

## Algunas reflexiones sobre la equidad en la educación y su contexto en México

*Some reflections on the equity and its context in México*

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### Resumen

En este trabajo se hace una reflexión sobre el concepto de equidad a partir de la teoría de la justicia social de Rawls (1993), partiendo de una visión general sobre el panorama en América Latina y las actuales reformas en México; asimismo, se analizan algunos programas gubernamentales cuyo objetivo es contribuir a mejorar la equidad en México con base en los criterios establecidos por el Banco Mundial, específicamente los factores extraescolares que inciden en el éxito escolar y que impactan directamente en la equidad educativa (Aguerrondo, 1993). Los programas que se analizan en este trabajo son: escuelas dignas, escuelas de excelencia para abatir el rezago educativo, escuelas de tiempo completo (ETC), inclusión y alfabetización digital, e inclusión y equidad educativa.

**Palabras clave:** equidad, educación, calidad, justicia social, programas de intervención.

### Abstract

This paper presents a reflection on the concept of equity from the theory of social justice proposed by Rawls (1993), based on an overview of the situation in Latin America, and the ongoing reforms in Mexico; also are described some government programs developed with the aim of contributing to improving equity in Mexico and analyzed based on the criteria established by the World Bank on school factors that influence school success and that directly impact on equity in Education (Aguerrondo, 1993). The programs discussed in this paper are: schools with

dignity, schools of excellence to bring down the educational gap, full-time schools, inclusion and digital literacy and inclusion and educational equity.

**Key words:** equity, education, quality, social justice, intervention programs.

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## Introduction

The current international panorama presents heterogeneous differences between countries in terms of organization and social structure, economy and politics; although the predominant system in the global sphere is a free market economy, and widespread political organization comes from the ideas of the Enlightenment values such as democracy and freedom, the degree of introjection of these values is highly variable in different regions of the world.

The situation in Latin America is characterized by democracies in the process of consolidation; Latin American countries tend to be politically stable and possess strong institutions (although still not resolved the chronic problem of corruption); however, at the same time they have the problem of poverty experienced by most of its population. Thus, these countries are considered poor or developing and its economy grows at a reduced size compared to other regions.

What invest in education is little compared to what developed countries spend. Access to better opportunities, services and quality of life only to certain groups of the population in some regions of each country (for example, the poverty and marginalization is more prevalent in indigenous populations and in rural areas is offered compared to nonindigenous and urban) population.

In addition to this, there has been a profound social, economic and political change in recent decades, but education systems have not kept pace with that change. In this regard, authors such as Braslavsky and Cosse (1996) mention that the education issue is in crisis, caused by the massive expansion of the education system, lack of orientation towards lifelong learning, social inequalities, family changes, and destructuring the axes of the educational system (sequencing and prioritization).

Also, Krawczyc (2002) mentions, after analyzing a set of official documents of multilateral agencies: the program to promote educational reform in Latin America and the Caribbean (PREAL), World Bank (WB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) social development division of the UN, the Inter-American development Bank and the International Institute for educational Planning of UNESCO (IIEPE), there is a consensus among authors that existing educational systems -of most countries are not responding to the demands generated by the reorganization of democratic systems and the opening of the economy.

Referring to this global situation, Cohen (2002) mentions that equity faces some difficulties: not the issue is approached from understanding the multiplicity of explanatory factors, there are few systematic evaluations of implemented projects, and there is little connection between information available and the teams that define policies.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

The issue of equity in the context of democracies in Latin America

The issue of equity fund carries an ideological aspect of the concept of equality as a value that is conceived in a certain way according to the type of social organization and the prevailing social consensus; some of the pillars of modern societies are equal before the law and the rights and duties to exercise in an environment of civil, political and economic freedoms (Rodriguez, 2008).

However, this environment of freedom in a heterogeneous social structure entails a differentiation between the capabilities, opportunities and access to better goods, services and life choices, which result in the generation of inequalities social, and ethical problem social justice.

Rodriguez (2008), analyzes the concept of Amartya Sen on social justice, assuming that any conception of equality entails the definition of a fundamental equality that could "justify" other types of inequalities; in modern societies the fundamental equality is equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which currently remains a utopian ideal that has not had beneficial results of economic and social character for the majority (at least in Latin America).

