

Challenges for evaluation in upper-secondary education: young people first; and, only then, students

Mexican dossier

Rodolfo Tuirán
Yoloxóchitl Bustamante
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International perspectives

Colombia, Chile
Italia, Peru
Poland, Uruguay

Voices from the INEE

Teresa Bracho
Margarita Zorrilla
Giuliana Mendieta
Mariana Castro
Lizbeth Torres
Adriana Dander
Jorge Hernández
Eduardo Backhoff
Francisco Miranda

Chronicle

Magali Tercero
Pedro Mejía

Contexts and projects

Upper-secondary Subsystems
State Programs of Educational
Evaluation & Improvement

Special supplement:
*Follow-Up Guidelines for State
Programs of Educational Evaluation
& Improvement*

With texts translated into
Oaxaca-coast Mixtec





The logbook

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IN OUR OWN HAND

2 Young People First; and, Only Then, Students

Members of the Board of Governors of the INEE

FROM THE DESK

3 When Pedro went back to high school

THE SPECIAL GUEST

4 Only self-regulation can make young people free

José Bernardo Toro

VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE

7 Upper-Secondary Education as the Foundations for a Life Project

Rodolfo Tuirán

OUR VOICE

9 The disconnect between young people and the school in Latin America

Teresa Bracho González
Francisco Miranda López

13 Learning Evaluation in Higher Secondary Education

Jorge Hernández Uralde
Eduardo Backhoff Escudero

17 Building futures: the agenda that must accompany the New Educational Model at the Upper-Secondary Level

Margarita Zorrilla Fierro

IN THE CLASSROOM

20 Decalogue of Pedagogical Principles Essential for Teaching to Young People

Héctor Morales Corrales

NAUTICAL LETTER

23 State Educational Evaluation & Improvement Programs. Proposals for Upper-Secondary Education

SPECIAL REPORT: UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION

25 Why talk about the educational evaluation of young people?

REPORT

26 Voices and Challenges of the Upper-Secondary Education Subsystems

URBAN CULTURE CHRONICLE

29 14-Year-Old Feminists on Facebook

Magali Tercero

ARTICLE

31 How can we get young people to stay in school?

José Antonio Pérez Islas
Luis Antonio Mata Zúñiga
Leticia Pogliaghi

DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES

WITHOUT A PASSPORT

34 Educational Measuring: Lessons Learned in Chile

Jorge Manzi

37 Student's Reality in Poland, Chile, and Peru

Anne Wojciuk, Juan Bravo Miranda
Lionello Punzo, Jaime Saavedra

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

40 Decisions Regarding Upper-Secondary Education in Mexico: Bustamante Díez, Székely, and Martínez Espinoza

43 Young people first and students second: a viewpoint that is barely taken into account

Ernesto Rodríguez

ROADMAP

46 Between Diversity and Fragmentation: About the Origin and Development of Upper Secondary Education in Mexico

María Adriana Dander Flores

49 Political Strategies Applied to Attend to School Dropouts in Upper-Secondary Education

Giulianna Mendieta Melgar
Mariana Elizabeth Castro

52 What Role Should Upper Secondary Education Play in Skills' Development?

Lizbeth Torres Alvarado

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Young People First; and, Only Then, Students

INEE Governors Board's Advisers



In its Seventh Edition, the *Gazette of the National Educational Evaluation Policy* of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation's (INEE) addresses issues related to Upper-secondary Education and places its focus on young people and their personal project as a fundamental life referent.

Thus, we open this number with an autobiographic letter written by Pedro Mejía, a 45-year-old citizen who went back to school—after several decades—in order to study for his high-school diploma. His text is an example of, and offers a voice to, many people who were obliged to abandon the school and, over time, they return, taking advantage of the offered opportunities to continue studying. The restrictions and advantages reflected in this testimony, show the contrasts that young people face nowadays.

His story is presented together with analyses by specialists from Uruguay, Poland, Peru, Colombia, Chile, Italy, and Mexico; as well as testimonies of students in Mexico and

dreamers in the USA, in the Special Report chronicle on this issue.

Also present in this edition, there are the projects and opinions of Mexican teachers, administrative staff, and public officers, as well as the reflections and proposals of those of us who are part of this Institute and of the National Educational Evaluation System. These points of view aim to strengthen—through these pages—the issue of young people at school.

We assume as our initial premise that the main thing is to recognize that *those students are, first of all, young people* who need quality education which offers them the possibility of becoming able and creative people capable of facing current challenges and, above all, capable of living together with other democratic citizens who respect each other's differences.

Mexico is one of the Latin-American countries facing the biggest challenges in terms of Upper-secondary Education (Spanish acronym: EMS). More than 30 million kids and adolescents are registered for basic mandatory education in the school, 4.9 million studied at the EMS level. Although a good part of them (14.4%) leaves their studies (INEE, 2017).

Also, in 2014, one out of two young Mexicans between 12 and 17 years of age lived in conditions of poverty, one out of ten were in extreme poverty, and 75.6% lacked the conditions needed for guaranteeing one or more of his or her social rights (CONEVAL and UNICEF, 2015).

And although today young Mexicans, in their various contexts and circumstances, enjoy more educational opportunities, and a better access to health services and employment, than previous generations, they still face gaps which hinder their full exercise of rights.

Thus, in the certitude that their reality develops both within and without the classrooms, and that it is paramount to recognize the framework of values, needs, lacks, difficulties, and dreams which are present in their lives, the *Gazette* offers a broad panorama of reflections on the question of youth.

Thus, this edition shows the routes presented by those who have set out to listen to these youths and those who have been re-

sponsible for the design of evaluations, policies, and programs. The questions tackled are: Why students don't like school? What do students have to face in current times? What factors have an influence in their living environment? What moves them? How do they learn? What are their dreams for they adult years? What is the educational system doing wrong? What is the system doing correctly? What issues are not being tackled?

Our aim in these pages is to find, together, some answers to these questions and to point at some paths which will allow us to build a better future together with our youth, for our youth. €

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FROM THE DESK

When Pedro went back to high school

Of the 4.9 million or so young people currently in upper-secondary education, 693 077 drop out every year (INEE, 2017) for the kind of reasons mentioned in this edition of the *Gazette*. In this autobiographical letter, Pedro tells us why somebody would, after several decades, to return to high school.

PEDRO MEJÍA MERINO
INEE Security Officer

Origins

My name is Pedro Mejía Merino. I'm 45 years old and was born on February 20th 1971 in San Lorenzo, in the state of Oaxaca, where I grew up and attended primary school.

San Lorenzo was so poor that I had to go to school barefoot and, since I didn't even have a satchel, carried my books under my arm or on my shoulder. I played baseball and started work at the age of 12 in a town called Santa Rosa de Lima, very close to the sea, where there are several growers of lemons, watermelons, honeydew melons and tomatoes. I recall that I couldn't even lift a crate of lemons onto the truck. In those days, I earned 50 centavos a day, and was paid 6 pesos for 2 weeks' work, of which I spent 1 peso and gave 5 to my parents.

I only had 2 shirts and 1 pair of shorts, which had to last me 6 days, and studied and worked at the same time. During recess, I wanted the same things as my classmates, but just had to sit there with an empty mouth, because I had no money for food unless I worked. I remember that I was really fond of a type of cake called "submarine", and managed to buy one for myself for the first time when I started work. I still remember it to this day.

When I reached fifth grade, I couldn't afford to buy the uniform I needed to be a flag bearer, and when I reached sixth grade, I was the only pupil in my who that couldn't afford the uniform that we had to wear to

pick our diplomas at the official ceremony. My teacher asked me if my godmother, who was sponsoring my graduation, would be 'floating in the air,' because I hadn't been able to pay for a table for her either.

Why I dropped out

I dropped out due to lack of support from my father, who believed that a man's place was in the field and a woman's in the kitchen, and got angry when I went to school, saying that I should do agricultural work to earn a living, since school wouldn't pay for my food. I remember that my mother used to feed me before my father got back from the field, because he would chase us away if he found us eating, and we would go hungry.

I recall that house was roofed with sheets of corrugated cardboard. It was so poor that the walls were just palm leaves stood on end. It was a long time before I could study, and I didn't finish primary school until I was 14. To tell the truth, my dream was to study and make something of myself, but I failed. I remember that I had a godfather who said he would help me, which made me very happy. He was from another town, so I got my documents and went to see him, but he said he couldn't help, using the excuse that the surnames on my birth certificate were different, so I went back to my home town feeling very sad. All I could do was go back to my girlfriend, since there was no way for me to study.

I went back to Santa Rosa de Lima to work in the field, first watering the papaya plants that grew among the lemon trees. The tractors passed by with their harrows, leaving a lot of thorns buried in the ground. Since I had to work barefoot, a lot of the thorns pierced my feet, and I couldn't wear leather sandals because the earth got very boggy.

The change

I remember when Hurricane Paulina passed through Oaxaca in September of 1997. The whole area was flooded and I was left without work and forced to try my luck in Mexico City, where I arrived, with nothing but a cardboard box, at the age of 27, unable to speak more than a few words of Spanish.

It took a lot of effort, but, thank God, I was able to finish my secondary studies with

the help of the Auxiliary Police, and now that I'm enrolled in lower-secondary school, I'm finding it harder because now I have family and work problems. It isn't the same as just concentrating on my schoolwork, but I'm going to make a big effort to finish my studies, because your nothing without education. It's more difficult to learn when you get older and I'm grateful to my teachers for being so patient with me.

My advice

I advise young people who have the chance to study to take advantage of it, because, for me, it's a privilege. We haven't all had—and don't currently have—the opportunity to study. I have four children, three of whom have now finished lower-secondary school, while the youngest, who is 11 years old, is in the sixth year of primary school. I always told them that They'd have my full support if they wanted to study, since I didn't have the same opportunities.

*Pedro, who wants to go to university and study Law in order to defend Mexico's indigenous people, is a security officer at the INEE and a member of a group of adults, of varying ages, who are taking secondary-school classes every Saturday with teachers from the Margarita Maza de Juárez number 10 Technical-Industrial School in Mexico City. The above letter, written in his own hand, unexpectedly arrived at the desk of the *Gazette's* editor, reminding us of the problems that still remain to be solved in our lower-secondary-education system. It is published with the full consent of its writer, who helped to translate it into his native Mixtec language. €

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Only self-regulation can make young people free

“Our education systems don’t have the ability to foster self-regulation. To do that, we need to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-regulation - three things that none of our socializing spaces has the tools or routine practices to foster —says **José Bernardo Toro**, a consultant for the Avina Foundation in Colombia—. These things cannot be achieved by the child himself, but, rather, need the intervention of adults, not only at the education-system level, but also of society in general”.

Youths and children are recent arrivals on our planet, and this is important because, as adults, we usually make judgments, but fail to realize that young people do the same thing. When you arrive in China or Japan without knowing the respective national languages and customs, what you do is to watch, listen and imitate.

In a society, young people’s discourse cannot transcend the cultural patterns of the adults, since the former see and hear, and imitate and interpret, the actions of the latter. Moreover, if we cannot manage to observe and interpret ourselves, neither will we be able to understand what other people do.

Though it may seem obvious, it bears pointing out that young people in more organized environments with better prospects, close to adults who make plans and have everything sorted out -i.e. upper-class youths with money- do the same, just as youths with mid-level incomes try to take advantage of educational, social and cultural opportunities, looking to the future and saying “I’m going to be an engineer, a doctor or a politician”, because they see opportunities they can seize or have the support of their families.

While upper-class youngsters have certainty, and middle-class ones have hope, the problem is that poor youths have no op-

portunities. In their world, there is no hope; everything is immediate and uncertain, with no tomorrow on the horizon, and the societies of which they form part don’t have enough information about their environment to change or ameliorate so as to afford them social and educational opportunities.

Young people in Colombia are, indeed, interested in politics, though they haven’t managed to solve the big problem of how to achieve government and private institutions that reflect their interests and characteristics, an aim actively pursued by all the outraged inhabitants of both the East and the West.

We are not providing opportunities to young people, in the areas of tertiary education, politics or communications, so that they may build a new society, and I believe that’s because we ourselves are not finding opportunities in the aforesaid areas.

For example, in Avina in Chile, we managed to contact two of the leaders of the “Penguins” movement who were fighting for better education. I said to one of them, who was 15 or 16 years old, “Well, what is it that you and your companions want?”, to which she replied “Look, you can’t ask me what kind of education system I want; I’m a girl and, though I can’t tell you which system would be the most appropriate, what I can say is that what we’re currently being offered is of no use at all to us”, which simply bears out my earlier assertion that the only prospects for young people are the ones that adults can provide.

The national purpose: an ethical project

For Bernardo, who has been a consultant to the Ministries of Education of various countries over the years, values arise from routines. If you want to know what values prevail in your home, then look at your domestic routines. If you want to find out what values govern Mexico’s National Institute for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: INEE), then all you need to do is look at its routines.

The main sources of young people’s values are the home, the street, the school, neighborhood organizations, the churches that residents do or don’t attend, the political movements to which they do or don’t belong, and the communications media.

One problem is the lack of coherence. A society is coherent in its values when the aforesaid places where socialization occurs propose things that accord with their respective spheres of activity, but share the same ethical aims.

What happens when these different places clash -e.g. when a child is taught in school that all men are equal, regardless of race, color or religion, but, upon telling his mother that he’s invited his friend, Luis, to play football in the yard, receives the response, “We don’t accept blacks or Indians here”, or when the routines of the home and the school reflect different values- is that he begins to mistrust everybody and get bored with everything, since —and this is a problem for parents and teachers— what he loves most is not wisdom, but consistency. If someone sets himself as a model and is inconsistent, he will not be acknowledged and accepted as a leader.

Our routines are not developed based on ethical coherence. We simply establish a lot of aims and increase the number of rules, but we fail to foster the desired values. We talk about the importance of participation, but don’t allow anybody to talk in class. Teachers advocate respect for women in principle, but have a very unhealthy attitude towards them in practice. The problem is not one of apathy or indifference on the part of young people, but rather that, upon analysis, they find that nothing is consistent.

Only self-regulation brings freedom

Our education systems don’t have the ability to foster self-regulation. To do that, we need to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-regulation - three things that none of our socializing spaces has the tools or routine practices to foster.

Nothing in the school, at work or in the communications media helps young people to develop self-knowledge. Our independence-loving society doesn’t allow people to be independent.

Our societies develop prohibitive laws, being expert at saying how things are not, rather than how they are, what cannot be done and what is punishable, but they are unable to create regulations and behavioral models that enable things to happen. In such societies, children’s behavior depends on

external rules, and this generates dependence, fear and a double morality.

The important thing for self-regulation is that an appropriate model for living be available, that people have the conditions and support that they need in order to decide, in time and with adequate backup, which life plan they wish to formulate.

If your boss told you that, to keep you job, you had to get up and go for a run at 4:00 a.m. every day, rain or come shine and be pose in front of the CCTV camera in reception each time you enter and leave the company, you would think he was a real SOB. But if this wasn't the case, and one day you yourself decided to take a daily run at 4:00 a.m. come rain or come shine, you would feel invigorated and free, because your boss's order was imposed from outside, your own decision came from inside. Only self-regulation makes your free: there's no other way.

If we don't manage to be self-regulated in everything we do each day, we won't manage to be ethical, participative, transparent, loyal or committed either. Achieving this we need to struggle to develop awareness, acknowledge our own past and background, and value our cultural heritage at the family, neighborhood and national levels. We need to understand our society's mistakes so as to rectify them and prevent them from recurring, and also to be aware of our own history in order to appreciate and value those of others – something that we don't do systematically, since we have no clear aspirations as a nation.

The same is true of self-esteem. If a child's family doesn't make use of a wide range of strategies aimed at strengthening emotional ties, then that child will not develop self-esteem or perceive itself as playing an important role, since strong family ties and self-esteem will enable him to fearlessly relate to people he hasn't met before and be participative. These things cannot be achieved by the child himself, but, rather, need the intervention of adults, not only at the education-system level, but also of society in general, which needs to rethink the whole issue of teaching and learning.

Evaluations and the concept of success in tests

While I support the idea of countries paying to take part in the Program for International Stu-

dent Assessment (PISA) for reasons of international strategy, the said Program is of little use to our country's education system *per se*.

Almost nobody knows about the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) or the activities carried out in 13 countries by UNESCO's Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO-OREALC).

Regarding the aforesaid PISA test, we need to ask how we can all improve as a continent. It seems to me that the political and public debate surrounding the said test is a sign that we are dependent and suffer from an inferiority complex, being subject to the requirements imposed on us by European tests. If we are to improve Latin America's education systems, we, the countries of this continent, have to do it together.

When asked what he thought about PISA, the Finnish Minister of Education answered: "We have no opinion, first because we don't carry out evaluations, and second because, since we embarked on the task of creating a more or less decent education system, all we've tried to do is ensure that our system is more or less like that of our neighbor, Sweden. This game of keeping-up-with-the-Joneses has enabled us to discover what best suits our own interests".

In a meeting on education in a theater in Brazil, attended by over 400 people, I asked all the top leaders in education if they had seen the LLECE tests and not a single one of them had seen them. I would wager that the same goes for Mexico, but those of us who work in education face the daily problem of epistemologically defining the said discipline.

When we don't want to know and accept ourselves, we spend our lives imitating others and creating lots of problems. It's like the case of the Swedes and the Latin Americans. If the average height of Swedes is between 1.82 m. and 1.85 m., and that of Latin Americans between 1.72 m. and 1.74 m., then it makes no sense for the latter to aspire to be as tall as the former.

This doesn't mean that the theoretical analyses carried out by the administrators of PISA are not valid, but knowing we are above or below the PISA scores isn't going to solve the big educational problems that exist in Latin America.



Now if the parameters that we have for running the aforesaid tests aren't the same, or if we don't like them, let's talk about it and set other parameters. Since behind the whole benchmark system is a matter of ideals, then why don't we reach an agreement in order to aspire to the said ideal?

Creating suitable conditions

What's the point in teaching your children to wash their hands if there's no soap in your house and no water supply? They will understand what you teach them, but won't

be able to adopt the hand-washing routine. The reason is because we think we can promote change without modifying routines. We want children in a school to behave well, learn to greet and thank people, and ask for things politely, but the teachers there shout at the pupils. People don't live by rules, but by social systems with social criteria and limits that drive behavior.

For example, Colombia is a country where many of the teachers are men. The children in the primary schools there hear their male teachers talking about their female colleagues in an unhealthy, mocking tone, and so we can't ask those children to have respect for women, sex and love, because the predominant routines show just the opposite. The aspirations of children and youths can only be modelled on those of the adults that surround them.

Five recommendations for ministers of education and politicians: routines vs. decrees

1. You need to create a culture based on the tenet that nothing in education changes in less than twenty years; the idea of "long term" is very important
2. Great care should be taken when making educational decisions. We need to combine maximal research and optimal experience so as to create the conditions for things to happen.
3. Every organization is a limited set of protocols that are supposedly organized in order to get a given result. It's very important to ascertain whether the protocols that give rise to school and classroom routines and the institutional protocols of social environments meet the desired aims. It often occurs that meetings in schools catering to the upper class are very well attended, so that people say that poor people are not interested in education. However, this isn't true; what poor people lack most is time, not money. They want to attend school meetings, but doing so is very costly for them. The current structure doesn't work for poor communities. Unfortunately, the government bureaucracy is made for people who get paid for their time. We haven't managed to create schools that take stock of the time limitations that prevail in the surrounding communities. Some teachers do this, but on their own initiative, and nobody

appreciates their efforts. We haven't been able to match institutional routines to community so that the schools and communities, and also parents, pupils and teachers can work in unison.

4. Those who make decisions about government education policy tend to confuse what is important with what looks good. It is relatively easy to improve an education system if we all engage in the right basic routines. The weak areas in Latin American education are reading and writing, but making improvements in these areas isn't attractive and doesn't lend itself to showy announcements or ceremonies launching innovatory programs. The first and second primary-school years should be the most important and essential ones for educators, but, on the contrary, we structure things so that the least experienced teachers are assigned to those years. We also forget another important point – i.e. that most children in impoverished and rural areas have an active vocabulary of only 500 words, while my grandson, or your son, has one of between 3,500 and 4,500 words, a gap that will not be narrowed if the education system is not aware of it.

It's of no use at all to give schools broad-band connectivity or supply each school with a computer. It's as if I were to say: "Go to the University of Shanghai's library; it has every type of book you could imagine". What's the point in my going there if I neither speak or read Chinese?

Hard daily work is needed if children are to develop high levels of proficiency in reading and writing, not to mention mathematics, but these efforts will not be newsworthy or get politicians votes.

Latin America's education systems have no problems when it comes to financing, structure or usage. While the teachers are not paid the best-paid people in their country, neither are they the worst-paid ones, since their earnings are generally above average. Parents want to play an active role, everybody wants change, but we don't want to make a persistent daily effort so as to achieve it.

5. The more self-knowledge a society has and the more it is aware of its cumulus of traditions, habits and abilities, the more able it will be to decide what to teach to

the next generation, for the curriculum is the mixture of knowledge, traditions, myths and rituals that we believe that the coming generation should. However, this depends on how well the society understands itself. Discussions about the curriculum should be in terms of knowledge, rather than subject content. €

Interview: Laura Athié



You can find out more about the Avina Foundation at: www.avina.net



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* **José Bernardo Toro**, who has a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy and a Master's Degree in Research and Educational Technology, Mathematics and Physics, has been a consultant to UNICEF, the World Bank, The Interamerican Development Bank for Latin America, and the ministries of education and/or communications of Colombia, Brazil and Mexico. Having been president of the *Viva La Ciudadanía* corporation, the Columbian Center for Corporate Responsibility and the Colombian Confederation of Non-Governmental Organizations, coordinator of the Citizens' Committee for the Oversight of the Investment-for peace Fund of the Office of the President of Columbia, and a member of the International Board of the Ethos Institute of Brazil, he is currently a consultant to the president of the Avina Foundation.

VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE

Upper-Secondary Education as the Foundations for a Life Project

In an interview, **Rodolfo Tuirán**, Undersecretary of Upper-Secondary Education, presents an overview of this sector in the context of the New Educational Model in place by the Ministry of Public Education this 2017: Progress, challenges, contributions, a definition of success, and the relevance of evaluation.

Progress and Challenges of the EMS

Progress in Upper-Secondary Education (Spanish acronym: EMS) include improvements in coverage, equality, and quality. However, challenges show there is still a long road ahead in order to achieve a high-quality higher secondary education that prepares young people to face social and economic changes.

Coverage

First of all, educational opportunities have been greatly expanded. Between 2012 and 2016, enrollment increased from 4 400 000 to 5 500 000 (2016). This is a significant increase in the coverage rate, from 65.9% to 82%. The goal is to reach 85% coverage by the end of the current federal administration. This has been possible, in part, by increasing the number of schools, but also by the creation of at-distance and blended-learning modalities, such as higher tele-secondary education, online education, and open education.

Equality

We have also grown in terms of equality. More and more disadvantaged young people have access to higher secondary education. Today, a young person who is part of the first four deciles of income in Mexico has a 72% chance of accessing the EMS; four years ago, it was only 61%.

We have sustained an increase in coverage with more equality, using mechanisms such as scholarships; expanding the offer and access opportunities is only useful as long as youngsters can take advantage of them.

Quality

In 2012, only 4.2% of the total enrollment in EMS was registered within the National High School System (Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato), which is a quality standard. Today, that percentage has grown up to 41.7%. We aim to have at least 50% of the enrollment ascribed to this standard by the end of this federal administration. We recognize, however, that quality does not depend on the alignment of processes and supplies alone, but on the results of learning and school performance as well.

Education quality depends on many factors, including the student and his or her accumulated intellectual capital. Such capital is built in many different ways, but it is a fact that youngsters reach the EMS with an enormous deficit in cognitive and socio-emotional skills. In addition to providing new knowledge and the development of skills, it is also the school's task to support them so they can overcome accumulated lags.

Faced with this, the first step is to have suitable teachers, who have the necessary skills and vocation.

Research shows that the sum of the intellectual capital of young people, together with the contribution of teachers, can explain much of the progress in student learning. There are other factors, such as the leadership of principals in putting school resources to work on behalf of youngsters, as well as the responsible involvement of parents in supporting the teaching-learning process.

School Dropout

We know that one of the main obstacles in EMS is school dropout, which today is 12.6%, and in 2012 was 15%. This decrease is equivalent to that achieved in the previous 22 years.

Thus, we recognize that a good share of factors determining school dropout exist in the school itself, and that it is its responsi-



bility to address these factors through the leadership of the principals, teacher training, scholarship grants, and early warning mechanisms in place.

