INCLUSÃO SOCIAL

Thematic Dossier

The social business oriented towards education

Manifest of the education-oriented social business
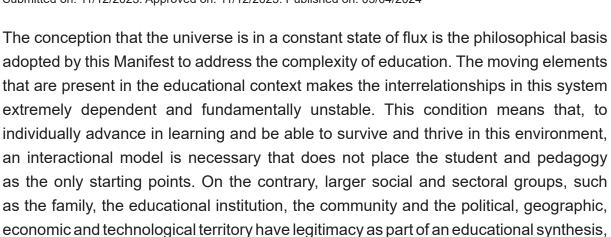
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The conception that the universe is in a constant state of flux is the philosophical basis adopted by this Manifest to address the complexity of education. The moving elements that are present in the educational context makes the interrelationships in this system extremely dependent and fundamentally unstable. This condition means that, to individually advance in learning and be able to survive and thrive in this environment, an interactional model is necessary that does not place the student and pedagogy as the only starting points. On the contrary, larger social and sectoral groups, such as the family, the educational institution, the community and the political, geographic, economic and technological territory have legitimacy as part of an educational synthesis, especially those aspects responsible for equity between the actors belonging to the educational environment: economic equality, adaptive teaching and individualization of learning.

The dynamics contained in the system gained visibility with the Manifest of the Pioneers of the New Education, when educators in 1932 pointed out that education was based on an unfair and asymmetrical structure, in which educational opportunities were not equal. The path indicated in the document firmly advocated that a person's chances of entering the job market or of preparing for democratic citizenship or of achieving broad flourishing as a human being should not rely on the circumstances of their birth, such as social class, religion, race and gender, which are morally arbitrary.

This scenario is not only in line with the meaning of democracy, but constitutes the concept itself, as the exercise of full citizenship – a crucial condition for the success or failure of the democratic regime – depends on education. Consequently, it can be said that education is a valuable asset for individuals and society, especially for democratic societies that benefit from productive workers, with competent, critical and creative vision, able to participate in decision-making processes in shared governance environments.

This makes questions about how access to high-quality educational opportunities should happen particularly important, as the underlying theme is achieving democracy through education. This discussion can emerge in light of three main factors regarding egalitarian educational opportunities.

Such factors are the genesis of new teaching strategies, in particular technology-mediated education, one of the pillars of this manifest. The first factor is the scarcity of high-quality opportunities. The second factor is the place of education in modern societies and the third factor is the critical role of the private sector.

Before moving forward, however, it is worth characterizing what an equal educational opportunity is. When a specific group faces only explicit obstacles in relation to the intended educational goal, such as a selection exam, it can be said that equality of opportunity prevails among the members of such group. However, there is no equal opportunity in the group if any member faces an implicit obstacle to the intended educational goal, such as the risk to survival due to adverse economic conditions. Implicit obstacles exclude group members from an equal educational opportunity and, therefore, every effort must be made to remove them, at the risk of compromising democracy itself. In the implicit scenarios is the family context, which can bring with it nearly insurmountable disadvantages, if society does not mobilize in the search for solutions. Who is responsible for correcting this social situation, only the State, even considering that the whole of society must be involved?

> Equal educational opportunity is directed towards the concept of inclusive education, a contemporary teaching concept that aims to guarantee education for all, promoting equal opportunity by means of **inclusion and respect for diversity.** The concept arose from the appreciation of people's differences, in social, ethnic, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity, in short, in the abundance of existing pluralities. This Manifest adopts the broad concept of human diversity for inclusive education, especially as a consequence of economic restrictions, in search of a more just and participatory society, and whose set forth principles are: (i) everyone has the right to access education; (ii) every person learns; (iii) each person's learning process is unique; (iv) coexistence in a common school environment benefits everyone; and (v) inclusive education concerns everyone (Diversa, c2022). In addition, for inclusive education to be effective, it must be aligned with the dimensions of public policies, education management, pedagogical strategies and family, thus demanding and involving direct action from different actors and social spheres of **communities external and internal to the educational process**, which relate in an interdependent and interacting manner.

Returning to the first aspect of the discussion, which addresses the scarcity of high-quality educational opportunities, it is observed that education funding is always in competition with the need to provide citizens with other social goods, such as housing, health, culture, security and food, thus making high-quality education – even in developed societies – scarce to some extent. Shortages are evident especially in developing countries, from primary and secondary education to higher education.

Given the implicit obstacles that affect equal educational opportunities, alternatives to classical models (the latter of which are incapable of having a significant social impact in the complex scenario) must be considered in order to achieve social and economic justice. The scarcity of educational opportunities, in short, prevents young people from participating in the job market, in democratic governance and, more generally, from leading a prosperous life.

