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Original article

**Current Research on Inclusive Education
in Mexico**

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Abstract

Introduction. The study of access, participation and learning for people with disabilities in Mexico has been a recurring theme in the country's educational research, however, its treatment over the last three decades has been superficial and contradictory. Based on a systematised literature review, guided through the PRISMA-S checklist and by means of a qualitative content analysis we describe and analyse the most developed themes and approaches in Mexican research published in indexed journals on the education of people with disabilities over the last nine years.

Materials and Methods. Based on the protocols, reviews were conducted in multiple databases and the results were limited to Ibero-American journals published between 2013 and 2021. Keywords in Spanish related to disability and inclusion were used for the search. Inclusion criteria specified Mexican authorship or analysis of the Mexican context, blind peer review and relevance to Social Sciences teaching. The analysis involved a coding process focusing on the epistemic positioning, main themes and transformative aims of the research, providing a descriptive overview of academic articles.

Results. The results highlight that the studies, for the most part, tend to be empirical research reports promoted by female re-researchers from Mexican public universities, a large part of the studies are situated in the paradigm of inclusive education and the objectives of the research tend to study the conditions of schools and universities. During the analysis process, 13 thematic sub-dimensions were identified, of which two stand out: 1) initial and in-service teacher training and 2) inclusive education policies. The study points out some contradictions between the theoretical approach selected by the authors and their own forms of research; the scarcity of socio-critical research and a worrying need for funds to develop transformative projects in Mexican schools.

Discussion and Conclusion. The study calls for expanded international research efforts to collectively improve educational conditions for people with disabilities.

Keywords: inclusive education, teacher training, education policies, right to education, disability, international research

Conflict of interests: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Оригинальная статья

Актуальные исследования в области инклюзивного образования в Мексике

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Аннотация

Введение. Аспекты обучения людей с ограниченными возможностями здоровья в Мексике были постоянной темой в образовательных исследованиях страны, однако его подход в течение последних трех десятилетий был поверхностным и противоречивым. Цель статьи – на основе систематизированного обзора литературы, руководствуясь контрольным списком PRISMA-S, и качественного контент-анализа описать и проанализировать наиболее разработанные темы и подходы в мексиканских исследованиях, опубликованных в индексируемых журналах по образованию людей с инвалидностью за последние девять лет.

Материалы и методы. Поиск источников осуществлялся в нескольких базах данных по ключевым словам на испанском языке, связанным с инвалидностью и инклюзивностью. Полученные результаты были ограничены иберо-американскими журналами, опубликованными в период с 2013 по 2021 гг. Критериями отбора являлись мексиканское авторство (анализ мексиканского контекста), слепая экспертная оценка и принадлежность к области социальных наук. Анализ включал процесс кодирования, фокусирующийся на эпистемическом позиционировании, актуальных темах и преобразующих целях исследования, обеспечивая описательный обзор научных статей.

Результаты исследования. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что большинство научных публикаций представляют собой отчеты об эмпирических исследованиях, подготовленные женщинами – исследователями из государственных университетов Мексики. Значительная часть исследований проводится в парадигме инклюзивного образования, а их цели направлены на изучение условий школ и университетов. В процессе анализа были выделены тематические подпоказатели, среди которых особое место занимают начальная подготовка и повышение квалификации преподавателей, а также политика в области инклюзивного образования. В статье отмечаются некоторые противоречия между выбранным авторами теоретическим подходом и их собственными формами исследования, недостаток социально-критических исследований и острая потребность в средствах для развития трансформационных проектов в мексиканских школах.

Обсуждение и заключение. Материалы статьи могут послужить стимулом к расширению международной исследовательской деятельности с целью коллективного улучшения условий образования для людей с ограниченными возможностями здоровья.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование, подготовка учителей, политика в области образования, право на образование, инвалидность, международные исследования

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Introduction

The institutionalization of the right of access to formal education for persons with disabilities in Mexico began in 1970, with the creation of the General Directorate of Special Education of the Mexican Ministry of Public Education. From 1993 onwards, agreements on this issue were extended to the whole nation, establishing a specific

special education curriculum, with special attention schools that safeguarded, in some cases, the right of access to basic education for persons with disabilities. However, with the Salamanca Statement¹, the special education model was questioned, and a new paradigm was promoted, that of educational integration, which eventually became the model of inclusive education².

