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## **Researching Education in a Globalising Era: Beyond Methodological Nationalism, Methodological Statism, Methodological Educationism and Spatial Fetishism**

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## Introduction

At its most concrete, the voluminous literature on globalisation is a complex and overlapping set of stories not only about profound changes that are taking place but our own understandings of these changes. These transformations have followed the disintegration of the post World War II settlement in the developed western economies in the 1970s, the emergence of neo-liberal economic policies and new technological developments in the 1980s, and the collapse in 1989 of the iconic Berlin Wall which had structured West-East alliances and relations (Mittelman, 2004). The post-war suturing of state-economy-civil society relations also unravelled in the face of attacks on enlightenment thinking which had shaped ideas about modernisation and progress (Harvey, 1989), as well as notions of knowledge, power and subjectivity (Foucault, 1982).

While there is considerable debate over precisely how best to define globalisation (Scholte, 2005), there is broad agreement that it is an historical process involving the uneven development and partial and contingent transformation of political, economic and cultural structures, practices and social relations (Hobsbawm, 1999; Jessop, 1999; Mittelman, 2004; Scholte, 2005) whose distinctive features (in contrast to modernisation) involve the denationalisation and transformation of policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frameworks (Sassen, 2006: 1)). Crucial in these unfolding processes is the rise of powerful globalising actors; the intensification of accumulation; new political, social and class struggles (Harvey, 2006); Having said this, it is also important to note that globalisation is also taking place within as well as beyond national boundaries. Sassen (2003), for example, argues that processes of globalisation have resulted in the partial denationalisation of the state, with important implications for questions of citizenship, representation and politics.

Within this, the education systems of modern nations have faced major changes in terms of, firstly, the mandates that now drive education policy, secondly, the human and fiscal resourcing for the provision of education (capacity), and thirdly, the governance of the sector (Dale, 1997). These changes have been well rehearsed – so our remarks at this point are necessarily brief. The new mandate for education—what it is desirable that the education system should do—has increasingly privileged global economic competitiveness, lifelong learning, education for a knowledge based economy and education as an export industry. The resourcing of education (human and fiscal) emphasises efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. Finally, new structures of governance (funding, regulation and so on) have reconfigured relationships between the state and civil society, public and private, citizens and communities (Newman, 2001).

One of the key effects of globalisation on education is an evident shift away from a predominantly national education system to a more fragmented, multi-scalar and multi-sectoral distribution of activity that now involves new players, new ways of thinking about knowledge production and distribution, and new challenges in terms of ensuring the distribution of opportunities for access and social mobility (Dale and Robertson, 2007). One way of conceptualising the changing nature, scope and sites involved in the work of education is to see a new ‘functional and scalar division of the labour of education’ emerging (see Dale, 2003).

More broadly, these emerging social structures of the world demand new knowledges so that we might understand better a new ontology of world order (Cox, 2002: 76). While not a new debate in the social sciences, it is an important, albeit highly contested, one.

Ulrich Beck (2002), for instance, has argued that the global transformation of modernity calls for rethinking the humanities and social sciences. He argues that the study of globality and globalisation has revolutionised the social sciences as these processes call into question the deeply held national assumptions that have historically shaped the development of modern social sciences. Like Cox (op. Cit), what is at issue for Beck (2002: 29) is that it is not possible to understand changes in the nature of the relationship between social structures and our knowledge of the world with tools that are no longer fit for purpose. We require a new lexicon, Beck argues, to describe social phenomena that is not dependent upon what he colourfully refers to as 'zombie' categories—such as 'national states', 'identities', 'classes' and so on. Second, rethinking the social sciences opens up the possibility of an ideational shift that would in turn generate possibilities for a more dialogical 'cosmopolitan' imagination (ibid).

Beck's arguments around cosmopolitanism as a new imaginary are controversial and ones that we do not intend to engage with here. Rather, the more important point for this chapter is to take up the conceptual and methodological challenges he poses concerning the social sciences more generally and our analysis of education in a globalising era more specifically. It is fundamentally the changes of the scale and the means of governance at and through which 'education' is carried out that has exposed the shortcomings of previous theorising.

