The Educational and Social Situation in Mexico:  
The Future of Girls' Education 

E-9 National study. Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico is a complex, rich and varied country with a great educational tradition, which must confront the challenges posed by the future of a mainly young population creatively.

The economic crisis that the country has experienced over the last 25 years has increased inequality alarmingly and today the enormous gap between the haves and the have-nots must lead those responsible for different projects (in education, labor and health), together with society, to find solutions.

Among the groups most affected are the inhabitants of underprivileged rural and urban areas, indigenous peoples, migrants, the disabled, single mothers and senior citizens.

Although awareness of the situation of women is gradually dawning, “today, gender equality is a distant target, and in some countries, far distant.” In Mexico, “only since a few years ago at most, actions have been undertaken to establish a culture of gender equality in formal education.” ¹

The challenges to respond to the different services of the population have been enormous over the last century, and although there is still a long way to go, important strides have been made.

As we shall see further on, education has spread to most of the population, but the quality of it still leaves much to be desired.

The National Council of the Educational Workers Union (SNTE),

meeting in Guadalajara in September 2000, analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system, and as a result the Guadalajara Declaration was issued, which recognizes that it is necessary to review education and the quality of the educational system.

According to the document, the strengths of the educational system include its high coverage, the experience of the human resources with varying degrees of qualification, the important advance in the federalization process, and the diversified educational opportunities, while among its weaknesses are excessive rigidity, the inefficiency of objectives and content, and the use of an inadequate assessment system.

As education is not an isolated activity, the first part will give a brief description of the educational background of the country and analyze the social context in which Mexicans lead their daily lives, so as to understand the circumstances experienced every day, which explain, at least in part, the results achieved in the educational process.
In the pre-Hispanic era, there were special centers for education, which was obligatory for both girls and boys, who from birth were assigned to one of the schools located in the different neighborhoods. This state of affairs was interrupted shortly after the conquest. At first, only the sons of Indian nobles were allowed to attend missionary schools, but after 1550 they were kept open for the sons of Spaniards.

In addition to violence and death, the results of clashes, new diseases brought by the conquistadors decimated the population. To have cheap labor, they brought African slaves to the country. The sons of slaves from various African countries were not allowed access to schools either; they and the Indians could only attend catechism, which was given in the atriums of churches. The education of the Spaniards depended on the religious orders.

For girls, schools known as “Amigas” are known to have existed in the 18th century which were really day-care centers created so that mothers would have time to do their work. Gradually, from the late 18th century boys between the ages of 2 and 3 were admitted as well as girls.

In 1810, the long struggle for independence began, ending in 1821.

Notes:
2 De Sahagun. Fray Bernardino: Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España. The original version dates from 1559.
3 Códice Florentino, 1564. Pictorial section of Sahagun’s manuscript, now in the Library of Florence.
In 1831, a law was passed that made education compulsory for everyone aged between 6 and 14, but it was not effective until the 20th century. The 1848 census reported a population of 7,335,000, of whom 230,000 lived in Mexico City. It is calculated that in 1868, the illiteracy rate was 87 per cent and that 60 per cent of the population was considered to be Indian, despite the number of mestizos. Life expectancy was 35.

In 1921, after the 1910 Revolution, the Ministry of Public Education was created. At the time the country’s population was 14.3 million, 7 out of every 10 Mexicans were illiterate, and the average schooling of the population aged 15 or over was first grade. José Vasconcelos, the Minister of Education, led a great nationalist movement in popular education, with large movements of teachers into rural areas, taking education to all Mexicans, the Cultural Missions. He organized a wide publishing program in which distinguished artists and writers took part, and established public libraries.

In the Cárdenas era (1934-40), socialist education, decreed in 1934, was promoted, opposed by the Mexican clergy, supported by the North American clergy.

From pre-school level on, the schools of this time had areas for looking after animals and growing vegetables.

Years later in ethnic communities, the education of boys and girls began in hostels, where they lived during the week, returning to their homes at the weekend, some of them quite far away. They still operate today, although there have been some changes.

In 1960 the illiteracy rate in the country was 34.5 per cent and the average schooling was 2.6 grades.

In 1976, the educational lag was composed of 16.9 million persons over 15 who had not completed their primary education; in 1988 it amounted to 19 million.

The illiteracy rate was 12.44 per cent in 1990, while 29.31 per cent of the population had not completed primary school. The average number of years’ schooling for the population aged 15 and over was 6
6.78 for males and 6.6 for females. Life expectancy for Mexicans in this year was 69.77 years, and by 2000 it had risen to 77.6 years for women and 73.1 for men.

In the year 2000, the level of illiteracy recorded in the country was around 10 per cent (11.48 corresponding to women and 7.48 to men). The educational lag—which now includes secondary school—is calculated to be more than 34 million Mexicans and affects mainly women, in addition to being concentrated in the poorest communities.

The 12th General Population and Housing Census in the year 2000 showed that in the same period 94.46 per cent of the boys and 94.55 of the girls aged between 6 and 9 attended school, while between the ages of 10 and 14, the figures were 90.59 per cent for boys and 89.48 for girls. The average schooling of persons aged 15 and over was by now 7.6 years: 7.33 in the case of girls, and 7.82 for boys. The greatest lags were in the states of Chiapas (5.5 grades), Oaxaca (5.81 grades), Guerrero (6.32 grades), Zacatecas (6.54 grades), Michoacán (6.35 grades) and Veracruz (6.55 grades).

It is important to note that government-provided education benefits 89 per cent of the nationwide student population (81 per cent in basic education, 10 per cent at upper secondary level, 6 per cent in higher education and 3 per cent in vocational training). The remaining 11 per cent attended private institutions providing educational services. 8

If most of the population lived in rural areas at the beginning of the 20th century and worked in the primary sector, when the 21st century began, there was an inverse proportion, since due to the absence of adequate policies for rural development, today only 16.1 per cent of the economically active population works in the primary sector, 27.7 in the secondary, and 53.8 in the tertiary sector.

Notes

The population of Mexico in 2000 totaled 97.4 million. The countries with the highest population densities, such as China and India, also number among the countries with the greatest educational backwardness. The former has 13 times more inhabitants than Mexico, and the second, 10.
CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Mexico is a country with marked inequalities, which are reflected in the educational system. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, there is a difference of 8.5 years of schooling between the richest and the poorest, and the poorest receive as little education as in the most underprivileged nations in Central America.  

To understand the situation of the country, it is important to examine social conditions, particularly the quality of life.

Today we are living a paradox; the largest, densely populated countries rich in raw materials, such as India, China, Brazil, Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, Mexico and Russia are among the poorest on earth.

Since 1975, real wages have declined in Mexico and so in June 1999 the minimum daily wage was equivalent to only 27 per cent of the value it had in 1978. The minimum daily wage in the year 2000 was 37.9 pesos or approximately 4 dollars.

In regard to income, the number of people not receiving any payment increased between 1990 and 2000 from 7.2 per cent to 10.1 per cent, while the number of workers receiving up to twice the minimum wage fell from 56 to 42 per cent, and those with more than twice rose from 32.5 to 42.7 per cent.

Note

In ten years, the number of women with a job increased to 31 out of every hundred in the year 2000, while there were fewer than 20 in 1990.

Between 1994 and 2000, the cost of the basic shopping basket rose 370 per cent, while the minimum daily wage increased only 135 per cent, with the result that the consumption of staple products fell drastically. It has been possible to contain inflation, but at a very high social cost.  

If in late 1994 the basic shopping basket cost 640 pesos on average, at the end of 2000 the price had risen to 2,055 pesos. Among the staple foods, milk increased 328 per cent, powdered and evaporated milk up to 600 per cent; eggs 300; tortillas—which is an essential in the diet of Mexicans—455 per cent; household gas 405 per cent; telephone service, 500 per cent.

The America director for the International Labor Organization noted that labor costs in Mexico continue to be among the lowest on the continent. The paper “The main challenges faced by the labor market in Mexico at the beginning of the 21st century,” mentions the need to contain the widening of the universe of highly precarious work with low productivity in which 41.6 per cent of the economically active population are involved.

The document prepared for ILO points out that unemployment and the proliferation of precarious wages have a very high cost for society in terms of unutilized or under-utilized human resources and an enormous social burden which shows up as exclusion, personal frustration and poverty.

The World Bank Report for 2000 indicates that in Mexico, 28 million people out of a total population of 97.4 million live on less than one dollar a day. “In Latin America, the difference between rich and poor is the greatest danger to social stability”. Between 1997 and 1998, the number of Latin Americans surviving on under one dollar a day rose from 63.7 to 78.2 million.

According to the most recent National Wage Survey—Household Expenditure, containing 1998 data and published in 2000 by INEGI,
20 per cent of the poorest households obtain only 4 per cent of the wealth generated in the country, while 20 per cent of the wealthiest families account for 50 per cent of the total. In households where the wage earners have higher and postgraduate education, earnings are 9.5 per cent higher than those of workers who have no education and 3.6 times greater than those of wage earners on average.

The Banamex Accival Financial Group (Banacci), the second largest in the country, reports that “the deficiencies existing in the country are difficult to close simply through economic growth, hence the need to promote policies to help improve the mechanisms for the distribution of wealth, such as the creation of more human capital.”

This financial group believes that the lack of educational opportunities is one of the reasons why the country does not show any progress in distribution of the wealth generated by the economic boom of the last five years.¹²

In the study *Prospectiva demográfica y económica de México y sus efectos en la pobreza*, the National Population Council (Conapo) reports that almost 80 per cent of all Mexicans lack sufficient means to buy a basket of basic staples, which means they live in poverty. In absolute terms, the number of poor rose from 30 million in 1963 to 74 million in 1996.

In rural areas and where there are ethnic groups, conditions are even bleaker: infant mortality is estimated at 90 per 1,000 live births, compared to 20 per 1,000 in Mexico City and 50 in the country as a whole (Avila, Shamalh and Chávez quoted in ¹¹). It is important to mention the high incidence of under-recording (estimated to be 33 per cent nationwide) still prevalent in many states of Mexico (Avila, 1997, quoted in ¹³).

The same document (¹³) affirms that Mexico has sufficient installed
capacity and amount of economic and human resources to deal with the malnutrition of all minors (Suárez 1997). In addition, Mexico currently allocates almost 2 thousand million dollars annually to welfare programs to eradicate malnutrition among the infant population.

In 1990, 21.47 per cent of the population lived in housing without drainage or lavatory; 12.99 per cent had no electricity, and 57.09 per cent registered overcrowding. 14

Between 1990 and the year 2000, 23 million people were connected to the running water system, and in the same period the sewer system was expanded to reach a coverage of 73 per cent, up from 61 per cent, so benefiting 22 million people.

