

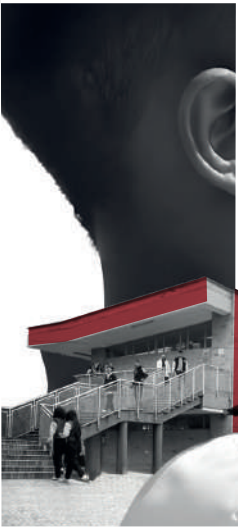


Fe y Alegría
INTERNACIONAL

70
years
Educating
hearts

Quality, Improvement and Innovation

Keys to a Transformative Popular Education





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SOMOS IGUALES
y DIFERENTES



As Father Vélaz said: "The education of the poor should not be a deficient education". May this anniversary be an opportunity to continue ensuring and strengthening this comprehensive educational quality for the excluded. Thus, renewing its commitment to the Mission and following the example set by poor and humble Jesus, walking alongside the most vulnerable and sowing hope through education for freedom, dignity, transcendence and fullness of life.

Letter to Fe y Alegría on its 70th Anniversary of its foundation March 5, 2025

***P. Arturo Sosa, S.J.
Superior General of the Society of Jesus***

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Presentation

Fe y Alegría has traveled a long, courageous road, full of questions. For decades we have been committed to a popular education that does not settle for the status quo, that revises itself, that dares to imagine other ways of doing, of teaching, of transforming. That seed sown at the XXXIV International Congress in 2003, "The Quality of Popular Education at Fe y Alegría" in Bogotá, Colombia, has taken deep roots: we continue to believe that quality, understood from our perspective, is an indispensable condition for education to be truly transformative.

Today we present this document: ***"Quality, Improvement and Innovation. Keys to a Transformative Popular Education"***, as a part of this shared path. It is not just another technical document. It is a tool for discernment. It is an open and living proposal that wants to help us renew our educational practices from an ethic of care, from an improvement that does not stop, and from an innovation that makes sense.

Why do we at Fe y Alegría insist - and with increasing urgency - on talking about quality, improvement and innovation? Because it is not processes that are at stake. It is lives. And, above all, the lives of those who have had fewer opportunities. These are some of the reasons that move us:

1. **Our way is to educate with dignity.** It is not enough to open classrooms. We must take care of what happens inside. Education that dignifies is comprehensive, critical, liberating, updated. Education that awakens capacities, conscience, hope. Innovation is not a luxury: it is an ethical necessity in the face of ever-changing contexts.

2. **The right to education does not mean just access.** It is fulfilled with depth, with relevance, with impact. To bet on quality is to take the side of those who have been historically excluded and deserve more than the minimum. So that our children do not repeat their history but rather rewrite it.
3. **We want social transformation, not just literacy.** If the education we offer does not serve to critically read the world and transform it collectively, we are not carrying out Fe y Alegría. We need an education that generates critical thinking, civic awareness and committed spirituality. This can only be achieved with demanding processes, in permanent revision.
4. **The world does not wait.** The change is brutal: technologically, culturally, politically. If we do not innovate, we become irrelevant. It is not a matter of following pedagogical fashions, but of responding with clarity and creativity to the real challenges of students and educators. We cannot teach as in the 20th century to people with 21st century problems.
5. **Continuous improvement is part of our pedagogical model.** It is about evaluating, rethinking and changing, not out of fashion, but out of fidelity to what we believe in. Our pedagogy becomes alive, it is incarnated anew. And this requires humility and courage to continue learning on an ongoing basis.
6. **We want to spread hope.** A well-done education excites, mobilizes, transforms communities. When we take care of the processes, people join in, they feel a part of it. What we do speaks of who we are, what we believe in, what we dream of. We want to be a spark that ignites other fires.

7. **Credibility is built on coherence.** Our words only carry weight if they are backed up by deeds. If we say that we are committed to the latter, it has to show. In classrooms, in relationships, in management, in learning. Quality is also a way of being accountable to those who have put their trust on us.

Quality, improvement and innovation: Keys to a transforming popular education are not technical discourses, they are radical bets for the Gospel incarnated in education. They are keys to continue being that movement which, from the margins, dreams of a fairer world and educates to make it possible.

To the national teams, to the directors of centers, to educators: this document, as well as the **International Framework for Popular Education**, is for you. It is not a manual, it is an invitation to go back to the essentials, to let ourselves be uncomfortable, to walk together, to not lose sight of the horizon.

P. Daniel Villanueva, S.J.

*General Coordinator of the Fe y Alegría
International Federation*



Foreword

Fe y Alegría has been one of the world's most influential players in making the universal right to quality education a reality. In a further twist, this universal right to education becomes, in the 21st century, a right to learning, as stated by its leaders after the last congress. This is a concept that I have also been upholding in recent years. This conviction is the result of the logic that has presided over the entire history of Fe y Alegría, persevering in its purpose of interpreting quality and popular education as a historical process that responds to the needs of the population, which, on the other hand, are tremendously changing in our time.

I think it is worth highlighting the coherence of Fe y Alegría's approach in linking quality to "thinking", as proposed in recent congressional debates. When an institution wishes to place itself in a permanent state of active attitude, it must work on the mindset, as a priority. That is to say, the one that nestles in the soul and in the purpose of each member of the organization. That which moves us with certain automatism and with certain spontaneity to guide criteria and ways of proceeding to be in line with the educational project and its founding spirit. I bring up this reflection here because it seems relevant to me that the proposal of the Common Quality Framework is not only that of Quality in itself, but of the Culture of Improvement and Innovation. The one that brings our views towards the educational contexts, especially when they are as changing and uncertain as the current ones are.

Since FyA decided to embark on the path of Quality systematization, it is important to highlight its desire to create a framework linked to the need to provide itself with a system for measuring and evaluating those aspects it considers essential to achieve the objectives of results and impact that have been set out since its inception. This decision has led to tensions with the standardized systems promoted by the governments of the countries in which it is implemented. From a multidimensional and popular culture perspective, we must be aware of the diversity of priorities that exist among the different external tests promoted by governments, companies and international organizations. Not all the tests measure the same things, nor can we affirm that only one of them gives us a reliable picture. Therefore, among

the items that determine the measurement systems we have, we must clearly establish which of them we do not want to remain invisible in the debate on educational quality, as we conceive it, and even more so in the context of popular education.

It is not surprising that the Fe y Alegría XXXIV International Congress in Colombia, on **"The Quality of Popular Education at Fe y Alegría"** should address the debate on the tensions derived from the conception we have of what it is to educate, what training and competencies we must guarantee and the meaning of academic performance with parameters of social and educational justice. The conception of education at Fe y Alegría is inseparable from its objective to be key in human and social development, as well as in the formation of individuals, who are not only competent, but are also agents of social transformation. Any measurement that does not take into account these characteristics and that does not conceive it as a process that shows the path taken will not give us an accurate picture, if our aim is to balance inequalities and make life projects possible for students from environments that are below the line of poverty and marginalization.

I am well acquainted with the development and practices that Fe y Alegría has given to the concept of innovation in the last ten years. The willingness to anticipate changes and commit to transformation has led FyA to the frontiers of methodological experimentation while remaining faithful to its founding spirit. It is a path that must be traveled, even if it is not free of tensions, successes and mistakes.

In the process of persevering in the measurement of effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction of needs and expectations, in the sense proposed in this document, it would be interesting to link it to evidence of the impacts we find throughout the students' lives, beyond the day they graduate. Looking back, the perspective that time gives us enriches the view that we, as adults, have about the impact of school. Education is like planting seeds, the results of which are often seen long after the harvest has been gathered. Without the grain being scattered, patiently and lovingly, across the field there is no subsequent fruit. Weather conditions, as well as the students' environments and the evolution of the contexts in which they live, have a powerful influence on the course of their lives as adults. It is then that the way in which the seeds were sown facilitates the richness or limitations of the harvest. From this perspective, by following the evolution of a significant sample of Fe y Alegría graduates, we could redefine the

value we place on effectiveness and efficiency. This is evidence that standardized tests do not show us.

