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The Political Economy of Lifelong Learning in International Organisations

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Abstract

Lifelong learning has been one of the main regulatory principles for the educational policies of many countries, and also Turkey, since the last couple of decades. Popularization of lifelong learning is the result of the congruence between the learning perspective of the notion and the capital accumulation regime. International organisations such as EU (European Union), WB (World Bank), OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) have played an important role with the popularization of lifelong learning. This paper aims to evaluate the meaning of the notion in terms of the political economy of these organisations. Main policy papers on lifelong learning of the aforementioned organisations have been reviewed for this purpose. As a result, although there are some little differences, it seems obvious that the meanings attributed to lifelong learning by all of these organisations can be considered inside neoliberal framework.

Keywords: *Lifelong learning, EU, WB, OECD, UNESCO, neoliberalism*

Introduction

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The concept lifelong learning could be traced back to a hundred years in literature but it has become one of the main regulatory principles of many national education systems, including Turkey, in the last couple of decades in which it has been popularised. Efforts of some international organisations on lifelong learning, such as European Union (EU), World Bank (WB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have played an important role in the aforementioned increasing significance of the concept (Bağcı, 2010). These organisations' role can be defined as framing a theoretical background for the concept through the official reports and policy papers under different interrelated subtitles and as effecting their members' national educational policies by the help of these reports and policy papers. For Turkey for instance, the membership negotiations with EU has been the only resource of national lifelong learning policies (Bağcı, 2011).

Lifelong learning is a concept that is brought forward due to changing nature of adult education, just like popular education, continuing education, recurrent education, human resource development, community education and lifelong education (Jarvis, 2004: 39-66). Lifelong learning as an educational approach is mainly based on the idea that learning is an inseparable part of everyday life and it contains all the learning processes that occur everytime and everywhere throughout life, irrespective of age and space limitations set for school types of learning, although it covers them. So lifelong learning is strictly tied but not limited to adult education.

Speaking of adult education, two main categories of approach should be mentioned in order to comprehend the dynamics of the international organisations on popularising lifelong learning. Stoica clarifies all the aspects of this classification in the growing world of lifelong learning, briefly (2008):

The number of adult learning programs has exploded over the past couple of decades. Cooperative extension, continuing education, and language learning programs, as well as professional schools, community colleges, and specialized degrees in various technologies, offer those seeking practical skills opportunities for advancement and for 'existential' growth. The dominant models of adult education are critical pedagogies and market-based pedagogies. Critical models are a force that fosters meaningful social action, while market-based pedagogies reinforce the norms of the dominant culture through practices of scientific management.

This study aims to evaluate the position of OECD, EU, WB and UNESCO in terms of their conceptions of lifelong learning, under the classification above. The main assertion of the paper is that the role of these organisations in popularising lifelong learning serves for the concept to be placed in the market-based pedagogies. There are some nuances between the organizations' approaches but as a whole, they work under neoliberal hegemony. For to promote this idea, first, neoliberal political economy of lifelong learning is going to be discussed. Second, views of these international organisations on lifelong learning is going to be described depending on their own texts. Finally, an evaluation of the whole idea of lifelong learning in these organisations is going to be conducted.

So this study is based on a review of lifelong learning reports and policy papers of EU, WB, OECD and UNESCO in order to find out what kind of educational policies these organisations offer to their member countries under the concept of lifelong learning. This kind of review seems important to understand the dynamics of transformation regarding educational policies in countries, such as Turkey.

When discussing lifelong learning and international organisations it seems important to underline two points. First, neoliberal educational project does not only have a political economic dimension, namely marketisation, but it also has cultural and socio-political dimensions, namely conservatisation (Apple, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Hill, 2010; Bağcı, 2015). Second, in spite of global characteristics of neoliberalism, practices in different national contexts are realised according to distinctive national conditions; neoliberalism in any national context is constructed through interactions between structures of economic, political, cultural and social institutions, policy regimes, regulatory practices and political struggles of that country that has a history of her own (Yazıcı, 2012: 10-22). By underlining these two points, it becomes obvious that analysing lifelong learning policies in a country definitely requires socio-political and cultural dimensions of that country, beyond political economic perspectives (Bağcı, 2015). However, since this paper is limited to lifelong learning policies of international organisations, not countries, socio-political and cultural dimensions seem to be irrelevant since they occur under national contexts. To be brief, this paper does not deal with all dimensions of neoliberal lifelong learning policies, but only with the political economy of it in the official reports and policy papers of EU, WB, OECD and UNESCO.

