THE GEOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION. DIRECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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Abstract: The changes that have taken place in education, in terms of the way schooling is coordinated, under the impulse of the standardisation of education, as an effect of globalisation and of competition between countries, directly impact those being educated because they involve a process of mainly financially motivated recentralisation. There are multiple viewpoints from which this can be analysed, because they are conditioned both by paradigm shifts in the social sciences and, above all, by the interdisciplinary nature of research studies, most of them from the comparative education field. In this interdisciplinary mix, studies that belong to the geography of education have made a great impression in recent decades, operating with new coordinates and establishing a place of their own in academic discourse. The aim of this study is to describe the development of this academic sub-discipline, the geography of education, and a number of case studies connected to changes in the coordination of schooling which could pave the way for future directions in research.

Key words: geography of education, rural environment, segregation, decentralisation, territorial governance of schools

1. INTRODUCTION

The geography of education is to be found at the meeting-point of studies in social geography, as a sub-discipline of human geography, and comparative education, which in its turn is difficult to define as a science. This latter, along in fact with most disciplines in the social sphere, has seen expansion as education has increasingly been recognised as an engine of socio-economic development, and subsequently has been at the heart of national policies aiming at reducing social differences both between the urban and the rural environment and within metropolitan areas. Under pressure from the standardisation of education as a consequence of globalisation, and in particular as a derived indicator in explaining inequalities in development, changes in the way schooling is coordinated can model territory through their socio-economic significance. Whereas in the past official education served political purposes, as an expression of economic interests in neo-liberal countries, or as an expression of national consolidation

for young states, usually republics, over time there has been a reconsideration of education systems involving a socio-economic paradigm in which education determines development and not vice versa, with the consequence that its role moves from the realm of discourse to that of policy. Against this background there has been a paradigm shift in academic research in which studies in the field of the geography of education acquire considerable importance. Research directions here are complex in nature, with the spatio-temporal dimension, subordinated both to the social dimension and to the political factor, forming the framework for the majority of studies.

Given this background, since considerations of space make it impossible to give an exhaustive presentation defining the research directions proper to the geography of education, the present study provides an introduction to the principal *schools of geography of education* and by giving a number of representative case studies makes it possible to discern the new trends in research, which pursue two main areas of interest: **what happens to small schools**, generally in the rural environment, as an effect of policies of decentralisation, and **educational segregation**, particularly in the urban environment.

2. THE GEOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION. DIRECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the geography of education, the spatial dimension of any phenomenon under examination is both a requirement and something that needs to be clearly defined, depending on the purpose of the assessment being made. Space and place are terms that cannot be used separately in works on the geography of education if we are aiming for an analysis that is integrated in terms of system and in a clearly defined territory. To this end, the specialist geographical literature furnishes us with an abundance of information regarding the definition of the ideas of place and *space*.

The manner in which the term *space* has been used, especially since the major cultural turn that was reflected in the way this term was redefined, involves complex meanings that lie at the meeting-point of a number of social sciences: "It is very easy to maintain that we need to take space seriously... the rhetoric is everywhere, the content is more elusive" (Massey, 1999, p. 11). The chief feature of this paradigm shift is the fact that it is not that space determines social actions; rather, it provides them with a theatre in which to exhibit. Postmodern approaches have played an important role in the defining of these academic trajectories but have not been a great help to geography. On the contrary, the use *ad nauseam* in different contexts of a specifically geographical term such as space, leading even to the grounding of theories accepted in the educational sciences, for example those of habitus (Bourdieu) and classroom codes (Bernstain), reduces the stature of the term by over-contextualising it. These respected authorities in fact "make use, on occasion, of the term space, frequently with a metaphorical meaning, but do not examine the phenomenon of space or spatial realities in the context of education" (Taylor, 2009, p. 657). Studies in the field of the geography of education (Bildungsgeographie/Geographie des Bildungswesens; Géographie de l'éducation; Géographie de l'instruction/ Geography of education; Geography of Schooling) are increasing in number in three areas in which the subject is developing as a modern academic discipline: France, Germany, and Great Britain (Kučerová *et al.,* 2020, p.14).

2.1. The geography of education in English-speaking countries

The Dictionary of Human Geography defines the geography of education as "the study of spatial variations regarding take-up, income and expenditure in the provision and facilitating of educational resources" (Johnston, 2004, p. 203). However, according to the specialist definitions given in the same work, "systematic studies in geography focus on one or more aspects of the human environment by studying performance distribution in a predetermined geographical space" (Johnston *et al.*, 1994, p. 222). These two approaches are not opposed to each other; rather, they capture areas of analysis that differ because of the distinct aims being pursued. These changes in research are occasioning a new approach that emphasises quality: "studies in the geography of education are concentrating on spatial variation in the quality of educational resources" (Johnston, 2009, p.186).

The expression "geography of education*"* was probably first used in an academic context by H. Ryba in 1968 in an article entitled *The Geography of Education – a Neglected Field?* The subject was taken up again in 1972, with a meeting of the International Geographical Union (IGU) at Toronto University, coordinated by G. Hones and H. Ryba, being given the title *Why not a Geography of Education?* As a consequence, five highly academic analytical updates were published by the Committee between 1973 and 1981 on the topic of the geography of education. They were succeeded by a period dominated by interdisciplinarity, during which the powerful influence of social constructivism brought about interactions with sociology and psychology, the result being studies that belong more in the realms of behavioural, mental and even mythical geography.

