OPERA PRIMA – FIRST COMPOSITIONS

EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC AND COMMON GOOD: REVISITING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN A CONTEXT OF GROWING MARKETIZATION

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1. Presentation

Over the course of the last two decades, there has been a tremendous expansion of school systems around the world. Especially in the countries of the Global South, this expansion has been possible thanks to the adoption of international policies that have promoted universal schooling so that all children have access, and complete, free and compulsory education. The Millennium Development Goals agenda as well as the Education for All movement are two of the most vivid expression of this global move towards universal schooling.

Having said this, the traditional schooling model is currently called into question by at least two factors. On the one hand, the growing demand for the reduction of public expenditure and the crisis of the welfare state have resulted in the greater involvement of non-state actors and to the weakening of the capacity of several States to elaborate effective public policies. In addition to this problem of resources is the need to overcome the current education system based on the mere transmission/acquisition of knowledge in order to make education more relevant to the diversity of contexts in terms both of methods and content. The changes occurring worldwide are indeed characterized by new levels of contradiction and complexity to which the schooling system is called to account. These changes are already ongoing and are strictly connected to the huge transformations that have been affecting society since the last few decades and make it nec-

essary to rethink both the way learning systems are organized and the purposes of education itself. To address the long-standing crisis in education systems, however, there is a need for a shift in culture, a transformative change in order to significantly revisit and reshape the way of functioning of public institutions. In this respect, there should be a discussion on the fundamental principles for the governance of education that could lead to the development of new social structures and public institutions able to deal with change and favor the full development of people and of their communities.

This doctoral thesis is a contribution to this debate. It explores the implications of considering education as a public and common good for the democratic and inclusive governance of education. Indeed, education has increasingly been referred to as a public good in education development and human right discourse. The education-related Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - outlined in the Incheon Declaration², is grounded on long-established foundational principles that refer to the recognition of education as a human right and as a public good (UNESCO 2015a, p. 5). This vision is also recalled and further detailed in the Framework for Action which outlines how to translate into practice the commitments envisaged in the Education 2030 agenda. It is stated that "Education is a public good, of which the state is the duty bearer" (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 10). On the basis of a general interpretation of the theory of public goods, the notion of education as a public good aims to reaffirm the primary responsibility of the State in assuring that all children have access to access to

¹ United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York, United Nations. (UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1).

² The Incheon Declaration Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all was adopted at the World Education Forum held in Incheon (Republic of Korea), 19-22 May 2015.

free and quality education at least at the compulsory level. The role of the State has always been considered fundamental since it is the main actor that has to safeguard the respect of principles of equality of opportunity, equity and inclusion. In this perspective, it is assumed that States have a key role in safeguarding the public interest in education and are expected to directly provide or finance educational opportunities.

The conceptualization of education as a public good in development discourse is however problematic. First and foremost, some have argued that there are theoretical limitations inherent to the transposition of the economic concept of public good to the field of education (Daviet, 2016; UNESCO, 2015b). Moreover, the leading role of the State is increasingly being questioned, largely as a result of the changing dynamics in the global educational landscape. This is characterized by the greater involvement of non-state actors in educational policy and provision, as well as by the growing scale of for-profit education at all levels. Under the trends of education privatization lies the assumption that the private sector can provide better quality education and, when functioning as corporate or business organizations, be more efficient also in the management of the education system. Moreover, the education decision-making process is shifting from a national to a global level. Indeed, regional and global initiatives are increasingly influencing national policies and practices, encouraging the development of for-profit private education. These dynamics enhance the adoption of free-market logics, notably those of choice, economic competition and performance. This blurring of boundaries between the public and the private seems to undermine the relevance of the concept of education as a public good as a fundamental principle for educational governance. Education increasingly appears to be reduced as a private / positional good at the detriment of more social and cultural dimensions.

This study explores the use of the concept of education as a public good in international education development discourse and of the interpretations of the theory of public goods as applied to education. Indeed, the concept of education as a public

good has been increasingly mentioned in international education development discourse since the 1990s, although with different interpretations and purposes. At the international level, it has been recalled by international actors such as UNESCO, UN human rights treaty bodies, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations whose mission is clearly grounded on a human rights framework and whose main concerns are related to principles of equity and social justice in education. The different interpretations of the concept of education as a public good in education development discourse may be referred to the use of this principle as an approach/vision in order to reaffirm a humanistic/integrated vision of education in contrast to a more utilitarian approach; as a policy focus, to preserve the public interest and societal/collective development in contrast to an individualistic perspective; as a principle of governance, to reaffirm the role of the State as the guarantor of education in light of the greater involvement of non-state actors at all levels of the education endeavor.

This study further investigates the application of the concept of public goods to the field of education. It is argued that determining whether education is a public good or not is related to considerations about the existence of conditions for state intervention. Since education has important aspects of a public good, mainly related to the public benefits that education engenders, as well as issues of equity and social justice, some sort of intervention from public institutions is required. Although an intervention from the State is to be expected, however, there is no consensus on whether state functions should refer to the provision, funding or regulation of education opportunities, and how this should vary at different levels of education.

