

Planning, re-bordering and setting times: a comparative analysis of European and Latin American 'education spaces'

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ABSTRACT.- The article compares educational regionalisation in Europe and Latin America. This analysis unveils the influence of three social phenomena in the two case studies, namely power, fields of activity and knowledge. Mostly, it focuses on the initiatives led by the European Union and the Organisation of Ibero-American States in order to implement large strategic, multi-government educational plans in each continent. The actions of international political players, the theories (or 'ontologies') embedded in these devices and the consequences for sub-national politics are observed.

Keywords: regionalisation, educational plans, power, scales of decision-making

Over the past decades an array of global political players has promoted very ambitious educational plans, grounded on expert knowledge on development, which set mid-term deadlines for evaluation. Some of them are the UNESCO-led Education for All Programme, the New Partnership for African Development, the Lisbon Agenda and the 2020 Strategy of the European Union, and the 2021 Educational Goals of the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI, in Spanish). Some emergent countries have also launched wide plans such as Brazil's National Education Plan for 2011-2021, India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for 2007-2012, China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development for 2010-2020, and South Africa's Schooling 2025.

Following the strand of comparative studies on regionalisation on the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean (Jenson, 2010; Grugel, 2004, 2006; Verger and Hermo, 2010), this article takes into

account the particular features of the European Union 2020 Strategy and the OEI Ibero-American 2021 Educational Goals so as to explore their commonalities and differences (Tilly, 1984). This exercise reveals that in both cases governments and international organisations establish alliances, international and sub-national politics become increasingly connected, and the promoters of both initiatives share analogous causal beliefs on the expected results of their educational plans.

The first section of the article defines the lens of analysis, basically focused on the concepts of agency and power, social field and knowledge. The second and third sections portray the EU 2020 Strategy and the OEI 2021 Educational Goals as two significant case studies. Then, the fourth section attempts to shed light on the similar and idiosyncratic processes that take place in Europe and Latin America.

'Education spaces'

Both the EU 2020 Strategy and the OEI 2021 Educational Goals require their member states and associates to operate in international 'education spaces'. Besides a great emphasis on the mobility of higher education students within (and between) these areas (Verger and Herme, 2010), these international strategic educational plans also commit school systems to achieve certain statistical targets. Currently, curbing the number of early school leavers and producing one-third of graduates in higher education in each generation are the main European educational goals (European Commission, 2010), while completing the expansion of primary education, tackling significant drop-out rates in secondary education, and opening access to higher education are the expected outcomes in Latin America (OEI, 2010). For more descriptive details, see *infra*.

Besides explicit institutional devices managed by these international organisations, 'education spaces' are also sociological phenomena constituted by agency and power, fields of

activity, and the social use of knowledge. Generally speaking, the international organisations, governments, parties, unions, corporations and advocacy networks that intervene in the space of education policy have varying capabilities to influence their counterparts in given contexts of interaction, where everybody does not avail of the same advantages, and some powerful agents use particular forms of expert knowledge to pursue their own interests (Dale, 2009; Lawn *et al*, 2011).

Agency and power

Unlike former approaches, many contemporary writers do not look for the roots of human behaviour in structural mechanisms that operate beyond consciousness. Those theories professed that the deep rules of kinship, mythology and social roles, the potential technological responses to natural challenges, and genetic influence determined the actual options for action. Nevertheless, albeit admitting that institutions and social structures contextualise human behaviour, current approaches attribute it to agency carried out through the interplay of individuals and collective actors who pursue their interests, aspire to implement some principles and believe in particular factual ideas about the world (Schmidt, 2008). A number of contemporary perspectives make this point in sociology —e.g., 'rational action' and 'critical realism', political science — e.g., 'rational-choice', 'historical', 'sociological' and 'ideational' 'institutionalisms', and international relations — e.g. 'constructivism'.

Some strands of this scholarship, mostly in sociology, argue that power is a basic component of human agency as well. In their view, certain agents are more powerful than others inasmuch as their interests eventually prevail in open conflict. Furthermore, dominant agents may also gain leverage by keeping undesired issues out of the agenda, or by shaping the context in which their opponents have to make their decisions (Lukes, 2005).

