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Description of the Educational System for the Disadvantaged Indian Population in Mexico

Perla K. Blejer
Loyola University Chicago

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DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE DISADVANTAGED
INDIAN POPULATION IN MEXICO

Perla K. Blejer

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Education in the School of Education of Loyola University of Chicago
DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE DISADVANTAGED
INDIAN POPULATION IN MEXICO

Perla K. Blejer
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Introduction

This paper describes Mexican education for the Indian population. The target group will be defined and specific characteristics which distinguishes it from the majority population will also be presented.

The discussion will focus on the following questions: 1) What is the national educational policy regarding the disadvantaged Indian population? 2) What agencies implement the educational programs for this population? 3) What are the goals of Indian education? and 4) Which programs are used in order to attain them? Emphasis, however, will be given toward describing the educational programs geared for Indian children and youth, particularly how these programs differ from educational programs directed toward majority-group students.

Evaluation criteria will be suggested and used in assessing these programs; successful and unsuccessful effects of these programs will be discussed. Finally, suggestions for improvement will be presented. The nature of the research will be documentary and will rely on primary data and supplementary bibliography.

It should be pointed out that since a large portion of the primary data was never published before, some problems of availability are present. This is the reason for certain gaps to be found in the quantitative data. However, representatives at the Ministry of Public Education of Mexico were able to provide a supplementary information
which made possible an evaluation based largely on empirical data.

It should be stressed that problems of availability, reliability and comparability of quantitative information in Mexico are common but are not unique to the field of education. This problem is particularly true regarding collection of data over periods of time, due to inappropriate technical conditions for collecting and processing data and also due to changing political administrations which tend to alter the definitions and variables used and change the patterns of information.
CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

A. Educational Policies Toward the Indian Population

The Indian communities are isolated geographically and culturally, because of their remote location, their monolinguisrn and their relative self-sufficiency. In the typical Indian community the division of labor is simple and the economy tends to be self-sufficient. The community is poor. Their poverty stems from well known factors: their land is deficient, qualitatively and quantitatively, the equipment and the methods used are primitive, and the price which is paid to the Indian production is low.\(^1\) All this makes the Indian population economically disadvantaged.

Although there are some empirical studies on the distribution of income in Mexico, those studies do not distinguish the Indian population as a separate group\(^2\); therefore, it is hard to give a quantitative answer to the question of the relative position of the Indians in the overall income distribution. However, since these studies

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provide information on the functional distribution of income (the share of income going to the different factors of production engaged in the various sectors), coupled with available knowledge on the productive structure of the Indian population, it is possible to infer that they are placed at the lower end of the income distribution scale. Scattered evidence suggests also that the rate of illiteracy among the Indian population is higher than the national average.¹

The official definition used by the Mexican Government to distinguish the Indian population from the rest of Mexicans is part cultural and sociological. It refers to people who speak the native language of Meso-America, regardless of their knowledge of the Spanish language. In total, they speak about sixty different native languages or dialects; they constitute about 8 percent of the population and are concentrated in rural and isolated areas of the country.²

There are two distinctive groups among the Indian population: the monolingual who speaks only Indian language and the bilingual who speaks Indian and Spanish. As in many other countries of the world, Mexico considers formal schooling as a way to integrate their minority groups (and other marginal groups) to the mainstream of national life. Indian education refers to formal education that is specif-


ically conceived for the isolated regions of the country in which the majority of the population are monolingual Indians. It consists of formal school instruction in the Indian communities in which informal instruction is stressed.¹

Indians conceive learning as being intimately bound to the environment, the community and the daily routine of activities. The children learn to participate in the religious, economic, and social life of their community contributing their part to the well-being of the family. They learn to till the soil, build homes, cook food, knit clothing, etc. The Indian’s concept of education does not radically disagree with Dewey, they believe in learning by doing, by action.²

Indian communities are economically self-sufficient. These communities lack interest in formal education; therefore, the goals of national education and Indian communities often do not coincide. The national education is oriented to the achievement of goals characteristic of a capitalistic and individualistic society and to the integration of all the sectors of the population in a common nationality.³ On the other hand, Indian education is informal and emphasizes the conservation of ethnic identity

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 31.


and socio-cultural continuity of the local community. The Indian population tries to maintain patterns of life which they consider acceptable but which constitute an obstacle in the formation of a common nationality.\footnote{Ibid, p. 223.}

It is not unusual to find among local Indian leaders a strong resistance toward the introduction of national educational centers in their communities, since formal education imparted in the schools lacks real meaning for Indian life. Nevertheless, the increasing interaction between both societies, Indian and national, have made the Indians increasingly aware of their economic disadvantages, illiteracy and lack of communication with the outside world. As a result, they are beginning to accept the national educational system as long as it does not interfere with the transmission of their cultural heritage.

Following the Mexican Revolution of 1921, the national policy toward the Indian population was based on the "incorporation" system\footnote{Ibid, p. 95.}; its principal goal was to teach Indians the Spanish language since one of the most vigorous assumptions of the incorporation thesis was that it is impossible to structure a common nationality unless all Mexicans share a common language. That assumption created the need to expand the knowledge of the official language. Spanish was then introduced as the language of instruction, to the extent of excluding the use of the native languages which at that time were considered as dialects of
an inferior intrinsic value. This policy was later reexamined at the First Interamerican Indian Congress held in Pátzcuaro, Mexico in 1940, and officially repudiated.\textsuperscript{1} A new educational policy for Indians was then adopted; this new policy intended to integrate disadvantaged populations such as Indians into the national society. The values and culture of the Indian subgroups was recognized but attempts were made to integrate their life style into the larger society.

