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Transcending global hegemonic discourses: Localizing lifelong learning policy making

Trascender los discursos hegemónicos: pensar localmente las políticas de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida

Doctoral Thesis / Tesis Doctoral

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01 | Introduction

Introduction

This thesis work, consisting of four published peer-reviewed articles, brings together a number of thoughts and reflections about lifelong learning that I have entertained in the past ten years. Although the papers comprised in this compilation date from the last four, they have been informed by a plethora of studies, research projects, and LLL experiences that I have been able to research, undertake, and analyse throughout the last decade. Thus, this is a somewhat peculiar thesis work because it looks back to papers that were produced for different purposes and under different circumstances, and reflects upon them. In so doing, I have attempted to highlight the theories, positions and research questions that motivated the articles, and to unveil their commonalities in form of an academic thread that bonds them together and that may explain my main preoccupations as well as the most important findings about the complexity of lifelong learning (LLL), and the implications of trying to construct LLL as an object of public policy.

One of such findings is that LLL is not a new phenomenon. The idea of learning throughout life has been present in educational thought and inscribed in education systems and policies for centuries, its precedents can be traced back to ancient cultures and civilisations all over the world. In the case of Europe, the philosophy of the Enlightenment in the XVIII Century, which underlined the role of science and reason in individual and social progress, provided a most fruitful backdrop for the cultivation of knowledge and the practice of thought which, in turn, required the permanent education of the citizenry. According to Rizvi (2010) LLL is a central idea of European modernity that can be traced through the industrialisation process of the XIX Century which needed workers that were trained to use the new technologies brought forth by the mechanisation of the forms of production, and whom were able and willing to learn permanently. The first half of the XX Century witnessed two World Wars and the blossom of adult education to face the emerging problems of war. The same period saw the publication of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1918) and the ensuing development of instrumentalism and pragmatism in education, which suggested that the purpose of education could only be defined by the educational act itself; thus, the purpose of education was to prepare learners for lifelong education. A few years later Basil Yeaxlee published *Lifelong Education* (1929), and argued for the amalgamation of formal, non-formal and informal learning to account for the different dimensions of life and education, i.e. wisdom, work, and leisure.

The second half of the XX Century is probably the time when LLL consolidated as a guiding principle for educational efforts. After WWII, following the impetus gained by adult and continuous education, and guided by the need to reconstruct Europe, nation-states and civil society worked actively in finding ways to promote more just, democratic, and humane societies. One such effort was the foundation of the United Nations in 1945 and its Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The Organisation's mission was set "to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the

sciences, culture, communication and information" (UNESCO, 1945). Therefore, the values guiding its action revolved around equity and equality of opportunities. For education, this meant enhancing lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities for all, especially for groups that had been excluded from education in its Member States, like was the case of the education of adults and other social groups.

In this respect, one of UNESCO's most relevant initiatives was the establishment of an 'International Commission on the Development of Education' in 1971. Also known as the Faure Commission, after the name of its president, the Commission was tasked with reflecting upon the possible solutions to the major challenges in the development of education in a changing world. In its final report 'Learning to be' (1972), the Commission proposed lifelong education as an organising principle for educational reform and as a means of producing the kind of 'complete person' needed to construct a learning society (Vargas, 2015). After this seminal report, many other of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) undertook efforts to propose similar formulae. That was the case, for example, of the Council of Europe's *Education Permanente* (Permanent Education), which aimed at preserving and renewing European cultural heritage and promoting cultural integration, or the OECD's *Recurrent Education* (1973), which intended to bridge the gap between education and employment and to make flexible pathways between education, employment, leisure and retirement.

These early views of LLL as a wide concept that entailed varied purposes and accounted for the multidimensionality of education and of social life itself have however been narrowed down since the 1970s to focus mostly on its importance to economic performance. The rise of education as an economic policy tool is owed to the expansion of economic rationalism and human capital theorizations since the 1960s, and especially its amplification since the onset of neo-liberalism in the early 1980s (Desjardins, 2009). The changes brought forth by this economic perspective contrasts with a long social tradition in Europe in which education was viewed as a means to consolidate national identity, citizenship and moral values since the formation of the nation-state (Green, 1990). Instead of these grand values, human capital theory (cf. Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1962) conceptualized education as an investment inasmuch as it yielded economic benefits for both the state, in form of economic growth, and individuals, by means of better wages and upward social mobility. Since then education policy in much of the world has been informed by -and responsive to- economic imperatives like promoting employment, fostering competitiveness and economic growth.

In the 1990s, this tendency was augmented by globalization in general and by the intensification of international trade and transnational economic relations in particular. One key development that shaped the understandings around education in and for the global era was the revitalization of the 'knowledge society' and the intention to create 'knowledge based economies'. Coined by Ferdinand Drucker in 1969, the concept of the knowledge society referred to the changing value of knowledge to industry and work in view of technological developments and changing conditions in employment. It acknowledged that traditional educational patterns had to change to produce 'knowledge workers' who would be able to adapt to the changes in employment patterns, and to change jobs and careers throughout their lives. This understanding of education as a means of adaptability was reinforced by

the idea of "The coming of post-industrial society" posited by Daniel Bell's seminal *oeuvre* (1973, cited in Jakobi, 2007). In both industrial and post-industrial theorizations education –understood as human capital development- had a role to play and to do so in a lifelong perspective.

The idea of the knowledge society and how education had to be reformed so as to catch up with societal and economic changes was strengthened by intergovernmental organizations (e.g., UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, European Commission) by means of influential reports that used the concept of the knowledge society and/or of the knowledge economy to argue the urgency of reforming education policies and systems. The policy influence exercised by these IGOs was twofold; on the one hand, it underscored the role of education in economic development and performance, while on the other it created an idea of a global education polity; that is, that education like the economy is a global policy field. In practice, the latter assumption implies that educational decision making is no longer an exclusively national concern, and that there are different policy actors who can –and do- help define the purpose of education and the organization of learning beyond national boundaries.

It is against this background that knowledge and information, and the processes through which they are attained and developed (i.e. education and learning), became the foundations for competitiveness and economic growth in the global arena. This logic, coupled with the fact that labour markets are also becoming global, and that the changing nature of work itself necessitates learning throughout the lifespan and up-skilling, cemented the way for lifelong learning to become a dominant discourse, albeit one that privileges its economic dimension. This hegemonic notion of LLL has gained currency under the auspices of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) that have, in recent years, presented it as a 'master concept' or 'organising principle' for education policy to adapt to the changes brought forth by globalisation, and to the imperatives of an alleged new social order: that of the global knowledge economy.

As a result, national governments have adopted the narrative of the knowledge economy or knowledge society in producing educational reforms and in orienting their efforts towards the development of LLL systems, programmes and strategies. As a result of strong political mobilisation and cooperation mechanisms utilised by IGOs, national and regional authorities have embraced the globally converging discourse of LLL but have adapted it so as to accommodate local traditions and aspirations. In order to exemplify this trend, I have taken the Basque Country as a case study of how IGOs, and predominantly the European Commission (EC), have diffused a particular notion of LLL, and how this has been adopted and adapted at the (sub)national level. Likewise, I addressed the possibility of rethinking higher education policies in view of the pre-eminence of LLL and of conceiving universities as inclusive organizations that are involved in the transformation of the localities in which they operate, thus departing from an exclusively economistic vision of higher education.

In the case of the EC some of the articles contained in this collection have pointed to an unresolved tension between economic growth and social cohesion in the Commission's development agendas

of the past two decades (e.g., The Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020), which translated in a strong economic focus in its educational strategies. Notably, since the Lisbon Strategy was set for Europe "… to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (EC, 2000), the idea of education as an economic policy tool began to take shape. In its *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (EC, 1993), the European Commission emphasized the need to develop, generalize and systematize lifelong learning as a response to unemployment in the region and to allow individuals to change jobs "three or four times in their lifetime" (p. 120). This logic of LLL as an instrument for adaptability to the labour market was recollected in multiple education policy documents thereafter. The White Paper on Education and Training "*Teaching and Learning towards the Learning Society*" (EC, 1995) suggested the adaptation of education to the needs of the market and to equip workers to cope with the global economy, scientific progress, and information and communication technologies. Five years later, after the European Year for LLL (1996) whose conclusions were first utilized to craft the European Employment Strategy (1997), the EC's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning confirmed "…that the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. Therefore, Europe's education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes. They too, must adapt" (EC, 2000b, p. 3).

These developments in European policy revealed an imbalance between the EC's strategic objectives (economic growth and social cohesion) and, in turn, between the purposes defined for its LLL agenda i.e. employment and active citizenship. A couple of the articles in this compilation (Vargas, 2013; 2015) explain how social cohesion and active citizenship became functions of economic growth in the European agenda instead of ends in themselves; that both objectives were rearticulated under utilitarian notions of wellbeing in which social cohesion and active citizenship were valued inasmuch as they provided a better framework for economic growth.

Coupled with a recently acquired competence over educational matters, conferred by the Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the EC's utilitarian take on education travelled from Brussels to all Member States and, with that, to European regions where LLL strategies -of the kind proposed by the EC- started being adopted. Two governance mechanisms from the EC facilitated these policy transfers, the Open Method of Coordination and, more recently, the European Semester. The former has been described as a form of soft law introduced by the EC "at a time when EU economic integration was advancing quickly but EU countries were reticent to give more powers to the European institutions" (EUR-Lex, n.d.). It is a form of intergovernmental policy-making that does not result in binding EU legislative measures as it does not require EU countries to introduce or amend their laws. However, it does intend to direct national policies by means of setting common objectives, measurement instruments and benchmarks for 'peer' comparison, naming and shaming.

On the other hand, the European Semester was created as means for the Commission to analyse the fiscal and structural reform policies of every Member State, provide recommendations and

monitor their implementation. Member states are expected to fulfil the agreed policies in the second semester. In the logic of human capital, the Education and Training benchmarks of Europe 2020 are part of this guidance and surveillance mechanism. The latest exercises (EC, 2016) have included country reports and country-specific recommendations on early school leaving, skills for the labour market and tertiary education attainment.

Both governance mechanisms allow the EC to orientate policy decisions in fields that were, until very recently, matters of national competence and sovereignty. In the case of Spain, *the Plan de Acción para el Aprendizaje Permanente: Nuevas oportunidades para aprender* (Action Plan for LLL: New Opportunities to Learn) (MECD, 2011) copied the Commission's policy discourse and mirrored its policy objectives by setting up an action plan to meet the EC's goal of attaining at least a 15% rate of participation in LLL by 2020. The *Plan de Acción* is argued to be a response to the changes taking place in European labor markets, and recalls LLL to be an "inextricable element for European competitiveness that favors the employability and adaptability of workers" (p.21). The action plan was followed by a Strategic Plan for LLL launched by the Spanish government in 2015 which recollected the stocktaking exercises of the European Commission's Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework (2012, 2014), and its own SWOT analyses of the progress in Spain's Autonomous Communities since 2011. This was a new opportunity for the central government to reiterate the importance of LLL to the Autonomous Communities. It reaffirmed Spain's commitment to set its national educational goals in alignment with the EU's Education 2020 agenda, and posited that "the decentralized nature of Spain's education system…demands that these objectives be taken up and implemented by regional administrations" (MECD, 2015, p 14).

Due to the decentralized nature of the Spanish education system and the devolution of educational competence after the 1978 constitution, the 17 regions (*Comunidades Autónomas*) that compose the Kingdom of Spain enjoy relative autonomy in educational decision making. While the central state is responsible for ensuring the basic and unitary structure of education and diplomas through legislation, the responsibility and funding for implementation comes from the regions. According to Wilkoszewski and Sundby (2014), more that 80% of the financial resources committed to education in Spain come from the regions and sometimes even from the provinces, like is the case of LLL in the Basque Country.

However, this competence over education is mediated by the State through different means, the most important being the Sectoral Education Conference (*Conferencia Sectorial de Educación*), an organism established in 1986 as a forum for discussion and deliberation among the Spanish central government and the education departments of the 17 regions. This forum and its meetings have the specific purpose of achieving the highest level of coherence and integration for the application of educational decisions through the exchange of viewpoints, and by the collective analysis of problems that arise and of the actions foreseen to address and solve these problems (MECD, 1999). This Conference has analyzed and suggested different measures for Spanish regions to adopt regarding LLL, including its plans and goals. Thus, the dissemination of LLL as principle and policy imperative

in the Basque Country was aided by both European and Spanish policies and soft governance mechanisms, perhaps more by the former rather than the latter, as there is very little reference to the Spanish government´s initiatives in the Basque policy documents analyzed, compared to the plethora of allusions to European policies and agendas.

The articles in this compilation explain that many of the European Commission's directives and recommendations have been welcomed in the Basque Country and how they have become local drivers for the implementation of LLL policy. Examples of this can be seen in the emphasis on employability and vocational education and training contained in Basque LLL law, policies and initiatives. These include the establishment of a Vice-Ministry for LLL in 2001; a series of annual grants to fund LLL activities that has run uninterruptedly since the year 2002; a White Paper on LLL (2003) and, most recently, the Law for LLL (2013) and a renewed plan for VET (2015). However, a closer analysis is made of how the hegemonic discourse of LLL has been partially rearticulated so as to fit with the Basque context. The adaptations and accommodations concern, for example the conception of LLL as a right as opposed to a service that may be regulated by the market, although there is a notion of market regulation in supply and demand for LLL as explained in the Basque Law's mediation services (Basque Government, 2013). Other re-articulations that have been explained concern the introduction of Basque culture and identity in the curriculum, the importance of conciliation and the prioritization of the most vulnerable social groups that have been construed as target populations for the purpose of inclusion.

Key research questions and underlying assumptions

The question that triggered the research underpinning each of the articles in this collection was mainly concerned with how a hegemonic notion of lifelong learning was constructed in the global arena and transferred to a particular locality, and how this, in turn, received, adapted and rearticulated this globally converging discourse so as to fit local understandings, agendas and aspirations. In the process of unpacking these questions, a few others concerning policy formation processes became important: How is a local education policy formulated? What influences does it draw from and how are these accommodated in the local context? How are LLL, and the lifelong learner defined in policy, and what implications do such constructions have for the most vulnerable (in terms of remaining vulnerable or exiting marginalisation)? To what extent does a LLL policy promote equality (in access, participation and outcome in education) in the face of other competing values (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency, excellence)? Are there any contradictions? How can these be unveiled in global and local policy dynamics and spaces?

In order to address these questions, the articles in this compilation analyze how economic rationalism has been globally used to envisage educational matters. That is, how economic and market principles of cost- benefit relations, and of returns on investment have been applied to education, how they have been utilized to imagine and determine the purpose of LLL, its organization and governance.

Examples of this argument are provided that signal how when education and LLL are valued according to the benefits they may produce; these are often conceived in economic terms. As a result, the leading objective of LLL –discursively and otherwise- is to promote economic growth, sometimes via employment, some others through innovation, entrepreneurship, or even active citizenship. The texts that follow this introduction explain how the notion of the knowledge economy or knowledge society epitomizes this economistic framework and helped shape a hegemonic notion of LLL which construes LLL as an instrument for the economy in spite of the multiple purposes attached to it, including personal development, social cohesion and inclusion.

In studying how this notion of LLL came about, and how it has been diffused around the globe, the articles explain the role that intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) have played in producing and legitimizing discourses around LLL. The articles explain the different modes of international cooperation and political mobilization that IGOs use to influence a certain view of education, of its purpose and organization, and exemplify them in both higher education and LLL policies.

Theoretical resources

In order to understand the normative function of IGOs, and how policy discourse is shaped and disseminated, different theories of the policy process have been utilized. One such theory is that of global education policy. This recent theoretical development explains how globalization processes have led to an increased mobility of people, capital and information (with the rise of information and communication technologies) around the world, but also how these mobilities and exchanges have also enabled the diffusion of ideas, ideologies, hopes, aspirations and desires. They have made possible ways of communicating ideas and thinking about the world and its problems in a truly global fashion and given rise to social imaginaries (cf. Appadurai, 1996; Taylor, 2004; Rizvi, 2014); that is, common understanding of 'what is' and 'what ought to be'; thus allowing certain values to describe and prescribe social reality, and in the case of our study, education and LLL. The configuration of a neoliberal social imaginary in education is exemplified by the introduction of human capital theory accounting for the economic returns of education and its role in the economy, and the worldwide acceptance of this axiom is explained by the discourses produced by certain IGOs which have defined global agendas. Under this framework, the purpose and social function of education and the organization of learning have been redefined in economic terms, and this redefinition has become almost homogeneous in an understanding that all localities in the world face the same problems, and thus the same solutions are needed everywhere.

A useful theoretical clarification to understand the policy formation process and the agency of local and global players in a complex educational landscape has been the distinction between -and ensuing complementarity of- policy as text vis-à-vis policy as discourse. Stephen Ball (2015) explains the textual analysis of policy as that concerning processes of interpretation or policy translation, that is, in our case, the enactment of global policy by local actors, while the discursive analysis of

policy relates more to the way these local actors are affected by global policy –subjectively and institutionally- and how they are able to 'speak back' –or not- to the global or authoritative narratives. Ball draws attention to the idea that "…policies are 'contested', mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts (policy as text), but on the other hand, at the same time produced and formed by taken-for-granted and implicit knowledges and assumptions about the world and ourselves (policy as discourse)" (2015, p. 6).

This was a powerful distinction for my analyses, as I intended to elucidate how policy discourses support the instauration of global imaginaries, of regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) that constitute rather that reflect social reality; that prescribe and not only describe courses of action, and to see how these discourses were established in legal and policy frameworks. But at the same time, I attempted to examine how local actors reacted to the global dictum of LLL and the possibilities for adoption, accommodation and/or contestation by bringing into play their own, vernacular subjectivities and their possibility of dissent and divergence based on historically dissimilar understandings of education and LLL but also of social inclusion, which were, in turn, shaped by previous discourses and positions, possibly those of the social contract and the welfare state.

Another consequence of globalization, and a tenet of global education policy studies is that, in addition to the instantaneous and widespread dissemination of thought, discourses and ideas, globalization has 'deterritorialized' the spaces in which decision making takes place; that is, the policy making process. This implies a shift in the power locus from the nation-state to the international arena, but also changes in the way that educational ideas are transferred from one context to another, how they are legitimized, and how –once they gain currency- they are installed as models to follow by all nation-states generating what is referred to in the literature as isomorphism. In the field of global and comparative education this phenomenon has been labelled as policy diffusion, policy learning, policy travelling or policy borrowing (cf. Steiner-Khamsi, 2000; Dale & Robertson, 2002). It was these ideas the ones that inspired the early phases of my research, as can be observed in the second article of this compilation (Vargas, 2013).

However, while these theories help explain the dialectical relation between power and knowledge and signal imbalances between the authority of local and global actors, and between different understandings of the purpose of education, they may result in polarized ways of entering the phenomenon as they tend to disregard the positionality of a certain locality before the transfer of a particular policy, and its margin for agency; thus accounting very little for the values, the culture and the political and ideological underpinnings of a specific polity. This was one very valuable lesson learnt in the later phases of my research: that in identifying global convergence towards a hegemonic discourse of LLL, one must be careful not to fall into deterministic approaches that interpret policy transfer as an entirely top-down process. Beech and Artopoulus (2016) introduce the notion of relational spaces as one that may assist us in observing how policy discourses circulate back and forth between the policy lender and the policy borrower, something that Steiner-Khamsi called 'circular transfer' (2000, cited in Beech & Artopoulus, 2016) and how a given policy is constructed in

the process of circulation in between different locations. This notion was used to problematise the policy space, to not take the global as a given, but as a social construction, and to not think of the local naively as a mere victim of hegemonic impositions.

This dialectic approach between policy as text and policy as discourse necessitated a framework that paid attention to both dimensions; consequently content analyses were undertaken treating policy as text, and interviews with local –current and former- policy makers were carried out so as to understand policy as discourse. The analyses were supported, theoretically, by notions derived from critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis. From the former I made use of the idea of education as a political act, one that can thus never be neutral since its purpose is grounded on certain values, which in critical pedagogy are of a humanistic take; they are rooted in human dignity and concern processes of "conscientization" and social transformation (cf. Freire, 1970). From the latter I utilized the notion of language as a social practice that is both socially shaping and socially shaped; that is to say that language shapes social identities, relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs (cf. Fairclough, 2000) and that discourse can thus be embedded in and shape the policies, polities and politics of education. What both frameworks have in common is that they are both concerned with the issue of power and how it is exercised in the production and reproduction of hegemonic discourses in education by dominant institutions, be them local or global.

In the case of the local, I used theories of the policy process and the social construction of target populations (cf. Ingram & Schneider, 1993; Ingram, Schneider & De Leon, 2007) to explain how LLL was construed as an object of public policy (the problem to which a policy is a response), and how the main target populations in the LLL law were socially constructed as deserving or undeserving of public attention by policy makers. This theory is important, as posited by its authors, because "it helps explain why some groups are advantaged more than others independently of political notions of political power and how policy designs reinforce or alter such advantages" (Ingram & Schneider, 1993, p. 334). This social constructionist framework was useful to analyse the target populations of lifelong learning, particularly in Basque policy where the most vulnerable social groups are construed as dependant; as those for whom solutions need to be found and formulated, but without their participation in thinking about these solutions.

My main preoccupation, as may be deduced from the articles in this compilation, is that the adoption of a hegemonic, globally convergent notion of LLL has narrowed down the purpose of learning and education so as to prioritize its economic function; namely economic growth and employability ("lifelong earning"), over some equally important objectives like social cohesion, inclusion and active citizenship, and that this conceptualization has produced a number of tensions in how we understand LLL as organizing principle for policy making, in how we construe the policy problem and its target population. This is specially the case when those the policy intends to benefit are marginalized groups and people at risk of social exclusion for whom LLL is conceived as a tool for employment and this, in turn, as the only way out of poverty and into wellbeing. This, I argue, is a short-sighted approach to exiting marginalization as utilitarian forms of education translated in

teaching and learning for the sake of employability hold very little promise to raise the opportunities that people have to re-imagine and transform their lives. As it is pointed out in the conclusion, the idea of educating for social justice transcends the qualification function of education and the redistribution of educational opportunities, and looks at the possibility of a different notion of LLL, one that may include the purpose of recognition and representation of subaltern groups. To this effect, the idea of the capacity to aspire (cf. Appadurai, 2004) has been introduced as an *idée force* to rethink the content and purpose of LLL. Arjun Appadurai defines it as a "navigational capacity" one that can be exercised in order to enhance the horizons of those who seldom exercise it, of those who live in a structural setting or cultural regime that diminishes the possibility of this practice to occur (2004). The objective is to build and strengthen the capacity to read the world (cf. Freire, 1970), to debate, contest, inquire and participate critically so as to allow the voice of the subaltern to emerge and to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty by allowing them to imagine and build their own future horizons, to realize their aspirations (Appadurai, 2004).

Since the capacity to aspire is closely linked to the context in which one lives, to one's social and cultural capital, and to the possibility to imagine only that which one knows, aspirations are usually adapted to situations that seem feasible. This form of adaptation deprives individuals and collectivities from thinking of another possible world, and the necessary steps to reach this scenario. Another form of adaptation occurs when the desires and expectations are truly out of reach due to structural barriers, or when they have been experienced as inaccessible; both forms of adaptation are part of the vicious circle of poverty and marginalization. Conradie and Robeyns (2013) argue that aspirations can play two roles in breaking this vicious circle and in enhancing human development, one that they name the 'capabilities-selecting' role, which consists of the possibility of selecting the capabilities that want to be realized by the process of voicing and publicly discussing the aspirations that individuals and social groups entertain (p. 564). The second role, which they refer to as 'agency-unblocking', consist of unleashing people's potential by means of raising awareness of aspirations that might be "latent" and of "agency which is present but of which [the individuals] may not be fully aware, or may so far not be sufficiently motivated to act upon" (p. 565). This, as is argued in the conclusions, would be the main function of a lifelong learning policy aimed at supporting vulnerable groups in exiting marginalization, not by adapting to an unjust social order but to identify and transform the conditions which prevent them from fully realizing their potential and aspirations.

Based on these theoretical resources, the works in this thesis suggest the necessity to reclaim LLL by building an alternative notion of it, one that looks at socialization and subjectification as equally important functions of education as is that of qualification (cf. Biesta, 2010), and one that is grounded on the three dimensions of social justice: redistribution, recognition and representation (cf. Fraser, 2008).

The articles

"La adaptación y la transformación sociales como metas del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: la contribución de las organizaciones internacionales"

The first article in this compilation (Vargas, 2015), addresses the tension between adaptation and transformation as the purpose of LLL policy by examining how the most influential international organizations (the World Bank, the OECD, UNESCO and the European Commission) have produced a hegemonic discourse of LLL justified by the rapid changes of the world today and grounded on a concept of adaptation, especially the adaptation of people to changing realities, and the adaptations of their skills to the labor market to make the best of knowledge intensive economies.

The article posits that it is currently very difficult to understand the orientations and purpose of a national or local LLL policy without looking at its sources of inspiration which -more often than not- are located beyond national boundaries; especially since IGOs have become sources of inspiration, promoting political change and diffusing policy ideas across the world. The idea that 'methodological nationalism' (cf. Beck, 2000) is no longer tenable is explained by elucidating the forms of 'cooperation' that IGOs use to disseminate policy ideas and ideals and to promote the global governance of education. It is argued that IGOs classify the world (e.g., by means of rankings and typologies), confer meaning to certain policy issues (e.g., by constructing priorities and authoritative definitions), and then disseminate norms and principles sustained by such beliefs (cf. Barnett, 2004). But perhaps the most worrisome result of these forms of cooperation is that they form global imaginaries (cf. Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) that homogenize values, beliefs and ideas about education.

Following Jallade (2011), the paper explains the forms of educational cooperation that IGO's utilize to form global imaginaries and to promote local change in education policy. Examples are provided of the ways in which IGOs have promoted normative and universal values around LLL across the globe; how they have established common goals for all countries to follow (e.g., global and regional agendas), which then need standards and other monitoring mechanisms like performance indicators and comparable data, and how policy dialogues and other dissemination strategies (like ´good practices´) are used along with financial aid to promote specific goals, targets, and ultimately to shape the purpose of LLL.

The article examines sixteen policy documents and flagship publications from the four IGOs analyzed and concludes that the role of these agencies in setting the agenda, the purpose and the organization of LLL relies, on the one hand, on educational and financial cooperation but secondly, and perhaps most importantly, on their capacity to produce educational discourse and legitimation strategies. It is argued that these discourses have progressively shifted from more ambitious and transformational goals to agendas that promote adaptation and resilience, which are less revolutionary in nature and more responsive to economic aphorisms.

A word of caution is also raised to not understand IGOs as monolithic blocks; that is, to consider that within IGO's different interest groups operate –not to mention Member States themselves-, that different views about one same issue coexist, and that these views are embedded in a variety of values that might compete, complement or contradict one another forming assemblages of values (see conclusions). Finally, a critique is made of a possible de-democratization process in policy making since the important decisions are made in transnational networks and not by elected representatives acting in the name of their constituencies. The transposition of the policy locus carries the associated danger of undermining the traditions, culture and aspirations of specific localities, and the authority and power of national and local governments to define the educational agenda.

"Discursos e influencias internacionales en las políticas para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: el caso de la nueva propuesta legislativa para el País Vasco"

The second article in this compilation (Vargas, 2013) embarks in a historical journey to trace the modern origins of lifelong learning both in the field of education as well as in that of international cooperation. It underlines the complexity of the term and elucidates the main characteristics of LLL as presented in academic literature, so as to identify the imbalances in the conceptualizations and the foci and priorities that different IGOs subscribe and prescribe. From a plethora of scholarly works, four main purposes are found for LLL: promoting economic development and employment; social inclusion, cohesion and democratic participation; personal growth and self-fulfilment; and cultural development and enrichment. The analysis shows how these objectives are esteemed and appreciated in different ways by both IGO's and governments which tend to stress or prioritize certain goals over others, depending on their interpretation of societal needs. It is argued that even though IGOs or governmental formulations tend to retain the main characteristics of LLL; namely learner centeredness, universal participation, and learning in non-formal settings, their emphases vary and, it is argued, they increasingly tend to fall within those of the economic domain.

In order to illustrate this impetus, the paper undertakes an analysis of what was -at the time of writing- a legal proposal for a new LLL policy in the Basque Country. Drawing from the definitions of LLL crafted by IGOs and the purposes attached to it, the paper identifies parallelisms between the Basque proposal and those of, mainly, two international organizations: UNESCO and the European Commission. Form the former, the driver of 'learning to learn' and the promotion of a lifelong learning culture are identified as consistent with UNESCO's educational paradigms, while form the latter a tendency to view LLL as a tool for economic growth and competitiveness is inferred.

By means of content analysis, it is revealed that the Basque proposal carries a strong emphasis on adapting education to social needs and, mostly, to those of the productive sector by promoting 'professional competences' and vocational education and training. A critique is made of the little notice taken of the multidimensionality of learning and education, and of the more meaningful purpose of education; that attached to personal development and empowerment, cultural production and diffusion, and of citizenship, social and democratic participation.

A set of tensions is identified that may cause LLL to sway from the social and cultural to the economic realm and that causes it to prioritize the latter. Among these tensions is that between adaptation and transformation (op. cit.) as the ultimate goals of LLL, the tension between the knowledge society and the knowledge based economy as backdrops against which LLL is proposed (see the conclusions of this work), and the tension between education and learning as orientating paradigms for LLL. This last tension is addressed in the paper and the potential for a particular vision of learning to reign over education: an individualistic, instrumental and utilitarian notion that is more concerned with qualifications than with the full development of the human personality.

The Basque proposal also provides an example of the difficulty of defining who the target population of LLL is. Given the wide array of purposes and the vast scope of LLL as a policy principle, the wants, needs and aspirations of the social groups that the policy is supposed to serve are hardly captured. The ensuing article of this compilation (Vargas, 2014) actually argues that the participation of different groups –or their lack of participation- in the policy formation process may account for this absence.

"Democratising education policy making or legitimising discourse? An analysis of the new Lifelong Learning Law in the Basque Country"

Before delving into the policy formation process of the Lifelong Learning Law in the Basque country, this article looks at the construction of lifelong learning as an object of public policy; as a policy problem. It justifies this construction based on three main arguments. First, because, like education, LLL is a human right and as such, a universal entitlement; that is, everybody must have access to learning opportunities throughout their lives and should be able to benefit from the results of learning experiences and educational chances. Secondly, because these results, the wider benefits of learning, have proven to be ample. The benefits of lifelong learning include the development of human, social, and identity capitals (Schuller et al., 2004; Schuller & Watson, 2009), an amelioration of poverty, inequality and social exclusion (EAEA, 2010; Mtey & Sulle, 2013), the improvement of living standards and quality of life including employment and health (Sabates, 2008), life expectancy, social cohesion, civic participation and active citizenship (Feinstein et al, 2008). Thirdly, lifelong learning is a public matter because it entails the convergence and action of many different stakeholders, and multi-sectoral efforts. Amongst the most prominent actors in lifelong learning are educational authorities, but also other ministries and government officials like those in charge of health, the environment, culture, employment, and overall, those leading the social and economic agendas. Likewise, other stakeholders from the private and social sectors are important. These actors include, inter alia, civil society organisations, unions, education providers (both public and private and in all forms and levels of education; from early childhood to higher and further education), interest groups, researchers, think-tanks, enterprises, and employer associations.

Due to the impact that a lifelong learning policy may have on social life and its wider benefits beyond educational matters; to the great expectations placed upon lifelong learning as an overarching principle

(leading to self-fulfillment, empowerment, personal development, social cohesion, and economic growth), and because of its broad scope (i.e. life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning) the article deems important to look into the orientations and purposes that such a policy may have. Likewise, it is argued that an understanding of the inspiration and purposes –its rhetoric and discourse- is also important when it comes to assessing the actual outcomes of any given policy, programme or strategy.

Against this background, the paper analyzes the year-long consultation that the Basque Government organized (via its innovation agency, Innobasque) to determine the content, purpose and scope that the LLL Law was to have, and questions the preference that governments have for certain policy partners, usually experts and academicians, over some other social groups, and, in the case of education, over learners themselves. This common quest for 'evidence-based policy making', in which the 'evidence' that is usually valued and utilized comes from experts is criticized for being a top-down, and not a democratic process, one that excludes other stakeholders –and particularly learners- from the possibility of co-ideating and co-effectuating education policy.

In order to support this argument, the different participants who attended the Basque consultation were categorized according to Ingram & Schneider's typology of target populations (op. cit.), and the power and strength of their ideas and suggestions were weighed against the final legal text, that is, according to whose narratives were retained and whose discarded. The exercise asserted that certain groups are advantaged in the policy process by their political power, resources and valence, and that their influence on policy decision perpetuates this power imbalance. The paper also reveals how contender groups and their proposals were relegated, and dependent groups were not invited to the consultation. The fact that the esteem by which certain groups are held might be highly dependent upon their levels of education may explain why learners –and especially those at risk of social exclusion, who constitute the most identifiable target group of the LLL Law- were not consulted as to their educational needs, hopes and aspirations, nor about the barriers and difficulties they face in accessing learning opportunities.

