

International Conversations on Curriculum Studies

Subject, Society and Curriculum

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GLOBALISATION, CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The process of globalisation has been introducing meaningful changes into the most diverse sectors of society, of which education, namely in the context of higher education, in which the discourses of competitiveness, individualism and free market enable a new paradigm and consolidate curricular changes which we would label *return to the actor* (Touraine, 1984). In this communication, we intend to analyse some effects this agenda has introduced into education and training systems and anticipate the sense Curriculum and Assessment will assume while structuring components of this system in the context of definition of macro policies, with highlight on the Bologna Process and its effects on the restructuring of university's identity and mission.

Both society in its global nature and the State in its various ways of exercising authority are profoundly involved in change processes, based on presumptions of political, economic, cultural and social action which result from the intense globalising dynamic that contributes to the reformulation of educative and curricular policies. Such policies, whose discursive registers orient themselves towards principles of equity, justice and inclusion, eventually legitimate, in practical terms, logics of performativity that result in a prescription of knowledge and in control of the assessment. Particularly in higher education they comprise the reorganisation of the training cycles.

In this sense, we have structured this communication according to three main points—globalisation and curriculum; globalisation and higher education; globalisation and assessment—which will be explored according to an analysis of content of the most relevant documents that have marked the education and theorisation agenda which, in a national and international context, seemed to us more relevant to convoke and make reference of.

GLOBALISATION AND CURRICULUM

In the last decades, and in the most diverse political and social contexts, the course of education, in general, and of the curriculum, in particular, has been traced by economic policies whose orientations follow globalised decisions derived from international and supranational organisms, on the one hand, a process which Hallak (2001) calls creation of new spaces for political regionalisation, and, on the other hand, the adoption of accountability policies that are anchored in a perspective of technical rationality connected to the market principles (Dale, 2005).

As a process of creation and condemnation of hegemonies (Teodoro, 2003), globalisation is a phenomenon that can be placed in distinct planes, mainly in the economic and social ones, and that, therefore, alters power relationships between levels of transnational, supranational, national and local decisions significantly, imposing news logics of conceptualising not only education and training but also organisations themselves and, consequently, their role.

Whereas at a discursive level the concepts of local identity, decentralisation and autonomy become vital, the uniformity of educative institutions is still reality. It is, therefore, imperative to accept that the State will keep on insisting “on the uniformity of practices, values, knowledge and orientations” (Kress, 2003, p. 120) and on the fulfilment of a globalised educational agenda that turns the debate about the role of the State—a protagonist or a reduced character?—into something fierce. To Arrighi and Silver (2001, p. 16), “globalisation is related to the emergence of transnational organisms that do not have to be loyal to any countries or do not feel at home in any of them.”

As for the European Union, the member states have nowadays a common policy within what Santos (2001, p. 93) calls “globalisation of low intensity” and Teodoro (2003, p. 56) names “globally structured agenda.” It is thus predictable that its effects on national policies tend to homogeneity and uniformity rather than to diversity and multiplicity. It is, as Wätcher (2004, p. 268) claims, the alteration of the dominant paradigm—from diversity to convergence—, justified as follows at the level of higher education:

It is linked to the fact (or perception) that, at the time, a global higher education market was emerging, with the ‘export’ of education as one of its traits, and that Europe was not amongst the winners on this market. European higher education therefore needed, in the words of the Bologna Declaration, to acquire ‘a world-wide degree of attraction.’

According to Bourdieu’s notion of field it is then admitted that there is a global field in terms of definition of educative policies:

Theorization about an empirical investigation of educational policy fields today must recognize the growing global character of relations between national policy fields and international fields, re-emphasizing Bourdieu’s conceptualization of fields as social rather than geographical spaces. Such an account needs to see the various networks, referred to by Mann as sitting within what, after Bourdieu, we call a global education policy field. (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005, p. 761)

Can one think of the Europeanisation of the curriculum within a European policy for education? At this moment there is only a tendency being expressed, despite the fact that the existing regulation levels testify two different realities: for higher education there is the formatting of curriculum training cycles through the Bologna Process; for compulsory and secondary schooling regulation takes place according to indicators of learning outcomes, through which curricular options are justified, and in the adoption of curricular languages that privilege the mastering of pragmatic knowledge (Pacheco & Vieira, 2006).