In this chapter we focus upon four key underpinning assumptions which still shape research on education but which we argue are challenged by globalisation; methodological nationalism, methodological statism, methodological educationism and spatial fetishism—or as we have argued elsewhere—a set of 'isms'. By 'ism' we mean the tendency to see these categories as natural, fixed and unchanging—or in other words as ontologically and epistemologically ossified. The assumption/acceptance of these categories means that the understanding of changes brought about by globalisation may be refracted through the lenses of unproblematic conceptions of the nationalism, the state, education systems and the spatial geometry of education, even as these changes themselves bring about changes in the meaning of, or the work done by, nation states and education systems and thereby undermine their validity.

## Four Assumptions of Research in Education

### *(i) Methodological nationalism*

The outstanding, and most relevant, example of methodological nationalism is 'the nation state'. The nation state has been at the core of comparative education throughout its history. It has been the basis of comparison, what has been compared. As Daniel Chernilo puts it, "...the nation-state became the organizing principle around which the whole project of modernity cohered" (Chernilo, 2006: 129). We might see it as the institution that embodies the principles of modernity and through which those principles are to be delivered. Furthermore, the nation-state conception is further reinforced by its being embedded within a well established system of similar states, (where nation states are recognised as legal entities under international law) which deepens the difficulty of both looking beyond, and of imagining alternatives to it.

The nation state has been the core concept on which the methodological nationalism that has characterised most of social science has been based (Martins, 1974). We can

identify four distinct elements of this problem (for an extended critique of the conception of methodological nationalism in comparative education see Dale 2005). The first, and best known, is the idea that methodological nationalism sees the nation state as the container of ‘society’, so that comparing societies entails comparing nation states (see also Beck, 2002; Beck and Znaider, 2006) and their distinctive economic, cultural and social systems. Invoking the national as an analytical category in a cultural account tends to result in categories such as Indian, or Korean, with little ground given to the huge differences within this category either at the level of identification or at the level of ethnic groupings. The second is the close association between nation states and comparison brought about by the ‘national’ being the level at which statistics have traditionally been gathered. As one of us put it elsewhere, methodological nationalism operates both about and for the nation-state to the point where the only reality we are able to comprehensively describe statistically is a national, or at best an international, one (Dale 2005, 126). The third element of the problem arises from the tendency to juxtapose an unreconstructed methodological nationalism to underspecified conceptions of ‘globalisation’ in a zero-sum relationship – that is as the global has taken on more functions and power this ostensibly has been at the expense of a new disempowered state. The final element concerns the extent of the suffusion, or identification, of concepts of the nation state with a particular imaginary of rule. This has become clearer through recent discussions of conceptions of ‘sovereignty’, ‘territoriality’ and ‘authority’ (see especially Ansell and Di Palma 2004). These discussions essentially see the particular combination of responsibilities and activities that nation-states have been assumed to be responsible for as historically contingent rather than functionally necessary, or even optimal. Thus, though the ontology that “...a region of physical space... can be conceived of as a corporate personality”, the nature, implications and consequences of this have varied greatly, and it remains the case that “...the unity of this public authority has generally been regarded as the hallmark of the so-called Westphalian states” (Ansell 2004, 6), while “...the chief characteristic of the modern system of territorial rule is the consolidation of all parcellized and personalised authority into one public realm” (Ruggie, 1993: 151). However, while “...public authority has been demarcated by discrete boundaries of national territory...so, too, has the articulation of societal interests and identities that both buttress and make demands upon this authority” (ibid.: 8). The question is then raised about the “...implications of a world in which the mutually reinforcing relations of territory, authority and societal interests and identities can no longer be taken for granted” (ibid.: 9)

### *(ii) Methodological statism*

If methodological nationalism refers to the tendency to take the nation state as the container of societies, the related but considerably less recognised term—methodological *statism*—refers to the tendency to assume that there is a particular *form* intrinsic to all states. That is, it is assumed that all polities are ruled, organised and administered in essentially the same way, with the same set of problems and responsibilities, and through the same set of institutions. The problem emerges because the state, as an object of analysis, exists both as a material force and also an ideological construct (Mitchell, 1999: 76). The ideological construct tends to dominate, and spread—for instance through global interventions like the ‘good governance’ agenda (Weiss, 2000). Added to this problem, as Bourdieu (1999: 53) points out are the problems for the analyst when categories are produced by the state and are also deeply embedded in societies. Thus, “to endeavour to think the state is to take the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a

thought of the state, that is, of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state and hence to misrecognise its most profound truth”.

