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A Discursive Analysis Of UNESCO's World Declaration On Education For All (1990)

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Abstract:
Background*: Notions such as equity and social justice have permeated educational discourse in a variety of contexts and situations throughout history. This study considers the particular context of the global agenda spearheaded by UNESCO, which became known under the slogan "education for all." In order to better understand the discourses mobilized and emanating from this agenda, the World Declaration on Education for All, signed in 1990, was adopted as the object of analysis. To this end, the social order since the founding of UNESCO in the 1940s was considered, including the transformations of capitalism, the advance of neoliberalism, and the process of globalization. Next, the text of the Declaration was approached from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, observing elements such as interdiscursivity/intertextuality, modality, transitivity, as well as legitimization strategies. Finally, in light of the analyses carried out, some implications and impacts of these discourses and the "education for all" agenda were discussed.*
Key Word: *Education for all; Critical discourse analysis; Equity; Educational agendas; UNESCO.*
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I. Introduction

Throughout the history of educational ideas, concepts of equality, equity, and social justice have been transformed, revised, and taken different perspectives: universalization of education, democratic access to education, inclusion, lifelong learning opportunities for all, etc. These discourses have emerged as part of various backgrounds: for instance, in the educator-state model, the social welfare policies of the post-World War II period and neoliberal policies in the context of the structural crisis of capitalism at the end of the 1970s, among others. In general, they have emerged in response to pressure from social movements, teachers, intellectuals and other groups concerned about the condition of education and its relationship with the current state of the social fabric. However, the very meanings of these ideas are located in arenas in which forces that are not necessarily symmetrical compete with each other. The result is the production of different interpretations and ways of appropriating these ideas.

Considering this broader context, we would like to look at one particularly milestone: the "World Declaration on Education for All" (UNESCO, 1990), signed at the "World Conference on Education for all: Meeting Basic Learning Needs", in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990.

Despite expressing a climate of hope at the approach of the new millennium and cosmopolitan aspirations and projections about the information society, the conference, held under the auspices of UNESCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank, was marked by dismay at the negative effects caused or accentuated by the process of global capitalist transformation. The Jomtien Declaration emerged from this context and is involved in discourses on equity, institutionalizing them according to an international agenda for education. While its publication can be seen as a victory for social justice and democratization movements that have been occurring since the 1960s and 1970s, it can also be interpreted as a strategic solution adopted by major neoliberal powers through multilateral organizations. This was done both to appease social movement pressures and to mitigate the negative effects of capitalist crises accentuated by globalization and neoliberal policies. It also positioned education as a sector of interest to global capitalism, imposing its own logic of control and intervention.

It also signals the inception of an international political agenda consolidating the aforementioned educational ideas under the banner of "education for all." It also constitutes a watershed moment for UNESCO, marking the culmination of debates and initiatives that have been ongoing since its establishment in 1945.

In the decade following the Jomtien Conference, several meetings were held to follow up on the objectives of the Declaration on Education for All. In 2010, the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) was adopted, reaffirming the objectives of the previous conference, as well as establishing a set of new goals to be achieved by 2015, focusing on early childhood care, universal primary education, youth and adult literacy, gender equality, and quality education. In a way, it was precisely in 2015, at the World Education Forum held in Incheon (South Korea) that the "Education for All" agenda came to an end, giving way to a broader global

agenda: "The Incheon Declaration: Education 2030", aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, this does not mean abandoning the previous ideas, on the contrary, as can be seen in "SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, s.d.).

In this sense, this paper explores how the Jomtien Declaration appropriated, interpreted, and conveyed discourses on equality, equity, and social justice, as well as its consequences for education in the following years. To this end, a discursive analysis of selected excerpts from the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All will be undertaken, with the objective of interrogating the meanings constructed through diverse forms of production. More specifically, we will adopt the concept of critical discourse analysis which corresponds to the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis and other elements of social practices. The focus of this discipline is twofold: radical changes in contemporary social life and the role of semiosis in processes of change. It is also concerned with the relationship between semiosis and other social elements within the network of practices (Fairclough, 1992 & 2012; van Leeuwen, 2008).

