
Lost in Translation: Discursive Obstacles in Educational Policy Transfers*

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Summary

Discourse on a knowledge based society and its connection with the concept of lifelong learning is among the dominant debates within European education circles today. The term knowledge society can be explained as a policy construction which seeks to present things as they are, as they were, and as they should be. This paper deals with the various discourses on lifelong learning, especially where they present difficulties for educational policy transfers in the European Union. In the EU, lifelong learning connects educational and social policies, which today are mostly defined by member states. The European Union has complementary and supporting competences in education and shared competences for social policy (defined in the yet-to-be ratified Lisbon Treaty). But is there one policy that can connect the ideas of 27 different member states? The author argues that the idea of lifelong learning has until now only occurred within a specific epistemic community of international experts and leading persons of international organizations. Changes in Croatia's educational policy, however, have occurred as a continuation of transition, under the influence of global changes, and as a part of the accession process to the European Union. The changes in definition of European educational initiatives can be attributed to the implementation processes, where a community in practice tends to adapt European meanings to the national environment, specifically the position of its own organization and abilities. It is argued that the difference between national and European discourse is not necessarily an obstacle to the development of national educational policies.

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1. Introduction

Knowledge and educational developments have long been important public policy issues on both European and national levels. How are these changes understood and argued in Croatia's evolving educational setting? Is anything lost because of translations or transfers? A discussion of European educational policy must begin with one transcending question: is there one or 27 policies? In this paper I will argue that even of a single multilevel policy model is implemented, it will still allow for various possibilities. The basic discourse in educational policy centres on a knowledge based society. Within this discourse, lifelong learning must provide for the competitiveness of the European economy, as well as a stable social environment. Based on this common basic starting point, European and national approaches have been formed through an open coordination method.

2. Is there a Europe with one or 27 educational policies?

We are witnessing the emergence of a single multilevel educational policy in the European Union. Within this process, common goals exist, instruments of implementation have been provided together with resources for these goals, and institutional structures are becoming more stable. At the same time, however, countries have been persistent to keep their national educational policies. Normative educational policy remains under the jurisdiction of member countries, which cooperate on common European projects. A significant part of educational policies is implemented beneath the state's apparatus, at the level of regional authorities within certain countries (Germany, Belgium), or as part of a bilateral or multilateral cooperation between countries.

The competitiveness of the European area, presently a key objective of the EU, is largely based on knowledge as its main resource and on the premise of a *common area* for the transfer of knowledge. The process of linking national policies has been carried out in areas such as the European educational area and the European lifelong learning area. Lawn and Nóvoa have analyzed the importance of discourse for the European educational area and the importance of a fixed European educational policy for the future of

Europe (Nóvoa, Lawn, 2002). Within this area, the *key objectives* of European educational policy have been established: to enable citizens to develop innovativeness and move freely in search of educational opportunities and employment across various regions and countries, and to use their knowledge and competences to maximize their potential. In the centre is the individual, the one who learns and creates (Commission, 2000). To fulfil these tasks, *necessary instruments* have been provided for strategies, forms of learning evaluation, necessary resources, innovative pedagogy and necessary indicators for the success of the initiative. Through these objectives, Europe intends to bring together lifelong learning policies and processes, as well as strategies that deal with youth, employment, social inclusion, and research policies.

There are still no common political, legal and social European structures above the national educational policies. Initiatives, however, have begun within the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and other common programs that work toward the creation of an *institutional infrastructure*, which will implement them. The Council of Ministers of Education has been meeting regularly since the 1970s. Besides the European Parliament, the Council of EU, the European Commission, and the European Council, there exist other institution important for the development of institutional infrastructure, including the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Committee of the Integrated Action Program in the field of lifelong learning and the Education and Training 2010 Coordination Group (ETCG) 84.

The process of defining national educational policies has been developing in a single European educational area with multilevel decision-making (European, national, local and regional level). Besides *actors* from European institutions, nation-states and associations, representatives of various interest associations (professional and sector associations), representatives of civil society and advocacy coalitions also take part. Various networks of experts, politicians, entrepreneurs, civil activists also have an important role in supra-national linking and the supra-national opening of specific questions and transfers of experience.

For the convergence of national educational policies and soft implementation of common European educational policy, a specific method of *governing* has been used: the *open method of coordination (OMC)*. This is perhaps the most efficient way to spread good practice and achieve greater convergence in terms of creating the most important EU objectives. This is also the model to accomplish EU tasks on various policy levels (Gornitzka, 2005). OMC has been developed within the dominant managerial discourse and it has produced a discourse of educational measurability. With the introduction of benchmarks and indicators, as well with their selection, this dis-

course has become dominant. Indicators have themselves shown that instead of fairness, justice, and equality one must discuss the successfulness of the product (learning outcome) (Ozga/Jones, 2006: 7).