We see this in the way an assumed set of institutions has become taken-for-granted as *the* pattern for the rule of societies and that this pattern is the one found in the West in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular the social-democratic welfare state that pervaded Western Europe in the second half of that century (see Zurn and Leibfried, 2005, 11). Central – and, we might argue, unique--to this conception was that all four dimensions of the state distinguished by Zurn and Leibfried (resources, law, legitimacy and welfare) converged in national constellations, and national institutions. What Zurn and Leibfried make clear, however, is that “...the changes over the past 40 years are not merely creases in the fabric of the nation state, but rather an unravelling of the finely woven national constellation of its Golden Age” (Ibid.: 1). To put it another way, both the assumption of a common set of responsibilities and means of achieving them, and the assumption that they are necessarily rather than contingently associated with each other, can no longer be sustained, outside a continuing methodological statism.

We can point to two further assumptions of methodological statism in the social sciences in general and education in particular. The first is the recognition of its locational specificity as the basis of methodological statism. The model of the state that became taken-for-granted in academic discourse across most of the social sciences was not one that was ever established or present in the greater part of what we refer to as developing countries. That model was not only imposed on the majority of post-colonial states that were created after World War II, but formal acceptance of, and attachment to, it became the main basis of membership of the ‘international community’. As has been pointed out by Ferguson and Gupta (2002), among others, that model of the state was never an effective means of conceiving of how the majority of developing societies were ruled. They see work on states based on two assumptions; *verticality*, which “refers to the state as an institution somehow above civil society, community and family” (Ibid.: 982). This top-down assumption is contrasted with *grass roots* and *encompassment*, “...the state, (conceptually fused with the nation) is located within an ever widening series of circles that begins with family and local community and ends with the system of nation-states” (op.Cit). This conceptualization produces a sense of hierarchical nested-ness. This politically imposed representation of ruling and with it sovereignty of rule has not only distorted attempts at introducing fair, efficient and effective forms of rule in those countries, but its acceptance as a valid and accurate account by academics as well as politicians, on the basis that the same term meant the same thing, irrespective of circumstances, has equally distorted analyses of the governance of developing countries. The depth of the penetration of these kinds of assumptions on the social sciences and relevant to education and international development is summed up by Ruggie as displaying “...an extraordinarily impoverished mind-set...that is able to visualize long term challenges to the system of states only in terms of entities that are institutionally substitutable for the state” (1993: 143). Our point here is not to suggest that the state as an actor is unimportant. It has, and continues to be a very significant and powerful ensemble of institutions that is able to mobilise power and act. Rather our focus is on, first, the way the idea of the state represents itself as a universal form rather than a particular representation that has been univeralised, and second, on the way the state itself as both a project and container of power has evaded close intellectual scrutiny.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this brief discussion is that one essential basis of any response on the part of education researchers to understanding processes of

globalisation is to recognise that using ‘the state’ as an explanatory concept, without major qualification, is both to accept an inaccurate picture of the world and to perpetuate a particular outcome of political imposition. To put it briefly; one consequence of globalisation for comparative education, and for social science more generally, is to make it clear that the nation-state should be regarded as *explanandum*, in need of explanation, rather than as *explanans*, part of an explanation. Or, to put it another way, the component parts of what is connoted by the nation-state, need to be ‘unbundled’, and their status and relationships examined anew in a globalised world, by comparative educationists as by other social scientists.

