

OPENING SPEECH FOR THE OFFICIAL INAUGURATION OF GLOBED MASTER

BARCELONA, OCTOBER 1ST 2015



Dear Vice-Chancellor of Institutional Relations, members of the Globed Consortium, students of the Globed first edition, dear colleagues of the faculty, ladies and gentlemen.

Today is of course a very special day. Today we officially inaugurate Globed as an Erasmus Mundus Masters on Education Policies for Global Development. GLOBED is actually the first Erasmus Mundus Master coordinated by this university, something that makes us proud as a University and as the Faculty of Sociology and Political Science.

GLOBED is the result of 3 years of intensive joint work by many people, of meetings and endless discussions on the curriculum structure and content to reach an agreement for a study plan that reflects our way of thinking and, I would even go so far as to say, the way we feel about the field of education and development. GLOBED is also the result of overcoming many administrative obstacles. As social scientists, we have realized how difficult it is to move administrative structures, and how difficult it is to construct the European Higher Educational Space. If the EU wants to be something other than a market place, much more effort should be made at the level of political and institutional structures.

But let me be positive today. Critical, but positive. If we have discussed at length about what should be included in the GLOBED master it is because our approach to the field of education and development is not a mainstream one. Dominant approaches to educational policies have been based on Human Capital Theory (HCT), a strong positivist paradigm that understands education only as an investment that has instrumental values for the labor market. This paradigm is supposed to inform policy makers for educational planning and programmes: whether to invest in primary or higher education, whether to open the door for private providers in education, whether to decentralize an education system... these are all decisions that find their rationale and legitimacy in an educational paradigm that is as reductionist as it is normative.



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Within this paradigm, the actors' rationalities are mostly the same. They are the response to instrumental preferences based on marginal utilities to each decision-making process. So, if investing in basic education has a positive return, poor families will also send their children to school, otherwise they would be irrational

This is wishful thinking and naïve, and our approach in GLOBED can be everything but naïve. Of course, we recognize the extreme potential of education for development and for changing people's lives. There are many personal and collective stories about how education has helped to open up possibilities to many people: children or adults that otherwise would have never left the worst forms of labor or would have never escaped from poverty or indigence. There is also evidence of the great benefits that education has in reducing HIV/AIDS, decreasing child mortality rates, providing more labor opportunities for women or protecting workers from unemployment.

However, by recognizing these effects we do not necessarily have to believe that things happen because the theory is right, or things happen as the dominant theory (HCT or neoclassical economics) expects. Social acts must be put into context, and policies and programs do not have automatic effects on people. They take place under certain conditions and usually do no benefit all groups in society. Recognizing the qualities of investing in education does not tell us everything about the mechanisms by which education impacts on peoples' lives. Why this happens is because there is something more than a positive return to educational investment. Something that sometimes makes education a beneficial investment for certain people, but sometimes it doesn't for others.

In the last decades, the dominant paradigm has faced a crisis of evidence. The famous evidence-based policies have been questioned by critical approaches that show that education and society cannot be reduced to economic relationships. The crisis of the hard version of HCT has opened the door to other educational and social sciences. Forms of educational governance, actors' participation, management strategies or the use of ICT are some of the potential factors to ensure that educational investment produces the best possible results.



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But, is this a real change or are these only new variables to be included in the econometric equation in order to maximize investment in education? A type of science that excludes all those things that cannot be measured from the reality which surrounds us. By trying to model all forms of human behavior into equations, neoclassical economics and HCT attempt to colonize other social sciences.

What is missing in this paradigm? What is missing in this model? Where is power? How is the intrinsic value of education understood? Is there a rational behavior when children in some countries risk their lives to attend school every day?

Actually, GLOBED wants to be everything that is hidden in this approach.

GLOBED is about exploring the instrumental but also the intrinsic and positional values of education,

GLOBED is about analyzing why and how specific educational policies are globalized,

GLOBED is about who plays a crucial role in the process of setting the agenda,

GLOBED is about how conflict and power relations interfere in the supposed effects of education for development,

GLOBED is about the 'other' interests that private providers have when investing in education,

GLOBED is about understanding that not all actors behave in the same way and that there is no single form of rationality,

GLOBED is about how different forms of 'Southern' knowledge can help us to understand why people do what they do,

GLOBED is about how patriarchal relations interfere in educational policy planning and their effect on gender relations.



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GLOBED is about how we can take into account all of this to construct a social justice approach to education and development and about how all this mess can be taken into account for educational planning.

For GLOBED scholars this is the REAL form of understanding education, far from any form of wishful thinking, far from any form of reducing the complexity of social sciences to a single formula.

Having Stephen Ball here today as keynote speaker to inaugurate GLOBED is a real privilege and a decision that we believe gives coherence to this GLOBED rationale. Beyond his extraordinary CV and his international recognition, what convinced us to invite him is the way he thinks about education. Needless to say his work has inspired so many of us and has helped us to realize that it is possible to be both critical and influential at the same time when working in the field of education policy.

With his lecture and with these words I would like to officially inaugurate the 1st Edition of the GLOBED Masters. I will not name names because it might be a very long list, but we are many people that have prepared a lot for this journey, but as usually happens when you travel, the experience of the journey is by far much better than you could ever imagine. I am sure that this will be the case.

PROF. XAVIER BONAL I SARRÓ

COORDINATOR OF GLOBED,

ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTERS ON EDUCATION POLICIES FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT



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