Although the Indian population does not yet share the national conscience, contact with modern culture might lead them to the organization of a pan-Indian movement, that is the shaping of a separate nationality.\textsuperscript{2} Since this would be contrary to the goals of national unity, the education of Indian children is being complemented by a policy that seeks to make the dominant population aware of Indian culture. For example, Indian arts and crafts are promoted by the national government and exhibited in museums and markets. This helps develop the self-esteem of the Indians while it sensitizes the larger population to the subgroup culture. The policy of integration emphasizes not only educational aspects but also the community development through an integral and coordinated action of many governmental agencies (Agriculture, Health, Social Work, etc.). This policy implies the acceptance of the anthropological method for the solution of the

\textsuperscript{1}De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{2}Aguirre Beltrán, Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena, p. 259.
problems derived from the ethnic national heterogeneity.¹

B. Educational Agencies for the Indian Population

The federal system of education in Mexico includes two types of institutions: institutions of a nonspecialized type, such as the urban literacy centers, the elementary schools (rural and urban) and special institutions such as those designed for educating disadvantaged groups (especially the Indians).² The institutions of the general type constitute a majority compared with those of the special type. The former type may be characterized by the fact that it does not make ethnic distinctions in the student body, the latter type can be characterized by opposite. In this context, however, "ethnic distinctions" have cultural and not racial overtones.³

Indian education is part of an integral program of regional and community improvement administered by public agencies. Two important public agencies participating in programs for developing Indian communities are: 1) the General Administration of Extracurricular Education for the Indian Communities (Dirección General de


²De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 95.

Educación Extraescolar en el Medio Indígena) which is a division of the Ministry of Public Education and 2) the National Indian Institute (Instituto Nacional Indigenista).¹

The General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education was created in 1946 to serve the specific educational needs of the Indian population. Until then, Indian education was no different from the general urban and rural education of Mexican education and used the same programs and methods.

The National Indian Institute was created in 1948 as a decentralized branch of the federal government. Its declared objectives are to accelerate the integration of the Indian population and to improve their living conditions, emphasizing mainly the educational aspect. The Institute is also designed to fulfill an organizational function: to coordinate the activities of the various government departments involved in the development of the Indian communities (education, health, social welfare, etc.).²

In respect to formal education, it was evident there was a need to establish a special institution of multilateral action which would contribute to the development of the Indian communities and to their integration into national life. With this goal, the National Indian


²Ulloa and Muñoz, "Imagen Educativa del Instituto Nacional Indigenista," p. 5.
Institute coordinates programs of economic development and health services which run parallel to the educational programs. The National Indian Institute was also given evaluation functions in both the academic and applied fields. But the Institute was not given governmental authority or status of Ministry of State.

The Indian education adopted by the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education and by the National Indian Institute is considered Extra-Curricular; it differs from the urban and rural education in that it serves only the Indian monolingual population, and the materials used are in Indian language as well as in Spanish according to the bilingual method.

C. The Goals of Indian Education

The Assembly of the Technical Council of Education held in Mexico City in 1963, established a set of goals for Indian Education which are the following:

1. To teach the Indian population, both children and youth, to read and write;

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1Aguirre Beltrán, Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena, p. 174.


2. To provide the complete cycle of elementary education and to expand it to those regions lacking any kind of school;

3. To spread the benefits of the educational service to the family and the community;

4. To have the participation of the Indian community in educational activities, specifically in the promotion of Indian teachers; and

5. To emphasize the inherent values of the Indian cultures and to educate the students as active members of their family and communal groups.
CHAPTER II

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DEVISED FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

A. Description of programs

The educational programs for the Indian population can be characterized as follows:

1. Target population - children and youth population.
3. Nature of services - instructional and community development.
4. Focus of activities - in school and community.
5. Basic intent of strategy - integration.

Five educational programs for Indian population provided by both the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education for the Indian Population and the National Indian Institute will be examined.

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1 Some gap in information is due to the problems of unavailability of the data as discussed in the Introduction.

The General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education for the Indian Population offers the following educational services:

1. Indian Elementary Boarding Schools (Escuelas Albergues).
2. Centers for Social Integration.
3. National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture.
4. Brigades for Development and Improvement of the Indian Population.¹

The National Indian Institute offers elementary education and other educational activities in its Coordination Centers.

