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Monographic article

Principals re-constructing their professional performance in elementary education: A participatory contribution within the educational system in Yucatan, Mexico[☆]

Directores reconstruyendo su desempeño profesional en la educación básica: una contribución participativa en el sistema educativo de Yucatán, México

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Abstract

The Educational Reform launched in 2013 established, as fundamental, evaluation for the elements within the National Educational System (NES). An important element from NES, it is the Teaching Professional Service (TPS) at the public educational system, which requires solid processes of evaluation focused more on cultural and contextual opportunities and constraints faced by educational professionals in service. In order to foster fairer, useful and feasibility evaluation for educational professionals, the Ministry of Education, through the Center for Educational Evaluation of Yucatan State, developed a Public Consult to identify the main characteristics that professionals within the TPS should develop within their educational practice. The Public Consult included participation from teachers, principals, academic supervisors and pedagogical advisors from elementary education. In this paper, we analyze characteristics that contribute to principals' performance profile and to pedagogical leadership approach. We analyzed five main dimensions for principals' performance characteristics: educational policy and pedagogical knowledge, educational praxis, professional development, ethical and identity professional, and community commitment. We consider the Public Consult will support the educational system evaluation mainly focusing on the cultural and pedagogical context of the TPS in Yucatan, in order to contribute to the feedback for characteristics retention (performance) of principals from elementary education.

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Keywords: Educational Reform; Teaching Professional Service; Pedagogical leadership; Principals' profile from elementary education; Participatory process

Resumen

En 2013 se estableció la Reforma Educativa que fundamenta la evaluación de los elementos del Sistema Educativo Nacional (SEN), particularmente lo relacionado al Servicio Profesional Docente (SPD), el cual requiere de procesos integrales de evaluación enfocados en las oportunidades y retos culturales y contextuales enfrentados por los profesionales de la educación en servicio. Con el propósito de desarrollar evaluaciones justas, útiles y viables de los profesionales en el SPD, la Secretaría de Educación del Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, a través del Centro de Evaluación Educativa del Estado de Yucatán (CEEEY), desarrolló una consulta pública para identificar las principales características que deben poseer los profesionales del SPD en su práctica educativa. Este estudio incluyó la participación de docentes, directores, supervisores y asesores técnicos pedagógicos de la educación básica. En este artículo analizamos las principales características que conforman el perfil de desempeño de los directores y que se alinean al liderazgo pedagógico. Identificamos cinco dimensiones que integran este perfil: conocimiento educativo, práctica educativa, desarrollo profesional, ética e identidad profesional y compromiso con la comunidad. Concluimos que las características más importantes para los directores de Yucatán coinciden con las propuestas en el enfoque del liderazgo pedagógico reportado en la literatura.

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Palabras clave: Reforma educativa; Servicio profesional docente; Liderazgo pedagógico; Perfil de directores escolares; Consulta participativa

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Introduction

Mexico is currently experiencing several reforms within its whole system. A relevant case is the Educational Reform for Public Education in both elementary and middle educational levels. This Reform establishes that every professional within the Teaching Professional Service (TPS)¹ must evaluate under solid and fair processes. In addition, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (NIEE),² the main evaluation authority in Mexico, must develop these evaluations. As part of this process, every State has the moral and social responsibility to align its own educational law for public education in order to accomplish the federal demands and provide all conditions necessary to develop it (DOF, 2013b, 2013c, 2016a, 2016b; DOGEY, 2016).

Despite criticism to this Educational Reform, Yucatan State remained open to the dialog between society and government. As show of this concern, Yucatan reformulated its Law for Education in Yucatan State (LEYS),³ published in November in 2013, which assured labor and educational right conditions to all Educational Professionals (EP) involved within the different evaluation processes developed by the NIEE and Local Educational Authorities, and aligned to the national level demands and the legal framework for the educational reform (DOGEY, 2016). In this context, the Ministry of Education in Yucatan required from the Center for Educational Evaluation of Yucatan State (CEEYS) to develop a participatory and democratic project with EP⁴ from the TPS. This project visualized the democratic participation from teachers, pedagogical assessors, principals and academic supervisors. The purpose of that project was to obtain opinions from those participants for establishing criteria regarding current characteristics about their Admission, Retention (professional performance), Promotion and Acknowledgment processes within the TPS in Yucatan. In this paper, we only present the results regarding to professional performance characteristics from principals in elementary education. As Donaldson and Papay (2014) argued, principals develop strategic activities that impact directly to the educational achievement. In this sense, any educational reform affects those activities related to educational success.

In addition, diverse research has shown that pedagogical leadership, specifically for principals, is an effective element to potentiate action and strategies which orient to school communities toward student learning achievement (Bass, 1997; Bolívar, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Theoretical framework

Education has become the best way for any society to face deep and new challenges and transformations (OECD, 2005). To make this possible, it is required different educational

perspectives that promote accurate competencies necessary by societies and economies (UNESCO, 2015).

An educational perspective within this context means going further than literacy and acquisition of basic knowledge. It implies new teaching and learning contexts and approaches that promote a more justice, social equity and solidarity world (UNESCO, 2015). According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development⁵ (2005) the quality of elementary education could prepare students with solid basis to help them for their lives. This means that quality education must be conceived as education that assures people achieve knowledge, capacities, abilities and attitudes focused to attain a sustainable adult life (OECD, 2005).

Facing new educational changes, Mexican Government included within its National Development Plan 2013–2018 the goal: “Mexico with quality education”, that guarantees holistic development of Mexican citizens in order to obtain trained human capital and to develop maximum potential on students” (DOF, 2013d, p. 22).

Addressing this goal under a legal framework, the Mexican Government reformed the educational system in both elementary and middle educational levels, making responsible to governmental authorities for providing necessary conditions to practice an education of quality (DOF, 2013c, 2016a, 2016b). Within this legal framework, evaluation is one of the elements included within the National Educational System (NES)⁶ and becomes a fundamental element to understand and identify necessary aspects which led us to education of quality (DOF, 2013c, 2016b). For instance, the Law for General Education (LGE)⁷ refers to a need for developing a systematic and continue evaluation for EP, and the Law for General Teaching Professional Service (LGTPS)⁸ establishes that quality of education can be attained through EP whom personal qualities and professional competencies promote students’ learning within social and cultural inequality contexts (DOF, 2013c, 2016b).

With the purpose to establish these professional characteristics, the NIEE required an extensive and continuous collaboration from all Local Ministries of Education, through the General Organization for Teaching Professional Service (GOTPS).⁹ As a main result from this collaboration was bringing together, analyzing and stablishing all state’s educational proposals regarding to personal qualities, and professional competencies that all professionals on education must accomplish (DOF, 2013a). This work allows establishing the main characteristics that EP must possess for belonging to the TPS in elementary and middle education levels. Under this framework, educational professionals have the duty for participating in all evaluation processes proposed by the NIEE (DOF, 2013b).

⁵ OCDE by its acronym in Spanish.

⁶ Sistema Educativo Nacional (SEN by its acronym in Spanish).

⁷ Ley General de Educación (LGE by its acronym in Spanish).

⁸ Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente (LGSPD by its acronym in Spanish).

⁹ Coordinación General del Servicio Profesional Docente (CNSPD by its acronym in Spanish).

¹ Servicio Profesional Docente (SPD by its acronym in Spanish).

² Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE by its acronym in Spanish).

³ Ley de Educación del Estado de Yucatán (LEEY by its acronym in Spanish).

⁴ In this paper, we will name educational professionals (EP).

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