

**WHERE DO MEXICO AND CHILE STAND ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?
SHORT TITLE: INCLUSION IN MEXICO AND CHILE**

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This paper discusses the background, current situation and challenges of educational integration and inclusive education in Mexico and Chile. These countries obtained similar low results on the academic achievement of their students (Mexico last and Chile second last) among OECD countries; and above average scores, among Latin-American countries. In both countries educational integration began as a consequence of legal changes mandating that students with special educational needs (SEN) be attended in regular schools. School financial systems in Mexico and Chile are very different. In Mexico, educational services are predominantly public, while in Chile the state provides subsidies for students to attend both public and private schools. These differences have had an impact in educational integration procedures. In Mexico, students with special educational needs are served by special education professionals affiliated to the schools. In Chile, school principals hire, with the subvention provided by the government, specialists to offer support to the students enrolled. In both countries, educational integration has benefited integrated students. However, many adjustments still need to be made in both countries in order to install more adequate inclusive processes.

Introduction

This paper offers a comparative perspective on the evolution of inclusive education in Mexico and Chile. Main issues addressed include: the challenges these countries face to meet the needs of diverse students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN), and the steps needed to advance towards providing quality education to all students.

The theoretical framework for this study is the evolution of the concept of inclusive education (IE), which originated in the Netherlands in the 70s, first as educational integration. In the late 1970's, the Warnock Report (1978) proposed a more positive approach to label students, softening the line between handicapped and non-handicapped students, and adopted the concept of special educational needs. Later the World Conferences in Jomtien (UNESCO, 1990) and Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994) declared that students with SEN had the right to study in general schools. More recently, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) called for the inclusion in general school systems of all students with disabilities and for the provision of the necessary supports and accommodations so that they accomplish full quality and free primary and secondary education.

The idea of educational integration has extended rapidly with some good results. Nevertheless, many children from vulnerable groups still remain out of general schools; others have been integrated but their special educational needs remained unattended. The concept of inclusive education emphasizes the right of diverse students not only to study in the general school setting, but to adequately address their needs in order to secure their personal development and academic achievement (Ainscow, et al. 2006; Ainscow & Miles, 2008). In the process towards inclusion, countries have modified their educational systems. In particular, Mexico and Chile have taken different routes achieving some good results, but still facing complex challenges.

This study addresses two specific questions: How has IE been implemented in Mexico and Chile? What are the main challenges faced by these countries to fully implement IE?

In order to answer these questions, we drew on our own experience in these countries as active participants in the inclusion movement, as well as on the legislation pertaining IE, teacher training programs and various other documents produced on this topic in each country. The analysis of the Mexican and Chilean advancements towards inclusive education is presented in five sections: the general characteristics of the educational systems, school financing, legal framework for inclusion, the onset of inclusive education and the transformation of special education services, and the outstanding challenges towards full inclusion.

General characteristics of the educational system

México

Mexico has a population of approximately 112 million people (INEGI, National Institute for Statistics and Geography, 2010), over 26 million are students in the basic or mandatory educational system which includes from preschool to middle school (ages 3 to 15). Even though in 2012 high school became mandatory, this has not been yet implemented.

There are 224,194 schools, half of which have one teacher per grade (school with complete organization), and the rest are multigrade, this means that the same teacher teaches two or more grades at the same time (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2012b). In the Mexican educational system, public schools serve the majority of the students and only 9% of the schools are private, which serve mostly middle and high SES students, as all are tuition-based. There is no government financial program to support private schools or to provide financial support to parents to send their children to private schools.

The Mexican educational system has been ineffective in reducing social gaps. The precarious pedagogical and organizational conditions of non-urban schools (rural schools, community schools for indigenous populations and tele-secondary (audiovisual based education provided mostly in rural areas for students in grades 7th through 9th), reproduce social inequalities, as many of these schools lack basic materials, are multigrade (one teacher serving two or more grades), and do not have a principal (INEE, National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, 2014). In 2012, Mexico's students ranked at the bottom of OECD countries in the PISA assessment in math, reading and science, with a mean score of 417. Mexico's results are determined by the socio-economic composition of the country, characterized by inequality and high poverty. Nevertheless, some improvements have occurred. In 2009, 58% of the Mexican students participating in PISA were in the most disadvantaged group (of all participating countries) when considering a series of socioeconomic and demographic conditions (OECD, 2010). In 2012, Mexico showed improvement in the levels of equity in education (OECD, 2014).