One of the current proposals on social injustice, focused on equality, is Rawls (1993), one part of a hypothetical principle which called veil of ignorance, mentioning that if we all as a society were

in a position of not knowing the place we occupy in the social structure (a structure with economic, cultural and opportunities differences, where the majority is disadvantaged) and we had to negotiate a form of social organization based on that principle, the best option would be to find a system more fair and equal for all. In this respect, Rawls proposes two principles of justice:

1. Each person should have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others, and
2. Social and economic inequalities should be resolved so that:
  - resulten the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society (the difference principle).
  - the offices and positions should be open to all under conditions of equal opportunities (fair equality of opportunity).

This theoretical proposal on equity is important because your starting point is the equal rights and freedoms and the pursuit of profit of the least advantaged members; ie states that there must be a compensation system in which the most advantaged help improve living conditions and opportunities for the disadvantaged (improving equity).

Therefore, as already mentioned, the principle of freedom of modern societies involves the generation of inequalities in the distribution of wealth, which are more marked in less industrialized countries and developing as Latin Americans. Vakis, Rigolini, and Luchetti (2015), cited 2012 data from the World Bank, which reports that 12.3% of the population of Latin America lived in extreme poverty (with \$ 2.5 a day), 25.3% lived in moderate poverty (with \$ 4 per day), 37.8% are vulnerable to poverty (with \$ 4 to \$ 10 a day), and 34.2% belonged to the middle class (\$ 10 to \$ 50 a day).

Thus, 75.4% of the population of Latin America in 2012 was considered poor or vulnerable to poverty, a situation related to lack of opportunities in an unfavorable environment for the optimal development of individuals social context, which together with education low quality public, has become a vicious cycle that keeps improving conditions of equity and life of the lower classes.

Regarding the influence of the social context in educational topic is interesting to note the data provided by the Bank of World (Aguerrondo, 1993): 60% of school performance comes from

out-of socioeconomic and family nature (40 to 50%) , the most important educational climate in the home (the time devoted to the study of adults in the household); the economic capacity (25 to 30%); and finally, the level of family organization.

Against this background, where they have taken into account factors influencing school performance, as inequality and poverty in Latin America, it is important to develop a proposal based on a critical analysis of reality that really forays into the situation equity in educational issues. Retaking the postulates of the theory of Rawls about social justice, the proposal should focus on supporting the less advantaged in the elements that are causing unequal opportunities. Thus, the study of school factors becomes important.

In response to these problems, Cohen (2002) mentions a principle of equity (consistent with the second principle of the theory of social justice Rawls), where he mentions that to overcome the differences should be treated unequally those who are socioeconomically unequal (affirmative action or positive) discrimination; ie it is necessary to intervene in the educational issue by providing a differentiated higher quality education for the most disadvantaged sectors and propose strategies to counter the effects of contextual aspects.

**Some indicators of educational issue in Mexico**

Mexico has significantly increased access to basic and secondary level education, ie primary: almost 100% of the population attends this level (INEE, 2013; Navarro, 2006); however, there is a very noticeable lag in other population groups of different levels and ages, where the percentage of coverage is lower.

**Table I. Percentage of school attendance**

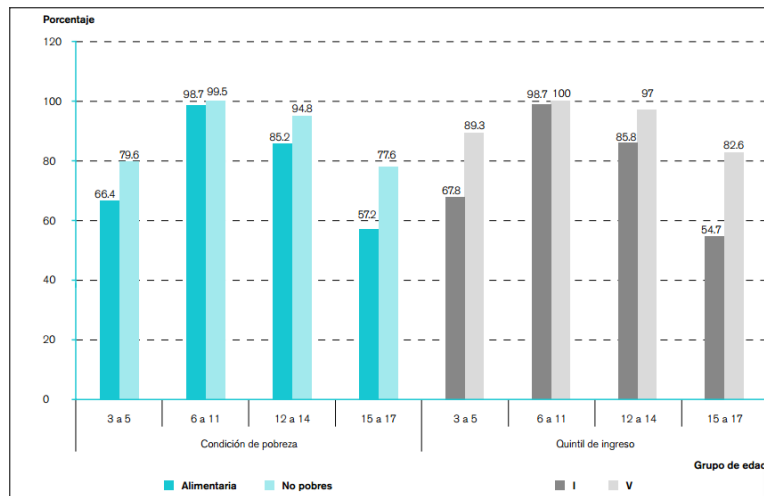
Edades	Porcentaje
3 a 5 años	73 %
6 a 11 años	98 %
12 a 14 años	93.3 %
15 a 17 años	71.1 %
18 a 24 años	32.2 %

Fuente: (INEE, 2013).

