

**STUDIA**

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**The Background and Development of Mexican  
Educational System: the Main Features**

**Historical aspects**

The historical pedagogical analysis has shown that the Mexican education system originates from the Indian civilization camp. The Spanish colonization (the 15<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) had subjugated the Mexican education system to the Catholic Church and Spanish cities and the Mexican ethnic groups had lost their national identity, languages and culture. The development of the Mexican system of public education began with the process of gaining political independence for Mexico in 1810<sup>1</sup>.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Mexican system of public education was influenced by the economic expanse of the USA, as well as the decrease of the social and economic wellbeing of Mexico, decline of the system of higher and pedagogical education.

The development of the Mexican education system can be divided into the following periods:

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<sup>1</sup> O. Zhizhko, *Professional education of marginalized populations of Mexico and Venezuela: its formation and development*: monograph, Kherson, Grin D.S., 2015, p. 104.

- The first period – under the protection of Catholic Church and Spanish cities (the 15<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century);
- The second period – directed by the independent Mexican state (beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> – the 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century);
- The third period – directed by the state and public organizations (the 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – present times).

### Modern System of Education

The modern Mexican education system encloses basic education (pre-school, primary school and secondary school), preparatory school, higher education and postgraduate education.

The principles of the Mexican education system were established in the Mexican Constitution on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1917. These principles work now and include the following:

- non-clerical character;
- prohibition to the religious corporations to direct primary schools;
- state revision of the private primary schools;
- accessibility of primary schools and free scholarship<sup>2</sup>.

The object of the Mexican education system is its democratic and national direction, harmonic development of human individuality, education in love to the home country, development of self-consciousness, international solidarity in conditions of the independence and justice (art. 3)<sup>3</sup>.

In the 90's Mexican primary education system was federalized through two documents: National Convent about Modernization of the Primary Education (1992) and The General Law about Education (1993). In 1993 the 3<sup>rd</sup> article of the Mexican Constitution was reformed and obligatory studying at the secondary school was introduced. In this period the process of the decentralization of the Mexican education system, which is typical for most American and European states, was observed.

The basic education level (preschool, primary and secondary schools) of Mexican education system develops student's abilities of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, counting, etc., their abilities to study systematically and

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<sup>2</sup> Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Principales cifras del sistema educativo nacional 2012–2013*, SEP, México 2013.

<sup>3</sup> C. Ornelas, *El sistema educativo mexicano. La transición de fin de siglo*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 1995, p. 15.

apprehending the norms of social life. This study level is represented by state and private institutions. 79% of the students of all study levels are basic education level students. In this level there were registered in 2013 23,8 million students: 3,5 million – in preschool institutions, 14,8 million – in primary school, 5,5 million – in secondary school. Statistical data also reveal that 2 million Mexican children and teenagers don't visit the school<sup>4</sup>.

The preparatory education system is divided in two types: propaedeutic and bivalent. The first one includes a general bachelor course and is represented by state and private institutions. This bachelor program includes general student's preparation and technical one such as humanistic knowledge: mathematics, natural and social sciences, language skills, research abilities, communication skills and computer knowledge. In the last semesters students are separated in four groups according to their skills and preferences: physical-mathematical sciences and engineering, biology and medicine, social sciences, humanities and arts.

The bivalent bachelorship takes place in two forms: technical and professional-technical bachelorship. Both concentrate on laboratory practice, work in industry, professional practice and social service outside of educational institution. The last one is the main condition for obtaining a professional certificate. Study plans are composed of general education disciplines, which are identical for all specialties, and of professional directed technological courses, which are special for each group.

Nowadays 93 teenagers of 100, who finish secondary school, continue their study in preparatory school. In 2013 2 955 783 students in this level studied and 210 033 teachers in 9761 schools taught. 46,8% of 16–18 aged teenagers, who visit preparatory schools in Mexico were registered<sup>5</sup>.

In modern Mexico the educational policy focuses on building national cultural educational camp, harmonizing both globalization and unique identity tendencies of development. The development tendencies of Mexican education system are as follows: non-clerical character, accessibility, reforming of university education, realization of the postgraduate pedagogical education programs and development of scientific pedagogical activities; democratization of education direction through equilibration of centralization and decentralization processes and participation of public organizations.

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<sup>4</sup> Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Principales cifras del sistema educativo nacional 2012–2013...*, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

## Higher Education and Leading Universities

Higher Education could be obtained in Mexico in state and private institutions, which prepare technical workers with high university degrees, bachelors' degrees, specialists, masters and doctors. Higher Education Institutions occupied themselves in the following activities: teaching, scientific, humanitarian and technological researches, conservation and promotion of national Mexican culture and traditions.