The article concludes that the target population of the Basque law has traditionally being ill served by public policy and that they lack the power to contend and reverse this situation, and that the very objective of a lifelong learning policy which aims at redressing social exclusion should be to empower this social group, starting with acknowledging their potential to define the public affairs that concern and affect their lives.

"Lifelong Learning Principles and Higher Education Policy"

The last article in this compilation (Vargas, 2014) argues that if higher education policies are to address the increasingly complex landscape in which higher education institutions operate, which is characterized by economic downturns, demographic change, the changing nature of the labour market, and pressing social needs, they might benefit from introducing lifelong learning principles. These principles, it is argued, are good alternatives to recent trends in higher education that have

introduced deregulation, privatization and commodification as solutions to the massification of higher education, and which have in turn exacerbated social stratification and reproduced inequalities.

The paper argues that introducing lifelong learning principles to higher education means broadening the horizons of higher education institutions in at least three ways: by acknowledging that learning takes place in different settings and recognizing that knowledge is produced –and increasingly so- outside of education institutions and in partnership with others; by recognizing that the potential target population of higher education goes well beyond youth and the so-called non-traditional students; and by acknowledging that learners are agents that may not only learn at a higher education institution but that may bring fresh outlooks for higher education institutions to learn from. Opening up higher education is viewed as a means to enhance the relevance of education and to boost knowledge production and social transformation.

But reforming higher education policy, it is argued, means transcending universities' traditional functions of educational provision and research, it means diversifying its student population and adapting study programmes, curricula, pedagogies, assessment methods and learning environments accordingly. Catering for diversity also means putting in place mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning, expanding funding and diversifying -and intensifying- exchanges and partnerships with government, industry, civil society and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, the paper explores the possibility of higher education institutions becoming learning organizations and not only teaching institutions. This means that universities may learn from their historical trajectories, and reflect upon the extent to which they have enabled social mobility or social reproduction, and on the effects that rankings and performance indicators have had upon equity and inclusion. As is the case with LLL, higher education may have to adapt to cover the social, economic, and personal goals that are attached to HE and to balance its outcomes in terms of economic growth and social cohesion.

A final note to guide the reader

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the analyses undertaken in the articles presented here do not attempt to prescribe policy options or issue recommendations, but rather to illuminate the complexity of policy making in the field of LLL. They lie in the distinction between the research *of* and the research *for* policy. Desjardins & Rubenson (2009) describe the latter as a problem solving approach that aims at identifying problems and finding solutions so that policies may function smoothly, and the latter as a critical approach consisting of stepping "…outside of the prevailing order of the world and asking how that order came about … the task is to understand the process of change by constructing the whole rather than subdividing the problem into separate parts and limiting the issue to be dealt with" (p.12).

The research undertaken in the following falls into the critical approach; that is, it is of a conceptual nature and not an instrumental one. It does not follow a linear, rational logic that defines a problem, identifies missing knowledge, acquires it, interprets it and formulates a policy choice (cf. Weiss, 1977 cited in Desjardins & Rubenson, 2009), nor does it subscribe deterministic assumptions as to how policy comes into existence. Rather, it problematizes LLL as a policy object; it delves into the underpinning ideas and values behind the conceptualizations of LLL, and deconstructs the purpose, nature, content and intentionality underlying policy.

I hope the reader will enjoy the articles as much as I enjoyed writing them.

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02

“La adaptación y la transformación sociales como metas del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: la contribución de las organizaciones internacionales”.

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La adaptación y la transformación sociales como metas del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: la contribución de las organizaciones internacionales.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, organizaciones internacionales, discurso e ideología, política educativa, transferencia de políticas.

Abstract

En las últimas dos décadas el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida (ALV) se ha constituido en un campo emergente de estudio y práctica y en un principio organizador de las políticas educativas en todo el mundo. Este impulso no es fortuito sino que es resultado, por un lado, de una búsqueda de nuevas estrategias para enfrentar los desafíos que la globalización ha traído consigo en términos de bienestar, cambio demográfico, sostenibilidad ambiental y desigualdad, y por otro, del énfasis que han puesto diversos organismos internacionales, como la Comisión Europea, la OCDE, el Banco Mundial, o la UNESCO, para que el ALV sea adoptado como modelo para la cooperación y el desarrollo educativos entre los países que los conforman.

La influencia que ejercen estas organizaciones internacionales sobre sus estados miembros tiene diferente alcance e implicaciones para las políticas públicas. Dependiendo de su mandato, estas agencias han conceptualizado el ALV como un instrumento para el empleo y el crecimiento económico; la participación y acción democráticas; el desarrollo cultural o la cohesión social. Sin embargo, en sus desarrollos más recientes, los discursos producidos por los organismos internacionales -los significados y contenidos que atribuyen al ALV- tienden a parecerse entre sí y a adoptar una racionalidad homogénea en la que la dimensión económica de la educación toma preeminencia sobre otras dimensiones del aprendizaje y en la cual prima la adaptación sobre la transformación sociales en tanto meta del ALV.

Desde una perspectiva sociológica, el presente artículo analiza la construcción del ALV como objeto de política pública en los organismos internacionales, examina las transformaciones que ha sufrido en cuanto paradigma educativo en las últimas décadas y dilucida las posibles consecuencias de tales formulaciones. La intención de este trabajo es contribuir a la discusión sobre los derroteros del ALV y su aterrizaje en políticas, planes y programas educativos y a un debate mayor sobre la instrumentalidad de la educación y su carácter transformador.

Introducción

El aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida como objeto de política pública en la aldea global

El aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida (ALV), como paradigma, ha sido analizado desde muy diferentes perspectivas disciplinares. La más común quizá sea la educativa, al interior de la cual se analizan los cambios necesarios para la realización del ALV en el plano pedagógico. Temas como la autonomía, el aprendizaje centrado en la persona, y la auto-motivación, la naturaleza universal, permanente y multi-situada del aprendizaje, suelen ser relevantes en este tipo de abordajes. Existen también otras disciplinas, como la sociología de la educación, desde las cuales se analizan los cambios estructurales que han dado lugar al surgimiento y posicionamiento actual del ALV como principio organizador de la acción educativa, y los cambios derivados de la notoriedad y hegemonía que ha adquirido el término. El presente artículo adopta esta última perspectiva y parte de la afirmación de que el ALV es un bien común y como tal es motivo de interés público ya que las repercusiones del aprendizaje o, en su defecto, de la falta de oportunidades educativas, transcienden la esfera individual y tienen consecuencias que afectan a la sociedad en su conjunto. Toda vez que el ALV contribuye al desarrollo humano (cf. Desjardins y Schuller, 2006; Preston y Hammond, 2002), al mejoramiento de la calidad de vida (cf. Mannien, 2008; Feinstein, 2003;) y al crecimiento económico (cf. Feinstein et al., 2004; Sabates, 2008), el ALV debe ser motivo de atención y objeto de política pública, especialmente en una sociedad del aprendizaje.

La dimensión pública de la vida ha sido definida como toda actividad humana para la cual se piensa necesaria algún tipo de regulación, intervención o acción común ya sea desde el plano social o gubernamental (Lasswell, 1956). Sin duda, éste es hoy el caso del ALV. El hecho de que el ALV sea un objeto de política pública puede explicarse a partir de tres factores; en primer lugar porque el ALV representa un derecho humano y como tal requiere de garantías para que todas la personas tengan acceso a oportunidades de aprendizaje a lo largo y ancho de la vida, y para que puedan beneficiarse de los resultados de estas experiencias (Vargas, 2014). En segundo lugar, debido a que se ha comprobado que los beneficios resultantes del ALV son amplios e incluyen el desarrollo de capital humano, social e identitario (Schuller et al., 2004; Schuller & Watson, 2009), la contención y reducción de la pobreza, la desigualdad y la exclusión social (EAEA, 2010; Mtey & Sulle, 2013), la mejora en la calidad de vida; la salud y el trabajo (Sabates, 2008), la cohesión social, la participación cívica y la ciudadanía activa (Feinstein et al, 2008; Hoskins, D'hombres & Campbell, 2008). En tercer lugar, el ALV es un asunto público debido a que, para su efectuación, se requiere de la convergencia y acción conjunta de una multiplicidad de agentes de diferentes sectores. Entre ellos destacan las autoridades educativas y otros ministerios y departamentos gubernamentales como aquéllos encargados de la salud, el medio ambiente, la cultura, el empleo; aquéllos que lideran las agendas económica y política de una determinada localidad. Asimismo, otros agentes de los sectores social y privado son igualmente importantes; entre ellos, las organizaciones de la sociedad civil, los sindicatos, las instituciones educativas –públicas y privadas- de todos los niveles, desde la educación infantil temprana, hasta la educación superior y continua; los grupos de interés, las y los investigadores, los centros de investigación y las asociaciones patronales y de empresas.

Debido al impacto que las políticas de ALV pueden tener sobre la vida social; por lo beneficios que reportan más allá del plano educativo, las expectativas de bienestar y prosperidad fincadas en ellas, y por su alcance y cobertura, es indispensable analizar sus orientaciones y los propósitos que plantean. Para ello una comprensión de la inspiración y metas que proponen –su retórica y discurso- es un elemento fundamental para el análisis o evaluación de los resultados reales de las políticas, programas o estrategias de ALV. Para los gobiernos resulta cada vez más importante ser transparentes y demostrar su capacidad, liderazgo, inclusión y eficiencia en la formulación e implementación de políticas, mientras que para la sociedad civil y otros agentes los propósitos declarados y las intenciones reveladas en una política pueden abrir la puerta a su participación, discusión, negociación y evaluación.

Entender las fuentes de inspiración, la orientación y los propósitos de una política nacional o regional de ALV, al día de hoy, significa adentrarse en conceptualizaciones que no son elaboradas únicamente en lo local. Los estudios de relaciones internacionales, globalización y política educativa (cf. Dale, 1999; Rizvi y Lingard, 2010) han identificado a las organizaciones internacionales como fuentes de cambio político a escala nacional y de difusión de políticas y de valores a escala transnacional. Éste es el caso, especialmente, de las políticas de ALV cuya adopción trasciende las necesidades propias del Estado-nación y se inserta en estrategias globales de legitimación (Jakobi, 2012). Independientemente de que estas políticas sean simbólicas o efectivas; es decir, de que se promueva el ALV a nivel discursivo o que se realicen realmente las reformas necesarias para llevar a la práctica este principio normativo, vale la pena detenerse a analizar la influencia que han tenido los organismos internacionales en la adopción del ALV como paradigma a nivel mundial. Para ello, en este artículo se presta atención a la función de las organizaciones internacionales de "definir la agenda" (*agenda setting*) del ALV; es decir, el énfasis se pone en la difusión de ideas y la distribución de valores (cf. Easton, 1965), y en su inscripción en las políticas a nivel mundial, más que en su implementación a nivel nacional ya que ésta última depende de la capacidad de los sistemas políticos nacionales o regionales (y de sus niveles de dependencia o autonomía), mientras que la diseminación de las ideas y los discursos son más fácilmente transferidos (Jakobi, 2012, p. 56).

La construcción de imaginarios globales y la difusión de ideas, algunos referentes teóricos

Hasta hace pocos años, buena parte de las teorías y metodologías de las ciencias sociales asumían que lo social es sinónimo de lo nacional (Lingard y Rawolle, 2011) y como tal los abordajes académicos solían estar asentados en lo que Beck (2000) ha bautizado como 'nacionalismo metodológico'; es decir, la presunción de que todas las relaciones sociales se organizan a escala nacional o local. La diferencia entre los abordajes locales y los globales, o *glocales* (la imbricación de lo local y lo global) ha sido marcada por la globalización; en particular por la globalización económica que, como comenta Moutsios (2009), va a acompañada de la globalización de las políticas públicas y de su formulación. Según este autor, los estados nacionales, los gobiernos, las organizaciones no gubernamentales y las corporaciones privadas operan en contextos transnacionales para hacer políticas en diferentes áreas, entre ellas la política educativa (2009, p. 469).

La globalización ha tenido implicaciones reales para la educación, particularmente por las políticas emanadas desde fuera del Estado-nación. Una de las primeras implicaciones consiste en desafiar la unidad de análisis tradicional, el Estado-nación, y reconocer que las políticas nacionales, al día de hoy, son una combinación de fuerzas políticas, estructuras sociales, tradiciones culturales y procesos económicos enmarañados en una matriz multinivel que incluye espacios locales, nacionales, regionales y globales (Verger, Novelli y Altinyenken, 2012), lo que Beck (2000) ha denominado una 'poligamia de lugares' y que han formado una suerte de estado postnacional (Appadurai, 1996). Este fenómeno ha trastocado los lugares y los niveles de autoridad desde los que se toman las decisiones educativas y desde los cuales se definen las políticas. La globalización ha supuesto entonces una 'des-democratización' de la toma de decisiones en las esferas económica y social toda vez que las decisiones políticas importantes son tomadas al interior de redes transnacionales más que en las debilitadas instituciones nacionales de representación (Moutsios, 2009, p. 472).

Algunos autores, como Martha Finnemore (1993) argumentan que los Estados-nación han adoptado innovaciones sugeridas desde fuera de sus fronteras gracias a la provisión, por parte de las organizaciones internacionales, de recomendaciones o cooperación para ampliar la capacidad institucional (*capacity building*) de los Estados, y que estas innovaciones, más que responder a las lógicas y características inherentes a un Estado en particular, son producto de cierta persuasión internacional (p. 566). Dicha persuasión puede tomar diversos cauces y utilizar mecanismos globales de influencia (Dale, 1999) que van desde la imposición, hasta la armonización, la diseminación, la estandarización, y la 'instalación de interdependencias'.

De acuerdo con Barnett (2004, citado en Verger, *et al.*, 2012), las organizaciones internacionales ejercitan su poder a través de la orquestación de tres tipos de acciones técnicas que son aparentemente apolíticas. Primero clasifican al mundo; por ejemplo, estratifican a los países según su desempeño educativo u otras tipologías, y después los presionan para que introduzcan reformas educativas. En segundo lugar, orquestan significados en el mundo social, por ejemplo a partir del sostenimiento de definiciones autoritativas sobre lo que es el desarrollo, o la calidad, o indirectamente a partir de indicadores y metas. Finalmente, a través de la articulación y diseminación de nuevas normas, principios y creencias, por ejemplo difundiendo lo que las organizaciones internacionales consideran buenas prácticas.

Pero más allá de estas funciones, las organizaciones internacionales forman imaginarios globales que homogenizan los valores, creencias e ideas acerca de la educación (Rizvi y Lingard, 2010). Esta homogenización de los valores subyacentes a una política suelen también filtrarse en los sistemas de organización e implementación de las políticas; a establecer nuevas formas de gobernanza. Una forma de adentrarse en la formación de estos imaginarios pasa por entender la agenda que intentan proponer las organizaciones internacionales, analizar sus discursos y problematizarlos.

Problematizando los discursos de las políticas de ALV, una nota metodológica

El análisis de los discursos sobre el ALV que presentan las OIs parte de dos premisas fundamentales, primero que los textos de política educativa, como la educación misma, no son neutros sino

que contienen motivaciones ideológicas y políticas, más aún en el caso de las organizaciones internacionales, y en segundo lugar, que los valores que presentan y promueven las organizaciones internacionales, aunque parezcan similares no lo son. Es decir, que los valores y conceptos que presentan han sido re-articulados; han sido de-construidos y reconstruidos de acuerdo con sus objetivos particulares, con posiciones y fuerzas políticas determinadas (Hall, 1996).

Debido a las diferencias en posturas y bases ideológicas de las OIs, se ha elegido un análisis de contenido en la que se considera a las políticas como elementos discursivos de las propias organizaciones (cf. Faircough, 2003), y a los documentos de política como "actores debido a sus efectos performativos" (Cort, 2014, p. 129). Se han seleccionado 16 documentos de política (6 de la Comisión Europea, 6 de la OCDE, 2 de la UNESCO y 2 del Banco Mundial) que delinean las definiciones y conceptualizaciones del ALV que sostienen y promueven estas OIs, los problemas y las soluciones que plantean al reto de instaurar políticas de ALV a nivel mundial. Estos documentos han sido analizados sistemáticamente para identificar la postura de cada una de estas organizaciones en términos de su cercanía a visiones utilitarias o humanistas, a imaginarios social-demócratas o neoliberales y a la formulación de recomendaciones que suponen la adaptación y/o transformación de las personas y los sistemas sociales y educativos.

Para ello, el análisis parte de una preocupación sentida acerca del uso de la educación, y en particular del ALV, como un instrumento de gobernanza que obedece a las demandas del mercado de trabajo global. Los gobiernos y las OIs actualmente obedecen las demandas de la economía, y de las empresas en particular, cuyos requerimientos tienen que ver con la formación de una fuerza de trabajo equipada con las habilidades necesarias para competir efectivamente en los mercados mundiales (Satterthwaite , 2005). Las OIs utilizan formas de cooperación y movilización política que refuerzan y legitiman dichas demandas. No obstante, tanto los gobiernos como las OIs presentan, al mismo tiempo, narrativas que sitúan la equidad e inclusión sociales, y no sólo la empleabilidad y el desarrollo de capital humano, como objetivos de la educación y el aprendizaje.

Para analizar los textos de política seleccionados, el presente estudio se inspira en el análisis crítico del discurso (Cf. Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2003; Van Djik, 1996) que considera el uso del lenguaje como una práctica social e investiga las tensiones entre dos supuestos acerca de su uso; que el lenguaje es tanto constituyente de la realidad social, como constituido por esta última (Fairclough, 1993). En especial, se presta atención a la manera en que las OIs, a través de sus prácticas discursivas, moldean sistemas de conocimiento y de valores. Una de las tareas cruciales del análisis crítico del discurso es "dar cuenta de la relación entre el discurso y el poder, y de cómo éste es ejercido, reproducido o legitimado por los textos de grupos e instituciones dominantes" (Van Djik, 1996, p. 84).

Con el objetivo de analizar la construcción discursiva del ALV en las políticas de las OIs seleccionadas, se ha llevado a cabo un análisis temático, un método utilizado para identificar, analizar y reportar patrones y temas recurrentes y sobresalientes al interior de los datos (Braun y Clarke, 2006), en este caso, de los documentos de política citados. Para este efecto, un tema es definido como "algo importante que se captura acerca de los datos en relación con la pregunta de investigación y que representa un nivel de respuesta o significado de dicho patrón en los datos" (Braun y Clarke, 2006,

p. 82). Más allá de un análisis semántico, se ha intentado un análisis latente (Ídem) mediante el cual se trasciende el texto para identificar los valores y creencias subyacentes a los documentos de política. Así, los temas analizados corresponden a las categorías de empleo-empleabilidad, ciudadanía, participación e inclusión sociales, equidad, adaptación y transformación.

El papel de las organizaciones internacionales en la conceptualización del ALV

Desde su conformación, las organizaciones internacionales (OIs) han jugado un papel importante en la definición de la agenda educativa de los diferentes países del mundo. Sin embargo, sus acciones de cooperación y, consecuentemente, su esfera de influencia, se han incrementado a partir de la intensificación de la movilidad de capital, recursos, ideas y personas en la aldea global. Dicha intensificación de la globalización, particularmente de los flujos comerciales y de capital, ha coincidido (aunque quizá no sea coincidencia, ni una relación unívoca) con el enarbolamiento del ALV como paradigma educativo y con la proliferación de políticas y estrategias nacionales y regionales de ALV en el siglo XXI.

Cuatro de estas organizaciones han sido especialmente activas en la promoción del ALV como principio organizador: la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO), la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE), el Banco Mundial (BM) y la Comisión Europea (CE). El papel de estas agencias como generadoras de discursos se ve reforzado por sus acciones de cooperación educativa en los cinco continentes que, aunque con distintos objetivos, y con mecanismos y recursos diferenciados, han logrado moldear la gobernanza internacional de los sistemas educativos y plantear al ALV como 'principio maestro' u 'organizador' de las políticas educativas. Sin embargo, el hecho de que las cuatro organizaciones utilicen el término ALV no significa que lo entiendan de la misma manera, ni que estén de acuerdo en las formas en que las políticas deben reorganizarse, re-conceptualizarse o implementarse (Schuetze, 2006, pp. 289-290).

Las formas de cooperación que utilizan los organismos internacionales para orientar o gobernar los sistemas educativos nacionales y sub-nacionales "desde la distancia" (Musial, 2010) suelen variar; sin embargo, todos ellos constituyen formas de 'movilización política' (Milana, 2014). De acuerdo con algunos autores, la meta fundamental de la cooperación internacional en educación es precisamente la gobernanza global de los sistemas educativos. Para este fin, Jallade (2011) identifica seis formas de cooperación educativa de las organizaciones internacionales: i. La promoción de valores normativos y universales entre la comunidad educativa mundial; ii. El establecimiento y monitoreo de metas comunes o compartidas entre los sistemas educativos, iii. El desarrollo de estándares de calidad e indicadores de desempeño comparables; iv. El fortalecimiento de diálogos de políticas y la diseminación de buenas prácticas a nivel nacional o regional; v. La provisión de ayuda financiera para la gobernanza de sistemas a través del desarrollo institucional; y vi. La promoción de la dimensión europea de la educación (pp. 7-8).

Para fines de este artículo, problematizaremos las primeras dos formas de cooperación educativa como elementos integrales de la función de las organizaciones internacionales de definir la agenda global del ALV, y analizaremos los discursos sobre ALV que presentan las cuatro OIs arriba citadas.

La UNESCO

La UNESCO, desde su constitución, y por su propia misión, ha promovido la paz, los derechos humanos y la erradicación de la pobreza, en consecuencia muchos de los valores que sostiene y promueve se relacionan íntimamente con estos objetivos. Por ello, no es de extrañar que sus esfuerzos educativos se sitúen en "…valores universales, en la libertad individual, la emancipación y en un concepto de los seres humanos como dueñas y dueños de su destino" (Elfert, 2014, p. 88). De este modo, a diferencia de otros organismos, como el Banco Mundial o la OCDE, la UNESCO ha intentado "subyugar los enfoques funcionalistas y economicistas del aprendizaje a través de una visión humanista de la educación" (Mundy, 1999, p. xx, citada en Rubenson, 2006, p. 156).

La impronta de estos valores significó, en el ideario educativo de la UNESCO y en sus posteriores desarrollos, un papel prominente de la equidad y la igualdad de oportunidades para todas las personas, incluidas las personas adultas que habían estado al margen de los esfuerzos educativos de los países miembros de la organización. Así, una primera respuesta a esta necesidad de equidad se encontraba en ampliar la gama y alcance de la educación a todos los estratos poblacionales, a lo largo y ancho de la vida.

La primera iniciativa de la UNESCO en este sentido fue la creación, en 1971, de una comisión que analizara el futuro de la educación; la Comisión Internacional para el Desarrollo de la Educación, mejor conocida como la Comisión Faure, por el nombre de su presidente, el exministro francés. Tras un año de trabajo, la Comisión publicó el reporte titulado 'Aprender a ser' (UNESCO, 1972) en el que se incluían las conclusiones de sus deliberaciones y recomendaciones para la acción, y cuyas principales contribuciones, la educación a lo largo de la vida y la sociedad del aprendizaje, se convirtieron en estandartes de la UNESCO y en principios ordenadores para la reforma de los sistemas educativos a nivel global.

'Aprender a ser' fue el primer reporte en proponer la educación a lo largo de la vida (ELV) como un concepto maestro; como un mapa que guiara las reformas educativas tanto de los países –entonces- industrializados, como de los llamados en vías de desarrollo (Boshier, 1998, p. 4). El cariz humanista de este nuevo concepto se puede evidenciar en la caracterización que presenta de la ELV:

> "Aprender a vivir; aprender a aprender, de forma que se puedan ir adquiriendo nuevos conocimientos a lo largo de toda una vida; aprender a pensar de forma libre y crítica; aprender a amar el mundo y a hacerlo más humano; aprender a realizarse en y mediante el trabajo creador" (UNESCO, 1972, p. 132).

Algunas de las ideas principales de la ELV fueron esbozadas en este reporte, entre ellas que todas la personas deben estar en condiciones de aprender a lo largo de sus vidas; que la ELV es clave para la sociedad del aprendizaje; y que la ELV no se trata de un sistema educativo sino del principio con el que deben fundarse las formas de organización de los sistemas (UNESCO, 1972).

Sin embargo, y a pesar de la amplia difusión del reporte, éste tuvo muy poca repercusión en las políticas educativas nacionales (Rubenson, 2006; Lee, 2007; Elfert, 2015). Si bien el reporte de la comisión planteaba los principios fundacionales de la ELV (*v.g.* la centralidad del individuo, el desarrollo

personal y el aprendizaje auto-dirigido) y algunas directrices pedagógicas sobre el currículum y la formación docente, éste no abordaba las condiciones sociales necesarias ni las pautas específicas sobre cómo instaurar sistemas de ELV que redujesen las brechas educativas en las sociedades.

Ante la falta de respuesta de los Estados miembros de UNESCO, correspondió a la sociedad civil mantener el ímpetu de los principios de la ELV. Los esfuerzos del Instituto de la UNESCO para la Educación (el hoy Instituto de la UNESCO para el Aprendizaje lo Largo de la Vida) y la continua publicación de reportes temáticos y prácticos fueron de mucha utilidad para mantener el *ethos* (Boshier, 1998) del Reporte Faure y apoyar ese ímpetu de la sociedad civil.

Veinticuatro años después, el paradigma de la ELV fue substituido por el de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida (ALV) en el seno de la UNESCO. Afectado por la crisis económica de los años ochenta y por dos influyentes reportes que se abordarán más adelante, uno de la OCDE ("Educación y economía en una sociedad cambiante", 1989) y otro de la Comisión Europea ("Libro blanco sobre crecimiento, competitividad y empleo", 1993), el Reporte de la Comisión Internacional sobre la Educación para el Siglo XXI 'La Educación encierra un tesoro' planteó la necesidad de "retomar y actualizar el concepto de educación a lo largo de la vida, para conciliar la competencia que estimula, la cooperación que fortalece y la solidaridad que une" (UNESCO, 1996, pp. 11-12).

El Informe Delors, como también se le conoce, presenta una preocupación por adaptar la ELV a los cambios en la naturaleza del trabajo acontecidos en las últimas décadas sin menoscabo de los principios originarios planteados por Faure y los coautores del reporte de 1972; es decir, la contribución del ALV al proceso continuo de formación de seres humanos completos, de conocimientos, aptitudes y una facultad crítica para actuar, que contribuyan al avance hacia una sociedad del aprendizaje. Sin embargo, algunos autores (cf. Boshier, 1998; Griffin, 1999) afirman que el cambio de la educación al aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida no fue sólo semántico sino que fue substantivo; mientras que la ELV se asociaba a un objetivo más amplio e integral de desarrollar personas y comunidades más humanas, la interpretación dominante del ALV en los años noventa estaba vinculada a la capacitación y al aprendizaje de nuevas habilidades que permitieran a las personas lidiar con las demandas de un mercado de trabajo rápidamente cambiante (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako y Mauch, 2001).

Igualmente, el ALV adoptó una orientación más individualista que la ELV que hacía una mayor referencia a la comunidad. Medel-Añonuevo y sus colaboradores sugieren que este énfasis podría interpretarse como un reconocimiento de la agencia de los individuos en contraste con la atención prestada por la ELV a las instituciones y estructuras, o como una abdicación del estado de bienestar a su responsabilidad de proveer oportunidades económicas y educativas (Griffin, 1999. Citado en Medel-Añonuevo, *et al.*, 2001). Ésta última parece ser una interpretación más cercana a las condiciones del contexto de la década de los noventa en que surge el Infome Delors, una década caracterizada por la crisis del estado de bienestar. De acuerdo con uno de los artífices de la educación recurrente de la OCDE:

> "El clima político y económico de los 90 es muy diferente al de los años 60, no es favorable para la filosofía un tanto utópica e idealista de los paradigmas anteriores del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. [El contexto actual] es propicio simple y llanamente para los programas

de ‘capacitación a lo largo de la vida’ relacionados con el trabajo y el empleo, de preferencia privados y que demanden pocos recursos públicos” (Kallen, 1996, p. 17).

Sin duda, el Informe Delors fue publicado en un entorno sociopolítico y económico diferente al de Faure. Mientras que éste estuvo inspirado por –e intentaba responder a- los movimientos sociales estudiantiles y de las y los trabajadores de la década de los 60 en el norte, y a los procesos independentistas y las dictaduras militares del sur global, la década de los 90 significó un escenario muy diferente para el Informe Delors. Entre otras circunstancias, éste se insertaba en un proceso rampante de globalización, en la transformación de los sistemas socialistas a las llamadas ‘sociedades abiertas’ tras la caída del muro de Berlín y la Guerra Fría, y a una transición económica hacia el capitalismo postindustrial y las economías del conocimiento.

Según Elffert (2015), después de la Guerra Fría parecía que el capitalismo había ganado una victoria completa; el neoliberalismo estaba a la alza, pero al mismo tiempo había esperanza para una revitalización de la cooperación internacional y un interés renovado por los derechos humanos (p. 90). De acuerdo con el mismo Delors, el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida sería una de las claves del siglo XXI para adaptarse a los variables requerimientos del mercado de trabajo y para el dominio de los tiempos y ritmos cambiantes de la existencia individual (UNESCO, 1996).

Además del contexto histórico, los desarrollos en el campo de la educación y de las ciencias sociales de los que abrevó cada uno de los informes de la UNESCO determinaron sus orientaciones. Mientras que el Informe Faure estuvo inspirado por el pensamiento de los pedagogos de la desescolarización (*v.g.* Ivan Illich), de la liberación (*v.g.* Paulo Freire), y de la tradición utópico-anarquista (Boshier, 1996), el Informe Delors hace referencia a la teoría del capital humano emanada de la escuela de Chicago y cuyos principales proponentes (Gary Becker y Milton Friedman) argumentan que la educación es una inversión importante en términos de productividad económica. Esto explica la secreta desaparición del pensamiento radical neo-marxista del Informe Delors (Lee, 2007) y la poca atención prestada a temas como la alfabetización y la educación de personas adultas, tan importantes para el informe predecesor.

Por ello, a diferencia del Informe Faure, que hacía hincapié en la transformación de las personas, las instituciones, los sistemas educativos y las sociedades, el Informe Delors ponía el acento en la adaptación; la adaptación a los nuevos tiempos, a las necesidades del mercado de trabajo, a las nuevas tecnologías, a las necesidades de la economía, al cambio. Al parecer, la impronta de la globalización y el discurso neoliberal convencional, que plantea la educación como la preparación para la vida laboral futura, tuvo una influencia determinante en la concepción del aprendizaje planteado por ‘La educación encierra un tesoro’. Bajo esta perspectiva, el aprendizaje se supone continuo, vocacional y frecuentemente relacionado al trabajo. Esto contrasta con la aseveración del Informe Faure que apuntaba que el énfasis debería recaer en aprender a aprender y no en adaptar el sistema educativo a las necesidades del mercado laboral; y que el objetivo de la educación en relación al empleo y al progreso económico debería ser no tanto preparar a las personas para una ocupación específica o técnica, sino más bien optimizar la movilidad entre los aprendices y facilitar estímulos permanentes al deseo de aprender y formase a sí mismos (Vargas, 2013).

El Informe Delors en su intento por conciliar la competencia, la cooperación y la solidaridad propone la adaptación en dos planos. Por un lado plantea la necesidad de adaptar la educación y el aprendizaje a las demandas de la economía, y por otro plantea la adaptación como una herramienta para que las personas puedan conservar el dominio de sus vidas y de su devenir (UNESCO, 1996). Este balance entre aprender a ser, aprender a hacer, aprender a aprender y aprender a vivir juntos, más que las críticas recibidas por el cariz instrumental del aprendizaje, confirmaron el rol de la UNESCO como defensora de una visión humanista y utópica de la educación (Elfert, 2015).

La 'versatilidad' del Informe Delors consiste en que combina principios humanistas propios de la social democracia como la igualdad de oportunidades, la justicia, la equidad, y la liberación, con otros de corte neoliberal como la competitividad, el impacto de los cambios del mercado de trabajo y de la globalización sobre la educación. En su análisis sobre las ideologías detrás del Informe Delors, Moosung Lee (2007) apunta que la Comisión intentó mantener una posición a favor del liberalismo social-demócrata aunque pretendió no mostrarlo demasiado, e hizo un esfuerzo por mantener un discurso en contra del neoliberalismo al mismo tiempo que albergaba argumentos en su defensa.

