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# **Who Cares? Care as a Discursive Signifier in Global Education Governance:**

**A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of UNESCO, OECD and World Bank Policy Discourses**

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who undertake acts of care, whether within educational settings or beyond them. It is through this invisible, undervalued and unpaid labour that education and everyday life are sustained.

To my care network - Mamá, Leo, Carlos, my family, friends and the professors who showed understanding and support after my dad's passing - thank you.

## **Abstract**

Care has become increasingly visible within global education policy, particularly through growing attention to well-being, belonging, inclusion discourses. However, limited research has examined how care is conceptualized, governed and connected to inequality within the policy discourse of International Organizations (IOs). This study investigates how care is constructed, governed and embedded within inequality framings within education policy discourses of UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank.

The study employed reflexive thematic document analysis to examine six policy documents through a coding framework focused on care conceptualization, responsibility allocation, governance mechanisms and care-related inequalities. The resulting themes were interpreted through a macro-discursive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective. The findings reveal that care is articulated through multiple and overlapping conceptualizations, including: structural, relational-affective, pedagogical, labour and ecological framings. Across the three organizations, these are translated into distinct governance arrangements that allocate responsibility to different educational and social actors according to each organization's institutional logic. Although gendered, resource and recognition inequalities are acknowledged, they are predominantly addressed through support and capacity-building rather than through the structural relations that produce them.

The study argues that care functions as an empty and flexible discursive signifier through which International Organizations legitimize different educational priorities while shifting responsibility and shaping how care-related inequalities become visible and governable. By bringing feminist understandings of care into dialogue with a neoliberal governance perspective, it exemplifies how different conceptualizations of care are translated into distinct governance arrangements that progressively relocate responsibility towards frontline actors, while maintaining the progressive normative appeal of care across different institutional agendas. In doing so, the study contributes to understanding how global education policy constructs the meanings of care, legitimizes particular distributions of responsibility, and shapes responses to care-related inequalities.

**Keywords:** Care, Global Education Policy, Educational Governance

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|          |                                                                  |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019                                         |
| IO       | International Organization                                       |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| OECD     | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development           |
| ECE      | Early Childhood Education                                        |
| NPM      | New Public Management                                            |
| DEOS     | Discursive Educational Opportunity Structures                    |
| CDA      | Critical Discourse Analysis                                      |

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Relevance**

In the context of increasing global crisis, particularly emphasized after the COVID-19 pandemic, education policy has highlighted the emotional, social and relational dimensions of education through discourses of well-being, belonging or support. These concerns have emerged through the recognition of the necessary conditions to sustain learning, particularly in contexts characterized by vulnerability and uncertainty (Ozga & Hell, 2025). This shift has been reflected in changing expectations regarding the role of global education in fostering well-being and its implications for social and educational actors in addressing these demands (Deuchar & Gour, 2023).

Within this context, care has gained attention as a term increasingly articulated in education policy. However, care constitutes a contested and multifaceted concept that is understood and utilized in different ways depending on the purposes it serves and the interests it supports (Baker & Burke, 2023). Therefore, different understandings of care imply different assumptions regarding who requires care, who is responsible for its provision and how caring responsibilities are organized or supported. These questions are significant because care is embedded within policy discourses involving multiple actors, values, inequalities and levels of governance, shaping responsibility allocation, policy implementation and social inequalities (Ciccia & Lombardo, 2019).

Thus, care constitutes a matter of political significance in the global policy arena because the ways in which it is constructed within policy discourses has implications for how educational needs, responsibilities or inequalities are understood and governed. This also constitutes a socially significant issue because care construction influences whose care needs are recognized, how care is distributed and which forms of inequality become visible.

## **1.2 Aim, Research Questions and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine how care is constructed, governed and how care-related inequalities are embedded in global education policy documents, informed by the view that research should analyse how care is discursively constructed, what assumptions underpin these constructions and what political effects they create (Bacchi, 2024). Therefore, the research questions of the study and the corresponding research objectives to guide the analysis are:

*(RQ1)* How is care discursively constructed within global education policy discourses?

- *RO1*: Identify the presence of care within global education policy discourse and analyse how it is conceptually framed when articulated.

*(RQ2)* How is care governed within global education policy frameworks?

- *RO2*: Examine how policy discourses allocate responsibility for care across different social, institutional and educational actors.
- *RO3*: Identify the types of governance mechanisms framing care responsabilization within global education policy discourse.

*(RQ3)* To what extent and in what ways are care-related inequalities incorporated into global education policy discourses?

- *RO4*: Analyse how policy discourses construct, recognize and/or problematize inequalities associated with care.

## **1.3 Research Gap and Contribution**

Care has been examined across educational, philosophical and feminist scholarship, because of its significance for understanding how societies organize dependency, responsibility or support, generating important insights into the social implications of different understandings of care. However, as this concept has entered the global education policy arena, attention has also been directed towards understanding how care is shaped within policy. In this respect, care policy research has traditionally neglected the role of discursive constructions despite their importance in framing inequalities, governance and actor responsibility (Ciccio & Lombardo, 2019). Nevertheless, some scholars have begun to examine care discourses in educational policy, demonstrating that

care is constructed through multiple and sometimes competing meanings (O’Flaherty & McCormack, 2023).

In parallel, global education governance scholarship has extensively examined the influence of International Organizations (IOs) such as UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank in shaping educational agendas, policy priorities and normative understandings of educational problems and solutions (Elfert & Ydesen, 2023). Consequently, these discourses influence how concepts are interpreted, how responsibilities should be allocated and how inequalities are framed within global and national policy frameworks. Nevertheless, limited attention has been paid to how these organizations conceptualize care and the implications of these constructions for educational governance and inequality.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining how care is discursively constructed, governed and embedded into inequality framings within the education policy discourse of UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank. In doing so, it contributes to emerging scholarship on care in education policy while extending debates on global education governance by examining how care operates as a policy concept through which educational priorities, responsibilities and inequalities are articulated.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is structured in six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter two reviews the literature on care, educational inequality, social justice and global education governance, establishing an informed theoretical framework that guides the study. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach, including the research design, document selection, coding framework, analytical procedures employed to guide analysis, the researchers’ positionality and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the findings and analysis, organized around the conceptualization of care, its governance through responsibility allocation, the framing of care-related inequalities and the limitations. Chapter five discusses these findings in relation to the existing literature and wider debates and provides some directions for future research. Finally, Chapter six concludes the dissertation by summarizing the main findings and implications of the study.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Foundations and Evolution of Care**

This section explores the principal traditions through which care has been examined, outlining the main theoretical foundations that contributed to the evolution of the different understandings of care in relation to socio-political transformations.

Early approaches to care emerged during the 1980s through feminist critiques of philosophical traditions that prioritized universality, autonomy and impartial forms of reasoning while treating moral and political subjects as detached from social relationships and conditions of dependency (Benhabib, 1992). In particular, the work of Gilligan (1982) later developed by scholars such as Noddings (1984) and Ruddick (1989), challenged justice-oriented models of ethics by defining care as a mode of moral reasoning grounded in attentiveness and responsiveness to the needs of others. Similarly, Noddings (1984) conceptualizes care as a relational encounter between the “one-caring” and the “cared-for,” highlighting the situated and reciprocal character of ethical action. These approaches contributed to bring dependency and relationality from marginal concerns to central dimensions of moral and social life (Held, 2006).

In the 1990s, feminist scholarship examined care in relation to questions of power and inequality, particularly in the context of changing welfare arrangements and the reconfiguration of caring responsibilities between states, families and markets (Williams, 2001). The decline of traditional male breadwinner models and the growing participation of women in paid employment intensified debates surrounding childcare, domestic labour and the social organization of dependency and care (Lewis, 2001). In this context, Tronto

(1993) situates care within relations of power, arguing that the organization of care reveals whose needs are prioritized and whose caring labour is recognized or neglected, theorizing that care organization is central to citizenship, justice and participation (Tronto, 2013). A similar shift is evident in Sevenhuijsen's (1998) work, which conceptualizes care as a dimension of democratic citizenship and emphasizes the need for societies to make explicit decisions about the distribution and institutionalization of care responsibilities. Related contributions in feminist political theory emphasize interdependence as a fundamental feature of life, challenging liberal assumptions of self-sufficiency and drawing attention to the institutional dimensions of care (Kittay, 1999).

As these debates increasingly highlighted the institutional organization of care, feminist scholars also began examining the material conditions necessary for sustaining caring labour. Concerns surrounding neoliberal restructuring and the unequal distribution of unpaid and low-paid care work contributed to growing attention toward the economic dimensions of care and social reproduction (Folbre, 2001; Fraser, 2016). From the late 1990s onwards, feminist political economy and theories of social reproduction conceptualized care as a form of paid and unpaid labour essential to sustaining households, communities and the reproduction of labour. These approaches reframed care as central to sustaining the everyday social conditions that make economic life possible (Bhattacharya, 2017).

This shows how capitalist economies frequently rely upon forms of reproductive labour that remain outside dominant understandings of productivity and economic value (Federici, 2012). Feminist political economy scholars further argue that conventional economic models fail to account for caring labour because care depends upon time, relationships and human interaction rather than efficiency and market output (Himmelweit, 1999). Additionally, patriarchal societies sustained by the unequal care burdens reduce the caregiver's access to economic resources, political influence and social power, perpetuating the lack of recognition of care as socially valuable work and even the assumptions of free private provision (Folbre, 2018). These tensions become increasingly visible under neoliberal regimes, explaining why growing social demands for care coexist with limited public and institutional support and create conditions in which the caregivers time and energy are increasingly strained (Rai et al., 2014).

This body of work further emphasized that caring labour depends upon material resources, infrastructure and institutional support, while often remaining undervalued within gendered divisions of labour (Duffy, 2005). This is reinforced through racialized and socioeconomic inequalities that contribute to the uneven distribution of caring burdens (Glenn, 1992). From this perspective, the capacity to provide and sustain care is shaped through social and institutional inequalities that distribute caring responsibilities and access to support unevenly across social groups (Lynch et al., 2009; Tronto, 1993). These approaches further highlighted how neoliberal welfare arrangements frequently shift caring responsibilities toward households and individuals while providing limited public support (Rai et al., 2014).

## **2.2 Care in Education: Meanings and Critical Tensions**

Care has developed diverse understandings in education as scholars have approached its analysis from different lenses. The following discussion reviews some of the principal perspectives that have shaped educational conceptualizations of care and the tensions that emerge across them.

### **2.2.1 Care as an Ethical-Moral Value**

Care in education was initially framed around ethical and moral orientations. Within educational philosophy, Noddings (1992) argues that caring relations should constitute the central moral purpose of schooling rather than merely supporting academic instruction. Following the same line of thought, Held (2006) and Ruddick (1989) state that care represents a distinct ethical framework grounded in interdependence, relational responsibility and the maintenance of human connections, locating ethical judgement within concrete practices for sustaining human life. Slote (2007) further operationalizes ethical care through empathy, arguing that moral judgement emerges through empathic responsiveness.

Although these contributions were foundational in legitimizing care within educational thought, later scholarship has critiqued ethical approaches for underemphasizing the structural conditions shaping caring practices. Kittay (1999) argues that care and dependency are organized through unequal social and material relations, while Hargreaves (1998) highlights how caring practices in education are mediated by institutional pressures, accountability demands, workload and organizational constraints. From this perspective, understanding care primarily as moral commitment can risk

reducing caring practices as dependent on personal dispositions of educational actors, while overlooking the institutional and material conditions necessary for sustaining care in educational contexts (Tronto, 1993; Kittay, 1999).

#### 2.2.2. Care as a Relational Pedagogical Practice

Relational understandings of care emphasize the centrality of human relationships within educational processes, conceptualizing care as emerging through attentiveness, reciprocity, dialogue and responsiveness to others (Noddings, 1984). Within this perspective, teaching and learning are understood as fundamentally relational practices shaped through ongoing interactions between teachers and students (Noddings, 1992). Van Manen (1991) describes the notion of “pedagogical tact” highlighting the importance of situated sensitivity and responsiveness to students lived experiences. Similarly, Walker (1996) highlights an ethos of care sustained through trust, collective responsibility and close teacher-student relationships within school and community contexts.

However, critical perspectives argue that relational understandings can risk framing care as an interpersonal disposition while paying insufficient attention to the structural inequalities, power relations and institutional arrangements (Tronto, 1993). Valenzuela (1999) further argues that educational institutions may prioritize forms of care centred on academic achievement or discipline, while neglecting the relational recognition and cultural responsiveness through which students experience being cared for. In addition, because relational dimensions of care are difficult to quantify and standardize, they frequently remain institutionally marginalized and undervalued within education systems increasingly organized around performativity and measurable outcomes (Lynch, 2010).

#### 2.2.3 Care as Emotional Practice

Care has also been conceptualized through the emotional and affective dimensions of educational practice such as through emotional well-being, self-esteem and sense of engagement within school environments (Hargreaves, 1998; Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Emotions are therefore understood as central to teaching, which Hargreaves (1998) conceptualizes as an emotional practice shaped through relationships, commitments and affective investment. Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour, further explains how caring work requires the management and regulation of emotions in accordance with professional expectations and institutional norms, a dynamic that within educational contexts extends to relationships with students, colleagues and institutional expectations

(Zembylas, 2005). Emotional understandings of care therefore emphasize practices such as encouragement, emotional support, trust-building, and belonging as central dimensions of educational experience and learning (hooks, 1994).

Despite the importance of the emotional understanding of care in sustaining learning and meaningful educational relationships, critical perspectives argue that emotions within educational contexts are socially and politically shaped rather than individual experiences, linking affective relations to broader dynamics of power, pedagogy and institutional expectations (Boler, 1999). Furthermore, the absence of recognition and support of emotional labour can shift responsibility onto educators, framing care as a personal or professional choice, rather than as a socially and institutionally shaped practice mediated by cultural norms and organizational contexts (O'Connor, 2008). From this perspective, emotional understandings of care can contribute to the normalization of affective labour by positioning emotional availability, empathy and self-regulation as implicit professional expectations (Hochschild, 1983; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Furthermore, insufficient organizational support may intensify emotional demands, contributing to emotional exhaustion, burnout and uneven affective burdens among educational professionals (Anomneze et al., 2016; Zembylas, 2005).

#### 2.2.4 Care as Feminized and Undervalued Educational Labour

Educational scholarship has also examined care as a gendered and professionally undervalued form of labour. Feminist approaches argue that caring practices have been associated with femininity and nurturing, contributing to the tendency to treat care as a natural expectation of educational work rather than as skilled labour requiring professional recognition, support and material value (Folbre, 2001; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996). This has been notable within Early Childhood Education (ECE), traditionally positioning women as default carers, reproducing a persistent care ceiling that intersects with low-status, poorly paid and precarious workforce with limited bargaining power defined as pink-collar labour (Mooney Simmie & Murphy, 2021; Apple, 2012). This exemplifies how caring responsibilities have been unevenly distributed through gendered divisions of labour, reinforcing educational care with feminine forms of responsibility (Tronto, 1993).

Research on Primary and Early Childhood Education (ECE) has further highlighted how the relational and affective dimensions of teaching remain insufficiently recognized

within dominant institutional constructions of educational work (Acker, 1995; Osgood, 2006). Osgood (2006) argues that contemporary constructions of professionalism in Early Childhood Education (ECE) increasingly privileges performative standards and measurable competencies while continuing to associate care with feminized identities and presumed emotional dispositions. As a result, emotional attentiveness and nurturing practices risk being naturalized as inherent disposition of educators rather than recognized as forms of labour requiring material support and professional recognition (Duffy, 2005).