OMC's success depends not only on the formal institutionalization of the process, but also on non-material conditions present in the policy process. It is important to see how meanings and understandings have been constructed in present institutional structures. The OMC, for instance, is relying on the creation of pan-European epistemic communities intended to spread policy norms and use elements of social recognition (Citi/Rhodes, 2007).

OMC is the most important instrument for policy learning and has been used for policy transfers as well. *Policy transfer* is the process in which knowledge (present and past) about public policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system has been used for the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in another political system (Dolowitz/Marsh, 2000: 5). Within the European education policy, policy learning is the most common mode of transfer for that knowledge. Yet according to Rhodes and Citi (Citi/Rhodes, 2006: 16) the policy learning concept in the OMC is defined poorly. It has different mechanisms and meanings: it signifies a comparison of experience, knowledge diffusions, peer review, development of common policy discourse and common indicators. More simply, it is a cognitive convergence or strategic use of knowledge for imitating successful models and practice (Citi/Rhodes, 2006: 15). Values differ from country to country and in different periods of one country (Inglehart, 2008), which affects the ability and desire for the implementation of the experience of another country. Because of possible misunderstandings, a critical part of the process is implementation, which is a result of different cultural contexts (Rose 2005: 92). It is unlikely that a convergence in discussions would result in a convergence of decisions. Since key concepts have been defined in international epistemic communities, the difficulty is not in defining concepts, which are used by intellectually close individuals, but in their different national implementation (Rose, 2005: 113).

Finally, one must not forget that the European *Court of Justice* (ECJ), since the case *Donato Casagrande v. Landeshauptstadt München*, has passed verdicts that are important for observing common principles in education. Donato Casagrande, a son of an Italian immigrant, did not receive a scholarship in München that he was awarded. Through court action his parents managed to secure the same treatment for their child as other German citizens have.

The declaration and confirmation of new policy objectives, modified policy frameworks, and the shift in basic discourse are signs of a single European educational policy emerging (Walkenhorst, 2008).

3. Discourse analysis of educational policy

I have used discourse policy analysis, which provoked a great interest among political scientists in recent years, as a form of interpretative research. In this paper I use the discourse analysis method developed by Marteen Hajer, Norman Fairclough and Deborah Stone, as well as their approach to defining policy problems (Hajer, 2006; Fairclough, 1992; Stone, 2002).

In a study of educational policy documents, discourse analysis has proved to be a helpful tool (Olssen, 2004; Lindblad/Popkewitz, 2000; Felt and associates, 2007; Nóvoa/Lawn, 2002; Schriever, 2003; Robertson, 2005; Ball 1998, Taylor, 2004; Nicoll/Edwards, 2000; Warren/Web, 2007). Besides a discourse analysis of a European educational policy, I discuss results and research regarding Europeanization, institutional learning and policy transfers (Schmidt/Radaeli, 2004).

Discourse analysis enables the extraction of key concepts and their meanings, shifts the focus away from content analysis, and helps to link texts with institutions, actors and impacts of texts. In order to understand why a certain approach has been used in policy-making, or why a story has been told in a specific manner, I have chosen discourse analysis.

This article will compare dominant EU and Croatian educational discourse during the Europeanization process. I analyse different meanings and institutional settings of the idea of knowledge based society and the idea of lifelong learning which constitute the dominant discourse for European and Croatian educational policies. I also analyse the different meanings of lifelong learning and adult education, as one of the most important and questionable policy attributes.

A modified version of Hajer's methodology is used (Hajer, 2006: 73) and it is combined with text and context analysis (Lingard/Ozga, 2007: 3). Ten documents from the European Commission, Parliament, Council, and their background papers, and twelve national educational acts, strategies, programs, public speeches and interviews of Croatian ministries form the basis of this analysis. The context focuses on socio-cultural, political environment and discourse in which texts were produced (Ball, 1993: 48, Fairclough, 1992: 82-83) and the discourse practice in which texts were implemented. The context incorporates discourse practice which restructured, re-constructed and challenged existing orders of discourse (Fairclough, 1992: 95, Ball, 1993).

Contexts and consequences of policy texts, or discourse in the implementation phase of policy work are analysed with a help of secondary literature, published analyses and studies of educational policy, and direct observations. Participant observations are important to reveal the context and social reality (Heck, 2004: 226).

