Educational policies, inclusive leisure and social equity in the face of the new futures of education

Políticas educativas, ocio inclusivo y equidad social ante los nuevos futuros de la educación

Políticas educativas, lazer inclusivo e equidade social face a novos futuros da educação

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ABSTRACT: Focusing its main arguments on values evoked by equity and social inclusion, from a historical perspective, the text presented here emphasizes the important role that educational policies play in achievements associated with a better future for individuals and society. However, the relevance that their discourses and practices have acquired –in convergence with those that refer to cooperation and solidarity, peace, freedom or social justice– in international declarations must not be overlooked, as their initiatives show a commitment to a two-fold challenge: on the one hand, to guarantee the right to lifelong quality education, expanding and diversifying educational opportunities, ways of educating and being educated in society, and on the other, harnessing the transformative potential of education as a global public good, in the transition towards a future that is more ecologically and socially liveable and sustainable.

Imagining it and building it requires a new social contract for education, in which leisure –as a third-generation right that meets basic needs related to rest, recreation, personal development, well-being or quality of life– must reconcile freedom with equality, inclusion with changes and technological, social, cultural and other transformation processes, so that no one is left behind.

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PALABRAS CLAVE:
políticas educativas;
derecho a la
    educación;
equidad social;
educación inclusiva;
educación del ocio

RESUMEN: Situando sus principales argumentos en los valores que invocan, con perspectiva histórica, la equidad y la inclusión social, el texto que presentamos pone énfasis en el importante protagonismo que tienen las políticas educativas en los logros asociados a un mejor futuro para las personas y la sociedad. Siendo así, no se obvia la relevancia que han adquirido sus discursos y prácticas –en convergencia con las que nombran la cooperación y la solidaridad, la paz, la libertad o la justicia social– en las declaraciones internacionales, comprometiendo sus iniciativas con un doble reto: de un lado, garantizar el derecho a una educación de calidad a lo largo de toda la vida, ampliando y diversificando las oportunidades educativas, los modos de educar y educarse en sociedad; de otro, aprovechar el potencial transformador de la educación como un bien público mundial, en el tránsito hacia un porvenir que sea más habitable y sostenible, ecológica y socialmente.

Imaginarlo y construirlo requiere un nuevo contrato social para la educación, en la que el ocio –como un derecho de tercera generación, con el que se da respuesta a necesidades básicas relacionadas con el descanso, la recreación, el desarrollo personal, el bienestar o la calidad de vida– precisa conciliar la libertad con la igualdad, la inclusión con cambios y procesos de transformación tecnológica, social, cultural, etc. para que nadie se quede atrás.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:
Políticas educativas;
direito à educação;
equidade social;
educação inclusiva;
educação do lazer

RESUMO: Colocando os seus principais argumentos nos valores que invocam a equidade e a inclusão social, numa perspetiva histórica, o texto que apresentamos salienta o importante papel que as políticas educativas têm nas conquistas associadas a um futuro melhor para as pessoas e a sociedade. Assim sendo, não é obviada a relevância adquirida pelos seus discursos e práticas –em convergência com aqueles que nomeiam a cooperação e solidariedade, paz, liberdade ou justiça social– nas declarações internacionais, comprometendo suas iniciativas com um duplo desafio: por um lado, garantir o direito à uma educação de qualidade ao longo da vida, expandindo e diversificando as oportunidades educativas, as formas de educar e de ser educado em sociedade; por outro, fortalecer o potencial transformador da educação como um esfoço público e um bem comum, na transina transição cara um provir mais habitável e sustentável, ecológica e socialmente. Imagina-lo e construí-lo requer um novo contrato social para a educação, no qual o lazer –como um direito de terceira geração, que atende necessidades básicas relacionadas com o descanso, a recreação, o desenvolvimento pessoal, o bem-estar ou qualidade de vida– deve conciliar a liberdade com a igualdade, a inclusão com mudanças e processos de transformação tecnológica, social, cultural, etc. para que ninguém fique para trás.

Introduction

The documentary *On the Way to School* (2013), directed by Pascal Plisson, illustrates in a unique way the value that should be conferred on education in today's societies, particularly in those that, for cultural, religious, family, economic, geographic or political reasons, keep hundreds of thousands of children –above all, girls– out of schooling. This right, enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which will celebrate its 75th anniversary on 10 December 2023, is violated each and every day in most countries around the world, despite the emphasis on its relevance for a better future for Humanity.

Proof of this can be found in the words written in the agreements, covenants, reports, etc., endorsed –with varying degrees of conviction– by policy leaders in international forums sponsored and/or called, mainly at the initiative of UNESCO, since the mid-twentieth century. This is especially the case following the *World Conference on Education for All* and the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990. Undoubtedly, that was a major milestone in international dialogue, both for its effect on the important role played by education in policies on human development and for the commitments made to promote universal primary education and to wipe out illiteracy around the world.

