

POLICY BRIEF PIPE

Nº6 | January 2018

PROGRAMA INTERDISCIPLINARIO SOBRE
POLÍTICA Y PRÁCTICAS EDUCATIVAS

Executive Summary

Within the framework of the Permanent Seminar on the Evaluation of Educational Policies and Practices, co-organized by CLEAR for Latin America and the Interdisciplinary Program on Educational Policies and Practices (PIPE), the seminar entitled "*Evaluation of educational policies and interventions*" was held. : perspectives and challenges of the actors involved".

Based on what was discussed and analyzed in the seminar, this document reflects on the need to improve educational policy and intervention evaluations in Mexico. This, due to the challenges and difficulties faced by the agents involved; the evaluators and makers of public policy, in addition to the mediating agencies.

In the seminar discussion, the agents involved affirmed that, in education, evaluations need to be focused on creativity in order to achieve the social and moral impact required by the sector in Mexico. This, in order to contribute to much more specific evaluations, which are context-specific and useful for decision makers.

They also recognized the need to relax the terms of reference to achieve this goal; since, the evaluators considered that this limitation is central in the evaluation process and, above all, hinders communication between public policy makers and evaluators.

There was also a consensus on the advantages of the evaluations when they attend to the context in which the educational program unfolds. The comments favored the evaluation of aspects such as the creativity and feasibility of the recommendations, as well as the commitment and mastery of the issue by public policy makers.

The seminar was attended by representatives of the Secretariat of Public Education and the World Fund in the role of public policy makers and interventions; of the State Commission for the Evaluation of Social Development of the State of Morelos, as a mediating agency; and some particular evaluators with extensive experience.

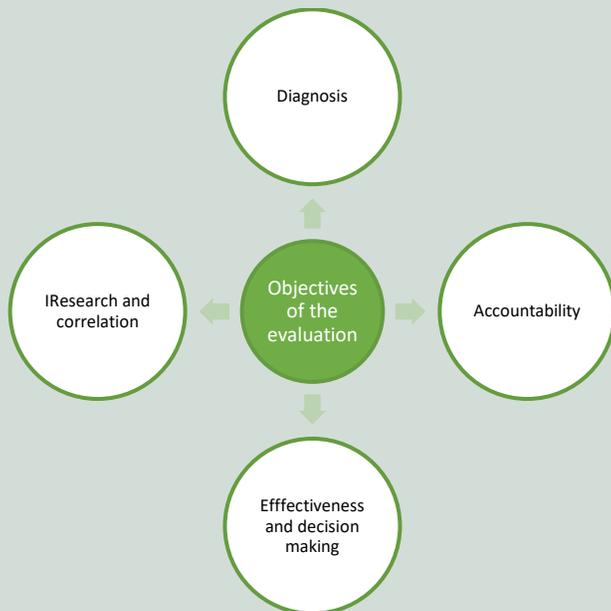
In summary, and based on the opinions and comments gathered during the seminar, challenges and specific needs were identified to improve the evaluations of educational policies and interventions. These require more specific evaluations, which reflect the context of the educational program that is being evaluated, as well as special treatment as its impact inevitably refers to social issues, income redistribution, equity, justice and democracy.

Introduction

The educational evaluation should be understood, firstly, as a transversal process of educational policy (Escudero Muñoz, 2010). In the ideal, this must be a wide-ranging process that ensures and promotes actions of changes and transformations for the improvement of educational policy and its impact on society.

Due to the relevance of the evaluation of educational policies and practices, it is necessary that there are criteria and mechanisms that allow the evaluations to be relevant, efficient and transparent. In general, the evaluations should seek to respond to four main areas, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of public policies and practices in education.

Figure 1. Contribution axes of the educational evaluation



Source: Martínez Rizo (2015).

For this reason, and under the assumption that educational policy is based on the consensus and dialogue of the actors involved, as well as the demand and social pressures (Amador, 2008); the evaluation should be understood as a mechanism that provides indispensable information for the design, implementation and continuous improvement of public policy in education.

In the same way, the evaluation of educational interventions must generate valuable information that contributes to improving the intervention itself in any of the axes previously presented.

During the seminar herein referred, the discussion put on the table the need to create safe environments for the implementation of both policies and interventions; that is, to elaborate mechanisms that allow the permanence of the makers of public policy for a considerable time, in addition to ensuring their qualification and mastery of the educational topics

that are dealt with, both in politics and in educational interventions.

