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From inclusive education to global citizenship training. Notes for a reflection



De la educación inclusiva a la formación para la ciudadanía mundial. Apuntes para una reflexión

Da educação inclusiva à educação para a cidadania global. Notas para reflexão

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**Abstract:** Inclusive, equitable and quality education for all, in addition to being the essence of one of the sustainable development goals promoted by the 2030 agenda, are the indicators of analysis of this study. It aims to elucidate some of the main causes of exclusion in education, in order to understand the real challenge implied by the desire for inclusive education. At the same time, this reflection proposes to assume the training for global citizenship and its direct relationship with the sustainable development of a world, of which we are all part, as an integrating axis and main claim of societies at this time. The proposal finds, in the review of articles, books, conferences and congresses, the support to deliberate around a laudable and necessary challenge. Let this exploration serve, therefore, as a starting point for debate or at least to awaken consciences.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, exclusion, quality, global citizenship, sustainable development.

**Resumen:** Una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad para todos, además de constituir la esencia de uno de los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible que promueve la agenda 2030, son los indicadores de análisis de este estudio. Con él se pretende dilucidar algunas de las principales causas de exclusión en la educación, para comprender el desafío real que implica el anhelo de una educación inclusiva. Al mismo tiempo, esta reflexión propone asumir la formación para la ciudadanía mundial y su directa relación con el desarrollo sostenible de un mundo, del que todos somos parte, como eje integrador y principal reclamo de las sociedades en este tiempo. La propuesta encuentra, en la revisión de artículos, libros, conferencias y congresos el soporte para deliberar entorno a un desafío loable y necesario. Sirva por tanto esta exploración, como punto de partida para el debate o al menos, para despertar conciencias.

**Palabras clave:** educación inclusiva, exclusión, calidad, ciudadanía mundial, desarrollo sostenible.

**Resumo:** Educação inclusiva, equitativa e de qualidade para todos, bem como estar no centro de um dos objetivos do desenvolvimento sustentável promovido pela agenda para 2030, são os indicadores para análise neste estudo. Visa elucidar algumas das principais causas de exclusão na educação, a fim de compreender o verdadeiro desafio envolvido no desejo de uma

educação inclusiva. Ao mesmo tempo, esta reflexão propõe-se assumir a educação para a cidadania global e a sua relação directa com o desenvolvimento sustentável de um mundo do qual todos fazemos parte, como eixo integrador e principal exigência das sociedades neste momento. A proposta encontra, na revisão de artigos, livros, conferências e congressos, o apoio para deliberar sobre um desafio louvável e necessário. Por conseguinte, esta exploração serve como ponto de partida para o debate ou, pelo menos, para a sensibilização.

**Palavras-chave:** educação inclusiva, exclusão, qualidade, cidadania global, desenvolvimento sustentável.

## INTRODUCTION

During the last 20 years, Social Sciences and Pedagogical Sciences, in particular, have been working on the configuration of strategic lines focused on different aspects: Peace Education, Sex Education and Gender Equality, Multicultural Education and Social Inclusion, Environmental Education and for Sustainable Development, among others. From these strategies, a permanent call is promoted to join wills and deploy joint actions to take advantage of the possibilities and opportunities that the National Education Systems have to achieve these purposes.

The 17 sustainable development goals promoted by the 2030 Agenda (ECLAC, 2016) are guidelines to be followed by international organizations and policies around the world. During the first decades of the 21st century, 193 countries in clear commitment to global progress have adopted, since 2015, these goals. Based on the preponderance of Goal 4 and its close linkage with the rest, once again the power of Education as an enhancer and transformer of development is alluded to. At the same time, when the purpose of "*ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all*" is established, essential characteristics of the type of education required at this time are also defined.

It is visualized in these efforts, the training for global citizenship in close relation to sustainable development, as the axis of all actions, is the primary need that in unison involves the human being as the center from a duality: doer and beneficiary, protagonist of change and remunerated by progress, where, from this perspective, everyone is added equally. The right to education is a common good and an obligation of humankind, which in the words of (Kasman & Brown, 2020) assumes the challenge of leaving no one behind, leaving no one out. In the same way, this right must be understood as the commitment to guarantee the quality of education in order to contribute to the legacy of more just, equitable and democratic societies.