Especially relevant seems to me the willingness of Fe y Alegría to understand that "improving is not trying improve what has always been done" but that "it implies creating, transforming and innovating". As the late Harvard professor Richard Elmore critically pointed out, educational reforms have focused on optimizing ineffective processes instead of transforming essential pedagogical practices. This is the same danger that some applications of quality systems have had, by focusing on peripheral aspects or on "doing the wrong thing very well". We certainly learn by doing, but we must choose very well what we decide to do.

In my experience I have learned that you cannot improve what you do not practice. Improvement processes that wait for perfect documents, or that are nourished only with the terminology sacralized by the organization, are doomed to paralysis and ineffectiveness, if they are to respond to the complexity of the current challenges of quality education in popular education contexts. Therefore, it seems to me that it is extremely wise to link innovation to the capacity to anticipate. Although new tensions are constantly arising, especially between foundational fidelity and adaptive evolution. And it is here that the call of Fr. Arrupe, General of the Society of Jesus, to work on identity and mission from "creative fidelity" resounds.

The social contexts in which Fe y Alegría works, following the founding path of Father José María Velaz, expressed in the phrase "there where the asphalt ends", is shaking the very reality of Fe y Alegría. In addition to the poverty of a few decades ago, there are new forms of poverty, which sometimes make it difficult to establish categories of who are the poorest or most marginalized. The growing migratory mobility shows us an overwhelming reality when we find new waves of marginalized people who seek their resources where there is only poverty.

We need to ask ourselves new and good questions if we believe that this is the way to face new challenges. If we are convinced that the methodology of questioning is one of the most outstanding contributions of popular education, given to us by Paulo Freire, I believe

that we must be consistent and implement it to our usual practices of debate and reflection in the organization, and be radical in the way we proceed, as pointed out in the conclusions of the Fe y Alegría 2014 International Symposium in Nicaragua.

Transformations are produced by carrying them out and the documents serve to establish frameworks that guide us towards action. This document of Fe y Alegría International's Common Quality and Innovation Framework for Quality and Innovation that you have in your hands is, without a doubt, a good guide to learn about the objectives and criteria that guide Fe y Alegría towards the dream of "a quality education that empowers people to know, exercise and promote their rights, actively participating in the community and society".

Pepe Menéndez

May 2025

Introduction

In its commitment to the defense and effective exercise of the universal right to quality education, Fe y Alegría has carried out valuable collective exercises of reflection on educational quality. These reflections, over time, have given way to the implementation of guidelines on quality, especially through the Quality Improvement System. These orientations have also been condensed in what we know as "Fe y Alegría's thinking", which is especially present in the congresses that we hold every two years, or in the meetings of the Federation's initiatives where the subject is addressed. The educational quality perspective is a fundamental pillar of Fe y Alegría's mission. In this context, this framework of reference explores the background of the conceptualization of Quality from the perspective of Popular Education and proposes new routes to continue advancing in the commitment to quality education for all.

The first chapter offers a retrospective look at the milestones in the Movement relating to Quality, the Culture of Improvement and Innovation, compiling and summarizing documents produced over the course of two decades on the commitment to quality in popular education at Fe y Alegría.

In the second chapter, we focus on the current educational context, which continues to be a permanent call in the face of the different global challenges, as well as on the words of the Movement in the recent Fe y Alegría XLIX Congress, Quito 2024.

Chapter three presents the current reflections on Quality and Innovation in the Movement carried out by the Federation's initiatives for Educational Quality and Innovation during the period from 2022 to 2023. These reflections emerged from international discussions involving National Directorates, Leaders of Initiatives, Referents of Educational Quality in each country, and some educators.

Finally, **chapter four**, dedicates special attention to Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System, the strategic instrument of the movement to make the dreams of quality popular education possible and viable. A synthesis of the evaluation and impact measurement on the SMCFyA conducted from 2017 to 2020 is presented, as well as the current mapping on the contextualization of the system in five national Fe y Alegría centers.

1. Milestones of Quality, Improvement and Innovation at Fe y Alegría

In the constant search for improving educational quality and fulfilling our mission of promoting inclusive education for all, the Fe y Alegría International Federation has developed a solid theoretical and practical basis on Educational Quality from the perspective of Popular Education. There are some fundamental milestones in this process: the Educational Quality Congress (2003), the work of the Quality Improvement System carried out by the FIFYA Quality Program (2005-2015) and the Innovation Symposium in 2014.

1.1. Milestone 1. Congress on the Quality of Popular Education (2003)

The Fe y Alegría XXXIV Congress in Colombia was entitled "Quality of Popular Education at Fe y Alegría". The title is already suggestive in itself, because it raises the perspective that characterizes our movement's commitment, popular education, and thus, its emancipatory intention.

The objective of this congress was: "To establish a conceptual framework, criteria and indicators for the quality of education at Fe y Alegría, consistent with the Movement's proposals for formal, alternative and non-formal education, to serve as a basis for the design and development of systematic evaluation processes, as well as for the formulation of quality improvement plans in our centers and programs."

As can be concluded from the objective stated, the quality approach not only encompasses the educational process developed in a classroom, but also the different educational programs and services with which Fe y Alegría is inserted in each country and community.

The Fe y Alegría XXXIV Congress sought to establish a conceptual framework consistent with the movement's identity, which would serve as a basis for improving educational centers and programs and developing systematic evaluation processes. On the other hand, the importance of talking about quality at Fe y Alegría was highlighted due to the limitations of the environment and the lack of educational policies that promote quality education for all people, especially for those who are below the poverty and marginalization line. Society, the educational system and the people demand quality in education, and Fe y Alegría, in its commitment to the excluded, does the same.

The final document of the Congress raises the issue of educational quality as a way to improve educational practices and the quality of life of excluded people and emphasizes that this debate on quality must be kept permanently open.

During the Congress, several tensions on educational quality arose; between education as training and competencies; between academic performance and associated factors; between social justice and educational justice; in terms of naming and qualifying education; and between theoretical formulations and Fe y Alegría's daily practices. Special emphasis was made to the importance of an integrative approach that combines comprehensive training with the competencies necessary for today's world, avoids quantitative simplification in evaluation, and balances social and educational justice. In addition, the document emphasized that educational quality should consider all aspects of human formation and not be limited to academic achievement.

Since this Congress in 2003, Fe y Alegría has approached quality education as a right and an opportunity for all, especially for those who are excluded; it opts for quality education from an egalitarian conception and as a social commitment to collective rights. Therefore, it promotes quality education for all social sectors, especially for the most disadvantaged in society. It does not accept a deficient education for the poor, nor an education that maintains or increases the exclusion of the popular sectors.

The promotion and defense of human rights are an expression of a faith that is committed to greater social justice.

From this perspective, Fe y Alegría defines educational quality as a transformative commitment rooted in its vision of the individual, society, and the Church. Through its focus on popular education, Fe y Alegría seeks to develop individuals who are committed to justice and capable of contributing to the construction of a more equitable and fraternal society.

Within this framework of ideas, Fe y Alegría established a series of fundamental values and commitments to define the quality of education, such as the centrality of the individual, inclusion, justice, public education and the appreciation of popular culture and the community; it defined a series of general quality criteria that are interrelated and capable of assessing quality of education taking into account the following criteria: comprehensiveness and context, equity and effectiveness, creativity and efficiency, participation and belonging, solidarity and focus, innovation and transformation, impact and quality of life.

In summary, in relation to the first milestone, Fe y Alegría considers educational quality to be a broad and comprehensive concept that depends largely on the context and the intention of the educational event. At the Fe y Alegría International Congress on Educational Quality, emphasis was placed on its complexity, and the importance of considering various factors that need to be integrated into our concept of quality was highlighted. These factors include inclusion, equity, community participation, cultural relevance, and a primary focus on rights.

1.2. Milestone 2. Quality Improvement System. (2005-2015)

In alignment with the guidelines set forth by the Congress on the Quality of Popular Education, in its Second Global Development and Strengthening Plan (2005-2009) and its No. 1 Strategic Objective on Identity, the International Federation proposes an operational objec-

tive "To promote a quality improvement system" as a part of the educational proposal of the movement framed in the Popular Education approach.