This emphasis on agency has strongly suggested that national states —the main agent operating in the Westfalian system—, are no longer the single actor in the international politics of education. The key point is that different types of international organisations, corporations, lobbies, think tanks, advocacy networks and social movements disseminate ideas, decide on investment, sponsor policy designs and campaign for social and civil rights (Mundy, 1999, 2007). Endowed with uneven power-resources, these players struggle for influence over policy transfer and policy learning between international organisations and national and sub-national levels of government (Dale, 2005).

Fields

Agency and power normally operate within given fields of social activity where political opportunities open and close. In order to determine their concrete functioning, it is crucial to analyse who writes, enforces and follows the rules of the game (Jenson and Mérand, 2010: 87). Likewise, it is plausible to ask whether the interaction between the promoters of regional educational initiatives—who comply with the existing legal commitments, have their own agendas, and respond to the previous historical paths—, eventually produces particular sets of political opportunities for those committed to the EU 2020 Strategy and the OEI 2021 Educational Goal (Dale, 2009: 32).

Generally speaking, the emergence of policy spaces above, below and through different national societies brings about the symptoms of “regulatory regionalism”, a new phenomenon according to some experts in international relations. This is a pattern of regional, supra-national integration which consists of the ordering of boundaries between national and regional levels and the institutionalisation of connections to global governance (Jayasuriya, 2008: 33-4). Specialists in education policy have observed that “regulatory regionalism” triggers a new politics of bordering

and re-bordering that draws limits through complex interplays that often transform the older nested, international and national scales of policy-making into a new web of interlocking scales where agents choose at what level they pursue their strategies (Robertson, 2011).

Thus, the global no longer contains the national and the sub-national; nor are the agents who operate at these scales determined by factors operating at the higher ones. On the contrary, since political competition, conflict and power relations keep fashioning new scalar articulations in which some agents may choose their position, the growing importance of world regions is likely to derive from consensus and struggles fought within, above and below the European and Latin American 'education spaces'. An example of this complex re-bordering is the specialisation of certain state organisations in enhancing the transcendence of supra-national bids (Sassen, 2006). Other examples are the simultaneous processes by which a global educational agenda, regional educational spaces and local educational policies are created (Maroy, 2009).

Knowledge and temporality

Political players utilise the knowledge about the hypothetical effects of educational plans in order to rank a variety of temporalities. Interestingly, the Lisbon Agenda was to be evaluated in 2010 but then its final judgement was postponed until 2020. The EFA Programme is to be evaluated in 2015, but Latin American governments will also be attentive to a more ambitious deadline for evaluation in 2021. Since knowledge, education policy and temporality are coined in social fields where social agents draw on power the time frames of educational plans must be scrutinized through these specific webs of social relations.

Knowledge is an on-going social activity, embedded in scientific communities which use and transform the pre-existing knowledge about the external world (Bhaskar, 1978: 17, 195). The

sociology of educational policy has widely documented how educational policy-makers provoke and manipulate discrepancy in scientific communities (Ball, 2008; Ozga, Seddon and Popkewitz, 2006). Policy studies have also discovered that programmes are normally grounded on 'programme ontologies', that is, basic assumptions about the mechanisms they are expected to activate (Pawson, 2006). Therefore, in the same way that Europeanisation has created an 'education space' where education policy intermingles with a given 'programme ontology' (Dale, 2009: 32), so Latin American integration is likely to trigger an analogous development. Remarkably, this hypothesis does not imply that the same events will take place, but that analogous social fields are at stake.

A variety of social practices produces the distinct temporalities of child care, employment, politics, finance and national identity (Sassen, 2000; Santos, 2000; Santos, 2005). Instead of an addition of days and courses measured by hours of teaching and years of schooling, educational time is an intricate order that emerges out of heterogeneous social practices —students' experiences, family aspirations, teachers' professional endeavours, governmental policies, supra-national initiatives and so on. Therefore, educational plans do not necessarily respond to the mid-term of individual educational pathways, nor are the deadlines for programme evaluation a necessary consequence of their logical framework, but conversely, the strategic use of expert knowledge by the parties engaged in the politics of education may eventually pattern evaluation times concerning official goals and targets.

In sum, Europeanisation and Latin American integration impinge on education policies through power and agency, the configuration of fields and the use of knowledge. The involved governments, the EU, the OEI and education policy networks have shaped new and very complex fields of activity. Despite some variation, in both continents the complex implications of regional, international alliances for national and sub-national politics have become apparent. Similarly, an

exploration of 'programme ontologies' finds that the EU 2020 Strategy and the OEI 2021 Educational Goals equip their promoters with the same kind of political instruments, and that the promoters of both educational plans use these instruments to set the time for final evaluation.