The demand for an inclusive, equitable and quality education for all has always been the clamor that, as humanity, has developed over the course of time. Many rights have been won in this regard. If only a brief historical review is taken into consideration, irrefutable facts give evidence of this, for example: the formal access of women to the university, the access of blacks to education and the repeal of the practice of racial segregation, which years later was achieved through a decision of the Supreme Court of 1954 in the United States, the recognition of vulnerable sectors in terms of special needs and not their treatment as people with disabilities, or with problems or retarded, old adjectives that are on their way out and that soon will be only the bad memory of ignorance and insensitivity. Differentiation or exclusion, in origin, sexual orientation and religious beliefs of individuals, are also labels that are gradually disappearing from educational systems.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological bases for this publication were based on a review of articles, theses, congresses, conferences and normative documents of international organizations, which guided the author in the argumentation of the different origins of educational exclusion manifested at present. As part of the systematization of the studies referenced here from a historical and global perspective, it is suggested the importance of a unified thinking around educational practices and their true scope, while allowing to establish the necessary guidelines in the achievement of an inclusive education closely linked to a change in the pedagogical conceptions, with obligatory requirements of approach to the training for world citizenship.

## RESULTS

Indeed, with evident interrelation, inclusion is identified as the key to quality education to the extent that the learning provided by the school, the family and the community stimulate respect for cultural diversity and help all students in their constructive participation in democratic processes; which are projected to achieve peaceful coexistence, participation in the processes of local and national governance and the struggle for and for the sustainability of life on the planet, as an effort of each and every citizen in full exercise of their rights and duties.

In this regard, the pedagogical debate identifies basic aspects, manifest in today's society, that limit educational inclusion, by promoting just the opposite, educational exclusion is discussed as evidence of discrimination and annulment, as various segments of the population with the right to be educated are left out. Also in this educational discrepancy it is evident how the relationship between education, inclusion and training for citizenship is assumed, since the synergy of the meanings and sense that are being used, offer a reference of analysis of obligatory consultation to reconsider the positions that are being assumed in current pedagogical practices and that turn the universal right to equal access to quality education for all into a banner of progress, justice and equity.

### **Equal access to education for all. A utopia that must become real.**

However, there are many challenges in this attempt to make education the guarantor and manager of new developments. The concept of inclusion from the educational point of view, at first, refers to equal access of children and young people to be educated. By establishing this equality of opportunities in terms of learning, there is no discrimination in any aspect, and from the policy point of view, it is established as one of the fundamental human rights. Although current demands have shaped the concept much further and go hand in hand, inclusion, quality, global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace and non-violence, cultural diversity; the truth is that unequal resources and opportunities prevail.

These differences are marked by gender, income level, migration, displacement, sexual orientation, identity, religion, geographic location and language, to cite some of the main reasons for exclusion. Education for all as a right (UNICEF, 2008) and in it the possibility for individuals to transform their lives, should be, well into the 21st century, an irrefutable practice, however, according to the World Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2020:7) "it is estimated that 258 million children, adolescents and youth, that is, 17% of the world total, do not attend school". This evidence shows a first challenge that has yet to be overcome and constitutes the non-fulfillment of one of the main conditions for equality in Goal 4: access to education for all. This fact also results in a continuous violation of the human rights established since 1948 by the UN.

In the same vein, another relevant aspect of the study establishes the regions of the world with the highest rates of out-of-school adolescent children and youths. In Latin America, the ethnic and racial condition is identified as one of the aspects that still limit access to education. According to (Viáfara and Serna, 2015) in countries such as Colombia and Brazil, for example, an Afro-descendant will have fewer possibilities to access universities and therefore fewer qualifications, which also leaves them vulnerable and incompetent in

the labor market. Despite the implementation of some educational policies that attempt to minimize these barriers, the truth is that these populations continue in a growing cycle of economic, social and educational disadvantages that exacerbate the gap between rich and poor in the region and demonstrate the lack of interest of governments in this issue.

According to this analysis, it is possible to establish the correlation between educational, economic and social development policies and the need to benefit from high-level education. Equal access to free and quality education corresponds to equitable models of social justice, where education is a priority for governments that focus their budgets on the education of students, with the clear vision that the functioning and development of democratic civil societies will depend on them. From this perspective, countries such as Finland, Canada, Estonia, Japan, the Netherlands and South Korea, have high evaluations of their educational systems, (Sahlberg, 2015) in correspondence with also superior states of well-being, prosperity and civic-mindedness.