In order to find causal chains outside the text analysis, I use fifteen semi-structured interviews (Hajer, 2006: 73) with key educational policy actors from the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, the Chamber of Economy, universities, governments, and trade unions. These are important because semi-structured interviews “provide detail, depth, and an insider’s perspective, while at the same time allowing hypothesis testing...” (Leech, 2002: 665).

Finally I compare the EU discourse with the Croatian one (Heck, 2004: 233), I identify similarities and differences between them and I attempt to explain the consequences of these similarities and differences for the achievement of common educational goals.

4. Educational policy discourses in the EU

A *knowledge based society* discourse together with the concept of *life-long learning* dominates the discussion of European educational policies. Knowledge is a key factor, which is supposed to respond to global economic threats and competitive dangers and to enable the stable and sustainable development of Europe (Lisbon European Council, 2000).

At the end of the 1990s, the rediscovered concept of *knowledge based society* has become more apparent. This term was first used by an American political scientist Robert E. Lane in 1966. Lane advocated for a scientific approach to solving social problems, and argued that knowledge should assist in producing a more harmonious development of society. A number of authors have developed similar concepts – *post-industrial society* (Bell), *information society* (Castells), *learning society* (Husen), *knowledge society* (Stehr). All these concepts point to the importance of knowledge as a catalyst for change in society.

These terms, often used in policy documents without any clear distinction, have been combined with theoretical doubts about the differences and definitions that make-up a knowledge based society and knowledge based economy (Guile, 2003; Peters, 2003). After Kok’s report (2004), economic development has been explained within a *knowledge and innovations* narrative pattern. This narrative has been used for prior framing and justification, as well as a mode to make sense of the policy domain (Felt, 2007: 76). Terms have been created, above all, as policy constructions in which the differentiation between economy, society, knowledge, and information has not been clear (Foray, 2003: 25).

Fairclough points exactly to this dimension of a knowledge society as a discursive construction. Discourses include presenting things as they are, as they were, and as they should be or must be – imaginaries. Knowledge

economy and knowledge society in the policy process are imaginaries; they are projections of a possible state of affairs or possible worlds. These imaginaries can move from imagined activities to real ones, or the social reality, which includes the materialization of discourse (Fairclough, 2001: 3). As a result, a new planetary language has emerged: globalization, flexibility, governance, employability, exclusion, etc. A managerial narrative pattern has colonized public institutions, organizations, educational and scientific institutions. Discourse affects the change of identity. Yet it remains a mystery how people unconsciously position themselves in the discourse, and how discourse becomes part of their personality.

An expert group, which has analysed the idea of a knowledge based society for the Directorate General for Culture and Education, has warned about the dangers of this kind of narrative pattern, specifically the acceptance of an instrumental use of knowledge for economic competitiveness (Felt, 2007: 14). In this concept a shift has occurred from *citizens* and *public* to *stakeholders*, which provides for a different focus on the issue of democratic rule. The idea of a stakeholder democracy as a starting point results in a situation where the roles of participants have already been assigned (it is known who are the stakeholders). The public is included only in a metaphorical sense and the question of the public has become, above all, a question of representativeness (Felt, 2007: 58). In a situation where the discourses of knowledge, objectivity and neutrality dominate, the public has been constructed as an analysis of a statistical sample. The Eurobarometer has long monitored citizens which represent the public as a statistical sample, and in that way can be considered an objective device (Felt, 2007: 58). Justifications about the public's *misunderstanding* of science, technical *illiteracy*, *deficits* in risk perception, and *failures* of communication between experts and the public creates a narrative basis, where the public becomes an obstruction to development. Contrary to this, unused resources are seldom presented: *social cohesion*, *lay knowledge*, *hidden skills*, common *values* which could support resistance to risks and abilities of a *practical knowledge* assessment (Jasanoff, 2002: 379; Felt, 2007: 59).

It can be argued that the present discourse on a European knowledge based society (and economy) sustains and supports the notion of the EU as a meaningful policy space and that it helps to legitimise the extension of certain strategic and spatial policy activities (Burfitt/ Collinge/ MacNeill, 2006: 12).

Continuous learning is a necessary foundation for the development of a knowledge society. In 1970 the idea of *lifelong learning* (LLL) occurred within a specific epistemic community of international experts and leading persons of international organizations (Knoll, 2000). They attempted to find educational responses to new demands born out of social, economic and po-

litical challenges. These ideas have been noted in many official documents of international organizations (E. Faure's report to the UNESCO 1972), in UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the OECD. After the results of the Delors commission (*Learning treasure within*) and the proclamation of 1996 as the year of lifelong learning, this idea has spread rapidly (Field, 2006: 15, 16). In 2000, special impetus came for the Memorandum on lifelong learning (Knoll, 2004). The Memorandum identifies the following:

- Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications.
- Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalized certificates. Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups (such as in youth organizations, trades unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organizations or services established to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).
- Informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and may not be recognized even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills (Commission, 2000).

