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Meanings of social justice. A critique of three plans of study for basic education*

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Abstract
This article analyzes the meanings of social justice as found in three plans of study for basic education (preschool 2004, secondary school 2006, and elementary school 2009). The selection of academic material is related to two issues. First, the World Education Forum ratified the Framework for Action for the Americas, a document that considers basic education to be a fundamental human right, with social justice as its mainstay. Second, and as a consequence of the Forum, the curriculum of Mexico's basic education was renovated during the first decade of the 21st century. Due to the priorities of this article, analysis excludes the revision of the 2011 plan of study, which is still in effect in the nation's educational system. The article's underlying argument is that in the indicated plans of study, social justice acquires meaning in a reductionist manner with regard to social multiplicity and complexity. In organizational terms, the article begins with a conceptual genealogy of social justice, followed by an analysis of its meanings based on certain categories (of theory and argumentation), and closes with analytical statements.
Keywords: Social justice, plan of study, basic education, argumentation, Mexico

Introduction

The invention of newspapers, radio, and television created massive possibilities of communication among societies at different latitudes. And such possibilities were increased exponentially by the inclusion of the Internet in individual life.

This new network of mass communication has revealed social problems—such as civil war, organized crime, assassination, forced disappearance, corruption, racism, and discrimination—to growing sectors of the population, which in many cases have called for justice. Two premises in this regard, however, must be clarified. The first is that social justice is not simply a joint claim involving adverse situations, but in recent years has also been made manifest as a type of positive discrimination. The second premise is that the multiplicity of spaces for the proliferation of social justice is proportional to the historical, epistemological, and symbolic conditions that surround it; in other words, to its locus of enunciation.

The above premises motivated discussion of the meanings of social justice in the educational setting, specifically in academic standards. Three arguments support this decision. First, the World Education Forum, held in 2000 in Dakar, ratified the Framework for Action for the Americas, a document that stipulated basic

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education to be a fundamental right of individuals; in such a framework, social justice was considered to be a priority in closing the educational gaps in each nation (Unesco, 2000). Second, in agreement with the recommendation from Dakar, Mexico's Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), through the sector's sub-program of basic education, recognized the following:

> In spite of the expansion of educational coverage and the growth of the average schooling of the nation's population, not only has justice been unattained, but the gap between marginalized groups and the rest of the nation's population has also become wider over time (SEP, 2001, p. 107).

Thus expressed, justice acquired a meaning of educational equality and compensation. According to the previously mentioned sectoral sub-program, basic education would mitigate the social inequalities of marginalized groups and groups in extreme poverty (SEP, 2001). The third argument, also in agreement with the above, is that Mexico implemented a policy to reformulate curriculum content and improve academic achievement in basic education. This policy was included, at the national level, in the National Program of Education 2001-2006 and the Sectoral Program of Education 2007-2012; among other aspects, it established the renovation of plans and programs of study for preschool in 2004, for secondary school in 2006, for elementary school in 2009, and an integrated reform of basic education in 2011. This reform replaced the three previous plans and is still in effect in the nation's system of basic education. To meet the goals established in the Framework for Action for the Americas, this renovation involved the adjustment of disciplinary focuses, the selection of new curriculum contents, the design of textbooks, and the updating of in-service teachers, among other actions.

Although this article centers its attention on basic education, the SEP also made changes in secondary and higher education. The common purpose was to contribute to the topic of social justice by offering high-quality service to various sectors of the population, especially to the so-called minority, unprotected, or disadvantaged sectors. An example of the above was the creation of the General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education (CGEIB) in 2001; this institution promoted the founding of Intercultural Universities for indigenous regions in 2004, the same year that the nation's normal schools created an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education with an Intercultural Bilingual focus to train bilingual teachers for indigenous regions.

One year later, in 2005, the Intercultural High School was created for the same type of regions. Three years later, in 2008, the SEP began work on the Open University for Distance Learning in Mexico, which was officially opened in 2012, offering various undergraduate majors for the entire population. Lastly, in 2009, the Integrated Reform of Secondary Education (RIEMS) was implemented to approve a general plan of study for all types of high schools.