In this case the global policy for education goes beyond the European Union:

At the global level, the influence of OECD educational indicators, but particularly the TIMMS and PISA studies and results, can be seen to constitute a new global space in educational policy, but practices of educational policy also remain national and very localized, with the habitus of actors situated in various positions within the field. (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005, p. 774)

Mostly since 2000, the Europeanisation of the curriculum can be easily found in two documents that are founding texts of the convergence of education and training policies: “Indicators on the Quality of School Education”¹ and “The concrete future objectives of education and training systems.”² The former is related to compulsory and secondary schooling and the latter expresses, for all school levels, the necessity of

Increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union; facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems; opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

The basis of it is Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which began a wide reflection upon the objectives of education systems among Education Ministers:

On the basis of contributions from Member States’ the Council has identified a number of common priorities for the future and the contribution which the education and training systems must make if the Lisbon goal that Europe

should 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*” is to be achieved.

The profound relation between globalisation and knowledge, based upon the *theory of human capital* and on the movement of *lifelong learning* (Jones, 2005) led the European Union to the adoption of “the techno-economic paradigm for a knowledge economy” (Bullen, Robb & Kenway, 2004). Knowledge as it is conveyed by education and training curricula tends to be viewed as capital. This leads Olssen and Peters (2005, p. 331) to naming it “Knowledge capitalism” which “emerged only recently to describe the transitions to the so-called ‘knowledge economy,’ which we characterize in terms of the economics of abundance, the annihilation of distance, the de-territorialization of the state, and, investment in human capital.”

Although the Lisbon agenda seems to focus more on higher education, mainly due to Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) European councils, the other school levels have not been forgotten. For compulsory and secondary schooling the curriculum Europeanisation may have its genesis in the referred document (“Indicators on the Quality of School Education”), which contains a series of curricular orientations and specifies quality indicators for the learning of Mathematics, Reading, Sciences, Information and Communication Technologies, Foreign Languages, Learning How to Learn and Civic Education. Linguistic skills and skills at information and communication technologies are structuring in a European-wide curriculum, which is recognised namely in the document-plan of action “Action plan on language learning and linguistic diversity” (2004), in several programmes of e-learning and in “European area of lifelong learning” (2001).

In practice, this knowledge is reduced to a more pragmatic perspective in which the knowledge of certain subject fields, for which the symbolic meaning is meaningful, and of essentially technicist orientations, is cherished and students are given a utilitarian vision of school. Ladwig wonders (2003, p. 283) then “why students begin to see this form of knowledge (and the required abilities and skills to make this knowledge public) as absolutely precious and desirable.”

The curriculum Europeanisation, which is spread over all school levels, focuses, therefore, on the centrality of knowledge and on the adoption of more efficient social policies, highlighting the control of education and training systems.

On the basis of these systems’ convergence there is the presumption that education is a worldwide institution, whose construction is modelled by supra and transnational policies (Azevedo, 2000) that lead to changes in all school levels, both in terms of curricular organisation and knowledge policies. In the curricular organisation the learning goals give way to competences, now understood as

structuring literacies, now perceived as *practical knowledge* that individuals need to acquire in order to integrate in knowledge economy. Even if such changes are based upon flexible and contextual models of curriculum development, for teachers and pupils are responsible for the organisation and operation of learning situations according to their needs, in practice, the curriculum conforms to decision processes and practices that result not only in a State perspective, in the definition of curricular parameters and in assessment regulation, but also in a market point of view that defines and imposes, directly or indirectly, the selection and organisation criteria of school knowledge. Therefore, globalisation in its diverse dimensions, in general, and in its educational dimension, in particular, represents a factor of curriculum regulation dependent on economic interests that demand an effective curriculum control—this originates what we may label as curriculum *(re)tylerisation*.