These considerations should be confronted with the changing educational context which sees the traditional role of the State being called into question by increasing private involvement, by the shifting locus of policy and of decision-making at different levels, and by the impact of commercialization/marketization which affects the purposes of education. Given the increasing in-

terconnection between different forms and practices in privatization policies, the multiplication of public and private actors involved in education, it has been argued that the habitual principal difference between the definition of the public and the private in education is becoming less evident. This thesis examines the extensive literature developed by several scholars and human rights researchers cautioning against the potentially adverse impact that market approaches to education can have on equity and social justice. Indeed, market engagement could promote corporate or individual interests over public/societal benefits which may foster inequality and social stratification. It could also lead to the privatization of the governance of education and to its commodification since schools are increasingly compelled to act as businesses and students as consumers. Narrow approaches may therefore sideline important social and equity concerns, compromising efforts of education institutions to respond to social change. In addition, although the provision of education may not be necessarily privatized, the commercial/market approach to education makes the purposes of education increasingly pending towards individual private interests, with repercussions on the societal and civic objectives of education.

Taking into consideration the peculiar nature of education, serving both public and private interests, this study provides a revisited interpretation of the role of the State in education in light of the increasing variety of stakeholders involved, and at the same time tries to identify what constitutes the *public* in education from a political perspective. It is argued that the existence of a democratic system guaranteed by the State represents the prerequisite for any action taken in view of the development of more inclusive and participatory institutions. However, changes in the way of functioning of institutions themselves need to be significant and require a shift in culture, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches. In this respect, this study examines complementary frameworks for the governance of education that may favor democratic participation and a humanistic approach, while countering neoliberal influences in the sector.

Considering education as a common good implies an integrated approach to education which may favor a transformation of public institutions in order to overcome more hierarchical and utilitarian approaches, and build more democratic schooling systems. In this perspective education is a shared collective endeavor, both in it terms of production and of benefits. It implies that students and all actors in society are considered as directly responsible for the development of the educational project of a given community. Of course, the democratic participation of all actors in the educational endeavor can be possible only in a framework of governance that is guaranteed by the State. That is why the concepts of education as a public and common good should be seen in a sort of continuum and do not exclude each other. Indeed, the concept of education as a common good does not diminish he importance of the role of the State in education. It rather implies a strengthening of this function of regulation while calling for a revisiting of the institution itself. Besides revisiting and reaffirming education as a public good, the concept of common goods may contribute to the strengthening and rethinking of public democratic institutions. This is all the more urgent as neoliberal policies, driven merely by market approaches, have given more prominence to the individual economic benefits of education rather than to collective societal and civic aims. Innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges affecting education systems worldwide need to be based on a vision of education seen not merely as an economic tool, but mainly as the process through which human-beings and society fully develop.

Given the complexity of the subject in question, this thesis provides more clarity with regard to the adoption of important concepts that drive the formulation of educational policies and practices. In particular, this contribution provides an overview of the structure and main arguments discussed in this thesis, as outlined in the table of context, introduction, conclusion and bibliography.

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3. The Introduction

Background

Over the course of the last few decades, education has increasingly been referred to as a public good in education development and human right discourse. The education-related Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (hereafter referred to as Education 2030) – outlined in the Incheon Declaration, is grounded on long-established foundational principles that refer to the recognition of education as a human right and as a public good (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 5). This

vision is also recalled and further detailed in the Framework for Action which outlines how to translate into practice the commitments envisaged in the Education 2030 agenda. It is stated that "Education is a public good, of which the state is the duty bearer" (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 10).

On the basis of a general interpretation of the theory of public goods, as developed by Musgrave (1939) and Samuelson (1954), the notion of education as a public good aims to reaffirm the primary responsibility of the State in assuring that *all* children have access to free and quality education. The role of the State is considered fundamental since, as also envisaged in legal frameworks, it is the main actor that has to safeguard the respect of principles of equality of opportunity, equity, and inclusion. This is all the more important given the need to ensure that discriminations are avoided and marginalized or underprivileged groups also have access to quality education opportunities. In this perspective, States have a key role in safeguarding the public interest in education and are expected to directly provide or finance educational opportunities, especially at the basic and compulsory level.

The leading role of the State in educational policies and practices is however increasingly being questioned, largely in result of the changing dynamics in the global educational landscape. This is characterized by the greater involvement of non-state actors³ in educational policy and provision, as well as by the growing scale of for-profit education at all levels. These changes are undoubtedly the result of several interconnected trends that have seen the increasing involvement of private actors in the funding and delivery of education opportunities. One of the main trends can be attributed to the "remarkable and unprecedented expansion in access to education at all levels" that has occurred worldwide over the last two decades and which has resulted in greater pressures on public financing (UNESCO, 2015b). The resulting public sec-

³ Throughout this dissertation, the term "non-state actors" refers to civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, teachers unions, private sector, multilateral and international organizations.

tor capacity constraints have created numerous opportunities for non-state actors to get involved in the sector. Under the trends of education privatization lies the assumption that the private sector can provide better quality education and, when functioning as corporate or business organizations, can be more efficient also in the management of the education system. The growing collaboration with the private sector, and the consequently increasing diversification of actors involved at different levels of the education endeavor, has contributed to the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private. Within this context, it has been argued that the multifaceted process of privatization may undermine the relevance of the concept of the public good as a guiding principle for educational governance (UNESCO, 2015c).