Within this context, the current article studies the meanings of social justice as found in the plan of study for preschool 2004, secondary school 2006, and elementary school 2009. Excluded was the analysis of the so-called integrality of basic education, plan of study 2011, since the exploration of meanings by educational level (preschool, elementary, and secondary) was determined to be of greater interest; in addition, the plans of these three levels were renovated according to the content of the Framework for Action for the Americas.

For the effects of this project, a plan of study will be understood to be the document that condenses technocratic/normative thinking with respect to school tasks and the functions of both teachers and students (Díaz Barriga, 2005); in other words, it stipulates the curriculum, disciplinary, academic, and teaching orientations for the development of school practices and the attainment of educational ends.

In terms of organization, the article contains three sections. The first presents a brief conceptual genealogy of social justice, influenced by focuses such as natural laws, the nation-state, utilitarianism, and the so-called postmodernism. The second section analyzes the meanings of social justice as found in three plans of study of basic education. This second section is subdivided into four parts: three parts are dedicated to the revision of each plan of study (preschool education 2004, secondary education 2006, and elementary education 2009), based on three categories of the theory of argumentation by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969); the fourth part discusses such meanings in regard to the theoretical referents of the first section on the "genealogy of social justice". Lastly, the final section of the article expresses arguments related to social justice, specifically to the need to reduce social justice or not, due to its multiplicity.

Conceptual genealogy of social justice

The problematic field of social justice is initially crisscrossed by historical aspects of European societies (primitive, hierarchical, and market-based), as well as by conditions of possibility in epistemological terms. Based on those historical aspects, new forms of association were developed among individuals, today's societies, and knowledge. Underlying such conditions are contexts of equity, equal opportunities, injustice, human rights, collective needs, individual responsibility, freedom, self-regulation and abuse, as well as others (Miller, 1976; Braham, 1981; Campbell and Mancilla, 2012). These contexts, in turn, generated diverse forms of intellection that have permitted the dismounting and re-articulation of social justice per se.

To show part of the problematic field of social justice, a brief presentation is given of a genealogical exercise involving its conceptualizations; useful for this effect was the work of Miller (1976), Capeheart and Milovanovic (2007). This section's discussion of conceptual contributions does not imply a denial of theories developed in social justice in other regions such as Latin American or Mexico. For in-depth consultation, see the work of CTERA (2004), Bolívar (2005), and Latapí (1983).

The exercise neither recoups the essence of social justice, i.e., its "true" origin, nor establishes the supremacy of one conceptualization over another. On the contrary, the priority is to identify the distinct scenarios where social justice has taken place (Foucault, 1997). The conceptual genealogy presented here is organized into five groups, according to classical, modern, recent modern, postmodern and trained thinking.

From natural law to the primary conditions of democracy

This first group of conceptualizations can be associated with classical thinking, with reflections from Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas. Their contributions are related mainly to the idea of the state, natural laws, and human relationships.

For Plato (1951), justice was present in three cases: the experience of injury provoked by another person and revenge taken by the injured party; the repayment of debt acquired throughout life; and the exercise of absolute power

over a group of individuals.

Aristotle (2002), on the other hand, believed justice was the search for proportional equality among citizens; in other words, that equals should be treated as equals, and those not equal should be treated in an unequal manner. His thinking recognized the existence of distributive justice (the distribution of goods through transactions) and the justice of rectification (associated with damages caused by an individual).

Lastly, rooted in Biblical thinking, Thomas Aquinas affirmed that justice existed only in the interaction between a positive law (by legislators) and natural law (divine); thus in the event of incongruity in the exercise of fairness, natural law permitted disobedience. Thomas Aquinas distinguished between two types of justice: one general and one particular. The first type referred to the laws of the state, and in the last case, to natural law; the second type presents a process of communication (a relation of equality established between two persons) and a process of distribution (a community relation involving the distribution of joint assets).

These three contributions establish a series of conditions and binaries such as natural law and divine law; obedience and disobedience; just and unjust; equality and inequality, and so on. They also provide the foundation for what is now known as citizenship, the exercise of democracy, laws, norms, and punishment. In specific terms, some of these dualities are still present in daily practices at Mexican schools.

From the social contract to the cooperative social contract

This second group of conceptualizations can be included in modern thought. Outstanding are the contributions of Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Rousseau, who aimed their reflections toward the construction of democratic forms of society and individual rights.