Any process of curricular convergence which results, or not, in the curriculum Europeanisation contributes to the reinforcement of curricular over professional authority. According to Campbell (2006), curricular authority strengthens the legitimacy of planned curriculum, which is related to standardised and formalised curricular orientations derived from academic matters and subjects, manuals and the *authorised knowledge* teachers should teach to their pupils. Professional authority, in contrast, is situated not in the curricular parameters defined by forces that are external to teachers, but, essentially, in teachers’ capability to use their pedagogical and curricular knowledge with discretion and proficiency. The tension that can be noticed between these two types of authority has strongly marked what happens around the curriculum: in terms of discourse, teachers’ professional authority prevails, whereas in terms of curricular practices this happens with the authority of the central administration, whose decision action more and more often takes place in a supranational scope.

GLOBALISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The globalisation and the processes of policies’ regulation that are associated to it led to challenges that, as we have been analysing, are evidence for the necessity of readapting the educative systems to a new reality, on the one hand, and confirm the central role of education and training in the development and prosperity of peoples, on the other.

In all this change process both the pressure exerted by certain forces which operate at a transnational level and the consequent redefinition of the State’s mandate, as far as the importance of the economic sector in society’s structuring, functioning and progress is concerned, become visible. It is therefore understandable that, in the construction of a European area, the economic cooperation has dominated

the international agenda and placed cooperation in other social contexts in a less important level, electing the former a central reference of communitarian policies, directly or indirectly endeavouring to turn “the values and criteria of the capitalist economy of market into the exclusive values and criteria of reference and meaning of what is good, useful and necessary” (Petrella, 2002, p. 19).

Such an economic intentionality had already been clearly expressed during the Portuguese presidency in the European Union, in the Lisbon Meeting (March 2000), in which the work programme “Programme of common objectives for 2010” (later renamed “Education and Training 2010”) was first designed with the aim of, in the 10 subsequent years, making Europe “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.”³ When insisting on the social and economic importance of education and training systems for the “potential for excellence, innovation and competitiveness of each country,” the recent European Commission’s 2006 Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs⁴ about the progresses which were verified within that programme reinforces the attempt to implement a European social model based upon a new form of rationalisation of social practices (Gimeno, 1998) and orientated by values connected to mechanisms of productivity, meritocracy, efficiency and efficacy, that is to say, a model based upon a *market ideology*.

Both the “bankruptcy” of the nation-state model, upon which most contemporaneous democracies are based, and the *geographical redefinition* of the concept of State itself, which is now limited to the “supranationality of the European Union” (Vilar, 2003, p. 14) are related to the emergence of this new order. In fact, the State’s incapacity to efficaciously perform the functions of regulation and provision of goods and services that were consigned to it caused a series of structural and functional alterations with transference of responsibilities to society both at the level of the State’s functioning and of the social framework. The dirigiste and hierarchical model that had been ruling collapses and the State is compelled to begin a series of reforms in which the “bureaucratic regulation”—derived from the “exercise of power by authority, hierarchy, formal regulation”—gives way to a “regulation of a mercantile sort”—based upon the “exercise of power by influence, mutual adjustment, diffuse and informal nature of rules and relations” (Afonso, 2003, p. 51).

The changes concerning the State’s decision powers had an influence on higher education due to the tendency towards transforming the university into a different institution, for it is no more the *ideological arm* of the nation-state, and, idealising it

as an organisation of enterprise-related dimensions, entrusted it with the production and diffusion of a *national culture*:

The process of economic globalisation brings about the relative decline of the nation State as the main institution of capital reproduction all over the world. The university, on the other hand, is becoming a bureaucratic transnational enterprise, both connected to governmental transnational institutions as the European Union and working independently, by analogy, as a transnational enterprise. (Readings, 2003, p. 13)

The attempt to establish a *global agenda for education*, able to help overcome certain educational problems with which the teaching systems, particularly universities, have to deal in order to answer the demands of economic globalisation, in the wider context of the European Union, is, therefore, comprehensible. The *Bologna Process* helps understand how education fits into this process of economy globalisation and make the University’s mission explicit—the University is nowadays closer to a professionalising dimension, as the foundation of the construction of a knowledge society, than to a humanist one that supports the development of individuals’ critical thinking. Still according to Readings (2003, p. 39), the conflict between a purely economic point of view and the traditional cultural mission of the university finishes nowadays in the centrality of excellence, which “leads to the fact that university is only understandable in the patterns of enterprise administration”.