1. Indian Elementary Boarding Schools (Escuelas Albergues)

These schools were created in 1958 in response to the geographical dispersion of the Indian populace. Among the Indian communities there are compact settlements in which rural schools function, and the schools have no difficulty in recruiting the necessary number of students to justify their functioning through the complete cycle of elementary instruction. However, there exists another type of settlement in which the people live in isolated neighborhoods or in places of very low density. In this type of Indian settlement, the rural school is often unable to function. In some cases it is possible to establish a "school" in which only one teacher is in charge and he imparts several grades of instruction. Neverthe-

less, that arrangement is not available everywhere, and in the majority of cases it is not feasible to establish any kind of formal school.¹

In order to solve this problem, the boarding school was created, offering the possibility of concentration of students coming from dispersed settlements. The boarding schools serve the Indian population of ages 6-14, providing them with elementary education and related assistance.² In the boarding schools, students stay on the grounds from Monday through Friday, in that way assuring the attendance of the children.³ Since the students return to their homes on Fridays, they continue to be attached to their families and they are not segregated from their communities and culture. The boarding school maintains cultural continuity and encourages mobility among the dispersed regions and educational center.

The student body in these schools is recruited exclusively from the monolingual Indian population and the children receive scholarships and free textbooks. Each boarding school has a minimum of 50 pupils and a maximum of 150, and the average classroom size is 40. Approximately 10 percent of the students are from the village where the school is located and the remaining are from neighboring villages.

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 35.


³Aguirre Beltrán, Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena, p. 40.
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<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Served</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>6,501</td>
<td>12,751</td>
<td>12,851</td>
<td>23,325</td>
<td>30,500</td>
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Unpublished Data Provided by the Head of the Department of Boarding Schools, Ministry of Public Education.
The number of boarding schools and the population served by them did not increase significantly in the period between their inception in 1958 and the beginning of the Echeverría administration in 1970. A seven-fold increase in the number of these schools and eight-fold increase in the number of students occurred in school year 1971-72. In the 1974-75 period the increase in schools with respect to the previous year was 87 percent, while the population served was almost doubled. The increase in the 1975-76 school year with respect to the previous year was also significant. These increases may be attributed to the fact that the General Administration of Extracurricular Education felt that the demand for primary education in isolated regions was still high. Moreover, it was decided to allocate part of the funds of the Centers for Social Integration to the creation of new boarding schools in new regions to meet this need.

2. Centers for Social Integration

The Centers for Social Integration were started in 1952 to

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1 For comparison purposes data on the federal system are provided. In the 1974-75 school year, the total number of students in the elementary schools of the national system was 11,026,175 and the number of schools was 49,848. In 1958 the total number of students was 4,105,302 and the number of schools was 30,816. See Ministry of Public Education, Estadística Básica del Sistema Educativo Nacional (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1975), p. 56.

2 Based on talks with the Head of the Department of Boarding Schools and Centers for Social Integration at the Ministry of Public Education, Professor José Melquiades Pureco Vega.
provide accelerated elementary education for youngsters, ages 14-18. The Centers also provide assistance and training in activities consistent with the resources of each region for the purpose of integrating them into the productive work of their communities.¹

During the 1971-72 period a restructuring of the services of the Centers of Social Integration was started for the purpose of compensating the academic needs of the Indian youth ages 14-18 who were isolated from the technological progress of the present era.² The Centers initiated programs toward academic and technological preparation. In these Centers, individualized instruction is practiced and the guidelines of Continuous Progress Education is followed.³ Instruction is organized in three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. The first two correspond to the elementary education and the students who reach the advanced level are prepared as promoters (which are Indian teachers of both sexes who have shown themselves to be natural leaders in their communities). This is a new strategy developed by the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education in order to give a better academic preparation to the promoters.⁴

¹ Ministry of Public Education, Cuatro Años de Labor Educativa, p. 70.
New bilingual and bicultural educational programs are being structured and new specialization courses are being introduced in order to respond to the students' diverse interests. The Centers also offer in-service courses for the staff. Courses have been held in the areas of language, mathematics, science, social sciences as well as courses of elaboration of pedagogical material and evaluation.

The Centers for Social Integration have not shown a similar rate of progress as the boarding schools. Starting with a larger number of Centers and students in 1952, the number has slightly increased over the years. This is related to the evolution of the boarding schools, which received part of the financial funds once allocated to the Centers for Social Integration.

3. National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture

In response to the urgent demands for educational services in the Indian regions of the country, the Sixth National Plenary Assembly of the National Council of Education held in Mexico City in 1963 established the National Service for the Promotion of Bilingual Culture.  

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1Ministry of Public Education, Informe de Labores, p. 80.

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<tr>
<td>Number of Centers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
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Ministry of Public Education, Obra Educativa del Sexenio 1958-64, p. 15.
Unpublished Data Provided by the Ministry of Public Education.
Created in 1964, the Service, carried on by teachers known as promoters, was designed to teach oral Spanish to the Indian monolingual children in order to prepare them for the first grade of the formal elementary education. Since 1970 the Service expanded the program of Indian education to include all the elementary instruction for children ages 6-14 and also for adults.¹

The extra-curricular instruction offered by the National Service is based on the currently used national programs of elementary education. The specific bicultural content programs are elaborated for each region by the Service and are implemented in coordination with the Coordination Centers which depend on the National Indian Institute. Bilingual methods are used; the instruction is conducted in the Indian language and Spanish is taught as a second language. The Service operates programs of literacy and preparation of adults in agriculture and livestock business, environmental improvement and recreation.²

The Service rapidly grew from its creation until the early 1970s. From 1973-74 the rate of growth was slower. From 1970 to 1975 the number of students ages 6-14 increased by 49.2 percent while the number of adults served by the Service increased by 118 percent.