These tensions are particularly significant since caring educational practices often involve forms of invisible labour that remain difficult to formalize within professional frameworks, potentially contributing to women educators being more likely to perform care due to socially regulated practices shaped by internalized gender norms and expectations (Hargreaves, 1998; Olson et al., 2019). Additionally, this may lead to the naturalization and feminization of care work, promoting its under-compensation and lack of professionalization and contributing to occupational inequality (Malhotra, 2022).

#### 2.2.5 Care as Institutional and Political Dimension in Education

Care has also been conceptualized as an institutional and political practice shaped by social and organizational arrangements. Tronto (1993, 2013) argues that care is inherently political because the distribution of caring responsibilities and the organization of care are shaped by relations of power and inequality, making care a matter of collective responsibility. From this perspective, care is understood as a collective and socially organized practice dependent upon the distribution of resources, labour, responsibilities and institutional support (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, Sevenhuijsen (1998) argues that care is articulated upon the provision of wider systems of public support, social services and institutional responsibility. Applied to education, these perspectives suggest that sustaining care depends not only on ethical or social-emotional commitments, but also on material and support structures that enable or constrain its enactment (Kittay, 1999).

However, tensions remain regarding the extent to which caring practices can be formally recognized and sustained within educational systems since relational and affective dimensions of education frequently remain marginalized within institutional environments organized around performativity and measurable outcomes (Lynch, 2010). Although care may increasingly enter public and institutional discourse, its translation into concrete responsibility and policy support structures remains a challenge (Sevenhuijsen, 1998).

## **2.3 Care, Educational Inequality and Social Justice**

This section examines care through a social justice and inequalities perspective drawing attention to the unequal caring conditions through which education is experienced and sustained.

### **2.3.1 Care and Educational Inequality**

Inequalities are structurally produced through institutional and social arrangements related to class, race, gender, and social position that shape relations of power, opportunity and participation (Young, 1990). This implies that educational processes cannot be understood independently from the inequalities embedded into educational life, since educational environments are within wider social arrangements that shape educational opportunities unevenly (Connell, 1993).

Consequently, inequalities shape students' access to resources, institutional interaction, advocacy, and forms of support, contributing to differentiated educational experiences (Lareau, 2011). For instance, O'Brien (2008) highlights how the capacity to provide educational support and care is shaped upon unequal access to emotional and relational resources available across families and communities. Similarly, Watkins (2025) analysis of interventions with refugee-background students argues that educational resilience, understood as the capacity to navigate adversity in educational settings, depends on sustained effort, time and supportive relationships, highlighting the importance of emotional and social resources.

This suggests that students do not encounter education under equivalent caring conditions, since meaningful educational participation depends not only on formal access or resources, but also on relations of care, recognition, support and conditions of engagement and belonging within educational environments (Lynch & Baker, 2005; Kolleck, 2025). Building on this perspective, Lynch (2012) argues that inequalities extend beyond material disparities or attainment because emotional support, attentiveness, institutional responsiveness and relational security are also unevenly distributed across social groups and educational contexts. Therefore, care constitutes a central component of social reproduction, because it encompasses the relationships and forms of support necessary to sustain individuals and reproduce the capacities upon which economic and social life depend (Fraser, 2016).

### 2.3.2 Care and Social Justice

Beyond inequalities in caring conditions, the examination of care as a matter of social justice has important implications. Feminist critiques and capability approaches argue that traditional theories of justice pay insufficient attention to the role of care and interdependence in shaping people's opportunities (Kittay, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003). The capability approach shifts attention away from the distribution of material resources alone and focuses on the individuals' freedoms to participate and shape their own life (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Applied to education, capability scholars argue that educational opportunities depend on the social conditions that enable learners to transform educational provision into real possibilities to benefit from learning (Unterhalter, 2007) and on relationships of participation, recognition, belonging and respect that support the expansion of student's capabilities (Walker, 2005).

Understanding care as a matter of social justice also requires attention to the institutional arrangements that shape experiences of support, belonging and inclusion within education. For example, Mills et al. (2015) argue that socially just education involves more than questions of redistribution and recognition, since students' opportunities for meaningful participation are also shaped by affective forms of justice. Similarly, Nobile and Tarabini (2025) discuss the affective dimensions of schooling having been often overlooked despite their importance for understanding how educational inequalities are experienced and reproduced. Rather than treating emotions, well-being, or resilience as individual attributes, they emphasize that experiences of belonging, recognition, exclusion and support are shaped through social relations and institutional conditions. In the same way, educational practices of assessment and comparison may generate forms of affective injustice reinforcing inequalities by shaping how students experience recognition, belonging or educational value within schools (Lynch & Lodge, 2025). These perspectives align with calls to recognize affective inequalities as a distinct dimension of injustice, highlighting how unequal access to care, love, solidarity and emotional support constitutes a significant yet overlooked source of social inequality that intersects with class, status, or political power (Lynch et al., 2021).

According to these contributions care could be understood as a matter of social justice because inequalities shape caring conditions through which educational opportunities are experienced, accessed and sustained (Lynch & Baker, 2005; Fraser, 2016; Unterhalter, 2007). Consequently, the ways in which care is recognized, supported, organized or

institutionalized within educational systems and policy has implications on how education responds and reproduces inequalities (Tronto, 2013; Fraser, 2016).

## **2.4 The Governance of Care in Education Policy**

### **2.4.1 Global Governance and Educational Priorities**

Contemporary education systems are governed through cultures of performativity in which accountability, evaluation and performance become central mechanisms of regulation (Ball, 2003). Within global education reform agendas, these principles are materialized through governance instruments such as testing, benchmarking, indicators and accountability systems that enable educational systems to be compared, evaluated and steered across different contexts, aligning with human capital logics that frame education as an investment for productivity (Verger et al., 2018). These tools are primarily shaped by IOs, transnational policy networks and global reform agendas that circulate policy ideas across national contexts (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Rather than relying on direct regulation, data is operating as a form of soft governance that encourages alignment through comparison, monitoring and the production of knowledge, shaping what becomes visible and actionable through policy (Ozga, 2009). Since, as Rose and Miller (1992) argue, governing depends upon rendering social phenomena manageable through specific technologies and expertise. Therefore, instruments such as testing, accountability systems, audits and performance metrics are actively shaping institutional priorities and practices (Shore & Wright, 2015).

The implications of these governance mechanisms influence how educational success is defined by privileging outcomes that can be measured and compared across contexts, risking narrowing broader educational purposes by reducing questions of educational quality to what can be quantified (Biesta, 2009). As a result, relational dimensions such as care and emotional support become less visible, valued and legitimized within educational processes (Lynch & Lodge, 2025). For example, examining summative assessment in ECE, Archer (2017) states that caring relationships, although central on this stage, occupy an uncertain position within accountability frameworks focused on evaluating children's attainment. Similarly, Korsvold and Nygård (2022) show how Norwegian ECE policy has incorporated discourses of assessment and school readiness, reflecting New Public Management (NPM) standards that conflict with holistic educational traditions. Additionally, accountability demands create performative

pressures that can displace caring priorities and encourage educators to focus on effectiveness rather than responding to student needs (Walls, 2022).

#### 2.4.2 Governance Mechanisms in Global Education Policy

Beyond the governance instruments used to steer educational systems, governance also operates through processes that shape the framing of policy problems, allocation of responsibility and the definition of appropriate responses. Critical governance scholarship argues that these can be articulated through different mechanisms that influence how social issues become visible, thinkable, problematized and governable through particular forms of knowledge and intervention that shape subjectivities for desirable outcomes (Dean, 2010; Popkewitz, 2008).

One example is the relocation of social issues from arenas of political debate into forms of technical, managerial and expert-led decision-making rather than through explicit political contestation (Flinders & Buller, 2006). Since policy does not simply respond to educational problems but actively shapes how they are understood and which responses become legitimate (Adams, 2015), the appearance of an issue within policy frameworks does not necessarily indicate its institutionalization. Drawing on Lombardo and Meier's (2014) work on symbolic representation, policy frameworks may rhetorically acknowledge particular concerns while producing limited changes in the distribution of responsibilities, resources or institutional arrangements. Hay (2007) understands these phenomena as depoliticization strategies materialized in the representation of certain issues outside concerns of political control by reducing their visibility or reframing them as challenges of individual responsibility or resilience. To do so, policy frameworks create Discursive Educational Opportunity Structures (DEOS) influencing which educational problems, solutions and actors become visible and legitimate by privileging certain understandings while marginalizing others (Jules, 2022).

Apart from shaping policy visibility and legitimacy, governance also operates through shaping the conduct and capacities of individuals and organizations (Rose & Miller, 1992). Through processes of responsibilization, a neoliberal reconfiguration of responsibility from state provision towards individuals, professionals, communities and organizations, encouraging them to assume greater responsibility for addressing social challenges (Peeters, 2019). Therefore, social problems become governed by encouraging actors to assume responsibility for managing themselves, often through self-regulation,

capacity-building and behavioural change, cultivating responsible subjects (Pyysiäinen et al., 2017).

Within education, these governance processes can be reflected in forms of educationalization or pedagogization, understood as the tendency for social, political and economic challenges reformulated as educational problems to be addressed through learning, schooling and pedagogical intervention (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008). This governing strategy has positioned schools as accountability sites for addressing complex social problems despite the limited capacity institutions to resolve challenges whose origins lie beyond education (Labaree, 2008). To explain these phenomena, Singh (2015) argues that pedagogization is a structural feature of performative societies in which social concerns are increasingly reframed as matters of learning and human capital development. Therefore, responsibility for addressing social challenges is dispersed across educational actors, while political and social problems intend to be governed through educational processes and the cultivation of individual capacities, shifting attention from the structural conditions that produce them and positioning education as a substitute for political intervention (Depaepe, 2012).

#### 2.4.3 Framing Care in Education Policy

As education is increasingly expected to respond to social challenges, including participation, belonging, well-being or inclusion, policy frameworks are required to engage with issues that are closely connected to certain understandings of care, caring relations and support structures (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008; Lynch & Baker, 2005; Tronto, 2013).

Regarding educational policy dimensions in which care has been explicitly referenced, care has historically been institutionalized most visibly within Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy frameworks, associating care with the early years, while later stages of education became increasingly oriented towards learning and attainment (Bennett, 2003). Moss (2017) argues that this separation reinforced the perception of care as an Early Childhood Education (ECE) concern and contributed to enduring inequalities in the status, funding and policy attention to care in education. Additionally, pastoral care represented a significant policy domain originated in religious traditions of pastoral guidance. It became incorporated into policy through responsibilities related to student welfare, guidance, and personal development (Purdy, 2024). While Best (2007) describes

its evolution towards questions of student welfare and support, Purdy (2024) notes that contemporary policy increasingly addresses these concerns through concepts such as well-being and mental health rather than through the language of pastoral care itself. This highlights the fluidity of care within educational policy discourse, as associated concerns have been reinterpreted and incorporated into changing policy vocabularies and priorities.

Care has also been recently conceptualized as a distinct policy approach materialized through care ethics. For example, Greenswag (2019) argues that care ethics offers a transformative approach to policy by examining how institutions respond to needs, distribute caring responsibilities and sustain relationships of interdependence. Engster (2020) operationalizes this perspective by stating that care ethics should serve as a guiding principle for public administration and policy implementation arguing that public institutions should be evaluated according to their responsiveness to human needs. Therefore, as stated by Jackson (2025), care ethics provides an alternative educational discourse that challenges policy agendas centred on performance by emphasizing the importance of relationality and responsiveness as educational concerns.

As previously mentioned, contemporary policy frameworks increasingly address concerns such as well-being, belonging, inclusion, participation and support, many of which engage with relational, emotional and social conditions through which care is experienced and organized (Lynch & Baker, 2005; Spratt, 2017; Tronto, 2013). One relevant example is the growing emphasis on well-being and mental health in education policy that draws upon multiple traditions, including a discourse of care, suggesting that care-related concerns are articulated through policy commitments to well-being (Spratt, 2017). Similarly, students belonging has become a prominent education policy domain that explicitly connects with care as being produced through relationships of recognition and obligation to others (Gilani & Thomas, 2025; Macartney, 2012). Care-related understandings can also be represented through policy commitments to inclusion and equity, Fernandes (2019) argues that an ethics of care provides an important framework for inclusive education by emphasizing students' well-being, belonging and support. Lastly, the convergence of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and care policy is a process through which learners develop competencies to “manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle challenging situations effectively” (UNESCO, 2024, s.p.).

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study defines care as an institutional material responsibility for sustaining the relational, emotional, and social conditions necessary for education to occur. This understanding draws on:

- The emotional and social dimension supported by educational scholarship emphasizing attentiveness, emotional support and affective relationships as central components of educational experiences and learning processes (Noddings, 1992; Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2005).
- The material dimension informed by feminist political economy and social reproduction perspectives, which emphasize that care depends upon labour, resources, time and institutional support, and is embedded within social arrangements that sustain everyday life (Duffy, 2005; Fraser, 2016; Lightman & Kevins, 2021).
- The institutional and political dimension illustrated by Tronto's (1993, 2013) and Sevenhuijsen's (1998) understanding of care as a matter of public responsibility shaped through social and political arrangements. From this perspective, care raises questions regarding how responsibilities are organized, distributed and supported within society and how such arrangements reflect relations of power. The focus on sustaining the conditions necessary for education is further guided by Tronto's (1993) definition of care as “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world” (p. 103).

Building on these perspectives, the study understands care as a matter of social justice because access to relationships, emotional support and institutional responsiveness is unevenly distributed across educational contexts and social groups (Lynch & Baker, 2005; Lynch et al., 2009). Therefore, as access to care is understood as partly shaped by institutional arrangements and accountability, it applies a critical governance lens to examine how educational policies define care-related concerns and allocate caring responsibilities across different actors and institutions (Rose & Miller, 1992; Hay, 2007). As global governance increasingly operates through the production of policy knowledge (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), policy documents are approached as governance instruments through which global education shapes educational priorities and, therefore, care understandings.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative reflexive thematic analysis of policy documents grounded in feminist literature. This research design has been selected because its qualitative nature is suitable for analysing how policy constructs meanings, while reflexive thematic analysis is well suited to capture semantic and underlying understandings, enabling the development of analytically meaningful themes (Yanow, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2023). Additionally, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to provide the theoretical lens through which the findings are interpreted by examining how they connect to the legitimization of certain forms of responsibility, unveiling the dialectical relationship between language and social practices through a macro-discursive approach (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, 2003). This enables to examine how policy discourses reflect and shape power relations and ideologies in relation to care conceptualization, governance and inequality framings. Therefore, for the analysis, policy documents from International Organizations (IOs) constitute the primary source of data because they provide insight into how educational priorities, responsibilities and responses to social and educational issues are legitimized within global policy frameworks (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

### **3.2 Research Paradigm and Epistemological Positioning**

This study is informed by a critical interpretivist epistemology that views social realities as mediated through processes of meaning-making while recognizing that these are shaped by relations of power and inequality (Yanow, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). This understanding is particularly relevant to policy research because, following Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) this research understands that policies aren't constructed as responsive to pre-existing problems but contribute to defining what is recognized as a problem, which actors are positioned as responsible and which forms of intervention

become justified. From this perspective, policy discourses embedded in policy documents are understood in the study as a social practice through which knowledge, power and social relations are produced and legitimized (Fairclough, 2013).

### 3.3 Sampling Strategy and Data Collection Process

Document selection followed a purposive sampling strategy to select policy texts produced by International Organizations (IOs) that could answer the research questions. Specifically, UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank were chosen because they are among the most influential actors in global education governance shaping educational policy agendas, norms and policy instruments (Elfert & Ydesen, 2023), and therefore relevant for understanding how care is constructed and governed.

The sampling process focused on policy documents published after the COVID-19 pandemic to capture contemporary policy priorities and the growing attention to well-being, socio-emotional development, support and resilience within education policy discourse (Ozga & Hell, 2025). Following Lombardo et al. (2009), this study understands care as a contested policy concept whose meanings may be articulated through different policy vocabularies apart from direct references. Therefore, inclusion criteria were granted to documents that contained explicit or implicit constructions of care.

