Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 61, Number 1, April 2021

Guaranteed Minimum Income and Universal Basic Income programs: Implications for adult education

Juan Ramón Rodríguez-Fernández
University of León, Spain

Spyros Themelis
University of East Anglia, UK

Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) is currently the principal mechanism for fighting poverty and achieving social inclusion among a plethora of social policies in the European Union (EU). In GMI, education and vocational training hold a major role in fighting social exclusion and promoting social cohesion. The first part of the paper discusses the characteristics and limitations of the GMI scheme.

The second part of the paper discusses an alternative model for income support, intended to achieve a fairer and more cohesive society, the Universal Basic Income (UBI). We close by highlighting the potential of UBI schemes on reconfiguring that UBI schemes have on reconfiguring education, with an emphasis on adult education. On its own, UBI cannot challenge the neoliberal hegemony. However, UBI can become a means for shifting attention to alternative conceptualisations of social inclusion based on the creation of adult education for critical and participatory citizenship.

Keywords: *guaranteed minimum income, social policy, adult education, vocational training, social inclusion, poverty, universal basic income*

1. Social policies combating social exclusion: minimum incomes for social inclusion

Income support policies deal with a fundamental social justice issue, which is enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty of the European Union (EU) (European Union, 1992). However, one of the major shortcomings of this Treaty and the EU's role in relation to fighting poverty and social exclusion in general, is that the EU has been designed around the prioritisation of economic competitiveness rather citizen rights, such as employment and a decent living.

In order to address this shortcoming the EU developed, though belatedly, some policy tools and designed specific policy interventions. One of them, is the Active Inclusion Program (AIP). Its aim was to support the inclusion and labour market participation of those of working age as well as those who cannot work (European Commission, 2010). The AIP rested on three pillars: (i) adequate income support, (ii) inclusive labour markets and (iii) access to quality services.

Perhaps the most important of the three pillars was the one that related to income support. The EU member states started seeking ways to link income and access to services, mainly through minimum income schemes, also known as GMIs. GMIs emerged at the beginning of the 1990s thanks to the European Council Recommendation (1992), which encouraged EU member states to develop programs guaranteeing their citizens a minimum income. As we discuss below, the role of education in combating poverty and social exclusion was important and it is reflected on another important EU communication, Europe 2020 (European Commission, 2010), which set up concrete targets to be met by 2020. Among them, three are of particular interest:

- 75 percent of the population aged 20-64 should be employed
- the share of early school leavers should be under 10 percent and at least 40 percent of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree
- 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

Throughout the 1990s and well into the early 2000s, various EU countries rolled out GMIs with considerable heterogeneity in terms of amounts of money available, requirements, duration, and recipient requirements.

These policies were directed, at least formally, at those having an income below the poverty threshold, that is to say below 60 percent of the median income in a given member state (Malgesini, 2017).

In 2018, the risk of poverty or social exclusion affected 109 million people or 21.7 percent of the entire EU28 population (European Union, 2018). Some of the worst affected groups are women (22.3 percent) and households with children, especially in East and South Europe. For example, Romania has the highest rate, 33.9 percent, of households with children under the poverty line, followed by Greece, 33.5 percent. On the other hand, in Slovenia this stood at 11.9 percent and in Czechia at 11.4 percent (Eurostat, 2019).

Despite the great heterogeneity of GMIs across the EU member states (Frazer and Marlier, 2016), two common characteristics prevail. First, a periodical payment is made, and, second, every program to a greater or lesser extent links receipt of this payment to the performance against a range of activities aimed at the social and labour market integration of its recipient. These activities may take place in a number of contexts (family, personal, health, educational, workplace or other) following a Personalised Integration Route-map, which invariably includes various commitments by the recipient to take part in and carry out activities proposed by social services. Amongst these, training courses and enhancing employability occupy a prominent position.

This plan is designed by professionals and is aimed at enhancing the recipient's social inclusion. It was in the context of the European Social Model based on public social welfare systems (Esping-Andersen, 2000) that GMIs first arose. We argue that, in nature, these schemes are social-democratic policies aimed at the inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society. According to the fourteenth principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Union, 2019): "Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market" (2019: 20). In this way, inclusion was expected to be achieved in a twofold way. First, through enhanced access to consumption enabled by the guaranteed income. Second, through its linkage with the labour market given that participation in educational

and training activities intended to provide trainees with skills and qualifications. As the European Commission pointed out (2010) in its seminal document Europe 2020 Strategy: "…better educational levels help employability and progress in increasing the employment rate helps to reduce poverty" (2010: 9). In this way, employment is linked to education in a mechanistic manner, that is to say, a pipeline to social inclusion is constructed: socio-economic disadvantage entitles one to GMI; the latter offers access to a training course, which, in turn, offers access to the labour market. Finally, the labour market is the royal avenue to mainstream society and the cycle of social inclusion is thusly completed. Education and training, therefore, become subservient to the labour market. However, GMI for training and education-sponsored integration to the labour market as a means of combatting social exclusion was an expectation that was never fulfilled.

