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## **Abstract**

Globalisation has altered educational agendas worldwide. While some similarities in the global agenda can be identified, it is also the case that the ways in which those agendas are produced, distributed and carried out at different scales of decision-making may explain different implementation processes as well as different impacts on educational development and inequalities. This paper explores how southern and northern paradigms of educational development have shifted for the last decades by identifying the explanatory and normative frameworks of different political agendas. By doing this we show that globalisation is used with different meanings and has different implications in shaping southern and northern education policy agendas. The analysis takes a general form for the 'southern case' while it focuses in the European education policy as a specific case of a 'northern' paradigm of education and development. Finally, we conclude by pointing out how different power relations impinge on the different mechanisms that set southern and northern agendas.

## **Introduction**

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the philosopher Thomas Kuhn defined a paradigm as "the set of universally recognised scientific achievements which, for a certain time, provided models of problems and solutions to a scientific community" (Kuhn, 1971: 13). The establishment of a paradigm is a first step towards the existence of the "normal science" phase, in which the paradigm is consolidated as a framework for research practice firmly shared by the scientific community. The paradigm may go into crisis in the presence of new paradigms that manage to superimpose themselves on the old ones, giving rise to new models and formulations redefining the research practices of the scientific community.

In the last few decades, if any factor seems to have given rise to changes in the paradigm in the explanatory frameworks of education and development, it is globalisation. Although it is a complex, multidimensional and polycentric concept, the phenomenon of globalisation has been the factor in whose name new approaches, new needs and new policies for development have been justified. It is possible that the concept of globalisation has not substantially modified the instruments with which the

scientific community has studied educational development, but there is no doubt that, from the ideological point of view, globalisation has served as a catalyst for the introduction of new discourses, new practices and new agendas. The agents taking part in the production and circulation of these discourses are many and diverse: developing countries, certain NGOs, governments of rich countries paying out official aid to poor countries and, above all, supranational bodies channelling the majority of development aid and generating great scientific production providing legitimacy to the establishment of priorities and political strategies. The most important agencies in this field are the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, but there are also a large number of regional development banks and United Nations organisations.

It is no coincidence that it is the international bodies which make use of globalisation to lead changes in the paradigm. Ultimately, the process of globalisation itself gives them a much greater role in the development policy scenario than was intended at *Bretton Woods*, a leading role which they themselves are responsible for maintaining, emphasising the importance of reviewing the priorities and strategies necessary for incorporating less developed countries into the global economy. In order to do this, they have powerful research departments and systems for publicising analysis and political recommendations, with a clear vocation for hegemony. In the last few years, for example, the World Bank, has been using the expression, *Knowledge Bank* to consolidate its image of an institution encouraging 'best practices' on development issues. Using strategies of this kind, the Bank manages not only to make its interpretation of development problems and solutions the hegemonic one, but also to become the reference point for providing answers to critics or for leading the changes in the required analysis methods and priorities.

So, in the name of globalisation we have seen the replacement and emergence of paradigms in the field of development policies, changes which have also affected the sphere of educational investment priorities and strategies. In the last few decades, the most important turning point in this sense has been the consolidation of the *Washington Consensus* as a basic frame of reference for marking out the problems relevant for development and as a set of political prescriptions necessary for achieving the inclusion in the network of the countries most excluded from it. As indicated by Gore, the Washington Consensus involves the introduction of a new paradigm in as much as it

alters the frames of reference for defining development problems and suggesting possible solutions to them.

The structure of the revolution in thinking that occurred with the introduction of Washington Consensus policies is usually seen as a shift from state-led *dirigisme* to market-oriented policies. Such a shift undoubtedly occurred. But it is not a sufficient description of the nature of the change as a paradigm shift. As Kuhn shows, when paradigms change, there are usually significant changes in the “methods, problem-field, and standards of solution” which are accepted by a community of practitioners (Gore, 2000: 790).

This study attempts to position itself before and after the *Washington Consensus* so it can observe which changes to paradigms incorporate its hegemony and in what way this consensus has been altered and modified in the educational field, down to the appearance of the so-called *Post-Washington Consensus*. Taking as a reference the work of Gore (2000), developed for the general analysis of development policies, our analysis goes into depth specifically in the field of educational policy to observe the development of paradigms in education and development. We will first apply this analysis to the case of less developed countries, principal recipients of Washington Consensus policies and the imposition of certain political agendas. Secondly, we will carry out the exercise of transferring the same analytical methodology to the recent development of dominant educational policies in the area of Europe. This analysis will allow us to make it clear that, far from following the same patterns fed by the dominant education and development paradigm, the use of the concept of globalisation in Europe has given rise to a type of political response differing substantially from the recipes provided for the countries of the South. Finally, by way of conclusion, we will compare the two processes, to illustrate that the polycentric nature of globalisation gives rise to different political logics in areas characterised by different power relationships.