Neoliberal Political Economy of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning has a long history: A hundred years in the literature of educational sciences and more in history of humanity. The roots of the concept can be traced back to the *Republic* by Plato about *dia viou pedia* as the obligation of every citizen to learn for the ultimate good of the city and the community (Ouane, 2009: 303). In the last couple of decades, as implying learning from cradle to grave, it's been a very common and taken-for-granted concept whose meaning is rarely questioned (Jarvis, 2009: 9). The reason for it's been so popular in this recent period is the congruence between the learning perspective of the concept and the capital accumulation regime: Lifelong learning offers a flexible and continuing educational model that could be adjusted and focused only on the requirements of labour markets in order to meet the emerging needs of neoliberal precarious (un)employment regime (Bağcı, 2014a).

The regulatory framework here is neoliberalism. There are two dimensions of neoliberal political economy of education: First is commercialisation of educational institutions and activities and second is adjustment of the content of education to market needs (Sayılan, 2015). Lifelong learning also stays inside this framework. That public expenditures in adult education decreases whereas the demand for it increases (Bağcı, 2014b) results in the rise of the share of private sector, non-governmental organizations and local authorities in this field (Yıldız, 2012). On the other hand, educational objectives and activities under lifelong learning is strictly tied to market needs (Sayılan, 2015).

From Fordism To Post-Fordism

Since lifelong learning includes informal types of learning beside formal ones, mentions the continuity of everyday learning and remove the limitations of age and space in formal learning settings, it plays along with the shift from Fordist production models to the Post-Fordist ones, that is to say the liquidation of welfare state and full employment policies (Bağcı, 2014a). Therefore the harmony between the premise of lifelong learning and Post-Fordist accumulation regime places the concept at the very heart of educational debates in neoliberal times. Flexible and precarious working plays an important role in the new regime and that requires, to be more precise obligates, the labour force to update occupational skills and knowledge continuously due to permanent changing working conditions (Bağcı, 2014a).

Welfare state was an active social and economic agent between the Second World War and the oil shock in 1970's, providing circumstances that enable mass consumption related with mass production and high rates of profit, by the state's market intervention on behalf of society (Bulut, 2003; Ersöz, 2003; Sönmez, 2007). Capitalism used to work on full employment policies in order to increase market demand. Economic and social policies used to provide large mass of people with guaranteed employment opportunities. Social security, education and health services were financed by public resources and thus, people were expected to consume more since they don't have to pay for these kinds of services. Education for all was a necessity for full employment and welfare state used to undertake this task (Günlü, 2003).

After the oil shock in 1970's, capitalism needed new fields of profit and set eye on the consumption potentials under education, health and social security services and therefore welfare state started to be portrayed as a target that causes economic crises (Ersöz, 2003). After the crises capitalist economies began to be reconstructed against low growth rates, high rates of unemployment and inflation. Companies reacted low profit rates caused by shrinking market demand by technological innovation (computerisation), reorganisation of production and marketing techniques (stockless production etc.) and changing their financial structures. From then on, they started to prefer flexible production systems directly targeted to actual demand (Harvey, 1993: 84). Thereby, Post-Fordist production took the place of Fordist system while neoliberal regulations liquidated welfare state.

Knowledge-Based Society

The above-stated transformation brought forward the notion "knowledge-based economy" that implies the boom in information and communication technologies (ICT) that shortens time to reach information resulting with rapid change in social and economic life. Knowledge-based economy, with strong emphasis on the increasing significance of knowledge in economic production, caused lifelong learning to be considered as a redeemer of any country that should survive under brutal competition circumstances in the new knowledge-based world (Smith and Doyle, 2002; Bağcı, 2010). As a result of linking the relationship between knowledge and learning to the fate of any society, solutions for social, economic and cultural problems of modern societies/communities started to refer to their learning capacities by deriving concepts such as learning society, learning government, learning organisation, learning firm and so on.