¹ UNESCO. Declaración de Salamanca y Marco de Acción sobre Necesidades Educativas Especiales. UNESCO; 1994. Available at: <https://www.riadis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Declaracion-de-Salamanca-UNESCO.pdf> (accessed 10.04.2023).

² Booth T., Ainscow M., Black-Hawkins K., Vaughan M., Shaw L. Index for Inclusion. Developing Learning and Participation in Schools, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education; 2006. p. 1–110.

At the international level, the concept of inclusion in education was promoted by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³, ratified in Mexico in 2008. At this point, Gilberto Rincón – an activist for the rights of persons with disabilities – promoted, throughout the country, the so-called “inclusive education movement”, which proposed equal education in the same educational spaces for persons with and without disabilities, without distinction.

Since 2012, Mexico has integrated the concept of inclusion both in official discourse and in government documents, especially in education reforms. However, in practice, until a few years ago, no real changes have been seen in schools and universities⁴.

For three decades, the Mexican Council for Educational Research (COMIE) has set up commissions dedicated to documenting evidence of the country’s educational reality. In 2021, a team of researchers was formed with the aim of analysing how the educational reality of persons with disabilities in Mexico had been researched in the last nine years, specifically the dimensions related to violence and discrimination in formal education⁵. The study developed by this team shows that the educational reality of people with disabilities is researched under uncritical dominant paradigms, which result in an indistinct use of concepts such as inclusion and integration.

With regard to the ways in which “disability” is understood, Mexican academic publications tend to develop different paradigms that progressively question each other. Studies first defined “disability” in terms of lack, deficit or dysfunction, be it physical, mental or psychic. However, over time, a handful of studies have emerged that question the hegemonic vision centred on disability as deficiency, questioning

the social model of productivity and valuing the right of people to possess non-productive bodies.

Generally speaking, the different terms used in Mexican research over the last decade in relation to people with disabilities have been concepts that are pejorative and discriminatory because they belong to the medical model. There has been no investigation into how they arose or how they have been displaced, nor has there been any reflection on the social condition they provoke: On the one hand, a critique of the medical discourse is pointed out, and on the other, similar terms are reintroduced, supposedly under a different discourse. Without paying attention either to its epistemology or to the set of dimensions that imply a symbolic and imaginary matrix, beyond the description of the subject’s referential characteristics, [disability] ends up being more of an adjective⁶.

At this point, the research developed on education for people with disabilities in Mexico has a bearing on educational policies and programs in formal education based on “good will” and not on legal obligations, as it should be.

In this article we present part of the findings of the research developed by Gajardo and Jacobo aimed at finding out how the educational reality of people with disabilities is researched in Mexico from 2013 to 2021⁷. Specifically, we present a systematized review of the Mexican scientific literature [1] published in indexed journals on the educational processes of people with disabilities. The article aims to provide a descriptive summary of the most frequently mentioned topics, their epistemological treatment, and the objectives they pursue.

Materials and Methods

We conducted a systematised review of the literature. To ensure the quality of the research we used some of the criteria established

³ UN. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNESCO; 2006.

⁴ Adame M.Á.H. Guía para la Atención Educativa de Alumnos con Necesidades Específicas Asociadas a Discapacidad Intelectual (DI) o Trastorno del Desarrollo Intelectual (TDI), Fondo Blanco Editorial. 2016. (In Spanish)

⁵ Jacobo Z., Campos M., Vargas S., Salazar M.L., Hernández M.C., Gajardo K., et al. Discapacidad, discriminación y violencia (2012 al 2021). In: A. Furlán (ed.). Estado del conocimiento “convivencia, disciplina y violencia en las escuelas 2012–2021, COMIE; 2023. (In Spanish); Gajardo K., Jacobo Z., Hernández M.C., Campos M., Salazar M.L., Cáceres J. Diez años de investigación educativa sobre discapacidad en México y proyecciones. Educar (submitted). (In Spanish). (In press).