From this perspective, discourse is considered to be a set of statements and narratives, whether in spoken or written form, which represent ideas about the world, the meanings given to actions in society, the ways of expressing them and also the ways in which the world is involved by such ideas; thus, discourse can be conceived as a social practice, not as a purely individual activity or a reflection of situational variables[4] In this way, discourse is implicated in a game of tensions, disputes and subject to power relations, being produced and renewed according to a relationship of control, selection, organization and redistribution (Foucault, 2008, 2010 & 2014; Fairclough, 1992). Based on this concept, there is a dialectical relationship between semiosis (understood as a multiplicity of ways of constructing meanings) and productive activities, means of production, social relations, social identities, cultural values and consciousness (Fairclough, 1992 & 2012).

Therefore, in order to carry out the discursive analysis required, it is essential to focus on a problem that has a semiotic aspect (the text of the Declaration, official documents, legislation, minutes of meetings, etc.). When discourse is officialized in these documents, on the one hand it gains legitimacy and authority, reinforcing its hegemony. On the other hand, its very materialization in the form of written documents enables a more focused and systematized analysis. Secondly, possible obstacles to resolving this problem must be identified, taking into account the network of practices in which they are inserted, the relationships with other elements within the practices in question and the discourse itself. Finally, in the light of the analysis carried out, it is hoped that possible ways of overcoming the obstacles and problems will be identified, as well as critically reflecting on the very process of analyzing these obstacles and problems (Fairclough, 2012). Based on this framework, it is important to understand and analyze the orders of discourse as the semiotic aspect according to which the various social orders relate and constitute a social order. In the case of the documents covered here, the social order according to which they are produced and circulated is that of globalization from the late 1980s to the 2000s, when the world was seeing the results and effects of neoliberal policies, the importance and reach of multilateral organizations was increasing and a new international political agenda for education was being drawn up.

II. Material And Methods

This study is undertaken in the field of qualitative research, understood here as a general methodological orientation. According to Ollaik & Ziller (2012, p.232), "qualitative research seeks to describe and understand a phenomenon (…). Such description and understanding are restricted to a specific context from which a type of knowledge is reached that is distinct from what is attainable through statistical procedures or other forms of quantification". Sharma (2013) also points out that qualitative research allows for a greater depth of detail by bringing direct quotes and descriptions of the context into the discussion. This also implies that the research needs to be built from the bottom up, with back and forth between the themes analyzed and the database, organizing them into increasingly abstract units of information, until a relatively comprehensive set of themes is obtained. When carrying out a qualitative study, various procedures or methodological approaches can be used, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation of practices or phenomena, etc.

Among the possible approaches, we will adopt documentary analysis, combined with the perspective of critical discourse analysis, as has been suggested up to this point. According to Pimentel (2001), studies based on documents as primary material extract all the analysis from them, organizing and interpreting them according to the proposed objectives. The approach to the text of the World Declaration on Education for All will include the analysis of elements such as interdiscursivity/intertextuality, modality, transitivity, as well as legitimization strategies. These elements will be briefly presented below.

Intertextuality represents the superimposition of one text on another, i.e. the use of a text within another text, and so on. According to Fairclough (1992), intertextuality represents the insertion of history into the text, by absorbing the texts of the past, and of the text into history, by reworking the texts of the past and thus contributing to their change in the present. Intertextuality can be observed both horizontally, when texts interrelate in a chain, and vertically, when this relationship is established from a historical link or based on a

certain context, as in the case of paraphrase. However, it is possible that even the order of discourse or certain discursive conventions are clear, without direct references being made to them or them being nominally evoked. This is what we can call constitutive intertextuality or interdiscursivity.