We can illustrate the points made above about methodological statism by recognizing that the national state is no longer the only most important, or taken-for-granted, actor in the area of education. Indeed, as Chernilo (2006: 134) argues, what *is* to be explained is how it is that the state has managed to represent itself as the primary site of power and container of these social relations, including education as a particular geometry of activities, when empirical investigation could tell us that this was not the case. That aside, concretely we can see that if we look closely at the *governance* of education—that is the combinations and coordination of activities, actors/agents, and scales, through which ‘education’ is constructed and delivered in national societies—we can identify four categories of activity that collectively make up educational governance (that are for the sake of exposition taken to be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive), *funding; provision, or delivery; ownership; and regulation*. These activities may in principle be carried out independently of each other and by a range of agents other than the state—though the state remains a possible agent of educational governance and at a multiple set of scales, from the local to the global.

One example of the kind of theorizing made possible by the recognition of and escape from, methodological nationalism and statism is to conceive of ‘education’ as not necessarily and exclusively associated with the nation-state, but as constituted through the complex workings of functional and scalar divisions of the labour of educational governance (see Dale 2003), which can mean any or all of a single locus of governance, parallel loci of governance at different scales, or hybrid forms of governance across scales, and/or activities, and/or agents. For example, since the restructuring of the education sector in the UK and the emergence of new processes of European regionalism, important aspects of the governance of education have now being separated off from the sub-national and reconstituted at the national and European scales and downward into schools. So, what is broadly meant by governance here is the replacement of the assumption that the state always and necessarily governs education through control of all the activities of governing, with what might be called the coordination of coordination, with the state possibly retaining the role of coordinator, or regulator, of last resort (see Dale, 1997).

### *(iii) Methodological educationism*

Education has been a central project of modern and modernising societies. Since the early nineteenth century, mass education has been a crucial element of the modern nation state in the interests of collective progress and in the interests of equality and justice (Meyer, 1999: 131). As Meyer notes, “these doctrines became increasingly dominant over time and, after World War II, were celebrated in many UN and UNESCO pronouncements and in the highly developed scientific ideologies about education as a

direct ingredient in national economic and political development, as with human capital theory.

‘Education’ would appear on the surface to be the most constant of the three components we are currently examining. After all, almost everyone in the world has either been to school, or is to have the opportunity to go to school—which, interestingly, is how education is defined in the *Millennium Development Goals (MDG)*. However, we also know that what is understood by ‘education’ differs widely and along multiple dimensions, and that the experience of schooling varies enormously.

Despite this, ‘education’ tends to be seen as equally fixed, abstract and absolute as methodological nationalism and statism. However ‘education’ requires explanation rather than provides it. It also has similar consequences for analysis and understanding. Key evidence for this is to be found in Meyer et al’s analyses of the global scripts of education (see for example, Meyer et al 1992). The most crucial, but also the most taken for granted feature of these discourses is that they essentially *equate education with (compulsory) schooling*. We might also note that the central elements of what we refer to as ‘education’ have themselves co-evolved in a rather similar way—indeed, alongside the evolution of the nation-state (see Green 1993)—and may be in need of a similar kind of conceptual ‘unbundling’ that matches the unbundling that is now taking place of the system itself as a result of education being constructed as a for-profit industry that operates locally and trans-nationally.

This point is also made by comparativists Bray and Kai (2007: 141), who point out that while education systems have long been a prominent unit of analysis, “...detailed scrutiny shows that scholars rarely define what they mean by systems”. A major reason for this state of affairs, they argue, is that education and education systems are difficult to delineate and hence describe.