For Fe y Alegría, talking about the quality of education in contexts of inequity is a challenge that implies assuming a political, ethical and social stance. Based on the proposals of the XXXIV Congress, Fe y Alegría, through the federation's Quality Program, developed the Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System (SMCFyA), a complex and multidimensional system that did not leave out any essential aspect of the school and had pedagogy as its central axis (FIFYA, 2005). The Quality System is distinguished by two main lines of work: the first, Quality organized in a set of elements: phases, principles, contents and results, including a matrix of indicators to measure progress and changes; the second, the culture of improvement to identify the types of changes and transformations of the centers according to the chosen focus susceptible to be transformed. To make this system more dynamic, the Federation's Quality Program promoted the creation of communities of reflection, networks, systematization of practices and flexible curricula, as well as training for solidarity and commitment to social transformation.

1.2.1 Quality at Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System

Based on different reflections and tensions on the concept of quality focused on the effectiveness of results, Fe y Alegría broadened and defined that its understanding of the quality of education had to be part of a historical process, be nurtured in a context, move towards a citizenship project and be closely linked to the concept of equity. In this sense, they understood that both quality and school enable human beings to understand and anticipate the changes that are generated and their commitment to transformation. Quality cannot be related only to content or results; it has to do with the processes of the system, and with all the variables that intertwine in the great fabric of education (FIFYA, 2005).

In the first document of Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System, hereinafter SMCFyA, the quality of education is defined from the multidimensional nature of the concept, firstly integrating in the analysis three dimensions: effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction of needs; later adding a fourth dimension in its understanding of quality: improvement (FIFYA, 2005).

Three approaches to the concept of quality from the SMCFyA:

- A first approach to the quality of education has consisted of conceiving it as **efficacy** or, in other words, as the degree of effective fulfillment of the proposed educational objectives. This concept emphasizes the quality of the educational product, using as a criterion the results achieved by students at the end of their learning process or at key moments during said process.
- A second approach consists of considering the quality of education in terms of **efficiency**, that is, the degree of adequacy between the achievements obtained and the resources used. It is usually a complementary approach to the previous one. The development of indicators of human and economic resources, such as the teacher/student ratio, graduation and dropout rates, educational expenditure per student and the like, are due to the impetus provided by this conception of quality.
- A third approach to educational quality consists of stressing its role in **meeting needs and expectations**. The relevance of both the context and school processes has made it necessary to adopt an approach capable of taking them into account. This third approach draws attention to the relevance of educational objectives and achievements; it has also highlighted the need to include the satisfaction of needs among the dimensions to be considered.

These three approaches to the concept of quality give rise to the structure of the Quality Improvement System, but, as mentioned above, a fourth dimension is integrated: the improvement of educational quality that has its roots in the School Improvement approach promoted in the 1960s, "with the strong idea that the school must be the center of changes with a dual vision: change must be led by the schools themselves, and the focus must be on school culture in order to bring about change in education (FIFYA, 2005)".



1.2.2 Quality Improvement at SMCFyA

Quality at Fe y Alegría opted for an improvement approach that implied changes in different factors. School improvement brings to quality its conception of the school and the processes of change, as well defined by the Fe y Alegría XXXIV Congress:

“The quality improvement processes must be oriented towards this diversity, with a multidimensional approach. All these processes should be interrelated, seeking coherence between the efforts made by educators, students, parents and those promoted by the centers themselves and by Fe y Alegría offices. Quality improvement should not be carried out in isolation because, in this way, it will hardly be sustainable over time nor will it achieve the expected results, since it must be a coordinated work involving everyone” (FIFYA, 2003).

With this approach to quality as a backdrop, the SMCFyA defines **improvement** as:

“A continuous process of looking at reality, assessing it, interpreting it, contextualizing it; deliberation and decision making becomes a permanent culture in educational centers. It can be affirmed that the process of quality improvement refers to working together to become aware of the institution's problems, which allows preventive measures to be taken, with

short-, medium- and long-term plans with the appropriate follow-up and support. Improvement is not trying to do better what has always been done, it implies creating, transforming and innovating. We are talking about a dynamic and not a static concept of quality, since it allows the subject to "do new things" and not simply "do well what is already being done" (FIFYA, 2003).

1.2.3 Innovation and transformation

While the purpose of quality is the improvement of the center and student learning, innovation linked to transformation is considered one of the principles of Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System:

"The process of improvement requires innovation; it is necessary to experiment and even take risks because there is no certainty that what is proposed will generate the expected changes. Uncertainty, however, should not become an obstacle to change. Committing to the development of improvement processes within the socio-critical paradigm that underlies this proposal necessarily leads to innovation, which is more associated with the creation of opportunities and possibilities.

At Fe y Alegría, innovation aims to transform pedagogical and social practices based on the context and its educational proposal, avoiding following "successful experiences" (according to global market competitiveness criteria), or "novelty trends" that are disconnected from the needs of the environment. Innovation must include methods and pedagogies, content and curriculum, institutional programs, the educational center and the classroom, educational materials, management improvement practices and the educator-learner relationship itself. When assessing quality, it is necessary to evaluate the presence, nature and transformative impact of the change processes carried out by the different educational agents to modify their work in all these aspects" (FIFYA, 2009).

The approach to quality based on effectiveness, improvement and principles, including innovation, was the basis for the development of the system with indicators for each educational process as well as the expected profile of the learner.

In the following table we have the overall view of the SMCFyA:

Elements of Fe y Alegría's Quality (2005)			
Phases			
Evaluation	Reflection Systematization	Planning	Implementation
Conditions			
Equity and efficiency	Creativity and Efficiency	Organization Articulation	Follow-up Support
Principles			
Equity and Effectiveness	Creativity and Efficiency	Participation and Relevance	
Solidarity and Focus	Innovation and Transformation	Impact and quality of life	
Quality contents			
Context	Resources and Structure	Processes	Results
Analysis of reality	Resources of the center	Educational management	Language
Critical reflection	Classroom resources	Teaching Learning	Mathematics
Contextualized reflection and adaptation	Equity Resources	Coexistence and Citizenship	Values
		School-Community Relationship	

In the last set of elements of the system, Fe y Alegría identifies four basic contents of the system: context, resources, processes and results. This framework enables us to visualize the comprehensive methodological approach to educational quality: educational processes are developed in response to the context and are reflected in the students' results. Resources are important for recognizing quality, but they are not decisive. These four contents of the system can be understood in an interrelated action:

- **The Context:** Recognizes the influence of students' social background on the quality of education and generates processes of reflection and analysis of the context so that educational centers can respond appropriately to local contexts in order to achieve equity in learning.
- **Resources:** Although important, they are not decisive factors in educational quality according to Fe y Alegría. The organization of resources, space, and human talent are considered factors to be taken into account in the school, in the classroom, and in all educational processes.
- **Processes:** For Fe y Alegría, educational quality lies in the interaction of processes such as management, teaching, learning, coexistence, citizenship building and community relations. These processes are crucial to the quality of an educational center.
- **The Results:** Represent a manifestation of quality when the other three elements are properly combined. Through the System, Fe y Alegría evaluates academic performance and human development. The expected results focus on Language, Mathematics and Values.

Four processes of the Quality Improvement Culture in which improvements, transformations and changes are made:

1. **Executive management:** Aims at quality when it is based on a distributed leadership that allows for the co-responsibility of many actors and enables a management that is more student-centered, specifically

serving the particular needs of each learner and prioritizing support for those who have greater difficulties or limitations.

2. **Teaching and learning processes:** It becomes decisive from the moment it implies the development of an inclusive and integrative curriculum that intentionally opens the doors for the development of adequate strategies so that no child is left without learning.
3. **Coexistence and Citizenship:** A process of coexistence that encourages respect for differences, participation, and creative conflict resolution. This is an essential aspect of our educational process and has a significant impact on our students' values.
4. **The relationship between school and community:** Ensures the development of communication skills focused on solving specific, everyday problems, which generate learning that is crucial for life in society.

In summary, regarding the second milestone, for ten years, 2005-2015, Fe y Alegría positioned a rights-based approach to educational quality, integrating effectiveness and efficiency in educational processes and results. The response to the needs of the population from the change and transformation of educational centers was given by means of the approach of the Improvement Culture. This understanding with the approaches of rights and a culture of improvement was the basis of the structure of Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System organized in different quality components that would drive it forward: phases of the system, necessary conditions for the structure, principles underpinning the system, contents in which the change processes take place, and expected results. The measurement of the Indicator System is structured around each of the processes and the expected results.