To understand the concept of *modality*, consider the following statement: "learning is necessary for exercising citizenship". The idea conveyed by the phrase and the association between 'learning' and 'exercising citizenship' is explicit. The same goes for the negative formulation of the same statement, "learning is not necessary for the exercise of citizenship". The use of the terms "is" and "is not" categorically commits the enunciator to the meaning of the sentence (Fairclough, 1992), in other words, the enunciator must always declare their degree of affinity with the proposition enunciated. However, it is possible to obtain different degrees of commitment by using modal adverbs such as "possibly", "probably", "certainly", etc., or variations such as "in a way" and "may be". In our example, the possible formulations are: "learning is definitely necessary for the exercise of citizenship", or "learning is possibly necessary for the exercise of citizenship"; thus, each has a different level of commitment to the relationship between "learning" and "exercising citizenship". Every utterance of this type is therefore considered modalized. When interpreting or analyzing modality in an utterance, as Fairclough (1992) points out, it is important to consider that when an utterer expresses high affinity with a proposition, this does not necessarily indicate their high commitment to that proposition, but rather a demonstration of solidarity with the idea expressed in the utterance.

Transitivity deals with the processes and elements involved in the formulation of an utterance. Processes can be relational, when the verb indicates a relationship ("to be", "to be", etc.); action, when the verb points to an action towards a goal; event, structured in the same way as the action process, but without an explicit goal; and mental, expressed by verbs such as "to know", "to think" (cognitive), "to hear", "to see", "to feel" (perceptive), "to like" and "to fear" (affective) (Fairclough, 1992). Understanding the types of process leads us to identify the subjects of the action in the utterances. When the analysis expands from a single sentence to a larger text, it can reveal how certain voices take precedence while others tend to be minimized or even silenced. Another characteristic of transitivity is the nominalization of processes, i.e. the conversion of processes into names, implying the effect of putting the process in the background and making the subjects of the action implicit.

Every utterance is subject to a given order of discourse, to rules that authorize or endorse its proposition. *Legitimation* is understood as the process of "authorizing" this statement. Legitimation can be understood, for example, as the process by which a legislator is authorized to enact a certain law as a norm, or the process by which a scientific discourse must pass in order to be taken into consideration by the scientific community (Lyotard, 1984). Leeuwen (2008) points out that the authorization of an utterance can occur in several ways: appealing to personal authority ("I, as a researcher, consider that..."), impersonal authority ("it is the policy of this company..."), evoking experts ("it is the policy of this company..."). "), evoking experts ("according to Foucault..."), resorting to ideal models ("according to the wise..."), emphasizing tradition ("as developed by several generations..."), or using conformity ("the majority of educators..."). According to Leeuwen (2008), legitimization can also derive from a moral evaluation based on values. In this sense, it does not require the imposition of any kind of authority or justification. Legitimization occurs through key words such as "good", "evil", "useful", "natural", etc. However, these words only hint at the discourses, without making them explicit, for example in "policies to improve living conditions..." or "it is healthy for society that...". In this sense, the identification of this form of legitimization is always linked to our cultural knowledge of common sense. Other moral evaluation strategies refer to the use of both abstraction and analogies. In the first case, the enunciator refers to certain practices in an abstract way, in such a way as to connect them to discourses of moral values. This is the case, for example, of a student who uses numerical or quantitative resources to model a given everyday problem. In relation to this practice, we can say that "the student, empowered by the use of mathematics, solved the problem". Similarly, "children making decisions on their own" can be phrased in terms of "autonomy", or "students working in groups" in terms of "socialization", "solidarity", "cooperativism", etc. The enunciator uses analogies when justifying a certain position by comparing it to other practices associated with positive or negative values, depending on the case. Another legitimization strategy is rationalization. In this sense, it is rationality that legitimizes statements by referring to their objectives, uses and effects, or by referring to a natural order of things.

III. The Social Order And The Orders Of Discourse

In order to understand the social order in which the World Declaration on Education for All emanated, we will briefly explore the social and political context in the years leading up to the Jomtien Conference, especially within UNESCO.