In November 2000 the members of the National Council of State Housing Agencies recognized that the institutional programs had been insufficient to meet the needs of 70 per cent of the population without the means to buy or rent a house in the conventional market because of their employment in the informal sector, low income, or their age. The UN recommends the construction of 10 dwelling units per year for every thousand inhabitants in developing countries, but in Mexico only 1.7 were built annually. It must also be considered that the construction of dwellings is a contention of social pressures and a matter of national security.

In the year 2000, 94.6 per cent of the dwellings in Mexico had electricity, 88.5 per cent had access to running water and 77.6 per cent had drainage. 15 In the same year, the percentage of dwellings with roofs of unsound man-made materials (waste, cardboard, asbestos or metal sheeting, typically low in cost), which are the most unstable and hazardous to health, was 25.4. The communities most using this type of roofing are mainly in the southeast of the country: Tabasco (57.4 per cent), Chiapas (56.6 per cent), Veracruz (52 per cent), Campeche (46 per cent) and Oaxaca (44.2 per cent) (15).

In rural areas, where the situation is most critical, only 33 per cent of the inhabitants have sanitary arrangements suitable for disposing of excreta. 16

As for the management of waste water from urban areas, towards the
end of 1998 there were 914 treatment systems in townships capable of handling 21.8 per cent of the waste water from urban areas. In the case of industrial waste, only 13 per cent is treated in 1,354 plants. Approximately 120,000 waste water discharges are recorded, which pollute the water of rivers and lakes and make it unfit for consumption. The National Water Commission states that practically all the country’s bodies of water are of poor quality.

According to the year 2000 Census, the most common durable goods in Mexican homes are radios and televisions, found in 85 per cent of them. A lower percentage have a telephone—36.2 per cent—and only 9.3 per cent have at least one computer.

HEALTH

AIDS AND MOBILE POPULATIONS

Epidemiological data reveals that the communities most affected by the incidence of STD/HIV and risk areas are those associated with heavy population movement, through higher migration or immigration, mainly areas of in-bond assembly industries, construction, steel-working, red-light districts, or tourist, port and border zones because they are important corridors.

A culture of prevention must be developed, which is why education continues to be the best way to bring the necessary information to the public.

It is estimated that there are 6,531 pregnant women who are infected (one out of every thousand), and of these, 63 per cent are housewives.

Out of the total infected population in the country, 48.5 per cent do not have access to medicines because of their high cost, and Mexico, like New York and Africa, is among the places where there

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is the highest contagion among the female population.

**Pregnancies and Maternal Health**

Pregnancies are common among Mexican adolescents and the 1997 IDB report shows that 67 per cent of the adolescent mothers in Mexico were in turn the daughters of adolescent mothers. Fifty per cent of adolescent mothers (between 5 and 6 million) are anemic. Among the cancers affecting the female population of Mexico, cervical cancer ranks first, and breast cancer second. These facts must be taken into account when educational material aimed at women is being prepared, since they need proper information to adopt real preventive medicine and above all create a culture of bodily care.

**Drugs**

Over the last five years, the use of narcotics has increased by 30 per cent. Addiction begins at an even earlier age, at 10 on average. Cocaine is a growing threat, as are amphetamines. Drug consumption is part of the crime chain of production and distribution and is also related to family violence and adolescent pregnancies.¹⁸

The Attorney General's Office announced that delinquents selling drugs to minors have been reported in 1,377 primary and secondary schools.¹⁹

Data from the Third National Addiction Survey ²⁰ reveal that in the last five years, there was a 35 per cent increase in drug use. The age group with the highest level of consumption is males between 18 and 34 years of age.

There are thought to be between 8 and 9 million alcoholics, meaning that the number of people affected by them is approximately 45 million. In the peasant and indigenous communities of many states, alcohol consumption is directly related to abuse of power by caciques.
CHILD LABOR

Faced with a difficult economic situation, girls and boys as well as youngsters of both sexes are forced to work and so more than half of them drop out of school.

Only the children who work as cerillos packing customers’ purchases in supermarkets are required to continue studying; among them there are three boys to every girl.

It is estimated that 3,500,000 children work in Mexico, of which one million are girls. Of all these girls and boys 13,932 are under the age of five. As mentioned above, over half of the children who work do not study and most of them work in the countryside: 1,470,000 (42 per cent); in services 805,000 (23 per cent); in trade: 595,000 (17 per cent).

In the case of girls, 82 per cent give all their earnings to their family.

Children who work in markets do various jobs, such as cleaning and carrying and in some cases also prostitute themselves, by which they double their earnings, which are calculated to be 60 pesos a day (approximately 6 dollars).

Girls earn less than boys for the same work, although it is considered that there are more boys who work. The World Bank Report 1999/2000 explains that they are employed in more visible positions, while girls perform household tasks which are unpaid, and work for longer hours than boys do.

Low-income families try to find ways to survive, which involve children working in activities that provide earnings (e.g. sexual exploitation); this means that current government policies must be

Notes
18 Statements by the Minister of Health, Dr. De la Fuente: La Jornada, May 25, 1999, Mexico.
19 La Jornada, December 17, 2000.
21 Study on girls, boys and adolescents who work in 100 cities, DIF and UNICEF.
examined to discover whether they are really helping the most vulnerable children in the process of globalization.  

The participation of children in the workforce drops as per capita income increases (23).

The number of street children in the country was estimated to be 120,000. In 1995, UNICEF and Mexico City Government took a census which revealed that of the children who worked in the street, 30 per cent were girls, and that 18 per cent of them were under the age of 6. 1,859 of the street children had no family, while 11,514 of the children on the street did, and had to contribute money to the upkeep of their homes. If parents did not have employment, it was the children who ensured that the family could survive.

At present the number of street children in Mexico City, estimated at between 20 and 30 thousand, grows by approximately 5 every day, who come from the poorest states in the country: Veracruz, Guerrero, Puebla, Tlaxcala and Oaxaca.

As for street girls, 75 per cent ran away from home because of the ill-treatment and sexual abuse they suffered.

It has been reported that some 60,000 youngsters under the age of 17 work in Mexico City, due to the economic circumstances which prevail in their homes. Of these, more than half contribute to household expenditure and the rest have to look after themselves. 25 Girls who work account for 43.3 per cent of the total, and they are mainly employed in cleaning, arranging goods, taking money and serving customers. Of all the minors of both sexes who work in Mexico City, 40 per cent are unpaid.

Migration is the refuge of people from the states which have had a drought for five years and those sunk in poverty. Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas and Zacatecas are the ten states with high migration figures as a result of drought, while Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán and Puebla are those the population migrates from because of poverty.
Estimates made by the National Migrant Laborer Program show that today there are approximately 300,000 migrant children between the ages of under one year and five. The Program reports that there are some five million day laborers in agriculture, of which 3.6 million are migrants. It is estimated that at least 1.2 million of these are children under 14 years of age who travel about with their parents to do productive work that helps the family economy (cited in 8).

The mortality and school dropout rates among child migrant workers are high. In an article in the book Los rostros de la pobreza al debate the author writes that on average the educational system took in only 63.6 per cent of those entitled to schooling and the largest deficit was in rural areas. 26

Currently, 6,000 school-age children are being educated in the migrant worker camps of nine states under a recently created program covering the first two years of primary school for the moment. It should be noted that the causes of migration vary according to sex: 31.5 per cent of the men migrate for reasons of work, while women do so for family reasons: 29.5 per cent. (15).

FEMALE LABOR

In Latin America, two thirds of the workload falls on women, and 60 per cent are unpaid. Women produce 40 per cent of all food and receive only 10 per cent of world income; also, they hold less than one per cent of world wealth.

In Mexico, a quarter of the economically active female population has secondary or higher education, with an unemployment rate of 42 per cent. Among the 36 per cent of women with completed primary school or less, the unemployment rate is 11 per cent. Fifty per cent of the women who work earn under one minimum daily wage, 75

Notes
25 Child and Adolescent Labor in basic geosatistic areas of Mexico City, Mexico City Government, Mexico, 2000.
per cent receive less than twice the same, and 50 per cent of workers in the informal sector are women. 27

In 1992, 33 per cent of Mexican homes were headed by women. In 1995, INEGI reported that 84 out of 100 heads of households were men, and 16 women. 28

The 2000 Census showed that just over one out of every five households is headed by a woman (17.2 per cent of the total). In the 15 to 19 age group the proportion of female heads of households rises to 23.3 per cent, made up of single mothers, or daughters in charge of the home. The 65 and over age group has the largest proportion of female heads: 34.8 per cent.

VIOLENCE

There are various types and nowadays, family violence is a daily fact of life in the country, and of course violence only generates more violence. Fifty-seven per cent of the women in Mexico admit to having been victims of violence, 1 out of 3 frequently. Twenty-five per cent of married women are beaten by their husbands, but only 1 case in 10 of family violence is reported.

In Ciudad Juárez, north Mexico, from 1993 to October 2000, 220 young women were murdered, and 44 simply disappeared, most of them workers at in-bond assembly plants who went missing as they were on their way home or to work.

In the states where poverty is grinding, armed groups have arisen, like the EZLN in Chiapas and several groups in Guerrero. The writer Carlos Montemayor affirms that armed movements are the final stage of a long process of social deterioration which manifests itself as hunger, exclusion, illiteracy and unemployment. 29 Among the demands made by all these groups, education is a priority.

In Mexico City, one crime is committed every minute, a rape every hour and a murder every other day. Cases of robbery with violence also increased, and in Mexico they tripled between 1990 and 1996. 30 The head of the Mexico City Government recognizes there are two intentional homicides daily. 31
Kidnappings have risen in Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico, and child violence has increased in the region. Nowadays, 6 million minors are subjected to abuse and 80,000 die each year from injuries caused by their parents, families or others.  

In response to the violence they are surrounded by, more and more youngsters between the ages of 12 and 17 take part in illegal acts. In Mexico City alone the Attorney General of Justice placed 3,912 adolescents at the disposal of the Prosecutor's Office for their part in assaults, kidnappings, rapes and killings.

The agency responsible for dealing with young offenders, the Bureau of Commissioners, reported that out of 4,091 delinquents handled during 1998, the majority had a low level of schooling. Of the minors who entered the institution, 14.9 per cent had completed secondary school, 31.6 per cent had not finished; 16.9 per cent had completed primary school, 16 had not, and 15.5 per cent had no schooling at all. In 1992, the Bureau of Correction and Treatment of Minors began its operations of correction in Mexico City by implementing a program of education which covers nine counseling modules, with the participation of 11 multidisciplinary teams.

