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The logo for the Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública (INAP) is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters 'I', 'N', 'N', and 'P' are connected and stylized, with the 'I' and 'N's having a unique, blocky appearance.

Educational Challenges in the National Development Plan 2013-2018

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The National Development Plan (PND) analyzes the theme of education from the moment it states its main challenges: construction of public consensus, coverage in basic and middle education, political agreement on the education reform, federalization of education, institutionalization of educational evaluation, and insertion in the knowledge revolution as a central element of the plan's political strategy:

“Planning is a complex and continuous activity, that has different functions, tasks and stages that are developed in time. It is a set of actions that make out a unique process within another more general process: that of political decision-making. The state's planning activity, its formulation, and execution require a permanent political decision”.¹

While past national development programs focused their attention to coverage and the bilateral negotiations with the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), the current plan sets as its strategic goal to achieve quality education based on a political consensus that holds the political system, in order to carry out the education reform in a somewhat autonomous way. This is why the combination of said goal with a policy making program needs a strategy that effectively articulates society's interests with decision making in order to fulfill the quality education objective. Thus, the PND gives a significant diagnosis which lead to establishing structural issues as a public educational matter where the challenge of quality education is reformulated with a participation and social co-responsibility approach.

The Public Consensus Challenge as Axis of Planning

One of the main features of democratic governments is the effective cooperation of society in planning and decision making for solving

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¹ Marcos Kaplan, *Sociedad, política y planificación en América Latina*, Ed. UNAM, México, 1989, pp. 13.

education-related problems, that is, a Development Plan based on social consensus:

“First of all, the website pnd.gob.mx was made available for the citizens in order to receive digital proposals and to carry out an interactive survey. In addition, physical proposals were received throughout the country. Furthermore, 397 public consultations were made, including 5 National Forums with 31 panel discussions, 7 Special Forums with 40 panel discussions, 32 State Forums with 160 panel discussions, and 122 Sectorial Committees with specialists and several special interest groups. Through these actions, 228, 949 people participated: 129, 299 people answered the survey; forums and sectorial committees had 61,779 attendants; and 37,871 proposals, both physical and digital, were received”.²

Quality education is a fundamental policy in the National Development Plan's general outline:

Main objective: achieve Mexico's full potential.

Five National Goals

1. Mexico in Peace
2. Inclusive Mexico
3. Mexico with Quality Education
4. Prosperous Mexico
5. Global Responsible Mexico

Three Transversal Strategies

1. Democratize Productivity
2. Near and Modern Government
3. Gender Perspective³

Diagnosis: coverage and terminal efficiency of the National Education System

Given the magnitude of quality education demands according to current social and economic needs, coverage is not only a challenge by itself, but is also in need of a strict institutional evaluation of its planning capacities of education supply and the directive skills to lead and regulate the education and scientific development national project:

² *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013-2018*, Gobierno de la República, México, 2013, pp. 25.

³ Gobierno de la República, *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013-2018*, México, 2013, pp. 21.

“The National Education System is currently in charge of 35.2 million children and youth in the formal education modality. Elementary education is the basis of the educational pyramid, which represents the 73.4% of the Education System roll, made out of 25.9 million alumni in the following levels: 4.8 million in preschool, 14.8 million in elementary school, and 6.3 million in high school. Almost 1.2 million teachers work throughout almost 228 thousand schools in these education levels”.⁴

The terminal efficiency subject is present in both elementary and secondary education:

“Terminal efficiency of education is low in basic education: for every hundred children enrolled, only 76 finish high school on time. This situation has limited the possibility of expand the current secondary education coverage (66.3%), which is also mandatory.

In the case of secondary school, out of the 4.4 million youngsters that attend, 91.3% go to junior and high school, and 8.7% to technical education, amongst which the National School of Professional Technical Education (Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica CONALEP) can be found. Out of every 100 people that finish high school, 85.9 enroll on a higher or postsecondary education institution”.⁵

“On the other hand, adults who lag behind in education is still an issue. About 32.3 million adults have not finished their elementary education, which represents the 38.5% of the population over 15 years old. To this number, one must add over 5.1 million people who are illiterate, a situation that affects their access to the labour market. In addition to this, it is estimated that about 15 million people over 18 years old have not finished the secondary schooling requirement to have better job opportunities (...)