In the years following its foundation in 1945, Unesco launched a series of regional and global meetings involving its member countries. In November 1949, the 4th Section of UNESCO's General Conference was held in Paris, where the organization's main objectives and lines of action for the following years were outlined,

particularly for education. Regional seminars and meetings were proposed in order both to prepare for the General Conference that would take place the following year and to question member countries about proposals and progress in relation to the Constitution's proposals on providing "education for all". These seminars and meetings covered a variety of topics and ways of approaching them, from proposals to revise history and geography textbooks, the standardization of scientific terminology, strategies for popularizing science, to a research task force to be developed with the collaboration of other "competent international organizations", with the aim of: (a) Analyze and define the main connotations of freedom, democracy, law and equality that have emerged in the history of political and legal philosophy; (b) Determine their practical influence today; (c) Estimate their importance in current ideological controversies; and (d) Give adequate publicity to the results of such research (UNESCO, 1945, p.24).

This type of movement points to some remnants of the impacts caused by the Second World War, made explicit in the first propositions of UNESCO's Constitution: "since war began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be built" (UNESCO, 1945, p.5). In other words, an attempt to reorganize nations according to a sense of unity. However, it also points to a reorganization of the world order and a dispute over ideological, political and economic hegemony, personified by the Cold War.

In the following years, UNESCO launched and coordinated a sequence of actions among its member countries, including providing, through the International Bureau of Education (IBE), a variety of printed materials, film lists, audios and educational support for member countries. According to Valderrama (1995), despite the various discussions on the notion of "education for all", it was only at the UNESCO General Conference, held in 1976 in Nairobi (Kenya), that programs of activities to promote equal opportunities in education were officially authorized. In November 1982, the 4th extraordinary session of the General Conference held in Paris (France), approved a set of fifteen major short-term programs, the second of which is specifically called "education for all".

Thus, despite the fact that "education for all" was already circulating in international discussions and in some local education programs, it was after this conference that the issue really began to appear on international political agendas. This can be explained by the advance of neoliberal policies to restructure capitalism, either by the increase in power and scope given to multilateral organizations, or by the worsening of living conditions in the peripheral countries of capitalism, or by technological development and the process of globalization.

Understood as the pinnacle of capitalism's internationalization process, globalization was the result of neoliberal policies that sought to respond to the structural crisis of capitalism in the 1970s, marked by high inflation and the beginning of a period of recession in the richest countries, calling into question the very functionality of the Keynesian welfare state model. Driven by the technological revolution that had taken place in the IT and communications sectors since the 1960s, the neoliberal proposal for the restructuring of capitalism included a series of aspects, including the consolidation of the dominance of the financial system at a global level, more flexible and globally distributed production processes, a reduction in transportation and logistics costs, and an increase in the importance of multilateral financial agencies.

In order to do this, it was necessary to ensure an increase in the participation of civil society - understood from a neoliberal perspective as the third sector - and, consequently, the participation of private capital in the economy, towards an alignment with the minimum state perspective. Thus, the very processes of decolonization in Africa and democratization in Latin America were fundamental to the neoliberal project. Neoliberalism, consummated by the notion of globalization, is no longer a doctrine and economic policy, but a hegemonic discourse in various areas of public life: from the conceptions of law, justice and equality, to the ways in which countries organize their public policies and allocate their investments, such as education. However, according to Giddens (1999), globalization has not developed in an equitable manner, especially in terms of distribution and access to its benefits, culturally assuming an unpleasant appearance of westernization. In Latin America specifically, globalization has meant the exhaustion of a stage of economic development that was characterized by self-centered industrialization at a national level and dependent on external financing; by accelerated modernization and urbanization that was out of step with the industry's own productive capacity; and finally, by a strong presence of the intervening state, regulating or replacing private activity (Coraggio, 2000). This scenario led many of the economies into crisis, since they didn't have a flexible enough economic structure to sustain competitiveness and innovation, while dependence on foreign capital deepened these countries' foreign debt and exacerbated the situation of poverty and social inequality.

While, on the one hand, this scenario has mobilized criticism and action from social movements, on the other, it has put pressure on the major world powers and multilateral organizations to discuss solutions to mitigate the negative effects of globalization, which are, in a way, detrimental to the very development of the neoliberal project. In this way, multilateral financial agencies began to propose a set of economic, political and ideological conditions for loans to peripheral countries.

