
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Tarabini-Castellani, Aina. «Educational targeting in the fight against poverty : Limits, omissions and opportunities». Globalisation, societies and education, Vol. 6 Núm. 4 (2008), p. 415-429. DOI 10.1080/14767720802506789

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/288676>

under the terms of the  license

Postprint version of:

Tarabini, A. (2008) Educational targeting in the fight against poverty: limits, omissions and opportunities, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 6:4, 415-429, DOI: [10.1080/14767720802506789](https://doi.org/10.1080/14767720802506789)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767720802506789>

1. Introduction.

Since the nineties, education has played a fundamental role in the global struggle against poverty. International organisations, national governments and even non-governmental organisations agree in highlighting the virtues of investing in education to reduce the population's poverty level. Consequently, investment targets, strategies and proposals are being established to make it possible to increase the level of education of poor sectors and, thus, the general level of education of the population as a whole. This is the strategy that will supposedly make it possible to stimulate the development process of southern countries and reduce the current levels of inequality on an international scale.

Nowadays, education is not only one of the core policies for fighting against poverty but there is also a sort of “global consensus” regarding the need to make a priority of investment in education in national development strategies. A global agenda has been settled regarding education and poverty in which several agents at different scales agree in what should be done in order to achieve development. Moreover, the agenda for worldwide development not only defines *what* education has to achieve, but also establishes *how* it should be achieved. In other words, it defines the best policies for increasing the efficacy of investment in education as a means of reducing poverty. Under the recommendations of the global agenda, state intervention, both in education and in other social sectors, must be specifically aimed at poor collectives, and must adopt an explicitly pro-poor orientation, which makes a priority of investment in benefit of the most in need. The idea, in short, is to apply targeting policies that, through selective action, guarantee the orientation of resources,

services and state intervention towards the population in demonstrated situations of poverty and need.

In harmony with the “new consensus”, many international organisations support targeting, both directly, through projects that are specifically aimed at poor people, and indirectly, by supporting sectors that offer greater possibilities of benefiting poor people than other social groups (Mkandawire, 2005). At the same time, numerous governments in the southern countries have introduced targeting programmes and policies as one of the main –if not the first- national strategies to reduce poverty.

The main objective of the article is to stand out some of the limits, omissions and opportunities of educational targeting as a priority strategy to fight against poverty. In order to achieve this objective, the article has a twofold goal. First, it pretends to analyse the World Bank’s (WB) proposals related to education, poverty and targeting. It is important to note that the WB is the dominant agent in the creation and promotion of the global agenda for development and it has a large influence in defining the educational strategy to fight against poverty both in a global and in a national scale. Second, it pretends to explore the objectives, features and impacts of a specific targeting education programme implemented in Latin America: the Bolsa Escola Programme (BE). Due to its pioneering and widespread nature, the BE Programme has constituted one of the most important strategies for compensatory educational policy in Latin America and it has been used by the WB as an example of “good practices” to fight against poverty in the region. This is the reason why the article will be focused on this programme. Specifically it will explore different modalities of the programme, the municipal and the federal ones, analysing their differences and similarities and the role that the WB plays in both.

2. Education, poverty and targeting in the World Bank agenda

Since the beginning of the 1990s fighting against poverty is one of the main priorities of the WB. After the failure of the Washington Consensus as the main strategy to achieve development, the WB explicitly declared the need for a new development strategy with a broader scope, objectives and instruments.

The 1990 *World Development Report*, published with the title *Poverty*, suggests for the first time the possibility of implementing strategies that would be

complementary to the market-centred development model, and acknowledges -also for the very first time- the excessively harsh impact of adjustment policies on the poorest sectors. Under this “new model” the struggle against poverty appeared as WB’s top priority, and an entire series of targeting programmes (compensatory and selective) aimed at the most vulnerable sectors of society began to emerge. The WB’s central argument in favour of implementing this type of programmes was based on the need to compensate the sectors most harshly affected by structural adjustment without generating excessive increase in social expenditure. There were two main ideas put forward to justify the implementation of these programmes: first, it was associated with the need to reduce costs and to reorient the allocation of public expenditure as efficiently as possible; second, it was presented as a mechanism that would allow it to more effectively reach the poorest sectors of society, thus contributing to social equity (Filgueira, 2001). In this way, the WB not only managed to mitigate existing criticism of its management, but also presented itself as an organisation concerned with social welfare, as the body spearheading the struggle against poverty on a global scale.

The new measures proposed to combat poverty included two key instruments: promoting the productive use of the most abundant resource amongst the impoverished, namely labour, and providing basic social services for the poorest classes. In particular, key importance was attached to providing basic health care and access to primary education (World Bank, 1990). Through the lens of the World Bank, providing education for the poor population was viewed as a key mechanism for increasing its human capital and possibilities for “activation”, thus contributing to increasing labour productivity, economic growth and social development. From this vantage point, it is understood that investment in primary education generates important return rates both individually and society-wide, and thus targeting education on the vulnerable sectors enables these to participate more fully in the process of economic growth, thereby ensuring both expansion and sustainability.