### **The normative and explanatory frameworks for development policies**

According to Gore (2000), we can state that “specifying development policy problems involves both explanations of development trends and normative judgements about how the world should be” (Gore, 2000: 790). In the field of debates on development, a crucial aspect of these frames of reference is their national or global nature. In effect, normative and explanatory judgements can be made from exclusively global frames of

reference, exclusively national ones or from those corresponding to a combination of the two. Figure 1 summarises these possibilities.

**Figure 1. Combination of explanatory and normative framework in development policy analysis**

		Normative Framework	
		National	Global
Explanatory Framework	National	Wholly National	Global Norms/ National Explanations
	Global	Global Explanations/ National Norms	Wholly Global

Source: Gore (2000: 791)

Gore applies his pattern to the analysis of development policies from before and after the *Washington Consensus*. This allows him to position the different currents of thought in the different quadrants, combining the different normative and explanatory frames of reference and to go into depth on the characteristics of each current. Gore's pattern makes it possible to observe, above all, the transition of normative judgements from the national level to the global level. Concerning the dominant paradigms, the dominant framework for explaining the causes of underdevelopment remains at a national level, while political priorities and needs are changing, coming to be elaborated at a global level. The *Washington Consensus* constitutes the consolidation of a paradigm identifying the causes of underdevelopment in the inefficiency of national policies to successfully achieve incorporation into the global economy. This differentiates it fundamentally from the previous currents, such as the modernisation theory, which also puts the causes of underdevelopment at national level, but which suggests policies adapted to the different stages of development in the different countries. Gore places the critical approaches of Latin American structuralism and the theory of dependence – theories which place the causes of underdevelopment at a world level (consequence of

the economic imperialism of the metropolis) and suggest national policies (like import substitution policies) as a reply to the economic oppression of the north against the south – as simultaneous to modernisation theories, but with a very different approach to development policies. Gore's work wonders to what point we are seeing the appearance of a new paradigm with the emergence of *Post-Washington Consensus*, a frame of reference maintaining the need for strategies designed globally to incorporate societies into the global economy. But, in contrast to the previous dominant model, the new "paradigm" also considers that a good part of the causes of the failure of development policies reside in the exclusively national approach to the factors explaining underdevelopment. Because of this, it is necessary to consider the failures of global policy deriving from the uniform design of Structural Adjustment Programmes and move forward towards understanding how globalisation itself is an explanatory part of societies' development problems. Figure 2 places the theories mentioned on the previous pattern.

**Figure 2. The configuration of development policy analysis**

		Normative Framework	
		National	Global
Explanatory Framework	National	Competing Mainstream Dev. Paradims Pre-1982 <i>Modernisation theories</i>	Dominant Development Paradigm Post-1982 <i>Washington Consensus</i>
	Global	Main Counter-currents Pre-1982 <i>Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory</i>	Coming Paradigm Shift? <i>Post-Washington Consensus</i>

Source: Adapted from Gore (2000: 792)

## **Southern globalisation: shifting paradigms in educational development**

Gore's approach can be extended to the study of the relationships between education and development. Ultimately, educational policy is a fundamental sphere for development strategies and it is therefore logical that its explanatory and normative frames of reference should coincide. Diagram 3 includes what, in our judgement, has been correspondence of education with the evolution of development paradigms. The theory which has dominated the area of educational policies for development has undoubtedly been human capital theory (HCT). Since it was formulated at the beginning of the 1960s, HCT has been the fundamental frame of reference for the establishment of priorities and education policy strategies. The consideration of education as an investment providing social benefits was not, of course, new from a conceptual point of view, but its formulation as a frame of reference for decision-making by States and international bodies, like the World Bank, was new. Since 1968, the World Bank has incorporated educational investment projects into its portfolio of loans to developing countries and, since then, not only has it not interrupted them but rather it has increased the sectorial distribution of all the loans granted by the Bank (Mundy, 2002).