A fact that stands out is that, of all the alumni that enrolled on 2010 to high school, 49% were men and 51% women. In comparison, out of the graduates from high school on the same year 46.9% were men and 53.75% were women”.⁶

The taboo subject of education supply is related to the study plans and programs reform and the way they are taught:

“A high rate of young people considers that education gives them no abilities, competences or capacities to get a job or perform properly in it. On this topic of concern, 18% of the people who participated in the Citizen Consultation believe that in order to achieve universal coverage, technological careers should be encouraged and linked to the productive sector. (...), it is necessary for the curricula to be appropriate, since it is of great importance to reconcile the educational supply with social needs and the private sector’s requirements.

⁴ *Op.cit.*, pp. 60.

⁵ *Op.cit.*, pp. 60.

⁶ *Op.cit.*, pp. 61-62.

Furthermore, it is imperative to promote several mechanisms that allow the certification of job experience, not of formal studies, that allows people to prove their level of knowledge and skills with an official document”.⁷

The latter poses several questions that must be discussed. How to reform education supply? What kind of knowledge and skills do we want the students to have? Who are the main characters in the teaching-learning process? What are the expected pedagogical results to be achieved by this education reform?

Higher education: from quality to excellence

As quality in education is often measured by elementary and secondary education coverage, the levels of specialization in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs measure higher education:

“3.3 million alumni are enrolled in higher education, which represents a coverage of 29.2%. Only when the absorption rate (the proportion of students that are admitted to subsequent levels in relation to the total of alumni that graduate from the immediate last education level) increases, and secondary school desertion is reduced, can a higher coverage be achieved.

Furthermore, a current imbalance exists between the demand of youth for certain careers and the needs of the productive sector. In the case of careers with the largest indexes of occupation –Administrative Sciences, Accountancy and Law–, about a 49.6, 67.7 y 68% respectively of their graduates do not work in related occupational fields.

This lack of balance is reflected in its remunerations: the average engineer is paid over 13% more than his or her pairs of the above-mentioned careers. This is why it is mandatory to develop mechanisms that improve student vocational orientation, mainly during the transition of different educational levels”.⁸

It is also worth mentioning that the PND does not attend to the part that Technological, Polytechnic, and Intercultural Universities, as well as the Postgraduate subsystem play in the Superior Education System and as a leverage to social, scientific and technological development.⁹ Even though there is a current demand for specialized education given the development perspective offered by knowledge networks and information globalization,

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 62.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 60 and 62.

⁹ See Judit Bokser Liwerant, coordinadora, *Las ciencias sociales, universidad y sociedad. Temas para una agenda de posgrado*, Ed. UNAM, primera edición, 2003; y, Julio Rubio Oca, coordinador, *La política educativa y la educación superior en México 1995-2006: un balance*, Ed. SEP-Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, primera edición, 2006.

whose use and massification create new options and modalities in the academic supply.

Although the latter generates tensions within the National Education System when incorporating to the Superior Education System study programs, the use of new information and communication technologies, as well as joint certification strategies and academic collaboration agreements both in open and distance learning has become increasingly frequent.

The political challenge: agreement as condition to quality education

The political agreement that gave birth to the constitutional reform of articles 3 and 73, allows the State to modify and adjust the structural components, processes, and results of the elementary, secondary and higher education systems:

“SINGLE ARTICLE. Articles 3, sections III, VII y VIII, and 73, section XXV; a third paragraph is included, as well as a subsection d) to the second paragraph of section II, and a section IX to article 3, of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, to remain as follows:

Article 3. ... The State shall guarantee the quality of mandatory education so that education materials and education methods, school organization, education infrastructure and suitability of teachers and directors guarantee the best possible learning process for students.

