon Strategy (2000), enables us to critically discuss some of the basic assumptions and their consequences for the EU-advocated transnational education policy. The benefit of adopting Dewey's work *Democracy and Education* as the critical starting point is twofold: First, it helps discuss the relationship between education and society from a pedagogical point of view, and second, it helps clarify that all interpretations of discourses, for politicians as well as for the public, always provide alternatives for action.
- 24 The data sources include 28 EU policy documents from 2000 to 2014. We selected them because they are related to three key documents: (1) the principal document for the *Lisbon Strategy* (European Council 2000) with 12 subsequent documents within the OMC; (2) the principal document for *Europe 2020* (European Commission 2010) with eight subsequent European semester documents including specific country reports, and recommendations to each country; and (3) the principal document for *Rethinking Education* (European Commission, 2012) with five subsequent documents regarding the agenda for European cooperation regarding schools.

## 8. The Lisbon Strategy: Analysis Results

- 25 This section includes the result of analyses of the four themes. In the first part, we analyze the theme of economic growth and social cohesion in Europe followed by the European crisis and global competition. Striving for restructuring education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results constitutes the third part of the section, and finally, moral argumentation for more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe concludes this section.

### 8.1. Economic Growth and Social Cohesion in Europe

- 26 In the Lisbon Strategy from 2000 (European Council 2000: § 5), the new strategic goal for the next decade for Europe was set: sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The goals, which should be met by 2010, should have been reached with a transition to a knowledge-based economy through better policies for structural reform for competitiveness and innovation, as well as “modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion” (European Council 2000: § 5). The aim of the strategy was to gain full employment and to strengthen regional social cohesion in Europe. The striving for a competitive and common Europe mirrors the purpose that was set out after the Second World War: From the start, the EU was thought of as a “peace project,” built on the assumption that common economic interests, close cooperation and trade would prevent future conflicts and war. Thus, from the start, the Lisbon Strategy combined the goals of economic growth and social cohesion. In the strategy, it was argued that a transition to a digital knowledge-based economy would also improve people's quality of life and contribute to a better environment. “Every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in this new information society” (European Council 2000: § 9). It is clear from the policy document that “every citizen” must be included, and the policy argues for combatting illiteracy and providing special attention to people with disabilities.

- 27 Consequently, there is a need for the nations' education systems to adapt to the demands for improved quality in the labor market. Three target groups were identified: young people, unemployed adults and those whose jobs were at risk due to rapid changes. Education should have three main components: local learning centers; basic skills with an emphasis on information technologies, foreign languages, entrepreneurship and social skills; and a system for qualification transparency, fostering the mobility of students and teachers. To spread best practices and achieve greater convergence, the OMC was implemented. From the beginning of the project in 2000, the Lisbon Strategy largely focused on education. During the first seven to eight years, the educational interest was centered on vocational training and common qualification systems in higher education (Lawn & Grek 2012). At the same time, a dense network of statistical data for comparison between the member states was developed, as an important presupposition for the OMC (Ozga & Lingard 2007; and Grek 2009). Around 2010, the focus shifted to implementing the European Framework for Key Competences in the national compulsory school system, and closer monitoring of the achievement of national school systems emerged.
- 28 When 2010 arrived, the optimistic formulations were gone. "The [economic] crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weakness in Europe's economy" (European Commission 2010: 5). In the new *Europe 2020* strategy, the goal was set to "come out stronger from the crisis" and to develop the EU to be a "smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion" (*Ibid.*). By 2020, at least 75 % of the European population should be employed, and the percentage of high school dropouts should be under 10 %. At least 40 % of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree. The EU leadership urged member states to ensure efficient investment in their national education systems, at all levels, from pre-school to tertiary education, to improve the educational outcomes at all stages. The evaluation of the national knowledge results is implemented through the surveys of the Programme for International Student Assessment surveys, henceforth PISA, run by the OECD. To ensure progress toward the goals set for 2020, "Education and Training Monitor" was implemented in 2012, to "unlock the full potential of education as a driver for growth and jobs" and to help the member states to pursue reforms for greater efficiency of their education systems. The country-specific assessment within the framework should ensure, among other things, that the percentage of 15-year-olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %, assessed by the PISA tests. The underlying assumption is that education could solve the problem of the economic crisis and the demographic problem of an aging labor force. Another assumption is that if students lack an upper secondary education, they risk getting caught in unemployment and social exclusion.
- 29 When reading the policy documents through the lens of Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, it becomes clear that well-functioning socialization in society, either in one's own country or in Europe as a whole, is deemed very important. It is not only about the need to contribute to the common welfare but also a fear of the consequences if different groups are left out of society. In Dewey's terms, it is not possible to position oneself outside society, but Dewey acknowledges that not all societies are good societies, which he exemplified with the metaphor of a gang of thieves. What characterizes good societies are the large number of values and interests in common within the group, and a recognition of *shared values* as a factor in social control (MW 9: 92). Another criterion for a democratic society is free interaction between different social groups and *continuous*