Concentrating on the policies of the European Union we have laid stress, even if in a brief way, on some of the principles which guided the Bologna Process⁵. In order to answer the growing needs of internationalisation of universities, mobility and competitiveness of European citizens and improvement of the levels and conditions of employment for the ones who have a diploma, the Bologna Declaration⁶, an agreement which was signed in June 1999 and that has now the signature of 42 European countries, proposes the construction of a *European Higher Education Area*. For the achievement of such a purpose, the Bologna Declaration enumerated six fundamental lines of action: the adoption of a comparable and easily read system of degrees; the adoption of a training system of two cycles; the establishment of a system of academic credits (ECTS) to stimulate the students’ mobility, the promotion of mobility within and outside the community of teachers, investigators and students; the promotion of a European dimension in higher education. Subsequently, meeting in Prag in 2001, the Education Ministers of member states decided that for the construction of the European Higher Education Area it was necessary to add three new action areas: lifelong learning, the students’ commitment and participation in the management of higher education institutions;

the promotion of the capacity of attraction of the European Higher Education Area. This agreement was to be progressively consolidated, both in the Berlin (2003) and in the Bergen European Council (2005). A new council is already scheduled for 2007 in London in order to assess the developed actions, to draw strategies and reinforce commitments.

The progressive importance of education and training in the European Union, the idea of deepening the cooperation between member states and the construction of a *European Higher Education Area* aim at constructing a Europe of Knowledge, at least as far as produced texts are concerned, a purpose that is associated to the intense globalising phenomenon in which the world has submerged and to the spectacular development of information and communication technologies.

In line with such purposes, the attempt of the European Union to assume a leader attitude under the pretext of cooperation, prosperity, modernity and social cohesion has become visible and is shaped by the enlargement and reinforcement of the capacities of influence and intervention among the member states and the acceding countries, leading to what several authors (Antunes, 2001; Cortesão & Stoer, 2001; Dale, 2001; Seixas, 2001) call Europeanisation of educative and training policies with the consequent curriculum Europeanisation (Pacheco & Vieira, 2006).

As far as educative policies are concerned, they are now meditated on through a “political process that intends to reduce policies to the ministerial agreements with redefinition of the national context as an area of technical implementation” (Antunes, 2005, p. 1346). That is to say that the architecture of educative policies is done according to a “bipolar model in which the moment and space of decision and of implementation are preliminarily split and exclude each other mutually in a nearly absolute way; the national space and decisions, then, go back to a subordinated and imposed position of accomplishment of the orientations that are defined in supranational platforms” (*idem, ibid*)—a process in which common basic principles are recognised that work around strategic goals for the education and training that orientate the specific policies of each member state, a process that will inevitably tend to the uniformity of European teaching systems.

A similar situation can be found in curricular terms, for globalisation brought about meaningful changes for the conception of the curriculum, with a tendency towards a predetermined plane of knowledge fields within the Tylerian rationality rather than within an action project with a complex conversation (Pinar, 2001), as it is claimed to be correct in the field of critical theorisation. The supranational logic is the reinforcement of this technicist view and a way of patterning the educative policies (Catani & Oliveira, 2000), where the university is supposed to assume a mission that is far away from the role of critical training, for, as it has already been

referred, “excellence is swiftly becoming the university’s motto and the university is on the way to become an enterprise (Readings, 2003).

As Pacheco and Vieira stress (2006, p. 94), the national educative policies in their structuring aspects tend to subordinate to the European educative policies, “which are at this moment more intensive in terms of form than in terms of content as far as curricular convergence is concerned.” It is thus easy to understand that the curriculum Europeanisation in higher education focuses on the formatting of training cycles and on the (pre)determination of learning outcomes according to Bologna Process’ principles. This leads to the construction of a European curricular territory which is “more visible through the referential systems of organisational structure than through the programmatic contents” (*idem*, p. 104).