Moreover, the principle of education as a public good, traditionally defined within the contours of the nation-state, is further challenged by the progressive shift in the locus of decisionmaking from a national to a global level. Indeed, regional and global initiatives in education are increasingly influencing national education policies and practices, sometimes encouraging the development of for-profit private education. At the same time, the trends of globalization and liberalization of markets have encouraged a more utilitarian and individualistic approach to education, based on the human capital theory and on rates of return on investment in education, also promoting private engagement in the sector. Rooted in neo-liberal ideologies, these dynamics enhance the adoption of free-market logics, notably those of choice, economic competition, and performance. In this perspective, education is conceived merely as an individual socio-economic investment and, therefore, as a marketable, consumable good (Macpherson et al., 2014). Indeed, it has been argued that the introduction of market mechanisms in the education sector may call into question specific aspects of the properties of public goods, since market involvement can lead to some forms of exclusion, thus making education more similar to a private good (Kohlrausch & Leuze, 2007).

Rationale

The issue of determining the extent to which the private sector should be engaged in education has been at the center of an intense debate in the education development field. The growing trend of for-profit actors' involvement in the sector has raised important issues with regard to the nature and purposes of education itself, and the consequences for societal development at large. Whether education is considered to be a public or private marketable good is related to two competing visions of the purposes of education (Labaree, 2011). It raises important questions about both the organization of education and the governance of education systems. This is related to the relations that exist among the State, the market, and other stakeholders involved in education, their respective roles, and the distribution of power that exists among them.

Questions have been raised regarding the viability of the traditional role of the State in education – one that commits States to the primary responsibility to directly fund, provide, monitor, and regulate education opportunities. Indeed, the increasing demand for education at all levels has contributed, along with the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals global agendas, to an expansion of access to education and to the lengthening of the average duration of schooling across the world. The growth in enrolment, also resulting from the significant global demographic changes, has generated greater pressures on public schooling systems in terms both of funding and delivery of education opportunities, determining the 'failure' of government to provide quality basic education to all citizens.

It has been argued that the notion of the public good (and the role of the public and private sector in achieving this) "will probably always be, and should be, a contested subject" (Mansbridge, 1998). In a context characterized by increased complexity and by the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private, it is necessary to revisit the concept of education as a public good

in order to determine the policy implications with regard to the role of the State in the governance of education systems.

Moreover, given "the peculiar nature of education", serving both public and private interests (Levin, 2000), and the difficulty to make a clear-cut distinction between the public and private sphere in this field (Robertson et al., 2012), it appears more and more difficult to reconcile the economic private purposes with the public-good aspects of education. Since private providers – also for-profit ones – may be expected to provide public goods (Olson, 1965), and that forms of privatization and of marketization are possible also thanks to the direct intervention of the State, it is becoming increasingly challenging to ensure that economic investments of for-profit actors in the field of education are not guided by mere opportunity for business expansion but are principally aimed at contributing to the public interest.

In this respect, it is more and more evident that a "blanket defence of the public sector, as it is or was, over and against the inroads of privatisation, is untenable" (Ball, 2007). "There is no going back to a past in which the public sector as a whole worked well and worked fairly in the interests of all learners. There was no such past" (Ball, 2007). As acknowledged by many scholars, to address the long-standing crisis in education systems there is need for a shift in culture, a transformative change in order to significantly revisit and reshape the way of functioning of public institutions themselves (Apple & Beane, 1995/2007; Hursch, 2016; Tedesco, 1995; UNESCO, 2016).

Since the coming challenge is not merely a question of economics, but of democracy (Reich, 2015), reframing the concept of education as a public good should take into consideration both economic and political perspectives which focus on the institutional regulation of goods (Kohlrausch & Leuze, 2007). As argued by the historian and social critic Tony Judt (2010), "the choice will no longer be between the state and the market, but between two sorts of states. It is thus incumbent upon us to reconceive the role of government. If we do not, others will" (p. 9).

Objectives of the study

The new global educational landscape requires a clearer understanding of what the principle of education as a public good possibly means today in light of the changing dynamics in the governance of education both at the national and at the global level. This is all the more important given the renewed commitment, and the ambitious goal of the international community to ensure that "all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes"⁴.

This study maps out trends in, and the rationales for, private engagement in schooling, including the development of public-private partnerships in education, the controversial growth of low-fee private schools in the global South, and the emergence of what some have termed the "Global Education Industry" (Verger Lubienski & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

It examines how market approaches reshape state institutions and the State-Education relation (Robertson & Verger, 2012). This dissertation also aims at identifying potential challenges that for-profit business engagement in education poses to the role of the State and to democratic policy-making, democratic governance and the societal collective purposes of education.

It takes into consideration how the principle of education as a public good may be recast in light of the increasing variety of stakeholders involved in education. This may be useful in order to understand the conditions under which for-profit participation undermines or contributes to the aim of a public-good approach, that of ensuring free and quality education for all. Defining the role of the State in education will be necessary to avoid the risk that "business interests creep into the formulation of aims and

⁴ Target 4.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 4. United Nations. (2015). Transforming our World – The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

strategy" (Draxler, 2014), thus leading to the privatization of the educational governance itself.

This study aims to examine complementary frameworks for the governance of education that may favor democratic participation and a humanistic approach, while countering neoliberal influences in the sector. The concept of education as a common good may provide innovative elements for the development of political institutions that enable citizens to have greater voice in the decisions that affect their well-being. It is argued that understanding education as a common good may call for greater cooperation both within and beyond the education sector in order to innovate and rethink education systems substantially.