Another type of violence that has increased among adolescent males is suicide. From 1997 to November 2000 the Mexican Child Psychiatry Association reported that the suicides of minors totaled 350 per year. Over the last two years, 196 suicides of young people aged from 14 to 24 have been reported in Yucatán.

And, closer to the subject being discussed, it must be noted that before it was closed down, the SNTE Foundation carried out a study which related the aggressiveness of teachers to student drop out.

Notes
2. Household and Family Indicators by State with data from the Population and Housing Count, 1995, INEGI.
3. La Jornada, October 26, 2000.
RELIGIOUS GROUPS

In the last few years, in addition to the increase of Protestant groups, religious sects have proliferated in the country and “it is precisely in rural localities (mainly the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche and Quintana Roo) that Protestant and Evangelical groups, non-Evangelical biblical religions and people who profess to have no religion at all are most in evidence.” (13)

In a great number of cases, religious differences foster violence and divisions within communities; in others, they force children to drop out of school, since some religious sects do not permit them, for example, to pay honor to the flag, and this, added to the inflexibility of those in charge of educational centers, leads to student drop-out. This happens only with fundamentalist sects.

According to the investigator of these issues, Cecilio Luis Rosado, groups similar to Jehovah’s Witnesses have less influence in ethnic communities since they have less penetration. Other groups, such as Presbyterians, accept government policies and are very respectful toward the community. The Church of the Latter-Day Saints has its own schools, which are mixed, and hymns specially for children.

Fundamentalist groups directly influence families and have leaflets designed for children. There is open rejection of the government, history and patriotic symbols, in addition to the fact that they alter the dietary habits of their followers. They do not allow certain medical procedures or transfusions.
CHAPTER II

This chapter will refer briefly to the Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) meetings before giving official statistics for demography and education over the last ten years, the period between the two meetings.

MEXICO AT WORLD EDUCATION FORUMS

FROM JOMTIEN TO DAKAR

In 1989, a nationwide assessment was made of the educational system in Mexico to discover the true facts about education and make any changes necessary. The results of this evaluation showed agreement with the Jomtien proposals put forward in 1990, when representatives from 155 governments met in response to an invitation extended by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and the World Bank to analyze the state of basic education for all in the world.

In Jomtien, the delegates from the various countries participating confirmed the World Action Plan on Education for All, which includes among its objectives the expansion of activities to protect and encourage children, particularly the poor, underprivileged and handicapped; the universalization of primary education and the termination of the cycle for all from that time until the year 2000; the reduction of the illiteracy rate among adults by half between 1990 and 2000, placing emphasis on the literacy of women, and the expansion of basic education and training in essential skills for adolescents and adults to improve health, employment and productivity.
Mexico, considered to be one of the nine countries with the greatest backwardness in the sphere of education, then began a great educational reform.

In 1992, the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education was signed and shortly afterward the federal government began to transfer the operation of preprimary, primary and secondary services to state governments.

Also in 1992, a change was begun of all teaching material for the basic education of Mexican children and adolescents. Recently the country’s new education authorities announced a change of textbooks.

Dakar

In April 2000, the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, and the United Nations Secretary General inaugurated the decade of education for girls. One of the Forum’s purposes is the elimination of discrimination in education by the year 2015.

At this meeting, Mexico’s Minister of Education spoke not only of the results achieved but also about what is still to be done in the country as regards education. He included among the matters pending the need to increase attention to the most socially vulnerable children under three by higher social investment in early childhood with intersectorial programs designed for families to overcome poverty by overseeing the quality of services. He also stated that it is necessary to ensure all boys and girls have at least two years of preprimary and that this really does discharge its educational function. The Minister also signed the agreements reached at the meeting, which included among the targets to be met:

- To extend and improve care and education for infants, especially for girls and boys most at risk and disadvantaged
- To ensure that by 2015, all boys and girls, particularly the latter, in difficult circumstances and belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete good quality, free and obligatory primary education.
To ensure that the learning needs of all adolescents and adults are met by means of equitable access to continuous basic education.

To achieve these goals, governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations pledge, among other things, to:

- Promote a firm political commitment at both national and international levels to Education for All, develop national plans of action and considerably increase investment in basic education.
- Further the policies of Education for All within a sustainable, well-integrated framework, clearly linked to the elimination of poverty and development strategies.
- Meet the needs of educational systems affected by conflicts, natural disasters and instability and conduct educational programs in such a way that they foster mutual understanding, peace, and tolerance and help to prevent violence and conflict.
- Implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for a change in attitudes, values and practices.
- Introduce urgent educational programs and actions to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- Create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitable environments leading to learning excellence and clearly defined targets for all.
- Improve the condition, morale and professionalism of teachers.

Note
The Undersecretary for Basic Education and Teacher Training made the announcement on January 31, 2001.
STATISTICS 1990-2000

THE POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY

In 1990, Mexico had 81,249,645 inhabitants, 50.9 per cent female and 49.1 per cent male. Five years later, in 1995, population had risen to 91.2 million, and in 1997 to 93.7 million, giving Mexico eleventh place among the most populated countries in the world and third in America. The 2000 census recorded a total of 97.4 Mexicans.

Of this current total of 97.4 million, 34 per cent are under 15, 60.6 per cent are between 15 and 64 years of age, and 5 per cent are over 65.

The national female population is distributed in large age groups in the following manner: 34.9 per cent girls; 30.4 per cent young women aged between 15 and 29; 28.5 per cent adult women, and 6.2 per cent over 60. (27)

The State with the highest proportion of girls is Coahuila (41.4 per cent), while in Mexico City the figure is 26.9 per cent. In the case of young women, the state with the highest proportion is Quintana Roo, with 32.7 per cent, and the state with the lowest percentage is Oaxaca (27.5). The largest proportion of adult women is in Mexico City, which has 34.2 per cent, and the lowest in Guerrero (25.6 per cent). Mexico City has the highest proportion of women aged 60 or over, with 7.6 per cent, while Quintana Roo has only 3 per cent.

EDUCATION STATISTICS

At present, more than 622 thousand boys and girls are catered for an initial education, almost 370 thousand more than in 1990, or 7.2 per cent of the population aged from under one year to 3 years 11 months. Seventy-five per cent of the population in receipt of initial education enjoy this service outside the formal education system. (25)

In the 1990-1991 school year, 2.7 million children aged three, four and five received preprimary schooling, while in the period 1998-1999 the figure was 3.36 million.
In 1990, school attendance by girls and boys aged 6 was 79.5 per cent and by 1997 this figure had risen to 93.8 per cent for boys and 94 per cent in the case of girls.

In 1990-1991, 1.8 million pupils completed primary school. In the period 1999-2000, the figure was 2.1 million.

In the case of the 14-year-old age group, 69.5 per cent of the girls and boys in the country attended school, while in 1997, 78 per cent of males and 72 per cent of females did so. (4)

At 18, 21 per cent of males in an impoverished situation attend school, but only 13 per cent of females. Graduation in secondary schools is 44 per cent for males and 33 per cent for females.

In Mexico, 1.3 million children between 6 and 14 do not attend school. Out of every 100 boys, 36 do not complete primary school for economic reasons; 17 per cent of those who finish do not go on to secondary school; 37 per cent of adolescents aged 18 do not have secondary school education; in addition, 6,170,780 minors are illiterate, and every year, 800 thousand adolescents who reach the age of 15 swell the figures of the educationally deficient.

According to the Sixth Government Report (September 2000) the average schooling of the population over 15 was 7.7 grades, a level far lower than the one of developed countries, where the average is practically double. Furthermore, of the young adults aged 20 to 24, 55.2 per cent (urban areas) and 83.6 per cent (rural areas) have less than ten years of schooling and are not studying, and of the adolescents and young adults between 15 and 24 years old, 24 per cent (urban areas) and 31.4 per cent (rural areas) do not either study or work. (5)

In 1997, the percentage of boys who did not attend school was lower than that of girls. In fact, nine out of every 100 girls did not, while the figure for boys was 7 out of every 100. (6)

---

Notes

The same document draws attention to the difference in school attendance by state. In the case of girls, 18 states report percentages higher than the national average (91.4 per cent). At the opposite end of the scale are Michoacán and Chiapas, where only 87.1 per cent of boys and 83.8 per cent of girls attend school.

Those staples with the greatest difference in terms of percentage between school attendance by males and females are Guerrero (93.5 per cent for males and 89.1 per cent for females) and Tabasco (with 93.3 per cent and 89.1 per cent respectively).

The INEGI National Survey of Population Dynamics 1997 reports that as the localities where the student population lives grow in size, the number of both boys and girls attending school rises, but the proportion of males is always slightly higher.

In localities with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants, 89.1 per cent of boys between 6 and 14 and 85.9 per cent of girls attend school. In more urbanized localities with 100,000 inhabitants and over, the percentage of school attendance rises to 96.4 per cent for boys and 95.6 per cent for girls.

In rural areas the difference in school attendance is 3.2 percentage points, and in cities, as they grow in size, drops to 0.8.

In the nine countries with the greatest number of educationally deficient, rural areas are strongly associated with disadvantage. In the countryside, public health and educational services are scarce, and in addition, transportation and communication facilities are insufficient and inadequate. The great education projects of the 20th century did not achieve all their objectives in the rural areas of these countries. Only since the 1996-1997 school year has end of course data segregated by sex been available, in which inequalities can be detected in the main educational indicators; among these, it can be seen that a higher percentage of girls than of boys completes primary school, although fewer girls enroll in secondary school. From secondary school on, a bias in school attendance in the favor of boys can be seen although the performance of girls in terms of
course failure, drop out and graduation is better than that of boys. The reasons for which a lower proportion of the girls who complete primary school attends secondary school than that of boys must be looked for outside the school environment and are connected with the social roles habitually associated with the gender. (*)

The differences in school enrollment between males and females can be seen from the age of 11, coinciding with the move from primary to secondary. In 1999, 92.7 per cent of the boys and 89.2 per cent of the girls who had left primary school after the sixth and final grade entered secondary.