Free from any religious basis, Hobbes developed the theory of the "social contract". According to this theory, a group of individuals would designate a sovereign, who would act with full authority to determine individual rights, enforce them, and judge claims of violations (Hobbes, 1958). The sovereign would have no pretense of authoritarianism; his task would be to ensure peace for those in his charge.

Locke, on the other hand, who introduced the notion of "freedom" in his work, indicated that humanity in general had the inherent right to live without any type of restrictions. He suppressed Hobbes' notion of "sovereign" and suggested that of "political authority". For Locke, such authority would ensure justice and resolve disagreements among individuals, a situation that had become more common due to the violations of individual rights (Locke, 1924).

Based on Cartesian dualism (separation of mind and body), Kant sustained that each person, because of his uniqueness, represented an end in himself and not a means to reach an end: the primordial reason for ensuring respect for each individual. His idea of justice was based on an "original contract" in which the state, in the form of a republic, had the obligation to respect the collective will (Kant, 1965).

Subsequently, Rousseau incorporated the notion of the "cooperative social contract", which defended the need to deal with the inequities of private property. This contract explained that a greater desire for ownership emphasized inequity. Rousseau's reflections focused on the search for self-improvement anchored in cooperative relationships among the members of society.

The conceptualizations of this second group favored the notions of "collectivities" and the "recognition of others". Such ideas have had an important effect through the present time, since they continue to reign in school practice in the development of plans of study in basic education.

From sympathy to situations that speak

The third group of contributions corresponds to a type of recent modern thought, with contributions by Smith, Mill, Hume, Spencer, Marx, Kropotkin, Rawls, and Habermas. The central reflections with respect to justice are associated with free markets, private property, injustice, violations, inequality, ethics, and moral principles.

For Smith, justice was rooted in the free market, understood as the possibility for each person to work according to his own interests, under the law of the state. Smith inserted the notion of "sympathy" into the problematic field of justice. Through this concept, he explained that within the economic sphere, some individuals have excelled and others have not; in this sense, the former must be compensated proportionally according to their participation and their capacity to achieve collective improvements, which would include those who did not excel. This second group would be grateful to the first, through sympathy (Smith, 1776).

In another system of ideas, Mill (1961) explained that individual actions could be catalogued in two ways. On one hand, actions would be considered correct to the degree they promoted happiness; yet if actions produced the contrary of happiness, they were incorrect. Mill argued that justice possessed a principle of utility reflected in one's search for individual happiness and in one's respect for the actions of others; injustice, on the other hand, was related to the violation of space, rights, and interests.

Hume explained that society was not a refuge of terror, but a type of market for the efficient satisfaction of desired achievement (Hume, 1902). In Hume's opinion, justice was a virtue that all individuals could develop, thus enabling the configuration of a more human society.

Spencer added the notion of the "ethic of social life". He assumed that in the economic market, people were competitive, independent, utilitarian, and selfish by nature. His notion of justice attempted to validate the structures of modern societies, in that each person would have to receive the benefits or consequences of his own conduct; the total of such benefits or consequences represented the measure of justice (Spencer, 1897).

Marx recognized that justice was inferior to the economic structure, which served the interests of the capitalistic minority, instead of the interests of justice; this structure also consolidated the class difference, exploitation, inequities, and alienation among sectors of the population.

In critical form, Kropotkin (1902) introduced the notion of "mutual help", which defended a sense of collaboration, solidarity, and prevention of generalized conflict. He believed justice was made specifically manifest through help for the needy. Based on such ideas, Kropotkin attempted to develop the idea of a self-regulated society, free from the state and coercive institutions.

In this order of ideas, in a desire to understand society and explain justice, Rawls (1971) developed the notions of "original position" and "principle of difference". For Rawls, at the original position, the individual is clear about the place he occupies in a determined social structure; while the principle of difference allows

identification of equality in terms of the rights and obligations of the members of society, resulting in a fair social contract. Thus Rawls believed that hierarchical organizations had to be indiscriminately open to all, although not necessarily equal in the distribution of income, status, and power.

Habermas (1976) introduced the notion of "ideal speech situation" to argue that individuals experience discursive moments with different claims of truth, or in his words: pretensions of validity, exactitude, veracity, and comprehensibility. Habermas explained that resolving conflict required the parties in dispute to dialogue freely until reaching genuine consensus, which could be established only in ideal speech situations in which each speaker viewed himself as equal to others in contributing to the discussion.