Europeanisation and education

The European Union was officially created by several international treaties negotiated, signed and passed by national parliaments in the 1990s. Although these treaties did not commit states to align their education systems, in 2001 the European Commission earned a say in this policy area by means of the Open Method of Coordination (Radaelli, 2007). In the summit held in Lisbon that year, governments were required to coordinate their policies affecting economic growth, sustainability and social cohesion. The latter label included social and education policies in such issues as reducing poverty and early school leaving. Unlike the former procedure through the European Parliament and the executive branches (i.e. the Commission and the Council), the Open Method of Coordination worked by setting common targets and benchmarks so that by 2010 each country was to achieve the goal in its own way. In its website the EU statistical office EUROSTAT publishes the benchmarks and the yearly scores of all the Member States and some comparable countries such as Japan, Norway and the United States.

All the Member States were also supposed to share experiences in international workshops. The European Commission and the European Council implemented a system of peer learning activities asking Member States and European institutions to meet for systematic reviews of evidence and practices on several issues concerning the Lisbon Agenda. So far, these meetings have enacted different forms of mutual (qualitative), competitive (targets set quantitative incentives for some states to catch up), imperialistic (some countries try to impose their own organisational culture) and surface (defensive, formal responses) modes of policy learning (Lange and Alexiadou,

2010). In 2010 a new decadal programme, the 2020 Strategy, was launched in order to achieve those targets finally in ten years' time. Before this extended deadline arrives, peer reviews are scheduled to be more demanding so that underachievement carries some political, albeit so far undefined, consequences.

Inasmuch as a heterogeneous coalition of governments, sector interests and officials converged on its design and implementation, the Open Method of Coordination indicates the role of agents in EU politics (Pierson, 1996). To start with, by the late 1990s dominant Social-democratic and New Labour governments in Britain, France and Germany wanted to underline the social dimension that the treaties had side-lined some years before (Schäfer, 2004). Moreover, education ministers, who were already collaborating in the Bologna Process, felt marginalised in the area of skills and training as it was defined in the European Employment Strategy (EES), where employment ministers were the main protagonists. Finally, some officials and politicians working at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture were also very active in advocating for the OMC (Gornitzka, 2006: 12-15).

Although the OMC was very innovative in education and social policy, where governments had mostly exchanged ideas but had not set common goals before 2001, afterwards its support declined because some of the incumbent administrations that had promoted the agreement were defeated in their national elections (Radaelli, 2007). Nevertheless, in spite of the national conjunctures, in education the OMC pushed the Commission to seek technical assistance from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD was interested in consolidating its international reputation with this partnership, not least because most of the countries included in its Programme for International Student Assessment were integrated in the EU. In the end, this collaboration between the EU and the OECD induced governments to think of

the relationship between education and the economy in a new light (Grek *et al*, 2009).

The OMC filtered down to the agenda of the EU Member States and some of their provincial and local governments. For instance, while England and Sweden faced the need to compare their own tradition of quality assurance with the new EU statistical targets and benchmarks (Grek *et al*, 2009), the success of Finland in most PISA tests induced its government to borrow an analogous numerical language from the OCDE (Gornitzka, 2006: 48-51; Grek *et al*, 2009). Furthermore, a growing group of national and sub-national authorities decided to borrow and implement analogous educational strategic plans. Not only Austria and the Netherlands defined their own national plans (Gornitzka, 2006), but also Catalonia (Engel, 2008), Flanders (Simons, 2007) and Scotland (Arnott and Ozga, 2010) issued their own ones in order to strengthen their position vis-a-vis their respective central governments of Spain, Belgium and Britain. Similarly, the set of standard data built by means of the collaboration between the EU and the OCDE has impinged in different ways on central-local relations of educational governance— e.g. while the resulting approach has encouraged re-regulation in England, the outcome has been considerably increased municipal autonomy in Finland (Ozga *et al*, 2011). Thus, a variety of governments utilised mid-term objectives in varied ways in order to strengthen their current policies, review their procedures, improve their international image, or emphasise their autonomy. Each political actor considered at which scale of policy-making its action would be more effective.