Increasing role of ICT in economic production chains in central capitalist countries which qualify themselves by learning societies affected labour markets directly. While mass production approaches of previous times were giving way to stockless production methods, flexible working conditions were taking the place of full employment. That flexible working conditions caused the number of employees to decrease, there became a gap in the production chain and that was filled with new technologies. By this way the crisis of overproduction was expected to be solved (Bağcı, 2010).

In line with these changing conditions, demand for qualified labour in service sector has started to grow making lifelong learning more and more significant every day. Since costs of permanent qualified labour are high, companies were directed to flexible work. As a consequence, the type of labour force who start to work in a company and continues to work there mastering till retirement shift to another type who have to update knowledge and skills permanently in order to meet the rapidly changing needs of production, who have to work in

several places throughout life under precarious conditions and who could be dismissed if not keep up with new circumstances. And lifelong learning has emerged as the flexible type of learning only to fit that new type of flexible labour force, not anything else (Bağcı, 2010).

Lifelong Learning and International Organizations

International organisations such as OECD, EU, WB and UNESCO played an important role in popularisation of lifelong learning. These organisations added lifelong learning to the agenda of their members' educational debates. Although they all played a key role as a whole, one can argue that there are some differences between their approaches to the concept. Thus, in terms of their approaches, they can be grouped into two: On one hand there is OECD, EU and WB and on the other, there is UNESCO.

OECD, European Union, World Bank

Between these three organisations, OECD can be considered as the main resource on setting the global view on lifelong learning. Transformation of the educational approach of OECD since 1960's can be seen as a kind of a direct reflection of the transformation of capitalist accumulation regime.

Main point of educational view of OECD has been the theory of human capital. Starting from 1960's, investment in education as an investment in human was believed to help economic growth. This view was playing along with welfare state policies which were based on high education public expenditures. Since investment in individuals' educational progress was considered to benefit the whole society's economic growth, OECD believed that the state should expend much on education. Debates of that time were on the ratio between educational expenditures of public and individual due to the balance of the ratio of the benefit of the individual and the society. After 1980's, by the rise of neoliberalism, OECD's theory of human capital was transformed. In the emerging circumstances, there was no room for public expenditures on education since neoliberalism requires a decrease of the economic functions of the state. Thus OECD revised her view on educational finance. The discourse of the 1960's that implies high rates of investment on the active individual who runs the economic growth for the benefit of whole society shifted to the discourse claiming that individuals could damage economic growth unless they are educated the right way, by 1980's. New economy was thought to be based on knowledge and thus, with the help of permanent and appropriate educational programs, damaging potentials of the individuals could be reversed and the structural problems of the economies could be solved. If people are continuously educated, the need for highly qualified and adaptable labour force of the new economy could be met and economy could keep on going (Olssen, Codd, O'Neill, 2004: 134-150). What was valuable in this context was "skills"; the individual was valuable to the extent of her/his skills.

With this approach OECD states that lifelong learning becomes more and more important due to increasing effects of globalisation and technological change, changing nature of labour and work and the continuous need for improving life and job skills in aging populations. Else, OECD argues that large scale structural transformation increases the polarisation between the ones who have knowledge and skills and the ones who don't and that threatens the state of democracy (OECD, 2004).

One of the most important subtitles of OECD's agenda on lifelong learning seems to be "skills beyond school" demonstrating that acquisition of skills stays at the very heart of the

new economy for the organisation (OECD, 2014). In brief, OECD mentions that low-skilled jobs has been conducted by automation systems with the help of ICT boom but there is still a skills deficit in highly qualified positions. In order to fill this gap, basic education systems should get rid of the unnecessary content by focusing only on the market skills and lifelong learning opportunities that work on updating vocational skills should be more common that everyone can reach when needed. Instead of the deep confidence to basic education systems, it would be better to employ a lifelong learning strategy based on skills acquisition (OECD, 2014). That means OECD offers an extended lifelong learning strategy leading to better job skills after basic education that is limited to very basic skills in order to meet the needs of the markets.

As seen, educational approach of OECD degrades human existence into an economic input while it values individuals only by their vocational skills. Blessing learning and relating societies' survival strictly with their learning capacities has brought lifelong learning forward in OECD's reports and policy papers. A similar approach could be traced in the official texts of EU and WB. In these texts, the purpose of education is directly tied to economic development objectives and lifelong learning is claimed to be the solution for all the economic, social and cultural problems.