2. The Limitations of GMIs for Social Inclusion

GMIs include among their objectives combating poverty, increasing social cohesion and social protection of citizens. The 1992 Council Recommendation is the first European policy document that states these objectives explicitly: "…[We] recognize the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity as part of a comprehensive and consistent drive to combat social exclusion…" (1992: 47). Despite the bold rhetoric, policies, such as the GMIs, suffer from a number of limitations and problems inherent in the theoretical and political assumptions underpinning them.

First, they are limited in respect of their ability to address their recipients' basic needs. Following Frazer and Maulier (2009: 24) only four countries in the EU (Cyprus, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Iceland and Switzerland) offer adequate minimum income support to ensure a decent living whereas the rest of the EU countries offer inadequate (or very inadequate) support. For instance, in 2017 the average amount that Spain paid GMI recipients was €435.80 per month (Spanish Ministry of Social Services, 2018), which was insufficient to cover basic monthly expenses, such as housing and living costs (e.g. the average rental price exceeded this amount). Therefore, GMIs do not fulfil their first and most important aim: to cover basic social needs.

Second, GMI schemes have been criticised for their stigmatising nature, as they focus on the poor as an individual, rather than on all citizens as a whole. For instance, a study conducted in 2015 (Eurofund, 2015) showed that potential beneficiaries from countries such as Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Norway, Spain and Portugal among others, did not apply for the scheme because of the social stigma attached to these programs and the loss of privacy linked to the process of application.

Third, GMIs rest on complex bureaucratic and administrative procedures dedicated to assessing the financial, familial and social circumstances of their applicants. This assessment is aimed at checking the resources applicants possess and their compliance with the requirements attached to the scheme. It is administratively demanding and requires both complex initial decision-making and frequent updating of benefits received and recertification of eligibility (Gentilini et al., 2020). As a result, it is common to experience delays up to 10-12 months until the recipient starts receiving the first payment (Malgesini, 2017). Moreover, an attendant repercussion of this complex administrative process is the potential risk of intrusion into applicants' lives as well as the compromising position this places them by having administrators passing judgment on the way they live (Haag & Rohregger, 2019).

Fourth, GMIs tend to restrict poverty and social inequalities to a matter of individual control and responsibility, when their origins are fundamentally structural and socio-economic (Bauman, 2004; Piketty, 2014). The reliance on an individualised route-map to inclusion reinforces deficit assumptions about the GMI recipients and encourages a culture of 'poverty porn': 'Poverty porn produces a symbolic divide between the 'worker' and the 'shirker' and encourages viewers to scorn the lifestyles of those featured in the programs. Structural inequalities stemming from deindustrialisation and the precarity of the contemporary labour market are obscured, and instead poverty is represented as a lifestyle choice, with benefits claimants depicted as living it up at taxpayers' expense – further undermining welfare provisions.' (Pattison & Warren, 2020: 16).

3. Education as a Way Out of Poverty

From the Lisbon European Council (European Parliament, 2000) onwards, European policies for combating exclusion have increasingly

been based on the idea of 'individual activation' through enhanced employability and entrepreneurship (Hermann, 2007). The latter are the two linchpins in the grand scheme of making the EU *"... the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world"* (Commission of the European Communities, 2001:6).

Education in GMIs for inclusion is theoretically supported by the Human Capital Theory (or HCT for short) (Becker, 1964). According to it, education is an investment of an individual nature redeemable for a set value in the labour market (Schultz, 1962). Thus, education is one of the most important determinants of economic performance.

This theory sees education not just as an enhancement of an individual's employability, but as a key factor in improving productivity and economic growth as well as the quality and number of jobs available in a given nation (Becker, 1964). In this vein, education and training are the key pathways to accessing and succeeding within the global economy. This thinking is evident in key EU policies and directives designed to combat poverty and social exclusion (Council of the European Union, 2009), which require the poor to receive training in order to acquire the knowledge, abilities and skills most needed in the labour market (Muñoz & Bonete, 2009: 279). For example, the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 "Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion" highlights the idea that the labour market's needs are constantly evolving and *"to deal with these changes, people need to be equipped with sound basic skills, including literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Transversal skills, such as the ability to learn and initiative-taking, are essential to help people deal with today's varied and unpredictable career paths. Entrepreneurial skills contribute to employability of young people in particular, as well as supporting new business creation"* (European Commission, 2016: 14-15). In other words, *"Let's Make Education a Way Out of Poverty!"* (EAPN, 2018), is not only a political proclamation, but the very road-map into social inclusion that the EU started fashioning in the early 1990s.

