Participation of the C20 in the G20 negotiation table bringing representativity and legitimacy: a case study of the Education Working Group under Brazil's presidency in 2024

Participação do C20 na mesa de negociações do G20 trazendo representatividade e legitimidade: um estudo de caso do Grupo de Trabalho de Educação sob a presidência do Brasil em 2024

Participación del C20 en la mesa de negociaciones del G20 aportando representatividad y legitimidad: un estudio de caso del Grupo de Trabajo de Educación bajo la presidencia de Brasil en 2024

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Abstract

This article examines the social participation of the C20 in the G20, focusing on the inclusion of civil society in the group's formal meetings through the proposal of a Social G20 by Brazil during its presidency in 2024, with an emphasis on the Education Working Group. The case study analyzes the dynamics of the participation of C20 delegates as interlocutors in the G20, with access to discussions and debates on educational policies, participating in the negotiations. The qualitative methodology employed includes analysis of materials, discourse, and participant research, utilizing documents and participation in the meetings analyzed in 2024: on education professionals and the use of technology in education. The results highlight the importance of the articulation between the C20 and the G20 to promote inclusive and sustainable educational policies, already showing signs of impact in the formal construction of public commitments and of enforcement mechanisms and in the content of deliberations, providing greater representativity and legitimacy to the group, in processes that can be deepened in case of continuation and improvement of this democratic practice.

Keywords: G20; Legitimacy; Representativity; Commitment; Enforcement.

Resumo:

Este artigo examina a participação social do C20 no G20, focando na inclusão da sociedade civil nas reuniões formais do grupo por meio de proposta de G20 Social, pelo Brasil em sua presidência em 2024, com ênfase no Grupo de Trabalho de Educação. O estudo de caso analisa a dinâmica de participação dos delegados do C20 como interlocutores no G20, com acesso a discussões e debates sobre políticas educacionais, participando das negociações. A metodologia qualitativa empregada inclui análise de materiais e de discurso e de pesquisa participante, utilizando documentos e participação nas próprias reuniões analisadas ocorridas em 2024: sobre profissionais da educação e sobre uso de tecnologia na educação. Os resultados destacam a importância da articulação entre o C20 e o G20 para promover políticas educacionais inclusivas e sustentáveis, já dando sinais de impacto na construção formal de compromissos públicos e de mecanismos de enforcement e no conteúdo das deliberações, imprimindo maior representatividade e legitimidade ao grupo, em processos que podem ser aprofundados em caso de continuidade e aprimoramento desta prática democrática.

Palavras-chave: G20; Legitimidade; Representatividade; Compromisso; Aplicação.

Resumen:

Este artículo examina la participación social del C20 en el G20, centrándose en la inclusión de la sociedad civil en las reuniones formales del grupo a través de la propuesta de un G20 Social por parte de Brasil durante su presidencia en 2024, con énfasis en el Grupo de Trabajo de Educación. El estudio de caso analiza la dinámica de la participación de los delegados del C20 como interlocutores en el G20, con acceso a discusiones y debates sobre políticas educativas, participando en las negociaciones. La metodología cualitativa empleada incluye el análisis de materiales, discursos e investigación participante, utilizando documentos y participación en las reuniones analizadas que ocurrieron en 2024: sobre profesionales de la educación y el uso de tecnología en la educación. Los resultados destacan la importancia de la articulación entre el C20 y el G20 para promover políticas educativas inclusivas y sostenibles, mostrando ya señales de impacto en la construcción formal de compromisos públicos y de mecanismos de enforcement en el contenido de las deliberaciones, otorgando mayor representatividad y legitimidad al grupo, en procesos que pueden ser profundizados en caso de continuidad y mejora de esta práctica democrática.

Palabras clave: G20; Legitimidad; Representatividad; Compromiso; Aplicación.

Introduction

Dani Rodrik (2018), in his article "Populism and the Economics of Globalization," argues that the economic globalization of recent decades has been unsustainable, leading to adverse effects on politics, economics, and society at both national and international levels. This unsustainability has resulted in what is known as the "crisis of global liberal order." Rodrik notes that the broad processes of economic liberalization began with the push for global openness following the decline of support for the Keynesian model. The Washington Consensus (WC), formalized in 1989 by John Williamson, is regarded as a set of economic measures designed to open and liberalize global markets. The widespread adoption of the WC was facilitated by the consolidation of liberal democracies, the end

of the Cold War, and the influence of international financial institutions (Rodrik, 1996; Milner, 1999; Venugopal, 2015).

Babb (2013) argues that the influence of these institutions, along with think tanks and scholars from the Chicago School, created a "policy paradigm," as conceptualized by Peter Hall (1993), in which a cohesive group of thinkers and policymakers advocates for specific measures. This paradigm led to specialization, expanded trade, and increased competitiveness but also resulted in cuts to social investments and a rise in poverty and inequality, particularly in developing countries. According to Kahler (2018), these issues contributed to the emergence of populist and nationalist governments, as globalization came to be perceived as an elitist project that caused more harm than good.