1.3. Milestone 3. Educational Innovation

In this section, we present some definitions and relevant aspects of innovation that have been the result of two international events and are references for different processes of the Movement. The first was an event in 2014, the Fe y Alegría International Symposium on Innovation in Managua, Nicaragua, which marked a broader reflection on innovation based on questions raised in the different spaces of debate and discussion, covering areas such as organization, strategic planning, new territories, new themes and, in particular, pedagogy. The second was the: 2016 International Symposium Barcelona, promoted by Educsci (Network of Jesuit schools in Spain) and its main focus is educational innovation. This meeting was attended by six Fe y Alegría centers.

1.3.1 Fe y Alegría International Innovation Symposium

In 2014, the International Innovation Symposium took place as part of the 40th anniversary of Fe y Alegría Nicaragua. The Movement paused on the way to reflect and delve deeper **into innovation**. Each Fe y Alegría center underwent a preparation process beforehand, with the participation of experts on the subject.

At this event, it was proposed that innovation is the ability to continuously create value by anticipating people's needs; and that it must achieve its greatest creativity and competence (FIFYA, 2014).

According to the Symposium, in order to innovate, it is necessary to reflect on and analyze what has been good and what needs to be further improved and scaled up in a dynamic of sustainability; to analyze what requires change and new approaches:

“Fe y Alegría must pay attention to those new things that are being done in our schools and in the communities where we are present, many of which may not be so well known. It must also think of new ways of approaching traditional problems in different, innovative ways, and naturally, learning from others” (FIFYA, 2014).

In the following paragraph we can find some criteria to identify an innovative practice:

“We have considered that these should be experiences that strengthen the community or in which the participation of the community or the recipients of the services is developed; that they should be innovative and creative and can be considered as good practices so that their results are positive; also that they are relevant because they are clearly aimed to solve real problems or needs identified in the community; and finally, that, if possible, they have the potential to be maintained over time, i.e., that they are sustainable” (FIFYA, 2014).

Criteria to identify an innovative experience

- Relevance in the resolution of specific problems
- Novelty contribution
- Creativity
- Good results
- Strengthening of the community
- Involvement of a diversity of actors
- Sustainability



The Symposium had 12 conclusive ideas on Innovation in the Fe y Alegría Movement, which we organized into different aspects:

Innovating from identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We innovate out of our desire to be faithful to our mission and our identity. This is not a fad: we innovate because we want our people to remain the center and the ultimate goal of our actions and to respond to new contexts that challenge us. 2. We approach innovation with the audacity bequeathed to us by our founder, with openness, flexibility, freshness and admiration. Innovation is a part of our genetic code.
Innovating in transformational intentionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Our intentionality in innovation is always that of social transformation in accordance with our option for the most neglected and excluded.
Focus of innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Our priority focus lies on pedagogy, prioritizing strategies of support that guide innovative proposals in educational processes.
How we proceed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. We innovate starting from big questions that unsettle us and open us up to new paths. 6. We innovate by considering the diverse, complex and changing context of which we are a part, being aware of the path we have traveled. Therefore, we read, reread and reinterpret the context on a permanent basis. 7. We fight against our resistance to change, those that stagnate us in the paths of innovation and therefore of transformation.
we innovate in collaboration with others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. We consider education as a public good that makes us allies of the State. 9. We have a vocation for networking, working with others, and bringing people together, and in this regard, we recognize that Fe y Alegría owes its existence to many people who, through their efforts, have built what we are today.
Going beyond	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Our vocation for networking does not close borders, rather it invites us to open ourselves up and reach more places "where the asphalt ends."

<p>Innovation from the structures</p>	<p>11. We seek to rethink our structures at all levels so that they are more flexible and contribute to the leadership of each of the actors in the movement.</p>
<p>Innovation in relevant topics</p>	<p>12. We innovate in new areas that require significant educational experiences and that become challenges to be addressed as a network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth and childhood affected by violence in the exercise of citizenship ● Early childhood education ● Job training ● Intercultural education ● Strengthening for rural work ● Openness and community relations ● Technological world

It is important to note that innovation can be developed from the smallest spaces of the school, from the classroom, from the most horizontal management, when students are given the opportunity to create something new from acquired knowledge or teachers are given the opportunity to experiment and turn their spaces into true pedagogical laboratories. From this perspective, educational innovation develops action research in the classroom, which is also coherent and necessary within the framework of popular education (Ortiz and Borjas, 2008). It can also be developed from other broader spaces, such as national and regional offices, making innovative proposals where paths for the transformation of the school and/or center are thought of together with the educational actors.

1.3.2 International Symposium Barcelona/Education/Change 2016

FyA's concern for educational innovation from the key of quality improvement in its centers, the need to generate spaces for exchange, knowledge generation and networking to learn and enrich the experiences in relation to other educational centers, crystallized in 2016 in the **I International Symposium Barcelona/Education/Change** in a process of in-depth work in the Federation based on the question: how can educational innovation contribute to generate paths from different cultural, geographical, socioeconomic, religious and spiritual perspectives to respond effectively to the challenges of socialization of the younger generations in the era of globalization?

The topics addressed at the Symposium were the following:

- Why and for what purpose should education be transformed?
- Support Networks for Educational Innovation
- Leadership of Transformation to transform people.
- Transforming education is possible. Essential common elements of experiences of change.

In addition, prior to the symposium, Fe y Alegría participated in an exchange with Entreculturas and Alboan. Over two days, participants shared ideas and opinions, challenges and dreams, always under the premise of the need to change the mindsets and hearts of managers and educators in order to transform education as a means of social transformation. The common mission of working for an education that forms people who contribute to the transformation of a wounded world into a world where social justice prevails was emphasized.

Subsequently, Fe y Alegría created a network of countries interested in developing proposals for educational innovation. Two more meetings were held to discuss innovative proposals, and Ecuador was asked to lead the innovation initiative

To summarize the third Milestone, although Innovation at Fe y Alegría was considered in the Quality Improvement System as one of its main principles, it was not until 2014 when this concept was deployed in the Movement, raising necessarily uncomfortable questions that require us to rethink and redefine institutional practices and management in light of the demands of a changing and challenging reality. Starting in 2015, a new way of organizing and proceeding within the Movement was implemented through the Federation's Priorities Plan and, since 2016, the Educational Innovation Initiative was launched, focusing on training for educational coordinators, pedagogical assistants and educators in innovative methodologies and strategies for classroom work.



2. Current state of the art in education

2.1. The UN and UNESCO on the right to quality education

In 2015, the UN approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these 17 goals is SDG 4 on Education which seeks to: ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Quality education is the basis for improving people's lives as well as for sustainable development. Quality education is, therefore, one of the fundamental objectives for international organizations and for all countries that have signed the SDGs.

Between 2015 and 2020, there was progress, albeit slow, in the improvement of the right to education. However, according to the 2023 report on the scope of the SDGs after the impact of COVID-19, the pandemic has had devastating repercussions, causing learning delays in four out of five of the 104 countries surveyed. Without additional measures, only one in six countries will achieve the target of universal secondary education completion by 2030. This means that around 84 million children and young people will miss out on education and approximately 300 million students will not have the basic arithmetic and literacy skills necessary to succeed in life. To achieve the targets of Goal 4, measures such as free and compulsory education, increasing the number of teachers, improving basic school infrastructure, and embracing digital transformation are essential.



In 2019, UNESCO promoted an International Commission to explore deeper and put forward proposals on the future of education, which must be based on two fundamental principles: expanding the right to education, including the right to quality education throughout life, and also encompassing the right to information, culture and science (UNESCO, 2020).

Figure 0.1

Lifelong learning opportunities for all

Formal: Leads to a degree, a diploma or a certificate	Early childhood education (ISCED 0)	Primary education (ISCED 1)	Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	Educación secundaria alta (CINE 3)	Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	Short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5)	Bachelor's degree in higher education or equivalent (ISCED 6)	Master's level, specialization or equivalent (ISCED 7)	Doctoral level or equivalent (ISCED 8)
		Special educational needs, technical and vocational training							
		Second chance education	Learning a trade, applied practical learning, boarding school education						
	QF: validates non-formal and informal learning	Level 1 of the Qualifications Framework	QF Level 2	QF Level 3	QF Level 4	QF Level 5	QF Level 6	QF Level 7	QF Level 8
Non-Formal: Leads to a non-formal certificate or no certificate at all	Early childhood care	Youth and adult literacy programs	Training in the acquisition of professional skills, professional development, internships						
		After-school programs	Training in life skills, health and hygiene, family planning, environmental conservation, computer training						
		Social or cultural development, organized sports, arts and crafts,							
Informal: No degree	Family childcare	Self-directed learning, family-directed learning, society-directed learning: workplace, family, community, everyday life							
		Incidental learning: reading newspapers, listening to the radio, visiting museums							

Source: GEM Report Team

Taken from: Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016: Education for people and planet: creating sustainable futures for all UNESCO, Paris, 2017.