It was Colin Brock, in *Comparative Education and the Geographical Factor* (1984), given further grounding in his doctoral thesis *The Case for a Geography of Education* (1992), who took the initiative in attempting to establish the *geography of education* as a branch of geography (in the Anglo-Saxon context, a sub-discipline). Brock, a researcher into educational systems, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world and the Commonwealth but also more generally in Europe, gives a comparative (both spatially and historically) description of different systems of education (see Figures 1 & 2). From this starting-point, he makes a strong case for the instruments used to investigate the field of education to be those methods characteristic of geographical analysis that are employed by a wide range of specialists in the human sciences. Comparative studies on education in relation to geographical factors may be found in the same writer's *Comparative Education and the Geographical Factor* (2013), where he argues for the importance of the influence of geography being recognised when studying education.
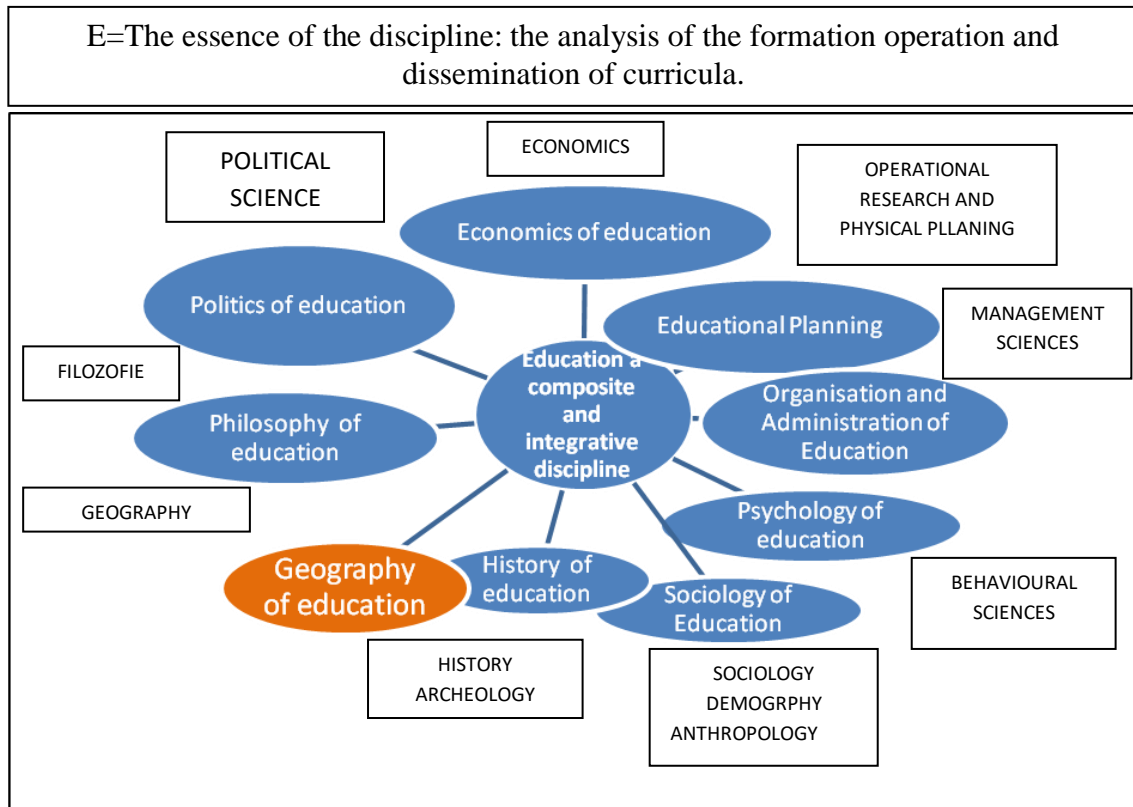
E=The essence of the discipline: the analysis of the formation operation and dissemination of curricula.

Figure 1. Education – a composite and integrative discipline
(after C. Brock, 2013, p.10)