In this context, European Union also plays an important role in popularising lifelong learning. Union's "The Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems" report mentions that (European Commission, 2001a: 3-4):

The contributions from Member States were varied and diverse; but they show a number of common concerns about the future and about the contribution which the education 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, and to the more general goals which society attributes to education... This should be done by a strategy of lifelong learning which overcomes the traditional barriers between the various parts of formal and informal education and training.

As can be seen in the paragraph quoted, in EU's view, education plays a key role in the development of economy and society as a whole, while emphasizing that this kind of a role should be taken by a strategy of lifelong learning as it could remove the barriers between different types of learning. EU claims that knowledge-based society could provide individuals with many opportunities as well as it has many risks in times of globalisation since social and economic changes have become so rapid. In order for individuals to participate actively in the society and to take the advantages while avoiding risks, they should improve their knowledge and skills permanently. Rapid change also threatens the society with the inequalities to get deeper because inequalities begin with the differences of school attendance between individuals in earlier stages of life (European Commission, 2001b).

Beside linking lifelong learning to objectives economic growth, EU defines eight fields of competences that lifelong learning should work on, that are communication in mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression. For EU, these competences are essential for each individual and they add value to labour markets, social cohesion and active citizenship (European Commission, 2012).

The economic crises in 2008 had effects on EU's educational policies. Economic stagnation in the USA caused by speculative growth in financial markets triggered a widespread economic crises in EU countries in 2008 resulting in some changes in Union's structure and educational policies. Economic recession and mass unemployment changed the optimistic views on EU economies and forced the Union to form a new economic relationship highly depending on Germany which had the strongest economy. Concordantly, a tendency to enlarge vocational education systems aiming to fill the skills gap in EU economies was brought forward. European Union seemed to decide to overcome the capitalist crises by lifelong learning again by apprenticeship training for the ones who don't have chance to attend better schools (Grollios, 2014: 76-78).

Mass unemployment after the crises, especially the educated youth unemployment, necessitate EU to change educational strategies but it doesn't seem to remove the neoliberal framework. In 2012 the number of low educated adults were 73 million, 20% of the 15 years old population were at insufficient levels of literacy, rate of attending lifelong learning was 8,9% in EU. Despite these facts, EU sets educational goals as nothing has changed (European Commission, 2012):

- that initial education and training offer all young people the means to develop the key competences to a level that equips them for adult and working life, thus also providing a basis for future learning;
- that appropriate provision is made for young people who are disadvantaged in their training so that they can fulfil their educational potential;
- that adults can develop and update key competences throughout their lives, particularly priority target groups such as persons who need to update their competences;
- that appropriate infrastructure is in place for continuing education and training of adults, that there are measures to ensure access to education and training and the labour market and that there is support for learners depending on their specific needs and competences;
- the coherence of adult education and training provision through close links between the policies concerned.

The set of educational policy goals shows that EU considers that if there are enough learning opportunities for adults for improving their job skills and appropriate provisions for disadvantaged young people, economic and social problems could be solved. It is obvious that EU insists on educational policies related with former objectives, that is "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" and she is still barking up the wrong tree.

Jarvis (2009: 271) states that EU pronounces a policy of lifelong learning since the middle of 1990's, consisting of two dimensions: Economic competitiveness and citizenship. Because EU aims to unite the member states into a coherent whole, economic meaning of lifelong learning is enlarged with a political meaning focusing on citizenship, under the title active citizenship. However, he notes that economic competitiveness and active citizenship have conflicting meanings: When one becomes a consumer, she becomes a less active citizen. Because the consumer demands more and more protection while acts less and less for to

participate in the running of the state (Jarvis, 2009: 275-276). So by employing the neoliberal project, the citizen is inevitably sacrificed on the altar of the consumer.

World Bank seems to ascribe a wider social meaning to lifelong learning. In “Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy” report, the meaning of lifelong learning is defined as follows (World Bank, 2003: 4):

Lifelong learning is crucial in enabling workers to compete in the global economy. Education helps reduce poverty; if developing countries do not promote lifelong learning opportunities, the skills and technology gap between them and industrial countries will continue to grow. By improving people’s ability to function as members of their communities, education and training also increase social capital (broadly defined as social cohesion or social ties), thereby helping to build human capital, increase economic growth, and stimulate development. Social capital also improves education and health outcomes and child welfare, increases tolerance for gender and racial equity, enhances civil liberty and economic and civic equity, and decreases crime and tax evasion (Putnam 2001). Education must thus be viewed as fundamental to development, not just because it enhances human capital but because it increases social capital as well.