Según Maren Elfert (2015), ambos informes están basados en la igualdad de los seres humanos como ciudadanos globales, en la creencia ilustrada en el progreso, en el desarrollo completo del potencial humano y en la habilidad de las personas de cambiar el mundo. Más que tratarse de principios ordenadores, abunda la autora, la educación y el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida evidencian una visión democrática del mundo y la sociedad en la que toda la ciudadanía cuente con la igualdad de oportunidades que le permita liberar su potencial y participar en la construcción de las sociedades en las que viven (Elfert, 2015, p. 92).

A pesar de que ninguno de los dos informes de UNESCO ha tenido un impacto evidente sobre las políticas educativas nacionales por no presentar una "tipología de la educación o una metodología para la reforma educativa" (Elfert, 2015), a partir de ambos informes, y por prestar importancia tanto al desarrollo humano como al progreso material, la UNESCO se autoafirmó como una autoridad moral y normativa de estándares internacionales. Este carácter de autoridad normativa le ha permitido a la organización crear una "meta-narrativa acerca de la universalización de los derechos humanos"… y "contribuir a la formación de un proyecto educativo basado en un enfoque humanista y precursor de las conceptualizaciones modernas del ALV" (Milana, 2014, p. 79).

Tras el Informe Delors, otras estrategias de la organización, como el desarrollo de estándares e indicadores de monitoreo y evaluación (*v.g.* los indicadores de la Declaración de Educación Para Todos, Jomtien, 1990 y Dakar, 2000, y los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, 2000) han opacado los valores humanistas de los informes y la andadura de la UNESCO en temas de ALV. Por un lado, el insuficiente progreso en el cumplimiento de estos objetivos, por parte de los Estados-miembros, y por otro la falta de prioridades, recursos y estrategias de implementación, han desdibujado el papel de la UNESCO en la gobernanza global de la educación. Aunado a esto, los enfoques pragmáticos y la hegemonía de un discurso neoliberal del ALV se han hecho presentes en los subsecuentes esfuerzos de la UNESCO (Elfert, 2015, p. 95).

Si bien varios autores concuerdan en que los informes de UNESCO han tenido poco impacto en la formulación de políticas nacionales, su influencia sobre la agenda de otras organizaciones internacionales es innegable. Desde la década de los años 70, el concepto de ALV desarrollado por la UNESCO ha influenciado y provocado otras versiones de políticas de ALV, por ejemplo entre el Banco Mundial, la OCDE y la Unión Europea (Lee, 2007).

El Banco Mundial

A primera vista podría parecer extraño que un banco tenga entre sus prioridades la educación; sin embargo, el Banco Mundial (BM) se ha comprometido cada vez más con la promoción de la educación, más precisamente con el desarrollo del capital humano, como contribución al cumplimiento de sus metas reales: la promoción del crecimiento económico y la reducción de la desigualdad de ingreso. Al día de hoy, el BM es el organismo crediticio con más provisión de préstamos para programas educativos a nivel global, con 85 países entre sus acreedores (Mutsios, 2009).

El trabajo del BM había incluido la formación de capital humano como una de sus metas desde su fundación, en 1944, pero es a partir de la década de los 90 que la actividad del banco y la cantidad de fondos y préstamos para los países en desarrollo se intensifica (Ídem). Fue precisamente una iniciativa de la UNESCO, la Educación Para Todos (EPT), la que abrió la puerta a la cooperación del BM. Para éste los objetivos de la Declaración de Jomtien (1990) o el Marco de Acción de Dakar (2000) no eran tan importantes como su convicción de que la inversión en educación primaria producía las tasas más altas de retornos económicos (Elfert, 2015). Pero más allá de la inversión en educación primaria, los contratos con el BM contenían condiciones desventajosas para sus contratantes; las medidas de ajuste estructural que supusieron la liberalización económica, la privatización de bienes públicos y la desregulación de los mercados, incluido el 'mercado de la educación'.

Además de los programas de ajuste estructural que tuvieron afectaciones severas sobre los sectores sociales en los países en que los fondos y la inversión fueron condicionados, el BM impuso una lógica gerencialista a la iniciativa de EPT; la introducción de metas cuantificables y la condicionalidad de los recursos de ayuda para el desarrollo al logro y/o avance numérico en las citadas metas. Esta medida y la Iniciativa Vía Rápida[1] de la EPT que pretendía apoyar a los países más pobres para cumplir las metas de la EPT y de los objetivos de desarrollo del milenio (particularmente la educación primaria universal), han sido ampliamente criticadas por privilegiar la eficiencia sobre la equidad (cf. Torres, 2002; Goldsmith, 2004; Schuetze, 2006; Elfert, 2015).

Después de una década de experimentación sobre la educación primaria y tras el cambio de foco de la estrategia y fondos del BM hacia la educación superior, el Banco publicó, en 2003, su primer informe sobre aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, '*Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy. Challenges for Developing Countries*'. Este informe significó un parte aguas en la historia de la organización que, hasta entonces, sólo había publicado reportes sobre diferentes subsectores

1. La iniciativa conjunta de la UNESCO y el Banco Mundial llamada Vía Rápida (*Fast Track Initiative*) fue implementada en 2002 y cambió de nombre en 2011 a Alianza Mundial para la Educación (*Global Partnership for Education*) tras el Informe de seguimiento de la EPT en el mundo (2010) que criticaba la ineficiencia de los mecanismos de cooperación. La nueva iniciativa se ha abierto, igualmente, al sector privado y filantrópico cuyo representante más importante es la Fundación Bill y Melinda Gates.

educativos (primeramente sobre educación básica y posteriormente sobre educación superior) o informes nacionales, según sus prioridades de inversión y políticas de turno. Así que el de 2003 fue el primer reporte que abordaba el sistema educativo en su conjunto y el ALV en particular. El prefacio de este reporte es bastante indicativo de la orientación del BM: "El aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida es la educación para la economía del conocimiento" (World Bank, 2003, p. xiii). En la visión de este organismo, preparar a la fuerza laboral para competir en la economía del conocimiento requiere de un nuevo modelo de educación y formación, un modelo de ALV. El Banco argumentaba que los sistemas educativos no pueden seguir enfatizando habilidades para tareas específicas sino que deben abocarse a "desarrollar habilidades para la toma de decisiones y la resolución de problemas entre las y los estudiantes, y enseñarles como aprender por sí mismos y con otros" (p. 3).

El informe recogía también los retos a los que se enfrentan los sistemas educativos en los países en desarrollo y en las llamadas economías en transición (*i.e.* los antiguos regímenes comunistas). El BM consideraba que estos retos eran inmensos y que consistían en elevar los niveles de desempeño en las habilidades básicas de lengua, matemáticas y ciencias, y en dotar a una gran diversidad de estudiantes -con diferentes bagajes, experiencias, niveles de motivación y preferencias- de nuevas habilidades y competencias. Además, según el informe, desempeñarse en la economía global y funcionar en una sociedad global requiere del dominio de habilidades técnicas, interpersonales y metodológicas. Las primeras incluyen "la alfabetización, lengua extranjera, las matemáticas, la ciencia, la resolución de problemas y las habilidades de análisis", las interpersonales hacen referencia al "trabajo en equipo, el liderazgo y las habilidades comunicativas", mientras que las metodológicas se refieren a "la habilidad de aprender por sí mismo, de involucrarse en el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida y de lidiar con el riesgo y el cambio" (p. 22).

El informe sostiene que alcanzar estas metas requiere de cambios fundamentales en la manera en que el aprendizaje se lleva a cabo y en las relaciones entre las y los docentes y el estudiantado, y que estas competencias son necesarias por la rápida proliferación del conocimiento científico y práctico, el acotamiento de la vida útil del conocimiento debido a la producción continua de éste, y a la creciente influencia de la ciencia y la tecnología, factores que cambian profundamente la organización del trabajo y de la vida.

Como se puede observar en su informe sobre ALV, más allá de su racionalidad económica, el BM reconoce otros efectos –no así objetivos- del aprendizaje: "la educación tiene un efecto importante sobre resultados que no se relacionan con los mercados como la reducción de la criminalidad, la cohesión social, la distribución del ingreso, el altruismo y una búsqueda de empleo más eficiente" (Word Bank, 2003, citado en Schuetze, 2006, p. 294). Al margen de estas consideraciones, vemos que la lógica del ALV en las estrategias del BM está enraizada en la teoría de capital humano y en la economía del conocimiento, no en vano, en 1996, se autonombró 'El Banco del Conocimiento' o '*Knowledge Bank*'; es decir, "un proveedor de clase mundial de *expertise* sobre desarrollo" (Kramarz y Momani, 2013).

Esta apuesta por la economía del conocimiento fue refrendada en el año 2011 cuando el BM planteó su estrategia de desarrollo con vistas al 2020. Esta estrategia de diez años contempla un objetivo primordial: "Aprendizaje para todos", y plantea, para su cumplimiento, "promover reformas nacionales

a los sistemas educativos y construir una base global de conocimiento lo suficientemente potente para guiar dichas reformas" (World Bank, 2011). De este modo, el conocimiento y las ideas son presentados como el mayor y mejor recurso del Banco y como la base para el cambio educativo.

El objetivo de "Aprendizaje para todos" planteado en la actual estrategia del BM considera el aprendizaje más allá de la escolaridad porque, desde su perspectiva, el crecimiento, el desarrollo y la reducción de la pobreza dependen de los conocimientos y las habilidades adquiridos por las personas y no necesariamente del número de años que pasan en el aula (Ídem). Esto coincide con uno de los principios fundamentales del ALV, que los aprendizajes se producen en distintos entornos y a lo largo de la vida, aunque contradice las propias métricas de progreso que el propio Banco ha desarrollado para medir el avance de sus acreedores.

La adscripción a la teoría del capital humano se hace evidente asimismo en la Estrategia 2020 del BM cuando relaciona los aprendizajes, directamente, con el crecimiento económico:

> A nivel social, investigaciones recientes demuestran que los niveles de habilidades en la fuerza de trabajo, medidas por indicadores de desempeño de los estudiantes en pruebas estandarizadas como PISA o TIMMS, pueden predecir tasas de crecimiento económico de una manera mucho más precisa que el promedio de años de escolaridad. Por ejemplo, el incremento de una desviación estándar en las puntuaciones de los estudiantes en lectura y matemáticas…está asociado con un gran aumento de dos puntos porcentuales del crecimiento anual del PIB (World Bank, 2011, p. 7).

Igualmente, la estrategia del Banco refrenda sus principios eficientistas de gestión; la rendición de cuentas y el financiamiento orientado por resultados (113).

Observamos que el poder del BM para influenciar la agenda educativa a nivel global deviene de dos fuentes, por un lado del poder financiero que le provee un potencial enorme de negociación, mismo que utiliza para impulsar su agenda educativa (Moseley, 1995), y su capacidad de producir discursos y difundirlos a nivel global. Como recuerdan Kamarz y Momani (2013), el Banco siempre ha vendido ideas, no sólo préstamos.

Estos factores han hecho del BM uno de los actores más importantes en las decisiones educativas de muchos países, especialmente en las últimas décadas en las que la globalización ha llevado a los países a buscar respuestas, a hacer consultas y a actuar a nivel global. En este estado de cosas, el BM ha brindado el espacio para dichas consultas, en las cuales sus discursos y políticas han moldeado los propósitos de la educación en los Estados-miembros.

La OCDE

La Organización para la Cooperación y desarrollo Económicos (OCDE), al igual que el Banco Mundial, es una organización que no tenía, originalmente, a la educación o al aprendizaje como parte de sus funciones. Su constitución, de 1960, definía su misión como "la promoción del diseño de políticas" para tres fines específicos:

- "Lograr el más alto crecimiento económico sostenible, empleo y un estándar de vida cada vez más alto entre los Estado Miembros, al mismo tiempo que mantener la estabilidad financiera, y por tanto contribuir al desarrollo de la economía mundial"
- "Contribuir a una sólida expansión económica entre los Estado Miembros y aquellos no miembros en el proceso de desarrollo económico" y
- "Contribuir a la expansión del comercio mundial desde una base multilateral y no discriminatoria de acuerdo con las obligaciones internacionales" (OECD, 1960).

Aun con la ausencia de la educación en su acta constitutiva, es evidente que el interés de la OCDE por los asuntos educativos se ha incrementado en las últimas décadas (cf. Rizvi y Lingard, 2010; Rubenson, 2006). Este interés se vio reforzado en las décadas de los años sesenta y setenta del siglo pasado de la mano del desarrollo de la teoría de capital humano (*op. cit.*) que apuntaba una fuerte relación entre la inversión en educación y el crecimiento económico entre los países y los individuos (Rubenson, 2006). Desde entonces, la educación ha sido vista en la OCDE como un motor importante de fortaleza económica y prosperidad, éstos sí propósitos fundacionales de la organización (Papadopoulos, 2011).

La educación hizo su entrada formal en la estructura de la OCDE en 2002 con la creación de un nuevo Directorado para la Educación, cuando la organización consideró que el tema era lo suficientemente significativo para concederle una cartera propia y bajo el reconocimiento de la educación como una prioridad política en desarrollo cuya prominencia se relacionaba no sólo con la relación entre la creación de capital humano y la prosperidad económica, sino también con la naturaleza global del discurso educativo y el papel predominante de la OCDE en la comparación entre países a través de indicadores y estadísticas educativos (Istance, 2011, p. 89).

Antes del establecimiento del Directorado para la Educación, este tema era parte de un Directorado conjunto para el Trabajo y los Asuntos Sociales (Schuller, 2005). No obstante, los temas educativos comenzaron en 1968 con la creación del *Center for Educational Research and Innovation* (CERI), cuyos principales objetivos contemplaban: la promoción y apoyo al desarrollo de actividades de investigación en educación; la promoción y apoyo para la realización de experimentos piloto de cara a la introducción y evaluaciones de innovaciones en los sistemas educativos; y promover el desarrollo de la cooperación en el campo de la investigación e innovación educativas entre países miembros (OECD, 1973).

Uno de los primeros trabajos del CERI fue la publicación de 'La Educación Recurrente, una estrategia para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida' (OCDE, 1973) como una fórmula nueva para repensar la educación en vista de que el axioma inversión-educación-empleo-prosperidad demostró fallas en la realidad de la década anterior. La "Educación Recurrente" planteaba "una estrategia educativa amplia para la educación post-obligatoria (tras la educación básica), cuya característica esencial era la distribución de la educación a lo largo de toda la vida de los individuos de forma recurrente; es decir, alternada con otras actividades, principalmente el trabajo, pero también con el ocio o la jubilación" (Kallen y Bengtsson, 1973, p. 24). Este nuevo principio era propuesto por la OCDE como base para la planeación educativa toda vez que, según la misma organización, la implementación de este

nuevo sistema comportaría ganancias económicas, beneficiaría los mercados de trabajo, conllevaría a una mayor equidad y estimularía la búsqueda de conocimiento por parte de las y los estudiantes (Rubenson, 2006, p. 153). Como se puede observar, la "Educación Recurrente", como muchos otros desarrollos de la OCDE, también estaba inscrita en los principios teóricos de capital humano. Rubenson (2006) afirma que, en la estrategia de la OCDE, la agenda de la equidad, y su promoción en y a través de la educación, no estaba claramente definida, ni se precisaba cuán importante era la reducción de la desigualdad educativa. A este respecto apunta que las discusiones en la organización acerca de cómo la educación recurrente podría reducir la equidad fueron generales y no supusieron compromisos firmes por parte de los estados socios de la OCDE (p. 155).

Con todo, las ideas de la educación recurrente jamás fueron implementadas "ni siquiera consideradas seriamente en los debates nacionales e internacionales sobre política educativa, así que el interés por desarrollar los sistemas educativos de acuerdo con los principios de la educación recurrente desparecieron rápidamente" (Rubenson, 2006, p. 156). Sin embargo, el concepto sentó las bases para el surgimiento y apoyo del ALV como estrategia de inversión educativa más allá de la educación formal. Basada en la formación del capital humano como un proceso a lo largo de la vida, la organización pregona que, el potencial de los países de beneficiarse de la 'economía del conocimiento' depende de la educación, competencias, talentos y habilidades de sus individuos (OECD, 2007).

En 1996, el mismo año en que se publicó el Informe Delors y que la Unión Europea celebró el Año Europeo para el ALV, la OCDE publicaba '*Lifelong Learning for All*' (OECD, 1996). En este documento se reelaboraron los propósitos del ALV y los instrumentos de política necesarios para su efectuación según la propia OCDE (McKensie, 1999). La definición del ALV presentada por la organización trascendía su precepto anterior de educación recurrente e introducía nuevas dimensiones además de la formación para el trabajo y la alternancia entre éste y la educación, e incluía aspectos relacionados con la cohesión social y la ciudadanía. Sin embargo, el propósito dominante del ALV seguía siendo la adquisición de habilidades y competencias para encarar las necesidades del mercado laboral en un contexto más amplio de competición en la economía del conocimiento (Elfert, 2015).

Esta tendencia se confirma en el informe de política (*Policy Brief*) de la organización sobre el ALV (OECD, 2004) que plantea que:

> "…para los individuos, el ALV enfatiza la creatividad, la iniciativa y la capacidad de respuesta como atributos que contribuyen a la autorrealización, a mayores ingresos, al empleo, a la innovación y la productividad. A nivel de la empresa, las habilidades y la competencia de la fuerza de trabajo son un factor muy importante en el desempeño y éxito económicos, mientras que para la economía, existe una relación positiva entre el logro educativo y el crecimiento económico" (OECD, 2004, p. 2).

Quizá el elemento más importante de '*Lifelong Learning for All*' fue el desarrollo de un marco de políticas que permitieran la implementación del ALV. El marco propuesto por la OCDE (1996) contempla cinco elementos principales:

- El fortalecimiento de los fundamentos del ALV (*i.e.* las habilidades básicas) a través de la mejora en el acceso y la calidad en la educación inicial
- La mejora de las vías y transiciones entre el aprendizaje formal y no formal, y el trabajo a lo largo de la vida
- Repensar y clarificar el papel y las responsabilidades de los distintos ministerios y niveles de gobierno, organizaciones comunitarias, empleadores y sindicatos para el desarrollo e implementación de políticas
- Crear incentivos para que las personas y las empresas inviertan en el ALV, aumentando las prestaciones y reduciendo sus costos, y facilitando el acceso a la financiación
- Desarrollar la capacidad para monitorear el avance en el logro de las metas de ALV y para evaluar el impacto de los instrumentos de política

Otro logro importante del informe de la OCDE fue el reconocimiento de que el logro de estos objetivos involucra mucho más que a un ministerio y que a sólo las políticas educativas, y la necesidad de profundizar la cooperación con otras áreas de los gobiernos nacionales como las áreas sociales, de trabajo, de economía y comunicaciones, para asegurarse que las políticas que afectan el ALV sean coherentes y viables financieramente (OECD, 1996). De acuerdo con McKensie (1998), ésta fue una diferencia notable respecto a los debates de la educación recurrente de los años 70 que confinaban la provisión de educación a lo largo de la vida a los círculos educativos. Según el autor, el informe de 1996 y una posterior conferencia de Ministros del Trabajo de estados miembros de la OCDE (1997), marcaron un hito en la ampliación del horizonte y alcance de las políticas de ALV. En esta conferencia los ministros secundaron el concepto de ALV y aceptaron que éste formaba parte de sus agendas y responsabilidades. El documento preparatorio para dicha conferencia sostenía que el debate del ALV es relevante para los Ministros del Trabajo en tres aspectos: a) la ausencia de oportunidades efectivas de ALV o su falta de acceso contribuyen al desempleo y a los bajos salarios; b) la perspectiva de ALV añade una dimensión preventiva y de largo plazo a los programas laborales; y c) las políticas del mercado de trabajo juegan un papel importante en tanto estrategias de ALV costeables (OECD, 1997. Citado en McKensie, 1998).

Después del Informe de 1996, y a pesar del reconocimiento de su importancia, los análisis holísticos acerca del ALV han sido muchos menos socorridos en el trabajo de la OCDE. Sus trabajos más recientes han abordado las perspectivas de la educación y el empleo en la provisión de la educación de adultos; estudios complementarios sobre las cualificaciones, el financiamiento y el reconocimiento de los aprendizaje no-formales e informales, y las tasas de retorno de la inversión en educación (Istance, 2011).

Aunque algunos actores dentro de la OCDE, como Istance, argumentan que la organización no distribuye fondos ni organiza programas en el campo del ALV, y que esto hace que la OCDE tenga "poderes formales muy limitados" (Istance, 2011, p. 88), existen otras voces (cf. Henry, Lingard, Rizvi y Taylor, 2001; Moutsios, 2009; Jallade, 2011) que entienden que el poder de la organización se basa en su poder discursivo y en su papel de vigilante del desempeño económico; en su facultad de evaluación y calificación de los sistemas y en la atracción de inversión extranjera directa o los efectos bursátiles que derivan de estas evaluaciones.

La Comisión Europea

El Consejo de Europa propuso, al inicio de la década de los 70, un concepto alternativo a la ELV (Faure, 1972) y a la Educación Recurrente (OCDE, 1973): la '*éducation permanente*'. En realidad este concepto no era diferente de los planteamientos esbozados por los otros organismos internacionales y compartía las mismas características que sus predecesores, con una limitación importante, la competencia del Consejo sobre la política educativa de la región estaba severamente limitada por el principio de subsidiariedad del Tratado de Roma de 1957. Este tratado reconocía que la educación es un asunto que se encuentra enraizado en la cultura y por tanto debía ser competencia de los estados nacionales (Schuetze, 2006, p. 298). No obstante, al pasar de los años, la competencia educativa del Consejo ha ido evolucionando. El Acta Única Europea de 1986, que promovía la movilidad de trabajadores a lo ancho de la Unión Europea, y en particular el Tratado de Maastricht de 1992, que da nacimiento a la Comisión Europea, modificaron la competencia educativa del Consejo, y de la nueva Comisión, que podía ahora emitir directrices sobre la educación técnica, la educación de adultos y la educación superior.

Haciendo uso de su recién adquirida competencia, la Comisión Europea (CE) publicó el "Libro Blanco sobre Crecimiento, Competitividad y Empleo" que planteaba la necesidad de "desarrollar, generalizar y sistematizar el ALV" (Comisión Europea, 1993, p. 120) para dar respuesta al desempleo, a través del establecimiento de sistemas educativos más flexibles y abiertos, y al desarrollo de la habilidad de los individuos. Ambos factores eran vistos como fundamentales para la adaptación, tanto para los negocios, para que las personas trabajadoras puedan hacer uso de las innovaciones tecnológicas que éstos desarrollen o adquieran, como para los individuos, los cuales, en buena medida, tendrán que cambiar de trabajo cuatro o cinco veces durante sus vidas. En la lógica de la Comisión, los sistemas educativos juegan un papel determinante en este proceso de adaptación.

Dos años después, la Comisión publicó el Libro Blanco sobre la Educación y la Formación "Enseñar y aprender, hacia la sociedad cognitiva" (*Teaching and Learning towards the Learning Society*). Este documento significó el primer ejercicio de competencia educativa de la CE y en palabras de Boshier "una cooptación del ALV desde una perspectiva neoliberal que lo ha convertido en un instrumento para fortalecer la efectividad económica" (1998, p. 5). La aseveración de Roger Boshier queda explicada al examinar el Libro Blanco que, a pesar de detentar en el título el potencial de construcción de sociedades del aprendizaje, presenta un enfoque demasiado acotado del aprendizaje, reduciéndolo a las necesidades del mercado laboral y la formación en habilidades para las y los trabajadores de frente a la economía global, el progreso científico y de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (Schuetze, 2006). Los objetivos trazados por el Libro Blanco confirmaban esta orientación pues todos, menos uno (combatir la exclusión), proponen medidas de respuesta a la economía: la adquisición y reconocimiento de conocimientos a través de las TIC; acercar las escuelas y las empresas mediante programas vocacionales; desarrollar competencias lingüísticas en otros idiomas europeos, y tratar la inversión de capital y la inversión en formación de igual manera (Comisión Europea, 1995).

Otra crítica que se ha hecho al Libro Blanco es que no abordaba la necesidad de una provisión abierta y flexible de educación y aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, sino que se enfocaba más en la escolaridad

inicial, lo cual parecía un despropósito en un documento de política que pretende promover el ALV. Aun así, y a pesar de las críticas recibidas, el Libro Blanco ha sido crucial para el establecimiento del ALV como una estrategia orientadora para las políticas europeas y para el establecimiento de los primeros programas que las implementaron; los ahora extintos Sócrates y Leonardo da Vinci (Dehmel, 2006).

El Libro Blanco sentó las bases, propuso y preparó el lanzamiento, en 1996, del Año Europeo de la Educación y de la Formación Permanentes (*European Year for Lifelong Learning*), con el objetivo de crear conciencia pública acerca de la importancia del ALV (Comisión Europea, 1995, p. 31). El Año Europeo representó el 'pistoletazo de salida' para un período largo de promoción activa del ALV en la CE (Dehmel, 2006). Además de la variedad de eventos realizados a lo largo y ancho de Europa, el Consejo presentó las conclusiones de la iniciativa en un documento de política denominado Conclusiones para una Estrategia de ALV (Comisión Europea, 1997), mismas que fueron retomadas, el mismo año, para la formulación de la Estrategia Europea para el Empleo y tres años más tarde y como producto de ésta, en el Memorando sobre ALV.

El Memorando sobre el ALV (Comisión Europea, 2000) fue una respuesta, tanto a la Estrategia de Empleo como al llamado de la CE a identificar estrategias coherentes y medidas prácticas que promovieran el ALV para todas las personas. Presentado en octubre de 2000, el Memorando retoma los principios de la Estrategia de Lisboa para el 2010, presentada unos meses antes, y que planteaba al ALV como un elemento esencial para la transición hacia una sociedad y economía basadas en el conocimiento, y como una herramienta para cumplir con el objetivo de la estrategia europea de desarrollo para la próxima década: "…convertirse en la economía basada en el conocimiento más competitiva y dinámica del mundo, capaz de crecer económicamente de manera sostenible con más y mejores empleos y con mayor cohesión social" (Comisión Europea, 2000b).

El objetivo del Memorando (Comisión Europea, 2000) era iniciar un debate a nivel europeo, entre los Estados Miembros, los países candidatos y aquéllos del área económica europea, sobre una estrategia global de ALV. El Memorando partía de dos objetivos primordiales del ALV, la promoción de una ciudadanía activa y de habilidades para el trabajo que permitieran a la Unión adaptarse a las demandas de la nueva sociedad basada en el conocimiento y que permitiese una participación completa en la vida social y económica.

Para ello, el Memorando definió inicialmente al ALV como "toda actividad de aprendizaje realizada deliberadamente y de forma continua con el objeto de mejorar el conocimiento, las habilidades y la competencia" (Comisión Europea, 2000, p. 3). Esta definición, que había sido establecida por la Comisión y los Estados Miembros en el contexto de la Estrategia Europea para el Empleo (de ahí su orientación hacia la vida productiva), fue adoptada como definición inicial '*working definition*' (Dehmel, 2006). Un año -y muchas críticas- después, la definición fue enmendada para incluir "toda actividad de aprendizaje realizada a lo largo de la vida con el propósito de mejorar el conocimiento, las habilidades y competencias, desde una perspectiva personal, cívica, social y/o relacionada con el empleo" (Vargas, 2013).

Teniendo como antecedentes una estrategia de empleo y un plan de desarrollo a diez años que

plantea como objetivo ser la economía más competitiva y dinámica del mundo, quedaba claro que los objetivos del ALV en la visión europea estaban más cercanos a la promoción de la empleabilidad que a la ciudadanía activa. Aunque ambos propósitos son mencionados como igualmente importantes en el Memorando, las respuestas a la consulta de la Comisión hicieron ver este desbalance y criticaron que el enfoque principal estuviera puesto sobre la dimensión laboral del ALV. Como consecuencia de las respuestas al Memorando, tanto de países miembros como de numerosas organizaciones de la sociedad civil, el objetivo dual de promover el empleo y la ciudadanía fue corregido y aumentado en la posterior comunicación 'Hacer realidad un espacio europeo del aprendizaje permanente' (EC, 2001), la cual presentaba "cuatro objetivo amplios y que se apoyan mutuamente: el desarrollo personal, la ciudadanía activa, la inclusión social y la empleabilidad/adaptabilidad" (Dehmel, 2006, p. 56).

Además de enmendar los propósitos del ALV, tarea que no era menor, la Comunicación de 2001 representaba un plan de acción para la construcción de políticas de ALV en el continente, basadas en los principios del Memorando. Para ello se concebía el intercambio de ideas y buenas prácticas a través de diálogos de política sostenidos entre las y los responsables de las agendas educativas en los países de la Unión. El Método Abierto de Coordinación (*Open Method of Coordination*), una estrategia nueva de la CE, se inauguraba como sistema de gobernanza de la educación en el continente. Este método de coordinación ha introducido, al igual que la UNESCO, la OCDE y el BM, una gobernanza basada en metas cuantitativas (objetivos trazados por el Consejo de Europa), indicadores (instrumentos de medición definidos junto con los estados miembros), y evaluación comparativa (supervisada por la CE). Esto se puede evidenciar en las metas propuestas en 2002 en el plan de educación y formación 'ET2010' y en las metas actuales de desarrollo de la CE dentro de la estrategia Europa 2020.

Así, desde el año 2000, la andadura de la CE en el impulso de un ALV que promueve, sobre todo, el empleo y el crecimiento económico ha sido amplia, veloz y contundente; ha incluido la producción de indicadores de calidad del ALV (2002), directrices para la implementación de estrategias nacionales de ALV (2002), consejos para invertir eficientemente en educación y formación (2003), argumentos para la validación del aprendizaje no-formal e informal (2004), una estrategia para la mediación y orientación a lo largo de la vida (2004), un marco europeo de calificaciones para el ALV (2006 y 2008), y una serie de competencias clave para el ALV (2006), así como una estrategia para mejorar la habilidades para el trabajo (2007) y para anticipar y empatar las necesidades del mercado de trabajo y las habilidades (2008).

Con este sistema de gobernanza y con el papel destacado de la CE en la definición de la agenda educativa parecería que el Tratado de Funcionamiento de la Unión Europea que afirma que "cada Estado miembro es responsable de la organización de sus sistemas de educación y formación, así como del contenido de los programas docentes" (Artículo 165) es letra muerta.

Como afirma Dehmel (2006), el ALV parece ser el eslogan –aparentemente muy atractivo- elegido por la Comisión para justificar, resumir, publicitar y popularizar sus valores, ideas y políticas en el campo de la educación y el aprendizaje (p. 49).

Conclusiones

Las organizaciones supranacionales analizadas han contado, históricamente, con definiciones del ALV más o menos cercanas a la equidad o al utilitarismo económico; sin embargo, en las últimas dos décadas las agendas de estos organismos empiezan a parecerse entre sí cada vez más. Algunos autores (cf. Rubenson, 2006; Schuetze, 2006; Istance, 2011) han atribuido esta similitud a lo que han llamado "las dos oleadas del ALV". Estas dos oleadas, supuestamente, corresponden a una primera ola, la de los años 60-70, en la que algunas de las OIs promovían valores más cercanos a la igualdad y a la transformación social e individual basados en una visión humanista de la educación y el aprendizaje. En la segunda oleada, la correspondiente a la década de los 90 y la primera del nuevo siglo, las OIs presentan conceptualizaciones más utilitarias del ALV, asentadas en objetivos económicos, que combinan nociones neoliberales con otros propósitos más sociales como la cohesión, la ciudadanía activa y el desarrollo y satisfacción personales.

La semejanza aparente entre los discursos de las OIs en un periodo u otro, supondría que algunas de ellas –como la UNESCO y la Comisión Europea- que en los años de la primera oleada se comprometieron con un proyecto humanista que garantizase la igualdad de oportunidades educativas, hayan virado su discurso hacia una visión neoliberal y utilitaria que buscase la adaptación de las personas y las sociedades a las nuevas condiciones impuestas por la globalización económica, en lugar de la transformación de estas condiciones que suponen exclusión social y la ampliación de las diferencias sociales. De igual forma, esta similitud entre las cuatro OIs implicaría que las organizaciones que desde el principio habían planteado nociones utilitarias, basadas primordialmente en la teoría del capital humano (el Banco Mundial y la OCDE), comenzaran a incluir preceptos más cercanos a la equidad, la cohesión social y la ciudadanía.