*readjustment* as consequences of encounters with other groups. Readiness for changes in habits, instead of merely a lively exchange, distinguishes the democratic approach (MW 9: 92) from an exchange of people and services for an economic boost from a human capital perspective. Since the European democracies cannot be authoritarian toward their inhabitants, the democracies need, similar to all other democracies, to rely on education for infusing a disposition of interest in people and circumstances other than their own. Thus, for democracies in general, as well as for Europe, it is not just about getting the informed citizens to the polls but also about appreciation of an “associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93) in their everyday lives. In the EU policy documents, there is an awareness of the danger of creating enclaves and excluding groups, both from a social and an economic perspective. However, when it comes to education, the meaning of social efficiency is more in line with the economic thinking of supply and demand of skilled labor, than of handling challenging social situations in an intelligent and effective way, in accordance with Dewey's thinking of social efficiency. There is a strong impact of an economic logic, not least from the OECD and their policy initiative in education, including the PISA surveys.

## 8.2 European Crisis and Global Competition

- 30 When launching the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, the European Council painted a picture of Europe entering a radically new era due to globalization and challenges from “a new knowledge-driven economy” (European Council 2000: § 1). The forthcoming expansion of the EU was discussed as an important part of the creation of new opportunities for growth and employment. An optimistic future was sketched where Europe's “generally well educated workforce as well as social protection systems” (European Council 2000: § 3) were seen as capable of securing a stable framework for managing structural changes for a knowledge-based society. Through the introduction of the OMC, a communicative logic was built into the system in order to facilitate transmission of knowledge and experience between the member states in a continuous process of policy learning (Alexiadou 2014). The communicative logic of mutual learning is based on two premises: first, that the problems addressed are not national problems but common problems and, second, that “Europe” is the appropriate level for addressing those common questions (Dale 2009b). The process of Europeanization in education is formed as its own unit, by numerous networks, private actors and interest groups, through sharing of meanings, the production of identities and increasing commonalities. The exchange of contacts and conversations takes place at all levels: city-to-city networks, expert networks, research networks, networks between national and local authorities etc. (Lawn 2007). Although not explicitly discussed as such, the logic of the OMC connects to Dewey's idea of social coordination and cooperation through communication opening up for different voices and experiences to be heard in a mutual process of policy learning. However, communication within and between different groups is mainly formed in what Nancy Fraser (1989) terms “from above” by expert groups, forming expert “needs interpretations,” while the needs “from below,” forming oppositional discourses, are left out of discourse formations on European needs. The vivid exchange and discussions within and between networks, forming a discourse of Europe, are therefore first formed in a depoliticized, official economic arena (Wahlström 2010a). With this limitation regarding the participation of different social groups communicating within and between each other, the OMC does not provide communication in terms of the meaning the term is