At the political and strategic level, the United Nations presented, among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one goal especially focused on quality education that advocates ensuring the provision of inclusive, equitable and quality education as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities at all times for everyone. SDG 4 (UN, c2023, *online*)[1] outlined seven goals until 2030, among which, "garantir que todas as meninas e meninos completem o ensino primário e secundário […] com resultados de aprendizagem relevantes e eficazes"; "[…] assegurar a igualdade de acesso para todos os homens e mulheres à educação técnica, profissional e superior de qualidade, a preços acessíveis, incluindo universidade"; e "aumentar substancialmente o número de jovens e adultos que tenham habilidades relevantes, inclusive competências técnicas e profissionais, para emprego, trabalho decente e empreendedorismo" and the number of " alunos […] [com] conhecimentos e habilidades necessárias para promover o desenvolvimento […]" of social and sustainable values.

The second factor addresses the place of education in modern societies. In the 16th century, Thomas Hobbes wrote about materialism, the concept that everything in the world is exclusively physical in nature, that nothing without substance can exist, and that everything in the universe has length, width and depth. The powerful current of the evolution of human knowledge, however, saw the information society flourish with technology, supported by the intangibility of innovations that emerged since the end of the 1970s and originated in the computer's ability to revolutionize the world, based on the fusion of information with communication and global connectivity. The old limits of the physical world have been expanded to virtual environments, which in the abundance of small technological revolutions, in continuous flow since the protocols that made the internet popular, now have at their disposal persistent immersion technologies that emulate the physical world through a digital world, creating a surrounding sensory feeling that brings the human experience closer, also in the teaching and learning processes.

It is the metaverse. A multi-user environment that merges physical reality with digital virtuality, based on the convergence of technologies that allow multisensory interactions in virtual environments. It is a web of collaborative virtual reality and augmented reality spaces, housed in immersive social environments, interconnected through persistent multi-user platforms, which allows users to have dynamic interactions with digital artifacts in real time. It carries the potential to trigger transformations in various sectors of the economy, especially in education, from which enhanced hybrid formal and informal learning experiences could emerge on *virtual campuses*.

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[1] Translation: "ensuring that all boys and girls complete primary and secondary education […] with relevant and effective learning outcomes"; "[…] ensuring equal access for all men and women to quality technical, professional and higher education at affordable prices, including university"; "substantially increasing the number of young people and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and professional skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship"; "students […] [with] knowledge and skills necessary to promote the development […]" (UN, c2023, online, editorial translation).

In fact, the expectation is that learning in the metaverse will definitively cross the final border between social connection and learning, through future-bearing pedagogical processes that will lead to egalitarian education.

Foucault's words (2013, p. 115)[2] help to translate the abstraction of the metaverse of this Manifest:

> [há] lugares reais, lugares efetivos, lugares que são desenhados na própria instituição [...] espécies de lugares que estão fora de todos os lugares, embora sejam efetivamente localizáveis. [...] do fundo desse espaço virtual do outro lado do vidro, eu retorno a mim e recomeço a dirigir meus olhos a mim mesmo e a me reconstituir ali onde estou.

This virtual place becomes an important tool to complement new strategies and opportunities for equal and inclusive education. By turning our attention to (i) the need to remove implicit obstacles to educational goals, (ii) to reconstructing the immanent social mission in search of the common good, (iii) to the demand to develop personalized learning plans, (iv) to the growing diversity of students in various educational environments, and (v) the possibility of distance education and interaction on a revolutionary scale, quality and inclusive education cannot dispense with the reach of cutting-edge technological environments, nor ignore the potential for revolution in the interrelationships and educational context that these environments will provoke. In regard to this last sentence, it is worth mentioning the words of educator John Dewey (1859-1952).

> Haverá quase uma revolução na educação escolar quando o estudo e a aprendizagem forem tratados não como aquisição do que os outros sabem, mas como desenvolvimento de capital a ser investido em ávida vigilância em observar e julgar as condições em que se vive. No entanto, até que isso aconteça, estaremos mal preparados para lidar com um mundo cuja característica marcante é a mudança. (Dewey, 1944, p.463, our translation)3.

For many education scholars, technology is fundamental to solving broader social issues and is, in fact, the way to address educational and social inequalities. For this reason, the commitment to reducing the digital divide is crucial, as preparation for the next step of advancing technology-mediated interaction or, specifically, technology-mediated education, understanding the issues of how to obtain a better understanding of the complexity of in-person and remote learning environments. Among them, identifying the factors that influence technology-mediated interaction, the differences between in-person and remote teaching, the cultural issues involved and the necessary structures based on the identified characteristics.