Research questions

Given the above background and rationale, this dissertation will endeavor to answer the following research questions:

Why has the principle of education as a public good constantly appeared in education development discourse over the last few decades?

What are the implications of the growing trends of privatization and marketization with regard to the role of the State in education?

How might the principle of education as a public good be revisited in order to address the challenges that arise from the governance of education systems in a context characterized by greater complexity and uncertainty?

Nature of the study

The analysis conducted in this study is of theoretical nature. It builds on the work of research I carried out at UNESCO in Paris during my period of secondment at the Education Research and Foresight Unit (Education Sector). In particular, I had the privilege of providing research assistance in the realization of the re-

port of the Senior Experts' Group established by the Director-General of UNESCO Irina Bokova to rethink education in a world of rapid transformation. This UNESCO flagship publication, *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?*, aims at revisiting foundational principles for the governance of education systems and at identifying issues likely to affect the organization of learning and the purposes of education in a context characterized by increasing complexity and uncertainty.

The object of my study is in continuity with the theoretical analysis developed in *Rethinking Education*, and looks particularly at the need of revisiting the concept of education as a public good in light of the trends of privatization and marketization which are increasingly affecting the educational landscape both at a national and at a global level.

It could be argued that my theoretical study falls within the category of what some scholars have called "research of policy" which is primarily characterized by critical analysis (Desjardins & Rubenson, 2009). This type of research is distinct from the problem-solving approach which characterizes the so-called "research for policy" category, according to which the role of research is primarily directed at informing decision-making and policy development by providing tools and solutions for policy action and design. The "research of policy" aims instead at clarifying concepts, providing a better understanding of issues which affect education policy, expanding theories and thinking, and unpacking principles. As argued by Desjardins and Rubenson (2009), this more "conceptual position" "developed as a criticism against the narrow interpretation of instrumentalism. The role of research is not primarily seen as coming up with a solution and/or answer to a specific issue but rather helps develop a broader understanding of the underlying problem. This involves widening the debate, reformulating the problem, clarifying goals, and analyzing eventual conflicts between multiple goals. Instead of being of direct instrumental use, the primary function of research is conceptual" (p. 13).

Indeed, if research *for* policy may be required to provide concrete guide for action in order to respond to knowledge or action

"gaps", it is also true that these gaps may occur because key concepts/principles may not be clear enough, or should be revisited as they are no longer relevant to changing contexts. This requires that another kind of research is implemented: research of policy.

UNESCO is actively involved in research of policy. This function reflects the role of UNESCO as an intellectual agency and its main task "as a global observatory of social transformation" (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 9). Indeed, besides playing a fundamental role in technical assistance, support, and coordination in the education global agendas – such as Education for All, now Education 2030 – UNESCO "has an important intellectual leadership role in international education" (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 5). This important function has been developed within the work implemented by the Education Research and Foresight Unit, which today forms integral part of the Section for Partnerships, Cooperation and Research.

It should be recalled that UNESCO is also directly involved in the formulation of policy recommendations and analysis which pertain to the so-called "research for policy". Moreover, the role of research within the education sector is also undoubtedly linked to the gathering of data, both quantitative and qualitative, for the monitoring of global education targets.

Given the theoretical nature of my dissertation, the participation in international conferences represented essential moments of my work since I could share findings regarding the reframing of concepts related to my study and receive contributions and feedback from scholars and academics involved in policy decision-making and research. Indeed, during the last few years I had the opportunity to have periods of feedback from scholars and academics who form part of the global education policy community. In particular, I had the opportunity to present a paper at the conference on Global Public Goods, Global Common and Global Democracy organized by the University of Leuven (Belgium) and to discuss issues related to the analysis of the concept of education as a common good. Moreover, I took part in the XVI World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, held in Beijing (22-26 August 2016), one

of the most important conferences on international and comparative education studies.

Methodology

In order to provide a clearer understanding of the concept of public goods as applied to education, the study examines the economic theory of public goods and the way numerous scholars and experts have interpreted this notion, especially with regard to the policy implications on the role and functions of the State. The analysis of education policy discourse is essential in order to highlight the conceptual frameworks and ideological underpinnings both of the actors that support a vision of education seen as a public good and of those who are more in favor of private involvement.

Through the analysis of discourse of the main actors involved in global education policy and the review of the literature, the study attempts to clarify the multifaceted phenomenon of privatization, considering administrative, economic, technical as well as political and social dimensions. Moreover, the analysis of international education database and the review of research provide a detailed and systematic description of trends of private and market involvement in education.

This theoretical study examines the extensive literature developed by several scholars and human rights researches cautioning against the potentially adverse impact that market approaches to education can have on equity and social justice. The review of the literature is grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective which examines political theory, economics, human-rights law, and philosophy as applied to the field of international education development.

Theoretical framework

This dissertation argues that the concept of education as a public good represents a fundamental principle for the governance of education, as found in international education development discourse and research. In order to provide a clearer understanding of what this concept actually implies, this dissertation adopts a political perspective which focuses on the institutional regulation of goods, through which concrete elements that constitute the "publicness" in education systems can be identified. Moreover, given the increasing interactions between State and non-state actors at different levels, this study also explores the concept of common goods as a potential complementary framework to strengthen democratic governance in education in a context characterized by greater complexity. Indeed, the concept of common goods has been increasingly adopted in philosophical-political spheres since its theoretical foundations are grounded in the alternative practices which oppose the spread of market policies that have been occurring both in the private and public domain.