In previous decades, it was considered that dropping out of school had its main cause in economic factors: young people stopped studying in order to work and contribute to family support, either in domestic or extra-domestic tasks.

Today, we know that school dropout also has to do with such things as student motivation, the teaching method used, lack of relevance, and a sense of school-belonging, amongst others. What have we done about it? First of all, we formed a movement against dropping out. Each year, we train 10 000 principals and give them a toolbox for teachers, so they know how to deal with this issue. Furthermore, we give the school tools to identify young people that might be at risk of dropping out.

We also introduced instruments of economic support, such as scholarships, to prevent school dropout. *Construye T* (“Build yourself”) is another program in which, through the development of 18 socio-emotional skills, young people acquire the possibility of knowing and managing their emotions, as well as building more assertive social relationships to face the risks of their age, such as alcohol, drugs, and violence, to name but a few.

Adequate and Meaningful Learning

We have to reduce the proportion of young people in the levels of achievement I and II of the National Plan for Learning Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA). This includes addressing the gaps in learning, which favor men, especially in Mathematics, while reflecting the care we give to both male and female instruction, as early as the basic level. We also need to reduce the gap against youngsters living in vulnerable situations.

Contexts

Young people face many problems in their environments. According to the surveys of the Under-Secretariat of Upper-Secondary Education, 70% report to have suffered some kind of violence in school in the last year, and half of them mentioned repeated violence (which is the closest thing to the concept of bullying). Furthermore, 14% have experimented with some kind of illicit drug, almost 50% consumes alcohol, and 22% have

unprotected sex, which results in a high number of pregnancies. All of these situations disrupt their chance to complete their studies and affect their life trajectory.

It is important to mention here that the school has traditionally been seen as an entity responsible for the development of cognitive abilities in youngsters; however, the development of social-emotional abilities is in fact relevant, contributing to school performance and providing tools to better deal with contextual factors.

A young person who knows himself or herself better, has the ability to build empathic relationships with others, knows how to make decisions, perseveres, is a team player, and knows how to manage his emotions. He or she is a much better equipped person to face the challenges of life. School, then, has to be responsible for providing young people with these socio-emotional tools, while at the same time fostering the development of adequate and sufficient cognitive skills for the progress of their school trajectory.

Learning-Labor Market Relationship

There is a breach in terms of high and low employability rates, or high, medium, and low income. In this sense, we have established a variety of mechanisms to connect schools and companies, in order to influence the curriculum and learning contents. This will help young people to develop skills that enable them to meet the requirements of their first jobs.

In some surveys, only 40% of students mentioned that the skills they learned in school were useful to them in their first job. This reveals the low relevance of the EMS.

Contributions of the New Educational Model

The new educational model seeks to keep young people at school. In order to do so, it moves away from memory-based knowledge, while at the same time embracing the development of competence—the combination of knowledge and values—as the key to solve the events of life. The new model is thus designed to allow young people to be protagonists in their own development, their knowledge, and their own transformation.

Teachers play an important role in the process of abandoning memory-based models. They cannot continue to be master lecturers; they must develop an interaction with the students.

The model also recognizes the importance of introducing some curricular autonomy. There has to be a common curriculum that provides fundamental learning principles, while being flexible enough to introduce, at the same time, regional and local elements to make it more relevant and significant.

I must mention that, because of its nature, the EMS already possesses such curricular autonomy. Allow me to elaborate: The basic education system has 32 state chapters, whereas in the EMS there are 33 subsystems of higher secondary education with 150 organizational and institutional chapters. These subsystems are based on the specific expansion needs of each state and at a national scale: colleges of scientific studies, marine schools, tele-secondary education, and centers of higher-secondary distance education, amongst others. The same was true for the centers of the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the National Polytechnic Institute.

These are some of the elements that have been integrated to the new educational model that, in essence, gives the school a central role, and leaves bureaucracy only as a tool to accomplish its goals. Such a school would respect and enrich the social and linguistic diversity of its contexts, with a much more complex governance framework.

In summary, there are five key elements that compose the new syllabus model: the school at the center, the curriculum dimension, teacher education and training, the new governance, and lastly, fairness and inclusion.

Visions of Success in the EMS

If we were to put high standards on ourselves, we would measure success through the access of young people to education, the fairness of the process, educational quality, and the results of appropriate and relevant learning.

From the system’s perspective, success would be measured through the access to high quality education, as established by Constitutional decree, which values the development of cognitive and social-emotional skills and ensures that young people have a good physical, social, emotional, and cultural development.

From the people’s standpoint, success is a consequence of the graduation profile; by the time youngsters’ graduate from Upper-

Secondary Education, they are expected to have acquired professional knowledge, but also 11 generic skills, 54 basic disciplinary skills, and 60 extended disciplinary skills. Should the youngster not activate this set of skills, however, they will be useless to him or her while facing a world in constant change. In this way, the quality and relevance of education are measured, to a large extent, by the success associated to each personal project.

If the young person's project is to continue to higher education, the set of skills should be adequate and sufficient to thrive in higher secondary education; If his or her desire is to enter the labor market, these skills should enable him or her to find a respectable, satisfying job that provides the necessary income. This scenario brings us close to a fulfilling and comprehensive development of their own life project.

Success of young people cannot be measured by one indicator alone, but from the outcome of adequate learning, developed skills, and securing a respectable and satisfying job. It is a set of indicators that provide the means to measure satisfaction, together with the progress of their own life projects and the approaching possibility of being happy. Here is where education can make significant contributions.

The Significance of Evaluation

In this broad panorama, present and future, of the *ESM*, it is necessary to have the means to know if the school is fulfilling its objectives, to better know the realities in which young people thrive, and to evaluate the performance of people and institutions involved in education. Therefore, the actions taken by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation of (Spanish acronym: *INEE*), as well as those by the Secretariat of Public Education, are paramount.

In the case of the *INEE*, since there is much to be measured and evaluated, the evaluation exercises and the release of guidelines will significantly help to improve the *EMS*. €

Interview:
Lizbeth Torres Alvarado

VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE OUR VOICE

The disconnect between young people and the school in Latin America

Young people's growing lack of interest in school has given rise to discussion about the extent to which certain features of our schools have led to increased dropout rates among young people. According to the authors of this article, "Instead of asking why students drop out of school, we are now beginning to ask which aspects of –or shortfalls in– our schools lead students to and disconnect from them and wish to drop out".

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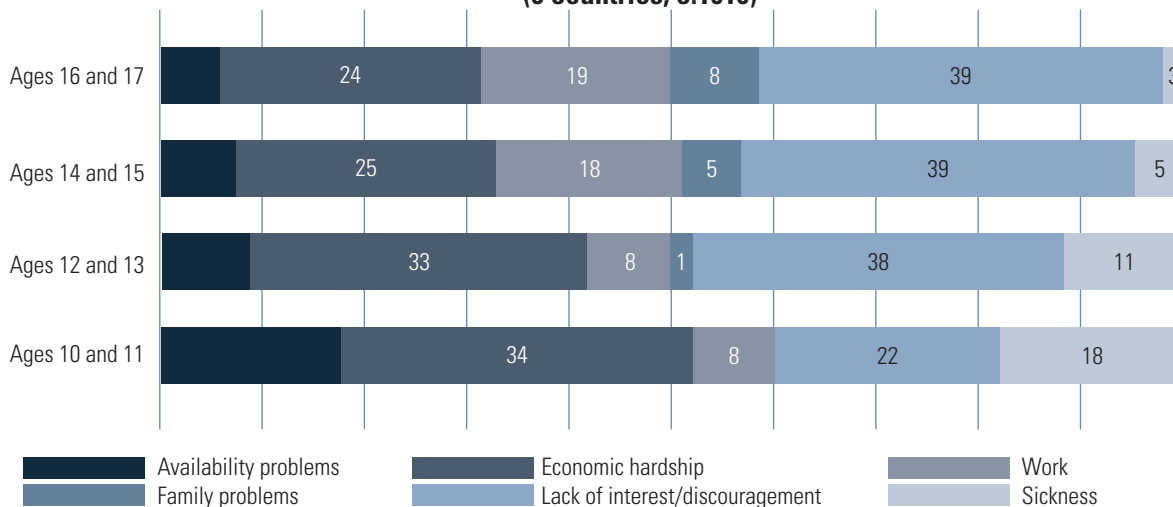
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Throughout Latin America in general, and in Mexico in particular, enormous numbers of young people enter Upper-secondary education (*USE*). While, just over a decade ago barely one third of the population old enough to enrol in upper-secondary education actually did so, nowadays three quarters of the said population enter upper-secondary education. While these bear witness to substantial growth in the number of enrolments, it should be stressed that we still need to provide upper-secondary education to one third of the population between 15 and 17 years old in our region.

The effect of such massive growth in *USE* has been to cause our institutions to change the rules of the schooling game and give rise not only to different practices and teacher-student relationships in our schools, but different links between



Graph 1. Factors associated with dropout per age group, in Latin America (6 countries, c.1010)



Source : SITEAL, based on a survey of homes in each country.

the said schools and the environments in which they function. In short, the system has become more complicated and, as a result, there are both high enrolment rates and serious levels of failure, dropout, enrolment of students in the wrong age bracket, and educational lag.

Given the above, it is clear that we are undergoing a big change in the 'schooling experience of youngsters who enrol in USE, characterized by subjectification and the convergence of different logics on the one hand and, on the other hand, the types of problems that tend to arise in an environment marked by a disconnect and clash between the culture of the school and the culture of the young people who attend it.

Social risk and juvenile identity

We cannot ignore the fact that young people entering school face certain social threats to their physical and psychological integrity that make it harder for them to learn and diminish their chances of receiving a decent, adequate, high-quality education.

Just being young per se implies the multiple risks of being in an age group whose members are facing the aggravated challenges implicit in maturing both psychologically and socially in a society marked by high

levels of inequality that affect their wellbeing and possibilities of development.

Added to the above are questions of young people's identity and culture – i.e. components such as tastes, preferences, use of time, etc. that are different from those of adults. Young people have manifold forms of cultural, ideological and political expression, along with different expectations regarding their future, different body images, a more hedonistic viewpoint, a different approach to sexuality and alternative ways of socializing than those that prevail in institutionalized cultures such as that of the school, which tends to reject them.

In general terms, the phenomena described above tend to conflict with the institutional characteristics of schools, resulting in problems such as expulsion, dropout, academic failure, unease in both students and teachers, conflict, disorder, violence, inability to fit in and, above all, a feeling, in many young people, that school is meaningless. Educational sociologists tell us that USE institutions do not benefit everybody. To paraphrase Francois Dubet and Danilo Martuccelli, besides being based on different logics, the educational experience that occurs in schools can be seen as a one of socialization

and training for citizenship by some and as one that constitutes an obstacle for others (Dubet and Martuccelli, 1998).

Lack of interest in school

Based on the information gathered by surveys of homes in six Latin American countries (See Graph 1), the report entitled *Why young people leave school*, issued by the Information System on Educational Trends in Latin America (Spanish acronym: SITEAL), asserts that "At the start of adolescence reasons why young people leave school change. Economic hardship, sickness and problems of availability cease to play a central part, while lack of interest in learning, or discouragement, play an ever bigger role – indeed, the main one" (SITEAL, 2013).

The significant increase in young people's lack of interest in school has been documented in various Mexican reports – from the seminal report on the results of the 2000 National Survey of Young People¹ to the recent report pertaining the National Survey of Dropouts in Upper-secondary Education² and the report pertaining to the most recent nationwide censuses (Bracho and Miranda, 2012).

The aforesaid trend has awoken people's interest in carrying out research into

the nature and meaning in this disconnect between young people and school and has given rise to discussion about which aspects of the school lead to dropout rates and poor academic results – i.e. an approach that emphasizes inquiry into the factors that lead young people to become disaffected and drop out, rather than focusing on the reasons they give for doing so.

Currently, rather than lack of access to education or dropout, the biggest concern is about those who remain in school but fail to learn what they are expected to learn or barely manage to do so, falling far short of society's needs and expectations and of the targets set in the economic-development models for Latin America.

Among the most important policies aimed at tackling dropout, low terminal efficiency and educational shortfalls in USE in Latin America have been those establishing scholarship-award programs for students, based on the assumption that the said scholarships fulfil a double purpose, both by facilitating access to education and also by preventing dropout. Yet, it is still hard to ensure that young people remain in school without lagging behind and learn what they need to learn.

The study of the “*Prepa Si*” (“Yes To Senior-High School”) program in Mexico City (which provides economic incentives to all USE students regardless of family income) observes that, notwithstanding the extraordinary financial and administrative challenges inherent in providing the said scholarships, the latter tend to benefit students who are better off, while failing to ameliorate the social and educational problems faced by poorer students (Miranda and Islas, 2016). Furthermore, the data indicate that the correlation between scholarships and continued attendance at school varies according to social level, with poorer people being more likely to have problems vis-à-vis the school.³

Institutional disembedding and disconnects with the school

Given the available empirical evidence, regarding both coverage and internal efficiency and also the quality of USE results, we can affirm that we are not only facing a problem of insufficient supply of –or demand for– education, but also confronting an even bigger problem of “secular disembedding”, reflected in the chasm that exists between schools and

teachers on the one hand and young people on the other hand, that calls into question the traditional rhythms and capacity of the people and institutions involved – i.e. we have XVIII-century schools, XIX-century teachers and XXI-century students, added to which our schools and the expectations of our teachers and students seem to approximate more closely to an “elementary- education” model than to a model that poses greater challenges to young people between 15 and 18 years old with regard to intellectual and professional development.

What we need is not euphemism and rhetoric, but a transformation of education, which should not only concern itself not only with universal schooling, but also address more contradictory, disperse and socially differentiated issues, as well as taking stock of the diversity that characterizes our young people, and all of this in the context of an information- and knowledge-based society which, whether wishing to do so, “un-schools” our young people by its very nature and permeates their brains, consciences and emotions with other social codes which, while faster and more complex, trivialize educators and teaching materials and render them “sub-professional”.

Those who experience teaching on a day-to-day basis have pointed that low student-performance levels and high dropout rates are associated on the one hand with pupils' frustration and loss of confidence resulting from recurrent failure, and on the other hand with the lack of mechanisms for participation in the classroom and the school in general, which discourages and constrains them from interacting in order to solve learning problems (Brown, undated).

Recent work analyzing the education of young people from a sociocultural point of view (Miranda, 2012) has stressed the growing gap, in terms of expectations, interests and needs, between the student and education-system cultures. Where this tension is not resolved, the gap cannot be closed and the student drops out of school – i.e. if the student doesn't develop a feeling of belonging, the school becomes meaningless for him/her.

While this tension manifests itself in Mexico, Latin American educational research has recorded and analyzed similar biographical accounts by young people regarding their relationship with upper-secondary education whose basic features concur with those of the aforesaid ones.

These are cases where, for various reasons, the reality and expectations of the school clash with those of the students, who feel that their teachers are too demanding, perceive that they are not learning anything useful, and get bored or fail to develop any sense of belonging to the school community. While this situation is more evident in poorer children, it is also increasingly manifesting itself in the imaginary and feelings of middle- and upper-class youths in Latin America, being a generalized problem faced by Latin American governments, rather than one limited to the poorer classes.

Though young people have a positive view of schools, deeming them to be important forums where they can meet and socialize with their peers, many of them believe that school rules are not clear and, at times, instead of helping them to forge a relationship with the institution, are merely punitive. Schools want students to be obedient, participate, study, show dedication, and respect both teachers and their classmates, but many students do not do these things because they have grown up in sociocultural contexts where the aforesaid rules and values do not necessarily prevail. From their point of view, there are too many school rules and the latter are constraining and unclear. They see the school as an authoritarian, hierarchical institution, rather than as a place for democratic participation and coexistence.

Young people reject schools because, in them, they are not asked for their opinion about the way the said institutions function or about classroom dynamics, but merely expected to obey rules that are sometimes unclear, without being allowed to really participate and express their opinions, and much less their families. This situation generates a feeling of fatigue in students and renders their day-to-day efforts meaningless.

Young people feel that the school does not include topics that interest them in either the formal or informal curriculum, and that, when there, they cannot chat or clarify their doubts in a welcoming environment where they can receive guidance, being exposed to moralistic diatribes by adults, without shared codes or symbols, in a context far removed from their personal experiences, out-of-school activities, everyday language or practices. Their accounts reveal that they would like to bridge the gap that exists between the daily school dynamic (i.e. the school culture) and their

own experiences (i.e. the youth culture) outside the school.

Furthermore, the culture of the school and the results achieved there are questioned by students from different social classes, albeit with varying emphasis:

Middle- and upper-class students criticize antiquated teaching styles that are far removed from practical daily experience, as well as some parts of the curriculum and authoritarian teaching practices, while lower-class students state that their schools lack richness and say that the curriculum contents are irrelevant, asserting that the demands placed on them there perpetuate social marginalization and discrimination, with little attention being paid to their progress. They feel that the school fails to foster equality or inclusiveness (Dussel, Brito and Núñez, 2007).

The young people who drop out are precisely the ones who were unable to develop even a minimal feeling of community or identification with the school, and hence they harshly criticize the latter's failure to make them feel as if they belong there. Some of them refer to the lack of any "strong links" with the school such as might make them want to stay there, asserting that this defect renders the teaching that goes on there meaningless.

Other types of indiscipline also arise in schools from the clash between the latter's ethos and the search for identity and resistance to the school culture of young people who seek to be accepted by their companions, draw the latter's attention, and stand out due either to their attractiveness, "their strength, their bravery or their importance". Hence, bad language, provocative clothing or gestures, eroticized relationships and other subversive behaviors such as drinking, quarrelling, merciless mockery and vandalism constitute some of the expressions of young people to which the school usually responds in an authoritarian, controlling manner, rather than in a constructive one based on the general principles of conviviality.

The accounts of many young people reveal an important change of perception of the school, since their priority is no longer social mobility, but, rather, the ability to find ways of resisting in a world that they perceive as increasingly hostile. They perceive that they will neither manage to enter higher education nor find decent employment in a truly open job market, finding the available

training to be of a devalued kind that leaves them wondering how they will face the current uncertain world.

The most poignant complaints expressed by young people are about the lack of close relationships with their teachers, rules that limit them and inappropriate punishments. While they do not generally refer in detail to their teachers' performance, they do distinguish between "good" teachers and "bad" teachers, considering that teacher performance affects their learning and their school results. Our young people consider that their teachers are not always well trained, or that they are often too insensitive to understand their pupils' reality, and even less able to teach in a way that stresses assertiveness, conscientiousness, respect. Students have different learning rhythms and interests, as well as being naturally critical of adults and finding it difficult to describe the problems they are facing.

Their strongest criticism concerns their relationships with their teachers, whom they find distant, unfriendly, insensitive and locked in their roles. They want better teacher-student relationships, since it would seem that their communication with their teachers is not always as good as it might be.

Might this be due to the teachers' hiring conditions and crushing workloads, or to the lack of fact that schools are not designed in such a way that teachers can provide emotional support to students who are learning to be free, responsible citizens? How many of the problems mentioned above can be addressed via educational policy? How can we design schools that foster empathy with these young people who will soon be the pillars of our society?

Conclusions

Given the acknowledged disconnect between the school and young people that currently exists, we need to concentrate on designing various mechanisms aimed at improving relationships between teachers and students, and, at the same time, providing ways to bring the former and the latter closer to each other, and, of course, to do this we need to redesign and resignify our schools.

In our view, we need to forge new educational policies contemplating scholarships and remedial tutoring programs, added to which we need to create new criteria in our schools regarding the need for dialogue and inclusiveness.

At this point, we can mention the following preliminary points that such these new policies need to address. We need to:

- **Include youth cultures in the school**
Dynamic – i.e. adopt an educational strategy whereby schools take stock of young people's realities and acknowledge and address the existence of an autonomous youth culture which comprises generational preoccupations, languages, models and behavioural styles that entail conflict and risk.
- **Make our curriculums more relevant**, since, if young people consider what they are learning to be useful and relevant to their daily lives, they will derive more satisfaction from their studies and find them more meaningful.
- **Adopt a participative methodology**, which should stress the self-management of time and autonomy via freely chosen group activities – i.e. democratic participation and conviviality should be favored, since assign a high value to collaboration and social organization and their daily lives feature a great deal of sharing and group participation.
- **Foment more academic self-esteem in students**, since they will perceive their relationship with their teachers to be better to the extent that their intellectual capacity and ability to learn are appreciated by both the latter and themselves.
- Strengthen the sense of belonging, since a young person who feels that s/he has a good relationship with his/her school will identify with the latter and feel proud of it. €

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VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE

OUR VOICE

Learning Evaluation in Upper-Secondary Education

Given that “social changes force educational systems to transform in order to anticipate the scenarios future citizens will face,” explain the authors, the implementation of the New Educational Model is “an opportunity to take as a base the results of PLANEA EMS in 2017” and compare them in twelve years in order to know the impact of its implementation.

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Evaluation is a substantive attribute of all human activity. We constantly evaluate ourselves to know if we are on the right track, if we are getting off track, if we approach our goals or if we must change the route to reach them.

The educational evaluation responds to this same logic. Teachers evaluate their students to know the extent to which they acquire the expected learning, how well the curriculum objectives are met and what they should modify, as well as which students show a lag that prevents group progress.

Similarly, national education systems must have mechanisms that allow them to know the degree to which educational goals are achieved, which populations show the biggest educational lags, which components of the system require greater attention, which conditions favor the attainment of the educational goals, and what aspects must be reformed to achieve a high-quality educational system.

Thus, since evaluation is a central and indispensable component of any educational process, dating back to the middle of the last century there has grown —among specialists and decision-makers— the conviction of using the evaluations of the components of the National Educational System to provide information on the state of the art of education. This is done with the goal of contributing to informed decision-making for educational improvement, and to improve accountability to society concerning educational quality.

In the last two decades, this interest has produced a huge advance in the theoretical conception, the methodology, the development, and the administration of evaluation instruments on a large scale.

For this reason, the creation of national institutions responsible for assessing the quality of education through a variety of standardized indicators and tests of educational achievement is increasingly frequent. It is also more common for nations to want to know the results of their education systems from a comparative perspective, compared to those achieved by other countries with diverse economies, cultures, and socio-political organization.

This has resulted in increased participation of nations in studies such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), led by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), all coordinated by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), As well as the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning in Upper-Secondary Education

In order to fulfill its attributions, as set forth in article 27 of its Law and in Article 29 of the General Law on Education, the National Institute for Educational Evalua-

Miranda, F. (2013). “Los jóvenes contra la escuela. Un desafío para pensar las voces y tiempos para América Latina”. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Comparada*, Year 3, No. 3, 2012, pp.71-84

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1 Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud 2000, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, Centro de Investigación y Estudios sobre Juventud. Available at: www.imjuventud.gob.mx

2 Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación del Tipo Medio Superior A.C., Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior, Secretaría de Educación Pública. Available at: http://www.sems.gob.mx/en_mx/sems/encuesta_nacional_descercion_ems

3 For higher-risk levels, in both socio-economic and academic terms, scholarships don’t seem to prevent dropout, while they encourage lower-risk youths with family support, reasonably stable socio-economic conditions to remain in school, though they do not play a key role in preventing dropout. Finally, medium-risk youths -i.e. one living in unstable economic, family and individual conditions, scholarships can tip the scales against dropout so long as the other associated factors remain within the risk threshold and do not reach extreme levels.



tion (Spanish acronym: INEE) developed, among other strategies, the National Plan for Learning Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA).

PLANEA was designed with the purpose of periodically knowing the extent to which students of mandatory education acquire the essential knowledge and skills set out in the plans and curricula of basic education (Spanish acronym: EB) and upper-secondary education (EMS). This plan seeks to provide information on the fulfillment of the learning objectives to the national and state educational authorities—as well as society in general—for monitoring, planning, programming, and managing the educational system.

Starting in 2017, the test PLANEA Upper-Secondary Education (PLANEA EMS) is designed by INEE—formerly by the Secretariat of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP)—and applied to a representative sample of students who complete the last grade in the higher secondary education level subsystems. Through a matrix¹ design, PLANEA EMS evaluates key learning in the fields of Language and Communication, and Mathematics. The test is composed by six blocks of questions that have similar characteristics and contents. Each student answers two of them, with 25 questions for each training field.

In parallel, SEP applies a simplified version of these two tests to a sample of students in all EMS school centers, in order to provide each school with information about the level of learning their students achieve and the factors that may impact on their educational achievement.

Design and Elaboration of the Test

The design and construction of PLANEA EMS responds to a systematic methodology that attends to the careful delimitation of the contents of the instrument and the technical and psychometric characteristics of its questions. The preparation of the tests that will be applied for the first time in 2017 was made jointly with different collegiate instances as follows:

Design Committee

Made up by professors of the subsystems and experts in didactics of different institutions, who elaborated the tables of contents and indicators of the key learnings to be evaluated.

