

Evolution of the educational structure in Mexico: Document analysis of the reforms implemented during the period 2018-2024

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Abstract: During the period 2018-2024, educational reforms in Mexico transformed the structure of the national education system with changes in policies and pedagogical approaches. The evolution of the educational structure in Mexico during this period was analyzed, identifying the factors that influenced its development and implementation. A systematic documentary analysis was carried out. The search was conducted mainly in open-access databases with specific keywords. Forty-two Spanish-language education manuscripts from Mexico from the year 2024 were analyzed using a logbook. Five main factors influenced educational evolution: the development of educational research, the implementation of new pedagogical methodologies, the formation of academic evaluation communities, the adaptation of national policies to regional contexts, and the creation of specific teaching materials. The transformation of the Mexican education system was based on documented research and systematic analysis of the changes implemented, highlighting the importance of strengthening the regional contextualization of national policies and the participation of local communities.

Keywords: *Educational equity, Educational inclusion, Education reform, Public policies, Teacher evaluation.*

1. Introduction

With the arrival of new administrations, Mexico has undergone important transformations in the political sphere, which have had a profound impact on the development of public policies and the implementation of new reforms; in particular, the education system has undergone a significant restructuring process over the last five years, primarily in response to the needs of Mexican society. These educational reforms have ranged from the elimination of mandatory teacher evaluations to the creation of new civic education programmes and the inclusion of pedagogical approaches to equality and human rights.

However, these restructurings have also triggered debates about stability and continuity in education, with each administration introducing new goals and approaches, affecting students, teachers and communities. Thus, education in Mexico is at a crossroads where policy decisions profoundly impact the future of the country, showing the challenges and opportunities that arise in this constant process of transformation.

Hernández Alcántara [1] cites that the 2013 Education Reform [in Mexico] was one of the most ambitious initiatives in the field of public education, promoted under the mandate of President Peña Nieto, its main objective was to improve educational quality through the professionalization of teachers, implementing mandatory teacher evaluations and promoting transparency in the hiring and promotion system. However, these measures generated widespread debate and opposition, particularly among teachers and unions, who argued that the evaluations put their labour rights at risk without taking into account the social and regional conditions of each educational community.

Martínez Luna and Eslava Maceda [2] point out that in 2018, with the change of presidential administration now under the leadership of President López Obrador, the cancellation of the 2013 reform was promoted, arguing that it harmed teachers and did not achieve a real change in educational quality. Instead, a new reform was pushed through that eliminated punitive evaluations and placed teacher development and well-being at the centre. In addition, new curricular approaches oriented towards values education, civics and educational equity were integrated. This change represented not only a reversal of policies, but a new vision of education in Mexico, seeking to address the needs of teachers and strengthen access to inclusive and quality education.

In 2019, a global pandemic put the education system to the test, with forced school closures, distance learning and technological problems, and low levels of learning highlighted the shortcomings and ways in which students learn and teachers teach. The pandemic also exacerbated the learning gap, and the impact on mental health, both among students, teachers and parents, and at a general level has forced us to rethink education in a context of uncertainty. Given this situation, it is necessary to review the problems and opportunities offered by the pandemic in the education system, in order to build a stronger, more inclusive and equitable future for all students.

Mexico has undergone several changes in its public policies and educational reforms, mainly with the aim of improving the quality of learning, equity in access to education and education in its training area. These educational reforms have failed because they have been hindered by the educational actors (teacher, principal, parents, etc.), one of the great tests that these reforms have presented is the challenge in the adoption of new technologies and educational methodologies, in addition to the problems of school infrastructure.

In relation to the above, it must be recognized that government policies are not completely aligned to the cultural, social and economic diversity of the community, which generates an imbalance between the policies that are proposed and the educational reality; based on the above, an analysis of the difficulties that have been generated in the adoption of educational reform and ensuring quality education in all areas of society is carried out. Likewise, this research seeks to contribute to the debate on the adaptability of educational policies in each community, promoting an inclusive and equitable approach that leads to the development of students at all educational levels, regardless of their cultural, social or economic context. The research is justified by the urgent need to address the obstacles that have arisen around education reform in recent years in order to put forward proposals that can steer public education reform in the other direction, towards an improvement of the education system aimed at making the right to quality education effective for all.

2. Background

One of the problems that the Mexican education system has faced for decades is the school backwardness, inequality in access to information and technology and the exclusion of indigenous communities. After the 2013 education reform, the 2018 education reforms focused their objectives on teacher evaluation and the standardization of educational content, a change that caused conflicts between the teachers' union and the authorities.

2.1. International Background

The study of the international framework on education with an equitable and inclusive approach in Mexico in the last five years is based on globalized principles that have been determined by multilateral organizations and by replicating the educational methodologies and practices of countries that are recognized for their educational success.