No obstante, esta diferenciación por oleadas, aunque resulta potente pues desvela el papel del contexto histórico en la formulación de políticas, y debido a que resalta el carácter político del ALV y de las OIs que intentan definirlo y promoverlo, presenta algunas limitaciones. Entre ellas, la consideración que las OIs son 'bloques monolíticos' (Schuetze, 2006) con una agenda consensuada al interior de las cuales no hay diferencias, matices ni grupos que sostienen visiones distintas alrededor de ciertos objetos de política. La segunda corresponde a la influencia que algunas OIs tienen sobre otras; a la cooperación, a las alianzas y trabajos conjuntos que llevan a cabo y a la dirección bidireccional de la influencia en la agenda del ALV; es decir, que los Estado miembros de las OIs también buscan influenciar los discursos de las organizaciones. En tercera instancia, por la transferencia y circulación de personas entre las OIs. El caso más paradigmático, aunque no el único, es el de Jaques Delors, quien pasó de la Presidencia de la Comisión Europea (hasta 1995) a ser Presidente de la Comisión Internacional sobre la educación para el siglo XXI de la UNESCO (1996).

Si bien la aseveración acerca de las dos oleadas parece comprobarse a través de un análisis detallado de los documentos de políticas y directrices de los organismos estudiados; lo que no es tan claro es que los conceptos clave detrás de los virajes en la conceptualización de ALV -entre otros, los de equidad, igualdad de oportunidades y cohesión social- signifiquen lo mismo en los documentos de una u otra organización. En este sentido, una agenda futura de investigación podría basarse en cómo estas nociones son utilizadas en las políticas de ALV, cómo son tomadas de un campo y re-

articuladas en otro. Un abordaje de este tipo que muestre cómo los procesos de política pública involucran la articulación de una diversidad de valores que parecen estar en competencia, que son contrastantes e incluso contradictorios (Rizvi y Lingard, 2011, p. 6), conllevaría, muy seguramente, a una mejor identificación de las agendas ulteriores de las OIs y a un mejor estudio de su impacto sobre las políticas nacionales. Todo esto desde el reconocimiento de que las políticas educativas son, por excelencia, políticas nacionales y que deben ser el reflejo de las circunstancias, tradiciones y culturas (Papadopoulos, 2011, p. 86) de los países o localidades para las que han sido construidas, y de que las OIs y sus intentos de gobernanza global minan el poder de decisión de los países en lo individual y despojan a los gobiernos locales de su responsabilidad de fijar la agenda educativa; de definir la naturaleza y los propósitos de la educación.

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03

“Discursos e influencias internacionales en las políticas para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: el caso de la nueva propuesta legislativa para el País Vasco”

INGURUAK Revista Vasca de Sociología y Ciencia Política. No. 55-56, pp. 1961-1974.

Discursos e influencias internacionales en las políticas para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: el caso de la nueva propuesta legislativa para el País Vasco

Palabras clave: aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, educación, políticas transnacionales, adaptación, transformación.

Introducción

El concepto de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida (ALV) ha estado presente en la historia de la educación por casi un siglo. Sus orígenes se pueden encontrar en la década de los años 1920 y 1930 cuando la educación a lo largo de la vida se circunscribía a las oportunidades educativas para personas adultas; en particular para las y los trabajadores. Medio siglo después, el concepto de educación permanente reconfiguró la idea de ALV e introdujo algunos elementos más a la ecuación; entre otros, que el aprendizaje toma lugar a lo largo de la vida, que incluye a diversos sectores y colectivos sociales, que toma lugar en diferentes entornos (formal, no-formal, e informal) y que contiene una variedad de propósitos sociales, culturales y económicos.

Desde entonces, el ALV se ha constituido en parte importante del discurso educativo internacional; en un campo emergente de estudio y práctica, y en un estandarte para el diseño de políticas educativas en todo el mundo. Diversas organizaciones internacionales como la UNESCO, la OCDE, el Banco Mundial y la Comisión Europea, han enfatizado el papel del ALV como un prerrequisito para el crecimiento económico y la cohesión social. Dicho énfasis, y el nivel de influencia que estas agencias tienen sobre la política educativa global, ha contribuido a la visibilidad del ALV y a que éste cobre un nuevo impulso en los debates educativos.

Estas organizaciones internacionales presentan diferentes definiciones de ALV, sin embargo coinciden en que es un enfoque que contribuye a la adaptación de los individuos y a su participación en las sociedades del conocimiento. Al parecer, una racionalidad económica subyace a estas conceptualizaciones: la transición del capitalismo industrial (en el cual el crecimiento económico está basado en el comercio) a un nuevo capitalismo basado en la innovación. La educación y el aprendizaje (en particular el ALV) juegan un papel fundamental en esta configuración en tanto que potencian la generación de conocimiento y promueven la creatividad como componentes necesarios para alentar la innovación y, por tanto, la vida económica.

Existen, no obstante, otras visiones del ALV que cuestionan esta definición y que son más críticas. Estas otras visiones apuntan que el ALV debe ir más allá de las preocupaciones económicas y que la educación y el aprendizaje deben contemplar otros propósitos sociales y culturales igualmente importantes como la convivencia en sociedades más equitativas y el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico para transformar la realidad social.

En cualquier caso, y a pesar de las diferencias en su conceptualización, existen coincidencias en dos rasgos distintivos del ALV:

a) Que el ALV se trata de colocar a los aprendices, sus necesidades, aspiraciones y demandas, en el centro de las políticas, programas y métodos educativos, y

b) Que el ALV debe preparar a los individuos y a sus sociedades para enfrentarse a un mundo en constante cambio (a través de la adaptación y/o la transformación)

A pesar de estos acuerdos, el campo del ALV ha servido a propósitos ampliamente diferentes; la etiqueta de ALV ha servido para designar, entre otras cosas: proyectos escolares con población infantil y juvenil; programas de educación y aprendizaje con personas adultas; programas de educación profesionalizante o para el trabajo; educación superior; alfabetización y educación básica; educación intercultural; educación popular; aprendizaje intergeneracional, etc. La definición y orientación del ALV, la articulación de los distintos programas, y el papel que juegan los diversos actores involucrados se difumina en la cantidad y variedad de proyectos, programas y políticas educativas.

Por ello, el interés de este escrito es indagar acerca de las conceptualizaciones del ALV que han llevado a una Comunidad Autónoma Vasca a plantearse la necesidad de legislar en la materia. He decidido tomar como caso el País Vasco, en particular un análisis de la Propuesta de Ley de Aprendizaje a lo Largo de la Vida, por su relevancia en el contexto Europeo y con el fin de explorar su orientación y las posibles vías para su implementación.

Características del ALV

El concepto de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida abarca una gran variedad de temas educativos y formativos que atañen a distintas audiencias. Sin embargo, en la literatura especializada se pueden encontrar tres elementos articuladores que transforman la educación, la formación y la capacitación, o al conjunto de las tres, en el concepto de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida: el aprendizaje no formal, el aprendizaje automotivado y la participación universal.

La primera característica del ALV es que abarca tanto a la educación formal como a la no-formal y al aprendizaje informal. El aprendizaje formal incluye a los sistemas educativos estructurados jerárquicamente que abarca desde la educación primaria o preprimaria hasta la universidad y los programas cuasi-escolares creados para la capacitación técnica y profesional. Por otro lado, el aprendizaje informal describe al proceso vital (que corre a lo largo de la vida) por el cual las personas desarrollan actitudes, valores, destrezas y conocimientos a partir de la experiencia cotidiana y de la influencia y recursos educativos del entorno: de la familia, los vecinos, el trabajo, el esparcimiento, el mercado, la biblioteca y los medios de comunicación.

El segundo tema común al ALV es la importancia del aprendizaje automotivado. Existe un gran énfasis sobre la necesidad de que los individuos se hagan responsables de su propio aprendizaje; los "aprendices a lo largo de la vida" se definen no por el tipo de educación o formación en la que participan, sino por las características personales que les llevan a participar de procesos y oportunidades de aprendizaje. Según Nesbit (2009), las personas que son más proclives a implicarse en procesos de aprendizaje, ya sea formal o informal, a lo largo de la vida comparten ciertas características, entre ellas: a) la actitud y habilidades necesarias para el aprendizaje, particularmente habilidades lingüísticas (alfabetismo) y de aritmética básica, b) la confianza para aprender, incluyendo un sentido de compromiso con la educación y los sistemas educativos, c) la voluntad y motivación para aprender.

Aunque la educación y formación pueden conllevar beneficios económicos para los individuos, se ha reconocido que los solos incentivos económicos no siempre son suficientes para motivar a las personas para que se involucren en la educación o formación. Se debe identificar y enfrentar una pluralidad de barreras motivacionales para que algunas personas participen en los procesos formativos. Si bien algunas de estas barreras son económicas y pueden superarse con asistencia financiera, muchas personas son disuadidas por factores sociales y personales. Dentro de las motivaciones más socorridas se encuentran: actualizar las competencias laborales, iniciar un negocio, aprender sobre una materia, ampliar los conocimientos, conocer a otras personas, desarrollar la autoestima, involucrarse en la comunidad, desarrollar habilidades personales, participar en redes sociales, etc.

A partir de la identificación de los factores que actúan como motivadores u obstáculos para el involucramiento en la educación, las políticas de ALV tienden a promover la participación en el aprendizaje por el puro gusto de aprender más que como un medio para un fin específico (v.g. para el empleo). La meta de participar en el aprendizaje parece entonces ser más significativa que las razones para la participación, lo cual puede ser visto como un reconocimiento del abanico de factores que motivan a las personas a implicarse en el aprendizaje formal o informal en lugar de –o adicionalmente a- metas instrumentales.

La tercera característica del ALV tiene que ver con la participación universal en la educación. La participación de todos los grupos sociales considerando la diversidad étnica, etaria, socioeconómica, cultural, religiosa, sexual, física y de género. El concepto de participación universal incluye todos los tipos de educación –formal, informal y no formal- y todos sus propósitos y objetivos; sociales, económicos y personales. Diversos documentos internacionales de política educativa subrayan la necesidad de la participación de todos los colectivos sociales para promover la cohesión social y para hacer frente a los vertiginosos cambios económicos y sociales que la globalización ha traído consigo. En la siguiente sección se analizan las definiciones de las distintas organizaciones internacionales y el énfasis puesto en los distintos propósitos del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, por ahora basta decir que, debido a la falta de una definición formal y ampliamente reconocida del ALV, los siguientes elementos son comunes a la mayoría de las definiciones académicas y políticas:

- El reconocimiento de que el aprendizaje sucede más allá de los sistemas educativos
- La comprensión del aprendizaje como una necesidad continua de las personas a lo largo de sus vidas
- La afirmación de que se necesita más que el aprendizaje formal para lidiar con el cambio en las sociedades contemporáneas
- La conciencia de que una organización o sociedad realmente del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida es un escenario futuro deseable y preferible a otra alternativa
- El reconocimiento que tanto los individuos como sus comunidades, locales y globales, necesitan involucrarse en la determinación de las necesidades de aprendizaje y necesitan hacerlo a lo largo de la vida
- La noción de que el ALV es tanto un producto como un detonador del uso extendido de las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación

Aún con estos derroteros, los debates para una definición del ALV se centran en algunas cuestiones no resueltas:

a) Si el sistema de educación formal está incluido en el ALV o si éste se refiere únicamente al aprendizaje informal y no-formal

b) Cómo reconocer el aprendizaje no formal e informal; es decir, si se acredita en los esquemas formales de acreditación o si se debe crear un sistema diferente para registrar el aprendizaje

c) Si el ALV es una inversión o un gasto, un bien público o una oportunidad de negocio, una responsabilidad individual o un derecho

No obstante, de las múltiples definiciones del ALV es posible identificar algunos elementos recurrentes en los discursos políticos y académicos de quienes las proponen y sostienen. Los tres elementos centrales de lo que ha sido llamada la terna de propósitos del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida (Nesbit, 2006) son:

- El progreso y desarrollo económicos
- El desarrollo y la realización personales
- La inclusión social y el entendimiento y acción democráticos

Algunas conceptualizaciones del ALV se centran en el debate de las diferencias entre los enfoques culturales y territoriales del mismo; entre el énfasis de la competitividad global de los países del norte y aquéllos del sur que ponen el acento en el desarrollo. En estos ejercicios conceptuales, el enfoque del norte parece situarse en la educación a lo largo de la vida derivada de la conciencia, cada vez más extendida, de que estamos insertos en un mundo rápidamente cambiante en el cual el conocimiento y las habilidades necesitan de una actualización constante. El impulso de las naciones por acogerse al ALV como paradigma educativo y no a la educación inicial obedece al reconocimiento de la necesidad de garantizar la competitividad económica en un mundo cada vez más complejo y global. Los argumentos se basan en la presunción de un vínculo entre el nivel educativo y el crecimiento económico.

En contraste, en el "sur global" existen argumentos para sostener una mirada más amplia e integral del ALV que la que ofrece el modelo de capital humano. Esta mirada deriva de los valores sociales y culturales imbuidos en las sociedades en las que se valora el aprendizaje colectivo más que el individual. Aunque todas las sociedades tienen sus propios contextos específicos, algunos autores sostienen que las poblaciones indígenas, por ejemplo en África, siempre han tenido una tradición bien establecida de ALV (*vid*. Ouane, 2007). Este sistema privilegia lo colectivo, comunitario y espiritual sobre lo económico con un enfoque en el capital social más que en el capital humano.

Estas diferencias basadas en los propósitos y la naturaleza misma del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida pueden ser observadas en las definiciones y conceptualizaciones del ALV que presentan y sostienen las organizaciones internacionales que se han encargado de promoverlo a nivel mundial.

Definiciones de las organizaciones internacionales

Son múltiples las organizaciones internacionales que actualmente promueven y trabajan sobre temas de aprendizaje a largo de la vida; entre ellas podemos contar organizaciones de la sociedad civil, universidades, centros de investigación, *think-tanks*, sindicatos, organizaciones culturales, agrupaciones profesionales y empresariales, etc. Cada una de estas organizaciones tiene un ámbito de influencia determinado y agendas específicas para promover el ALV, sin embargo para el análisis me basaré en las definiciones que han acuñado, defendido y promovido cuatro organizaciones internacionales, intergubernamentales y multilaterales: la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE), la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO), el Banco Mundial (BM) y la Comisión Europea (CE) por ser éstas quienes han promovido la adopción de políticas de ALV a nivel mundial y reformas educativas consecuentes con sus propias visiones del desarrollo, del bienestar, de la prosperidad y, por supuesto, de la educación y del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. En particular, para el caso en estudio, se analizará detenidamente la conceptualización que del ALV hace la Comisión Europea.

El Banco Mundial, por ejemplo, afirma que el ALV es esencial para que los individuos puedan seguirle el paso al acelerado avance tecnológico y al cambiante mercado de trabajo global. El ALV es visto como la preparación para una vida desestabilizada de trabajos, perfiles laborales y ubicaciones geográficas cambiantes (World Bank, 2003). En esta visión del "trabajador nómada", las personas deben adaptarse constantemente a nuevas condiciones de vida, a nuevas tecnologías y a nuevos requerimientos para el trabajo, lo cual requiere del aprendizaje de ciertas habilidades que les permitan ajustarse a un mundo en constante evolución.

El enfoque del ALV del BM contempla una combinación de competencias que incluye: "…habilidades académicas básicas como las lingüísticas en idiomas extranjeros, las habilidades matemáticas y científicas, y la habilidad de utilizar tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación. Los trabajadores deben utilizar estas habilidades de manera efectiva, actuar de manera autónoma y reflexiva, e inserirse y funcionar al interior de grupos sociales heterogéneos" (World Bank, 2008).

La OCDE comparte muchos de los planteamientos del BM, entre ellos el enfoque de capital humano y la instrumentalidad de la educación y el ALV. No obstante, la OCDE, en su marco sobre el ALV, enfatiza que la educación formal contribuye al aprendizaje tanto como la no formal e incluye cuatro características para su conceptualización. Primero, que el ALV ofrece una visión sistémica del aprendizaje ya que examina la demanda y la oferta de oportunidades de aprendizaje como parte de un sistema que conecta y cubre todo el ciclo vital y que comprende todas las formas de aprendizaje (formal, no formal e informal). Segundo, enfatiza la centralidad del aprendiz y la necesidad de iniciativas que satisfagan la diversidad de sus necesidades, lo cual representa un cambio de foco de la oferta educativa a la demanda de la educación. Tercero, el enfoque enfatiza la motivación para aprender y presta atención al aprendizaje autodirigido y autogestionado. Cuarto, hace hincapié en los múltiples objetivos de la política educativa que incluyen, *inter alia*, resultados económicos, sociales o culturales, el desarrollo personal y la ciudadanía. No obstante, cuando intenta dar cuenta de estos resultados, la metodología y los estándares (e.g., PIAAC, PISA) sólo miden algunas de esas dimensiones; particularmente las habilidades económicamente valorables a través de criterios economicistas como la eficiencia, la eficacia, la calidad total y otros criterios que han sido importados de la teoría del capitalismo neoliberal o, cuando más, de la gestión y administración para insertarse en el análisis del campo educativo.

Una de las principales críticas a los planteamientos del BM y de la OCDE se relaciona con el énfasis utilitario e instrumental del aprendizaje. En el discurso de ambas organizaciones se encuentra el aprendizaje como adaptación, es decir, adaptarse a los cambios derivados de la globalización y a los cambios derivados de las sociedades de aprendizaje o a las economías basadas en el conocimiento. La adaptación y la resiliencia están muy presentes como una manera de adaptarse a los cambios que ha traído consigo la globalización económica. Es decir, en los fines del ALV encontramos lograr aprendizajes para adaptarse y tomar ventaja de las oportunidades que supone la globalización y se echa de menos una visión crítica acerca de las causas y consecuencias de tan vertiginosos cambios y de su impacto, diferenciado, sobre los niveles de bienestar de las personas y sociedades.

Por su parte, la UNESCO parece sostener una visión más humanista del ALV, al menos en comparación con los argumentos marcadamente económicos del BM y de la OCDE. El discurso de la UNESCO sobre el ALV se ha enfocado en el desarrollo completo del individuo. El informe comisionado a Pierre Faure (1972) "Aprender a ser: el nuevo mundo de la educación de hoy y de mañana" apuntaba que el énfasis debería recaer en aprender a aprender y no en adaptar el sistema educativo a las necesidades del mercado laboral. El informe sostiene que el objetivo de la educación es permitir y habilitar a la persona para que sea ella misma, y que el objetivo de la educación en relación al empleo y al progreso económico debería ser no tanto preparar a las personas para una ocupación específica o técnica, sino más bien optimizar la movilidad entre los aprendices y facilitar estímulos permanentes al deseo de aprender y formase a sí mismo (Faure, 1972).

La perspectiva de este reporte, pionero en el campo de la educación a lo largo de la vida es que el amor por el aprendizaje crea un deseo de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida y el mantenimiento de una sociedad del aprendizaje y, por consecuencia, la meta del ALV es lograr empoderar a las personas para que tomen el control del desarrollo económico, científico y tecnológico de una manera democrática.

Sin embargo, en la década de los noventa, el enfoque humanista de la UNESCO hacia el ALV se vio mermado- o pausado- debido al discurso imperante de las economías basadas en el conocimiento y el desarrollo del capital humano. A pesar de ello, la UNESCO evitó los argumentos puramente económicos del ALV, lo cual se evidencia en el informe de 1996 titulado "La educación encierra un tesoro" (*Learning: The Treasure Within*) que define el ALV como la adaptación a los cambios suscitados por la tecnología y la economía y como un proceso de formación de seres humanos completos y multidimensionales; tanto por la formación de sus conocimiento y aptitudes, como de su capacidad crítica y de acción (UNESCO, 1996).

En la actualidad, la UNESCO ha clamado por un "nuevo humanismo" para la educación del siglo XXI y aunque recoge los principios de adaptabilidad, esa adaptación parece no proponerse a costa de las posibilidades de transformación de las propias personas ni de las estructuras que provocan efectos negativos sobre sus vidas. Para ello es importante en primera instancia, incluir las diferentes dimensiones de la vida de las personas, es decir, no sólo en tanto trabajadoras/es, sino en tanto hijos o hijas, padres o madres, feligreses, vecinos, miembros de la comunidad. Es en este diálogo con las necesidades de aprendizaje en el que se pueden lograr aprendizajes que logren transformar las estructuras que se quieran transformar. Sin duda unas de éstas son las estructuras educativas.

Actualmente la UNESCO está trabajando en el desarrollo de un quinto pilar, añadido a los cuatro pilares clásicos de Delors. El quinto pilar es aprender a transformar como una competencia clave para las condiciones actuales y futuras de las sociedades. Esto supone que existan también oportunidades de formación ciudadana que movilicen a las personas hacia la participación en los asuntos que les afectan, y que éstos son más que aquellos que sólo se relacionan con su vida productiva (Hanemann, 2012).

Para la Comisión Europea, la escala de los cambios económicos y sociales actuales, la veloz transición hacia una sociedad basada en el conocimiento y las presiones demográficas resultantes del envejecimiento de la población en el continente, constituyen retos que demandan un nuevo enfoque educativo. De este modo, en el Memorandum sobre Aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, La Comisión Europea (2000) define el ALV como "toda actividad de aprendizaje realizada deliberadamente y de forma continua con el objeto de mejorar el conocimiento, las habilidades y la competencia". Esta definición tan breve y orientada hacia la vida productiva fue enmendada tres años (y muchas críticas) después para incluir "toda actividad de aprendizaje realizada a lo largo de la vida con el propósito de mejorar el conocimiento, las habilidades y competencias, desde una perspectiva personal, cívica, social y/o relacionada con el empleo" (Comisión Europea, 2003).

La CE ha desarrollado iniciativas múltiples con el objeto de empoderar a su ciudadanía para transitar entre países, regiones, entornos de aprendizaje y trabajo en búsqueda del aprendizaje (***v.g.*** los programas Sócrates, Comenius, Gundtvig, Erasmus, etc.). Estas iniciativas han posibilitado la participación de muchas personas en experiencias de aprendizaje estimulantes y han ayudado a forjar los sistemas educativos a lo largo y ancho de Europa. Sin embargo, las prioridades de política para el ALV, y para las estrategias educativas de los últimos dos planes de desarrollo (la Estrategia de Lisboa, 2000 y Europa 2020) parecen favorecer el desarrollo de competencias específicas que se presumen rentables y redituables.

En palabras de un miembro de la CE en el lanzamiento de la Zona Europea del ALV:

> "El fortalecimiento de las habilidades y competencias en la nueva economía en Europa requiere que el énfasis de la política gire hacia una mayor inversión en capital humano y en elevar la participación en educación y formación a lo largo de la vida productiva. Para seguir el paso de los desarrollos tecnológicos, de la globalización, del envejecimiento de la población, y de las nuevas prácticas de negocio, se debe prestar particular atención a la formación en y para el trabajo; una dimensión muy importante de nuestra estrategia de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida" (A Diamantopoulou, Miembro de la Comisión Europea en el lanzamiento del Área Europea de Aprendizaje a lo Largo de la Vida, 2006).

Ley de Aprendizaje a lo largo de la Vida del País Vasco

La propuesta de ley del ALV del País Vasco es consistente con la conceptualización de la Comisión Europea y muestra una fuerte tendencia hacia la formación profesional y las competencias para el trabajo. El apartado de exposición de motivos encuadra la Ley del ALV en el contexto de la "modernización de Europa del siglo XXI" en la que el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida es un "factor transformador decisivo" en la conversión de Europa en "una sociedad y en una economía del conocimiento avanzadas" (Gobierno Vasco, 2012, p.1).

Los esfuerzos de la Unión Europea hacia la configuración de una política educativa europea común, con las consiguientes reformas, adaptaciones y "nuevas demandas personales, sociales y profesionales de la ciudadanía" (Gobierno Vasco, 2012, p.2), junto con el "incremento del nivel educativo de la población y el aumento de la esperanza de vida"; la complejización de la sociedad, que requiere ser más "participativa, multicultural y sostenible"; y la rápida evolución tecnológica, social y económica (Gobierno Vasco, 2012, p.1) son elementos que caracterizan el escenario en el que situar la Ley.

En el marco europeo existen también distintos documentos, medidas y recomendaciones que inciden en el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. A éstas, se suma la legislación propia del Estado Español que sigue las directrices del Tratado de Lisboa (2000) y de la estrategia educativa del plan Europa 2020 (2010). Entre los documentos europeos que sirven a la exposición de motivos de la Ley, se han elegido varias recomendaciones del Parlamento Europeo y del Consejo relacionadas con el aprendizaje permanente, las cualificaciones, los créditos, y la formación profesional que tienen una estrecha relación con el objeto y definición de la Ley, sus fines, y el tipo predominante de instrumentos del sistema de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida que se contemplan en ella.

Asimismo, encontramos en la propuesta legal un énfasis en las competencias profesionales que se corresponde con las prioridades de la propia Comisión Europea o de la OCDE. Aunque la propuesta vasca intenta establecer una propuesta intermedia que combine tanto intereses personales como profesionales, y también de las personas y del mercado, el balance no parece muy equilibrado.

Las necesidades a las que pretende dar respuesta la ley ilustran el peso de estas cuestiones. Hay mucho mayor énfasis en la orientación hacia temas productivos o laborales, o en los términos de la ley "profesionales", que tienen que ver, fundamentalmente, con el empleo.

Por ejemplo, entre los fines del sistema de ALV están, según el punto 4, "adecuar la oferta formativa a las demandas sociales, y del entorno productivo" (p. 8). No obstante, tanto el tipo de "instrumentos del sistema de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida" (p. 11), el énfasis de los ámbitos de formación y los programas prioritarios para la financiación pública (pp. 12-13), y el gran peso del sistema integrado de formación profesional que establece la Ley (Título Segundo, pp. 16-26), el cual pareciera ser su estrategia más sólida, apuntan un desbalance hacia instrumentos, programas y recursos orientados a las "demandas sociales" o a los "intereses personales", pues no hay contenidos específicos que ayuden a darles forma, a diferencia de la claridad y precisión que se observa en lo que respecta al sistema integrado de formación profesional. El sistema integrado de orientación a lo largo de la vida (Título Tercero, pp. 29-32), que supone un elemento fundamental de la estrategia del sistema de ALV, abarca elementos del "ámbito de la formación y/o el empleo en cualquier momento de la trayectoria vital. En función del contexto y los objetivos la orientación a lo largo de la vida abarca las dimensiones: académica, profesional, personal y social" (p. 29), amplitud que dificulta la concreción de funciones, definiciones, etc. y que, además, corre el riesgo de deslizarse fácilmente hacia asuntos profesionales o laborales.

De la perspectiva de ALV que promueve la UNESCO se identifica una cierta influencia en la idea de "aprender a aprender". La Ley contempla, por ejemplo, entre sus fines, "promover una sólida cultura del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida", (p. 7) y "que cada persona desarrolle plenamente sus aptitudes para aprender" (p. 8), propósitos concretados en el sistema de Aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida que se caracterizará por promover métodos que "desarrollen la competencia de aprender a aprender" (Ídem).

Encontramos muchos méritos en la propuesta vasca, entre ellos destacan la interlocución social, la participación intersectorial, las múltiples formas de financiamiento y colaboración posibles. Hay diversos grupos poblacionales (sociales, profesionales, académicos, empresariales, sectoriales, ciudadanía en general, familias, alumnado, sindicatos, etc.), cuyas formas de involucramiento posibles o esperadas están claramente definidas, son variadas, abiertas, y hay un espacio consultivo (un Consejo) que se pretende que sea plural.

Asimismo, se prevén mecanismos para adecuaciones y aterrizajes en los ámbitos comarcal o local. Aparece el tema de la conciliación, el cual es muy propio del contexto vasco. En la Ley, la formación a distancia se concibe como una alternativa que favorece la conciliación de tiempos o actividades y se pone un claro énfasis en temas de calidad, evaluación e investigación, así como en la formación del personal.

No obstante estos méritos, la Ley presenta algunas limitaciones y ausencias importantes. La primera de estas limitaciones tiene que ver con una conceptualización incompleta y parcial del ALV, que se entiende en la propuesta como todo aquello que no es la educación formal; no hay una interconexión

con el sistema educativo formal, con las universidades y otras instituciones tradicionales que cada día más se piensan en clave de aprendizaje a lo largo y a lo ancho de la vida.

Además, no todos los factores que se ubican en el contexto de la Ley tienen una relación o traducción en ésta. Por ejemplo, no se alude en ningún sitio a tendencias o desafíos demográficos ni, particularmente, del envejecimiento de la población, asunto que suele ser crucial en las políticas de ALV, más aún en el entorno europeo. Tampoco aparece el tema del multiculturalismo o interculturalidad entre los fines ni objetivos explícitos o prioritarios de la Ley.

En segunda instancia, no se hace referencia a las sociedades del aprendizaje; a comunidades, ciudades o regiones de aprendizaje que, en la última década se han convertido en estrategias fundamentales para transversalizar la perspectiva del ALV y para pensar en esta misma clave las transformaciones e implicaciones para la política educativa en relación con otras políticas como aquéllas de tienen que ver con empleo, la planeación urbana, la política cultural, etc. Otra omisión fundamental es la referencia a las economías basadas en el conocimiento y a las dinámicas de innovación y desarrollo usualmente asociadas a éstas.

Entre los documentos europeos e internacionales que sirven a la exposición de motivos de la Ley, o para la definición de sus propósitos y características no se han incluido aquéllos que dotan a la noción de ALV de un cariz más holístico y de corte humanista como por ejemplo los principios de aprender a ser, aprender a convivir o los referentes a la posibilidad de agencia y transformación individual, social y cultural. Por un lado, la Ley incluye sólo parcialmente objetivos formativos y no otros de carácter más integral que incluyan el ocio, el esparcimiento o el desarrollo cultural. Podría pensarse que éstos están contemplados en el "desarrollo personal" o "social" que, según el texto de la propuesta, se busca favorecer a través del ALV, pero no se especifica así. Sólo hay una referencia en lo que se refiere a los programas complementarios de formación los cuales pueden contribuir al "desarrollo cultural y social de las personas" (p. 13).

Por otro lado, deja al margen todo objetivo de educación crítica. El texto no incluye una sola vez nociones como: "justicia", "pensamiento crítico", "democracia", "empoderamiento", "paz", y apenas se mencionan algunos elementos de carácter más sociopolítico, particularmente la cohesión social, término utilizado también, y de forma reiterada, por la Comisión Europea. El punto 2 del Artículo 1 sobre el objeto y definición de la Ley, dice: "El Gobierno de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco, en coordinación con otras administraciones públicas y los agentes educativos, sociales y económicos, promoverá el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida como medio de asegurar la promoción personal, la empleabilidad y la cohesión social" (p. 6), pero en el resto de la ley no se vuelve a recoger este énfasis; y se alude una vez a una dimensión cívica en el Art. 12 sobre los programas de formación: "3.- Además de los programas prioritarios el sistema de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida desarrollará programas complementarios que contribuyan al desarrollo cultural y social de las personas, así como al fomento de la participación social y ciudadana" (p. 13).

Se incluyen conceptos de especial relevancia para el contexto vasco, tales como "innovación" y "competencia emprendedora", pero no se definen ni aparecen de forma transversal o finamente

entrelazados con otros propósitos u orientaciones. Por ejemplo, la innovación y el emprendimiento podrían bien ser sociales y no sólo económicos como tradicionalmente se conciben. También podrían responder a necesidades apremiantes como hoy resulta la sustentabilidad ambiental, misma que no es mencionada en la propuesta.

Finalmente, la ley parece necesitar una mayor precisión conceptual alrededor de temas sustantivos. En el tema de las necesidades de los "aprendices" o de la población objetivo, no está claro cuál es la población objetivo, quiénes son, qué grupos sociales, ni cuáles son sus demandas (necesidades, intereses y aspiraciones) específicas. Este tema aparece de manera muy difusa en el texto; está presente en algunas ideas como la de responder a las "necesidades de formación permanente" de las personas, o de favorecer su "desarrollo personal, social y profesional". Sin embargo, nunca se define o caracteriza cuáles son o podrían ser esas dimensiones personal y social del desarrollo; por otro, las "personas destinatarias", particularmente las señaladas como "objeto de atención preferente". Esta definición, imprecisa como es, puede limitar la adaptabilidad de las oportunidades de aprendizaje a las necesidades e intereses de las personas, o al menos de todas las personas y de la diversidad social de la región.

Se habla de adecuaciones de materiales que den respuesta a "las necesidades formativas propias de la realidad socioeconómica, cultural y lingüística de la Comunidad Autónoma" (p. 15), pero no de las personas de la propia CAV; o de que "las administraciones, agentes sociales y entidades titulares de los servicios de orientación acordarán la formación básica y común para las personas de los distintos servicios de orientación, teniendo en cuenta las características del sector de población a los que cada uno se dirige" (p. 32) pero no aparece la diversidad de sujetos con intereses y demandas diferenciadas temática, contextual y pedagógicamente.