In Mexico, the graduation efficiency of girls is higher than that of boys in primary, secondary and upper secondary school. In the school year 1997-1998, the failure rate of boys in primary school was 8.4 per cent and that of girls 6.1 per cent; the dropout rate for boys at this same level was 3 per cent, and in the case of girls 2.7 per cent. (27)

In secondary school, nationwide graduation efficiency was 75.3 per cent in the 1997-1998 period. However, in the state of Nuevo León, 87.1 per cent of pupils of both sexes finish secondary school in three years; in Zacatecas, only 64.6 per cent do. 39

According to the Progress Report 1998-1999 of the Ministry of Education, the number of boys and girls attending school has risen over the last decade, and the total proportion of children aged from 6 to 14 grew from 85.81 in 1990 to 92.23 in 1997. In this same year, 93.1 per cent of boys between the ages of 6 and 14 attended school, and 91.4 per cent of girls. (*)

This same SEP Report notes that "Today, the school-age population which does not attend school lives mainly in scattered, isolated localities. According to estimates made by the National Population Council, 40 from 1990 to 1995 alone, 6,342 new communities with

Notes
34 Women as educators, a comparative analysis of investigations in the E-4 Group of countries, SEP, Bureau of International Relations, Mexico, 2000.
36 CONAPO "The territorial distribution of population", in The demographic situation in Mexico, 1998.
under 500 inhabitants appeared, outside the sphere of influence of an urban area and far away from a road. These contained a total of 316 thousand inhabitants.”

The XII General Population and Housing Census 2000 reports that the national average for school attendance by girls and boys aged from 6 to 14 is 92.1 per cent.

If literacy rates among heads of family are analyzed, the INEGI reports that the proportion of those who can read and write is 89 per cent, meaning that 11 out of every 100 heads of family are illiterate.

The highest literacy rates for heads of family are found in Mexico City, (97.8%), Baja California (96.9%), Coahuila (96%), Aguascalientes (95.8%) and Nuevo León (95.3%), while the lowest are in Guerrero (73.7%), Chiapas (76.8%) and Oaxaca (80.6%).

In the case of spouses, 84 of every 100 can read and write. The highest literacy rates for spouses are in Chihuahua (95.5%), Mexico City (95.4%) and Coahuila (94.9%), while the lowest are in Chiapas (63.2%), Oaxaca (66.5%) and Guerrero (67.2%). The lowest percentages of wives who did not complete basic education are to be found in Mexico City (44.3%), Nuevo León (48.2%), Sonora (51%), Baja California (51.3%) and Baja California Sur (54.4%). 41

The states with the highest proportion of wives with basic education completed are Sonora (31.2%), Baja California (29.6%), Mexico City (29.4%), Nuevo León (26.8%) and Baja California Sur (25.2%), while in Chiapas only 12.4% finished it, in Zacatecas 12.5%, in Oaxaca 12.8% in Veracruz 13.9% and in Puebla 14.5%.

INITIAL EDUCATION

According to projections from the National Population Council (CONAPO), based on the 1995 national statistical count, the absolute number of children under 4 dropped from 8,904,469 that year to 8,839,006 in 1997. This is equivalent to 9.3 per cent of the population.
As regards attention to the needs of girls and boys under the age of 6, in 1993 the National Council for Educational Development (Conafe) initiated an experimental program for children under 4 in settlements with under 100 inhabitants, and coverage in 1994 was not over 300 children. 42

Also there are two Initial Education programs which work along with heads of families: one of them is nationwide and non-formal. The figures for attention vary, but it is reported that in 1994, 212,494 children were catered for.

The Initial Education Development Project (Prodei) is another one directed by Conafe in the ten states with the highest poverty rates, i.e. Chiapas, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, México, Michoacán, Puebla, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí and Veracruz. The goal of the program was to attend to the needs of 200 thousand children in a period of five years (41). It is a compensatory education program for parents which began in 1994 and which was operated with financial support from the World Bank.

In 1995, a loan was obtained from the Inter-American Development Bank to extend the program to 13 more states.

A television series began in 1997 aimed at parents or persons responsible for upbringing, consisting of 20 programs.

According to Profile of Education in Mexico, in the 1997-1998 school year, the needs of a total of 31,381 parents and 29,667 infants were met.

The 1997 Comexani report states that the quality of these initial education programs has not been evaluated, and neither has the effect they have on the psychosocial development of girls and boys under 4.

There are other institutions which attend to the needs of children under 6 by running Infant Development Centers (CENDI), and these include the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS). Among its achievements in this field, the 1994-1997 Comexani report an-
announced that since July 1997, the Mexican Institute of Social Security made changes in its laws that will allow it to:

a) Control funds for the CENDI.

b) Open the service to widowed or divorced fathers who have custody of their small sons and daughters.

c) Increase the coverage of the Centers by signing agreements with different companies which meet the necessary requirements.

This last point refers to the growing tendency to follow community-based patterns. Since the 1995-1996 period, the SEP has been experimenting with a semi-formal model of Initial Education Centers; the IMSS with the “Community Neighbor” scheme; the Institute of Social Security and Services for Civil Servants (ISSSTE) promotes the “Comprehensive Education Program” which seeks agreements with existing centers in neighborhoods, and the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF) supports the “Integral Development Centers” with emphasis on providing assistance to low-income families not covered by the Social Security systems. (13)

**BASIC EDUCATION**

**PREPRIMARY EDUCATION**

CONAPO reports that the population of girls and boys aged between 4 and 5 fell in the years 1995 to 1997 from 4,417,617 to 4,411,253, representing 4.7 per cent of the country’s total population.

Emphasis has been given to expanding the coverage and not improving the quality of preprimary education (13). Although school enrollment has risen in recent years, this does not mean that student continuance in education has increased.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>49.0</td>
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<td>49.5</td>
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<td>49.5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the scholastic period 1997-1998, in 27 of the 32 states, the proportion of boys in preprimary education was slightly higher than that of girls; in Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca and Zacatecas, slightly more females enrolled than males, while in Chiapas, the percentages were equal between the sexes. The greatest difference in the proportions of boys and girls in enrollment was in Michoacán, with 3.2 percentage points in favor of girls.

Progress in the increase of enrollment in preprimary education in underprivileged areas is not what was expected. For example, the rate of attention to the population of five-year-olds in Chiapas is 58.3, while the national average is 81.1. Among the possible causes for this situation are:

- The high dropout rate, which could be due to the inability of low-income families to buy the materials periodically requested for this level of education.
- The gradual elimination over recent years of the over-reporting of numbers or over-enrollment which occurred in preprimary schools and can be more common in isolated rural areas (4).

The same document points out the need to assess the contents and activities in preprimary education and also to review and evaluate the Degree in Preprimary Education. As a result, in 1999 students of the Degree in Preprimary Education began their training under a new curriculum (5).

An interesting project is the combination service in kindergartens to be found in certain districts of Mexico City. Working mothers can leave their children in the school, where they are given high-quality meals prepared on the premises.

**Primary Education**

New variations were introduced in the year 2000 Population Census, and the purpose of one of these was to discover the causes of absence. Today, we know that from among the population aged between 7 and 9, slightly over 225 thousand boys and girls nationwide do not attend school. The reason in 36 per cent of the cases, or
approximately 81 thousand children, is because they have never been enrolled in an educational institution; 53.4 per cent drop out and the reasons for absence were not specified for the remaining 10.6 per cent. At the same time, of the slightly more than 120 thousand children who drop out of school, 22.3 per cent left for personal reasons, particularly lack of interest in continuing their studies or low achievement; 17.3 per cent because they had to work to support themselves or contribute to the family budget and 7.8 per cent because there was no school in the locality or it was very far away (15).

As children grow older, the number not attending school rises, and the year 2000 Census reports that between the ages of 10 and 14 they number approximately one million. Of these, 89.9 per cent dropped out of the educational system, while 8.1 per cent had never been enrolled. Personal reasons were the cause for drop out in 45 per cent of the cases, economic reasons in 27.9 per cent, and the absence or distance of schools in 4.4 per cent.

When young adolescents are asked about the reasons why they drop out of school, these range from a lack of interest in what they learn, the need for earnings so as to live better, the mockery of their companions—especially in the case of boys—to both physical and verbal ill-treatment by their teachers.

With adolescence, due to economic need and the acquisition of other commitments, which include marriage from the age of 15, the figures for absence rise considerably (15).

Depending on the size of the locality, in those with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants 10.5 per cent of the boys do not attend school, neither do 12.1 per cent of the girls. (15) In communities with between 2,500 and 14,900 inhabitants, 8.2 per cent of the boys and 9.1 per cent of girls do not attend school.
## POPULATION ATTENDING SCHOOL, BY STATE (PERCENTAGES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>95.1</td>
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<td>94.6</td>
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<td>State of Mexico</td>
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<td>Colima</td>
<td>86.7</td>
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<td>91.9</td>
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<td>Jalisco</td>
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<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>71.3</td>
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</table>
The XII General Population and Housing Census 2000 recorded the number of boys and girls between 6 and 14 years of age who can read and write state by state. The highest percentages were found in Mexico City (92.9), the State of Mexico (92.5), Nuevo León (92.2), Aguascalientes (92.1) and Coahuila (91.0). The lowest percentages were in the states of Chiapas (76.7), Guerrero (78.1), Oaxaca (81.1), Veracruz (81.7) and Tabasco (81.7). (15)

One thing which should be underlined is that the increases in primary school enrollments are due to the fact that "ethnic and community primary schools have increased by one third over the decade and if it had not been for the increase in students registered in these two types, in the 1995-1997 period alone, enrollment in primary school would have dropped by almost 20 thousand." 43

**Enrollment by School Year (thousands of pupils)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>14,401.6</td>
<td>14,574.2</td>
<td>14,650.5</td>
<td>14,647.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>13,730.8</td>
<td>13,777.1</td>
<td>13,776.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic and Community</td>
<td>670.8</td>
<td>797.1</td>
<td>874.1</td>
<td>890.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a national scale, enrollment increased for both sexes, although a larger proportion of boys than girls attends primary school, and this has remained a constant over the years. In 1997, of the 14.6 million pupils in primary school, 54 per cent were boys.

Concerning failure "at the national level, the percentage of boys who fail one of the six years of primary school is higher than that of girls (8.4 and 6.1 respectively). In the period 1997-1998, in 25 per cent of the states (Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chiapas, Yucatán, Campeche, Veracruz, Michoacán and San Luis Potosí), between 14.2 and 10.3 per cent of boys failed one of the six years of primary school; on the other hand, in only three states (Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas) are between 11.3 and 10.8 per cent of the girls in the same position." (38). Also, the percentage of boys who fail is higher than of girls, with the biggest differences in Michoacán, Guanajuato and Guerrero. (38)

**Note**

### Percentage of Pupils Failing 1997-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaloa</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlaxcala</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veracruz</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucatán</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An important factor to take into consideration in the numbers of the educationally deficient is the existence of incomplete primary schools.