I. y II. ...

a) ...

b) It shall be national –but neither hostile nor exclusive-, it shall tend to understand our problems, to profit from our resources, towards the safeguard of our political independence, the assurance of our economic independence, and towards the continuity and increase of our culture;

c) It shall contribute to a better human coexistence, in order to strengthen both cherish and respect for cultural diversity, human dignity, family integrity, the conviction of society’s general interest, the principles of fraternity and equality of everyone’s rights, avoiding privileges of race, religion, groups, sexes or individuals, and

d) It shall be a quality education, based of constant improvement and maximum academic achievement of students;

III. In order to fulfill what has been established in the second paragraph and section II, the Federal Executive shall determine the study plans and programs of preschool, elementary, secondary and normal education of the Republic. In order to do so, the Federal Executive shall consider the opinion of the state governments and the Federal District, as well as the opinion of social sectors involved with education, teachers, and parents in the terms determined by law.

Furthermore, admission to the teaching service and promotion to directive or supervision office in both elementary and secondary public education, shall be achieved by competitive examinations that guarantee their knowledge suitability and skills. The regulatory law shall set the criteria, terms, and conditions of mandatory evaluation for access, promotion, recognition, and

permanence in the professional service with full respect to teachers' labour constitutional rights. All admissions and promotions that have not been granted under the law shall be void. These provisions shall not be applied to the Institutions referred to in section VII of this article;

VII. The Congress of the Union, in order to unify and coordinate education throughout the Republic, shall enact the necessary laws for the distribution of the social educational function between the Federation, the States and Municipalities, in order to set the correspondent economic contributions and to set applicable penalties to civil servants that do not comply or enforce these provisions, as well to anyone that infringes it, and

IX. In order to guarantee quality education services, the National Education Evaluation System is created. Its coordination shall be in charge of the National Institute for Education Evaluation. The National Institute for Education Evaluation shall be a public autonomous agency, with legal existence and wealth of its own".¹⁰

Bearing in mind this constitutional reform, the National Development Plan has generated considerable expectations and doubts as to the way the institutional provisions will be interpreted when designing a state policy that will execute the education policies and programs for the 2012-2018-term office.

The Financial Challenge of Education Federalization

The National Development Plan recognizes that one of the best-attained achievement in the last fifteen years has been the federalization of education.

"However, a high centralization of power, resources, and decisions, as well as the absence of effective coordination mechanisms between the different levels of government and unfinished decentralization processes, have deepened the contrasts amongst regions, states and municipalities.

It is therefore imperative to achieve joint federalism in which all levels of government co-responsibly undertake their functions without leaving anyone behind, in order to achieve national goals".¹¹

Indeed, insufficient funding caused the current deficit of the federalization process, as it was estimated in its initial phase on 1997:

"The 1995-2000 Education Development Program allowed the transference of 540,000 teaching positions and 116,000 administrative positions to states, as well as over 100,000 buildings with both furniture and equipment; (...)

The other remark concerns funding, specifically the distribution of financial

¹⁰ As directed by article 135 of the Political Constitution, the United Mexican States' General Congress issued the Decree by which articles 3, sections III, VII, and VIII; and 73, section XXV, were modified and by which a third paragraph, a sub-section d) to the second paragraph of section IX, article 3 were added to the Constitution on february 26 2013.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 30.

burdens between the Federal, local and municipal governments. A new federal organization of education finances remains to be done, one that responds to transparent criteria of justice, compensation of inequalities and stimulation of quality and efficiency on new Treasury and tax basis”.¹²

It is true that the federalization process of the National Development Plan has a double dimension: to redistribute directive responsibilities and to create new financial schemes of labeled and multiannual funds that make education development planning possible, according to the contextual needs and projects, as well as an accountability system with social supervision that is related to control agencies of local congresses and municipal councils.

The challenge: institutionalization of education evaluation

The constitutional reform sets forth a new institutional design in order to achieve this. The challenges and plan of action of the National Development Plan includes the principles and functions of the Education Evaluation Institute, which shall guide the decision-making throughout the admission evaluation of the teaching staff, the training process of the administrative staff, and the bureaucratic machinery’s supervision – in charge of coordinating decisions, actions, and results of the national education system through preschool, elementary, and secondary school.