We are referring to education, with the knowledge and learning it affords, as a practice that transcends fate, despite the fact that, as asserted in the introduction to the documentary, *"we often forget how lucky we are to go to school"*, in which the true stories are told of four boys and girls considered everyday heroes who must overcome numerous obstacles on a daily basis to get to school. While its value is unquestionable, education is neither morally nor materially a gift granted by life merely by living it; likewise, it is not merely a treasure to be discovered, nor is it a necessary utopia for the purpose of dreaming about and building a better future (Delors *et al.*, 1996). Education must be affirmed and advocated as a social, cultural and political construct. In other words, opportunities that open the doors to what is possible, even if that means taking the most hostile paths, as is the case for Jackson in Kenya, Carlitos in Argentine Patagonia, Zahira in the Moroccan Atlas mountains and Samuel in the Bay of Bengal in southern India. Their journeys, as Plisson would say, are not only physical but also spiritual: "a journey within, that leads them from childhood into adulthood", as the first in their families to go to school.

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Thus, in the midst of the repeatedly broken promises of the past –ranging from the *Millennium Goals* to those that propose sustainable development– and the uncertainties of the future, what is required are firm, convincing, honest and committed stances that, beyond questioning the education we have, illuminate the future we need. This is the task of policymakers and those members of international organisations and national, regional and local governments that call upon us to take part in renovating education by signing a "new social contract" that allows us to think and act differently about learning and the relationships "between students, teachers, knowledge and the world" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 4).

However, not only students and teachers must participate, because everyone, young and old, both in and out of school, is involved. This includes a range of social professionals who are –or should be– in charge of education and culture, as fellow participants in their initiatives and practices, if we truly intend to change course. Despite the insistence on the idea that, for it to be permanent, the right to education must encompass the right to information, culture, science and connectivity, for example, this cannot be achieved if there are educational practices related to free time and leisure, the community or society that are barely even mentioned in words, or only in passing; not to mention the fact that, as noted in the Report from the *International Commission on the Futures of Education*, "the English word 'school' come from the Greek *skholè*, meaning free or leisure time" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 100).

When Social Pedagogy, Social Education, Leisure Education or Pedagogy reach international levels of recognition and outreach in both scientific and academic terms, in public policies and in professional practice, there can be no excuse for ignoring its contributions to a better future for society. Attention must be paid to leisure (Cuenca, 2000 y 2004) –a third-generation right that meets basic needs related to rest, recreation, personal development, well-being and quality of life, in which freedom is also reconciled with equality, and inclusion with changes and technological, social, cultural and other transformation processes, so that no one is left behind– from at least a two-fold perspective: firstly, by recognising education as a basic right of every person and, secondly, emphasising its importance in each individual's development, by linking it to their full integration in society. An education that is deeply rooted in, committed to and accountable for equity as a vector for social inclusion. And with it, the rights that are inherent to "leisure" and to its opportunities for living with and in time, giving it not only a recreational meaning but also a formative and liberating sense, with teachings and learning that span a lifetime.

Education must be designed, legislated and constructed not only by those devoted to it professionally as teachers and/or those who take part in its practices as students, but rather everyone must be involved, fully harnessing their full potential so that they can "enjoy and expand the educational opportunities... in different cultural and social spaces" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 5). As asserted before, the solution in promoting a renewed social contract for education does not lie in more school, although this could be demanded, but rather more and better education, engaging families, communities, civic life, associations, government bodies, social services, the social media, cultural institutions and more... An education that is "social" because it is made not only *for* society but *in* and *with* society, placing many of the reasons for hope in providing a better present and future, especially for younger generations, in "free" time, as much as possible under the circumstances (UNESCO, 2022).

1. The right to be entitled to human dignity

The values evoked in relation to equality and freedom, inherited from Greek political philosophy, acknowledging that no human being can be superior to another based on convention or law –as Rousseau asserted in *The Social Contract*– became particularly relevant in illustrated thought, as an extension of revolutionary ambitions that deemed them inseparable from full respect for human dignity, not only from a philosophical or moral perspective, but also from a regulatory and legal viewpoint. This would be enshrined in the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ...", and in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789, Article 1 of which declares that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights".

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century on a planet inhabited by more than 8,000 million people, we are still a long way from converting those ideals into daily realities, even in States that constitutionally claim to be social and democratic subject to the rule of law and to hold freedom, justice, equality and political pluralism as superior values.

Even in the countries considered to be the most "advanced" in socio-economic and cultural terms, abuse, exploitation, mistreatment, exclusion and

diverse expressions of violence continue to exist. Armed conflicts persist around the world, from the recent ones taking place in Iraq and Ukraine to the prolonged conflicts in Myanmar, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, etc., reaching a sum of more than sixty wars of diverse natures and scopes.