No se hace referencia a debates teórico-pedagógicos ni políticos respecto a conceptos clave de la Ley, como "educación", "aprendizaje", "formación", "formación permanente", e incluye otros como "actividad formativa", "enseñanzas", "adquisición de competencias" entre otros conceptos que parecieran utilizarse indistintamente. Esta falta de elaboración teórica o aclaraciones conceptuales derivan en el hecho de que tampoco haya un posicionamiento respecto a su uso e implicaciones, factor preocupante en vistas de su posible implementación.

Algunas tensiones no resueltas

Con el objeto de resolver y precisar algunas cuestiones que parecen planteadas superficialmente en la legislación propuesta, a continuación se presentan cinco tensiones para la conceptualización de la Ley del ALV y tres recomendaciones para poder dar pistas futuras para su implementación. Si bien el espacio aquí es limitado para desarrollarlas propiamente, me interesa al menos enunciarlas y explicarlas brevemente. Las tensiones que presento para su posterior consideración son:

1. La tensión entre educación y aprendizaje (como paradigmas orientadores)

2. La tensión entre adaptación y transformación (como metas del aprendizaje)
3. La tensión entre las sociedad del aprendizaje y las economías del conocimiento
4. La tensión entre el aprendizaje para la empleabilidad y el crecimiento económico (*lifelong earning*) y el aprendizaje para la inclusión social y la ciudadanía activa
5. La tensión entre las dimensiones individual y colectiva del aprendizaje (necesidades, demandas y aspiraciones)

En cuanto a las recomendaciones de abordaje en la Ley he identificado cuatro:

a) La necesidad de abordar directamente la influencia de las tendencias y organizaciones internacionales en la definición de agendas y políticas locales (proceso de construcción), y cómo aquéllas pueden responder a necesidades distintas o similares.

b) Caracterizar a los sujetos de la ley del ALV, a los distintos colectivos sociales, sus demandas, intereses, necesidades y aspiraciones de aprendizaje.

c) La necesidad de explicitar y contextualizar los desafíos locales y globales en los que se plantea la ley; abordar los desafíos demográficos (envejecimiento y migraciones), económicos (crisis, desempleo), sociales (marginación, exclusión y participación) y culturales (interculturalidad, identidades, capital cultural, etc.) actuales.

d) Preguntarse si la educación, o el aprendizaje, por sí mismos pueden resolver los problemas sociales, económicos, ambientales, culturales y políticos que se presenta en la región; cuáles sí y cuáles no, en qué mediada y con qué alcance. Estas preguntas apuntan hacia la necesidad de pensar en reformas sustantivas a los sistemas educativos y a desafíos importantes para la innovación social.

La tensión entre la educación y el aprendizaje

Aunque no desarrollaré aquí el resto de las tensiones, me parece importante abrir el primer nodo pues podría allanar el camino para el abordaje de las demás tensiones. Tomo como referencia los trabajos de Colin Grifin (1987, 1999a, 1999b) y de Licinio Lima (2007, 2011), autores que analizan las orientaciones políticas y estratégicas de la Unión Europea alrededor del aprendizaje y educación de personas adultas, a lo largo de las últimas dos décadas haciendo notar que el uso del concepto de educación (educación comunitaria, educación popular, educación a lo largo de la vida) parece cada vez menor. Según Lima (2011) igual que en otras instituciones internacionales, se prefiere ahora el concepto de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, a menudo más direccionado hacia la adquisición de cualificaciones, competencias o habilidades para el crecimiento, la productividad y la competitividad en términos económicos. La modernización y la adaptación funcional frente a los imperativos de la llamada "sociedad del aprendizaje" y "economía del conocimiento", más que la promoción del espíritu crítico y de la transformación económica y sociocultural, se constituyen ahora como los principales objetivos de las políticas de aprendizaje, basadas en conceptos más estrictos e instrumentalistas de

formación y aprendizaje. Las tendencias economicistas, tecnocráticas y de gestión del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida se basan "en un elogio hiperbólico de las capacidades todo-poderosas del aprendizaje para cambiar la economía y la sociedad. Se trata de un nuevo tipo de pedagogía de naturaleza económica y gerencial, basada en la creencia ingenua de que la educación lo hace todo y de que el aprendizaje todo lo puede" (Lima, 2011, p.12).

Ambos críticos señalan la erosión del concepto de educación y la adopción de una concepción limitada de un término que es potente en sí mismo; el del aprendizaje que se ha visto desvirtuado y limitado a buscar la adaptación de la población a las estructuras sociales, a la competitividad económica y a la búsqueda de empleabilidad en una lógica individualista (de competitividad) y pragmatista. El tránsito de la educación al aprendizaje, en términos amplios, representa numerosas oportunidades para la reforma y transformación educativa pues refuerza la preocupación por los sujetos y sus aprendizajes efectivos, mismos que los sistemas educativos formales muchas veces parecen incapaces de garantizar. Sin embargo, el cambio ocurrido en los discursos políticos, el desuso aparente del concepto educación (en el caso de la educación de adultos en particular) y la opción por el ALV ha sido utilizada para justificar el desplazamiento de las obligaciones del Estado hacia el mercado y hacia los propios individuos, entendiendo así la educación más bien como la prestación de un servicio mercadeable que como un bien público (Lima, 2007).

El reciente interés de las políticas, públicas y privadas, por los aprendizajes no formales e informales, de pronto descubiertos, elogian su potencialidad; especialmente si éstos están orientados hacia un desempeño competitivo, si contemplan competencias para competir, la adaptación a las necesidades de la economía, el emprendimiento y la empleabilidad. Emerge, así, una especie de nueva pedagogía, a la que Licinio Lima ha llamado "*pedagogía en contra del otro"* (2011). Al igual que en el mercado, "competir para progresar" parece el lema pedagógico propuesto, reproduciendo el principio liberal que afirma que sin rivalidad no hay progreso (Ídem).

Si bien hoy sería irresponsable concebir la educación de espaldas a la economía, los problemas del trabajo y del desempleo. Esto, sin embargo, no significa que podamos aceptar que la educación, la formación y el aprendizaje renieguen sus responsabilidades éticas y políticas, de lectura crítica de la realidad social, de profundización de la ciudadanía y de la democracia. No pueden, por lo tanto, adoptar una posición de adaptación funcional a los imperativos del nuevo capitalismo, reduciendo el aprendizaje y la educación a lo largo de la vida a la educación y formación vocacional, o profesional, no obstante la relevancia de ésta. "El aprendizaje y la educación no pueden ignorar la economía, no pueden adoptar una posición pasiva, de subordinación, reclinadas ante la fuerza de los intereses económicos que nadie ha elegido y de un mercado que, por definición, no busca producir justicia social." (Lima, 2011, p. 23).

El peligro de centrarse en el aprendizaje, como señala Nesbit, es que éste se enfoca en los individuos, es descontextualizado, y se adopta más o menos fácilmente "por aquéllos que creen que la educación supone adherirse a, en vez de desafiar, las ortodoxias sociales" (2006, *cit. pos*. Boshier, 2011, p. 82). La educación y el ALV implican diferencias importantes. "La educación es un proceso sistemático, un derecho y un servicio que se provee. La educación a lo largo de la vida requiere que alguien, generalmente el gobierno u otras agencias, desarrollen políticas y destinen recursos

que promuevan la interacción entre un amplio abanico de entornos de aprendizaje informales, no formales y formales. Deben tomarse decisiones deliberadas. La educación a lo largo de la vida es un sustantivo, un nombre, el nombre de un concepto maestro o angular para la reforma educativa" (Boshier, 2011, p. 82). El ALV anida, también, una noción del aprendiz como un individuo autónomo y como un consumidor que tiene la responsabilidad de aprovechar las oportunidades disponibles. Si no lo hace, es su culpa. Es decir, se culpa a la víctima en vez de superar las barreras estructurales o socioculturales para la participación. Ejemplos de ello se encuentran en las reiteradas llamadas a una "segunda oportunidad" de las políticas de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, como si hubiese habido una primera oportunidad accesible para todos, y como si la primera hubiera sido lo suficientemente relevante y pertinente como para que no se necesitara una segunda.

Conclusiones

Las últimas décadas han revelado un complejo proceso de cambio tanto conceptual como de orientación política, volviendo más tenue el origen democrático y emancipador del ideal de educación y prefiriendo realzar las capacidades adaptativas y funcionales traducidas en una visión reducida del ALV. Aunque existe un cierto consenso alrededor de que los procesos de globalización y modernización tienen implicaciones profundas para la teoría y la práctica educativas, la forma en que los problemas son definidos y la manera de enmarcar las soluciones potenciales para éstos varían ampliamente. Por un lado, hay quienes ponen un énfasis primordial en la competitividad global en la que el ALV es visto como un ingrediente crítico para el éxito económico. Por el otro, hay otras voces que subrayan la existencia de patrones globales de desigualdad, de desarrollo inequitativo y de destrucción ecológica y que conciben las nuevas formas de aprendizaje social como un ingrediente crítico para la movilización para el logro de patrones de desarrollo sustentables y participativos.

Concluyo que, en toda su diversidad, considerando su naturaleza multiforme, la educación y el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida no tienen por vocación ignorar los problemas de la economía y de la sociedad, del trabajo y del empleo. Pero su proyecto humanista difícilmente resistiría a la adopción de una posición de subordinación, sometido por la fuerza de la competitividad económica, siendo transformado en programas más o menos estrictos de "entrenamiento" de los recursos humanos y de "cualificación" de la fuerza del trabajo (Lima, 2011).

Por ello es importante revisar los significados y los significantes (simbólicos, políticos, económicos, pedagógicos, etc.) de los términos clave del ALV y particularmente de la propuesta de ley que hasta aquí se ha analizado. Muchos de los conceptos claves del ALV son utilizados de manera ambigua, por ejemplo, la noción de educación "no formal" puede aplicarse a los sistemas, a las maneras de aprender, o a las actividades o contextos para el aprendizaje. Además, se confunde el aprendizaje con la educación. "Toda educación (en contextos formales o informales) supuestamente implica aprendizaje, pero no todo aprendizaje supone educación" (Bohsier, 2011, p. 85). La ciudadanía en general aprende la mayor parte de las cosas en entornos informales, mucho menos que en los no formales, y menos aún en los contextos formales. Sin embargo, poco se sabe sobre las maneras en que el aprendizaje en un contexto se relaciona con el aprendizaje en otro. Esta confusión respecto al

uso de los términos afecta negativamente la habilidad de los políticos para vislumbrar la educación y el ALV de una forma holística y sistemática.

Coincido con Shirley Walters (2011) en que lo que se necesita es pensar en clave de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. En términos generales, si el ALV se toma en serio como filosofía y aproximación, éste desafía las maneras de contemplar las identidades individuales y colectivas, hay distintas nociones sobre el conocimiento, y también, relaciones de poder cambiantes, que se relacionan con objetivos sociales y económicos en disputa. El ALV puede resultar muy desafiante para las identidades de las personas, para las comprensiones epistemológicas, y para las relaciones de poder. Hay objetivos sociales en disputa, y por tanto, luchas. Esto apuntala la importancia de acuerdos nacionales y de políticas generales y marcos legislativos para el ALV.

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04

"Democratising Education Policy Making or Legitimising Discourse? An analysis of the Lifelong Learning Law in the Basque Country"

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Democratising education policy making or legitimising discourse? An analysis of the new Lifelong Learning Law in the Basque Country

Key words: policy making, democratization, lifelong learning, adult education, learners' voice.

Abstract

This paper looks into the orientation and purposes of a Lifelong Learning Law that was sanctioned in the Basque Country in 2013, and whose formation process entailed a year-long consultation with different local stakeholders. Although the consideration of diverse agents -other than political players- in policy making is a very valuable element for the democratisation of public policy, the paper poses serious questions as to the extent to which non-state actors may take part in the policy and decision making processes, and underscores the differences in the scope and influence of their actions, perspectives and proposals.

In view of the increasing popularity of evidence based approaches, which rely on the evidence gathered by research and enquiries -usually carried out by experts and academicians aiming at informing policy developments- the paper raises concern about the prominent role these actors have, and the predilection for these in spite of other stakeholders. From a social construction framework, it is argued that the incorporation of experts to policy making belongs to a certain way of crafting policy, one that is top-down, while the idea of democratic policy making requires an inverse design; a bottom-up method that may enable the practitioners who implement programmes and strategies, and those receiving the educational services, to be co-participants and to share responsibility in the ideation and effectuation of education policy.

Finally, the analysis goes back to the Basque experience by identifying the interests and standpoints in the discourse of the final text; thus, recognising the narratives that have been undertaken in the legal document, and pointing out the power imbalances that have caused the needs, demands and aspiration of the most vulnerable learners to be left out of the new law.

Introduction

Lifelong learning and public policy

The transition from education to lifelong learning and the conceptualisations of the latter can be read from many different angles, the most frequent being that of pedagogical changes. However, the shifts in educational discourse have not often been accompanied by an understanding that lifelong learning, like education, is itself a public affair which, as such, is also a matter of public concern since the repercussions of learning –or the lack of learning opportunities and capabilities- transcend the

individual spectrum and have societal consequences that affect us all. Inasmuch as lifelong learning contributes to the betterment of quality of life, and enhances human development and economic growth, it is a matter of public attention and an object of public policy, particularly in a learning society.

Lasswell (1956) described the public dimension of life as all human activity which is regarded as requiring governmental or social regulation, intervention, or at least common action. That is the case of lifelong learning today. The fact that lifelong learning is a public affair can be explained, at least, by three factors. Firstly, because, like education, it is a human right; secondly, because the wider benefits of learning have proven to be ample; and thirdly, because the operationalization of lifelong learning entails cross-sectoral efforts, and the convergence and action of many different stakeholders.

Lifelong learning as an object of public policy demands a multifocal and intersectoral approach. One that may include the areas that constitute lifelong learning (e.g., formal and non-formal education, and informal learning) or that may be affected by it (e.g., health, employment, democratization, security), and that includes the different actors at the governmental (ministries, agencies), and non-governmental (civil society organisations, industry, think-tanks, international agencies and associations) levels. However, public policy has been traditionally thought of as a field concerning solely governments. An example of this may be found in several sources. For example, Sabatier states that: "In the process of public policymaking, problems are conceptualized and brought to government for solution; governmental institutions formulate alternatives and select policy solutions; and those solutions get implemented, evaluated, and revised" (Sabatier, 2007; 3). The consideration of different actors other than political players in the policy formation process has been a trend in policy studies for a few decades now. Certainly the works of Harold Lasswell pioneered the democratisation of policy making and the public character of certain issues that, as such, may not be solely decided upon by politicians and government officials, not without due consideration of their constituents, and that of the concerning target populations and overall stakeholders.

As put forth by Luis F. Aguilar "Policy is more than the supreme decision of the legitimately elected or appointed authorities, the great decision is conditioned and limited by the preceding decisions of multiple governmental, political and social actors, who, from their interdependent positions, prepare, configure, focus or broaden the policy" (Aguilar, 2005, p. 24; Cited in Flores-Crespo, 2008). Still, there are serious questions in the field of policy analysis as to how much these other non-state actors can take part in the decision and policy making processes, and there are also differences in the scope and influence of their actions, analyses and proposals (Vargas, 2009). A paradigmatic example is that of evidence based policy making, an approach that relies on the evidence gathered by research and inquiries usually carried out by experts and academicians that aim at informing the policy development process. Although this is certainly a right way of identifying good practice, and of shedding light on a particular issue, there is concern as to the extent to which the role of experts, usually called in by politicians, democratises the policy and decision making processes. Santizo (2008; cited in Flores-Crespo, 2008, p. 14) sustains that the incorporation of experts belongs to a certain way of crafting policy, one that is top-down, while the idea of governance requires an

inverse design; a bottom-up method that may enable the practitioners who execute programmes and strategies, and those receiving the educational services, to be co-participants and to share responsibility for the realisation of such actions.

Thinking of policy making as an evidence based practice requires, of course, gathering evidence, but doing so cautiously; defining what counts as evidence and whose evidence is sought and taken into consideration to inform policy making. As Parsons puts it "…'what works' is about what works for whom, when and how? or what kind of evidence works for what kind of problem or policy in what context, and for whom?" (2002, p. 57) This post-positivistic approach to evidence based policy making complements the usual 'hard facts' with analyses of policy orientations and narratives; it aims at clarifying values and contextualising problems; it tends to look further and reach out to different stakeholders in addition to experts and bureaucrats.

The narratives that are accounted for in the process, starting with the formulation of the policy object, are paramount in identifying the phenomena that a certain policy is meant to address. The active participation of all stakeholders is desirable starting from the formulation phase, more so in the presence of power imbalances, and when meanings need to be negotiated. However, not all stakeholders' narratives carry the same weight. These power differentials and their effects will be discussed in the following section by using a social construction framework.

The social construction of target populations

In analysing the construction of a Lifelong Learning Law for the Basque Country (i.e. Euskadi) that was passed in October 2013, I have chosen to use a social construction framework in order to analyse the actors that took part in such endeavour, and the narratives and agendas inscribed in the final text. At the same time, I attempt to examine how robust and useful this approach might be when applied to education policy, considering that the esteem by which certain groups are held might be highly dependent upon the outcomes of education itself. This framework posits that the target populations of any given policy are socially constructed by policy makers, and society at large; this means that policy makers typically deem different social groups in positive and negative terms, and that they distribute benefits and burdens so as to reflect and perpetuate these constructions (Ingram, Schneider & DeLeon, 2007).

The analysis of target populations proposed by Ingram and Schneider (1991, 1993, 1995, 2005) rests on the assumption of social constructionists that social problems are deemed problems (are constructed) by different groups of society by means of political actions and understandings; and as such, social problems are never neutral or objective phenomena that are passively waiting for examination and resolution. Rather, the interpretations and definition of problems, and their placement in the public agenda, depend upon how reality is observed and understood. This includes, of course, the narratives, values and beliefs that shape our worldviews, and what we consider to be a problem worth of public attention; a policy object.

Evidently, these values and the ways in which we conceptualise social problems vary amongst societies and social groups. The same can be said about how we envision the solutions to any given problem; that is, how policy is formulated, and who benefits – or suffers- from the effectuation of policy. This is what the proponents of the framework call target populations. They identify them as "those groups actually chosen to receive benefits and burdens through the various elements of policy design" (Ingram, Schneider & DeLeon, 2007, p. 95). This includes how policy objectives, and the implementation mechanisms (e.g., tools, rules, legislation, programmes) are defined and legitimated. In turn, policy legitimation depends upon the coherence of these conceptualisations with those of the general public, and on a certain consensus around the logic and soundness of the problem construction and of the solutions ideated for it.

These policy designs, the authors claim, are pondered by target groups as reflecting their needs (or not) and as relevant or irrelevant to the problems they perceive. This "sends implicit messages about how important their problems are to government and whether their participation is likely to be effective" (Ingram, Schneider & DeLeon, 2007, p. 96). Consequently, policy designs, according to this framework, also have symbolic and instrumental means of shaping institutions and influencing culture, public opinion, and government decisions. The symbolic means have to do with how target populations are constructed, while the instrumental relates to how institutions (e.g., government) conform with and reinforce these constructions. A clear example, as we shall see further on, is how government may give preference to certain groups (e.g., scientist, entrepreneurs) over other in the policymaking dynamics.

The social construction of target populations sustains that policymakers construct different population groups as deserving or undeserving (Ingram & Schneider, 2005) of policy attention and, I argue, of participating in the formulation or effectuation of public policies. Ingram and Schneider (1991) suggest a typology of target populations that includes four categories: advantaged, contender, dependant, and deviant target populations. Ingram, Schneider and DeLeon (2007, pp. 101-104) explain the typology as follows:

a) Advantaged groups have high levels of political power resources and enjoy positive social construction as deserving people. They are deemed important in the political and social hierarchy and are likely to receive benefits in public policy and to be treated with respect.

b) Contender groups have substantial political resources but are negatively regarded as relatively selfish, untrustworthy, and morally suspect; and thus politically powerful but undeserving. They are likely to receive benefits because of their political power but these tend to be difficult to locate in the midst of obscure and complicated legislation. They are also subjected to harsh rhetoric about their shortcomings.

c) Dependents are positively constructed as deserving, at least in terms of sympathy and pity. Their lack of political power significantly limits the benefits they may receive. They are perceived as good people but less deserving than advantaged groups due to the fact that, unlike the latter, they do not play a role in the creation of national wealth. This group is usually the first to suffer from budget cuts in economic downturns, and the last to enjoy the benefits of growth. These benefits, when provided, tend to be heavy on rhetoric and low on financing.

d) Deviants lack both political power and a positive social construction, and tend to receive a disproportionate share of burdens and sanctions; they are blamed for the ills of society and usually punished through public policy.

It is reasoned that these constructions count when allocating benefits and burdens, but also in choosing policy partners with whom to share decision-making processes. These groups are defined by two main factors. On the one hand, by their political power and resources; for example, their size, cohesion, wealth, skills, mobilisation and interlocution potential, and, on the other, by their valence i.e. how they are positively or negatively constructed as more or less worthy and deserving (Ingram & Schneider, 2003).

I have chosen to use this approach because the social construction framework seems to be useful not only for understanding who benefits from change, but also -and most importantly for the purpose of this paper- whether change impacts the conditions of democracy and vice versa. I pay particular attention to these constructions and how they play a part of policy design because it may help "…explain why public policy, which can have such a positive effect on society, sometimes -and often deliberately- fails in its nominal purpose, fails to solve important public problems, perpetuates injustice, fails to support democratic institutions, and produces an unequal citizenship" (Ingram, et al., 2007, p. 93).

With the aim of unveiling the unstated reasons behind the obliteration of the most vulnerable learners in the construction of the new Lifelong Learning Law in the Basque Country, and in order to explore the possibility for their voices to be heard, this framework is used in analysing the participation of different target groups in the formulation process and the implementation mechanisms.

Social constructions may become viewed as natural conditions, which bring into consideration the concept of hegemony -when the perspective of the dominant social group is taken for granted as the right way of interpreting events and circumstances. This, in turn, poses the classical question "Can the subaltern speak?" (cf. Spivak, 1990), and to what extent the possibility of the subaltern subject to raise their voice and be heard depends on personal and social agency, or on systemic impossibilities.

Methodology

The analysis undertaken is part of an ongoing project that researches policy making in the field of lifelong learning, and which takes the Basque Country as a case study. The theoretical perspectives utilised include ideas derived from social constructivism (cf. Bernstein, 2000; Young, 2008) about democratic access to knowledge -other than vocational and pragmatic- as a necessity for individuals to draw from and contribute to society. Also, theories of policy design, like the above mentioned framework, are tested in an attempt to understand the logics and power relations underpinning the democratization of the policy processes.

Primary and secondary data have been collected and subjected to content analysis using a collaborative social research approach which according to Berg (2001) may be undertaken if the research aims at accomplishing some change or action. This approach has also been used in the selection of interviewees who have provided valuable primary data about the construction of the Lifelong Learning Law at hand. A total of 12 interviews were carried out with current and former policy makers in charge of education and lifelong learning in the Basque Country, and with coordinators and teachers of different lifelong learning programmes who took part in the consultation process toward the LLL Law. Likewise, the content and discourse of Basque policy documents and reports regarding LLL legislation, directives, programmes and initiatives were analysed by "systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Berg, 2001, p. 240). Both policy documents and interview transcripts have been treated as text for the purpose of content analysis.

The construction of the Basque LLL Law

LLL is not new to the Basque Country. Ever since the consultation of the European Commission on its proposed Memorandum on LLL, and its ensuing publication (2000), the term has been part of the government's and other social actors' discourse and preoccupations. The Basque Government has been very active in promoting LLL as an organising principle of education policy. The buy-in was such that, in 2001, the Basque Ministry of Education's structure was changed to accommodate a new Vice-ministry for VET and LLL. The new Vice-ministry had among its functions to "design, define, and perform the necessary LLL actions for the implementation of a model that may introduce us into the new knowledge society, so that we may benefit from its opportunities" (Basque Government, 2001).

A year later, the Government passed a decree (298/2002) under which the MoE offered financial aid to support "…the development of useful learning actions in any area of knowledge, in the context of LLL, with the purpose of promoting active citizenship by enhancing the professional qualifications; the competencies, and aptitudes of people over 25 years old" (Basque Government, 2002, p. 233). This financial aid has been provided almost uninterruptedly (2013 being the exception), on a yearly basis. The decree justifies the object of the financial aid in the structural changes implied in the transition towards a knowledge economy "…in which it is increasingly important that the population acquire an adequate, appropriate, and varied level of knowledge, aptitudes and competencies". It is argued that "the improvement in people's competencies and abilities has a positive impact on the region's economic performance, and on social cohesion, contributing to the permanent employability of people and their active citizenship" (Idem).

One constant tension in the Basque initiatives has been that of adopting LLL, on the one hand, as a means for taking part in the knowledge society and improving employment rates and economic growth, while on the other promoting active citizenship and personal wellbeing among the citizenry. This tension was addressed in the White Paper on Lifelong Learning "The Basque Country: a Learning Region" produced in 2003, which conceptualized LLL in a so-called triple dimension that included innovation, social inclusion, and active citizenship. Although the white paper defined

specific objectives for each of the three dimensions, and urged "all institutions working in the LLL area to prepare a strategic plan for the 2004-2006 period" (Basque Government, 2003, p. 37), these plans were never monitored, and the white paper, along with LLL, took an impasse in education policy until 2009, when the MoE decided to write a new law for LLL.

In November 2009, the MoE and the Basque Agency for Innovation (Innobasque) organized a consultation process to define the "strategic axes", contents, purpose, and scope of the legal text. A total of 146 public and private institutions from the Basque Country were invited along with economic and social agents that "are committed to education and LLL and to the implementation of a learning culture" to contribute to the basis and foundations of the law, and to posit their concerns (Innobasque, 2010). Among the most numerous participants were representatives of schools and education institutions (37% of the total), Adult Education Centres (18%), Enterprises and training centres (12%), Government officials (9%), NGOs (8%), and *Berritzegunes* i.e. Training and Educational Innovation Support Centres (7%). Surprisingly, none of the participants in the discussions were learners from these institutions and organizations.

The consultation process consisted of 8 working sessions dedicated to arriving at a consensus around the mission and vision of LLL in Euskadi (LLL culture and Euskadi as a learning country); completing the basic factors that must be included in Euskadi's LLL Law, and defining the content, development and scope of such factors (Innobasque, 2010; 14). The abovementioned factors refer to three challenges and the "areas to be included" in the LLL Law, as determined by workshop participants.

The three challenges included; firstly, cultural change, the valorization of LLL and the obstacles to pursue LLL. Secondly, an integrated system for the recognition and accreditation of LLL and priority groups for the system, and lastly, the resources and quality of the LLL system.

The legal text

The final text of the LLL Law was passed in October 2013 and, like many other European countries, it assumes the definition, goals, and benchmarks inscribed in European Commission documents and directives (e.g., Lisbon Stategy, Europe 20202, Memorandum on LLL), and adapts them to the Basque context; "the promotion of LLL to enable the personal, social and professional development of individuals, and their contribution towards the social and economic development of Euskadi" (BOPV, 2013, pp. 5-6). Whereas the objective of the law is clear, the definition of its target population is not. The document defines the target population as "…every person residing in the Basque Country that undertakes a learning activity subsequent to their initial training, or those who continue with their trajectories of personal and social development, or of improvement and updating of their professional qualifications" (BOPV, 2013, p. 7). This definition of the target population is rather vague considering that the glossary of the law defines 'initial training' as "the training carried out within the education system, regardless of its duration, including higher education, from the beginning of schooling until its end due desertion or the transition to the labour market" (BOPV, 2013, p. 6).

From this definition, it can be presumed that the target population includes school leavers, including those who do not complete higher education; school and/or university graduates who went into employment at any stage of their education; anybody who pursues their social or personal development, or who wants to improve and update their qualifications. Following this formulation, every person living in the Basque Country would fall under the stated target population of the law. Although this is a very commendable feature of the law, it is very difficult to implement specific programmes targeting such a large and diverse target. This is probably why the legislation mandates that "those with lower qualifications or at risk of social or labour market exclusion, and those with special learning needs, be object of preferential attention" (BOPV, 2013, p. 7).

The emphasis in this particular target population is reaffirmed in the action areas defined by the legislation, these include: the acquisition and development of basic competences; the attainment of non-tertiary certificates from the education system; professional qualifications and certificates; higher education degrees; linguistic competences in the official languages of the Basque Country and other languages; and non-formal education for personal and social development as well as for cultural enrichment (BOPV, 2013). The programmes that take priority for public funding, as stated by the law, also reflect this spirit. They comprise basic education and literacy (in both Spanish and Basque), vocational education and training (VET), professional certificates (continuing education), programmes conducive to access to VET and higher education, continuing professional development (up-skilling and re-skilling), and basic ICT training (BOPV, 2013).

Although the programme areas prioritised by law are diverse and would probably fit the needs of the target population (i.e. learners at risk of social exclusion), the mechanism set forth by the same legal text show a predisposition for vocationalism. Amongst others, the instruments foreseen entail the establishment of an Integrated System for VET; a mechanism for the recognition and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning; a Lifelong Guidance System; a Distance Education Institute, and a Council for LLL. It remains to be seen how these mechanisms and bodies will be instrumented, and how the Basque Lifelong Learning Plan will be crafted. Regarding the latter, the law stipulates that the plan should promote universal and equitable access to LLL to foster social inclusion; promote a solid culture of LLL; and improve skills, knowledge, and competences for employability. However, it remains uncertain how the Plan will foster social inclusion and a LLL culture since, as stated by law, the Plan will be the responsibility of the Council which must "…attend to the directives derived from the Basque Employment Service, and the Basque Council for VET" (BOPV, 2013, p. 26).

This impetus for employment and the consequent absence of other forms of promoting social inclusion and active citizenship in the law; its areas and instruments, may well be a result of the different levels of influence of the interlocutors that participated in the formulation process of the text, and the consultation process. Following the taxonomy proposed above, we may be able to identify, at least, four advantaged and two contender groups that took part in consultation and formulation processes, and one dependent group who did not.

The advantaged groups included: i. university professors, ii. school teachers, iii. government officials, iv. business and employer associations. According to Ingram and Schneider, these target population

enjoys a positive social construction and is well respected; their opinions are considered expert, based on science and/or experience. Both during the consultation process and in the final text, the recommendation of these actors can be easily identified: the emphasis in competence development and accreditation, and the overall role of education institutions are an illustration of the inputs educationist were able to put forward. Likewise, the impetus for employment, VET, and meeting the labour market needs were posited, mainly, by the productive sector and the government. The latter also promoted issues regarding the governance of the system and a relevant role of the Employment Services Agency in the whole process. While the suggestions elaborated by these groups made it to the final legal text, many of those put forth by the contender groups did not.

The contender group was formed mainly by some civil society associations and unions. Even though these actors were invited to the consultation process, some of their recommendations were not recollected in the legal text. Some examples of these was the need to address work-life balance and learning times and formats so that they would benefit –instead of burdening- workers (Innobasque, 2010). The same happened to some NGO suggestions concerning promoting equity and participation of the most vulnerable groups. In particular, it was suggested that the groups at risk of social exclusions be identified and explicitly referred to in the legal text; that the obstacles they face towards social inclusion be made explicit and addressed by the law and the learning areas and programmes proposed (Innobasque, 2010, p. 104). These and other suggestions, like the implementation of affirmative action policies, and the provision of educational services free of charge –including indirect costs of participation- were also dismissed in the final legal text.

Concerning the dependent group, this is composed by the social groups at risk of social exclusion. As has been mentioned, this group of learners and potential learners was not invited to the consultation process, and although some NGOs tried to represent them in the process, their views were obviously not taken into consideration. These will be evidenced in the following section.

Consultation results: contradictions and omissions

Amongst the consultation structure, preliminary basis, and results, a series of recommendations have been identified which necessarily call for the inputs form learners.

For instance, it was concluded that the strategies to be followed in order to develop the future LLL Law must be both coherent and global. Coherence was viewed as complying with some European Commission recommendations[1] which, according to Innobasque, were ratified by those participating in the consultation. For the purpose of this paper, it is curious to notice that these recommendations stress that LLL is a task that "concerns society as a whole, and that the responsibilities of each party need to be defined" (Innobasque, 2010, p. 16). Accordingly, the document affirms that

1. The recommendations stated in Innobasque's conclusions do not belong to one single European Commission document; rather they have been mentioned in a multiplicity of EU directives, memoranda, white papers, and recommendations. Among others, these include: collaborative work; creating learning culture; the search for excellence; the continuous, social, flexible, integrating, and innovative nature of LLL.

the responsibility of public administrations lies in "providing the necessary means to guarantee educational opportunities to all citizens" (Idem). It is also stated that social interlocutors (i.e. third sector and unions) are responsible for promoting agreements and collective negotiations that might enable workers' participation in LLL. Finally, it argues that it is the citizenry's responsibility to "… become aware of the value of training in order to access employment, to keep their jobs, and to participate actively in society" (Idem).