E=The essence of the discipline: teh spatial/location analysis and cartographic reprezentation of the earth's surface phenomena.
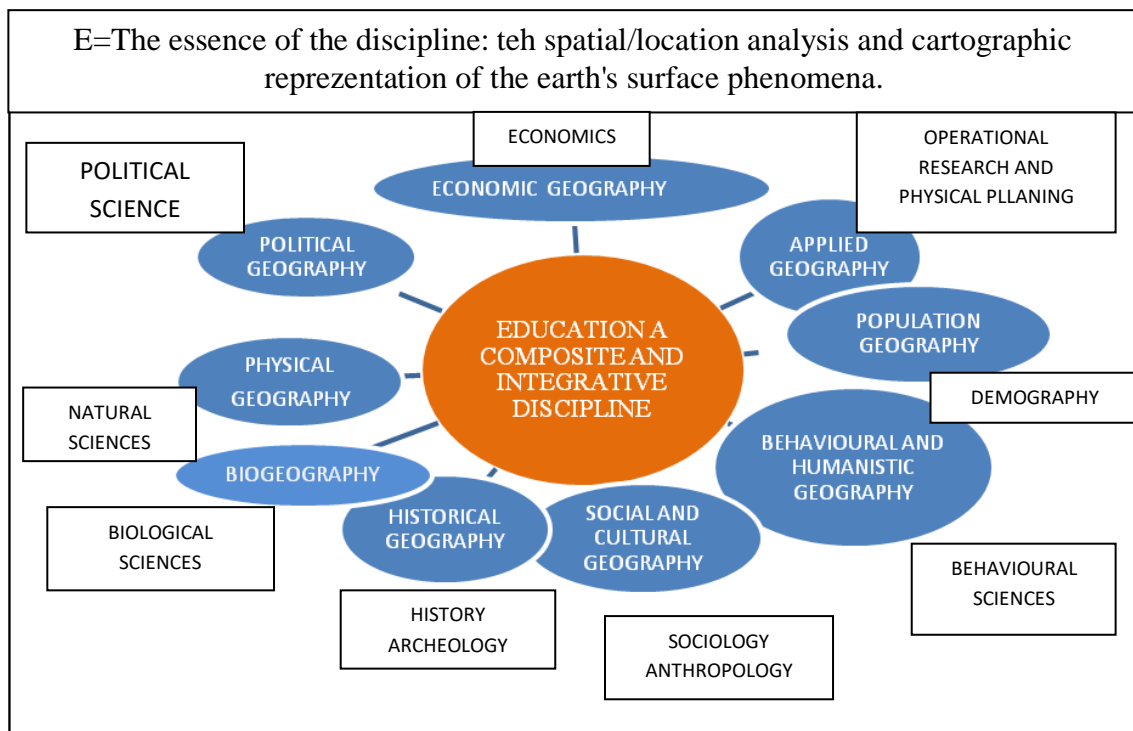

Figure 2. Education – a composite and integrative discipline
(after C. Brock, 2013, p.10)

The historical dimension of geographical research in the field of education is also discussed by Livingstone (1992) and by Johnston and Sidaway (2004), *apud* Taylor (2009, p. 653), and is divided into five periods spanning the 20th century, as follows:

a. The early part of the century, characterised by region-by-region descriptions, exploration, and mapmaking; the making of regional distinctions between empires;

b. The 1960s, dominated by the revolution brought by modernist quantitative studies, the move from descriptive to explanatory styles of investigation, studies that focus on spatial distributions and local analyses;

c. The 1970s, characterised by the humanists' critique of the positivists, with a renewed interest in social Marxism, with a large number of discussions and analyses dealing with the areas of social justice and inequality, a period dominated by structuralism;

d. The mid 1980s, a period in which socio-spatial analytical language made itself felt, with local analyses predominating;

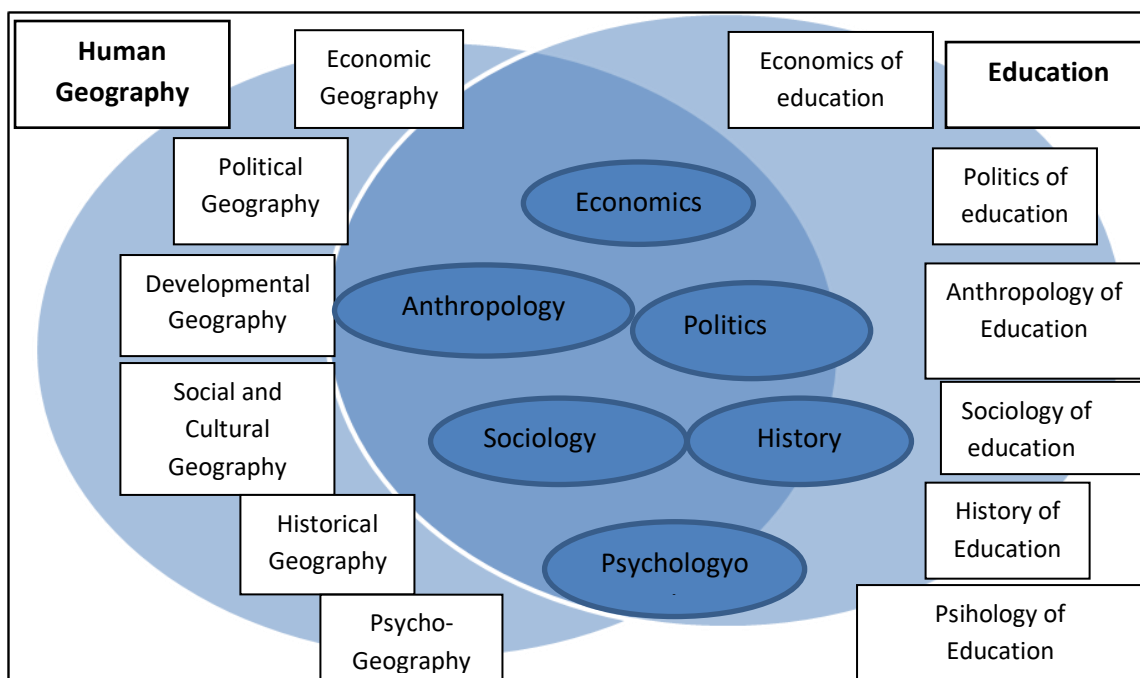e. The 1990s, summarised in Barnett (2002), *The cultural turn: fashion or progress in human geography.*