The table above graphically illustrates what is meant by “lifelong learning opportunities for all,” taking into account formal, non-formal, and informal education. Quality education should be present in all these educational spaces and levels.

The document "Reimagining our futures together" (UNESCO, 2021) seeks a **new social contract** based on human rights and on the principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. It must include an ethic of care, reciprocity and solidarity. It must reinforce education as a public project and a common good. **This social contract for education** has two main principles:

Guaranteeing the right to quality education throughout life. The right to education must remain the basis of the new social contract for education and must be expanded to include the right to quality education throughout life. It must also encompass the right to information, culture and science, as well as the right to access and contribute to the common knowledge, the collective knowledge resources of humanity that have been accumulated over generations and are continually being transformed.

Strengthening education as a public project and a common good. As a shared social initiative, education creates common goals and enables individuals and communities to thrive together. A new social contract for education must not only guarantee public funding for education but also include a society-wide commitment to include everyone in public debates on education. It is this emphasis on participation that reinforces education as a common good, a form of shared well-being that is chosen and achieved together.

The Social Contract for Education establishes the following proposals and areas to work on and strengthen:

- A more comprehensive, shared, and supportive learning experience.

- Presence of teachers who are sufficiently prepared and trained to support critical and reflective education processes.
- Alliances between different educational actors.
- Promotion of education in spaces beyond schools and in lifelong environments.

This act of reimagining means working together to create futures that are shared and interdependent. The new social contract for education must unite us around collective efforts.

Quality from the perspective of inclusion and equity. - Ensuring that all learners have access to quality education is also about recognizing the intrinsic value of diversity and respect for human dignity (UNESCO, 2015a). In this way, differences are seen as positive, as a stimulus to encourage learning among children, youth, and adults, and to promote gender equality. The principles of inclusion and equity are not only about ensuring access to education, but also about providing quality learning spaces and teaching methods that enable students to progress, understand their realities, and work towards a fairer society. (UNESCO, 2017):

“To accelerate the achievement of SDG 4, we seek the adoption of an integrated and lifelong learning approach to education, focused on strengthening and transforming the system, particularly in relation to the following five aspects: equity and inclusion, early childhood and basic learning, lifelong learning and skills development; investing in research and strengthening higher education institutions; teachers and the teaching profession; governance and leadership in education. All this with the aim of equipping people with the tools to achieve their full potential, while fostering the development of a skilled workforce, innovative ecosystems and knowledge-based economies.”

2.2. Education in emergency

In response to the health emergency and the economic and social situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Fe y Alegría set out to "develop quality popular education programs" in all the territories where it operates, using methodologies that, although they had already been tested, had fallen out of use a few decades ago, or were not used in all countries, as in the case of tele-education and radio education in some countries. Fe y Alegría has had to modify pedagogical methodologies, timetables, contents and development of competencies, relying on existing resources in centers and families, and working more closely with other organizations in different scenarios.

On the other hand, it was evident that the work is not only limited to the development of learning associated with the classroom, but also includes psycho-emotional health, the development of psycho-spiritual support (both for students and educators) and a management of the educational community that seeks to maintain an active relationship between its various members.

As can be concluded from the above, the educational emergency marked different patterns that also account for the exercise of the universal right to quality education beyond the school itself, because during the pandemic, the home became a school, and school practices entered the home at the same time that the home entered the school. It was therefore proven that educational quality, being multifactorial, is permeated by the influence of the environment, and that environment also requires intervention by popular educational processes that seek emancipation, considering the different needs and contexts of students and their families.

2.3 Challenges of Popular Education at Fe y Alegría

Fe y Alegría 2024 International Congress in Quito, has identified challenges to be taken into account in order to work on the quality of popular education.

The reflections developed from the work of the different groups during the pre-Congress period and the discussions held during the Congress clearly highlight the challenges that Fe y Alegría, as a Popu-

lar Education and Social Promotion Movement must address in order to respond to the reality of the contexts in which it operates. Although each country has its own particularities, sharing the same mission and commitment to the most vulnerable allows us to respond to local contexts from a global perspective.

Based on the right to learning, the need to continue working to guarantee the following is identified:

- **Equity and inclusion:** especially for the most vulnerable groups, girls and women, people with functional diversity, migrants, displaced persons, and those who suffer any type of violence, in order to reduce the gaps that hinder access, permanence and results in quality education, which are also characterized by socio-economic, political and cultural factors.
- **Educational quality:** offering relevant and meaningful learning for life, with a focus on gender equality and equitable attention to the diversity of students and their socio-emotional needs.
- **Training of students as epistemic, social and critical subjects** who learn, grow, and develop with foundation and criteria, empowerment and leadership in the face of the challenges posed by technological, social, and political issues.
- **Innovative educational models:** that respond to the principles of equity, inclusion and quality within the framework of Popular Education, where technology is present to guarantee learning.
- **Teacher training:** ongoing, continuous and comprehensive enabling educators to respond to current contexts, from the perspective of popular education.
- **Collaboration with others,** through different instances and levels, networks, alliances, dialogues with the Society of Jesus, organizations and actors to generate advocacy for the right to learning at national and international levels.

- **Ongoing dialogue with governments** on our commitment to public education to guarantee the right to education.

As a major outcome of this Congress in response to the Challenges, three documents, which are available for consultation, have been produced: Fe y Alegría's Popular Education Framework, Popular Education at Fe y Alegría from the perspective of Africa and Madagascar, and a third document, the International Congress Magazine, which gathers the results of the debates on the right to learning.

check here: <https://www.feyalegria.org/publicaciones/>



3. Fe y Alegría's Quality and Innovation. Response to the Universal Right to Education.

After having made this tour of the main milestones at Fe y Alegría in relation to quality, improvement and innovation, this chapter presents current definitions based on the experience and learnings of Fe y Alegría. Confirming that this is our response to the Universal Right to Education.

3.1 Educational quality at Fe y Alegría

Educational quality has generated a series of dialogues and debates among academia and civil society organizations related to education, thereby gaining importance and visibility on public policy agendas that seek to generate impacts at the educational level. Educational quality can be understood through two concepts, the first one refers to "educational excellence" with quality standards and learning outcomes, and the second one, which is conceived from the perspective of popular education that emphasizes the political pillar above all, but also the epistemological and ethical pillars. This relationship highlights a contrast between "education as excellence versus education as a right," as mentioned by Fernández (2016), in his article "Educación popular, calidad educativa y buen vivir" [Popular education, educational quality, and good living]. In 2019, Fe y Alegría emphasized the intentionality of quality, beyond academic efficiency:

“As opposed to conceptions that reduce quality to mere efficiency or the ability to successfully answer a series of standardized tests, Fe y Alegría believes that education is of high quality when it responds to the realities of its recipients and contributes to the development of free individuals with the skills to improve their lives and transform their social environment” (Reflection and Updating of Popular Education, 2019).

In this sense, Fe y Alegría conceives quality education as a process that focuses its actions on the well-being of the individual and the community, enabling the deployment of actions for change and transformation.

Quality at Fe y Alegría promotes lifelong learning opportunities for the promotion of individuals and communities, with a clear emphasis on social issues. The principles defined at Fe y Alegría's Framework for Popular Education¹ are inherent to the understanding of educational quality at Fe y Alegría. These principles are comprehensive, human and spiritual education; pedagogical contextualization and training of critical thinking; equity, inclusion and educational innovation.

A quality education not only shapes competent individuals, but also agents of social transformation, committed to the common good, who place their human, professional and technical skills at the service of the poorest.