Specifications Committee

It grounded and operationally defined the learning indicators from the academic, theoretical, and teaching practice points of view. With this, it delimited the substantive aspects that had to be observed when elaborating the questions associated to each indicator.

Questions Elaboration Committee

Developed the questions based on the specifications elaborated for each learning indicator included in the table of contents.

Committee on Validity and Biases

It carried out the conceptual, cultural, and linguistic review of the questions to avoid inadequate ones because of mistaken measurement or biases that could affect the performance of students due to elements that do not relate to his or her mastery of the key learning.

Committee of Achievement Levels and Cut-Off Points

After applying the test, it will define achievement levels and score ranges to calculate the percentage of students who achieve mastery of the key learnings, as indicated in each level.

So far, 200 teachers and specialists from the 32 federative entities assigned to different subsystems of the upper middle level (see table 1) and other institutions have participated in the process of designing and preparing the test.

Structure of the Test

PLANEA EMS evaluates the performance of students in the last grade of this educational level, encompassing two areas of competence: Language and Communication, and Mathematics

The **Language and Communication** test looks into students' communicative skills in terms of text production and comprehension (see table 2). At the moment, the production of texts is not verified as part of the test, but skills and knowledges related to this skill are explored.

The **Mathematics** test examines the mastery of mathematical learning and the ability to use it and transform it into tools that allow students to interpret, understand, analyze, and solve different problems in their environment and other disciplinary fields (see table 3).

Table 1. Subsystems of Upper-Secondary Education and Institutions Represented in the Academic Committees

Dirección General de Bachillerato	Colegio de Bachilleres Tabasco (Bachillerato intercultural)
Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Industrial	Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica estatal
Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Agropecuaria	Telebachillerato Comunitario
Dirección General de Centros de Formación para el Trabajo	Instituto de Educación Media Superior
Dirección General de Educación en Ciencia y Tecnología del Mar	Bachillerato del Estado de México, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México
Colegio de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos	Escuela Nacional Preparatoria de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)
Colegio de Bachilleres Ciudad de México	Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades, UNAM
Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica	Consejo Académico del Bachillerato, UNAM
	Universidad Pedagógica Nacional
	Sociedad Matemática Mexicana

Source: Self-elaborated

Table 2. PLANEA EMS Topics for Language and Communication

1. Management and building of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normative use of language Discursive modes Diversity and selection of information sources (as a tool) Language functions Analysis of characteristics of academic papers Abstract, paraphrases, commentary, notes taking Strategies for reading comprehension Analysis of ideological presuppositions in texts Analysis of ethical values in literature and art works Academic paper project Analysis of media and informative genres
2. Argumentative Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characteristics of argumentative texts Argumentative written text with topics on diversity Structure of argumentative texts Analysis of literary and argumentative texts Journalistic genres Debate, panel, and dissertation Critic review Essay Textual operations
3. Expositive Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characteristics of expositive text Purposes of the argumentative, narrative, expositive, descriptive, and dialogic text Structure of expositive texts Analysis of expositive texts on topics related to social issues Strategies of reading comprehension for expositive texts, scientific articles, and journalistic notes
4. Literary text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative text in the first and third persons (biography and journal) Analysis of entertainment works Analysis of literary texts Evaluation of literary informative texts, literary texts, and mass media texts

Source: self-elaborated.

Table 3. Mathematics PLANEA EMS Topics

1. Numerical Sense and Algebraic Thought	Equations Fractions Operations' hierarchy Algebraic language Greatest common divisor Minimum multiple common	Real numbers Polynomials Percentages Reasons and proportions Reduction of similar terms Systems of linear equations
2. Changes and Relations	Distance between two points Functions Proportionality Straight lines and their transformations	Conic sections Successions Parameter variants
3. Form, Space and Measurement	Angles Similarity Pythagoras theorem	4. Information management Information management Dispersion measures Central tendency measures Probability

Source: Self-elaborated.

Social-Emotional Skills and Context Questionnaires

Social-emotional learning is oriented to the social, value, and emotional formation of students (Rosen et al, 2010). These skills are critical in decision-making and to solve personal and interpersonal problems. In addition, they are fundamental for the development and welfare of individuals. PLANEA progresses gradually in different aspects of this area of the formation of students.

For this reason, the application of PLANEA EMS includes scales of social-emotional skills on four attributes: persistence, empathy, stress management, and decision making. By its nature, information about social-emotional abilities makes sense in its own right, regardless of the linkage it has with other learnings.

Contextual questionnaires are also applied to principals and students to know their personal, family, and scholar conditions, since it is within those that the teaching-learning process takes place. This information is useful to consider aspects that may influence the educational achievement of students, and to provide contextualized results.

Relevance of Evaluation of Learning Outcomes in EMS

As it has been seen, since 2014 Mexico has a National Learning Evaluation Plan that allows it to monitor the educational progress of students at all levels of mandatory

education, which recently included the EMS. As most specialists state, evaluation only makes sense if it helps to improve education. Therefore, INEE's motto is "Evaluate to Improve." In fact, the very essence of education is to bring about changes that make children and young people into adults capable of coping with the many challenges of life in an increasingly complex, competitive, and globalized society. Undoubtedly, the current pace of social change we experience requires the education systems to transform quickly in order to anticipate the scenarios that future citizens will face once their formal education is completed.

Thus, it is not possible to dissociate evaluation and the changes the educational systems experience. For example, the Mexican educational system is obliged, by law, to develop new modes of action that—taking into account diversity—provide quality education, from preschool to EMS, for all children and youth in the country, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Schools must act accordingly and adapt the organization, curriculum, and functioning to the changing circumstances in which they operate, which clearly calls for criteria of greater flexibility and autonomy in the decision-making of scholar communities.

In these conditions, the EMS evaluation conducted by INEE should focus on providing relevant and timely information that will enable federal and state educational authorities

to know how far students are achieving the learning goals set for compulsory education, which will allow them to successfully enter into society by continuing into their university studies or joining a productive activity.

Likewise, the evaluation should provide information on the learning achievement gaps between student groups and the relationship between such achievement and the variables in terms of the school, family, and social contexts in which the student develops.

At the same time, INEE, together with SEP, should report—in a timely and contextualized manner—to school authorities, teachers, and educational communities the extent to which students who complete primary, secondary, and EMS degrees dominate key learnings. This information should help the school, in general, and teachers' groups, in particular, to reflect on the level of learning their students achieve and the improvements needed to increase the effectiveness of their teaching practices.

However, for the above to occur, it is not enough for INEE to generate appropriate information. Using the evaluation's results to change education is a pending subject in which Mexico must work intensively, so that it does not become a "words without meaning," as it has been in the past.

The implementation of the New Mexican Educational Model represents an opportunity to take the results from PLANEA EMS, 2017, as a basis and to contrast them

twelve years later in order to know the impact of its implementation. €

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Know more about:

Plan Nacional para la Evaluación de los Aprendizajes: <http://www.inee.edu.mx/index.php/planea>



International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA): <http://www.iea.nl/about-us>



Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (LLECE): <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/santiago/terce/latin-american-laboratory-for-assessment-of-the-quality-of-education-llece/>

- 1 The matrix design is used to evaluate a large number of curricular contents. Each student answers only a part of the test and, among all, they respond the complete evaluation.



VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE OUR VOICE

Building futures: the agenda that must accompany the New Educational Model at the Upper-Secondary Level

“We who are part of Mexico’s educational Community need to reflect profoundly on the meanign and range of educational aims, teaching-learning contants and the endowing of student learning processes with new meaning”, says the author of this article, giving reasons for her assertions.

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What does the New Educational Model (NEM) set out to achieve for the 4.9 million students who are currently enrolled at the upper-secondary level, constituting 16.1% of all those enrolled in compulsory education in Mexico? Like the 292 484 teachers at the same level, they need a series of matters pending -including the improvement of teacher training, educational evaluation that fosters the design of better educational policies and programs, and, above all, subjects and curricula that are truly relevant and thus enable young people to map out a future- to be tackled (INEE, 2017).

The public announcement of the NEM for Mexico provides us with an opportunity to express various kinds of reflections and criticisms. It is good to hear dissident voices, because some people see what others fail to see and vice versa. The main thing is to make realistic proposals regarding our schools, their teaching staff and the students themselves.

One must start by reflecting on the relationship between ends and means and processes and products. Ends are the lighthouse that guides us and are to be found in Article Three of the Mexican Constitution, the General Education Law, the General Law



Figure 1. Exit profiles of students completing upper-secondary education

Language and communication: Expresses him/herself clearly in spoken and written Spanish. Identifies key concepts and makes inferences based on them. Communicates fluently and naturally in English.

Mathematical thinking: Creates and interprets real, hypothetical or formal situations that require the use of mathematical thinking. Posits and solves problems by applying different approaches. Finds solutions to problems using numerical, graphical or analytical methods.

Exploration and understanding of the natural and social worlds: Obtains, records and systematizes information, consulting relevant sources and carrying out the pertinent analysis and research. Understands the relationship between science, technology, society and the environment in specific historical and social contexts. Identifies problems, formulates scientific questions and posits the hypotheses that are needed to answer them.

Critical thinking and problem solving: Uses logical thinking, mathematics and scientific method to critically analyze and question different phenomena. Develops arguments, evaluates aims, solves problems, formulates and supports conclusions, makes innovations and adapts to changing environments.

Socio-emotional skills and life project: Is self-aware and determined. Cultivates healthy relationships with others, controls his/her emotions, is able to face adversity and act effectively, acknowledges the need to ask for support. Sets aims and seeks to take maximum advantage of options and resources. Makes decisions that create wellbeing and opportunities and can handle future risks.

Cooperation and teamwork: Works constructively as a team member, is participative and responsible, proposing alternative actions and solving problems. Has a cooperative attitude.

Coexistence and citizenship: Recognizes that there is room for diversity, inclusion and equal rights for all in a democratic society. Understands relationships among what happens at the local, national and international levels. Values and exercises interculturality. Understands the importance of institutions and the rule of law.

Artistic appreciation and expression: Values and seeks experience of the arts because they help him/her to communicate and bring meaning to his/her life. Understands their contribution to people's all-round development. Appreciates the broad range of cultural manifestations.

Attention to body and health: Takes responsibility for keeping healthy, both physically and mentally. Avoids risk behavior and practices and favors an active, healthy lifestyle.

Attention to body and health: Takes responsibility for keeping healthy, both physically and mentally. Avoids risk behavior and practices and favors an active, healthy lifestyle.

Takes case of the environment: Understands the importance of sustainability and proactively seeks solutions. Thinks globally and acts locally. Weighs the social and environmental impact of scientific progress and innovations.

Digital skills: Makes suitable use of information and Communications technologies to carry out research, solve problems, produce materials and express him/herself, taking advantage of them to develop ideas and make innovations.

Source: SEP, 2017.

Governing the Professional Teaching Service and the Law Governing the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE). Means and processes are a constituent part of the NEM and

their purpose is to achieve the results that are expressed as destinations in the profiles for each educational level.

Hence, it should not be forgotten that: the purpose of elementary and upper-sec-

ondary education is to help produce free, participative, responsible, informed citizens who can exercise and defend their rights and play an active role in Mexico's social, economic and political life – i.e. ones who

Figure 2. Common-core components of the New Educational Model

I. The concepts underlying the curriculum: The exit profile assumed progression in what is learned, from the preschool to the upper-secondary level, with a humanistic approach. Schools have unprecedented freedom to adapt teaching contents. An updating process has been designed for the NEM: the Common-core Curriculum Framework will have better contents and foster the development of key learnings.

II. The school as the hub of the education system: The school will be the basic organizational unit of the SEN, focused on promoting optimal learning in all students via a horizontal system with self-managing schools and family participation.

III. Teacher training and professional development: The teacher is a professional whose main role is to promote learning in his/her students. The Professional Teaching Service is a system for fostering professional development system based on merit, underpinned by initial training that is strengthened by evaluation, which enables ongoing training to occur.

IV. Inclusion and equality: Regardless of the student's mother tongue, ethnic origins, gender, socio-economic situation, aptitudes or other differences of whatsoever kind, education lays the groundwork for students to fulfill their potential. Inclusion and equality are basic general principles that guide the operation of the NES, and compensatory measures are implemented to protect those at a disadvantage.

V. Governance of the education system: This consists of institutional mechanisms and the joint participation, in the educational process, of different protagonists and social sectors – i.e. the federal government, local education authorities, the INEE, schools, families and the Legislative Branch.

Source: SEP, 2017.

wish -and are able to- develop at the individual, work and family levels, improve their social and physical environment, and go on learning throughout their lives in a complex world that is experiencing dizzying change (Mexican Ministry of Education [Spanish acronym: SEP], 2017).

Many of us ask how we can achieve the above aims, which new features of the NEM would help to create such Mexicans, and what the aforesaid type of Mexican citizen would have to be like? Below, we describe the exit profile of students completing upper-secondary education.

The new feature of this NEM is its division into five big components (See Figure 2). Though we have known, for almost 30 years now, that the school and the classroom are integral parts of the National Education System (NES) and the places where education fundamentally occurs, for them to function as expected, we need different educational entities to support the activities that occur there so that each school can concentrate on teaching-learning and school management. The five common-core components

of the new educational model constitute an interlocking system that requires the ideas and participation of many protagonists both inside and outside the school, from the children and youths being taught to parents, educational officials and researchers.

Outstanding among the five components is that of the school's autonomy regarding curriculum decisions. However, a lot of work needs to be done in order to provide each school with enough information and support so that it can make the best decisions. A sine qua non, albeit a sufficient condition, in this regard, is the training of teachers and school principals so as to prevent curriculum autonomy from contributing to inequality among Mexico's different population groups.

Matters pending

For the first time since the 1973 Educational Reform, a route for implementing the NEM has been publicly divulged. The proposed path is still not perfect, but it is crucial that the local educational and school authorities undertake to follow it, with the necessary adjustments, so to achieve the best possible outcome.

Having said the above, the NEM has to tackle the high dropout rate. What can we conclude about the aforesaid key learnings and the main reasons why the children and youths in upper-secondary education decide to leave school prematurely? Of the total number of dropouts, 16.1% say they stopped attending school due to problems with teachers or classmates, 19.9% because they found school difficult, 40.4% due to economic problems, and 9.6% due to pregnancy, among other things (CENEVAL, 2017). How can we tie in the set subjects with the classroom strengths that teachers need to have in order to help their students? During the 2013-2014 school year, 0.8% of all students dropped out at the primary level, 4.1% at the lower-upper-secondary level, and 15.3% at the upper-upper-secondary level, which indicates that people drop out more often during the school year than in the period between the end of one school year and the start of the next one (INEE, 2016). Undoubtedly, the reasons for dropping out can be tracked via evaluation. It's good to ask questions and can be empowering to ask even more

questions that challenge us to find more satisfactory answers.

It behooves us members of Mexico's great educational community to reflect on -and discuss in depth- the meaning and scope of educational aims, teaching contents, the needs of different learners, the resignification of learning processes, and the fostering of curriculum autonomy in school communities. It is also important to talk about how the Technical Support Service for Schools (Spanish acronym: SATE) really functions, how was can breathe new life into so-called "governance", how to update school books and materials, how to use evaluation in order to foster improvement, and, most importantly, how to how to actually achieve the highest possible level of teacher professionalization via diversified innovative strategies at both the initial-teacher-training and in-service-teacher-teacher-development levels.

Equally great is the challenge that NEM poses for us educators, since there an increasingly urgent need to transform our

educational practices so that our young people may develop their potential to the maximum. It is essential that we listen to the thousands of teachers whose experience and wisdom are vital if we are to make that transformation happen from coast to coast and border to border, throughout our country.

The agenda includes, above all, a viewpoint that we urgently need to examine in depth – that of those who live and study in the most unfavorable conditions, of the young people who are enrolled in upper-secondary education and still do not find it relevant enough to go on studying.

In the words of León Felipe, a Spanish poet belonging to the so-called Generation of '27: "What matters isn't to be first, but to arrive in time and with everyone". €

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IN THE CLASSROOM

Decalogue of Pedagogical Principles Essential for Teaching to Young People

"It is essential to recognize—the author says, quoting Goleman—that the best learning takes place in an affectionate atmosphere," in this text that guides pedagogical principles of support to establish a sense of security and connection with students.

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The educational teaching process integrates, in essence, the influences of all the agents that, through different ways, intervene in the formation of the student. Undoubtedly, pedagogy is a determining agent. And it is precisely this discipline that guides us regarding *the how* of teaching, which at the end of the day is evidenced in the way that students take advantage of it.

Given that the results of educational evaluations carried out in Mexico have revealed deficiencies in the development of the educational process, it is necessary to consider ten pedagogical principles that regulate the educational action.

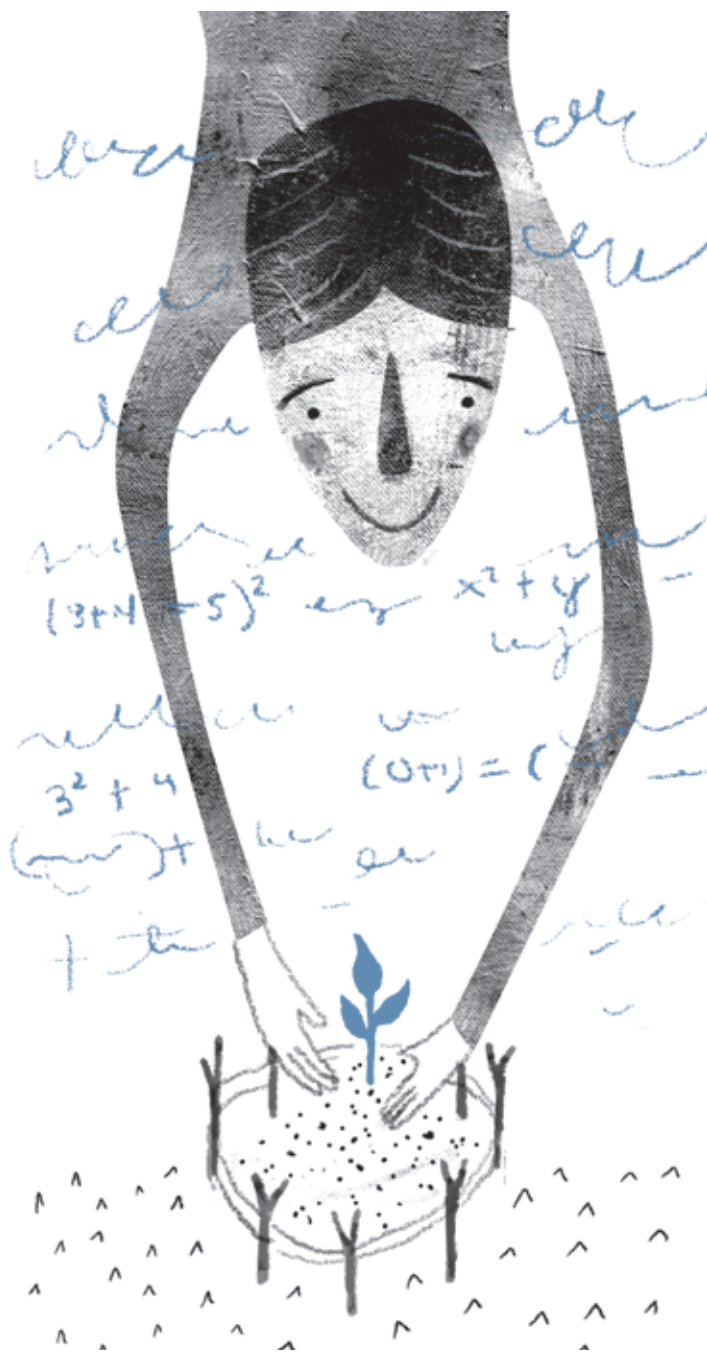
1. Identifying the actual level of knowledge, as well as the learning style of each student, to define the gap between what they know and what they should learn. It's necessary a diagnostic evaluation by teachers of previous knowledge when starting each class or each new system of contents.

2. Designing the learning environment according to the age and level of knowledge of students. Learning can happen anywhere and at any time. However, the environment conducive learning does not occur randomly, it must be built. Both the design of the physical, mental, and social aspects must be elaborated with pedagogical criteria. It's imperative to reason why certain spaces, colors, pieces of furniture, information and communication technologies, materials, and pedagogical tools, as well as cognitive, emotional, socio-affective and interpersonal factors, are indispensable for the educational process.

The way you work in the classroom, the way in which dialogues and interactions are given, the design of tangible and intangible tools in the teaching and learning processes should be designed based on modern pedagogy. It is essential to recognize that the best learning occurs in an affectionate, supportive atmosphere in which there is a

sense of security, support, attention, closeness, and connection with students. (Goleman and Senge, 2016).

3. Encourage the creativity of students and teachers themselves. Creativity is the ingredient that our education requires to make a qualitative leap. Stimulating imagination, flexibility, curiosity, inventiveness or collaborative work, with the purpose of gradually developing the spirit and the creative and critical thinking of teachers and students is a demand of a stubborn reality.
4. Take into consideration didactic principles in the direction of the teaching-learning process:
 - Scientific character: the teaching of a subject must be guided by the advances of the science that supports it. The teacher will ensure that the knowledge he or she teaches is truthful and up to date, as well as using those pedagogical techniques which are the most effective.
 - Linking theory and practice. The enrichment of a theory has to start from the demands of the educational practice. Theory guides the practice and this, in turn, serves as a developmental impulse to the theory.
 - Linking the concrete and the abstract. This is the need to relate the concrete real data studied with their theoretical generalizations in a specially-organized process for their appropriation by students.
 - Systematicity. It is based on the relation, interinfluence, and concatenation of contents, as well as on the students' possibilities of development.
 - Creative, conscious, and active character of students. That students do not receive prepared knowledge, but instead they themselves reveal the conditions of its origin and development. The teacher should stimulate scientific curiosity, discipline in study, stable cognitive interests, constancy, attention, and self-demand. This principle aims to project in students the fundamental value of responsibility as a mechanism of self-help in their personal



and professional life, taking into account that such responsibility must mature to the extent that the teacher inspires exemplary behavior to their students. *Learning to do and learn to know* are fundamental pillars of education, so *learning to be and learning to live together* are the fundamental

elements for a healthy education (Delors, 2008).

- Feasibility. It requires that teaching be understandable and possible according to students' individual characteristics. Thus, contents must be presented gradually by the teacher, as a way for the develop-

ment of independent and creative thinking. This does not mean simplifying teaching, but rather adapting it to individual and group possibilities.

- High level of difficulty. Make content and methods of study with a level of difficulty that students can overcome in order to fulfill the purposes of the teachers' development action.
 - Soundness of knowledge. It lies in the struggle between assimilation and oblivion as a normal psychic principle. The first is incomplete if students are unable to show stable results for certain periods of time.
 - Combination of the individual and collective nature of teaching. The teaching-learning process must combine the interests of the group, and of each student, based on the objectives and tasks of teaching. Thus, the implementation of empathy will allow cooperative and collaborative work in an environment of respect and active participation, which will strengthen the interaction and creation of teaching-learning scenarios with full adherence to the official curriculum, adding value to teachers and students who make new strategies possible.
 - Attention to the individual differences of the learners. It's all about teachers knowing the learners individually, their characteristics and learning processes, as to support them in overcoming their shortcomings and in the growth of their potential.
5. Use different types of learning, especially meaningful learning. The class should consider all angles of learning so that students combine reasoning, memorization, attention, and all the cognitive processes involved in the process. By incorporating contextual aspects (territory, time, environment, students, teachers, and parents), the predominant factors rescued from didactic activities are recorded in the diagnosis.

This principle directly impacts on the emotional and cognitive, because it creates the conditions of confidence and security for approaching the curricular objectives in a fun way.

6. Encourage students to create, build, and develop without fear of error. Teaching-learning methods and strategies should be combined so that students carry out the four fundamental types of activity: cognitive, evaluative, communicative, and practical. This principle seeks to show the benefits of the pedagogical treatment of error: to exhibit it, to study it, and to reflect on it to fully understand what happened—how and why—and assimilate it as a lesson. And always keep in mind that, as Maxwell (2015) states: "Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn."

As Oppenheimer (2014) states, children must be taught that the world's most famous entrepreneurs stumbled several times before triumphing. To create in society the idea that failure is often the prelude to success.

7. Seek the involvement of parents in school activities. The best schools of elementary education in the world have a permanent relationship with parents as one of their main characteristics. Culture, values, and all those stimuli which enrich the "being" of people (children) start from the fundamental basis of society: the family. Parents are the basic reference, the authentic model of the student's life.