By the end of the 1990s, this “new strategy” was known as the Post-Washington Consensus and it does clearly consolidate a new rhetoric on education and poverty reduction. The *World Development Report 2000/2001, Attacking Poverty* set out the World Bank’s desire to set itself up as an institution charged with overseeing “global welfare”, along with the strategies and priorities that should support this objective. Specifically, it proposed a strategy for attacking poverty in three ways: promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment and enhancing security

(World Bank, 2001). Among the multiple suggestions and policy proposals stated in the document the following ones are specially relevant: reallocation of public expenditures towards poor sectors, mechanisms aimed at making the markets function more favourably for the poor, measures to stimulate participation of poor people in decision-making, proposals for target interventions in social programs and strategies for reducing the vulnerability of the poor. As can be observed, policies to fight poverty are featured by their amplitude and diversity.

The plethora of reports and documents published by the World Bank until the moment (World Bank, 1995; 1999a, b, c; 2001b, 2004, 2006a, b; etc.) only serve to strengthen the relationship established between education and poverty, and give prime importance to targeting as a mechanism for “expanding poor people’s opportunities” and “fostering their activation”. In fact, several targeting education programmes applied in southern countries are used as examples of “good practices” to be followed on a global scale. Furthermore, since 2004 the WB is funding one of the most ambitious targeting education programmes ever implemented in Latin America: the Bolsa Familia Programme, which was inaugurated in Brazil in 2003. The provision by the Bank of finance for this type of programme is a novelty in its loan portfolio, and indicates the importance acquired by the relationship between education and poverty in general, and targeting in particular, in the development agenda of the World Bank.

In short, under this new model there is a direct, causal relationship between education and poverty, with the understanding that increasing one will generate a decrease in the other almost automatically, and that the aggregate result will have positive repercussions on economic growth and national development. As the World Bank stands out:

“Education is one important explanation of why some people have higher incomes than others. People who have had little education tend also to be less productive and are more likely to be unemployed and economically and socially marginalized than are people with more education. Consequently, education reduces inequality and poverty by enhancing the skills and productivity of the whole population by equipping them with the skills they need to adapt in volatile economic times (...) Thus, educating the poor is a social, economic, and moral imperative and must be an essential element of any strategy for eradicating poverty and ameliorating social inequalities” (World Bank, 1999a: 16)

Of course, it is undeniable that education is an important input for development, one that generates important benefits from the economic, social and cultural standpoint. Placing a priority on education in the struggle against poverty is thus a goal that is both legitimate and necessary, especially in a context of globalisation marked by the growing importance of knowledge and information. The relationship between education and poverty established by the WB, however, is characterised by a twofold omission.

First, the WB ignores one of the great paradoxes associated with the process of globalisation: inasmuch as education is increasingly necessary, it is also decreasingly sufficient (Filmus, 2001). The growing demand for education generates a devaluation of the social utility of degrees earned, thus producing a displacement in the minimum levels of education needed for labour and social insertion. Within this framework, having completed school, though absolutely necessary, is not sufficient in itself to join the labour market, and is even less sufficient as a means for rising out of poverty.

Second, the WB omits the effects of poverty on education, forgetting that opportunities for taking advantage of education amongst the various social sectors are unequal. The relationship between education and poverty cannot be viewed solely from a causal, unidirectional standpoint; rather, it must be viewed from a bidirectional perspective: education is necessary for lowering poverty, but the levels of poverty must also be lowered in order for education to develop.

We must also bear in mind that the new discourse in the WB's struggle against poverty in no way entails a reconsideration of the conditionality imposed for accessing loans. Indeed, although the negative effects of the adjustment have been acknowledged, they have always been regarded as transitory and temporary, and have been associated with the lack of economic growth in the beneficiary countries. The WB has never admitted responsibility for this situation and has accused national governments of being incapable of carrying out the reforms needed to achieve development. Within this context, this second omission takes on even greater prominence, since the WB not only ignores the effects of poverty on education; it also continues to enforce policies that contribute to increasing poverty and inequality.

In fact, according to the WB's logic economic growth continues to be one of the main factors in determining poverty. Furthermore, austerity, macroeconomic and structural reform policies are still considered the best way for achieving economic growth. In this context, the WB's concern on poverty, according to Illon (2002), is

based exclusively in an economic logic, which means, to avoid the risks that poverty generates for markets' stability and growth. The measures proposed by the WB within the "second generation reforms", thus, remain subjugated to economic and market logic and have the particular feature of being compatible with structural adjustment, fitting within the neo-liberal model of development, and keeping low margins of state intervention (Fine, 2001). Within this context, it can be claimed that the development of anti-poverty policies has been based on a defensive strategy that mitigates both criticism levied by dissatisfied groups and the emergence of social tensions that might compromise the continuity of the reforms and of the neo-liberal model of development (Tarabini, 2005). It is what Robert Wade (1996) describes as the "art of paradigm maintenance".

3. The Bolsa Escola Programme: a paradigmatic example of educational targeting.

The BE Programme is one of the targeting pioneering programmes in Latin America. It was implemented in the mid 1990s in Brazil and since its origins it was presented as a model guide, both for national governments in the region and for international organisations, in the fight against poverty. The objective of this section, therefore, is to explore the origin and evolution of the BE Programme as a paradigmatic example of educational targeting. In doing so we will analyse the general objectives of the programme, its features and the role of international organisations, specifically the WB, in its orientation, implementation and funding.

The BE programme is a targeting education programme involving intervention on demand issues. It is based on income transfers to poor families, conditioned by their children's attending school. This programme is part of the Minimum Income Guarantee Programmes initiated in Brazil in the first half of the 1990s, and unlike other similar programmes implemented in Latin America (such as the Mexican *Oportunidades* programme), from the very start it was developed in a decentralised fashion on a municipal scale.