According to data INEE (2013), three out of ten children do not attend preschool and three out of ten young people not attending school, a figure that rises further at the top level, with seven out

of ten young people not access to higher education. The population not attending school amounts to 4.3 million people aged 3-17 years.

The rates of school attendance according to economic conditions, according to the INEE (2013), are: preschool (3-5 years old), 79.6% in the non-poor considered population and 66.4% of the population poor. Inequality is even more noticeable if the economic population is compared in the fifth income quintile (the population with higher incomes), which records an attendance of 89.3% compared to 66.4% of the population living below the breadline and 67.8% of the population in the first income quintile (the population with lower incomes). In the population aged 15 to 17 years inequality in access increases significantly with 77.6% in non-poor compared to 57.2% attendance of the population living in food poverty, and comparing by income quintile, access is 82.6 % of the population in the fifth quintile and 54.7% of the population in the first quintile of income (see chart 1).

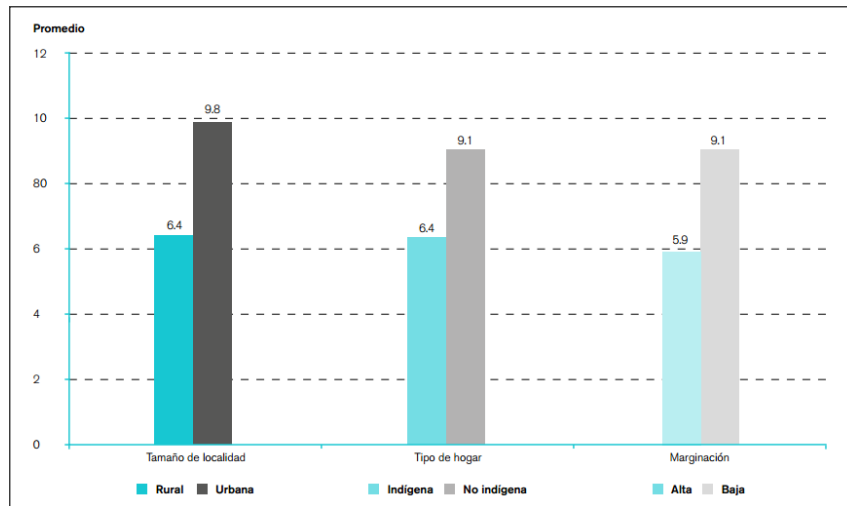


**Gráfico 1. Porcentaje comparativo de asistencia a la escuela de grupos de población pobres y no pobres (INEE, 2013).**

The greatest inequalities among the most vulnerable populations and the main beneficiaries regarding their attendance at the level of upper secondary education are presented in households whose head of household has reached a level of schooling higher education (96.1%) or work more than 20 hours per week extra-domestically (30.5%) (INEE, 2013).

Another notable fact is gender inequality, look where men show a disadvantage to women at all levels, including higher education (Bustos, 2003).

Another important aspect in the issue of educational access is the number of years of schooling in the population aged 15 years old. If the comparison between the towns of rural areas is the average years of schooling is 6.4 and 9.8 in urban areas; the indigenous population average is 6.4 years and the non-indigenous population of 9.1; Finally, in the highly marginalized population average it is 5.9 years and the population with low marginalization of 9.1 (see Figure 2).



Gráfica 2. Escolaridad media de la población de 15 años de edad o más por tamaño de localidad, tipo de hogar y marginación (INEE, 2013).

### Equity in the current reforms in Mexico

In Mexico, as in Latin America, to make educational reforms involves hard work of negotiation between the state and the unions, since the latter are national in scope (Navarro, 2006); and therefore, the process of policy formulation (PFP) is carried out mainly through the negotiation of these two actors (although there may be involvement of others, such as teachers, principals, supervisors and even parents, the most important negotiations exist between unions and the state).