Children motivated by their family at home will be outstanding in the classroom. Children inspired by their teacher and backed by their classmates will become conscious, competent, creative, and compassionate citizens who will have learned to lead their life.

8. Link the educational process with problems and characteristics of the community. Teachers should incorporate the analysis of subjects and events in the environment in which students live and teach them to find solutions according to their contextual needs. This, in addition to promoting meaningful learning, helps to develop values such as responsibility and solidarity, and to awaken civic sensitivity.

9. Change the pedagogy of teaching by a pedagogy learning; and a pedagogy of answering by a pedagogy of questioning.

The teacher must reaffirm his or her humility and acknowledge the deficiencies of his or her own knowledge before the students. Only in this way will the children's confidence and security scenario be created. This premise allows students to find different paths in search of their own learning. It is worth remembering the words of Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset: "Whenever you teach, teach to doubt what you teach."

As this is practiced, the student will discover that the right questions are the key to success. Questions cultivate humility, respect. As Maxwell (2014) puts it, they allow us to develop new and better ideas.

10. Systematically practice and promote self-assessment and co-evaluation of teachers and students. In any process, the evaluative stage is fundamental for knowing results, and in order to generate a balance between what was planned and what has been achieved. It is for this reason that one should not wait until the end of academic cycles to practice it, but it must become a constant practice and social culture. It can be developed daily, from the beginning of the class, to remember what has been learned, until the end of the day, to recreate the information and build new thoughts. The group didactics in an atmosphere of confidence will make of this practice a progressive, novel, and efficient action for the cognitive development of students. €

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NAUTICAL LETTER

The Gazette has been monitoring the National Policy of Educational Evaluation and the 32 State Educational & Evaluation Improvement Programs that emerged from it, designed by state teams in 2016. Now, this Fifth Nautical Chart presents an analysis of the gaps that have to be closed in higher secondary education through their Educational Evaluation & Improvement Projects.

The Background

The National Educational Evaluation Policy (PNEE), coordinated by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE), defines the strategies and actions of the National System of Educational Evaluation (SNEE). From it, the following derive:

- State Educational Evaluation and Improvement Programs (PEEME). Planning instruments for the analysis and guidance of educational evaluation and improvement actions at the federative entities (INEE, 2016).
- Educational Evaluation and improvement Projects (PROEME). Specific evaluation actions that emerged from state diagnosis.

The PROEME & Upper-Secondary Education

As a result of the cooperation between INEE and the educational authorities in the states, during 2016, 130 PROEME were established. 30 states defined 47 projects for Upper-Secondary Education (EMS), 41 of them for this level, and 6 for compulsory education, including specific actions for EMS. 29 of the projects will apply some kind of evaluation, 17 will create strategies to use and circulate the information resulting of the existing evaluations, and 1 will be an improvement intervention.

State Actions Towards Educational Improvement

The PROEME for EMS classified according to the aspects that the Third Constitutional Article points out as essential to achieve educational quality, are:

- **14 for educational achievement.** 12 PROEME will be focused on the promotion and use of the results of the National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning in Upper-Secondary Education (PLANEA). One state (Puebla) will make a diagnostic evaluation, in Communication and Mathematics, for students who join the EMS and, one more

manence. 2 more projects will elaborate strategies for use and communication of teaching performance evaluation's results.

- **9 for programs, policies, and information systems.** Projects will analyze the relevance of teachers' training and actualization programs, tutoring programs for EMS students, and the efficacy of strategies to combat high desertion rates at the EMS.
- **4 for educational offer and infrastructure.** PROEME will evaluate the physical conditions and infrastructure that school's operate with, in terms of facilities, equipment, furniture and/or technological resources.

Expected Results for these PROEME in 2020

STATE EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS. PROPOSALS FOR UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Decrease of coverage gaps, having an effect on equality.
- Decrease levels of failure and school desertion, mainly in highly and very highly deprived areas.
- To build optimal learning environments in the classrooms and improve the pertinence, sufficiency, and quality of the physical conditions of the school buildings and their equipment.
- To improve the level of performance of teachers, principals, supervisors, and technical and pedagogical consultants.

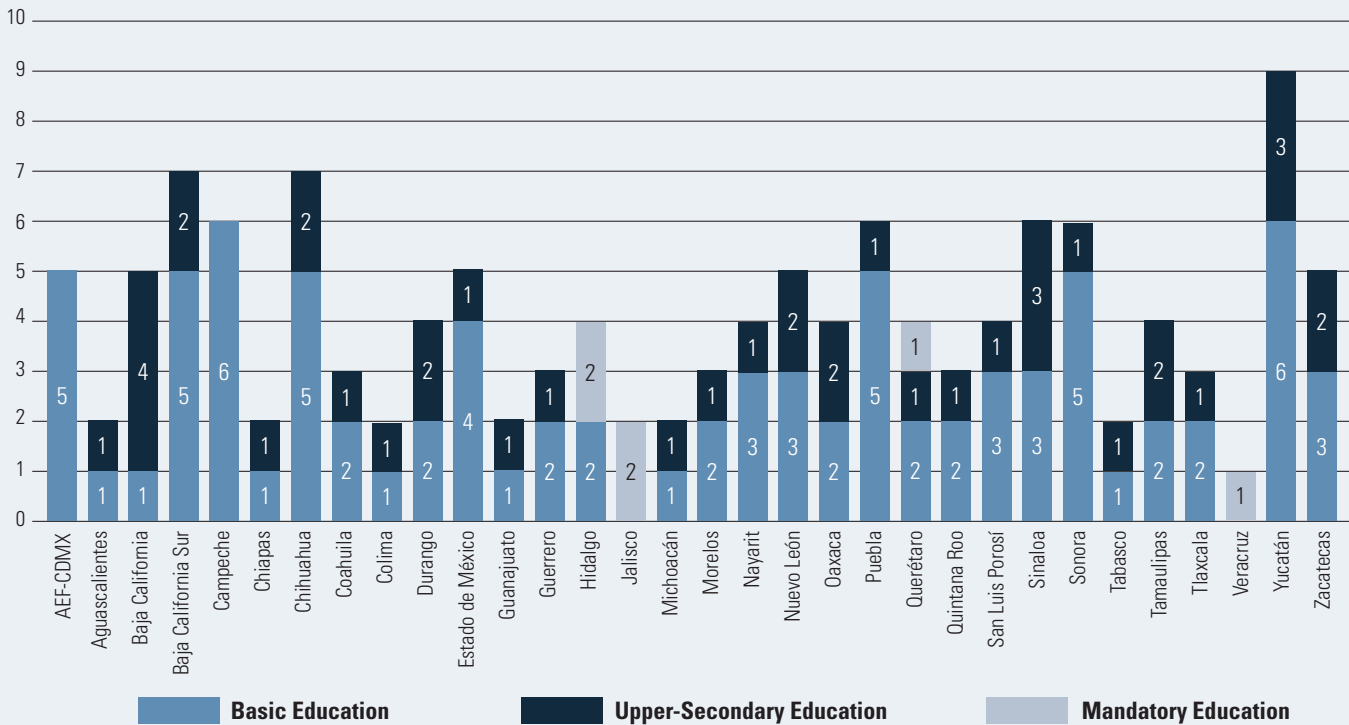
state (Nayarit) will implement an improvement intervention.

- **12 for school organization and learning management.** 9 will investigate the influence of educational offer in students' educational performance, like school environments, application of normative regulations for EMS, supervision and educational practices. 3 more projects will impulse strategies for use and communication of evaluations' results.

- **8 for teaching staff and Directors:** 6 PROEME will evaluate teachers, directors, supervisors, or technical pedagogical consultants, and their influence on educational achievement as well as the factors that affect their perfor-

- To provide teachers with the tools that will facilitate the learning processes of the students.
- To improve the profile of graduates and curricular standards.
- To impact in the coordination of the subsystems and the optimization processes for educational management.
- To guide the psychological-pedagogical processes, and the economic programs, to improve the terminal efficiency of students.
- To increase student enrollment on levels III and IV of PLANEA, in Language, Communication, and Mathematics. €

Chart 1. Upper-Secondary Education PROEME, per state



Source: Made with the information provided by PEEME, General Direction for the Coordination of SNEE, and the Educational Normativity & Politics Unit of INEE.

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- 1 The PROEME are classified under three different categories: planning for a new evaluation exercise, or adjustment of those already existing to the local context; definition of strategies for the promotion and effective use of the results of the already existing evaluations which help in the educational improvement; and design of intervention strategies aiming to reduce educational gaps and, therefore, to improve education (INEE, 2016b).



Do you want to know more about the PNEE or PEEME? Go to *Nautical Chart* in the issues N. 3, 4, 5, and 6 of our *Gazette* in its blog: <http://www.inee.edu.mx/index.php/blog-de-la-gaceta-noviembre>



To know about PROEME by State, visit the PNEE microsite at the INEE website: [HTTP://WWW.INEE.EDU.MX/INDEX.PHP/PNEE-PEEME](http://www.inee.edu.mx/index.php/PNEE-PEEME)

Why talk about the educational evaluation of young people?

In 2015, Mexico, a country with 119 million inhabitants, had 6.4 million children and young people, of which 5.4% –50-38% male and 49.62% female– were between 5 and 17 years old (INEGI, 2015).

The number of people old enough to enroll in Upper-Secondary Education is rapidly decreasing. Very soon, there will be more and more senior citizens and less and less young people.

Meanwhile, many of those presently engaged in Upper-Secondary studies find schools meaningless and can see no future for themselves.

The context

In the 2015-2016 school year, 16.1% of the 30 882 716 students enrolled in compulsory basic education in Mexico -i.e. 4.9 million young people- were enrolled in Upper-Secondary school (INEE, 2017).

In this education cycle, more than 292 000 teachers work in just over 17 000 institutions pertaining to a wide variety of models, modalities, study options, syllabuses, programs, subjects and support systems (INEE, 2017).

Dropout

While other countries in Europe and Latin America have very small dropout rates, 15.3% of all students in Upper-Secondary Education in Mexico -i.e. 693 077 young people- left school during the 2014-2015 school year (INEE, 2017), with 36.4% of them doing so due to lack of family resources (SEP, 2012).

Of the various educational models, general Upper-Secondary Education has the lowest number of dropouts, with technical Upper-Secondary Education and professional technical education coming in second and third place, with respective dropout rates of 14%, 16.5% and 33% (INEE, 2016).

This special report covers the many aspects of the aforesaid reality.

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Voices and Challenges of the Upper-Secondary Education Subsystems

Using testimonies and interviews with directors, teachers, officials, and students from various subsystems in the country, this report traces a choral panorama regarding the complexity of this educational type.¹

The educational offer for Upper-Secondary Education (Spanish acronym: EMS) is made up of three models: general high school, technological high school, and technical professional studies. Each one has different forms of funding: federal, state, autonomous, and private; with or without certificate of official validity; organized from five kinds of administrative and budget control: centralized, decentralized, independent, autonomous, and private. A complex network made up of 35 subsystems that currently tends to 4 985 080 students, through 292 484 teachers and 17 400 schools (INEE, 2016a).

The main challenges faced by the EMS

“The school doesn’t have electricity, or water,” says a teacher from the state subsystem in Puebla. With these services, the quality of the students’ stay could be improved, which would also increase their motivation, permanence, and performance.

A student from Colegio de Bachilleres in Mexico City states that “Some teachers’ classes are boring, either they don’t teach you, or they only make you read without explaining anything, that is a challenge.”

Antonio Gago Huguet, general director of the Council for the Evaluation of Upper-Secondary Education, A. C. (Spanish acronym: COPEEMS), points out that:

“I see two large challenges, the usual ones: one, broadening the coverage; two, f

this opportunity of studying to make sense, education should be of good quality, that is, pertinent, effective, efficient, and equitable. The abilities, skills, attitudes, and values that young people acquire should be based on valid, current, and scientifically adequate knowledge, and should have a focus of practical use, both in their future academic life and in their daily life, work life, family life, social life, and as mere citizens. A school is effective when its students attain what their plans and programs establish; it is efficient when it gives the best possible use to its resources (teaching staff, plans, programs, methods, and means) and is equitable when its students belong to all socioeconomic levels. The great challenge is for this education to be transcendent.

It would seem then that the main gap in education is the way of conceptualizing it and the way in which it unfolds in real life. This is stated by the interviews with Mauro Solano Olmedo, general secretary of Colegio de Bachilleres, in Mexico City; Ramon Zamanillo Pérez, general director of Education in Ocean Science and Technology (Spanish acronym: DGECYT); Jorge Galileo Castillo Vaquera, principal of the Independent Operations Unit of the National School of Technical Professional Education (Spanish acronym: CONALEP) in Mexico City, and Melchor Sánchez Mendiola, coordinator of Educational Development and Curricular Innovation of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Spanish acronym: UNAM). They agree that some of the main challenges for Upper-Secondary Education are coverage, school desertion, terminal efficiency, academic achievement, and a deficient and insufficient infrastructure.

“One of the main challenges is the disproportion between the installed capacity available and the needs of the country. For example, with the admissions exam to the UNAM high school, there are many people who do not get in,” says Melchor Sánchez Mendiola.

In his turn, Mauro Solano Olmedo points out that:

“Not all students who get in graduate. In our subsystem, out of 100 students who get in, 41 manage to graduate. Another problem is that they are not graduating as prepared



as we'd want them to be. The tests provide evidence that, in very basic aspects such as reading, writing, and mathematics problem resolution, young people are not qualified to face the competitive world, or an adult's life.

Armando Noé Hoyos Mejía, subdirector of Evaluation in the General Directorate of Industrial Technological Education (Spanish acronym: DGETI) indicates that having the ideal teachers in the numbers required is also a challenge. In this regard, Sánchez Mendiola mentioned that more efforts should be made to keep teachers updated both in their disciplinary areas and in the fundamental pedagogical principles.

In face of the already mentioned organizational and institutional complexity the Upper-Secondary Education faces, Roberto Peña Reséndiz, general director of the Subsecretary for the Evaluation of Policies for the Upper-Secondary Education (Spanish acronym: SEMS), points out that:

"The population that is addressed sometimes jumps and changes from one side to another, so it is necessary for the subsystems to be articulated to define joint actions, manage information, and generate indicators."

Martín Cruz Gatica, subdirector of Academic and Teaching Teams at the National Fine Arts Institute (Spanish acronym: INBA), shares that:

"Another line that should be tended to is the articulation that should exist between the EMS system and that of Upper education with the prior educational levels. This would enrich the experience of the students and, therefore, it would make it more significant and relevant for them."

School Desertion

Even when the richness of the Upper-Secondary Education consists in its diversity of options, this is the educational level with the highest rates of desertion (15.3 %) (INEE, 2016b). Some students share the reasons why they leave their studies.

"The school is somewhat far, and in the distance that must be walked there are almost no roofs or streetlights. In addition, during rainy days the facilities, books, and benches get wet, and during the warm season the classrooms feel like ovens," say students from the Colegio de Bachilleres in Veracruz.

In their turn, students from the Colegio de Bachilleres in Querétaro and from CONALEP, in the state of Mexico, indicate

that desertion is due to the way in which they are taught, as well as the injustices and arrogance of teachers and directors, and their lack of respect and of interest about the students' positions. "Sometimes they even treat us like criminals," they state.

A student from the state subsystem in the State of Mexico states:

"School becomes a boring place, where there is not good coexistence or activities for which the students want to come, and also at the end they all get a passing grade in order for the school to get high statistical numbers."

Among the causes for desertion there are the economic, since the large majority of parents are devoted to working the land and their families are extensive.

"The whole student community depends on the supports they receive and on socio-cultural factors; there are still young people who decide to marry at an early age and begin to work, leaving aside their studies," says a director of the Telebachillerato (distance learning) in the State of Mexico.

"Drug addiction, family problems, pregnancies, and machismo [are other causes]," mentions a director from the Center of Ocean Technological Studies in Sonora.

Zamanillo Pérez, from the DGECYTM, indicates that:

"We are making an emergency plan of action, case by case. Sonora is not the same as Yucatan. It is not the same on the coast than inland. In fact, there are five profiles of the student who deserts school, not just one. Our young people have scholarships. We also have early alerts and tutoring. We work to visualize the cases quickly and for the young person not to feel alone or abandoned to his or her luck, to feel that the school has an interest in him or her; we also make an alliance with the parents."

The representative from CONALEP in Mexico City points out that:

"Between the first and second semester is when youngest people drop off. We have several hypotheses. The main one is that, in the case of Mexico City, according to the exam by the Metropolitan Commission of Public Upper-Secondary Education Institutions (Spanish acronym: COMIPEMS), we are found in the lowest part of the subsystems' preferences. On the other hand, we receive young people with very few correct answers in their admissions exams. That's why we work so much on the issue of failing, which

in the end influences school desertion. Regarding the work to decrease this rate, our work is quite close to the teachers. We sensitize them to make more flexible their traditional positions on education, because with an aging teaching plant a generational clash is generated with the youth, who demand another type of access to knowledge. In the impulse of the model of entrepreneurship we have very good results, which in the end are united with academic achievement. Finally, we work with the young people who show lack of interest for education. We even see it in the allotment of scholarships: many times they have to be accompanied to the bank to collect them."

The highest desertion rates are recorded in the technical professional model and it is the men who drop off the most (INEE, 2016b).

Evaluation: An Instrument for the Redesign of the Educational Offer?

"Evaluation is the scaffolding that allows understanding what we lack and how we can improve. However, there are at least three axes that we must strengthen. It is necessary for all the subsystems or institutions of Upper-Secondary Education to join the evaluation exercises," argues Zamanillo Pérez.

"It may be a basic means for articulation, at least in terms of the evaluation of academic achievements," says Roberto Peña.

Antonio Gago indicates:

"The use and diffusion of the information that derives from evaluations is another challenge. Evaluations have no problems, but what really matters is what is done after. Evaluation solves problems of lack of pertinence, insufficiency, or ineffectiveness, but it does so through the teacher, the collegiate school groups, the school direction, the school facilities, the educational system, and the state or federal educational authorities."

Castillo Vaquera agrees that:

"The results of the evaluation and the information should trickle down to the schools, because it is there where the change must occur. This would be very helpful to improve the yield indicators from institutions and to update the contents of the curricula."

Solano Olmedo mentions:

"The student, the society, the teachers, and the parents must understand the functioning of the educational system. Evaluations such as the National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning (Spanish acronym:

PLANEA) offer references, but it is necessary to deepen the right to know how well-prepared you graduate from school; not only if you get a 6 or a 7 in your marks, but rather what I learnt, what for I learnt it, and what I can achieve with it.

Another reflection refers to the issues absent from the evaluation agenda of the Upper-Secondary Education: the governability of the system and the way it is articulated.

“Measuring the transit of students in the different subsystems is a challenge. Many of the indicators are not necessarily true, even inside the subsystem itself, because desertion can even imply a change of school or a change of major subject,” shares Castillo Vaquera.

Another challenge is the adaptability of the evaluation. It is true that the system should guarantee the profiles of graduation and the basic competencies established by the Integral Reform of the Upper-Secondary Education (Spanish acronym: RIEMS); however, the path to equity and pertinence of the Upper-Secondary Education will also be defined by the fulfillment of the objectives and particular goals of each subsystem or educational model. Javier Olmedo Badía, spokesperson of COMIPEMS, argues that “different types of instruments are required to monitor the large variety of institutions, systems, schools, types of study, etc.”

“Finally, in the case of teachers’ evaluation, it is important for their rights not to transgress, they must feel that it is part of a system of education improvement,” complements Hoyos Mejía.

The Future of Upper-Secondary Education

Data from the National Survey on Values of Youth, 2012, point out that 93.9 % of young people consider that to study is worthwhile (IMJUVE, 2012). That is, despite the reality in our country, they trust their preparation can improve their quality of life. When asking students from the state subsystem in Yucatán, they point out that going to school “is another step to be fully prepared to face the future, a tool to have a good future, to change the country, and to give a better future to the family.” A young person from the distance modality in Jalisco says: “We go there to socialize, because at this age we need to be busy to avoid falling into addiction and getting depressed.”

What commitments should the Upper-Secondary Education reconsider in order

to respond to these needs? The professionalization of teachers, reflects Gago:

“We need to strengthen them in the disciplinary area, and in their pedagogical formation, and they should be paid as the professionals they are.”

María D. Madrigal, academic director, and América I. Sánchez, student director, at the Instituto de Educación Media Superior (Spanish acronym: IEMS) in Mexico City indicate that:

“We are working for our model to be very complete, based on competencies, and with a strong component of feedback, tutoring, and accompaniment for the student.”

Madrigal mentions that:

“As a young person, I would choose the IEMS model because it is centered on the student. The school trajectory and the solution to the problematics are defined by him or her and the teacher. This is important in the cases of young women who interrupt their studies because of early pregnancy and then they return to school. The student receives much accompaniment to conclude their studies. Another key is that 60 % of our teachers have graduate studies and all of them are tutored in excellence to tend to the young people.”

The representative from CONALEP in Mexico City explains that:


“The professionalizing hours in the technical formation of young people have provided a good indicator of entry and graduation to our students who are going to technological universities. There, our graduates have a good academic achievement and exploit better the competencies they acquired throughout their training.”

The representative of the COMIPEMS also points out that “a young man with technical professional training can have an income that allows him to continue studying both at the Upper secondary level and in Upper education.”

Zamanillo indicates that:

—We are lacking six states to which we have the goal of reaching in 2018, and we have a master plan in which our priority is to grow and impact the educational quality, but also in terms of pertinence and inclusion. Today, there are three interesting conditions in the life of any educational institution, which has to do with your flexibility, your response speed, and your innovation.”

“It is necessary to strengthen the diversity of the options of Upper-Secondary Education,” adds Javier Olmedo.

Finally, a student from the School of Scientific and Technological Studies in Nuevo León contributes, hopeful: “It is never late for doing what you want in life, so if they want to return to their studies, they can do it.” 

Interviews: Cecilia Mariel Bossi, Mariana Elizabeth Castro, Juana María Islas Dossetti, Aracely Fuentes Bonifacio, Lourdes Nancy Martínez Márquez, Lizbeth Torres Alvarado, and Selene Kareli Zepeda Ploquinto.

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SPECIAL REPORT: UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION
URBAN CULTURE CHRONICLE

14-Year-Old Feminists on Facebook

What world do young girls in Mexican Upper-secondary schools, and the “dreamers” in American high schools, live and perceive? One of the best chroniclers in Latin America, winner of the Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera 2005 Award and the National Cultural Journalism Fernando Benítez Award, 2010, offers three portraits of these teenagers who post: “If I diminish you, I diminish myself.”

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So far from God, so close to the United States. A chronicler’s mind activated by the incessant register of phrases and situations in other people’s land, by conversations around issues such as the three months of psychiatric care paid by the us government to ex-combatants in Iraq and other countries. From my corner at the Borders Bookstore cafe it is impossible not to hear the story of a panic attack suffered yesterday by a former Mexican-American soldier. Seen from the clear, sunny, and expanded San Diego, Mexico is resulting absurdly inaccessible to me. In this paradoxical city, there are no Internet cafes because everyone owns a computer. There are also not enough buses because everyone owns a car; so, I have to walk, for an hour, carrying my computer, until I find an oasis in a branch of this bookstores chain. All because, I must say, the Internet system has failed in the house where I’m staying.

I’m trying to decide whether or not to buy the 2007 Bob Dylan catalog—some critic has already offered to take seriously the big crooner’s skills as a visual artist—but my brain fits only the image of that 23-year-old boy who was treated, in a special unit for

combatants, at the psychiatric center. Apparently, he ran terrified down the halls and cried out for a pitcher of water with lots of ice. “He contorted horribly... and emptied the pitcher over his head,” told me later the nurse sitting on the next table, born in Tijuana. She did not want to give her name, but talked about young kids whom war made crazy, about boys who begin to tremble and warn the medical staff “*Do not touch me, please*,” for they are aware of their own violence. “I woke up another ex-soldier to give him his medicine and he almost hit me. He asked for an Ativan shot.”

Justified paranoia?

