

Inequality And Inequity In Mexican Rural Education: The Experience Of CONAFE In The State Of Chihuahua

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Abstract

The objective of the article is to analyze the actions promoted in Mexico since 1971 by the National Educational Incentive Council (CONAFE) to guarantee access to education for rural populations. The data collection was carried out by means of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview that sought to deepen the backgrounds and experiences of community educators who live in the state of Chihuahua. The research uses a mixed methodology based on narrative strategy, complemented by a description of absolute and percentual frequencies linked to the difficulties faced by the subjects involved in the study. The results show that inequality prevails in geographical areas with a high and very high degree of marginalization, due to structural discrimination and a lack of financial investment and administrative solvency. Likewise, the recommendations of educational public policies contained in the text can be used to accompany the measures implemented in rural territories, in order to provide the same learning opportunities to all students.

Keywords: direct to education; educational policy; educational equity; rural education; CONAFE.

1. Introduction

Education is a right that assumes a public and universal character to guarantee “the dignity of the being, social participation and the development of personality and societies” (OEI and IOE-UNESCO, 2018, p. 3). In this understanding, UNESCO (2017) and the countries of the Organization of Ibero-American States share the conviction “that education is the fundamental strategy to advance cohesion and social inclusion” (OEI, 2010, p. 16) . This goal, ambitious and permanent on the political agenda, demands that States confront an exclusion that seems to be endemic in rural and marginal urban contexts, where barriers of various types reduce learning opportunities and increase gaps in educational achievement (Backhoff et al., 2019). Therefore, this reality opens the discussion regarding the sufficiency of the international, regional and national legal framework (Right to Education Initiative, 2022; UNESCO, 2020; INEE, 2019) to reduce educational inequality for girls, boys and adolescents (NNA).) who live in dispersed rural areas and belong to vulnerable, minority and disadvantaged groups.

On September 11, 1971, the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE) was created by presidential decree. The objective was and continues to be to provide “basic education to the girls and boys of the highly and very highly marginalized communities in the country” (CONAFE, December 3, 2021). The intention of this organization is to help students who reside in rural and indigenous localities with less than 2,500 inhabitants, children of migrants or who travel with their parents in circuses, receive sufficient, relevant and inclusive educational attention. In this way, the reason that gave rise to this institution is an example of the inability of the educational system to make the constitutional article valid : “[the State] will implement measures that favor the full exercise of people's right to

education. and combat socioeconomic, regional and gender inequalities in access, transit and permanence in educational services” (CPEUM, 2019).

An overview of the state of affairs regarding CONAFE can be consulted in Herrera (2022), who presents an inventory organized into three themes: studies dedicated to the evaluation of sociodemographic, public policy and budgetary factors that influence the operation and educational results; analysis of the pedagogical-didactic proposals for the multigrade modality; and articles about initial and continuing training, teaching practice, the construction of identities, and the personal and professional trajectories of educational figures. In a similar vein, the work of López (2019) includes a statistical account of the main features of community services, a description of the pedagogical models and the multigrade curriculum, a characterization of the professionalization of educators and an analysis of academic performance that students achieve.

Regarding the state of knowledge of rural education around the world, Loera (2021) carries out a review of the strategies that teachers follow in multigrade classrooms, where the Escuela Nueva model developed in Colombia stands out for its similarities with the CONAFE educational proposal. In Latin America, Juárez et al. (2020) are the editors of a research that brings together experiences from eleven countries, which addresses the meaning of the rurality category, the regulations and meaning of education for the rural and indigenous population, the organization of educational systems, the nature of the training of educators, educational policies and programs, and the main challenges facing education in rural territories. In this work, the contribution of Rodríguez and Juárez (2020) stands out for the study of educational equality and equity. Finally, Rebolledo and Torres (2019) coordinate a collective work focused on the state of the art of rural education in Mexico

between 2004-2014, which includes productions related to initial and in-service training, forms of work and teachers' knowledge. , multigrade organization, evaluation and specific didactics.

Multigrade schools were created at the beginning of the 20th century due to the lack of teachers and currently their high percentage is due "to the mountainous or lake geography... and the population dispersion that is increasing due to migration" (Weiss, 2000 , p. 58). Consequently, more than a pedagogical option, it is a self-imposed decision by a State that is not willing to invest in schools with low enrollment. In this order, the question posed in the research revolves around the service provided by CONAFE to expand coverage in rural territories, public sector expenses, the inequality that is observed in the workplace, the autonomy that is granted. grants and the responsibility that falls on communities, families and educators. From this perspective, the purpose is to analyze the dimensions linked to the operation of CONAFE from the perspective of equity: the general framework and financing, admission to the service, rights and obligations, initial and continuous training, the mandatory nature of the model. pedagogy and learning outcomes of community education.