The preliminary analysis was conducted through the official repositories of UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank. Specifically, publications released between 2019 and 2026 were initially screened for relevance searching for keywords directly associated with care or care-adjacent constructions such as well-being, support or social-emotional development. The final corpus was identified and assessed against to the inclusion criteria and selection was granted based on their relevance to the research questions and their engagement with care-related questions. In cases where a single document did not provide sufficient care data for a specific organization, additional documents were included to capture a broader range of care constructions. It is relevant to note that in the case of UNESCO, a single report was selected because constituted the organizations flagship vision document during the study period and was particularly suitable for examining how care is constructed within its educational discourse. The final selected documents were downloaded in PDF version and organized in a folder to manage the corpus. Table 1 summarizes the included documents and their final rationale for selection.

**Table 1**

### *Final analytical corpus*

| <b>Organization</b> | <b>Document</b>                                                               | <b>Year</b> | <b>Rationale for Inclusion</b>                                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UNESCO              | Reimagining Our Futures<br>Together: A New Social Contract<br>for Education   | 2021        | Extensive explicit and implicit<br>care engagement                                                         |
| OECD                | Learning Compass 2030                                                         | 2019        | Explicit construction of care as<br>a learner value                                                        |
| OECD                | Equity and Inclusion in Education                                             | 2023        | Explicit and implicit<br>construction of care focused<br>on support provision and<br>educational equity    |
| OECD                | Beyond Academic Learning                                                      | 2021        | Implicit construction of care<br>through belonging, supportive<br>relationships and well-being             |
| World Bank          | Realizing the Future of Learning                                              | 2020        | Explicit and implicit<br>constructions of care through<br>developmental support and<br>focus on caregiving |
| World Bank          | The Role of Teaching and<br>Learning Practices for Supporting<br>Safe Schools | 2023        | Explicit and Implicit<br>constructions of care through<br>supportive relationships and<br>responsiveness   |

### 3.4 Development and Operationalization of the Coding Framework

To operationalize the study's research questions, a coding framework was created to examine how care is represented within policy discourse, how responsibilities for care are allocated and governed and how care-related inequalities are problematized. To systematize analysis, a coding matrix was developed in Microsoft Excel and used as the principal instrument that aligned the research questions and objectives with the coding framework materialized in a set of analytical dimensions to examine each excerpt. A coding matrix was found suitable for organization, comparison and interpretation of qualitative data across the corpus (Miles et al., 2020). Specifically, the matrix construction was articulated by capturing the document source, excerpt, page number and analytical

dimensions in relation to research questions and objectives. This format enabled the examination of the relationships between analytical dimensions, providing deeper insights into how care conceptualizations were linked to specific actors, forms of governance and patterns of inequality. This matrix is available in Appendix A. The coding framework was structured around five analytical dimensions: care presence, care conceptualization, care provider/actor, governance mechanism and care-related inequalities. Table 2 presents the relationship between the research questions, objectives and analytical dimensions that guided the coding process.

**Table 2**

*Alignment of Research Questions, Objectives and Analytical Dimensions*

| <b>Research Question</b>                                                                                                        | <b>Research Objective</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>Analytical Dimension</b>           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>RQ1.</b> How is care discursively constructed within global education policy discourses?                                     | <b>RO1.</b> Identify the presence of care within global education policy discourse and analyse how it is conceptually framed when articulated | Care Presence; Care Conceptualization |
| <b>RQ2.</b> How is care governed within global education policy frameworks?                                                     | <b>RO2.</b> Examine how policy discourses allocate responsibility for care across different social, institutional and educational actors.     | Care Provider/Actor                   |
|                                                                                                                                 | <b>RO3.</b> Identify the types of governance and mechanisms framing care responsabilization within global education policy discourse.         | Governance Mechanism                  |
| <b>RQ3.</b> To what extent and in what ways are care-related inequalities incorporated into global education policy discourses? | <b>RO4.</b> Analyse how policy discourses construct, recognize and/or problematize inequalities associated with care.                         | Care-Related Inequalities             |

### 3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

Following the selection of the corpus, each document was read to identify relevant excerpts to the study's research questions. In line with the coding framework, both explicit

references to care and implicit constructions were considered for inclusion. Specifically, excerpts were coded as explicit care through terms such as: caregiving, care work, ethic of care etc. For implicit references, care-adjacent concepts were coded when contributed to sustaining the relational, emotional, social or structural conditions necessary for learning and education to occur, in line with the theoretical framework. For example, references to responsive relationships, forms of support, conditions for well-being, belonging or socio-emotional dimensions of learning. Furthermore, the length of each selected excerpt varied according to the amount of text required to capture the relevant meaning within its policy context in accordance with the analytical dimensions. Once an excerpt was considered as analytically relevant, it entered the coding matrix.

The final analytical corpus consisted of approximately 105 coded excerpts. The distribution of excerpts across organizations was uneven, reflecting differences in care articulation within selected policy documents. Specifically, a single UNESCO document contained a substantial proportion of relevant data, whereas identifying comparable evidence within the OECD and World Bank required engagement with a larger set of documents. Consequently, variations in the volume of coded excerpts should be understood as differences in the visibility and articulation of care within the corpus.

Subsequently, excerpts were coded according to the analytical dimensions of care presence, conceptualization, care provider or actor, governance mechanism and care-related inequalities. To support the systematic application of the coding framework, a codebook table specifying the definitions and coding criteria for each analytical dimension and coding category was developed and refined throughout the analysis. The final codebook tables can be found in Appendix B.

Specifically, the coding process remained iterative throughout the analysis but initial coding was guided by the analytical dimensions derived from the research questions and informed by the literature review that provided a basis for anticipating some possible coding categories within dimensions. For example, in the case of care conceptualization, early coding informed by the literature review anticipated pedagogical, emotional and relational constructions of care, while subsequent comparison of excerpts across documents led to the refinement of these categories and the identification of additional conceptualizations, such as structural, labour or ecological care. Throughout the analysis, categories were reviewed, merged, split or redefined when they did not adequately

capture recurring patterns across the corpus, facilitating within-document and cross-document comparison. Consequently, the final coding framework was grounded in the empirical material combining concepts anticipated from the literature with additional conceptualizations that emerged through engagement with the policy corpus. Table 3 reflects the final coding categories according to each analytical dimension.

**Table 3**

*Final Coding Framework:*

| <b>Analytical Dimension</b> | <b>Final Coding Categories</b>                                                |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Care Presence               | Explicit; Implicit                                                            |
| Care Conceptualization      | Relational; Affective; Pedagogical; Labour; Structural; Ecological            |
| Care Provider/Actor         | State; Education System; School; Teacher; Family; Learner; Community; Society |
| Governance Mechanism        | Normative; Educational; Institutional; Material                               |
| Care-Related Inequalities   | Gendered Care; Resource Inequality; Recognition Inequality                    |

It is relevant to note that excerpts were assigned up to three coding categories within analytical dimension when it was necessary to capture the multifaceted nature of care. However, in most cases, coding was limited to one or two categories to maintain analytical clarity. Closely similar excerpts appearing in different sections of the same document were coded as separate instances to capture their recurrence with working notes used to track similarities during analysis. Additionally, methodological notes and observations were recorded within the coding matrix throughout the coding process to document coding decisions, patterns or contextual considerations. These can be consulted by accessing the Excel coding matrix through the link provided in Appendix A.

Following the iterative development of the coding categories through reflexive thematic analysis, these were interpreted through a macro-discursive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, drawing selectively on Fairclough's (2003) explanatory framework. This interpretation focused on the identification of social problems and their discursive

dimensions, the concept of interdiscursivity, and the critical examination of the implications of discourse for social change. Within this perspective, attention was directed towards how care was represented and conceptualized and how particular understandings of care, actors, governance mechanisms and inequalities shaped the identification of educational challenges and their proposed policy responses. The concept of interdiscursivity was employed to explore how care was articulated through adjacent policy discourses, while the analysis also considered how particular constructions legitimized certain responsibilities and governance arrangements, rendering alternative understandings less visible. This process resulted in the configuration of different themes for each research question that will be explained in the next chapter.

### 3.6 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As a female pedagogue and early childhood educator, I bring professional familiarity with contexts in which caring responsibilities are crucial part of educational work but remain undervalued and obscured. This background informed my interest in examining care through a governance lens, particularly regarding its distribution and (de)valuation within education policy, including the gendered dimension associated with caring. Consistent with the critical interpretivist orientation of the study, I acknowledge that my theoretical commitments and research judgment through the analysis influences the research process. However, to enhance reflexivity and transparency, the study was guided by a defined care conceptualization, a structured coding framework and the systematic documentation of coding decisions. Additionally, interpretations were assessed against the policy corpus and the theoretical framework to ensure that findings remained data-grounded while acknowledging their interpretive nature.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study analysed publicly available policy documents produced by international organizations (IOs) and therefore did not involve participants or personal data. Nevertheless, ethical standards were maintained through the accurate representation of policy texts, transparent documentation of analytical procedures and appropriate citation of all sources.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and analysis according to the three research questions of the study. Table 4 provides an overview of the thematic areas and emergent themes identified for each research question that structure the sections of the chapter.

**Table 4**

### *Emergent Themes by Research Question*

| Research Question                                                                                                               | Thematic Area                                                | Emergent Themes                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RQ1.</b> How is care discursively constructed within global education policy discourses?                                     | 4.1 Discursive Constructions of care                         | 4.1.1 Structural care                                            |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.1.2 Relational-affective care                                  |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.1.3 Pedagogical care                                           |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.1.4 Care Labour                                                |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.1.5 Ecological care                                            |
| <b>RQ2.</b> How is care governed within global education policy frameworks?                                                     | 4.2 The Governance of Care through responsibility allocation | 4.2.1 Care as a collective responsibility                        |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.2.2 Care as an educational responsibility                      |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.2.3 States as enablers and families as sites of care enactment |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.2.4 Teachers as frontline carers                               |
| <b>RQ3.</b> To what extent and in what ways are care-related inequalities incorporated into global education policy discourses? | 4.3 Care inequalities                                        | 4.3.1 Gendered inequalities                                      |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.3.2 Resource inequalities                                      |
|                                                                                                                                 |                                                              | 4.3.3 Recognition inequalities                                   |

## **4.1 Discursive Constructions of Care**

The analysis revealed that care can be conceptualized through both explicit and implicit discursive constructions. However, UNESCO engaged with care as an explicit policy concept to a much greater extent than the OECD and the World Bank, where care was more commonly articulated through adjacent policy discourses. It is also relevant to note that although this section presents distinctive conceptualizations, care was often constructed through multiple and overlapping discursive formations, reflecting a multifaceted nature. The following sections examine the main subthemes that emerged from the analysis and possible interpretations of these constructions.

### **4.1.1 Structural Care**

Structural care appeared consistently within UNESCO, OECD and World Bank. It was predominantly constructed by implicit references through policy vocabulary centred on support, resources or services to sustain educational processes, participation or well-being.

Within these framing two sub-patterns were identified. First, care was constructed through enabling conditions such as funding, infrastructure, public services and supportive environments that facilitate learning and well-being. For instance, “adequate and sustained public funding for quality early childhood education” (UNESCO, 2021, p.57), positioning care as a systemic responsibility within public provision and resource allocation. Second, structural care was articulated through institutional support mechanisms like targeted interventions to address student needs. This was reflected in references like the importance of “non-instructional support and services” for fostering educational potential and belonging (OECD, 2023, p.274), as well as the World Bank's call to provide “guidance, support, and counseling to parents” so they can “better fulfill” their role in supporting learning (World Bank, 2020, p.9).

While both patterns were identified across the organizations, differences emerged on its articulation. UNESCO predominantly framed structural care through enabling conditions, emphasizing public responsibility legitimized by collective action. The OECD also emphasized this, but by positioning care as a means of improving inclusion and educational performance, but also placed emphasis on support provision for addressing

diverse learner needs. The World Bank combined both patterns, although its construction of structural care was related to learning continuity and human capital development, with support provision directed towards strengthening capacity for risk mitigation.

These differing articulations demonstrate how similar care-related practices can be discursively mobilized to advance distinct governance objectives. Since in all documents structural care framings function as a governing discourse that describe what educational systems ought to provide by allocating enactment to lower governance levels and producing a scalar division of labour in which global actors define their educational priorities and local actors are supposed to implement them (Dale & Robertson, 2007). Consequently, structural care becomes utilized through adjacent policy discourses of inclusion, well-being, equity or support (Lombardo et al., 2009), utilizing interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 2003) to linguistically legitimize care-related responsibilities within existing policy agendas to conveniently shape educational priorities by directing the structural provision of care towards particular interventions.

#### 4.1.2 Relational-Affective Care

Relational-affective care emerged through policy concerns with well-being, belonging, emotional support and socio-emotional development. It was one of the most recurrent implicit conceptualizations across UNESCO, OECD and World Bank documents.

For UNESCO relational-affective care was primarily articulated through holistic understandings of education connected to reciprocity. To do so, it mobilized discourses that emphasized student-centred approaches to “support the social, emotional, cognitive, and moral development of the whole person” (UNESCO, 2021, p.100), resonating with human formation perspectives (Biesta, 2006). This was heightened by experiences that learners bring to education such as “emotions, fears, insecurities, confidence and passion” (UNESCO, 2021, p.67). Additionally, the construction of an ethic of care was relationally utilized as enabling individuals to understand themselves as “interconnected persons who are simultaneously capable and vulnerable” (UNESCO, 2021, p.67). Here the ethic of care construction discursively legitimizes relational interdependence by presenting mutual vulnerability and reciprocity as the moral foundations of educational relationships, attempting to challenge neoliberal individualized understandings of responsibility (Kittay, 1999).

Although the World Bank also referred to commitments to policies aimed at “fostering the holistic development of children” (World Bank, 2020, p.37), care was predominantly articulated through responsive relationships for supportive learning. This positionality sometimes emerged through discourses of vulnerability like pandemic contextualization where “heightened food insecurity, increased home-based violence, and greater economic instability” had developed stress among learners needing to “provide socioemotional support for students” (World Bank, 2020, p.23). In response to these challenges, care was operationalized through relationships aimed at creating supportive learning environments mainly to enhance performance. For instance, “caring and supportive student-teacher relationships” were presented as helping students feel safe and contributing to “better school performance and engagement, greater emotional well-being and social competencies” (World Bank, 2023, p.8). Through this framing, socio-emotional well-being is constructed as an educational concern and a legitimate target of intervention and governance, reflecting post-pandemic recovery discourses that render emotional and relational dimensions of learning visible within policy agendas positioning them as a matter of educational action (Ozga & Hell, 2025).

Within the OECD corpus, relational-affective care was understood through emotional, psychological and interpersonal conditions that support learning and mental health. Relationships with teachers, peers and families were valued because they foster belonging and socio-emotional development. For instance, students who “feel like they belong at school are more likely to get along well and work well with classmates and friends” (OECD, 2021, p.5). Although the OECD argues that “the identification of student needs should not focus solely on learning needs” (OECD, 2023, p.369), the needs articulated through its policy discourse were frequently justified through their contribution to educational achievement. Therefore, relational-affective care becomes visible through educational support frameworks, reflecting processes of psychologization in which educational policy frames students as emotionally vulnerable subjects requiring support (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009).

The predominance of implicit references suggests that relational-affective care functions as an underlying policy logic embedded within concerns with well-being, belonging, socio-emotional development and learner support. Yet the purposes assigned to this conceptualization differ according to each organization: UNESCO frames it as

constitutive of human development and social interdependence, whereas the OECD and World Bank more frequently justify its capacity to enhance participation and educational performance. These differences illustrate how relational and affective vocabularies may operate as “accommodationist mechanisms” (Verger, 2014), enabling shared commitments to well-being and socio-emotional development to govern different policy rationalities by legitimizing particular educational priorities according to each organization.

