

Education policies in the context of the 2030 Agenda: challenges when promoting more equitable education systems

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One of the main aspirations of many societies around the world is to build more inclusive, just and equitable societies (Sánchez-Santamaría & Manzanares, 2017; UNESCO, 2017, OECD, 2023). Education is a key issue in these aspirations, and in line with these intentions, the United Nations has been promoting different actions and movements, such as the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), a framework aimed at redoubling efforts, clarifying objectives, guiding processes and making resources available to move towards successful education for all from a cross-cutting and globalising perspective (Martínez-Usarralde, 2021). An example of this is Goal 4 (SDG4), which states that education systems should «ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all» (UN, 2015). The relevance of this goal, in coherence with the rest that make up the 2030 Agenda, is that it considers every child matters, the importance of their school well-being (Losada Puente, Mendiri & Rebollo-Quintela, 2022) and with the capacity to learn, and therefore, all public policy in education must deepen quality education within a context and a process of equity, from which every student can learn successfully in school, that is, have access, remain and progress, and obtain relevant and meaningful results for their life project (UNESCO, 2021).

The current intentions of education and curriculum reforms have revolved around the importance of maximising learning opportunities for all, in the sense of fostering relevant learning conditions connected to student needs (UNESCO, 2020). But in practice, the problem has been that not all students have had the same possibilities and opportunities for educational success, and that social, family and personal factors have been determining factors (UNESCO, 2017; Ainscow, 2020; OECD, 2023). This is undoubtedly one of the pending challenges in many educational systems, which supports the need to know, understand and share the advances experienced by educational policies in recent years in the development of successful educational processes for all (ONU-CEPAL, 2018; Ainscow, Chapman & Hadfield, 2020; Cárdenas, Lomelí & Ruelas, 2022). Furthermore, education policies and programmes have invested much effort in promoting equity of access/supply and outcomes, but not in equity of process, which is beginning to be of political, academic and social interest (Sánchez-Santamaría & Manzanares, 2017). Equity of process implies that all students should have the same opportunities for permanence and progression within the education system, so that their school life trajectory responds to their needs, potentials and outcomes with adequate, and not only minimal, quality conditions (UNESCO, 2021). The importance of learning cannot only lie in whether the student accesses or completes, but in how he or she builds his or her educational pathway in coherence with his or her needs, concerns, potential and learning pace. If everyone has the right to learn and everyone has the right to quality education, everyone should be treated as equal, in terms of rights, but as different, in terms of the process (De la Cruz, 2022).

For all these reasons, this special issue contains a selection of studies and research that provide elements of analysis and reflection on public education policies from an equity approach. It provides evidence with the intention of contributing to the debate on the relationship between policy and practice in the development of successful educational processes for all in the context of current educational challenges. All of this is based on contributions that allow us to contextualise and analyse educational equity from the perspective of the role of teaching learning communities in teacher training; the implications of institutional plans for the promotion of educational quality and equity (UNESCO, 2021); educational change and the reform of curricular policies (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018); and the challenges of public policies in order to situate the lessons learned (Ainscow, 2020), the setbacks experienced, the pending issues and the challenges of educational policies in cases such as Spain, Colombia, Belgium, Albania and Mexico in relation to the educational goals of the 2030 agenda (Opazo, Castillo & Carreño, 2020).

Therefore, there are 4 papers presented in this special issue: firstly, the main results of a research on new models of pedagogical upgrading of teachers in the framework of learning communities for equity-inspired education are presented. The research provides evidence that informs the effectiveness of learning communities on the design of curricula, organisational conditions and formative ecosystems to promote education with equity and justice; secondly, it addresses the meaning and function of the Colombian government's «Todos a Aprender» (PTA) programme. An analytical review is made of this programme, which, as a public policy, has had a considerable impact on the Colombian education system since its implementation

almost 30 years ago. The possibilities and challenges are analysed in terms of the State's position in its formulation and implementation, and the possibilities and barriers of this position for educational practice, the difficulties and successes of the PTA are determined, analysing the inclusion of this policy in broader educational and social processes in the Latin American region and the 2030 Agenda. A series of interesting reflections are provided in order to understand the immediate present of PTA in relation to the 2030 Agenda in the Latin American context; thirdly, one of the most important reforms at the global level is the revision of curricula. In this case, through qualitative research, the experience of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB, Belgium) and Albania is analysed in coherence with the recommendations of international assessments proposed via PISA and through OECD and UNESCO recommendations. It can be seen that in both countries important changes are taking place in the curricula around a common core to be in line with the challenges of the 2030 Agenda, while at the same time combined with a process of strong decentralisation of the curricula with the intention of giving greater participation and power to the actors. This special issue closes with a paper on public policies on educational equity in Mexico and their alignment with the 2030 Agenda. The main challenge of these policies is to promote educational inclusion, in the sense of promoting inclusive education, which has been very limited by the enormous and marked situations of high vulnerability, the need for economic resources and a greater boost to teacher training. All of these aspects have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and question the political intentions to take on the challenges of successful education for all in a convulsed socio-economic context.

In short, this is a special issue that provides elements of analysis and arguments for the debate on the challenges of public policies in countries such as Spain, Colombia, Belgium, Albania and Mexico to align with the goals of the 2030 Agenda. This is undoubtedly focused at promoting successful educational processes for all in a context of enormous liquidity and high vulnerability.

1. References

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