Being so close to nowhere, in this middle-class residential area with a club featuring three pools and two tennis courts, everything seems perfect. But in the neighborhood’s public school, some students sell their parents’ pain killers. Paracetamol, codeine mixed with potent analgesics, Bufferin, and Tylenol. Three dollars the pill. Fear reigns here. “I don’t open the curtains because there are no fences and I have three daughters,” explains my hostess, who lives in a safe and well-kept residential neighborhood. A “justified fear,” as Frank Goldman says, talking about Guatemalans, in his excellent novel *The Long Night of White Chickens*? A few months ago, this woman’s eldest daughter, a prominent student at the same school, wrote a paper on a play by Shakespeare. Before the analysis of characters about two women dealing with male culture, the 16-year-old girl described her racist paternal grandfather. She is half Mexican and her grandfather—as an “American Macho,” as Goldman defined—years ago was recruited into the authoritarian ranks of the Born-Again Evangelical Christian Sect—showed his conviction that his granddaughter should not study a major, but concentrate on her future as a suburban *desperate housewife*. For Jane, an insatiable reader, this was outrageous. Is that why, in her text, she used hard words to define the masculine culture with and exhorted to create a better world for both sexes? A vehement teenager, she’s quarrels with her father—already divorced from her mother—because he imposes on her a relationship with his new girlfriend,



an old and surly woman, her stepmother, who “definitely does not respect me or my sisters.”

“If I diminish you, I diminish myself,” sentenced Sandra, the 14-year-old sister, on the public “wall” of her Facebook space, where she has dozens of virtual friends. “Kids say ‘IDNW’ (I don’t know why) maybe because they don’t know anything.” A student tells her she did not like it, and she explains: “That was three years ago. I was living a different moment. It’s for having fun.” In the social network, this girl-woman intrigues others with quotes from Montaigne (“He who imposes his argument by noise and command shows his reasons are weak”) and Bernard Shaw (“telling the truth is the funniest joke in the world”). Some acquaintance asks her, also on her wall, why so many quotations. “I hope people will think and discuss these ideas. I find them interesting and I want to share them.”

Another day, she uploads a picture of Michael Jackson and declares herself as a Harry-Potter fan. When her mother is present, this strong natured girl, the best student in her school, demands twice as much attention as the other two sisters, with the emotionality of a small girl but the strength of a teenager. I join the mother and her daughters to watch Harry Potter’s last film in a 3D cinema. One comment I did not think they would hear, “it’s OK for their age,” makes them walk away at a brisk pace. Suddenly, I see them—the youngest turned 13—at the end of the avenue of that mall where the cinema theaters are. They got there hugging each other, advancing by taking very high leaps. I am surprised—almost painfully—to realize that the subject of the film will not be mentioned again. I notice they are acting politely, and distant. What a pity! When they came here they were so excited... What a frail age, the age of convalescents, as my mother would say. “Changing my own actions will not change the world, but it’s a start,” Sandra quotes the following day on FB (or FBI?—many Internet users complain about surveillance and censorship in that social network). In the world of the future, we adults are still clumsy.

Sects of Gringo Fundamentalism

I am familiar with the feminist ferocity of certain radical women in the United States. Have you heard, reader, about the sexual-

harassment lawsuits for a gaze or a sexually charged compliment in this country where many get large sums through legal actions? Has any “gringo” told you about how his “ex” got the last penny out of him? Americans women were, after the English, the first suffragists in the second half of the 19th century, while Mexican women got the vote barely in the mid-20th century. What a novelty! But seeing it live is something different. The chronicler, allergic to the intransigence of the first activists she met in college, wonders about such feminist anger at such a young age. In the fabulous America, Sandra writes, again on her wall: “You are asking me to quit my freedom, my love for life, for an institution that fails so frequently. Why should I marry you? I mean, why do you want to marry me? Together with the desire to fulfill an ideal society has instilled in us since the beginning, (...) do you want to promote a capitalist consumer agenda?” This interesting fourteen-year-old took the quote from a trendy comedy, *Definitely Maybe* about Marriage. Excessive? Many high-school students are children of separate parents. “They grow up alone,” my hostess tells me. Is the family institution about to bust?

A friend of Sandra shares a disappointment with her: “Bah ... my haircut is shorter than I wanted, the fringes on the sides of my face look horrible...”. A piece of everyday life that has the positive effect of returning this nosy reader—that’s what FB is for, right?—to the feeling of attending Sandra’s transformation into adulthood. I also used to be really upset when they overcut my hair at the salon. As I write about these young beings—they intrigue me so much, they remind me so much of Clarice Lispector’s teenagers and their jasmynes—; as I write, then, I remember a passage by Goldman about the new kind of human being born after 30 years of repression in Guatemala: “Resolutely silent, suspicious, [...] noisy in the bars [...] with that noise of suffocated people.” I try to define what is the new human we have in Mexico like.

“The world changed,” mentions the fourth wife of the grandfather of these girls. She is a missionary, with him, in one of those “sects of gringo fundamentalism,” also mentioned by Goldman. Among other convenient points of their militancy (?), there is the fact that their Church got them a very well-located apartment (next to the church). This is often done: to offer a cheap and nice roof, as

well as social work, to the faithful. That way, they evangelize joyfully. Mildred and Rolf just went to China to do it. They got funds for it. Of course, the Chinese should not know. “If they see you with a Bible, you go to jail,” tells me another fan of this religion(?), convinced about the salvation of souls. In their photo album, there are pictures of them teaching English and American culture classes as part of this foreign evangelical program. “We kill two birds with one stone, we teach them the language and we give them spiritual comfort,” says someone else. Their mission is here in Mexico, around Naucalpan, one day I am invited to go to the service in the church, “if only for sociological interest”. I get ironic. Too much “not seeing” themselves... their authoritarianism, their rude imposition of beliefs. Do they know the right uses them? I don’t think so. They admire Trump because he opposes homosexuality. They tell anecdotes about his courage. They omit, or disqualify, the issue of war, so hot during the Obama administration, of the Iraq war. They throw around flamboyant sentences—learned by heart, apparently—against Obama and his political handling of racial plurality and abortion, against couples who do not marry (“not even by common law”), against homosexuals and their perversions, against girls interested in studying a major.

Kidnapped Teenager at Escondido

“Here, teenagers disappear.” My hostess does not let her teenagers walk alone, not even when they go to the bathroom in a movie theater. In February, she was given a notice in Escondido. The man and the woman seemed familiar. She saw them on a newscast. “They were the parents. Their expression was terrible. The border is not a game.” Yes, well... Yesterday I saw the poster pasted on a pole, the photo of that never-found girl. She disappeared, just like Mark Kilroy, the student murdered, back in ‘89, by the Narcosatanic sect, a criminal band devoted to the satanic cult as a way to subdue their *narco* rivals in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. According to a crime-tabloid journalist, José Luis Durán King, their Cuban-American leader, Adolfo Constanzo de Jesús, had ties to two serial killers of the 1970s: Henry Lucas and Ottis Toole, both members of the satanic sect *Hand of Death*, based in Miami, dedicated, among other things, to selling children on the borders of Matamoros and Ciudad Juárez.

In fact, and although another version indicates otherwise; apparently, it was Toole who, from jail, provided the first clue about specific sites of demonic cults in Matamoros. Oooops ... now I must listen to my friend Barbara (what remains of the enthusiastic and rebellious young college student she was) defend the actions of President Bush in his last two presidential terms. I'm about to mention Lucas, the serial killer, his special training in paramilitary camps (Florida, Everglades). Already in jail, he asked for and was baptized, which could have in-

fluenced Bush Sr. to suspend his execution at the last minute, in '79. But that's another story... One day I'll tell it in detail. €



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SPECIAL REPORT: UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION ARTICLE

How can we get young people to stay in school?

If, as the authors of the following article assert, many young people enjoy attending school because that's where they find friends and girl- or boyfriends, with whom horizontal socialization enables them to share, learn, suffer, laugh, drink, smoke or, as Rossana Reguillo (2004) says, "huddle", then why do they drop out?

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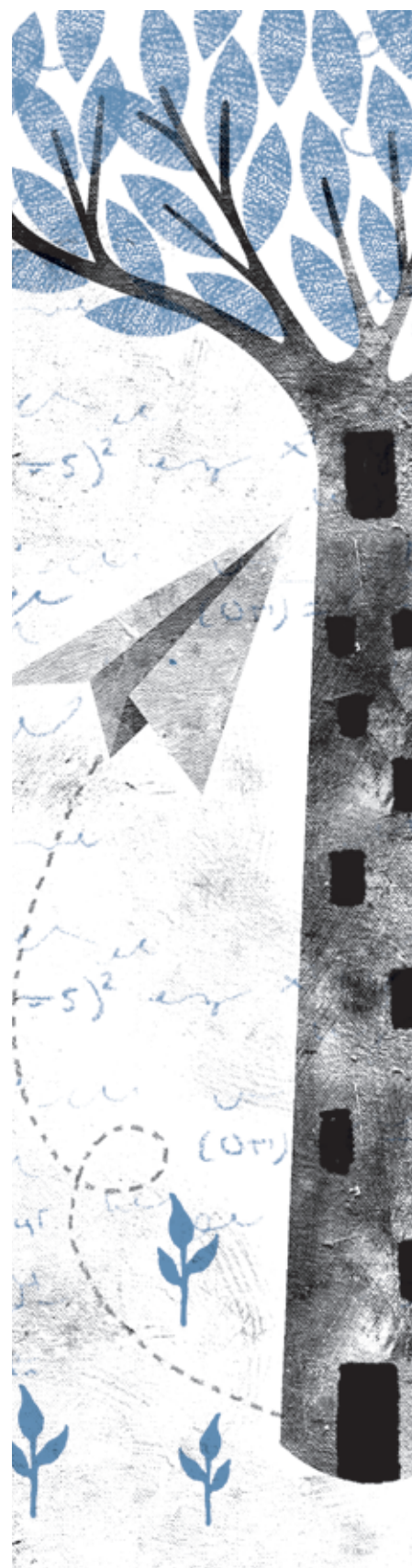
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When the National Preparatory School was founded in 1867, under the Organic Law Governing Public Education in Mexico City, the said institution's founding charter stated that upper-secondary education should "make students men, in the noblest sense of the word, developing all their physical, intellectual and moral attributes" (Castrejón, 1985:158-159).

After one and a half centuries, this general aspiration has not changed very much, though students and the meaning of upper-secondary education have indeed changed, as have the reasons for remaining in school or dropping out of it. Nowadays, what is meant by "make students men [of course, now we would have to say "men and women"] in the noblest sense of the word" and "developing all their physical, intellectual and moral attributes"? And even more importantly, why do today's students drop out and what can we do about it? Below, we will try to answer these questions.

A lot of research projects, both quantitative and qualitative (Abril *et al.*, 2008; SEP-IMJ-CIEJ, 2006; SEP-IMJ, 2012; Navarro, 2001; SEP, 2012) have identified different phenomena which, to a greater or lesser degree, lead to dropout from Upper-Secondary Education (USE). Broadly speaking, we can mention three causes identified in the majority of studies —lack of resources, socio-emotional problems and lack of interest —on the part of young people or their families— in studying.

Regarding the first cause, different government entities, and also private initiative, have taken various actions, the most typical of which has been the granting of a wide va-



riety of scholarships, including a so called “Anti-dropout Scholarship”.

Regarding the second cause, so-called “socio-emotional competencies” have been included in the new USE model, for the purpose of developing things such as empathy, self-knowledge, self-regulation and teamwork which, while it is true that they don’t set out to address the causes of school dropout, do at least try to interruptions in schooling by strengthening young people in the said areas. Furthermore, a specific anti-dropout program called “*Construye-T*” [a phonetic pun, in Spanish, meaning “Build Yourself”] was implemented in schools several years ago with the aim of directly strengthening students’ socio-emotional skills.

However, up to now the area where the least work and research have been done is that of “lack of interest in studying”. While the education authorities have indeed taken various actions -e.g. the setting up of science fairs and cycles of conferences where specialists in various areas talk about their professional experiences, the use of computers in the classroom in order to bring the school closer to young people, the organizing of artistic and recreational activities and tutoring aimed at building bridges between the so called juvenile and school worlds so as to interest the former in the latter- nevertheless, no well thought out and articulated action has been taken to make the school an attractive place for young people.

Do young people like school?

Despite the many problems facing it, the school is the place where people “should be” if they are young, since it is the main institution that controls insertion into society. While it is true that a lot of research projects deal with the *reluctance* of young people to attend school, it is also true that many young people do like going to school.

It bears pointing out that this fondness for school is not necessarily associated with things such as enjoyment of study, enthusiasm and commitment on the part of teachers, or an ability to get students’ attention via innovative teaching strategies and materials. In fact, most young people enjoy going to school because it’s the place where they find friends and girl- or boyfriends, with whom horizontal socialization enables them to share, learn, suffer, laugh, drink, smoke or, as Rossana Reguillo (2004) says, “huddle”.

And yes, the school may be one of the

few places where it’s still possible to avoid responsibility, albeit just for a few moments – indeed, less and less as time goes by, but it’s still possible – i.e. being a student is still an enjoyable venue for socialization and being sociable. Due to this special type of experience, which favors interaction with others based on the sharing of new experiences, for many young people their time in upper-secondary school is especially meaningful.

Statistics show that the most propitious place for “first-time” experiences is the upper-secondary school. Since the first sexual relations, the first job, the first time we leave our parents’ home, the first pregnancy, etc. generally occur between the ages of 15 and 19 (SEP-INEGI-IMJ-CIEJ, 2002; SEP-IMJ-CIEJ, 2006; y SEP-IMJ, 2012), the school becomes an appropriate place for the construction of a student experience that goes beyond formal classroom learning, and hence lack of interest in studying and lack of interest in attending school are two different things, which bears witness to the distance that exists between the interests of young people and those of students per se.

Furthermore, young people are aware that, outside the school, insecurity, overcrowding, job instability and disconnectedness will force them to face their personal and family realities once more. It is worth mentioning that the research we have done in the senior-high-school section of the Autonomous National University of the UNAM (Pogliaghi *et al.*, 2015) shows that students remain in or near the school for up to 10 hours, and after mulling this over a few times, we realized that the conditions in their homes might be worse, or they were deprived there of something very important to them – i.e. being with friends.

Besides the external problems that impinge on the school and can cause young people to stay there in order to be with their friends, boy-/girlfriends, etc., it is important that we take stock of the urge to stay in the school ambiance and socialize with others by adopting a new approach to what it means to be part of a school community and be a student. This approach would be based on an awareness that, as we know, education does not only consist in academic learning, or learning at home, in church or in one’s neighborhood, but, rather, derives from the set of relationships and practices that occur among those involved in schooling, and from the way in which the links forged in the

school succeed or fail in endowing education with value and interest as an activity in which everybody is involved.

Hence, interest —or lack of interest— in studying depends on the value assigned to education by a given community. Given the above, the said interest or lack of interest could be detected within the school and then observed in the personal behavior and practices that arise based on the possible approximations and distances between the world of young people and that of the school, which shape the experience of school.

It would only be possible to promote actions contravening this from within the school community and its surroundings, beyond the school’s walls and railings, responding to particular conditions for the benefit of the community per se by carrying out a wide range of projects involving all those involved both in the school and the world outside it. In this way, an effort would be made to actively involve young people in their own education via more horizontal relationships rooted in the pleasure of collective discovery, innovation and transformation.

Such a cultural change may be utopian, but it might be the most viable way to break with the usual way of fulfilling study obligations, which has led to so many Young people losing interest in education.

Being young and being a student – two paths that would appear not to converge

One constant feature has surprised us in various qualitative studies that we have carried out in the UNAM’s Seminar for Research into Youth: when young people are asked about their home life, their accounts are fulsome, diverse and complex, but, when asked about their school life, they talk about what happened with their friends, boy-/girlfriends, about drunken parties and shared adventures, but, notably, never speak about what happens in the classroom, especially if an adult (i.e. teacher) is present.

In a study of secondary-school students that we carried out in Mexico City (Pérez Islas, 2016a), we came up with a concept that was not very academic, but, in our view, very illustrative, regarding student experience -namely, *the rave-up level*, a concept that we identified based on the subjects’ perception of their fleeting juvenile life as youths and their experiences in school. In other research

(Pogliaghi *et al.*, 2015; Pogliaghi, 2017), we have mentioned some of the meanings that students assign to being young, some of which we cite verbatim below:

Youth is to be enjoyed, [...] visiting your friends [...] getting drunk if you want to (dialogue between two third-year students).

For me being young means making decisions and accepting that, if you made a mistake, you have a whole life in front of you to start again (third-year student).

But something happens when they are asked what being a student means to them:

I think that a student is someone who goes to school to study, mainly as an obligation [...] (third-year student).

It's like opening a door to a lot of things that you have access to and knowledge about. You do learn a lot in the street, but you also learn a lot in school, such as history, [...] I don't know, number or something, so that's what being a student means to me [...] (third-year student).

Based on these accounts, and a lot of other ones recorded in the field, we can assert that there's a certain distance between being young and being a student. The former is associated with fun and learning via trial and error, while the second has to do with obligatory, standardized learning. In other words, the interests of young people who study take two very different forms, causing a disconnect with education in many of them. While they do learn to be students, "learning the rules of the game" (Perrenoud, 1990), this has little to do with their daily lives or with the concept of education as a process that occurs, and is socialized and valued, in the community.

And the teachers?

Just as it is clear that students learn to "read" their teachers very well and have them perfectly labeled as "lax", "good vibes", "bad news", etc., teachers often fail to understand what's happening with their students – i.e. they suffer from a kind of cultural illiteracy (Onetto, 2011) when it comes to understanding and decoding what's happening with the youngsters in front of them and are

hence unable to communicate adequately with them. For them to acquire these competencies, they need to learn several things, including their students' spoken, body, musical -and now, more than ever, technical- language, and this isn't just a task for teachers, since we need to build an entire community with shared codes.

In their defense, due to the way they are hired, trained —most times, not as teachers— and organized, teachers cannot acquire the aforesaid competencies. As just a small example, the master's-degree course in Upper-secondary Teaching (Spanish acronym: *MADEMS*) has only one course about students in its syllabus, and the said course focuses on the traditional subject of evolutionary psychology.

The conclusion of the study that we carried out for the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: *INEE*) (Pérez Islas, 2016b) is clear: teachers feel alone and overloaded -above all administratively- and hence often resort to whatever means they have at hand to defend themselves -i.e. doing the same things that they have always done- .and hence they become ever more distanced from their students, which also helps to weaken the links between all the other members of the school community.

If nothing is done about the last link in the chain, the reform that we wish to implement will fail.

The institutional effect

It is true that a great deal of economic and social inequality arises outside the school and is then merely reproduced inside the latter (and many education authorities use this as an excuse to explain the state of their students, saying "That's how they reach us from secondary school" or "It's because of the type of family they come from").

However, we cannot deny the existence of what many people have called "the institutional effect" (Solís, 2011) – i.e. depending on the structure of the school —closed, vertical, authoritarian, etc.— dynamics will arise that affect its environment. Indeed, one especially important aspect is each school's good or bad prestige, since this affects the students' perception of their responsibility for the success or failure predicted for them. Indeed, even the physical areas in the school have a bearing on student conviviality, since students feel more at ease in places that are conducive to the latter (Pérez Islas, 2016b).

Nevertheless, this institutional effect is only scantily acknowledged when its influence on teaching-learning and dropout rates is evaluated. If we want young people to complete Upper-Secondary school and learn meaningful things there, we must change the aforesaid structures and relationships, building schools where culture, sports, conviviality and play take place communally, though not within the context of a "total school" (Saraví, 2015) where students live in a bubble, but rather of a space that lends itself to active construction by the students, allowing them to develop both individually and collectively, be free, and create their own guidelines and rules.

The efforts made and the progress achieved in this regard tend to be limited to complementary activities that fail to get to the bottom of the matter. We stubbornly continue to emphasize teaching over learning and our encyclopedic approach continues to stress the accumulation of contents while eschewing other things -such as dancing, which is a key to socialization among young people- that are also necessary.

As already mentioned, the national youth surveys (*SEP-INEGI-IMJ-CIEJ*, 2002; *SEP-IMJ-CIEJ*, 2006; and *SEP-IMJ*, 2012) have confirmed that "first-time" experiences generally occur between the ages of 15 and 19, yet upper-secondary education fails to take stock of this. In this regard, "decision-making and risk assessment" might be a central subject in the curriculum, along with "conflict management", in which case young people might remain in our schools longer for the honest purpose of learning more.

As posited by Dubet and Martuccelli (1998), student experience (1998) comprises three logics: that of integration, which connects past learnings, traditions and inter-generational roots, that of strategy, for facing unusual situations, new challenges and learning methods, and that of creation of the meaning that the subject assigns to certain events. A new USE school should gamble on generating processes within these three logics so as to put together a comprehensive study experience.

Such proposals may sound utopian, as we have sometimes been told, but the problem we are facing is that dystopias are more likely to turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. *Generative policies* (Giddens, 2006) are, precisely, ones that design the future, rather than being rooted in a past that no longer

exists. This is the challenge we must face if we are to answer questions such as: “Why educate?”, “What meaning does the school have for these “men [and women] in the noblest sense of the word?”, or, at the very least “How can we prevent them from leaving?” €

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DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES WITHOUT A PASSPORT

Educational Measuring: Lessons Learned in Chile

The author, director of MIDE UC, presents four Chilean cases of evaluation mobilized the public opinion and forced to reconsider the course of action, offering important lessons in relation to issues such as legitimacy, balance, institutional frameworks, and a validation agenda. This is the story.

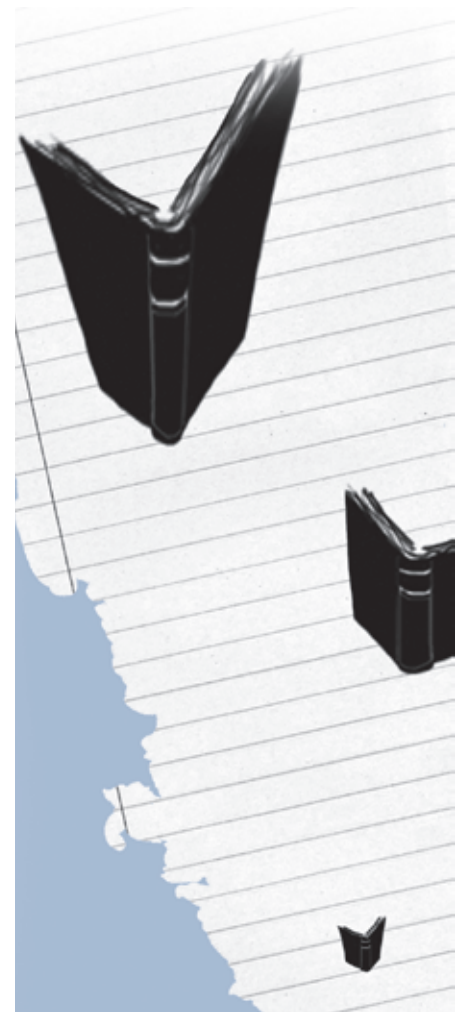
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Chile is a country with an important tradition in terms of educational evaluation; measuring has been used for admission to college education; as a way to monitoring educational achievements, in censuses applied for over 25 years; in national programs for teachers' evaluation or certification programs, since 2002; and in assessments to evaluate the education level of teachers' school graduates. Using all these measurements has delivered valuable information to direct the discussion on education and to implement public policies. However, this has also been at the center of a very hard debate.

Lessons Derived from these Experiences: Four Cases

1. University Admission: The PSU. The selection system used in the past for selecting students who would enroll at Chile's few universities was developed in the 19TH century and it was based on written and oral tests presented in front of evaluating commissions. This was only possible within a con-



text with a limited number of applicants and the system became under pressure as this number increased. This led the main university in the country to make experiments with a new system based on multiple-choice tests which was inspired (even in its name) on the American Student's Academic Skill Test (SAT), this was the Academic Skill Test (Prueba de Aptitud Académica, PAA), which was first used for admission tests in 1967, when the number of applicants was close to 40 000. This test included the mandatory measuring of verbal and numeric skills. After some years, other optional tests—related to the fields of Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, and even Chilean History—were added.

The curricular reform implemented in the late 1990s, forced the Education Ministry (Spanish acronym: MINEDUC) and the Rector's Council (Spanish acronym: CR)¹ to establish a commission to examine if the change in the educational framework should entail a modification in the admission system. This commission—which I took part in—considered that the lack of a relation between the tests used in those days and the curricular framework was a sign which weakened the educational process because it played down the pertinence of teaching subjects the students knew wouldn't be part of the admission evaluation system (and, in contrast, this made informal institutions—known in Chile as “pre-university institutions”—more relevant in the preparation for such tests). The Commission's proposal included the simplification of the number of tests—by defining four (Mathematics, Language, Social Sciences, and Science)—and demanding all applicants to present the two first tests and choosing a third depending on their chosen degree.²

Not long after this change was announced, an intense debate among all social strata began. Those who were against the change questioned the replacement of a test which (supposedly) measured aptitudes for one which was labeled as a test of “contents.” There was also a criticism in the sense that curricular alignment entailed a threat to educational freedom (even though, in Chile, there is a mandatory national curricular framework). Finally, the timeframe in which this change was announced and implemented was considered to be too short. The evidence generated in relation to the validity of the evaluations (favorable for the change)

has been practically ignored, while the international evaluation—by Pearson, hired jointly by the Chilean Education Ministry and CR— was broadly known, especially in terms of the critical aspects of its report.