The correspondence of HCT with modernisation theory's view of development is clear: educational investment is, from the social point of view, the best investment to ensure a workforce capable of driving the growth and modernisation of backward societies. Both approaches share an exclusively national character, both on the diagnosis of the development problems and on the initiatives to be carried out to solve them. It is no coincidence, therefore, that based on this frame of reference, the version of HCT dominating the scene in the 1970s was the national planning of the workforce. Based on identifying the least advanced economic sectors considered crucial for development, HCT provides the basis for determining how and how much to invest in education. The World Bank, for example, established its educational loan priorities in professional technical education, ahead of investment in basic education (Heyneman, 2003).

Approaches critical of HCT in the area of education and development also emerged throughout the 1970s. The so-called theories of reproduction and correspondence provided an alternative explanatory framework for the causes of educational inequalities, functional inequalities in the unequal power relationships between social

groups, whether cultural or economic. Outstanding among this set of critical positions were the criticism of HCT by Bowles and Gintis (1983) and, in the area of education for development, the work of Martín Carnoy (1974) *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, a work that illustrates as no other does that the causes of educational inequalities must be sought not in what the more backward countries were lacking but in the relationships of dependency between the periphery and the imperialism of the metropolis. These and other works, however, are mainly concerned with exposing the supposed social function of education for social mobility and go into very little or no depth in constructing normative frameworks, based on which power relationships and oppression in education can be overcome through struggle.

Changes could be seen in the normative frames of reference in the variants of HCT from the 1980s onwards. Undoubtedly the most outstanding change was the move in the method of calculating education investment priorities from planning the needs of the workforce to calculating rates of return on educational investment. In the space we have for this study, we cannot give an account of the set of causes that led to this change.<sup>1</sup> It is enough to indicate that the new logic based on rates of return on educational investment involved a substantial change of course in the Bank's priorities and strategies (visible, for example, in the 1980 policy paper, World Bank, 1980). In effect, the new educational investment paradigm justified the reorientation of the Bank's loans and recommendations in the direction of prioritising investment in basic education over other educational sectors (such as vocational education or higher education). From the point of view of analysis that interests us in this study, it should be highlighted that, in the same way that the *Washington Consensus* formed a set of prescriptions intended to be able to be applied regardless of the context, the calculation method based on rates of return also served as a technique exclusively for global application. Any review of scientific production in the field of education and development from the '80s onwards allows us to see the proliferation of studies on rates of return on educational investment in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, India or Malaysia. While problems of educational underdevelopment were still identified at national level, the normative framework came to be globalised thanks to the hegemony of the new version of HCT. Educational 'best practices' are, then, the result of a calculation method determining where to invest (in

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<sup>1</sup> See Heyneman (2003) or Bonal (2004) for an analysis of the external and internal factors favouring the predominance of the method of calculation of rates of return to establish educational investment priorities.

basic education) and give rise to a menu of policies 'consequent' with the calculation method and, of course, with the prescriptions laid down by the *Washington Consensus*. Heyneman (2003) has referred to this as the 'short education policy menu', characterised by the priority for investment in basic education, the incorporation of cost recovery policies, the increase in the range of private education and decentralisation.

**Figure 3: Changing paradigms in educational development**

		Normative Framework	
		National	Global
Explanatory Framework	National	Human Capital Theory <i>Manpower Planning Forecast</i>	Human Capital Theory <i>Rates of Return Basic Education</i>
	Global	Reproduction in Education <i>Education as Cultural Imperialism</i>	Education as an anti-poverty tool: a new paradigm? <i>Millenium Development Goals Targeting the poor</i>

Despite the many criticisms the method of calculation based on rates of return has received<sup>2</sup>, both this and the short education policy menu have been maintained throughout the 1990s as priority methodologies and policies of the World Bank. The 1995 policy paper is a good example of this, highlighting in a very prescriptive way the orientations that should guide education investment strategies. However, in the most recent debates on educational policy for development, there are indications of change in the normative approach of the dominant paradigm. The widely documented failure of structural adjustment policies (Stewart, 1995; Chossudowsky, 1998, Reimers & Tiburcio, 1993), is at the root of the need for such changes. The incapability shown by the adjustment programmes to reduce poverty explains the relative deterioration of the

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the excellent critique by Bennell (1996).