2. Method and materials

The article refers to a theoretical and normative body of reference that is used to contrast the findings of empirical evidence. In short, this is an exploratory study based on a descriptive process of a phenomenon detected through interaction with key informants that aims to decipher the scenario in which rural education taught by CONAFE is developed.

The research corresponds to a mixed design of sequential explanatory type for the collection and analysis of information (Creswell et al., 2003). In total, 6 early

childhood community educators participated, 17 from preschool, 18 from primary and 10 from secondary education. The average age when entering CONAFE was between 18 and 19 years (61.9%), 60.8% spent four to five school cycles, 83.3% are women and the rest men, two thirds were born in municipalities with a high or very high degree of marginalization and they exercise or have exercised their service in 45 localities in the State of Chihuahua with the same characteristics (CONAPO, 2020).

In the quantitative part, availability and snowball sampling were used, communication was established through the WhatsApp application thanks to the collaboration of three higher education professors who facilitated contact and there was the intervention of four federal primary education teachers. to determine the monthly and annual benefits provided to them. In the qualitative research, the informants were chosen by educational level, function and years of tenure in CONAFE.

To collect data, a questionnaire with 34 closed and open response items was used, which was sent to 80 educational figures and answered by 51 educators. The instrument is made up of 14 items about the positions they have had, the characteristics of the localities, schools and students, the transfer and the studies they carried out with the monthly scholarship; The next three examine the reasons why they joined CONAFE, and what level of schooling and teaching experience they had; three more investigate economic support, food and housing, security, and initial and continuing training; Next, five questions refer to attention to indigenous and disabled students, class time dedicated to different areas and the Learning Based on Cooperation and Dialogue (ABCD) model; The last nine deal with educational care in the covid-19 pandemic, visits to communities, resources, family

contributions and learning losses. The quantitative analysis was done based on the sections in which the questionnaire is organized and uses descriptive statistics.

The qualitative methodology is developed from a semi-structured interview divided into 18 questions that was applied directly or by telephone to 29 educational figures to delve deeper into their trajectories. The informants are identified in the text with a code: interview number (E1), function (EC= community educator; ECA= community accompaniment educator; CT= tutor trainer; AE= educational assistant; CAZ= zone academic coordinator; CAR = regional academic coordinator) and educational level (I= initial; PR= preschool; P= primary; S= secondary). Specifically, they provided data on the income and expenses they had while providing their service, the situations of insecurity they experienced, the outstanding aspects of the training, the work schedule, the tutoring relationship with indigenous and disabled students, the advantages and limits of the ABCD, the reasons why they taught in-person sessions during the pandemic and the magnitude of the educational lag of their students.

The analysis is divided into four parts: obligations and rights, initial and continuing training, attention to students and academic achievement. In each section of the questionnaire, codes were developed to systematize the responses, the interviews were transcribed and the findings of the instruments were triangulated, then the trends were selected, testimonies were added and the results were contrasted with research on community education.

3. CONAFE community education model

In Mexico, basic education serves 24,113,780 students and 16.2% study in 48,535 multigrade schools that represent 50.6% of coverage (SEP, 2022). CONAFE accompanies 153,109 preschool students, 99,231 primary students in 26,917

schools, and 37,909 secondary students spread across 3,114 centers (MEJOREDU, 2021; SEP, 2022). In turn, in initial education it welcomes 292,233 families and 270,438 children under 4 years of age, distributed in 23,497 services that have 26,810 educators (CONAFE, December 3, 2021). This organization has a presence in 31 states, 2,157 municipalities and 36,414 communities (CONAFE, December 3, 2021), of which 48% have less than 100 inhabitants (López, 2019).

Regarding facilities and services, 24.7% of the country's community centers do not have water, 41.8% lack electricity, 17.8% of the walls are made of plasterboard, sheet metal or wood and 50% of the Roofs are asbestos or metal. In addition, schools are built with resources and labor from the communities, 87.8% have a single classroom, 21% of the service is carried out in adapted spaces (room, warehouse, roof), only 0.1% have of multimedia materials, 0.5% of materials for physical activities and 0.3% for artistic activities (Aguilera et al., 2019).