Figure 3. The multi-disciplinary foundations of geography and education
(after Taylor, 2009, p. 654)

The major research trends in this space are concerned with changes that have taken place in the relationship between schools, communities and neighbourhoods; the spatial distribution of educational resources; social reproduction as a consequence of differences in educational opportunity; the multiple connections between formal and informal education which model both the educational process and the space in which it takes place; the socio-political and cultural features of a policy of decentralisation in education; the employment of spatial data when studying educational phenomena

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(Taylor, 2009, p. 663), (see Figure 3). In recent years, studies that deal with a restructuring of the educational system in the context of a neo-liberal policy with extremely varied regional components have played a major role in the English-speaking world (Butler *et al.*, 2007), as have some treatments that offer a social geography critique (Holloway and Jöns, 2012).

2.2. The German School in the Geography of Education

The German school has been very active in the area of the geography of education. "During the 1970s many German, Austrian and Swiss geographers were actively involved in studying the geography of education" (Meusburger, 2015, p.166). After the founding in 1983 of the German Society for Geography (DGfG), the large number of research studies in the field of education led to the geography of education becoming established as a subdiscipline of human geography, the foundational work being *Bildungsgeographie,* coordinated by Peter Meusburger, which appeared in 1988. This was a full recognition of this area, which the French school includes within a much broader, interdisciplinary spectrum and the English-speaking world views as a sub-discipline of social geography. The major research studies were undertaken at the universities of Heidelberg, Giessen, Osnabrück and Münster, the project being centred on the University of Heidelberg, where, under the direction of Peter Meusburger, a school of geography of education came into being as a result of the doctoral theses he supervised (Schmude, 1988; Kramer, 1993; Weick, 1995; Freytag, 2003; Jöns, 2003; Jahnke, 2005), *apud* Kucerová 2020. Research is currently continuing through the studies *Perspektiven für eine konzeptionelle Orientierung der Bildungsgeographie* (Freytag, Jahnke, 2015) and above all through a new reference work for this domain, *Bildungsgeographie* (Freytag, Jahnke, Kramer, 2015), (Figure 4).
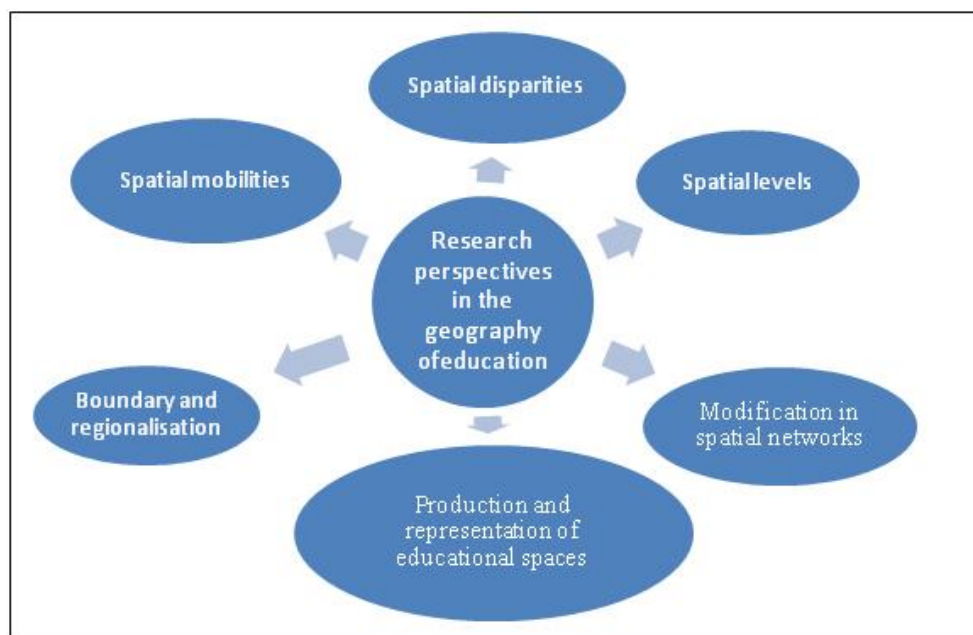

Figure 4. Research directions in the geography of education
(Freytag and Jahnke, 2015, p. 70)

Areas of research interest in the German-speaking countries include the causes and consequences of variations in the provision and uptake of education, the impact of the socio-cultural environment on the degree to which educational objectives are attained, spatial variations in the socio-demographic structure of the teaching profession, the influence that political systems, educational policies and demographic changes have on the school network, and educational indicators that may explain socio-economic inequalities and which can be used to demonstrate the existence of unequal power relationships (Meusburger, 2017). New research directions are characterised by case studies in a broader socio-economic and political complex, a preference for qualitative methods, and a growth of interest in informal and non-formal education (Kramer 2019, p. 2).