In the 1997-1998 school year, the 12,157 schools in the country with incomplete facilities to provide primary education through the six grades of this level of education are located mainly in the small communities of Chiapas (2,482 schools), Michoacán (823) and Veracruz (772). The lowest numbers of these schools are in Tlaxcala (28), Aguascalientes (59) and Morelos (60).

There are also 24,779 one-teacher schools, in which a male or female teacher gives classes in the six grades single-handedly. In the school year 1997-1998, these were concentrated in the states of Chiapas (3,481), Veracruz (2,534), Michoacán (2,017), Guerrero (1,653), Jalisco (1,530), Oaxaca (1,356) and Durango (1,144), while in Mexico City there are only 6 one-teacher schools.

**Failure in Primary School**

The evaluation document ten years after Jomtien 44 reports that the higher failure rate among boys is due to the fact that “economic and community conditions drive families to involve boys in the effort to survive. This phenomenon results in a higher graduation success rate for girls at the end of the six grades of primary school.”

Failure rates in private education are much lower than in State education; in the 1997-1998 school year they were 2.8 per cent, by the period 1997-1998 they had dropped to 1.3 per cent.

**Secondary Education**

In the 1998-1999 school year, an estimated total of over 5 million pupils were catered for in secondary education, approximately 155 thousand more than in the previous period. In the last few years, enrollment at this level has grown considerably, partly as a result of its incorporation into obligatory education, the federalization of education, curriculum changes and increased numbers of successful leavers.

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Note: 44 Mexico, Jomtien + 10, SEP. Bureau of International Relations, Mexico. January 2000.
from primary school, who continue on to secondary in growing proportions. It is estimated that today some 65 per cent of adolescents reach the age of 18 having completed secondary school. (44)

The Free Textbook Distribution Program for Secondary Schools begun in 1997 and the implementation of the Education, Health and Diet Program (Progresa) have benefited the pupils of this stage.

Throughout the decade 1990-2000, enrollment in secondary education increased by 25.6 per cent, attending to 5.2 million pupils. Television secondary has played a decisive role in this advance by enabling primary school leavers in rural localities and some poor urban areas to continue their education.

At present telesecondary serves approximately one fifth of the student body at this level. The introduction of this system has particularly benefited young women who live in small communities that are difficult to reach. (44)

Telesecondary is a form of distance education which has been operating in Mexico, primarily in rural communities, for just over 30 years. Currently, 900 thousand adolescents are served in this way, and over the last three years enrollment has risen by more than 32 per cent.

One important feature of telesecondary—which has been in operation since 1968—is that the community receiving the service donates the land for the school to be built on.

Of the total number of secondary school scholarship holders in 1998-1999, 439 thousand adolescents of both sexes, 67 per cent were studying in television secondary. (44)
Enrollment, Intake and Dropout Rate in Secondary School (1992-98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>Intake (%)</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Drop-out (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>4,203,098</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>4,341,924</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>4,493,175</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>4,687,335</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>4,809,266</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>4,929,301</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>5,084,277</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Today the National Distance Education Network is backed up by the Educational Television Satellite Network (Edusat Network), the Educational Electronic Data School Network (School Network), public television (state television stations and channels 11 and 22), private stations and radio. (*)

In 1998-99 the Edusat Network had 16 video and 24 audio channels. It was hoped that by the end of 1999 there would be 30,500 hardware units in place all over the country. The Latin American Institute of Educational Communications (ILCE) and the Educational Television Board (DGTVE) have produced 7,043 hours of programs, in particular, projects for telesecondary, upper secondary distance education, community education and teacher support. (*)

Government secondary schools also have a video library at their disposal to back up their study programs. With the Educational Electronic Data School Network, computers were introduced into classrooms with a view to creating a new culture of technology to benefit pupils and teachers in basic education.
AVERAGE SCHOOLING

In regard to the average schooling of the population aged 15 and over according to sex, in 1990 it was 6.3 years for females and in 2000, 7.3. In the case of males, it rose from 6.9 years in 1990 to 7.8 in 2000 (XII Census 2000).

If the average school attendance of the population aged 15 and over is compared on the basis of figures reported by the 1990 and 2000 censuses, all the states show an increase. The states with the highest number of years of schooling are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuevo León</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the states with the lowest average schooling, the following increases were recorded in the decade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacán</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the nine countries with the highest number of educationally deficient, the two which have the smallest rural populations (Brazil with 20 per cent and Mexico with 26.5) are at the same time those which have achieved the highest rates of literacy among females (82.2 and 87.1 per cent respectively). (37)

Currently, the figures for the educationally deficient are very high, there being an estimated 34 million men and women over 15 years old.
who have not completed their basic education. To those not served can be added pupils expelled and drop outs.

In the 2000 Census, the distribution in per cent of the population aged 15 and over, according to level of instruction and average level of schooling is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population aged 15 and over</th>
<th>No schooling</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary or technical/commercial studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,352,272</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33,320,095</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>18.66</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19.19  17.79
INDIGENOUS POPULATION

In the year 2000, indigenous groups accounted for 7.6 per cent of the country’s total population; however, it was not until the last decade that it was stipulated in Article IV of the Constitution that “the Mexican Nation has a multicultural composition originally founded on its indigenous peoples.”

The decrees added by Article IV of the Constitution states that 70 per cent of the members of the country’s indigenous groups live in rural communities, a proportion that is the inverse of the population as a whole, and base their subsistence on primary sector activities. A region is considered to be ethnic when 70 per cent or more of its population speak an indigenous language; these communities—with the exception of Mexico City, which contains a large indigenous population but will be studied separately—are groups that suffer enormous deficiencies insofar as health, education, human rights and basic services.

The 1990 census registered 5 million 282 people over 5 years of age who speak an indigenous language. The census also recorded 1,129,625 children aged from under one year to 4 who live in homes where the head of the household speaks an indigenous language. In 1990, the ethnic population made up 7.9 per cent of the total population of Mexico, and is located mainly in eight states where 80.8 per cent are concentrated: Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, Yucatán, Puebla, State of Mexico, Hidalgo and Guerrero. Other states with an indigenous population are Campeche, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, Durango, Querétaro, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Nayarit, Mexico City, and others.

The year 2000 Census recorded a population of 6.3 million persons aged 5 and over who speak an indigenous language, in addition to 1.3 million children aged between under 1 year old to 4. This total is almost one million higher than in 1990.

While in 1990, 15.8 per cent of the indigenous population were monolingual, in the year 2000 this per centage had risen to 16.8. It is
worth noting that 1 out of every 4 monolingual speakers are aged between 5 and 9 and a similar proportion is over 50 years old. Within the indigenous population, the proportion of monolingual speakers is under 20 per cent in almost all states; the exceptions are Chiapas and Guerrero, where the ratio is 37.9 and 32.1 per cent respectively. \(^{(15)}\)

In 1990, 81.3 per cent of the speakers of indigenous languages were bilingual, speaking both their own language and Spanish; 85.8 per cent in the case of males, and 76.8 per cent for females.

The states where the largest ethnic population is found are Yucatán and Oaxaca, with levels of slightly over 37 per cent of the resident population aged 5 and over. These are followed by Chiapas, with 26.8 per cent and Quintana Roo with 22.9 per cent. Even though this same proportion is only 2.2 per cent in Mexico City and 3.5 per cent in the State of Mexico, in absolute figures this means a population of almost 600 thousand (XII Census, 2000).

Typical features of the ethnic population are high fertility rates, high mortality and considerable migration from their communities, and as a result the populations of these are young. In 1990, infants from under one year of age to 4 made up 40.1 per cent of the total, while people of 50 or over account for only 14.4 per cent.

In 1994, UNICEF stated that some 80 per cent of the children in indigenous communities suffered from malnutrition. \(^{(46)}\)

In Mexico, in extreme cases with no access to a plot of land, the rural or indigenous family sells its labor to agribusiness concerns, which often makes it necessary to migrate temporarily or permanently to regions where there is a demand. In turn, this makes regular school attendance by the children impossible. In these difficult circumstances, rural families usually give preference to boys over girls in the matter of school. \(^{(17)}\)

Notes


\(^{(46)}\) Cited in La Jornada, Mexico, December 20, 1994, p. 18
The seasonal migrant population is composed of people from the different states of the country. However, almost two thirds of these groups are estimated to be members of ethnic groups who speak only their mother tongue or are only just beginning to become bilingual. (5)

In 1990, 21 per cent of the working indigenous population did not receive any pay at all, while in the rest of the population the figure was 7.3 per cent.

As for the quality of life, in 1990, 1,537,982 dwellings were recorded. Of these, 25.5 had no services whatsoever and only 24 per cent had drainage, 52.1 per cent had running water and 63 per cent were supplied with electricity.

In 1990 the annual child average for indigenous women was 3.3 (2.5 in the rest of the population).

There are 62 ethnic groups in Mexico, distributed mainly in 24 states and speaking at least 78 languages and dialects. 47 The General Population and Housing Census 2000 reports that "some 92 autochthonous groups have been identified."

The ethnic groups of Mexico face a situation of poverty and marginalization, which goes back hundreds of years. According to the INEGI Population and Housing Count of 1995, 83 per cent of the persons who live in municipal districts with mainly indigenous populations live in highly or very highly marginalized conditions (cited in *).

It is important to draw attention to the cultural aspects of these populations, which are so complex and dynamic. In an interesting article the anthropologist Andrés Fábregas notes, when speaking about the groups in Chiapas, "There is nothing further from reality than to imagine these human groups as immobile and the eternal bearers of the same culture traits. On the contrary, this is a dynamic human contingent which forms a very complex multicultural environment." 48

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Insofar as education, in 1990 it was recorded that 40.7 per cent of the indigenous population were illiterate (in contrast to 12.4 per cent of the total population), and that 37 per cent had received no school-
ing of any kind. This same census reported that 29.3 per cent of the members of ethnic groups between the ages of 6 and 14 did not attend school.

During the school year 1998-1999, bilingual instruction (indigenous language and Spanish) at preprimary and primary levels was provided for 1,049,500 children. There were 286,000 of these in preprimary education and 763,500 in primary. (5)

Although increased attention has been given in the decade to preprimary systems for the indigenous population or inhabitants of small, scattered communities, it is community-based education that has recorded the highest rates of growth in recent years.

This is interesting, since instruction is usually given by the young of the communities themselves; what is necessary is an assessment of the content of the education provided to discover whether it matches the circumstances addressed.