Table 3
NATIONAL SERVICE FOR PROMOTING BILINGUAL CULTURE AND POPULATION SERVED (1964-1975)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>2,183</td>
<td>2,372</td>
<td>2,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Served</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>624,098</td>
<td>867,837</td>
<td>1,054,511</td>
<td>1,138,466</td>
<td>1,269,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 6-14</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>132,880</td>
<td>166,098</td>
<td>177,338</td>
<td>185,022</td>
<td>198,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>491,218</td>
<td>701,739</td>
<td>877,173</td>
<td>953,438</td>
<td>1,070,939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ministry of Public Education, Obra Educativa del Sexenio 1958-64, p. 23.
Ministry of Public Education, Cuatro Años de Labor Educativa, p. 81.
This is the only service of the Ministry of Public Education which offers educational services for adults.

The National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture continues with the restructuring of the instruction techniques which started in 1973. Bilingual literacy cards in Indian language are being used, besides additional reading material in both the Indian and Spanish languages.

The teaching of this program is carried out by persons known as promoters. They are Indians of both sexes who have shown themselves to be natural leaders in their communities. The idea of promoters is derived from the notion that Indians who enjoy some status within their communities could act as cultural mediators, promoting the social change in their communities more easily and with less conflict than strangers. In practice the idea had to undergo some modifications. In some cases it was necessary to employ people with high status, but who did not have adequate preparation. Because of their capacity as leaders, they could contribute towards developing other aspects of the general program. In other cases it was necessary to employ persons with good educational preparation, but who did not have a high status in their communities.¹

The promoters are either recruited from Indian boarding schools or are prepared by special training courses at the Federal

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 101.
Institute for Teacher Training (a nonIndian institution) and currently at the Centers' for Social Integration (exclusively Indian institutions). The promoters' training is continued while they are in service and consists essentially in the broadening of their academic knowledge and training in methods and techniques of instruction. They are also trained in certain aspects of health, agriculture and legal proceedings in order to serve as counselors and guides in their communities.1

4. Brigádes for the Development and Improvement of the Indian Population

The Brigades are mobile agencies whose activity takes place in the work centers of the Indian population. Their purpose is to help improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities.2 Among their stated objectives is to improve the economy through the formation of cooperative societies and solidarity groups, social service activities, and the building of classrooms and housing for teachers.3


2Ministry of Public Education, Informe de Labores, p. 78.

Table 4

BRIGADE SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS SERVED (1958-1975)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Brigades</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Served</td>
<td>27,209</td>
<td>73,554</td>
<td>85,449</td>
<td>114,000</td>
<td>134,115</td>
<td>155,005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the 1958-70 period the number of Brigades tripled and the population served more than doubled. From 1970 to 1975, the number of Brigades did not increase significantly: only three new ones were created in 5 years; the population served, however, doubled during this period.

5. Coordination Centers and Elementary Schools of the National Indian Institute

The four educational services described above are provided by the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education in the Indian Communities. The other government agency that carries on educational activities among the Indian population is the National Indian Institute. This agency concentrates its action in regions of high density, in which it established Coordination Centers, whose objectives are to improve the life conditions of the Indians and to solve the fundamental problems in the Indian communities. These regional centers started by concentrating their efforts and resources in a small area, considered nuclear, and then expanded their activities to the marginal places until all the territory of the region was covered.¹ The Centers implement activities in three fundamental

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 99.
fields: the educational, the economic and the sanitary. The
discussion will concentrate on details of the educational activities
of the Centers.

The National Indian Institute first introduced a literacy
program for the Indians through the vernacular language; then
developed educational activities in which the school became the
center of development for the whole community. The function of the
schools of the National Indian Institute was first conceived as a
bridge between the Indian community and the national school. Thus
the Centers first established initiation schools, including the
preparatory to first grade, to prepare the monolingual Indian children
to attend first grade in the national rural schools. The initiation
schools were established in those communities which requested them
and which also contributed to their construction. The lack of
schools in the Indian regions, and the great number of children
attending those initiation schools, created the need to provide
Indian children with the possibility of continuing their schooling
in Indian schools which used the vernacular language. As a result, in
the schools which had a larger number of students the other elementary

1 Nahmad, Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, p. 7.
3 Ulloa and Muñoz, "Imagen Educativa del Instituto Nacional
education grades were introduced. To facilitate the instruction, all the schools of the Centers were given pedagogical material and the pupils were provided with free textbooks.¹

Since all the schools of the Coordination Centers have the same characteristics, we will list the features of this formal system of education, which are the following:²

1. Instruction is carried out by local promoters.

2. The literacy program for the children starts in the vernacular language which is used as a means of communication between promoters and pupils and members of the community.

3. After reaching an advanced stage in the literacy program in the vernacular language, the instruction of the Spanish Language is introduced, first orally and then reading and writing.

4. Maximum flexibility is given to time schedules, the school calendar, and the testing periods in order to adjust to the cultural rhythm of life and to the working periods of the region.

5. The mobility of students and promoters is encouraged in order to increase their knowledge of their region and improve their relations with the non-Indian world.

6. Students showing greater abilities are prepared to serve their communities or are helped to find jobs in the national society, if they are interested.