2.3. The French School

The geography of education as an academic discipline was approached differently in France from how it was in English-speaking or German-speaking areas, at least in its beginnings, since it was influenced by specifically French Republican policies that concentrated on equity and territorial accessibility and less on insufficiencies/failings caused by educational segregation. Its principal champion was Maurice Debesse, who developed the idea of a geographical approach to education by overseeing (between 1969 and 1978) the works that made up the volumes of the *Traité des Sciences Pédagogiques* (Brock, 2016, p. 15, *apud* Kucerová 2020); the character of the works changed along the way from pedagogical to comparative education approaches. Whereas for the French school comparisons between nations in terms of education represented the dominant trend in the geography of education, in the German- and English-speaking space research concentrated on the educational offer within countries and in particular on the complex relationships between space/place and population as regarding access to education. A detailed analysis of studies on the geography of education was made by Jean-Pierre Chevalier in his *Géographie de l'Ecole et géographie à l'Ecole (Etude du fichier des thèses de 1990 à 1994),* in which he gives a list of all doctoral theses on the subject of the geography of education written in France in 1990-1994. This synthesising of papers, their content, the subjects they addressed, and above all the design of the research allow Chevalier to capture changes in research approach. These include:
-   A high level of interest among researchers in abstract models, graphically represented, and less interest in specific models of the geographical landscape kind;
-   The epistemological dimension seen in research studies moves towards the notion of concept, as distinct from earlier, historical, approaches;
-   The classical, linear, didactic model of thesis format disappears after 1992;
-   Subjects that involve capturing pupils' mental representations occur frequently;
-   Research into primary education declines in frequency in the theses studied;
-   There is a growing interest in research into school textbooks.

Chevalier draws attention to the fact that these developments should not fail to find room for the following academic constants:
-   Modern investigative methods must be seen as an instrument and not as an end in themselves;

- Concepts utilised in the geography of education must be ones found as an integral part of geographical study;
- Methods and instruments used in the geography of education must be related to standard bodies of academic knowledge, which continue to be essential for this discipline or branch of science.

Recent research in the French school has focused on the results of the policy of territorialised education, urban school policies conceived so as to weaken social differences, issues concerned with access to education in neighbourhoods with social problems (Wayens et al., 2017, Giband, 2019), and the complex relationship between school segregation and residential segregation (Audren, Collin, 2017). Significant contributions are also to be found in the seventeen successive volumes of the *Géographie De L' école*, a model of analysis for the whole of Europe, which deals with a wide range of aspects but does so while maintaining coverage of the same themes throughout. Here too certain changes took place in the nature of research studies as tests of the PISA type came into international use, comparative education features largely in studies, and from the fourteenth volume onwards much attention is paid to instances of segregation brought about by waves of migration.

3. CHANGES IN THE SCHOOL NETWORK AS AN EFFECT OF DECENTRALISATION, AS REFLECTED IN STUDIES IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION

Despite its having become established as an academic subdiscipline, new directions in the geography of education are strongly influenced by changes taking place in social geography and by the way in which data provided by comparative education are interpreted. For this reason, predictions of the direction that research in this area will follow are, to say no more, hazardous. In these circumstances, we have decided in this article to analyse a number of studies and articles in the specialist literature devoted to the geography of education (Taylor, 2009; Wayens et al., 2010; Kucerová *et al.*, 2010, 2020; Meusburger, 2015; Freytag *et al.*, 2015; Jahnke *et al.,* 2019), our principal theme being instances of the restructuring of school networks, something which has particularly affected small schools and has led to educational segregation in the urban environment. Changes in the size and shape of school networks have been the result of policies of decentralisation aimed at giving schools greater autonomy, in the sense of the establishing of educational needs taking place in each community, defined as the chief beneficiary of educational policies, as an aspect of largely territorial governance. These changes have brought about a number of negative developments and have led to the disappearance of schools in rural areas and to the phenomenon of educational segregation in large towns.

3.1. What has happened to schools in rural areas under the impulse of decentralisation

The process of decentralising pre-university education is part of a broader pattern of administrative decentralisation that takes different forms in different periods and places, in most cases with the desired results failing to be achieved. Looking at Europe as a whole, in countries that have a federal system or at least a neo-liberal tradition these policies have succeeded in being applied to the school system as well as

to other areas, although the effects have not always been positive. In countries in the former communist bloc of central and eastern Europe, the majority of which are republics with centralised institutions, the fact that they have retained the style of administrative-territorial organisation that they inherited from a different system has meant that the process of educational reform has not been supported by a genuine policy of decentralisation, with the result that these policies have been doomed to failure; worse still, they have created educational polarisations that have been reflected in a new centralisation of the school network directly influenced by new hubs of urban development. When decentralisation leads to "school autonomy" that is no more than skin deep, the result is an unclear status for schools and the longer-term effect increased dependence on local resources, in this case financially; since these differ very widely from region to region, the consequence in the medium term is school closures in disadvantaged areas. This has the effect of deepening inequalities in education, with those groups regarded as disadvantaged being the most at risk (Kramer, Jahnke, 2019, p. 3). The wide-scale implementation of the system of capitation costs (allocation of funds per pupil) obviously works well when there are a large number of pupils, which is not the case in the majority of rural areas. This brings us to an essential question: How much does school size influence the decentralisation process, which most often leads to the closing of small schools? This phenomenon can be seen at work in a wide variety of cases. At one end of the scale is the example of the Scandinavian countries, which as a consequence of integrating historico-geographical considerations into a broader plan for community cultural development continue to have schools with a wide range of pupil numbers; in all other countries, Romania included, such decisions are conditioned by their financial resources.