At the beginning of the 1999-2000 period there were 767,555 pupils enrolled in primary education for indigenous peoples in 24 states of Mexico, in a total of 53,332 groups. 49

While in the school year 1990-1991, graduation efficiency was 33.8 per cent, in the period 1997-1998, this indicator rose to 57.9 per cent. Both dropout and failure showed a reduction; in the first case from 12.9 per cent in 1990-1991 to 6.6 per cent in 1997-1998, while the failure figures for the same periods dropped from 19.4 to 14 per cent. (5)

By 1999, all the indigenous schools providing primary education should have been incorporated into the Parent Involvement in School Management Program (AGE). This would enable parents associations, working closely with teachers, to administer funds that can be used to improve schools and buy classroom material to help in the education of their children (5).

Notes
The document prepared by the SEP for the Dakar meeting states that there are no facts available to indicate whether the indigenous education model has been apposite, therefore it is necessary to investigate the matter further.

**INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Indigenous Student Hostels are support units for indigenous school-age children who, because they live in small villages without any educational services, have to move to larger communities to study primary school. In these hostels, indigenous children receive—in addition to accommodation—food and medical care from Monday through Friday during the school year (13).

The same document (13) states that in 1991 the Indigenous Children’s Health Trust, A.C., working in coordination with the National Indigenous Institute, conducted a nutrition diagnosis of 12,860 children receiving attention in 457 indigenous hostels located in Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, State of Mexico, Michoacán, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Sonora, Veracruz and Yucatán. Some of the findings were:

- Forty-five point six per cent of the boys and girls were considered properly nourished, in other words, their weight and height coincided with what was expected for their age and sex; 54.4 per cent showed some degree of malnutrition.

- Malnutrition became more serious over the years: if at the age of 6 it was present in 43.4 per cent of the children, at 12 the figure had risen to 69 per cent, with a more marked deterioration in the case of girls. In the 10 to 12 age group, the proportion of girls falling in the normal range from 42.5 to 0 per cent.

- The highest rates for children within the range considered as normal were found mainly in the northern states: Sinaloa, (83.5 per cent); Chihuahua (75.3 per cent); Sonora (72.9 per cent) and Nayarit (70.9 per cent).
The highest rates of malnutrition were in the states of Chiapas (66.74 per cent); Oaxaca (66.67 per cent); Guerrero (64.65 per cent); Quintana Roo (64.12 per cent); Campeche (63.12 per cent) and Yucatán (62.48 per cent).

Currently, there are 1,079 hostels operating in 23 states of the country. During the period 1998-1999, 58,850 indigenous children from scattered villages suffering from marginalization and poverty were attended to. In this same period the “Education Strengthening in Indigenous School Hostels” project was started up in coordination with the National Indigenous Institute, which manages them, and with the support of CONAFE.

Chiapas is top, followed by Oaxaca, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Veracruz and Puebla in the list of the ten poorest states in Mexico, according to the indices and degrees of marginalization. In 1993, the population of Chiapas, calculated to be 4 million, had more than 30 per cent illiterates over the age of 15, 62 per cent without completed primary school, 42 per cent occupied dwellings with no drainage, sanitary facilities or running water and 80 per cent had earnings less than two times the minimum daily wage.

The circumstances of indigenous people does not fail to surprise us, because despite living in the poorest states of the country—which in contrast are also the richest in natural wealth—they continue to produce real works of art by hand where they tell the world their history, both in textiles, carvings and embroidery, and reading this history must be learned.

Unfortunately, the education authorities have demonstrated a lack of sensitiveness in not incorporating this artistic work into daily classroom life, giving it its rightful value in the context, involving the different specialized artisans of the community in workshops for girls.

Note

and boys. This does not mean that craftsmen themselves do not take
an interest in them, and in several communities there are admirable
examples of the work some of them do with children.
CHAPTER III

In this chapter, some of the proposals of various researchers interested in girls' and boys' education will be examined so as to present the situation from different points of view.

INVESTIGATIONS

CASE STUDY. PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MEXICO CITY

Mexico City is a complex megalopolis, with all the problems typical of large cities and features that make it unique. A multiethnic conurbation where as well as the enormous modern city there are rural areas and poverty-stricken shanty towns.

The 1990 census recorded a population of 8,235,744 for Mexico City, not counting the suburbs of the Federal District which make up the metropolitan area. In the total population of the city, 52 per cent are females (4,295,833) and 48 per cent males (3,939,911).

In 1990, Mexico City found itself in a transitional phase, moving from a young population to an intermediate one, since approximately one third was under the age of 15 and only 4.8 per cent was 65 or over. 51

The 1997 figures showed that 14.3 per cent of the city's population aged 15 and over had not completed primary school and 3.58 per cent were illiterate (222,879 individuals), mostly women in the ratio of five to one females to males.

The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Data Processing

Note

(INEGI) reports that Mexico City ranks third nationwide in the number of pupils failing in each school year.  

There are serious housing problems in the city, which is why most of the population lives in overcrowded conditions, something which is repeated in many child-care centers, generating violence. All human beings need a minimum amount of space they can call their own in order to develop properly, a living space.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Different investigation projects carried out in Mexico City between 1996 and 1997 in Child Development Centers and Educational Centers depending on the DIF (Integral Family Development) and Mexico City Government, as well as consultations held with the general public between 1996 and 2000 the performance of more than 2,000 boys and girls was evaluated and the learning problems that arise. We shall briefly describe the results, since these facts may provide guidelines for future measures designed for the benefit of children.

EDUCATIONAL CENTERS

At present, in the educational centers located in the poorest areas of the city and where parents are peasants or underemployed, the staff in charge of children have a low educational profile, and the centers in fact function like the old day-care centers.

Generally speaking, the boys and girls who attend these Centers have little encouragement in their homes; in the centers they are given food—thanks to a contribution from parents—prepared by a woman belonging to the community, play games and, most important, are with other children and are not left alone at home while their parents are working. Girls show better levels of language skills than do boys. There is very little educational material due to lack of funds, and many children play with the plates and spoons they use for their meals.
Girls need less help in dressing than boys do, and even help them in this.

The children in general show poor adaptation to new situations, and graphomotor limitations, therefore they need a lot of encouragement not only in oral expression but also in graphic skills, that is to say, in all aspects connected with expression and body control. They need to draw much more, do handwork that requires fine coordination, be talked to, engage in activities to encourage creativity (acting out plays, inventing tales, telling stories, mapping their family trees with the help of grandparents to help them with self-identification, and others).

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (CENDI)

Most of the CENDI evaluated are in poor districts. Parents help to obtain educational material because they are keen for their children to be educated. The boys and girls are kept amused, but there do not seem to be any concrete objectives or clear educational goals. In general, their activities are very controlled and imaginative play is not encouraged.

The mistresses need training and support, since the situation they face is not an easy one. They have too many children in their groups, have very limited space available, do not know the capacities and achievements of their charges, which is why they try to make them uniform.

In addition to different language problems, most boys and girls at preprimary level cannot name colors. They are unable to handle the numbers from 1 to 4 as they would be expected to do at this age, since they are taught them in an abstract fashion.

The girls and boys who draw most skillfully also use more complex language and are the ones who receive encouragement through affection.

Maltreated boys and girls talk very freely about the violence they are

Note
51 Education Indicators for Mexico City, 1990-2000. INEGI, Mexico.
subjected to in their homes, but teachers do not react to these revelations.

Language both at school and at home needs much attention. There is a tendency to "baby" children, especially boys, which is reflected in their communication problems.

Food in the CENDI is adequate and there do not seem to be any problems of lack: quite the contrary, since 30 per cent of both girls and boys in the groups tend to be overweight and 10 per cent of the older children (aged 5-6) are frankly obese and need attention.

Almost all the Development Centers where girls and boys under 6 were evaluated are too small for the large numbers they must look after. The Centers inside markets are overfull; originally created to look after the children of stall-holders, they are now attended by children from the neighborhood where they are located. This overcrowding is a pressure not only on the children but also on teachers.

**Preprimary School**

In general, the performance of girls is better than that of boys and is clear from the first year up. Even though on entry 50 per cent of girls still do not show the level of performance to be expected at their age, 20 per cent achieve better than expected results and 30 per cent are at their level. In the case of boys, 3 per cent are above their level when they enter preprimary school, 14 per cent are at the expected level, and 83 per cent are below.

Language is an area affected in most of the children assessed, particularly among children with low or average performance.

In the matter of gender, teachers address groups as "children," and with few exceptions say "girls and boys." There are no gender-oriented activities, not even in imaginative play, which is not given encouragement, and when it occurs spontaneously it is interrupted when both girls and boys dress up and begin to act out what they see in their homes.

In the first grade of preprimary school most girls know how old they are, while one third of the boys do not; only a low proportion of girls
(10 per cent) do not know their name, in contrast to 20 per cent of the boys. Only one third of the girls cannot count up to four, while half the boys cannot. The same is true for naming colors.

This can be explained by the fact that the children with low results receive little encouragement at home; they are not allowed to take an active part in household activities and conversation, and school is expected to provide the necessary education.

It is interesting to note that in motor perceptive aspects 15 per cent of the children in the first grade of preprimary school had better results at the beginning of the school year than at the end. These children were in very unstable groups, either because of the frequent absence of mistresses or else they were in groups whose mistresses did not fail to arrive but which continually took in the pupils of groups whose teachers were absent.

In third grade of preprimary school, girls continue to show the forwardness over boys that they had in first grade. Approximately one third of the girls and one fourth of the boys out of all the children assessed are ready to learn reading and writing. The aspects of space and time are the ones which present more difficulties.

On completing the third grade of preprimary, children automatically go into the first grade of primary school, irrespective of their level of development, as they have reached the age considered proper by SEP authorities. If they are still not of age they have to wait a year more to go to primary, and in such cases their level of development is not taken into account. The average age of the children evaluated was 6 years 3 months.

Drop-out is heavy in preprimary. Mistresses comment that many parents are annoyed by the fact that when a teacher is absent children are shared out among several groups, so they prefer to leave them at home in the care of a family member.

Girls and boys need benchmarks for their development and the school system—at least in the first years—does not provide them.

Public schools foster an inequality which affects the children attend-
Changes of mistresses and headmistresses definitely affect the performance of groups. Headmistresses are very important as they are responsible for school organization. Mistresses are also key elements because it depends on them whether interesting activities are carried out that involve the active participation of the children. In general, the teachers are open-minded and in need of support.

We feel it is very important for there to be some kind of link between preprimary and primary school, since the teachers in both blame the children for scholastic failure when actually they do not know what happens in the different levels.