#### 4.1.3 Pedagogical Care

Pedagogical Care emerged by the construction of care as something that can be learned, and developed through educational processes, embedded across UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank documents.

UNESCO presented an extensive explicit pedagogical conceptualization, framing care as something that education should actively cultivate by, for example, claiming that “caring-about, caring-for, care-giving and care-receiving must be included in curricula” (p.67). Additionally, it was also constructed as a specific educational aim through which learners develop the necessary capacities for participation, social cooperation or ecological responsibility. This may explain why pedagogical care utilizes references to care language and intersects with other care conceptualizations, as care becomes part of a broader educational project concerned with shaping the dispositions of future citizens by legitimizing certain ways of relating to others and the forms of social relations required for more caring societies (Popkewitz, 2008). Furthermore, within this conceptualization, UNESCO sometimes invokes the language of an ethic of care, arguing that pedagogies should be “framed by an ethic of care and of reciprocity” (UNESCO, 2021, p.50). This ethical framing functions as a normative discursive resource that legitimizes pedagogical practices by appealing to moral accountability and presenting care as a guiding educational principle.

However, the OECD and the World Bank framed pedagogical care as something that can be developed through educational interventions by mostly utilizing implicit references through care adjacent articulations. Yet, in the OECD documents, it is primarily embedded through interventions aimed at developing the capacities to respond to learner diversity. For instance, teachers are expected to possess “strong theoretical knowledge of

differentiated instruction and the skills... to address the diverse needs of students” (OECD, 2023, p.12). But the World Bank constructs pedagogical care as connected to child development, for example by expecting caregivers to “support healthy development” through engagement in “nurturing, stimulating, language-rich activities” (World Bank, 2020, p.37). This interdiscursive articulation legitimizes pedagogical care through its contribution to desirable educational and developmental outcomes, governing educational practices according to learning optimization and marginalizing the value of pedagogical care beyond instrumental contribution (Biesta, 2009).

#### 4.1.4 Care Labour

Care Labour emerged as a less prominent, though significant, conceptualization across UNESCO, OECD, and World Bank documents. It was constructed through explicit references to care materialized as the work involved in sustaining individuals, households and societies through activities such as childcare and caregiving.

UNESCO presented the most explicit and developed conceptualization of care labour. By challenging conventional understandings of economic value, arguing that “what is formally considered 'work' and what is measured as 'productivity' makes a great deal of essential labour invisible” and that “when this work is formalized, these professions are often lower-paid and have lower status” (UNESCO, 2021, p.41). Through this lens, care is discursively positioned as essential labour that sustains social reproduction while remaining undervalued within dominant economic systems (Fraser, 2016). This could explain why care labour was sometimes constructed within structural care framings, valuing care as a form of labour that requires recognition and support. UNESCO goes a step further by explicitly locating responsibility for care labour, arguing that “women and girls carry the greatest load” of responsibilities related to supporting families, communities, health, and food security, while receiving “little recognition or support” for their contributions (UNESCO, 2021, pp.113-114). These constructions reflect the feminization of care labour by gendered divisions of responsibility and insufficient recognition within social and economic arrangements (Folbre, 2001).

In contrast, the World Bank and the OECD primarily conceptualized care labour as childcare services, discursively narrowing its meaning by rendering visible its service function obscuring its labour character. For example, the World Bank acknowledged that

schools perform childcare work function that “enables parents and other caregivers to participate in the labour force” (World Bank, 2020, p.15). Through this discourse care labour becomes significant because of its economic contribution for participating in the labour market, diminishing the intrinsic social value of caring work. The OECD framed care labour as a service whose economic accessibility influences equity and participation rather than a form of work that requires recognition by arguing that “the cost of childcare has important implications for equity and inclusion” (OECD, 2023, p.135). Together, these constructions subordinate the value of care labour to the educational, social and economic outcomes it enables, reflecting instrumental policy rationalities that legitimize interventions through their contribution to measurable social and economic objectives (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), marginalizing the intrinsic social value of care labour.

#### 4.1.5 Ecological Care

Ecological Care was identified predominantly through explicit care terminology and constructions such as “caring for the planet”. This framing appeared to a limited extent across the corpus and it was primarily articulated in UNESCO and with occasional reference in the OECD corpus.

A pattern emerging from the data was its frequent articulation within other conceptualizations, specifically drawing upon relational, pedagogical or labour understandings of care. For example, the OECD draws upon pedagogical understandings to claim that “students are thus expected to learn to care not only for their personal well-being, but also for the well-being of their friends, families, communities and the planet itself” (OECD, 2019, p.9). Similarly, UNESCO articulates ecological care through care labour, suggesting that the knowledge associated with “raising children, caring for the ill and elderly, [and] maintaining a home” also informs how humans care for a “damaged and vulnerable planet” (UNESCO, 2021, p.67). These excerpts construct ecological care by extending forms of human caregiving, life-sustaining labour and care-related knowledge sharing to the ecological sphere, resonating with environmental care ethics that emphasize the interdependence of human and ecological life (Silberzahn, 2024). However, it is relevant to note how UNESCO invokes ethical care language to legitimize ecological responsibility, arguing that “an ethic of care enables us to understand ourselves as interconnected persons who are simultaneously capable and vulnerable. It forces us to reflect on how we affect and are affected by others and the

world” (UNESCO, p.67). Nevertheless, these ecological care constructions obscure structural and political conditions through which ecological crisis emerge, by locating environmental responsibility within individual capacities and moral obligations for sustaining life (Rose & Miller, 1992).

## **4.2 The Governance of Care Through Responsibility Allocation**

The analysis revealed that care is governed through different mechanisms that allocate responsibility across social, institutional and educational actors. The following sections examine the main patterns of responsibility allocation across different actors and consider their implications for care governance.

### **4.2.1 Care as a Collective Responsibility**

The construction of care as a collective responsibility was conceptualized by framing care attached to actors such as communities or society. This understanding appeared more frequently among UNESCO discourses with governance operating at a normative level and less within the OECD or the World Bank.

The collective responsibility of care within UNESCO is articulated through discourses that present educational transformation as dependent on “millions of individual and collective acts- acts of courage, leadership, resistance, creativity, and care” (UNESCO, 2021, p.5). This formulation distributes abstract responsibility to individuals as agents for enacting educational change. Also, by constructing care as a civic and moral responsibility rather than institutional, for example, by arguing that “emergencies cannot be faced without the help of society at large, through self-responsibility and mutual caring” (UNESCO, 2021, p.40). To emphasize this, UNESCO frequently utilizes the discursive resource of “an ethic of care” that appears to challenge transactional and individualistic understandings but instead moralizes certain forms of conduct (Locatelli, 2024). In this way, the “ethic of care” discourse functions to increase political visibility while legitimizing collective moral commitment and providing limited attention to structural conditions or accountability mechanisms required to sustain care in practice (Engster, 2020).

Differently, within the OECD and the World Bank corpus care as a collective responsibility acquires a different discursive value translated into collective action. For example, the OECD constructs the concept of co-agency by arguing that “students are

surrounded by their peers, teachers, families and communities, all of whom interact with and guide the student towards well-being” (OECD, 2019, p.6), attributing collective responsibility for well-being to multiple actors. Similarly, the World Bank advocates collaboration between teachers, communities and caregivers to develop contextually relevant SEL programmes and enabling learning environments (World Bank, 2023, p.12). However, the practical implications of all these framings translate into diffusing accountability across moral commitments in the case of UNESCO, and multiple actors in the case of the OECD and the World Bank. This ultimately displaces responsibilities by governing care through the conduct of social actors, framing individuals and communities as responsible to shape their own conduct according to each organization’s desirable norms (Rose, 1999).

#### 4.2.2 Care as an Educational Responsibility

Framing care as an educational responsibility was a persistent theme in which UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank positioning education systems, schools and learners as actors responsible for care-related needs, constructing three different patterns. In these discourses governance operates predominantly through educational, institutional and sometimes material mechanisms that frequently understand care as pedagogical, locating responsibility for its enactment within education.

Along the corpus education systems are frequently assigned responsibility for identifying and responding to learners needs. For example, by stating that “care and respect for others need practice and reinforcement - something that education can well support” (UNESCO, 2021, p.40), positioning education as responsible for developing caring dispositions. Similarly, the OECD argues that “education systems [must] address the diverse needs of refugee students, including their learning, social and emotional needs, and promote their inclusion in schools” (OECD, 2023, p.16), addressing students’ needs as objects of educational governance. The World Bank extends this responsibility, but also articulates material governance mechanisms, arguing that education systems should “provide learning resources for the home environment” (World Bank, 2020, p.27). Across the three organizations, responsibility for care is enacted by educational systems, reflecting a governance mechanism of educationalization in which diverse challenges are transformed to educational concerns (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008), making its system the principal organ for responsibility. Hence operating by rendering care visible as a legitimate object

of intervention without necessarily being accompanied by clearly defined arrangements for its provision (Hay, 2007).

Similarly, all organizations address schools as institutions through which discourse allocates responsibility for care enactment. A representative example is UNESCO's description of schools as "central public infrastructures for organizing intergenerational conversations on how to live in the world, make worlds, and care for them" (UNESCO, 2021, p.96). Likewise, the OECD and the World Bank position schools as relevant actors for their capacity to provide the resources and services through which care is enacted. For instance, the OECD understands schools as "crucial resources for promoting students' psychological well-being" (OECD, 2021, p.104). Yet, these discourses shift accountability towards educational institutions, framing them as capable to address care-related concerns making less visible the underlying causes that are embedded in social and economic arrangements beyond the reach of schooling (Labaree, 2008).

Learners are also constructed as responsible subjects expected to acquire caring capacities. The OECD argues that "students are thus expected to learn to care not only for their personal well-being, but also for the well-being of their friends, families, communities and the planet itself" (OECD, 2019, p.9). Similarly, the World Bank describes social and emotional learning as a process through which individuals learn to "show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (World Bank, 2023, p.12). This exemplifies that, while governed through educational processes, accountability is relocated to learners, revealing processes of responsibilization through which individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for addressing social concerns (Peeters, 2019).

#### 4.2.3 States as Enablers of Care Provision and Families as Sites of Care Enactment

This articulation was particularly prominent in UNESCO and World Bank documents, where families were constructed as the primary sites of care enactment and states as actors responsible for providing supportive infrastructures through predominantly material governance arrangements. It was relevant to note that UNESCO linked these to both care labour and structural care conceptualizations and the World Bank mainly to structural care framings.

Within UNESCO, families were consistently associated with the performance of care labour as essential social and economic work taking place within households like "raising

children, caring for the ill and elderly, maintaining a home” (UNESCO, 2021, p.67). However, these responsibilities were often constructed by discursively unifying “care work undertaken within households, the provisioning of common good resources, and the enabling infrastructures (both material and regulatory) provided by government” (UNESCO, 2021, p.45). Similarly, through a rights-based discourse, states were assigned responsibility for creating the conditions that enable education, including access to social protection and “a stable and healthy family and community environment that promotes emotional and physical well-being” (UNESCO, 2021, p.109).

A close articulation was evident within the World Bank corpus. Parents and caregivers were positioned as central actors, arguing that “support be provided to parents and caregivers” to ensure learning continuity and emphasized the need to secure their “buy-in and commitment to new models of education delivery” (World Bank, 2020, p.17). Likewise, parents were described as “key players in their children’s learning and their future”, while public policy was expected to provide “guidance, support, and counseling” to help them “better fulfill this role” (World Bank, 2020, p.9). This logic was further reinforced through family-oriented welfare measures, by for example arguing that “Governments need to enact family friendly policies (e.g., maternity leave, cash benefits)” (World Bank, 2020, p. 35).

Although appearing to distribute responsibility between families and states, this constructs a political settlement in which families are ultimately responsible for care enactment. Since state action is framed as governing care through interventions designed to strengthen families’ caring capacities (Rose, 1999), in line with neoliberal welfare arrangements that relocate caring responsibilities without corresponding with institutional responsibility for its provision (Rai et al., 2014). In this way, care is upheld as a public value while responsibility for meeting care needs is relocated to the family sphere, reflecting processes of refamilialization associated with neoliberal governance (Vike et al., 2024). This is particularly evident within UNESCO, where the recognition of care as socially and economically valuable work grants care labour political visibility without challenging the distribution of caring responsibilities. Therefore, political attention is directed towards the recognition of care labour through its valuation, potentially displacing redistributive attention aimed at transforming the structural-economic inequalities (Fraser, 1997). As a result, questions of state responsibility remain comparatively unaddressed, while the burden of care is located within the family sphere,

reinforcing the reproduction of care labour inequalities (Daly & Lewis, 2000; Fraser, 2016).

#### 4.2.4 Teachers as frontline carers

The construction of teachers as the immediate actors for care enactment was a predominant pattern across UNESCO, the OECD and World Bank documents. It is relevant to note that in the three organizations, teachers emerged through explicit references and implicit mentions materialized in pedagogical practices. Additionally, teachers are the only actor that appears systematically across all governance mechanisms and almost all care conceptualizations (except from care labour), suggesting that they carry one of the broadest distributions of care-related responsibilities within the corpus.

A recurring teacher framing across the organizations was articulated by implicit references through pedagogical practices. For example, within UNESCO, teachers were responsible of care enactment by references to pedagogies that “should be based on ethics of reciprocity and care and recognize interdependencies among individuals, groups and among species” (UNESCO, 2021, p.51). Similarly, the OECD frequently framed students caring needs as issues to be addressed through educational interventions, for instance by arguing that “social and emotional learning programmes and trauma-informed teaching strategies can help address the needs of students who may have experienced trauma or who may otherwise need particular social and emotional support” (OECD, 2023, pp. 274–275). The World bank exemplified this to a lesser extent but also by constructing care-related dispositions through pedagogy, like by explaining that “SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to... show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (World Bank, 2023, p.12). All these framings demonstrate that, by prescribing pedagogical approaches and desired educational outcomes, policy texts govern expectations that are enacted through teachers’ practices, positioning them as subjects responsible for their realization (Ball et al., 2012).

Another relevant articulation of teacher-care responsibility was enacted through the provision of emotional and relational work. In the case of UNESCO this can be reflected by understanding that social and emotional learning practices “require consciously designed learning experiences, bonding with teachers...” (UNESCO, 2021, p.68). More explicitly, the OECD argues that “students who believe that teachers support, care about,

respect, and praise them are more likely to like school and be more involved” (OECD, p.135). Furthermore, the World Bank expects that teachers “ensure fairness and justice”, “exhibit compassion for individual learners”, and provide the “necessary emotional or physical support” (World Bank, 2023, p.8). These discourses construct care as a professional obligation of teachers, normalizing the expansion of teachers’ emotional and relational labour while diminishing the visibility of institutional conditions, material resources and support structures necessary for its enactment (O’Connor, 2008).

Yet the discourse of the three organizations sometimes acknowledge that teachers require support, for example, by arguing that “teachers are the most significant factor in educational quality provided they have sufficient recognition, preparation, support, resources, autonomy...” (UNESCO, 2021, p.22). However, UNESCO often governs teacher support through moralizing discourses of collective responsibility, calling on “schools, communities, families, administrators, higher education, and political entities to rally in solidarity around teachers, to recognize the importance of their work and to create the conditions that enable their success” (UNESCO, 2021, p.80), framing support as a shared responsibility rather than an institutional obligation.