The global economic crisis, driven by the radicalization of liberalism, poses a significant barrier to advancing international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda. This crisis, combined with the absence of a new paradigm, is regarded as the root cause of the crisis of liberal democracies (Babb, 2013). Mounk (2018) emphasizes that the deconsolidation of democracies stems from the phenomena of "democracy without rights" and "rights without democracy," in which politics has become a "playground for billionaires and technocrats," echoing Hall's (1993) concept of a "policy paradigm".

Piketty (2013), Moffitt (2016), Rodrik (2018), and Norris and Inglehart (2019) examine how economic liberalization has contributed to democratic crises and the rise of authoritarian populism. Rodrik (2018) contends that globalization has deepened divisions between capital and labor, globalized and local interests, elites and the general population. Norris and Inglehart (2019) analyze cultural shifts that have fueled the rise of nationalist populism.

The crisis of democracies poses a significant risk to human rights, as democracies are often regarded as natural allies of these rights (Simmons, 2009). Contemporary dilemmas, including the erosion of the rule of law, stem from the globalization of capitalism. This erosion is closely tied to liberal values and constitutionalism, both of which are increasingly strained by global crises. The decline of liberal democracies is also linked to the crisis of multilateralism, with direct implications for global governance. Lafer (2018) argues that the world order has shifted from a Kantian vision of interdependence to a Hobbesian vision of anarchy.

Compounding this scenario, the international system is increasingly characterized by a multitude of international institutions with overlapping competences, often lacking a cohesive institutional framework or a de facto authority to mediate and resolve conflicts arising from these competing norms (Alter & Meunier, 2009). This structural fragmentation enables actors to strategically shift the political game across different institutional arrangements or establish new ones that compete with existing structures, thereby undermining the integrity of international law. As a result, this intricate system of global processes, actors, and institutions produces equally complex consequences.

The primary challenge posed by the complexity of the international regime lies not only in the preexistence and overlap of regulatory

frameworks but also in the absence of an agreed-upon hierarchy to resolve conflicts between the rules or decisions of different institutions. This lack of hierarchy shapes actors' strategies and intensifies the politics of cooperation. Both state and private actors recognize that, within a complex regime, decisions made in one forum can be influenced or undermined by policies adopted in a parallel or overlapping forum, whether at the domestic or international level (Alter & Raustiala, 2018).

Traditional discussions on international regimes typically focus on states and intergovernmental organizations, often overlooking the role of non-state actors such as corporations, NGOs, and civil society coalitions. In recent years, many scholars have emphasized the need to consider how the overlapping and sequential nature of international commitments influences the politics of cooperation and shapes actors' decision-making within regime complexes (Alter & Raustiala, 2018).

In this context, the decisions of the G20—comprising the world's 20 richest nations and forming part of the regime complex of global governance and the economy—have a crucial impact on the global future and human rights. This underscores the need to reassess decision-making practices that exclude civil society's demands. Consequently, the inclusion of civil society groups, such as the C20, in G20 negotiations is essential to ensuring meaningful representation, where diverse voices are heard and more inclusive policies are developed, thereby enhancing both their legitimacy and that of the group. Furthermore, in a context of multiple overlapping crises, it is imperative that the G20 review its internal governance practices, creating a cascading effect that amplifies the global impact of its decisions.

This article focuses on Brazil's proposal to include civil society during its presidency of the G20 in 2024, using a case study of the Education Working Group—the first to incorporate civil society not only as a voice advocating for demands but also as an active participant in negotiating commitments that year. Drawing on concepts from international politics such as "commitment" (Simmons, 2009) and "enforcement" (Raustiala, 2002), it examines the participation of the Civil 20 (C20) at the G20 negotiation table.

Methodology

To understand the process of C20 participation in the G20, this study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining material and discourse analysis with ethnographic research. The material analysis involved examining official documents, political statements, and reports from both the C20 and G20 to identify negotiation dynamics and priority themes. The documents analyzed in this study are listed in the table below. It is important to note that the final meeting of the G20 Education Working Group (EdWG) and its concluding declaration were not analyzed, as this article was prepared prior to these events.

Table 1. Documents from the Education Working Groups of the C20 and G20

Author	Title and Document Information
C20 Education and Culture Working Group	"The right to education: transform education from a global south perspective" - Policy Paper May 2024
C20 Education and Culture Working Group	C20 Education and Culture Statement "Valuing and building capacity of education professionals: what can we collectively do?" / Brasilia meeting: 20-22 May 2024
C20 Education and Culture Working Group	C20 Education and Culture Statement "Digital transformation and access" / Brasilia meeting: 07-10 July 2024
G20 Education Working Group	Education Working Group (EdWG) Brasilia meeting: 20-22 May 2024 Background Note "Valuing and building capacity of education professionals: what can we collectively do?"
G20 Education Working Group	Education Working Group (EdWG) Rio de Janeiro meeting: 07-10 July Background Note "Digital transformation and access"
G20 Education Working Group	Annex to the Leaders' Declaration First Draft
G20	"G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration" / Rio de Janeiro meeting: 18-19 November 2024

Source: prepared by the authors based on documents received during the participatory research process.