In this context, according to Valderrama (1995), at the General Conference held in Paris in March 1984, a document was signed which gave the "education for all" program high priority status, especially with

regard to requests for cooperation from developing countries. In October of the same year, during the International Conference on Education, held in Geneva (Switzerland), possible links between "education for all" and the context of scientific and technological innovations were discussed, highlighting the importance of teaching science and technology in modern society, from the point of view of equal opportunities.

Finally, during the General Conference held in Paris from October to November 1989, the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Illiteracy by the Year 2000 was approved, to be initiated in 1990, thus proclaimed the International Literacy Year and determining the content of the proposals made the following year at the Jomtien Conference.

At the same time, the issue of poverty and investment in human development took center stage in the discussions of organizations such as the United Nations (UN), UNESCO and the World Bank (WB), according to a discourse of international solidarity. However, such solidarity only serves the maintenance and survival of neoliberalism itself by progressively exempting the state from its role as a guarantor of rights and offering the market not only this role, but also positioning it as a representation of democracy, citizenship and justice. In this context, the WB positions education as a key element in the eradication of poverty, as can be seen in the "World Development Report", sub-titled "Poverty", published in 1990:

Looking at the development experience, it can be seen that the most effective way of achieving rapid and politically sustainable advances in the quality of life of the poor has been to adopt a two-pronged strategy. The first element of this strategy is the search for a growth model that guarantees the productive use of the most abundant good among the poor - labor. The second element is the ample provision of basic social services to the poor, especially primary education, basic medical care and family planning. The first component creates opportunities; the second enables the poor to take advantage of these opportunities (World Bank, 1990, p. iii).

From this document, the WB makes explicit some of the purposes of neoliberalism in its "fight against poverty": firstly, to guarantee a minimally qualified workforce and, secondly, to guarantee favorable local conditions for market development. Linked to these purposes are the concepts of distributive justice and equal opportunities, closely linked to meritocratic logic. What's more, by proposing this model as "the most effective means", it associates the idea of equity with the logics of efficiency and effectiveness.

Having understood the trajectory of the discussions on "education for all" in the context of the international proposals led by UNESCO, with the direct influence of the World Bank, as well as the context of globalization and neoliberal policies outlined in the introductory chapter, we will now move on to an analysis of some excerpts from the Jomtien Declaration.

IV. Documental And Discursive Analysis

The preamble to the Jomtien Declaration begins with the following text:

(...) despite the efforts made by countries around the world to ensure the right to education for all, the following realities persist:
- more than 100 million children, at least 60 million of whom are girls, do not have access to primary education:
- More than 960 million adults - two thirds of them women - are illiterate, and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all industrialized and developing countries:
- more than a third of the world's adults do not have access to printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve their quality of life and help them understand and adapt to social and cultural changes:
- more than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete the basic cycle, and millions more, despite completing it, fail to acquire essential knowledge and skills (UNESCO, 1990, preamble).

The aforementioned "efforts made by countries all over the world" refer to the path taken by UNESCO until the signing of this Declaration. However, as we can see from the historical observation of this trajectory, although the theme of education for all already circulated in the speeches promoted by UNESCO, it was only after the General Conferences held in 1982 and 1984 that "education for all" began to take on the form of public policy, that is, in the sense of the term used by Höfling (2001, p.31), as the "State implementing a government project, through programs, actions aimed at specific sectors of society". In this way, the apparent feeling of frustration communicated by this passage can be assumed to be a rhetorical device, since it would have been practically impossible to achieve perceptible results on a global scale during the six or eight years between the Jomtien Declaration and the above-mentioned Conferences.

Another salient issue is the use of various nominalizations (Fairclough, 1992). This is the case, for example, with "efforts made", which acts as an abstract entity, dispensing with a description of exactly what kind of actions and measures would correspond to such efforts. However, the most striking nominalization is precisely "education for all". As we have seen, throughout the history of UNESCO itself, it has shifted its meaning from an objective to be pursued to a concept that encompasses not only that objective, but also practices, policies, government programs, etc. This nominalization can be seen in the passage "ensuring the right to education for all". "Right", as used in the sentence, must refer to a specific object ("ensuring the right to

vote", "ensuring the right to life", etc.). In this case, the object to which "ensure the right" refers is not "education", but "education for all".