explanatory and normative frameworks for educational policies for development. How can the same policy recipes be maintained when they are shown to be incapable of improving education in poor countries? How can the priority of reducing poverty be maintained when, in practice, the policies are incapable of reducing it? Despite the use of counterfactual arguments ("without these policies things would have been much worse"), in the last few years it appears to be possible to make out greater flexibility in the normative judgements intended to guide education for development. The leading roles taken on by the struggle against poverty at global level seem to have also moved some of the causes of underdevelopment into the area of globalisation, including the recognition of the effects of globalisation on education in poor countries. It is no coincidence that an example of this movement toward global explanatory frameworks should have coincided with the search for global consensus in the area of policies in the struggle against poverty, a search which culminated in the signing of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. However, the normative frameworks of the dominant education and development paradigm have not been modified because of this. Global recipes continue to predominate and, among them, the struggle against poverty by targeting specific programmes aimed at the most vulnerable sectors has taken on particular importance. In this scenario, education maintains a central leading role, through transfer programmes conditional on school attendance and interventions focused on schools where poor students are taught.

The political agenda for developing countries ultimately shows us some particular uses of the concept of globalisation, both concerning explanatory frames of reference and normative ones concerning education and development paradigms. In the name of globalisation, certain changes in the political agenda have been consolidated and managed to become "globalised" as the best practices to follow. The result of this are prescriptions for the right form of governance and for measures for southern countries to follow to become incorporated into the global network.

### **Educational globalisation in a northern world region: education and social cohesion in the European Union**

Without any pretensions to being exhaustive, this section attempts to evaluate the possibilities offered by Gore's pattern for observing turning points in the combination of

the national and global frames of reference for European education policy. Although the majority of European Union countries have not been subject to the worldwide controversies about development, it can be seen that the definition of education policy in this world region has moved in the same direction as indicated in Gore's diagram (2000). Many studies of southern countries have also discussed their semi-peripheral or semi-developed nature; whereas Eastern European countries have clearly received the message of the Washington Consensus following the fall of the Wall. There are clearly differences, both in the content and form that have characterised the debates about education and development between Europe and the countries of the south. In fact, the relationship between education and development has changed a great deal more in the north than in the south. In the southern hemisphere, the lower level of development has clearly limited the social and economic functions that educational institutions have to carry out. In Europe or in other northern regions, by contrast, successes in economic development since the war have generated spaces for new definitions and conceptualisations of the social functions of education for development. For example, the functions assigned to schooling in the postwar period (democratisation and aid for reconstruction of nations devastated by war) have little to do with the predominant role today assigned to education as a driving force for international competitiveness and social cohesion based on the Lisbon agenda.

Figure 4 can be read alongside Figure 3, although it is not possible to fill in all its cells. So, while in the seventies the human capital theory and educational planning emphasised endogenous mechanisms of educational development, in the main European countries there were also political debates and conflicts about the integration of the different social classes into the school system. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 meant a significant extension of the normative framework to a supra-State level, as it encoded the Union's education action in a "European dimension" with respect to which the actual situation in each member country had to be measured. Perhaps it did not manage to generate such a sophisticated apparatus as the World Bank's rates of return, but it is undeniable that it opened up the possibility that the governments of member states, without giving up sovereignty, should see themselves as subject to aligning their educational policy with the guidelines of a higher body.

In addition, a certain analogy can be initially be seen concerning the meaning of education in the context of the United Nations' Millennium Development Objectives and the European Union's Open Method of Co-ordination. However, within this initial similarity important differences must also be pointed out in the sense in which the same concept of education has been adopted in the two contexts. Part of these differences is probably due to the different average level of human development in the countries referred to in each case. However, another part has revealed different implications during the political disputes that have emerged in the European Commission.

**Figure 4: Normative and Explanatory Frameworks in EU educational policy (1970s-2000s)**

		Normative Framework	
		National	Global
Explanatory Framework	National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debates on comprehensive education in Britain, France and Germany</li> <li>• VET- driven reaction to 1970s recession</li> </ul>	The Maastricht Treaty (1992) fostered the European educational dimension 'by encouraging cooperation between Member States'
	Global		The Lisbon strategy (2000): The Open Method of Co-ordination and the educational benchmarks

In the decades before the nineties, the educational policy of the countries which are today members of the Union corresponded to a diagnosis focused on endogenous factors entrusting the leading role in terms of action to States and the final judgement to their governments. Moreover, the democratisation of the south made it clear that this final judgement also corresponded to popular sovereignty, given the educational demands of the movements fighting against dictatorships. For its part, in Eastern Europe, educational expansion had taken off in the 19th century under the German and

Austrian empires, but the socialist governments put in place in 1945 strongly accelerated the expansion of the school system.