given in *Democracy and Education*. As Dewey notes in his discussion of the individuals who form a society, “what they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding.” Moreover, “the communication which insures participation in a common understanding” is one which secures similar “ways of responding to expectations and requirements” (MW 9: 7). Such communication for the creation of communities requires broad participation of different social groups, both vertically and horizontally. Despite the communicative methodology, the OMC is mainly about horizontal communication, discursively embedded in a wider policy environment that emphasizes global competition and the development of human capital through lifelong learning. Member states were invited into a voluntary development process built up around benchmarks, goals, indicators and the persuasive power exercised by the continuously growing amount of comparable data presented in different kinds of league tables and ranking lists (Lawn & Grek 2012). At first, the tone was very optimistic and the strategy for coordinating the policy initiatives among the member states through communication seemed to do the work as expected (European Council 2004: 4). However, by the time of the planned mid-term review in 2005, the previous optimism had been replaced by a growing sense of crisis due to what was described as a lack of progress (Robertson 2008).

External events since 2000 have not helped achieving the objectives but the European Union and its Member States have clearly themselves contributed to slow progress by failing to act on much of the Lisbon Strategy with sufficient urgency. This disappointing delivery is due to an overload agenda, poor coordination and conflicting priorities. (Kok 2004: 6)

- 31 The Kok report criticizes the EU as well as the member states and argues that “greater focus is required to build understanding of why Lisbon is relevant to every person in every household in Europe” (Kok 2004: 7). This argument comes closer to a Deweyan way of understanding communication. The problem is that communication still is expected to be implemented “from above,” instead of forming a public as Dewey argues in *The Public and Its Problems* (LW 2: 235-372), concerned with “the side effects” of risks in a time of globalization (Beck & Grande 2007). The focus of the crisis discourse that emerged around 2005 is the structural aspects with economic growth and jobs as core issues in order for the EU to regain global competitiveness. The European Commission states, “Europe’s performance has diverged from that of our competitors in other parts of the world” (2005: 4). Within only a year, the European discourse thus changed to more explicit crisis rhetoric urging immediate action in order to prevent a catastrophe: “At risk – in the medium to long run – is nothing less than the sustainability of the society Europe has built” (Kok 2004: 16). The Commission expresses great concern about structural ‘risks’ such as an average growth rate below comparable countries, a declining population starting in 2013/2014 and a smaller percentage of the population being employed (European Council 2006: 8). Without being able to manage these “risks,” the Commission states that the EU runs the risk of widening the gap with competitor countries such as the US, China and India when it comes to key knowledge economy sectors. The bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the US in 2008 contributed to the cementation of the crisis discourse and formed the basis for the Commission to launch a new growth strategy for Europe called *Europe 2020*. With the financial crisis, external factors thus coincide with the former crisis discourse that focused mainly on potential future risks, establishing special premises when regarding time and space. In the preface to *Europe 2020*, Barroso states,

The crisis is a wake-up call, the moment where we recognize that “business as usual” would consign us to a gradual decline, to the second rank of the new global order. This is Europe’s moment of truth. (European Commission 2010: 2)

- 32 The emerging crisis discourse is thus built up by a combination of an argumentative strategy intended to legitimize extensive reforms and the realization of one out of many potential risks that Beck and Grande (2007) talk about as inherent in today’s globalized society, a financial crisis.
- 33 One of the fundamental problems posed by the Kok report (2004) and the Commission (European Commission 2010) is that the OMC has not been able to coordinate national policy initiatives as expected. It had given the member states too much communicative space, which had resulted in a slow and straggly reform agenda. Time is therefore an important aspect in future European policy initiatives. The joint interim report in 2006 urges that the serious situation in Europe calls for more effective reforms and that the “pace of reforms must be accelerated” (European Council 2006: 8). To gain better effectiveness, the EU needs to “go into the member-states and engage in an ever more intense discussion with civil society” according to Barroso (2005: 5). The discursive theme on more direct involvement by the Commission in national educational policy making is followed up in the *Europe 2020* strategy. To strengthen the coordination of national policy initiatives, a new structure for surveillance is introduced. Compulsory schools are more explicitly included in the educational agenda than before (cf. Wahlström 2016b), and moral aspects are reintroduced into the European discourse, but without the social and democratic connotation that characterized the moral discourse in European policy during the 1960s and 1970s concerning the inclusion of marginalized groups, poverty reduction and solidarity (Nordin 2012). This time, the moral theme instead has to do with the individual responsibility of every European citizen to engage in a self-directed process of lifelong learning to be constantly employable.