Education is key to human and social development, given that a person's educational level determines, to a high degree, the opportunities to access the basic rights of a democratic society. From an ethical perspective, it integrates reflection and action to promote social transformation, integrating values such as dignity, equity, inclusion and justice. Fe y Alegría seeks to ensure quality education that empowers people to know, exercise and promote their rights, actively participating in the community and society.

1. One of the products of Fe y Alegría 2024 International Congress in Quito was the drafting of Fe y Alegría's Popular Education Framework, a document that guides and inspires the educational mission.

Quality from a rights-based approach incorporates context to shape citizens of the world and for the world, reflective, critical individuals, aware of their realities, their responsibilities and commitment to the world for a healthy and harmonious coexistence. This approach draws on the knowledge of the context, reading it, observing it, and feeling it; it delves into critical reflection on inequities, injustices, discrimination, abuses of power, corruption, and vertical relationships that are some of the expressions of power and control of hegemonic, patriarchal systems and of the same groups that hold economic power. Quality seeks contextualized solutions through a flexible and localized curriculum with the optimization of resources, offering the most vulnerable population meaningful educational processes, so that they can broaden the spectrum of possibilities to transform their lives and enable them to influence society. For example, an analysis of curricula from a gender perspective to reduce the inequality gaps in the narratives of texts and images that perpetuate discrimination and stereotypes.

From an ethical approach, quality education develops a dynamic of reflection on action based on transformation proposals. This reflection integrates values such as human dignity, equity, inclusion, appreciation of diversity, care for our common home, human promotion and social justice. Transformative ethical action develops from the micro to the macro, from smaller to larger transformations, from the local and territorial to the global. These transformations occur in students, populations, schools, centers and communities, and it is there where ethical and social changes materialize and become tangible.

The purpose of the pedagogical approach to quality is that any person who studies at any Fe y Alegría center, program or process achieves the expected learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and values, social and community engagement. This is how pedagogical reflection helps us to reformulate learning programs that respond coherently to the challenges and demands of the context. According to FIFYA (2023), Pedagogy should be based on "knowing how to understand and knowing how to do".

Innovation is a part of the Culture of Improvement of Fe y Alegría's Quality System. In the trajectory of the commitment to quality explained in previous chapters, we can identify that in 2005, the Movement created the SMCFyA, by which time the concept of innovation had been introduced into Fe y Alegría as one of the principles of the system, but not as its main focus. It was not until 2014, with the Interna-

tional Symposium on Innovation in Managua, and later in 2016 at the Symposium on Educational Innovation in Barcelona, that the concept became more relevant in the Fe y Alegría Movement. Today, innovation is understood to be linked to the entire quality improvement system.

According to our Popular Education Framework (2025) in practice, in each Fe y Alegría program, center or educational service, **quality is embodied in a culture of improvement** that recognizes, implicates the entire educational community, and through evaluation, identifies strengths, weaknesses and challenges; reflects on the problems, plans the desired transformation and systematizes and generates new knowledge in response to the demands of the contexts. The culture of improvement at Fe y Alegría is based on the constant pursuit of educational quality, social transformation and the strengthening of its mission to offer quality education to vulnerable communities.

From this perspective, Fe y Alegría makes "Sustainable Development Goal 4" possible by ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education, fostering lifelong learning opportunities, creating opportunities for the promotion of individuals and communities, with a clear emphasis on social issues.

In any quality education, anchored in human rights and authentic and relevant learning, there are five points of change: pedagogy, curriculum, school organization, the teaching profession and the learning ecosystem, which in turn are promoted through four catalytic actions: research and innovation, participatory dialogue, links with the university and relying on international cooperation (FIFYA, 2023).

The quality effectiveness approach makes sense in this order of ideas because it seeks that the student's academic exit profile, both in a formal education center as in non-formal education programs and/or centers, has very good results in fundamental and higher competencies and skills.

3.2 Educational innovation at Fe y Alegría

After having made a necessary review of the concepts of quality, the culture of improvement and innovation at Fe y Alegría, we can approach our own definition of innovation:

For Fe y Alegría, based on its identity and mission, what is essential in innovation is not that it is "something new" that is linked to "fashion trends," but rather that at Fe y Alegría, innovation arises from indignation and dissatisfaction with something that needs to be improved or changed in the population and promotes hope of transformation through reflection, planning and creativity; it innovates from inclusive, equitable and high-quality actions.

Innovation at Fe y Alegría is a means to achieve educational justice and improve the quality of life of the populations we work with, linked to the transforming intentionality of popular education. From this integral approach, it promotes innovation in teaching, educational management, and the relationship with the community, encouraging permanent reflection, planning and the creation of other possible conditions so that another education is possible. Thus, its commitment to quality education seeks to educate people and communities committed to social transformation.

Innovation drives us to develop educational centers that become prefigurative spaces (Suissa 2010), that is, alternative models, anticipatory because they foresee at the center the society we want, places where a new social order based on democratic ethical relations is experienced and where transformations are possible, as evidenced in the processes of Fe y Alegría's quality improvement culture (Fe y Alegría's Popular Education Framework, 2025).

3.3 Innovation linked to Quality and System Improvement (SMCFyA)

The objective of educational innovation is the quality of education. Innovation is understood as any process of improvement, change or educational and social transformation of the people and communities with whom Fe y Alegría works.

Innovation is a part of the Culture of Improvement of Fe y Alegría's Quality System. In the trajectory of the commitment to quality explai-

ned in previous chapters, we can identify that in 2005, the Movement created the SMCfyA, by which time the concept of innovation had been introduced into Fe y Alegría as one of the principles of the system, but not as its main focus. It was not until 2014, with the International Symposium on Innovation in Managua, and later in 2016 at the Symposium on Educational Innovation in Barcelona, that the concept became more relevant in the Fe y Alegría Movement. Today, innovation is understood to be linked to the entire quality improvement system.

The proposal for innovation for the transformation of Fe y Alegría from the SMCfyA requires ongoing reflection on the educational management processes, the pedagogical approach for the improvement of teaching-learning, the ways of coexistence and interaction with the community, as well as the reflection of the practice of accompaniment, of the processes and personal experiences. In each of these elements of quality and in light of the new scenarios and problems of the current context, it will be possible to propose creative ideas with deliberate and planned intervention, recreating pedagogical practices, where learning prevails over teaching, taking the curriculum as the means that helps develop skills, with the aim of transforming the reality of injustice and inequity, creating a more inclusive, equitable and high-quality society with the protagonism of students, families, teachers, and community.

In the pedagogical field, it involves actions that specifically and directly affect educational processes, but only when those actions also touch on the social field that seeks to contribute to its transformation. Innovation implies modifying things by introducing changes and improvements in teaching practices, in beliefs, values and attitudes in every educational and social event, Innovation promotes changes that enable transformations aimed at comprehensiveness. According to our reflections made in 2023, innovation must be linked to research to ensure systematization and learning at every moment of quality educational processes (FIFYA, 2023).

In pedagogical innovation it is important to warn that pedagogies that do not develop life skills are obsolete, because they focus their didactics on the educator as a transmitter of knowledge and the learner as a receiver thereof. Innovation as a strategy should guide the reflection of our practices. The dream of innovation for transformation is for our educational centers to have a more horizontal management, to allow the relationship between the school and the community, promoting a transformative education that helps the school to become aware of its

role, that helps to improve our praxis by placing educators in the role of facilitators or companions, so that our students really become the protagonists of their own learning.

To make innovation visible in an educational center, it is necessary to create dynamic learning environments and spaces, to organize time with flexible schedules, with a curriculum, methodology and evaluation in accordance with the needs of the students. Educators, from their roles, should contribute to the development of critical, communicative, cooperative, research, responsible citizenship, empathy, creative, self-evaluation and leadership skills, among others. With the support of active methodologies that take context, revaluation, dialogue of knowledge, cultural negotiation, and research into account, the student should be able to use knowledge in innovative situations in a creative way, with sound decisions that systematize their learning and socializing, in other spaces, the lessons learned in response to the problems that arise in society.



3.4 Fe y Alegría's commitment to quality education through innovation ²

In 2023, Fe y Alegría engaged in a dialogue with actors in the movement to reflect on and conceptualize the perspective of educational quality, taking into account the new contexts and the new realities and challenges of today's world. The dialogue revolved around the educational quality in new contexts based on the principles of popular education and what characteristics pedagogy should have in terms of quality that is capable of guiding educational processes and values from community transformation.