This section describes two global approaches related to education, firstly, the United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and secondly, the benchmarks set by UNESCO.

2.1.1. UN Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)

Tassara [3] points out that this Agenda was adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, which establishes 17

key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the structure of "ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". This principle sets the basis for indicators that will mark educational progress, as well as literacy rates, gender equality, and accessibility to infrastructure and the internet for all.

The Sustainable Development Goals included in the UN's Agenda 2023 are closely related to the Mexican government's goals regarding equity in education, as well as the inclusive approach to bridge the inequality gap with rural communities, which are the most marginalized sector.

Among the goals developed in the Sustainable Development Goals embodied in the United Nations 2030 agenda are to ensure that all people have access to literacy, to provide developing countries with trained teachers through the international cooperation programme for teacher training.

2.1.2. Parameters UNESCO

Massón Cruz and Torres Saavedra [4] argue that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes educational public policies, highlighting the importance of having education systems that ensure inclusion and promote meaningful and equitable learning.

Among the contributions promoted by UNESCO is to include in public policies that educational programs are focused on respect for cultural diversity and the inclusion of dialects and mother tongues, considering countries like Mexico that has a multicultural population, also another of its premises is to consider that all schools must have adequate infrastructure to include students with disabilities in the classroom, Another consideration is to promote that educational models are considered and strengthened through community interventions and decision making through active management and decision making.

2.1.3. National

In Mexico, the educational reforms of the period from 2018 to 2024 are closely linked to the changes not only political but also economic and social, since the aforementioned period seeks to achieve inequality in all areas of the student's life, we refer to the emotional, situational, socioeconomic, infrastructure and educational.

Considering the political and social context since 2018, a radical change in education reforms was initiated, proposing the repeal of the 2013 education reform, pointing out that it was a violation of the human rights of teachers and that by focusing on carrying out evaluations, managers neglected important factors such as the lack of equity, there was no inclusion and much less considered the options of the communities to make decisions on educational plans.

The Presidency of the Republic [5] in the legal and regulatory field, the educational reforms supported several legal changes among which are: the modification of Article 3° Constitutional (2019), which left a precedent in educational public policy, highlighting that the state was obliged to guarantee free education at all levels, fulfilling with this the right to have a quality education with a focus on gender equity, inclusion, respect for sexual diversity, right to cultural and linguistic diversity, of equally prioritizing the participation of parents, managers and the community in general to carry out educational management.

In 2019, the new General Education Law was updated, incorporating inclusion and gender equity in the new reform, recognizing and promoting mother tongues as part of the educational plans, as well as including early education for children from 0 to 6 years of age, prioritizing this programme in rural areas, which had been marginalized for a long time.

The "New Mexican School (NEM)" programme was created by Osuna Lever, et al. [6] which was the educational model that the government implemented, seeking to transform the educational system by considering the principles of equity, inclusion, excellence and a sense of cultural belonging, extolling the values of respect, solidarity and social commitment, with the aim of strengthening the role of communities in the development of the educational curriculum, by addressing each problem in a particular way.

Despite the programmes established with a differential and transversal approach with the aim of implementing inclusion and equity in educational practices, they face many challenges and limitations,

such as the following:

The regional gaps, this refers to the communities that are in a high educational backwardness such as Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, also another obstacle for the implementation of the programmes is the increase of school dropouts, first due to the COVID-19 pandemic that caused a considerable number of low-income people who were studying to drop out of school, this same pandemic evidenced the digital backwardness in which many low-income communities were found who lacked access to internet and adequate technological devices.

These public policies have made an effort to address the problems of exclusion and discrimination that the education reforms had been dragging on for years, through constant monitoring and evaluation of the processes in order to have standards for measuring the impact of the restructuring of the reforms, through the participation of all stakeholders such as teachers, students and the community in general.

3. Purpose of the Study

Develop a documentary analysis of the reforms implemented during the period 2018-2024.

4. Methodology

Considering a methodology to carry out research on the evolution of the Education Reform is relevant as it allows us to enhance the validity and relevance of the results. Considering the present study, the first 6 steps proposed by Colín [7] related to the Systematic Literature Review will be carried out (See image 1).



Figure 1.
Stages of a Systematic Literature Review.

Step 1. In order to delimit the search for information, we concentrated on the key words used in the research, which refer to our topic: "Educational model", "inclusive", "educational reforms", "Mexico".

To select the ideal search engine, a search was carried out in the Google Trends tool, as stated by Gordillo León and Mestas Hernández [8] which is an instrument dedicated to the analysis of search rates on the Internet, considering time intervals and geographical location. Image 2 illustrates the result obtained. Due to time and resources, it was decided to work mainly with the most widely used search engine in Mexico, which is also free and open access: REDALYC. This decision is in line with Bojo-Canales, et al. [9]. The following were also used: Dialnet, Google Académico and Scielo México.



