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Arriaga Álvarez, Emilio Gerardo
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The main axis of a nation project: the Mexican education system

Emilio Gerardo Arriaga Álvarez

Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México

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To begin with, the objective of this work consists on the elaboration of a basic information model of the Mexican education system, for which it is parted from international criteria. Fundamentally it is about, as a general context, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The starting point is also referred to the lack of an information system that supports those who lead the national education system, and that it is confirmed with the lack of clarity, in both the system structure as in the conceptual lagoons, from the juridical framework that tries to be the system's coverture. The sight is focused on the international context. Indeed, nowadays there is more mobility and interaction in terms of the educational processes and, in consequence, the different institutional designs have to meet, to begin with, international lineaments and parameters. These points constitute the fundament of the work here reviewed. The study has an assumption, which is presented at the beginning:

In order to develop an education information system, is indispensable to first know the parts of the educative system and the way these are related among them. Only in this way it will be possible to adapt the information system to the specific characteristics of the studied educative system and not in the opposite way, as sometimes it is intended to convert the information system into a pre-built model which the educative system will have to adapt to (p. 10).

Similarly, it is necessary, to bear in mind that the educative systems are human constructions and, therefore, will always be able to be improved, according to the interests and/o social needs. With this point, it is proposed the analysis of the main structural aspects of the educational system and not the qualitative, operative or functional matters.

In the analysis five dimensions of the Mexican educative system are defined: levels, modalities, control, sustenance and regionalization. In each of these dimension several categories can be identifies, with which an educative program can be classified, as well as the criteria to place it. The construction of the text, then, it is constituted from the dimensions mentioned, and each one of them is the title of a chapter. In the same

order: 1. Levels, 2. Modalities, 3. Control, 4. Sustenance, and 5. Regionalization.

The first chapter, where the level dimension is approached, starts with the definition that corresponds to the notion of structure.

The structure of a system is conceived as an ordered series of elements, which only acquire full sense in the extent that ones are observed in reference to the others. [...] The element is the basic unit for the analysis of the structures (p.13).

Structure and element are initial concepts of the reference framework of the object of study: the educative system. So, the basic unit, the element, is constituted by the educative program. The definition is that the UNESCO provides, and is conceived as a “series or sequence of educational activities organized to achieve a predetermined objective, this is, a specific series of educative tasks” (p. 13-14). In this way, the study of the educative system implies the analysis of the way its educational programs are organized.

The educative levels are fundamental organization criteria and are measured in annual cycles that correspond to the age of the pupils. To begin with, if the current situation is referred importantly to the globalization process, the structure of the educative systems has to adequate and/or to reconstitute in terms of the conditions of the international context and its standards. In order to do this, the argumentation is the following:

We cannot consider as an exaggeration the possibility that in a reasonably short term, there can be an international educative model, that of course, respects the particularities of each national, regional or local culture, but that is capable of facilitating a simple and efficient student exchange in the whole world (p. 20).

The first comparative exercise is proposed with a table that, at the same time, is conformed in an important axis in the text's argumentation. This table is constituted by four columns where there are presented from left to right the years of duration, the ISCED proposal, the Mexican educative system and the levels.

Here can be seen the differences that form, in both levels as well as in the programs proposed by levels: initial, pre-school, elementary, secondary, medium high, degree, actualization, specialty, Master degree and doctorate, regarding the ISCED. There are differences and they are significant. This chapter provides a clear description and analysis of the mentioned differences.

About the modalities, which are the subject of the second chapter, the proposal consists on the educative system needs: to develop modalities that allow responding to both the requirements and interests of the society in general, as other non-representative groups, but that are in need to be taken care of the system. By educative modality, in the text is understood "the way the curricula is assumed, this is, the way a certain educative program is designed" (p. 44). The educative modality, therefore, maintains interference in all the elements of the teaching-learning process: objectives, contents, teaching and learning techniques, materials and evaluation systems.

A relevant point mentioned by the authors: it is not the same level than modality. For example: when the elementary level is taught, the objectives are the same, no matter is it about older adults, people over 15 years of age or members of an indigenous community. The objective is to achieve the domination of the reading-writing skills. What changes is the way the objectives are adopted, the way the process is performed. The traced modalities are: ordinary and non-ordinary education, in attendance education, and distance education. The analysis ends in the classification and structuring in a table presented on the page 69.