In this group of conceptualizations, justice began to consolidate as an active force in the discursive flow of the educational field, in its differentiated contexts and unique processes.

Social multiplicity and individual precariousness

The fourth group of contributions agglomerates the postmodern view of social justice, with outstanding contributions by Lyotard, Derrida, Rorty, Deleuze and Guattari, and Hardt and Negri. The characteristic of these thinkers is that they address issues such as the multiplicity of society, which reveals the precariousness of social subjects, and the effects of monopolistic manipulation and government agencies.

Lyotard (1984) abandoned the idea of justice as a dominant, finite discourse since he recognized the existence of short narratives of justice generated in each society, group, or sector of the population. For this reason he defended consensus, which included the sectorization, reinvention and the multiplicity of societies, and required individuals to think of opening themselves up to others.

Under this system of the Other, Derrida (1992), following the work of Levinas, assumed that individuals at all times have a duty to the Other (individual, citizen, and inhabitant). Thus he considered the legal system to be a violent act of imposition against individuals. In addition, Derrida delimited the concepts of law and justice. He believed law contained illusory questions and could be conceptually deconstructed; while justice, according to his thinking, could be experienced only in the exercise of interpersonal relations, with the expectation of nothing in return.

Rorty (1989) considered that social justice was directly linked to action and experimentation, an idea that allowed him to state that the intersection of cultures enabled the contingency of justice.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), adhering to the work of Lyotard, argued that the distinct models of society had originated in particular historical conditions. For these thinkers, justice was an abstract category associated with closed systems of self-reference and critical freedom, transgression, and movement beyond the limits imposed by contemporary life.

For Hardt and Negri (1994), justice could not be confined to law, since such an idea would reduce it to an abstraction like the idea of a legal individual. In contrast, justice had to be explained through the multiplicity of social expression, influenced by its forms of being and becoming.

In this manner, justice moved from the vertical to become horizontal, diagonal and perhaps tridimensional, metaphorically speaking. The postmodern era required a questioning of all that had been validated as unique; the result

was the consolidation of a decentralized individual, with precariousness and the need to change structures to explain the future of the conceptions of society, culture, and social practices.

From "being trained" in multiplicity

The fifth group of contributions integrates contributions from the focus of *capabilities* or "being trained". Such contributions primarily socialize proposals to address injustice as a sort of empowering aimed at the sectors of the population considered to be disadvantaged.

Anderson (1999) explained that it is necessary to be trained to function as a human and a citizen; in other words, as a participant equal to others in a system of cooperative production. Such a participant focuses his efforts on the promotion of capacities to struggle against social hierarchies, oppression, and exploitation.

Nussbaum (2006) proposes ten settings where the focus on being trained must include: life; physical health; physical integrity; the senses, imagination, and thought; the emotions; practical reasoning; the affiliation with various forms of social interaction; self-respect, the absence of humiliation based on race or sexual orientation; appreciation for other life forms (animals, plants, etc.), for play and recreation; and the struggles for one's own environment (political and material).

Alexander (2008) defines social justice as that which enables the creation of better living conditions in various areas, including safety, work, health, politics, and education.

This final group of contributions favors conditions of preparing for the future of social change; such a focus "trains" vulnerable sectors to generate conditions of social justice from their locus of enunciation.

In summary, the conceptual variety of justice shown here convokes various readings of social and educational practices—practices that in most cases are unnoticed in daily life. This genealogical horizon offers, for the discussion of plans of study, tools of intellection to reflect on the formation of students enrolled in basic education from 2004 to 2009.

Meanings of social justice in basic education

During the first decade of the 21st century, Mexico's Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) approved the implementation of three plans of study in basic education (preschool 2004, secondary school 2006, and elementary school 2009). The purpose of this action was to "strengthen moral values […] emphasizing the importance of democratic values like justice, impartiality, tolerance, and respect for diversity, and equality for teachers and students" (Unesco, 2000, p. 71).