The Mexican Higher Education System is represented by more than 1500 state and private institutions, such as universities, autonomous universities, technological universities, technological institutes, research institutions, postgraduate education institutions, pedagogical higher education institutions, etc. All of these institutions are part of National Association of Universities and Higher Educational Institutions (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior – ANUIES). Private Higher Education Institutions are part of Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions (Federación de Instituciones Mexicanas Particulares de Educación Superior – FIMPES)<sup>6</sup>

In 2013 2 197 702 students, who study in Mexican Higher Educational Institutions, were registered, 68% of them study in state Higher Education Institutions. Technical workers with a higher university degree study in Mexico two years, licentiates – four–five years, specialists – one year, masters – one–two years and doctors – three–four years. In 2013 there were registered 6600 licentiates programs, 3900 specialists, master's and doctor's programs. Also 208 692 Higher Education teachers (28,9% – full time, 8,7% – part time, 62,4% – contract time), 26% of them have Master's Degree and only 6% – Doctor's Degree were registered<sup>7</sup>.

Mexican universities initiated cooperation with many world-known universities and invited outstanding professors to teach in Mexico and prepare highly-qualified professionals in different areas. Ukraine takes part in this collaboration too and approximately 300 Ukrainian scientists work at Mexican universities.

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<sup>6</sup> O. Zhizhko, *Psychological and educational aspects of P. Freire's pedagogy and its implementation in the training of professionals in Latin America*, "Scientific Journal Comparative Professional Pedagogy", Vol. 4, No. 1, 2014, p. 90–95.

<sup>7</sup> O. Zhizhko, *The modern system of professional education of Mexico*, "Comparative Professional Pedagogy", Vol. 2, 2011, p. 85–92.

The Leading Mexican Universities, which are The National Mexican Autonomous University – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Iberoamerican University – Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexican College – Colegio de México, La Salle University – Universidad La Salle, Metropolitan Autonomous University – Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana and Autonomous Universities of States, have a significant positive influence on the development of Mexican Education System and particularly of Higher Education System. The leading place in this process belongs to The National Mexican Autonomous University.

The National Mexican Autonomous University is the oldest and the most famous Mexican Higher Education Institution. It was founded in 1551 through New Spain Vice king Antonio de Mendoza's initiative and Spanish King's indication regarding the foundation of Real and Papal University of México.

The history of the National Mexican Autonomous University's development is organically related with the history of Mexican Education System and it is its reflection. Many times progressive university's community was the leader of the Mexican democracy building's processes, such as the fighter of university's autonomy.

The development of the National Mexican Autonomous University can be divided into the following periods:

The first period – foundation and development of the first colonial university in México (1553–1881);

The second period – development of National University in México (1881–1916);

The third period – the process of the university's autonomy's building (1916–1934);

The fourth period – the political fight of the progressive university's community for the democratic changes in México, the foundation of political groups and movements (1934 – end of 40's of 20<sup>th</sup> century);

The fifth period – the development of the democratically university's administrative system (end of 40's – beginning of 50's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century);

The sixth period – the anti-imperialist fight of the progressive university's community (end of 50's – beginning of 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century);

The seventh period – the process of university's management through democratic norms (beginning of 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century).

The National Mexican Autonomous University, state autonomous universities and other leading universities have a positive influence on the development of the Mexican system of professional education and also of professional pedagogical education. This influence is expressed in the democratization of educational system, foundation of national higher pedagogical schools, didactic centers, departments of methodic, teacher training courses, bachelor's and master's pedagogical programs, programs of economic assistance for university teachers who study for obtaining postgraduate degrees.

The National Mexican Autonomous University founded The Higher National Pedagogical School (1910), The Department of New Study Methods (1966), The Didactical Center, National Schools of Professional Pedagogical Studies (70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), The Departments of Bachelor and Master Degrees of Pedagogic, The Help Programs to Elevate of Teacher's Productivity, The Integrate Programs for the Teachers (80s of 20<sup>th</sup> century), etc.

The research of curriculum of professional teachers' training shows that it is based on social critics and combines three components: critical, hermeneutical and interdisciplinary. The curriculum building method includes the use of institutional, discursive, cultural theories, ethnographical and qualitative analysis. The theory of re-conceptual curriculum forms the basis of curriculum development through analysis of formal, occult and real curriculum incongruence<sup>8</sup>.

In the Mexican establishments of higher education, the practical application of professional teachers' training curriculum is based on communicative methods and different techniques, especially, interactive and project techniques.