⁶ Jacobo Z., Campos M., Vargas S., Salazar M.L., Hernández M.C., Gajardo K., et al. Discapacidad, discriminación y violencia (2012 al 2021).

⁷ Jacobo Z., Campos M., Vargas S., Salazar M.L., Hernández M.C., Gajardo K., et al. Discapacidad, discriminación y violencia (2012 al 2021); Gajardo K., Jacobo Z., Hernández M.C., Campos M., Salazar M.L., Cáceres J. Diez años de investigación educativa sobre discapacidad en México y proyecciones.

by the PRISMA-S statement and the PICOS Protocol [2] for the area of Social Sciences.

As the method indicates, we searched the Scopus bibliographic database, the Web of Science (WOS) scientific information service, the scientific dissemination portals Dialnet and Redalyc, the Latin American dissemination project Scielo and the open-access databases of public and private universities in Mexico.

We limited the search to academic articles published in indexed journals Ibero-American journals, developed between 2013 and 2021, which analysed the situation in Mexico with respect to the topic studied and/or which presented the theoretical and/or critical views of Mexican authors.

We used three Spanish keywords combined by Boolean operators: “discapacidad”, “inclusión”, “inclusión educativa”, “educación inclusiva”, “integración”, “sordo”, “ciego”, “baja visión”, “talla baja”, “síndrome de Down”, “autismo” and “diversidad funcional”. The keywords were chosen on the basis of the studies previously carried out by COMIE’s research commissions⁸.

We organised the results following some indicators of the PRISMA-S model and the PICOS protocol: 1) year of publication, 2) search keyword, 3) research method, 4) type of text, 5) predominant research design, 6) predominant

area of action, 7) pre-dominant theoretical model, 8) predominant field of study, 9) place of publication and 10) main topic.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Articles published in indexed Ibero-American journals.
2. Published between 2013 and 2021.
3. Written by Mexican authors and/or analysing the Mexican context.
4. That they have had a blind peer review.
5. Belonging to the area of Social Sciences, specifically to the field of education.
6. Containing at least one key word from the list of key words.

For the analysis of the full texts, we developed an open and inductive coding process which was elaborated during a seminar lasting more than 70 hours in which the 44 documents, as shown in Table, were analysed. This seminar was attended by all members of the research team. At this point, in order to respond to the research objective and write the report of results, we focused on three main dimensions: 1) Predominant epistemic positioning; 2) Main themes addressed; and 3) What the research seeks to transform.

The result of the search is summarized in Figure 1.

The following is a descriptive report of the findings of the systematised review.

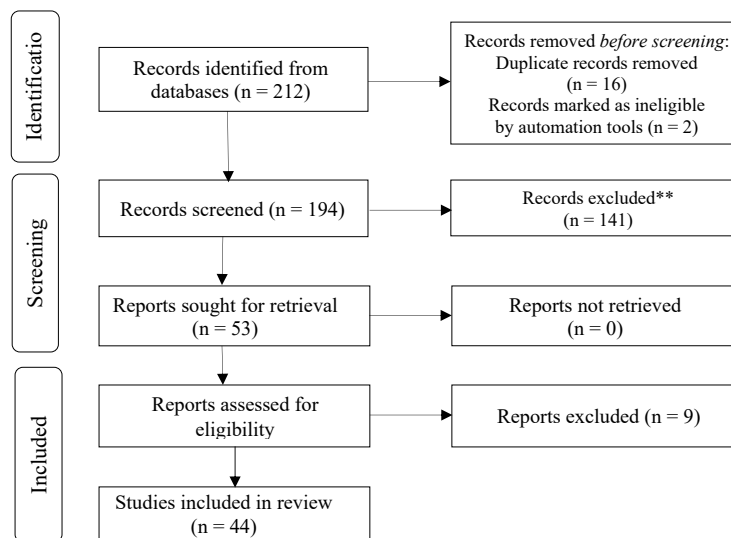


Fig. 1. PRISMA-S process flow

Source: Hereinafter in this article all figures were drawn up by the authors.