Furthermore, we cannot and must not forget that World War II represented one of the greatest expressions of brutality in history, in terms of both the vast number of dead and injured as well as the projects aimed at completely eliminating people or races merely because they were different. Scientific and technical progress, not only in physical and natural sciences but also in the increasingly consolidated fields of the social and human sciences, has outpaced the ethical and moral development of societies, which continue to invent, manufacture and use weapons with a tremendous destructive capacity.

In 1948 a group of nations proclaimed their determination to fight fear and misery, tyranny and oppression, violence and greed, slavery and servitude, making a commitment to step up their efforts to ensure full, effective respect for the fundamental rights and liberties of man. This "universal" Declaration proclaimed and adopted at the General Assembly has represented, since then, a "common ideal for Humanity" which, in historical terms, as Ignatieff (2003) pointed out, bestowed on individuals, regardless of their condition, "certain rights to struggle against unjust states and oppressive social practices" (p. 31).

The text begins by stating that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". It then stresses that: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". The Declaration arose with the intention of changing human awareness, taking on the challenge that was and is still posed by the right to have rights, as Hanna Arendt put it, inherent to any decent social cooperation system (Rawls, 2001). At the outset of the third millennium, we seem to be more aware than ever of this need.

And yet, far from acting consistently with the required demands, we remain steeped in a modernised, consumerist brutality reinforced by the harmful superstition that human beings must devote ourselves to cultivating and magnifying our differences rather than institutionally protecting our shared humanity. Cortina (2017) noted that reducing inequality, including educational inequality, is an unavoidable duty.

2. Between freedom and equity in 21st-century societies

Education, overcoming its incessant crises, often prompted by its inability to handle the challenges posed by a society in constant transformation, has evolved significantly toward its definition as an inalienable universal right, in which equity and inclusion are two cornerstones in the inalienable desire to construct ourselves in a dignified manner as humans (Bregman, 2021), individually and collectively. Transitioning from the right to education to education as a right (Caride et al., 2018) is still one of the urgent matters of our time in history.

International governmental organisations insistently stress this, noting that despite the progress made, educational access and opportunities remain unevenly distributed. In addition to discrimination based on gender, race or ethnicity, stigmatisation and certain stereotypes continue to act as obstacles that hinder the right to education for millions of boys and girls around the world. According to the latest Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM, 2020), more than 258 million children, adolescents and youths (17% of the global total) do not attend school. However, it is encouraging that 88% finish primary school, 72% complete lower secondary education and 53% go on to complete the higher level (GEM, 2022).
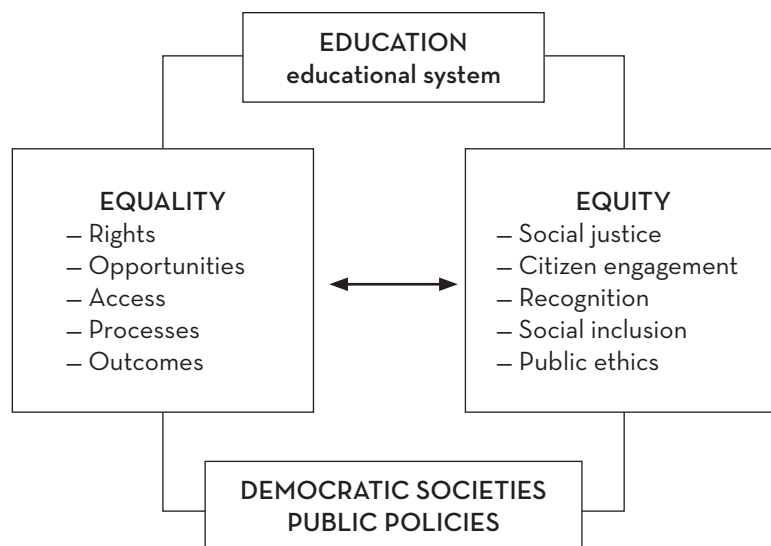
While everything seems to indicate that progress will be made toward universal schooling for children and youth within the framework of the *2030 Agenda* in order to achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals* and, especially, the one that seeks to ensure quality education (SDG 4), there are unsurmountable obstacles or limitations for hundreds of millions of people, which perpetuate social inequalities, expanding or exacerbating social exclusion and marginalisation whether due to gender, poverty, hunger, disabilities, ethnic origin, language, migration, sexual orientation, religion or simply because their ideas stray from the norm.

2.1. Equity, or the need to move beyond equality, even in education

Raising the issue of social and educational equity involves understanding, from the outset, the complexity of these situations on at least three distinct but converging levels, regarding which international policies have taken a stance: concepts, practices and resources, which are also tied to distributive justice and to equality (Bolívar, 2005; Murillo & Hernández-Castilla, 2011). In the mid-1990s in France, the concept of equity became relevant in better understanding the concept of equality. In this way, a more precise

response was given to the question raised by Sen (2004) "equality of what". The concept of equity helps us better understand what is attempting to be equalised (equal access, opportunities, treatment or outcomes), making it possible to expand the civic and pedagogical horizons nestled in equality. And, as Rodrigues (2015) stated, always linking its objectives to the "commitment to abolish inequality" (p. 18). In his opinion, no matter how central equal opportunities is for equity, it is essential to overcome the fallacy embedded for years in public policy, whereby the aim was to give everyone the same thing, when what this does is to "benefit those in a better position to understand, receive and profit from what is given" (p. 18).