As a consequence of this, the new assessment for university admission (Spanish acronym: PSU) is the target of many criticisms and this has even led to frequent proposals for it to be replaced or redesigned. The most persistent criticism has to do with inequity in terms of the results shown by students graduated from public and private high schools. And although this gap is similar to other national (such as SIMCE) or international (such as PISA and TERCE) evaluations, the high degree of consequences this evaluation in particular entails for the applicants (in terms of their opportunities to access superior education) create a greater sensibility in relation to the PSU.

What Does this Process Show? Mainly, the relevance of paying attention to the conditions in which the change of a test, with a strong impact on the educational system is generated and communicated; and to this we have to add the need to establish an adequate institutional arrangement including the differentiation between the roles of those who direct the process and those with technical responsibilities in its development and implementation.

2. Measurement of School Achievements: The National System for the Evaluation of Learning Results (Spanish acronym: SIMCE). This is a set of tests, applied as a census since 1989, which has combined various goals: a national monitoring of school achievements, the identification of those schools which need support, providing information on these achievements to guide families in their elections, and the role of these tests as a basis to organize the recently created System to Ensure Educational Quality (Spanish acronym: SAC). This system resides within a State entity; initially, within the MINEDUC's Curriculum & Evaluation Unity and, since SAC was created, as a dependent from the Educational Quality Agency.

Although the establishment of the SIMCE implied a certain degree of resistance by teachers, the low level of consequences associated to its usage—especially in its first decade of existence—dissipated questions and created conditions for its techni-

cal strengthening. SIMCE adopted procedures which made it possible to compare marks and thus its results became relevant for the general public. After some years, its consequences increased, especially after the creation of the first system of collective incentives for teachers and directors, assigned mainly upon the basis of each school's results at the SIMCE. Many educational endorsers, both private and public (municipalities), created incentive systems to promote the improvement of schools' marks, so the results of these tests became a relevant ingredient in school marketing, for bringing in families (especially in the case of privately-managed schools). Finally, the creation of the SAC established, for the first time, the possibility to close schools depending on its achievements in terms of a general indicator of educational quality (in which the SIMCE represents over two thirds of it).

What Does This Process Shows Us? The increase in the consequences of the SIMCE within the school system gave rise to questionings which, in its hardest form, manifested as a public campaign to “Stop the SIMCE,” which brought together educational professionals, university teachers, students' movements, and other groups, in particular those linked to leftist political positions. They see the SIMCE as a tool used against the guaranteed right to education and at the service of a commercial view of education. Additionally, it is accused of distorting the ends of education, generating an unjust overload for teachers and schools. The questioning around the SIMCE led to the establishing of a ministerial commission (of which I was also a part of) which, in 2014, analyzed the test and issued a set of recommendations to potentialize its positive usages and to control its possible negative effects. Essentially, the commission recognized a lack of balance between the usage of the SIMCE with the goal of establishing responsibilities (its most developed function), and its weak use for educational and developmental purposes. Therefore, there was a recommendation to analyze the calendar of evaluations, aiming towards a diminution in the frequency of some tests and a change in the character of others (for example, making it change from a census to a sample); thus, in a parallel way, its capabilities in terms of its educational use were potentialized. In this same direction, there was a recommendation to offer resources to schools and to promote the

professional development of teachers and administrative staff so they could design and implement formative evaluation processes at a local level, also including the capacity to analyze the results of these evaluations as a basis to offer feedback and new directions for educational practices.

3. Teachers' Evaluation: *Docentemás*.

Since 2003, Chile has a mandatory national evaluation program for all teachers who work in public schools; this was the result of a long process of negotiation between the teachers' union, MINEDUC, and the municipalities in charge of managing public schools. Initially, the negotiation was approved by two thirds of the teachers, through a national consultation organized by the Teachers' Association (Colegio de Profesores, Spanish acronym: CP). This is a complex system combining multiple evidences and different perspectives through four instruments: *a*) a portfolio (which combines documents on relevant aspects of teachers' work and one filmed class); *b*) the evaluation of the Principal and the Pedagogic Director of schools; *c*) the report of an evaluator who interviews the teacher; and *d*) a guideline for self-evaluation. Twelve years after its creation, it can be said that teachers' evaluation is now a regular process which, even though it does cause anxiety and resistance, is assumed by the vast majority of teachers who have to undergo the evaluation as a part of their professional role.

The Chilean teachers' evaluation was verified by a panel coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE), which assessed many aspects of it as positive, including the fact that this evaluation lies on the basis of a consensual framework of standards related to teachers' performance (the *Framework for Good Teaching Practices*), the strictness of its process of implementation and evidence analysis, as well as its concern to develop professional and technical capabilities, all of which are demanded by a system of this kind. However, the OCDE pointed out that the educational dimension of the evaluation is not sufficiently developed, which should be tackled in forthcoming revisions of this evaluative program. In the panel's opinion, it is not easy to combine in a single test the summative and educational goals which the Chilean-developed system seeks, and there is an unbalance leaning towards the former aspect

As a consequence of this, the main challenges faced by the evaluation of Chilean teachers are related to a central aspect in all evaluative systems—their capacity to promote improvement through the feedback they produce. In the Chilean case, the regulation through which teachers' evaluation was created established that teachers with identified weaknesses (those whose marks fell within the two lowest performance levels, that is the "unsatisfactory" or "basic" levels) should get professional support under the form of professional-growth plans organized by their employees (the municipalities). Our over-ten-year experience and its entailing research have shown that a significant number of the teachers to whom these actions are addressed don't attend and that the plans actually implemented are not necessarily highly-effective developmental actions. Therefore, it is needed to review this plan, together with the possibility of adding to the evaluation system some components completely focused on educational aspects—which should be implemented at a strictly local level.

What Does This Process Show? The necessity to have evidence about the real performance of teachers is reaffirmed; but it is also necessary to broaden the focus of this effort in order to take into account not only individual performances in the classroom, but also those professional areas which entail a dialogue and collaboration within educational communities. It is very likely that, as a result of this legislative process, the forthcoming portfolio will be broadened in order to include evidence of collaborative work among teachers.

4. Evaluation of Teachers' School Graduates: *Prueba Inicia* (Beginning Test).

Since 2008, Chile has implemented a program to evaluate the degree of preparation, in professional and pedagogic terms, of those who have graduated from teachers' schools (*Prueba Inicia*). This test originated within the context of the concern felt at MINEDUC to improve teachers' education. Since there was an explosion in the educational offer, but also a dissatisfaction towards the educational level of middle school graduates interested in studying to become teachers, and a big disparity in terms of the points of view of tertiary educational institutions on initial education. However, right from the start, it was observed the complete lack of a

referential framework on what was expected to be the main focus of teachers' education. This enabled not only a heterogeneity in the education of future teachers, but it also limited the interpretation of the evaluations' results. Thus, academic and professional panels were summoned to develop some standards for teachers' initial education, and these have constituted the basis for the *Inicia* evaluations. Currently, the Parliament is analyzing the role of such evaluation as a part of the Teachers' Professional Law. For it to have a mandatory character (as a prerequisite for professional practice) has been overruled and it has been transformed into a diagnostic evaluation to be applied at a moment in which institutions can still take corrective measures (halfway through the degree). The aim is for it to guide the direction teachers' education programs will follow and, thus, potentialize students so they can reach the pedagogical competences defined in terms of professional performance standards, and also to assure educational quality in the programs offered at the institutions.

What Does this Process Show? Since the first time the *Inicia* results were delivered, it was seen that a relevant number of teachers' school graduates had lacks in terms of relevant aspects in their professional formation. Moreover, it was verified that even though there were huge disparities in the results between the various educational institutions, most of these disparities could be explained through the levels of preparation shown by future teachers at the moment they presented their initial test to enroll at university. The very high correlation between the results in those initial tests and the results at the *Inicia* Test proved that educational institutions were not effective enough to alter the initial conditions of students at the moment they were enrolled. At the same time, this showed that accepting many students with low scores in their admission tests was a practice that should be put into question. The clearest effect of this evaluation was putting a halt to the growth in the offer for this educational area (some universities even took the decision of closing some of their campuses). These results also rendered visible the urgency to take measures to check and improve teachers' education, which until then was set aside by most universities. The State created a financing program to support these improvements and this allowed several universities

to have significant resources to renew their academic staff and to potentialize their professional practice by articulating it together with schools.

Conclusions

After all that has been said in relation to the Chilean experience, where measurements represent a very visible, and maybe even exaggerated, aspect of the educational process, there are four very relevant lessons:

- a. To base evaluations on referential frameworks with legitimacy. This is a broadly accepted lesson within the context of teachers' evaluation in Chile, which led to the creation of the *Framework for Good Teaching Practices* and proved that it was possible to define, through a consensus, the central aspects of good teachers' performance.
- b. To balance formative aspects, related to improvement, and summative aspects, related to assuming responsibilities. Most educational measurements
- c. To establish an institutional framework to direct, guide, and regulate the relations between those who develop, use, finance, and are potentially affected by the measurements. The evaluation of schools' achievements must be based on institutions through a government system regulated in its functions by law, and with enough public funding to allow the essential conditions for its conduction.
- d. To have, together with the development of the measurement instruments, a validation agenda which makes sure that there are evidences to back up the

interpretation of these measurements and their derived uses. It is essential for any measurement to control the sources of error which could affect the reliability of its results or classifications; to identify its purposes and uses; and to document its degree of compliance. The Chilean experience shows that the absence of such evidences impoverishes decision making and favors polarization. In contrast, when these evidences do exist, they facilitate a debate channeled into more constructive paths. €

- 1 Entity which brings together all Chilean traditional universities (eight, until 1980), as well as other 17 universities which stem from these 17 original traditional universities, most of them located at provincial regions.
- 2 The 25 universities which belong to the CR are forced by law to use this common admission system. In recent years, eight private universities subscribed to the system, accepting its rules.

DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES WITHOUT A PASSPORT

Student's Reality in Poland, Chile, and Peru

The most valuable patrimony of any nation are their children and youth. What have other governments done to potentiate the talents of their Upperr-Secondary Education students? They prohibit child work, promote participation in educational reforms, and form teachers at universities. Here, we present some State decisions in four countries.

Young Students in Poland Don't Have to Work

ANNE WOJCIUK

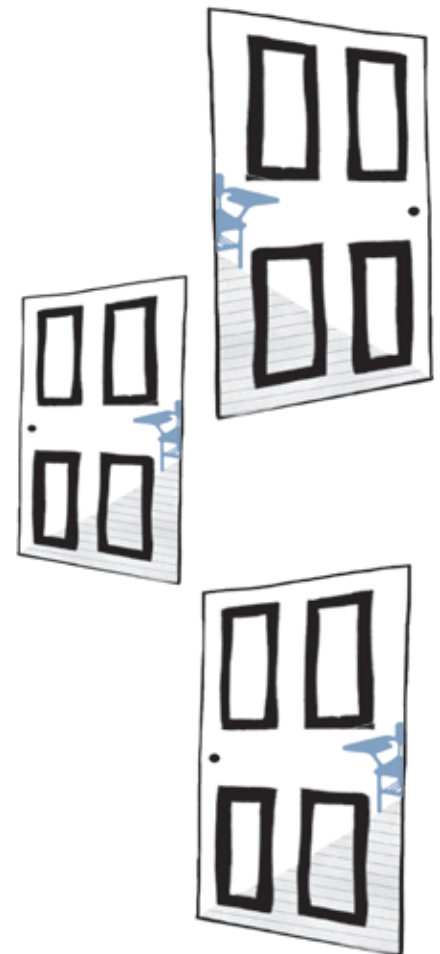
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For us, middle school includes 12-to-18-year-old students. We have a decentralized educational system which, so far, has had good levels of performance; at least, that's what evaluations tell us.

Poland has a very good educational system with the lowest levels of desertion within the European Union. Our system is very fair because we have worked hard to keep our youths inside of it, we offer them basic knowledge and help them so their talents can flourish and develop. The fact that the system is decentralized has also helped to achieve a good educational system.

Even though it is hard to point how we have secured students' continuity at school, it is important to say that our socioeconomic state is stable and equitable, so our youth don't have to leave school to go to work and help their families. They don't enter the job market until they turn 18. Working is not part of the expectations for families nor for students.

It's a fact that the economic situation is a factor that impacts on an important way in countries with a high rate of students' drop



off, and that policies are based on contexts. There must be a strong cultural work so that neither child nor youth work is allowed. These decisions are related to values and culture, to what people think is right.

Now, No More Middle School

In Poland, equality and quality are not a problem. We are at a reforming process; and so, evaluation rules are changing. For example; before, we used to evaluate students when they finished primary school. That helped because schools and government agencies got feedback from these results. There was also a general evaluation for the cohort finishing the ninth grade—that is, at the end of the mandatory education—after which young people went on to general, technical, or vocational schools. Now, with the reform, there won't be a middle school, which will be reorganized and will be part of the primary school, like it was until 1999. This is an important change because it aims at the system monitoring students' achievement and, therefore, making it efficient.

In Chile, We Try to Avoid Desertion to Become a Lifetime Doom

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Our scholar system shows two clearly-identified big gaps which public policies are trying to fix. The first, and most serious, is the socioeconomic factor. For years, our scholar system has showed a big difference between the results of the less privileged and the most privileged students, which has to do with the income and the political capital of their families.

The second gap we have is related to gender. In the case of younger students, at fourth grade (9 to 10 years old) we have been able to make it smaller, even though it still exists at eight grade and the secondary school. At this stage, male students have better results than female students in Mathematics and Science, while females get better results in Reading and Language.

For the last 25 years, our evaluation system has annually delivered information to the

system and the school: therefore, many public policies have been created to support those schools with the lowest performances. In this case, evaluation has played a fundamental role because it has rendered the situation visible. Before we had evaluations in Chile, these gaps were not an issue for public policies.

When you see the different paths of eight-grade students, you can see that, unfortunately, these gaps grow as they move forward into their school education. We have been able to stop the problem, but unable to fix it.

However Minimal, There Is Poverty and Desertion

We have a universal primary-education system. Mandatory education in Chile is 12 years. Coverage and desertion problems are basically found at the secondary level and within vulnerable sectors.¹ Secondary education presents two modalities: Technical-Professional, which is more vocational and working-world oriented, and Scientific-Humanist, oriented to the continuing of studies into higher education. Overall, the biggest problems in terms of desertion are found in the first modality and it is there we haven't been able to find a way to twist this and change it, because the majority of the students come from vulnerable sectors and their families need to increase their incomes. That's an incentive for students to leave school and start to work even before they are 18 years old. It's very hard to break the poverty-desertion circle.

What we have done is to promote educational programs aimed to those students who drop off from the system, which give them a chance to be reinserted in other educational centers and validate their studies. This is to avoid their desertion to be a factor which will doom them permanently. It's like a second chance. Beyond this policy, we haven't been able to move forward.

In Italy, There Is No Discussion on Quality & Evaluation

LIONELLO PUNZO

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In Italy, mandatory education is 16 years and, by law, parents have the responsibil-

ity to send their children to school. If they don't do it, the police show at their houses to see what's going on. In almost every country, there are laws that define the mandatory educational years, but the problem is to apply such laws.

There are 6 million students in mandatory education and at the universities—which are not public, but are very affordable—within the Italian Educational System. The average age for an individual to finish his or her education is 18. A strong reason for students to finish their education without interruptions is that there is not a job market for them.

In my country, desertion rates are very low, even at the university level. I mean, we don't have that problem. The reality is the educational system works very well; even we, as parents, don't have to worry about it. There is no discussion on educational quality because it is taken for granted. We have evaluation systems for all levels, from primary to university. There are evaluations for teachers and students and there is no discussion about it.

Fighting Youth Work

In countries with a different socioeconomic reality, such as the one Mexico faces, there must be programs that give families incentives for their children to go to school. In Brazil, for instance, there is *Bolsa Família* (PBF, Portuguese acronym), a fantastic program, because if the young kid goes to school the family faces some economic challenges. What PBF does is to give money to families to compensate them in terms of their income. However, the help must go further, it must fight the work of young people who haven't finished their education. That's where the State has to make a big investment.

In countries where the assembly industry is an important asset to their economy, people don't need higher learning. Job markets don't need specialty grades and there is a strong tendency to hire young uneducated people; therefore, young people don't have incentives to study.

Education: A Socially Valued Asset

A recommendation for Mexico would be that the State has to intervene in the education at a massive scale. Education must be an asset highly appreciated by society. Also, teachers play an important role; and when

their payment is low, educational quality is low too.

In Italy, we have an institution —with presence in every city—that constantly educates and trains teachers through a joint work with universities; here, in Mexico, that could be a mission for universities— to offer training courses for teachers. Yes, you have to evaluate teachers, but you also have to train them. If you don't have quality teachers, you have nothing.

The Secondary System Changed after the Educational Reform in Peru

JAIME SAAVEDRA

Former Education Minister of Peru and Independent Consulter

Secondary education in Peru shows huge deficits.² It is more complex than primary education, and it requires more specialization of teachers within a huge universe. Since the mid-seventies, there was an expansion of the educational-enrollment offer, and since this enrolment entailed more kids at the same number of schools, the hours were cut half a day at the secondary level. Our secondary schools worked half time. Now, as part of the reforms, we have full school days, which entails a substantial change in terms of the services provided.

At those schools with full-day schedule, kids are in school until three in the afternoon and there is no second shift, but extracurricular activities. School is part of their lives now and they spend less time in the street. This means not only a schedule extension, but also a curriculum extension. There is more Mathematics, English, and Physical Education. Teachers get extra training and schools have additional staff.

Also, they get administrative support which facilitates the principal's job and three additional hours for the less-occupied teachers so they can have meetings with parents, other teachers, and the school principal.

In Peru, there are 8 000 secondary schools. We are reaching a third of the enrolment universe. Our reform started in 2015 and, so far, we have covered 2 000 schools. This is the fundamental change at

our secondary level, which is similar to what in Mexico is called higher middle education.

Evaluation Changed Teachers' Vision

It becomes more and more evident that teaching is not just any profession; teachers are not there because teaching is just a job, or for the money, they are there to educate the youth. Evaluation emphasizes this in teacher's minds. And, because of that, the evaluations related to the subjects taught by teachers are based on pedagogical aspects.

Also, we give a bonus —equal to one month of their salary— to teachers in the best third of schools. And this is not about which schools get more points, but about which schools achieve the biggest growth in their marks. These are signs that emphasize the importance of learning in kids.

In terms of improvement and perfection, we are making it much harder to enroll to study to become a teacher. In the last process, we had a demanding and challenging evaluation in two stages: written, and in the classroom. Out of 35 000 applicants only 8 000 were selected —a 4% enrollment rate. It is a very selective test. The Union said "Hey, but we have 20 000 spots, why don't you simply hire the first 20 000?" We said: "No, they have to pass this extreme test," because we wanted to prove that joining the public career will be, from now on, something really hard.

A teacher must have capacities which are sought for in a middle higher-learning student, teachers have to learn and question themselves permanently. The class has to be more horizontal and that is hard, it requires more complex dynamics. Our monitoring system at schools shows that only between 20 and 25% of teachers accomplish it.

College Students Who Won't Get a Job

Because of universities' good use of marketing, two thirds of 18-year-old kids go to universities and only a third to technological institutions. And that is not necessarily the right proportion. More people are required studying to get technical degrees. A lot of young people who go to college won't necessarily get a job. That's the reason why in Peru we just passed a Law for Institutes and Higher Education Schools that promotes private investment in higher education at technological schools and commands public investment at this level. With this, dual education is promoted; in it, the student un-

dergoes through part of his education at a higher-education technological school and another part in a productive enterprise. That will provide him or her with better skills to find a job.

I See Big Hope in Young Peruvians

Even though educational investment is a big challenge, there is also great hope in young Peruvians. In December, 8 000 kids marched in the streets of the city of Lima in defense of the educational reform. This is unparalleled and hopeful, because it shows that kids are aware of the relevance of their education.

Bullying & Desertion: Two Pending Issues

Bullying at secondary schools is a challenge for the Ministry of Education. We have to make sure that schools are happy and safe places for everyone, that's the reason we have permanent campaigns to reduce these kinds of episodes.

The other issue is desertion rate. On secondary education, it is around 12%. A worrying fact that concerns us is that this number is for in girls than for boys. In the case of young women, sometimes this is related to teenage pregnancies, and that's why sexual education in our schools is very important.

Something we are doing, even though it is a small program, is to rescue those kids who have deserted. We created the Double Chance Scholarship, which gives a little economic aid to the student and also a two-year technical degree through working jointly with a technological institute and a secondary school. We need more mechanisms such as that to rescue those youths who, for some reason, drop off secondary school. €

Interviews in FLAGSO Mexico and CIDE, by: Lizbeth Torres Alvarado and Juan Luis Fernandez Valdez.



Know more about it:

Programa Bolsa familia: http://dab.saude.gov.br/portaldab/ape_bfa.php



Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR): <http://www.istruzione.it/>



Ley de Institutos y Escuelas de Educación Superior de Perú: <http://www.minedu.gob.pe/superiortecnologica/pdf/ley-n-29394.pdf>

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- 1 In Chile, as in Peru and some other countries of the Latin-American region, middle school is called “secondary” and it has four levels. It starts with the first grade (14-to-15-year-old students) and ends at the fourth grade (17-to-18-year-old students).
- 2 Peruvian Educational-Systems levels are organized in four areas: Initial Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education —which in other countries, such as Mexico, would be the equivalent to Upper-secondary education— and Higher Education. The primary and secondary levels have 5 different modalities: minors, adults, special, occupational, and distance learning (OEI, *Sistemas Educativos Nacionales*. Available at: <http://www.oei.es/historico/quipu/peru/>).

DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES
OTHERS PERSPECTIVES

Decisions Regarding Upper-Secondary Education in Mexico: Bustamante Díez, Székely, and Martínez Espinoza

The Under-Secretariat of Upper-Secondary Education in Mexico has had four directors since its establishment, in 2005. Three of them share their experiences, analyses, and proposals concerning the components of this educational level with the *Gazette*.

The Ideal School if You Were a Student Yoloxóchitl Bustamante Díez (YBD), Undersecretary of Higher Secondary Education from February 2005 to December 2006: From when we begin our student life, we should find in our schools a space that promotes the development of our cognitive abilities and correct ways of relating with others and with our environment; that is, school should provide the skills needed to face all kinds of circumstances. By the age of 18, the person graduating from school should be capable of surviving emotionally and socially, and capable of understanding the world he or she lives in.

Miguel Ángel Martínez Espinoza (MAM), Undersecretary of Higher Secondary Education from January 2010 to December 2012: Youths expect to acquire tools for their future performance, as well as a basis of preparation or knowledge for their advancement in higher education, if that's what they choose. They are looking for tools and for answers. If I were young, I would look for a school in which the learning experience is accompanied by a process that makes me feel included. The area of attention in Upper-secondary education (Spanish acronym: EMS) should lie on the ability to continue learning for the rest of one's life.

Success and the Expectations of Young People

YBD: There are different ways of seeing success; however, a high percentage of young people think it means the possibility of escaping from the socioeconomic condition they live in. Others relate success with the possibility of living a profession, and many others see it as the opportunity to have a family.

MAM: Success is related to outstanding participation in a given area, and to the economic response associated with this participation. In the case of the EMS, success should be measured in the contrast between the objectives of this educational level (graduation profile) and what is really attained. That is, success for the educational system would be an education that permits youths to fully develop their personalities, love for their country, consciousness of solidarity and democracy, and so on.

His and Her Possibilities

YBD: I see different levels of possibility for young people in Mexico. On the one hand, we have a population with access to education, who can reach higher education and postgraduate studies and, later on, earn a position in a company, in the public sector, or in research. On the other hand, we have many young people who, even with a higher education, cannot find a well-paid job. There are those who enter bivalent technological high schools, which provide a strong professional formation in order to practice as technicians within the area they have chosen. Reality is a little different for them, because in Mexico—as opposed to other countries—their activities are not valued, respected, or well-paid.

However, if we look at the occupational pyramid, there aren't as many positions for graduates at a higher level as there are technical positions, and businessmen themselves are the ones who demand the labor force the latter group represents.

Finally, in schools there are no limitations to study, but in the work environment there are still companies and industries with unwritten limitations that lower opportunities for women's performance.