In an environment in which progress has been made notably in access to educational services, the issue of quality and equity becomes more important (Navarro, 2006); this issue in the context of the reforms is discussion between the union and the state on the implications for teachers to adjust the guidelines of their role towards indicators of educational quality. In Mexico, despite the resistance of a large union sector and teachers, a reform was adopted in 2012, which includes

among its most important aspects of an amendment to the articles of the Constitution 3rd and 73rd, where it is mentioned that besides being compulsory, secular, free and public, basic education in Mexico should also be taught with quality and equity.

Thus, it is established that the State has the obligation nothing more to offer education but that this meets the quantitative criteria of access and qualitative ensure students acquire the expected knowledge of the system and that serve to adapt and cope in the current context. It is worth mentioning that the challenge is truly great and that although the goal may seem unrealistic in the short term, based on these new rules are expected to system efforts are directed to be in full compliance with the new constitutional law.

One of the most remarkable elements of this reform which is expected to affect positively on the quality and equity of education, is the professional merit as the only way to enter, remain and advance as a teacher, principal or supervisor (subject that has generated great controversy and resistance from unionized teachers). Thus, they have been granted powers to the National Institute for Educational Assessment (INEE) so that full autonomy is attained and criteria and mechanisms to assess and manage teachers professionalization established.

One of the fundamental objectives of educational reform is to ensure greater equity in access to quality education. With respect to this goal are described and discussed below some programs of the Ministry of Education oriented equity issues:

1. Program decent schools

This project aims to rehabilitate school buildings, and aims to consolidate school infrastructure as a fundamental aspect of public education. It is focused on the most disadvantaged schools, specifically those located in indigenous and rural areas; It consists of federal and state funds and provides care to schools based on a technical diagnosis (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The project aims to rehabilitate the areas in schools:

1. Structural safety and general operating conditions
2. Health Services
3. Furniture and equipment
4. Accessibility
5. Areas of administrative services
6. Infrastructure for connectivity
7. Spaces multipurpose



## **2. Schools of excellence to bring down the educational gap**

The Schools Excellence Program to Reduce the Educational Backwardness is geared to take actions that contribute to the reduction of the backlog in the physical conditions of public schools of basic education and strengthening management autonomy to improve the delivery of educational services (Secretariat Interior, 2015).

The program is aimed at public elementary schools of primary and secondary that are in conditions of greater lag in terms of facilities and equipment according to Census data Schools, Teachers and Students of Basic and Special Education (CEMABE) as well as supervisions area that serve these schools

With this program the school community receives the appeal, plans and decides community on what to invest first: classrooms, bathrooms, libraries, furniture classroom, multi-purpose spaces, fences, educational materials, training teachers and parents, computers, etc. .

## **3. Schools Fulltime (ETC)**

This program is to extend the school day in public basic education institutions to expand learning opportunities for children and adolescents in order to improve educational outcomes, strengthen curriculum development, promote the achievement of learning quality in a frame equity, and address the difficulties and educational needs of all students who attend them (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The ETC provide educational services in the same 200 school days than other schools, but for an extended time. This program is aimed at the most disadvantaged schools: indigenous and rural.

## **4. Inclusion and digital literacy**

This program is to provide free electronic fifth grade students of public primary schools for their personal use and that of their families tablets. It aims to provide technological resources to children to improve their study, reduce digital and social gaps of your family and your community as well as strengthen and update forms of education of teachers (Ministry of Education, 2015).

This program is aimed at students in the 5th grade in public schools in the Federal District.

### **5. Inclusion and educational equity**

The program for inclusion and educational equity aims to help ensure greater coverage, inclusion and educational equity among all groups of the population for the construction of a fairer society through standards and support for public education services and improve infrastructure and equipment of public institutions of basic education, medium and higher, catering population vulnerability context and / or disability (Ministry of the Interior, 2013).

This program impacts different educational levels and provides different support according to each level. At the basic level provides the following support:

#### Technical support

1. Rules to State educational agencies are provided and, at the express request, advice and technical support as well as support for the development of local skills to facilitate the achievement of the objectives and program evaluation.
2. The population is provided objective advice and support from state agencies in each state to strengthen management skills (planning, internal evaluation and monitoring) of the school community, promote conditions of participation of students, teachers, mothers and parents or guardians and the community in general to improve retention rates, inclusion and achievement of learning in initial and basic education, and to integrate care of educational priorities set out in the basic system on your route school improvement improvement.