Likewise, in creating a learning culture, the document stresses the importance of active citizenship, and of promoting participatory attitudes among all citizens (p.17). In this respect, the document emphasises that the LLL system must "prioritize those actions that ensure equity in access and participation of excluded groups" (p. 19). Universal access requires these groups to be identified along with the barriers they face to access education. It would seem like the most accurate way of finding this out is through the active participation of these collectivities in the process of designing and implementing the law. Sadly, these groups were not invited to the discussion table.

Another element that was present in the discussion of the LLL Law is that of motivation. The discussants were concerned as to how much of the success of LLL depends on how motivated learners may be to look for and enter educational programmes, and to make the best of learning opportunities. They argued that "without motivation, there will be no achievement or commitment" (p.21); however, no remarks are made as to what this motivation depends upon, or how motivations may vary across learners and groups.

In addition to a vast and dynamic offer of education and learning opportunities, there was discussion on the importance of orientation and information services for learners that may allow them to shape their own learning paths and itineraries. These services were thought of with the idea of linking formal and non-formal education, establishing professional profiles, favoring continuity and progression in education. The results of the consultation made clear reference to a threefold objective of counseling and orientation: a) informing the public about the labour market demands for qualifications; b) informing institutions so that they may redesign their education programmes and policies; c) informing the productive sector so that "social consensuses" may be reached (p. 22). Although promoting "the autonomy of the person and their capacity to decide as to their personal and professional development" was seen as the main objective of the orientation services, the first instance for deciding the kind of system learners would like to be involved in was cancelled along with the possibility of them introducing their aspirations and motivations in the consultation.

The consultation stated that continuous assessments of education needs should be carried out, and that some sort of mechanism should be put in place in order to adapt the educational offer to the country's social, labour, and economic needs; to adapt education to local reality; and to adapt the education catalogue to the needs of people in the different stages of their lives. The discussants concluded that these analyses should be based on social dialogue and rigorous studies and that an observatory that might be able to diagnose the learning needs and expectation of the general public and of organizations should be put in place.

A shift in mindsets and cultural change were regarded in the consultation as fundamental elements in promoting and valuing LLL. This, along with the intentions stated in both, the consultation and the legal text, of building learning communities and a learning society are difficult to imagine without the participation of learners. The conclusions of the consultation process also cite the need of promoting "…proactive attitudes towards LLL among the Basque society…and the acknowledgment of the value of participatory learning processes" (p.31).

Another one of the conclusions reached by those consulted was the need "to move from the conception of the person as an object of education, to be a subject in education" (p. 33). This is possibly one of the most representative conclusions regarding learner participation reached in the process, and, at the same time, an example of the incoherence between the consultation, its recommendations, and the actual legal text passed in October 2013. In the perspective of the discussants, this entails the possibility of allowing people to "define their own learning itineraries… and to be protagonist of the process" (Idem). Placing the person at the centre of learning also means responding to individual needs, and this in turns means creating a system that is adaptable to such needs, according to the different situations and characteristics of learners and employers. This adaptability and flexibility concerns the contents, schedules, methods and places of learning, as well as identifying the obstacles that people face in accessing the LLL system.

The discussants also addressed the areas and social groups that should have taken priority in the new LLL law. One of which is those who are vulnerable and who have been excluded from learning opportunities.

As to the omissions, these represent the critiques and ideas that, although expressed repeatedly in the consultation, did not make it to the final text of the law. Some of the most important are:

a) That the definition of LLL tends to be too instrumentalist and economic driven. The discussants argued that LLL goes beyond the economic rationality and that a more holistic approach should be taken in defining the purpose of the LLL law. It was mentioned that the bottom-line of the system should be personal development and that of society as a whole. It was suggested that clarifying this would allow to frame the kind of actions and support that could be derived from the law (Innobasque, 2009, p. 20).

b) That when speaking of education, it is natural that the discussions circulate around the institutions that provide education and training; their coordination and organizational processes, but that if we want to address learning the debates should resonate the learners' interest. It was mentioned that "in a learning system, the persons and their learning needs –not educational institutions-should be at the center" (Innobasque, 2011, p. 11).

c) That the specific groups that the LLL law is supposed to address are not mentioned in the text of the legislation. It was mentioned that target groups should have been defined.

d) That although discussants were happy to take part in the consultation, some of them presented a certain disillusion regarding what happened to their inputs. They argue that,

even though some of their testimonies were picked up in the first part of the legal text (the opening remarks and consideration in the preamble) these inputs have not been further developed or addressed in the actual legal text (the binding articles). Participants mentioned that they thought their insights had been accepted by the MoE, and therefore expected a text that was closer to their contributions, certainly not what has been published.

From the testimony of participants gathered through the discussions sessions organized by Innobasque, and through fieldwork and data collection, it is clear that the arguments posed by certain groups were incorporated into the final text of the law (overall, the contributions from universities, enterprises and government agencies) while others were left out or marginalized to the least substantive sections of the document (those of NGOs, unions, and cooperation agencies).

Power Imbalance and Agenda Setting

Looking at the final text of the law, it is easy to see the preeminence of the economy over some other valuable goals and purposes of LLL; namely those aiming at promoting democracy, active citizenship, and personal fulfilment. The final legal text also places great emphasis on professional competences, and when the civic and personal dimensions of learning are recalled, they are orientated towards the labour and productive returns they encompass.

Besides the inspirational sources of the law; visibly, human capital development and competition in the knowledge economy, the instruments of the system of LLL also underscore professional development and, particularly, vocational education and training for which there is one complete section of the law, as there is another for the creation of a Distance Education Institute.

Likewise, there are important absences in the legal text as to the target populations. While the text mentions that preference will be given to learners "with low qualifications, in risk of social exclusion; excluded from the labour market; and those with special education needs" (Basque Government, 2013, p. 7), the diversity of these and the larger public is not accounted for. The issue of multi and interculturalism does is not present in the Basque law, and neither are other important issues. Lacking in the legal text are notions of justice, critical thinking, democracy, empowerment, peace, and sustainability as purposes or challenges of LLL under the new law (Vargas, 2013).

The fact that some groups have more power that others and that they can put forward their views and agendas over those of less powerful groups, is nothing new. The legal text reflects this differential between the emphasis on employment and vocationalism, and the overall absence of the social dimension of learning. Even though a vast majority of participants in the consultation came from the realm of education and civil society organisations, and that only 13 percent came from enterprises, and a mere 3% from commerce chambers (i.e. an accumulated 15% of economic agents, so to speak), the employability agenda succeeded to permeate the LLL law. It should be mentioned that most interviewees –including educators and those from the third sector- also mention employment as one of the most important purposes of LLL, and that in the current economic downturn, the employability agenda has gained momentum in the Basque Country.

In addition to the power imbalances between those who participated and defined the LLL law, another preoccupation of this paper is the disregard for learners. Civil society organisations and educators have mentioned that they tried to carry the voice of learners to the consultation, particularly that of the most underprivileged; however, it is worrisome that learners themselves were not invited to the consultation process, and that their problems, needs and expectations have thus been overlooked. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent this impetus might have been different had learners taken part in the consultation. On the one hand, there is the issue of the subaltern subjects and the possibility of dominant discourse reproduction, while, on the other, the situation of disenfranchisement of learners (e.g., adults taking part in the subsidised LLL programmes) that might yield to a confirmation of employment and qualifications as the most important goals of the law.

As held by social constructionists, it can be viewed that the allocation of benefits and burdens to target groups in public policy depends upon the extent of their political power, and their positive or negative social construction on the deserving or undeserving axis. Interviews with former policy makers confirm that the most marginalized groups and adult learners were "harmless politically" and could therefore be disregarded without much farther ado. Also it has been mentioned that "investing in non-productive citizens could be viewed as a luxury…particularly because they did not make a public demand of educational services" (Informant 4). This point confirms some of the postulates of the social construction framework.

In the case of adult learners, particularly those who are most marginalized, this lack of power represents a vicious circle, since they cannot claim their right to education and hence be able to access educational and learning programmes that may enhance their capabilities for active citizenship and critical thinking, for example. Once again, we are reminded that policy design elements, including tools, rules, rationales, and delivery structures, differ according to the social construction and power of target groups. According to Ingram and colleagues "the way clients [learners, in this case] are treated…during implementation differs significantly depending upon the power and social construction of target groups" (2007, p. 104). Typically, groups that are constructed as deserving are served by government programs with professionalized services and specific rules of allocation. It follows that if adult learners, especially those at risk of social exclusion, are to be deemed as a deserving target group, their political power needs to be enhanced.

Conclusions

As illustrated above, vulnerable adult learners can be said to constitute a dependent target group; one that has traditionally been ill served by public policy and that has historically lacked the power to contend; to reverse this situation, and to claim their right to education. Traditionally, those with lower qualifications and at risk of social exclusion have been constructed as object of charity instead of right holders who can and should take part in decision making processes concerning their lives and opportunities. This is the case especially when it comes to education, this target group is often considered as not knowledgeable enough, or as not having the skills or experience to be policy

partners. This situation begs for a strategy for adult learners, especially for the most vulnerable, to move up the 'target group ladder' from a dependent position to become, at least, a contending group. This, in turn, needs participation mechanisms and spaces to be developed, and to formulate policy options for the empowerment and participation of the most vulnerable adult learners in their own educational processes.

As we have seen, according to the proponents of the social construction framework a target group's political power determines its opportunities for lobbying and pursuing benefits. However, this remains to be put to the test under, for instance, postcolonial frameworks. The works by Gramsci on domination and by Spivak on postcolonialism would suggest that when the subaltern subjects gain power (e.g., skills and wealth) they might cease to be part of the subaltern. Another theoretical perspective that might complement the social constructions framework is that of critical pedagogy (cf. Freire, 1970), whereby the oppressed develop a critical consciousness that may allow them to "read the world and speak their word"; that is, to insert themselves in the world as subjects who can transform it; to overturn the situations which oppress them and assign them a subordinate role in society, and which alienate them by prescribing, for example, what to learn or what paths to follow. Freire's liberation pedagogy could be a fruitful path to further elaborate on the non-neutral and political nature of education and learning, on the power asymmetries among target populations, and on the role of education in perpetuating or transforming the conditions that make learners at risk of social exclusion dependent upon the formulations of more advantageous groups.

Likewise, stock could be taken from different initiatives aiming at boosting the learners' voice. One such example is the UK's National Institute for Adult and Continuing education (NIACE) initiative 'The Learner Voice'. NIACE define their initiative as "the involvement of learners and potential learners in shaping the learning opportunities that are available to them. It means involving learners in reforming the lifelong learning system at all levels, by supporting them to act as partners with policy makers, providers, practitioners and other agencies". According to NIACE, Learner Voice initiatives enable learners to express their views, needs and concerns and also ensure that organisations respond appropriately to the issues that they rise".

Another inspiring initiative has been undertaken by the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE). Their initiative called 'Enhancing Voices: views and proposal for the education of youth and adults from the perspective of their subjects' aims at providing an open space for dialogue and critical thinking, where learners are the central actors of the process. The initiative also advocated for the participation of learners in all aspects of education policy; from the design, to the monitoring, implementation and evaluation (Modé & Lotierzo, 2014). The Campaign recollects that, paradoxically, the voices of the actors who are directly affected by education policy are the ones that receive the least attention. At least in Latin America and the Caribbean, "recent demonstrations demanding free public education for all unveiled the lack of truly participatory spaces for the citizenry to express their opinion and make recommendations on the mechanisms that may improve education" (Modé & Lotierzo, 2014, p. 3).

This sort of initiatives have a common foundation; the acknowledgement that learners are right holders whose voices should be heard in the policies and processes that affect them, and the value of the participation of learners in deciding the kind of education on which they want to embark.

Due to the limitations of this paper the narratives of learners themselves have not been included, as the main focus was to examine the social construction framework as an approach to the problem of underrepresentation of learners in policy making. Further analyses need to be undertaken regarding the potential and limitations of learner voice-like strategies, and the elements that allow a target group to gain empathy, esteem and to be constructed in such a way that policy makers may not be able to overlook their demands.

The potential for the participation of learners in crafting LLL policies transcends the already commendable goals of attaining quality, relevance, and good governance in a given education system, it aims much higher; it strives to break the disadvantage cycle in education and, ultimately, the power asymmetries in society.

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05

“Lifelong Learning Principles and Higher Education Policies”

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Lifelong Learning Principles and Higher Education Policies

Key words: higher education; learners; education policy; lifelong learning; learning organisations.

Abstract

The role of higher education in promoting economic growth and social cohesion has been recognised in multiple international documents, programmes and strategies. Likewise, a number of countries and higher education institutions worldwide have introduced policies that aim at fostering learners' employability, active citizenship, personal development, knowledge base, competences and capabilities. However, not all these policies have successfully addressed current global trends like the economic downturn, demographic change, the changing nature of the labour market, and pressing social needs. This paper posits that introducing lifelong learning principles to the formulation and implementation of higher education policies may provide more inclusive and comprehensive frameworks for meeting the needs and aspirations of the multiple stakeholders of higher education.

Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, different governments, academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and international agencies have produced a vast array of studies on the kind of higher education required to address current and future social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges. International organisations have been particularly keen to explore and suggest initiatives by means of international summits (e.g., UNESC0), reform agendas (e.g., World Bank), the assessment of learning outcomes (e.g., the OECD), and the construction of comparable, compatible, and coherent higher education systems (e.g., the European Higher Education Area, and the Bologna Process championed by the European Commission). These initiatives reveal that the challenges which higher education must confront are pervasive and pressing, and compounded by an increasingly unfavourable economic environment. They come from international organisations which are vastly different and whose proposals range from the privatisation, deregulation, and marketization of higher education, to seeing the latter as a public good and a human right. However different their conceptualisations of HE might be, they all agree that HE is the responsibility of all stakeholders, and that greater funding and efficiency is needed to promote equity and quality in and through HE.

In the economic domain, HE must face a paradigm shift: the transition from industrial capitalism, in which economic growth was based on trade, to knowledge-based economies in which innovation is considered the key to economic and social development. HE, thus, plays an increasingly important role in the development of learning societies, and in addressing the transformations undergone

by both the economic system and the social order. In order to respond to current economic and social imperatives, higher education systems must simultaneously develop competencies for employment, innovation and entrepreneurship (economically valuable skills), and capabilities for democracy, active citizenship, and personal development aiming at promoting social cohesion and more just and egalitarian societies.

In today's global society, the effectiveness of HE systems to develop such complex competencies has been questioned. The traditional higher education model, rooted in academic tradition and coined for industrial societies -and often driven by teaching and testing rather than learning- has arguably produced limited results in the provision of quality HE for all population groups. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that HE actually widens and reproduces socioeconomic inequalities and leads to skills mismatches[1]. It has been argued that HE has not been successful enough in catching-up with the emergence of new competencies, attitudes and values that are currently rendered as fundamental capabilities of individuals and society at large.

It is likely that HE systems will continue to be a key for the accomplishment and satisfaction of individual and collective needs as they carry out a duty that no other institution can currently replicate. It therefore becomes imperative to explore paths towards the innovation and reform of such systems. Reform efforts have been undertaken in most countries, and many good examples can be drawn from the diverse contexts, intentions, rationalities and structures. For example, recent research on the internationalisation of HE; its outcomes and effects on social mobility; the triple helix; the access to, and efficiency of HE, has shed some light on fruitful areas of analysis. These include higher education policy, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, infrastructure, teacher training and development, funding and financing, social inclusion, and stakeholder participation. Despite this great variety of issues, this paper argues that, in pursuing greater relevance, HE policy could benefit from a wider frame for analysis –that of lifelong learning- and from the lessons derived from reforms and innovations taking place worldwide. Thus, it is suggested that HEIs become learning –and not only teaching- organisations.

Lifelong Learning and HE

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is not a new phenomenon. It has been present in education history for almost a century. Its roots can be traced back to the 1920s and 30s when LLL was only about education and training opportunities for adults, particularly for workers. Half a century later, the concept of *education permanent* reconfigured the idea of LLL and introduced a few more features into its definition: that learning takes place throughout life, that it includes diverse sectors and social groups, that it takes place in different settings (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal), and that it aims at fulfilling a great variety of social, economic, and cultural purposes.

1. Cf. Patrick Clancy, and Gaële Goastellec, "Exploring access and equity in higher education: Policy and performance in comparative perspective", *Higher Education Quarterly, 61*, *2* (2007): 136-154; Peter Frederiksson, "Economic Incentives and the Demand for Higher Education", *The Scandinavian Jou rnal of Economics*. 99, 1 (1997): 129-142; Gaële Goastellec, *Understanding inequalities in, through and by higher education* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010); Tritan McCowan, "Expansion without Equity: An Analysis of Current Policy on Access to Higher Education in Brazil. *Higher Education,* 53, 5 (2007): 579-598; Carlos Alberto Torres, and Daniel Schugurensky, "The Political Economy of Higher Education in the era of Neoliberal Globalization: Latin America in Comparative Perspective", *Higher Education,* 43 (2002): 429–455.

Since then, LLL has become an important part of educational discourse throughout the world, an emerging field of study and practice, and a flagship for the formulation of education policy worldwide. Just like it has been the case with HE, different international organizations (e.g., UNESCO, OCDE, World Bank, European Commission) have stressed the role of LLL as prerequisite for economic growth and social cohesion. Such emphasis, and the level of influence these agencies have upon global education policy, has contributed to the visibility and thrust of LLL in educational debates.

These transnational organizations also present different definitions of LLL; however, they all agree that it is an approach that contributes towards the adaptation to and participation of individuals to knowledge societies. There seems to be an economic rationale behind this conceptualization of LLL, that of the transition from industrial capitalism (based on the production and exchange of goods and services) to a new form of capitalism based on innovation and knowledge intensive economies. In this order of things, education and learning, and specially LLL, play a fundamental role inasmuch as they foster knowledge production and promote creativity as necessary supports for innovation and, hence, economic life.

However strong this conceptualisation of LLL might be, there are other views that question and are critical of the economic impetus conferred to LLL. These alternative views assert that LLL must go beyond economic preoccupations and that education and learning must contemplate other, equally important, social and cultural purposes such as building -and living together in- more egalitarian societies, and developing critical thinking to transform social reality.

In any case, and despite these differences in their conceptualization of LLL, international organizations and academic developments converge in a few distinctive features of LLL: that LLL is about placing learners, their needs, aspirations, and demands, at the centre of educational methods, programmes and policies, and that LLL must prepare individuals and societies to face a world that is constantly changing; to adapt to it and/or to transform it. These are some of the characteristics of LLL that may help inform HE policies if they are to have a positive impact upon learners and societies.

HE as part of LLL must address a great variety of educational topics that concern an equally varied number of audiences and target groups. In order to do so, HE might benefit from the adoption of LLL as an organising principle. This entails embracing a number of characteristics; namely, that there is a multiplicity of settings and environments in which learning occurs; the autonomy and agency of learners; and universal participation.

The first characteristic is the acknowledgement that HE might benefit from expanding its traditional settings and environments by recognizing that, besides schooling and formal training, individuals develop skills, knowledge and values in their everyday lives and through the use of other educational supports, like the family, neighbourhood, work, leisure, the media, libraries, etc. Not only could HEI benefit from the learning taking place in informal and non-formal settings, but could make use of these environments to carry out teaching, learning, and outreach activities that might enhance the relevance and outcomes of HE. This implies also recognizing, validating and accrediting the skills and knowledge that learners have acquired elsewhere, and which are valuable for the purpose of HE programmes.

The second characteristic concerns respecting and enhancing the autonomy and agency of learners. This includes on the one hand, placing learners' needs and concerns at the centre of curriculum, delivery and assessment methods, and making students responsible for their own learning. Lifelong learners are not defined by the kind of education or training in which they take part, but rather by personal traits that drive them to partake in learning opportunities. According to Nesbit, Dunlop, and Gibson[2], the individuals who are prone to participate in either formal or informal learning processes throughout life share a few traits among which are: the right attitude and skills for learning; the confidence to learn and to keep learning, including a sense of commitment towards education and learning; and the will and motivation to learn.

Although education and training, and especially HE, may result in economic benefits for learners, research has demonstrated that economic incentives alone might not be enough to motivate individuals to get involved in education.[3] A number of barriers -motivational, economic, and otherwise- must be indentified and addressed so that some individuals who don't usually participate in education may be able to do so. Some of these obstacles are economic and can thus be surmounted by means of financial assistance, but other dissuasive factors are social, cultural and personal in nature. That is the case of the so called non-traditional students in HE; learners whose age, background, social and cultural capitals, and the social construction and stigmas behind being a non-traditional student, might inhibit them from taking part in HE. The relevance of HE provision is also an issue that concerns individual motivation, or lack thereof, to enroll a given HE programme. Identifying the obstacles faced by different social groups to enter and benefit from HE is the first step towards universal participation.

The third characteristic is precisely that of universal participation; that is, the possibility that all social groups regardless of their ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, religious, sexual, physical, age, or gender conditions may be able to participate in HE. Likewise, a HEI that welcomes and promotes participation from diverse groups should be able to cover the social, economic, and personal goals that these groups attach to HE.

The massification of HE, and the response that HE systems have chosen to give to this phenomenon, based on competition dynamics, have meant the systematic exclusion of society's most disadvantaged groups from HE. These include adults but also youth from low-income families, people with disabilities, racial minorities, indigenous groups, immigrants, and women. Whereas there are measures to monitor the progress of HEI regarding their quality and excellence (e.g., rankings, and performance indicators), these have not yet been developed to assess the efforts that HEI undergo in order to provide fairer and more inclusive access and progression to underserved societal groups. As explained by Usher:

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2. Tom Nesbit, Catherine Dunlop, and Lorraine Gibson, "Lifelong Learning in Institutions of Higher Education", *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 33, 1 (2007): 35-60

3. Cf. Bradley M. Allan, and Roland G. Fryer, "The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives", *Discussion Paper 2011-07*. (Washington DC: Brookings, 2011); Lisa Barrow, and Cecilia E. Rouse, "Financial Incentives and Educational Investment: The Impact of Performance-Based Scholarships on Student Time Use", *Working Paper No. 19351*. (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013); Peter Frederiksson, "Economic Incentives and the Demand for Higher Education", *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*. 99, 1 (1997): 129-142

"It is difficult to understand what kind of progress is being made internationally in this quest for 'fairness' or 'equity' in participation, for the simple reason that there is not an international standard for measuring it and difference countries have chosen to try to capture the issue in very different ways. In America, the unit of measurement for equality of participation is usually race, though family income is used as well. In the UK, measures of 'class' predominate. In much of Europe, there are concerns about the participation rates of recent immigrants, but administrative or survey data that can measure participation rates of these groups is quite limited. About a decade ago, however, the Eurostudent project began publishing a comparison of equality based on parental education levels – a measure which was later dubbed the 'Education Equity Index' and brought into use in comparisons involving non-European OECD countries. This data is somewhat patchy (no data is available in many countries) and cannot – as yet – tell us anything about changes over time as it has not been collected for very long. It can, however, show some basic differences in equality of access across different systems".[4]

In short, applying the principles of LLL to HE policy encompasses:

- Awareness of the fact that valuable learning takes place beyond HEI, and of the ample possibilities these other environments offer for HE.
- Understanding learning as a continuous need of individuals throughout their lives, and of the contributions HE can make in this respect.
- Acknowledging that contemporary societies need more than formal education to deal with constant local and global changes.
- Recognising that a learning society –and a learning organisation- are better alternatives to deal with such changes, and
- Admitting that both individuals and their communities need to be involved in determining learning needs and goals, and that they should do so throughout life.

Evidently, these principles beg for profound transformations in the way HE has traditionally been organized and structured, and the relationships of HEI with other stakeholders of HE. Among other factors, recruitment, admission, accreditation and recognition of prior learning, curricula, delivery methods and environments, assessment, quality assurance, and funding must be revised in order to orientate HE towards LLL. Perhaps the most challenging transformations have to do with how HE is conceived either as a public good or a private gain, and whose purposes HEI must seek to fulfil, those of the economy, individuals, or society at large.

The LLL University

Throughout the world, different initiatives that aim at promoting LLL among and within HEIs have

4. Alex Usher, "Ten Years Back and Ten Years Forward: Development and Trends in Higher Education in Europe" (paper presented in the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness, Bucharest, Romania, May 21-24, 2009): 7.

been undertaken. Examples of this can be found in the Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education (1998), which draws from the work begun at Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, 1997) in which a working group on Adult Education and Universities was put together. The Mumbai Statement was meant as a call for action for the delegates to the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, and was signed by HE and LLL experts and practitioners who proposed opening universities to adult learners and transforming HEI into LLL institutions. According to the statement, this requires a holistic approach which:

> *"a) supports institutions to become LLL communities; b) integrates academic, financial and administrative elements; c) provides structures which are responsible for organizational, staff, student and curriculum development and community engagement; and d) aligns the various supportive structures such as academic information systems, library provision and learning technologies to the new mission of universities in learning societies"*[5]

The signatories' main preoccupations were the societal challenges taking place due to economic globalisation, the rapid development of science, technology, and knowledge based societies that have given rise to unprecedented unemployment and inequality among nations and between countries, and tensions between social groups. Thus, the Statement recalls democratic citizenship as a key purpose of LLL and recognises that

> *"…democratic citizenship depends on such factors as effective economic development, attention to the demands of the least powerful in our societies, and on the impact of industrial processes on the caring capacity of our common home…The notion of citizenship is important in terms of connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts. Democratic citizenship highlights the importance of women and men as agents of history in all aspects of their lives."*[6]

While the World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998), echoed some of the concerns posed by the Mumbai Statement; namely those regarding access and equity, and, to a lesser extent, LLL and the promotion of active citizenship, it did not provide guidelines (rather a Declaration for HE in the XXI Century) that could assist HE stakeholders in pursuing the transformations of HE.

A couple of years later, the participants to a Conference on Lifelong Learning, Higher Education, and Active Citizenship held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2000 (some of which had taken part in CONFINTEA V, The Mumbai Statement, and UNESCO's 1998 World Conference on Higher Education), issued the Cape Town Statement on the Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution (2001) as "an organisational tool to be developed further in local contexts".[7]

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5. Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education. Published in *Adult Education and Development No. 55*, DVV, Bonn (1998): 2

6. Mumbai Statement, 3

7. UNESCO Institute of Education, *The Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education institution* (UIE, Cape Town: 2001), 2.

The Cape Town Statement recollected many of the concerns developed in the preceding international fora but with a view to developing "an instrument to assist transformation within HEIs". The Statement elaborates on six characteristic elements:[8]

1. **Overarching Frameworks**, including regulatory, financial, and socio-cultural supports upon and within which to build a LLL culture in and through HEIs.

2. **Strategic Partnerships and Linkages**, including international partnerships, cross-sectoral collaboration between institutions and stakeholders, and partnerships within HEIs (e.g., shared decision making, policies and strategies).

3. **Research** across disciplines, traditions, and institutions. This involves collaborative research, the recognition of a plurality of research paradigms and of the legitimacy of LLL as an area of study and practice.

4. **The Teaching and Learning Process** by which educators encourage self-directed learning, engage with the different forms of knowledge, interests, and life situations which learners bring to their education, and promote autonomous and experiential learning approaches and opportunities.

5. **Administration Policies and Mechanisms** which put learners and their learning processes at the centre of all processes. This includes, for example, prior learning recognition and accreditation, and the flexibility of programmes, courses and formats that may enable learners to choose, to move between offers, and to build their own learning paths.

6. **Student Support Systems and Services**, including those supporting learning, and enabling conditions for learning (e.g., costs, financial aid, childcare, transport, accessibility).

Although some 95 people from 19 different countries attended and subscribed the Cape Town Statement, and despite the fact that it was supported and published by the then UNESCO Institute of Education, it is not clear to what extent it has been used in reforming HEI or systems around the globe. Documented cases include the University of the Western Cape, South Africa (host to the Conference that gave birth to the Statement) which developed LLL strategies, including an on-going policy for the recognition of prior learning; the University of Missouri (USA) whose collaboration with the latter included the ideation of measurable performance indicators for the characteristic elements of a LLL HEI; and Chulalongkorn University in Thailand which adopted lifelong education as an institutional paradigm.[9]

At a regional level, a more recent example can be seen in the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (EUA, 2008). Derived from a seminar on LLL held in Paris, and by invitation of the then French Prime Minister, the EUA developed a set of commitments that both universities and governments need to subscribe if they are to transform HEI into lifelong learning institutions. The

8. UNESCO, *The Cape Town Statement*, 4-7.

9. Hohn Henschke, "Common Elements for Re-Orienting Higher education Institutions in Various Countries toward Life-long Learning: Research and Implications for Practice." (paper presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education. St. Louis, Missouri, October 4-6, 2006).

commitments made by universities entail promoting and embedding LLL as an organising principle of HE; providing education and learning to a diversified student population; adapt study programmes to widen participation and attract adult learners; providing guidance and counselling services; recognising prior learning; developing internal quality culture; strengthening the relationships between research, teaching, and innovation in a LLL perspective; consolidating reforms to promote flexible and creative environments for all learners; developing partnerships at all levels to increase the relevance of HE; and becoming LLL role models for inside and outside stakeholders.[10]

While it acknowledges the role of HEI in promoting LLL, the Charter recognises that these transformations demand actions from governments and other partners in order to secure the necessary funding and appropriate legal and institutional frameworks. Among these are: "recognising the university contribution to lifelong learning as major benefit to individuals and societies; promoting social equity and inclusive learning in society; supporting guidance and counselling services".[11] The Charter also states that governments need to play a leading role in mainstreaming LLL in the systems and agencies in charge of quality assurance, recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning, and should remove legal obstacles and constraints that potential learners face in order to access LLL and HE. University autonomy in terms of admission requirements, for example, and incentives to LLL provision in HEIs is also a responsibility governments should bear according to the Charter. Finally, encouraging partnerships with local authorities, employers, and other social organisations, and informing and encouraging citizens to participate in LLL opportunities provided by HEIs is also a role governments need to perform. Like universities, governments can act as role models thus championing LLL in public policy and extending LLL opportunities for public sector employees.[12]

Universities as Learning Organisations

This paper argues that, in order to comply with the above mentioned characteristics of LLL institutions, and to fully promote LLL, universities must become learning organisations. In addition to the social considerations explained up to this point, there are financial reasons for this transformation. Given the fact that there are numerous stakeholders in HE (e.g., learners, governments, enterprises), and that they present a multiplicity of needs, HEI may transform themselves into providers of learning opportunities and research outcomes that aim at solving problems and satisfying the personal, social, and professional demands for education and training presented by different sectors, thus diversifying their sources of funding.

According to some authors[13] the university's mission to produce and organise advanced knowledge

10. European University Association, *European University Charter on Lifelong Learning* (Brussels: EUA, 2008), 5-7.

11. EUA, *European University Charter,* 8.

12. EUA, *European University Charter*, 9-10.

13. Cf. Henry Etzkowitz, *The Triple Helix: University-Industry-Government Innovation In Action* (London: Routledge, 2008); Loet Leydesdorff, "The Triple Helix of University-Industry-Government Relations", in *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Elias Carayannis and David Campbell (New York: Springer, 2013): 1844-1951; Tom Nesbit, Catherine Dunlop, and Lorraine Gibson, "Lifelong Learning in Institutions of Higher Education", *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 33, 1 (2007): 35-60.

has been challenged by the knowledge economy, and newer demands have emerged from government, industry, and other stakeholders. Likewise, these authors recognise that the production and organisation of knowledge, and its use in addressing public and private concerns escapes the sole academic spectrum. Every time more, the university is presented with opportunities to partner with other sectors in order to undertake research and training. This way, industry, for example, can seek to address the learning needs of employees (e.g., up-skilling, re-tooling) via university LLL courses and modules, or to research education and learning solutions to private strategies together with HEIs. Likewise, the public sector may find university offers of continuous learning as a means to promote active citizenship, social inclusion, or even leisure, cultural and personal development.

This cooperation between three sectors which once acted separately (i.e. university, government and industry) has been called the 'Triple Helix'. This approach was developed by Etzkowitz[14] and Leydesdorff[15] as a model to promote innovation. The approach is based in the perspective of the university as a leader of the relationship with industry and government to generate new knowledge, innovation, and economic development. Innovation is understood as resulting from a complex and dynamic process of experiences and relations between science, technology, research, and development among the three sectors in a spiral of endless transitions.

This approach necessarily involves learning processes for all the stakeholders engaged in the innovation process. On the one hand, the university needs to enhance its third mission (apart from teaching and research), and needs to learn different analytical frameworks to approach problems; those traditionally applied by government and industry. On the other hand, the university needs to learn how to bridge the gap between public, private, and academic concerns in order for the cross-fertilisation of ideas to work.