“In order to achieve this, the National Institute for Education Evaluation shall:

- a) To design and carry out all measuring related to constituent elements, processes, or system results;
- b) To issue the guidelines of federal and local education authorities in order to carry out the evaluation functions according to the set distribution, and
- c) To generate and disseminate information, and to issue all guidelines necessary to improve quality and equal education, according to this information, since it is required in order to reach social equality.

The Management Board shall be the governing body of the Institute, and shall be composed of five members. The Federal Executive shall submit a list of three candidates for the consideration of the Senate, which, following the appearance of the proposed candidates shall designate the member to fill the vacancy. The designation shall be made by the vote of two-thirds of the members of the Senate present, or by the Permanent Commission of the Congress during its recess, all this within the unextendable term of thirty days. If the Senate does not reach a decision within this period, the candidate from the list who is designated by the Federal Executive will occupy the Management Board office.

¹² Pablo Latapí Sarre, “Perspectivas hacia el siglo XXI”, en Latapí Sarre, Pablo, Coordinador (1998), *Un siglo de Educación en México*, Tomo II, Editores: Fondo de Estudios e Investigaciones Ricardo J. Zevada-Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes-Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, pp. 424-425.

In cases where the Chamber of Senators rejects the entire proposed list, the President of the Republic shall submit a new one under the terms of the preceding paragraph. If this second list is also rejected, the candidate from this list whom the President of the Republic designates will occupy the office.

Members of the Management Board must be competent and experienced in the activities of the Institute, and to fulfill the requirements established by law. They shall stay in office for seven years, be replaced gradually and may be appointed for a single new term only. Members cannot stay in office for over fourteen years. When there is a permanent vacancy for whatever reason, a substitute to finish the term of office shall be appointed. While in the office, they may be removed only in accordance with the terms of the Fourth Title of this Constitution, and who may not hold any other employment, duty, or commission, with the exception of those in which they act in the Institute's representation and those of non-salaried positions in artistic, scientific, cultural, or charitable institutions.

All members of the Management Board shall appoint its president, by the vote of three of its members, and shall stay in office for as long as the law establishes.

The law shall establish the bases for the organization and the operation of the Institute in accordance with the principles of independence, transparency, objectivity, pertinence, diversity, and inclusion.

The law shall establish all necessary actions and mechanisms that allow the Institute, federal education authorities, and local education authorities an efficient collaboration and cooperation in order to guarantee the fulfillment of their obligations.

Article 73. ...

I. to XXIV. ...

XXV. To establish the Professional Teaching Service in terms of article 3 of the present constitution; to establish, organize, and maintain throughout the Republic rural, elementary, superior, secondary, and professional schools, and schools for scientific research, of fine arts and of technical training, practical schools of agriculture and mining, of arts and crafts; museums, libraries, observatories, and other institutes concerning the general culture of the inhabitants of the Nation, and to legislate on all matters relating to such institutions; to legislate on matters concerning fossil remains and archeological, artistic, and historic monuments, the conservation of which is in the national interest; and also to enact laws designed to distribute properly among the Federation, the States, and Municipalities the exercise of the educational function and the economic contribution corresponding to this public service, seeking to unify and coordinate education throughout the Republic. The degrees conferred by the aforementioned institutions shall be valid throughout the Republic. To enact laws regarding copyright, as well as other related intellectual property institutions.¹³

Within this framework, the National Development Plan includes the evaluation strategy as a constitutive element to improve quality education through the National Institute for Education Evaluation with legal existence

¹³ *Op. cit.*

and wealth of its own, whose purpose is to consolidate the teaching professionalization system:

“The National Institute for Education Evaluation (INEE) was created by presidential decree on August 8 2002, as a public, decentralized, and technical body in order to support both the National Education System’s evaluation function, and the Mexican society with information and knowledge that contribute to better decision-making in order to improve quality in education.

(...)