One could argue that the intention of this Memorandum was mainly about creating a narrative basis and a persuasive position of international organizations and epistemic communities that promote lifelong learning. With its transfer to national educational policies, various adaptations and the exchange of ideas have taken place (Green, 2002).

Because of this, similar policy aims and basic ideas have been formed in different ways within national policies. Differences in discourses that translate to strong institutional consequences for the implementation of the lifelong learning idea have led to disparities in the realization of seemingly-identical global aims. For example, it was obviously a different thing to implement lifelong learning into Nordic educational policies (with almost 100% literacy and where a majority of the adult population participate in additional education) and in developing countries (where the majority of the population is illiterate or without basic education). In other words, for educators under the influence of Paulo Freire, the expansion of learning throughout life has great social potential for the emancipation or liberation of suppressed individuals and groups. For developed countries, it presents a solution for new economic steps in the environment, technological innovation, and global connectivity. For transitional countries, lifelong learning is a means of departure from socialist heritages and a way to improve moderni-

zation. Thus, this concept does not have a singular meaning. Instead basic global objectives have been developed at the national level and in competitive or complementary discourses (Prokou, 2008: 124).

These differences have been analyzed in the vast amount of literature published by UNESCO and European specialized agencies. Moreover, UNESCO and CEDEFOP publications have analyzed national implementations of LLL in specific national education policies (Medel-Anonuevo, 2003; UNESCO, 2001).

On the level of European educational policy within the Lisbon process, lifelong learning has moved from the initial, rhetoric phase to actual implementation (Pepin, 2007: 127). In relation to the concept of a knowledge based society, its function is to strengthen European competitiveness via education (Lisbon European Council, 2000). Overall educational support has been set under the umbrella of (the integrated program of) lifelong learning (European Parliament and Council, 2006); funds have been provided; provisions have been implanted in the policies of boards, committees and the Council of Ministers of Education. In its occupation of the public space (media, official documents, public speeches), and with its institutional position and budget subsidies, the idea of lifelong learning has become a dominant educational discourse in Europe. In this process, the lifelong learning concept, when associated with competitiveness and performance, has acquired managerial terminology. Key words have been replaced; there are no longer *active citizens, responsible people, cooperation and social welfare*. Now, the language incorporates terms like *efficiency, quality, competences, goal oriented, and evaluation* (Gustavsson, 2002: 14).

Unlike lifelong learning, *Adult education* as a part of the overall educational system has a different pathway of discourse determination. Differences in adult education have resulted from diverging national traditions and practices. National adult education policies have long been based on unique traditions of educational policies, vocational education and access to adult education (Powell/ Smith/Reakes, 2003; Greinert/Hanf, 2004: 19). Further, they have been developed in specific political, economic and social environments. The consequences of this are different forms of legal regulations, financing, organization, certification, and realization of adult education (for example, differences between folk high schools, open universities and cultural centres) (Federighi, 1999: 75-89). Common European initiatives are merely an impetus for their creation.

Differences in understandings of adult education have also resulted from the European institutional linking of educational policies, together with the level of these policies, which has occurred only recently. In 1951, the first *European Folk High School Conference* was organized by the Dutch Agency for the European folk high schools' activities. Although the implementation

of lifelong learning first began at international conferences, and later developed within national policies, adult education now initiates educational cooperation on the basis of national traditions that have already been formed. The EU's ministers of education had not met until 1971, when they sought to prepare a resolution on education.

There is no uniform understanding of adult education in Europe primarily because of the difficulties that occur in determining the types of programs and participants (Powell/ Smith/ Reakes, 2003). The next obstacle occurs with determining the age of participants: what age criteria determine an adult education student? Finally, countries differ in how they approach vocational and non-vocational education (for example, Switzerland has been preparing an adult education law which would deal only with vocational education) (Powell/ Smith/ Reakes, 2003).

Another difficulty in determining a common definition occurred as a result of the adult learning concept. This new term should include all forms related to the acquisition of knowledge (formal, non-formal and informal), including spontaneous non-intentional learning and learning at the work place, and not simply the organized process of learning (adult education).