Participatory research was employed to observe interactions and discourses in the meetings and conferences analyzed in this article, offering a deeper understanding of the practices and relationships between C20 delegates and G20 members. This approach aligns with methodologies associated with action research or intervention research:

> The term "participant" suggests the controversial insertion of a researcher into a field of investigation formed by the social and cultural life of another, whether near or distant, who, in turn, is invited to participate in the research as an informant, collaborator, or interlocutor. Since the earliest ethnographic experiences, both the researcher and the researched have, for all intents and purposes, been subjects and objects of knowledge, and the nature of these complex relationships has been, and continues to be, at the center of reflections that shape and nuance theoretical-methodological differences. (...) The ideas of action or intervention are not equivalent, but they suggest, in addition to the presence of the researcher as part of the field being investigated, the presence of another who, as they participate in the research as an active subject, becomes educated and organized, appropriating, for action, knowledge that is collectively constructed. (Schmidt, 2006, p. 14)

On the one hand, action research is a form of participatory research, as it employs participant observation in conjunction with cultural, educational, organizational, political, or other forms of action. On the other hand, it is distinguished by its focus on the planned intervention within the investigated context, aiming to drive change while prioritizing the active participation of the researched group. In this study, this approach was applied through a privileged position of authorship, directly engaging in social participation within the C20 processes.

C20 Participation in the G20

With Brazil's presidency in 2024, the C20, for the first time, had the opportunity to act as a direct interlocutor in G20 discussions, gaining space to present proposals and debate crucial issues such as education. This inclusion reflects a growing recognition of the importance of civil society contributions in shaping more inclusive political agendas and addresses the demand for greater representativity and legitimacy within the group in the eyes of the international community.

In this context, two key terms need to be conceptualized. Representativity, according to Bourdieu (1991), is the capacity of an agent or institution to embody and express the interests, values, and identities of a social group, thereby ensuring its legitimacy in the social space. Legitimacy, in turn, as defined by Benhabib (1996), is achieved when political decisions are made through inclusive deliberative processes in which all stakeholders have a voice and influence.

Thus, the C20's participation in the G20 under Brazil's presidency can be analyzed through these lenses. By securing a platform to present proposals and engage in discussions, the C20 enhances its representativity, embodying the diverse demands of civil society within global governance structures. Simultaneously, its inclusion contributes to the legitimacy of G20 deliberations, as it aligns with the principles of inclusive decision-making and democratic legitimacy outlined by Benhabib.

According to the Brazilian State's proposal for the "Social G20," the initiative aims to "ensure that civil society is heard in the public policy-making process." The Social G20 was announced by President Lula at the 18th G20 Summit of Heads of Government and State in New Delhi, India, as Brazil symbolically assumed the bloc's presidency. The official G20 website indicates that more than 50 meetings involving civil society groups were planned, and that

> The objective of the Social G20 is to expand the participation of non-governmental actors in the activities and decision-making processes of the G20, which, during the Brazilian presidency, has the motto "Building a Fair World and a Sustainable Planet." As a plural and diverse country with the authority to address fundamental issues such as climate change and the fight against hunger and poverty, the Social G20 will ensure space for the different voices, struggles, and demands of the populations and non-governmental agents of the countries that make up the world's largest economies. (G20 Social, 2024, our translation)

In this context, the proposal aims to promote spaces for the participation of the 13 engagement groups that form part of the Social G20: C20 (civil society), T20 (think tanks), Y20 (youth), W20 (women), L20 (labour), U20 (urban), B20 (business), S20 (science), Startup20 (startups), P20 (parliaments), SAI20 (supreme audit institutions), and the newest additions, J20 (supreme courts) and O20 (oceans).

This research focuses on the case of the C20, which represents civil society. The C20 seeks to achieve positive societal outcomes based on the principle of economic justice, advocating for effective financial mechanisms and the efficient allocation of resources to ensure that no one is left behind. The group aims to foster dialogue with the G20 while ensuring

that civil society has the same level of access to governments as representatives of the economic sector.

The C20 was formalized as an official G20 engagement group in 2013 and has been strengthening its role each year, ensuring that world leaders consider the recommendations and demands of organized civil society. Its focus includes environmental protection, the promotion of social and economic development, human rights, and the principle of "leaving no one behind." The C20 fulfills multiple roles, including holding governments accountable for their commitments, advocating for positive societal outcomes, and promoting the effective allocation of resources (C20a, 2024).

The C20 seeks to establish a balance by ensuring that civil society has the same level of access to governments as representatives of economic sectors. In a context where governments are often perceived as being overly aligned with businesses or acting primarily in their own interests, the involvement of civil society is essential to ensuring that government decisions reflect the interests of citizens.

The C20 plays a crucial role in the G20 process by offering innovative solutions and policy recommendations to governments on key issues. During the C20 Summit in Tokyo (2019), more than 800 civil society representatives endorsed a set of principles that serve as a foundational framework for the C20's continued engagement, ensuring the sustainability and expanding impact of its collective work.