We would also suggest that the term ‘education’ often escapes close analytical scrutiny as it has a dual character; it is both descriptive and normative. It is descriptive in the sense that it tends to refer to a system—for instance, higher education establishments or schools. What is ignored in this description are all of the other ‘influences’—such as home, peer groups, workplace and so on, that contribute to the learning of a person. It is normative in that it is value-laden and that education—in this case ‘schooling’ and ‘the education system’—is viewed as a good thing and that the ‘education’ one receives in such a setting has positive value. These descriptions are then assumed to be linked to what is effectively a global normative imaginary that education is inherently—necessarily—‘a good thing’ (Meyer, 1999). That is to say, the rationale for education is universally approved and educationism assumes that is what education systems are created to achieve with the consequence, as John Meyer points out, that most sociology of education accepts those goals as unproblematic and is devoted to pointing to failures and shortcomings in meeting them (Meyer Op. Cit). This normative move enables us to sidestep the fact that education is about the acquisition of particular knowledges; knowledges that may or may not work for an individual or group depending upon their social location (Bourdieu, 1997). It also usefully disguises the role of education in capitalist systems; as a tool for social stratification.

The idea of ‘education as a human right’, by which they mean access to schooling, is a further illustration of the point that we are making. However, what is it a right to? The right to have your own situated knowledges either taken account of, or alternatively,

ignored? While there is some political mileage in having a concept that can absorb a variety of meanings—for instance in arguing that modernizing societies need access to education through the provision of schools, it does mean that there is important analytical work to be done in looking more closely at purposes, processes, practices and outcomes.

Educationism is also compounded by two self-limiting parochialisms in the field of education. Disciplinary parochialism restricts the bases for the study of education of education to approaches that come within the field, often, it seems, to work that contains ‘education’ in its title; this leads to analyses that share the same assumptions about the field—with the lexical equivalence removing the need to problematise them (see Dale 1994). Institutional parochialism similarly refers to the tendency within all education studies to take existing education systems, institutions and practices in isolation as self evidently the appropriate focus for their endeavours, and not to problematise these systems, and so on (see Dale 2005: 134)

In the conclusions to their essay Bray and Kai (2007: 141) call on scholars to explore the implications of different definitions and boundaries in order to examine new ways of conceptualizing education. We support their call. We believe there are three elements involved in addressing this problem. The first is to disaggregate, or ‘un-bundle’ these different components. The second is to seek to establish the determinants and consequences of the boundaries and content of education as a separate sector; and the third is to focus on questions around how, by whom and under what circumstances, education is currently represented.

The first, which we have previously discussed (see Dale, 2000), involves replacing the single term education by a series of questions that any understanding of education has to take into account. This essentially entails stipulative representations of ‘education’ with a set of variables or questions, as in Table 1. The basic idea behind the ‘Education Questions’ is that rather than assuming/accepting that we all mean the same thing when we are talking about education, we pose a set of precise questions that can frame discussions and provide a basis for coherent discussion and systematic comparison. The questions also prise open, through questions about governance and consequences, the fact that knowledge—its production, circulation, consumption and transformation—is a highly political process and therefore one that demands rigor by researchers because it matters.

LEVEL	EDUCATION QUESTIONS
<i>Level 1</i> <b>Educational Practice</b>	Who is taught, (or learns through processes explicitly designed to foster learning), what, how and why, when, where, by/from whom, under what immediate circumstances and broader conditions, and with what results? How, by whom and for what purposes is this evaluated?
<i>Level 2</i> <b>Education Politics</b>	How, in pursuit of what manifest and latent social, economic, political and educational purposes; under what pattern of coordination (funding, provision, ownership, regulation) of education governance; by whom; and following what (sectoral and cultural) path dependencies, are these things problematised decided, administered, managed?
<i>Level 3</i> <b>The Politics of Education</b>	What functional, scalar and sectoral divisions of labour of educational governance are in place? [authors: I have suggested that you explain these divisions in more detail in the text of your chapter.] In what ways are the core problems of capitalism (accumulation, social order and legitimisation) reflected in the mandate, capacity and governance of education? How and at what scales are contradictions between the solutions addressed? How are the boundaries of the education sector defined and how do they overlap with and relate to other sectors? What 'educational' activities are undertaken within other sectors? How is the education sector related to the citizenship and gender regimes? How, at what scale and in what sectoral configurations does education contribute to the <b>extra-economic embedding/stabilisation of accumulation?</b> [Authors: Again, this point could be further discussed—perhaps an extra sentence or two.] What is the nature of intra- and inter-scalar and intra- and inter-sectoral relations (contradiction, cooperation, mutual indifference?)
<i>Level 4</i> <b>Outcomes</b>	What are the individual, private, public, collective and community outcomes of 'Education', at each scalar level?

