

# THE NEW TEACHING PROFILE IN BASIC EDUCATION: CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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## Abstract

In Mexico, basic education has gone through different political, social and economic transformations in its history (1920 – 2024), impacting the teaching profile. The most recent educational reforms were those of 2013 and 2022, whose main objective was to improve educational quality and meet the demands of sustainable development of the 21st century. The document presents a comparative analysis of these latest reforms, based mainly on axes such as the educational paradigm, the subject of the teacher's work and curriculum. The study concludes that although the 2022 reform, called the New Mexican School, is an innovative proposal, it faces challenges of solidifying the teaching profile and its success will depend on its tight execution, as well as the commitment of all those involved in the educational system.

**Keywords:** *Teacher profile, basic education, sustainable development.*

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## 1. Introduction: Historical vision of educational reforms

Throughout the history of Mexico, education has gone through various stages of transformation. At the foundation (1920 – 1934), José Vasconcelos, founder of the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), in 1921, initiated the great national literacy course (Guevara, 2011, p. 16). Lázaro Cárdenas del Río made education a universal right, the expansion of coverage was accelerated, and “socialist education” was promoted. (Montes de Oca, 2007, p. 113). In 1943, Jaime Torres Bodet maintained and strengthened the growth of coverage, and, starting in the 1950s, a new concern began to take shape when it was noted that “the curriculum, teacher training, and teaching methods were neglected.” (Guevara, 2016, p. 22). Those years progressed until concern for educational quality was placed at the center (1970 – 2000), since “it is not only about training a greater number of professionals, but also about providing useful knowledge” (Echeverría, 1973, p. 8 as cited in González, 2018, p. 107). In the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in 1992, the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education (ANMEB) was created, which “...assigned great power to the unions” (Bensusán and Middlebrook, 2013, pp. 65-66). Finally, during the government of Vicente Fox Quesada (2000 – 2006), “the Social Commitment to the Quality of Education” was strengthened (Cherem, 2005, p. 93).

## 2. Recent educational transformations of the public sector in Mexico: From the 2013 reform to the New Mexican School in 2022

The main objective of the recent reforms (2013 - 2024) has been to consolidate a teaching profile and an educational model that meets the educational demands required by the sustainable development of the 21st century.

We agree that transforming the educational system is not an easy task because "Education has deep roots that do not change by decree, but in a process that is mediated by the training and conviction of educational actors, especially teachers" (Candela, 2023, p. 17). The challenge of raising quality standards remains constant and the question prevails, how to move from theoretical discourse to reality? with the aim of obtaining significant results in learning and that these are reflected. both in the national evaluation system PLANEA (national and standardized), in SisAT (diagnostic and formative), and in PISA at an international level\*.

Educational reforms generally address comprehensive and binding aspects. In this installment we are only going to focus on the proposal of the 2017 educational model, of the government of Enrique Peña Nieto (2013 - 2018;) as well as the 2022 educational model, of the New Mexican School, which was established in the period of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2019 - 2024) (Table 1). The latter known as

\* The national evaluation: National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning (PLANEA), Early Warning System (SisAT). International test: Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

the political moment of rupture, since for the first time recognized center-left parties won the elections in Mexico.

Table 1. Comparison of educational models: what is new?