EDUCATION
educational system

EQUALITY
— Rights
— Opportunities
— Access
— Processes
— Outcomes

EQUITY
— Social justice
— Citizen engagement
— Recognition
— Social inclusion
— Public ethics

DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES
PUBLIC POLICIES

Figure 1. Education, equity and equality at the epicentre of international policy.

Mere economic inequality is not enough to explain these realities, as social factors are also involved, reducing the potential often ascribed to "equal opportunities" in terms of both access and outcomes; and it is even more necessary because the neoliberal policies and capitalism that feed the power of the markets are incompatible with axiological movements that call solidarity, justice, ecology, equity and inclusion into play (Díez & Rodríguez, 2021).

References to equity force us to reformulate the criteria commonly used to understand inequality. Dubet (2012) highlights the impartiality and imbalance of the "equal opportunities" concept with regard to more vulnerable social groups, which requires paying special attention to the boys, girls and youth of these sectors, demanding from schools a common culture (*socle commun*) for the entire population, equipping it with competencies and skills without exclusions, in addition to not being exclusive. This is also the perspective taken by Fraser (2000, 2008) in her analysis of the redistribution-recognition dichotomy, so that, in conjunction with participation (Fraser & Honneth, 2006), it is possible to mainstream equity policies in contemporary societies as concerns the distribution of wealth, recognition of differences and economic and socio-political dynamics. Educational equity, in discourse and practice, cannot be separated from the power relationships or from the social stratification in which its proposals and achievements take place.

2.2. *Equity at the epicentre of international political agendas*

As mentioned above, international organisations have also added new readings on equity and equality to their concerns. In the nineties, the OECD drew the attention of the educational systems to the importance of inclusive education, taking an interest in integrating students with disabilities. In the report entitled *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education* (Field et al., 2007) the term 'equity' was introduced into the debates taking place in the early twenty-first century, linking it to justice and inclusion as factors of social integration, well-being and improved living conditions for citizens in their respective societies:

Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is fairness, which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances –for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin– should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is inclusion, which implies ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling school failure helps

to overcome the effects of social deprivation which often causes school failure (p. 10).

The authors do not shy from the financial benefits of educational policies that are committed to more equitable strategies, proposing ten steps based on inclusive practices and the application of basic skills.

Quality as a parametric factor is introduced later based on the argument that equity helps bolster quality. The report entitled *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (OECD, 2012), states that "the highest performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality. They give all children opportunities for a good quality education" (p. 3). It proposes the goal of focusing on improving equity in education, reducing school failure and early dropout rates to ensure a productive workforce and optimise human capital, which would lead to greater social cohesion (OECD, 2012). The socio-economic and merit-based perspective of equity is reinforced in other reports: *Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education. Policy Lessons around the World* (Schleicher, 2014) and *Equity in Education. Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility* (OECD, 2018).

Equity is expected to ensure that everyone has the basic tools to successfully cope with everyday life. They are inclusive and socially just when they ensure that all students' expectations are met without setting up obstacles that hinder their learning potential. In other words, socio-economic differences must not prevent the educational success of educational sectors in situations of social exclusion and vulnerability. One of the most recent reports, *Improving Early Equity* (OECD, 2022), highlights the importance of fostering and promoting high quality learning environments full of possibilities starting in early childhood, endeavouring to ensure equity in more disadvantaged settings.

In recent decades, UNESCO has also deemed equity a key objective of its agendas, with a more humanistic and less performance-based approach. In fact, inclusion and equity have appeared in the development agendas, and the right to education for all boys and girls is considered to be endorsed in the international treaties ratified by the States (UNESCO, 2014). At the World Conference on *Education for All* held in Jomtien in 1990, "equity" was first discussed in relation to proposed policies and strategies aimed at providing basic universal education for all, including adults, based on equity criteria. In addition, albeit belatedly, quality also became a key benchmark in educational policies,

stating that "the pre-conditions for educational quality, equity and efficiency are set in the early childhood years, making attention to early childhood care and development essential to the achievement of basic educational goals" (UNESCO, 1990, p. 9). The Conference marked the beginning of the transition toward the new century, promoting inclusive, equitable education for all within the framework of global ethics.

Despite the optimism aroused by the objectives set in Jomtien, in 2000 UNESCO convened a *World Education Forum* in Dakar (Senegal) to review, ratify the commitment and approve new *Education for All* (EFA) objectives with their sights set on 2015. At the *Forum*, six goals aimed at guiding the future of education were established, with an outlook in which, as Reimer (2020) notes, many of the challenges and opportunities cannot be successfully undertaken within the borders of individual States, given that they "require educating everyone to understand them, take an interest in them and gain the knowledge and skills needed to address them from their respective spheres of action" (p. 11).