The phrase could alternatively be formulated as "ensuring the right of everyone to education". However, this would be a repetition of Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to education" (United Nations, 1948, Article 26), which is already mentioned in the preamble to the Jomtien Declaration: "More than forty years ago, the nations of the world affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone has the right to education" (UNESCO, 1990, preamble). Thus, we believe that the choice of the formulation "ensure the right to education for all" expresses UNESCO's intention to reinforce "education for all" as a "brand", a concept or even a discourse, legitimized by the authority represented by UNESCO, by the tradition of its trajectory in discourses since the 1940s, by a moral evaluation, by associating it with equity and human rights (Leeuwen, 2008).

In this sense, despite the "declarants" positioning themselves as "we, the participants of the Conference" (UNESCO, 1990, preamble), the preponderant voice in the text is that of UNESCO. The representatives of the various member nations of UNESCO ("we, the participants"), are erased, or intentionally exempted from responsibility, for example, for the "realities" to which the passage refers: children without access to basic education, high illiteracy rates, "countless" adults who have not completed the basic cycle, etc.). The following excerpt illustrates this situation:

At the same time, the world has to face a bleak picture of problems, including: the increasing debt of many countries, the threat of economic stagnation and decay, the rapid increase in population, the growing economic differences between and within nations, war, occupation, civil strife, violence, the preventable deaths of millions of children and the widespread degradation of the environment (UNESCO, 1990, preamble).

The passage "the world has to face" implies a metadiscourse (Fairclough, 1992), since "the Conference participants" who sign the Declaration distance themselves "from the world"; they are part of it, but from this resource, they can speak with an authority enjoyed by their own distance. This type of rhetorical resource, as well as the nominalization of the "world" (and the series of problems listed in the text) creates the sensation that the world creates its own problems, as if it were an animated, personified figure. In this way, the "increasing debt of many countries", for example, does not establish a relationship with the structural adjustment policies that began around a decade before the Jomtien Declaration, or with the debts contracted with the central countries of neoliberalism, which nevertheless figure among "us, the Conference participants".

In the face of such a "gloomy picture of problems", the Declaration continues with an optimistic outlook:

Nevertheless, the world is on the eve of a new century full of hope and possibilities. Today, we are witnessing real progress towards peaceful distancing and greater cooperation between nations. Today, the essential rights and potential of women are being taken into account. Today, we see many valuable scientific and cultural achievements emerging all the time. Today, the volume of information available in the world - much of it important for people's survival and well-being - is far greater than it was a few years ago and continues to grow at a rapid pace. This knowledge includes information on how to improve the quality of life or how to learn how to learn. A multiplier effect occurs when important information is linked to another major advance: our new ability to communicate. These new forces, combined with the accumulated experience of reforms, innovations, research, and the remarkable progress in education recorded in many countries, make the goal of basic education for all - for the first time in history - an achievable goal (UNESCO, 1990, preamble).

In this way, technological developments and the world's geopolitical situation (the fall of the Berlin Wall and the imminent dissolution of the Soviet Union represented the end of disputes for the capitalist bloc and the promise of a peaceful future) are seen as possibilities for making the "education for all" program a reality. The feeling of optimism is provided by the modalization of several of the statements present in the highlighted passage: "extremely broader", "great advance", "remarkable progress", "many valuable achievements".

This type of construction is strategic for the structure of the text. The passage in question acts as a closing to the preamble, preparing for the opening of the Declaration itself. In this way, the reader conceives of reading the articles and proposals according to the feeling we refer to as optimism. The reader receives the information not just as a solution, but as the "most viable" and possible one.

Next, we will analyze articles 1 and 3 of the Jomtien Declaration, since they point more specifically to the conceptions of equity on which the Declaration itself is based and on which international policy agendas on education and national public policies will be based in subsequent years.

Article 3: Universalize access to education and promote equity.