<i>Ideas Strength</i>	<i>Educational model, Reform 2013 and its educational model 2017</i>	<i>Educational Model: New Mexican School (NEM) 2022</i>
<i>educational paradigm</i>	<i>The four pillars of education are taken up and strengthened in the Curriculum: Learning to learn, to know, to do and undertake, to live and to be. This is aligned with the curricula of the normal schools of the Ministry of Public Education.</i>	<i>Project-based learning is proposed, built from the experiences and knowledge of those who participate and intervene in community educational processes. This is NOT aligned with the curricula of the normal schools of the Ministry of Public Education</i>
<i>The subject of the teacher's work</i>	<i>Learning based on thematic objectives: Academic training fields: Language and communication; mathematical thinking and exploration and understanding of the natural and social world. Objective: individual education based on competencies.</i>	<i>Improve project-based learning in each of the training fields: Languages; Scientific knowledge and thinking, Ethics, nature and society; Of the human and the community. Objective: collaborative project-based education</i>
<i>Construction of academic curriculum</i>	<i>Curricular Autonomy: Schools are empowered through the School Technical Councils (CTE) - to incorporate the contributions of the School Councils for Social Participation (CEPS) - to make pedagogical and organizational decisions based on the regional, social context and needs of their students. Also considering the Areas of Personal and social Development.</i>	<i>Curricular Integration: Schools are empowered through the School Technical Councils (CTE) - to incorporate the contributions of the School Councils of Social Participation (CEPS) - to build the analytical program oriented to learning based on projects, ... inquiry (STEAM), ... problems related to the Training Fields. Also considering its seven Articulating Axes: Inclusion, critical thinking, critical interculturality, gender equality, reading and writing development, aesthetic education and healthy living.</i>
<i>Curricular standards</i>	<i>Key Learnings. What boys and girls should know as a minimum basis at the end of the school year of the Study Program. It constitutes a homogeneous objective of the learning necessary to be competitive at an international level. It is about acquiring life skills, disciplinary skills, expected learning, development of socio-emotional skills and an inclusive approach.</i>	<i>Graduation profile. That boys and girls develop critical thinking that allows them to value the knowledge and knowledge of the Training Fields. It is about "Reconceptualizing the curriculum as an open proposal, built from the experiences and knowledge of those who participate and intervene in the educational processes." That is, "... a process of school groups so that the components proposed in the 2022 Study Plan (...) acquire meaning and are articulated in favor of making schoolwork relevant and situated."</i>

**Source:** Own elaboration with data from Gutiérrez, E. (2019), Education for the New Generation of Mexicans. Plaza y Valdés S.L. Calle Murcia, 2. Colonia de los Ángeles Pozuelo de Alarcón 28223, Madrid, Spain.

National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education, (2023). Let's learn in Community, Mexico, retrieved from <https://goo.su/HIOb>

Secretary of Public Education, (2017). Key Learning for Comprehensive Education. Mexico. Recovered from <https://goo.su/cZ0bjmb>

**Note:** Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEAM). Secretary of Public Education, (2022). Synthetic Program, (Secretary of Public Education). Mexico. Retrieved from <https://goo.su/JtwkY>

### 3. What is new about the proposal of the New Mexican School (NEM), 2021–2022 in Public Education

Although only five years passed between both reforms, a very short time to make such a radical change, the 2013 Reform had left pending issues that were pointed out with opportunity. Gutiérrez, (2019) points this out about the educational model: "Recognizing the innate curiosity of girls and boys, attending to and respecting their need to explore the world in freedom, to have playful experiences, constitute optimal practices for learning. The educational process must form reflective people, capable of asking questions, looking for solutions and reaching results" (p. 47). And he continues: "Within the framework of the 2017 Educational Model proposal, it is necessary to consider the following aspects:

- Recognize memorization as a function of the brain that must be enhanced with learning processes oriented towards the definition of projects.
- Leave behind the isolation of the student in the classroom and move towards collaborative work.
- That part of the learning be online (Wojciki E. and Izumi L. 2016) so that the student faces the commitment of his own education and development of his skills in a world open to information, knowledge and the use of technologies” (p.51).

To analyze the contributions of the NEM educational model, four strong ideas were selected: 1. The educational paradigm, 2. The subject of the teacher's work, 3. Construction of the academic curriculum. 4. Curriculum standards (see table 1). These not only guide the teaching work but also define the structure and objectives of the teaching-learning process at school.

#### **a) The educational paradigm**

It is here where the most significant innovative break in the educational model of the New Mexican School is made and constitutes its transversal axis since it proposes that learning be based on projects, in a general way, throughout the scope of the Curriculum. And it is specified, in the contents of each of the Training Fields: “Language; Scientific knowledge and thinking; Ethics, nature and society; Of the human and the community” (SEP, 2022, p. 135), and its Articulating Axes: “Inclusion, critical thinking, critical interculturality, gender equality, reading and writing development, aesthetic education and healthy living” (SEP, 2022, p. 113).