The role in innovation that HEIs are called to fulfil does not substitute their more traditional mission in educating and empowering learners, rather it provides a great opportunity for HEIs "to reassess their academic and professional beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices"[16], and to expand the latter to a range of new actors including workers and non-traditional students. This expansion, as has been mentioned, necessitates the reformulation and modification of HE systems and practices, and this is where HEIs can learn from other stakeholders. For instance by examining how learning takes place in the workplace, in informal settings, and in NGOs, or by looking at how research outcomes are utilised in the public and private sectors.

Looked at it this way, "lifelong learning can represent a set of guiding principles for development, rather than an additional problem for institutions of higher education".[17] According to Nesbit and colleagues:

> *"Several studies of lifelong learning in different countries have examined how systems of higher education are changing to meet learners' needs and, in doing so, are impacting*

14. Etzkowitz, *The Triple Helix.*.
15. Leydesdorf, *"The Triple Helix of".*
16. Nesbit, et al., *"Lifelong Learning",*39.
17. Nesbit, et al., *"Lifelong Learning"*, 49.

various aspects of university governance, funding, resources, planning, and community relations…these studies indicate the extent to which the environment of higher education is changing and how such changes are redefining the character and role of institutions of higher education".[18]

The same authors claim that these transformations in HE are also responses to changes in public policy since "for governments, what is taught, investigated, and promoted [in HEIs] influences knowledge, attitudes, and values in many areas of society".[19]

Implications for public policy

Following these arguments, it can be deduced that LLL policies in HEIs would need to look at the research and teaching that is carried out by universities, government, and industry, and identify how these institutions cross-over, and the knowledge and the lessons that have been learned in the process of attending to a particular phenomenon should be systematised. This practice of policy learning is made easier "if clear structures and procedures are put in place so that institutional modes of 'knowing what works' and 'learning' can be extracted, stored, reviewed and communicated". This concerns the "…issue of how the making of public policy can be a process of organisational and public learning".[20]

One challenge of evidence based policy making is that it is not related to the actual amount of evidence out there, but rather to its usage or lack thereof. Many authors have discussed that research findings are underutilised when it comes to decision making.[21] For example Schön would argue that there is no shortage of evidence, information or data; rather, he maintains, the deficit has less to do with an information gap, than with our capacity for public and private learning. As put forth by Parsons:

> *"Schön focuses on the issue of learning rather than the idea of knowing: on the learning rather than the information or evidence gap, and the gap between institutions and problems […] what follows from this is that we have to understand government and policy making as a process of learning. For Schön the answer to the question of improving government as a learning system involved radically rethinking and redesigning the policy process of increasingly more complex information societies"*.[22]

Reshaping the policy process involves the redesign of public institutions too. According to Schön "we must become adept at learning, we must be able not only to transform our institutions in

18. Nesbit, et al., *"Lifelong Learning,"* 38.

19. Nesbit, et al., *"Lifelong Learning,"* 38.

20. Wayne Parsons, "From Muddling Through to Muddling Up- Evidence Based Policy Making and the Modernisation of British Government", *Public Policy and Administration* 17, 3(2002), 47.

21. Cf. Carlos Vargas, "Acerca de las posibilidades de incidencia de la investigación educativa en las políticas públicas: el caso de la educación básica con personas jóvenes y adultas en México", *Sinéctica, 33* (2009).

22. Cited in Parsons, "From Muddling Through", 47.

response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are 'learning systems' that is to say capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation".[23]

From this standpoint, public policy, and HE is no exception, is really the study of how societies learn (or fail to learn) about those problems they define as being public and how they seek to solve (or fail to solve) them. This is particularly true of public institutions and governments which "…should lay less stress on the dubious and doubtful claim to know what is best for a particular organisation… and should place more emphasis on organisations making the best use of local knowledge and their learning experiences".[24]

Conclusion

The same way that governments should learn from their surrounding institutions, including HEIs, these in turn should learn from their stakeholders, including non-traditional learners. This means that HEIs must be transformed into learning organisations so that they may be able to systematise their learning, the knowledge they produce, and share it as an important element to bring about change or the solutions needed by a particular policy object.

Becoming a learning organisation means being subjected to continuous transformation and development processes, and being able to systematise and assess these transformational experiences. But most importantly, becoming a LLL organisation, means that HEIs governance structures become more horizontal, as every person is a learner within and outside the organisation. It also means the acknowledgement that HEIs can learn from other stakeholders and from their own practice, can produce knowledge together, and can put this knowledge to use for the improvement and prosperity of the societies in which they operate.

23. Cited in Parsons, "From Muddling Through", 49.
24. Parsons, "From Muddling Through", 48.

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06 Conclusion

Conclusions

Over the past two decades, a set of globally converging discourses of LLL has emerged around the world, driven largely by IGOs such as the EU, OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank. These discourses have been largely embraced by national and local systems of education, even as they seek to reflect local traditions and priorities. This thesis is an attempt to critically examine the emergence of these discourses, their key assumptions and their impact on the changing nature of education policy and practice.

The papers contained in this thesis have shown how, in the last two decades, lifelong learning (LLL) has become an emerging field of study and practice, and an organizing principle of education policy worldwide. This impetus is the result of a search for new strategies to face the challenges brought forth by globalization along with the changing natures of work and labour relations. It is driven by different international organizations which have placed considerable emphasis on LLL to be adopted as a model for educational cooperation and development among their member states.

The papers have thus pointed to the influence that organizations like the European Commission, the OECD, the World Bank, and UNESCO exercise upon their member states. They have suggested that while these organizations have different reach and implications, depending on their mandates, they have increasingly conceptualized LLL as an instrument for employment, economic growth, democratic action and participation, cultural development or social cohesion and inclusion. However, in their latest iterations, the discourses produced by these transnational organizations –the meanings and contents attributed to LLL- tend to look remarkably alike, converging into a homogenous rationale in which the economic dimension of education predominates over other dimensions of learning, and in which adaptation takes pre-eminence over social transformation as a goal of LLL.

Drawing upon a range of theoretical resources, the papers contained in this compilation (cf. Vargas, 2013; 2015) have analysed the construction of LLL as a public policy object in -and by- supranational organizations and how they have been largely embraced by national and local education systems. The papers thus highlight the policy authority that IGOs have begun to exercise over what once used to be mostly a national domain, by pointing to the various forms of political mobilization they utilize in order to posit LLL on the agenda of their Member States.

The papers illustrate this broader understanding of the global convergence of a discourse of LLL by exploring the case of the Basque Country. They examine the policy texts on LLL as they are draw from European Commission directives and strategies, and reconciled with local priorities. They show how the Basque Government has largely bought into the European narrative about the nature and objectives of LLL, through examples that can be observed, for instance, in the establishment of a Vice-ministry for LLL in 2001, shortly after the European Memorandum on LLL (2000), and the Communication 'Making a European Area of LLL a Reality' (2001). Likewise, the definition of LLL in both the Basque White Paper (2003), and Lifelong Learning Law (2013), is based largely on the above cited European Communication.

Global governance

The European Commission (2001) defines LLL as "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective".

Although this definition of LLL seems comprehensive, the European preoccupation with LLL lays more in the latter aim. As has been argued elsewhere (Vargas, 2015), the European LLL agenda was crafted after the employment plan and guidelines developed by the same EU in 1997. In this sense, the EU´s educational policy is derived from its economic policies, particularly with respect to labour markets. Then, the European Council introduced "increased employability and ability for adaptation through training, as priority issues within its employment guidelines" (European Council, 2002). LLL has since then become a horizontal objective of the European employment strategy, and a cornerstone of the two major European 'jobs and growth' plans: the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010), and Europe 2020. The prior set the strategic objective for the European Union to become 'the world's most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world', which includes key elements such as the development of lifelong learning for everyone (European Council, 2002). In turn, Europe 2020 set the view in achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. For that purpose, it established four educational priorities, the first one of which is 'making LLL and mobility a reality'.

The stated purpose of LLL is another example of the Basque alignment with the European Commission's emphasis on employment, economic growth and employability. Although the Basque White Paper (2003) proposed an integral LLL policy with a threefold objective: to promote innovation, social inclusion, and active citizenship as a "…way to overcome the strict vocational training frame and to head towards a much broader conception of learning" (Basque Government, 2003, p. 9), it recollects the European Commission's imaginary of LLL, and adopts the imperatives of the knowledge based economy and the information society. In so doing, it considers it vital to "provide people, as economic agents, with the basic skills they need to be able to update, assimilate, transfer and share the kinds of knowledge that increase their ability to adapt to constantly changing situations" (p. 10).

The Basque LLL Law (2013), since it was a draft project, ratified the importance of promoting LLL for employability. In its 2011 Progress Report on the Implementation of Spanish National Reforms, the Basque Government declared that this Law's objective was to "…improve the adequacy of competences of the labour force to the demands of the market by integrating the three systems of vocational education and training" (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p. 10). Once approved, the final text of the Law endorsed the European guidelines and recommendations and used them in the motivations for passing the Law. Likewise, it recognised LLL as an enabler of personal, social and professional development, and a contributor toward the economic and social development of Euskadi (BOPV, 2013, p. 6). Nevertheless, employability and vocational education and training (VET) received much more importance than the other goals in the different sections of the legal document e.g., the establishment of a distance education institute to prepare students for qualifications and VET; an integrated system of VET, which occupies the whole second chapter, and an integrated system for lifelong guidance (BOPV, 2013).

The pervasive presence of VET in the Basque LLL law is also a result of a determined quest of the last three governments (2005-2009, 2009-2012, and 2012-to date) to promote VET and organise the different sub-systems in charge of regulating its provision. Interviews with former Basque Government members and Ministers of Education confirmed that the original purpose of the law was to promote VET. In fact, when it was first thought of, and when the policy formation work started "it was the specialists in charge of VET who worked on it; those in the vice-ministry for VET" (Informant 3). Another interviewee explained that the Government in charge of crafting and submitting the law "managed to build consensus around the proposed law with and through the Basque Council for VET", and that they had purposefully sought to include VET in the LLL law; that they, once out of power "had negotiated with the [new] Government to keep the richness of VET in the approved proposal" (Informant 4). Once submitted to Parliament for approval (under a different administration), the only opposition and amendments received by the legal proposal came from the Government who did not want to see so much emphasis on VET because they were themselves preparing a Law for VET (Informant 4). Indeed, the new Law regulating VET was passed on 9 June 2015. Reflecting back on the LLL law and the turn it took towards VET, a former Minister of Education stated that the legal text was poor since it was based on a VET perspective which is not as holistic as that of LLL. In his own words "the name was one but the origin was another" (Informant 3).

The issue of guidance and counselling for LLL is also an influence that can be traced back to the European Commission. In its 2002 resolution, the Council recommended that "priority be given by Member States and the Commission to the provision of and access to high quality information, guidance and counselling on learning and work opportunities in Europe, targeted at different groups". Similarly, a year later, the 2003 Progress Report on Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe notes that "information, guidance and counselling (including outreach measures for those least likely to participate spontaneously in LLL) are identified by many countries as essential to ensure that rights and opportunities are availed of, especially in a system which places the individual at the centre of the learning process". The European Employment Guidelines (European Commission, 2003) also recommend as a priority the provision of early advice and guidance to prevent inflows into long term unemployment.

Following this recommendations, the Basque LLL Law devotes a chapter to the development of an 'integrated system for lifelong guidance' and describes it as:

> ...a continuous process of accompanying the citizenry at any point of their lives, to determine their competences and interests, make decisions in terms of their education, learning and employment, and to define, plan and manage a learning project or one of social or professional insertion, or of personal interest (BOPV, 2013, p. 23).

But before it made it to the 2013 Law, guidance services had been launched in the Basque Country a decade before. By 2003, the Basque Employment Guidance and the Behargintza network of employment centres in Biscay's municipalities had started operations. Also, the Basque Government Decree (298/2002) that has funded LLL activities since 2002 has always included one chapter of the grants for 'learning mediation'.

In the realm of LLL, but separately to the specific LLL policies analysed hitherto, the policy transfer from the European Commission can also be observed in the themes of VET and Adult Education. The eight basic competences defined in the curriculum for the Basic Education of Adults in the Basque Country (BOPV, 2008) are remarkably similar to those defined two years earlier in the European Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (EC, 2006). Seven out of the eight competences described in the Basque curriculum, are phrased almost identically to those in the European Reference Framework, and the detailed explanations of what each of the competences entails resemble very much those of the European Key Competences. The only competence in the Basque curriculum that is different from the European Framework is that of 'artistic and humanistic culture'. This competence, according to the curriculum, entails "knowing, understanding, appreciating and valuing critically different cultural and artistic manifestations... of which, from an intercultural perspective, Basque artistic and cultural manifestations will be prioritised" (BOPV, 2008).

Jallade's model of six modes of international cooperation (2011, cited in Vargas, 2015) that IGOs use to steer the educational agenda throughout the world has been very useful in understanding the policy transfers from the European Commission to the Basque Country. A few examples can be elucidated from the research undertaken for the articles in this compilation. For instance, the promotion of adaptability (to the knowledge based economy or the information society) as a normative value for LLL; the establishment of the educational goals of the Lisbon Strategy or Europe 2020 as the Basque's own; the adoption of comparable quality standards and performance indicators developed by the European Commission (e.g., the Key Competences for LLL, the benchmarks for ET2020); the effect of policy dialogues and the dissemination of good practices, like the European Year for LLL, the Open Method of Coordination and, most recently, the European Semester; the use of European funds, like the Social Fund or Cohesion Funds to finance LLL programmes; and the multiple mobility schemes aiming at promoting the European dimension of education.

In view of the striking influence that the European Commission has had on Basque policies, it is important to remember that, still, education is a national competence under European law, and as such it is the nation-states, and their regions, where applicable, who are responsible for deciding their education policy as they see fit. In the Basque case, the exercise of its autonomy has allowed it to resist or rearticulate some of the values and purposes put forth in European soft policy and discourse. That is the case, for example, when regarding LLL as a right for the Basque citizenry; not a service that is left to the market to regulate nor shifting the responsibility entirely to the individual. There is a clear sense that the State is to assume responsibility for the provision of- and for enabling-learning opportunities for all.

Another trait of the Basque law defies the reiterated urgency for people to learn all the time and the duty –if not the burden- imposed on individuals to permanently engage in educational activities. The feature is that of 'conciliation' (conciliación), which means the right that people have to reconcile their personal, family and working lives. In Spain, as well as in the Basque Country, there are specific laws to promote the compatibility of different activities (particularly labour and care) with personal life. It is understood that a person may have different roles in life that can be simultaneously played in three different spheres:

- The personal dimension, which includes time for rest, self-care, leisure and free time, and social participation
- The family dimension, consisting of affective relations, care, and education
- The labour dimension, which includes the provision of resources (earnings) and professional development.

The issue of 'conciliation' is defined by the Basque Department of Employment and Social Policy (n.d.) as the balanced participation of women and men in family life and in the labour market that is achieved through the restructuration and reorganization of social systems (e.g., labour market and education) with the aim of introducing equality of opportunity in employment for women and men, changing traditional roles and stereotypes, and meeting the needs of care and attention of people who require it. Furthermore, the Basque Government (Department of Employment and Social Policy, n.d.) recognises that reconciling one's personal, family and work life is a right and a fundamental condition to guarantee equality between women and men.

It is no surprise that the very legislature that initiated the formulation of the LLL Law in the Basque Country understood 'conciliation' as one of its priorities (Ikuspegi, 2012, p. 7) as the legal text makes reference to it so that LLL may be reconciled with other activities. The issue of 'conciliation' is mainly referred to in the second section of the law, the one that establishes the Basque Institute for Distance Education, which, according to the legal text, "will establish norms and procedures… prioritising the personal and professional trajectories of students and facilitating the conciliation of learning with other activities and responsibilities" (BOPV, 2013, p. 15).

It is unfortunate that the discussion of 'conciliation' is not picked up in other parts of the LLL Law because it would provide a fruitful avenue to further debate the reach that LLL may have in other dimensions of life, besides employment or the promotion of birth rates. Following the concept of 'conciliation' it could be argued that LLL could equally contribute towards the personal and family domains (e.g., leisure and social participation), and legal provisions could have been planned accordingly. Likewise, the issue of 'conciliation' could cater for arrangements to be made so that people could take (paid) leave or time off from work or care-related responsibilities and embark in studies or learning activities that they consider enriching and not only profitable, as it is currently viewed by employers.

As has been observed, in the Basque context many of the European Commission directives and recommendations have been accepted and implemented, however some of them have been contested or adapted to accommodate local priorities and cultural understandings (e.g., LLL as a right, 'conciliation', Basque nationalism in the basic education curriculum). The acceptance of European directives can be explained by considering the good esteem that the Commission enjoys in most of the Spanish society. As argued by Calvo (2010), this is "a result of the association of the concept of Europe with both the democratisation process of the 1980s and the marked development experienced in the past few years" (p.235). The author contends that there has been no public question or contestation about, for example, the Lisbon Strategy and its ensuing reforms, not by academics or the two main political parties either (at the time of publication). Calvo (2010) goes on

to argue that, as it was the case with the European Employment Strategy, many of the core ideas of the Lisbon Strategy have been broadly accepted in Spain, as have been related ideas such as the transition towards a knowledge economy, the importance of implementing ICT, or encouraging entrepreneurship. In the author's words:

> Areas including the modernisation of employment policies, a clear and determined commitment to new technologies, active employment policies, lifelong learning, the formula "RTD & innovation" and the progressive interest in the issue of ageing all exhibit the notable impact that this [the Lisbon] strategy exerted on public authorities and even social partners. This does not concern only the central administration, but also the regional administrations, many of which have policies which strictly follow the Lisbon Strategy guidelines (p. 235).

The Basque Government's own economic, social, and environmental strategy (2006) mentions that "the Basque Government and its different departments agree with the Lisbon Strategy", and that they "take inspiration from the recommendations issued by the European Council in order to formulate [their] plans and programmes" (Gobierno Vasco, 2006, p. 8). Certainly, the inspiration that the EU has provided for the Basque Country comes with attached incentives. In the 25 years after Spain's accession to the then European Economic Community (1986-2011), a total of 4.1billion euro have been transferred to the Basque Country in the form of aid "toward the growth and modernization of the Basque economy" (Departamento de Economía y Hacienda, 2011). The funds have come from different funding mechanisms including structural funds, Research & Development Framework Programmes, the European Regional Development Fund, and the European Social Fund. The latter being the second source of EU resources to the Basque Country and the most important, as has been mentioned, for educational activities in and for employment.

But apart from funding, as explained earlier, the forms of political mobilisation that IGOs -and in this case the European Commission- use to position a particular issue in the political agenda of nation-states include the dissemination and diffusion of political ideas. In the case of LLL, these have entailed the construction of a particular narrative which views LLL as a response to the challenges of globalisation (mostly to changes in the economy and in the labour market) and as a means to adapt to these changes. The iteration of this narrative by at least four global IGOs; the multiplicity of reports, conferences, and agreements regarding this perspective of LLL in the past two decades, have successfully convinced local authorities of the importance of the issue. The role of context has also been important in the reception of this master narrative; particularly the economic crisis that hit Spain in 2008 and the idea behind this hegemonic discourse of LLL that sells it as a solution to the issue of widespread unemployment, and as a means to produce economic growth. These elements, along with a long tradition of VET and apprenticeships in the Basque Country, that reinforces the idea that education does indeed condition employment and presumably wellbeing, set the basis not only for political change but broadly for the normalization and internalisation of this particular discourse of LLL.

Thus, this principle of LLL "has become a global norm in education policy so that its adoption is not only a functional necessity in the age of a knowledge-based society, but also fostered by reasons of legitimacy" (Jakobi, 2012, p. 32). This means that regardless of the truth (or lack thereof)

behind the postulates of LLL that IGOs flag around the world, governments are adopting the same principles and values of LLL as they appear to be legitimate and, in turn, to legitimise their decisions. The legitimation strategies that the European Commission uses have been defined as "plans of action to generate diffuse support for the political system or the political community of the European Communities" (Biegon, 2013, p. 196). Following this definition, we can observe that, in the case of LLL, the legitimation strategies adopt two forms, firstly the articulation of a discourse of LLL that may speak to all member states due to the identification of common problems (e.g., unemployment, economic crisis), and secondly the inception of the idea of a commonly shared culture (Jakobi, 2012) reinforced by narratives often filled with images of a "unitary past directly connected with visions of an inexorable future" (Novoa, 2002, p. 152). Therefore, problems are not the only things that are shared across Europe, but also cultural understandings and arguably the solution to these problems or the policy options envisioned for that purpose.

This is what Fejes (2006; after Novoa, 2002), has referred to as the ***planetspeak*** discourse of LLL, and what has been elaborated as the neoliberal global imaginary of education by Rizvi & Lingard (2010). In this global imaginary, LLL is transformed into a magic concept as the solution for most of the problems (Novoa, 2002, p. 135), and it is put forward as a remedy to keep individual nations and the European Union at the forefront of education, research and the economy, and for individuals to achieve their goals and desires (Fejes, 2006, p. 697).

Examples of such notions can be found in most interviews carried out as part of my research. Current and former policy makers in the Basque Country asserted that LLL is "the basis to create a different productive system" (Informant 4), and that "it helps individuals to develop as citizens, and improves the way institutions, enterprises and organizations operate … it helps people become better people and society a better society… one that is more solidary and sustainable" (Informant 3). Some interviewees also held the belief that "the more competent the individuals the more development, prosperity and wellbeing [in society]" and that "the competences they develop will result in greater economic returns and greater social wellbeing" (Informant 6), "in greater employment prospects and personal development and integration" (Informant 7).

As can be observed, the role of the EU in determining the purpose of LLL has been strengthened through 'cooperation' but also by diffusing a particular discourse that rearticulates different values and adapts them to a particular logic. This globally converging discourse of LLL although focused on the economy, represents an assemblage of values that includes objectives other than employment that are arranged in a way that prioritizes the instrumentality of learning over other societal goals. The following section will address the assemblages entrenched in the views and definitions of LLL that IGOs have proposed.

IGOs, LLL and a new assemblage of values

The papers comprised in this thesis have argued that IGOs have played a major role in shifting LLL towards employment and economic growth. This view of the purpose of LLL has shaped a global imaginary (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and although it has been questioned and challenged by different

sectors (namely, NGOs and academics) it has been accepted and normalized at the national and sub-national levels of politics. The normalization process has been eased by the recent introduction, along with economic concerns, of social and educational values that either were not present or were not central to the tasks of economic driven IGOs (OECD and the WB), or that used to be central to the policy papers and positions of others (e.g., European Council and UNESCO), whose narratives have drifted away from humanistic values in the past twenty years.

However, the meaning and importance of these other values have been rearticulated; they have been subsumed under the overarching principle of economic growth. Thus, when social cohesion, equity, or active citizenship are included in policy texts, they either take a back seat in relation to the goals of LLL, or are depicted in economic terms. In this way, the globally converging discourse of LLL represents an assemblage of values, in which humanistic and instrumental traditions of education are brought together in a particular configuration, prioritizing the instrumental values of market, efficiency and individual accountability ahead of the humanist values of justice, democracy and social cohesion.

In order to understand how this particular assemblage of values has been -and is being- constructed and disseminated by IGOs it is useful to define the idea of 'social imaginary' that has been utilised here. Rizvi and Lingard (2009) define it in the following terms:

> A social imaginary is a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. It is largely implicit, embedded in ideas and practices, carrying within it deeper normative notions and images, constitutive of a society (p.34).

Tracing the development on social imaginaries made by Charles Taylor (2003, cited in Rizvi, 2006; 2011; 2014), Fazal Rizvi explains that a social imaginary works as "a framework that is at once descriptive and prescriptive of how things are and should be organised around a set of norms that gives them meaning and significance" (2014, p. 292). An imaginary is therefore identified in culture, in the ideas that a society has, and in the way these are used to structure social practices. It is thus a kind of narrative that may help explain societal goals and relations, or how they are taken for granted. This is particularly the case of the globally converging discourse of LLL which is mounted on a particular imaginary that has become globally dominant: the neoliberal imaginary. According to Rizvi (2011) the neo-liberal imaginary of globalization implies the extension of market relations to areas of policy that were deemed as public goods and had thus been object of state provision and safeguard under an earlier imaginary, that of the welfare state. In contrast, "the neo-liberal imaginary advocates a minimalist state, concerned with the promotion of the instrumental values of competition and choice across national boundaries" (Rizvi, 2011, p. 698).

In the Basque case this impetus for competition and choice can be traced to a number of initiatives that have been integrated in the LLL policy. For example, since 2002 there is an annual call for LLL proposals launched by the Basque Government, in which NGOs compete for funding following the guidelines set forth by the Department of Education. Initiatives like these public-private partnerships are not new or uncommon throughout Spain -and the Basque Country is no exception- where even

in compulsory education there are "***escuelas concertadas***"; that is, private schools subsidized by the government which aim at promoting choice among the citizenry. Another example is Txekinbide, a joint initiative by the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa and the Basque Government which entailed giving vouchers to unemployed individuals who could exchange them to 'pay' for training or internships in enterprises (Basque Government, 2003; Diario Vasco, 2006). This programme was flagged as a good practice by the Spanish government for the 2001-2006 period, as it "helped foster employability and entry to the labour market … by promoting an adaptation of the educational offer from an efficiency and efficacy perspective, and for being client-oriented" (Spanish Ministy of Labour and Social Affairs, n.d.). But learning accounts and vouchers are not limited to learners in the Basque Country; teachers have also been targeted by these schemes. That is the case of the Ikastxekin programme (supported by the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa and the Basque Government) under which post-compulsory secondary education teachers, mostly those in VET, are given cheque books they can use to access ICT training in a centre of their choice. Under this programme, teachers must bear 25% of the costs, thus co-funding teacher training and education, a policy area that used to be entirely the responsibility of the State (World Bank, 2003; Basque Government, 2003).

Yet another example of the extension of market relations to the education and LLL field is the formation of Hobetuz (the Basque Foundation for Continuous VET) in 1996, which opened the gate for participation and decision making in education to both unions and employers, the latter represented by CONFEBASK, the Basque Confederation of Enterprises whose first purpose is stated as "to defend and promote the private sector system (sic), that of free enterprise and competitiveness in the framework of a market economy" (CONFEBASK, n.d.). In addition to steering the educational offer "towards the needs and requirements of the private sector" (Hobetuz website, n.d.), this Foundation also distributes the cost of training in the form of social security deductions from workers themselves and enterprises.

The neoliberal perspective of globalization can also be observed in the recent European take on educational governance. As explained earlier (Vargas, 2015), the European Commission has increasingly advanced the idea that education, and especially LLL, is an imperative for Europe regardless of the national competence that Member States still have on educational matters, and the local interpretations there may be of the issue. This is confirmed by Novoa (2002) who claims that

> …from the middle of the 1980s, and especially in recent years, the programmes and guidelines that have been implemented at the European level reflect a consensus of thought about education ... all countries are incorporating the same guidelines and discourses presented as the only way to overcome educational and social difficulties. The strength of these guidelines is seen in their acceptance by member states with a "sense of inevitability" (Novoa, 2002, p. 133).

This has also been confirmed by a plethora of European guidelines, declarations and strategies that have consistently repeated the need to build a "knowledge-based economy" or a "knowledge-based society" (the shift from economy to society as a discourse marker is not casual) and the role that education and LLL must play in such efforts. According to Novoa (2002, p. 134), these directives

reveal a certain moral conformity and unanimity in this debate, which is "fuelled by opposing pedagogy and educational theories, and uses hackneyed terminology such as rigour, efficiency, accountability, responsibility, autonomy, market, choice, customers, etc." The author goes on to argue that the European Commission has redefined "employment" as a learning problem that should be solved by each individual, and has created the illusion that the "crisis of schooling" can be answered through a long life of education and training (141). This can be attested in all European guidelines for improving employability in which the emphasis is placed on education and training for the youth and on LLL. Novoa affirms that "the concept of employability was recently reinvented as a way to link employment and education or to see unemployment as a problem of uneducated people" (2002, p. 141), thus confirming the shift of responsibility for LLL from the public realm to the individual (Vargas, 2013). Following this logic, Novoa (2002, p. 141) argues that the mobilization of LLL in political discourse at the Commission and its intention to "give higher priority to lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model" (European Commission, 2001b) means that not only do citizens need to take responsibility for LLL and education but for solving the crisis of the welfare state (or the European social model for that matter) as they are invited to become responsible for "constantly updating their knowledge both in order to enhance employability, by acquiring skills attuned to developments in the nature and organization of work, and also in order to serve as a framework for the process of consolidating European citizenship" (European Commission, 1997).

Although there is a clear tendency toward employment in European Commission documents, and LLL is viewed as a source for national competitiveness and economic growth, these are not the only objectives inscribed in the policies and directives of the European Commission or the Basque Country. As has been argued before (Vargas, 2015) the most recent policy documents from both the European Commission and the Basque Country combine utilitarian visions of education with traditional values that are central to humanism, such as social cohesion (that is reiterated in EU policies), equity, citizenship, and social inclusion, the latter being an important ingredient in Basque policies. The simultaneity of both visions entails the coexistence of values that may conflict, contrast or complement one another.

In order to understand how public policy processes involve bringing together a number of competing values, Rizvi & Lingard (2011) have used the notion of assemblage (as developed by Deleuze & Guattari, 1997), that suggests that "policy is not derived from a distinct and discrete value that has been accorded authority, but represents an assemblage of a diverse body of ideas, values, historical settlements and a particular understanding of current conditions of political possibilities" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011, p. 8). This approach to policy studies is very useful in understanding how some values are prioritized over others, and confirms the classical definition of public policy as an authoritative allocation of values (Eastman, 1965). However, in the case of education policy, the notion of assemblage delves more deeply into the purpose and nature of education, and problematizes the multiple values underpinning educational ideals and imaginaries. This is so because, as Rizvi and Lingard (2011) remind us, it is not possible to simply derive education policies from a particular value position; that is to say that regardless of how clear a certain vision of education might be, it is impossible for this vision to suggest policy prescriptions or courses of action, it simply cannot propose "what ought to be done in a given set of circumstances" (p.9).

The application of assemblage theory to education policy analysis has proven to be of utmost use in unveiling some important facts about the policy formation process; namely that policies are not guided by one single value or vision; that guiding values are interpreted and reconciled with other values; and that they are translated according to a wide array of factors like political interests, and pragmatic factors like the time, circumstances and resources that make a policy feasible. According to Rizvi and Lingard, this means that policy makers have to assemble, organise and order values, configuring them in such a way as to render them more or less consistent and implementable, and that doing this requires privileging some values ahead of others (Idem).

In the case of the European Commission, this is the case when dealing with the main drivers of its development strategies in the past twenty years: economic growth and social cohesion, while in Basque Policies, particularly in LLL but not exclusively, the tensions are found between employability and social inclusion (Vargas, 2014).

As has been explained (Vargas, 2015), in European Commission documents the vocabulary has taken an economic turn that has rearticulated certain social-democratic values and redefined them in economic terms. For instance, citizenship, a cherished principle to the European Council aiming at the construction of a common identity and self of belonging, and at the exercise of democracy and human rights, has latterly been rearticulated as active engagement with the economy (e.g., active citizenship). The European Commission (2010) affirms that active citizenship must comprise not only the development of intercultural understanding, but also the acquisition of operational competence, and that "learning for active citizenship includes access to the skills and competences that young people will need for effective economic participation under conditions of technological modernisation, economic globalisation, and, very concretely, transnational European labour markets" (European Commission, 1998, p. 12). According to Drodge and Shiroma (2004), these formulations sideline the universal notion of citizenship and segment it in a way that the rights associated to citizenship are now only for those who are 'active' or 'productive' hence opening the floodgates of social exclusion for those who are disengaged from economic activity, creating a kind of second class citizenship in which different groups, for example immigrants, are categorised.

The same can be said about social cohesion, an agenda that was adopted as a function of the earlier European aim of achieving economic cohesion. Social cohesion, which had been associated with a sense of equality that sought to eliminate poverty and avoid the development of inequalities and the enlargement of social gaps, was identified by the European Council, in 1997, as "one of the main needs in Europe and as an essential complement of human rights in achieving wellbeing for all" (CEPAL, 2007, p. 34). The importance adhered to social cohesion in the EU can be trailed to numerous policy documents and the development of ad hoc structures like the European Committee for Social Cohesion, and funding, like that provided by the European Social Fund (ESF). The latter is described as "Europe's main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens" (ESF, n.d.), and among its priorities are "to boost the adaptability of workers with new skills, and enterprises with new ways of working... improving access to employment by helping young people make the transition from school to work, or training less-skilled job-seekers to improve their job prospects" (Idem). Indeed, vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities to give people new skills form a large part of many ESF projects.