MAM: In terms of performance measured in standardized tests, EMS graduates

should expect to develop further in higher education or in their productive activities. If we are guided by the results of standardized tests, women present a higher degree of development of their skills than men do. However, apart from the gender issue, it is pertinent to note that among the youth there are two groups who face more problems for a good performance in their future. One is the group with insufficient learning-achievement levels in reading comprehension and math skills; and the second group are those who drop out or never enroll in higher secondary education to begin with.

Advances, Setbacks, and Transformations of Higher Secondary Education

YBD: There have been advances in the definition of a common framework, which—respecting the different individual models—has enabled the establishment of the minimum requirements for building our citizens. Also, through the university preparation components, youths can prepare to enter higher education, and with the work formation components, they can become prepared for the job market.

On the other hand, I consider that more than 50% of teachers follow traditional methods and do not adequately fulfill their duties in terms of development of skills. This is because there is no true teacher formation, and many of them teach as best they can. This is one of our greatest challenges.

MAM: I think that the National System of Upper-Secondary Education has become gradually consolidated, and it will be further strengthened by the new educational model. This is a great opportunity to bring coherence and integrity to the obligatory education syllabus in Mexico; that is, to correctly coordinate it with basic education, and give it greater national content in order to allow greater compatibility between the study plans and programs. This will favor the migration of students between schools, or reinsertion of those who have dropped out.

Current Panorama of EMS in the Country: Challenges

YBD: In terms of equality we have serious problems. In some communities, there is no access to higher secondary education for their youth. In some areas, they don't even have high-school level distance learning.

Inequality is also seen in the kind of teachers available to students in all the variations in which higher secondary education is offered. One solution would be to implement support scholarships; that is, an aid that will allow them to live in a location where there is adequate provision of higher secondary education.

We also have to work on teacher education. Their role has become more complex and they have greater responsibilities. In principle, we must consider that they face diverse groups, which can include youth and children who are migrants, indigenous, who have disabilities, do not speak Spanish, etc. In this scenario, the teacher is required to generate inclusive education, they must have the capacity to organize, maintain, and render productive the collaborative work that is created along with their students (where they all build knowledge together). They must keep their knowledge and that of their students up-to-date, and strengthen social-emotional skills. They must coach their students, and be capable of evaluating students efficiently and in a timely and continuous manner. The teacher's role must be strengthened, it should get more recognition and receive higher remuneration: a teacher who is not well in his or her own life will not have the capacity to develop the skills of his or her students. Another point is the evaluation they are subject to. The evaluation processes must begin with a good information and awareness campaign.

Miguel Székely Pardo (MZP), Undersecretary of Higher Secondary Education from December 2006 to January 2010: The greatest challenge in higher secondary education is quality; but in order to speak about it, we need a common and explicit objective. Today, we have a well-defined graduation profile, so the question is: To what extent does higher secondary education achieve this profile? Our first challenge is teacher education and training. Teachers should have the skills to generate this profile, which is not based on memorizing data anymore, but rather on developing skills and abilities in students.

The second great challenge is the complexity of offering this service, which includes federal, state, university and private sector intervention. There is a diversity of skills, educational opportunities, and interests. How can we bring all the actors in higher secondary education together into one same policy? Reforms, by merely being enacted, do not imply a transformation in the educational

sector. This takes several years, requires significant investments and teacher-formation processes, time to build the appropriate infrastructure and syllabus, to select teachers and head staff, etc. With a policy that provides continuity, progress will be made in achieving these objectives.

MAM: A reiterated complaint of EMS teachers is the low reading-comprehension level of students who enter this education level. Reading habits develop the skill of understanding what one reads, and this affects future learning capacity. The EMS must focus on developing aptitudes, values, skills, and abilities so that youths can perform adequately in any work, given the current flexibility of the job markets.

The educational system needs to consider itself as a whole. The entire school must be committed to permanence in school. Schools must become a much more pertinent space in relation to the youths' modes of learning, to understanding their environment, and their social relations. The infrastructure must be appropriate and welcoming, and the curriculum pertinent.

Factors of Incidence on EMS Dropout Rates

YBD: I can identify three causes: financial, lack of significance, and social, family, biological, and other pressures. The financial aspect is highly important, but in second position, education is still very boring.

MZP: Generally, school dropouts are a result of a combination of causes: teenage pregnancy, risk of addiction, vocational orientation, and exposure to the communication media (with messages that discourage youth from attending school).

MAM: To a great extent, they are associated with the lag that appears and accumulates throughout the educational trajectory of youths. If there are insufficient levels of reading comprehension and math skills from primary school, it is unlikely that the EMS can help to compensate for these; they require much more focused attention.

Successful, Unsuccessful, and Possible Public-Action Strategies

YBD: I had the opportunity of operating the permanent scholarship program, and I got very good results; at least the economic aspect is compensated. On the other hand, there is also tutoring as a prevention tool for students at risk of dropping out, either

because of personal or family problems, or drug use and other reasons. Sports and the arts are very important at this stage in life, especially in contexts of violence. This and the responsibility of developing social-emotional skills present a great challenge for the subsystems.

MAM: The tutoring programs have been successful. In the efficacy reports I worked regarding the program *Siguele* (“Keep Going”), the schools that applied it increased students’ retention. In the educational system, we make the mistake of overlooking prior efforts. Lack of continuity of programs means wasting resources, efforts, talent, and experiences.

EMS in Mexico and Other Countries

MZP: The strategies must respond to the causes of desertion, and —on this point— I believe that the currently existing strategies are pertinent and coherent. For example, it is an advantage that the strategy against school dropouts in high school provides each school with a box of tools, and allows them to adapt it to their needs and circumstances. It is right that each environment should have the necessary tools and carry out their own interventions. One of the root causes of dropouts is academic, namely educational pertinence and quality. This is related to what youths expect from the educational system, and to the system’s capacity to respond to the generation of the graduation profile. That is to say, this is the measure in which educational institutions respond to the needs and perspectives of the youth.

MAM: The results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) clearly reflect the lag we face in Mexico in relation to the other member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE). It presents a similar behavior with respect to other countries of Latin America. There are also good practices that Mexico could adopt from other countries, such as the idea of the School at the Center, or the proposition of the New Educational Model, with a good retrieval of experiences.

Evaluation: Strategies and Aspects

YBD: I am convinced that evaluation is one of the most important tools we have for improvement. And I am referring to evaluating teachers, students, and school organization. With these three elements, we can have a comprehensive appreciation of the problem.



Another element for evaluation of school organization is number portability for student enrollment, such that students can be monitored with respect to their school trajectory. This would help a lot, given the conditions of internal migration.

MZP: At present, we are already implementing a series of approaches that are very informative. Here, the main challenge is that the annual learning achievement measurements are still not instituted as obligatory, which is what was being done with the National Evaluation of Academic Achievement in Scholar Centers (Spanish acronym: ENLACE). This was very valuable information that, even though it was not used as an instrument for improvement at a school level, it had at least already generated a dynamic of transparency and of establishing reference points for the society regarding educational progress.

The only way in which we can compare ourselves internationally is in terms of coverage, and we are lagging behind with respect to other countries in our same economic development level. Furthermore, we are in 9th position of 18 Latin-American countries in terms of coverage, a much lower place than would be expected. At a state level, we are in

our infancy in terms of using the evidence for public policy decision-making in EMS.

MAM: My point of view is that, as well as evaluating what is already included in the standardized tests, there are subjective elements that should be evaluated such as: to what degree does the educational system succeeds in helping an individual solve his or her vocational orientation at the end of their obligatory education, what are they going to do with their productive life, what profession will they be dedicated to, and so on. And then, there are the skills and values that surround citizen behavior, the sense of belonging to a community, the catalog of rights and responsibilities that a person has when they belong to a community. There is already significant progress in the evaluation of the main educational aspects, but I would propose exercises in more subjective components, which allow us to know the surrounding elements that the curriculum also influences. No matter how much one would like to accelerate the evolution of educational systems, they change slowly. And we have to be very patient in order to solidify the proposals for reform; they must be assimilated and consolidated. €

DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES
OTHERS PERSPECTIVES

Young people first and students second: a viewpoint that is barely taken into account

School cultures are vertical, rigid and authoritarian, while youth cultures are horizontal, flexible and more democratic. The criteria of education systems are almost never drawn up with the participation of teachers and students. The author of the following article, who has studied this phenomenon in every country in Latin America over the last 30 years, asserts that it is essential that they feel that their opinions matter.

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In each of my talks, courses and workshops, I point out that education comprises the two great processes of teaching and learning, adding that, while the most important of the two is learning, our education systems are overwhelmingly structured around teaching. This may seem irrelevant, and even irreverent, but the fact is that, if this is the case, the said viewpoint clearly substantiates the phrase, "Young people first and students second", assuming that the main component, teaching, has to do with young people, while the most "instrumental" one, teaching, has to do with teachers.

From this viewpoint, all education should revolve around the young students rather than the teacher – something that is only rarely actually seen in our middle-school classrooms.

School cultures vs. youth cultures

If we go a step further and try to find some underpinning for the aforesaid approach, we need to focus our attention on the ongoing, systematic, day-to-day conflict that occurs

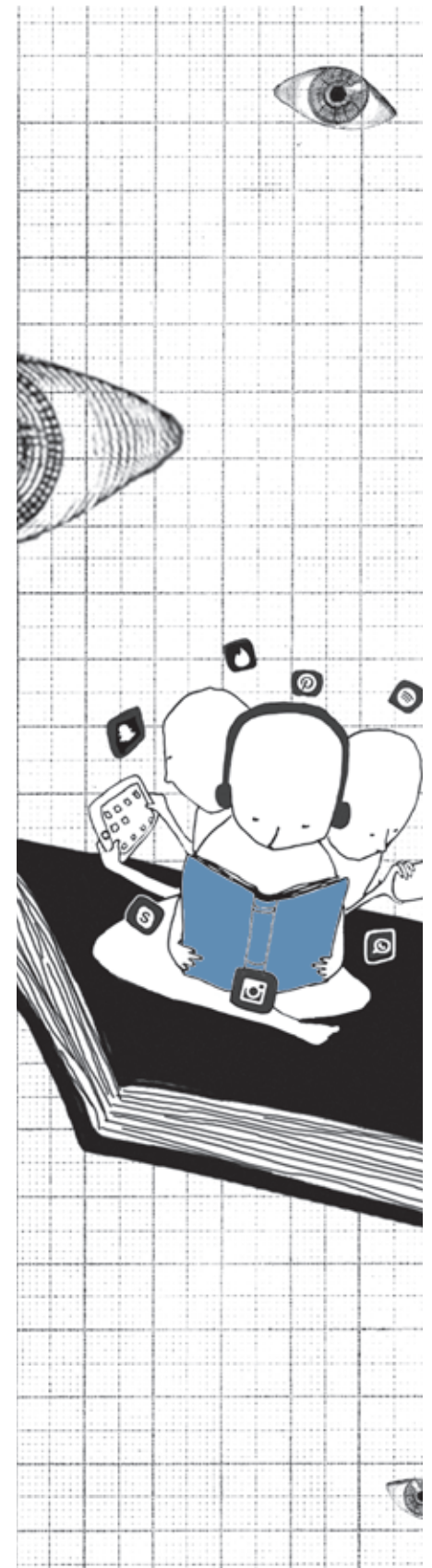
in almost all our middle schools between two "worlds" – i.e. that of *school cultures* and that of *youth cultures*.

Almost by definition, school cultures are vertical (being defined in the upper echelons of the education system and disseminated throughout the latter), rigid (varying once in a while due to complex bureaucratic processes), and even authoritarian (with the "authorities always being right"). In contrast, youth cultures, also almost per se, are horizontal (arising among young people via complex, fertile collective processes), flexible (constantly changing, almost without being noticed by us adults who face them every day), and much more democratic (usually via exhausting debates whose conclusions are always circumstantial).

Why do the aforementioned two cultures clash every day? Might we imagine processes and scenarios where they could interact in a cooperative manner? Some possible explanations might come from psychology, if we recall that youths are no longer children and are trying to become free of their model adults (which is why they are "rebellious"), but we could go further and take stock of the fact that the adolescent phase of life is taken up by the two great missions of building identity and becoming independent – things that we struggle to achieve throughout our lives, but which are much more important when we are youths.

If this is the case, public policy vis-à-vis youth should be designed, implemented and evaluated in terms of the support they can provide in the face of the said two big challenges. Educational and cultural policies are essential to the building of identity – i.e. who we want to be, what we want to do, what place in the world we wish to occupy. On the other hand, if we are to manage to become independent, alone and with our own resources and regardless of the links that we have with our family and social environments, then employment and housing policies are most certainly pertinent (Rodríguez, 2014).

In order to make progress in this respect, one should not forget that our education systems function based on standards and criteria that must be respected, by drawing up and approving more or less



relevant rules, albeit ones laid down by the education authorities and never -or almost never- by those who play a direct role in the educational process –i.e. teachers and students- .which is why the said rules almost always lack legitimacy, being imposed from outside.

How can one explain to young people that remaining seated and attentive for hours on end is a *sine qua non* of teaching, if they see it as something meaningless and unjustly imposed on them, as is the proscription of mobile phones in the classroom and of speaking while the teacher is giving his/her class? The “regulations” are cited to justify these prohibitions, and, if a student gives trouble in the classroom, we scold him/her, expelling him/her from the classroom, and thus preventing him/her from participating in the educational process - something that will always seem unfair to both the student involved and his/her classmates. Later, we’ll be surprised if the said student drops out – such cases will continue to be chalked up in the statistics pertaining to dropout – a euphemism that can mask the fact that the people in question were, in fact, expelled by the education system itself.

Educational aims, practices and methods that need to be reviewed

To the aforesaid part of the process one needs to add some of the central components of teaching, reviewing the aims, methods and practices currently in use – something that regularly occurs in the light of the school culture, and very rarely in the light of the youth culture. And even in the cases where such review is carried out at the institutional level, it involves complex political and administrative processes that stress ancillary procedural matters and pass over other aspects that are undeniably of the essence.

The subject is so big and complex that it cannot be adequately tackled in this short article, but it is important that we analyze some of the most pertinent aspects – i.e. 1) the role of the teacher; 2) the working methodologies, and 3) the assigning of tasks to different people involved in the education process, or the sharing of them among the latter.

From a long-term point of view, it is usually argued that, for much of the XX Century, the teacher’s role was basically to transmit information. This is relevant in societies that suffered from a great lack of -and need

for- information, but, with globalization, more open societies and the technological revolution, we now have the opposite problem – i.e. a surfeit of information, which is why the role of the teacher can no longer be centered around the mere transmission of data that are generally outdated and presented in ways that are not very attractive for adolescents, and the support for use and processing of information has now become much more pertinent.

The above is directly related to working methodologies, an area where approaches focusing on the use of provided data have predominated, to such an extent that the evaluation of the respective learnings has been -and still is- almost exclusively focused students’ ability to memorize. Obviously, this has several limitations, of which two outstanding ones are the fact that: 1) the relative value of the information that is transmitted is negligible, above all vis-à-vis competencies in information and communications technology (CIT), and 2) the teaching process becomes tedious and unattractive, being characterized by some specialists as “the pedagogy of boredom” (Correa and Lewkowicz, 2010), falling within the category of “meaningless education”.

We should therefore reformulate the links between the school and other people involved in education, prioritizing their coherence with CIT, which is seen, from a historical point of view, and for very good reasons, as one of the main mysteries of education, given its controversial and difficult introduction into the classroom, and remains at a rudimentary and strictly instrumental level, without extending to methodological and other substantive issues.

¿Should we train young people to be citizens, or workers, or what?

This question has arisen in the debates about educational policy in the countries of Latin America, but everything would seem to indicate that it is either badly or simplistically formulated, since it evades more in-depth questions. What are we talking about? Undoubtedly, about a very important topic that always divides entrepreneurs, and some relatives who demand that education provide more and better training for work on the one hand, and educators who sustain that such instrumental training implies an exaggerated and pointless circumscription of teaching aims on the other hand.

The discussion should focus on how to train young people to be both citizens and workers at the same time, within a framework of complete, comprehensive processes while avoiding pointless oversimplifications. Thus seen, the problem concerns classroom methodologies, a topic in which we tend to polarize the debate between the more traditional, frontal methodologies and the more modern ones that aspire to be more horizontal and participative and focused on teaching approaches, counterpoising frameworks that focus on the development of competencies against ones that stress values and abilities, without realizing that we have to all of these things and more (Bárcena and Serra ed. 2011, Tedesco 2012 and SITEAL 2008).

Young people see all these things as secondary to the extent that they fail to take stock of their interests, which mainly have to do with socializing with friends and building identity. For them it is crucial to feel that they are being taken into account and that their learning efforts are appreciated.

The aforesaid is valid, but different members of groups of young people experience such things in very different ways. Assuredly, within the school, as in many other places, it isn’t the same to be a man or a woman, to belong to the upper or lower class, to live in a rural or an urban area, or to belong to one ethnic group or another. It should not be forgotten that, though upper-secondary education was originally the preserve of the élites, over recent decades it has been invaded by youths from the lower-middle classes and marginalized populations. This is relevant, given that the methodologies that we at the CELAJU have analyzed may be valid for *traditional clients*, but not for *new ones*.

This dichotomy is especially important. Should we work from the particular to the general, or vice versa? This is another longstanding, current debate, but it is undeniable that, seen from the viewpoint of the former, the matter may be relatively simple, since the *traditional clients* have all the necessary family, social and cultural advantages, but, when dealing with the *new clients*, it is vital that we reflect on their daily living conditions and gradually broaden our focus to contemplate a single-methodology curriculum that must work -with no if’s or but’s- with all our students.

Safe schools or open schools?

Another topic associated with the dynamics in upper-secondary schools is the -in our opinion misnamed- one of "school violence", a phenomenon that conflates many different, highly complex, types of violence carried out by different social and institutional protagonists and hence goes beyond more limited viewpoints that contemplate only one type of violence -i.e. violence among students and sometimes between students and teachers- but always lays the blame on young people.

This topic has been amply analyzed in specialized studies and seminars (Furlan coord., 2012 and Ortega *et al.*, 2012), and, though it comprises different aspects, two types of responses to it are always proposed - namely prevention or punishment, which are generally expressed in the two public-policy models of safe schools or open schools, which are based on two different, opposing logics.

The *open-school* model has been tried out in Brazil and piloted in local and national contexts such as the Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, Guatemala and Uruguay. It rests on the basic concept of opening up elementary and middle schools during the weekend and vacations for play, recreational, cultural and sports activities, so as to foster conviviality and the positive use of free time by the young people who live around the school as well as the students themselves, who are governed by more horizontal and "friendly" rules.

The studies that have been carried out -above all those done in Brazil, where the open school system has been implemented in 100,00 schools throughout the country, with 8 million adolescents- clearly show the impacts achieved (Rodríguez, 2011). The levels of violence in the participating schools are significantly reduced, conviviality is significantly increased, basic values such as tolerance, solidarity, etc. are enhanced, and even some educational yardsticks -e.g. those pertaining to the reincorporation of dropouts and student-student relationships- experience an upswing. In Brazil, it has worked in 100 000 schools with eighth million students un all the country.

For its part, the *safe-school* model prioritizes vigilance and student control by means of security cameras, entry-point backpack scanners and even on-campus police, all within the context of dynamics that encour-

age the reporting of infractions of the established rules and are evaluated in terms of the number of students sanctioned, the number of reports processed and the levels of tranquility achieved in the schools where the system is in place. According to the Mexican Ministry of Education, this system was most widely implemented in 46 830 schools in 32 Mexican states, with 10 million students during the six-year term of office of President Felipe Calderón (2006–2012).

In this case, the evaluations that were carried out showed scant positive impact in terms of conviviality, the transmission of positive values, etc., and hence the program was phased out over time, notwithstanding which it has been reimplemented this year as part of the newly approved National Plan for the Prevention of Violence.

We can learn five big lessons from these two experiences (Rodríguez, 2011): 1) primary or non-specific prevention with all young people, and not just ones who are at risk, has more and better impacts; 2) it is essential to focus efforts and adopt comprehensive approaches; 3) the highest success levels are achieved in schools that manage to form proactive working teams who are committed to their job, young people who feel that they are acknowledged and appreciated within the context of these practices, families that positively value the participation of their Young members in such dynamics during the weekends, and communities that become really involved in this type of process; 4) it is not a good idea to mix or superimpose *open schools* and *safe schools*, since the results obtained when this was done have been very limited, given that *safe schools* are implemented based on a control-centered police logic, while *open schools* are implemented based on promotional logic that focuses on young people's participation, and 5) State participation is essential if we are to move from pilot projects to public policies, though it has many limitations, which can only be overcome by transforming and strengthening it, rather than ignoring it.

We need to see how the two aforesaid strategies function in the long term, since the change of government that occurred in Brazil in 2016 has left the continuation of the *open schools* up in the air, while the new *safe-school* version has only just begun to be implemented in Mexico. It will be important to follow up on these two initiatives, and also on the similar ones in Honduras and

Guatemala, which lean towards the *safe-school* model - a trend that is unfortunately spreading throughout Latin America based on political considerations rather than on the overwhelmingly negative results of the research that has been done.

Risk groups, people with legal rights or strategic development agents?

Since, the complex links between young people are, in any case, one of the many topics that concern and preoccupy those who play a central role in the educational dynamic, we do not seek to portray them as the only ones involved, though it is important to give a more holistic, comprehensive overview that reflects the wide range of problems and challenges that upper-secondary education will face in the future in our countries. To do this, it is crucial that we remember that, up to now, three great overviews of young people have been developed: 1) one that merely sees them as a risk group; 2) one that sees them, above all, as delinquents; and 3) one that also considers them to be strategic development agents. These three overviews, which are very different though they do have several links and overlaps, function very independently and can even be mutually exclusive, though they do coexist in practice.

If one starts from the idea that young people are a mere risk group, the pertinent public policies should be based on the two big aims of: 1) preventing risks of premature pregnancy, drug consumption, membership of gangs, etc., and 2) dealing with the consequences of the said risks once they have directly or indirectly affected young people (e.g. teenage mothers).

If one starts from the idea that young people are, above all, people with legal rights, public policies should safeguard young people's legal rights per se, as set forth in specific or general laws having to do with them, and hence the said policies should cover young people as a whole, and not just those who are at risk.

However, if we assume that young people are also strategic development agents, public policies should see them not only as objects of policy, but also as people actively involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the said policies, in which case their participation is much more important than it is in the other two scenarios.

All of this is significant, because many of the public-policy decisions taken in the fu-

ture will, one way or another, fall within the scope of one of the above options,

In any case, the important thing is to assume that these processes, implemented at many different levels of our society, will, to a large extent, focus on our schools, so that the argument about these different emphases should form part of the educational dynamic, regardless of the different positions taken regarding them.

Undoubtedly, the important thing is to make our views of young people explicit, assuming that there are disputes about approaches in all our countries, within their governments, among different government institutions, and with other non-governmental institutions, but taking much more stock of young people's views, what definitely matters is to prioritize learnings over teaching so as to improve education and align it with best practices. €

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DOSSIER: YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. LATITUDES ROADMAP

Between Diversity and Fragmentation: About the Origin and Development of Upper-Secondary Education in Mexico¹

The author states that upper secondary education is in a whirlwind of processes that put it on the national agenda—the Comprehensive Reform of the Upper-Secondary Education, an mandatory decree, and the General Law for Professional Teaching Service—and assures it has not been visualized like an essential element of the educational policy.

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In Mexico, there are more than 30 million young people between 15 and 29 years old (INEGI, 2016), of whom 6 736 349 are in age—15 to 17 years old—to attend middle school. Undoubtedly, the challenge faced by the National Educational System is big and complex because, although terminal efficiency of secondary education reaches 87.7%, the coverage rate recorded in the upper secondary education (Spanish acronym: EMS) is 57%, while desertion rates reach 15.3% (INEE, 2016:326, 361 & 367). In order to provide sufficient, adequate, and quality educational services, it's necessary to consider that the EMS is facing problems such as the difficulty in revalidating studies among the institutions that comprise it, insufficient coverage, a low level of school achievements of its graduates, and high dropout levels. Taking the *bacalaureate*² as a reference, it's possible to locate its origin in 1867 with the creation of the National Preparatory School

(Spanish acronym: ENP)³, since for a long period there wasn't an authority to channel its development throughout the country.⁴

The long absence of general guidelines for this kind of education had the consequence that its growth obeyed the conditions of specific entities or institutions, which allowed, on the one hand, to respond to the specific demand of these educational services and, on the other, contributed to a diverse and fragmented composition of educational options generated by different public, autonomous, and private educational dependencies and institutions⁵, a condition that from the perspective of the plans and study programs taught in them, makes it difficult to compare them and to establish equivalencies between them.