1. Basic education must be provided to all children, young people and adults. To this end, it is necessary to universalize it and improve its quality, as well as to take effective measures to reduce inequalities.
2. For basic education to become equitable, all children, young people and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain a minimum standard of quality learning. The most urgent priority is to improve the

quality of and guarantee access to education for girls and women, and to overcome all the obstacles that prevent their active participation in the educational process. Prejudice and stereotypes of any kind must be eliminated from education.
3. An effective commitment to overcoming educational disparities must be made. Excluded groups - the poor; street or working children; populations in urban peripheries and rural areas; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities: refugees; those displaced by war; and peoples subjected to a regime of occupation - must not suffer any kind of discrimination in their access to educational opportunities.
4. The basic learning needs of people with disabilities require special attention. Measures must be taken to guarantee equal access to education for people with all types of disabilities, as an integral part of the education system (UNESCO, 1990, article 3).

The universalization of education, by its very definition (according to Abbagnano (2007), universal refers to what is or should be valid for everyone), already implies the "notion of education for all". The universalization of access, however, would correspond to the creation of legal or structural means for everyone to have access to school. In this sense, all the items share this concern.

The notion of equity that underpins the Declaration becomes clear in item 2, particularly in terms of the idea of "opportunity". In other words, equity is conceived according to the notion of equal opportunities. Thus, the very meaning of universal access to education is established according to this same notion. Equity is then defined on the basis of equal access to school or "access to educational opportunities" (UNESCO, 1990, article 3) and is thus closely intertwined with a meritocratic system.

Furthermore, according to item 2, equal access opportunities explicitly refer to a "minimum standard of quality of learning" (UNESCO, 1990, article 3, emphasis added), reflecting the notion proposed by Rawls (1999) of guaranteeing minimum limits or a social minimum, i.e. a package of resources that an individual needs to lead a minimally dignified life in their society, guaranteed at limiting the inequalities caused by meritocratic systems.

In this sense, Article 1 of the Declaration translates the notion of a "minimum standard" into the idea of Basic Learning Needs:

Article 1: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (BLSN)

Every person - child, young person or adult - should be able to take advantage of educational opportunities aimed at satisfying their basic learning needs. These needs include both the essential tools for learning (such as reading and writing, speaking, calculating, problem-solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) needed for human beings to be able to survive, fully develop their potential, live and work with dignity, participate fully in development, improve their quality of life, make informed decisions and continue learning. The extent of basic learning needs and the way in which they are met vary according to each country and culture, and inevitably change over time (UNESCO, 1990, article 1).

Terms and phrases such as "to survive" and "to live and work with dignity" illustrate the concept of minimum limits or a social minimum expressed by Rawls (1990). Basic education is now defined as education aimed at satisfying BLSN).

The Jomtien Declaration dialogues with a series of other discourses, some explicit and others not, which are articulated to build the narrative presented so far. In this sense, there are two real problems to which this narrative refers: the first is that millions of children around the world are excluded from school, just as millions of adults do not have access to written culture in their societies; the second refers to the worsening of poverty and social inequalities, especially in the peripheral countries of capitalism (as presented in the preamble to the Jomtien Declaration). We can also consider a third problem, marginal to these two: given this scenario, is the world prepared for "genuine progress towards peaceful détente and greater cooperation among nations" (UNESCO, 1990, preamble), according to the text of the Declaration itself?

A broader response to these problems stems from the Enlightenment discourse of education serving the progress and development of society. As a result of this discourse, the first problem can be interpreted as the cause of the second and, in this way, solving the problem of access to education would create the conditions for solving the problem of poverty and social inequalities. Thus, universal access to education would be part of the strategy proposed by multilateral organizations to solve these problems. The discourse underpinning this strategy is that equal access to education is also understood from the perspective of equal opportunities which, in turn, is a fundamental element for consolidating a fair system, in the terms of the meritocratic discourse.