Criticism of HCT in education is manifold. First, it rests on the debunking of the direct and automatic-like association between training, integration into the workforce, increased productivity and improvements in working conditions as an outcome of the economic growth generated by better-trained workers that HCT propounds. This association, though, is easily refuted, since most EU societies have the

most widely and best trained young people ever, yet unemployment and precarity have increased. The expectation that "the greater a nation's investment in education, the greater its economic development" never materialized. For instance, in spite of their investments in education, many developing countries did not experience the "take off" that HCT predicted (English & Mayo, 2012: 79). Further, "employability" does not necessarily mean "employment". In fact, working arrangements and job availability in a specific country or a given area within it depend less on individuals' training or the prevalent education system than on the balance between capital and labour. However, this relationship has been radically altered in favour of capital by neoliberal policies especially since the 2008 economic crisis (Harvey, 2012; 2013).

Second, education in HCT acquires a passive role as it is dedicated exclusively to training for skills required by the labour market (Apple, 1998:39). In other words, education, at all levels and in all its forms, is viewed as preparation for work, regardless of its intrinsic value. Furthermore, education is approached as vocational training to provide the labour market with the requisite basic skills (CEDEFOP, 2001:15). Under the HCT framework, adult education and lifelong learning -all around the world and especially in the EU- have lost not only any kind of emancipatory or critical potential (Freire, 1971), but also most of their humanistic origins championed by UNESCO (Lengrand, 1970; Gelpi, 1985), taking instead an economistic turn.

Third, education is treated in HCT as a consumer product, with a price tag in the labour market in the form of better employment chance for its incumbents. This view contributes to the marketization of education and the organisation of education systems along free market principles, such as open competition. In a plethora of EU strategic documents, the idea of lifelong learning tends to reinforce this consumerist outlook, as all EU citizens are expected to consume education throughout their lifetime (English & Mayo, 2012), in order to adapt to the labour market changes and keep up being employable. Lifelong learning, therefore, is conceived in purely individualistic terms, placing the entire responsibility for learning on the individual, so any potential failure to achieve can be explained away by "blaming the victim".

What is more, since 1970, there has been a gradual process where public services and utilities, such as, communications, transportation, health systems, banks, electricity, water and so on, have been privatized (Harvey,

2013). By extension, the time seems to be ripe also for the "businessification of education", that is to say for the turning of education into a business. Public education systems are increasingly, in terms of economic exploitation, similar to the international automobile industry (Hill, 2013): a whole virgin territory awaiting to be run like a private business.

Fourth, HCT offers a purely mechanical view of the link between employee and employer, without taking into account the ideological and structural aspects shaping the terms of contracts and working conditions in the labour market (Bowles & Gintis, 1975).

Fifth, according to HCT, unemployment and poverty are problems arising either because education does not provide adequate training or because socially excluded individuals or poor individuals failed to take proper advantage of the training, educational and work opportunities presented to them. Either way, the labour market and its capitalist logic get absolved as the causes of these problems, which are explained away as external dysfunctions which could be remedied by "better" educational courses with a stronger "entrepreneurial" spirit.

4. A Pedagogy of Deficit and an Education to Redeem the Poor

What are the implications of EU welfare systems having adopted GMIs and the attendant HCT that underpins them? The literature identifies a number of issues both in terms of income support schemes and the role of education and training in them.

GMIs' theoretical underpinnings are tightly linked to a transmission pedagogic model, in which educators transmit vocational techniques, abilities or skills, while trainees acquire them passively either in a purely theoretical way or in the shape of applying just those abilities needed for work. This conception of education severely restricts the potential of educators and educated and it decouples theory from practice. The latter is now understood as the sterile application of skills in a limited field of practice or area of work. Furthermore, GMIs adopt an instrumental approach to the educational syllabus and they offer an insufficient intellectual diet because they rely on a deficit model: GMI recipients are unable to understand and assess their own needs. Instead, they need to have their educational needs diagnosed by professionals, such as educators and social workers, who take part in designing training actions and route-maps for social inclusion.

In addition, training programs within GMI schemes may be considered as a pedagogy of deficit, in which the poor are seen as having a number of shortcomings and deficiencies in skills, knowledge and training, which extends to their attitude or personality, which make it difficult to integrate them into a wage-earning society. Thus, training in these schemes concentrates exclusively upon instilling vocational skills and enhancing the employability of these people as well as their changing their attitude towards taking up any opportunities that might be targeted at them. Such opportunities include preparatory training for work and training courses for specific skills, such as on how to draw up a curriculum vitae, how to succeed in job interviews, how to seek work over the Internet, on entrepreneurship and setting up one's own business as well as courses intended to provide social and attitudinal skills, such as on improving self-esteem, enriching one's personal skills, emotional intelligence and the like. This approach has been criticised for being a paternalistic pedagogy, a sort of moral orthopaedic (Deacon, 2005) set in a context where jobs are scarce and precarious (Standing, 2013), while emphasising the social inclusion of such groups fundamentally through integration into the world of precarious work and sometimes underground and informal economy (Colombino & Narazani, 2013).