Now, curricular changes cannot be limited to formal issues, for we are talking about key competences, competences which are orientated towards lifelong learning, new contexts and learning methods, new ways of validating and assessing learning (Leney & Green, 2005). Rather than a case of mere *curricular reengineering*, the Bologna process should offer conditions for the curriculum to become a “vehicle of social integration” dependent on each context and able to act in concrete situations, that is, as a training project that “implies constant space and time of decision making at various levels and stages and involving the diverse educative agents” (Morgado, 2000, p. 458).

The challenges presented by the *Knowledge Society* demand from the teaching institutions that they create learning opportunities that stimulate the development of capacities and competences by the students so that they can participate more actively and responsibly in a society that is every time more and more complex and in constant change—challenges that imply change of the teaching-learning model that has ruled most educative institutions and of the curricular practices that develop there.

As for the teachers, this job that used to be mainly based upon scientific competences is now coming to a scenario where “relational and management competences play a new main role in a context in which pedagogy is becoming a quality facet of higher education’s quality and a presupposition inherent in teachers’ training itself” (Morgado, 2005, p. 55). Rather than transmitting knowledge, teachers are supposed to develop certain capacities in students as, for instance, learning habits; investigative appetencies, adoption of a critical way of seeing available information; capacity of responsible analysis, selection and use of information. In this same sense Mary Warnock (2003, p. 250) claims that “universities will perhaps find their new role in the Knowledge Society through the teaching and learning of those capacities.”

Nonetheless, that is not what was noticed in the teaching systems, which tend to play the role of extension of competitiveness and commercialisation of education. Despite believing that free and emancipating education is an essential resource in every democratic society, it has been noticed, particularly in some European countries, that the declarations of political leaders have been transforming it into a tool for economy and adapting it to market conditions and principles. The growing use of worldwide standards, favourable instruments for the commercialisation of the European educative sector, is a good example of it. From kindergarten to universities, the principles of competitiveness and economic efficiency are more and more affecting the various sectors: labouring regulation, pedagogical strategies, institutional organisation, budgets and so on.

GLOBALISATION AND ASSESSMENT

The centrality of assessment in the process of globalisation

The multiform and complex transformations, namely in the educative system, have been producing differentiated discourses: on the one hand, a more political-ideological discourse, which denies the inexorable nature of “globalisation” and seeks alternative policies that compensate for its baneful effects; on the other hand, a more descriptive and fact-based discourse, in which the analysis of the “effects” of a “historic process in course” has been mainly privileged (Morin, 1999). The series of public education reforms throughout the last decades also demonstrates that the political rhetoric of reconfiguration of the State’s role, renovation of the market’s leading role and claim for the advantages of competitive and private economy have placed the assessment in a undeniable central position as a legitimating, control and uniformity device (Lima & Afonso, 2002), and placed the various agents in some paralysing dichotomies.

From Illuminism onwards, education started playing a role of centripetal strength in the constitution of the nation-states. Through this, the aim of making rules, languages, cultures and values uniform became incompatible, on the one hand, with the openness to a transnational dimension that is not connected to a territory and, on the other hand, with the inclusion of local differences. The borderlines between countries are also more and more fluid and have been threatening the autonomy of national educative systems gradually and paradoxically: on the one hand, following the demands of globalisation, they require the importance of individuals’ performativity and insertion in an economy of no borderlines; on the other hand, on a local scale they claim the particularities, the multiculturalism and the difference. Globalisation has highlighted competitiveness with no borderlines

and no territory through which the States have been losing their mechanisms of regulation and protection of the economic-social systems of national nature. The educative systems are brought under pressure to answer these needs to increase the level of performativity of workers and enterprises. Paradoxically, though, globalisation has promoted forms of social, political and economic organisation which are more horizontal, participative and informal. The rhetoric of equity and justice is becoming stronger and compelling the educative systems to find answers in order to deal with and solve the problems associated to differences, multiculturalism and social cohesion.

Other factors such as the elevation of the acquisition of “competences” in formal and non-formal contexts, mainly due to a democratisation of the access to information and knowledge, are aspects of “globalisation” which are affecting education as well. Nowadays, the formal teaching institutions, which guaranteed their own social need due to the monopoly of knowledge and certification, have to live together with the threat of more and more efficacious, performative and non-institutionalised learning processes. This is the reason for the education “crisis” which has been an obviousness consensually accepted for some decades. In 1957 Arendt had already claimed that in America, under the background of general crisis that spread all over the modern world, “the periodic education crisis is one of the most characteristic and revealing aspects” (Pombo, 2000, p. 22).