The principles of the C20 reflect its global character, serving as a platform for civil society organizations and social movements worldwide that seek to influence the G20. Transparency is fundamental, requiring that all drafts and decisions be widely disseminated for public input, with all final documents made accessible. Independence is maintained, as the C20 belongs exclusively to civil society and remains free from external influence. Collaboration is encouraged, fostering cooperation with other engagement groups to amplify the C20's impact. Human rights and gender equality are priorities, with the C20 actively opposing inequalities and human rights violations while promoting gender equality. Inclusivity is essential, ensuring a space for meaningful exchange and collaboration without discrimination. Continuity guarantees that voices from diverse regions are represented in C20 processes, while predictability ensures clear timelines and well-defined procedures.

The governance of the C20 is structured across various spheres to ensure both efficiency and representativeness. The C20 Troika serves as a mechanism for dialogue among civil society organizations from the previous, current, and upcoming G20/C20 host countries, fostering continuity and continuous learning. The C20 Chair and Co-Chairs are responsible for facilitating the C20 process and engaging with other G20 actors, ensuring that civil society's concerns are effectively represented. The C20 Sherpa functions as the primary point of contact with external stakeholders, facilitating clear and effective communication with G20 representatives, international organizations, the media, and other G20 engagement groups.

The C20 Secretariat is responsible for administrative, financial, and logistical tasks, ensuring the C20 operates efficiently and in an

organized manner. The International Advisory Committee (IAC), composed of representatives from international civil society organizations, provides strategic guidance to the C20 and supports the dissemination of its recommendations among key stakeholders. Finally, the C20 Steering Committee (SC) serves as the executive body, ensuring that the C20 remains an open and diverse space by facilitating a broad range of civil society perspectives and coordinating the development of recommendations as well as regular interactions between C20 working groups and government representatives.

In Brazil, the C20 received 1,761 applications from civil society organizations across 91 countries, extending beyond the G20 member states and observer countries, thereby incorporating a broader and more global set of demands[3]. In 2024, the C20 was structured into ten working groups, each representing its strategic priorities:

1. Just, Inclusive, and Anti-Racist Economies

2. Food Systems, Hunger, and Poverty

3. Environment, Climate Justice, and Just Energy Transition

4. Sustainable and Resilient Communities and Disaster Risk Reduction

5. Integrated Health for All People

6. Education and Culture

7. Digitalization and Technology

8. Women's Rights and Gender Equality

9. Philanthropy and Sustainable Development

10. Democratic Governance, Civic Space, Anti-Corruption, and Access to Justice

Case Study: G20 Education Working Group (EdWG)

The C20 Education and Culture Working Group played a central role in the G20 discussions, advocating for policies that promote equity and inclusion in education while emphasizing four key priorities: (1) regulatory frameworks governing private sector involvement, particularly in the areas of technology and education; (2) quality inputs and conditions in educational institutions, including teacher training, working conditions, and the recognition of education professionals; (3) adequate public funding for education, primarily through state efforts supported by tax and fiscal justice; and (4) education as a key driver in addressing the climate crisis and global governance challenges (C20b, 2024).

The C20 Education and Culture Working Group in the edition analyzed here was composed of 552 civil society organizations from around the world[4]. In 2024, the group's work was structured around the theme "The Right to Education: Transforming Education from a Global South Perspective," advocating for a comprehensive and inclusive review of global educational and cultural systems through five main pillars.

Firstly, the Governance and Sustainability pillar seeks to centralize the global governance of sustainable education and cultural systems, emphasizing the need for effective multilateralism that actively involves both governments and civil society. This pillar also highlights

3. Information provided by the C20 2024 coordination team, based on internally tabulated database records.

4. Information provided by the C20 2024 coordination team, based on internally tabulated database records.

the importance of fiscal justice in ensuring adequate public funding for education and culture, the integration of climate justice and environmental education into public policies, and the reinforcement of democracy, secularism, and human rights as fundamental pillars for educational and cultural development.

The second pillar, Inclusion and Equity, focuses on fostering greater inclusion and equity within educational and cultural systems. This involves implementing adaptive public policies and inclusive infrastructures, as well as combating bullying, discrimination, and all forms of violence. Additionally, this pillar emphasizes the need for public policies that ensure accessibility and affordability, respect cultural diversity, and actively combat racism.

The third pillar, Digital Transformation and Accessibility, promotes equitable access to information, knowledge, and digital resources. Recognizing technology as a language and the internet as a vital space for education and culture, this pillar seeks to advance digital literacy and autonomy while emphasizing the need for digital public goods and algorithmic transparency to ensure ethical decision-making in the use of artificial intelligence.

The fourth pillar, The Central Role of Education and Culture Professionals, expands the recognition of these professionals beyond their roles as educators, emphasizing their active participation in democratic governance and public policy development. This pillar highlights the need to improve working conditions, infrastructure, salaries, and continuous professional development, ensuring that education and culture professionals are valued and can work in environments that support their mental well-being.

Finally, the Lifelong Learning, Holistic Growth, and Ethical Global Citizenship pillar advocates for comprehensive and lifelong education, emphasizing experiential learning and community engagement. This pillar also focuses on fostering a culture of continuous learning, expanding access to quality education, and integrating cultural diversity into curricula, thereby promoting education that equips individuals for ethical and responsible global citizenship.

Each of these pillars contributes to a cohesive strategy that seeks not only to transform the educational and cultural landscape from a Global South perspective but also to ensure that education and culture are recognized as fundamental pillars of sustainable, equitable, and inclusive global development.