At this juncture, the budget of the Initial and Basic Community Education Program from 2018 to 2021 suffered a decrease of 22.2%, a decrease that was unchanged in the years of the pandemic and that was modified in fiscal year 2022. These figures reflect the inequity and inequality that affects children and adolescents who attend community centers.

Table 1. Evolution of the budget assigned to community education (2018-2022)

Fiscal exercise	Basic education	Differential annual (%)	Community education	Differential annual (%)
2018	456,426*	–	4,858	–
2019	486,005	+6.5	4,553	-6.3

2020	496,688	+2.2	4,503	-1.1
2021	511,554	+2.9	3,830	-14.9
2022	536,220	+4.8	5,268	+37.5

Note. Own elaboration based on the Chamber of Deputies (2017; 2022).

* The figures are reflected in millions of pesos.

Table 1 shows that of the resources approved for basic education, CONAFE accounted for 1.06% in 2018, reduced to 0.74% in 2021 and increased to 0.98% in 2022, when it serves 2.3% of enrollment. In contrast, the Young People Writing the Future scholarship, whose purpose is to help students from municipalities with high or very high marginalization continue with their higher education studies (Becas Benito Juárez, 2022), was awarded 10,584 million pesos in 2022 (Chamber of Deputies, 2022).

To this end, Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that financial inequalities “create dramatically different educational opportunities for children and influence differences in access to educational resources (expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curricula, good educational materials and abundant information resources)” (p. VI). Along these lines, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2020) suggests introducing progressive investment policies in Latin America and the Caribbean that help mitigate initial inequalities with the aim of reducing learning gaps in the population with a lowest socioeconomic level.

3.1 Obligations and rights

In Mexico, the purpose of the admission process to basic education is to select teachers who have “the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to the

comprehensive development and maximum learning achievement of students” (USICAMM, 2022, p. 3). The requirements include having a bachelor's degree, covering a professional profile, accrediting several courses, solving an objective test and adding a series of multifactorial elements. Finally, the assignment of places is done according to demand and in accordance with a nominal list of results. As a counterpart, any young Mexican who has completed secondary school can submit an application to enter CONAFE and, if selected (Government of Mexico, 2022), is sent to schools located in rural and indigenous areas, agricultural laborer camps, with migrants already circuses

The educational figures were asked about the two main reasons that led them to enter CONAFE: 63.3% mentioned financial support to be able to study, 20% to participate in social programs, 16.6% to work with children and 13.3 % to have an income with which to survive. The majority of those surveyed did so with completed high school (81.8%) and more than three quarters felt very little or not at all qualified to teach, on average they serve 9.6 students, the localities congregate from 10 to 20 families and have as average 60.8 inhabitants. These traits reveal the aspirations, the level of studies, the preparation and the context where they begin their teaching work.

Community educators commit to 25 obligations that are established in an agreement. First of all, they must base teaching solely on the pedagogy of the tutor relationship and the ABCD and identify students' progress to reorient their learning processes. The practice is carried out on a schedule established in agreement with the Community Education Promotion Association (APEC), five days a week, between four and six hours a day, plus the follow-up visits that must be made to the families:

My schedule was from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm, sometimes I had to work with the parents and that extended the time, I also scheduled the students with the greatest delays in the afternoons and from Tuesday to Thursday to a workshop computing (E10-EC-P).

On the other hand, they must go to the microregional learning association and get involved in ongoing training actions in the modality, date and time determined by CONAFE:

If a meeting was called we had to attend, make up the class session and we had to be there whenever we were required even if they had not given prior notice (E27-EC-I).

These activities are complemented by the commitment to continue with their studies, facilitate the incorporation of families into the federal government's assistance programs and fulfill various administrative functions: evaluation reports, recording grades or delivering documents that prove the number and pedagogical situation of the students (CONAFE, September 27, 2022).

The rights include participation in spaces for professional development and technical-pedagogical advice, having stationery materials, teaching aids and a cell phone, release from social service and military service records, and having expense insurance. doctors, as well as with monthly financial support, another during initial and continuous training to cover transfers, food and lodging, plus a study scholarship (CONAFE, September 27, 2022). In all cases, the educators offer their service temporarily, voluntarily and without an employment relationship, a remuneration that 63.3% of those surveyed classify as limited and 26.6% as shameful.

Table 2. Financial support for community education (2022-2023)

educational figures	Monthly support	Intensive training	Collegiate Learning	Monthly study scholarship
Community educators	4,310*	4,000	1,250	1,020
Community early education educators	2,395	1,000	1,250	1,020
Accompaniment community educator	5,940	1,540	1,540	1,240
Regional support community educator	8,100	1,540	1,540	1,240

Note. Own elaboration based on consultation with community and CONAFE educators (September 8, 2022).

