

Editorial

If governors do not build schools, in twenty years there won't be enough money to build prisons. (Darcy Ribeiro¹)

With diverse cultures, ethnic origins, social structures, religions and political regimes, what do Finland, Vietnam, Belgium or Shanghai have in common? The answer is simple: they are some of the countries (or provinces) that have achieved more than 500 points in the evaluation of the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) in 2012². The fact that education is a common element among places with so many socio-cultural differences demonstrates its unequivocal importance as a factor capable of promoting the effective emancipation of a country and its people.

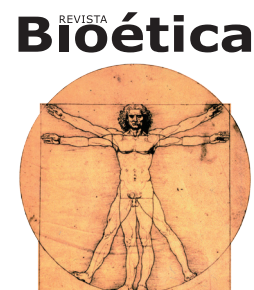
The ranking that compares 72 countries shows that education is taken seriously among the top performers, being considered fundamental to overcome underdevelopment. In addition to being a lever for economic prosperity, increased education contributes to social cohesion. Education allows for dialogue and fosters socially shared thinking, which are positive ways of reducing inequality, promoting social insertion, collaborating with the end of subemployment and with the reduction of surplus value.

The process of building access to knowledge, which is collectively experienced in societies that have education as a priority, creates a basis for the maintenance of ethnic and social identity. It also allows us to understand the conflicts with the most perverse aspects of globalization: the fragmenting forces (which forge and stimulate prejudices) and the massification forces (which disseminate and legitimize intolerance). That is, education is a tool to stimulate the emancipation of people and society.

Contrary to this history of combat and conquering to achieve prosperity, which, according to PISA, thrives in different parts of the world, Brazil did not advance in the last evaluation: *Nearly half (44.1%) of the Brazilian students were below Level 2 in the exam, which is the level of learning regarded as adequate*³. Although the 2012 report described a path of overcoming adversity⁴, the comparison between countries in absolute terms, made three years later, revealed that the goal of improving education was not met.

As far as reading and science knowledge is concerned, Brazil only maintained its position, and in mathematics a slight drop was identified. This means that in these disciplines, important for vocational training in any area, but essential to the performance of social life, 15-year-olds assessed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) did not show even basic preparation. This is sad news whose repercussions will extend over the next few decades.

It is true that in this period, access to education by lower income segments continued to increase, a process already identified in 2012. However, it is worth considering that, if the results of this expansion do not favour the achievement of the institution's primary objective - which in the case of schools is to produce knowledge and transmit knowledge -, this achievement loses a significant part of its value. It is not enough that people have attended school, it is indispensable that they have learned how to appropriate knowledge and understood the importance of using it in a socially meaningful way for the survival of the planet and the well-being of all.



Except for some timeous praiseworthy experiences, which reveal more personal effort than the general application of public policy, it could roughly be said that in Brazil there was an increase in enrolment (the entrance and duration of attendance of some groups in school) at the same time that there was a drop in education (that is, learning and performance declined). The requirement to increase access to school (at all levels) was not preceded by the acceleration in the quantity or by the improvement of the quality of the training of suitable professionals, restricting the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy of access to education. Without the existence of trained institutions and personnel, there was a drive for the enrolment of contingents of people who, because of these questions, were partly prejudiced in their aim to seek knowledge, because they failed to receive all the training they are entitled to and consider legitimately acquired^{5,6}.

What is currently occurring in education is a lack of personnel, since the increase in demand was not met by the growth in the supply of skilled personnel, which is associated tangentially with the fact that the teaching has, in the last decades, ceased to be a socially respected career. It is also easy to identify a lack of qualifications in many of those who already work in the sector, because sometimes the professionals who teach courses have no real preparation for the task, either because there are no courses available or because of the lack of quality of this training⁷. Thus, professionals and students lose, Brazilian institutions lose, future generations, whose present is already engaged in fruitless projects, lose.

Moreover, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of education, rescuing the importance of merit, which, coupled with the notion of quality, must be the goal of the educational process. Nowadays, for a large part of Brazilian society, talking about merit equates to advocating advantages and privileges, the socially and morally indefensible. This spurious perception must be discarded; the notion of merit must be associated with the positive effect of the effort to overcome, the commitment to do better and better. In this way, we must work to ensure that the problems of public education (at all levels) are effectively identified, so that the desired quality is actually achieved, so that students have effective access to knowledge, and not only to degrees that in practice prove to be inconsistent.