It is known, though, that we are not before a mere rhetoric construction, despite its repetition by the ones who intervene in the educative field, and we may even identify a phenomenology of this “crisis” which is well patent in several aspects. According to Lyotard (1979), the central event consists in the change in the knowledge statute and, *a fortiori*, in the nature of education itself as a process of “knowledge” transmission, production and investigation. If we accept this hypothesis of interpretation, the education “crisis” will be in the structural transition from the modern paradigm to the post-modern one, that is to say, in the progressive replacement of the educative institution seen as an agent of emancipation that aims at freeing man from all oppressions for an educative institution subjugated to the empire of performativity.

For Lyotard the crisis of the metanarratives represents a moment of mourning for the modern educational paradigm. The incredulity before the modern legitimacy device, both under the “speculative” and the “emancipation” form, establishes a different way of facing education, structurally influenced by the predominance of the performativity criterion. The statute of education and of the educative institution changes profoundly: it becomes “mercantile” and “instrumentalised.” The transmission and acquisition of knowledge, whose favourite space is the scholastic

institution, are limited by the need to optimise the economic system itself. There is no “humanist” goal in the act of educating anymore: one educates others for these to be more efficacious and productive. The educative institution is not an end in itself, mainly concerned about the emancipation of man, but a fundamental means in generalised performativity. The present education “crisis” would, therefore, result from this separation between a growing subordination of the educative systems to performativity, on the one hand, and the educational and pedagogical discourses, strongly inspired by modern narratives: the educative institution *still* wants to train “citizens,” whereas the system is *already* demanding efficacious “technicians.”

This “gap,” which is growing more and more (Magalhães & Stoer, 2002) as if the scholastic institution and society were two irremediably incommensurable worlds, leads us, from our point of view, to a crying need to re-establish the sense(s) of pedagogical work and of the institution in a double dimension: a dimension which is inherent in the institution itself and that allows the set of actions performed by its agents to acquire a meaning and an intelligibility for themselves (Guerra, 1999); an extrinsic dimension that answers the need for social scrutiny and, especially, for shared and democratic reflection about the fulfilment of its mandate.

The assessment before the challenges of equity and performativity

According to Alves and Machado (2003), since the emergence of the assessment as a subject, it is possible to identify the presence of two “metanarratives” in its field whose conflicting nature has been evident: on the one hand, a “metanarrative of emancipation” that is inserted in the Illuminist narratives of human being’s attainment as an autonomous, reflexive and critical being, aiming at the achievement of democratic and equitable societies; on the other hand, the “metanarrative of control,” after which assessment emerges simultaneously as guarantee and inducement agent of a generalised efficacy, following the demand for control of performance and constitution of societies based upon meritocratic competition. There are, therefore, two points of view of the assessment culture which are apparently antagonistic and paradoxical and lead us to an impasse. Each one of these metanarratives goes back to opposing characteristics which assign incompatible functions to the assessment.

The metanarrative of control is the one that, from the perspective of curricular policies, emerges immediately in association to what Pacheco names *model of technical rationalities* (2002, p. 27). In this case we are before a strongly centralised, fragmented context of curricular decision marked by the criterion of efficiency. It is a model based upon a “technicist vision of curriculum,” influenced by behaviouristic

psychological tendencies and associated to the goals to be achieved and that can be verified in the students’ outcomes after the teaching and learning processes, a guarantee of the investment in education.

In this perspective, assessment eventually performs a control function determined by a bureaucratic rationality and a deterministic conception of human action. According to the presupposition that the curriculum should not be reconstructed and recontextualised throughout the decision chain, assessment works as determined by a perspective of normative and prescriptive conformity. In its most “negative” version, this metanarrative of control would legitimate what the “dark” side of assessment is for some people: a way of subtle domination over individuals, mostly through exams, as Foucault (1983) demonstrated, or a way of “keeping the order” and “reproducing” social differences, as indicated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1970)⁷.