As seen above, WB attributes a wider social value to lifelong learning. However, a deeper investigation could reveal that the orientation of WB is toward human resource development similar to that of OECD. Rivera (2009: 286) remarks that WB’s main purpose is to develop market economies by fostering human capital market with the help of lifelong learning.

WB seeks to maximize education’s impact on growth and poverty, with her own words. Bank’s report on education sector strategy update underlines that “the information revolution and pace of global integration have led to more rapid evolution of market niches and the need for a flexible, skilled labor force able to strengthen nations’ competitiveness” by taking into account of the growing importance of the knowledge economy (World Bank, 2005: 22).

Considering the official texts of OECD, EU and WB, one can easily argue that *these* organisations offer the concept lifelong learning as almost a sacred solution for the problems of modern societies. For these organisations lifelong learning is a key to all the problems referred to knowledge-based economy and competitive capacity. The implicit premise of this liberal rhetoric is completely market-based. It assumes that companies need educated workforce in order to compete in the global economy; that new opportunities of employment would be created when competitiveness is accomplished leading to higher wages and better life conditions. That’s why it is a must to produce competitive goods and services for global markets. The only way to accomplish competitiveness is to improve workers’ level of knowledge and skills by promoting lifelong learning. There are unnecessary loads of knowledge and skills under basic education systems and they should be limited to the ones that are crucial for competitive markets and the rest would be undertaken by lifelong learning when needed. That’s the new way to the wealth of nations!

UNESCO

Some authors asserts that UNESCO has a more “humanistic” view of lifelong learning in comparison with OECD, EU and WB (Rubenson, 2009). This assertion could be accepted true to a certain extent. Although there is no fundamental break in UNESCO’s view in terms of market-based approaches, mentions from a more humanistic and social perspectives could be traced back in UNESCO tradition of lifelong learning.

UNESCO has held a pioneer position in popularising lifelong learning and bringing it forward in international agenda. Perspective of the organisation on lifelong learning was established in 1970's when welfare state was at work and education was not only directed to the needs of the markets. Purposes of lifelong learning for UNESCO at that time were helping people to cope with the problems caused by rapid change in society, supporting people to be happy, improving their life quality, contributing to world peace and international relationships (Lengrand, 1975: 95-108).

Bağcı (2010: 62-63) states that one should read Ettore Gelpi's writings for to understand the origins of UNESCO's view on lifelong learning. In his study, titled "Some Thoughts On Lifelong Education" in 1972, Ettore Gelpi mentions that the significance of lifelong learning lies at the idea that learning is not always intentional but most of the time incidental in human life and that if learning is associated with all the social structures in a society it can be freed from narrow school programs. He refers to a need for expanding the multidirectional learning opportunities to the institutions in which learning is not a primary object. This kind of approach could easily be confusing since it is similar to the "knowledge society" of neoliberal times but in fact Gelpi focuses on learning opportunities for all for public interest, not for competitiveness in global markets. The difference here is the function attributed to learning: Gelpi wrote his ideas on lifelong learning in postcolonial times when education functioned for dismantling the older social structures of colonial relations and for employing a modern developing strategy in underdeveloped countries and for progressive welfare states in the developed ones, not for integrating the unchained neoliberal global market (Bağcı, 2010: 62-63).

Another important point in UNESCO's conception of lifelong learning is the report "Learning To Be", namely the "Faure Report". The assumptions in the report's preface that Edgar Faure and his colleagues wrote in 1972 set a good example of the humanistic view of UNESCO on lifelong learning (Faure, Herrera, Kaddoura, Lopes, Petrovsky, Rahnama ve Ward, 1972: V-VI):

Four basic assumptions underlay our work from the start. The first, which was indeed the justification for the task we undertook, is that of the existence of an international community which, amidst the variety of nations and cultures, of political options and degrees of development, is reflected in common aspirations, problems and trends, and in its movement towards one and the same destiny. The corollary to this is the fundamental solidarity of governments and of peoples, despite transitory differences and conflicts.