The third dimension proposed in the book corresponds to the matter of the control of the educative programs. To this respect it is mentioned that:

When analyzing the history of human kind it is clear that since the prehistory to our day, the educative systems have not stopped increasing in duration and complexity, this is, of improving. [...] The development level of a society is directly measured by the development level of its educative system. In this process, the control has played and still plays a role of the utmost importance (p. 73).

The education is considered as the fundamental axis of every nation project. The development possibilities of a society are based on control systems. The development possibilities of a society are based on control systems. The control is not only necessary, but desirable, in terms of the existence of a civilization as it is ours.

The concept of control in the education includes the capability to define and supervise central aspects of the process, such as: the learning objectives, the selection and organization of the curricular contents, didactic material, accreditation systems, learning evaluation systems and the evaluation of the curricula.

The control institutions are the organisms of a private or public nature that are legally empowered to control the totality of the elements, by which the educative system works: curricula, materials, evaluation of the learning, certification, etc. The control institutions are those that in operational terms determine the form and function of the educative programs. The classification by levels and by control is described in the table presented on page 84.

The sustenance is the fourth dimension of the Mexican educative system, proposed in this book. The financial sustenance is a subject approached recurrently in the wide spectrum of the educative research. In this text, the sustenance parts from the difference between what spending means and what investing represents.

The expense can or not, the expected result. When an expense is done, expecting to obtain benefits in a predicable future, then it is qualified as an investment. In the last decades has prevailed the called neoliberal policy, according to which, although it is not explicitly admitted, the education is seen as an expense without return (p. 87).

In the case of Mexico, it is since the Republic's Constitution that it is established the obligation of the State of providing basic education (pre-scholar, elementary and secondary); as well as promoting and attending the other levels and modalities, distributing its cost in the federation, the states and the municipalities.

The argumentation regarding the expense in the education is based on the GDP percentage assigned to such entry since 1990. With data from the Civil Observatory of Education in 2001, a descriptive table is presented on page 91.

The fifth and last dimension of analysis of the text refers to the regionalization. Currently, this matter is linked to the need of reducing the differences in the economic and social development levels. However, there is also the need of meeting and understanding the cultural differences. The important part of this subject consists on, in economic terms; it implies an integration of Mexico to North America; but, the authors retake the UN vision, which considers our country as part of Central America (p. 107). This point of view (the one from the UN) is the interesting one, since it is from where the things acquire a world-wide validity.

The reader will find another two descriptive tables of the regionalization of the Mexican higher education on pages 111 and on page 113 another on the regionalization of the education in the State of Mexico.

The conclusive part of the text contains what the authors denominate “a taxonomic map with the different classification criteria approached in the body of the text”. It is, in the authors’ words, a structure of data that will allow constructing an educative information system for Mexico.

The book is very recommendable for both experts, as well as those initiating in the basic elements of the wide spectrum of the education research. The text contains valuable details that are always useful to know or remember. Besides the good prose of the piece, it is clear at all times, which is most appreciated by us the readers.

Emilio Gerardo Arriaga Álvarez, Ph. D, in Social Studies by the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa. He is a professor-researcher of the Centro de Innovación, Desarrollo e Investigación Educativa (CIDIE) and of the Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Administración Pública de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEM). He is the Editorial Director of the inter-institutional journal *Tiempo de Educar*. Dr. Arriaga Álvarez is holder of the PROMEP profile and is member of the National Researchers System, level I. His lines of

research are: problems of the medium high and higher education of the UAEM, labour processes and sociology of the power and the education. His most recent publications are: “Integración económica y educación superior en México”, in *Tiempo de Educar*, inter-institutional journal on education research, Toluca, México (2003); “El ajuste estructural en la educación superior pública en México: una mirada”, in *La educación superior en América Latina. Globalización, exclusión y pobreza*, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco (2004); and “La educación superior latinoamericana en el espacio no euclidiano de la historia”, in *Convergencia, Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (2004). Electronic mail address: egaa@uaemex.mx

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