It should be added that in the present context of the process of changing the providence state’s traditional sectors into enterprises, this metanarrative (even if reconfigured) has been growing in terms of importance in the discourses of neoliberal and conservative political sectors. Assessment appears, therefore, as a privileged instrument of profit and performativity demands under the cover of “quality” rhetoric, although we are finally dealing with the definition of criteria of assignment of differentiated financial aids to schools according to their outcomes, their social output. The assessment will then obey a merely managerial vision of education in which the diplomas’ head-office, the obligation to achieve outcomes, favours a comparative, normative and hierarchy-dependent approach of excellence.

According to a deterministic view of human action in which the curriculum does not have to be reconstructed and recontextualised, the metanarrative of control mainly legitimates a normative and prescriptive assessment function; at the epistemological level it is located within an objectivist paradigm (Rodrigues, 2002) that is supported by positivist presuppositions, separates the subject and the object and privileges a powerfully psychometric and quantity-based model; at the curricular level, it is connected to a model of “technical rationality” as determined by a decision context that is strongly centralised, fragmented and marked by the criterion of efficacy/efficiency.

From another point of view, the metanarrative of emancipation is based on an Illuminist conception of the individual as an autonomous, rational and free being, a project, so to say—this demands a critical relation to the curriculum according to the learner and his experience; epistemologically it comprises the presuppositions of the critiques of the modern paradigm of science, namely concerning the principles of determinism, order and certainty of knowledge, and emphasises the social and

cultural nature of scientific discourse; it presents a model of “reconceptualising” nature that endeavours to interpellate, problematise and reflect, according to which assessment appears as a practice that aims at the individual’s emancipating self-comprehension.

It seems evident that this metanarrative supports a marking rhetoric of our post-modern societies and a socio-constructivist conception of learning and is based on a reconceptualising perspective, which emphasises the learner and his experience, recognises activity as a privileged way of human achievement and, after Santos (1988), values the critical function of theory more highly. Critique should transcend control and manipulation when seeking a justification for practice; the pedagogical discourse will then transform itself into a way of cultural policy serving the emancipation of the learning individual.

In this case we would be before a strongly interpellating/problematising context of curricular decision, based on permanent reflection. We would thus be dealing with a model that, deriving from a “reconceptualising view of curriculum”, globalising, would be able to stimulate a training that favours the development of all capacities of the individual, not only cognitive but also intellectual and of true identity.

This conflict of assessment metanarratives is, as a double mandate, the conflict of present education itself, divided between the “challenges of efficacy” and the “ambitions of equity” (Alves & Machado, 2004), which becomes stronger every day with the effects of globalisation. Assessment should both be an instrument dependent on the supposed efficacy of educative systems and a way of developing citizens and people according to the promises of Modernity of a democratic and equitable school for all.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When we reach 2010, Lisbon Agenda will be carried out in terms of its main goals concerning the convergence of education and training policies and, consequently, the curriculum Europeanisation. Taking into account the fact that a process of implementation of common principles will have been developed, we are sure of the fact that many relative questions will remain either about the way education will contribute or not towards a knowledge economy or about the identity underlying the education and training system of each member state.

If *lifelong learning* is an unquestionable imperative for economic and social development, the new ways of approaching knowledge may not stand for learning processes that follow emancipation and the development of critical and thoughtful attitudes by each citizen. Therefore, the tendency to define curricular policies according to outcomes rather than objectives may originate the adoption by each

state member of an assessment culture characterised by rendering accounts and technical rationalities, more and more present in the curricular organisation. The global agenda for higher education materialises itself mainly through the Bologna Process, whose implementation in the European Union countries has been essentially marked by the formatting of the training cycles and the obsession with excellence rather than by the debate about the mission of university.

The existence of a *European Higher Education Area* within a supranational logic has positive (mobility, comparability...) and negative aspects (essentially administrative changes, standardisation...) that cannot be ignored. To include the university in this challenge of construction of a *Knowledge Society* demands the questioning of curricular practices associated to the curriculum structuring and to the organisation of learning as well as the need to approach pedagogy in the university.