In more global readings on education, equity became a fundamental political and pedagogical principle, stressing the relevance of early childhood educational development and care along with the acquisition and scope of basic skills needed by young people and adults to be fully integrated into their environments (UNESCO, 2000; 2015a). The *Forum* emphasised the limited progress made over the decade, declaring a firm intention to monitor this progress and renewing commitments to develop and supervise it until 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). The verified outcomes were modest but improvements in equity and inclusion were found. The *Monitoring Report* drafted in 2015 shows that there were still 58 million boys and girls out of school and another 100 million who do not complete primary education. While certain progress was made, educational inequality had increased, affecting the poorest and most disadvantaged segments of the population (UNESCO, 2015a).

In light of this situation, UNESCO convened another *World Education Forum* in 2015, this time in Incheon (Republic of Korea), in collaboration with UNICEF, the World Bank and the UNHCR, to name a few. More than 160 countries participated, along with members of unilateral and multilateral international organisations. At the *Forum*, the *Education 2030 Declaration* was passed, linking its statements, goals and indicators to *Sustainable Development Goal 4*: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2015b,

p. 6). In its framework for action, principles are specified with a view to stimulating a new conception of education, asserting that inclusion and equity are the cornerstones of any agenda that aims to transform education by tackling exclusion in its numerous forms.

The 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2015) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly as an extension of the *Millennium Goals* will focus on fighting inequality and poverty by creating more inclusive and equitable societies. No one must be left behind. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with other circumstances of an economic, social, environmental and military nature (the war in Ukraine, which began in 2022, is one of the latest examples), to name a few, are making it enormously difficult to make good on those "promises", precisely at a time when there are more reasons than ever to justify the existence of education –in equity, peace, with inclusion, etc.

2.3. Policies of and for equity as new governance

In traditional conceptions of social justice, as well as in those promoted by equity policies, there are abundant devices and procedures of a performative nature, thus giving rise to a growing body of proof and data. There are numerous indicators, standards, statistics, etc. whose diagnostic, evaluative, situational or comparative findings are prompting organisational, strategic and even structural changes that affect the ways in which social justice is understood in the field of education. Lingard et al. (2014) state that "current definitions of equity are linked to the introduction of multiple layers of technical and numerical mediation to measure equity, translating life in schools and communities into a series of abstract representations in graphs, grids, league tables and indices" (p. 711).

Although technical reasons are often cited, it is hard to deny the political and ideological motives that are leading to a gradual redefinition of the concepts of equity and social justice in emerging domestic and international settings in which the new technologies *of* and *in* global governance are being designed. With them, the "neo-social" (Rose, 1999) takes on greater significance, emphasising accountability and the potential that individuals have in the market. As Rose (1999) observed, data have achieved an unmistakable power of conviction as a technology of governance, undermining more substantive approaches to social justice and, by extension, to equity, in a way that subordinates its ethical and moral principles to its alleged objectivity (Lingard, Sellar & Savage, 2014). In this regard,

recent decades have seen how the concern for equity and social justice, after analysing the development and implementation of inclusive and integrating policies, has focused much more on technical "adjustment" operations than on an in-depth review of the system (González-Faraco et al., 2012).

From this perspective, Popkewitz et al. (1999) and Popkewitz & Lindblad (2005) have shown that contemporary educational policies and educational research have adopted an equity-based approach that takes the shape of regulated educational practices and programmes aimed at social inclusion and integration of individuals pursuant to national and international standards and rules that emphasise individualised expectations and rights. These seemingly well-meaning policies often reduce or obscure participation and social criticism, making use of mechanisms of distinction, differentiation and classification; rather than solving the problems, they exacerbate them. This is a dynamic process and, according to Lingard et al. (2014), it is creating a new rationality that stems from a topological, performance-based culture. It not only prioritises that which is quantitative and pragmatic, but it also stresses the efficiency of outcomes over the vitality of the processes.

3. Equality versus equity in education? Seeking answers for the common good and social justice

The complex relationships between society and education and, even more, the conditionality and dependence of the latter on the former, make it advisable to discuss equality and equity in general terms, referring to society before discussing them in relation to education. On doing so, it is clear to see the profound crisis in which Western democracies, with the countries of Europe as the main role models, are enmeshed.

In these democracies it becomes apparent that equality cannot be limited to legal provisions, to equality in the eyes of the law or to electoral equality: one person, one vote. What is more, these regulatory equalities do not resolve actual inequalities affecting the economy, power structures or cognitive processes. Their formalities do not guarantee equity (Subirats et al.,2002). This is also true with regard to education, with institutional and social dynamics that are influenced on a daily basis both in and outside of the classroom, in families and in communities. And this is the case despite the fact that, whether rooted in Western thinking, ethics or politics, actual inequality is often countered with what

should be and what is advisable to do, not only to compensate for the inequality, but also to reverse it (Rawls, 1971; Piketty, 2013).