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[2] Translation: "[there are] real places, effective places, places that are designed in the institution itself [...] types of places that are outside of all places, although they are effectively traceable. [...] from the depths of this virtual space on the other side of the glass, I return to myself and begin again to direct my eyes at myself and to reconstitute myself where I am." (Foucault, 2013, p. 115, editorial translation).

[3] Original: "There will be almost a revolution in school education when study and learning are treated not as acquisition of what others know but as development of capital to be invested in eager alertness in observing and judging the conditions under which one lives. Yet until this happens, we shall be ill-prepared to deal with a world whose outstanding trait is change." (Dewey, 1944, p. 463).

The third factor refers to the critical role of the private sector in technology-mediated education, which refers, *sine dubio*, to the concept of social business, that is, business as mechanisms for solving social problems. They are business solutions to socio-environmental problems in which the distribution of profit is admitted – in the interpretation of researchers Stuart Hart (Cornell University) and Michael Chu (Harvard University) – as this makes it possible to attract more investors and allows the solutions to be implemented at the pace required to overcome identified obstacles.

The revenues obtained must cover operating costs, making the company financially self-sustainable and profitable. The social business financial model must solve the problem for which it was created; reverse profits into the business itself (or another that supports scaling and intensifying the solution); guarantee the circulation of resources to strengthen the company and compensate shareholders.

Social business is not totally different from a traditional company. It is the meeting of philanthropy, financial sustainability and entrepreneurship and is measured above all by the positive impact caused on the lives of people served by the business. They are gradually transforming society, combining the dynamism and efficiency of traditional business with the awareness and purpose of environmental, social and corporate governance. Just like any other business model, it also needs to generate profit and, even in the line of thought of pioneer Muhammad Yunus – who argues that investors should not make a profit from social businesses, these companies follow some basic principles: they work in a network of partnerships (which results in the adoption of multi-level governance in this Manifest); is aligned with public policies; is attentive to environmental issues; is concerned with the production chain in which it is inserted and fights unworthy work.

In fact, social business is the future, since its strategy and logic of presence in society is based on the belief that the traditional division between the State, society and private companies does not help to reduce social inequalities. To implement its strategy, social business has the following principles: (i) cross compensation, which involves favoring the acquisition of services or products of a certain community from another community; (ii) service fees, which refers to the possibility for beneficiaries to pay affordable prices directly for the product or service offered by the company; (iii) training, which deals with fair wages, skills development and training for the beneficiaries, who are the employees themselves; (iv) it acts as a market intermediary, facilitating its expansion; (v) it connects markets, which is facilitating transactions between beneficiaries and new markets, between sponsors and proponents of new social projects; (vi) it supports parallel initiatives and (vii) supports projects by business participants, which are related to that social initiative.

This is the tripod of the Manifest of the Social Business of Education: the concern with the scarcity of high-quality educational opportunities, the new place of education in modern societies and the essential role of the private sector in this situation. These are the pillars of Inkluziva (2022, *online*)[4]:

> […] [o] ecossistema econômico educacional apoiado por rede de finanças descentralizada e [o] metaverso, que segue descortinando a educação como um processo ativo e construtivo, dependente do contexto que inclui os diversos atores da síntese educacional e das várias dimensões que afetam a oportunidades educacionais igualitárias, em especial, as dimensões econômica e tecnológica.

Within the deepening of Inkluziva's action lies the awareness of the importance of actions that reinvigorate democracy and the role of private companies in pursuit of the common good, which go far beyond the generation of jobs and wealth.

At the end of this Manifest one can find the view of Anísio Teixeira (1984, p. 685)[5] on education and democracy:

> Há educação para alguns, há educação para muitos e há educação para todos. A democracia é o regime mais difícil das educações, a educação pela qual o homem, todos os homens e todas as mulheres aprendem a ser livres, bons e capazes [...] A justiça social, por excelência, da democracia, consiste nessa conquista da igualdade de oportunidades pela educação. Democracia é, literalmente, educação.

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[4] Translation: "[…] [the] educational economic ecosystem supported by a decentralized finance network and [the] metaverse, which continues to reveal education as an active and constructive process, dependent on the context that includes the various actors of the educational synthesis and of the various dimensions that affect equal educational opportunities, in particular, the economic and technological dimensions" (Inkluziva, 2022, online, editorial translation).

[5] Translation: "There is education for some, there is education for many and there is education for all. Democracy is the most difficult regime of education, the education through which man, all men and all women learn to be free, good and capable [...] Social justice, par excellence, of democracy, consists in this achievement of equal opportunities by means of education. Democracy is, literally, education " (Teixeira, 1984, p. 685, editorial translation).