Of the people who participated in the Citizen Consultation, 60% approves the proposal of improving the quality of education through adoption of mechanisms regarding teacher selection. The improvement of results shall reinforce and increase reliability on teachers of both parents and society”.¹⁴

Through this, the INEE has a relatively large autonomy to create, regulate and innovate when it comes to the teacher, administrative, and supervisor professionalization system. In order for the INEE to attain a minimum consensus towards teaching and administrative careers, it is necessary for the agency to be autonomous from the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), The National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE) and government bureaucracy. Arbitration is of capital importance, especially when conflict threatens stability and the very existence of the education evaluation system.

Another Relevant Aspect of the National Development Plan: Culture and Sports

Cultural activity in Mexico has an impressive institutional SINERGIA that demands specialized administration, one that is able to give international projection to our cultural heritage and national identity:

“Mexico’s cultural infrastructure and heritage is exceptionally large, making it leader in Latin America in this area. According to the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA), we have 187 archaeological sites open to the public, 1,184 museums, 7,363 public libraries, 594 theatres, 1,852 cultural centers, and 869 auditoriums, amongst other sites in which cultural activities take place permanently”.¹⁵

On sports, the goal is to carry out a long-term investment on its inhabitants’ physical culture and health:

“According to information of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for every peso invested on physical activities 3.20 are saved on future medical expense. Today, there are 1,200 active spaces that offer their services to over 700,000 people on a monthly basis, and about 4,900 physical

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 63.

education centers and municipalities take care of 12 million children, young people and adults. However, as supply is not covered yet, the capacity to promote access to physical culture and sports must be increased.”¹⁶

Promotion of culture and sports talent is an educational aspect that undoubtedly constitutes transversal actions along with national and international civil society organizations, as well as macroeconomics.

The knowledge revolution challenge

This country has a deficient scientific policy, which is delaying its opportune insertion in the knowledge global process:

“The data on this situation is revealing: the country’s contribution to worldwide knowledge production does not reach 1%; the number of Mexican researchers out of 1,000 members of the economically active population represent a tenth of what is observed in highly developed countries; and the number of PhDs per million people (29.9) is not enough to achieve in the near future the human capital we need.

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of the Mexican case is the absence of linking between the people involved with science and technology, and private sector activities. 34% of the people who took part of the Citizen Consultation believe this is important for the development of the country. Contrary to other OECD member countries where the business sector represents over 50% of total investment on research and development, the business sector in Mexico has never invested much. This happens partly because of the aforementioned absence of linking, as well as the lack of private research centers.

Even though there have been great achievements on some areas (biotechnology, environment, engineering, etc.), public and private investment raises need a parallel strengthening on these linking mechanisms in order to increase productivity. It is mandatory to align the visions of all members of the Science, Technology and Innovation System, in order to let companies make better use of the existent capacities of superior education institutions and public research centers”.¹⁷

Polarized pluralism in research centers and technology development has caused fragmented development and an unequal process of scientific innovation. A plan of action made of construction and consensus will necessarily have to agree on social feasibility and the scientific investment project that the country needs. The National Development Plan recognizes the public and private association as an imperious politic strategy in order to face the challenges of the knowledge revolution.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 63.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

Conclusions

Social participation was key to identify education's structural problems that affect a significant part of society in its quality of life.

The political agreement is imperative in order to improve the Government's instruments, mainly the national development planning and design of the critical course of an education reform process that is necessary to achieve social development.

The institutionalization of education policy evaluation allows the improvement of decision-making, as well as public control on the government on access to the elementary and secondary teaching professionalization system. Thus, systemic planning is combined with strategic planning, based on social collaboration and effectiveness of education public policies is based on an excellence approach. Hence that design, formulation, execution, and evaluation of public policies are a political challenge, something that must be considered whilst making socially responsible decisions.

Politicizing the education federalization process has fragmented the coverage basis of the national education system, as well intern cohesion possibilities because of an insufficient financing scheme given the structural dimensions set forth by the strategic administration of local and municipal education services.

Similarly, government actions that come from this decision-making perspective will establish the basis of a specialized education with instruments of strategic evaluation of social impact, and in this regard, especially of social cohesion.

Finally, the National Development plan sets forth all challenges that jeopardize the State's institutional capacity to act as an effective national development agent.