Figure 2.
Search engine comparison.

Step 3. In order to delimit the number of selected items, filters were used, with the aim of reducing the number of items according to need. The filters used were:

- Year: 2024.
- Language: Spanish.
- Discipline: education.
- Country: Mexico.

Step 4. On the first attempt, the search engine returned a total of 494,000 articles. Applying the previously established filters produced a series of research relevant to the topic, consisting of 42 manuscripts. For the documentation of the information, a logbook was used in which the information for each manuscript was recorded.

Step 5. During this phase, the absence of duplicate manuscripts and, additionally, the absence of articles unrelated to the topic under study was corroborated. For this stage, only two duplicate manuscripts were found.

Step 6. Each manuscript was reviewed and a table was produced to illustrate the findings.

5. Results

Table 1 illustrates the variables identified (first column), the authors who identified these variables (second column) and the number of replicates observed.

Table 1.
Identification of variables.

Variables	Author(s)	Quantity
The development of educational research documenting and analysing the changes	Aceves Aldrete, et al. [10]; Aguado-López, et al. [11]; Arévalo Guízar and Alcántara Santuario [12]; Castañeda, et al. [13]; Ceballos Escobar [14]; Cuevas Cajiga [15]; Cruz Flores [16]; Ducoing Watty [17]; Dussel and Acevedo [18]; Gálvez Pérez and Block Sevilla [19]; García García, et al. [20]; García-Triana, et al. [21]; Guzmán Gómez [22]; Heredia [23]; Hernández Fernández and Marsán [24]; Hernández Velandia and Guzmán Zamora [25]; Jiménez Moyo and Ávila Pardo [26]; Juárez Némer [27]; Mata García, et al. [28]; Moreles-Vázquez [29]; Navarrete Cazales [30]; Navia-Antezana and Czarny-Krischkautzky [31]; Ortiz Mallegas, et al. [32]; Ortiz-Soriano [33]; Palmas Pérez [34]; Peri and Gómez Zaccarelli [35]; Rincón-Gallardo [36]; Rodríguez-Díaz, et al. [37]; Rolland [38]; Romero Andrade [39]; Santiago-León and Danielle-Strickland [40]; Schmelkes [41] and Valenzuela García, et al. [42].	33
The implementation of new methodologies and pedagogical strategies.	Aceves Aldrete, et al. [10]; Burbano, et al. [43]; Cámara [44]; Castañeda, et al. [13]; Cuevas Cajiga [15]; Cruz Flores [16]; Domínguez Cornejo and Loza Vaqueiro [45]; Gálvez Pérez and Block Sevilla [19]; García García, et al. [20]; García-Triana, et al. [21]; Hernández Fernández and Marsán [24]; Hernández Velandia and Guzmán Zamora [25]; Jiménez Moyo and Ávila Pardo [26]; Juárez Némer [27]; Mata García, et al. [28]; Nájera-Castellanos, et al. [46]; Ortiz Mallegas, et al. [32]; Peri and Gómez Zaccarelli [35]; Rincón-Gallardo [36]; Rodríguez-Díaz, et al. [37]; Rolland [38]; Romero Andrade [39]; Santiago-León and Danielle-Strickland [40]; Schmelkes [41] and Valenzuela García, et al. [42].	25
The formation of academic communities that study and evaluate the reforms	Aguado-López, et al. [11]; Arévalo Guízar and Alcántara Santuario [12]; Cuevas Cajiga [15]; Ducoing Watty [17]; Dussel and Acevedo [18]; Guzmán Gómez [22]; Heredia [23]; Hernández Fernández and Marsán [24]; Hernández Velandia and Guzmán Zamora [25]; Jiménez Moyo and Ávila Pardo [26]; Juárez Némer [27]; Navarrete Cazales [30]; Navia-Antezana and Czarny-Krischkautzky [31]; Ortiz Mallegas, et al. [32]; Ortiz-Soriano [33]; Palmas Pérez [34]; Peri and Gómez Zaccarelli [35]; Romero Andrade [39]; Schmelkes [41] and Arévalo Guízar and Alcántara Santuario [12], Valenzuela García, et al. [42]; and Morales Zúñiga [47].	20
Adapting national policies to regional and local contexts	Aceves Aldrete, et al. [10]; Álvarez Seoane and Rodríguez Rodríguez [48]; Cámara [44]; Cordero-Méndez [49]; Cruz Flores [16]; Domínguez Cornejo and Loza Vaqueiro [45]; García García, et al. [20]; Heredia [23]; Hernández Fernández and Marsán [24]; Jiménez Moyo and Ávila Pardo [26]; Juárez Némer [27]; Morales Zúñiga [47]; Moreles-Vázquez [29]; Nájera-Castellanos, et al. [46]; Navarrete Cazales [30]; Ortiz Mallegas, et al. [32]; Ortiz-Soriano [33]; Rodríguez-Díaz, et al. [37] and Santiago-León and Danielle-Strickland [40].	19
The creation of materials and specific didactic resources	Aceves Aldrete, et al. [10]; Álvarez Seoane and Rodríguez Rodríguez [48]; Castañeda, et al. [13]; Domínguez Cornejo and Loza Vaqueiro [45]; Gálvez Pérez and Block Sevilla [19]; García-Triana, et al. [21]; Hernández Fernández and Marsán [24]; Jiménez Moyo and Ávila Pardo [26]; Juárez Némer [27]; Mata García, et al. [28]; Rodríguez-Díaz, et al. [37]; Rolland [38]; Schmelkes [41] and Valenzuela García, et al. [42].	14