¹Ibid, p. 12.

²De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 99.
7. Participation of the community in the activities of the school is promoted.

In 22 years, from the creation of the National Indian Institute in 1948 until 1970, only eleven Centers were created. Between 1970 and 1975, 50 Coordination Centers were created which means that the number of Centers increased almost sixfold in this period. However, the number of schools show a greater rate of increase in the 1952-1970 period than in the 1970-75. The reason is that since 1952 many schools with only the preparatory to the first grade were created in isolated regions where no kind of school was available. On the other hand, from 1970 the trend was to extend the schools which already existed to include the complete cycle of elementary instruction. New schools were also created in the 1970-75 period but the rate of growth was slower than in the previous period (50 percent). The number of students increased almost 800 percent from 1948 to 1970, and then nearly doubled between 1970-1975. The number of promoters and bilingual teachers combined have increased vis a vie to student population. In 1964 the students-teacher ratio was 37. In 1970 it was reduced to 33 and in the 1974-75 period to 32.

In 1975 the Centers of the National Indian Institute started to provide secondary education for Indian children who graduated from elementary schools. Another way of helping graduates from elementary schools to continue their studies was to provide scholarships for
Table 5

COORDINATION CENTERS OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN INSTITUTE: SCHOOLS

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (1948-1975)

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<tr>
<td>Number of Centers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>1,827</td>
<td>1,966</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td>2,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>14,924</td>
<td>126,000</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>212,000</td>
<td>231,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoters and Bilingual Teachers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>3,815</td>
<td>4,023</td>
<td>5,715</td>
<td>6,229</td>
<td>7,008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Caso, "Educación," p. 34.

Indian children to study in national rural schools.

In the 1974-75 period the Ministry of the Treasury provided 3000 scholarships for Indian students to continue their studies in schools of their region. This number of scholarship represents a 50 percent increase from the previous 1973-74 period when only 2000 were awarded.¹

The Coordination Centers provide their schools with didactical material especially elaborated by the National Indian Institute. They also organize preparation courses for the staff, teachers and promoters.²

B. Literacy Programs in Indian Language

Along with the structuring of educational programs for the Indian children and youth, a controversy arose concerning the question of which language to use in the instruction. In the 1920s, under the national policy of incorporation, a need was created to expand the knowledge of the official language. Spanish was then introduced as the language of instruction for the Indian children to the extent of excluding the use of native languages.³

²Nahmad, Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, p. 24.
³Aguirre Beltrán, Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena, p. 223.
A methodological confusion existed between instruction of the national language (Spanish) and instruction in the national language. It was assumed that once the students knew the basis of the national language they could be taught all the subject matters in that language. This procedure, which might have succeeded had students belonged to bilingual families or communities, appeared to be inefficient with the monolingual Indian children since the students did not have an opportunity to use the national language, except in the reduced context of the school.¹

In order to deal with those aspects of the problem, the first Assembly of Philologists and Linguists was held in Mexico City in 1939.² In this Assembly, the idea was firmly accepted that it is desirable to use vernacular language in the instruction of the Indians. However, it was not until 1963, during the Assembly of the Technical Council of Education held in Mexico City, that the literacy program in vernacular language was officially approved.³

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 114.
²Aguirre Beltrán, op. cit, p. 158.
³Ibid, p. 162.
CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

A. Evaluation of Programs

In order to evaluate the effects of the educational activities developed by the Ministry of Public Education and by the National Indian Institute, we will analyze different aspects of the program operation. The analysis will focus on the following criteria.¹

1. Successful Attributes of the program.

2. The population exposed to the program in terms of which subgroups are reached and how they are affected.

3. The situational context within which the program takes place, such as: auspices, locale, competing programs and community support.

4. The characteristics of the programs that reduce its successfulness.

5. The different kinds of effects produced by the program such as: cognitive, attitudinal; long or short term; dysfunctional or negative side effects.

1. Successful Attributes of the Program

a) Instruction is carried out in the Indian language and Spanish is taught as a second language.

Data show that in the last forty-five years there was a substantial decrease, among the total Indian population, in the number of monolingual speaking Indians and a corresponding increase in the proportion of bilingual Indians.¹ This increase runs parallel to the progress of educational programs for Indian children and youth of the General Administration and the National Indian Institute.

The initiation of instruction in the vernacular language leads to encourage the self-esteem of the Indians, since it provides continuity with their culture and diminishes the possibilities of conflict between generations. On the other hand, the bilingual method, which includes the teaching of Spanish as a second language, provides the Indians with a system of communication with the national society and then enlarges the possibilities of their identification with it.

b) Instruction is carried out by local teachers, the majority being Indian promoters.

The fact that members of the Indian community and not outsiders carry out the literacy process has improved relations between

the school and the community. The intervention in schooling of Indian teachers adapted itself well to the situation of interethnic relations in the Indian regions. The exclusive use of Indian teachers came as a reaction to the failure of the non-Indian teachers in previous years. This failure was not due to the lack of knowledge of the Indian language but because those teachers belonged to the dominant ethnic group.¹

The transition from informal to formal education and the introduction of cultural change, which implies intercultural understanding, seems to be facilitated when teachers are selected from within the community. The promoters, who are of both sexes, are trusted by the population. Consequently, parents seem less reluctant to send their children to school.