The programme was first implemented in 1995 in the Brasilia region with the aim of achieving three goals: 1) increasing the families' standard of living in the short-term; 2) lowering child labour rates; and 3) optimising children's staying in school with the ultimate goal of reducing future poverty. The highly favourable

diagnoses on the earliest proposals implemented and the spread of the debates on this type of programme drove many other municipal governments – many of them governed by the PT (Workers' Party) – to develop education-associated minimum income programmes, which became widespread in the country during the second half of the 1990s.

The ways the programme is implemented on a municipal scale show differences in both design and management; however, generally speaking both their goals and the criteria used to choose the population converge. In terms of the goals, there is a general consensus with those set by the pioneering programme in Brasilia, with the exception of slight changes that correspond to specific characteristics of the different towns. In terms of the selection systems, the programmes share a series of criteria including family income, children's ages and time living in the town, with potentially eligible families being those with a per capita family income lower than a certain pre-defined level (generally, the poverty line) with at least one school-aged child (generally, from 6 to 15)¹ and a minimum time of residence in the town that fluctuates from one to five years. The families that meet the requisites and are accepted for participation in the programme will receive a monthly income transfer conditioned on their child's regular attendance at school.

Starting in 1997, and in light of the success of the municipal experiences, a type of federal programme began to be implemented under the government of F. H. Cardoso, initially created to provide financial support to poor towns with difficulties implementing the programme autonomously. Starting in 2001, the Bolsa Escola Federal Programme (BEF) spread to a nationwide scale, leaving its management and implementation in the hands of the town education councillors, with the financing and monetary transfers to the beneficiaries remaining under the aegis of the National Secretariat (Tarabini and Bonal, 2004). In the case of towns that already had municipal BE programmes, agreements were reached between both local and national administrations to make possible a fit between both programmes. From that point on, several municipal versions of the BE programme coexisted with the federal version of the same.

The BE Programme, both in its municipal modalities and in the federal one, has been funded since its origins by national budgets. Therefore, neither the WB nor other international organisations have taken part in its funding or implementation. Nevertheless the WB has published several evaluations of the Programme and has

referred to it as one of the paradigmatic examples to guide education policy to fight against poverty (World Bank, 2001a; Bourguignon et al., 2002; Bourguignon, 2003; De Janvry et al., 2005). In fact the BE Programme, above all in its federal version, has had a great international legitimacy and it has been supported and recommended by several international organisations as a model to follow by other countries. As Simon Schwartzman points out “Bolsa Escola became a favorite of governments and international agencies, and received wide support in public opinion, as an effective instrument to improve education conditions of the poorer segments of the population” (Schwartzman, 2005: 1-2).

In 2003, and due to the federal government change in Brazil, the BE Programme suffered an important modification: it was incorporated into a new targeting programme, the Bolsa Familia. This modification supposed significant changes both in the functioning and in the features of the programme as well as in the role of the WB in it. The Bolsa Familia Programme is part of the *Fome Zero Programme*; this is a public policy aimed to combat hunger and social exclusion in the country and the key project of Lula da Silva’s government. Such Programme has unified all the income transfer programmes existing in the country until the moment (*Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentação, Auxílio Gas and Cartão Alimentação*) and it has led in general terms to the disappearance of the BE as an independent programme.

In the following section we will explore in detail the main features of these three modalities of the BE Programme, in order to compare its differences and similarities and to highlight the importance of the contexts, the processes and the ontologies² under which they are applied. Specifically we will compare the federal version of the programme with one municipal version of the same: the municipal BE Programme of Belo Horizonte (BEM Programme). The fact of selecting one specific municipal programme is related to the multitude of municipal versions of the same³. The reason of selecting specifically the municipal programme applied in Belo Horizonte is because it is one of the pioneering cities in applying these kinds of programmes and also because the programme applied is one of the most ambitious in its category.

4. Municipal and federal modalities of the BE Programme: contexts, processes and ontologies.

The BEM Programme was created in 1996 and began to be implemented in Belo Horizonte in 1997, gathering together the experience of pioneering programmes in this realm that had been implemented in other towns around the country since the mid-1990s. It is important to notice that in the 1990s important new developments came about in Brazil within the realm of social policy, with a strengthening of the democratisation process through reinforcement of the process of decentralisation adopted in the 1988 constitution and the increasing political-administrative and fiscal autonomy of the different sub-national bodies in the country. This context reopened the debate around social inequalities and shaped a new institutional pattern in the quest for novel instruments in the struggle against poverty (Lavinias and Barbosa, 2000).

The implementation of the BEM Programme therefore emerged from the desire to seek new political mechanisms that, along with the “traditional” universal policies, would enable the problems of inequality and social exclusion plaguing broad sectors of society to be combated. Within this framework, the programme became one of the key policies of the Municipal Education Secretariat -led by the PT- and sought channels of connection with other of the town’s social and educational policies that contributed to attacking the different dimensions of social exclusion characterising the situation of impoverished families.

The BEM Programme defines itself as a social policy with a twofold purpose: to guarantee the right to education and to struggle against poverty and social exclusion. In order to guarantee the right to education, the programme insures that poor children are admitted to and remain in schools. From this standpoint, the specific purpose of the programme is to act on the external social inequality in schools, thus ensuring material support to families whose economic and social difficulties make it impossible for their children to access and progress in school under equal conditions. To fight against poverty, the programme offers the families support and protection by income supplements and socio-educational assistance. From this standpoint, and based on the idea that the existing situations of poverty, marginality and social exclusion in the country entail a serious limitation of the rights of both adults and minors, the programme strives to contribute to ensuring the citizens’ rights of the beneficiary families, thus fostering their emancipation and social inclusion.