Spain is a significant example of this complexity. In the early 2000s the conservative central government responded by surface learning (Lange and Alexiadou, 2010) when it delayed the publication of PISA 2000, since the international report challenged its own education reform act, which wanted to re-introduce early tracking [*reference deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process*]. Moreover, although only a few regions achieved the Lisbon target on early school

leaving, in the mid-2000s laggard regions mostly overlooked these general objectives [*reference deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process*]. This reluctance suggests some evidence of surface policy learning to the extent that official indicators were available but the realisation of disparate scores did not trigger policy changes (Lange and Alexiadou, 2010). Afterwards, the Catalan government included educational and social targets in its Strategic Agreement on Competitiveness and Social Cohesion in order to tackle a high rate of early school leavers (Gov. Catalonia, 2008). The Spanish government followed the same path later on by openly endorsing the OMC in order to deal with the same problem (Gob España-ME, 2010; Gob España, 2011). These later developments instantiate the competitive learning of governments that want to catch up in terms of the benchmark concerning early school leaving (Lange and Alexiadou, 2010).

The Open Method of Coordination assumes causal beliefs about the generative mechanisms of the expected impacts (Dale, 2009). Despite the disappointing results recorded in 2010, the Commission reacted by launching a very similar second programme the targets of which should be achieved by 2020 (Pépin, 2011). That second ten-year initiative was to trigger virtuous causal circles so that educated talents, democratic values and social and territorial cohesion engendered new synergies.

"Europe can succeed

Europe has many strengths: *we can count on the talent and creativity of our people, a strong industrial base, a vibrant services sector, a thriving, high quality agricultural sector, strong maritime tradition, our single market and common currency, our position as the world's biggest trading bloc and leading destination for foreign direct investment* [my italics]. But we can also count on our strong values, democratic institutions, our consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, our respect for the environment, our cultural diversity, respect for gender equality – just to name a few. Many of our Member States are amongst the most innovative and developed economies in the world. But the best chance for Europe to succeed is if it acts collectively – as a Union" (EC, 2010: 9).

The 2020 Strategy claimed optimism on the same goals as the Lisbon Agenda (EC, 2010: 9), and included a “Youth on the Move” Flagship Initiative relying on a sequence of positive synergies between education, employment and economic, social and territorial cohesion.

These targets are interrelated. For instance, *better educational levels help employability and progress in increasing the employment rate helps to reduce poverty* [my italics]. A greater capacity for research and development as well as innovation across all sectors of the economy, combined with increased resource efficiency will improve competitiveness and foster job creation (...) Despite disparities in levels of development and standards of living the Commission considers that the proposed targets are relevant to all Member States, old and newer alike. *Investing in research and development as well as innovation, in education and in resource efficient technologies will benefit traditional sectors, rural areas as well as high skill, service economies. It will reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion* [my italics]. To ensure that each Member State tailors the Europe 2020 strategy to its particular situation, the Commission proposes that these EU targets are translated into national targets and trajectories to reflect the current situation of each Member State and the level of ambition it is able to reach as part of a wider EU effort to meet these targets (EC, 2010: 11).

Thus, for the last decade the European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has shaped an 'education space' where at least the Commission, the Council, the OECD, the governments of Member States and some sub-national governments play a role. In the midst of these intricate politics, a 'programme ontology' relying on hypothetical, virtuous causal circles seems to have legitimised the hegemonic approach by postponing final judgements until 2020.

Latin American integration and education

In contrast with the finance-driven agenda focused on targeting expenditure on primary education, using educational affirmative action to activate the poor, fostering inter-school competition, and controlling teachers' salaries and collective action during the nineties (Carnoy, 1999; Feldfeber and Saforcada, 2005), a wide reaction against the Washington Consensus permeates most Latin

American policy proposals nowadays (Saforcada and Vassiliade, 2011). A certain desire to emulate the United Nations' philosophy on human rights, inclusive education and human development permeates the bulk of participative reforms and strategic plans in the continent (Puntigliano, 2007).

This landscape includes a rhetorical emphasis on new kinds of regionalism, although discourses and practices are not always clearly matched (Malamud, 2009). Mostly, diverse political projects compete for directing regionalisation in the continent. Firstly, in 2004, Cuba and Venezuela signed an international agreement that challenged the Free Trade Area of the Americas sponsored by the USA; it was the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of America (in Spanish, ALBA). Since 2008 ALBA has revisited the method invented in the 1960s campaigns for literacy in Cuba in order to pilot and implement it in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. These governments also aspire to create a new type of Latin American university based on the participation of grassroots (Muhr, 2010; Artaraz, 2011).