If we focus on the west of the continent, where the European Economic Community was at that time exercising its influence, the historical pattern of educational policies clearly reflects this State-based approach. In the sixties and seventies, France, Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany underwent strong controversies about the appropriateness of integrating academic and vocational curriculums into secondary education, which resulted in their effective integration, first in Great Britain, later in France and finally in some German Länder (Weiler, 1989). These processes unleashed a mechanism of initial expansion, followed by restriction and new pressures in favour of expansion (Levin, 1978), which was an internal driving force in their social structures and political systems.

Because of all this, when the crisis of the seventies also eroded this confidence in wider schooling, the Community's response was limited to the output of the education system and a very indirect advisory role. This very response concentrated its attention on vocational education and on passage from education to employment, in order to attack one of the flanks of the overwhelming social problem of the period, youth unemployment. Literally, community strategy noted that “the planning of programmes to ease transition from education to working life is an important local and regional concern, as well as a question of national policy” (European Communities, 1976) and only reserved for itself the power to encourage some pilot tests and experiments that could give governments some ideas.

When Greece, Portugal and Spain joined the Community during the eighties, their educational systems were undergoing a pattern of expansion that, in a way, came to be the last wave of the endogenous continental processes that went before. At least in the Iberian Peninsula, the expansionist reforms adopted the same philosophy of integration at secondary level, although they gave these initiatives fewer resources than their European neighbours and very mechanically borrowed the formulas of the Community pilot experiments reacting against the crisis (Bonal and Rambla, 1996).

The very establishment of a European Union by means of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty involved an expansion of the normative sphere of education policy in all member states. The foundation text explicitly respected State sovereignty on this point, but, at the same time, it declared that: “the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action” (European Union, 1992). Consequently, the Treaty sanctioned a certain displacement between the political levels that transferred some areas of evaluation from the States to the Union.

It must be remembered that the expression "development of quality education" made this transfer of some educational powers for two very important reasons. Firstly, the Union gave itself the right to estimate the quality of what the States were doing and could even act to direct education policy by encouraging co-operation (as the Open Method of Co-ordination would later do) and by promoting the complementary actions it thought necessary. Secondly, the measurement with which the situation in each country had to be compared ended up being expressed with the term that was becoming the catchword for the assessment of education policies: quality. The Treaty did not itself define the meaning of this concept, in the same way that many official documents it has used since then have also shied away from defining it. However, it is notable that educational quality was achieving a new legal validity in being introduced into a text of this legal standing. Since the eighties, the OECD had been proclaiming the importance of quality in directing and evaluating educational policy (OECD, 1991), but, with the Treaty, this changed from being a mere recommendation of an advisory body to also become a notion incorporated into an international treaty. What had been only a piece of advice, working guidelines or an opportunity for organisational innovation was now at the level of a principle forming part of the legal organisation of fifteen democratic countries that were very powerful in the world.

The Open Method of Co-ordination has driven the latest movement between Gore's cells, as it has also taken the explanatory framework beyond the sphere of State activity. This method consists of fixing common measurable objectives (benchmarks) which each State must achieve by itself, something which ends up giving explanatory priority to global factors at the same time as it gives meaning to the aforementioned principle of educational quality. In fact, it consecrates the expectation that, when the Open Method

is systematically applied, good practices essential for achieving the expected advances will be found. By contrast with the United Nations' discourse on education and the struggle against poverty, the Union has not drawn up its own theory about what these good practices could be, but there is no doubt that this way of specifying its objectives places the explanation at this level when it expects to empirically unveil the good practices that have most effect on the benchmarks. The parallels between the definition of the Lisbon agenda and the establishment of the open method of co-ordination not only seem to define the purposes of educational and economic development which need to be achieved; the Lisbon agenda and the OMC also involve maximisation of the means available for intervention by an organisation that does not have direct sovereignty over Europe's education policies and systems.

The constant setting and resetting of benchmarks provided by the Open Method of Co-ordination, firstly provides the EU, as a body overseeing competitiveness and social cohesion, with dynamism. At the same time, it is an open door for the participation of member States in collectively defining the best practices for achieving the benchmarks. Along the same lines, we could consider what the introduction of the OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* has involved as a mechanism globalising the explanatory and normative frameworks for education and development in Europe. The publication of rankings in the PISA report has an interesting effect on the "convergence of the means" the countries are planning to use to improve the quality of their education systems. There is no space here either to explore the creation of the European higher education area, the result of the Bologna process, and the trends in European convergence in this field. However, it is worth highlighting that this is also a process resulting from globalisation and, in the name of globalisation, it is once again another example of the displacement of the frames of reference for policies.