The BEM Programme follows the same goals and selection criteria as the first municipal programme applied in Brasilia. However, there are certain specific characteristics in the design of the programme that are worth highlighting.

First, it is important to point out the relative high value of the monetary transference allocated in the programme (168 R\$, equivalent to 56€) and the repercussion this decision might have on the programme's potential impact (Tarabini, 2007). In fact, one of the dilemmas that this type of programme must strive to resolve is what has been termed the trade-off between breadth and intensity (World Bank, 2004), because in a context of scarce resources there are few possibilities of offering high transfers to a broad swathe of the population. The BEM Programme therefore is featured by prioritizing the intensity of the benefit in front of the breadth of the coverage.

Second, the BEM Programme does not set predetermined timeframes for families' participation, rather they may participate for an unlimited time unless: a) all their children are over the required ages (six to fifteen); b) the family moves to another town; c) their children drop out of school; or d) the family's living conditions substantially improve to the extent that their vinculation in the programme can no longer be justified. This criterion is viewed as one of the more positive points of the programme since it fosters ongoing work with the beneficiary families. The majority of evaluators of this type of programme stress the importance of long, stable and lasting participation by families for the programme to have some sort of repercussions on their family's standard of living (Lavinias and Barbosa, 2000).

Third, along with the monetary transfer, the Programme also includes a powerful family assistance strategy based on the idea that income supplement is indispensable yet insufficient in itself to ensure families' dignity and social protection. The main initiatives implemented within the family-assistance strategy are: 1) socio-educational initiatives with the beneficiary families; 2) education of young adults and adults, and professional qualifications; 3) special attention to families with minors in a situation of social risk; and 4) relations and agreements with organisations associated with the town council and civil society.

Finally, the BEM Programme strives to create an articulation with the *Escola Plural Programme*, an educational policy that has been governing the everyday lives of municipal schools in Belo Horizonte since 1995. This programme is a global plan for educational reform that strives to eliminate the excluding structures acting within

the educational system by reforming and redefining all the areas within the system: student assessment, school organisation, teaching practice and curriculum definition. The articulation between both programmes is viewed as a strategy for attacking—in a parallel fashion—both the internal and external factors of educational inequality in schools, thus enabling headway to be made towards the conditions of equality needed for the implementation of educational practices.

Until the end of 2001, the BEM Programme operated in Belo Horizonte autonomously, managing to assist a total of 9.311 families. Starting in 2002, the BEF Programme began to be implemented in the city, with prior agreement by both administrations aimed to articulate the particularities in the design of both programmes. In fact, one of the main differences between the two programmes was related to the type and the value of the monetary transfer available.

The BEM Programme focused on the family by transferring a monthly fixed amount (168R\$) to each one regardless of how many children the family had. The BEF Programme, however, focused on the individual, transferring a variable benefit per family according to the number of children (15R\$ for one child, 30R\$ for two and 45R\$ for three or more, equivalent to 5€, 10€ and 15€, respectively). Moreover, while the BEM programme prioritized the intensity of the benefit the BEF Programme clearly prioritized the breadth of the coverage. Given the major differences between the amounts of the monetary transfers available in each programme, the decision was made to reach a financial agreement between both administrative entities that would enable to maintain the value of the benefit to families already participating in the BEM Programme. Under this scheme, the federal government finances the 15R\$, 30R\$ or 45R\$ provided in the design of its programme, while the municipal government finances the remaining amount until reaching the ceiling of 168R\$ per family.

The financial articulation between both programmes, however, only affects those families that were already beneficiaries of the BEM Programme, which means that since the implementation of the federal programme in Belo Horizonte there are two groups of beneficiaries of what appears to be a single programme: first, the families benefiting from the BEM Programme (through a financial agreement with the BEF Programme), who receive a monetary transfer of 168R\$ per month and who also enjoy all the benefits of participating in the socio-family assistance actions; second, the families participating in the BEF Programme, who receive a maximum monthly

transfer for 45R\$ if they have three or more school-aged children and who do not have the right to participate in any other additional action. Obviously, the potential benefits of both situations on the beneficiary families' living conditions are also totally different.

Indeed, although initially the two programmes seem to be similar, a detailed analysis reveals important differences in their designs, ontologies and contexts of action. These differences show their different degree of articulation with the World Bank's agenda, and entail different possibilities for reducing poverty and expanding the educational opportunities of the population thereby assisted. Let us examine it.

First, in terms of the context of implementation of both programmes, it should be recalled that while the BEM Programme was implemented by a leftist government in the wake of a progressive municipal movement seeking new mechanisms to combat poverty and inequality, the BEF Programme was implemented by the government of F. H. Cardoso, who during his mandate⁴ set in motion a far-reaching structural reform aimed at seeking economic growth and stability.

The Cardoso government was characterised by showing a strong complementariness with the approaches of international organisations and especially with the WB, a fact that affected the development of the social and educational policies implemented in the country during the 1990s (Sader, 2001; Altmman, 2002; Frigotto and Ciavatta, 2003)⁵. Orthodox monetary policies, market deregulation and the economy's embracing of international capital were some of the priorities characterising the government of the time, aiming at the approaches of the Washington Consensus and thus at the need to adjust the country to the pace of world economic growth.