Table 2 represents the synthesis of the variables, where the initial column indicates the number of elements, column 2 represents the factors, and the third column indicates the number of authors who agreed.

Table 2.
Identification of successful actions general.

No.	Factors	No. of Author(s)
1	The development of educational research documenting and analyzing the changes	33
2	The implementation of new methodologies and pedagogical strategies.	25
3	The formation of academic communities that study and evaluate the reforms	20
4	Adapting national policies to regional and local contexts	19
5	The creation of specific teaching materials and resources	14

The evolution of the educational structure in Mexico is influenced by multiple factors, including: the development of educational research that documents and analyses changes and the implementation of new methodologies and pedagogical strategies. In sum, five significant elements are highlighted.

6. Discussion

The results of the documentary analysis reveal five key factors that have influenced the evolution of the Mexican educational structure during the period 2018-2024. The development of educational research emerges as the most significant element, supported by 34 authors, which coincides with Hernández Alcántara [1] on the need to systematically document and analyze changes in educational policies in order to understand their real impact.

The implementation of new methodologies and pedagogical strategies appears as the second most relevant factor, with 25 authors agreeing on its importance. This is in line with the principles of the New Mexican School (NEM) described by Osuna Lever, et al. [6] which emphasizes the need to transform pedagogical practices in order to achieve a more inclusive and equitable education. However, it is notable that there is a gap between the theoretical formulation of these methodologies and their effective implementation in diverse contexts, particularly in rural areas and indigenous communities.

The adaptation of national policies to regional and local contexts, supported by 21 authors, reflects a recognition of the heterogeneity of the Mexican education system. This finding is in line with Martínez Luna and Eslava Maceda [2] on the need to consider socio-cultural particularities in the implementation of educational reforms. Nevertheless, the results suggest that significant challenges remain in the effective contextualization of national education policies.

The formation of academic communities that study and evaluate reforms, identified by 20 authors, represents an advance in the professionalization of educational analysis. This aspect is related to the parameters established by UNESCO, as cited by Massón Cruz and Torres Saavedra [4] regarding the relevance of constant evaluation and the involvement of multiple actors in the educational process.

The creation of specific teaching materials and resources is noted by fewer authors (14) as an essential component for the effective implementation of reforms. This finding is related to the goals stipulated in the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 4, which according to Tassara [3] underlines the need to ensure the provision of appropriate and accessible educational resources for all learners.

7. Conclusion

Having concluded the documentary analysis of the reforms implemented in Mexico during the period 2018-2024, the following conclusions are:

1. The study in the field of education is seen as the main driving force behind the metamorphosis of the educational system in Mexico, underlining the need to keep a documented and analytical record of the proposed modifications; it also highlights the importance of establishing observatories to assess the evolution of educational reforms in the country.

2. The adaptation of national level policies to regional settings is shown to be a crucial element for the effectiveness of education reforms. The findings suggest that education policy calls for a more systematic and participatory context, which should actively involve local communities in the

implementation process.

3. The constitution of academic groupings dedicated to the exploration and evaluation of reforms has constituted a repository of knowledge of relevance for future processes of educational transformation; it also underlines the need to strengthen collaborative networks between academics and experts in the field of education.

4. Despite their frequent reference in the literature, specialized pedagogical materials and tools constitute a significant area of opportunity for the effective implementation of reforms. It is suggested that a continuous system for the evaluation and updating of these resources be implemented.

The proposed lines of research are as follows:

Development of meta-analyses to quantitatively validate manuscripts that have passed the systematic review stage.

Development of studies oriented towards the adaptation and effectiveness of innovative pedagogical methodologies in various socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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