Based on the above premise, this section analyzes the meanings of justice in the previously mentioned plans of study. The analysis was carried out in two parts. The first part involved a review of the indicated plans of study, as well as the location of justice. Once completed, the subsequent step was to extract the evidence of the concept's acquisition of meaning, followed by an analysis using three categories from the theory of argumentation: meaning, speaker, and scenario (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Meaning is conceived as contextualized association; in this case, of the concept of social justice. Referring to meanings is not to allude to final meanings, but to think about the various possibilities in which social justice can be constructed, such as through allusions, associations, relations, characteris-

tics, and conditions; not through a literal meaning. Speakers are those involved in the exercise of speech (orator and audience); in the present analysis, the speaker is the SEP and the audience may consist of students, teachers, and educational authorities. It should be mentioned that although these speakers are not named directly in the plans of study, they could be identified through contextualization, as a function of their directionality. Lastly, the scenario can be physical or symbolic; in any case, the scenario represents a place of inclusion for the strengthening of justice. Within the scenario established relationships exist among speakers, such as mandate, invitation, hierarchy, collaboration, assertion, and others.

Using the above three categories (meanings, speakers, and scenarios), Table 1 shows the results in terms of the plans of study issued in the first decade of the 21st century:

Table 1. Meanings of social justice in plans of study of basic education

Plan of Study/ Categories of Argumentation	Preschool 2004	Secondary School 2006	Elementary School 2009
Meaning	Underlying principle	Democratic principle and value	Reverse negative: injustice
Speakers	SEP Teachers General public	SEP Teachers	SEP Teachers Parents Educational authorities
Scenario	Classroom - Relations of assertion of reality Invitation Mandate	Classroom - Relations Mandate	Social spaces – Collaboration

Justice in preschool is presented as an underlying principle of education and community. The concept represents a minimal part of the process of training preschool users. In secondary school, justice is configured as a democratic principle and value; its purpose is to train adolescents under the banner of citizenship, with a participative life in national collective processes (involvement and responsibility). In elementary school, justice is a reverse negative; in other words, recognition of injustice with respect to the access to education that many sectors of the population still experience.

These results are mentioned below. For effects of organization, the three plans of study are discussed in a chronological manner. The three first sections mention the structure of the plans of study; then the characteristics of the educational users to whom these plans are directed (children or adolescents) are compiled; following is the evidence that alludes to justice based on the categories of speakers, scenario, and meaning. The fourth and final section contains fundamental theory. Regarding the conceptualizations presented in the genealogical section of social justice, the findings indicate that justice in preschool and elementary school is associated with a type of classical thinking, while a type of modern thinking impregnates justice in secondary school.

Justice as an underlying principle of education

The 2004 plan of study for preschool education consisted of seven sections: a) fundamentals of a high-quality preschool education for all; b) program characteristics; c) fundamental purposes; d) pedagogical principles; e) educational fields and competencies; f) organization of teaching work during the school year; and g) evaluation. Only sections a), c), and d) included a reference to justice.

The document recognized that social experiences at school (in general, interactions with other individuals) represented a key role in child development, as well as in the strengthening of children's abilities through appropriate learning environments. The group under study was aged three to six, "in the period when children develop their personal identity, acquire fundamental abilities, and learn the basic guidelines to become integrated into social life" (SEP, 2004, p. 11). In this case, the plan of study favored the learning of spoken language, autonomy, the manipulation of objects in general, and social relations.

This plan of study for preschool did not strictly define justice; however, in the three pieces of evidence discovered, the meaning of justice is associated with offering students education and basic training. In such conditions, the role of teachers is to obey guidelines and plan their professional performance in accordance with the objectives of national policy. The above is a response to the SEP's initial ordering of school practice, followed by its determination of the legitimacy of users' learning.

The first evidence of social justice was located in the fundamentals of this plan. Education was considered as a concept, an action, and a possibility; in other words, education was given a privileged place:

> Education is a fundamental right guaranteed by our nation's Constitution. The third Constitutional article establishes that the education provided by the state will tend to develop all human abilities harmoniously while encouraging love for the homeland, international solidarity, independence, and justice. To attain this objective, the same Constitutional article establishes the principles to which education will be subjected: a free, lay, democratic, and national character, appreciation for personal dignity, equality under the law, the struggle against discrimination and privilege, the supremacy of the general interest of society, international solidarity based on independence, and justice (p. 16).