### 8.3. The Restructuring of Education for Greater Efficiency and Better Knowledge Results

- 34 According to the European Commission (2010), the European crisis discourse calls for a restructuring of the educational sector in order to gain greater efficiency and better knowledge results. One of the main reasons for the lack of progress and a cornerstone in the crisis discourse, the Commission claimed, was the communicative freedom facilitated by the OMC. Too many voices and too much diverse interaction had made it difficult to maintain direction. From this argument, it becomes clear that “soft governance” (Lawn & Grek 2012) emphasizing networking and communication has a closer affinity to governing by governments than to widespread social participation.
- 35 In the *Rethinking Education* strategy from 2012, the arguments for education as preparing for democracy in the way Dewey understands democracy, as an “extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others” for breaking down “those barriers of class, race, and national territory” (MW 9: 93), are thus overshadowed by economic arguments. After having stated that the “broad mission of education and training encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, personal development and well-being,” the Commission immediately notes that



against the backdrop of sluggish economic growth and a shrinking workforce [...] the most pressing challenges for Member States are to address the needs of the economy and focus on solutions to tackle fast-rising youth unemployment. (European Commission 2012)

- 36 The subsequent policy argumentation in *Rethinking Education* is almost entirely based on an economic logic of education as skills that “determine Europe’s capacity to increase productivity” (European Commission 2012: 2). The main concern for the education field is about providing the “right” skills for employability and to increase efficiency in educational institutions. Concepts such as skills and competencies also mark a discursive shift toward a new language for education characterized by individualization and market orientation. In the EU policy documents, the language of lifelong learning is described as a “semantic bridge” between the labor market and the educational sector. Lifelong learning in the context of the Lisbon Strategy has little to do with the democratic way of life advocated by Dewey. Although, just like Dewey, the policy documents link education, learning and the development of certain skills and competencies to a way of life, instead of to a strict formalized process within certain prepared school buildings, the vision that evolves in the EU documents is quite different. The development of competencies within the strict individualized conception of lifelong learning is described as follows by the Commission:

Key competences represent a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment. These should be developed by the end of the compulsory schooling or training, and should act as a foundation for further learning. (European Commission 2004: 6)

- 37 The adaption of competencies is brought forward as an individual adaption strategy in order for citizens to become, and remain, employable throughout their lives. Lifelong learning is constructed as a decontextualized conception of education where general knowledge is developed in the minds of flexible learners. The introduction of psychological concepts such as “attitudes” and the discourses of competencies in terms of “transferable packages” reveal an agenda for European education that in many aspects operates in the opposite direction from the term social efficiency suggested by Dewey. Social efficiency in Dewey’s terms is “that socialization of *mind* which is actively concerned in making experiences more communicable” by going beyond social stratifications and barriers. In the same utterance, he dissociates himself from an interpretation of social efficiency “confined to the service rendered by overt acts, its chief constituent [...] is omitted” (MW 9: 127). In Dewey’s understanding of social efficiency, the concept is an effect of expanded communication where intellectual, emotional and aesthetic horizons are widened (Hickman 2006). In contrast, when social efficiency is “severed from an active acknowledgement of the diversity of goods which life may afford to different persons,” social efficiency involves “hard and metallic things” (MW 9: 128). There is no reason to believe that the discourse of lifelong learning would not include a wish for expanded intellectual, emotional and aesthetic horizons. However, the European Union discourse of lifelong learning fails to acknowledge the criteria of individuals making their own intelligent choices, instead of “dictat[ing] to them what their good shall be” (MW 9: 128). From a democratic perspective, social efficiency and social control, as intelligent handling of different social situations, emerge from the individual acknowledging the public good. An argumentation imposed on individuals from outside and above, instead of being cultivated from within the individual, becomes