Although this kind of training has as its declared objective the enhancement of employability and encouragement of labour market inclusion, in practice, it fulfils a different function. That is to say, it acts as redeeming the poor, since participation in these training courses by the socially excluded is a way for them to demonstrate their willingness to integrate. Furthermore, taking part in training acts as a mechanism of differentiation between the 'deserving poor', that is to say those who make an effort and deserve to receive some monetary assistance, and the 'undeserving poor', that is to say those who do not make enough effort and thus do not merit any financial help. This divide between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, denies any right to social citizenship (Marshall, 1950) under which all citizens have an entitlement to a modicum of economic welfare. Instead, the right to social citizenship becomes another traded commodity, that is to say something that must be earned by demonstrating a willingness to submit to integrative route-maps and undertake employability training (Gray, 2004). What is more, such approaches have been shown to lead to a culture of blaming and shaming the poor and to punitive treatment of the victims of socio-economic inequalities (Wacquant, 2009).

A corollary of these implications discussed so far is that GMIs through HCT have facilitated and legitimised an axiological reshaping and reconfiguration of education as well as of what is permissible and viable as social policy to address poverty and social exclusion. GMIs through HCT promote an idea of education and training as the 'great equaliser' with precariousness and unemployment integrated into this conception. Furthermore, training for employment contributes to a reinforcement of the predominance of competitiveness and individualism, which are characteristics of the neoliberal thinking. Inclusion becomes a matter of personal vocational skills or attitudes acquisition, with people competing with each other for jobs on the basis of their training qualifications. This practice elevates the notion of people as enterprising men [sic] (Foucault, 2008) in which individuals fully develop their nature in free competition with others through investment in themselves as human capital. In this context, the never-ending effort to adapt oneself to the constantly changing labour market needs, may give rise to different mental problems such as chronic insecurity (Harvey, 2013: 83), stress, alienation and erosion of the self (Sennett, 1999).

In addition, there is a deepening commodification of education and training and a growing businessificiation of poverty[1]. Training courses to cater for GMI recipients are now approached as products with possibilities for generating profits to private firms entrusted with the provision of such courses. Doubtless, this is not a market niche as lucrative as the pension industry, care homes for the elderly or higher education. Nevertheless, it is of sufficient interest to have attracted a number of stakeholders into the poverty business, in the shape of setting up training partnerships organised through quasi-market systems (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1999). In this framework, public institutions take care of planning and organising training actions, which are then put into effect by third sector ("not-for-profit") providers, training partners, businesses, trade unions and other providers through public financing agreements.

5. Alternative proposals for social justice: the Universal Basic Income (UBI)

This section puts forward an alternative route to that marked by traditional social welfare policies. Given the manifest difficulties for liberal thinking in its current neoliberal guise when it comes to the distribution of wealth and the generation of more cohesive societies (Piketty, 2014; Harvey, 2013), there is a need to seek proposals and measures based on fresh ideas.

One of these proposals is the implementation of a universal citizen's basic income (UBI). While UBI is not a silver bullet (Haagh & Rohregger, 2020), it can create policy conditions that could make the challenging of neoliberal principles of human capital and employability as goals in themselves, possible.

5.1 The Universal Basic Income (UBI)

The idea of a basic income or UBI is not a novel one, but it has enjoyed a revival since the mid-1990s (Murray & Pateman, 2012). UBI first emerged in Van Parjis's writings during the 1980s. According to one of its major proponents, UBI "at the least, means an amount that would enable someone to survive in extremis, in the society they live in … [and it] would be paid to each individual, regardless of marital, family or household status." (Standing, 2017: 8). Amongst other key features, UBI comes with no behavioural strings attached. That is to say, recipients need not take up undesirable jobs or enter education or training courses they do not deem appropriate. What is more, UBI goes beyond GMIs, because it is not limited to dealing with poverty through handouts, but is in itself a tool directed towards social change. UBI has the following structural characteristics (Raventós, 2007):

First, it is individual as it is granted to a single person, not to a family unit, as is the case with GMIs.

Second, it is universal covering all citizens and it is recognised as a social right. By contrast, GMIs are not universal, as they are means-tested and, as such, they are directed at selected, 'at risk' groups.

Third, UBI is unconditional as it does not take into account the situation and conditions of the person receiving the payment. By contrast, GMIs involve a valuation of, and check upon the income and individual situation of their beneficiaries, leading to the creation of a complex bureaucratic and administrative system.

Fourth, UBI is sufficient to cover basic social needs and living expenses, as its amount is fixed above the poverty threshold. By contrast, GMIs do not necessarily move their recipients above the poverty threshold and hence they do not allow them to cover their basic social needs. Arguably, GMIs are no more than a salary for poverty, aimed at avoiding social revolt against the structural determinants of poverty (Negri,

1998). On the other hand, UBI challenges the foundations of poverty by eliminating it.

5.2 UBI and education

Over the last few years, a number of studies have been undertaken into the technical and economic viability of UBI in different countries (Standing, 2017; Haagh & Rohregger, 2020). Currently, no country has a UBI scheme in place, although there have been several small-scale pilots (e.g. in Finland in 2017 to 2018, which sought to explore the effects of UBI) and a few larger-scale experiences (Gentilini et al., 2020)[3].