Also, it is established that the processes of contextualization and co-design of curricular content “... will be built from the experiences and knowledge of those who participate and intervene in community educational processes” (MEJOREDU, 2023, p. 4). This constitutes another great shift, from “Learning to Learn”, focusing on individual and competency-based learning, of the 2013 reform, towards a collaborative model based on the definition of NEM projects. The latter brings with it another innovation because now the teacher's work does not fall on an individual activity, but on an activity of leadership and conduction of collective community school processes. This proposed educational model constitutes, at the narrative level, an advance of the greatest importance.

In this sense, certainly project-based learning and its implications in school management as a guiding idea of public education is an innovation and very important, however, its implementation presents many difficulties, including:

- The difficulty of going from theory to practice.
- The contradiction: the model promotes the participation of collective community school processes (governing bodies, teachers, workers, parents), but none of them were called to participate in the construction of the new educational model.
- Teacher training schools maintain previous educational programs.
- The training and training of project-based learning has been insufficient.

#### **b) The subject of the teacher's work**

In the 2013 reform, the teacher's work subject - based on the four pillars of Learning to Learn - consisted of achieving thematic objectives defined in the Academic Training Fields: Language and Communication, Mathematical Thinking, Exploration of the Natural and Social World, expressed and guided fundamentally by the textbooks published by the Ministry of Public Education.

In the New Mexican School model, the teacher plays a different role; he must now attend to the participation of parents in their proposed involvement in project-based learning, in addition to their contribution of these experiences in the School Technical Councils. A feature of the teacher's new subject of work is to be the actor-director of collaborative education, under the motto: Let's Learn in Community.

Indeed, it is the teacher's responsibility to develop the analytical program considering the “... analysis of the socio-educational context of the school, contextualization and co-design of content” (MEJOREDU, 2023, p. 2). Under this educational model, didactic planning is carried out according to the needs of the school context. With the purpose of exemplifying this substantive change in the teacher's work subject, an activity that appears in “...A book without recipes for the teacher” of third grade (phase 4)<sup>†</sup> is specified. This textbook instructs the teacher to approach project-based education and offers an example that is organized in several stages, as CONALITEG (2024):

For example. The teacher decides to implement the school project “water problem in my community”, which will be made up of the following moments:

1. According to the learning phase where the girls and boys are, suggest that they go to the community (their family or group of friends) and ask people the following:
  - Do they live with any water-related problems?
  - What do you think is the reason that causes this problem?
  - How would you solve it?

<sup>†</sup> “Synthetic study program: Phase 1; initial education from 0 to 3 years. Phase 2; preschool 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Phase 3; 1st and 2nd primary. Phase 4; 3rd and 4th primary. Phase 5; 5th and 6th primary. Phase 6; secondary school 1st, 2nd and 3rd” (SEP, 2024).

- Of course, students can create their own questions.
  - 2. Ask the girls and boys to organize the information according to the answers, that is, organize them according to age, gender or location.
  - 3. Support students to present the results of their project to the group, school or community itself. This can be through drawings, writings, posters, images, an artistic staging or a combination of all of them, or those decided by the group with the teachers (p.14).
- In this work, A book without recipes for the teacher, topics are addressed at an example level for all Training Fields.

### c) Curricular standards

This strong idea integrates what boys and girls should know at the end of the school year. With the 2013 Educational Reform, in the document "Key Learning for comprehensive education. Plan and Study Program for Basic Education", the specific features are presented: "Language and communication, mathematical thinking, exploration and understanding of the natural and social world, critical thinking and problem solving, socio-emotional skills and life project, teamwork collaboration, coexistence and citizenship, artistic appreciation and expression, attention to the body and health, care for the environment and digital skills" (SEP, 2017, p. 23). Each of them describes desirable traits; What students should know at the end of each year in basic education. In addition, the SEP highlighted the importance of promoting the development of transversal values: "resilience, innovation and sustainable development."