Differently, The OECD frames this support from a capacity building perspective by arguing that is “important that teachers are provided with high-quality professional learning that allow them to develop and strengthen the knowledge and competences required to identify and effectively respond to the varied needs of diverse learners in evolving and uncertain contexts” (OECD, 2023, p.219). Similarly, the World Bank acknowledges that the growing demands placed on teachers requires systemic support, arguing that “more attention needs to be given to teacher wellbeing” and that ministries should take action to prevent burnout and provide mental health support (World Bank, 2020, p.26). Yet, these discourses reveal a tension in which support is framed not as a means of challenging the expanding expectations placed upon teachers, but as a mechanism for enabling them to better fulfil those expectations. Through this framing, teachers are indirectly responsabilized as the actors who must develop their capacity, resilience and well-being to meet policy demands, rather than questioning the structural conditions that generate or intensify those demands (Done & Murphy, 2018).

This process of responsabilization aligns with teachers appearing across all governance mechanisms and almost all care conceptualizations identified in the analysis, suggesting

that these policy discourses construct teachers as the principal actor through which diverse care agendas should be operationalized and enacted. Furthermore, the absence of teachers from care labour framings could support that the care work expected of them is rarely recognized as formal labour. Instead, these duties are articulated through pedagogical, ethical or professional vocabularies, expanding teachers caring responsibilities and governing them, encouraging self-adjustment through discourses of capacity building to enhance their effectiveness and resilience (Rose, 1999; Done & Murphy, 2018). In this way, the intensification of care expectations becomes normalized as an extension of professional practice embedded in teacher identity (O'Connor, 2008), obscuring the emotional labour, affective investments and relational work required to fulfil these responsibilities (Anomneze et al., 2016; Zembylas, 2005).

### **4.3 Care Inequalities**

The analysis revealed that inequalities occupied a relatively peripheral position within the corpus and were rarely addressed through explicit discussions. Nevertheless, several forms of inequality emerged through the ways care was distributed and problematized. The following sections examine the main patterns of inequality identified in relation to care and consider their discursive implications.

#### **4.3.1 Gendered Inequalities**

Gendered inequalities emerged unevenly across the corpus, with UNESCO engaging most explicitly through discourses of labour feminization or gendered caregiving, while the World Bank approached them more indirectly through the labour-market consequences of caregiving.

Within UNESCOs conceptualization of care labour, the report argued that much of the labour required to sustain households and communities “has often been feminized” (UNESCO, 2021, p.41), while women and girls continue to “carry the greatest load” of responsibilities related to supporting families, communities, health and food security, despite receiving “little recognition or support” (UNESCO, 2021, pp.113-114). These constructions discursively link care responsibilities to gendered expectations and divisions of caring labour, representing care as both unevenly distributed and insufficiently valued (Folbre, 2001). However, the discourse predominantly frames this inequality through questions of recognition and support, potentially directing political

attention towards the valuation of care work while leaving less explicit the need for its redistribution across genders (Fraser, 1997).

The World Bank also addressed women labour concerns but as a structural reality rather than a gendered arrangement, focusing on the economic consequences. For example, by stating that schools perform an important childcare function that enables labour-force participation noting that “women's labor force participation has suffered significantly” when this support was disrupted during the pandemic (World Bank, 2020, p.15). Likewise, references to maternity leave and family-friendly policies positioned women as the primary subjects of caregiving responsibilities (World Bank, 2020, p.35). Therefore, this discourse problematizes women’s caregiving responsibilities as a taken-for-granted reality upon which policy must act, naturalizing the association between women and care and reproducing gendered inequalities through assumptions that make socially produced inequalities appear natural (Lazar, 2017). This contributes to the persistent undervaluation of care work and reinforcement of its unequal gendered distribution by normalizing women’s responsibilities with care labour (Tronto, 1993; Duffy, 2005).

Furthermore, UNESCO constructed the feminization of care labour as a site of social reproduction by arguing that “if men continue to only represent, on average, less than 2% of early childhood educators, boys learn implicitly that they need not aspire to care for the young and vulnerable” (UNESCO, 2021, p.57). Yet by framing workforce composition as the mechanism reproducing gendered care norms, the discourse constructs gender inequality primarily as a problem of representation, obscuring the deeper gendered meanings through which caregiving is associated with femininity reproducing the association it seeks to transform (Peeters et al., 2015).

However, it simultaneously positions education as a site for challenging these gendered constructions calling for curricula to “nurture an ethic of care for everyone regardless of their gender expression in order to address the traditionally gendered imbalances of caregiving in domestic and public life” (UNESCO, 2021, p.67). Through this discourse, education is positioned as a means of challenging gendered caregiving by reshaping the subjectivities through which unequal divisions of care are reproduced, utilizing educationalization to construct social inequality as a problem of individual transformation

and backgrounding the social and structural arrangements that reproduce gender inequalities (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008; Stromquist, 2006; Fraser, 2016).

#### 4.3.2 Resource Inequalities

Resource inequalities emerged across the corpus through disparities in access to care-related resources and support systems. While UNESCO and the OECD predominantly focused on Early Childhood Education (ECE) and educational services, the World Bank extended these concerns to household learning conditions and caregivers' capacity to support learning.

UNESCO and the OECD emphasized care-related resource inequalities through Early Childhood Education (ECE), reinforcing the historical positioning of care as an early childhood policy matter and contributing to its uneven policy attention across other educational sectors (Bennett, 2003; Moss, 2017). UNESCO understands that “some of the most significant inequalities develop in early childhood” when families with “higher education levels and greater resources” can provide educational opportunities unavailable to children who rely on “inadequate public centres” that are “underfunded” and staffed by “poorly paid and less well-prepared educators” (UNESCO, 2021, p.57). This discourse is particularly revealing, hinting at processes of care commodification and devaluation by framing what is understood as the predominant form of public care provision in education as deficient in relation to an implicit marketized ideal of quality, reflecting how care is understood as a service to be optimized (Moss, 2014). Similarly, the OECD, argues that “high childcare costs” contribute to “inequalities in childcare use across income groups”, with children from low-income households “one-third less likely to participate in ECEC” than those from high-income households (OECD, 2023, p.154). Additionally, resource inequality is discursively framed through unequal access to general educational support, with funding allocation and the availability of psychological and counselling services for promoting equity (OECD, 2023, p.369).

Although articulated through different discursive logics, both organizations construct inequalities primarily as a problem of unequal access that can be addressed through funding redistribution or service provision. In doing so, they foreground disparities in educational opportunities, obscuring the reproduction of cultural and social capital that enables families with “higher education levels and greater resources” to maintain educational and economic advantages (Bourdieu, 1986; Reay, 2017). Additionally, this

framing also overlooks how learners' capacity to benefit from educational opportunities is shaped by unequal caring conditions (Lynch & Baker, 2005).

The World Bank also constructed resource inequality in access to learning resources but through disparities in home learning environments emphasized by the pandemic. It argued that differences in "caregiver ability to support learning at home", "adequate spaces to learn", access to reading materials, and the availability of "connectivity or devices" contribute to and "widen learning inequalities" (World Bank, 2020, p.27). Similarly, disadvantaged families are represented as lacking resources that schools can provide, including "nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, technology, and connectivity" (World Bank, 2020, p.15). To address these inequalities, the organization primarily advocates for expanding learning resources while providing "support", "guidance" and "counseling" to parents and caregivers to build their capacity to support children's learning and development (World Bank, 2020, p.9). While these discourses acknowledge material deprivation and unequal access, they also frame structural inequalities into capacity issues (Rose, 1999; Dean, 2010), individualizing care inequalities as attributes of caregivers despite care, support and emotional support being shaped by the unequally distributed relational and institutional conditions rooted in social inequalities (Lynch, 2012).

#### 4.3.3 Recognition inequalities

Recognition inequalities were given less centrality and were constructed through care framings that identified marginalized identities within UNESCO, through the recognition of vulnerabilities and support needs within the OECD and responsive pedagogical relationships within the World Bank.

UNESCO adopted a very explicit rights-based framing, arguing that students cultural, spiritual, social and linguistic identities "must be recognized and affirmed", particularly among "indigenous, religious, cultural and gender minorities and systemically marginalized populations" (UNESCO, 2021, p.27). The OECD approached recognition more indirectly through the identification of marginalized learners requiring additional support, for example, by emphasizing the "learning, social and emotional needs" of refugee students and advocating targeted trauma interventions (OECD, 2023, pp.16, 274-277). However, recognition was also linked to representation, arguing that "enhancing diversity of school staff, especially teachers, can have positive impacts" on student well-being and socio-emotional outcomes, particularly for students from "diverse groups" (OECD, 2023, p.206). The World Bank framed recognition through caring relationships

by encouraging teachers to foster “a supportive and inclusive learning environment” that responds to student’s needs and by addressing or challenging stereotypes based on “gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity” (World Bank, 2023, p.8).

Although articulated through different discursive logics, these framings construct exclusion primarily as a deficit of recognition remedied by forms of affirmation, support or representation, positioning inequality at the level of its manifestations rather than its production (Fraser, 1997). These risks treating recognition as an outcome to be improved rather than examining how unequal experiences of belonging, support and recognition are systematically produced through broader social and institutional conditions (Nobile & Tarabini, 2025; Lynch et al., 2021).

#### **4.4 Limitations**

The findings of this study are bounded by the analytical framework through which care was identified and interpreted. Therefore, the themes and patterns identified in this dissertation should be understood as discursive constructions emerging from the selected corpus that offer insights into broader tendencies, while remaining specific to the documents and organizations analysed. It is relevant to note that comparisons across organizations should be interpreted as reflecting the selected corpus rather than the overall policy production of each organization, since UNESCO occupies a prominent position within the findings due to a greater care discourse among the selected document.

Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interpretative methodology that in this study allows to problematize the examination of how policy discourses construct problems, allocate responsibility and reproduce relations of power, therefore findings should also be interpreted as theoretically informed interpretations of the selected texts. In addition, the analysis focuses exclusively on policy discourse being unable to determine how these constructions of care are interpreted, negotiated or enacted within education systems or educational practice.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Contribution**

The findings of this dissertation suggest that care has become a visible concern within UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank policy documents. Although differing in how they conceptualize care, references to care-related concerns appeared across all three organizations through explicit and implicit discursive constructions. Care was articulated through multiple and often overlapping formations, including structural, relational-affective, pedagogical, labour and ecological framings. This finding reflects discursive shifts identified within global education policy research, where International Organizations (IOs) have broadened educational agendas (Niemann, 2021), while also resonating with scholarship highlighting the visibility of emotional and relational dimensions within policy discourse after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ozga & Hell, 2025).

The analysis suggests that care visibility in policy discourse should be interpreted as an empty and flexible signifier that International Organizations (IOs) mobilize to legitimize different educational priorities. UNESCO predominantly framed care through rights-based rationales, whereas the OECD and the World Bank more frequently instrumentalized care in support of educational performance. To do so, the OECD linked care to participation and inclusion and the World Bank to learner continuity and human capital development. These differences support arguments that policy ideas are continuously reinterpreted and modified across the governance arenas of different political actors according to their institutional logics (Verger, 2014).

However, when the findings are considered across the three research questions an important pattern appears reflecting a mismatch between the ways care is discursively conceptualized, how responsibility is allocated and how care-related inequalities are addressed. Table 5 synthesizes how the conceptualizations of care identified in RQ1 are

consistently translated into specific patterns of responsibility allocation (RQ2) and corresponding understandings towards care-related inequalities (RQ3).

**Table 5**

*Vertical synthesis across research questions*

| <b>Care Conceptualization (RQ1)</b> | <b>Predominant Responsibility allocation (RQ2)</b>       | <b>Primary Care-related Inequality (RQ3)</b> | <b>Relationship across RQs</b>                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Structural care</b>              | Schools, Families, State, Education systems and Teachers | Resource inequalities                        | Structural care is framed through institutional provision but discourses increasingly responsabilize schools, teachers or families and inequalities are framed through support and service provision |
| <b>Relational-affective care</b>    | Teachers                                                 | Recognition inequalities                     | Relational and affective care is discursively framed expanding teacher responsibility and recognition inequalities are primarily discussed in relation to students requiring support and inclusion   |
| <b>Pedagogical care</b>             | Teachers, Education systems and Learners                 | Recognition/Resource inequalities            | Pedagogical care is increasingly enacted by educational actors while recognition and resource inequalities are addressed through educational interventions and learner support                       |
| <b>Care labour</b>                  | Families                                                 | Gendered inequalities                        | Care labour is sometimes recognized; state is framed as supportive for its enactment but responsibility is ultimately located within families (specially within women)                               |
| <b>Ecological Care</b>              | Education systems, Learners and Communities              |                                              | Collective environmental concerns are understood as educational issues and individuals are often framed as responsible to address them                                                               |

Consequently, a common discursive logic across the corpus suggests that different conceptualizations of care increasingly relocate social and institutional responsibilities onto frontline actors while constructing care-related inequalities as objects of educational intervention. To do so, International Organizations (IOs) utilize different Discursive

Educational Opportunity Structures (DEOS) that legitimize particular actors and interventions as appropriate responses to care-related concerns (Jules, 2022). Specifically, in the analysis they employed two main depoliticizing strategies governing responsibility allocation and obscuring the structural arrangements through which care accountability and inequalities are produced and distributed (Hay, 2007).

First, care appears to be governed through educational discourses in which actors such as education systems, schools, teachers and learners are positioned as responsible for addressing care-related needs like socio-emotional well-being, support services or inclusion, extending educational responsibilities to a range of social and emotional concerns. Such findings resonate with scholarship on educationalization, which argues that social problems are reframed as educational concerns and positioned as conducive to educational intervention, even when their underlying causes lie beyond educational reach (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008).

Second, the findings indicate that care governance also operates through processes of responsibilization in which policy discourses relocate responsibility for enactment towards individuals or frontline actors like families, learners and teachers. These patterns align with governmentality perspectives that understand governance as operating through the shaping of responsible subjects rather than through direct provision (Rose, 1999; Dean, 2010). Particularly revealing, was the construction of familiar accountability within UNESCO and World Bank documents, in which both acknowledged the importance of the state's care responsibility by articulating measures designed to strengthen families caring capacities. This reflects tendencies associated with neoliberal governance and processes of refamilialization, whereby social needs remain publicly valued while responsibility for addressing them is displaced towards families and individuals (Vike et al., 2024).

The position of teachers illustrates the intersection of these two depoliticizing dynamics, as they constitute the most immediate actors through which educational and individual responsibilities for care are framed to be enacted. Teachers appeared across all governance mechanisms and almost all care conceptualizations (except of care labour), suggesting that they are expected to function as the principal implementors of care agendas. As illustrated by Table 6 that provides an overview of the distribution of governance responsibilities across actors according to each care conceptualization.

**Table 6***Distribution of governance responsibilities by care conceptualization*

|                                       | State | Education<br>systems | Schools | Teachers | Families | Learners | Communities |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| <b>Structural<br/>care</b>            | ●     | ● ●                  | ● ●     | ●        | ●        |          |             |
| <b>Relational-<br/>affective care</b> |       | ●                    | ●       | ● ● ●    |          | ●        |             |
| <b>Pedagogical<br/>care</b>           |       | ●                    | ●       | ● ● ●    |          | ● ●      |             |
| <b>Care labour</b>                    | ●     |                      |         |          | ● ● ●    |          |             |
| <b>Ecological<br/>Care</b>            |       |                      |         | ●        |          | ● ●      | ● ●         |

Note. Dots indicate the frequency with which each actor was identified as responsible within each care conceptualization (● = low; ●● = moderate; ●●● = high).