During this period, in which growth, stability and "modernisation" were the backbone of its actions, significant reforms were implemented in the state sector, with public resources earmarked for social policy being cut, thus generating profound alterations in the public nature of social services.

The outcome of this entire process was a significant increase in the levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country as a whole, a fact that affected the president's popularity as well as his possible re-election in 2000 (Da Silva, 2002). In light of this situation and of the increasing mistrust of the reforms being implemented, starting in 2001 (the penultimate year of his mandate), Cardoso's government began to examine the need to create social security networks for the most

vulnerable sectors of society in an attempt to reduce its high levels of poverty and to broaden guarantees that the existing reform plan would continue. The strategy used to implement this “broad social protection network” was, precisely, the implementation of income-transfer programmes, viewed as the best solution for compensating and aiding the vulnerable population.

Second, significant differences in the ontologies hidden beneath both programmes are perceptible, namely in the motivations, interests and missions guiding their implementation and development.

In the logic of the BEM Programme, monetary transfer was viewed as a supplement to the social-services network offered by the state, and was thus developed as a programme intended to complement (rather than replace) other social policies. From this standpoint, it is assumed that economic growth and market mechanisms are insufficient as a means to ensuring social welfare; consequently, income transfer is viewed as a measure for ensuring a minimum standard of living for all members of society. The underlying idea prompting this programme is that, in order to fight against poverty in contexts marked by extreme inequality, new mechanisms must be sought that help to break the structural barriers hindering access to social services. Its goal, therefore, is to go beyond assistance and activation, seeking to strengthen the role of the individual as the subject of rights and ensuring his or her social inclusion.

Under the logic of the BEF Programme, on the other hand, the implementation of compensatory selective programmes was viewed as an alternative to social policy that was perfectly compatible with the “commodification” of all other realms of social life. From this perspective, economic growth remains the top priority and targeting is viewed as the ideal measure for maintaining minimum state intervention in the realms of welfare and social protection, while at the same time ensuring the minimal requirements of welfare and stability. The underlying idea on which the BEF Programme is based is the need to compensate the social sectors that have not been able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by economic growth themselves by helping in their *empowerment* and activation.

The third factor that stands out is the differences in the mechanisms used by both programmes to achieve their goals (differences in the processes). These differences are crucial for understanding their possible impacts both from the social and the educational standpoint. While the ambitious design of the BEM Programme (the high

value of the monetary transfer, complementary socio-educational actions, etc.) may generate expectations of educational and social mobility within those families benefiting from it (in particular, those with a lower level of relative poverty), the scant value of the monetary transfer provided by the BEF Programme, as well as its lack of complementariness with other parallel measures of monetary benefits, will render unlikely any significant alteration in the living conditions of the families receiving aid, providing -at most- coverage of their minimal needs for survival.

The differences between the two modalities of the BE Programme are therefore outstanding. Despite the importance acquired by the BEF Programme in the country and the support that it received at international scale, in 2003-04 it ceased to exist autonomously and, as we explained earlier, it was incorporated into the Bolsa Familia Programme. The creation of the Bolsa Familia supposed new changes both in the municipal modalities of the BE Programme and in the federal one. These changes reveal, once again, specificities related to the context, the ontology and the design of the programme. Next we will analyse some of these specific features.

First, in terms of the context it is important to take into account that the Bolsa Familia is implemented, as the majority of the municipal modalities of the BE, by a leftist government. This fact reveals precisely the “institutionalisation” of targeting as one of the key mechanisms in national policies to fight against poverty. That is to say, independently of the political tendency of the governments, targeting has been consolidated as a prominent model to guide social and educational policies in the southern countries and in Latin America in special. It is important to notice as well the increasing international legitimacy of targeting measures and programmes and the rising support they received from public opinion. The context in which the Bolsa Familia is applied is, in short, one in which targeting is “taken for granted”.

Second, in relation to the ontology of the Bolsa Familia Programme it could be said that it tries to combine the interests and motivations that articulated the previous municipal and federal modalities of the BE Programme. The Bolsa Familia not only pretends to compensate poor people but also to achieve their social inclusion. In fact, the programme explicitly declares that it pretends to alleviate the level of poverty in the short term and to make significant progresses in the basic social rights of poor people in the long term. Both short term and long term objectives are taken into account in the programme’s philosophy. Moreover, in order for these objectives to be achieved, the programme pretends to articulate its action with complementary

measures and programmes as adult literacy or work creation programmes. In any case, it is important to take into account that this complementary measures are not part of the programme itself, as they were in many municipal modalities of the BE Programme. In the case of the Bolsa Familia there is only the purpose of fostering this articulation, but there are no measures established for doing so. It will be only in the long term in which we will be able to analyse if this kind of measures and programmes have been applied.

Third, in relation to the mechanisms for the Bolsa Familia Programme to be applied, it is important to highlight two elements: the first one is related with the amount of the transference and the second one with the components of the programme. On average, the Bolsa Familia Programme transfers 77R\$ per family per month (equivalent to €25), increasing substantially the amount of the transference provided by the BEF Programme and improving the intensity of the federal variety of the programme. At the same time, the programme introduces a triple approach action that includes education, health and feeding. This approach allows the programme to go beyond the educational conditionality and includes additional benefits for pregnant women, small children or food cooking subsidies. Therefore, the mechanisms used by the Bolsa Familia are without doubt much wider than those planned by the BEF programme.

