

Primary education reforms in Mexico greeted with both enthusiasm and skepticism, study shows

July 30 2024, by Kerra Maddern



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

There has been a mixed response to primary education reforms in Mexico which have created widespread uncertainty among teachers,

children and parents, new research shows.

Those affected have expressed concerns about lack of training to help them prepare for the major changes, but also enthusiasm about many of the aims.

The new Nueva Escuela Mexicana (NEM) in Basic Education represents a large shift in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Subjects such as math and science have been combined into integrated "formative fields." There is a focus on education that places more value on [local communities](#) and an emphasis on active and interactive learning through projects.

Children also learn more about topics related to inclusion and diversity. Teachers have increased autonomy to adapt their work to local contexts.

The NEM has been met with both enthusiasm and skepticism. This research is one of the first to comprehensively gather people's experiences and perspectives on the NEM in its first full year of implementation.

[The study](#) was carried out by Dr. Nozomi Sakata, from Hiroshima University and Dr. Nicholas Bremner, from the University of Exeter. They carried out 79 interviews with students, teachers, parents, head teachers, teacher trainers and supervisors in 12 [primary schools](#) in Nuevo León, Hidalgo and Chiapas.

Dr. Bremner said, "We found a mixture of positive and negative perspectives, but overall there was widespread uncertainty about the NEM reform. Although teachers, head teachers and teacher trainers were getting used to the changes over time, they were frustrated with inconsistent policy messages and a general lack of explicit training."

Researchers recommend more concrete training and support is needed, especially in terms of supporting teachers to manage increased autonomy. They say there also needs to be a more consistent, unambiguous communication strategy.

The research suggests that the Mexican Ministry of Education needs to address concerns the changes could lead to gaps in foundational knowledge. They should consider the extent to which students may need basic knowledge in order to develop higher order skills.

Communication with parents and the wider public should also be strengthened to make it clear what NEM does and what it does not do.

Dr. Bremner said, "More emphasis seems to have been placed on the 'what'—the content of the reform itself—and much less on how to implement it.

"Those interviewed were very concerned about the lack of 'foundational' knowledge many of their students had, and there was a lot of skepticism regarding combining specific school subjects into 'formative fields.'"

Teachers, pupils and [parents](#) were generally very supportive of content related to inclusion and diversity, but expressed doubts about certain topics, for example, content relating to gender and sexuality.

Those affected by the reform were generally happy with the notion of "focusing on the local," contextualization and teacher autonomy. However, some [teachers](#) did not always know how to manage such autonomy, requesting more explicit guidance.

One local supervisor in rural Chiapas said, "There is a [paradigm shift](#); there is a change in the approach to education. But there has been no real systematization of teacher training."

One local supervisor in rural Nuevo León said, "We started to be updated on a drip-feed basis. [...] The information either arrived too quickly for us to transmit it, or it arrived late, or it didn't arrive at all. You asked the corresponding educational authority, and they didn't know either. [...] I would say it is not consistent, and at many times it is not coherent."

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Primary education reforms in Mexico greeted with both enthusiasm and skepticism, study shows (2024, July 30) retrieved 30 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-07-primary-reforms-mexico-enthusiasm-skepticism.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.