**First Grade of Primary School**

Although there are serious difficulties of both spatial organization, and the discrimination of shapes and design among children of different socioeconomic levels, the greatest problems are found among pupils belonging to the poorest communities. Of all the children examined, 35 per cent were ready to learn how to read and write; for the others, it would be necessary to execute a series of activities leading up to these skills, and a forth of the cases need more time and also more suitable learning techniques, adapted to their needs and filling the gaps in their skills.

Something very interesting is that among first-year primary school pupils no differences were found in the way of solving puzzles and exercises between those who went to preprimary school and the ones who did not.

Computers with activities and contents geared to children like ours should be used both in the first year of primary and in preprimary as a rich support for activities related to rhythm (both in shapes and sounds), spatial organization and language, with special emphasis on the most underprivileged.
FOURTH YEAR OF PRIMARY

Nearly ten per cent of pupils still do not know how to write and the lowest results are found in schools in poor areas of the city. In arithmetic boys and girls have difficulty in understanding numerical order; approximately 40 per cent have not grasped the idea of ones, tens and hundreds.

Logical thinking is not encouraged either at home or in school. Errors of understanding are evident in arithmetic and language, which is why children find it difficult to follow instructions.

COMPUTERS IN THIRD GRADE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

A team of researchers from the ILCE made a study of pupils’ and teachers’ attitudes to computers. The sample included a total of 16 schools, four per state: two rural and two urban, except in the case of Guanajuato (151 pupils or 25.6% of the sample) since the computer program did not include rural schools. The other states were Nuevo León (164 pupils, 27.8%), Tlaxcala (163 pupils, 27.6%) and Quintana Roo (112 pupils, 19%). As for the sex of the students, 50.7% (299) were female and 49.3% male (291). All were in third grade of public secondary school.

The results are interesting. Preferences for different teaching methods vary: 44 per cent of pupils like to use computers, 22 per cent would rather read, 20 per cent prefer television and 14 per cent want to write before anything else.

As for the different degree of difficulty between teaching aids and activities, 33 per cent find it hardest to write, 31 per cent have trouble using a computer, for 27 per cent, reading is their most serious problem and 9 per cent find television difficult to watch.

The researchers found that as far as difficulty in these teaching aids and learning activities, pupils find writing the most problematic. This can be attributed to the fact that writing demands the exercise

Note
of analysis and synthesis, of reflection and above all the expression of ideas, and knowledge sharing, aspects which are probably underdeveloped among pupils due to the organization and running of the school or to the messages put out by the media, especially visual ones, which are faster in effect.

In the sex variable, the researchers found significant differences in two factors:

1) in empathy, which means that levels of sociability are greater among females and

2) in the frustration/anxiety factor, in other words, there is greater perception of dislike for computers and school among males than among females. In this factor, dislike of computers and school is higher among members of rural groups (X=2.10) than among those of urban ones (X=1.91).

The empathy factor refers to the level of sociability of the students who use computers in school and their impact on the interaction that pupils establish with their environment and their peers.

As regards teachers, those in rural areas are the ones who find it most complicated to work with computers.
CHAPTER IV

This final chapter will review the different support programs which the government has designed for the populations with the lowest means and some proposals will be made for the future.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Different support programs exist to help the people who live in the poorest areas of the country. In the 1991-1992 school year the Program Against Educational Deprivation (PARE) was launched to back up regular, rural and indigenous primary education in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo and Oaxaca where Mexico’s highest rates of educational backwardness are found. This program terminated in 1997, which is why until 2000 it will be financed with PAREB funds. (43)

Based on the experience of the PARE, in 1994-1995 the Program Against Deprivation in Basic Education (PAREB) began. It operates in ten states: Campeche, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, Veracruz and Yucatán. In the 1998-1999 school year, the parents of 438,475 children aged 4 were supplied with kits and given the advice of an outreach worker to promote the physical, cognitive and emotional development of their children. (8)

The Integral Program Against Educational Backwardness (PIARE) backs up initial, preprimary and primary education services and also provides educational services for the adults in the communities served.
In mid 1998, the Program To Reduce Backwardness in Basic and Initial Education was begun, aimed at reinforcing and consolidating the preprimary and secondary educational services provided for the children and young adolescents most in need. (8)

The combined action of these compensatory programs—PAREB, PIARE and PAREIB—meant that in the period 1998-1999, 4.7 million persons received assistance of various types in different areas of education. (8)

In extremely poor households in rural communities with a high or very high degree of marginalization, there is more sex discrimination than on the nationwide level: only 60.4 per cent of girls go to school, in contrast to 70 per cent of boys.

*Progresa* (the Education, Health and Diet Program) helps the poorest families financially so that they can have a better diet, and provides medical assistance to ensure improved health and therefore better school attendance.

In 1999, 1.2 million of all the scholarships awarded were for girls studying between third grade of primary and third grade of secondary; in the communities served by the Program, three of every four girls received scholarships, as distinct from 1998, when one of every two girls was assisted. In telesecondary, which is attended by girls who hold scholarships granted by the Program, the number of girl pupils has risen in comparison to boys, from 83 to 91 for every 100 boys. 54

The families included in the Program receive assistance so that their children under 18 in third to sixth grade of primary or enrolled in secondary school can complete their studies satisfactorily.

As far as prenatal care, attention to pregnant women increased by 6 per cent. Monitoring in pregnancy is vital in reducing the maternal mortality rate, which was 1,291 this year. (52)

It should be remembered that the states with the highest maternal mortality rates in 2000 were Guerrero, Chiapas, Oaxaca and the Federal District. (16)
One of the aspects to be examined, which is pointed out in the critical analysis of the document produced by the World Education Forum (\textsuperscript{14}) is that currently, girls and boys are only helped from third grade of primary school up.

\textit{Progresa} was recently assessed by the International Institute of Dietary Policy Research. \textsuperscript{55} According to the evaluation:

The consumption of animal products almost doubled in the families benefited by \textit{Progresa} and they increased their intake of calories by 7.1 per cent; this dietary assistance has an impact on children's growth.

The assessment states that in education, the probability of enrollment in primary school of girls—who receive slightly more economic assistance than boys do—is 1.2 per cent, while for boys it is 0.5 per cent.

In secondary school, figures are higher: the enrollment of girls rose 11 per cent, and that of boys 7.5 per cent. With these levels of enrollment, says the report, the girls assisted by \textit{Progresa} gain six months' schooling, and boys three months.

Another evaluation of the \textit{Progresa} program conducted by means of surveys in Campeche, Chiapas, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo and Yucatán by the World Bank in the Sight of Women, the Mexico Committee, the National Network of Rural Advisers and Feminist Millennium states that the program does not improve the status of women, and does not help to overcome poverty, on the contrary, it has negative effects since it does not encourage development and divides the population.

Thirty-two per cent of the people interviewed and who receive funds from \textit{Progresa} use part of the money to pay school expenses; 84 per cent think that their children are unlikely to find work in the community, while 24 per cent believe they can find a job in a nearby

\textbf{Notes}
\textsuperscript{55} National Women’s Program—Alliance for Equality, National Women’s Commission, Mexico, February 2000.
\textsuperscript{55} Turati, Marcela and Vega, Margarita: “Impact of government aid analyzed”. \textit{Reforma} newspaper, January 2, 2001, Mexico.
city; 78 per cent of the teachers consulted say that school attendance has risen but that infrastructure is inadequate; using Progresa money, 29 per cent of mothers added dairy products, chicken, beef or fish to the family diet. 56

Another of the criticisms made of the program is that it divides communities because only certain families are chosen to receive aid although all the inhabitants are poor. The author Julio Boltvinik states that “The issue is not inconsiderable. Centering attention on households or individuals is one of the essential elements of neoliberal thinking in social policy.” 57 And it is a shame that this aspect has not been resolved since it had been pointed out by investigators two years previously, as mentioned by the author in his article.

The monthly sum of scholarships from July to December 1999 for boys and girls in third grade of primary school was 80 pesos, 95 pesos for those in fourth year, 125 for the children in fifth grade and 165 for those in sixth. In secondary school, amounts are higher for girls. Boys received 240 pesos in first grade and girls 10 pesos more; in third grade the figures were 265 pesos for boys and 305 for girls.

Support Programs in the Federal District

Among the support programs in the Federal District, the Women’s Institute was created, as well as Centers for Attention to Women and Domestic Violence Care Centers. Gradually, awareness is being fostered among women that they can lodge complaints about the abuse they are subjected to, as at the moment it is estimated that 90 per cent of the cases of violence are not reported. 58

There is a series of strategies to help children from poor families, with the result that from September 1999 to August 2000, 99,052,016 school breakfasts were provided to 515,817 minors in 2,130 schools. Also, under the community kitchens and integrated services units, 67,752 packages of basic provisions were distributed to preprimary and primary school pupils suffering from severe or moderate malnutrition. 59
Free textbooks were distributed to pupils in state secondary schools. Between 1998 and 2000-2001, slightly more than 400 thousand pupils were given 2,955,720 books.

For attention to the indigenous population the Center for Migrant Ethnic Workers and the House of Native Peoples were established in the Xochimilco precinct of Mexico City. Since the House was opened in July 1999, 30,025 services have been provided (legal, educational, training, cultural and others).

*Street children* were helped thanks to the support of Private Welfare Institutions, with food and medical, dental and psychological care. A hostel in Mexico City looks after 298 *street children*, 24 per cent of them girls and 76 per cent boys. Of the girls who have arrived at the hostel, 21 per cent were pregnant or had a child under one year old. (58)

An interesting project called *Machinceupa* which is being carried out with *street children* or those most vulnerable takes into consideration the body, control of it and creative possibilities in all aspects of development. It began in Mexico in 1999, based on the experience of the Canadian performing group *Cirque du Soleil*. A rich and original teaching tool is provided through circus skills to begin preventive work among populations likely to develop antisocial attitudes, or else by working directly with street children and drug addicts.

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**Notes**

CONCLUSIONS

A pause on the way seems necessary to reflect on the role of education as an instrument for forging the men and women of tomorrow:

- Is the aim to create responsible citizens who care for all forms of life, are interested in their environment and in their persons, actively participating in the different processes?
- Is the aim to form passive members of society who participate little?

Nowadays there are many programs designed to ensure that children continue to attend school, particularly girls in secondary, but there are several problems that must be solved.

1) Education is compartmentalized and there is a lack of communication and coordination among the different levels and systems.

2) There are still no statistics differentiated by sex at all levels, although progress has been made in the last three years.