The following excerpt from the Jomtien Declaration makes such discourses explicit, according to a rhetorical strategy, a logical ordering of facts and the naturalization of concepts, which could well be interpreted in what Leeuwen (2008) considered as legitimation through rationalization:

Recalling that education is a fundamental right of all women and men of all ages throughout the world; Understanding that education can contribute to achieving a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally purer world, which at the same time favors social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation; Knowing that education, although not a sufficient condition, is of fundamental importance for personal and social progress; Recognizing that traditional knowledge and cultural heritage have their own usefulness and value, as well as the capacity to define and promote development; Acknowledging that, in general terms, the education provided today is seriously deficient, that it needs to be made more relevant and its quality improved, and that it must be made universally available; Recognizing that an adequate basic education is fundamental to strengthening higher levels of education and teaching, scientific and technological training and, consequently, to achieving autonomous development; and Recognizing the need to provide present and future generations with a comprehensive vision of basic education and a renewed commitment to it, in order to meet the breadth and complexity of the challenge (...).) (UNESCO, 1990, preamble).

The proposal to satisfy BLSN was based on the concept of equity as distributive justice (RAWLS, 1999). In practice, together with structural adjustment policies, this meant that states began to manage and focus resources according to the guidelines of UNESCO and the World Bank. In a way, the Jomtien Declaration was in line with the World Bank's economic vision, which is tied to the logic of efficiency and effectiveness. This is why "education for all" came to be understood as "education for the poorest", "basic needs" as "minimum needs", "focus on learning" as "focus on assessing school performance", "learning conditions" as "school organization". However, this "World Bank economic vision" cannot be considered the only factor explaining this scenario. As we have been arguing, this discourse is also the product of a series of conceptions about education, equity and justice, which become hegemonic (often as a result of the very way they are used by organizations such as the World Bank or UNESCO). We understand that there is a purpose (and an interest) in the World Bank's conceptions, for example, when it comes to education.

V. Conclusion

Based on a discursive analysis of the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) it was possible to verify that the political, economic, and social context of neoliberalism, in which the production of the aforementioned documents took place, represented in the order of discourse, becomes explicit in the Jomtien Declaration. This is due to the very idea of "declaring" something, that is, revealing an intention, making a certain position public. This, in turn, is loaded with discourses that make up its ideological identity. In other words, the very constitution of the text of the Declaration brings together such discourses in an almost natural way. However, it is essential to understand that by declaring their position, organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank are intentionally establishing discourses and concepts, such as equity, justice, and the functions of education, at a global level. In other words, given their own authority, these organizations have internationally legitimized such discourses, made them official, and materialized them according to these Declaration. However, we consider these interests and purposes to be situated within the very hegemony of the neoliberal political discourse which, together with discourses on globalization, creates an international situation which, according to Burbules and Torres (2000), leaves states with no option but to adapt to this set of global rules, in which they often participate, but which are not effectively their own responsibility.

While international agendas on education, equity, and social justice are taking shape as fair and necessary demands, the discourse they convey often serves structures that ultimately deepen the very negative scenarios they seek to improve. Nevertheless, when stated in this way, the apparent ambiguity of discourses on equity in education may be understood as if the problem lies in the interpretation of such discourses. Social actors and movements, when waving banners such as equal access to education, inclusion, diversity, or the defense of affirmative action, are actually deluded by an interpretation that, in practice, will have potentially adverse effects. Thus, it is more pertinent to understand this scenario in terms of the existence of a perverse appropriation of these discourses by the hegemonic discourse, according to Dagnino (2004). While, on the one hand, those most interested in defending equity are those who find themselves in a situation where access to certain benefits is granted unequally, on the other hand, there are those who are not in this situation but who defend the same banner of equity, either because they are subject to the negative effects of inequality or because they see in this defense a way to gain other benefits for themselves. In other words, there would be an identity of purpose in the defense of equity. What happens in the case of equity in education is both the emptying of its political and social meanings and its appropriation by the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism. In this sense, we emphasize that both movements — emptying and appropriation — do not occur independently, since the very emptying of discourses facilitates their appropriation. The ambiguous interpretations to which we referred initially are nothing more than shifts in meaning in the discourse, which are instruments for such appropriation to occur.

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