One crucial problem which Indian education faces is the conflict that exists between the local culture which requires separation of the sexes when the children are of school age and formal school settings where teachers are almost exclusively men and the groups are mixed.² This problem is in part reflected in the proportionally small number of girls attending school. Since the promoters have gained the confidence of the members of the community, the situation is slowly improving.

²Modiano, La Educación Indígena en los Altos de Chiapas, p. 189.
In 1974, the enrollment of girls in federal rural schools was 15 percent of the total number of students, while in the Indian schools of the National Indian Institute and the General Administration the proportion was 45 percent.¹

c) Flexibility given to the time schedule in school, according to the working needs of the region.

In rural schools, traditionally, there has been little concern for the economic conditions and work habits of the population which impeded the regular attendance of the students. The educational programs of the National Indian Institute and the General Administration have adopted a flexible schedule and school calendar which does not conflict with the local culture. For instance, classes are interrupted in the harvest period in order to allow the students to help their families with the field work.² Consequently, parents are now less reluctant to send their children to school, and the attendance has improved.³

d) The Indian school becomes a "house of the community."

The boarding schools which serve the population of low density areas, are an effective way of concentrating students of

¹Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Informe de Labores, 1974-75, p. 25.

²Kohler, Cambio Cultural Dirigido en los Altos de Chiapas, p. 226.

those areas and assuring their attendance at school. These schools are structured in such a way as to assure the cultural continuity of the Indian communities, since they maintain the students' tie with their homes and families. The internship system which functioned in the 1930s separated the Indian students from their communities and deprived those communities of their own potential leaders.¹ On the other hand, the boarding schools have succeeded in providing the Indian communities with people able to introduce changes since most graduates from boarding schools return to their communities to promote educational change and improvement of life conditions.²

The school and the promoters are the axle around which the Indian community revolves. The operation of the school encompasses nearly all the aspects of life of the village. This is especially true of the Indian National Institute schools which function in the areas where there are Coordination Centers.

The educational services integrate literacy programs with training in work activities. The Centers for Social Integration provide the Indian youngsters, ages 14-18, with accelerated elementary instruction and also training in activities consistent with the resources of each region. In this connection, they are prepared to integrate to the productive work of their communities, acting as

¹Aguirre Beltrán, Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena, p. 56.
²Kohler, op cit, p. 114.
authentic mediators of change. The National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture offers work training to adults which enables them to improve their working and economic conditions and to serve their own communities.

2. The population exposed to the program in terms of which subgroups are reached and how they are affected.

Table 6 shows that the efforts of the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education are localized and concentrated principally in some states, and they do not take into account all the regions where Indians live. Therefore, some Indian groups have been neglected. The majority of the Indian population served by the educational programs of the Ministry of Public Education is concentrated in four states: Chihuahua, Hidalgo, Guerrero and Oaxaca. These states represent 78 percent of the extra curricular educational effort developed for the Indian population. However, these four states only account for 33 percent of the total Indian population.¹

The distribution of the schools of the National Indian Institute also shows a pattern of concentration in some states.²

This pattern of concentration can be explained by the degree of acceptance with which schools were received in certain regions and also by the greater or lesser importance that different cities have

²Nahmad, Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, p. 22.
### Table 6
EXTRACURRICULAR EDUCATION FOR THE INDIAN POPULATION ACCORDING TO FEDERAL ENTITIES, POPULATION SERVED BY THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION, 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aguas Calientes</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Morelos</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Nayarit</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campeche</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Nuevo león</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>15,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colima</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Puebla</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>Qerétaro</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>21,281</td>
<td>Quintana Roo</td>
<td>1,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrito Federal</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>4,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>Sinaloa</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>16,866</td>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>18,926</td>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Tlaxcalca</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3,705</td>
<td>Yucatán</td>
<td>3,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacan</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for the overall strategy of the regional development program. An important factor in the decision of regions to establish schools is the density of population. With the boarding schools created in those high density regions, services are given to students who come from isolated areas as well.

In 1974-75, the number of students in the Indian Schools, both of the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education and of the National Indian Institute, was 456,313 which is only about 40 percent of the school-age Indian population.¹

The need is still felt to introduce educational programs at the preschool level, to extend the elementary school programs so as to include all the grades in all the schools which already exist, and to create schools in regions where there are as yet, no schools.

3. The Situational Context Within Which the Programs Take Place.

The schools of the National Indian Institute and the General Administration which are devoted to the Indian population are located in very poor and rudimentary prefabricated buildings furnished by the community.

The Ministry of Public Education provides pedagogical material consisting of free textbooks for all the students as well as note-books, pencils, etc. The teachers are also provided with a curriculum guide and with basic pedagogical materials.

¹ Ministry of Public Education, Informe de Labores p. 111.
The schools created for the Indians enjoy complete support from the community. Several reasons are suggested. These schools are flexibly organized and do not follow the rigid pedagogical pattern which characterizes the educational institutions of the national society. The school calendar and schedule are adapted to the work style and needs of the community. These schools are open to the communities, and neither the teachers nor the students lose contact with the activities of daily life of the village.