* The figures are reflected in pesos.

The monthly support is equal to the interprofessional minimum wage, but less than the 5,258 pesos received by those who are beneficiaries of the Young People Building the Future program (Natarén, January 24, 2022). From 2016 to 2021 it amounted to 3,600 pesos, the study scholarship was 1,020 pesos and attendance at the learning college was not paid, so expenses were greater than income.

Table 3. Monthly expenses of community educators (2016-2021)

General expenses*	E2-EC-PR (2018-2019)	E3-EC-PR (2016- 2018)	E4-EC-PR (2018- 2021)	E6-EC- PR/P/CT (2016-2021)

Collegiate Learning	1,600**	1,250	800	2,100
Undergraduate	4,200	4,120	2,800	5,400
Registration and materials***	750	700	700	625
Stay in the community	1,000	1,500	2,200	500
Total	7,550	7,570	6,500	8,625

Note. Own elaboration based on information provided by community educators.

* Expenses include food, transportation and lodging.

**The figures are reflected in pesos.

***The payment is made once per semester and therefore, the amount is divided into four.

The comparison between income and expenses shows a minimum loss of 2,939 pesos and a maximum of 4,005 pesos per month, so it is the families and not the Mexican State that actually subsidizes community education:

I borrowed money to cover what I had to pay and little by little I returned it to my relatives (E4-EC-PR).

It wasn't enough for me, for transportation I had to walk on top of cars in cold weather or travel at dawn to avoid paying for so many days in a hotel and many times I went without food (E5-EC-PR/P/CT).

I have to work in the afternoons because they don't pay me much (E22-EC-PR).

In contrast, the general director receives a gross salary of 141,394 pesos per month and the territorial coordinators earn 56,296 pesos (Función Pública, 2022). This disparity is not known to the CONAFE educational figures in charge of “contributing to closing the educational gap in the country” (SEP, June 2, 2021) and who, in the words of the director, favor “access to education for 579 thousand 613 students of Initial and Basic Education... [with] willingness, determination and enthusiasm” (Natarén, January 24, 2022). Without a doubt, the imbalance in income deepens an inequity that is confirmed when comparing the benefits of an educator with those of teachers who have a federal position.

Table 4. Gross monthly perceptions of primary education teachers working in rural areas (2022-2023)

Perceptions	First year	Fifth year
Compacted salary	12,647*	12,647
National compensation for new entry bachelor's degrees	–	2,270
School networks	1,837	1,837
Co-curricular services	546	546
Generic teaching assignment	380	380
Teaching materials	358	358
Pantry help	193	193
Multiple social security	169	169

Total	16,130	18,400
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Note. Own elaboration based on SNTE (2022) and consultation with three in-service teachers.

* The figures are reflected in pesos.

In addition to this income, a multigrade teacher in his second year receives 68,165 pesos that come from the bonus, the single national compensation, the teacher's day stimulus and the school year organization stimulus, the two end-of-year bonuses, the bonus vacation and an annual compensation for attention to multigrade groups to promote roots. In short, to perform the same function, a community educator earns 72,960 pesos and newly recruited teachers earn 261,725 pesos: from a commercial perspective, the State saves on these young women 3.6 times what a regular teacher earns, a figure that is multiplied by 61,557 educators (CONAFE, December 3, 2021) amounts to about 11,620 million pesos annually.

Santibáñez (2002) states that low salaries determine the profile of the individual who chooses an occupation, as well as its effectiveness and permanence. This factor is related to the dropout rate and the rotation of educational figures, as confirmed by an interviewee: “When I was in CONAFE, most of them left because of the payment” (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE), to which housing conditions, food and even personal safety are associated. The educators judge that insecurity is high or very high (52.2%) and although they have not experienced serious situations, they tell stories such as the following:

On the road, several armed men stopped us to check what we had in the truck. It was nothing more than the scare (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).

When I was going on vacation, a boy invited me for a walk and when I refused, he shot me at my feet. I didn't want to go back, but professors at other institutions told me they would keep an eye on me (E28-EC-PR).

In general, they emphasize that “the families are very supportive, they give everything they have from the heart” (E27-EC-I), however, one in two interviewees agree on the shortcomings of the accommodation:

A room measuring four by five meters, without a bathroom, it only has one window, it is somewhat cold and the parents lent it to me (E23-EC-S).

