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Editorial

Management of Social Change: The Draft Statutory Bill to Regulate the Fundamental Right to Education in Colombia

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In Colombia, during the year 2023, several legislative changes have been discussed. One of them is the draft Statutory Law that seeks to regulate the fundamental right to education. The bill seeks to remedy flaws such as the lack of connection between the different educational levels, financing and organization of the educational system, apart from establishing education as a fundamental right. Now, the subject of the bill is linked to the way of making social changes. Currently, the government has implemented several reforms that seek to establish certain social changes in which are indicated as a principle, the constitution of a more inclusive, fair society and in line with the project of nation derived from the peace process.

Beyond the contingency or evaluation of each proposal for legislative change, there is a need to review the way of thinking about social change. Already in *Open Society and its Enemies*, Karl R. Popper states that closed societies, for example totalitarian ones, promote social changes usually based on utopian social engineering, i.e. the belief that social change must be total, in which idealized general projects of nationhood are proposed, as in the case of Plato, when in *The Republic* he expresses the ideal model

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of society that should be established. Faced with these ways of managing social change, Karl R. Popper opposes the idea of gradual social engineering; gradual changes in institutions that, in a concrete way, and through a critical and democratic exercise, manage to evaluate social problems and the changes that should be made to reduce the problems, in search of reducing suffering, a kind of negative utilitarianism.

This use of critical thinking, evaluation and the fallibility of hypotheses transfers part of the philosopher's thinking from science to political reflection. Regardless of whether his theories still haunt the academy, what is important here is that political decisions in democratic societies must take into account that utopian changes in society, the ideal of society, even if it is presented as the fulfillment of values such as equality, justice, equity, etc., cannot be achieved satisfactorily with social changes derived from a sudden and total transformation. Faced with this, Popper reminds us that social changes can be initiated from the modification of social institutions, gradually, which has the advantage of maximizing and rationally evaluating the resources available and the goals that can be achieved. On the other hand, this way of managing change recognizes the difficulty of implementing general models of behavior or global changes that dramatically transform people's ways of living. For this reason, Popper criticizes closed societies that try to establish a perfect model of society and in the process, in search of happiness and social improvement, increase general suffering. Hence the old saying is always valid: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions".

Now, at the present time, Colombia is undergoing several legislative amendments that seek to change public policies and institutions. In the case of education, this draft Statutory Law, although necessary to update and address the problems of the education sector, in its formulation may face some drawbacks arising from the same good intentions to respond to the structural problems of exclusion. One tangential case is that the proposed legislative project, with all the positive elements it raises, may present some weaknesses in the formulation of the relationship between education and the international context, an issue of utmost importance in a globalized society.

For this reason, it is a pertinent moment to reflect on the intentions and ways of constituting these changes. A general model of education is being presented that revolves around an ideal of nation and principles of social organization, as well as solutions to structural problems of society. However, behind the search for this, there is the problem of ideals that sometimes make us lose sight of the concrete problems and resource limitations that society is experiencing.

To quote Karl R. Popper, the management of social change based on utopian social engineering, i.e., the idealization of a model of society that we want to work, can lead to forcing greater problems instead of solutions. Faced with this, and in relation to education, evaluating the changes and modifications that society requires, thinking in terms of gradual modifications and based on reducing the suffering of a greater number of people, can be a much more effective way of dealing with social problems. Hence, the current attempts to make multiple legislative reforms, which are necessary, yes, but which imply substantial changes at all levels, can be problematic. Prioritizing some over others, in this way, it is more realistic to reduce the suffering of a majority, instead of laws being created and the state, due to monetary, enforcement or even political power incapacity, causing the rules to be reduced to paper, with no positive effects on society or even producing serious problems.

In accordance with the foregoing, we hope that the draft Statutory Law that seeks to regulate the fundamental right to education reaches a successful conclusion, in such a way as to provide a sufficiently effective and comprehensive solution to the problems of education in Colombia, but that it is also correct in terms of its application.

The presentation of the State's limitations and the recognition of the critical points that need to be solved. For example, not only about inclusion but also about how education in Colombia should enable its citizens to position themselves in a global environment, highly interconnected, multicultural and with complex relationships between the local and the global.

The draft Statutory Law that seeks to regulate the fundamental right to education is presented, as is common in any reform, as a substantial and paradigmatic change in the understanding of education. Evidencing its goodness, as well as its defects, are necessary steps to recognize the elements of the discourse and evaluate it in the light, not only from our desires, but from the possibilities of adjustment that a norm can contribute to an educational process of a high degree of complexity and with diverse stakeholders.