Secondly, the displacement of the older market-driven priorities coincides with the relative weakening of US-led initiatives closely associated to free trade. However, a particular regionalism focused on school effectiveness and supported by USAID, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and other donors has kept some influence since 1995. This so-called Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas publishes regular Education Report Cards that monitor education systems, choose and disseminate best practices, and promote regional, national and local networks in accordance with these tenets (PREAL, 2006).

Lastly, the OEI 2021 Ibero-American Educational Goals have entered this arena with a philosophy of inclusive education explicitly borrowed from UNESCO, which welcomes this new partnership¹. They are supported by the Spanish international cooperation, the main donor

supporting OEI. Since it started with abstract statements on free exchange and narrow policies on enrolment, in the 2000s Spanish cooperation was perceived as an approach that cared for sector-wide problems and tried to improve teachers' labour conditions to counteract former impoverishment (Cortina and Sánchez, 2007). In 2008 the OEI published a white paper stating the rationale and the guidelines of its 2021 Educational Goals plan, which covered governance, diversity, early childhood care and education, universal enrolment, academic quality, vocational education and training, life-long learning, and teachers' professional development. After general debates in academia, the media and regular international summits, all the Member States of OEI officially adopted the 2021 Educational Goals in December, 2010. This plan commits each government to achieve key benchmarks in a decade, choosing which means are most appropriate to the national context, and accepting a standard method of monitoring progress throughout Spain, Portugal and Latin America (OEI, 2010).

The OEI 2021 Educational Goals are gaining momentum in one of the new powers in the region, Brazil. By the mid-2000s the opening of an OEI bureau in the Federal capital expressed the proximity between the country and the international organisation, which also relied on two contemporary developments in the national education policy. On the one hand, successive Federal funds for the improvement of local education (FUNDEF between 1996 and 2006, then FUNDEB) have underpinned the expansion of primary and secondary enrolment for more than a decade. On the other hand, local and state educational authorities have been required to comply with the Federal strategic ten-year plans. In spite of the restrictive focus of the 2001-2011 National Education Plan on primary schooling implemented by the Cardoso administration, the Lula administration designed a much broader Plan for the Development of Education (PDE). The Federal PDE broadened regulation to areas such as grade completion, performance, equity, parental involvement, vocational

UNESCO's satisfaction with OEI is explicit in many posts published on both websites. Besides, it was clearly stated in several interviews conducted by the author in Brasilia in 2009 and Paris in 2010.

training and access to higher education, and committed all the schools, municipalities and states in the country to produce and closely monitor their own plan for the development of education (Arretche, 2010). In 2010 the government convened the final session of the national conference on education (*Conferência Nacional de Educação- CONAE*), thus putting an end to a long series of local and state conferences during which the new 2011-2021 National Education Plan was outlined on the grounds of this multi-level discussion about the contributions of the funds, the 2001-2011 National Education Plan as well as the PDE.

From then on, qualified consensus and partial conflict pattern the national and the sub-national politics of education. At the national level, CONAE was strongly supported by the national teachers' union (*Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação*) and the Latin American branch of the Global Campaign for Education (*Campanha Latino-Americana pelo Direito à Educação*). But the campaign promoted by the All for Education coalition (*Todos pela Educação*), sponsored by PREAL and some big corporations and business-friendly organisations, also supported the debates and the final conclusions. Despite the general consensus, the union issued quite explicit warnings on the potential danger of All for Education as far as social-democratic ideals were concerned.

At the sub-national level, although unions, educational (municipal) employers and All for Education have attended the same conferences for some years, many provincial and local policies have derived from diverse readings of the central guidelines. For instance, a rich, big and powerful state such as Minas Gerais emulates Federal programmes, launching its own initiatives to improve primary and secondary education and foster parental involvement (SEDUC-MG, 2012). Similarly, São Paulo has its own system of evaluation that provides supplementary consultancy to vulnerable schools, and recognises the wider autonomy of the better institutions (OECD, 2010). Some case

studies also show that the success of the Federal funds is underpinned by opening local processes of citizen participation. The empirical accounts of municipal decentralisation observe a long-term struggle to underpin local strategic planning against top-down decisions, highlighting a major opening of policy networks in municipalities governed by left-wing governments (Sarmiento, 2005). Besides this commitment to school improvement, in a variety of municipalities local participation also seems to encourage a stronger fiscal control of potential corruption or irresponsible expenditure (Ramos and Giorgi, 2011).