5. Croatian knowledge society and lifelong learning

Changes in Croatia's educational policy result from the continuous process of transition, the influence of global changes, and EU membership negotiations. During Croatia's transition, learning based on one's own past experiences (good and bad) has been almost completely neglected. Indeed, detachment from past experiences has not been accompanied by an analysis and evaluation of the successfulness of at least some of its parts. In this sense, policy learning in education has not functioned as learning based on national experiences (Rosandić 2007: 7).

Discussions about policy transfer, within the framework of Croatia's accession to the EU, overwhelmingly focus on the European experience or the process of *Europeanization*. In education, Europeanization is not exclusively a process of institutional admission, but also a process of a more comprehensive adaptation to European standards and developmental objectives. The Bologna and Copenhagen processes have brought significant changes to the Croatian educational system. The majority of transfers has been moved to pre-accession EU programs (CARDS), where the institutional structure has been modified, together with the implementation, equipment and attractiveness of this education (Žiljak, 2007). A similar process has begun with adult education. A conclusion could be made that policy transfers have been established via domestic interest, European advisory and financial support (for example World Bank loans, a series of CARDS projects, Japanese

grant). Policy transfers lead to changes in educational policy, institutional changes and new initiatives (Mc Bride, 2005).

All these changes take place within the dominant *discourse of a knowledge society*. Therefore, it is identical to the European discourse of threats and risks. A knowledge based society has been, for the most part, defined as the use of knowledge in economic development, and the enhancement of Croatian competitiveness (Krištofić, 2005). Recent broad national positions have been determined by the Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010, and the Scientific and Technological Policy of the Republic of Croatia 2006-2010, and developed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia. These plans are based on HAZU's (Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences) Declaration of Knowledge (2002), Declaration on Knowledge and the Application of Knowledge (2004), the Strategic Development Framework 2006-2013 developed by the Croatian government, and 55 recommendations for competitiveness by the National Competitiveness Committee. These documents have mostly identified Croatian educational policy problems within the context of Croatia's economic competitiveness that must respond to global challenges. According to the 55 policy recommendations, "Technological advancement, knowledge, education, professional training, free movement of labour and capital and other quality-bearing factors have become the generators of growth, and they induce constant changes on the path to development and raising national competitiveness" (55 policy recommendations, 2004: 9).

In an environment of increasing risk and uncertainty, it is necessary to find a secure exit strategy. The government's Strategic Development Framework therefore begins with the chapter, *Fear and Hope* (Vlada, 2006: 12). In light of this, there is a very similar discourse of the threats and dangers present on the European level. Creating, spreading and using new knowledge is a prerequisite (and above all, a technical one) both for Croatia's sustainable development and for its response to new challenges and dangers. As a starting point, HAZU's documents give dramatic warnings about the danger for Croatia's economy to lag behind and the need for an affirmation of development which would bolster the dynamic aspects of Croatia's societal development. Science and education are seen as parts of the same process within the knowledge society. Knowledge is defined as a basic production force, and learning should transfer knowledge efficiently. Transfer cannot be done solely within the school environment, but instead should become a lifelong process. "Education...becoming [a] lifelong activity, [is] the only one capable to keep up with expanding knowledge" (Deklaracija, 2004: 9). There is a similar discourse in the 55 policy recommendations: "Education will make the greatest contribution to the development of a knowledge based economy in Croatia if it is commonly recognized as a potent force of production. Individuals must recognize education as a

valuable asset that allows them to improve their material position and quality of life. Therefore, an educational strategy and every concrete policy must be developed on the basis of the [two] concepts of lifelong learning and the learning society” (55 policy recommendations, 2004: 19).

Within this evolvment, a dominant managerial discourse is present. Educational policy changes are now seen within categories such as efficiency, benchmarks, indicator, and evaluation. The criteria and vocabulary of national identity protection, a characteristic of the early 1990s (Ramet/Matic, 2007: 163-223), have diminished in importance, and the past and national tradition are no longer seen as the primary national advantages. Minister Primorac concluded that all that Croats have “we put too often under the burden of the past, without looking into the future” (Primorac, 2008). This sentiment, however, does not mean that values are lost. The value of a community is assessed according to its contribution to the personal development of an individual. Focus is on the singular pupil (Primorac, 2008) (not local communities, the nation or state), who derives values from the community where he or she lives. The success in creating a knowledge society can be seen in numbers allowing the arguments to be, above all, quantitative. The size of these numbers, their significance and objectives are defined by supra-national benchmarks; however, their implementation is handled at the national level (Ministarstvo, 2005: 36-38).