This finding resonates with research arguing that educational policy governs through teachers by prescribing desired practices and outcomes that are ultimately realized through their work (Ball et al., 2012). Furthermore, it was relevant how policy discourses acknowledged the need to support teachers, but such support was generally framed as enabling them to better fulfil these expanding responsibilities rather than addressing the extension of those expectations. This reflects arguments that contemporary policy increasingly responsabilizes teachers by encouraging them to continuously develop the competences and resilience required to meet growing demands (Done & Murphy, 2018). Consequently, care becomes governable through normalized professional expectations that are discursively framed as inherent dimension of teacher's practice. In this way, the intensification of "caring responsibilities" gradually becomes embedded within professional identity, rendering care an expected component of what it means to be a good teacher rather than a form of labour requiring recognition and support (O'Connor, 2008). This contributes to existing debates on teacher governance by demonstrating how care operates as a discursive mechanism through which expanding professional responsibilities are legitimized, while obscuring the emotional labour and relational work required for their enactment (Zembylas, 2005).

Additionally, the findings suggest that inequalities occupy a peripheral position within care policy discourses, since although UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank sometimes acknowledged gendered, resource and recognition inequalities, these concerns were rarely addressed through explicit discussions of structural power relations through which they are reproduced.

Gendered inequalities were frequently acknowledged through the recognition of feminized care labour and the disproportionate caring responsibilities borne by women, yet proposed responses centred on representation and educational transformation, privileging changes in attitudes over the structural redistribution of care (Stromquist, 2006). Similarly, resource inequalities were framed through disparities in access to educational services or caregiver capacities, while recognition inequalities were addressed through inclusion, affirmation and responsiveness towards marginalized groups. This indicates that inequalities are constructed as problems of insufficient support, unequal access, lack of recognition or inadequate capacities, directing attention towards addressing the consequences of inequalities rather than the structural conditions through which they are produced and reproduced (Fraser, 1997; Fraser, 2016).

This finding is particularly significant because it suggests that care operates as a discursive framework through which strategic inequalities are rendered governable, shaping which dimensions of inequality become visible within policy discourse and which responses are considered appropriate towards them. However, all these constructions provide limited attention to how caring relations, belonging and recognition are socially structured and unequally distributed through broader institutional and social arrangements (Lynch et al., 2009; Lynch et al., 2021). Consequently, while policy increasingly recognizes affective dimensions such as belonging and well-being, it frames them as educational problems to be managed rather than as socially produced inequalities. In this respect, the findings resonate with emerging scholarship that positions affective domains as key sites in the reproduction of social inequalities and highlights how educational trajectories are shaped through unequal experiences of belonging and emotional well-being (Nobile & Tarabini, 2025).

Ultimately this study contributes by showing that the growing visibility of care within global education policy discourse should be understood as a discursive resource through which particular priorities and responsibilities are legitimized according to different

governance logics. Furthermore, by depoliticizing care through processes of educationalization and responsabilization, policy discourses render social inequalities and care-related needs governable providing limited attention to the political, economic and institutional conditions through which they are reproduced. In this respect, the study extends scholarship that understands care as a multifaceted concept carrying implications for how institutions organize responsibility, support and social justice (Baker & Burke, 2023). Specifically, by exemplifying how neoliberal governance operates by responsabilizing subjects, problematizing structural issues as matters of individualized self-governance (Pyysiäinen et al., 2017). The study shows that different conceptualizations of care are translated into distinct governance arrangements by International Organizations (IOs), through which responsibility is progressively relocated towards frontline actors while problematizing particular approaches to care-related inequalities according to each organization's institutional logic

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This dissertation examined how care is discursively constructed, governed and embedded within inequality framings in the education policy discourse of UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank. Through a qualitative research design employing reflexive thematic analysis it explored how care is conceptualized, how responsibilities for care are allocated and governed and how care-related inequalities are problematized within contemporary global education policy discourses. To do so, the findings were interpreted through a macro-discursive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, drawing selectively on Fairclough's (2003) explanatory framework.

The findings demonstrate that care has been discursively incorporated within global education policy materialized in explicit and implicit constructions. Care was conceptualized as an empty and flexible signifier articulated through structural, relational-affective, pedagogical, labour and ecological framings. While UNESCO engaged most explicitly with care language, the OECD and the World Bank more frequently designed care through adjacent interdiscursive policy articulations such as well-being, inclusion or support. These differences suggest that care acquires different meanings according to its mobilization to articulate the distinct institutional rationalities and policy priorities of each organization.

The analysis further revealed that care governance operates through interconnected processes of educationalization and responsabilization that depoliticize care by framing it as an educational and individual responsibility. Specifically, schools, teachers, learners and families were increasingly positioned as the principal actors ultimately responsible

for addressing care-related concerns, whereas states or education systems were more frequently constructed as facilitators for provision. Teachers occupied a central role, emerging as the principal actors through which care agendas are expected to be enacted, but these responsibilities were rarely recognized as forms of care labour and were articulated through pedagogical and professional expectations, expanding teachers' responsibilities and emotional labour.

Although gendered, resource and recognition inequalities were acknowledged across the corpus, they were often framed as issues of support, inclusion, representation or capacity building rather than as outcomes of structural relations of power. Consequently, policy discourses tended to make the consequences of inequalities visible while providing limited attention to the social, political and economic conditions through which unequal caring responsibilities and opportunities are produced and distributed.

Therefore, this study argues that although care has become increasingly visible within global education policy discourse appearing to privilege emotional and relational concerns to sustain education, it functions as an empty signifier whose broad and positive normative appeal allows it to be mobilized in support of different institutional logics while maintaining a progressive discourse. By bringing feminist understandings of care into dialogue with a neoliberal governance perspective, the study exemplifies how International Organizations (IOs) translate different conceptualizations of care into distinct governance arrangements predominantly relocating responsibility to frontline actors by discursively defining who becomes responsible for care enactment and which forms of care-related inequality become visible and governable. Consequently, the significance of the study lies in emphasizing that the meanings International Organizations (IOs) attach to care shape who is positioned as responsible for care, how care-related inequalities become governable, and the institutional and political conditions under which these responsibilities are legitimized.

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## Appendix A. Care Matrix

Link to the Excel document: [Care 2.0.xlsx](#)

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |      | RQ1: RO1                        | RQ1: RO1                | RQ2: RO2               | RQ2: RO3             | RQ3: RO4          |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Document                                 | Excerpt                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Page | Care presence                   | Care conceptualization  | Provider/Actor of care | Governance Mechanism | Care-Inequalities |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | This new social contract must be grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. It must encompass an ethic of care, reciprocity, and solidarity                                                                                                                 | III  | Explicit: ethic of care         | Relational              | None                   | Normative            | None              |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | At the same time, more people and communities are recognizing the value of care work and the multiple ways that economic security needs to be provisioned                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 3    | Explicit: care work             | Labour                  | Community              | Normative            | None              |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | We will build a new social contract for education through millions of individual and collective acts – acts of courage, leadership, resistance, creativity, and care                                                                                                                                                                                             | 5    | Explicit: acts of care          | Relational              | Society                | Normative            | None              |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Education systems have wrongly instilled a belief that short-term prerogatives and comforts are more important than longer-term sustainability. They have emphasized values of individual success, national competition and economic development, to the detriment of solidarity, understanding our interdependencies, and caring for each other and the planet. | 11   | Explicit: caring for            | Relational + Ecological | Education system       | Normative            | None              |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Education has a role to play in encouraging and assuring robust democratic citizenship, deliberative spaces, participatory processes, collaborative practices, relationships of care, and shared futures                                                                                                                                                         | 40   | Explicit: relationships of care | Relational              | Education system       | Normative            | None              |
| UNESCO: Reimagining                      | Care and respect for others need practice and reinforcement – something that education can well support – while building                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 40   | Explicit: care                  | Pedagogical             | Education system       | Educational          | None              |

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| our futures together                     | students' capacities for active citizenship and democratic participation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |    |                                  |                          |                             |             |               |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Many governments have realized that public health and other emergencies cannot be faced without the help of society at large, through self-responsibility and mutual caring. The social has been rediscovered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 40 | Explicit: mutual caring          | Relational               | Society                     | Normative   | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Overall, what is formally considered 'work' and what is measured as 'productivity' makes a great deal of essential labour invisible. This includes work that is vital to society but that has often been feminized and typically takes place in the home. Examples include caregiving, child-rearing, caring for the sick, cleaning, cooking and providing physical and emotional support to others. When this work is formalized, these professions are often lower-paid and have lower status | 41 | Explicit: caregiving/ caring for | Labour                   | Families                    | Normative   | Gendered Care |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Whether this leads to success and fulfillment in the formal economy, in the informal economy, or, for example, in domestic work, care work, and other forms of labour, we rightly expect education to play a role in enabling equal economic opportunity and allowing people to pursue meaningful vocations and occupations.                                                                                                                                                                    | 42 | Explicit: care work              | Labour                   | Families + Education system | Educational | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Economic security does not come from attending to the formal economy alone. We must also consider the care work undertaken within households, the provisioning of common good resources, and the enabling infrastructures (both material and regulatory) provided by governments.                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 45 | Explicit: care work              | Labour + Structural      | Families + State            | Material    | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Part II of this Report proposes ways to realize a new social contract that advances the right to education, and strengthens education as a common good and collective endeavour that augments our human capacity to care and cooperate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 47 | Explicit: care                   | Pedagogical + Relational | Education system            | Educational | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Pedagogies of cooperation and solidarity should be based on shared principles of non discrimination, respect for diversity, and reparative justice, and framed by an ethic of care and of reciprocity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 50 | Explicit: ethic of care          | Pedagogical              | Teachers                    | Educational | Recognition   |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Such pedagogies call for us to continue to learn about the dignity of every person and the great accomplishment that the right to conscience and freedom of thought represent – but to unlearn human exceptionalism and possessive individualism. They should be based on ethics of reciprocity and care and recognize interdependencies among individuals, groups and among species.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 51 | Explicit: ethic of care | Pedagogical + Relational                 | Teachers                 | Educational              | None                |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | For parents and families a supported and early childhood education is considerably advanced, when daycare centres, libraries, museums, community centres, and parks are well-funded and treated as essential public services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 57 | Implicit: supported ECE | Structural: enabling conditions          | State + Families         | Material                 | Resource Inequality |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Unfortunately, in many societies early childhood education is not recognized as a public responsibility in the same way that primary education is. There are not enough or adequate early childhood centres. Educators at this level are often poorly compensated, as if the only dimension that matters is to provide physical care. As a result, some of the most significant inequalities develop in early childhood, as families with higher education levels and greater resources provide high quality educational experiences for their children of the type often unavailable to those who rely on inadequate public centres that are underfunded and have poorly paid and less well-prepared educators. Governments must ensure adequate and sustained public funding for quality early childhood education to ensure the learning, growth and development of all children from birth. | 57 | Explicit: physical care | Structural: enabling conditions + Labour | State + Education system | Institutional + Material | Resource Inequality |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | For instance, if men continue to only represent, on average, less than 2% of early childhood educators, boys learn implicitly that they need not aspire to care for the young and vulnerable.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 57 | Explicit: care for      | Pedagogical                              | Teachers                 | Educational              | Gendered care       |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | We cannot learn to care for the living planet without also learning to care for one another.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 67 | Explicit: care for      | Pedagogical + Ecological                 | Learners                 | Educational              | None                |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Care is not only related to affections or attitudes but has a central cognitive component.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 67 | Explicit: care                                                     | Pedagogical                              | None             | Discursive    | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | An ethic of care enables us to understand ourselves as interconnected persons who are simultaneously capable and vulnerable. It forces us to reflect on how we affect and are affected by others and the world.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 67 | Explicit: ethic of care                                            | Relational + Ecological                  | Society          | Normative     | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | It is important that curricula nurture an ethic of care for everyone regardless of their gender expression in order to address the traditionally gendered imbalances of caregiving in domestic and public life.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 67 | Explicit: ethic of care                                            | Pedagogical                              | Education system | Educational   | Gendered care |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The reproductive knowledge of raising children, caring for the ill and elderly, maintaining a home, and responding to the physical and psychological needs of families so vital to society, also belongs to humanity's knowledge commons, and naturally extend to the ways in which we treat and care for our damaged and vulnerable planet.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 67 | Explicit: caring for                                               | Labour + Ecological                      | Families         | Normative     | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Caring-about, caring-for, care-giving and care-receiving must be included in curricula that enable us to reimagine our interdependent futures together                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 67 | Explicit: caring-about, caring-for, care-giving and care-receiving | Pedagogical                              | Education system | Educational   | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The future of literacy education can develop the abilities to read deeply, widely, and critically, to communicate clearly and effectively in speech and writing, and to listen with care, empathy, and discernment. For example, nurturing students abilities and inclinations to read independently and seek out complex texts in all disciplines opens doors to a much wider range of possible futures through more equitable interactions with the knowledge commons. Literacy education can go beyond classrooms and schools to become a society-wide commitment. | 69 | Explicit: listen with care                                         | Pedagogical + Affective/ Socio-emotional | Education system | Educational   | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining                            | As schools have developed and spread globally over the past two centuries, they have assumed a role as one of the central                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 96 | Explicit: care for them                                            | Structural: enabling conditions          | Schools          | Institutional | None          |

