

MEXICO – UPDATE ON NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION R&D

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STRENGTHS

- A very energetic and active research community (a biannual Conference, state of knowledge reviews every 10 years)
- A very interested and attentive policy maker audience at the federal level (not so at the state level – only 8 – 10 out of 32 states interested)

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Mismatches between policy priorities and research orientation.
 - More research on higher education, when the priority is basic education.
 - More academic research than use-oriented research.
 - Use oriented research not rigorous, unpublished, demand-driven.

Main challenges

- Lack of production capacity
 - Insufficient researchers
 - Concentrated (58% in metropolitan region)
 - Inadequate training. Limited opportunities for high-level doctoral studies.
 - Few researchers with quantitative skills
 - Ageing profession
 - Not articulated research community. Factions. Isolated. Different interests and approaches. Different prestige. Different funding.

Main challenges

- Funding is only 1.5% of total research funding.
 - Lack of capacity affects investment.
 - More investment is needed for research activities and for preparing researchers
- Use of research by policy makers
 - Willing audience at the Federal level
 - But use is lower than expected
 - And less interest at the state level

Main challenges

- Very little use of research by practitioners
 - Lack of practice-relevant research
 - Little dissemination. Many journals, not well distributed.
 - Lack of demand for research on the part of teachers
 - Teachers are not trained in research-rich environments and have little exposure to research
 - Teachers work two shifts – have no time
 - Supervisors do not fulfill an improvement mission
 - School principals have limited authority for introducing innovations.

Recommendations

- Definition of a national research strategy.
 - A national research agenda with priorities
 - Participation in its definition by main stakeholders
 - Through a permanent form that brings together producers, intermediaries and users
 - Initiated and established by the Ministry of Education and the Office for Science and Technology (funders).

Recommendations

- Enhancement of research capacity and infrastructure. A strategic plan is needed.
 - Number and quality of research training programs. Doctoral training in research environments.
 - New positions for junior researchers
 - Extension of research funding competitions and establishment of new ones.
 - Encouragement of collaborative research.
 - Improvement of recognition of quality criteria.
 - Mission specific research centers by Ministry of Education.
 - Train symbolic analysts to foster use.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the use of R&D
 - By teachers. Incorporate in teacher training curricula.
 - Enhance teachers' understanding of evidence through professional development.
 - Encourage research in school-based programs
 - Improve working conditions of teachers
 - Revise role of principals and supervisors
 - Create bridges. Brokers. Networks. Seminars. Conferences
 - Establish more vehicles (briefs, websites) for dissemination of research.
 - Make data bases available. An educational research portal

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- We were very close to constituting the permanent forum. Initial resources were approved, the Minister was in favor.

Problems:

- We were at the end of the administration
- The Ministry did not take it upon itself
- CONACyT showed little interest
- Researchers did not put pressure.

New Developments

- The National Council of Specialists of Education was established
 - Advises the Minister on Policy issues
 - Constituted by 12 members, mostly by educational researchers, but also historians (1), hard scientists(2), former ministers (3).
 - Constituted during the last year of the previous administration
 - Worked hard on a book that was widely disseminated and that proposed a long-term policy agenda for the country.

New Developments

- Present administration inherits the Council and adds to it. Mainly people from the media (who do not attend the meetings)
- Four meetings in the past 10 months. Attendance mainly by educators (researchers and former ministers). Reacts to Minister's agenda. Has no agenda of its own (yet). But has had some influence in shaping policy.
- Imitated at the undersecretary of basic education level, with a Council of its own. Many educational researchers, but also Union, opinion leaders. Also reacts to undersecretary's agenda, participates in organizing conferences, writing for a collective book on policy issues. It has been able to stop policy implementation of some decisions and to shape others. Has met 4 times in last 10 months. 60% attendance.

Both honorary.

New Developments

- Teacher education's location in the organizational chart of the Ministry was modified: from basic to higher education.
 - Only administrative transformation up to now
 - But high potential. Teaching in Mexico is an endogamic profession. Teachers are trained in normal schools that have a monopoly on teacher training.
 - Now possible to reach agreements with higher education institutions in order to modify curriculum, include research and move towards an evidence-based profession.
 - Transformations needed in in-service training and at the National Pedagogical University

New Developments

- More evaluation, and more research using evaluation data bases.
 - INEE – a more independent institution. Evaluation based on samples. Aimed at explaining and improving. Does research and invites research. Invites practitioners to use data (INEE explorer). Interest growing in society and among teachers, still very centralized.
 - Ministry. Census evaluation that is leading policy, training, curriculum. Ranks schools, gives schools feedback. Many people using data bases as THE measure of quality.

New Developments

- In other areas, incremental change.
- Structural problems are still there and still the same.
- Biannual Conference will take place next month, with 1,500 simultaneous presentations, researchers and teachers attending from all over the country, policy makers engaging in “informed dialogues” with researchers. Even the Minister will give 90 minutes of her time to discussing the importance of educational research. All this is public. An intense events where what should happen the year round occurs intensely.

Final comment

- Need to recuperate recommendations of review. Scenario has not changed
- When official representation was granted (last Friday), the official in charge of planning asked me to inform you that this administration is interested in studying and discussing OECD recommendations.
- Need to move towards a participatory definition of a research agenda.