The ranch homes only have the most basic things, an outside latrine, running water and are made of adobe or wood” (E5-EC-PR/P/CT).

The provision of food for educators depends on the community, a waste that represents another expense for families and that the majority of those surveyed rate as scarce, repeated and not very nutritious (67.5%). However, they endure the difficulties and only consider leaving CONAFE when they have a better job opportunity or are forced to:

By participating in the admission exam in 2021 I was able to fill a place for the entire cycle and that year I obtained a better place for a permanent place. Likewise, I could no longer continue as an educator because of my control number, a registration number that is given to us at the beginning and they told me that I had to fulfill other positions: I started as an educator, then I became a trainer and again an educator, then an assistant... To generate a new control number I had to give up the scholarship and it was not convenient for me (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).

A joint study by UNESCO, ECLAC and UNICEF (2022) indicates that teachers “with a higher level of education and experience tend to concentrate in schools with more favorable social contexts, which leads to an expansion of social

inequalities by via educational offering” (p. 132). Dlamini et al. (2022) confirm that most Latin American and Caribbean countries experience teacher retention and staffing problems in rural areas, which affects productivity, quality of service, and loss of skills. From this a deficit arises so that public policies must consider the inclusion of “monetary incentives to attract more qualified teachers to vulnerable schools” (IDB, 2020, p. 16) and not only resort to volunteers who are also in a situation of labor inequality.

3.2 Initial and continuous training

Incorporation into CONAFE culminates with an intensive initial training course that aims to provide skills to manage the ABCD model and help educators “to carry out their work in the classroom efficiently and responsibly” (SEP, June 2, 2021).). For five weeks, six lines of training are developed and four cycles of tutoring and study are completed so that they have some Autonomous Learning Units (AAU). The sessions are eight hours and six days a week, to which are added five days for field practice. In total, 256 hours are invested, of which 61.1% are allocated to the ABCD Communities line: 25 hours to Learning the tutor relationship, 48 hours to Double Participation in the learning network, 24 hours to Observation and analysis of the tutoring, and 20 and a half hours to the Strategies to study and increase the catalog of topics. As a counterpoint, the Community Participation line occupies 7.4% of the training, and Acquisition and strengthening of reading and writing 2.3% (CONAFE, 2017).

The majority of those interviewed rate coexistence and exchange, the preparation to work in the community and knowing the service they are going to provide as positive. At the same time, they see “excessive hours” as negative (E2-EC-PR) and that “too much time is spent on each activity, with the same information for

everyone, including those of us who have been in CONAFE for several years” (E1-EC -PR), they also emphasize that “the majority of the educators are from external communities and far from the headquarters, and attending means incurring a lot of expenses” (E24-EC-PR/ECA).

Throughout the training and in the school groups, only the ABCD is applied, which in summary is divided into six moments:

- The student chooses a topic that interests him/her from the catalog shown to him/her by the tutor, who performs a contextualization, specifies the challenge and the nature of the achievement that he/she will obtain.
- The tutor observes, diagnoses and interprets the procedure that the student follows, to provide missing information or share what he knows.
- The student describes and analyzes in writing the path he followed.
- Next, he presents in public what he learned and explains how he managed to overcome the obstacles in dialogue with his tutor.
- The student assists another classmate in learning the same topic and records their process as a tutor.
- Finally, discuss and deepen your knowledge in the learning community (CONAFE, 2016; Tutoring Networks and Learning with Interest, 2020).

Permanent training seeks to "strengthen the management of basic education content" (CONAFE, February 9, 2017) and apart from the visits of the accompanying community educators (ECA), the bimonthly tutoring meetings stand out, which last 40 hours. . The interviewees agree that “there are too many days, a whole week, we come from far away and the students lose a lot without a teacher” (E24-EC-PR/ECA). Basically, the purpose of the activities is accountability:

review of plans and the field diary, demonstrations and sheets of the units studied in a self-taught manner, progress of the community project, evaluations and student stationery, evidence of learning, newspaper community and delivery of the card “signed by the president of APEC to confirm the absences that occurred during the month” (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).

The rest of the advice focuses on mentoring networks and the domain of the UAA: Those of us who were already two years old and had enough topics tutored the new ones (E2-EC-PR).

The activities help you resolve doubts and get ideas about how your classmates work on a certain topic (E26-EC-PR/CT).

More topics are brought to teach the classes (E29-EC-PR/P).

Thus, the training responds to a conception of initial and ongoing training based on the ABCD:

[...] based on the techniques, procedures and skills that have been shown to be effective in previous research. The priority objective is the training of teachers in specific and observable skills; conceived as intervention skills. Which are considered sufficient to produce the expected effective results in practice (Pérez, 1992, p. 22).