Considering that the policies and issues related to marketization vary considerably at each level of education, this analysis will keep a specific focus on schooling since this is the level of education which receives most attention, partly "because it potentially affects the most people or involves the critical functions of education and socializing children" (Minow, 2003). This is not to underestimate the significance of market mechanisms in early childhood, secondary, tertiary or higher education. However, the privatization of each level of education displays itself in diverse ways, with different rationales and results. To discuss all levels would exceed the scope of this thesis. The primary is also the level of education where the role of the State is more clearly established by international conventions and national laws. Moreover, this is the level which, over the last two decades, has been associated with global agendas such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, and on which the debates on privatization have focused most, being this the level of education which has considerably increased worldwide.

Structure of the dissertation

Chapter one, entitled "Education as a public good: a concept with different interpretations", aims to provide a review of the education development discourse with regard to the use of the concept of education as a public good and to the different interpretations that have been attributed to this concept by the main actors involved in education policy. It aims to revisit the application of the theory of public goods to the field of education and to identify potential implications with regard to the role of the State. The chapter ends by suggesting that it is necessary to reframe the concept of education as a public good given the changing educational landscape, characterized by greater involvement of non-state actors at all levels of the education endeavor, by the "expanding public domain", and by the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private.

The purpose of the second chapter, "Changes in the global education landscape: growing privatization and marketization of education" is to give a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of privatization in the field of education. It first seeks to identify challenges related to the definition of this term and to the different meanings and understandings of this concept in education policy discourse and research. It outlines potential methodological implications related to the difficulty of finding a shared definition of privatization and to assess the real scale of the phenomenon. It illustrates the different forms of privatization and how trends and figures vary across and within regions, countries, and cities themselves. Driving forces behind the trends of privatization are identified in: the growing demand for more diversified educational opportunities; the government failure to provide quality basic education for all its citizens; the globalization and the spread of neoliberal ideology. It is finally suggested that the involvement of the market has been progressively taking a global scale and that these are directly linked to the risk of considering education as an industry regulated by the rules of global trade.

Chapter three, entitled "The Global Education Industry", investigates one particular manifestation of privatization in education which is influenced by neoliberal ideologies and market economics. This chapter provides an overview of the "Global Education Industry" landscape and traces the main actors involved.

The analysis identifies potential challenges of for-profit business engagement in education to democratic policy-making, to democratic governance and to the societal/collective purposes of education. It focuses on the growth of low-fee private schools and of public-private partnerships in education as particular manifestations of privatization in which market approaches appear most influential and provides an analysis of the pros and cons of these arrangements.

The fourth chapter, "Reframing the concept of education as a public good", first illustrates the peculiar nature of education, serving both public and private interests, and outlines two different approaches, one that puts greater emphasis on the publicgoods, and the other on private-goods aspects related to marketbased approaches to education. Potential effects of marketization on the concept of education as a public good are then identified. This analysis provides insights into how the principle of education as a public good can be reinterpreted, and identifies "criteria of publicness" that refer to both formal and functional conditions, the first related to the democratic governance of education systems, the latter to the development of democratic pedagogy and curriculum. The chapter outlines the policy implications with regard to the different functions of the State by taking into consideration different combinations of lower and higher levels of democracy and of private actors' involvement. I argue that the State should maintain a fundamental regulatory function and should strengthen its role in the provision and funding of education, especially in those contexts where education systems are not fully developed. Having said this, it is argued that the State cannot be self-sufficient in the funding and management of the education system. The existence and the development of networks at the local, national, and international levels, may give States the opportunity to put forward an alternative educational proposal that builds on the concept of education as a public good, in contrast to a vision of education yielding exclusively private benefits. Finally, I argue that partnerships may provide adequate opportunities both to complement the current functions and role of the Network State and to develop stronger education systems, especially in those contexts where the capacity and the financial opportunities of States need to be improved and supported.

The last chapter, entitled "Education as a common good", endeavors to examine complementary frameworks for the governance of education that may favor democratic participation and a humanistic approach while countering neoliberal influences in the sector. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of the State in the governance of education, understanding education as a common good also requires that the process of producing and benefitting from education is intrinsically shared. Indeed, the concept of common goods is increasingly adopted in philosophical-political spheres since its theoretical foundations are grounded in the alternative practices which oppose the spread of market policies that have been occurring both in the private and public domain. This study suggests that the frameworks of public goods and common goods may be seen as a sort of continuum in line with the aim of recuperating the role of the State, not merely seen as a State constituted by separate individuals, but as a "Statecommunity" which identifies itself in its citizens and in the fulfillment of popular sovereignty. Finally, the notion of education as a global common good is also examined. It calls for the development of global political institutions that enable countries and their citizens to have greater voice in the decisions that affect their well-being. This is necessary to encourage the diversity of approaches while countering dominant development discourse, characterized by a more instrumental vision of education. This dissertation discusses the extent to which the framework of global common goods may promote the formulation democratic education policies and practices in a global context.

4. The Conclusion

The drafting of this dissertation comes at a crucial moment for the global education community. Over the last two decades, the access to education has expanded at all levels at unprecedented rates, especially at the primary level, resulting in the positive reduction of the number of out-of-school children and adolescents by almost half since 2000 (UNESCO, 2015b). This remarkable progress is due in part to the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals frameworks which have put greater emphasis on the need to ensure education for all, especially at the basic and compulsory levels.