Table 1: Education Questions

#### *(iv) Spatial fetishism*

In this fourth section we address a more recent problem with research on education—one that tends to nuance context by specifying the global and globalisation as the new element in society. One common approach is to privilege outcomes that are self-evidently global (such as reference to the expansion of international agencies such as the

such as the World Trade Organization), ignoring the more nuanced, inside the national, changes that have taken place. Examples here include the rise of international trade departments exclusively concerned with trade in education services (as in the case of Australia), the rise of the globalizing for-profit education sector in countries such as the United States, and the impact on local communities of ‘globally-competitive’ universities. Another is one that we see in some papers submitted for review to our journal *Globalisation, Societies and Education* or at conferences. Globalisation appears in the title and the text, however this tends to be the end of the story. We neither know what difference globalisation makes to the policies, programmes and practices under analysis, and nor do we know what kind of phenomena globalisation is supposed to be. The global and globalisation are thus inert concepts; the container—context—is simply inflected with an adjustment of content, like a new product on the shelf. Brenner (2003: 38) describes this tendency in the social sciences as *spatial fetishism*. It involves “...a conception of social space that is timeless and static, and thus immune to the possibility of historical change”. The context now is globalisation, yet its causal dynamics—in other words ‘*what difference does space make?*’—are absent.

There are a number of different ways in which spatial fetishism is evident in research on education and globalisation. Take the research on the restructuring of education that focused on decentralization that was so popular during the 1980s (cf. Caldwell and Spinks, 1988). Concepts like ‘local’ and ‘place’ tended to assume an essential and romanticized meaning (familiar, good); one that was juxtaposed against the global (powerful external force, abstract space, bad). The ‘local’ is appealed to as a site where an imagined community has strong social links (social capital) while the community’s actions are always collectively oriented rather than self-interested. This essentializes the nature of community, its interests and relationships.

In the wider literature on globalisation, the spatial is binarised—as either global or local. Several problems emerge as a result. One is that “...the global appears as a telos on the move in an ongoing process called ‘globalisation’” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 27) defying transformation. While this might be expected, for instance, when politicians galvanize support for a political project, it is not particularly helpful in research work for it tends to construct globalisation as a process without a subject (Hay, 1999). The problem that emerges here is that not only are the actors (states, multinational firms, international organizations and so on) not placed under scrutiny, but we have no sense of the kinds of agents and their politics. This in turn limits action (Robertson, 2006). A second problem in binarising the local-global in this way is that processes we might associate with globalisation are always out there, rather than in here (for instance, inside national boundaries, institutions, subjectivities). However as Sassen (2006) argues,

...these processes take place deep inside national territories and institutional domains that have largely been constructed in national terms in much of the world. What makes these processes part of globalisation even though they are localized in national, indeed sub-national, settings is that they are oriented toward global agendas and systems. They are multi-sided, transboundary networks and frameworks that can include normative orders; they connect subnational or “national” processes, institutions and actors, but not necessarily through the formal interstate system.

In order to overcome the problem of fetishizing space, it is important that we see it as integral to social processes and that it is produced from social relations (Lefebvre, 1974).

It is both the object and outcome of struggles; struggles that take place at multiple scales. Insisting on this means insisting that society and space are integral to each other rather than space being an undifferentiated spatial backdrop against which social relations take place, as when globalisation is simply an interchangeable or newer context. As Massey argues; "...the spatial is social relations stretched out" (1994: 2). She goes on:

The lived reality of our daily lives is utterly dispersed, unlocalised in its sources and in its repercussions. The degree of dispersion, the stretching, may vary across social groups, but the point is that the geography will not be territorial. Where would you draw the line around the lived reality of your daily life? ... If we think space relationally, then it is the sum of all our connections, and in that sense utterly grounded, and those connections may go around the world (Massey, 2005: 184-5).