It seems clear, therefore, that there are sufficient empirical indicators that the development of agendas around education and development has been moved from national frames of reference to global explanations and standards. Both in the south and in the European case, processes of giving up educational sovereignty can be seen. However, the differences in priorities and strategies in education policy for development that have been established in different regions of the world are just as clear. These differences illustrate different conceptions of the effects of globalisation on

education processes and also give rise to different political agendas. We will concern ourselves with these differences in the final section of this paper.

### **Conclusion: In the name of which globalisation?**

It is a commonplace in different social science approaches to highlight the irreversible nature of globalisation. In effect, regardless of the multiple positions for or against neoliberal globalisation, if the different political and ideological positions seem to coincide on anything in recent years it is the impossibility of "turning the clock back", understood as seeking autarchic development strategies through the isolation of the nation-state from international financial flows, world trade or supranational political areas. However, the same type of consensus is far from being achieved either concerning the specific ways in which globalisation affects the different areas of social life or, above all, concerning the type of political strategies that should be developed at a national or supranational level to get countries successfully incorporated into the global economy.

This work has made clear an unequal development of the agenda on education and development in the south and in the north. In both areas, there is no doubt that such evolution has developed both as a consequence of globalisation and "in the name" of globalisation. In effect, globalisation has consequences for the displacement of explanatory and normative frames of reference at a national or global level, but it also has consequences through legitimising, in the name of globalisation, particular types of political strategy and models of governance which are defined as necessary and appropriate.

And it is precisely in the area of these differences where the existence of different mechanisms through which globalisation affects the orientation of national education policy is clearest (Dale, 1999). The different mechanisms reflect unequal positions in international power relationships and their consequences for different countries' possibilities both of intervening in the "form" adopted by globalisation and in their possibilities of following or not following particular agendas. In our case, there is no doubt that these mechanisms become clearly visible in the specific forms taken on by the "global education agenda" in different parts of the world and in the capacity shown

by the different nations to follow or adulterate it. The impact the Washington Consensus has had on education agendas in the southern countries, with the adoption of the "short educational policy menu" is not the same as that in the Maastricht Treaty concerning the orientation of educational policies in European countries. Nor is the new priority for the social function of education to fight poverty defined in the Millennium Objectives the same, nor do they have the same consequences for education policy as the strategy Lisbon grants to education as a driving force for competitiveness and social cohesion. In both areas, the need to seek strategies going beyond the national scale converges, and in both case it can be seen that the process of globalisation directs discourses, agendas and even instruments, but the impact mechanisms and their political consequences of these agendas are different and unequal.

So, at the risk of over-simplifying, it is easy to identify the imposition mechanism as the one that best defines the ways in which the global education agenda has been installed in the education policies of the south. Dependency and the conditional loan mechanism have ensured a very high level of compliance with the priorities and strategies defined by the World Bank and other international development bodies and have had an effect on educational reform trends towards decentralisation, an increase in the range of private education and policies of recovering costs. Although each country's capacity for negotiation has been different, there has been great convergence of practices. But this has not been so in terms of effects, as the application of the same agendas in different contexts is a long way from achieving the same results.

The European case is at the other end of the scale concerning the need to follow the global education agenda. There are indirect and less explicit mechanisms ensuring that member countries take part in the convergence of political objectives and also, increasingly, the content of best practices. However, the criterion of free will, ensured through the right of veto, formally grants the member states a different voice and position. In this way, the mechanisms that have predominated in the processes of convergence towards a global education agenda for European development have been those of policy harmonisation and standardisation, the latter particularly strengthened in recent years thanks to the open method of co-ordination and to educational assessment instruments such as PISA. Dealing with globalisation in the European area, as in dependent countries, means converging towards common targets and means, but the

content of these targets and, especially, the means of achieving them, differ notably from the prescriptions put out by the Washington Consensus.

The analysis carried out illustrates not only the polycentric and multidimensional nature of the concept of globalisation, but also its different and unequal uses in different areas of power in the process of establishing educational agendas. Recognising the change in the explanatory and normative frames of reference takes note both of the transformations in educational development discourses and instruments and of the power relationships underlying a particular direction in the changes. It is a type of analysis that can be used both for uncovering what is being done in the name of globalisation and for having a map available in order to navigate other discourses and practices.

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