However, despite this significant expansion of access to formal education, the target of universal primary education has not been reached. Too many children still remain out-of-school worldwide and the most disadvantaged continue to be the least likely to be able to access education. The situation is particularly alarming in countries at war and in fragile countries where the share of out-of-school children is most concentrated (UNESCO, 2016a). Moreover, there has been a "progressive acknowledgment of the alarming scale of quality deficit" which has led to a shift in global discussions from a traditional focus on access to a greater concern for the learning actually taking place (UNESCO, 2015b). As investigated throughout this dissertation, the growing demand for education, also resulting from the significant demographic changes occurring worldwide, has placed greater pressure on public financing, already constrained by the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 (UNESCO, 2015c). The trends of privatization and marketization are in part the result of the educational crisis affecting countries both in the global North and in the global South, and from the failure of governments to provide basic education of quality for all.

The global Education 2030 agenda adopted in 2015 "attends to the 'unfinished business' of the EFA agenda and the education-related MDGs, and addresses global and national education challenges" (UNESCO, 2015a). However, if past progress rates continue into the future ("business as usual"), in low income countries universal primary education will be achieved only by 2088 (UNESCO, 2016a). The present crisis of educational systems should encourage the development of innovative solutions

able to deal with growing complexity by developing new responses and approaches to public policy. As the world moves towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a "fundamental change of mindsets [is] needed to trigger action for sustainable development" (UNESCO, 2015b, p. 11). The Incheon Declaration also calls for "bold and innovative actions, to reach [the education] ambitious goal by 2030" (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 20).

This renewed global commitment may represent an opportunity for bringing about a comprehensive discussion to rethink educational governance substantially in order to address the challenges coming from the new global education scenario and to implement more effective and ethical international education policies. The challenges facing education systems worldwide may be seized as an opportunity to rethink the ways in which public institutions are organized and for what purposes. As argued in Hursch (2016), there is a need for "(re)build[ing] those social institutions and processes that help solve our collective problems" (p. 113).

It is against this backdrop that the theoretical discussion of this study is conducted. The analysis and the re-contextualization of principles of governance appear essential in order to fully understand the policy implications resulting from the adoption of different frameworks and to identify potential strategies for innovative reforms. As illustrated in this dissertation, the choice between an approach to education considered as a public good or as private and marketable good is far from irrelevant and it often brings about contrasting imaginaries and priorities with implications for public policy that vary considerably. This choice should be made by governments. Given the "peculiar nature" of education (Levin, 2000), serving both public and private interests and purposes, public institutions are asked to find the balance between these two apparently contrasting approaches so as not to undermine the fundamental principles of equity, social justice and equality of opportunity. This is something which cannot be left in the hands of individuals or households who also have to deal with private needs and aspirations.

In a context of greater privatization and marketization of education, the revisited concept of education as a public good, as explored in Chapter four of this dissertation, calls for the development of democratic institutions able to deal with confrontation and to favor participation in order to promote a comprehensive discussion on the foundational elements of educational policy and practice. While reaffirming the importance of the role of the State in the provision and funding of education opportunities, the greater participation of non-state actors requires that the State strengthens above all its regulatory function in order to preserve the public sphere. Indeed, the public sphere is certainly "under attack" as neoliberal claims and managerial approaches have decreased this "space of criticism" (Apple, 2006).

Despite the fact that neoliberalism has been one of the determinant forces which has contributed to the robust rates of economic growth in many countries, the model of development based on liberalization and on the predominance of market mechanisms has been deemed as the cause for the return of inequality to the levels existing one century ago (Mason, 2015). Indeed, significant inequalities persist throughout countries worldwide (UNESCO, 2015c). According to studies conducted by Oxfam, economic inequality is rising, with the "85 richest individuals in the world hav[ing] as much wealth as the poorest half of the global population" (Oxfam, 2014). Moreover, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are causing ecological stress and degradation, with consequences for livelihood and stability in many countries (UNESCO, 2015c). For these reasons, the neoliberal model appears to have failed in providing sustainable solutions for social and human well-being (Mason, 2015). By undermining equality and social justice, marketization puts the very functioning of healthy democratic systems at risk (Ball, 2007; Burch, 2009; Mazawi, 2013).

However, restructuring the *public* depends on a strong political will which aims at revisiting those rules that have favored the ex-

pansion of market ideologies at the expense of equality and democracy. Since market alone cannot exist without an explicit State intervention, it is important to understand which rules are being implemented and which norms, values, and systems of power, these rules reflect. As argued by many scholars, the challenge is not merely about the choice between the State and the market, but an essential issue of democracy which concerns both the quality of the State and of the market (Apple, 2006; Hursch, 2016; Reich, 2015; Rizvi, 2016).

With regard to education, the way the public sphere should be reconstituted requires a radical change in the approach to education policy and practices (Apple, 2006; Burch, 2009). A simple defense of the public sector is not useful to counterbalance the distortive effects of privatization in the field of education (Ball, 2007; Burch, 2009). Indeed, the effects of economic marketdriven approaches have had a significant impact on education, "since the point was reached when money, having become allpowerful, changed cultural and moral attitudes" (UNESCO, 1993, p. 1)[5]. The response to privatization "cannot be based on the simple assertion that everything we now have has to be defended" (Apple, 2006). To address the long-standing crisis in education systems this study argues that there is need for a shift in culture, a transformative change in order to significantly revisit and reshape the way of functioning of public institutions themselves (Apple & Beane, 2007; Hursch, 2016; Tedesco, 1995; UNESCO, 2016a).