For this reason, the evaluation should be a tool that allows to know the implementation strategies, their efficiency in terms of results and the coherence of the educational programs in question, always keeping in mind the context in which the policy or intervention is developed (Pritchett, 2015).

Argument

The evaluation of educational policies and interventions has been strengthened in Mexico thanks to the relevance that Education has taken on the national agenda. In addition, research in the field has allowed to establish clear criteria in the methodology and in the criteria to evaluate.

However, there is still a significant gap between the ideal in the development and use of educational policy evaluations and their current status. Among the main problems of the evaluation, the following stand out:

1. Little comparability between the results of the evaluations, since the criteria for evaluating educational programs has changed over time. Example of this, are the evaluations of the learning in Mexico (ENLACE, EXCALE, PLANEA).
2. Pre-established assessments on the diagnosis, implementation or results of educational policies and interventions. Without considering the specific needs of each program, according to its context.
3. Misuse and monitoring of evaluations over time. In many cases, the recommendations made in the evaluations are not pertinent or feasible, because when they reach those responsible, measures have already been taken to correct the design, implementation or processes of the policy or intervention evaluated.

In addition to the aforementioned problems regarding the evaluation of educational policies and interventions, it is necessary to bear in mind that educational programs must respond to social

demands, since the different actors involved usually exercise evaluations. For this reason, it is very important not to ignore that the type of evaluation discussed here responds only to formal and rigorous processes, and leaves aside the informal evaluations that society as a whole elaborates on the same educational policies (Escudero Muñoz, 2010).

The (formal) evaluation of public policies should seek to take into account the value judgments and opinions that different actors make about educational programs. In this way, they internalize the local context to the evaluation process. The evaluation exercise itself must offer knowledge based on evidence, criteria and indicators that allow to reinforce or refute the prejudices of society (Escudero Muñoz, 2010).

In this way, the evaluation -also- should contribute to the dissemination of information. As well as, use simple language, which allows all those interested to understand the analysis and the results obtained (Escudero Muñoz, 2010). Therefore, the same evaluation instrument can, and should, have several purposes (see figure 1).

The evaluation must be understood and, above all, used as a tool that provides useful information for public policymakers and decision makers that improves education policies and interventions.

These evaluations should also be easy for the interested parties to understand, based on the dissemination of the findings of the evaluation

itself. Therefore, among the characteristics that the evaluation must contain to achieve a positive impact on educational decisions, are:

- *Clarity and consensus regarding the purpose and purpose of the evaluation.*
- *Recognize the contributions and limitations of the evaluation results.*
- *Amplitude or depth in the evaluation.*
- *Improve the dissemination of the evaluation.*

These characteristics, which should contain all educational policy evaluations, are intended to improve public policy and interventions in educational issues. It is also necessary to know what the risks of a bad evaluation are. Among them, a poor evaluation can generate a limited or distorted understanding of a policy or intervention, and in turn, complicate the design, implementation, and even, the results of it (Chen & Rossi, 2015).

However, it is necessary to take into account the context in which the evaluation is carried out, the stage of development in which the educational program is to be evaluated. Thus also the contexts, administrative, political and the time horizon in , which it develops. Without forgetting the structure, organization and available resources for its implementation.

About the importance of Evaluation:

The **results** of the same **educational intervention** in two different countries (United States and Kenya), despite having the **same implementation**, have **different effects and results**. This is due to the local context.

The evaluation allows knowing the coherence between the objectives of the intervention and the implementation strategies (Pritchett, 2015).



existing terms of reference for educational evaluation. For the Mexican case, specific evaluation of educational policy, the person in charge of issuing the evaluation frameworks is the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL).

Although these guidelines and types of evaluation were created to improve the comparability between programs, standardize evaluations, establish minimum criteria in content and form, as well as to identify complementarities and duplications in programs; they have been a limitation in terms of the creativity and freedom of the evaluators to make suggestions or use methodologies better applicable to the context, in addition to restricting the information that public policy makers can request.

In this sense, the mediating agencies must establish the minimum criteria, but they must leave room for the creativity and knowledge of the evaluators. For these have the obligation to maintain a close communication with the makers of public policies to land the evaluation to the context that the latter require.