The present article, based on analyses from the domain of the geography of education, presents examples from Europe, where, despite a discourse that is positive towards keeping these small schools open, federal or national government policies have handed over a number of responsibilities to local authorities in the name of decentralisation or of territorial governance, but the resources allocated have not been planned to cover anything beyond the requirements of the curriculum. This has created the preconditions for a new wave of segregation largely prompted by financial motives, given the very heterogeneous nature of communities, and the result has been educational emigration (pupils commuting to school) and even the migration of whole families, particularly to urban settings.

In countries with a long neo-liberal tradition (Norway, Belgium, Germany) this process began earlier and has continued to this day. In France and Great Britain the process is largely complete but the effects have not been as expected. Whereas in France, with its tradition of a centralised system of education, the consequences were to some extent those expected, in Great Britain there is a desire for a recentralisation that would lead to a system even more powerfully centralised than was the case previously. In France, decentralisation began in 1982 and took place in stages, with the State retaining its prerogatives in the areas of pedagogy (the curriculum) and staffing, the view being that teachers fulfil a public function. More than that, even the experience of decentralisation in countries with a tradition of this kind (education serving the interests of economic agents) has produced situations in which "the results have not lived up to expectations" (*Decentralisation in Education Systems*, 2017). Results have been disappointing both as regards school performance (Busemeyer, 2012) and in particular in relation to the abandoning of a whole-country human-studies-based policy and the

appearance of "educational territories with results that are negative and paradoxical, as a consequence of specialised educational policies" (Giband, 2019, p.83). The effects of decentralisation are also to be seen in the size and density of school networks, i.e. the number of schools in rural areas and the distances between them; in almost all cases, irrespective of the space studied and of the specific subject area of the analysis, these policies have led to the disappearance of small schools. In spite of the post-World War Two demographic explosion, the principle of keeping schools in small communities open was not maintained, for both economic and pedagogical reasons. In particular, the fact that small schools supported by the local community and parish were more readily exposed to a Nazi discourse on such issues as property and country was regarded as something that could not be ignored (Kramer, 1993). Arguments of this kind were used in the former communist countries as well, the reasons adduced being related to the drawbacks of excessive ruralisation and the importance of all young people having access to better education (Gyuris, 2019, Kučerová *et al*., 2019). In both cases, above and beyond the correct pedagogical values invoked, education provided in a centralised way in large schools had as its aim the training of specialist workers for the post-WW2 boom in industrial development, which went hand in hand with a distancing from the patriarchal space, which was in theory opposed to globalisation.

Research studies of social impact, in the context of the debate regarding the existence or continued existence of small schools, have included quantitative system analyses, results of standardised international tests, and qualitative analyses based on interviews. The field of investigation was made up of isolated rural areas (the Alps, and isolated communities in Norway and Australia). The changes that took place in Norway are representative for the majority of small communities. In spite of their historic role, caused both by the geographical conditioning of the relief, which played its part in keeping small schools open and so preserved local identity, and also by the unique Norwegian style of doing things, "paradoxically, small schools were closed in a period in which Norway was regarded as one of the wealthiest countries in the world" (Solstad, 2009, *apud* Kvalsund 2015, p. 181). There was a devaluing of all aspects of rural life, with the economic factor taking pride of place in the majority of moves that affected the school network and rural communities more generally. Far-reaching changes took place in the 1960s, when over 2,000 rural schools were closed in an unprecedented centralisation process brought about by a shift in the educational paradigm regarding the location of schools in space. The same kind of changes occurred in a number of countries across Europe and beyond; they were characteristic of an era of late modernity dominated by efficiency, productivity in general and the standardisation of education in particular. This last aspect is intrinsically linked to the explosion in urban growth, which made necessary a standardisation of production processes that had knock-on effects for some school subjects and competences. A process of decentralisation whose results have been seen particularly since 2007 has reduced yet further the number of small schools, especially primary ones, for purely economic reasons. Later research on complex themes, both into issues related to educational results and in particular into the community impact of the keeping open or closing of primary schools that have historically functioned as centres of the community, has come out in support of the retention of small schools. Despite the existence of evidence pointing in this direction (Kvalsund, Lovik, Hagen 1992, Kvalsund 2000, *apud* Kvalsund 2019), the process of closing small country schools continues. Even the results of standardised school tests

show some small communities performing above the national average (*Sogn og Fjordane county (SF) - A paradox?,* Kvalsund, 2019, p.196).