⁸ Jacobo Z., Campos M., Vargas S., Salazar M.L., Hernández M.C., Gajardo K., et al. Discapacidad, discriminación y violencia (2012 al 2021).

Table. Documents included in the review

Reference	Type of study	Paradigm
Castañeda M.A. [3]	Qualitative	Integration
Castañeda-Brizuela C., Márquez-Cabellos N.G. [4]	Quantitative	Integration
Cabrero-Almenara J. [5]	Other	Inclusion
Díaz-Pedraza C., Hannz-Sámamo C.I. [6]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Romero Mata B., Guevara Benítez Y. [7]	Qualitative	Hybrid
Huerta Cruz M. [8]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Sevilla D.E., Martín J., Jenaro Y.C. [9]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Brogna P. [10]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Brunot S. [11]	Qualitative	Inclusion
García Llama J.J., Gómez López L.F. [12]	Qualitative	Other
López R., Tobón S., Veytia M., Juárez L. [13]	Quantitative	Inclusion
Saldivar Reyes A., Márquez Cabellos N. [14]	Other	Inclusion
Velasco G.J.R., Pantoja P.M.T. [15]	Qualitative	Integration
Bautista M. [16]	Qualitative	Integration
Reynaga-Peña C.G., Fernández-Cárdenas J.M. [17]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Amigón-García R., Fernández-Pérez J.A., Velázquez-Albo M. [18]	Quantitative	Integration
Zhizhko E.A. [19]	Mixed	Inclusion
Cabrera-Mora L., Méndez-Puga A.M., López-Peñaloza J., Valadez-Sierra D. [20]	Qualitative	Integration
Amigón-García R., Fernández-Pérez J.A. [21]	Qualitative	Emerging
Lara-García B., Huerta-Solano C.I., Gutiérrez-Cruz S. [22]	Quantitative	Inclusion
Navarro-Martínez E., Valadez-Sierra M., Soltero-Rodríguez N., Zambrano-Guzmán R., Nava-Bustos G., Sandoval-Martínez J. [23]	Quantitative	Inclusion
Cruz-Cruz J.C. [24]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Alvarado Guerrero I.R. [25]	Other	Medical
Álvarez-Rebolledo A.M., Santos Carreto M.G., Barrios González R.E. [26]	Quantitative	Inclusion
Cruz Vadillo R. [27]	Mixed	Inclusion
Cruz Vadillo R. [28]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Cruz Vadillo R. [29]	Qualitative	Other
Cruz-Vadillo R., Casillas Alvarado M.Á. [30]	Qualitative	higher education
Cruz Vadillo R. [31]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Cruz-Vadillo R. [32]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Guevara Benítez Y. [33]	Qualitative	Emerging
Iturbide Fernandez P., Pérez Castro J. [34]	Qualitative	Inclusion
López Campos A. [35]	Other	Inclusion
Paz Maldonado E.J. [36]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Pérez-Castro J. [37]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Pérez-Castro J. [38]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Pérez-Castro J. [39]	Other	Inclusion
Pérez-Castro J. [40]	Qualitative	Inclusion
Pozos López A., Hermosillo García Á.M. [41]	Quantitative	Inclusion
Cárdenas Martínez L. [42]	Other	Inclusion
Carrión Mejía C., Romero Thomé G., Sánchez Iniestra D.Y. [43]	Other	Inclusion
Sosa Zumárraga M.A. [44]	Qualitative	Inclusion

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Results

The articles that address the issue of education for persons with disabilities in Mexico tend to be mostly (56%) empirical research reports (Fig. 2). These articles are promoted by female researchers from Mexican public universities who position themselves in the paradigm of inclusive education to study phenomena linked to the development of more equitable conditions in schools and universities for persons with disabilities.