The second is belief in democracy, conceived of as implying each man's right to realize his own potential and to share in the building of his own future. The keystone of democracy, so conceived, is education—not only education that is accessible to all, but education whose aims and methods have been thought out afresh.

The third assumption is that the aim of development is the complete fulfilment of man, in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments—as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer.

Our last assumption is that only an over-all, lifelong education can produce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life—'learn to be'.

The humanistic view mentioned above can be traced in UNESCO's older texts, as seen. In these texts learning and education is not related only with economic matters but also with wider social and humanitarian objectives. More recent texts, such as the final report of the 6th International Conference on Adult Education held in 2009, deals with concepts about knowledge-based society. The report states that lifelong learning is the basis of knowledge based society, that it offers solutions to the global problems of education and that it is interested in all the vocational, familial and civic problems of our times. A conception of lifelong learning consisting all types of learning could serve to build a more equalitarian, tolerant and sustainable society against problems of equality, poverty and social exclusion by providing people with knowledge, capacity, skills, competences and values (UNESCO, 2010: 37-38). Although there are still some differences with the other organisations in terms of approaches to the relationship between education and economic markets, it seems that UNESCO is also affected by neoliberal hegemony compared with the earlier texts.

Discussion as Conclusion

The difference between UNESCO and EU, OECD, WB could be concluded from the set of concepts used in the texts on lifelong learning. From 1970's, when UNESCO set its main ideas on lifelong learning, to date, there seems to be a shift in UNESCO's view with the effect of neoliberal transformation. One can argue that UNESCO's conception is about solving the problems of globalisation through lifelong learning: The mission of lifelong learning is defined as sustaining mutual interactions between different cultures and identities of local communities in the global society in terms of mutual understanding and acceptance; as promoting democratic participation upon active citizenship instead of mechanisms of social cohesion under globalization and as supporting not only economic growth but also human development by education (Delors, Al Mufti, Amagi, Carneiro, Chung, Geremek, Gorham, Kornhauser, Manley, Quero, Savane, Singh, Stavenhagen, Suhr, Nanzhao, 1996).

Nuances between these international organisations are derived from the differences of their organisational qualifications. UNESCO covers all the countries of the world; thus it should always bear the educational agenda of the periphery in mind as well as the central capitalist countries. OECD covers the countries whose development levels and general political tendencies are similar to each other (Field, 2001). Development levels of the countries are known to affect policies of adult education and thus lifelong learning (Uysal, 2009). WB is one of the pioneer organisations of neoliberal transformation (Sayılan, 2006). Although UNESCO's more "humanistic" view seems to be more preferable compared to the market-based view of OECD, WB and EU, the fact is that all the international organisations mentioned above are running under neoliberal hegemony. UNESCO's view on lifelong learning has shifted from a social democratic position of 1960's welfare state and active citizenship perspective which is affected by radical perspectives to a certain extent, again to a social democratic view but this time which is affected by neoliberal perspectives (Lee ve Friedrich, 2011). Evaluating the long history of the concept lifelong learning, one can argue that UNESCO seems to represent Fordism while OECD, WB and EU seems to represent Post-Fordism. In other words, UNESCO's conception of lifelong learning could be as humanistic as Fordism can be compared to Post-Fordism.

Jarvis calles lifelong learning an ambiguous concept because it isn't a single phenomenon (2009: 9):

... it is both individual and institutional; it appears to be both a social movement and a commodity; it carries value connotations that are sometimes misleading; in one form it is a Western idea that

we have tried to universalise in the light of globalisation; it is both a policy and a practice; it might be a gloss on social change or something more permanent.

The ambiguity of lifelong learning makes the concept a contested terrain. Struggle between liberal and critical perspectives on education keeps on going also on lifelong learning. If the framework of the concept is set by notions such as market needs, knowledge-based economy/society, global economy and competitiveness, the subject of lifelong learning becomes the consumer and the labour force. When this is the case all the other notions such as active citizenship, intercultural learning, peace education and similar others are described depending on the consumer/labour force. This makes the ambiguous meaning of lifelong learning clear, but in an exploitative manner, not in a humanistic or equalitarian way. Setting an equalitarian and emancipatory lifelong learning policy is possible but at first, the concept should be emancipated from all the neoliberal aspects in order to serve as a humanistic contribution to education systems.

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