“hard” and demanding according to Dewey. The European Union discourse of lifelong learning has not emerged from the citizens of Europe. Instead, the discourses of lifelong learning and effective learning belong to an economic interpretation of the needs that relate more to Europe and the individual member states in a human capital perspective and thus have difficulty reaching out to the individuals in the European region. Therefore, it is rational that the EU makes an effort to implement the key competencies within the European framework of lifelong learning through the national frameworks for education in order to reach greater efficiency and better knowledge results. Put differently, through a reduction, instead of an expansion, of participants in communication, Europe should gain greater efficiency in education. The focus must be on the individual construction of knowledge instead of what is developed between people in intersubjective transactions.

- 38 Although still based on the principle of subsidiarity, the *Europe 2020* expresses a growing interest in including compulsory schooling in the Lisbon Strategy more explicitly than before as a means of strengthening the role of the EU in governing national educational reforms and to achieve better knowledge results in the European region. The EU promotes an individualized and competitive conception of education in which individual success in a flexible market is set before fostering participation in a broader sense, as citizens and humans. To achieve greater effectiveness in implementing the lifelong learning agenda, *Europe 2020* includes a new architecture to secure a better and more effective implementation called “the European semester.” It rests on two pillars, one with a thematic focus for the implementation of seven “flagship initiatives” that cover different policy areas. The other is a system of “country-specific recommendations” aimed at strengthening the role of the Commission in governing national policy and to identify what was described as “national bottle-necks.” The Commission has also acquired a strengthened mandate to enforce the recommendations delivered by the Commission.

In cases where recommendations are not followed up sufficiently within the timeframe provided, the Commission may issue policy warnings and ensure effective enforcement through appropriate incentives and sanctions. (European Commission 2010: 6)

- 39 This means that there now is a strong movement to centralize the evaluation of educational results in Europe, as an intergovernment organization, and at the national level in individual states. Even the issue of school content has received increased attention from key players in Europe, as well as individual member states.

#### 8.4. Moral Argumentation for More Thorough Control of Compulsory Education in Europe

- 40 The European crisis discourse means a renewed interest in moral aspects. The launch of the Lisbon Strategy meant a reduction in discursive themes such as solidarity, poverty reduction and democracy in favor of themes such as lifelong learning, competitiveness and accountability. However, the risk of increased economic nationalism and protectionism in the wake of the crisis discourse led the Commission to reintroduce the moral dimension the policy agenda. In *Europe 2020*, the Commission argues that in order to enter a new, smart and sustainable economy, Europe needs to act collectively (European Commission 2010: 7). The new economy should prioritize smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: smart in terms of focusing on knowledge and innovation,

sustainable through increased resource efficiency and inclusive in delivering economic as well as social and territorial cohesion. In addition to a strengthened surveillance system and better and more reliable data to measure progress, social cohesion is highlighted as an important policy area to address to realize the European vision of a new economy. When looking ahead, the Commission counts on Europe's

strong values, democratic institutions, our consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, our respect for the environment, our cultural diversity, respect for gender equality. (European Commission 2010: 7)

*Europe 2020* opens up for a widened policy agenda linking economic growth to aspects such as common values, diversity and solidarity. The production and use of comparable data are thus combined with a reintroduced moral argumentation in order to strengthen the coordination of national reform agendas. However, it is a moral argumentation conditioned by, and embedded within, a human capital discourse whose scope is limited to what is desirable according the logic of the labor market. The perspective includes cultivating flexible citizens able to adapt to a constantly changing environment and to increase educational outcomes at all levels, building on general competences and skills from pre-school to tertiary education. (European Commission 2010)

- 41 In order to foster citizens who take personal responsibility for fulfilling the overarching Lisbon objectives, the Commission states that lifelong learning has to guide education at all levels.