The working methodology developed by civil society within the Working Group (WG) followed a structured sequence of meetings designed to discuss and refine the policy paper. The process began on March 26, 2023, with the first meeting held during the first global gathering of the entire C20 in Recife, PE, where participants focused on major themes and key issues. The second meeting, held virtually on April 11, was dedicated to segmented work sessions on specific themes.

The subsequent meeting, held on April 25, focused on discussing the first draft of the document, which was collectively reviewed and debated in detail. The fourth meeting, on May 9, advanced to the discussion

of the first consolidated version of the document, reflecting progress in its development based on previous reviews and feedback.

The fifth and final meeting, scheduled for May 23, was dedicated to making final adjustments to the document. Subsequently, on May 30, the final document was submitted by the group facilitation to the C20 coordination, marking the conclusion of a collaborative development process that spanned over two months. This structured timeline and methodology reflect an organized and systematic approach, ensuring that all contributions were considered and that the final product met high standards of quality and consensus.

The final policy document of the C20 Education and Culture Working Group in 2024 underscores the need to realign education with a human rights-based approach, aiming to foster holistic development, social inclusion, and preparation for productive life. Its key focus areas include global governance, sustainability, full human development, digital transformation, and the central role of education professionals in the teaching and learning process. The C20's recommendations advocate for reorganizing global governance into sustainable and representative systems, promoting fiscal justice to secure sustainable education funding, integrating environmental education and climate justice into public policies, and defending the principles of democracy, secularism, and human rights as fundamental pillars of education. These principles are embedded in a lifelong education framework rooted in equity and inclusion. Based on this document, political statements were developed for the WG co-facilitation to present in the official G20 debates.

The first in-person meeting of the 2024 G20 Education and Culture Working Group (EdWG) was held in Brasília from May 20 to 22. Co-organized by the OECD TALIS team and the Brazilian Presidency of the EdWG, the event focused on the professional development of educators, emphasizing the importance of continuous training and international work experiences as integral components of government policies for professional development. The Background Document proposed that delegates analyze national gaps, assess the limitations of continuous training, and explore its interconnections with national policies, aiming to broaden the diversity and representativeness of professionals benefiting from these opportunities. Additionally, the document suggested prioritizing continuous training and short-term programs to circumvent controversial issues related to the global recognition of qualifications and recommended that discussions focus primarily on the public education system.

The official intervention of the C20 at the meeting (C20c, 2024) emphasized the recognition and empowerment of education professionals as a top priority, particularly in response to the current global teacher shortage and within the context of training and exchange programs, as defined by the G20's debate framework. The intervention underscored the importance of personal and professional development in fostering learning environments that promote sustainable development and peace. The C20's recommendations included broadening the definition of education and culture professionals, ensuring adequate working conditions and health protections for educators, and promoting international

coordination for both initial and ongoing training. Additionally, the C20 highlighted the potential of the arts as a catalyst for economic and social development.

During the meeting, several countries raised concerns extending beyond the official focus on training exchanges, particularly regarding the teacher shortage and the need to improve working conditions and professional recognition. Among these countries were Australia, Canada, Spain, France, Indonesia, Japan, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and Russia, among others. Education International, representing the global teaching profession, and UNESCO also emphasized the necessity of addressing this issue.

Seizing the opportunity provided by the broadened scope of the debates, and in response to the Brazilian presidency's decision not to establish a final commitment from the Education Working Group (EdWG)—justified as an innovation in methodology prioritizing exchanges and the sharing of best practices over negotiated language—civil society, through the C20 and Education International, formally demanded a minimum commitment to society based on the exchange of experiences.

In a political statement delivered during the meeting, the C20 representation declared:

> Considering such recommendations, we believe that the discussions in this meeting, *focused on valuing and building the capacity of education professionals,* are beneficial, promoting spaces for international cooperation. We request that the *efforts made here can also translate into commitments to domestic policy at the respective countries' levels and in promoting cooperation for such efforts in other countries of the Global South as well.*
>
> (...) Without these urgent actions, we will fail to truly value our teachers, as there will be no future for them or anyone else. They are, and must be, an integral part of our current efforts to avert this crisis. *This must be part of a broader global strategy that can only be realized with the support and leadership of the G20 nations. Together, we can build* a future where education and culture are the cornerstones of sustainable, just, and inclusive societies. (C20c, 2024, our highlights)

Based on this proposition, which was endorsed by some members present, the meeting's presidency, under the Brazilian Ministry of Education, proposed drafting a paragraph on the topic, now broadened and anchored in existing global commitments to the right to education. This approach aimed to facilitate the negotiation process by utilizing agreed-upon language, which could ultimately be adopted in the High-Level Final Declaration of Leaders or at the G20 Interministerial Education Meeting in 2024.