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls endeavoured to reconcile the principles of freedom and equality, citing the first article of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on considerations of the common good." He felt that not only was the declaration in the first part essential, but also that of the second part, which states that social distinctions, differences or inequalities are only acceptable when based on "the common good". He accepted that social justice need not pursue material income equality, provided that this did not pose an obstacle to improving the situation of the most disadvantaged. Rawls saw justice as the prime virtue of social institutions, prevailing over others like efficiency or stability. It should be noted that the tolerability of injustice has become one of the core problems of our time, to such an extent that increased tolerance has become one of the main shortcomings of contemporary democracies, often forcing the powers of the State to resort to violence to ensure proper functioning.

However, in *A Theory of Justice*, it is paradoxical that Rawls, like many Western thinkers, distinguished between the applicability of his principles in terms of a State and how they applied to a "society of peoples". He assumed that, on an international level, it would suffice to guarantee certain essential human rights and assistance to be a full, autonomous member of international society (Turégano, 2022). Distinguishing between different levels of exigency is striking and contradictory given that, in our interconnected world, when applied, this concept could easily have unwanted consequences.

Social inequalities, in which the contributions by Stiglitz (2015), Theborn (2015) and Piketty (2013 and 2015) are emblematic from a structural viewpoint, require a closer look at this latter author, whose theories are empirically based on very thorough statistical studies. These show that, for the past 250 years, wealth concentration has constantly increased and that, far from self-correcting, economic and social inequalities are growing. In his opinion, a global wealth tax would contribute to the redistribution of wealth, although the difficulties and resistance inherent to implementation cannot be denied. Major corporations and financial groups, which have been identified as "the masters of the world" (Navarro & Torres, 2014), continue to use extremely sophisticated financial instruments to impose a form of globalisation that is as lacking in

solidarity as it is irrational, thus frustrating timid attempts to apply taxes of this kind, such as the Tobin Tax levied on financial transactions. Piketty (2013) concludes that imbalances in wealth are also imbalances in power. Therefore, we might add, they are also imbalances of everything implied in socially constructing freedom, justice and equality. Inevitably, this also means *in* and *with* education.

Starting from the mid-twentieth century, numerous socioeconomic studies have contributed to the theories on human capital. According to their proposals, a nation's wealth would, to a great degree, depend on the level and extent of education of its population. As a result, in the United States, a forerunner in the development of these ideas, concerns about the quality of its educational system and the training provided increased. Some of the main conclusions of the well-known Coleman Report (1966), an extensive statistical study of educational outcomes, are still worth noting today: the importance of family background for performance, maintaining its influence throughout school years, the impact of the social make-up of the student body (peer effects), and teacher characteristics as one of the most relevant factors in attempting to explain variations in learning (Carabaña, 2016).

As was the case in the more economically advanced countries of Europe, the concerns that were cast on US society and its educational system would prompt an examination of its investments and outcomes. In April 1983 Ronald Reagan presented a report entitled *A Nation at Risk*, which highlighted the risks of being surpassed by other countries. In its wake, George W. Bush would propose using federal aid to create a plan that would hold schools accountable for the educational results of their students, which would end up being drafted into a law: *No Child Left Behind Act* passed in 2002. However, it was probably the educational agenda of the Barack Obama Administration that was most actively committed to improving education, encouraging states to make significant changes in their policies through charter schools, adopting common basic evaluations and rules, and teacher assessments (McGuinn, 2016).

In Europe, the studies and initiatives that are adopted in educational and social policies have taken a different approach. Early on, concerns arose regarding the impact of schooling on social reproduction, going so far as to assert that school functioning enables this phenomenon and acts to the detriment of educational equality and equity; instead of fostering equality and equity, it further aggravates inequalities (Duru-Bellat,

2003). Equity clearly requires education to take on a mediating, transformative role rather than merely reproducing social structures. Thus, the educational system must have its own dynamics, which stem from the relationships between the diverse agents and organisations of a pedagogical and social nature. Its contribution to a more equitable society is essential, particularly for those in situations of exclusion or in disadvantaged or vulnerable positions.

The social policies endorsed in Europe after World War II led to the adoption of educational policies aimed at preventing school segregation, especially at young ages; they endeavoured to offer the same opportunities to all students regardless of social background, gender, geographic origins, etc. Afterwards, the so-called comprehensive school was proposed and spread, first in the Nordic countries and, later, to the rest of Europe. The adoption of this system led to the blurring or elimination of the separation between common primary school and secondary school, at least in the initial years of this latter. In Spain, Basic General Education (EGB, in Spanish) was introduced under the General Education Act in 1970, offering common educational contents for all students from the ages of 6 to 14; in 1990, the Law on the General Regulation of the Educational System (LOGSE, in Spanish) extended that limit to the age of 16 (Sevilla, 2003).