#### Financial support

- a) services multigrade Indian education, migrant and are strengthened.
  - b) special education services serving students with disabilities or with outstanding skills, by transferring resources to the states for academic activities and inter-institutional links are strengthened; provide teaching materials and furniture or utensils adapted; hold meetings of networks of parents or guardians; implement actions academic strengthening and evaluation.
3. Telesecundarias schools in 32 states with actions to support the inclusion and retention are strengthened through transfers of resources for monitoring continuous improvement of study

processes, local evaluation on improving achievement levels learning and development strategies, the use of multimedia educational materials in the process of study of students in telesecundarias.

4. Financial support for local projects to strengthen educational inclusion and equity in the framework of human rights and gender equality perspective is provided.

In upper secondary education, financial resources provided through the program apply to purchase or payment of:

a) Computers and peripheral equipment such as printers, optical readers, scanner, voltage regulators and surge protector, among others.

b) Computer software for general use, including word processors, spreadsheets, databases and other required for the education of students with disabilities and virus protection programs and other utilities that are necessary.

c) specialized computer programs to support learning activities made by users by type of disability, such as visual, hearing or motor.

d) Printers Braille, audio systems and projection as well as any other device to support the learning activities of students with disabilities Learning Centers for Students with Disabilities (CAED).

e) Furniture installation and protection of computer equipment.

f) Services inherent in CAED, operating expenses and maintenance of the CAED.

g) The physical adjustments necessary to enable accessibility to CAED.

h) Maintenance of CAED.

For the educational level of higher education, the types of support that are provided through this program are:

1) Support the Strengthening of Public Institutions of Higher Education (IPES) for the formulation of actions to help reduce gaps in access to education through a broad perspective of inclusion with a focus on gender equality of people in vulnerable.

2) Support to the IPES serving people with disabilities to meet their specific needs and minimize barriers to learning and promote social participation. The support involves the transfer according to the budget availability of 100% of budgeted resources allocated to the SES and the IPES for academic activities, linking, infrastructure, furniture and equipment for people with disabilities.

## **CONCLUSIÓN**

One of the best critical system informed of political, economic and social predominant (free market democracies) organization, is the social polarity on the issue of equal opportunities and equal distribution of resources. This polarity tends to become more pronounced in the poorest and least developed countries.

Education is one of the elements of the systems of social organization that can contribute to improving equal opportunities to the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of the population access to better life choices, and reduce inequality in the distribution of resources (ie, education "can and should" be the means to deliver social justice in a system of freedoms that naturally generates inequalities). However, the question remains to be answered is: What structure and functions must possess the education system to help improve equal opportunities and generate a more equitable distribution of resources among different population groups in a country?

With a reflection a priori, and from a framework oriented towards quality education, based on a critical analysis of what is and what training to configure forms and educational content, are aimed mainly three actions:

- Characterize the different population groups, especially the marginalized who have greater lag in educational access and academic success.
- Identify by sound scientific studies school and extracurricular factors affecting academic success, and their degree of influence.
- And finally, devise strategies to the needs of different population groups according to their particular characteristics and factors affecting academic success.

Finally, with analysis of the five government programs aimed at improving equity in education can be issued the following conclusions.

- Three programs aim to improve the infrastructure and are aimed at the most marginalized groups of the population, thus promoting equity among the most vulnerable groups. These programs are worthy program schools, quality schools program to bring down the educational gap, and the inclusion program and educational equity.
- The program inclusion and digital literacy is aimed only children who attend public schools in the Federal District, there is no discrimination between marginalized population groups and not marginalized, and the area in which takes place the program based on the differentiated educational context and situation between the urban and rural populations, contributes little to favor the groups that require support to improve educational equality and equity.
- The program full-time schools is the one that best fits a specific proposal according to the needs of population groups to which it is addressed, and is probably the one that can have a greater impact to improve equity educational as it offers a differentiated training (extended hours) for the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups.
- Programs focused on providing infrastructure play a role very basic and necessary equity; however, factors that affect academic success as a whole are not addressed, as they do not include specific actions in the extracurricular aspects that according to World Bank data can have a greater influence than solely academic; therefore, so that programs can achieve the desired impact on educational equity is required in addition to intervene in academic factors may also affect the extracurricular aspects.

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