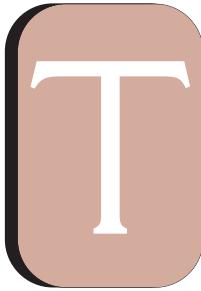# Introduction

Future Education: Prospective for sustainability and social justice

Guest-edited special issue:
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There is a long tradition of studies about the future, such as interdisciplinary studies, also known as prospective research (Bas, 2002). Interest in the future has been constant in humanity; people have always been concerned for their future whether from religions, for example, eschatology or apocalypticism, or from ideologies such as utopias. And also from science, carrying out prospective studies from the analysis of the past and the present to make projections or forecasts about the future that are based on knowledge (Santisteban, 2013). In fact, the future is the only temporal category in which we can intervene since, everything we do as people, we do thinking about the future.

In parallel to studies about the future there have been proposals for their application to education, in what we call Education for the Future, related to a democratic education for participation and social change (Slaughter, 2002; Anguera & Santisteban, 2016). How can we teach and how can we learn to think about the future? What are the competences needed to, carry out prospective studies? How do we convince children that they are the protagonists of the future? In this educational process the values of sustainability and social justice have to be the essential two pillars of Education for the Future (Ojala, 2017; Sant, Lewis, Delgado & Ross, 2018; Sant & González-Valencia, 2018). Meanwhile we should not forget the education for peace at a time when Europe is suffering a new war.

The media always offers a negative view of the future, taking up the tradition that we also find in literature. Through films, television series or on digital platforms, as well as in any other media, pessimistic images of the future are propagated. The negative forecasts favour the passivity of youth and a lack of participation in the face of a future situation that seems predetermined and in which it would seem that we can neither act nor decide on futures that are different (Santisteban & Anguera, 2013). Democratic education should make an effort to convince young people that they have to solve social problems and build a better world from a position of social commitment. But the abundance of images in the opposite direction make it very difficult to achieve this end. This is the aim of Education for the Future—to help young people to imagine positive images or scenarios for the future and take personal and social responsibility to achieve them.

Some authors consider that these dystopias offered by the media, through any channel or digital platform, can be tools of social criticism to analyse the current situation (Francescutti, 2003), since they are an exaggerated prediction of what may happen and they have had a clear impact in the development of the ecology movement and the call for a more sustainable economy, for example. But there are other authors who consider that science fiction or the images offered by the media about the future are consumed as just a distraction and the political message is forgotten, meaning that no social change is generated. It is therefore necessary to offer other readings of audio-visual products, particularly in education but also in other forums of public participation (Musset, 2012). Negative or pessimistic views of the future are what we call dystopias and they paint scenarios characterised by dehumanisation, inequality,

limitless technification, generalised conflict, overpopulation, pollution, a lack of democracy, etc. We need to reflect on these scenarios and on how we as people can change them using social intervention, and in that sense education is a fundamental aspect for working with these fictitious or dystopic stories and for on or dystopias and to learn how to think of other different futures (Pascual, 2021). In the face of dystopic narratives, which can be taking as a starting point as works of fiction, we can teach students to build alternative counter-hegemonic stories or counter-stories, taking as the horizon other futures from the point of view of human rights. In this process we need to teach critical thinking to be able to evaluate the social problems in our world, but also creative or different thinking to be able to imagine possible solutions or alternatives to the problems. In that respect, Education for the Future is strongly related to both critical and creative thinking.

It is very interesting to analyse past futures; in other words, how the future was imagined in other times or what has been called retrofuturism. Many of these images may appear anachronic but they are nonetheless a reflection of the hopes and fears of each period. A paradigmatic example of this is Jules Verne's (2018) "Paris in the 20th century", written in 1863 in which he imagines Paris in 1960. It is a pessimistic, almost dramatic, view of the world one hundred years on, bearing in mind that his adventure novels were fairly optimistic. Apart from getting it right in imagining different mechanical contraptions, just as Leonardo da Vinci and, decades later, Isaac Asimov had, Cerne predicted that the world would suffer great dehumanisation and would be dominated by technology. In one passage of the book a family is dining without saying a word to each other—rather like the present when people are looking at their mobile phones and not speaking to each other.

As people we always have the option of choosing our future and so there are always different futures in the short, medium or long term before us. This has always been the case and in the past people took decisions which shaped their future at all times. There were always different options, just as there are now, and we can always choose. From the point of view of education this is very important and necessary in democratic education, since from any other point of view we would be accepting that there is no choice, that the future has been and is determined, without us having a choice. That is why we need to promote the study of possible, probable and desirable futures (Kirschenbaum & Simon, 1974; Slaughter, 1988; Inayatullah, 2020). Some authors consider that this is a perception that does not contemplate the complexity of the present and propose three different types of futures: extended present, familiar futures, unthought futures (Sardar & Sweeney, 2016).