In this whole process of change, the assessment, which represents one of its nuclear dimensions, will tend to oscillate between performativity and emancipation. Assessment is thus associated to quality, efficacy and efficiency dynamics that, in a framework of implementation of education policies, correspond to criteria for assigning financings to institutions according to their social output.

The replacement of the diversity paradigm for the convergence paradigm allows us to immediately produce some inferences that denote contradictions. The most evident contradiction results from the rhetoric that promotes autonomy of institutions, teachers or even students and the heteronomy promoted by the macro control, namely through national exams. This contradiction, which can be seen in the three levels of curricular decision (micro, meso and macro), causes a dilemma for teachers, for they have to make a decision between their own educative and methodological ideals and the *principle of reality*, resulting in the teachers and students’ strategic option: the final product.

At a meso level institutions are now starting to play with their image, with educative marketing, to attract the best students, and reflecting upon changes in the assessment criteria. If we consider this to mean autonomy in school, it happens in dependence of a limit imposed by the State itself, the regulating institution that promotes this same autonomy—this may lead to the adoption of similar assessment criteria and homogeneous school practices. At a macro level and once education is regulated by the State, both when the latter creates the centralised curriculum and while it has the greatest part of education supply under its power and the assessment itself is centralised in terms of national exams, it is in contradiction to the decentralisation of curricular decisions and the autonomy of the institutions. Not only does the educative and curricular autonomy become limited by this centralising

process with a submission to the curricular decisions after the perspective of the state, the institutions become subordinated to the market principles while object of comparison as well.

In political terms we may ask if the educative objectives of the State—with centralised and predefined curricula and the uniformity derived from the assessment, typical of the curricular policy of the State, according to rigour, merit and concern with teaching efficiency and efficacy, and analysed in terms of product—as well as competition between institutions do not produce outcomes that prove contrary to the ones this same education aims at promoting in open, liberal and democratic societies. Those contrary outcomes correspond to learning centred in techniques for doing exams, learning which is neither integrated nor transferable, absence of stimulus to creativity, initiative and intellectual autonomy and students' passivity towards knowledge.

This political issue may extend over economy itself, for advanced societies that are based upon knowledge and information technologies as occidental societies are bring the educative systems under pressure in order to compete in a globalised world. This pressure is, therefore, economic, be it from the state (in order to produce a larger number of students that are able to integrate and adapt through their knowledge and competences in the world of work), from the enterprises, which demand good workers with capacity of learning and adaptation, or from the families, if knowledge and school certificates are to be recognised socially and in business-related contexts. This eventually seems to be a contradiction, for countries like Portugal will take economic advantage of enterprises, services and goods based in knowledge and technology. This is promoted by people with capacity of adaptation, acquired knowledge, capacity to learn further through this same knowledge, autonomous, creative and able to work in group or in net. The market perspective together with the State's point of view in policies of curricular development does not, in sum, promote these values as a priority and subordinates education to instrumental rather than to contextual rationality.

NOTES

- ¹ For compulsory and secondary schooling we believe the curriculum Europeanisation had its genesis in this document.
- ² Cf. Report from the Education Council to the European Council. "The concrete future objectives of education and training systems", Brussels, 2001.
- ³ Conclusions of the Presidency of the Lisbon European Council, March 2000 (conclusion nr. 5).
- ⁴ Cf. Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe. Official Journal of the European Union—2006/C 79/01.

- ⁵ The Magna Charta of University is one of the most relevant documents of this process. Signed in Bologna in September 1988 by the Principals of European Universities, it presents the fundamental principles and values, inherent in the concept of University: ethical and scientific independence from the political and economic power; dependence between teaching and investigation; respect for the fundamental demand for investigation and training freedom; universality of the area of action of the university as the trustee of the tradition of European Humanism (Simão et al., 2005, p. 26). This document is the basis of the structure and signing of the Bologna Declaration.
- ⁶ Cf. Bologna Process—<http://www.dges.mcieis.pt/Bolonha> [last visited 2006.04.10].
- ⁷ See, with regard to this, the text "Cinco Notas sobre o Conceito de Avaliação" (Five Notes about the Concept of Assessment) by Olga Pombo (2002, pp. 124–128).

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