For its part, in the model of the New Mexican School, 2022: The Plan and Program is based on Training Fields, which promotes "... the plurality of knowledge and knowledge from different disciplines with which to approach the reality that one wants to study" (SEP, 2024, p. 139). Under this model, "the graduation profile is related to the trajectory of the students, which responds to specific conditions of their development, context, rhythms and learning styles" (p. 97). However, it does not show what specific knowledge, and skills students must have in the graduation profile.

It is evident that both 2013 and 2022 reforms seek to improve education in Mexico, although with different approaches. However, the lack of specification of knowledge and skills of the graduation profile in the NEM could generate uncertainty, where student learning is directed in each of the phases, previously called school cycles, to achieve the knowledge of each stage.

## 4. Conclusion

In Mexico, defining the primary education teacher profile for public education is a challenge that prevails despite the great efforts that have been made throughout history. A fundamental situation to be resolved are the parameters that support the access, retention and promotion of teachers, considering that they are transformed in each of the government periods, therefore, it is not possible to transition to quality education if a long-term teaching profile is not defined.

In the 2013 Reform, the General Law of the Professional Teaching Service was created, which constituted its fundamental contribution since it took away from the union (and allied politicians) the power to define who entered the educational system and in its place, it was established that both entry and mobility to management positions would be by competition with strict and transparent protocols. Furthermore, the evaluation and monitoring process of entry, permanence and promotion in the educational system would be through evaluations carried out by the National Institute of Educational Evaluation (public, autonomous and decentralized body). But also, permanence and incentives for performance merit oversaw the National Coordination of the Professional Teaching Service (CNSPD). In fact, the criterion of seniority is abandoned, and the criterion of merit is moved as the guiding axis of mobility in the teaching world. Mentions Arnaut, (2017). "The era of education workers is ending and that of education professionals is beginning" (p. 35).

The center-left government promised to restore dignity to teachers and recognize their work. He proceeded to repeal the Law of the Professional Teaching Service and replaced it with the General Law of the System for the Career of Teachers, which deduces; The Supervision and Monitoring Unit of the System for the Career of Teachers, which oversees the process of entry, permanence and promotion of teachers, however, "is scheduled to be eliminated." (SNTE, 2024).

And the question: is it possible to ensure a quality teaching profile without establishing strict and transparent regulation that establishes the pedagogical requirements and knowledge for admission? Consequently, the lack of solid support prevails for the following moments of learning the educational model of the New Mexican School:

- From entry: there is no articulation of the Study Plans and Programs of the teacher training schools with the basic education teaching profile.
- From permanence: teachers lack timely and continuous training to attend to project-based and collaborative learning with school community agents.

- Since the teacher's promotion in the world of work, the acquisition of new knowledge through postgraduate studies “is not valued”, since we returned to the old scheme where the most senior teacher acquires a higher score.
- The profound contradiction: can there be quality in the learning proposed by the educational model, without ensuring that there are certified educational professionals upon entry?

The sustainable development of the 21st century needs teachers trained and prepared for the continuous acquisition of new knowledge, information technologies, training in investigative thinking, with a vocation as leaders of leaders and an affective and emotional commitment to children, capable of adapting to transformations and converting classrooms into environments to innovate, foster critical thinking and reflect, and train citizens to love their country and democracy.

The success of the New Mexican School will depend on the actions carried out by each of the members of the structure of the educational system and society if they participate and mobilize to defend above all the right of boys and girls to receive a quality education in the public educational system of Mexico. However, it is still too early to know if the purposes of improving educational quality will be achieved with the New Mexican School or if there would have been a better option, for example, the gradualist one. That is, start with the proposal of project-based learning in only one of the training fields, to facilitate the transition, both in the training and training of teachers, and in maturing the exercise of democratic participation in community educational processes, embodied in said model.

Education is everyone's task, with the aim of appropriating the new educational paradigm with a comprehensive and humanistic approach.

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