The relation between a knowledge society and lifelong learning is a basic causal relationship. Education, one of the foundations of progress, would stimulate changes (Vlada, 2006: 12). Although this causality is theoretically doubtful (Wolf, 2002; Levin/Kelley, 1994) this kind of indifference towards it has been presented in fragments from the *55 Policy Recommendations for Raising Croatia's Competitiveness* and the Government's Strategic Development Framework as a necessary, but insufficient condition for strengthening competitiveness (55 policy recommendations, 2004: 19; Vlada, 2006: 12).

The basic starting point for educational reform is competitiveness and the flexibility of education which can be achieved through the development of a partnership between the state, educational institutions and employers. This is transparent in a Strategy for Adult Education: “Today partnerships are an unavoidable way of cooperation between all relevant parties, within or outside the formal system of education. At the national and county level, as well as at the level of employers and institutions, social partners must be provided with a multiple “users” role; investors, negotiators and promoters of learning” (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2007: 42).

Research has shown that in implementation this kind of rhetoric faces structural obstacles. Cooperation between the economy and higher education is weak, and state administration is rarely able to fulfil its tasks (Polšek,

2004: 271, 275) Inappropriate teaching strategies, the insufficient use of contemporary technological potentials, and the decentralization of institutional education management (yet to be realized), as well as bad financing have led to the creation of a complex rigidity in the system (Bejaković, 2006: 419). This points to the fact that the simple acknowledgment of education as a priority is not sufficient if the necessary professional and social competences have not been defined as a partnership, if appropriate economic policy and public administration capable of responding to demands of the contemporary economy have not been developed (Bejaković, 2006: 420), and if the problem of responsibility of foreign owners for national scientific development has not been solved (Krištofić, 2005: 114). After reading these papers, a conclusion could be made that partnership relations are weak, and an inter-sector realization of educational changes has not been built. Data does not confirm the common opinion that education in Croatia is strongly linked to successful development and growth (Krištofić, 2005: 110). Social partners often understand flexibility differently (Večernji, 2008). Ambiguity can often ease the ways agreements are reached. In this case, however, ambiguity is an obstacle to the implementation of the lifelong learning concept in a flexible environment.

Unlike educational policy-making at the EU-level, where there are continuous discussions, disagreements, and dialogue about objectives and limitations, the educational discourse in Croatia has not been appropriately challenged yet. Discourse of a knowledge society with a managerial narrative pattern is unthinkable for many different reasons (scientific in HAZU, entrepreneurship in 55 recommendations, organizational-administrative in ministries). In Croatian educational policy, competitive or complementary (social) discourse has still been poorly represented. Instead, solving basic economic questions (for example an increase in employment) is accepted as a remedy for social problems. Many consider public dialogue, discussions and dilemmas about educational policies should be limited to party discussions, expert panels or key stakeholders. Street protests in 2008 against the introduction of a state-wide exit examination for all students did however manage to open new dimensions of deliberation in educational policy: new methods (protests organized on Facebook), new stakeholders (high school pupils) and new issues (pupils' participation in educational reform) (Facebook, 2008).

Except the above mentioned high school student's mobilization, the changes of educational policy have been primarily top-down, under the strong influence of European educational initiatives and needs for adjustment. This is particularly obvious in the explanations of the first draft of the Primary and Secondary School Education Act, which emphasized structural, normative and substantive adjustment to "European education" (Ministarstvo, 2008: 2).

This discourse of *need for adjustment*, part of the Europeanization process, is present in many EU countries (Kallestrup, 2002). These domestic changes are legitimised by the fact that member states must adhere to codified European standards. Modification of meanings takes place on the implementation level much the same way as the state-wide high school exit examination becomes an instrument for university admission (Bezinović, 2008).

Lifelong learning has become accepted as a dominant educational discourse. Its origin can be traced from international organizations to domestic educational policies, culminating in the 2002 Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. In the beginning, the discussion about lifelong learning had more of a spin doctoring function than that of an operative elaboration or critical debate within the educational system. In the Strategy for Adult Education this discussion is described as, "...lobbying for the development of adult education; the National Debate on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning was organized in cooperation with the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science and Culture" (Strategy, 2007: 41).

There was a tendency to adopt the term, though it was not completely understandable to policy makers, translators or educational program attendants. The main sources of interpretation came from outside contacts and they eventually became adopted within the Croatian educational system (Žiljak, 2007a). The most common approach was an extended concept of adult education. With regard to the period in question, most of these educational policies are part of the adult education area. One of these examples is the Adult Education Law, which was at one time prepared as a Lifelong Learning Law, as well as the report on the Ministry's accomplishments which puts lifelong learning within a separate sector together with adult education (Review of accomplishments).