Fe y Alegría was born as an educational, school-related, and social movement, where both aspects converge in the concept of education. Over time, the processes linked to the purely school-related issues have gained weight. State structures, standardized tests and evaluations, greater ease in economic management, as well as the objectives of many of FIFYA's initiatives have a greater focus on schooling than on social promotion and community development. However, we are called upon not to lose sight of the fact that the Fe y Alegría movement has an unquestionable will to integrate the academic and social spheres.

This dialogue confirmed that the relationship between quality and educational innovation is a fundamental part of Fe y Alegría's mission in promoting inclusive and equitable education. They are intrinsically linked and play a vital role in their pedagogical approach, which is not limited to academic excellence based on the learning of disciplinary knowledge, but encompasses a broader vision that includes a comprehensive, community-based and transformative approach to education. This quality is achieved through innovative educational processes that respond to the needs and local contexts of students and the communities in which they live through creative and flexible curricula and pedagogies. In its comprehensive approach to education, Fe y Alegría promotes innovation in teaching, educational management, and community relations as a means to achieve quality education. The transformative intent of this quality education is committed to the shaping of individuals and communities committed to society.

2. Results of mapping and discussion on Quality at Fe y Alegría. Carried out by the Quality and Innovation Initiative with the support of José Menéndez. 2022-2023.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of paying greater attention to the rural world, indigenous communities and the new vulnerable groups resulting from migratory movements, given the danger of being affected by the greater weight of schooling in urban areas. Paying special attention to the gap between the urban, rural and intercultural worlds, ensuring that the latter are not left out of the Movement's priority actions.

As a result of the dialogue, a new approach to quality was incorporated and echoed in the group: **Quality Pedagogy** from the perspective of popular education. This approach broadens the view of quality, focusing not on standardization, tests and exams, but rather on our principles as a starting point, on understanding popular education and on the social dimension of the movement. This approach leads us to broaden the scope of action of educational quality, not only in the processes that take place in schools but also in the programs and processes that take place in Fe y Alegría in the social and community spheres.

The systematic action of educational, pedagogical and social reflection, both in the strategy and in the evaluation of indicators, is a condition that can ensure educational quality. In this sense, the impact indicators from this approach of quality pedagogy cover the diversity of educational environments and/or modalities (formal and non-formal), social and community, as well as the diversity of actors/subjects that participate in them.

Quality pedagogy brings the methodology of popular education down to earth in concrete educational proposals that allow us to evaluate and ratify that the processes enable people to be capable, as Father Vélaz says, of building their own destiny and creating opportunities for life. School, social and community experiences that help build a community of values and practices of justice and equity.

As a result of the discussions in 2023, four aspects for reflection on the Quality and Improvement System of Fe y Alegría are highlighted: the first is to maintain spaces for dialogue and reflection on the founding spirit and popular education that set the seal of quality and innovation at Fe y Alegría; the second is the continuous and permanent commitment to training; the third, the continuous reflection on pedagogical practice and, in fourth place, the unwavering action and advocacy.

First: Maintaining spaces for dialogue and reflection

Deepening the founding spirit of the Movement, which calls for greater integration between school education and the social objectives arising from FyA's own *raison d'être*, related to justice, equity and well-being, in such a way as to emphasize the purpose of Fe y Alegria being an active agent in community building.

Spaces for reflection and experience of Popular Education, which allow for lifelong learning and a regular review of the link between reality, the Movement's objectives, and the praxis of the regions.

Deepening the debate on the concept of "popular" focusing on the diversity of subjects (gender diversity, women, indigenous people, children, young people, marginalized groups...), from an intersectionality approach, in order to prioritize actions that foster greater levels of equity, justice, sustainability and defense of the most vulnerable people.

Deepening the inspirational link between the principles of Popular Education, Ignatian Pedagogy and the message of the Gospel to strengthen the experience and education in the areas where the Movement operates.

Second: Commitment to training

Training of directors in the principles of Popular Education, as an instrument for transferring the spirit of the Movement's mission to all educators.

Training of trainers in the principles of the Movement and Popular Education, both of teachers in schools and of educators in the different non-formal, community and social educational activities.

Appropriation and training processes that take into account that the accompaniment must be meaningful to the countries, services, and centers, and that encourage frequent reflection.

Training of educators. One of the keys to the work of quality education is the training of the people who carry out the educational work. We understand training as a process of personal, professional and civic transformation, which goes hand in hand with a comprehensive conception of the individual, for the development of their abilities, skills, attitudes and values necessary for an effective commitment to quality education.

Components of training at Fe y Alegría: There are five components that serve as training categories, grouping together sets of objectives and contents that are similar in nature and intent: Human-spiritual component; Institutional identity component; Sociopolitical component; Pedagogical component; Leadership and management component.

Third: Reflection on practice, accompaniment and learning communities.

Reflection on the pedagogical practice is inherent to Fe y Alegría's educational approach, which requires accompaniment mechanisms to be able to analyze how progress is being made in relation to innovations and quality indicators.

Learning communities are spaces that define the dialogue between different actors of the educational community who reflect and compare the progress made and the difficulties to be overcome.

Fourth: alliances, action and public advocacy for education.

To this end, it is necessary to have a presence in the debates on quality in various social, cultural, political and economic spheres that enable us to influence public policy. To favor the integration between the demands of the states with the objectives of Popular Education, through standardized tests.

To deepen the *raison d'être* of the Movement, beyond its link to the direct management of schools, opening up to new demands for collaboration with states and social movements that share similar objectives.

To increase the coherence and joint vision of the common lines of the Movement through a more proactive role of the International Federation, for political incidence in the various spaces.



4. Updating Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System (SMCFyA)

The SMCFyA established itself as a vital instrument in the promotion of Quality Education at Fe y Alegría, highlighting its commitment to equity and educational transformation. It allowed numerous schools around the world the opportunity to reflect on themselves, recognizing their potential, limitations and the challenges specific to their contexts. This enabled them to formulate improvement actions that generate significant changes in the various approaches and processes of school life.



4.1 Evaluation and impact measurement

Between 2017 to 2022, Fe y Alegría International Federation conducted a joint evaluation in eight countries on the impact of Fe y Alegría schools in three areas of formal education: on students, on communities and on public policies. Seven statements were defined that represent the expected results of Fe y Alegría Quality through the implementation of the Quality Improvement System (FIFYA, 2017).

Scope	Statements
Impact of FyA on students and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fe y Alegría works with the poorest and most vulnerable students, generating opportunities for access, permanence and completion. • Fe y Alegría contributes to the development of dignified life projects for graduates and students. • Fe y Alegría educates citizens with critical awareness and social commitment.
Impact of FyA on the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fe y Alegría develops its educational proposal based on the context and characteristics of the territory. • Fe y Alegría contributes to the local development of the community.
Impact of M&A on public policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fe y Alegría puts forward proposals and works alongside other actors involved in developing and improving public policies. • Fe y Alegría seeks to strengthen quality public education through its Popular Education management model and pedagogical approach.

In some countries, progress in quality processes is evident, such as the perspective of innovation, the articulation of processes, collegial management, decision making, participation of school actors, teamwork, ongoing training, and a critical and proactive approach to contexts. In essence, a path has been laid out towards strengthening schools that observe themselves, question themselves, project themselves, set themselves in motion and consolidate themselves in a constant disposition of reflection and action.

Faced with the challenges we want today, as a means to implement the culture of quality, it is important to update and contextualize the SMC-FyA, which is the instrument that allows us to think and see differently in order to carry out the personal and community transformations that we desire. Therefore, it demands a response to the context and realities, thus ensuring access, permanence, and promotion of quality education for all.

Knowing the context at the micro and macro level in the educational field is key at Fe y Alegría. For this reason, it is essential that educators understand and interpret the socioeconomic, political and cultural reality of their students, families and teachers. Linked to their teaching, this exercise of analyzing reality enables them to have a meaningful horizon, respond with relevance to needs and interests, have the ability to adapt to new circumstances and propose actions that will help transform through innovative practices from a holistic and comprehensive approach.