In a recent experiment in India, two pilot studies were run in 2011 to test the impact of basic income grants. Monthly payments were made to every man, woman and child in eight villages in Madhya Pradesh, while another village was used as a comparison. The results showed that nutrition among recipients improved and especially for young children whose weight-for-age significantly increased, especially among girls (Standing, 2013). What is more, better health led to improved school attendance and performance for a large number of children. Finally, "The scheme had positive equity outcomes. In most respects, there was a bigger positive effect for disadvantaged groups – lower-caste families, women, and those with disabilities" (Standing, 2017:25).

More recently, a two-year project in Uganda, showed that unconditional cash transfers led to increased school attendance, from 50 percent to 94.7 percent as well as increased health and other benefits (i.e. in launching new businesses and happiness). However, the evidence is much more nuanced than this. In a rigorous review, Bastagli et al. (2016) found evidence to suggest that cash transfers lead to an improvement in school attendance in the short term, though there is less clear evidence about learning outcomes. Finally, in terms of gender, cash transfers seem to have a positive impact on school attendance for girls as well as some increase in test scores and cognitive development.

Findings from two experiments in rural USA found significant improvement for grades 2-8 in attendance rate and teacher training and test scores. Moreover, large positive effects were observed among children from disadvantaged families. In New Jersey, it was found that significant improvement in terms of school attendance, while in Seattle and Denver a positive effect of adults moving on to continuing education was found (Widerquist, Pressman and Lewis, 2016).

Baird, McIntosh & Ozler (2016) found positive effects of an unconditional cash transfer program in Malawi on anthropometric indicators of children of adolescent beneficiaries two years after the program it had stopped. Other studies on UCTs, showed that they significantly increase schooling while they decrease child labour (Edmonds, 2006; Edmonds & Schady, 2012). Baird et al. (2014) found that both Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs) had an impact on improving school enrollment and attendance, with no significant difference between them.

Taafe, Longosz and Wilson (2017) found a narrow impact of CCTs on livelihoods, education, and health. What is more, conditionality is not always required to produce an impact, though it may lead to stronger effects. On the other hand, UCTs could generate more widespread impact across development objectives.

To conclude, UBI that offers support without conditions resembles many UCT programs already applied in various parts of the world. However, "the prevalence of some sort of conditioning—even if only notional—suggests that the unconditional feature of a UBI will be challenging to present practice in at least some places. The empirical evidence suggests that without conditions, there may be some mild reduction in service uptake. However, sizable impacts seem to be achieved by programs with well-implemented soft conditionalities, which are likely to be less administratively and cost demanding." (Gentilini et al., 2020:34)

So, what could UBI achieve? Several possibilities emerge. First, UBI could lead to a considerable reduction or total eradication in the forms of poverty directly related to a lack of income (Raventós, 2007). A UBI scheme can achieve wealth redistribution that goes far beyond what is achieved by current GMI schemes, thanks to its universal nature and principles of mutual aid and strong solidarity. It is a proposal aimed at all citizens, not a measure directed solely toward the poor; hence, it is universal and non-stigmatising.

The second possibility is that it could contribute to re-establishing a balance of power between capital and labour by strengthening the workers' hands when engaged in labour negotiations (Standing, 2013). In this way, it could encourage improvements in working conditions and reduce precariousness, as it would provide a financial safety net allowing workers to choose jobs free of constraint.

A third possibility is that UBI could stimulate citizen participation and forms of organisation based on co-operative principles (Wright, 2005). UBI gives support to municipalism, participative and direct decision-making by bolstering participatory budgets in which there is discussion about how funds are to be allocated and community matters to be managed. In turn, this favours the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, as it guarantees basic financial support allowing the blossoming of work projects based on co-operative approaches. In the present economic context, such projects face huge difficulties in starting up: uncertainty about future success or failure, possible financial viability or problems in gaining access to funding from the banking sector.

Lastly, UBI has the potential to change the public social imaginary by shifting the boundaries of what is possible. Although we are conditioned by the neoliberal imaginary (Rizvi, 2017) and the putative lack of alternatives (TINA), UBI provides the opportunity to change this hegemonic way of thinking. The promise of the UBI scheme is that it frees people from the compulsion to work for a wage and allows them to offer their labour power to the realization of social and human needs outside the market.

5.3 UBI and Implications for Adult Education

In the previous sections we discussed how human capital approaches almost all education as vocational training, as a subsystem of the organisation of production, providing the skills that the latter requires (CEDEFOP, 2018). In this section, we explore whether with UBI could help education move away from the principles of HCT and what its new principles could look like.