Since 2013, publication has been constant, with an average of 5.8 articles published per year, and 2018 and 2019 are the years with the highest number of publications (8 per year). Most of the studies focus on the national context (34%) or Mexico City (23%) and there are very few examples of studies on specific localities (10%).

Epistemic Positioning of Mexican Studies on the Education of People with Disabilities. Studies that address the education of people with disabilities tend to be positioned within the paradigm of inclusive education (72%). This paradigm is understood as any action that addresses forms of discrimination and situations that impede people’s right to education, that takes into account the diversity and needs of all people, and that ensures not only presence, but also participation and progress in learning⁹.

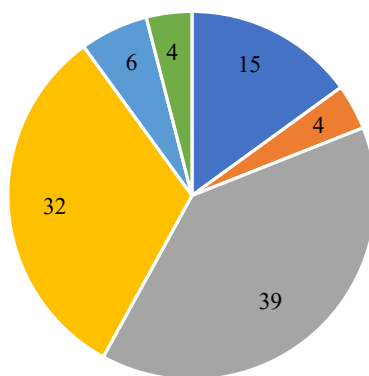
In line with the above, some studies [5; 9; 17] tend to position positively the approaches

developed by non-governmental agencies such as UNESCO and the United Nations. Agencies that have set some key guidelines for the enactment of fairer education laws across the globe.

Much of the research [10; 27–29; 37; 39] tends to highlight that the path to inclusive education corresponds to the “ethical” re-thinking of the phenomenon of educational integration, a process that seeks to guarantee access to school for people with learning difficulties [45] and which was developed in the 1960s as a result of movements in favour of the right of people with disabilities not to be discriminated against in education.

This does not mean that Mexican research distances itself from the positions of integration when analysing the right of people with disabilities to be educated; in fact, seven studies address it [3; 15; 19; 20; 25; 33] and two of them appeal to a more clinical approach in their lines of work [25; 33].

Educational integration is a paradigm that proposes the adaptation of contexts for the specific attention of those who have particularities that are incompatible with traditional schooling. Among the legacies of this approach are the defense of special education, the development of the foundations of therapeutic pedagogy or assistive pedagogy and the validation of the concept of Special Educational Needs [46].



■ Essays ■ Experiences ■ Empirical Research ■ Theoretical Research ■ Other ■ Inf. Projects

Fig. 2. Type of database research

⁹ Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All – UNESCO Biblioteca Digital. Available at: <https://gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/245656e.pdf> (accessed 20.03.2023).

On this issue, in the literature review carried out, we found some problems when characterizing the paradigmatic options of authors. Although there is a general statement of agreement with inclusive education, a group of registers makes arguments more related to integration than to inclusion when arguing their position [9; 12; 43].

As an example, we can mention this study [9]: A sample of pre-school, primary and high school teachers from public schools (...) were questioned in order to identify attitudes towards the inclusion of people with special educational needs¹⁰.

In the previous paragraph we can observe a tendency of the researcher to defend the ideals of inclusive education, however, the design and treatment of the topics is of educational integration: the instrument measures teachers' attitudes about the integration of groups with disabilities, not inclusive attitudes. This type of example appears in 11% of the articles positioned on educational inclusion, which demonstrates theoretical confusions that have already been studied at the international level¹¹, but not in the specific case of Mexico.

Main Themes of Mexican Research on the Education of People with Disabilities. We identified seven sub-themes within the literature dedicated to the education of people with disabilities in Mexico: 1) distance education and Information and Communication Technologies; 2) body and disability in the classroom; 3) inclusive educational cultures; 4) initial and continuous teacher training; 5) expression of art; 6) violence and discrimination at school; 7) educational policies.

For this analysis we selected the three most robust sub-themes: 4) initial and in-service teacher education; 6) violence and discrimination in schools; and 7) education policy.

Articles on teacher training tend to be empirical research that analyses teachers' and students' perceptions of the skills and knowledge needed to educate people with disabilities [5; 14; 17; 26]. On this point, there are few studies that address inclusive teacher training [26; 28; 36; 39] and, in general, the articles

focus on specific groups: people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, people who are blind or have low vision and/or people who are deaf or have low hearing.