This development can be considered the first achievement of civil society in the negotiations, demonstrating the impact of its participatory presence at the meeting. After group discussions, with the C20 actively participating, the agreed-upon text submitted for final approval at their headquarters in the November meeting was as follows:

> [We] emphasize the importance of *inclusive and equitable quality* universal education in building a *just world and a sustainable planet,* as well as the particular importance of teaching professionals to reach this goal. [We] recognize the importance of strategies of recruitment, retention and continuing professional development, including opportunities for mobility and exchange, to *address the shortages of teaching professionals which exist in many G20 countries and beyond.* [We]

further instruct our teams to continue to work to *dignify, diversify and valorize* teaching professionals. (G20c, 2024, our highlights)

A comparative discourse analysis between the C20's proposed discourse and the paragraph drafted by the G20 reveals that the C20's proposal advocates for a broad and transformative approach to the role of educators and cultural professionals in global education. It primarily focuses on the challenges and training of these professionals in the Global South, within the framework of a just and sustainable society.

The proposal underscores the need to recognize and value education professionals not merely as instructors but as fundamental agents of change, capable of shaping educational and cultural policies through democratic and participatory governance. It calls for the prioritization of continuous professional development, educators' mental well-being, and fair working conditions to foster learning environments that promote sustainable development and practical problem-solving.

This discourse serves as the foundation for the commitments articulated in the agreed-upon G20 paragraph. It reaffirms the critical role of educators, recognizing the need for strategies to recruit, retain, and develop teaching professionals to address the global teacher shortage. This aligns with key elements of the initial discussion raised by the C20, particularly its emphasis on valuing, diversifying, and dignifying educators as essential contributors to achieving universal and equitable quality education.

Thus, beyond civil society's achievement in securing a formal final commitment among G20 countries, which will establish an enforcement mechanism (Raustiala, 2002) for the C20, the engagement group also played a crucial role in expanding the scope of discussions. Initially limited to best practices in continuing education exchanges, the debate evolved into a broader commitment addressing working conditions, ensuring the recognition, dignity, and diversity of education professionals, and integrating the issue of the teacher shortage within an inclusive, equitable, and quality-focused framework.

The second meeting of the G20 Education Working Group (EdWG) was held in Rio de Janeiro from July 7 to 10, 2024, focusing on the theme "Connecting Digital Resource Platform Managers: Sharing Educational Material on Education for Sustainable Development." The discussions centered on exchanging the best practices related to state-managed digital educational platforms and resources in education.

Once again, the C20's concerns extended beyond the official agenda, emphasizing the importance of meaningful connectivity, data security, the negative impacts of the unregulated platformization of education, and the need for regulatory frameworks governing private sector involvement in this field (CGI, 2024).

Thus, in its official intervention (C20d, 2024), the C20 emphasized the risks associated with the privatization of education through technology, underscoring the importance of ensuring equitable access to open and public information, digital resources, and digital inclusion. The intervention also highlighted the need for robust data protection measures and safeguards for public safety, as well as the urgent need to address the

negative impacts of technology-driven privatization in education, particularly the replacement of teachers with digital tools.

The recommendations of the C20 Education and Culture Working Group included:

- Ensuring equitable access to information and digital resources;
- Promoting collaboration through community-centered digital appropriation;
- Advancing strategies to democratize access to educational resources;
- Ensuring human rights-centered decision-making in the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic transparency; and
- Reinforcing data protection and security principles, with special attention to children and adolescents.

Additionally, the C20 emphasized the urgent need for a global commitment to sustainable and inclusive educational and cultural systems, grounded in global governance, fiscal justice, democracy, human rights, and education for global citizenship and human rights.

The agreed-upon paragraph in the G20 is reproduced below:

> [We] collectively recognize the critical importance of involving educators in the creation and development of platforms and of digital content on Education for Sustainable Development, while appreciating the variety and range of solutions that already exist throughout countries in this area. [We] emphasize that *applications of artificial intelligence in education must be grounded in quality-assured educational content.* [We] underscore that digital solutions must be developed with a *strong emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion.* (extended version) [We] recognize the importance of *involving educators and students in the creation and development of platforms and of digital content* on Education for Sustainable Development. [We] appreciate the variety and range of learner-centric and multi-disciplinary solutions that already exist throughout countries in this area, while emphasizing that they *do not replace the role of teachers.* [We] consider users' experience – in terms of *ease of access, accessibility* and on how solutions try to *bridge the digital divide* – to be a key element to measure success in this area. [We] observe that media / digital literacy has become a necessary topic for education, *alongside critical thinking, emotional intelligence, human rights education* and many other subjects. (G20c, 2024, our highlights)

The G20 commitment paragraph acknowledges the importance of engaging educators and students in the creation and development of digital platforms and content for Education for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the recognition and protection of education professionals, who must not be replaced by technology. It highlights accessibility, diversity, equity, inclusion, critical education, and human rights education as key components of meaningful connectivity.

Furthermore, it represents a significant step in reinforcing the need for a commitment to ensuring that Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is built upon high-quality educational content. These priorities reflect concerns raised, among others, by the C20.

However, the issues of regulation and security remain more diluted in the G20 commitment paragraph. While the commitment suggests support for state-led development of platforms and tools, it can also be interpreted more broadly to encompass a wider range of digital solutions.

Although the need to ensure quality in the use of AI is acknowledged, security remains an implicit concern rather than a clear and explicit commitment. At best, an optimistic interpretation might infer that security is implied, but it is not explicitly stated as a firm obligation.