Moreover, the framework for competences, as requested by the Lisbon Council, should be seen from the perspective of lifelong learning, i.e. acquired by the end of compulsory schooling but also learned, updated and maintained throughout life. (European Commission 2004: 3)

- 42 Lifelong learning as a means for securing smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is explicitly discussed as an educational concept, bridging the gap between the educational sector and the labor market. To foster the spirit of lifelong learning in Europe's citizens and secure their acquisition of the appropriate competences and skills, the crisis discourse contributes to more thorough control of compulsory education (cf. Nordin 2012; and Wahlström 2016b). Compulsory education is central for fostering common values and a sense of shared responsibility for the EU's overarching objectives for economic growth. In the policy document *Rethinking Education*, the Commission states the importance of developing transversal skills and emphasizes entrepreneurial skills in particular, methods for transforming knowledge and innovation into creating employment and businesses.

Key actions are to ensure that measures are taken to introduce transversal skills across all curricula from early stages of education up to higher education, using innovative and student-centred pedagogical approaches, and to design assessment tools through which levels of competence can be effectively assessed and evaluated. All young people should benefit from at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education. (European Commission 2012: 15)

- 43 More thorough control of compulsory schooling in Europe thus means an increased focus on transversal skills as the guiding principle in organizing the knowledge content to be learned in schools. Individualized and decontextualized knowledge enhances flexibility and thus also employability, and should permeate all levels of education in Europe, including compulsory schooling.
- 44 The European crisis discourse thus strengthens the economic imperative at all educational levels, emphasizing that there are no alternatives other than to invest,

nationally and personally, in the acquisition of the necessary skills. However, despite the strong economic imperative, the *Rethinking Education* policy document has discursive elements pointing in other directions, elements that widen the idea of what education is, or could be, all about. The Commission states: "The broad mission of education and training encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, personal development and well-being" (European Commission 2012: 2). Combining this broadened definition with the expressed emphasis in *Europe 2020* for Europe to open up to the rest of the world in ever-more intense communication and cooperation as a way to combat the negative effects of the financial crisis holds a starting point for a more profound rethinking of education than what is offered within the human capital discourse.

- 45 The Lisbon Strategy and its subsequent education policy ideals thus include a dominant moral argumentation for every citizen's duty to contribute to increasing economic welfare in the European region and a more unseen and ambiguous moral duty to communicate and learn from others. The latter partly finds resonance in the concluding section of *Democracy and Education*: All education that has the force to develop students' interest in sharing effectively in social life is moral, and the essential moral interest is to develop an "[i]nterest in learning from all contacts of life" (MW 9: 370). The text's terminating lines summarize Dewey's fundamental idea that has been prominent throughout the book, namely, that the most important outcome of education is a person who is willing to and capable of engaging intelligently and ethically in a changing world (Hansen 2006). This is the moral measure for all education. As Hansen (2006) notes, this moral claim echoes Immanuel Kant's imperative that we should always treat others as ends in themselves and never treat any other human being as a means to our own ends. In striving to lead our lives in this way, we can be said to lead a moral life, and education is an important means for becoming moral selves. According to this way of thinking, quality of life can never be formed only by various quantities of material assets or social capital but by social efficiency in communication and responses through encounters with others. Thus, living a moral life is not something you can achieve through education; living a moral life is something you do through and in being educated, in the same way experience is not a collection of personal memories and conclusions but something you do, as an active verb, on your way through life in contact with others. The moral quality of life is discernible through the situations humans create (see Hansen 2006). The formulations in the EU policy documents on education partly acknowledge this insight, but they focus on a human capital understanding of the need for all people to be "included" as a prerequisite of economic growth.

## 9. Concluding Thoughts

- 46 The EU is based on the idea of an internal market. Therefore, it is not a surprising result of this study's analysis that the transnational policy documents discussed compulsory education and the national European school systems mainly in terms of a human capital discourse, based on economic arguments for guaranteeing basic skills, decreasing dropout rates and promoting teaching efficiency. However, examining the policy documents from the perspective of Dewey's philosophy of democracy and education allows for going beyond a limited human capital perspective and making visible an alternative approach to education.