Taking Sassen and Massey's points together, it is important that our research imaginaries resist ways of thinking about space as either here *or* there, but rather we are seeing complex assemblages.

This way of thinking about the spatial in relation to education enables us to see knowledge production, its circulation, consumption and transformation—both in its official (see Apple, 1990) and unofficial forms—as constituting and being constituted spatially, and that this spatial organisation is a particular geometry of power; an assemblage of moving/institutionalised relations that not only have horizontal and vertical reach, but that these processes are also dynamic. And, as Massey argues, since "...social relations are embued with power and meaning, the spatial is as an ever shifting geometry of power and signification" (1994: 2).

If we spatialise our analysis of very important governance shifts, such as with school choice policies or the creation of a global education market, we can see how space and scale (as a vertical partitioning structure – Collinge, 2005: 189) are critical dynamics in this process. Butler and Robson (2003: 6), for example, show how middle class families in London—in contrast to working class families—adopt a strategic approach to education markets with the whole metropolitan area treated as a single market for which they identify the most appropriate opportunities for individuals in the household. Their practices in turn constitute space and the social relations that underpin a highly selective middle-class education market. The strategic and relational nature of the spatial is highlighted in Waters (2006: 1048) study of the way middle class Hong Kong families "...employ spatial strategies to by-pass local academic competition and therefore localized social reproduction by accumulating valuable cultural capital in Canada". This in turn undermines the value of locally-delivered education. Similarly, we can see how new education projects are being constructed in space to construct different kinds of knowledge/spaces that compete with existing projects, such as the creation of a competitive European Higher Education Area through the reorganization of higher education in the Member States of Europe and beyond (Keeling, 2006); the construction of a global education industry under the regulatory auspices of the World Trade Organisation (Robertson, Bonal and Dale, 2002); or the global position-taking of Australian universities which in turn shape the global higher education space (Marginson, 2007). These new formations are constituted through new strategies and social relations. The actors that have been involved in these projects have used different scalar locations to either unsettle (Bologna) or bypass (global exporting of education services) and the fixed institutionalised interests of the 'education profession'.

## Conclusions

In this paper have tried to make four methodological arguments in relation to researching education and globalisation: that methodological nationalism, methodological statism, methodological educationism and spatial fetishism are chronic tendencies within the social sciences more generally, and specifically within education research. The point of offering this critique is to be mindful of this in our own research work. It is also to open up some lines of debate regarding the implications of globalisation for education research. We have argued that, as a whole, to make an unproblematised national container the focus of all analytic attention is more than ever problematic in an era of globalisation, while the tendency to reify, or fetishise, the national level can be seen to extend to the form of rule—‘statism’—and, in the case of areas like comparative education, to the object of study, education. The second is that this exercise demonstrates that terms were never actually accurate—the state, for instance, in most settings never ‘did it all’, for instance. Third and most important in this chapter, is that each of these is in danger of generating from the core categories of studying education a set of what we have called methodological ‘isms’, which have to be recognised and overcome if we are to progress our analysis of education, particularly comparatively, in an era of globalisation (Dale and Robertson, 2007). Both the generic and the nation-specific (indeed, what counts as nation-specific) characteristics of education sectors have changed and are changing under the pressure of globalising forces. As is apparent from our argument, it is no simply moving beyond the national to a new scale. This would simply be to commit the same fallacy but from the other direction—through the romance of the global. The wider and more important argument is that education as sector is changing in ways that make existing assumptions and forms of analysis—those that make up methodological educationism—unhelpful, even misleading. While the global and the regional are being re/constituted at the current time, to talk about and research education in a global era means that we are attentive to the complex ways that knowledge processes that represent themselves as ‘education’ are being constructed/constituted at multiple scales—out there and inside national boundaries. Finally simply adding ‘globalisation’ to education without being sufficiently attentive to what it means to talk about the spatial and its causal powers risks fetishising the spatial. This is particularly problematic as it is our view we in turn risk not seeing the strategic way in which actors are using space to further new education projects with very different logics and deeply inequitable social relations.

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