In the urgent need for new educators to have material to teach, a recurring aspect is training and surveillance, as if it were a process where the functions are defined in advance: the increase in topics in the catalog is achieved later. of presentation to a tutor, a kind of quality certificate that is acquired after receiving approval from someone with greater authority. Therefore, training and tutoring networks refer to a management scheme that aims to improve the efficiency of educational figures (Merchán, 2013): first the product is known, then it is introduced to others, the

elements that may affect it are detected. performance and thanks to merit you are promoted in the organization: community accompaniment educator, tutor trainer, educational assistant, zone academic coordinator or territorial delegate.

3.3 Processes of attention to students

CONAFE's operating rules indicate that it has the power to make adjustments to study plans and programs, materials and teaching content (Agreement number 12/30/21). Under this argument, in 2016 the proposal in force since 1976 was modified and the Community Education Curricular Framework was published. ABCD Model (CONAFE, 2016), which is mandatory “in practice and in discourse, [of] all levels of the institution – managers, program heads, coordinators and trainers” (Tutoring Networks, 2022).

The curricular adaptations were made from the 2011 basic education curriculum, the training fields were taken as the articulating nucleus, the topics that had continuity were selected and distributed in thematic menus. Likewise, five textbooks were created that group 30 topics, 53 UAA and three transversal axes, organized in four learning paths that replace the school grades (initial, basic, intermediate and advanced), and 11 levels with different depths connected to the expected learning of the subjects of the official curriculum. The UAA establish topics that the community educator first masters to form her catalog and then presents them to the students as a menu from which they can choose.

In an investigation on multigrade education, the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) pointed out that the ABCD did not include community knowledge and that of the culture in the understanding of the contents that were addressed. In this sense, it was indicated that in the materials:

[...] there is no systematic incorporation of texts in the indigenous language nor of challenges and activities that make palpable the usefulness and value that the knowledge constructed by indigenous peoples and the community has: the UAA are not translated into language (López, 2019, p. 168).

All community educators confirm this gap and none of them know the students' mother tongue, a distinctive feature that influences the tutor relationship and the learning process. The most common strategy to communicate consists of using a mediator, for example, “a girl who speaks Rarámuri, but who at the same time understands Spanish” (E28-EC-PR).

Juárez (March 24, 2021) also highlights the difficulty of using the ABCD:

[...] with preschool and early primary school students, in addition to the fact that the model does not consider strategies for teaching reading and writing, which adds to the need to have various resources (books, technological resources). that facilitate investigative processes in students, resources whose existence is very limited in community schools.

Some of these problems are similar to those pointed out by community educators.

Table 5. Limitations of the ABCD from the perspective of community educators

Scopes	Testimonials
Previous knowledge	<p>Even if they study the same topic, not everyone has the same prior knowledge (E15-EC-I/CAZ/CAR).</p> <p>The strength in this model is undoubtedly reading and one of the difficulties that children, but also educators, have is that they do not know how to read or write well (E16-EC-PR/CT/AE).</p>

	<p>One of the most marked problems is the educational lag that exists in the communities, in many families and in the students, which is why progress is not achieved in the UAA (E17-EC-S).</p>
Educational care	<p>In preschool it is difficult for children to have a tutor to help them, it is difficult when finishing the tutoring cycle and when demonstrating their topic with their classmates (E14-EC-I/PR/P/CT/AE/ECA/ CAZ).</p> <p>One difficulty is having several students studying at the same time; I have had five children with different AAUs and that is super exhausting (E15-EC-I/CAZ/CAR).</p>
Interest towards learning	<p>I worked with the same UAA for three years, they had to study themselves again and the children's motivation was less and less, just by hearing the name of the topic they lost interest (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).</p> <p>The model states that there must be collaboration and dialogue, but not all students from indigenous communities like to be participatory, when they are forced they feel inhibited and instead of learning they go back in their learning (E12-EC-S).</p>
Teaching materials	<p>Technologies cannot be integrated in communities where there is not even a signal (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).</p> <p>There were almost no resources for research, few books, no Internet and an objective of the model could not be met,</p>

that other content on a topic be seen (E16-EC-PR/CT/AE).

Note: Own elaboration.