In order to gain acceptance and continuity, the Indian schools were ready to compromise with the demands of the informal education, even at the risk of extending the educational process, diminishing the learning content and restricting the subject matter in the curriculum.

The education provided by the National Indian Institute and the General Administration not only contributes to the development of the community by means of its programs but also by its structure; that is, it brings the education to the Indian villages instead of uprooting the Indians from their cultural environment.

For the first time, the operation of the National Indian Institute and the General Administration adopted integral character of which the educational aspect is only a part. Their educational programs operate in conjunction with community development projects.

4. The Characteristics of the Programs that Reduce its Successfulness.

a) Curriculum relevance
The curriculum used in the Indian schools is the one adopted by the government for all the national elementary schools. Although this is usually adapted for the Indian population, the content of the educational material is frequently irrelevant to the cultural background of the Indian students. The curriculum of the Indian schools is in many cases unsuited to the students' interests or needs.

We refer to a program as "irrelevant" when it has little relationship to the world the students know outside of school or the roles he plays now or will later play in his adult life. In the Indian schools the textbooks used are the same that are used in the urban schools which present urban scenes and themes covering jobs and style of dress which are atypical to the majority of the Indian children. For instance, the first story in a book which is introduced right after the child knows the vowels in Spanish refers to a teddy bear. Few, if any, Indian children have an idea of what is a soft animal toy. The curriculum rarely has some relation with the experiences of the Indians, but it is considered that, once the children learn those things, they acquire notions of the world around them. The pedagogical materials seem somewhat deficient. There is neither audio-visual material available nor educational games to develop the sensory experience of the children. A poll carried out by the

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2Modiano, La Educación Indígena en los Altos de Chiapas, p. 193.
Ministry of Public Education among teachers of Indian schools included a question about the didactical material available in their schools. From a sample of 2,000 teachers, the answers obtained were as follows: only 27 percent considered the curriculum materials to be "satisfactory" or "sufficient." Fifty-three percent believed the materials were "deficient," and 12 percent stated it was "very deficient" or "useless." As many as 8 percent considered that materials were "unavailable."

b) Methods of instruction.

The teachers in the Indian schools tend to be guided by a detailed activity program presented by the Ministry of Public Education. Few teachers modify this program or introduce new exercises and activities. They tend to concentrate on some areas of the program: reading (comprehension is almost not required), writing and arithmetic. They neglect the areas of natural science and social studies. However, because of strong nationalist emphasis in the schools, the latter subject matter has gained recent popularity among teachers. The instructional approach seems mechanical, sometimes even irrelevant. Learning by memorization is still required. This is in sharp contrast with the Indian concept of learning based on

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1Ministry of Public Education, Los Maestros Opinan (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1974), p. 6. From the same source, it is observed that the situation is worse in the federal schools, where Spanish is used as the principal language of instruction.

2Modiano, La Educación Indígena en los Altos de Chiapas, p. 192.
"training." Before attending school, the Indian child learns by direct participation and imitation. The patterns of behavior are presented to the child in their immediate context. What he learns is related to his interest and needs, and he puts his knowledge into practice right away; the child learns by doing in his immediate environment, but in school he tends to learn by role and memorization.¹ Thus there seems to be a conflict in learning strategies between the home and school.

5. Different Effects Produced by the Programs.

The educational programs succeeded in their goal of alphabetization. The Indian children in the schools of the National Indian Institute and the General Administration know to read and write in Spanish after the second grade of instruction.² The cognitive effects are limited and consist of knowledge of reading, writing and basic arithmetic. The other academical aspects of the curriculum are neglected even in the elementary schools where the complete cycle is provided.

The goal of providing the complete cycle of elementary education is yet not being reached in the majority of the cases, since the programs for Indian population are limited to the primary

¹De la Fuente, Educación, Antropología y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, p. 29.
grades of elementary school.

As shown in Table 7, the proportion of students who finish sixth grade in the Indian schools is small, but this does not differ much from the federal rural schools. However, the drop out pattern is somehow different since the larger reduction in the number of students in the rural school occurs within the first and second grade, while in the Indian schools the main drop out effect occurs between second and third grade. The percentage of students finishing sixth grade in Indians as well as in federal rural schools is about one ninth of the percentage of students finishing sixth grade in urban schools and is no more than one fourth of the national average. This fact in itself might be regarded as indicative of the disadvantaged situation of the Indian population in a cultural sense.

As far as attitude is concerned, the educational programs for the Indian children and youth have helped to develop a sense of self-esteem among the students. Offering a variety of art courses and recreation in accordance with the cultural characteristics of the group, they help promote their traditions in relation to folklore, crafts, songs, and dances.

The fact that the students can aspire to become promoters upon finishing elementary school is an incentive for them to attend school, and it also creates an interest among parents in the functioning of the school.
Table 7

STUDENTS ATTENDING EACH GRADE OF ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTION IN THE INDIAN, URBAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Urban Schools</th>
<th>Rural Schools</th>
<th>Indian Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The Indian problem in Mexico is of a cultural and socio-logical nature and not a racial one. The Indian communities, rural and geographically isolated, are culturally disadvantaged.