This declaration's speakers are the SEP and readers in general. The quote considers education to be a means that gives any individual access to libertarian possibilities and a social conscience; thus the visible scenario is the assertion of reality. With such a description of education, no one can deny that it is a national right. In that sense, the SEP must be recognized as being supported by the Constitution in emphasizing the potential of education in the general regulatory framework. In this set of ideas and conceptions—or scaffolding, as it may be called—a reference to a quote was found. In the words of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, such scaffolding is an exercise of agreement among opinions; in this case, an exercise that occurs in government institutions. According to the quote, justice acquires meaning as an underlying principle of national education, which in turn is the basis of international solidarity.

The second piece of evidence was located in the purposes of the preschool plan

of study, which included the competencies children should attain to complete their preschool education. One of these competencies affirms the need for children:

> To appropriate the values and principles necessary for community life, while their actions are based on respect for the rights of others; the exercise of responsibilities; justice and tolerance; the recognition of and appreciation for the diversity of gender, language, culture, and ethnic group (p. 27).

In the above quote, the speakers are the SEP and Mexico's teachers; although written as an objective for students to attain, the plan is not made available to them. To achieve the competency, the visible scenario is the SEP's invitation to teachers, individuals who have been assigned the task of planning, directing, and evaluating school practice.

With respect to meaning, justice underlies the concept of community: the collective construction of "I". The above is more evident when reference is made to the rights of others, responsibility, and appreciation for the diversity of gender, language, culture, and ethnic group, which in general result in synonymy—defined as the "repetition of a simple idea by means of different words" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 176).

The third piece of evidence that alludes to justice was found in the section on the environments of learning; according to the preschool plan of study, such environments must promote attitudes of self-perception among students, as well as group work and classroom work:

> By participating in this community, children acquire confidence in their ability to learn and can realize that their achievements are the product of individual and collective work.
>
> At an early stage, children tend to consider that the results of an activity, whether good or bad, depend on luck or the intervention of others. It is desirable for children to learn gradually to pay attention to their process of work and to evaluate their results differentially. That possibility is influenced by the teacher's judgment and group interaction. If children perceive that evaluating their performance and that of their classmates implies justice, congruity, respect, and the recognition of effort, they will accept that evaluation is a form of collaboration that does not disqualify them (p. 40).

In this quote, the speakers are once again the SEP and teachers. A classroom scenario of mandate was identified; in the classroom, teachers have the task of managing the environments of learning for achieving educational purposes. Regarding the quote, it would be useful to ask what happens at the time children are not subject to the teacher's evaluation, such as during recess. This idea would make reference to non-scholastic justice that is constructed outside, not only in the classroom, but also under the conditions of teachers' control, where interaction and communication occur in a framework of the Other's perception of subjectivity.

Justice: Between value and democratic principle

The plan of study of 2006 for secondary school education supported the three types of secondary schools (general secondary schools, technical secondary schools,

and tele-secondary schools). The plan consisted of seven sections: a) the purposes of basic education; b) the profile of graduates from basic education; c) central elements in the definition of a new curriculum; d) characteristics of the plan and programs of study; e) the curriculum map; f) purposes of subjects; and g) teaching orientations for the best utilization of programs of study. Of these sections, only sections a) and f) refer to justice.

Prior to reviewing their meanings, it would be worthwhile to state that secondary education serves adolescents from ages 12 to 16. Adolescence, according to the plan of study from 2006, is a moment of tension when personal definitions associated with the adult world are established, accompanied by physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. In the exact words of this plan of study, adolescence is:

> A stage of transition toward adulthood that occurs within a social and cultural framework [...] a social construction that varies according to the culture and era. This process of growth and transformation has a double connotation; on one hand, it implies a series of individual biological and psychological changes until maturity is reached, and on the other hand, the progressive preparation individuals must acquire to become integrated into society (SEP, 2006, pp. 13 and 14).

The two pieces of evidence shown in the following paragraphs identify two meanings of justice: value and democratic principle. Although the classroom scenario is favored, the community was considered a symbolic scenario. The pretense of the latter is to give adolescents the possibility of experiencing exercises of democratic and electoral citizenship, without losing sight of the implications of their decisions for collectivity.

The first piece of evidence, found in the section on the purposes of basic education, acquired meaning as a value that emanates from Mexican law. The following is expressed:

> The curriculum contents of the various subjects also favor the formation of values in secondary education. The third article of the Constitution provides a general framework of values that orient the content of basic education; therefore, some values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, appreciation, and respect for life, cultural diversity, and personal dignity, constitute permanent elements of the programs of study (p. 23).