The use of lifelong learning education and learning as synonyms (AOO, 2008) points to the fact that in its realization, the definition is reduced to formal and non-formal education, while learning in various social and working situations has still not been accepted as an integral part of this concept. On these lines, there is also an unused opportunity to certify prior learning (as it was foreseen in the Adult Education Law). In other words, one could argue that on the level of rhetoric from Croatian public officials and politicians (public documents, official acts, ministers' rhetoric), lifelong learning still dominates. In practice, however, the discourse of continuous vocational education could be observed (above all in formal vocational education, as a basis for learning throughout life and for the needs of the labour market). It is visible in ministries educational inter-sectoral cooperation which means, "...promoting lifelong learning, creating lifelong learning systems, defining the necessary competences and qualification frameworks,

... promoting training companies as educational models for the inclusion of youth in entrepreneurship, ... harmonizing the activities for the implementation of practical training for pupils and students in economic subjects, ... encourage all the stakeholders ... to participate in the process of lifelong learning as an important factor for the development of the Croatian labour market and knowledge-based economy” (Agency for Adult Education, 2008: 79).

The whole educational discourse is optimistic about forming “the most competitive education system in the region”. Educational changes and a knowledge society can persuade and encourage officials to make necessary changes. These messages are statements against the despondency and burdens of the past. In this phase of introducing lifelong learning as a dominant discourse, which would assist the successful development of a knowledge society, support and initiatives come from the users – employers, craftsmen (55 policy recommendations, 2004).

Adult education, as a part of this educational structure, has developed its approach above all on its own needs and tradition. In this sense, it fits into the usual framework of European adult education policies. Since the 1980s to the early 2000s, adult education has been developed as a structure fit to respond to an attendant’s (the one who seeks service) demands, regardless of whether it is state, an individual attendant or a corporation (Pongrac, 1999: 26). Adult education has focused on the educational service market and on the endeavour to survive in various phases of educational policy where it has not been considered a priority. Because of the insufficient institutional strength at the state level, (Agency for adult education), weak financial support and insufficient scientific and research capacities (only one magazine with two issues per year, and two or three national professional conferences annually), this educational field has been left to fend for itself in Croatia’s transitional process and on the weakly regulated educational service market (Žiljak, 2006). Though this has weakened adult education’s potential and stifled its public visibility, it has demonstrated immense resiliency to adapt and survive. Given these conditions, different understandings of key concepts are common, whether they are transferred from international organizations or built within national strategies. Though ambiguity can be harmful, it can also have some positive consequences. It can soften a wide group of actors to come to the same realization of key objectives, regardless of their different initial understandings. On the other hand, incoherence often can block a group’s ability to attain its goals.

There are a few significant examples of these concepts. *Literacy* has been defined differently in the Adult Education Strategy, DZS, and national literacy programs. These differences are apparent in a national report about adult learning and education: “The Strategy for Adult Education...states that a

new understanding of ‘literacy for the 21st century’ must be considered, including the ability to read with understanding, communication skills, knowledge of foreign languages, ICT skills and the use of technology, which enable quality understanding of natural and social activities, problem solving as well as teamwork skills and motivation, accepting others and those who are different and competence for lifelong learning. This definition is much broader in scope than the one implied a year earlier, in 2003, in the context of the project *For a Literate Croatia: The Way to a Desirable Future* ...which insists on following the principles stated in the United Nations Resolution on the UN Literacy Decade, stating that ‘no person shall be denied the possibility to gain primary education, meaning functional literacy.’ When dealing with literacy in practice, however, the basic understanding of literacy as the ability to read, write and calculate, combined with the understanding of a literate person as one who has completed primary education, prevails....Furthermore, the definition of literacy used in the last population census in 2001 described a literate person as ‘a person with or without finished school, who is able to read and write an essay regarding everyday life, or who is able to read and write a letter, regardless of the language or in which language or alphabet he or she can read or write’. Although this definition suits the definition of functional literacy, it is still a long way from the concept of ‘literacy for the 21st century’ as it is understood in the Strategy for Adult Education” (Agency for Adult Education, 2008: 82). Yet regardless of whether this occurred intentionally or is simply a consequence of inattention to detail, it should not prevent the efforts of all actors to achieve a greater inclusion of adults in basic schooling and to seek different ways of support for their programs. Different meanings of literacy have not been obstacles for reducing illiteracy, but in contrast, have opened new possibilities for updating literacy concepts.