Likewise, they also do not have professional assistance “when schools have students with a disability or who require special education” (Aguilera et al., 2019, p. 81). 86.9% of the educators have not received a student with these characteristics in their groups and in the same proportion, they recognize that they are not prepared to detect, make adaptations or follow up on these children and adolescents. In the few situations that they mention, they look for “strategies and activities that promote learning” (E5-EC-PR/P) or they resort to other instances:

I asked for support in institutions that offered a service to remedy the needs presented in the children, they were treated in the municipal DIF 1 with therapy and two were found a place in the TELETON 2 of Chihuahua (E27-EC-I).

In addition, two thirds of community educators believe that they receive very little or no training to teach physical education, arts, technologies or English and recognize that they invest 10 or 15% of their teaching time in these areas. These spaces are not included in the UAA and are developed through transversal axes or are not taught, among other reasons, because “priority is given to working on those elements or capacities that the school can promote in students and that, If they do not do so, they will hardly be able to obtain it in the low-literate context of their communities” (CONAFE, 2016, p. 43).

Inequity in attention to students is reproduced by wanting to confront social backwardness through instruction alone. The ABCD cannot eradicate all the deficiencies in rural, indigenous and marginal urban areas because learning problems are due to a combination of factors specific to the child, economic,

material, family and school (Guarro, 2005), investment in infrastructure , equipment and preparation of teachers (López, 2019; Leyva and Santamaría, 2019). Therefore, ignoring that educational inequality is associated with socioeconomic and cultural stratification means ignoring all the research that demonstrates the positive correlation between both variables (Reimers, 2000; Tapia and Valenti, 2016).

3.4 Learning outcomes

One of the reasons for the change in proposal was due to the national and international recognition that the ABCD obtained, media pressure and the low results of students in standardized evaluations (Mejía and Martín del Campo, 2016). Along these lines, the Minister of Education of Honduras declared that “this pedagogical scheme can be the answer to the need to increase the quality and educational coverage in her country and in the entire area of Latin America” (CONAFE, January 18, 2017).

Rather than measuring the effectiveness of the educational system from the performance of students in objective tests, criteria and evaluation instruments relevant to the practice offered by CONAFE and multigrade schools are required (INEE, 2019). With this precision in mind, sixth grade and third grade secondary school students in community education centers have always been at the lowest achievement rate (level I) in the National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning (PLANEA).

Table 6. Percentage of community education students at achievement level I. Plana, 6th grade of primary school and 3rd grade of secondary school (2015, 2017 and 2018)

Plan	Language and communication		Math	
	6th grade	3rd grade	6th grade	3rd grade
2015	67.9	43.6	69.2	84.4
2017	–	60.2	–	86.7
2018	70.7	–	76.6	–
Differential	+2.8	+16.6	+7.4	+23

Note. Own elaboration with data from INEE 2017, 2018a and 2018b.

In 2018, sixth grade students were 17.5 points below the national average in Mathematics and 21.6 points in Language and Communication. These data show that after the introduction of the ABCD the results worsened, although the Tutoring Networks (2022) and CONAFE maintain that thanks to the model there was “substantial progress in the capacity and academic achievement of the students” (CONAFE ,January 18, 2017).

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were added to the learning losses seen in Table 6. After returning to classes, all the educators accept that at most they were able to recover between 25 and 50% of the knowledge that the students had:

What had already been advanced was lost (E2-EC-PR).

It seemed hard for them to be at school so much, and they no longer read or wrote like before because little by little they began to forget things (E23-EC-S).

The various educational figures did not stop visiting the communities while the contingency lasted “under personal responsibility and with health protocols” (E20-

EC-P/CT) and went two and up to three days a week “to deliver material” (E1 -EC-PR), “clarify doubts, reinforce learning and rescue evidence” (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE). In this period, they used activity booklets, textbooks or teaching aids as their main resources and, in essence, they could not apply the ABCD:

We only worked through exercises that were related to the UAA (E9-EC-PR/P/S/CT/AE).

Due to the little time that was dedicated to each student, due to distance or lack of communication (E25-EC-PR/ECA).

Likewise, the educators confirmed that families could not accompany their children in homework given the high rates of illiteracy (Leyva and Santamaría, 2019) and had to provide activities that did not involve many resources:

The parents struggled and had no patience with them, there was no help from them (E5-EC-PR/P).

I had to leave simpler or different activities because dialogue and collaboration could not be maintained (E23-EC-S).

Throughout the Mexican Republic, the presence of CONAFE in the communities was generalized even when social distancing was mandatory. The territorial coordinator in the State of Mexico recognized that to combat the gap “we have provided our educational services uninterruptedly since the pandemic began” (Portal, June 23, 2022) and the coordinator in the State of Yucatán confirmed that the teachers worked normally so “that the inequality gap does not continue to open in the entity” (Reporteros Hoy, December 21, 2021).