The Mexican national policy for the Indian marginal groups intends to integrate the Indian population to the national society by attaching to their own values and culture the values and language of the larger society. Mexico's national leaders have used formal education to build the basis of social change and economic development, considering formal schooling as a way of integrating the Indian minorities to the mainstream of national life. The integration policy, through a coordinated operation of all the governmental agencies involved, emphasizes educational, social and community aspects as growth and development.

Two important public agencies implementing educational activities and participating in programs for developing Indian communities are 1) the General Administration of Extra-Curricular Education for the Indian Communities, a division of the Ministry of Public Education, and 2) the National Indian Institute, an autonomous public agency. The Indian education imparted by both agencies is categorized as extracurricular education and differs from urban and rural education in that it serves only Indian monolingual children and youth. The materials used are both in the Indian and Spanish languages, following the bilingual method.
The goals of Indian education are the following: the alphabetization of Indian children and youth; the provision of the complete elementary education cycle; the spread of educational services to the community and the communities' active participation in the educational activities; and the maintenance of the inherent values of the Indian culture.

The programs implemented in the Indian communities were described. The General Administration of Extra Curricular Education offers four educational services: Indian elementary boarding schools; Centers for Social Integration; National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture; and the Brigades for Development and Improvement of the Indian population.

The boarding schools are able to concentrate students from dispersed settlements and are successful in keeping the students as active members of their families and communal groups, as well as spreading the educational services to the family and community.

The Centers for Social Integration provide assistance services for youngsters aged 14-17 and training in activities consistent with each region's resources as a way of promoting the communities' development. Special services are being implemented for the preparation of promoters.

The National Service for Promoting Bilingual Culture, offers elementary instruction to children and adults using the bilingual method. The Service, carried on by the promoters, has succeeded in
obtaining the participation of the Indian community in the educational activities. The goal of Indian education to prepare Indian teachers has been achieved.

The Brigades for the Development and Improvement of the Indian population emphasizes the inherent values of Indian culture through the promotion of social service activities and crafts.

The second agency, the National Indian Institute, established Coordination Centers in Indian regions in order to improve living conditions of the Indians and provide formal education. They have succeeded in gaining the communities' support by giving maximum flexibility to time schedules in order to adjust to the cultural aspects and the working period of the region.

The use of the vernacular language in instruction and the teaching of Spanish as a second language have been successful. The bilingual method, found to be more effective than the use of Spanish alone in the literacy programs, was officially approved and implemented in 1963.

Evaluation criteria were presented and used in the evaluation of the Indian education programs. It is possible to conclude that the goal of alphabetization is being reached, at least partially, since after second grade of elementary school Indian children know how to read and write in Spanish.

Elementary education has been expanded to isolated areas, although the population reached is still limited and the educational
efforts are still localized. A need is felt to increase services and to expand them to all Indian regions to include the majority of the Indian population. The goal of providing the complete cycle of elementary education is yet to be reached.

The programs meet the goals of providing educational services to the family and community; having the participation of Indians in the educational activities; and emphasizing the inherent values of the Indian culture.

It should be noted that a limitation in this study is the unavailability of complete quantitative data extended over time.

Recommendations

In view of the present operation and effects of the educational programs for the Indian children and youth, the following suggestions are provided.

1. The present educational approach is concentrated on the development of an individual Indian community. It is felt there is a need for a policy based on the coordination of all the Indian communities of a region to be integrated to the rest of the country and society in general.

2. Since the extracurricular educational programs are in a sense compensatory, they should include enrichment opportunities: experiences designed to broaden the horizons of disadvantaged pupils. A variety of multisensory materials should be available to provide for sound and touch, supplementary books, workbooks, films, records and
games, as well as the usual texts should be used, as instructional aids in order to elicit the responses needed for learning.

3. The educational programs devoted to the Indian population should be derived from results of sociocultural and economic research. This research should be conducted in the areas where they are to be built or are already built, in order to adapt their operations to the regional needs of the Indian population.

4. A comprehensive curriculum is needed for the Indian schools. For the Indian population who is not used to formal schooling and never experienced interdisciplinary learning, the comprehensive approach seems desirable. It consists of presenting interrelated subject matter, linking it to the daily life of the students and the problems of the community.

5. In the Indian schools the method of instruction is usually still based on memorization. Higher levels of learning should be developed; for example, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.1

6. The pedagogical material allocated to extracurricular education ought to be attractive, self-motivating and capable of being used

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effectively with relatively little effort. These materials would require an elementary level of literacy which the students usually reach.

7. Much is yet to be done in respect to the development of libraries, permanent or mobile, provided with reading material adequate to the literacy level of the population served.

8. The teachers' training programs should be restructured and a department specializing in Indian education should be created in order to provide local teachers with specific training required for the successful accomplishment of their tasks.

9. Further studies that will compare the Indian Educational system with Mexican National system are required, as well as studies on the effects of bilingual education on a cross cultural basis.
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The thesis submitted by Perla Blejer has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Allan C. Ornstein, Chairperson
Professor of Curriculum
Loyola University

Dr. Barney M. Berlin
Associate Professor of Curriculum
Loyola University

Dr. Robert Cienkus
Assistant Professor of Curriculum
Loyola University

The final copies have been examined by the chairperson of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

December 6, 1976
Date

Chairperson's Signature