However, after the Federation implemented the PDE the governors of Minas Gerais and São Paulo (and other states) decided to challenge the Federal regulation that established a minimum salary for teachers. For the last years, these states have made it compulsory for educational (municipal) employers to adopt performance-based systems that do not comply with the threshold. The union has responded with marches, strikes and statements against this policy; and significantly, sometimes this position has been presented to governors in conferences convened by All for Education.

The Ibero-American 2021 Educational Goals and Brazil's PDE rely on very similar 'programme ontologies' sharing claims on inclusive education, synergies between education and productive economy, and participative evaluation. Thus, in the same way that the OEI 2021 Educational Goals want to strengthen an Ibero-American community of nations based on social justice and democracy (OEI, 2010: 16), the PDE expects to ground an integrated national educational system on the right of everybody to education.

“Such an initiative should not only strengthen education among the policies implemented by the countries, but *it should also underpin the social cohesion of the Ibero-American community on*

the grounds of common goals with a view to building democratic and just societies [my italics]”(OEI, 2010: 16). My translation.

“The view inspiring the PDE is aligned with the constitutional objectives of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil. *This alignment calls for the building of a unity of educational systems as a national system- which assumes multiplicity rather than uniformity* [my italics]. Simultaneously, this principle demands not only the design of unitary stages, modalities and educational levels but also the articulation of these with territorial planning and social and economic development, since this is the only way to guarantee the right to learn to each and everyone to the best of their abilities” (Ministry of Education BR, 2008: 6).

Both of them suggest a tentative contribution to economic development that would compensate for long-term shortcomings and respond to new technological challenges.

“The two-way relationship between education and development is only enacted when state actions are aligned and the connections between them are reinforced, thus fostering mutual effects. *The potential of sector-wide, inclusive or educational plans depends on this movement towards the articulation of public policies* [my italics]. Thus, these plans become a condition for economic and social development in such a way that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Ministry of Education BR, 2008: 7).

“Latin American education (...) has to face the challenges of the XXI century so that an education which is attentive to technological changes, information and knowledge systems, scientific development and innovation, and the new meanings of culture, may eventually achieve an even economic development that ensures the reduction of poverty, inequalities and other threats to social cohesion. How can it face both challenges with a certain guarantee of being successful? Apparently, if educational progress and reforms reproduce the pattern we have experienced in recent decades, a qualitative leap that bridges the current distance with developed countries is unlikely. *Diverse approaches to the existing mismatches and new actors, institutions and strategies for educational change are necessary in order to enable us to advance in these two (economic and social) agendas in an integrated but innovative way* [my italics]” (OEI, 2010:

83).

By the end of the current decade the final reports will be published and subject to open debate. At that moment the evaluation of OEI 2021 Educational Goals, which were already designed through open consultation, will rely on dialogue and discussion. In a similar vein, Brazil's PDE is being assessed by official data which are widely disseminated in order to promote civic involvement in educational issues. So far, interim reports are quite optimistic about advancement in terms of enrolment and performance in Brazil (INEP, 2012; OECD, 2010); eventually, the informational basis provided by standard examinations and demographic estimates of enrolment will serve as a base for the final judgements issued in 2021.

“The data produced by the Brazilian Evaluation System of Basic Education, which used to come from a sample, were recently concretised for each school and type of school. This detail significantly augmented the parents’, teachers’, local educational authorities’ and politicians’ commitment to learning [my italics]. Here, responsibility and mobilisation transforms schools into a public rather than a state-controlled space. Dissemination is helpful to identify best practices -which can therefore be spread-, and shortcomings, which can therefore be tackled more effectively (Ministry of Education, BR, 2007: p. 20).

“According to the accurate conclusions of LLECE (Latin American Laboratory for Educational Quality) studies, the challenge lies in building a system of evaluation drawing on 'dialogic methods' [my italics] (UNESCO/ LLECE, 2008b) whereby conversation and opinion exchange is promoted. Therefore, evaluation does not only yield figures or data but the provided information becomes meaningful for the person and the institution receiving them” (OEI, 2008: pp. 123-4)

Thus, the on-going interaction between UNESCO and OEI, the Brazilian debate on the PDE in the municipal, state and national conferences, the particularities of state and municipal education policies in this country, have created a new and complex 'education space' in the core of Latin America. The political actors involved share a growing consensus that distinguishes the Education for All deadline in 2015 from the Educational Goals deadline in 2021. Without denying that 2015 is an important deadline worldwide, the Brazilian government and the two international agencies point

out that a more demanding challenge will remain in the years ahead. This expectation is grounded in the belief that educational reform supported by participative evaluation will foster social cohesion and economic developments.