3) Many projects are cancelled when the people in charge are replaced for political reasons, and it is too expensive to change people. Few countries have the profusion of educational material that Mexico has, and also the great waste that personnel changes signify.

4) Projects are personal, not governmental.

5) Any real understanding of the needs of boys and girls must start off from knowledge of them, from appreciation of the individuals who make up a group and respect for their differences.
6) The role of schooling in a country with 34 million educationally deprived must be examined carefully.

7) Adequate systems of assessment are required which produce real facts.

8) Programs are needed for making the results of evaluations widely known.

9) As well as drawing attention to successful projects, a system of communication must be established among participants in education.

10) Teachers of all levels need assistance and sound training.

A much forgotten aspect which must be considered is investigation and the theses written in the different states or in the capital by students in the various faculties of the Pedagogical University or other degree courses, find a way to ensure that they spread beyond the walls of libraries through channels that take the information to those who need it most: teachers and instructors.

It must be kept in mind that both intelligence and emotion play a part in all cognitive processes, that they are inseparable; the first structuring behavior and the second acting as a motivating force, as well as the fact that the stimulus of the milieu will speed up or slow down the appearance of new behavior patterns.

In the case of work with children, at both the initial and preprimary levels, it will be necessary to avoid improvisation and provide considerable help for the people in charge of groups so that they can perform their job as well as possible, since the future of children is at stake.

A thorough knowledge of boys and girls is necessary at all ages and levels, as well as of the strategies for successfully facing the problems which arise every day.

Our schools are the reflection of society, where discrimination due to sex, color and ethnic origin continue, which can do so much harm to someone in the process of development.

Aspects of gender are not addressed in the classroom, and actually
there is a tendency to give girls objects which culture traditionally considers to be “for girls,” while boys are allowed to play with toy cars. This is very clear in the case of groups aged from under one year to 6.

Schools do not fulfill their educational role completely. Working with children of limited means in a difficult phase for the country must make those responsible for education think carefully, so as to give the support necessary for children to have access to new, motivating, interesting situations and are given the tools needed for learning. Let us remember that both girls and boys begin school having received little encouragement and those who live in the poorest areas, even more so.

If language is to mark the differences between social groups more dramatically than perceptive and psychomotor activities, it is difficult to understand why this aspect of development has not been taken care of as a priority by means of systematic activities and programs designed to enrich it.

Children will not learn through sterile, parrot-fashion repetition or scolding: they must understand processes. If a child does not learn how to read properly, it will take years to correct this deficiency later on. Often the homework given to primary school children is obsolete and boring, and also obliges parents—who are not familiar with the subjects—to try to help them, only confusing the children even further. When the parents of children who drop out of school are interviewed, they invariably say it was because they did not learn anything. This is most common in rural areas.

In preprimary school, drop out and absenteeism, as well as the continual entry of new pupils—even a few days before courses end—make activities difficult, since teachers are left with only a small part of the group they began with. They comment that the continual intake of new pupils causes serious imbalances in groups. If undetermined numbers of children are going to be received throughout the year, they should not join already established groups because they affect their performance seriously due to the very precarious
balance. Children—and teachers—need security and structured environments to be able to perform properly.

In view of the situation in which our children grow up, particularly those in extremely impoverished areas, the first year of primary school should become a transitional year, involving activities which prepare boys and girls to acquire skills before reading and writing, covering such aspects as the discrimination of shapes and sounds, notions of position in space, drawing, psychomotor abilities, imagination and creativity. All aspects of language must be key considerations, and here oral communication must be encouraged so that later the step can be made to written communication. Activities involving bodily expression are very important, and these should include rhythm.

Teachers in primary schools feel under terrible pressure to try and ensure that children learn how to read and write. The problem is that they do not know how to do this with the pupils they have, with what they have learned during their schooling and the way they use the educational material available. It sometimes seems that they pay attention only to the children who do not have any difficulties. Children need teachers who are interested in them, who can create windows of freedom and creativity with activities specially organized for the purpose, in which they can express themselves, something which today happens only rarely. The work of these teachers should be disseminated. Opportunities should also be provided for them to work with other teachers, to observe one another with their groups and reach conclusions about the task of educating based on their daily labors.

It is striking to note the ever increasing number of pupils sent for professional counseling at the request of teachers because they do not pay attention and disrupt the group. When these children are assessed they are found to be very intelligent and creative boys and girls who get bored in the classroom and are out of place. If their capabilities were recognized, they could perform better in a higher grade or help teachers with the group.
Both the design of teaching material and training programs should involve teachers, since most of them know exactly what they require. Training should include school supervisors because they often cancel the efforts of creative teachers to carry out activities because they consider them not to be in the curriculum. The same happens with different groups of teachers in the country who take the initiative to train among themselves, but are not permitted to continue.

It will be necessary to discover the way both girls and boys have of learning, and what better than to collect the experience of the teachers involved. In classrooms there is a lack of information about the children and the characteristics of their development and how to approach gender issues.

It is interesting to note that increased coverage has been achieved in groups which come under the heading of “compensatory education” or “community education,” which are in the hands of willing but mainly unqualified people, although they have the enormous advantage of being able to involve the different members of the community in educational action.

In the open education programs, those responsible for the groups need better training, better working conditions and close monitoring to be able to perform properly.

The disparities in education show us that peasant, ethnic and shanty-town populations continue to be those in the greatest degree of isolation and with the least participation in the country’s progress. And this is precisely where dropout among girls is highest.

Both in cities and rural areas, dropout is very common in secondary school, mainly among girls because they have to cope with curricula which do not correspond to their needs. Also, they have to learn to defend themselves against the enormous amount of violence there is in the streets, especially in cities. The need to work makes both sexes drop out of school.
PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE

"Speeches about equality and the great need to educate women are of little use, changes in study programs and textbooks have little effect if, through the hidden curriculum, boys and girls are fed every day with ideas about what society expects of them, if every day they are reminded there are barriers, styles, ways of behaving and thinking that were determined and immobile long before they were born which specify that men and women each have a role and that this, in principle, must be fulfilled." 60

"If we were to have an effect of the teaching corps, if this were sensitive to the subject, if it were to look from the much bandied angle of gender, things would tend to change gradually; day after day another human being would wake up to the fact that it is necessary to invest more in the education of females, that ultimately it will be to the benefit of society as a whole." (60)

We know that changes take time and that training for the teachers who work in the different educational modes—formal, informal and open—is a pressing need, provided that it answers real demands. Nowadays there are numerous courses for teachers, instructors and volunteers, but they themselves ask for direct guidance in their daily work, more assurance in their task and better knowledge of children and adolescents, their differences and potentialities.

A wide campaign must be conducted to encourage an increase in the number of male teachers for preprimary groups. At present, the proportion of male to female teachers at this level is almost nil.

A closer relationship between formal and compensatory or community education is recommended, since the latter serves expelled pupils or those not catered for by formal education, although this delicate task is entrusted to non-specialized personnel.

"In the system of community primary school, designed for scattered, isolated communities with fewer than one hundred inhabitants and where it is common to find multilevel groups of under ten pupils, teaching is done by adolescents from upper secondary school, who live in the communities for two years.

68
The comparative of the performance of volunteers and graduates of teacher training school (full graduates or not) shows that the value added to the teaching-learning process is greater in the first case than in the second." (50) Occasionally very creative persons are found who achieve real results with their groups, which is why formal education could benefit from certain techniques used in community education, making the structure imposed by the Ministry of Education more flexible.

It is important for education to approach service to the public from the viewpoint of gender; this does not mean that specific projects for girls are needed, since narrowing their scope and limiting them in their projects is precisely what must be avoided. It has been proved in several countries—like our own—that girls have fewer problems of performance in school, while the boys are the ones who need help different from that provided up to now. Concepts have been handled such as strength, decision and others which are supposed—wrongly—to be the qualities expected in boys and which can lead them into situations of great desperation and low self-esteem.

Attention to boys and girls needs programs which address the different aspects of their development and include everything from the prevention of language, nutritional, health and housing problems, all of them connected with their quality of life, preventing dropout from school due to economic difficulties or because of living in very violent areas.

The government should in fact cover the cost of educational material, since the contribution requested of parents at different levels can be very onerous for many families if their level of income is taken into account, and the economic means they require nowadays to be able to survive. Public school is not free.

Education is highly valued in our population, and therefore we see parents who go without the most basic things so that their children can attend school and the circle of poverty can be broken.

Note
10 Cruz, Sara Lourdes: Elements for the analysis of women’s education, in GenFems, Colima Association of Women University Graduates, University of Colima, University Gender Studies Center, February 2000, Colima.
This participation is very clear in the community education provided by CONAFE, since it is the members of the community who take responsibility for both the food and lodging of community instructors, adolescents who on finishing their service in the community receive a scholarship to continue their studies.

It is interesting to note that in the different research projects, regardless of the level involved, the areas where most difficulty lies are those related to communication, especially written. Girls are helped by their ability to socialize and their curiosity, which should be stimulated by school.

The best school results obtained by girls—a situation found in all the countries which have assessed real conditions—require open management if a change of mentality is desired in the different social groups through community participation in the educational processes of the different systems, addressing the issues of inequality and fairness.

The education problem in Mexico is one of quality, of continuity, about respect and help for individuals, of learning about tolerance and diversity which is our greatest wealth.

School could become a space where team work is really encouraged, where boys and girls are not labeled in accordance with old ideas that only create divisions, where everyday street and domestic violence is not repeated.

Indigenous children require a change in educational projects, real, deep-reaching support which root them firmly in their communities and the country with accurate knowledge of the nation's history.

This will only be possible if genuine, consistent, long-term development projects are executed.
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73


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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ............................................................. 3
A LITTLE HISTORY ...................................................... 5

CHAPTER I
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT .................................................... 9
HEALTH, AIDS AND MOBILE POPULATION ......................... 13
PREGNANCIES AND MATERNAL HEALTH ......................... 14
DRUGS ........................................................................... 14
CHILD LABOR ................................................................. 15
FEMALE LABOR ............................................................. 17
VIOLENCE ...................................................................... 18
RELIGIOUS GROUPS ....................................................... 20

CHAPTER II
MEXICO AT WORLD EDUCATION FORUM ......................... 21
STATISTICS 1990-2000 .................................................. 24
EDUCATION STATISTICS ............................................... 24
INITIAL EDUCATION ....................................................... 28

BASIC EDUCATION
PREPRIMARY EDUCATION ............................................. 30
PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION .................................... 32
FAILURE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ...................................... 37
SECONDARY EDUCATION ................................................ 37
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