As in the case of preschool, the plan of study for secondary school includes a reference to argument, supported by the third article of the Mexican Constitution. The quote refers to curriculum contents as guides in students' educational process; however, the immediate speakers are the SEP and teachers, who must administrate the contents in their planning in order to attain the ends of basic education. The scenario is the classroom mandate, which requires teachers to make the necessary efforts to comply with the purposes established in this plan of study for secondary schools, of 2006.

The meaning of justice was still associated with value, which could be developed especially in the context of daily and collective work. It is worthwhile to state that not expressing justice as a moral, civic, or ethical value does not imply the lack of position; on the contrary, the position assumed in this article is that of

respecting the plans of study in order to avoid bias. On the other hand, expressing the notions of equality, solidarity, appreciation, and respect for life, etc., makes evident a synonymy of values, which are unchanged throughout the plan of study.

The second piece of evidence was found in the purposes of Civic and Ethical Education, a sequenced subject that begins in the second year and ends in the third year. One of these purposes is:

> Identify the characteristics of democracy in the rule of law; understand the democratic meaning of the division of power, federalism, and the electoral system; know and assume the principles that sustain democracy—justice, equality, freedom, solidarity, legality, and equity; understand the mechanisms and procedures of democratic participation; and recognize the adherence to legality as a necessary component of democracy that guarantees respect for human rights (p. 38).

In this case, once again the speakers are the SEP and teachers, who must encourage the attainment of the purposes of the subject of Civic and Ethical Education. The above permits the existence of a classroom scenario of mandate. The meaning of justice is linked to the principles of democracy, which marks an alternate path to that of preschool, with its reference to the principles of education. It should be remembered that in both cases, the suggestions of the World Education Forum are not disassociated.

With respect to the above quote, a synonymy of democratic principles was identified (equality, freedom, solidarity, legality, equity). These principles were to be strengthened initially in the classroom, and according to the plan of study for secondary school, were to be developed until the adolescents reached adulthood. Such democratic principles involve an epistemological dimension (knowledge of the Mexican democratic system) and another phenomenological dimension (exercise of electoral practice).

The reverse negative of justice

The plan of study of 2009 for elementary education consisted of seven sections: a) basic education in the international and national context; b) main challenges for offering high-quality education; c) central elements in the definition of a new curriculum; d) the curricular articulation of basic education; e) competencies for life and the profile of the graduate of basic education; f) characteristics of the plan and programs of study; and g) the curricular map. Of the above, only section b) identified a numerical reference to the negative condition of justice, an aspect that was considered feasible for elimination. The rest of the document makes no allusion to justice.

In contrast with the meanings found in the preschool and secondary school plans of study, the elementary school plan revealed meaning focused on the reverse of justice; i.e., injustice. This concept represents the perfect pretext for opportunity, access and possibility; concretely, such an opportunity is determined by the users' social conditions. It should be indicated that the mentioned children were not at school, but lived in potential conditions of unattained justice.

The sole evidence located in this respect was in the section of "main challenges for offering high-quality education", which assumed that children aged six to twelve were at the center of educational intervention—which was structured by specific elements, including the classrooms where users attend class, the schedu-

les of educational activity, the teachers in charge of a specific educational level, the processes of evaluation of learning, among others. The discussion against the negative condition of justice emphasized the following:

> Fourteen of every 100 children (six in elementary school and eight in secondary school) do not have the opportunity to attend school and interact with a teacher. This is a fact of enormous unsocial justice, especially since these children are members of groups of the population in the most vulnerable situations and contexts (rural, indigenous, migrants, laborers, homeless, with special educational needs, with or without handicaps, etc.) (SEP, 2009, p. 18).

The above quote recognized that the speakers are the SEP, teachers, parents, educational authorities, and general public. In this statement, the SEP indicated the existence of unsocial justice toward vulnerable sectors of the population; and disclosing this phenomenon was an exhortation for the audience to contribute so that users in conditions of injustice could attend school. In such a case, the scenario was that of collaboration.