4. Discussion and recommendations

In the Mexican Educational System, not all students and teachers have the same rights, a situation that violates a legal duty and does not exempt the State from responsibility despite the low cost of human and financial resources that CONAFE represents. In this vein, Rodríguez and Juárez (2020) bring together several analytical proposals about equity that link to the initial question, the objective and the results of the research:

a) CONAFE contributes to ensuring that any student from rural areas accesses and remains in school, even if the geographical dispersion, the socioeconomic status of the communities, the reasons that lead educators to choose a career, the type of training they receive, few professional skills and lack of continuity in service determine inequality in educational opportunities.

b) Equality and equity in learning means that similar strategies are implemented for all students. CONAFE uses a model that excludes other pedagogical alternatives inherent to the multigrade classroom and derived from national (Schmelkes and Aguila, 2019; MEJORED, 2022) and international experience (Bustos, 2010; UNESCO-Bangkok, 2013; Smit et al., 2015; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019).

c) In community education, free education is not total due to the indirect expenses it generates and because the State does not allocate “better inputs – quantitatively and qualitatively – to school establishments in the most backward and poor areas of the country” (Rodríguez and Juárez, 2020, p. 442). For this reason, CONAFE is a compensatory modality that does not ensure the reduction of educational inequality.

d) Education is equitable when all people “learn the same things, at the same levels” (p. 433), a purpose that is manifested in the equalization of results,

regardless of the environment of origin. Contrary to the discourse of the educational authorities, the support provided by CONAFE is not reflected in national evaluations, which is why a constant loss of learning among students remains.

The operating rules and structure that characterize CONAFE, scarce financing, low financial support for educational figures, flexibility in the recruitment process, unqualified initial and continuous training, imbalance between rights and obligations, uniformity of the pedagogical model, minimum retention and poor academic results, add to the structural challenges linked to rural territories. In this scenario, the fact that the educators are volunteers seems to justify that the food, protection and lodging falls on communities that live in poverty or extreme poverty (CONEVAL, October 2022) or that they are in charge of the installation, organization and maintenance of schools (CONAFE, December 3, 2021).

Multigrade education is a genuine, feasible and validated alternative at an international level (UNESCO-Bangkok, 2013; INEE, 2019; Loera, 2021), for this reason, instead of proposing the disappearance of CONAFE, it is recommended that it receive a greater amount of funding. budget, which is fair with the incentives it grants to educational figures and open to pedagogical innovation. The other lines of action must be aimed at:

- Provide sufficient infrastructure, furniture and equipment to schools, in accordance with the geographical characteristics and specific educational needs so that this commitment does not fall on the communities.
- Do justice to the work carried out by community educators with the equalization of the salary and benefits that correspond to any multigrade teacher to encourage their permanence in the service for at least three years .

- Strengthen the professional development (not training) of educators so that they can make informed, autonomous, free and independent decisions.
- Develop a professional profile for the multigrade teacher (INEE, 2019) as a reference for the admission processes, initial and continuous training of educational figures.
- Include community education in the multigrade education model (INEE, 2019) to modify the conception of the educator as a specialist in a single teaching proposal and become “an intellectual who reflects on the social and political meaning of education.” , a researcher who has theoretical and practical knowledge, with skills to influence the purposes, contents and methods of evaluation” (Abellán, 2022, p. 95).
- Adapt the curricular framework for community education to the 2022 curriculum, value the multigrade experiences of other countries and develop “teaching materials that take into account the diversity of sociocultural, ethnic and linguistic contexts” (Leyva and Santamaría, 2019, p. 135).
- Support community centers to be at least two-teaching, give greater attention to preschool and first cycle primary school students, teach a foreign language, physical education and arts, in addition to facilitating access to special education specialists (INEE, 2019).

These suggestions involve the discussion and rethinking of the objectives of public policies for rural areas with high and very high marginalization, the transformation of the welfare, authoritarian and compensatory representation regarding this service and implementing effective measures from the perspective of inclusion. where the diversity and participation of the beneficiaries is the fundamental

resource to level out inequalities (Boix and Domingo, 2015, p. 54). Of course, first we must consider the conditions of educability, reverse the social and economic gaps that generate poverty and exclusion, as well as commit to an education that seeks to “equalize or give more resources and attention to students from lower income groups.” (Reimers, 2000, p. 44).

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