By breaking away from the submission to the entrepreneurial ethos and the centrality of employability that is integral in GMIs, education can more readily address broader social needs based on mutual support and solidarity. Education, in general, and training for adults in situations of social exclusion in particular, if they are to promote social justice, they must include a content stimulating critical reflection through questions that directly affect all those involved in the educational process. For example, new vocational training, if it is to be truly anti-hegemonic, it needs to incorporate reflections and explorations around the origins and consequences of precarious work, the social utility of the jobs for

which training is provided, the privatisation of education and other public services, as well as the root causes and role of poverty in capitalist societies. It would also need to address other aspects of social relevance for those participating and for the community.

It is, therefore, urgent to re-establish a balance between use and exchange value in education and especially adult education (Cascante, 2018). Thanks to the theories of human capital, the absence of this balance has two undesirable outcomes. First, it reduces the value of training as it is necessary to have an ever-larger portfolio of qualifications, certificates and diplomas to get even a precarious job. Second, it limits education to skills provider, thereby losing track of the real learning value or personal satisfaction it may bring, and falling into the vicious circle of educational consumerism.

Additionally, proposals for an alternative organisation of education based on UBI can take on a different character. Specifically, they can move away from banking models of education where a few (the education professional) design and select the content and pass it on, whilst the many (the trainees) receive and assimilate it in a more or less passive way. New proposals would emphasise teaching methods based on social interactions, debates and dialogues. Learners can acquire a much more active role both in the delivery of the educational activities and in their planning. This process can lead to the elimination of artificial divides, such as between expert-technicians, that is teachers, and passive recipients, that is trainees. Methodologies suited to this pedagogic model comprise reading circles and learning communities (Flecha, 2009), interest centres, action-research procedures (Kemmis & Carr, 1993) or dialogue education circles (Freire, 1971). Such methods pay attention both to the role and significance of social structures as well as to the interests and values of all participants. Instead of handing out mechanistic and individualistic road maps to acquiring skills for entering the labour market, the emphasis shifts to meeting the needs of people embedded in communities with social, environmental, economic, politic, spiritual and personal needs. By removing the mediation of the ideological state apparatuses and its market-oriented tentacles, such as private providers of training courses, space is created for interactions, debates and dialogues about the contents and themes of education, the nature of employment and the type of society that needs to be created.

6. Conclusion

The economic crisis that started in 2008 and the pandemic provide an excellent opportunity for advancing further the neoliberal agenda with ever-greater intensity, especially with regard to welfare policies and education. The latter has been infiltrated by a diverse set of stakeholders, such as businesses, charities and various other entities, who are active in delivering educational and training courses as employment fixes through upskilling. In turn, the involvement of third parties leads to a reduction in public spending and a growing trend toward reducing social rights.

Even a cursory examination of EU spending on training offers valuable lessons. For despite the fact that the EU embraced austerity since 2009, in the period 2011 to 2015 alone, more than €330bn was spent on vocational training intended to enhance employability and activation of the unemployed. However, this volume of expenditure begs the question why this money was not spent directly on job creation, quality employment of genuine social utility that would permit adequate labour market integration, strengthening a real safety net of minimum income to respond to the needs of the most marginalised. The answer is that, if it were, education for the poor would cease to be a mechanism for their redemption and would no longer offer itself as a business opportunity. For the latter, the education of the poor is a lucrative opportunity that attracts NGOs, enterprises, foundations, associations, and other stakeholders. While some are motivated by altruistic and philanthropic values, others have profit making incentives. In any case, the common denominator is that all of these actors have a stake in the poverty industry. Although they did not create this industry, they nevertheless benefit from its existence, making themselves co-dependent on it and the elimination of poverty inseparable from their eclipse. As such, their incentives lie more with the creation of training courses to fix a vaguely conceptualised skills gap rather than to eliminate poverty.

Consequently, traditional policies for combating poverty and social exclusion through education and training are largely ineffective. What compounds this situation is the effect of neoliberal welfare policies, which have resulted in increased socio-economic inequalities and poverty and have eroded the social fabric (Faulkner, 2013; OXFAM, 2017). With the predominance of neoliberal policies, the equilibrium

between the use and the exchange value of education has gone out of kilter. The use value has come to be measured solely by its exchange value. Moreover, the attendant sacrifice of its use value on the altar of employability is proving futile, since the exchange value of training diminishes continuously as neoliberal policies advance: more and more education is needed to obtain worse and worse jobs.

In this light, it is imperative that we seek alternative discourses and practices that break away with the neoliberal orthodoxy and its reliance on individualistic and mechanistic interventions. From the perspective of critical education, UBI can contribute to the objective of balancing the use value with the exchange value of education, giving a social sense to both of them. In addition, UBI could be used as a tool to re-imagine what is possible, as a means of making the work of creating a real utopia practicable (Wright, 2005). In this way, education can break loose from the centrality of employability and from the stranglehold of human capital theory.

Against the self-interested rhetoric of "there is no alternative" (TINA) imposed by neoliberalism, there is a need to explore discourses and practices that run counter to it and to weigh them in accordance to their possibilities in creating the conditions for greater social justice. UBI can be seen as such an asset within a complex counter-neoliberal strategy. This strategy would include actions in other spheres of activity (climate change and sustainability, de-growth, eco-feminism, municipalism and so on) that can contribute to social change by means of the gestation of a new order from within the contradictions and cracks of the old predominant social order (Holloway, 2010). While UBI is no panacea, we argue that it can foster communal processes over individual fixes as it based on a model of policy for social justice rather than individual deficit.