Thinking about the complexion of social justice in plans of study

The result of analyzing social justice, in the area of academic standards, permitted the discovery of three major meanings—one for each educational level: underlying principle in preschool; democratic principle and value in secondary school; and reverse negative in elementary school. This set of meanings forms a type of complexion, which can be understood as a constellation of meanings, speakers, scenarios, and relations (Malaga, 2014). Such a complexion (Table 1), as associated with these plans of study, grants a certain identity to the social justice of the first decade of the 21st century; in other words, unique and unrepeatable.

The plans of study represent the central axis for the development of educational practices, ends, and purposes at school. In the analyzed cases, the predominant physical scenario for strengthening justice is the classroom. In elementary school, however, its reverse is found in a symbolic scenario (diversity of social spaces); such a reverse is experienced through the conditions of absence of inclusion and integration of users. The speakers are primarily the SEP, teachers, students, and parents. Depending on the case, the relations that are established among them are of mandate, invitation, collaboration, and assertion (vertical and multi-directional).

According to the evidence presented in the above sections, justice is seen to acquire a distinct conceptualization as a function of the corresponding plan of study. Table 2 shows this result in schematic form:

Table 2. Mentions of justice in plans of study of basic education

Plan of Study	Preschool 2004	Secondary 2006	Elementary 2009
Mentions of Justice	Classical Conceptualization	Modern Conceptualization	Classical Conceptualization

Each type is explained below. Justice in preschool, having the meaning of an underlying principle in education, is found within a framework of classical thinking. Based on the writings of Thomas Aquinas, the existence of positive law (by legislators) can be affirmed. In this case, the law assumed at school (by directors and

teachers) aims at fairness in students' individual and collective actions, through their interaction; in other words, in their process of constructing "I", as well as in their education and integration into the life of society.

Justice in secondary school, on the other hand, with a meaning of democratic principle and value, is found within a framework of modern thought. Two reasons permit the above affirmation. First, the meaning attributed to justice is related to a type of daily, collective learning. In second place, the type of education offered in secondary school is directly related to the writings of Hobbes, Locke, and Kant: respect for each individual; enforcement of the collective will; and the resolution of disagreements. All are ideas that form part of the purposes of secondary education.

Lastly, justice in elementary school, with a meaning of reverse justice—i.e., injustice—is found within a framework of classical thinking. Based on the writings of Aristotle, such injustice, with respect to the opportunity for achievement, is identified as a possibility for equal treatment among citizens. The type of injustice mentioned in the plan of study of elementary school is strongly rooted in the justice of rectification, which seeks to correct damage caused by any inequality that the state generates among its citizens.

In summary, based on the elements presented above, the affirmation can be made that in the three plans of study, social justice is sustained in a reductionist manner regarding the multiplicity and complexity of society.

In closing

The possibilities of interpreting plans of study are undoubtedly infinite and are not fully covered in this article, which makes only an epistemological approach to the field of social justice. The theoretical and conceptual efforts carried out in this field represent a starting point for understanding the distinct realities and the complexity of today's societies.

In terms of educational legislation, other forms of establishing society must be studied; not only in idyllic aspects, but also in geopolitical spaces where social justice is almost imperceptible due to the preponderance of corruption, organized crime, civil war, racism, discrimination, and other problems to which Mexican society is exposed daily.

It can be seen that the complexion of social justice in the plans of study acquires a property of plasticity as well as a property of precariousness. Plasticity refers to the conditions of the adaptability of justice, depending on the scenarios or loci of enunciation. Precariousness, on the other hand, is associated with the impossibility of conceiving justice in a finite, closed, and unique form for all of the world's societies; in other words, a society's precariousness would have to recognize other conditions of possibility for institutions as well as for the individuals in a determined society.

The conclusion is that it is necessary to question the reductionist condition of social justice in the plans of study and to reactivate justice at school, which continues to be seen as a synthetic laboratory in which idyllic conditions of life and society are often sketched. Such action will allow, in the first place, the visualization of conflicts of a symbolic type. Then it will offer the possibility of reflecting on the imposition of a national plan of study that recognizes but does not accept the emergence of local curriculums that are elaborated according to their users' needs. As a result, the suggestion is for teachers to consider aspects of the local, national, and international context for analyzing their schools. In this manner, they will have greater possibilities of constructing differentiated notions of social justi-

ce, close to differentiating focuses.

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