This conceptualization of social cohesion and the mechanisms foreseen for its promotion at European level reveal a utilitarian view that sees social cohesion as a means and not as an end in itself. Social cohesion is valued inasmuch as levels of social cohesion provide a better framework for economic growth, and due to the fact that it may attract investors as they see a cohesive society as a dependable environment for economic activity (CEPAL, 2007). The role of education in pursuing greater social cohesion, in this assemblage of values, concerns promoting adaptation and employability, particularly among the most vulnerable groups of society. As claimed by Drodge & Shiroma (2004, p. 184), it is "primarily about adjusting the excluded to the demands of the labour market".

An evidence of that can be observed in both Basque LLL policies. The White Paper stated that the lifelong learning strategy should focus particularly on the underprivileged, who normally have lower levels of training and education, by giving them the updated basic skills required to increase their employability and facilitate their social inclusion" (Basque Government, 2003, p. 10). Likewise, the LLL Law of the Basque Country (Gobierno Vasco, 2013) specified preferential attention to those with lower qualifications, those with especial education needs, and those at risk of social exclusion, and promoted LLL as a means to ensuring their 'personal promotion', employability and social cohesion. Indeed, the idea of employability is the main driver of the LLL law, one that motivates all of its elements (e.g., training, mobility, distance education, VET, guidance) and one that reorganises the rest of the objectives of LLL, including social inclusion.

The interviews held with policy makers, particularly with the ones responsible for crafting, passing and implementing the law, also confirmed the centrality of employment in the LLL policy. Furthermore, most interviews revealed the extent to which humanistic values and principles were rearticulated under the supreme goal of employment. As stated by a former minister of education of the Basque Country (Informant 5):

> For us who ideated the law, the [main objective] was clearly that of employability. We think that the biggest tragedy that a human being may face is unemployment… Employability for us was fundamental. Social cohesion, well, I think it is a consequence, I mean, a society that does not have employment sees its youth fall into depression… Personal promotion is also linked [to employment].

The emphasis conferred to employment is certainly noteworthy. When explaining its economic and social policies, the Basque Government has declared that social welfare and benefits are not enough to prevent poverty and exclusion and that employment is still the best means for social inclusion (Gobierno Vasco, 2011). Similarly, even valued principles like that of 'conciliation', which was explained earlier, or 'family policies' are seen as an investment for added productivity, wealth creation, and social cohesion due to the fact that they foster a more participative and integrated society (Idem).

In this assemblage of values, like in the theory of human capital formation, education and LLL are conceived as investments for enhanced employment and, ultimately, wellbeing. As elaborated by one interviewee: a set of happy individuals, a set of educated individuals generate a society that is more cultured, much healthier, and at the same time much more efficient, because such a society is able to compete (Informant 5).

Equity in education is seen as an important issue "but not only for ethical considerations, but because it is a matter of efficiency, because societies need all its individuals to move forwards, not only a selected few" (Idem). When equity is subordinated to economic growth, it does not mean equality or equal opportunities but it is rather related to effectiveness (Drodge & Shiroma, 2004, p. 194). This can also be perceived in the way that certain populations groups are constructed as policy objects, precisely because they represent the best return on investment.

The problem with this intricate assemblage of values is that it combines a multiplicity of purposes and objectives for LLL that mix at once active citizenship, entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and employability and a wide array of values which as a matter of fact do contradict one another (e.g., competitiveness and cohesion). The overlapping discourses around LLL can thus be fully understood only when articulated around the anchor value of employment and the fundamental goal of employability which is thought to be the main -if not the only- source of wellbeing and the best remedy for unpredictability and insecurity. As put forth by Drodge and Shiroma (2004), "security has been discursively constructed as something individuals achieve through employability, and employability as an individual obligation. What is described as a lifetime entitlement to learning is effectively a lifetime obligation to acquire and maintain marketable skills" (p. 194).

In this view, "the new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of incessant job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self" (Rose, 1999, p. 161; cited in Novoa, 2002).

Much of the conceptualization of LLL in Basque policies has been explicated by the influence of the European Commission which has portrayed unemployment as the main European problem, and by local traditions and understandings about the role of work. However, LLL gained momentum and was shaped as a policy problem due to the rise of the so called knowledge based economy which mandated continuous learning as a means to adapt to the constant changes of the economy and the labour market.

The Knowledge Economy and the role of LLL

The discussions in the papers show how the globally converging discourses of LLL are embedded within a social imaginary, and how this is closely tied to an understanding of the knowledge economy that interprets the role of education in market terms, based on an assumption that continuous learning is essential for the changing demands of the global economy and human capital formation; the knowledge and skills it needs.

The changes in the economy brought forth by globalization and by a neoliberal understanding of the role that knowledge and education play in the production and distribution of wealth, has given birth to the Knowledge Based Economy (KBE). The liberalization of trade, changes in production, consumption and distribution of goods, the deindustrialization of the economy, and rapid technological change have been adopted as the main reasons why people need to continue learning throughout

their lives if they are to remain employable. These changes, and the rise of the KBE, have produced profound transformations in the nature of work (e.g., casualization) and education. It is now presumed that new skills are needed to navigate these transformations, and thus re-skilling, up-skilling, and LLL have been deemed the solutions not only to unemployment and risk of redundancy but also to widespread wellbeing.

Raising educational standards and 'excellence' are part of the changes encompassing education policy under the influence of the KBE. In the belief that cognitive skills and higher education levels will directly lead to more jobs, more growth and more wellbeing, education systems have transformed the content and pedagogy of education and learning so as to serve the interests of the economy.

Backed up by human capital theory, the idea of the KBE rests upon three main postulates that seem to find no clear confirmation in reality these days; firstly, that the attainment of higher education levels will invariably derive in better job prospects for the learners; secondly, that higher skills or more specialised knowledge will bring higher earnings to those who have accumulated knowledge or developed highly specialised skills; and thirdly that due to the speed of technological developments and the changing nature of the production process, economies are increasingly becoming non-industrial, service economies; that is, that there is a higher proportion of jobs in the market that require qualified rather than unskilled labour. This dubious assumptions find disproval, for example in the characteristics of some labour markets which are far from knowledge intensive, or by unemployment rates, like the ones in Spain and the Basque Country, and the high levels of education of the latter where 36% of the population holds at least a Bachelor's degree.

But apart from the possible delusion or factual confirmation of this aphorism, the imaginary of the KBE has helped shape education policies and particularly lifelong learning, for knowledge is viewed as the principal source of capital and production, and, consequently, education becomes paramount to improve productivity and competitiveness by enhancing the employability of individuals. As has been mentioned before, under this imaginary unemployment becomes a problem of lack of qualifications and skills (in the personal realm) and thus different formulae have been proposed to address the problem of 'skill mismatch', and outdated knowledge, and to produce 'the right set of skills' for work. Among these formulae are lifelong learning, work-based learning and vocational education and training which hold the promise of not only providing learners with the 'right mix of skills' but also helping society adapt to the 'learning society' or the knowledge-based economy.

The European Commission was certainly a pioneer in promoting adaptability as an important objective of education policy and LLL. In its 2001 Communication 'Making a European Area of LLL a Reality' it defined adaptability as: "The capacity to adapt to new technologies, new market conditions and new work patterns of both enterprises and of those employed in enterprises" (2001, p. 31). The same communication claimed that the objective of the European area of LLL should be "to help citizens face up to the challenges of the knowledge-based society, by circulating freely in and between different learning milieus, jobs, regions and countries" (Idem).

The idea of the KBE has been imprinted in the European Commission's strategic frameworks for education and training (ET 2010, ET 2020), and in its 'strategies for growth and jobs' since the year

2000. The first such strategy, the Lisbon one, declared that its main objective was: "To become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment" (European Commission, 2000).

This declaration and the imperatives of the KBE set the agenda for the years to come in the European Commission which consisted of "a global and long-term agenda of reform and modernisation" (European Parliament, 2010). From its inception, the Lisbon Strategy had an economic focus that reorganised all other affairs, including education, under it.

The Lisbon Strategy was born as a European commitment to overcome the differences in growth and productivity between the EU and its leading global competitors of the time, USA and Japan. Europe's deficit in terms of technological capacity and innovation became the symbol of the ground needing to be made up to assure EU competitiveness; this was at the heart of the emphasis laid on advancing towards a "knowledge society", which became the strategy's best-known slogan (European Parliament, 2010).

The European Council and the Commission have been consistent in repeating the need to build a "knowledge-based economy" or a "knowledge-based society" and have used these two terms interchangeably (Novoa, 2002, p. 140), they do not make a distinction between the one and the other, although it could be argued that both terms hold different premises. One of the most important, as reminded by Peters (2002), is the difference between an economy and a society, the latter concept being informed by notions of welfare, rights and state responsibility that do not necessarily characterise economies, certainly not these days.

Similarly, discourses of the 'information society' (Castells, 2010) and the learning society have been introduced so as to water down the economic determinism of European policies that has been widely criticised in the past fifteen years; however, these are also articulated under the imaginary of the KBE; hence there is no distinction –but rather certain ambiguity- between information and knowledge; between the latter and learning; between the different kinds of knowledge and their usage; but most importantly, between the economy and society. This amalgamation of the idea of society with the economy has played a very important role in the normalisation of the KBE imaginary and in installing a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1980) around the idea of the need to adapt education to the needs of the market and the economy, and that these needs are the same across Europe and around the world.

In the case of the EU, the spread of LLL has been considered essential to achieve the goal of becoming the world's most competitive KBE. Since then, documents issued by Brussels systematically reiterate lifelong learning as "the cornerstone of the knowledge-based society developing in Europe" (Novoa, 2002, p. 142). This way, LLL is linked to the economic and social transformation needed for that purpose and European Member States have been mobilised to help in its achievement.

In Basque policy this imprint can be observed when it is declared that "knowledge has become the strategic resource par excellence for organisations and territories" and that "LLL has become a key

ingredient of the knowledge-based economy and the information society" (Basque Government, 2003). The Basque White Paper on LLL confirms this view:

> From the perspectives of economic growth, competitiveness and innovation, of social inclusion and equality of opportunities, the objective of giving citizens the tools they need to meet the challenges posed by technological innovation, by the changes in production processes and the shifts in business and work methods and by the need to participate actively in society, leads us inevitably to work on a strategy favouring and promoting lifelong learning for everyone (Basque Government, 2003, p. 8).

The 'inevitability' argued above rests on the internalisation of the KBE discourse, on the fact that "technological, economic and business transformations occur in the information society and the knowledge-based economy at a frightening, and ever-increasing velocity" and that these transformations are so radical that it is vital to provide people, as economic agents, with the basic skills they need to be able to update, assimilate, transfer and share the kinds of knowledge that increase their ability to adapt to constantly changing situations (Basque Government, 2003, p. 10).

The idea that the knowledge-based society necessarily requires a lifelong learning strategy (Basque Government, 2003, p. 14) is also present in the recently sanctioned LLL law which does not make such reiterated mention of the KBE or the learning society, but which does cover the drivers (e.g., adaptability, employability, reskilling) and mechanisms (e.g., VET, mobility, business and industry cooperation) envisioned for it. Also, as has been mentioned before, it quotes and draws on both the European Commission developments and the former Basque White Paper.

The normalisation and internalisation of the KBE imaginary in the Basque Country has had effects on the content of education policy (e.g., the basic education curriculum for adult education), and its orientation towards employability or the acquisition of the right knowledge, the right mix of skills and competences to adapt to the ever changing economy and the uncertainty of the future. However, perhaps the most important consequence is that this discourse limits the process of thinking about and determining local educational needs (as opposed to those construed by the European Commission or other IGOs), and ideating policy options and local responses to steer education and LLL in a direction that might be more suitable for the sake of social inclusion and cohesion, and better quality of life for the different social groups of the Basque Country.

Learning as a policy object

Another consequence of the globally converging discourse of LLL is the shift from education to learning and the challenges posed by the latter as a policy object. The papers in this compilation suggest that the core policy object of the discourses of LLL involve a shift from education to learning, away from teachers and education providers to the learners themselves, thus focusing on the importance of individuals taking responsibility for their own learning throughout their lives to meet the requirements of the changing nature of work and labour relations.

Education and learning are sometimes used interchangeably in education policy; however, the latter has been privileged over education in LLL policies and initiatives. The 'transition from education to learning' is justified by some authors and IGOs as a shift that focuses on the results of education, and on the learners rather than the teachers or education providers. While there are good arguments for this shift, maybe the most common being the empowering nature of a learner-centred approach and the avoidance of possible power imbalances and authoritarianism on the part of the teachers, there are consequences that are less pedagogic and more political in nature.

Some authors argue that dropping the term 'education' in favour of 'learning' in education policy may disguise a major shift in politics, i.e. the shift from a social democratic tradition to a neoliberal imaginary (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This emphasis on learning rather than education shifts the responsibility from the state (as a duty bearer in the fulfilment of the right to education) towards the market (i.e. demand vs. supply driven education) and to the individual who is now 'burdened' (Biesta, 2015) with the duty to learn and to do it throughout their lives, something that Griffin (2000) has identified as the 'moral bullying' of lifelong learning discourse. This shift in responsibility comes with an underlying argument: that the responsibility of individuals and organisations for their own learning means that public forms of education seem increasingly incapable of meeting their needs (Griffin, 2000).

Indeed, the discredit of education systems and policies is a common practice among lifelong learning proponents. "The rhetoric of lifelong learning policy often includes the premise that public education has failed, or at least could not succeed in the future, either in meeting peoples' learning needs or in promoting access and equal opportunity" (Griffin, 1999; 2000). This raises questions about the validity of this assumption and makes one wonder whether research evidence exists to support this argument. According to Griffin (op. cit.), there is certainly reason to believe that lifelong learning may form part of a much wider policy for reforming the welfare state itself.

One of the main preoccupations here is that a neoliberal, market-oriented view of lifelong learning may open the door to the widespread privatisation of education, and that this in turn may have serious consequences for access and equal opportunities in education, since markets reproduce inequality and only governments can redistribute opportunities (Griffin, 2000, p. 6). As put forth by Griffin, "the policy discourse of lifelong learning usually projects it as an expansion of learning opportunities, but not always as the expansion of public provision" (Idem).

Besides these central concerns, another criticism of the systematic substitution of education by the word learning is the fact that learning is a much more ambiguous concept than education upon which to base public decision making. Learning is a vaguer policy object because, while in public education it is easy to say who benefits and who loses from policy decisions, "lifelong learning apparently advantages everyone and disadvantages no-one" (Griffin, 2000, p. 7). As stated by a former Minister of Education of the Basque Country: "The problem with lifelong learning is that nobody knows what it is" (Informant 3).

Gert Biesta has referred to this phenomenon as the "learnification of education discourse and practice" (2015, p. 76). He identifies a number of discursive shifts (e.g., the use of 'teaching and learning instead of 'education' or the use of the word 'learners' instead of 'students') that have

taken place recently, and explains the perils of confusing education and learning. He posits that learning is a process that is 'individualistic and individualizing' and as such undermines the relational nature of educational practice, and that learning is a neutral term that denotes neither its content nor its purpose (2012, p. 7). Lacking content, purpose and relationships (Biesta, 2015, p. 76), learning by itself appears to be a rather void concept, and lifelong learning (in this understanding) to be a superfluous policy object as we may have only a choice between means but we cannot choose the ends of education policy (Griffin, 2000).

According to Biesta the language of learning avoids or prevents people from asking the key educational questions of content, purpose, and relationships or, in other words, the threefold purpose of education which entails qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2012; 2015). This typology is helpful in understanding how the values driving education might be simultaneously complementary, contrasting or contradicting. For example, successfully pursuing a qualification, depending on the pedagogic approach that a certain education provider or teacher may hold, might have positive or negative effects on the socialization of a student, and the construction of their subjectivity. Therefore, the author suggests bringing the question of purpose into the discussion of lifelong learning so that the agendas of policy makers and the direction in which lifelong learning is steered may become visible and an object of debate (Biesta, 2012).

Earlier in some of the articles that constitute this work (Vargas, 2013), we have shown how the use of the term education, particularly 'lifelong education' seems to have fallen out of use among IGOs and national systems, and how it has been substituted for LLL, especially a kind of learning that focuses on the acquisition of skills and competencies for growth, productivity and competitiveness as understood in the economic realm. In the Basque case, we can see a constant trend in both policy documents that allude much more to learning than to education, a simple glance at the White Paper on LLL (2003) and the LLL law (2013) is revealing; the former mentions learning 252 times but education only 74, while the latter makes 186 allusions to learning but only 57 to education. Likewise, the Basque Government's Decree that funds private actors who offer LLL activities states that "the borderline between education and learning is fading away" (Basque Government, 2002, p. 23327).

The debates around education and learning, and the relation between the two concepts become even more complex in Spanish. As opposed to its English counterparts, 'educación' and 'aprendizaje' are not differentiated by the settings, environments (formal, non-formal and informal) or intentionality of the process. Unlike in English, the term 'education' in Spanish can indeed be used for meanings other than 'schooling', and for informal learning as well (as in educación popular), on the other hand, 'learning' may be used to describe formal education (as in aprendizaje formal). A good example of this interchangeable use is the report commissioned by UNESCO, and chaired by Jaques Delors, 'Learning the treasure within' whose publication in Spanish took the name '***La educación encierra un tesoro***'. Amusingly, many of the early European Commission policy texts that propounded LLL as an organising principle, found a translation that replaced 'learning' with 'education' and 'lifelong learning' with 'educación permanente'. These events made the discussion between education and learning much more subtle in the Spanish speaking world, and the implications of the transition from education to learning much more difficult to trace -not to mention the term '***formación***' which has different acceptations in Spain (as training) and Latin America (as a sort of ***bildung)***. Nevertheless,

and regardless of the terms, LLL -whether formulated as education or learning in Spanish- retained the meaning carried in English and the emphasis on outcomes, competences and individual competition.

According to Lima (2014), this discourse of LLL posits modernization and functional adaptability to the learning economy and society as the main objective of learning policies, rather than the formerly more common educational ideals of developing critical thinking or enabling social transformation. One interpretation of the shift from education to learning is that proposed by Griffin (2000) and Biesta (2006), among others, who see it as a symptom of the erosion of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism. This erosion, according to Milana (2012), has effects on the role of the state in redistributing wealth through public provision and in the privatization of the relation between the state and its citizens (p. 105). Following this view, the citizen is seen as a consumer and education as a commodity that, as such, can be purchased, sold, or exchanged in the market. This commodification of education and learning not only erodes the welfare state and opens the floodgates of privatization, but in so doing it endangers the human right to education, and the responsibility of the state to respect, protect and fulfil education as a human right, and the enjoyment of the rights derived from education; i.e. the rights to, in, and through education. The transition from education to learning, in this understanding, suggests a new mission statement for LLL "as a management tool of the work force; as a means to prevent forms of social conflict; and as a tool for adaptability" (Barros, 2012, pp. 125-126).

An analysis of the Basque Government's Decree (298/2002) that has funded LLL activities undertaken -mostly by private providers- since 2002 can help in exemplifying the allegiance with the narrative of the KBE, the search for adaptability and employability, and the shift of LLL from the public to the private realm by attempting to produce a market of LLL, and by introducing public-private partnerships in education. For example, the Decree stipulates that grants (funding) will be awarded to LLL activities that promote 'useful' learning in any knowledge area with the aim of promoting active citizenship by augmenting the professional qualifications, competencies and aptitudes of those who are 25 years of age or older (Basque Government, 2002). The emphasis on the usefulness of learning and the association of active citizenship with the attainment of qualifications confirm the views explained previously. The rationalisations of the Decree, like those of the aforementioned white paper and law, are also similar; they justify LLL as a necessity in the KBE in order to improve employability and consequently active citizenship (Idem). Finally, among the activities that may be financed by the government are projects that "must promote the demand and offer of LLL" (Basque Government, 2002, p. 23327).

The concern with augmenting the demand of LLL is an indication of the transfer of responsibilities from the state to the market, and ultimately to the individual, as was commented earlier. In this logic, "removing barriers to learning is a central principle of current education policy but that some people may choose, for reasons of their own, not to participate in learning, is excluded from consideration: the duty of the citizen is to learn and thereby to improve his or her ability both to benefit from and to contribute to society" (Drodge & Shiroma, 2004, p. 193). This also illustrates the turn towards greater individualism facilitated by the shift from education (and its relational nature) to learning and the role of the citizen as a consumer rather than a right-holder. It also raises questions as to the compatibility of a kind of economic growth based on individual merit, effort, and competition, with

social cohesion. Furthermore, this instrumental, individualistic, and pragmatic view of LLL gives rise to a risky assumption in policy making; that individual lifelong learning or the sum of the learning of the individuals of a certain locality will change society or the economy, in clear, consensual, and trouble-free ways.

In this vein, delving into the purpose of lifelong learning becomes essential in face of the homogeneity brought about by a hegemonic discourse of LLL. The next section problematizes the potential consequences of grounding LLL in accordance with the neoliberal imaginary, and proposes that an alternative characterization of LLL is not only possible but desirable.

Beyond the hegemonic concept of LLL

The hegemonic nature of the globally converging discourse of LLL is evident in the fact that it serves the interests of the market ahead of those of the community, and has the potential of producing communities that are driven by individual self-interest and rampant inequalities. In what follows I argue that an alternative characterization of LLL, anchored in the values of equality and inclusion, is not only possible but also desirable.

One of the main preoccupations of the globally converging discourse of LLL is that it conceives education as a private affair instead of viewing it as a public good. This has serious implications for public policy for it drives education out of the public sphere and, as such, it is increasingly viewed not as an object of public concern (i.e. one that affects society as a whole) but of private benefit. The conceptualisation of education as a service (and not a good) or as a commodity (that is subject to transaction) assumes that it yields individual benefits and represents an advantage for individuals to position themselves better than others (who do not acquire such commodity, or who cannot afford it) in the social realm. In this understanding, then it is justified that individuals who will gain from education should pay for it (or invest in it, as human capital theory would phrase it) and this presupposes the existence of a market that may provide that which individuals are willing (and able) to buy. This is the reasoning behind the arguments for the privatization of education and against its gratuitousness. Likewise, the promise of employability makes this commodity all the more appealing; hence the reiterated emphasis.

There are other concerns that are equally important. For example, Fazal Rizvi explains that, when education is envisioned as a private good, public policies are centred on efficiency instead of equity since it is assumed that social and economic progress can only be achieved through education systems that aim at satisfying the needs of the market; particularly those of the knowledge based economy. Accordingly, educational purposes are defined instrumentally, in terms of their ability to educate workers with a solid base of literacy and numeracy, who are flexible, creative and knowledgeable in ICTs, and who can work in culturally diverse environments (2010, p. 202).

On the other hand, seeing education and LLL as public goods means not only that it is a public responsibility, but also that education may be shared by all members of society and that it contributes to generalized societal wellbeing (Rizvi, 2010). As has been pointed out (Vargas, 2014), education as

a public good plays an important role in reducing poverty because it prepares individuals to exercise citizenship and democracy; it protects the most vulnerable groups of society and it encourages greater equality in the access to opportunities and wellbeing. From this perspective, education policy may contribute towards social cohesion and inclusion if it pursues equity in the access, treatment, and outcomes of education, and if it attempts to avoid the reproduction of inequalities in employment, in civic, cultural, and political participation. In this way, education may also contribute to economic growth and employment, but without it being necessarily considered a private good and, most importantly, without doing so at the expense of others, of their development and wellbeing.

In crafting and alternative characterization of LLL, one that is different from "the discourse of competition, of personal striving, of constant becoming, of inclusion and exclusion, of stratification… that hides beneath the cloak of the 'inherent goodness' of LLL" (Brine, 2006, p. 663), I suggest using the concept of social justice as an anchor value around which the multiple purposes of LLL may be rearticulated.

Nancy Fraser (2008) defines justice as 'parity of participation' and explains that "overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others as full partners in social interaction" (Fraser, 2008, p. 16, cited in Tikly and Barrett, 2013, p. 13). These institutionalised obstacles refer to the economic structures that deny them access to resources, the institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value that may deny them standing, and exclusion from the community where justice claims can be made and injustice contested. Accordingly, Fraser identifies three dimension of social justice: redistribution, recognition, and representation (Idem).

If applied to LLL policy, redistribution would imply securing access to educational opportunities for all, guaranteeing the possibility for learners to remain in and enjoy these opportunities, and ensuring that the outcomes of education may be achieved and enjoyed with relative equality. Recognition may be understood as identifying, acknowledging and addressing the claims, needs, desires and aspirations of those who have been marginalised from education, and participation would entail "the right of individuals and groups to have their voices heard in debates about social justice and injustice, and to actively participate in decision making" (Tikly and Barrett, 2013, p. 13). In education, this comprises having a say as to when to learn, what to learn, how to learn, and most importantly why to do it; that is, issues of content, pedagogy, curriculum and purpose.

Undoubtedly, the issue of the purpose –or the multiple purposes- of LLL may be defined and negotiated between the individuals and the state which must declare the intended purpose(s) of a particular policy. In the case of the Basque Country, the policy has included personal development (promoción personal), social cohesion, and employability; however, when analysing the discourse and content of the law it was made clear that the meta-value (the guiding principle to which all other values were subordinated) of the law was that of employability, and issues such as social inclusion were valued in their capacity to contribute to this greater aim.

However, it has been acknowledged by former Basque policymakers that LLL should indeed transcend the issue of employment, and that a better, broader characterization of LLL was necessary "... to help individuals be better individuals and society as a whole to be a better society… in terms of living

together, of socioeconomic and cultural development; a society with more solidarity, a sustainable society" (Informant 3), but that it was difficult to posit these purposes in policy texts and in political contexts. According to a former Basque Minister of Education, it was difficult to "convince [other policy makers] that investing in a citizen who was thought to be unproductive was a kind of luxury" (Informant 4). A number of Basque policy makers agree that it was also a problem concerning the difficulty of implementation (Informants 5, 6, and 7). Even when there was awareness of the holistic nature of LLL and its multidimensionality in the government, it was difficult to realize such a policy and to find support for its realization:

> I did not see it like that [like a progression of educational stages]. I understood that if we were to really think in a lifelong perspective, it all fit in a general LLL policy, but we could not carry it out. I did not find the endorsement either… nobody framed it like that… some thought that it was a way of watering down the problems that were specific to each educational level (Informant 5).

There is also consensus among most interviewees that the narrow focus of the LLL law and the formulation of LLL policies is the result of a clash between broader aspirations and the immediacy and urgency of certain issues, "those urgencies [employment, literacy, language acquisition] collided with a more ambitious education policy… It was a more limited perspective" (Informant 3).

Considering that the Basque policy mandates giving priority to those with lower qualifications, those at risk of social exclusion, and those with special learning needs, a different assemblage of values in which social justice is centrepiece might not only be welcomed, but required in order to redistribute opportunities, enhance participation, and recognise the structural reasons behind the exclusion and marginalisation of such groups, thus acknowledging that their claims and needs may not be solved solely by means of promoting work integration or employability.

The promise of work and the role attached to it by society as a means of social integration, as a meaningful sense maker of personal life, as a space for civic participation, and as an engine for material progress is deeply problematic in today's society. The description of work as a 'noble and ennobling activity' (Bauman, 2005, p. 8), so common in pre-modern times and modernity, does not match easily with the reintroduction of and the appeal for a work ethos in the XXI Century. Besides the gap between the needs of consumption and those argued for production, the alienation and exploitation of workers, work can no longer provide a safe zone in which the self can be defined and developed, in which identities and life projects may be forged (Bauman, 2003). This is so because of the changes in the economy and in the forms of production, but also because these changes have been accompanied –if not fuelled- by growing unemployment, the polarization of income, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and the casualization of labour and working conditions. Against this backdrop, the importance attached to work and employability as engines for self-realisation and social cohesion result extremely dubious, especially in a context in which more education does not guarantee access to better jobs or to the labour market let alone.

Educating for the sake of employment seems to be a contradiction in a time and place where there is more education but fewer jobs; an enhanced desire for autonomy but fewer opportunities to

materialise it; greater access to information but less access to the places where decision making occurs; a greater dissemination of civil and political rights (especially individual freedom), and democracy as the pathways of government and a lesser fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights (CEPAL, 2007, p. 12). These asymmetries, although they are pervasive across the social spectrum, affect especially those who are less privileged in socioeconomic terms; therefore, if they are to be prioritised as a target population of education policy, steps need to be taken more towards promoting their effective personal development and social inclusion, rather than a job that holds promise of very little in this direction.

Analysed from a social justice perspective, the emphasis of LLL for employment might fit the purpose of redistribution, as it is thought that economic injustice might be redressed by employment or, at least, that individuals may improve their condition by entering the labour market. But employment alone, as a strategy, certainly does not address the need for the recognition of the most vulnerable groups and their cultural practices and understandings, or the need to enhance their participation in decision making. Therefore, an alternative characterization of LLL that seeks to promote social justice must simultaneously address the interdependent dimensions of redistribution, recognition and participation of marginalized groups and, in so doing, must go beyond employment or explore how this might enhance other capabilities that relate more closely to these needs for recognition and participation.

One such capability might be the capacity to aspire (Appaurai, 2004), that is, the capacity to imagine another possible future and to develop and activate one's capabilities in order to move toward a desired scenario. This idea is central to the conceptualization of wellbeing under the capabilities theory (Cf. Sen, 1987, 1999) since aspirations encapsulate being able to pursue the kind of life (being, doing or becoming) that people have reason to value. However, aspirations may also represent a trap and a vicious circle to exit marginalization since aspirations are culturally and contextually bound and so individuals tend to set their aspirations in relation to what they know or what is socially construed as acceptable and appropriate. Following this, it is impossible to aspire to something we do not know or to something we consider impossible to achieve, something that Sen (op. cit.) has named 'adaptive preferences'; that is, an exercise of contentment, of settling for less than is actually possible.

In this respect, LLL might hold promise for broadening horizons about that which is possible to do or to become. From a social justice perspective this might encompass the recognition of what people desire beyond social mandates, global imaginaries and hegemonic discourses; that is, what a process of lifelong learning may provide in terms of wellbeing, beyond employment. This includes developing the tools to identify, analyse and problematize the social, political and cultural structures that support poverty and marginalization, and that represent barriers for people to achieve their desired situations.

In terms of representation and participation, LLL processes may also help exercise the capacity to aspire by cultivating the voice of the poor and the marginalized (Appadurai, 2004). In postcolonial studies, it has been asserted that "the oppressed, if given the chance, can speak and know their conditions" (Spivak, 1995), however their chances to 'speak' tend to be neglected as result of misrecognition and misrepresentation. Power and Taylor (2013) have identified that the effects of

misrecognition in education can vary from lack of access to certain forms of education (or privileging certain groups over others), to "the various subtle ways in which the content of education reflects particular dominant values and silences or misinterprets the values of culturally marginalised groups" (p. 468).

Recently, Conradie and Robeyns (2015) examined the potential role of voicing and examining aspirations in their possible fulfilment and in breaking adaptive preferences. They discovered that the process of voicing aspirations reflexively among one marginalized group led to the birth of new aspirations or the discovery of 'latent aspirations' i.e. aspirations that are believed to be out of reach but that are actually available. The authors also argue that aspirations can play two roles in human development: a 'capabilities-selecting role' by which the capabilities to be developed –in a small human development intervention- may be selected by the target group, an a 'agency-unlocking role' which consist of triggering action toward the materialization of aspirations, based on awareness raising and reflexivity.

This kind of practices that are fairly common in popular education (in the Latin American acceptation of the term), and that are grounded in critical pedagogy may provide examples of how LLL may play an important role in addressing and dismounting social disadvantage and in promoting the transformation of unfair and oppressing conditions that limit not only people's capacity to aspire but their chances to exit marginalization. If we want LLL to truly promote social justice (through politics of redistribution, recognition and representation) we might have to shift the ultimate objective of LLL from the adaptation (of people, policies and systems) to economic mandates, to the transformation of the conditions that such mandates impose upon us all, but most importantly, upon the poor. In this alternative conceptualization of LLL, the capacity to influence, modify and transform reality and the self would be the core of the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches.

A social justice approach to LLL would also reconcile economic growth and social cohesion and would uphold the latter not as a function of the economy or a prerequisite for it, but rather as the amplification of what is common and social, including a sense of community and the sort of actions that it entails, like the use and care of public space, like the city or the environment as learning places and contents; the agreements around values and rules to live together such as tolerance and reciprocity; the participation in deliberations that concern individuals and their communities, including sharing and being exposed to different views of the world; the identification of common problems and the ideation and negotiation of possible solutions. In short, the sense of belonging entailed by social cohesion would be embedded in the fulfilment of human rights; in the inclusion of all individuals in the development of their communities and the enjoyment of the wellbeing derived from it. For the state, this would mean stopping inequalities (in and through education) that prevent different groups and individuals from engaging in learning, and fully belonging in the community.

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