Instead of this situation, many municipal modalities of the BE Programme still maintain a monetary transference substantially superior to that of the Bolsa Familia and provide complementary actions and benefits much broader than those provided by the Bolsa Familia. In these cases, some municipal councillors have established agreements with the federal government in order to articulate the Bolsa Familia Programme with the municipal modalities of the BE. These agreements follow the same logic used under the application of the BEF Programme. Progressively, however, the municipal modalities of the programme are disappearing and, consequently, so are the benefits provided by them. The municipal BE programme applied in Belo Horizonte is one of the only cases that still maintains its autonomy in relation to the Bolsa Familia.

Nowadays the Bolsa Familia has been consolidated as the main national strategy to fight against poverty in Brazil. Moreover, as Draibe (2006) indicates “it has monopolized pro-poor policies in the whole country”. In 2006 its coverage was of 11 million families in the whole country, representing an 18’6% of the total

population (Villatoro, 2007). Its estimative cost represents 0'5% of the GNP and approximately 2'5% of the total government expenditure (Lindert, 2006).

Finally, it is important to notice the role of the WB in the programme. The WB's loan for the Programme is equivalent to 6.195 million dollars, representing approximately the 10% of the total funding of the programme. The WB's involvement in the Bolsa Familia not only indicates the priority given to targeting in the WB portfolio but also its growing influence in defining the orientation that targeting programmes have to follow.

4. Educational impacts of targeting: shortcomings and opportunities of the BEM Programme

The goal of this last section is to set forth the limits, omissions and opportunities of the BEM Programme from an educational standpoint by presenting the main results of the fieldwork study undertaken in Belo Horizonte during 2004-2005 and 2005-2006⁶. The reason for focusing the analysis in this specific programme is related to the purpose of analysing the shortcomings and opportunities of one of the broadest and more ambitious targeting education programmes implemented in Latin America. This choice enables to reveal the shortcomings of educational targeting, even in one of the "best possible cases".

Educational impacts of the BEM Programme and opportunities of targeting.

The most significant impact of the BEM Programme from the educational standpoint is that the students assisted have better access to education and school attendance, and remain longer at school, thus generating a reduction in drop-out rates during the period of primary education. This situation can be viewed as a direct educational impact of the programme, inasmuch as it corresponds to its very nature and way of acting. It should be recalled that the BEM Programme is characterised by having a conditional nature; that is, if regular attendance at school is not ensured, the monetary transfer to the family in question is suspended and, thus, the programme ceases to act.

Improvement in school attendance, however, is not solely derived from the conditions imposed by the programme (direct educational impact); rather, it is also a consequence of the programme's repercussions on non-educational realms. From this standpoint, we can affirm that the programme's effects on attendance and remaining

in school are characterised by being eminently indirect; that is, they are the outcome of the impacts generated in the families' living conditions. It is not only that the programme requires the children to attend schools, but also that it makes this possible precisely inasmuch as it guarantees the minimum conditions for doing so.

The BEM Programme therefore generates an improvement in the conditions of *educability* (López and Tedesco, 2002) of poor students, in the sense that it entails an improvement in the living conditions needed for the development of educational practices. We recall that regular school attendance and the potential educational success of children and adolescents are closely associated with a series of family characteristics that affect the positions and dispositions adopted towards education: the availability of material resources, the possibility of assisting minors' educational development, a proper physical context to accommodate school routines, and the family's cultural and educational climate and values -these are just some of the key factors in this process. The effects generated by the programme on families' living conditions therefore clearly influence the minors' education by broadening their educational opportunities.

The educational impacts of the BEM Programme enable us to conclude that targeting policies may contribute to reducing poverty in the short term and to improving the educational opportunities of poor students, as long as such policies are guided by an ambitious design in relation to the amount of monetary transfer, to the length of time the families remain within the programme and to the complementary actions that strive to act on those dimensions of poverty that are not purely economic.

Omissions of the programme and limits of targeting.

Despite the significance of the direct and indirect educational impacts generated by the BEM Programme, four major shortcomings and omissions can be identified that curtail its possibilities for expanding the educational opportunities of the impoverished student body and thereby to reduce their level of future poverty.

First, despite the high relative value of the monetary transfer provided by the programme, this is nonetheless insufficient in itself to change the practices of certain families, or to modify their strategies and positions towards education. Indeed, the educational impacts of the BEM Programme present characteristics, intensity and a degree of stability that are wholly distinct, depending on the level of poverty to which the family in question belongs. Additionally, we cannot forget that families

participating in this type of programme live in situations of poverty and indigence that, though varying in degree, are all characterised by the common problems linked to a lack of work, poor housing conditions and health problems. Despite the fact that the monetary transfer may improve these families' living conditions – especially those that are closer to the threshold of poverty– the situations of instability and vulnerability continue to characterise their everyday lives, taking them further away not only from possibilities of educational inclusion but also – and especially – from possibilities of social inclusion. Thus, it is absolutely necessary for targeting programmes to be articulated with universal social policies that enable to combat the causes generating poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

Second, improvements in school attendance derived from participation in the programme can only be ensured for the duration of primary education since the programme only covers children up to the age of fifteen. This shortcoming becomes especially important if we recall the displacement of minimum levels of educational investment generated by globalisation, thus bringing into question the programme's ability to reduce the future poverty levels of the assisted population through its investment in education.