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| our futures together                     | public infrastructures for organizing intergenerational conversations on how to live in the world, make worlds, and care for them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |         |                                 |                          |                  |             |               |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Nurturing the social dimension of learning also implies sustaining citizenship education in an increasingly interconnected world to enable individuals to care about each other, embrace other perspectives and experiences, and engage in responsible practices towards the environment and our shared natural resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 100     | Explicit: care about each other | Pedagogical + Ecological | Education system | Educational | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | The biosphere is an important learning space. The fact that today indigenous-governed lands are home to approximately 80% of the world's biodiversity is itself enough to demonstrate that indigenous perspectives have much to teach everyone about education that cares for the planet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 112     | Explicit: care for              | Ecological               | Community        | Educational | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Educational needs, priorities and modalities change when there are shifts in the balance between youth and the elderly, in the proportion of people in the working-age population, as well as in the kinds of caregiving and care work (waged and unwaged) that is undertaken, by whom, and when. In fact, these issues shine a bright light on the basic assumptions our societies make on what it means to produce value.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 113     | Explicit: caregiving            | Labour                   | None             | Material    | None          |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | It is increasingly recognized that our well-being and economic security do not come from the formal economy alone. Paid work is one part, but the work done within households to provide care for people is certainly no less important. This includes the labour of caring for children and older adults, producing and preparing food, building shelter, and in many areas of ecological stress, gathering water. Women and girls carry the greatest load in terms of supporting families, communities, health, food security, even environmental and ecosystem health, and receive little recognition or support for their enormous and essential contributions. | 113-114 | Explicit: care for              | Labour                   | Families         | Material    | Gendered care |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | In other instances, the challenges of elder care may parallel the challenges of childcare that have characterized the last three decades as women were entering the workforce in increasing numbers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 114 | Explicit: elder care, childcare | Labour                                        | Families + State | Material               | Gendered care |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | New household forms could emerge if co-operative living and extended family support become more significant to more parts of the world. All of this means that the capacity of people to build and form longstanding and robust caring relationships is also an educational issue for learners of all ages.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 114 | Explicit: caring relationships  | Relational + Pedagogical                      | Families         | Educational            | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Learning to care, and making caring a feature of life-entangled education, is not simply a 'nice to have' feature. Looking to 2050 and beyond there is a hard-edged logic to this. Education that supports the day-to-day work of preparing and sometimes growing food, and education that supports the nurturing and sustaining of bodies and families, must be prioritized. This is the broader perspective on learning that a strong understanding of education as entangled with life and taking place in different spaces and times points us towards | 114 | Explicit: learning to care      | Pedagogical + Structural: enabling conditions | Education system | Educational + Material | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Education at its best is a collective process that acknowledges the value of peer and intergenerational as well as intercultural learning. This social dimension emphasizes learning to care for each other, for our communities and for the planet. These collective processes and social dimensions need to exist within schools and universities, but not only.                                                                                                                                                                                         | 116 | Explicit: learning to care      | Pedagogical + Ecological                      | Education system | Educational            | None          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Learning is shaped through relationships between teachers, students, and knowledge that go beyond the limitations of classroom norms and codes of conduct. Learning extends students' relationships with the ethics and care needed to assume responsibility for our shared and common world. Pedagogy is the work of creating transformational encounters that are based in what exists and what can be built.                                                                                                                                            | 147 | Explicit: ethic of care         | Relational practice                           | Education system | Educational            | None          |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Schools will require environments of cooperation and care in which diverse groups of people learn from and with one another. They can enable teachers and students to interact with new ideas, cultures, and ways of seeing the world in a supportive and caring environment, not only preparing children and youth for challenges in their future lives, but helping them negotiate the rapidly changing world they live in now. | 151 | Explicit: caring<br>environment                         | Relational +<br>Structural: enabling<br>conditions                   | Schools  | Institutional | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Collectively we can transform education to help build just, equitable, and sustainable futures drawing on what already exists and building what else is needed. We will change course through millions of individual and collective acts of courage, leadership, resistance, creativity and care.                                                                                                                                 | 156 | Explicit: acts of<br>care                               | Relational                                                           | Society  | Discursive    | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The report aims not only to open the conversation about education to everyone and provoke thought, but to spur each one of us on to action. It argues, above all, that is through millions of individual and collective acts of courage, leadership, resistance, creativity and care that we will change course and transform education to build just, equitable and sustainable futures.                                         | 189 | Explicit: acts of<br>care                               | Relational                                                           | Society  | Discursive    | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The connections between home and school are often strongest at this level. Families play a key role and need to be supported to help children thrive and enhance their physical, socio-emotional and cognitive development.                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 57  | Implicit: support<br>to thrive; SE<br>development       | Structural: support<br>provision +<br>Affective/ Socio-<br>emotional | Families | Material      | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Quality early childhood education must be a priority for every society. The early years of human life are a time of considerable brain plasticity and development when an extraordinary amount of essential physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth takes place. A strong body of educational research points to the importance of early childhood education as a key foundation of all future learning and flourishing | 56  | Implicit: physical<br>and social growth;<br>flourishing | Pedagogical                                                          | State    | Material      | None |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Curricula need to treat students as complete human beings who, young and old, bring curiosity and thirst for learning into educational settings. They also bring emotions, fears, insecurities, confidence and passion.                                                                                                                                                  | 67 | Implicit:<br>curricular support;<br>emotions; passion                                                         | Affective                        | Education system               | Educational               | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Curricula that teach people as whole human beings support their social and emotional interactions with the world and make them more capable of collaborating with others to improve it.                                                                                                                                                                                  | 68 | Implicit: support<br>SE interactions                                                                          | Affective +<br>Relational        | Education system               | Educational               | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Social and emotional learning practices are heterogenous and need appropriate contextualization. They require consciously designed learning experiences, bonding with teachers, positive peer experiences, intergenerational understanding and community involvement.                                                                                                    | 68 | Implicit: SEL<br>practices                                                                                    | Affective +<br>Relational        | Education system<br>+ Teachers | Educational               | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Mindfulness, compassion, and critical inquiry all support powerful social and emotional learning. It must be recognized however that such learning places extra demands on teachers and that they must be supported to accomplish this work.                                                                                                                             | 68 | Implicit:<br>Mindfulness;<br>Compassion;<br>support SEL<br>teachers support                                   | Affective                        | Teachers                       | Educational<br>+ Material | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Likewise, taking a holistic educational approach to human sexuality that is age appropriate and culturally attuned recognizes the importance of social and emotional literacy, promotes discussions of respect and consent, builds understanding of the physical and emotional processes during physical maturity, and promotes respectful relationships and equality.   | 68 | Implicit: holistic<br>approach; social<br>and emotional<br>literacy; respectful<br>relationships;<br>equality | Affective +<br>Relational        | Education system               | Educational               | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Education in the arts – music, drama, dance, design, visual arts, literature, poetry and more – can greatly expand students’ capacities to master complex skills and can support social and emotional learning across the curriculum. It can enhance our human abilities to access the experience of others, whether through empathy or the reading of non-verbal clues. | 73 | Implicit: social<br>and emotional<br>learning; empathy;                                                       | Affective                        | Education system               | Educational               | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining                            | At the same time, students’ physical, social, and emotional needs are integral to their ability to learn. Students need to be                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 81 | Implicit: physical<br>needs; social                                                                           | Structural: support<br>provision | None                           | Material                  | None |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |     |                                                                                                                |                                 |          |                          |                     |
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| our futures together                     | supported by a system that enhances the effectiveness of teachers with other essential supports.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | needs; emotional needs; students need to be supported                                                          |                                 |          |                          |                     |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | We should support teachers to work in common as the master convenors of educational environments, relationships, spaces, and times. Quality teaching is produced by teams and enabling environments which ensure that students' physical, social, and emotional needs are provided for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 90  | Implicit: relationships; students' physical, social and emotional needs; enabling environments                 | Structural: Enabling Conditions | Teachers | Material + Institutional | None                |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | Some students felt comfortable with online and distance education, and their positive experiences remind us that future schools need to be student-centred in ways that support the social, emotional, cognitive, and moral development of the whole person.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 100 | Implicit: student-centred; support; social development; emotional development; moral development; whole person | Affective + Pedagogical         | None     | Educational              | None                |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | The right to education is tightly linked with other human rights. In this sense, as guarantors of rights, states have the responsibility to make intersectoral efforts to create the necessary conditions to enable and facilitate learning of all children and youth. This means ensuring access to fundamental rights such as the right to water and sanitation, to healthy food and nutrition, to social protection, to live in a stable and healthy family and community environment that promotes emotional and physical well-being, and to live free from all forms of violence. | 109 | Implicit: enable and facilitate learning; emotional well-being; physical well-being                            | Structural: Enabling conditions | State    | Material                 | Resource Inequality |
| UNESCO: Reimagining our futures together | the need to protect schools as social sites that support learning, inclusion, equity, and individual and collective well-being, while simultaneously changing them to better realize just and equitable futures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 15  | Implicit: support learning; inclusion; equity; individual well-                                                | Structural: Enabling Conditions | Schools  | Institutional            | None                |

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|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |    | being; collective well-being                                                                                     |                                 |                     |               |                        |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining our futures together | If human rights is to guide the new social contract for education, students' sense of identity – cultural, spiritual, social, and linguistic – must be recognized and affirmed, particularly among indigenous, religious, cultural and gender minorities and systemically marginalized populations. Appropriate recognition of identity in curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional approaches can directly impact student retention, mental health, self-esteem, and community well-being. | 27 | Implicit: identity recognized and affirmed; mental health; self-esteem; community well-being                     | Affective + Structural          | Education system    | Educational   | Recognition Inequality |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining our futures together | A future in which girls in many parts of the world continue to feel excluded through the possibility of physical or sexual harm – a reality faced especially by adolescent girls in many contexts, preventing their continuation into secondary schooling – is unfathomable. Maternal and child health, mortality, and well-being are also closely related to comprehensive sexuality education.                                                                                           | 68 | Implicit: maternal health; child health; well-being; comprehensive sexuality education                           | Structural: Enabling Conditions | None                | Material      | Gendered care          |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining our futures together | In other examples, public services and non-profit organizations work alongside schools in priority areas to connect to students and families outside the classroom in ways that support their overall learning, health and well-being. There are countless promising approaches to providing each student with the complete range of support they need, from mentors, counsellors, specialists and co-teachers.                                                                            | 82 | Implicit: support; health; well-being; complete range of support; mentors; counsellors; specialists; co-teachers | Structural: Support provision   | Community + Schools | Institutional | Resource Inequality    |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining our futures together | They not only represent unique times and spaces for primary and secondary education, but many have also become centres of society in their own right, bringing together a range of social goods and services that support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Nonetheless, schools have been limited in their accomplishments, in part due to narrow definitions of the spaces and time structures of learning.                                                      | 94 | Implicit: social goods and services; support; well-being                                                         | Structural: Enabling Conditions | Schools             | Institutional | None                   |

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| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Teachers are the most significant factor in educational quality provided they have sufficient recognition, preparation, support, resources, autonomy, and opportunities for continued development. With proper support, teachers can ensure effective, culturally relevant, and equitable learning opportunities for their students.                  | 22 | Implicit:<br>recognition;<br>teacher support;<br>equitable learning<br>opportunities                            | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions                                    | Teachers | Material      | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Teachers are working in new environments with students who have diverse educational histories, languages and cultures. Pedagogies of respect, inclusion, belonging, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation go beyond merely acknowledging or tolerating difference. They must support students to sit side by side one another and work together. | 53 | Implicit:<br>pedagogies of<br>respect; inclusion;<br>belonging;<br>peacebuilding;<br>conflict<br>transformation | Pedagogical +<br>Relational                                              | Teachers | Educational   | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | Teaching demands compassion, competence, knowledge, and ethical resolve. Wise and learned figures have been recognized in cultures around the world, and from this tradition the ‘teacher’ stands as a specialized actor in the context of a school                                                                                                   | 80 | Implicit:<br>compassion;<br>ethical resolve;<br>recognition                                                     | Affective                                                                | Teachers | Discursive    | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | To carry out this complex work, teachers need rich collaborative teaching communities, characterized by sufficient measures of freedom and support. Supporting teachers’ autonomy, development, and collaboration is an important expression of public solidarity for the futures of education.                                                       | 80 | Implicit: support<br>teachers; measures<br>of freedom and<br>support                                            | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions                                    | Teachers | Institutional | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The chapter calls on schools, communities, families, administrators, higher education, and political entities to rally in solidarity around teachers, to recognize the importance of their work and to create the conditions that enable their success.                                                                                               | 80 | Implicit: create the<br>conditions that<br>enable teacher<br>support; rally in<br>solidarity                    | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions +<br>Affective/Socio-<br>emotional | Teachers | Material      | None |
| UNESCO:<br>Reimagining<br>our futures<br>together | The individual talents and abilities of teachers need to be bolstered by collaboration and support. Teachers have, and must continue to have, a central role in reconfiguring the social contract for education for our shared futures. Their abilities to do so are directly impacted by the degree to                                               | 81 | Implicit: teachers<br>support                                                                                   | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>conditions+<br>Relational                     | Teachers | Institutional | None |

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|                                                | which cooperation and collaboration are woven into their modes of working.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |                                                 |                                       |                                 |                             |                     |
| OECD (2019): Learning Compass 2030             | Students are thus expected to learn to care not only for their personal well-being, but also for the well-being of their friends, families, communities and the planet itself.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 9   | Explicit: learn to care                         | Pedagogical + Relational + Ecological | Learners                        | Normative                   | None                |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Although evidence is scarce and often focused on early years, the successful integration of services can, for instance, result in more efficient identification of children's needs, including health, well-being, participation, social justice and equality. Services that provide holistic care are also more accessible, more likely to be approached and thus improve the outcomes of those with complex needs. | 91  | Explicit: holistic care                         | Structural: Support Provison          | None                            | Educational                 | None                |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | The cost of childcare has important implications for equity and inclusion, with high childcare costs being one of the factors contributing to inequalities in childcare use across income groups. Data from the OECD show that in European OECD countries, children under the age of three in low-income households are one-third less likely to participate in ECEC than those in high-income households.           | 154 | Explicit: childcare ECEC                        | Labour                                | None                            | Material                    | Resource inequality |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Learning provision This area covers the quality of care and education. The indicators include the topics of safe-guarding and child protection; curriculum; learning, teaching and assessment; personalised support; family learning; transition; and partnerships                                                                                                                                                   | 341 | Explicit: Quality of care and education         | Structural: Support Provison          | Education system + Families     | Educational + Institutional | None                |
| OECD (2021): Beyond Academic Learning          | For example, students who believe that teachers support, care about, respect, and praise them are more likely to like school and be more involved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 135 | Explicit: care about                            | Relational                            | Teachers                        | Educational                 | None                |
| OECD (2019): Learning                          | However, student agency does not mean student autonomy or student choice. People learn, grow and exercise their agency in social contexts. Thus, as                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 6   | Implicit: guide students; well-being; co-agency | Relational + Pedagogical              | Teachers + Families + Community | Educational                 | None                |

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |         |                                                                                                        |                                         |                    |             |                        |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Compass 2030                                   | the visual also shows, students are surrounded by their peers, teachers, families and communities, all of whom interact with and guide the student towards well-being. This the concept of co-agency.                                                                              |         |                                                                                                        |                                         |                    |             |                        |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Given the prominence and severity of refugee crises around the world, it is crucial that education systems address the diverse needs of refugee students, including their learning, social and emotional needs, and promote their inclusion in schools                             | 16      | Implicit: address diverse learners needs; social and emotional needs; inclusion                        | Affective                               | Education system   | Educational | Recognition Inequality |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | The increased prevalence of mental disorders entails important challenges for education systems that have to support the mental health of students, and ensure that their well-being needs are being met.                                                                          | 19      | Implicit: support mental health; well-being needs                                                      | Affective                               | Education system   | Material    | None                   |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Non-instructional support and services: Supporting all learners to achieve their educational potential and in fostering a sense of belonging depends not only on teachers and school leaders, but also on the availability of non-instructional support and services at the school | 274     | Implicit: non-instructional support services; sense of belonging                                       | Structural: Support Provison            | Teachers + Schools | Material    | None                   |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | social and emotional learning programmes and trauma-informed teaching strategies can help address the needs of students who may have experienced trauma or who may otherwise need particular social and emotional support.                                                         | 274-275 | Implicit: social and emotional learning; trauma-informed teaching; needs; social and emotional support | Pedagogical + Affective                 | Teachers           | Educational | Recognition Inequality |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Supporting students well-being: In-school counselling and therapeutic services are offered in a number of education systems to support the psychological and social well-being of students                                                                                         | 275     | Implicit: supporting students' well-being; counselling; therapeutic services;                          | Structural: Support Provison+ Affective | Schools            | Material    | None                   |

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |                                                                                                |                                                         |                          |             |                        |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     | psychological well-being                                                                       |                                                         |                          |             |                        |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Dedicated social and emotional learning programmes can play an important role in supporting the needs of refugee students who have experienced trauma. School-based interventions with a cognitive behavioural therapy basis, which can deal with both past experiences (for instance, through verbal processing) and current and future challenges (using methods such as self-soothing) have been found to have the potential to have positive therapeutic effects.                                                      | 277 | Implicit: social and emotional learning; supporting needs                                      | Structural: Support Provision + Affective + Pedagogical | Schools                  | Educational | Recognition Inequality |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Leverage the provision of non-instructional services to foster students' well-being: Supporting the well-being of learners extends beyond classroom learning and may require a variety of non-instructional services or interventions. As was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools can play a crucial role in providing access to psychological services (such as counselling or psychotherapy), particularly for students who may otherwise face barriers in obtaining the support they need in this regard. | 286 | Implicit: non-instructional services; well-being; psychological services; counselling; support | Structural: Support Provision                           | Schools                  | Material    | Resource inequality    |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Resourcing education systems to foster equity and inclusion: The way funding is allocated to schools and students that are most in need of additional resources has fundamental implications for the equity and inclusion of an education system. To this end, education systems should leverage both main allocation mechanisms and targeted distributions of resources to appropriately support all students                                                                                                             | 12  | Implicit: equity; inclusion; additional resources; support all students                        | Structural: Enabling Conditions                         | State + Education system | Material    | Resource inequality    |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Career and educational guidance represent a further important non-instructional support intervention to help ensure that all students receive equal opportunities to achieve throughout education and beyond.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 287 | Implicit: career guidance; educational guidance; non-instructional support                     | Structural: Support Provision                           | None                     | Material    | None                   |
| OECD (2023): Equity                            | Building capacity to foster equity and inclusion: Supporting the learning and well-being of all students requires teachers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 12  | Implicit: supporting                                                                           | Pedagogical                                             | Teachers                 | Educational | None                   |