Recommendations

The evaluations of educational policies and interventions in Mexico face challenges in different areas, which make the evaluation process and the use of their findings difficult. As perspectives for the improvement of the evaluation, it is necessary to take into account the following recommendations:

- ⇒ Review the theory on evaluation of educational policies and interventions, to take and adapt the one that best suits the context that is intended to be evaluated.
- ⇒ Harmony is needed between knowledge and theories in social sciences, since there is a risk of contradicting (with arguments of the theory itself) the practical assumptions of educational policy makers.

- ⇒ Use reference frameworks that allow homologation of the evaluations and know the methodology used; as well as the characteristics and objectives pursued by the evaluation.
- ⇒ However, there must be space for the evaluators' creativity. This would make it possible to personalize the findings and the viability of the recommendations for the improvement of educational programs.
- ⇒ Establish frameworks for the accountability of the evaluation processes, which give credibility to the findings and recommendations given by the evaluators.
- ⇒ Reinforce communication mechanisms among those involved in the evaluation process (educational policy makers, evaluators and evaluation mediators), in order to clarify the objectives pursued by the evaluation.
- ⇒ Internalize opinions and judgments that those interested in educational evaluation issue from civil society, as this would increase the credibility of the evaluation process.

Additional readings

With these recommendations for the evaluation of educational policies and interventions, all that remains is to suggest readings that contribute to improving the evaluation processes and change the perspectives of the usefulness and benefits of the evaluation:

- Acosta, Félix. *La evaluación de la política social en México: avances recientes, tareas pendientes y dilemas persistentes*. Pap. poblac [online]. 2010, vol.16, n.64, pp.155-188. ISSN 2448-7147
- Creswell, John y Poth, Cheryl (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*:

Choosing Among Five Approaches. 3rd edition. Sage. pp. 53-58

- Tyler, Chris (2013). "Top 20 things scientists need to know about policy-making." The Guardian. 2 December.
- Wholey, Joseph S., Hatry, H. P., and K.E. Newcomer (2015). *Handbook of Practical Evaluation*, 4th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. pp. 701-739 (Parte 4)
- Cárdenas, Sergio. Monitoreo y evaluación en el Sistema Educativo Nacional en "De las recomendaciones a las acciones. La experiencia del Premio 2011 Programas Federales Comprometidos con el proceso de evaluación" Cejudo, G. y Maldonado, C. (Eds) (2011). CIDE, CLEAR, SFP. pp. 133-151

References

- Amador, J. C. (2008). *La evaluación y políticas educativas en México*. Documento de trabajo, Centro de Estudios Sociales y de Opinión Pública.
- Calero, J., & Choi, A. (2012). *La evaluación como instrumento de política educativa*. Presupuesto y Gasto Público, 67, 29-41.
- Chen, H.-T., & Rossi, P. (2015). *II. Evaluación con sentido: el enfoque basado en la teoría*. En C. Maldonado, & G. Perez Yarahuan, Antología sobre la Evaluación. La construcción de una disciplina (págs. 85-112).
- Escudero Muñoz, J. (2010). *Evaluación de las políticas educativas: cuestiones perennes y retos actuales*. Fuentes, 10, 8-31.
- Martinez Rizo, F. (2015). *Las pruebas Enlace y Excale. Un estudio de validación*. Cuaderno de investigación, INEE.
- Pritchett, L. (2015). *Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes: Making the Transition from Schooling to Learning*. Research on Improving System of Education.

Author

Erick Marsán holds a degree in Economics by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He has collaborated in educational projects on the identification of talent, analysis of school dropout, processes of internationalization of education and analysis of the regulations on education in Mexico. In addition, he has participated in different evaluations of educational programs and interventions. He is currently a junior researcher of the Interdisciplinary Program on Educational Policies and Practices (PIPE) at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE).

Acknowledgments

This policy brief was prepared based on the Permanent Seminar on the Evaluation of Educational Policies and Practices in its July, 2017 edition. Thanks to the support and guidance of Dr. Jimena Hernández Fernández, Professor Chair-Conacyt of the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), as well as all those who made this edition of the seminar possible.

Suggested Quote

Marsán, E. (2017), *Perspectivas y retos de la Evaluación de Políticas e Intervenciones Educativas* (policy brief), Programa Interdisciplinario sobre Política y Prácticas Educativas (PIPE).

www.pipe.cide.edu