Research into Education for the Future shows what kind of representation of the future children and young people have, where technological and catastrophic images of the general future of the planet abound. Contrary to these images, when thinking about their own personal future, most of them think they will achieve what they want to if they make an effort (Hicks, 2006; Anguera & Santisteban, 2013; Franceschelli & Keating, 2018). On the other hand, primary age children are much more optimistic about the future than adolescents. As they grow up they lose confidence in their ability to change the present and to build a better future (Hicks & Holden, 2007). This should

make us wonder why young people have not developed competences for prospective research applied to the important social problems in the world today.

In the current post-pandemic context of fake news and conflict, references to uncertainty about the future in all kinds of studies and publication are on the increase. These are the liquid times of Bauman (2006), in which it seems that there are no lasting social or cultural references. There is no longer security in progress and some authors consider than current society is the "risk society" (Luhmann, 2006), producing a sense of insecurity among the public which does not favour participation or hope for social change. This sensation of continual change and a lack of permanency in important aspects of life or social organisation is not new; in fact, it can already be seen in the Epic of Gilgamesh, written in 2650 BCE: "'There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand for ever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? (…). From the days of old there is no permanence." (Quoted in Whitrow, 1990, 48). Therefore, the perception of the acceleration of time and of changes is nothing new to our time but something inherent to humanity.

Studies on the Future and Education for the Future are essential aspects to approach from communication and education as part of a democratic preparation for participation, particularly at this time when fundamental democratic values are being questioned in many countries. It is also essential to educate our young people and persuade the public that we can build a better future. For these reasons, the journal approaches this topic, to inform about the research, deficits and possibilities of Education for the Future through five articles in the monograph. In the first article, David Menéndez-Alvarez-Hevia, Santos Urbina-Ramírez, Dolors Forteza-Forteza and Alejandro Rodríguez-Martín, carry out a systematic review of the international literature on the study of futures in education, using the data bases of the Web of Science and Scopus. The findings show that there is a balance between theoretical and empirical studies and that they are concentrated in specialised journals in certain countries. They also show that multidisciplinarity is limited outside the area of social sciences. The conclusion is that literacy in futures is a key element for promoting the dynamics of change in education.

In the second article Alejandro Carbonell-Alcocer, Juan Romero-Luis, Manuel Gértrudix-Barrio and Eddy Borges-Rey, consider education for a sustainable future through the circular economy. The objective is to identify the forces of change to improve educational intervention in Spain, to promote the commitment and participation of young people. The qualitative methodology combines discourse analysis using the established theory and prospective analysis using the scenarios method. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used with specialists and managers, teacher trainers, teachers and researchers. The strengths and weaknesses were identified, establishing a matrix of probabilities and impacts which allow the identification of three possible futures. The article concludes with a series of recommendations for strengthening the desired scenario and avoiding the dystopic scenario.

Alessandro Manetti, Pablo Lara-Navarra and Jordi Sánchez-Navarro, fare the authors of the third article, which related studies on the future and the design discipline. The objective of the study is to verify the validity of the DEFLEXOR method which was developed in response to the need to detect educational opportunities based on future scenarios, defined from macrotrends detected in different fields. It uses mixed research methods combined with design methodologies to open up new paths for studying the evolution, impact and behaviour of trends in future scenarios. The conclusions highlight the fact the combination of an integrative perspective of qualitative and quantitative methods with the methodological principles of design thinking, in combination with the use of automatised calculations based on the creative thinking of experts, constitutes a powerful methodological construct for developing prospective studies.

The fourth article is the work of Jordi Castellví, Carmen Escribano, Rodrigo Santos and Jesús Marolla, and presents a qualitative descriptive and interpretative analysis of the curricula in Australia, Spain and Chile, as well as interviews with teachers from each country to study the role of Education for the Future in their syllabuses as well as its level of development to find out the influence of education for the future in schools. To do this they identify four dimensions: situate in time, anticipate, imagine alternative futures and act socially. The results show that while the Australian curriculum includes education for the future explicitly, the Spanish and Chilean curricula only include it tangentially. Some of the elements that decide the development of education for the future in schools are the sociocultural context of the school and the willingness of the teachers.

Marina Casadellà, Mariona Massip-Sabater, Neus González-Monfort, Alfredo Dias-Gomes and Maria-João Barroso-Hortas are the authors of the fifth and last article in the monograph. In this study, official public policy documents from Spain and Portugal are analysed to examine the idea of future in educational systems. The study is carried out on three levels: laws on education, primary school curricula and institutional policies for teacher training

in universities. The results show that there a few references to the construction of the concept of future- both at a general regulatory level and in the curricula and teacher training programmes. The article concludes that this situation should be reversed to introduce Education for the Future in all the areas analysed, taking as a reference the competences of democratic culture defined by the European Council.

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