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |                                                                                                                    |                                           |          |               |                        |
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| and Inclusion in Education                     | to have strong theoretical knowledge of differentiated instruction and the skills to put this into practice. Without adequate learning opportunities throughout the teaching life-course, teachers often feel unprepared to address the diverse needs of students.                                                |     | learning; well-being; address diverse needs                                                                        |                                           |          |               |                        |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | It is therefore important that teachers are provided with high-quality professional learning that allow them to develop and strengthen the knowledge and competences required to identify and effectively respond to the varied needs of diverse learners in evolving and uncertain contexts.                     | 219 | Implicit: support professional learning; respond to varied needs                                                   | Pedagogical                               | Teachers | Educational   | None                   |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Enhancing diversity of school staff, especially teachers, can have positive impacts on multiple dimensions of student well-being, from learning to broader socio-emotional outcomes (Brussino, 2021[16]), both for students from particular diverse groups and for the student body as a whole (OECD, 2022[47]).  | 206 | Implicit: student well-being; socio-emotional outcomes                                                             | Structural: Enabling Conditions           | Teachers | Institutional | Recognition Inequality |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Parents in more advantaged families were likely to have had better digital skills and be better equipped to support home learning for their children.                                                                                                                                                             | 20  | Implicit: support home learning                                                                                    | Structural: Enabling Conditions           | Families | None          | Resource inequality    |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | Inclusive environments are characterised by positive social experiences for all students (Nishina et al., 2019[51]), such as decreased bullying, reduced loneliness and greater numbers of cross-group friendships.                                                                                               | 18  | Implicit: inclusive environments; positive social experiences; decreased bullying; reduced loneliness; friendships | Relational                                | Schools  | Normative     | None                   |
| OECD (2023): Equity and Inclusion in Education | The identification of student needs should not focus solely on learning needs. Schools can play a crucial role in providing access to psychological services (such as counselling or psychotherapy), particularly for students who may otherwise face barriers in obtaining the support they need in this regard. | 369 | Implicit: student needs; psychological services; counselling; support                                              | Structural: Support Provision + Affective | Schools  | Material      | Resource inequality    |

|                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                                                                      |                                 |                               |               |                     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| OECD (2021): Beyond Academic Learning        | Schools are crucial resources for promoting students' psychological well-being, especially among the most disadvantaged who might otherwise have limited or no support. Schools can help students recognise, understand, and regulate their psychological well-being.                                                                                                                                                                   | 104 | Implicit: psychological well-being; support                          | Structural: Support Provision   | Schools                       | Educational   | Resource inequality |
| OECD (2021): Beyond Academic Learning        | teacher support such as adapting lessons to the class' needs and knowledge level, providing individual help for struggling students and showing confidence in students' abilities might help reduce students' test anxiety (OECD, 2017[5]).                                                                                                                                                                                             | 104 | Implicit: teacher support; adapting lessons; individual help         | Relational + Affective          | Teachers                      | Educational   | None                |
| OECD (2021): Beyond Academic Learning        | When students feel they are treated in a fair way, when the school and its staff help students develop a sense of belonging, when they provide for a disciplined, structured and cooperative environment, when the environment is supportive and less punitive, their social and emotional skills develop better.                                                                                                                       | 6   | Implicit: treated fairly; sense of belonging; supportive environment | Relational                      | Schools                       | Institutional | None                |
| OECD (2021): Beyond Academic Learning        | The results from the survey show that students' sense of fitting in at school and student-teacher relations are consistently and positively related to social and emotional skills. Students who feel like they belong at school are more likely to get along well and work well with classmates and friends. In contrast, students who are bullied tend to report lower skills in the domain of emotional regulation as well as trust. | 5   | Implicit: sense of fitting in; student-teacher relations; belong     | Relational + Affective          | Schools + Teachers + Learners | Educational   | None                |
| TWB (2020): Realizing the Future of Learning | But third, the pandemic has also made painfully clear that school closures affect society's functioning as a whole. Schools perform an important childcare function that enables parents and other caregivers to participate in the labor force. During the pandemic, women's labor force participation has suffered significantly                                                                                                      | 15  | Explicit: childcare                                                  | Labour                          | Schools                       | Material      | Gendered care       |
| TWB (2020): Realizing the Future of Learning | Thus, to ensure learning continuity during the pandemic and beyond, it is vital that public policy prioritize the quantity and quality of learning resources available at home, that                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 17  | Explicit: caregivers                                                 | Structural: Enabling Conditions | State + Families              | Material      | None                |

|                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |    |                                                                                   |                                                      |                  |                           |                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
|                                                       | support be provided to parents and caregivers, and that their buy-in and commitment to new models of education delivery be obtained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |    |                                                                                   |                                                      |                  |                           |                        |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the<br>Future of<br>Learning | More attention needs to be given to teacher wellbeing. Supporting and motivating teachers is crucial to ensuring effective teaching. Successful systems care about the physical and socio emotional well-being of teachers, and about teachers working together to support each other. Ministries of education should collaborate with health authorities to detect signs of burnout early, reduce stigma regarding mental health support, and adjust and distribute teacher work loads to manageable levels (World Bank 2020a).                                                           | 26 | Explicit: systems care                                                            | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions +<br>Affective | Education system | Normative                 | None                   |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the<br>Future of<br>Learning | Learning resources must be expanded beyond the school. As discussed above, the pandemic has highlighted how disparities in the home learning environment—including differences in caregiver ability to support learning at home, in adequate spaces to learn, in availability of reading material, and in availability of connectivity or devices—widen learning inequalities. Education systems need to provide learning resources for the home environment along with caregiver support and guidance on how to use the learning resources to boost learning outcomes (World Bank 2017b). | 27 | Explicit: caregiver ability                                                       | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions                | Education system | Material +<br>Educational | Resource<br>Inequality |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the<br>Future of<br>Learning | For the most disadvantaged families, schools are often an opportunity to obtain nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, technology, and connectivity that they lack at home.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 15 | Implicit:<br>opportunity to<br>obtain nutrition;<br>water; sanitation;<br>hygiene | Structural:<br>Enabling<br>Conditions                | Schools          | Material                  | Resource<br>Inequality |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the<br>Future of<br>Learning | Resilience also requires placing much more emphasis on the role of parents. The pandemic has made it clear how important support at home is, and how parents are key players in their children's learning and their future. Public policy should internalize this and provide guidance, support,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 9  | Implicit: support<br>at home;<br>guidance; support;<br>counseling;<br>equitable;  | Relational +<br>Structural: Support<br>Provision     | State + Families | Institutional             | None                   |

|                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |                                                                                        |                                             |                  |                            |                                     |
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|                                                                | and counseling to parents so they can better fulfill this role. Thus, education systems must become more equitable and more resilient to realize the vision presented here on the future of learning, so that learning occurs for everyone, everywhere.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |    |                                                                                        |                                             |                  |                            |                                     |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the Future of Learning                | The World Bank will work with countries to implement policies and programs targeted at supporting parents, families, and communities in fostering the holistic development of their children. For example, we will support countries in expanding cross-sectoral interventions that build parents' and other caregivers' capacity to support healthy development, including coaching caregivers at home on positive discipline and how to engage in nurturing, stimulating, language-rich activities with their children (e.g., storytelling, singing, reading). | 37 | Explicit: caregivers                                                                   | Structural: Support Provision + Pedagogical | Families + State | Educational+ Institutional | None                                |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the Future of Learning                | In addition, there is evidence of the high toll of the pandemic on the wellbeing of learners, with heightened food insecurity, increased home-based violence, and greater economic instability increasing stress for students. It has also highlighted the need to nurture socioemotional skills and provide socioemotional support for students                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 23 | Implicit: wellbeing of learners; nurture socioemotional skills; socioemotional support | Affective                                   | None             | Educational                | Resource Inequality                 |
| TWB (2020):<br>Realizing the Future of Learning                | They need opportunities to play and learn during the early years, when the brain is most malleable and the greatest development occurs. Governments need to enact family friendly policies (e.g., maternity leave, cash benefits). Cash transfer programs for households could also accompany prenatal and child services to address acute material deprivation and improve developmental outcomes                                                                                                                                                               | 35 | Implicit: family-friendly policies; maternity leave child services                     | Structural: Enabling Conditions             | State + Families | Material                   | Resource Inequality + Gendered care |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for | Caring and supportive student-teacher relationships, as well as other child-adult relationships, help to create a school environment in which students are more likely to feel safe. Such positive relationships are linked to better school performance and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 8  | Explicit: caring student-teacher relationships                                         | Relational                                  | Teachers         | Institutional              | None                                |

|                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |    |                                                                                                                                            |             |                     |             |                        |
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| Supporting Safe Schools                                                                | engagement, greater emotional well-being and social competencies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |    |                                                                                                                                            |             |                     |             |                        |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | Classroom culture refers to a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors shared by teacher and students. For a positive classroom culture to emerge, all need to understand and adhere to shared values and goals, which in turn form the identity and sense of a caring learner community                                                                                       | 8  | Explicit: caring learner community                                                                                                         | Relational  | Learners + Teachers | Normative   | None                   |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions                                        | 12 | Explicit: caring decisions                                                                                                                 | Pedagogical | Learners            | Educational | None                   |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | Teachers create a culture that is conducive to student learning and engagement by (a) fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that treats all students respectfully, consistently using positive language, responding to students' needs, and challenging/addressing stereotypes (e.g., based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity) | 8  | Implicit: supportive learning environment; inclusive learning environment; treats all students respectfully; responding to students' needs | Relational  | Teachers            | Educational | Recognition Inequality |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | Responsive teachers ensure fairness and justice toward their students, exhibit compassion for individual learners, and provide the necessary emotional or physical support in class                                                                                                                                                                                            | 8  | Implicit: fairness; justice; compassion; emotional support                                                                                 | Affective   | Teachers            | Educational | None                   |

|                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |    |                                                                                                             |                        |                                 |                             |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | Establishing a forum for teachers and students (and/or teachers-parents when required) to connect and address conflictual issues, especially for students exhibiting risky or problematic behaviors who may need extra support                                                                                                                                      | 9  | Implicit: address conflictual issues; extra support                                                         | Relational             | Teachers + Learners + Families  | Educational                 | None                |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | Create space for teachers to support and facilitate social and emotional development of youth... collaborating with communities and caregivers to design SEL programs that ensure context relevance and build an enabling environment for students to develop SEL competencies                                                                                      | 12 | Explicit: caregivers                                                                                        | Relational             | Teachers + Community + Families | Institutional + Educational | None                |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | guaranteeing all students access to sports or arts-based extra-curricular activities, after school programs, or SEL interventions that promote and support their positive behaviors and socio-emotional skills                                                                                                                                                      | 12 | Implicit: SEL interventions; promote positive behaviors; socio-emotional skills                             | Pedagogical            | Schools                         | Educational                 | Resource Inequality |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | C. Support teachers' SEL to help them manage their stress and anxiety to create a safe and supportive classroom environment that fosters positive relationships and effective teaching                                                                                                                                                                              | 13 | support teachers' SEL; manage stress; anxiety; safe classroom environment; supportive classroom environment | Relational + Affective | None                            | Educational                 | None                |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for                         | Better teacher-student relations. One of the most important benefits to teachers of using PBL could be the creation of good relationships with students. This benefit could be vital because deeper the relations that teachers have with their students and the more profoundly teachers know them, the more open students may be with them. As a result, teachers | 10 | Implicit: help students; teacher-student relations; know students;                                          | Relational             | Teachers                        | Educational                 | None                |

|                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |    |                                                 |                          |          |             |      |
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| Supporting Safe Schools                                                                | probably would be more able to help students with their problems.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |    |                                                 |                          |          |             |      |
| TWB (2023):<br>The Role of Teaching and Learning Practices for Supporting Safe Schools | PBL also helps students to be friendlier with one another and support their peers within each group. Because PBL is a group work approach, students have a common task to finish. This possibly suggests that students within every group will try to contribute to the project and help their group mates when necessary | 10 | Implicit: support peers; group work; contribute | Relational + Pedagogical | Learners | Educational | None |

## Appendix B. Codebook tables

| <b>Care conceptualization</b> | <b>Definition/Coding criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Relational</b>             | Care is understood as something that emerges through relationships and interdependence. It is expressed through connection, responsiveness, belonging, cooperation and shared responsibility among people, groups or communities. |
| <b>Affective</b>              | Care is understood as attending to emotional, psychological and/or well-being. It involves supporting individuals' capacity to feel safe, valued, connected, mentally stable and/or able to manage and express emotions.          |
| <b>Pedagogical</b>            | Care is understood as something that can be cultivated through education. It is framed as a disposition, practice or competence that can be learned and strengthened through educational experiences.                             |
| <b>Labour</b>                 | Care is understood as work that sustains people, families, households and/or communities. It encompasses the activities, responsibilities and efforts involved in meeting needs.                                                  |
| <b>Ecological</b>             | Care is understood as responsibility toward the environment. It emphasizes human interdependence with ecosystems and the need to sustain environmental and planetary well-being.                                                  |
| <b>Structural</b>             | Care is understood as an organized responsibility that is embedded in institutions, policies, services, resources and/or material arrangements. Therefore, being dependent on the conditions, supports and structures.            |

| <b>Actor / Provider of Care</b> | <b>Definition/Coding criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>State</b>                    | Care is attributed to public authorities or governmental actors responsible for regulating, funding, coordinating or guaranteeing the conditions through which care is provided. |
| <b>Education System</b>         | Care is attributed to education as a system-wide responsibility, including educational structures, policies, services or arrangements.                                           |
| <b>Schools</b>                  | Care is provided or supported by schools as institutional settings.                                                                                                              |
| <b>Teachers</b>                 | Care is provided by teachers as actors who directly support, guide and respond to learners' needs through educational relationships and/or pedagogical practices.                |
| <b>Families</b>                 | Care is provided by parents, caregivers or households as responsible for support, nurturing, development and well-being.                                                         |
| <b>Learners</b>                 | Care is attributed to students or individuals as active agents capable of caring for themselves, others or communities.                                                          |
| <b>Community</b>                | Care is attributed to communities, local networks or collective actors operating beyond formal educational institutions and families.                                            |
| <b>Society</b>                  | Care is attributed to society as a whole, humanity, or a collective responsibility that transcends specific actors or institutions.                                              |
| <b>None</b>                     | No identifiable provider of care is specified                                                                                                                                    |

| <b>Governance mechanism</b> | <b>Definition/Coding criteria</b>                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Normative</b>            | Care is governed through values, ethical principles, rights, moral obligations or shared responsibilities.                                                      |
| <b>Educational</b>          | Care is governed through educational framings and processes, including curricula, pedagogy, teaching, learning, assessment or educational practices.            |
| <b>Institutional</b>        | Care is governed through institutional arrangements, organizational structures or services through coordination or support provision.                           |
| <b>Material</b>             | Care is governed through the allocation of resources, funding, welfare measures, infrastructure, services or policy provisions that enable care to be provided. |

| <b>Governance mechanism</b>   | <b>Definition/Coding criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gendered Care</b>          | The excerpt identifies or implies unequal expectations, responsibilities, opportunities or recognition related to care on the basis of gender.                                                        |
| <b>Resource Inequality</b>    | The excerpt identifies unequal access to care, educational opportunities or supportive conditions due to differences in resources, funding, infrastructure, services or socio-economic circumstances. |
| <b>Recognition Inequality</b> | The excerpt identifies unequal recognition, inclusion or responsiveness toward the identities, experiences or needs of particular individuals or social groups.                                       |
| <b>None</b>                   | No care inequality is identified.                                                                                                                                                                     |