- 47 A “democratic perspective” expands the vision of a European citizenship in relation to national citizenship. With reference to Hansen (2006: 166), Dewey believes that “the art of living and the art of democracy are symbiotic.” Dewey concludes that a society “which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life” is from this standpoint a democratic society (MW 9: 105). This form of “associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93) requires a
- type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (MW 9: 105)
- 48 In this way, there is a strong connection between Dewey’s understanding of social life, democracy and education.
- 49 In the study, we used Dewey’s concepts of social efficiency, communication and the moral interest for a critical analysis of the content of EU policy documents that are relevant to education. The analysis reveals the possibility of a re-understanding of the policy documents. We are, as readers, not bound to accept the term “social efficiency” as a human capital term. We can choose to interpret and argue for an understanding of social efficiency as taking an active interest in other people’s lives, the way other people look at life and what they appreciate in order to live a good life. We do not need to understand “communication” as a process of passing information from one level to the other, for example, from the European Council to the national parliaments; instead, we can imagine communication, as Dewey did, as participation and shared experiences from the ground. Finally, moral interest is not necessarily linked to European economic welfare but far more to the way we respond to the Other. Such an alternative reading makes it possible to also pay attention to the possibilities and the potentialities that could hide beyond the dominant limited human capital discourse.
- 50 We wrote these lines on November 14, 2015. That day, it was reported that about 130 people had been killed in six coordinated terror attacks in Paris and that many people were injured. During the fall, the Swedish government also estimated that 150 000 people would apply for asylum in Sweden this year. During just one week in October, 9179 asylum applicants arrived in Sweden. Of them, 2441 were unaccompanied children (under the age of 18), mostly from Afghanistan but also some from Syria (DN 2015-10-19). During the year as a whole, several thousand refugees have come to Sweden and Germany each week while other European countries have regarded themselves as transit countries where refugees may cross but not stay. Other European countries do not permit transit or applications for asylum. Italy and Greece are experiencing tremendous pressure, as those countries become responsible for receiving refugees who arrive by boat in Europe.



- 51 In this crisis of nearby wars, terror attacks and refugees in Europe, economy and competition are not viable concepts for seeking solutions, even though the economy certainly plays an important role in handling the problems. Instead, we argue that the European member states, their citizens and their educators need a different language for defining themselves as a public (LW 2: 235-372). A shift to a language adapted to the real crisis and the fear of future crises in Europe could preferably be a language that understands concepts such as social efficiency, communication and a moral interest as

full and free communication within and between different groups as Dewey developed his philosophy on democracy and education, in order to maintain and strengthen a democratic education and a democratic way of living for all.

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## NOTES

1. References to John Dewey's published works are to the critical edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, edited by Boydston J. A., Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1991, and published in three series as *The Early Works 1882-1899* [EW], *The Middle Works 1899-1924* [MW], and *The Later Works 1925-1953* [LW].

## ABSTRACTS

In this article, we use the basic concepts of Dewey's pedagogical philosophy on democracy and education as analytical tools for exploring the democratic potential of a transnational education policy within the contemporary European risk discourse. A Deweyan reading of main policy documents, starting with the 2000 Lisbon Strategy, allows for critical discussion of some of the basic assumptions and consequences of the EU-advocated transnational education policy. The



data sources include 28 EU policy documents from 2000 to 2014. The analysis shows that in addition to a prevailing “human capital” discourse, there is potential for a communicative “democratic discourse” that promotes social cohesion. The democratic discourse underlines the full and free communication between different groups as the only way to promote and ensure the conditions for social cohesion. In this crisis of nearby wars, terror attacks and refugees in Europe, economy and competition are not viable concepts for seeking solutions. We argue that a shift to a language adapted to the real crisis and the fear of future crises in Europe is needed. We argue that a language that understands social efficiency, communication and a moral interest in the way Dewey outlined the concepts in *Democracy and Education* corresponds to the strong need to maintain and strengthen a democratic education and a democratic way of living for all.

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