For this change to be possible and practicable, minimum and enabling conditions are necessary. First and foremost, there should be democratically established public institutions and a political environment which favors both participation and accountability. This not only depends largely on agreement and a strong political will but, in order to introduce new approaches and perspectives able to deal with change and complexity, also on the need to have "accurate diagnoses concerning the current situation, a considerable amount of information concerning global trends and mechanisms for evaluating the actions undertaken,

which can be used to introduce changes before results harden and become too difficult and too costly to modify" (Tedesco, 1995, p. 110).

The contribution of all actors is increasingly fundamental in order to promote the development of democratic institutions able to innovate and identify more structured responses to the crisis of educational systems. Indeed, it has been shown that the adoption of market mechanisms and the provision of standardized solutions to the problems facing education worldwide may lead to forms of exclusion and discrimination.

The arguments discussed in this thesis

It has been illustrated in this study that building constructive and sustainable alternatives requires education to be considered as *both* a public *and* a common good. Indeed, the concept of common goods may help to develop new approaches likely to integrate the notion of education as a public good with the fundamental social and cultural components of education in order to enhance a transformative and alternative system of governance that promotes education not only as an economic tool for individual progress but above all as a collective endeavor for the fulfillment of human-beings and of their communities. In this light, it is suggested that a change is needed in the way in which public and governmental power is used for the promotion of a greater complementation of both top-down and bottom-up approaches (UNESCO, 2016a).

As illustrated in the last chapter, building on alternative practices which oppose the processes of privatization and marketization, the notion of common goods promotes the development of instruments of participatory democracy and puts greater emphasis on the networks of solidarity among citizens and groups. It is about suggesting a transformation of public institutions through greater participation of citizens in the introduction of viable policies and practices in order to overcome more utilitarian and individualistic approaches and build more democratic schooling sys-

tems. As argued by Hursch (2016), "we need to develop democratic processes that place educators, parents, and students in the center of decision making. Such changes will require more than protesting the neoliberal agenda; it will also necessitate developing new social structures" (p. 107).

Having said this, it has also been suggested that the principle of education as a common good does not propose easy solutions since it depends on a strong political commitment, willing to call into question current cultural orientations and institutions in order to promote innovation and social change based on the values of human dignity and freedom. More structured and innovative responses to the challenges facing educational systems need to be carefully designed and require trust in the democratic functioning of institutions. Indeed, unlike corporate reforms which tend to reduce the spaces of participation, new responses which build on the concept of education as a common good, and which can see people taking more responsibilities, need to be based both on trust and community, and this can be more easily achieved in those contexts where the principles of equality and equity are safeguarded (Hursch, 2016).

The role of civil society is increasingly crucial in the development of alternatives that take into consideration the diversity of contexts. The contribution of civil society organizations at all levels of the education endeavor may help in the analysis of current realties and in the monitoring of education policies. Their role is essential in enabling the voices of all citizens to be heard and in influencing the functioning of public institutions. Strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations would mean that governments would have the possibility of developing public education systems that take into consideration both innovation and inclusion. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that when the public sector accepts and integrates different contributions in order to innovate and invest in the quality of education, it is generally more preferred over the private sector.

It has also been argued that the concept of education as a common good should favor a humanistic vision of education and the enhancement of the cultural and social dimensions of each educational process. With regard to the private sector, this feature requires that corporate actors replace mere for-profit market logics with social objectives (Bruni, 2012). Private actors should be called on to manage educational services ethically and sensitively without profit representing the only motivation. It requires the establishment of forms of cooperation that replace the logics of economic competition. This does not mean prohibiting all kind of profits to private actors, but creating a system of accountability and control which ensures that profits are limited and reinvested in social actions. It is about rediscovering the ethical underpinnings of economic theory itself, grounded in social relationships more than in economic transactions and profitmaking purposes (Bruni, 2012).

A shift in the relationships of current arrangements of power between the private corporate sector and public institutions is therefore required in order to develop forms of cooperation based on partnerships that favor the many, not the few. Indeed, when "genuinely based on exchange and mutual benefit", partnerships may contribute to the development of a new form of cooperation (Delors, 1996, p. 183).

The private sector may have an important role in society as long as it is able to work with citizens and public institutions in the development of new ways to achieve shared societal goals. This is based on the acknowledgment that viable solutions are those which are culturally and socially fair. As illustrated in the third chapter, the closure of the for-profit chain of low-fee private schools in Uganda is a clear sign that when education solutions are designed and developed without the direct involvement of citizens, teachers, parents and students, the final result is far from sustainable and acceptable both in economic and in sociocultural terms.

It is necessary to acknowledge the positive contributions that private actors may provide, while also paying increasing attention on the limitations and challenges of private involvement in the education sector. As stated by Minow (2003), "the preconditions

for a constitutional democracy are also its stated values; a population with the freedom and equality to pursue self-governance is both the end and the means of democratic political systems. Private actors could either undermine this alignment of ends and means or strengthen it and the values of pluralism and freedom it pursues".