The shift in the rural/urban balance in favour of the latter has caused a complete change in the education system, with the result that small schools and small communities have felt themselves excluded as one instance of a more profound segregating of Norwegian society into groups known as the "power elite" and the "ordinary people". The research results were preponderantly in support of small schools being kept open, bearing in mind that in these communities the school is the only organised way of strengthening and maintaining local identity (Kramer, 1993; Steiner *et al*., 2011; Kilpatrick, Mulford, Falk, 2002*, apud* Kramer, 2015, p. 231). In Germany, the results of the implementation of a policy of decentralisation provide another example of failure, although the way it is reflected on the ground is different from what we have seen in Norway. The greater level of school autonomy and a different kind of economic development both contribute to this. Despite there being a tradition in matters of education of a very clear distinction between the responsibilities of the regional (for each of the Länder) Ministry of Education and those of the local authorities – a relationship specific to countries with a federal form of government – there were interventions by central government in pursuit of aims related to school performance, along with modifications introduced by the support of parents, whose role was still further reduced by the cutting-back of time allocated to the family. It was to make up for this deficiency that the system of "*all day schooling*" was introduced and made general, with the necessary infrastructure being paid for from federal funds (Janke, 2019, p. 21). At the local level, despite the existence of school accessibility policies to ensure the operation of a catchment area system, at least for primary schools, recent years have witnessed the appearance of a movement that gives a powerful impulse in the direction of segregation. This is termed *"free parental choice of schools"* and it has had a direct impact in two regions of Germany, Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia). These changes have been helped by legislative initiatives of the "*Schleswig-Holsteinishes Schulgesetz vom 24.1.2007"* kind, which have liberalised the "school marketplace" by allowing schools to compete to attract pupils and parents to select schools beyond their catchment area in what has been termed "*free market competition*". Given the fact of demographic decline in some areas and the rule that primary schools must have a minimum of 80 pupils in order to stay open, this has led to changes in the school network in the area, in particular through the disappearance of some schools. The degree of decentralisation has increased, both in terms of the school curriculum and as regards institutional management (staff recruitment). Thus, in an indirect way "pupils and parents have become customers of the school" (Jahnke, p. 25). These neo-liberal policies have caused inequities that arise from different levels of economic development, a problem that particularly affects country areas. In addition, the PISA results, which have brought about an avalanche of changes throughout Europe, have generated a desire for the universal implementation of an *"all day schooling"* type of school system through *after school* activities. In the absence of institutionally regulated funding, these have had only local resources to rely on, leading once again to major differences in provision between communities with different levels of economic development. A shortage of qualified teachers, with most positions in the after-schools being filled by volunteers, has led to a deprofessionalisation of elementary school teachers, and school results have not been as good as originally predicted. The impulse towards providing all-day education via the *after school* system, which springs

in particular from the fact of both parents working until late, has led to changes to out-of-school activities that counted on parents taking a direct part in the programmes provided. Results have differed across time and space. The way in which these changes in the law have affected how pupils and parents spend their time is conditioned by the existence of different social classes, leading to a high level of social reproduction, according to research carried out by Holloway, Pimlot-Wilson, for the period 2012-2018, *apud* Holloway (2019). Examples of policies that support the local autonomy of schools may also be found in England and Wales United Kingdom, with its concept of *extended schools* (Oto 2005, Coelen, 2009 *apud* Coelen, 2015), and in the Netherlands, with its model of extending educational services via *brede scholen* (Du Bois - Reymond, 2011, *apud* Coelen, p.41). These are only viable in the case of urban schools, since they are funded by middle-class families, who are well represented in towns.

In Timiș county, Romania, decentralisation policies have led to a fall in the number of elementary schools, through a process of closure and absorption, from 212 in the school year 1999-2000 to 163 in 2019-20, a reduction of 22.64%. These educational policies that have brought about the closing and combining of elementary schools form part of a long series of legislation based strictly on pupil numbers (*Law no. 354/2004, Law no. 349/2004, Ministerial Order 5082 of 07.09.2006, Law no. 1/2011 of 5.01 2011* etc.), the instrument used being standard cost per pupil (*Government Decision no. 72 of 27 /02/20013, Government Decision no.169 of 1.04.2019*). In rural areas the number of schools has been falling steadily between 1999-2000, when there were two schools on average per commune (Rusu, 2007, p. 328), and the present day; in 2019-20 only 16 communes in Timiș still had two elementary schools. The decentralisation process generically known by the name of *"territorial governance of schooling"* has not produced the hoped-for results, nor will it do so until there are supra-regional public policies to bring about financial and professional rebalancing. It is the lack of these that is responsible for the current spatial inequities in educational provision.

3.2. Urban educational segregation

It is in the urban environment that research into the geography of education has captured the phenomenon of educational segregation moat clearly, in metropolises in countries that have experienced strong waves of immigration and that also show signs of ethnic segregation. In spite of the fact that schooling has among its objectives the reduction of social inequalities by encouraging ethnic groups to become less closed, we find a powerful resistance movement that operates by implementing methods of educational segregation within cities and even within the same neighbourhood. These new types of segregation are caused by parents who may generally be described as middle-class. In order to ensure their children receive a higher quality education, they attempt to evade the law (by finding a way round the catchment area rules) or, in significant numbers, resort to private schools, a behaviour that belongs within a broader process of social reproduction. These aspects may be clearly seen in studies that capture educational segregation in some neighbourhoods in Marseilles (Audren, Collin, 2017), the main strategy employed being the private school offer. Segregation is more striking when comparing schools than when comparing neighbourhoods, its emergence being a combination of parental choice of educational establishment and the role played by the school authorities (Johnston *et al.*, 2017). Confessional schools go some way to

reducing this segregation via allowing a degree of curricular flexibility, but the determining factor could be age differences between white parents and those of colour.