Planning, re-bordering and setting times

European regional arrangements differ from Latin American ones. The European Union is a very special type of international organisation —established by a sequence of treaties—, that has created a particular mode of governance based on the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and some courts. On the contrary, there are diverse 'unions' in Latin America, many of them with their own parliaments and steering committees. MERCOSUL, the Andean Community, the Central American Community, the Organisation of American States, the Inter-American Dialogue and the Organisation of Ibero-American States are some examples.

Despite these different institutional designs, in both cases the symptoms of 'regulatory regionalism' (Jayasuriya, 2008) are visible in terms of power, pluri-scalar politics, knowledge and the management of time frames. Arguably, international, regional organisations acquire 'global political capabilities' (Sassen, 2006) when seeking legitimisation. At the same time, some national and sub-national governments try to get the most out of these new developments. Finally, 'programme ontologies' endow these political actors with new instruments of power.

Firstly, international agencies ally in order to shape new regional 'education spaces'. In Europe, the EU relies on technical support provided by the OECD, which appears to be quite satisfied to widen its role as an international consultant in this way. In Latin America, an alliance is also visible between OEI and the Federal government of Brazil. Here, the former needs some national counterparts to support its great but open 2021 Educational Goals, whereas the latter

presents itself as a regional leader in these experimental forms of open coordination.

Secondly, even though these two 'education spaces' become supra-national fields of social activity, their effects are quite visible at other scales of policy-making. In Europe, a sample of small countries and the governments of national minorities have adopted education plans analogous to the EU proposal in order to reinforce their own policy and their presence in the regional space. In Latin America, Brazil not only illustrates a national use of planning methods which are quite similar to international ones, but also shows new sorts of provincial and municipal appropriation.

Lastly, in the midst of these international alliances, national implications and sub-national innovations, the great educational plans provide their promoters with a new policy instrument. The noticeable power of the EU to delay the effective evaluation of the Lisbon Agenda, and the ability of Brazil to diversify the moments of evaluation (2015, 2021) instantiate a new 'political capability' engendered in the context of global transformations (Sassen, 2006). By drawing on varied scales of decision, and blurring the boundaries between the national and the international, governments and international organisations manage to schedule the key moments of evaluation at their convenience. The 'programme ontology' of their great educational plans helps them to integrate countries, define regions, and set the appropriate time for evaluation.

Conclusion

Through a comparative analysis of international educational plans in Europe and Latin America, this article argues that power and agency, international, national and sub-national fields of activity, and the political implication of the expert knowledge coded in 'programme ontologies' drive the processes whereby these plans are designed and implemented. Notably, both the EU 2020 Strategy and the OEI 2021 Educational Goals assume that their ambitious goals will eventually transform

primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as lifelong learning, so that all these educational sub-sectors will produce a positive effect on the other ones, and the educational systems as a whole will establish new synergies with the economies of their countries.

This political analysis is relevant in order to understand the intricate impact of globalisation on education, and correspondingly, the very influence of education policies on current global transformations. Rather than actor-blind, inexorable processes, all these social changes are the ultimate outcome of human agency. Moreover, if human agency is at stake, cosmopolitan deliberative democracy also has an opportunity despite some undeniable difficulties.

Besides these scholarly contributions, however, the former political analysis also suggests a more concrete conclusion on policy evaluation. The analyses of political conflict and negotiation do not imply that 'programme ontologies' are essentially right or wrong, but simply unveil the social interests conveyed by this kind of scientific knowledge. We could only find out their validity, or their fallacies, if we eventually examined how the plans inspired by their tenets worked by comparing salient case studies inspired by these similar assumptions (Pawson, 2006). Right now, this is an open question.

Finally, the former comparative analysis suggests that the impact of these great strategic educational plans is not linear at all. In fact, whereas the Lisbon Agenda failed to yield the expected results in Europe (Pépin, 2011), at least the Brazilian Plan for the Development of Education (PDE) is welcomed as a successful initiative by some official, national and international reports (INEP, 2012; OECD, 2010). To date, the question about their last impact remains open too.

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