Thus, equality as a conquest and a right, in the end, as an axiom of education is the social binomial that reflects each country, equal access without any exclusion or stigmatization, is the result of a society that assumes the educational process as a pillar of its own development. From this approach, the prerogatives of equality and equity are intertwined as conditions for quality education. The emphasis on the difference between these terms is based on the understanding of each one. Equality is referred to by several authors (UNESCO, 2020; Shalberg, 2020), as the right of access: to school, to the same materials, to equal teachers; while equity is assumed as a process, the way in which the different is attended to, the understanding of the diverse and its effective educational treatment. And in this same order, another condition emerges as a result of the process that globally reflects equality and equity; educational inclusion is an assumed decision that finds its basis in the value and individual potential and that integrates in diversity an education of respect, tolerance and knowledge.

#### **Races, ethnicities, emigration. We are all.**

The increase in migration in the world has had an appreciable social impact in that it has modified the lives, structures, learning and behaviors of individuals, families, communities and countries. It is a recurring theme in the world's newspapers and newscasts, from its two cornerstones, emigration and immigration. Migratory phenomena are also regular and irregular depending on the way in which they are carried out and among the main reasons for migration, those related to: job opportunities, family reunification, studies and war conflicts have been identified. Data obtained by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020) reveal that 272 million people have moved from their place of origin to other countries, always in the hope of better opportunities.

In general, migration is associated by individuals of an educational and social community, in negative terms of: poverty, lack of culture, misery; or from a neutral perspective when alluding to a different culture, changes, differences. To a very small extent, migration is identified as a source of wealth and learning from the knowledge of new cultures, identities and languages. In this same sense, indolence, intolerance and lack of empathy often predominate in the event of students from other countries in schools. One of the reasons why this occurs seems to point to the lack of integration of school, family and community, as a result of scarce promotion policies in this regard in the educational systems (Iglesias and Guitart, 2020) and the absence of concatenated actions in this sense, despite the importance of these influences (Iglesias and Guitart, 2020). (Campos, 2020) The absence of a link between family and community, despite the importance of these influences, in understanding the legacy of parents to their children in terms of economic resources, competencies, values, attitudes and contact networks (UNESCO, 2020).

It is clear in this sense that migration has also been used by some politicians to divide, polarize and profit from the demonization of the migrant. By engendering with their speeches the absurd thought of job losses for the locals, depletion of public health resources and the guilt of those who arrive, as the sole perpetrators of criminal or delinquent events, they have done nothing more than undermine democracy and inclusive

civility by taking fear as their core. They take advantage of the uncertainties and the accelerated changes of our times (IOM, 2020). In the same way, they disguise the real causes of the economic crises and, of course, intentionally and aberrantly ignore the history of the countries and the meaning of migration in them, as well as the benefits, growth and enrichment that this phenomenon brings to the nations.

Faced with this negative and misleading image that some powers try to project, it is added the fact that, despite being the natural different, that everything diverse, from the species, is an inherent condition to the evolutionary development of humanity; the tendency among individuals is, however, to the association of equals. Feeling comfortable within a collective determined by similar visions or behaviors induces the preference to be within the same group (Cortina, 2018), at the same time that generally disapproving judgments are developed towards the unequal and as a consequence labels are generated to frame other tendencies, based on origin and cultural or religious manifestations. With these prerogatives, the fact that cultural diversity is a scenario to encourage from education a cosmopolitan vision and to train students in a much more encompassing dimension, with citizenship responsibilities from a global perspective, is obviated.

Taking this into account, there should be no classifications in schools, starting from the primacy of equality, the view should include students with diverse motivations, expectations and situations that require the support, guidance and orientations of teachers. It is laudable to avoid labels that incorporate prejudices, generalizations or judgments, through the development of skills such as listening attentively, observing and interpreting concrete facts (Lonka, 2020) and being able to discern between myths and realities. This would undoubtedly lead to the understanding of multicultural environments from a perspective of learning and curiosity.