Moreover, as far as the content of knowledge is concerned, it is necessary to think that all over the world, encyclopedic knowledge, identified until the end of the last century as intelligence and erudition, is no longer the hallmark of intellect. Machines are much more efficient at storing unimaginable amounts of information (in quantities expressed by powers of 1,000) and, above all, in evaluating and comparing them at speeds unattainable to humans. Now what matters is the ability to think, to articulate information, to reason about them, to reflect on their meaning and to elaborate applicable answers, even if we are also destined to lose to machines on this matter in the near future.

But the assessment captured by PISA is definitely a dilemma when one has in mind the ethical dimension, that is, when one considers the values related to the process of educating. And what exactly are the values being transmitted to the population when poor and low quality education is offered? Who are we trying to deceive? Because, when the country is "caught" disputing the last ten positions, the end of the line among others 72 countries, we cannot pretend that the average quality is being increased with increased access.

Therefore, we consider it necessary to evaluate quality and quantity separately. Providing access is unquestionably great, but it should be noted that access alone does not ensure the necessary results for the reduction of inequality,

expected by and for all citizens. Education is the main collective means to achieve the improvement of life and quality of life, allowing the achievement of a more convenient professional situation and greater job satisfaction. It is also an end in itself, because it intensifies the person's understanding of the world's relationships, revealing itself as a tool for their emancipation.

When it education is considered as a continuous process, it is simple to understand that for an educational project to work and to produce effective changes in society, it must extend over time, spanning consecutive generations. It is this process that allows the consolidation of a world view that guides the educational project itself, which in the Brazilian case is based on the Constitution⁸. Therefore, it is indispensable that the educational project be configured as a State policy, crossing different governments and transcending the different ideologies to guarantee for all Brazilians, in time and space, this fundamental right.

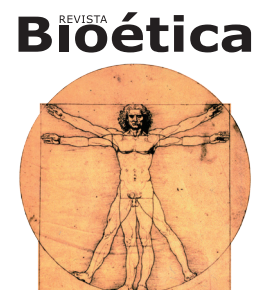
Over the past eleven years we have emphasized, in many editorials, how much we believe and fight for this perspective. How much *Revista Bioética's* editors and editorial staff value education, considering it an essential part of the right to health. For us, health and education cannot be unconnected, the first being a reflection of the second, whether in regard to the adoption of policies aimed at avoiding illness, or in terms of guaranteeing the best care, in the ethical and technical perspectives. For the support received, we also believe that ad hoc referees also agree with us and consider it important to consolidate bioethics as a transdisciplinary field of knowledge development.

The recognition of its quality has made *Revista Bioética* the only Brazilian scientific paper in its field to obtain indexation in international databases, such as Lilacs, SciELO, Redalyc, Latindex, Periódica, Ebsco, Doaj. This fact is considerable for a scientific publication in Latin America, which challenges the canons of the hegemonic model of bioethics and brings articles focused on the social dimension of the health and illness process, as consolidated in the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*⁹.

And in this year in which *Revista Bioética* celebrates its silver jubilee, we could not fail to thank those who effectively collaborate with us daily, giving the necessary reviews regarding the evaluation of manuscripts. We also want to once again call upon all our effective and extraordinary collaborators to give their generous contribution to the paper. We count on your expertise as authors, evaluators and readers, to continue working for applied ethics in our country.

Considering that commitment to the ethical training of professionals in the various health areas will promote public policies capable of discouraging ethical deviations, inhibiting the commodification of health, and drive out those that cause harm to the population, perhaps we can reconstruct the salutary expectation of eliminating inequalities in access to health and education, and in 50, 100 or even another 500 years live in a society ruled by justice and equity. Participating in this achievement has been the main challenge of *Revista Bioética* for 25 years.

At the present time, it seems that the first step to make this process effective is to rescue the hope, which has been weakened in the wake of citizenship. The loss of hope for better days fractured society and undermined tolerance, whose lack fuels the chaos in which the country now plunges. Hope, tolerance, respect, dignity, integrity and justice are ingredients that cannot be lacking in the social pact, since its stimulus is fundamental to face the adversities inherent in overcoming the historical and cultural limits of the development of the country and guarantee that, in the end, social justice prevails. Achieving this goal is the objective of *Revista Bioética*, and we call on our collaborators and readers to share it.



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