There are various perspectives in different countries regarding the contextualization of the SMC-FyA, as expressed and presented at the Fe y Alegría Assembly in Honduras in March 2023. This implies revisiting experiences, sharing experiences, rereading the context, and generating adaptations to each of the phases with their respective guides, moments, and instruments for evaluation and follow-up.

4.2 Implementation and contextualization of the FYCFYMS

The need to contextualize Fe y Alegría's Quality Improvement System is essential to guarantee its effectiveness and relevance in different environments and moments. To date, five countries have contextualized the SMC-FyA during the period from 2016 to 2024 following the implementation of the Federation's Quality Program (2005-2015).

In 2024, the Fe y Alegría International Federation conducted a Mapping on "the implementation and contextualization of the SMCFyA in five Fe y Alegría centers" in which the motivations and objectives that move the implementation of the SMC, the main advances and the possible improvements that can be made in the face of the difficulties encountered were identified (FIFYA, 2024).

Six main motivations stand out:

- To strengthen educational processes by promoting effective pedagogical practices.
- To guarantee popular education and the transformation of the context of the environment of the communities, in line with the principles of popular education.
- To install a culture of Improvement and Quality in the educational centers.
- To comply with the requirements of the ministries of education by working on educational quality.
- To strengthen a national network of quality schools, promoting the exchange of good practices and cooperation among educational centers to raise education quality nationwide.
- To promote learning and strategic planning through a structured process of evaluation, reflection, planning and systematization that guides decision-making and continuous improvement.

Assessments: According to this mapping, the SMCFyA has been positively valued for its capacity to establish a common language on quality, its relevance in the educational context, and its positive impact on the institutional culture of quality. It has facilitated continuous reflection and the systematization of processes, contributing to the consolidation of a national network of schools with a strategic vision of continuous improvement:

- Strengthening educational quality, usefulness and relevance of the subject. The establishment of a common language and culture of quality in educational centers and the consolidation of a national network of schools

that share a strategic vision of continuous improvement and quality.

- **Organization and continuous educational and identity reflection:** The SMCFyA has been integrated into the educational dynamics of the centers, providing a clear structure for reflection and continuous evaluation, as well as strengthening the identity of Fe y Alegría.
- **Positive impact on the institutional culture of quality:** The implementation of the SMCFyA has fostered the formation of a culture of continuous improvement, which has become a comprehensive part of Fe y Alegría's operations.
- **National impact:** In some countries, the system has had an impact on the public education system, promoting the systematization and socialization of good practices at national level.

Difficulties: Despite its benefits, the SMCFyA has faced some significant difficulties, such as insufficient accompaniment, the perception of redundancy in claims, work overload, the complexity of the system, and integration with other external regulations. Staff turnover and the lack of impact indicators have also been relevant challenges that have affected the effective implementation of the system. In view of the difficulties encountered, possible areas for improvement have been identified:

- **Accompaniment and training:** increase accompaniment and support to management teams, as well as to strengthen training on the SMCFyA. In order to do this, a team dedicated exclusively to the SMCFyA is required to strengthen the focus on the culture of improvement and not just on compliance with procedures. This team needs to be trained to strengthen its capabilities.
- **Simplicity, contextualization and flexibility:** Simplification of the system and its adaptation to the specific context of each center helps make the SMCFyA more understandable and applicable. Certain aspects should be made more flexible to prevent it from becoming a straitjacket.

- **Impact measuring and indicator updating:** It is essential to improve the ability to measure the impact of educational practices implemented under the SMCFyA. This includes updating indicators so that they accurately reflect the results and changes achieved in the centers. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of new topics, such as functional diversity and entrepreneurship, to make the system more relevant and useful.
- **Integration with other external regulations:** There is a debate as to whether integrating the SMCFyA with external standards and systems, such as ISO 9001, should be considered.

4.3 Quality through the Federation's initiatives

The quality of Fe y Alegría's popular education in the Movement, as mentioned above, is achieved through its strategic instrument, the Quality Improvement System, and is contextualized according to the needs and interests of the different Fe y Alegría centers. In this section, we will take a closer look at the Federation's initiatives, which are international action networks of the Movement that focus on specific topics.

In order to respond to the new frontiers of inequity, in 2016, Fe y Alegría International identified different themes from which it could diversify, deepen and contribute to its mission of education and social promotion in the Movement. These initiatives were: Quality, Innovation, Evaluation and Impact Measurement, Inclusive Education, Training for Work, Pedagogical Training, Gender, Youth, Citizenship, Integral Ecology and Pan-Amazonia, Spirituality, Early Childhood Care and Migration. For each of these, proposals and projects were developed and focused on in order to have an expert impact on the different themes.

From the point of view of quality, we can say that each initiative in the Movement has frameworks/declarations that provide foundation, cohesion, and guidelines for making educational and social promotion proposals with greater weight and solidity, as well as training proposals or itineraries::

- Equality and Gender Policy, updated in 2018 by the Gender Initiative. Approved in 2019
- Methodology for Evaluating and Measuring Quality Impact (2020)
- Inclusive Education Framework (2023).
- Fe y Alegría's Training Reference Framework (2023).
- Training guidelines for virtual environments (2023).
- Early Childhood Reference Framework (2024).
- Learning Together to Care for our Common Home Reference Framework for Integral Ecology and Pan-Amazonia (2024).
- Egalitarian Masculinities at Fe y Alegría (2024).
- Methodologies proposed by Youth, Citizenship, Migrations and Gender.
- Guidelines and Orientations for Training for Work (2025).

Similarly, we have indicators that allow us to assess points of change and achievements in the different practices:

- Gender Indicators for each SMCFyA Process (2020).
- Gender Indicators of the Federation's Policy (2022).
- Categories on the emotional state and situations of violence in childhood (2025).
- Training for Work indicators (2025).
- Ecology activities and achievement indicators for each SMCFyA process (2024).
- Inclusive Education Index (under construction).

These documents will be of great value and importance for the new phase of updating the SMCFyA.

Summary of Chapter 4. After pursuing several educational paths since 2005, Fe y Alegría International continues to focus on quality. The Improvement System is effective thanks to the countries' ability to contextualize it. In the coming years, the System will be updated taking into account the accumulated expertise, innovation, and the design of the system beyond the school, considering a "Quality Pedagogy" approach proposed in the 2023 discussion, the results of the mapping on the System's implementation in five countries, and the contributions of indicators that have been developed from the perspective of gender, training for work, and ecology.



By way of closing

Through Popular Education, we believe in the power of educational transformations for individuals and communities when they recognize themselves as historical subjects, where each person is the protagonist of their own learning, knowledge is born from experience and dialogue with others for the building of a fairer world.

As a Movement, we continue to move forward with hope, convinced that educational quality is not measured solely by results, but by how much it humanizes, liberates and connects communities in the reflection of their educational practices. From this perspective, educational quality and innovation make sense when they place people, their contexts, and their struggles at the center of learning, and when they are nourished by the ethical and political commitment of those of us who are convinced that another education and another world are possible.



Fe y Alegría
INTERNACIONAL



Comprehensive,
humanistic and
transcendental

Contextualized
and critical



Equitable



**Quality
Pedagogy.**
New perspective

- ♥ The **quality** of social justice, from a broader perspective than school culture.
- ♥ **The right to lifelong learning** focused on each person's learning processes and pace.

Culture of improvement 1

- Participation and collaboration.
- Evaluation and reflection.
- Planning and action.
- Systematization.
- Communication and exchange of learning.
- Institutional commitment and leadership.

2

Quality

Quality
 Keys to
 Fe y Alegría's
 Transforming
 Popular Education.

- People with abilities, competent, and agents of social transformation.
- Lifelong learning.
- Focus on rights.
- Ethical approach.
- Pedagogical approach.
- Friendly and close accompaniment.



3

Innovation for transformation

- It arises from indignation and ethical dissatisfaction.
- It is a part of the culture of improvement in each process: management, teaching-learning, coexistence and citizenship, and community relations.
- It drives change and creativity.
- Transforms and innovates in and from the pedagogical aspect, beliefs, attitudes and values
- Links with research.



Inclusive



- ♥ Our principles as a starting point.
- ♥ **Scopes:** Educational, social, community, productive, spiritual, ecological and gender.

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Fe y Alegría
INTERNACIONAL

70
years
Educating
hearts