The *adult learning discourse* is an example of these different understandings. The concept of learning versus education gives an opportunity to implement learning outside traditional educational structures in the Croatian educational system. This attempt, however, already lost momentum with the title of the project CARDS 2004, where adult learning became adult education (hence, it comprises the structure which covers the processes of a formal program’s implementation). Moreover, the content of the project is even narrower and relates to continuing vocational education. Because of this, the title does not respond to the content, or we could say that in Croatian adult education the learning discourse (lifelong or adult) does not dominate. This shift is not the result of theoretical or expert deliberations of the scientific or professional community. Instead, it is a spontaneous and routine response of the community of practice, which also narrows the space for activities to them (they do not recognize certification of prior learning). In this case, disparate understandings are an obstacle in the implementation process.

Training is translated in Croatian as making competent for, or instruction. *Vocational training*, an important component of European educational policy, does not have a corresponding equivalent in the Croatian educational system. The strict classification which has existed in European educational policy in Croatia has, in recent years, been developed as part of the system of education. This is not only an accidental terminological difference. It also reflects the terms which have emerged from the development of the Croatian educational system.

In Croatia, vocational training is a part of *vocational education* and is promulgated in the Vocational Education Act (Hrvatski sabor, 2009). There are only a few analysts who have written about vocational training in addition to vocational education (Petričević, 2007). Therefore one should not be surprised that the English name of the agency responsible for this activity is the Agency for Vocational Education and Training. In Croatian the name is reduced to simply the Agency for Vocational Education (Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje – ASO). Similarly, it is possible to see that vocational education programs are a part of adult education. Given this, we can conclude that education and training are not understood as two clearly separated entities. Both are part of the education system, and when defining vocational education, training is an additional practical activity which connects education and labour. The term *strukovno* (vocational) loses its initial definition, which is kept in the English term vocation or Slovenian *poklic*. From a dedication to a life-long vocation, it has been turned into professional training, which allows for new qualifications entirely. Where there exist more similarities, knowledge is more easily transferred, i.e. within craft cooperation with Bavaria (ETF, 2001). The system of master and apprentice, a key characteristic of the Croatian tradition, is also part of a similar middle-European model of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship or dual-training programs involve on-the-job training coupled with in-class support for students before they directly enter the workforce and differs from the internship model more commonly practiced in the United States. Clear institutional obstacles can make the implementation within that same discourse more difficult. England had a different problem; neither tradition nor institutional conditions have allowed for the transfer of the dual system from Germany to England (Phillips, Ochs, 2003).

6. Conclusion

As Europe's educational policy continues to form, the common goals, implementation instruments, and necessary funds have stabilized its institutional structure. *Discourse of a knowledge based society*, in connection with *lifelong learning*, dominates policy debates. Much has been realized through the open method of coordination, which includes a policy learning method

where the best practice is transferred from one country to another. The term knowledge society emerged as a policy construction to explain things as they are, as they were, and imaginaries – as they must or should be. In this process, knowledge has been presented within managerial narrative patterns. The idea of lifelong learning has emerged within a specific epistemic community of international experts and was transferred to the national level and filtered through implementation discourses. Because of these processes, there are differences between the understanding and implementation of this concept. A causal relationship has been argued at both the European and national level: successful lifelong learning will result in a Europe of knowledge which will successfully stand up against competitive economies.

Adult education has been developed within broader national educational policies and was subsequently formed as a common educational tool. Because of the different environments and implementations, differences in how officials interpret adult education remain. Educational policy transfer takes place within the framework of Europeanization. In Croatia, a key developing discourse focuses on the knowledge society, i.e. the implementation of lifelong learning programs. Lifelong learning is to a great extent understood as continuous vocational education (above all in formal vocational education, as a basis for learning throughout life and for the needs of the labour market). The creation of knowledge society may help foster and encourage necessary changes in a situation where there is fear of competitive dangers.

The change in definitions of European educational initiatives can be attributed to implementation processes, where a community of practice tends to adapt European meanings to the national environment, as well as the position of its own organization and abilities. The ambiguity of these terms can block some changes, but also make possible the achievement of compromises and various coalitions that seek to reach a common goal (for example literacy). The impressions and ambiguity of terms can be both an advantage and an obstacle to successful public policy.

Benchmarks which measure the successfulness of changes are above all European benchmarks (or have been made under the influence of European benchmarks), while the instruments for implementation under the direction of national governing bodies. Beside numbers there exists meanings and values, and in that sense national and European understandings are competitive.

Slight differences in the way key educational terms are defined in national and European discourse is not necessarily an obstacle to the development of national educational policies toward common European educational goals. The difference can make their implementation into European educational policy more difficult, but can also improve the appropriate national implementation of European educational goals. In reconstructing and chal-

lenging existing orders of discourse, the key actors are epistemic communities of international experts and communities of practice. They are capable of spreading and adapting meanings of European educational policies to the national environment.

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