Endnotes

[1] For more about this idea of 'poverty business', see Rodriguez, J. (2013 & 2016).

[2] For more information on this pilot experiment, see shorturl.at/mYZ69.

[3] Only Mongolia and the Islamic Republic of Iran had a national UBI in place for a short period of time.

References

Apple, M. (1998). El trasfondo ideológico de la educación. *Cuadernos de Pedagogía, 275*, 36-44.

Baird, S., McIntosh, C. & Ozler, B. (2016). *When the Money Runs Out: Do Cash Transfers Have Sustained Effects on Human Capital Accumulation?*. Washington: World Bank. Retrieved from https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25705/WPS7901.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Baird, S., Ferreira, F.; Ozler, B. & Woolcock, M. (2014). Conditional, unconditional and everything in between: a systematic review of the effects of cash transfer programmes on schooling outcomes. *Journal of Development Effectiveness, 6*(1), 1-43.

Bauman, Z. (2004). *Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bastagli, F., Hangen-Zanken, J., Harman, L., Sturge, G., Barca, V., Schmidt, T. & Pellerano, L. (2016). *Cash transfers: what does the evidence say?* London: Overseas Development Institute. Retrieved from https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/10747.pdf

Becker, G. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1975). The problem with human capital theory, a marxian critique. *The American Economic Review, 65*(2), 74-82.

Cascante, C. (2018). Education as a commodity (use value and exchange value of education). *8th ICCE Critical Education and Activism Against Neoliberalism/Authoritarian Neoconservatism in Education, State and Society*. University of East London, London, 25-28 July 2018.

CEDEFOP (2018). *Skills forecast: trends and challenges to 2030. Luxembourg: Publications Office*. Retrieved from https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3077_en.pdf

Colombino, U. & Narazani, E. (2013). Designing a universal income support mechanism for Italy: An exploratory tour. *Basic Income Studies, 8*(1), 1–17.

Commission of the European Communities (2001). *Making a Europe area of lifelong learning a reality*. Brussels: European Commission on Education and Communication.

Council of European Union (2010). *Europa 2020. Una estrategia para un crecimiento inteligente, sostenible e integrador*. Brussels: Official Journal of European Union.

Council of European Union (2009). *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'). Brussels: Official*

Journal of European Union. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN

Council of European Union (1992). Council Recommendation of 24 June 1991 on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in the social protection systems. *Brussels: Official Journal of the European Communities, 50*, 46-48. Retrieved from https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vhckkmn242zu

Deacon, R. (2005). Moral orthopedics: A foucauldian account of schooling as a discipline. *Telos: Critical Theory of Contemporary, 130*, 84-102.

EAPN (2018). *17th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty*. Brussels, 7-8 November, 2018.

Edmonds, E. & Schady, N. (2012). Poverty Alleviation and Child Labor. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 4*(4), 100-124.

Edmonds, E. (2006). Child labor and schooling responses to anticipated income in South Africa. *Journal of Development Economics, 81*(2), 386-414.

English, L. & Mayo, P. (2012). *Learning with Adults. A Critical Pedagogical Introduction*. Boston: SensePublishers.

Esping-Andersen, G. (2000). *Los fundamentos sociales de las economías postindustriales*. Barcelona: Ariel.

Eurofund (2015). *Access to social benefits: Reducing non-take-up*. Luxembourg: Office of the European Union.

EUROSTAT (2019). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10163468/3-16102019-CP-EN.pdf/edc3178f-ae3e-9973-f147-b839ee522578

European Commission (2018). *Peer Review on "Minimum Income Benefits – securing a life in dignity, enabling access to services and integration into the labour market"*. Retrieved from https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/synthesis-report-peer-review-on-_minimum-income-schemes_berlin_nov2019.pdf

European Commission (2016). *Strategic Plan "Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-empl_march2016_en.pdf

European Commission (2010). *Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Working paper*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf

European Parliament (2000). *Lisbon European Council*. Retrieved from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm

European Union (1992). *Treaty of Maastricht*. Brussels: Official Journal of the European Communities C 325/5.

Faulkner, N. (2013). *A Marxist History of the World: from Neanderthals to Neoliberals*. Chicago: Pluto press.

Flecha, R. (2009). Change, inclusion and quality in learning communities. *Culture and Education, 29*(2),157-169.

Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics*. London: Palgrave.

Frazer, H. & Marlier, E. (2016). *Minimum Income Schemes in Europe. A study of nacional policies*. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from https://www.google.es/l?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiKypHttrTwAhWrShUIHSKuCnkQFjAAegQIAxAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FBlobServlet%3F docId%3D15304%26l langd#%Den&usg=AOvVaw1LzkfD9ua9cUoWuVCDHh2g

Frazer, H. & Marlier, E. (2009). *Minimum Income Schemes Across EU Member States*. Brussels: European Commission.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Gelpi, E. (1985). *Lifelong education and international relations*. London: Croom Helm.