The EdWG's third and final face-to-face meeting took place in Fortaleza from October 29 to 31, focusing on school-community engagement. The discussions underscored the role of strengthened ties between schools and communities in enhancing learning outcomes and advancing inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as sustainable development. The delegates highlighted the importance of collaboration among school leaders, educators, parents, and community organizations in developing effective educational policies and practices. Such partnerships have demonstrated their potential in addressing critical challenges, including violence, adolescent pregnancy, and mental health issues, while fostering meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences. Furthermore, community participation in educational decision-making enhances accountability and transparency, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and that educational initiatives are responsive to students' needs.

The C20's (C20e, 2024) official intervention emphasized the importance of centralized global governance for education and culture, structured through multilateral mechanisms that ensure the active participation of governments and civil society. The intervention also stressed the need to integrate climate justice and sustainability into educational practices, strengthening climate literacy and resilience, particularly in vulnerable communities. Additionally, it advocated for fiscal justice as essential to the sustainable financing of quality education, calling for active participation in global negotiations, such as the UN Tax Convention, to secure resources and prioritize education. Lastly, the C20 representative warned that while innovative financing can complement efforts, it must be regulated to prevent exacerbating inequalities, as evidenced by experiences with impact bonds and results-based approaches in low- and middle-income countries.

Once again, the C20's intervention expands on the concepts originally presented by the EdWG of the G20, linking the school-community engagement with the need for democratic governance at all levels of educational decision-making. While the EdWG highlights the role of collaboration between schools and communities in improving learning outcomes and addressing social challenges, the C20 intervention broadens this perspective by emphasizing the inclusion of civil society in global education governance. This approach underscores that democratic management should not be limited to decisions within schools but must extend to the construction of education systems as a whole.

Finally, the C20's final intervention emphasized three essential recommendations for states:

> 1. Recognizing and valuing all education professionals in both formal and non-formal institutions by ensuring adequate working conditions, proper infrastructure, and access to healthcare, with a particular focus on educators' mental well-being. This includes guaranteeing fair salaries, career progression,

and remuneration plans. Promoting international coordination for *the initial and continuous training* of education and culture professionals by allocating human and financial resources for ongoing training and international exchanges.

2. Ensuring *equitable access to digital resources* through connectivity, *digital literacy*, and autonomy, recognizing technology as a language and the internet as an educational space. Safeguarding the *ethical use* of AI with transparency and accountability, prioritizing public access, and regulating private sector involvement. *Protecting privacy, security, and data protection in the use of technology in education.*

3. Strengthening the ties between schools and communities requires the demilitarization of schools. Furthermore, global evidence shows that *reinforcing participatory, inclusive, anti-discriminatory, and democratic governance*, along with fostering a welcoming school environment, is fundamental to effectively preventing and combating violence in schools, including attacks and shootings. (C20e, 2024, our highlights)

The outcomes of the three EdWG meetings were compiled and delivered to G20 leaders. The analysis of the Leaders' Declaration, presented at the final G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro on November 18–19, highlights the inclusion of elements introduced by the C20 during the EdWG meetings. The most significant aspect of the text is a dedicated paragraph on education:

We emphasize the critical role of *quality education and training*, including digital education, as an enabler for human dignity and empowerment; *equity, equality, and inclusiveness*; sustainable and socio-economic growth; active citizenship, prosperity, peace and well-being. We note with concern the current *global teacher shortage*. Professional development policies capable of *qualifying and retaining teachers* and of stimulating the interest of early-career teachers have become an essential component of the multidimensional challenge of preparing our societies for the future ahead. (G20d, 2024, our highlights)

The specific paragraph agreed upon by the G20 leaders contains several elements from the paragraph suggested at the first EdWG meeting with the active intervention of the C20. It highlights the critical role of quality education in building a just world and in enabling human dignity, empowerment, equity, and sustainable growth. Additionally, it expresses concern about the teacher shortage and the need to qualify and retain these professionals.

The paragraph also addresses the intersection between technology and education, a topic on which the C20 made several interventions during the EdWG meetings, contributing to the drafting of the text produced during the group's second meeting, as well as in the final speech of the C20 representative during the third meeting. Several of the elements introduced by the C20 on this subject are reflected in the specific paragraph of the Leaders' Declaration:

We acknowledge that the development, deployment and use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, can provide many opportunities to workers, but also *poses ethical concerns and risks for their rights and well-being*. As AI and other technologies continue to evolve, it is also necessary to *bridge digital divides*, including halving the gender digital divide by 2030, prioritize the inclusion of people in vulnerable situations in the labor market, as well as *ensure* fairness respect for intellectual property, *data protection, privacy, and security*. We agree to advocate and *promote responsible AI for improving education* and health outcomes as well as women's empowerment. *We recognize that digital literacy and skills are essential to achieve meaningful digital inclusion*. We recognize that *technologies' integration in the workplace* is most successful when it *incorporates the observations and feedback of workers* and thus encourage enterprises to engage in social dialogue

and other forms of consultation when integrating digital technologies at work. With this in mind, we welcome the decision of G20 Labor and Employment Ministers to establish *guidelines for the safe, secure and trustworthy use of AI in the world of work*, in collaboration with other relevant workstreams. (G20e, 2024, our highlights)

The paragraph also shares the views presented by the C20 with a focus on the ethical considerations of AI, the need for digital literacy, the importance of bridging digital divides, and the urgent need to ensure security, privacy, and data protection. The C20 interventions emphasize the importance of creating platforms and digital content with the participation of educators and students, focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ensuring the accessibility and ease of use of digital solutions. The topic was brought up in the Leaders' Declaration, which calls for the inclusion of workers' feedback when integrating digital technologies in the workplace, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and fairness in the deployment of technologies.