## **Educational Management**

The management of the primary, secondary schools and elementary pedagogic education is in charge of the Basic Education's and Medium Superior Pedagogic Education's Department of the Ministry of Public Education of Mexico and with assistance of other state and civic organizations: National Counsel of Educational Assistance (Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo – CONAFE), which develops education in Indian's ethnic group places; National System for Integral Family's Development (Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia – DIF), which solves the educational

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<sup>8</sup> O. Zhizhko, *Psychological and educational aspects of P. Freire's pedagogy...*, op. cit., p. 90–95.

problems of marginal social groups; the Ministry of Social Development (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social – SEDESOL), which helps organizations that solve the educational problems of marginal social groups; National Council of Education for Life and Work (Consejo Nacional de Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo – CONEVYT), which deals with problems of worker's qualification; National Council of Social Participation in Education (Consejo Nacional de Participación Social en la Educación – CONAPASE), analyzing study processes to elevate educational quality; National Commission of Free Text Books (Comisión Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuitos – CONALITEG), whose object is primary and secondary study of materials preparation and edition; General Direction of Planning, Programs and Budget (Dirección General de Planeación, Programación y Presupuestación – DGPPP); Federal Management's Commission of School's Building (Comité Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas – CAPFCE); The Program of Education, Health and Alimentation (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación – PROGRESA); Primary and Secondary Leaving behind's Dismantling Program (Programa para Abatir el Rezago en Educación Inicial y Básica (PAREIB); Associations of Parents (Asociaciones de padres de familia)<sup>9</sup>.

Of the elaboration of Mid Superior Education programs are in charge both: the State Commission for Planning and Programming of Mid Superior Education (Comisión Estatal para la Planeación y Programación de la Educación Media Superior – CEPPEMS) and National Department of Medium Superior Education (Coordinación Nacional de la Educación Media Superior – CONAEMS)<sup>10</sup>.

In the organization process of Higher Education are engaged the State Commission for Higher Education Planning (Comisión Estatal de Planeación de la Educación Superior – COEPES), the National Commission of Higher Education Planning (Comisión Nacional de Planeación de la Educación Superior – CONPES) and the National System of Permanent Higher Education Planning (Sistema Nacional de Planeación Permanente de la Educación Superior – SINAPPES). All Mexican Higher Education Establishments must be accredited by Higher Education Accreditation Council (Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior – COPAES) for being financed through

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<sup>9</sup> Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Programa Sectorial de Educación 2013–2018*, SEP, México 2013.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

Investing Found for Evaluated and Accredited Programs (Fondo de Inversión para Programas Evaluados y Acreditados – FIUPEA)<sup>11</sup>.

The evaluation of educational quality in Mexican Higher Education Establishments is done through Interinstitutional Comities for Higher Education Evaluation (Comités Interinstitucionales de Evaluación de la Educación Superior – CIEES) and National Centre of Higher Education Evaluation (Centro Nacional de Evaluación para la Educación Superior – CENEVAL).

According to the globalization processes (end of the 20<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries), which influenced considerably all the world's national educational systems organization ways, the Mexican Education System was inclined through restructuring of educational management, which included centralizing-decentralizing processes<sup>12</sup>.

The decentralization of Mexican Education in 60's – 70's is related with democratic processes in Mexican social life, such as social justice and rights movements, autonomous universities' foundation, etc. The decentralization was the result of a public demand to include in the educational programs planning students' individual abilities and necessities to plane flexible school's programs, as much as the result of the introduction to the Mexican Education System in 70-th the North American's instrumental pedagogic theory, which contributed to prepare only cheap work hand for USA and Canada.

In the end of 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries we observed the new tendency of centralizing-decentralizing management processes in Mexican Education. This tendency is characterized by a public demand of the intensification of the state's and market's audience to educational establishments. The Ministry of Public Education of Mexico begins the process of Education System's reforming and teachers' formation's quality's elevating throw the Program for Academic's Transformation and Reinforcing of Pedagogic Schools (Programa para la Transformación y el Fortalecimiento Académicos de las Escuelas Normales). The reforming tendency is the building of own national pedagogic theory and own pedagogic techniques, which is based in analysis of not only instrumental, but also many other progressive pedagogic approaches (culture theory, institutional theory, historic cultural focus, dialectic Marxism, Paulo Freire pedagogic theory, etc.).

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<sup>11</sup> O. Zhizhko, *The quality management of professional and andragogical education in Mexico: experience and innovation*, "Humanitarian Bulletin of Perejaslav-Khmelnitsky State Pedagogical University »Grygoriy Skovoroda«", vol. I (34), No. 27, 2012, p. 128–133.

<sup>12</sup> O. Zhizhko, *Professional education of marginalized populations of Mexico and Venezuela: its formation and development*, Grin D.S., Kherson 2015.



**Abstract:** This article is the result of scientific-pedagogical research, which was conducted to identify the main characteristics of the background and development of Mexican educational system. The author found that the development of the Mexican education system can be divided into three periods; in modern Mexico the educational policy focuses on building national cultural educational camp, harmonizing both globalization and unique identity tendencies of development; in the Mexican establishments of higher education, the practical application of professional training curriculum is based on communicative methods and different techniques, especially, interactive and project techniques; there is observed a new tendency of centralizing-decentralizing management processes in Mexican Education.

**Keywords:** history of Mexican educational system; background and development; modern Mexican educational system; Higher Education and Leading Universities; Educational Management

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