Third, we should bear in mind that, despite the programme's impact on improving educational opportunities for poor students, there are still important educational barriers that make it difficult to achieve equal conditions between poor students and the remaining student body. These problems include accessing pre-school (since in Belo Horizonte this is mainly private) and the lack of secondary-education places in day-time timetabled courses at schools near the poor families' place of residence. Despite the fact that neither the BEM Programme nor other similar targeting educational programmes can be blamed for these shortcomings, it cannot be denied that greater integration with other universal educational policies aimed at expanding and improving the education available at the different levels (preschool, primary and secondary) would contribute enormously to palliating this situation.

Finally, there is a wide variety of educational impacts derived from the BEM Programme, depending on the characteristics and particularities of the schools where students attend. This fact highlights the need for a greater articulation between the programme and the processes of improving the educational provision. If the goal is to ensure that the poor students' educational careers are developed under equal conditions with those of the remaining students, it is essential to continue making

headway in improving the educational provision through educational policies that, along with monetary transfer, lead to an effective improvement both in the teachers' working conditions and in the students' learning conditions.⁷

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the World Bank's proposals in education, poverty and targeting and the study of the Bolsa Escola Programme in its several modalities leads to the following conclusions.

First of all, although international organisations have an increasing influence in setting the educational agenda it is important to analyse how educational policies are regulated and implemented at a national scale. The impact of international bodies on national policies is broader than simple imposition and entails diverse mechanisms such as dissemination, standardization or harmonisation (Dale, 1999). In fact, the WB's proposals to fight against poverty do not entail any kind of direct imposition and nevertheless they clearly influenced social and educational policies in southern countries. In this sense, it is quite important to carry out a contextual analysis of educational policies that allows highlighting the ontologies, the contexts and the processes under which they are implemented. A clear example of this are the differences between the BE Programme modalities and the Bolsa Familia Programme. Programmes that initially appear to be practically the same and to share the same goals, but that hide important differences in their objectives, in their relation with international bodies and in their potential impacts.

Second, despite the fact that the BEM Programme is one of the most ambitious targeting educational programmes implemented in Latin America, the analysis of its impacts allows to say that there are still a series of shortcomings in targeting as a means to ensure school attainment amongst poor students and thus to contribute in the reduction of their future poverty level. All these factors lead us to the conclusion that universal social, economic and educational policies, aimed at combating the causes of poverty, inequality and social exclusion are still needed. Of course, targeting by itself doesn't necessarily contradict the universal character of social rights. In fact, if it is articulated with universal policies it could be an important measure for equity and redistribution. Nevertheless, targeting can be questioned when it justifies the residual action of the state, when it leads to segmentation in the quality

of the services rendered and when it ceases to be a temporary mechanism and is established as a permanent criterion of social policy. In this sense, we completely agree with ECLAC (2006) when it says:

“Prolonged targeting can lead to an assistentialist model that reinforces the beneficiaries’ dependency. This contradicts the ideal of social citizenship, according to which the most important is the development of the citizens’ capacities in a way that allows them to actively participate in society and constitute themselves as actors with a greater power of autodetermination. Therefore, when a certain level of development is reached it is important that targeting does not imply confining the poor to living from state subsidies, keeping them out of the social integration circuits” (ECLAC, 2006: 36).

Finally, although investment in education is an important factor in reducing poverty, it is neither the only nor the most important one. It is essential to bear in mind not only how education can affect poverty, but also how poverty affects education. In this sense, it is necessary to ensure minimum social, economic and cultural conditions in order to enable the development of educational practices and to ensure their potential success. In short, although education is an essential element for equity, sound educational development cannot be ensured without having previously achieved minimum levels of social equity.

References

- Altman, H. (2002) "Influencias do Banco Mundial no contexto educacional brasileiro". *Educação e Pesquisa* (28) 1: 77-89.
- Bourguignon, F., Ferrerira, F., and Leite, P. G. (2002), *Ex- ante evaluation of conditional cash transfer programs: the case of Bolsa Escola*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Bourguignon, F. (2003), 'Conditional Cash Transfers, Schooling and Child Labor: Micro-Simulating Brazil's Bolsa Escola Program', *The World Bank economic review*, 17 (2), 229-54.
- Da Silva, O. (2000) "The Minimum Income: a monetary transfer to poor families with children in school age in Brazil", VIII Congreso Internacional del BIEN. Berlin, October 6-7.

Dale, R. (1999) "Specifying globalization effects on national policy: a focus on mechanisms", *Journal Education Policy* (14) n° 1: 1-17.

De Janvry, A., Finan, F., Sadoulet, E., Nelson, D., Lindert, K., De la Brière, B., and Lanjouw, P., (2005), 'Brazil's Bolsa Escola Program: The Role of Local Governance in Decentralized Implementation', *SP Discussion Paper n° 0542*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

Draibe, S. (2006), 'Brasil: Bolsa Escola y Bolsa Familia', en: Ernesto Cohen y R. Franco (ed.), *Transferencias con responsabilidad. Una mirada latinoamericana*, Mexico D.F.: FLACSO.

ECLAC (2006) *Shaping the Future of Social Protection: Access, Financing and Solidarity*, Santiago de Chile: ECALC

Filgueira, F. (2001) "Entre pared y espada: ciudadanía social en América Latina (I)", Instituto Internacional de Gobernabilidad, Biblioteca de ideas.

Filmus, D. (2001), *Cada vez más necesaria, cada vez más insuficiente. Escuela media y mercado de trabajo en épocas de globalización*. Madrid: Santillana.