Conclusions

The C20 Education and Culture Working Group played a prominent role in addressing critical global education issues during the 2024 G20 discussions, marking the first time it had a formal voice in meetings and negotiations. This was made possible by Brazil's initiative to formally integrate engagement groups into the debates through the Social G20.

Comprising a vast network of 552 civil society organizations, the C20 Education and Culture WG sought to reshape educational paradigms from a Global South perspective, emphasizing education as a pillar of sustainable and just development. Its strategy aimed to influence decision-making within the G20 Education Group, advocating for inclusive and transformative educational policies.

Grounded in five strategic pillars—Governance and Sustainability, Inclusion and Equity, Digital Transformation and Accessibility, the Central Role of Education and Culture Professionals, and Lifelong Learning—the C20 Education and Culture Working Group proposed an educational model that not only addresses contemporary demands for fiscal justice, inclusion, and environmental sustainability but also reinforces education's fundamental role in cultivating conscious global citizenship.

Furthermore, its emphasis on valuing education professionals—by ensuring fair working conditions and continuous professional development—aligns with the objective of sustaining a quality and equitable education system.

These pillars reflect a holistic and integrated approach, emphasizing the need for inclusive global governance and the promotion of effective multilateralism that incorporates diverse voices, particularly those from Global South countries and representative civil society.

This social demand translates into civil society processes with a clear political impact. The working methodology adopted by the C20, characterized by a series of preparatory meetings and rigorous reviews of policy documents, exemplifies a commitment to democratic participation

and consensus-building. The culmination of this process, marked by the submission of the final policy document, underscores WG's ability to facilitate constructive dialogues that result in practical and actionable recommendations.

The C20 played a pivotal role in the G20 discussions during the three meetings analyzed in this article. Due to pressure from the C20 and other organized civil society representatives present at the first meeting, the meeting's presidency, under the Brazilian Ministry of Education, proposed the inclusion of a paragraph on valuing educators, which was ultimately adopted in the 2024 EdWG High-Level Final Declaration and reflected on the G20 Leaders' Declaration.

This paragraph underscores the importance of strategies for recruitment, retention, and professional development as key measures to address the global teacher shortage. Additionally, it affirms a commitment to the recognition, diversification, and dignification of education professionals, reflecting the C20's initial advocacy to broaden the scope of the debate and establish a clear commitment to improving working conditions and enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

At the second meeting, focused on the theme "Connecting Digital Resource Platform Managers: Sharing Educational Material on Education for Sustainable Development," the agreed-upon G20 paragraph reflected some of the C20's concerns. It acknowledged the importance of engaging educators and students in the creation and development of digital platforms for Education for Sustainable Development and emphasized the need for digital solutions that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, it highlighted the importance of ensuring that AI in education is built upon high-quality educational content.

In the final Leaders' Declaration, the concerns raised by the C20 were also reflected, with specific sections addressing the ethical use of artificial intelligence, digital literacy, the inclusion of workers in the development of technologies in their workplace, and a particular issue the C20 has been highlighting: the need to create guidelines for the safe, secure, and trustworthy use of AI in the world of work, specifically in education. However, the issues of regulation and security remained more diluted. While security was implicitly acknowledged, it was not explicitly addressed as a firm commitment.

The EdWG's third and final meeting underscored the role of strengthened ties between schools and communities in enhancing learning outcomes and advancing inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as sustainable development. The C20's intervention went further and linked school-community engagement with the need for democratic governance at all levels of educational decision-making. Furthermore, the C20 reinforced the need to value education professionals and ensure adequate remuneration and training, invest in digital education, promote the ethical use of artificial intelligence in education, and ensure security, privacy, and data protection.

In summary, the C20's participation in the G20, through an unprecedented process of genuine engagement, led to significant commitments regarding the recognition of educators, the promotion of an inclusive and

equitable educational system, and the consideration of principles governing the use of digital resources in education.

However, there remains room to strengthen state commitments, particularly in light of the extensive, in-depth, and representative work carried out by the C20. A notable example, as highlighted in this analysis, concerns the regulation and security of educational technology, where commitments could be further reinforced.

The first step toward civil society participation in G20 debates has been taken, already demonstrating impact in terms of the adoption of formal commitments and their content. This progress is expected to enhance the representativity and legitimacy of the G20 while strengthening enforcement mechanisms available to civil society.

Future research should focus on assessing the implementation of these commitments and ensuring not only the continuation of participatory processes in future G20 editions but also the greater quantitative and qualitative integration of social proposals into national policies.

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