However, the mere implementation of comprehensive models does not guarantee either equality or equity in education. Educational policies that seek new formulas for facing the daunting challenges of these models are still required. In Spain, the Programme for Educational Guidance, Progress and Improvement (PROA, in Spanish) is particularly relevant, aiming to offer support and guidance to educationally vulnerable students and reduce student drop-out rates, especially at young ages. The budget allocation for this programme – more than 118 million euros in 2022 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2022)– offers an idea of how important it is.

4. Toward a new future for education, or the urgency of supporting a "pedagogy of opportunities"

Inclusion and social justice are the cornerstones of equity. This is highlighted in a recent report by UNESCO (2022), which calls upon us to *reimagine our futures together*. Its authors, members of the *International Commission on the Futures of Education*, assert the need for a new social contract for education, considering that education is the top priority: an essential human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. Informed by a consultation process with over one million institutions, it is open not only to debate but also to an educational change, in which the stakeholders and the institutions themselves play a key role. Certain of the transformative capacity of education, the *Commission* raises the urgent need to bolster it as a common good, setting their sights on 2050 (UNESCO, 2022). Equity is seen as a factor of inclusion: a decisive, active framework for any shared social effort, which ensures quality in education that should last a lifetime.

Despite the uncertainty sparked at a global level by inequality, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Report's authors assert that humanity is at a crossroads in its ability to respond to important challenges in the coming decades, starting with a revitalisation of democratic ethics to give rise to governance that dignifies human rights, reconciles growing digitalisation and the appearance of artificial intelligence, along with building a more inhabitable planet that is ecologically and socially sustainable (UNESCO, 2022).

Unlike previous reports, which must not, however, be underestimated given that they made decisive progress in ways of thinking and rethinking the education we want, the proposals here are firm, stating that education must be consolidated as a common public good. A collaborative effort based on more active, democratic participation conducive to new forms of conviviality, with innovative and creative pedagogy that generates new forms of learning and understanding, opening up to new times and new social, cultural and educational spaces. In sum, the goal is to imagine education that is more just and equitable, with a transformative capacity. This also requires an alternative governance, enlivened by citizen engagement, in which equity and justice serve to strengthen commitment, cooperation and solidarity as intangible values, leaving behind instrumental rationalities of a performative nature. Dubet's assertion (2015) in defence of solidarity, which must be bolstered in response to increased inequality, is meaningful here.

For the future of education to offer hope, take on new meanings and generate valuable impacts on society, it must take the shape of programmes, resources, systems and processes that transform the everyday activities and experiences of everyone taking part in its dynamics, from early childhood into old age. This includes the professionals involved in the practice of education, as teachers and educators, at academic institutions and in the communities, preparing students for work and for leisure that contributes

–critically and without falling into the traps of the civilisation of entertainment, of the markets and their exclusive dealings– to recreation, personal and social development, well-being and quality of life in a networked society (Caride et al., 2020). Leisure in this sense educates in an inclusive and equitable manner in everything proposed as a pedagogical and social construct (Caride, 2020).

5. Leisure and reconciliation in the rights to equity and social inclusion

In an effort to objectify reality, it could be said that time is the same for everyone. Measured in years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds... there is very little room for variations in the numerous ways of calculating, distributing and arranging it. However, as Castells (1997) concluded, interpretations of the circumstances of time have changed radically in recent decades: its perception as something linear, irreversible, measurable and predictable is crumbling in this networked society open 24 hours a day. The transient nature of time has become "timeless", relative, complex and subjective, magnifying its description as a time of times, in which a decisive role is played by social performances, personal decisions, politics and its practical consequences on everyday experiences, as an essential trait of the human condition (Safranski, 2017).

Leif (1992) stated that "relationships between time and freedom are infinitely variable. Undoubtedly, freedom is only exercised in time... [meaning that] each individual's unique possibilities and conditions to use their time in the exercise of freedom are especially important" (p. 17), as are, therefore, the possibilities afforded for equality and equity. Now that it is accepted, with little hesitation, that social time is also gendered (Caride & Gradaílle, 2019), both leisure and reconciliation are opportunities to construct more equitable societies, provided that one moves beyond employment policies, shared responsibility for housework, flexibility in scheduling and mere entertainment.

Herein lies the importance of education and learning about time, which begins in early childhood and spans all stages of life, encouraging cross-disciplinary dialogue that must go from local to global, specific to universal, *kronos* to *kairós*, biological to social, business to leisure (Caride, 2018). In these settings, free time and the opportunities it offers for leisure –and for finding a balance between personal, family, work and social life– take on a key role. For years now, government agencies and their policies, especially in countries considered "advanced", have attempted to be consistent with these aims, with wide-ranging outcomes and convictions.