Gentilini, U., Gross, M., Rigolini, J. & Yemtsov, R. (Eds.) (2020). *Exploring Universal Basic Income. A Guide to Navigating Concepts, Evidence and Practices*. Washington D.C: World Bank.

Gray, A. (2004). *Unsocial Europe. Social protection or flexploitation*. London: Pluto press.

Haag, L. & Rohregger, B. (2019). *Universal basic income policies and their potential for addressing health inequities Transformative approaches to a healthy, prosperous life for all*. World Bank. Retrieved from https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/404387/20190606-h1015-ubi-policies-en.pdf

Harvey, D. (2013). *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. Oxford: University Press.

Harvey, D. (2012). *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*. Oxford: University Press.

Hermann, C. (2007). Neoliberalism in the European Union. *Studies in Political Economy, 79*, 61-89. Retrieved from http://www.iaq.uni-due.de/aktuell/veroeff/2005/dynamo05.pdf

Hill, D. (2013). Class struggle and education. Neoliberalism, (Neo)-conservatism, and the capitalist assault on public education. *Critical education, 4*(10).

Holloway, J. (2010). *Cracking Capitalism*. Chicago: Pluto press.

Kemmis, S. & Carr, W. (1993). *Becoming Critical. Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. London: Routledge.

Lengrand, P. (1970). *An introduction to lifelong education*. Paris: UNESCO.

Malgesini, G. (2017). *Developments in relation to minimum income schemes. European Minimum Income Network*. Retrieved from https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/spain-minimum-income-update-2017.pdf

Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays*. Cambridge: University Press.

Mitchell, K. (2006). Neoliberal Governmentality in the European Union: Education, Training, and Technologies of Citizenship. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 24*(3), 389-497. Retrieved from https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.884.5634&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Muñoz, R. & Bonete, R. (2009). *Introducción a la UE: Un análisis desde la economía*. Madrid: Alianza.

Murray, T. & Pateman, C. (2012). *Basic Income Worldwide. Horizons of Reform*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Negri, A. (1998). *El exilio*. Barcelona: El Viejo topo.

OXFAM (2017). An economy for the 99%. *Oxfam International*. Retrieved from https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf

Pattison, J. & Warren, T. (2018). *Class disparities and social inequalities*. In Dunleavey, P., Park, A. & Taylor, R., The UK's changing democracy. London: LSE Press.

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the Twenty-first century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Raventós, D. (2007). *Basic Income. The material conditions of freedom*. Chicago: Pluto press.

Rizvi, F. (2017). Globalization and the Neoliberal Imaginary of Educational Reform. *Education Research and Foresight Series, 20*. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/node/262287

Rodríguez, J. (2016). *Entreteniendo a los pobres*. Albacete: Bomarzo.

Rodríguez, J. (2013). Los programas de Rentas Mínimas de Inserción y la propuesta de las Rentas Básicas. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 21*(40). Retrieved from https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1243

Schultz, T. W. (1962). *Investment in Human Beings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sennett, R. (1999). *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: Norton.

Spanish Ministry of Social Services (2018). *Informe Rentas Mínimas de Inserción*. Gobierno de España. Retrieved from https://www.mscbs.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/ServiciosSociales/RentasMinimas/Informe_2018.pdf

Standing, G. (2017). *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen*. London: Penguin Books.

Standing, G. (2013). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.

Taafe, J., Longosz, A. & Wilson, D. (2017). The impact of cash transfers on livelihoods, education, health and HIV – what's the evidence? *Development Policy Review, 35*(5), 601-619.

Wacquant, L. (2009). *Punishing the Poor. The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Whitty, G., Power, S & Halpin, D. (1999). *Devolution and Choice in Education: The School, the State and the Market*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Winderquist, K., Pressman, S. & Lewis, M. (2016). *Ethics and Economics of a Basic Income Guaranteed*. New York: Routledge.

Wright, E. O. (2005). Basic income as a socialist project. *US-BIG Congress,* March 4-5. Retrieved from https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Basic%20Income%20as%20a%20Socialist%20Project.pdf

About the authors

Juan Ramón Rodríguez-Fernández is an Associate Professor at the School of Education, University of León, Spain. His latest book (2021) is 'Educación para una Sociedad poscapitalista' (Octaedro).

Spyros Themelis is an Associate Professor at the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia. His current research interests evolve around education and social movements, and inequalities in education. His latest book (2021) is 'Critical Reflections on the Language of Neoliberalism in Education: Dangerous Words and Discourses of Possibility' (Routledge).

Contact details

Associate professor
Juan Ramón Rodríguez_Fernández

Email: jrodrf@unileon.es

Associate professor
Spyros Themelis

Email: S.Themelis@uea.ac.uk