For structured and viable alternatives to be sustainable, it is also necessary that both the national and global levels are aligned to a vision of education seen as a public and common good. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that there is a progressive shift in the locus of decision-making from the State to the global level with the constitution of complex global governance arrangements (UNESCO, 2015c). This study suggests that the concept of education as a global common good may call for the adoption of a cultural shift also regarding international cooperation in the field of education.

At this particular historical moment, international organizations such as UNESCO can play a leading role as public international institutions, representing most of the States of the world in fostering the establishment of mechanisms that can monitor and facilitate the implementation of policies that favor a humanistic approach and the democratic governance of education. Leading the global agenda for education, UNESCO is in a privileged position to facilitate international cooperation in education based on a vision of education seen as a common good. Indeed "the common good is a typical UNESCO concept as it has a long tradition in all cultures" (Elfert, 2015b).

Democratic governance at the global level can be strengthened by the participation of governments and other global actors able to identify, protect, and enhance different visions of development. Indeed, international civil society organizations, as well as popular movements, are playing an increasing influential role in global arenas. These actors may be able to seize the voice of the most vulnerable and marginalized, boosting the values of social justice, equity, and solidarity among human-beings. Moreover, cooperation among universities and research centers world-

wide could help identify new structures and arrangements necessary for the realization of these alternative visions in different contexts.

All these factors are necessary to define a societal project open to the contributions of all cultures, knowing that common development is the result of the cooperation among diverse worldviews, systems of knowledge and experiences. Achieving education as a global common good requires an effective and substantial democratic governance at the global level, based on the adoption of a different cultural perspective on issues that affect us all.

Directions for future research

The analysis conducted in this study has enabled the identification of other possible directions for future research which have not been dealt with in this dissertation.

First and foremost, this thesis is based on the critical analysis of principles of governance and has aimed at providing greater conceptual clarity which is fundamental for a better understanding of tensions and contradictions deriving from the use, or misuse, of different concepts and for identifying policy implications. A more concrete understanding of contexts and conditions that may encourage or discourage the adoption of specific frameworks would be relevant and would add significant elements to the discussion conducted here. For instance, a sociological field study, which would enable the analysis of the conditions that have contributed in a specific context to a revisiting of education policies based on participation and democratic decision-making, would represent a significant contribution to the advancement of the discussion on the possibilities for concrete and transformative changes in the governance of education.

Moreover, as illustrated in the introduction, the objective of this study was delimited to analyses of the primary education level. The entire work has aimed at revisiting the role of the State and at identifying possible new avenues for innovation and cooperation at this particular level. Understanding the policy implications of the concept of education as a public good for other levels would be relevant in order to deal with the new global Education 2030 agenda which also puts greater emphasis on the secondary level and adopts a perspective based on lifelong learning. Since the role of the State is deemed as fundamental to achieving this renewed commitment, different studies on the policy implications of the principle of education as a public and common good at post-compulsory level would also be valuable for the identification of sustainable policy and practices.

Finally, since this study has offered a perspective on issues related to public and common goods basically at the national level, touching only marginally on global arrangements, a more detailed analysis of the concept of education as a global common good may provide important elements for the governance of education at the global level. A more complete understanding of the implications of the concept of education as a global common good for the functioning of international organizations and their visions of education would facilitate the development of innovative approaches to issues related to education from a global perspective.

Potential contributions

Given the complexity of the subject in question, this thesis may provide some more clarity with regard to the use and significance of important concepts that drive the formulation of educational policies. As discussed in the introduction, theoretical critical analysis contributes to a better understanding of the issues that are behind the adoption of specific concepts. This study can be included in the type of "research of policy" (Desjardins & Rubenson, 2009) which does not directly aim at offering concrete solutions for the formulation of policies, but at least clarifies the meanings and implications that may arise from the adoption of different policy frameworks.

It has been argued that there is an unprecedented need to strengthen the role of the State at this time of increasing involvement of non-state actors at all levels of the education endeavor. The analysis of the concept of education as a public good has tried to provide greater clarity on the roles and functions of public institutions, not only in the provision and funding of education opportunities, but also with regard to the regulatory and monitoring roles which become even more essential for the democratic governance of education systems. The State is determinant for the elaboration of alternative frameworks that encourage cooperation among state and non-state actors, indicating a particular vision of education that is also a political project for a democratic society, in contrast to a vision of education serving individual economic interests.

In line with one of the roles of "research of policy", this analysis has also tried to "expand theory and thinking" by identifying new frameworks that may inspire the adoption of innovative visions more relevant to the diversity of contexts and needs of societies worldwide. Indeed, besides revisiting and reaffirming education as a public good, it is also argued that the concept of common goods may contribute to the advancement and rethinking of democratic public institutions. The effects of neoliberal policies driven merely by market approaches to education have to be softened and complemented by more structured responses that build on the forces of society and empower them to become actively involved in the process of education policy formulation and implementation. This is necessary in order to build systems that are sustainable and therefore inclusive and equitable.

In line with the extensive scholarly debate on the need to strengthen democratic schools, and to rethink the State in a context of privatization and marketization both of and in education (Ball & Youdell, 2008), this study has tried to provide greater conceptual clarity of different concepts and frameworks for the identification of innovative and democratic solutions based on a vision of education seen not merely as an economic tool, but mainly as the process through which human-beings and society fully develop.

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