Fine, B. (2001) *Social Capital versus Social Theory*. London: Routledge.

Frigotto, G. and Ciavatta, M. (2003) "Educação básica no Brasil na década de 1990: subordinação ativa e consentida à lógica do mercado", *Educação e Sociedade* (24) n°. 82: 1-29.

Ilon, L. (2002), 'Agent of global markets or agent of the poor? The World Bank's education sector strategy paper', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22, 475-82.

Lavinas, L. and Barbosa, M. L. (2000) "Combater a pobreza estimulando a frequência escolar: o estudo do caso do programa Bolsa Escola de Recife". Dados, *Revista de Ciencias Sociais* (43) 3: 1-26.

Lindert, K. (2006), 'Brazil: Bolsa Escola Program. Scaling-up Cash Transfers for the Poor', in: OECD-WB (ed.), *Emerging good practice in managing for development results: Sourcebook*, Washington D.C.: OECD-WB, 67-74.

López, N. and Tedesco, J. C. (2002) *Las condiciones de educabilidad de los niños y adolescentes en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: IIPE-UNESCO.

Mkandawire, T., (2005), 'Targeting and Universalism in poverty reduction', *Programme Paper*, 23. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

Pawson (2002) "Evidence-based policy: The promise of realist synthesis", *Evaluation* (3) 8: 340-358.

Sader, E. (2001) *Una democracia sin alma*, en; SADER, E., *Una democracia sin alma*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Schwartzman, S. (2005), "Education-oriented social programs in Brazil: the impact of Bolsa Escola", *Global Conference on Education Research in Developing Countries*, Global Development Network, Praga, March 23-April 2.

Tarabini, A. and Bonal, X. (2004) "Bolsa Escola: una revisión de sistemas de evaluación de los programas de garantía de renta mínima en educación", paper presented at the *X Encuentro de Latinoamericanistas Españoles: Identidad y Multiculturalidad, la construcción de espacios iberoamericanos*, Salamanca, 13–24 May.

Tarabini, A. (2005) *Globalización, focalización educativa y lucha contra la pobreza. Master thesis*. Sociology Department. Autonomous University of Barcelona.

--- (2007), 'The spread of targeted educational policies in Latin America: global thesis and local impacts', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 17 (1/2), 21-43.

Villatoro, P. (2007), 'Las transferencias condicionadas en América Latina: luces y sombras', Ponencia presentada en: *Seminario Internacional. Evolución y desafíos de los programas de transferencias condicionadas*, Brasilia, 20-21 de noviembre.

Wade, R. (1996), 'Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: The East Asian Miracle in Political Perspective', *New Left Review*, 217 (1), 3-36.

World Bank (1990) *World Development Report: Poverty*. Washington D.C.: World Bank

--- (1995), *Priorities and strategies for education*. New York: World Bank.

--- (1999a), *Educational Change in Latin American and the Caribbean*. New York: World Bank.

--- (1999b), *World Development Report 1999/2000: Entering the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

WB (1999c), *Education sector strategy*. New York: World Bank.

--- (2001a), *An Assessment of the Bolsa Escola Program*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

--- (2001b), *World Development Report 2000/2001. Attacking Poverty*. Washington D.C.: Oxford University Press.

--- (2004), *World Development Report 2004. Making services work for poor people*. Washington D.C.: World Bank and Oxford University Press.

--- (2006a), *Education Sector Strategy Update. Achieving Education for all, Broadening our Perspective, Maximizing our Effectiveness*. . Washington D.C.: World Bank.

--- (2006b), *World Development Report 2006. Equity and Development*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

¹ It is important to notice that the BE Programme focuses on primary education, as the majority of the programmes of this nature applied in Latin America. The Mexican *Oportunidades* Programme is an exception of this tendency.

² Following Pawson's proposal (2002), we understand ontology to mean any theory hidden beneath the development of different social programmes; their *raison d'être*, more than their contents.

³ According to the estimations by Cardoso and Souza (2003; quoted by Schwartzman, 2005), 61 municipal BE Programmes existed in 1999, in addition to 17 programmes run by a non-governmental institution, *Missao Criança*.

⁴ F. H. Cardoso governed the country for two consecutive mandates: from 1994 until 2002, when Luís Inacio Lula da Silva, at the head of the Workers' Party, won Brazil's federal elections.

⁵ Despite the fact that Brazil was subjected, as were all other Latin American countries, to the structural adjustment policies implemented by the WB, this restructuring process was postponed in comparison to other countries in the region. As indicated by Sader (2001), it was only after 1990 when a coherent neo-liberal project was formulated in Brazil, first with the Collor government (1990-1992) and later with the Cardoso government (1994). This is why the Brazilian case is defined with expressions such as "late neo-liberalism".

⁶ The fieldwork was undertaken based on a qualitative methodology entailing interviews with three key stakeholders: mothers who were beneficiaries of the BEM Programme; students who were beneficiaries of the programme, and the teaching and management staff of those schools hosting students who were beneficiaries of the programme. In total we did more than 80 interviews and we gathered numerous information related to families and children's social and educational conditions and the impacts of the programme in these conditions.

⁷ Despite the fact that the BEM Programme is theoretically articulated with the *Escuela Plural* programme, in practice there are still numerous hindrances to this. The main factors explaining this situation are the fact that working conditions for the teaching staff continue to be difficult and that there is a high concentration of poor students at certain schools.