Evasion of the catchment area law by middle-class families who take up the private school offer is helped by the existence of opposition from parents contesting these public policies, a phenomenon visible in two working-class neighbourhoods of Dusseldorf (Lobato, 2017). These studies, which examine the connection between socio-spatial segregation and school segregation on ethnic grounds, demonstrate that in an already strongly segregated urban context social and ethnic inequalities between schools tend to reflect the degree of segregation that obtains in the neighbourhoods that form the pupils' catchment areas. Pupil numbers lead to changes in the school offer, especially in the context of a falling school age population that leads to the disappearance of some schools. There are however situations in which we are looking at a marked increase in the number of young people, especially where there have been waves of immigration, and this occasions new school policies at local level and allows schools to operate new rules about recruitment on the grounds of the existence of a *free market in education*. In these situations, ethnic segregation is plain to see, with disadvantaged groups, as is the case in some neighbourhoods in Brussels, attending only schools which are regarded as *peripheral* and are located a long way from their homes (Danhier, Devleeshouwer, 2016). The degree of school segregation is thus the cumulative result of residential segregation, the way the school offer is structured, and the degree of freedom permitted to actors (parents included) by the regulatory mechanisms. Careful examination of the way these various factors work together sometimes shows up results that are counter-intuitive. Thus, if we examine the factors that determine distance from school, it may be clearly demonstrated that the dominant image of school ghettoes in the working-class neighbourhoods of Brussels has to be put down largely to the existence of free choice of school (Danhier *et col*., 2017), in the context of demographic pressure on some neighbourhoods of the city. The conditions for segregation have come into being above all against the background of high levels of immigration, with groups regarded as disadvantaged coming especially from communities that are seen as distinct, due to their being predominantly Islamic in religion, irrespective of their "Muslim" ethnicity. The coefficient of school segregation is on occasion greater than that of residential segregation! This leads to school enclaves being identifiable in a precisely studied territory, for example in the town of Wuppertal in North Rhine-Westphalia (Riedel *et al*., 2009, pp.106-108).

A different form of educational segregation is that generated by gentrification. This has produced and continues to produce changes that lead to massive relocations of population and mismatches with certain school policies that were intended to be equitable, even reconciliatory (in particular cases). Situations arising in the "rust belt" of the United States are a case in point. The process of improving the desirability of the historic centres of cities is causing a new wave of people to move away, but this is leading not to the disappearance of working-class neighbourhoods but to their relocation, thus perpetuating a situation of space-based socio-educational segregation. The phenomenon generally affects large urban concentrations, whether we are talking about cities in North America, such as Pittsburgh (Nafaa, 2017), Portland (Lipman 2009, *apud* Serbulo) or New York, or about London. In these cases, policies that were intended to bring diversity to the school offer by (re)attracting the middle class have facilitated the process of educational gentrification. In the States, these situations are a

consequence of neo-liberal policies characteristic of American metropolises; these policies are based on rivalry and competition, the true sources of segregation.

School segregation in the former communist countries presents some unique features that have two causes: the smallness as yet of the private sector in education, and the persistence of features of a centralised education system. In the city of Timişoara, the county town of Timiş county in România, educational segregation is a fact of life, in the face of a public policy that aims to ensure fairness and accessibility in matters of education. When it comes to those elementary schools which are regarded as elite, the rule about residence-based catchment areas is evaded by means of little legislative subterfuges involving the obtaining of "temporary visas" (one-year residence certificates, bought from people who live in the desired area of town) which give pupils the right to attend a school thought to provide a high quality education. Additionally, these schools generally run after-school programmes that are very expensive and are used by parents who enjoy a certain social status. Given that the majority of what goes on in these programmes is delivered by the class teachers, these schools are avoided by less-well-off families. On top of this, these schools hold entrance examinations, a practice not found in the National Education Law but permitted by exceptions granted at county level. Arrangements of this kind are frequently encountered in almost all counties whose county towns are major growth hubs, as well as in the capital, Bucharest. From this perspective, we are looking at educational segregation on financial grounds, although in theory public education is free, and at a situation in which the Ministry of Education is aware of and permits practices of this kind. Here, then, policies regarding fairness in education do not go beyond the level of discourse.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The task of providing the geography of education with a solid foundation depends both on its developing an epistemological direction of its own and on the academic status it acquires. Lying as it does at the meeting-point of a number of sciences, among which sociology and comparative education play dominant roles, and also at the meeting-point of powerful currents in social geography, dominated as it is by its behavioural and psychological components, the geography of education is distinguished by its employment of *space* as a basis for the display of human behaviours and not through the *modelling of space* by individual representations. its predominantly holistic character does not exclude the individualistic dimension, despite the existence of some relatively antagonistic academic approaches, a situation clearly shown by numerous interdisciplinary studies that necessitate the devising of new research instruments that will make it possible to investigate complex subjects such as education.

The relationship between the way a phenomenon manifests in the field and its mental representation from the viewpoint of social constructivism, with the former predominating, has the potential to either give the geography of education a firm academic basis or to cause it to melt into an interdisciplinary mix, a situation frequently encountered in the social sciences and especially in the sciences of education.

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