The *bacalaureate* or middle school, was conceived as a preparatory training prior to the higher education studies, i.e. college, but throughout its development formative elements aimed for job preparation were incorporated. It was not considered that all should have access to this training section; however, this perspective was expanded later, since it was considered as a means of social mobility.

There is a large degree of fragmentation of the EMS in the different kinds of education regulated by authorities such as the entities, the federal government, universities, and the private sector (see Table 1). It is often found curricula which differ significantly between different, but similarly named, organs. This, and the lack of compatibility, is generalized situation that limits a harmonic, coherent, and effective operation.

The various educational authorities are in charge of establishing regulations regard-



Table 1. Kinds of Educational Training

Kind of Support	Administrative Control	Subsystems
Public	Centralized *	Dirección General de Bachillerato (DGB) Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Agropecuaria (DGETA) Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Industrial (DGETI) Dirección General de Educación en Ciencia y Tecnología del Mar (DGECYTM)
	Decentralized *	Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica del Distrito Federal (CONALEP Mexico City) Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica del Estado de Oaxaca (CONALEP Oaxaca) Centro de Enseñanza Técnica Industrial (CETI) Colegio de Bachilleres México (COLBACH Mexico)
	Deconcentrated *	Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBAL) Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN)
	Centralized **	Secondary education or preparatory schools that are assigned to the Secretary of Public Education of each entity.
	Decentralized **	Colegios de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos (CECYTES) Colegios de Bachilleres estatales (COBACH) Educación Media Superior a Distancia (EMSAD) Bachillerato Integral Comunitario (BIC) Bachillerato Intercultural Bilingüe (BI) Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica (CONALEP) Other state-governments' decentralized subsystems
Autonomous		Upper secondary education, or preparatory schools, belonging to the states' autonomous universities.
Private		Upper secondary education or preparatory schools belonging to private institutions

* Federal government's. ** State governments'.

Source: Self elaborated, based on INEE (2015). *Panorama Educativo de México. Indicadores del Sistema Educativo Nacional 2014. Educación básica y media superior*. Mexico: INEE, p. 60.

ing implemented plans and curricula, as well as the way in which they will operate in schools; this means they define in which modality and educational option these plans and curricula will be taught (see table 2).

According to the curricular structure presented in the plan and curricula of the various dependencies and institutions that offer upper secondary education, the following educational kinds, or approaches, can be identified: general middle school or preparatory baccalaureate, general baccalaureate with job training, technologic baccalaureate, professional technical education with baccalaureate, professional technical education without baccalaureate.

However, to the previous classification—due to its formative specificity—it's necessary to add the characteristics of the kinds of training that are taught in other baccalaureate systems, such as military, arts and humanities, bilingual intercultural, communitarian, inclusive and the Mexican Dual Education Model, among others.

In Mexico, the EMS is made up of various dependences and educational institutions. The school system offers more than a hundred study programs, which can be complex in terms of their equivalence, and makes it difficult for young people to move between different subsystems, kinds of education, and educational options. A single educational institution can simultaneously offer one or more kinds, and it can operate one or more educational modalities and options, and also show different dimensions in terms of the number of schools and in the amount of people enrolled; in addition, it can include different curricular structures and organizational and school-management forms.

It is important to point that in order to analyze the subsystems of EMS it is crucial to identify the kind of support and administrative control that offers a frame to the work of each subsystem because they this can have a significant influence on the implementation of certain regulations which emanate from the federation or the federative entity.

Since a few years ago, this kind of education is in a whirlwind of processes that have placed it in the national agenda. On the one hand, the implementation of the Comprehensive Reform for Upper Secondary Education (Spanish acronym: RIEMS), which parts from the basis of a competences approach, and the establishment of the Common Curricular Framework, began in 2008; on the other, the Decree of February 2012, establishing the compulsory nature of this type of education, will be gradually enacted until it is universalization by 2020-2022. And there is also the implementation of the General Law for Professional Teaching Service, which since 2013 indicates the criteria, the terms, and the conditions that teachers must cover for their admission, promotion, recognition, and permanence in the service.

Both the absence of a national curricula, and the conditions and contexts in which each dependence has responded to the necessities of this educational service, have contributed to diversity and fragmentation

Table 2. Normativity of the EMS Educational Offer

Modality	Opción	Characteristics
Out-of-school System	On-site	Its taught in a campus; it has fixed schedules and timetables; it has a mediating teaching staff; it follows an established curricular path; it can have access to digital mediation or dispense with it; it must meet and accredit the plan and curriculum to obtain the corresponding certificate.
	Intensive	In general, it shares the features of the on-site option. The difference is that in the intensive option there is a curricular concentration and a reduction in the duration of the schedule to cover the academic curriculum.
In-school System	Virtual	There are not necessarily spatial or temporal coincidences between those who attend a virtual secondary education option and the institution providing it; it must have specific educational and technological strategies for the development and fulfillment of the plan and the curriculum; it follows a pre-established curricular path, it offers the mediation of teaching staff which can work at the institution itself or in other spaces where they have access to information and communication technologies; the schedule is fixed but the timetables are flexible; it needs to meet and accredit the plan and the curriculum to obtain the corresponding certificate.
Mixed	Self-planned	Flexibility in the schedule, teaching mediation; a part of the curricular trajectory is pre-established for the serial subjects and free for the rest of them; teacher mediation is based on the students' needs, however, it must guarantee that at least 30% of the learning activities are carried out under the supervision of a teacher; students will perform activities on campus and will also carry out independent work; flexible schedules and timetables, it needs to meet and accredit the plan and the curriculum to obtain the corresponding certificate.
	Mixed	It combines strategies, methods, and resources of the different options according to the characteristics of its enrolled population, the nature of the academic model, and the resources and conditions of the educational institution; it shares the characteristics of the self-planned option. The difference between them is that the mixed option must follow a fixed schedule while timetables can be preset or flexible; it must guarantee that at least 40% of learning activities are carried out under the supervision of a teacher; it needs to meet and accredit the plan and curriculum to obtain the corresponding certificate.

Source: *Diario Oficial de la Federación*. "Acuerdo secretarial 445". October, 21st, 2008.

as its own characteristic features.

It should be noted that it is possible that the competence-based Common Curricular Framework (MCC) has not been consolidated as a national curriculum for the EMS because each subsystem responds to its own formative purposes, so it the incorporation of a model based in competency has been a complex issue. Even though since 2008 the MCC was established on the basis of competences as an essential element of the EMS graduate's profile, the curricula continue prioritizing subjects and matters as a substantial element of the contents that conform curricular learning units. In the New Educational Model of the Secretariat of Public Education, presented on March 13th, 2017, there are no elements that modify significantly what was stated above.

This invites to a reflection on the limits and the reach of the reforms in which it is immersed and to explore the vast possibilities for its revision and analysis. Upper-Secondary Education is partially known in its fragments, but it has not been visualized in a comprehensive and global way as an essential element of the educational policy,

aimed to the attend a strategic population in the definition of the present and the future of the country: the youth. €

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- Updated version of the published text at: Dander, A. (2016) *Diverse and fragmented, High School-Level Education in Mexico. Voices of Mexico*. N.101, CISAN-UNAM, pp. 24-27.
- According to the General Law of Education, the EMS is made up of middle school studies and other formative alternatives (Article 37). In Mexico, "baccalaureate" and "preparatory" are terms used to refer to upper secondary studies, which prepare the student for college.
- Dr. Gabino Barrera was the founder and first director of the National Preparatory School.
- In 2002, the General Coordination of Middle Education was established, which until 2005—when the Undersecretary for Upper-Secondary Education was established—dealt with this educational level.
- The dependencies and institutions that form the EMS are identified as "subsystems".

Political Strategies Applied to Attend to School Dropouts in Upper-Secondary Education

One of the guidelines for improvement that will be issued in 2017 by INEE will focus on school dropout in higher secondary education, “because it is one of the greatest challenges the National Education System faces to guarantee compliance with the right of students to remain in school,” explain the authors, and they affirm that it should be considered as a systemic problem, resulting from a multi-causal process.

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In compliance to its constitutional mandate, and in full exercise of its autonomy, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: INEE) has issued three sets of guidelines in priority educational areas: initial formation of basic education teachers, in September 2015; educational services to girls, boys, and teenagers of families of migrant farm workers, in August 2016; and educational services for indigenous children, in January 2017. This is aimed at guiding decision making for the improvement of aspects relevant to education in Mexico, and to contribute in this way to the progressive compliance of the right to quality education for all.

As follow-up to this work, during 2017, INEE will issue improvement guidelines focused towards preventing and dealing with school dropouts in higher secondary education (EMS), because this is one of the greatest challenges of the National Education System (SEN) in ensuring compliance with the right of youths to remain in school and acquire meaningful and relevant knowledge for living.

Introduction

School dropout, at any stage in the school trajectory, generates exclusion and has negative results in forming human capital and in the social integration process (Blanco, 2014).

This problem should be considered systemic, resulting from a multi-causal process, which in many cases derives from an accumulation of disparities and deficiencies in learning that are expressed throughout the school trajectory of students. Therefore, broadening educational opportunities should ensure quality education provision, so that social inequalities are not produced or worsened. (INEE, 2011).

In the case of EMS, two panoramas come together: enrollment has considerably increased in the last 25 years—a little over half the students at the ideal age for this educational kind (15 to 17 years) is studying—but the school dropout rate is still the highest in obligatory education. Discontinuing occurs in greater measure during the course of the school year (intra-curricular dropout), and is highest in the first year.

Thus, in the 2013-2014 school year, dropouts in primary education were 0.8%, in secondary education they were 4.1%, and in higher secondary education they were 15.3% (INEE, 2016). In the same period, from the total of students enrolled in first year of high school, 23.8% dropped out, while the percentage dropouts in second year was 10.8%, and 6.6% in the third year (INEE, 2016). Men showed a higher dropout rate than women: 17.0% and 13.5%, respectively.¹



Educational Policy for Attention to School Dropouts in Upper-Secondary Education

Interventions directed explicitly to dealing with high school dropouts—which form the policy of attention to school dropouts—can be grouped in three categories: 1) economic support, 2) support for the social-emotional development of students, and 3) comprehensive support.

Economic supports granted by the federal government to motivate student permanence at higher secondary education are basically two: 1) the Higher Secondary Education Scholarship Program (PROBEMS), which is part of the National Scholarship Program (PNB), and 2) the *Prospera* Program, Social Inclusion Program, directed towards beneficiary families with members in higher secondary education, and its component *Jóvenes con Prospera*, incorporated in 2003.

Support for social-emotional development of students is provided, since 2008, by way of the *Construye T* Program, oriented towards preventing the risk factors and strengthening the factors for protection. Although this program did not have the expected results in decreasing school dropouts, it did present a decrease in student absenteeism, higher study and employment expectations, higher self-esteem, and less problems with depression and school violence (INSP-NUD, 2013).

At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the objectives and dimensions of the program were redefined in order to realign them with the comprehensive development of youth through social-emotional skills, focusing on the following points: 1) contributing to the comprehensive development of youth so that they complete their studies and can successfully face life's challenges; 2) promote the leadership of principals and teachers; 3) achieve a positive and measurable impact on the development of social-emotional skills and improving school environment; 4) mobilize the school community in order to effectively prevent the development of risky behaviors, and 5) cover all public schools in the country by 2018.

With respect to comprehensive supports, the program *Siguele*, *Caminemos Juntos* was started in 2011, an integral companion for young students in higher secondary education. This strategy proposed contributing towards the improvement of learn-

ing achievement, increasing the graduation efficiency rate, and decreasing dropout and failure rates.

The program coordinates six different facets: The Early Warning System (information generator for timely intervention actions), the National Academic Tutoring System (which tends to the academic aspect), the Vocational Orientation Program (focusing on the vocational area), *Construye T* (which is oriented towards the psychosocial and emotional aspects), Scholarship Program (economic aspect), and the Reading Encouragement Program. Most of these components already existed, only the Early Warning System and the Reading Encouragement Program were created in 2011.

These interventions set the current stage for the policy of attention to higher secondary education dropouts, which is characterized by having a comprehensive approach of diversified responses in order to attend to the problem from various angles. This policy is formed by the Movement Against School Dropout *Yo no abandono*, which takes components from the *Siguele* Program and considers the multidimensional aspect of the dropout problem by dealing with individual, social, institutional, and academic aspects. On their part, the *Construye T* Program, National Scholarship Program, *Prospera* Social Inclusion Program, and the Reading Encouragement Program are still in force.

The Movement Against School Dropout is a strategy that takes from previous interventions, such as the detection tools for students at risk of dropping out from the Early Warning System, the academic tutoring program, and the vocational orientation program. Likewise, it includes actions that search to promote dialog between parents and EMS schools, the use of social networks to prevent and deal with school dropouts, the reception and induction of new students at the schools in order to favor a friendlier transition from secondary to higher secondary education, and the development of social-emotional skills that are considered to be key, as they add to the learning skills and abilities established within the Common Syllabus framework (MCC).

One of the main differences between this strategy and previous ones consists in encouraging school management, as this pushes high school principal towards guiding the strategic planning processes, and

strengthens their involvement in the school community regarding school dropouts.

Federal Public Expenditure Destined to Upper-Secondary Education Dropouts

During the last six budget cycles (2012–2017), federal public resources for EMS services has been between 12% and 14% of the total approved budget for the Educational Function; in comparison, almost two thirds of the resources assigned to this function were granted to basic education.

Although there is no program that integrates the resources destined to EMS dropouts, because the Movement Against School Dropout did not imply the assignment of additional resources, it is possible to make an approximation to the amount from the four programs aimed at impacting this problem, but whose purposes can have an ever greater reach: 1) (S243) National Scholarship Program; 2) (S072) *Prospera*, Social Inclusion Program; 3) (U080) Support for Education Centers and Organizations, which grants resources to the operation of the *Construye T* Program, and 4) (U079) Expansion of Upper-Secondary Education and Higher Education, which is incorporated to the Foundation for Strengthening the Managerial Autonomy of Upper-secondary Schools, which contributes to preventing school dropouts by implementing projects directed towards improving infrastructure, purchasing educational materials, solving basic operating problems, and promoting conditions for the participation of students, teachers, and parents—under the guidance of the director—so that they become involved in resolving the challenges of each school.

Therefore, we know that 17.22% of the budget directed to the EMS sub-function is oriented towards contributing, to some extent, to student permanence at this educational level. It is worth noting that 93% of these resources are destined to attending to the economic causes of the problem, through grants (*Prospera* and the PNB), and only 7% is directed towards other causes of the problem.

The Main Findings of Implementing the Policy for Attention to School Dropout

One of the greatest strengths of the policy against school dropout refers to the design of the strategy *Yo no Abandono*, due to the

flexibility and autonomy given to the actors to make decisions at a micro-policy level. This poses a change in school management, as it places at the center the leadership of principals and the participation of school communities.

Also, a wide variety of actions against school dropouts was identified at the EMS schools, many of which were already being developed previously. Among them are: 1) Instruments for diagnosing students at risk of dropping out through the ABC mechanism (Attendance, Good Achievement, and Conduct, according to their Spanish acronym); 2) dropout prevention activities for new students; 3) granting scholarships that contribute to permanence in school; 4) activities for creating environments that promote permanence; 5) talks with students at risk by teachers or tutors; 6) academic counseling; 7) home visits; 8) communication with parents, and 9) administrative ease for re-enrollment.

Although the actors in charge of implementing this strategy recognize these virtues, they also highlight the following weaknesses: 1) Little adaptability of the strategy for a diversity of contexts and for the inequality that exists in various schools and subsystems; 2) lack of knowledge of the strategy in many schools; 3) insufficient inter-institutional, inter-sector, and inter-subsystem coordination, because the strategy does not include the local authorities and is directly aimed at school directors; 4) lack of resources (financial, material, infrastructure, human, and even time) which creates incoherence between its design and operation; 5) little participation from the students and parents in planning and decision-making at schools; and, 6) unsystematic evaluation and follow-up processes.

Final Considerations

Although the efforts made by the Mexican State to attend to the problem of EMS dropouts, there is still a lot of work to be done in an integrated, coordinated manner, and with the resources needed to avoid the annual loss of more than 700 thousand young students, as well as to achieve a universal coverage, at the latest by the 2021-2022 school year, as proposed in the *National Development Plan 2013-2018*.

For this, a group of strategies need to be promoted which allow improving attention to EMS dropouts, among which are the following:

1. Generation of intelligent and coordinated information systems that allow follow-up of students from the moment they enter the higher secondary education.
2. Creation of a specific area of policy for attention and follow-up to dropouts, as well as to accompany the changes in school organization and management for its effective instrumentation.
3. Implementation of intergovernmental coordination strategies and inter-sector, inter-institutional, and inter-subsystem coordination.
4. Training and support to the numerous actors in education.
5. Strengthening of the tutoring and educational orientation system.
6. Assignment of specific resources for the instrumentation of the comprehensive policy strategy for attention to dropouts, and a more equal distribution of the expenditure.
7. Strengthening the relationship between parents and schools, as well as establishing immediate action protocols in cases of dropout risk.
8. Better coordination between secondary education and the EMS.
9. Creation of systematic follow-up and evaluation mechanisms for this policy strategy.
10. Development of interventions that favor re-enrollment of students who have dropped out of the EMS.

The guidelines that will soon be issued by INEE search to provide answers based on the evidence and on communication with the social and educational actors, in order to support decision-making oriented towards improving the permanence and conclusion of studies, with optimal achievement levels, for these young students. €



Would you like to learn more about the INEE guidelines? Visit the INEE micro-site at: http://www.inee.edu.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=2336

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- 1 In the 2014-2015 school year, dropout rate in the EMS 14.4% (INEE, 2017).

What Role Should Upper-Secondary Education Play in Skills' Development?

Even though it is expected that youths arrive at upper secondary education recognizing that school has been an opportunity to satisfy their basic learning needs, indicators show the opposite—this is a crashing point in their educational trajectory. Despite pointing out that success depends on education, students also affirm to find it pointless.

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Quality Education and Educational Trajectories

Quality education, according to the Mexican Constitution's 3rd Article, guarantees the greatest learning achievement of students through preschool, primary, secondary, and upper secondary education (Spanish acronym: EMS). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2007), in a broader sense, defines it as the possibility the population has to acquire tools, abilities, knowledges, and skills that, in turn, make students proficient to learn at any moment of their lives, to develop themselves, and to reach the greatest degree of fulfillment they wish. To this effect, education must comply with the attributes of equity, relevance, and pertinence; in other words, it should generate meaningful learning, through flexible curricula, methods, and teaching materials that answer to contextual requirements and individual interests in the different populations

attending school. In this context, educational indicators in Mexico do not ratify the State as guarantor of such quality education.

Access and coverage. Mandatory education covers from 3 to 17 years of age (from preschool to upper secondary education). It is true that relevant advances have been achieved in the universalization of these services, but two important lags still exist: 35% of youths between 15 and 17 years are not enrolled and 19% of children between 3 and 5 years are also out of education (INEE, 2016).

Permanence. The 12-year-old population shows a decrease in the rate of school enrolment, which expands at 15 and becomes critical towards 17 (INEE, 2016). In the school cycle 2014-2015, 2.3% of students showed a serious lag in primary, 3.7% in secondary, and 14.9% in EMS. In the same cycle, the efficiency rate in primary was of 96%, in secondary 88%, and 63% in EMS. Besides, .8% of students dropped out primary school, 4.1% dropped out secondary, and 15.3% dropped out EMS (INEE, 2016). The main cause of abandonment in upper secondary education is economic, as well as in primary and secondary. However, youths in EMS also point out their dislike for studying (7.8), they prioritize work, (7.2%). Also have problems understanding teachers (7.1%), fail courses (6%), and get pregnant (4.7%) (SEP, 2012).

Educational Achievement. According to the results, at a national level, of the National Plan for Learning Evaluation, in Basic Education (Spanish acronym: EB), in 2015, 60.5% of the students in the sixth grade attained Level I achievements in Math, while 49.5% attained the same level in Language and Communication. At the secondary third grade, 65.4% were placed at the Level I of achievement for Math and 29.4% for Language and Communication (INEE, 2015).

In the test applied to students of upper secondary education (2016), 49.2% were placed at the lower level of achievement for Math and 45% for Language and Communication (SEP, 2016).

Without analyzing the gaps in these indicators related to the more vulnerable sectors of the population—such as indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and inhabitants of highly marginalized commu-



nities, rural and in poverty—the goal is to show how youths reach at upper secondary education. In some cases, they face family economic deprivation which forces them to join to the labor market and leave aside their studies. Others dislike studying. Some more, show an important limitation to keep learning (they point out they fail courses constantly or have issues understanding their teachers). Also, some other youths face struggles related to their age (alcohol, drugs, violence, early pregnancy, etcetera).

Because of some of these realities, or the combination of several of them, the EMS as part of mandatory education, acquires a particularly relevant responsibility to accomplish that youths fulfill their educational trajectory or get incorporated into the labor market in the best possible way.

The analysis wouldn't be complete without assessing the National Educational System (Spanish acronym: SEN) from a comprehensive perspective. The preparation for learning and skills development that a

quality education raises must happen stressing the first years of the EB. Thus, the EMS wouldn't have to face such a critical scenario.

Skills Generation. In What and Since When?

A skill is defined as the integration of abilities, knowledges, and attitudes in a specific context; these converge and allow the student's effective performance (Díaz, 2006). Under this structure, education following the encyclopedic model is limited, since it is necessary to deliver a basis of knowledge which allows its mobilization within the frame of a real problem which has to be solved (Díaz, 2006). With a skills approach, students attain the knowledge of the subject and develop abilities and mental and behavioral habits (theory plus practice) that impact their level of performance (Díaz, 2006).

This approach has been present in educational policy since the 1990s. In the Basic Education Comprehensive Reform (RIEB), for example, besides boosting a strong articulation between the levels of preschool, primary and secondary, a block of five skills which the graduate student should have was integrated: 1) constant learning (reading-abilities development, writing culture, communication in more than one language, digital skills, etcetera); 2) information management (capacity to identify, evaluate, select, organize, systematize, analyze, among others); 3) situation management (facing risks, incertitude, perform and conclude procedures, time management, foster changes, decision making, emotional management, life-projects development) 4) coexistence (empathy development, capacity to relate harmonically with others and with nature, reaching agreements and negotiating, recognizing and valuing diversity), and 5) life in society (respect for values, social and cultural norms, recognizing democracy, peace, legality, and human rights) (DOF, 2011). Ángel Díaz Barriga points out that these are the skills that should be accumulated during the EB and those which a student should be integrated to the upper secondary education. Nevertheless, previous educational indicators don't show that.

The EMS comprehends the level of middle school, as well as professional education or its equivalents; it has a duration of two to five years and it is constituted by three educational models. General Middle School, or baccalaureate, which prepares youths for

their incorporation to higher education. The Technological Middle School which is bivalent; that is to say, it prepares students to enroll in higher education and qualifies them so they have the opportunity to join professional activities and, finally, the Technical Professional Education, which trains students in industrial and services activities (INEE, 2016).

Under this general scheme, the upper secondary subsystems give effect to the Common Curricular Frame (Spanish acronym: MCC) established in the Upper Secondary Education Comprehensive Reform. An education based on four types of skills: 1) generic competences (the youth knows and values himself, or herself, and his or her fellows; he or she approaches problems and challenges considering the goals he pursues and at the same time respects his or her environment); 2) basic disciplinary competences (the skills, attitudes, and knowledges that every middle school graduate must acquire. They are organized in four disciplinary fields: Maths, Experimental Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Communication); 3) disciplinary extended competences (focused on preparing the students academically so they continue their studies and enter higher education), and 4) professional competences (skills that are relevant to perform activities in the productive sector).

The recently-published Educational Model for Mandatory Education confirms the need to continue with this approach, both in basic and in upper secondary education. However, it places more emphasis in the skills achieved at the EMS.

The SEN and Its Challenges

The skills approach has been quite promoted throughout the ems, because this is a period of discovering, of assuming responsibilities, of taking decisions about the desired future, of experimenting emotions, etcetera. It is also the educational level in which the incorporation of students to either higher education, or the labor market, is determined. It is true that youths require tools that compensate the challenges of their age, but it should not be forgotten that in the outlook of the sen the building of skills must initiate at the first years of education. Young people must reach at ems not limited but well prepared to cross it and accomplish their project of life.

For the Mexican State to be guarantor of a quality education with a perspective on

rights, the New Educational Model must be harnessed to prioritize the need of generating key learnings and skills from preschool onwards, to articulate all educational levels, and to procure the effective fulfillment of students' graduation profiles. Educational permanence and achievement are indicators that must be attended since EB so they don't become critical at EMS.

Building more relevant, significant, and pertinent scenarios for students, and linking the life projects of people with the education, are pending debts, particularly, in the case of the youths. €

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