Moving away from more conventional interpretations, leisure in 21st-century societies is seen as a necessity and a civic right, from which important achievements can be expected for the well-being of individuals and their quality of life. And time is seen as "a constant, without which it would be impossible to explain the experience of leisure" (Cuenca, 2004, p. 28). This is perceived in the declarations, proposals, initiatives, etc. that have been galvanised by a number of international organisations and entities, such as the *World Leisure Organization* (2020), which, in its revised *Charter for Leisure*, emphatically asserts that leisure is a basic human right, like education, work and health, that no one should be deprived of based on gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, beliefs, health conditions, disabilities or economic status.

As Aurora Madariaga (2008) has noted in reference to the principle of inclusion applied to leisure, this is, above all, "a matter of rights and, as such, it is committed to advocating a society for all" (p. 293). In her opinion, this could be achieved by ensuring that leisure equipment, infrastructures, services and programmes enable everyone to access, communicate and participate fully in the available enjoyment opportunities. Defending, supporting and espousing leisure that is inclusive means "advocating the total global inclusion of all people in any setting, entailing a structural reform and taking the community and social setting as a reference" (p. 296). To accomplish this, she added, everyone must be entitled to participate in equality and with full respect for diversity, observing that significant progress must be made in terms of mentality, attitudes, management models, service provision, research, knowledge transfer and networking.

The options for equity and inclusion are related to value and belief systems that go beyond a set of actions, and two processes must take place simultaneously: "on the one hand, engaging everyone in the decision-making and, on the other, increasing equal opportunities based on the criteria of equity and social justice" (Cuenca, 2004, p. 258). Educating in and for leisure is a task that is inseparably committed to human rights, meaning that having time and resources is not enough. At the very least, the experience must be perceived as valuable time for personal and social life with a dual dimension: the first entails ensuring that it is enjoyed by the entire population, based on principles of equity, through public policies and citizen initiatives, while the second promotes a leisure culture that is entirely consistent

with human rights. It must not be ignored that "education, which is always a project and path for a better future, must be anticipated but never subordinated. Critically and reflexively foreseeing its circumstances rather than merely obediently and adaptively foreseeing them" (Caride, 2020, p. 410). Obviously, we are advocating education that enables us to rethink its futures and the worlds in which those rights must be projected and enforced each day. Leisure, in an equitable and inclusive sense, in finding a balance between school, family, social life, etc., must be a part of this.

To conclude

On the eve of celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to rights that dignify the human condition is based on the three cornerstones of freedom, equity and social inclusion. As discussed above, this is observed in the educational and social policies promoted by international organisations since the late nineteen-nineties in response to long-standing claims, demands and needs, engaging government bodies with goals that are consistent with a two-fold challenge for the future (UNESCO, 2022): guaranteeing that everyone – children, youth and adults– is entitled to quality education, and harnessing the transformative potential of education as a common good that leads us toward a more pacific, just and sustainable future. Unfortunately, these policies have achieved disparate results within each country and also in the comparisons made globally over the past decades, which are outlined in the global education monitoring reports.

With these unacceptable inequalities that are unjust and unwarranted, everything indicates that significant progress must be made in complying with the agreements undertaken in relation to learning throughout the cycle of life, not restricting education to schooling, teaching curricula or training in competencies and job/professional skills, no matter how important they are. Leisure and leisure education, in a society that is substantially altering the coordinates of time, play a key role, as a third-generation right. To this end, as a factor of social inclusion or exclusion, it must be disentangled from financial interests that foster tensions between leisure and business, encouraging consumerism and dependence on technological networks, media corporations and cultural industries. To be freed from the risks entailed here, educational, cultural and social policies must feature strategies, programmes and initiatives, to name a few, that contribute to the development of citizens who are aware, sensitive, democratic, critical and transformative on both local and global levels. Achieving this is a challenge to any future that can be deemed worthy for education and life if we truly intend to convert "*leaving no one behind*" into something more than a mere promise outlined in an agenda for 2030 (UN, 2017).

Note

[1] A la *Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos* (1948), le ha seguido toda una serie de declaraciones y acuerdos internacionales que en cierta medida han intentado garantizar los derechos y libertades de todos los seres humanos sin distinción para alcanzar una sociedad más justa y equitativa. Pueden citarse, entre otras, la *Convención sobre el Estatuto de los Refugiados* (1951), el *Pacto Internacional de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales* (1960), la *Convención relativa a la Lucha contra las Discriminaciones en la Esfera de la Enseñanza* (1960), la *Convención sobre la Eliminación de Todas las Formas de Discriminación contra la Mujer* (1979), la *Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño* (1989), la *Convención sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad* (2006) y la Resolución aprobada por la Asamblea General sobre *el derecho a la educación en situaciones de emergencia* (2015), o *Educación 2030: Declaración de Incheon y Marco de Acción* (2015).

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