Diversity, therefore, must be assumed as an enriching and unifying element (Dueñas, 2010, Shalberg, 2020) in educational communities. In this sense, and in accordance with the principle that the formation of man is the objective of education and that this is assumed as the result of planned, coherent and systematic activities, which are developed so that individuals are able to act actively as protagonists of their own learning and in the transforming responsibility of their actions in their communities and historical stages (Báxter, Amador & Bonet, 2002; Pérez & Sánchez, 2018) it is evident the requirement of an inclusive education that by articulating family experiences coming from different cultures, the school and the new community that is formed, in an integrating axis of to the scope of formation the necessary elements for global citizenship.

Working life has taken on new limits, the perspective is increasingly international and the work is assumed by multicultural teams in multinational projects that are distinguished by their basis in collaborative work. Part of the success, in this sense, rests on the good relationships that are projected within the group where different cultures converge and at the same time the group's own insertion in the local culture. The transfer of professionals to different countries for work reasons, common at this time, must be visualized in the school as another of the educational challenges of this century, with which the abandonment of traditional and closed approaches to social interaction is imperative. From this training perspective, it is necessary to learn new social and intercultural skills (Lonka, 2020) that promote the capacity for adaptability in socially diverse and sustainable environments and lifestyles.

In this sense, knowledge of one's own cultural background plays a fundamental role in building and strengthening one's identity in this regard. In the same endeavor, it is important to promote respect and understanding of different cultures in order to value the contributions found in diversity and foster through these influences the meaning of being a citizen of a broader place (world) where the inclusion of all equally, with equal responsibilities, rights, learning opportunities and commitments, contribute to sustainable and equitable development for all societies on the planet. Not without difficulties, this purpose must be approached from a construction perspective where the problems to be overcome in multiculturalism are also visualized.

### **Special educational needs**



Another aspect of fundamental importance, when the reference to inclusive education invites reflection, is that of students with special educational needs. For the author, the term itself confers dignity to these students, it is an achievement in time, as are the efforts made to eliminate architectural barriers in schools and cities and facilitate the mobility of those who have difficulties in this. Similarly, educational systems that have chosen to link these students without any segmentation, in the daily life of schools have undoubtedly succeeded in establishing learning for growth and self-improvement, while promoting acceptance and normality to the different. Children should be taught that difference is natural and understanding it makes us better people and therefore better citizens.

Despite the worldwide recognition of inclusive education as the beginning of education for all, this is still assumed as a challenge that has not been met, although in most countries educational policies have been incorporated in this sense. The perception and attitudes of teachers when they take on students with special educational needs in their classrooms is of vital importance and divergent positions have been found. The consideration, among teachers, that this sector of the educational population should be taken on by special schools (Quintero, 2020), hinders the implementation of educational actions that add and incorporate the difference as part of the educational process. In addition, these positions show failures in the training of teachers who cannot establish the importance of the incorporation and social acceptance of future citizens with special living conditions.

In this same line, another aspect to take into account is the responsibility of education in forming empathetic, tolerant and respectful societies where each person has a social role and there should be no place for stigmatization or nullity due to different physical or mental conditions. The importance of incorporating as worthy citizens, able to contribute with their work to the development of countries and to the same extent be self-sufficient and not a social responsibility, depends largely on including in equal access to students with special educational needs in schools and give them a differentiated teaching treatment according to their conditions, with early interventions to help (Shalberg, 2015). The convergence at this point is based on the integration of these students in a different majority community and equally, but in the opposite direction, the acceptance, by this community, of minorities with special characteristics.

#### **On gender and sexual orientation.**

Despite the achievements made in the recognition of gender equality in the world, it is pertinent to recognize the persistence of gender disparity in terms of access, achievement and continuity in education. To the detriment of girls, education systems often emphasize gender inequalities rather than counteracting them. (UNESCO, 2020). Teaching initiatives, based on competitive play, that promote classroom division between boys and girls are, for example, common exercises in Vietnamese classrooms. In Romanian schools, too, boys have priority over girls, a legacy perhaps of teachings rooted in and promoted by the Orthodox Church in its Sunday masses where, first, the right goes to the man.

Such practices are mere examples of what is going on. Different countries in Africa and Latin America, India, Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia (UNESCO, 2020) show even more cruel evidence of discrimination; imposed child marriages, gang rapes, mass abductions of girls who end up as sexual slaves of armed forces, child labor exploitation, are some of them. It is essential, therefore, to promote through education the conditions of equality that are a human right, to raise awareness, through inclusive educational practices, about respect, value and equality will help to erase this social burden that annuls a good part of humanity.