The articles dealing with educational violence and discrimination focus on analysing situations experienced by certain groups of people with disabilities when they are enrolled in school. In this group of research, we find examples that aim to give a voice to people with disabilities – an ideal proposed by the social model of disability – in order to focus the analysis on the personal perspective of the actors who experience the condition of disability (physical and intellectual). There are authors, for example, who give life stories of young people who have felt social discrimination through the barriers that exist in the city and in the education system [26]; authors who question the meritocratic system and the violence it exerts on people with intellectual disabilities [6], or authors who point out how the imposition of a single alphabet prevents deaf people from being able to effectively join the education system [24].

Articles on educational policies tend to be theoretical-propositional studies and documentary studies that analyse Mexican educational policy from historical approaches [5; 7; 18]. On the same topic, there are also research studies that analyse the education law from an expository perspective [19] and fewer are the examples that expose the law from a critical stance [29; 44].

What Mexican Research on Education for People with Disabilities Seeks to Transform. In general, Mexican research on education for people with disabilities tends to have descriptive and propositional rather than critical-transformative objectives. Therefore, studies tend to analyse problematic situations, break them down and try to find options for improvement and transformation. For this reason, case studies, studies with a narrative biographical approach and ethnographies are the research designs of choice (n = 17), closely followed by descriptive research based on statistical analysis of medium- and large-scale questionnaire responses (n = 11).

¹⁰ Gajardo K., Torrego L. Relación entre las actitudes de las y los docentes y sus prácticas para la inclusión: Un recorrido por la literatura reciente. In: Díez-Gutiérrez (ed.). Educación para el Bien Común: hacia una práctica crítica, inclusiva y comprometida socialmente. 2020. p. 519–534. (In Spanish)

¹¹ Ibid.



We pay special attention to those studies with a critical-transformative orientation, which point to 13 examples. Of particular note is the study that exposes the structural violence suffered by people with disabilities in a special education centre [6]; the study that exposes the difficulties encountered by a group of teachers when applying the indicators of the law on educational integration in compulsory education schools [25]; the study that challenges teachers to look at the multiple territories that coexist in the classroom as factors of exclusion [10]; the theoretical analysis that presents a critical comparison between educational models that challenge deaf people [24]; the research that analyses the perceptions of students in private universities on the education of people with disabilities [26] and the study that develops an analysis of the dilemmatic situations that students with disabilities face at university when confronted with a discourse of inclusion that is inconsistent with educational practice [34].

Discussion and Conclusion

The systematized review of the Mexican scientific literature published in indexed journals on the educational processes of people with disabilities in the last nine years tends to show an epistemological treatment that is favourable to the postulates of inclusive education, but with evident challenges with regard to the ways of signifying its objectives and scope. The research topics, on the other hand, are varied, but they have one thing in common: they denounce or highlight problems

that need to be corrected. Finally, different opportunities for improvement are observed, above all, the openness to produce research that is more transformative than descriptive.

Our research has some limitations, such as its reduction to the Mexican context and the analysis only of research published in indexed journals, however, based on the findings of the literature review, we propose the following lines of action:

1. Strengthen quality teacher training: a large number of studies [4; 5; 9; 14; 16–18; 22; 25; 36] expose that one of the main shortcomings in Mexican education is the low quality of some of the teacher training programs. At this point, quality is defined as the necessary access to pedagogical, methodological, and ethical training.

2. Enact education laws and policies consistent with the provisions of international treaties: multiple studies [9; 14; 27; 37] have shown the need to respect agreements such as the universalization of education when publishing new laws. Other studies [15; 19; 29; 39] emphasize the need to monitor schools and higher education institutions, because in some cases, the discourse of inclusion remains only on paper.

3. Produce more empirical research and studies with representative samples: Some studies [8; 21; 26; 36] propose the strengthening of situated educational research.

We encourage new researchers to propose similar research in other educational contexts and countries. This is needed today to improve the educational conditions of people with disabilities.

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