In the same sense, and despite the fact that societies are becoming more and more plural with affective-sexual and gender diversity, discrimination and harassment on these grounds in the classroom are not exceptions. Causes of these behaviors could be stereotypes that favor a heterosexual position and always give men a supremacy in their hegemonic role, condemnatory attitudes towards what is different, in this same sense, and prejudices that have been fabricated, make up the main reasons for contempt and exclusion towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) collective (Cifuentes, Medina, and Carrer, 2020). Therefore, that each individual accepts his or her sexual condition and orientation and that

this is also accepted by others as a condition of preference, freedom and respect depends to a large extent on learning about differences in a normal way. Of course, the school, the family and the community play a transcendental role in the efforts to unite for such purposes.

### **Aporophobia, a growing disease**

Another form of exclusion with wide social repercussions in almost all countries of the world is aporophobia, a term coined by (Cortina, 2009) to refer to contempt for the poor, the disadvantaged, it also alludes to the exclusion of all people who supposedly have nothing to offer. In this analysis, it is identified by (Cortina, 2018) In this analysis, the contractual basis of societies is identified as the cause of this fact; something is expected in return and it is the value of what is received that gives people importance. The richness of this new word lies in its transforming power, starting from an egalitarian education where respect, dignified treatment of all, empathy and feelings of social justice are promoted as the only possible way to development in democratic societies, where it is precisely the condition of equality that must prevail.

In the same vein, it would be necessary to rethink the convenience of private and elitist educational institutions, which promote inequality, school segregation based on income, and emphasize the belief of superiority in certain sectors of students who come from rich and powerful families. (UNESCO, 2020) and emphasizes the belief of superiority in certain sectors of students who come from rich and powerful families. It is recurrent in this analysis to highlight the importance of access to equal and quality education for all, regardless of the place of residence, family situation, socioeconomic status or individual conditions of students (Shalberg, 2015; Lonka, 2018). To the extent that this is achieved, contempt for the poor can be abolished and it will be understood that each individual counts within a community as equals, each citizen has a role, a responsibility and something to contribute in the construction of a more just society.

From this perspective, it should not be forgotten that poverty in the world should be understood as social failure, not as stigmatization and prejudice towards a phenomenon that detracts from and denigrates the human condition, violating the right to dignity, equality, freedom and fraternity enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. Its eradication is one of the goals of the 2030 agenda, and to achieve it, all possible efforts must be concatenated, eliminating any hint of discrimination or exclusion. Educating in a sense of equality, responsibility and value must be assumed by formal and non-formal education systems, governments and the media.

It is evident that guaranteeing the recognition of each student's own worth, of the effects that their actions have on themselves and their repercussion on others, as well as the transcendence of their contribution as future citizens to a sustainable and fundamental development, must be prioritized from the school, the family and the community. Integration and unity for the same objective: to train students to exercise global citizenship, as the center of all efforts, will undoubtedly lead to the reality of a better place to live, as a result of constructive and critical responsible decision making, where everyone without exception of any cause, have something to contribute, for their own benefit and that of others.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Inclusive education is evidence of quality education by fostering values such as respect, tolerance and empathy, while promoting the building of relationships between the family, the community and the school through inclusive teaching practices, the fundamental axis of which is the formation of a global citizen who participates in the construction of fairer democratic societies. In this sense, equal and free access to educational resources must be a real right in all countries of the world, if the objective is to have peaceful and developed societies.

In this sense, the social and developmental impact that quality education for all has on countries is evident. Therefore, citizen unity, ethical and coherent decisions, a critical and constructive sense, pillars on which the common welfare is based, are the result of an education that involves all sectors and powers of the countries.

Therefore, effective educational investment is a guarantee of wealth and progress and cannot be the basis for widening the gap between citizens with different purchasing power.

This result of integrating, attending and enhancing collaborative competencies by bringing together the diverse from education, requires educational and social policies that understand a single objective: that of forming citizens with responsibilities, commitments and rights, of global scope. Furthermore, the dialogue and perseverance of all the actors with influence in the educational field, where the maximum expression of quality in education must be constituted in the well-being of all students, guarantees an education whose result translates into citizens capable of making laudable and socially edifying ethical decisions in order to preserve and sustainably develop the world in which we all live.

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