When compared to other Latin American countries, Mexican students perform above average (less than one standard deviation) both in mathematics and reading. Socio-cultural inequalities are evidenced by significant differences between urban and rural students; Mexico is among the fourth highest countries regarding such differences (OREALC/UNESCO, 2008).

Mexican special education serves a total of 655 thousand students; 143 thousand have a disability. These services are delivered in two settings: Multiple Attention Special Education Schools (*CAM, Centros de Atención Múltiple*) and Support Services for General Education Units (*USAER, Unidades de Servicios de Apoyo a la Educación Regular*). Currently, there are 2,400 CAM and 3,700 USAER which serve approximately 28,000 schools (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2011). There is no official information as to how many students are served in each service: general and special education schools. Moreover, it is not possible to offer an accurate idea of the proportion of children with special needs served by special education services, as the total number of such children in the country is undetermined; the only indicator we have is the total number of people with disability, as measured by the last Census, which is 5 million 740 thousand (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2012a). Figure 1 shows the general characteristics of the Mexican educational system and how they compare to the Chilean's.

<i>Mexico</i>			<i>Chile</i>
	112	Total population. Millions	16.6
		Basic education	Preschool-High-school
	Preschool-Middle school		
	26	Basic education students. Millions	3.3
	224	Basic education schools. Thousands	10
	417	PISA mean score 2012	436
	Last	OECD rank 2012	Second last
	Above average	Latin American rank -2008	Above average
	5.7	People with disability. Millions	2.05
	665	Students receiving special education services. Thousands	225.6- 300
	143	SEN students with disability served. Thousands	3.4

Figure 1. General characteristics –Mexico vs. Chile

Chile

As of 2012, Chile had a population slightly over 16 million 600 inhabitants (INE, National Institute for Statistics, 2012) this is about 15% of the Mexican population. According to the General Education Law (LGE, *Ley General de Educación*) promulgated in 2009, elementary and high-school education are mandatory and the State must ensure access to all through a public financing system (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2009b). The Chilean basic educational system serves 3,252,040 students (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2012). In 2009, there were 229,163 preschool students, 2,028,454 elementary and middle school students, 979,108 high school students, and 130, 410 adults. These students were served in a total of 10,190 schools (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2009a). In Chile, in contrast with Mexico, preschool education is not mandatory, however, according to the LGE the State must promote this educational level and grant free access and public financing for the first and second grades (ages 4 and 5). Nevertheless, preschool education is not a pre-requisite for elementary education.

Regarding students' achievement, according to the 2012 PISA test, Chilean students rank the second lowest among OECD countries in the areas of math, reading and science, with an average score of 436. In 2009, a high proportion of participating Chilean students, over 20%, belonged to the internationally most disadvantaged group, which reveals high inequality in the Chilean society (OECD, 2010).

Within the Latin American region, Chilean students rank above average (less than one standard deviation from the mean) in both mathematics and reading. Socio-cultural inequalities are evidenced by significant differences between urban and rural students in mathematics and reading (OREALC/UNESCO, 2008).

Chile has 2.05 million people with disability (FND, National Foundation for People with Disabilities, 2012), the most common being of sensory origin (visual and auditory, 70.4%), followed by physical disability (16.5%), intellectual disability (9%) and psychiatric problems (4.1%). As of 2010, there were 75,683 students with SEN integrated in general schools; 3,365 of these children had some kind of disability, and over 150 thousand students were in special education schools.

In the Chilean legislation, special education is an educational modality which includes the following options: special education school to serve sensory, intellectual, motor, communication and language impaired students; general education schools with educational integration projects for students with disabilities and special groups for students with learning disabilities; and in-hospital schools and classrooms for students undergoing medical treatment (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2005). Special education services are coordinated by a central unit within the Ministry of Education. As of 2012, some 300,000 students with special education needs received financial support (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2012).

School financing system

México

Mexico's school financing system is predominantly public. About 91% of Mexican schools are public, most of which are administered by the Secretariat of Public Education of each state and some by the Secretariat of Public Education at the federal level. These schools provide free education to the majority of the children in the country (93%, as of 2012) (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2012b). Despite the fact that public schools do not charge tuition, parents normally pay a fee to the parents' association or the school principal to make improvements to school facilities and to pay for expenses not covered by the state. Moreover, parents are responsible for buying school supplies, for taking their children to school or paying transportation, and for other associated expenses, such as meals consumed during school hours.

Chile

Chile has a mixed educational system regarding the administration, ownership and financing of schools. In contrast to Mexico, only a small proportion of the schools are public, most of these are financed by the municipalities and in some cases public schools are administered by private corporations (*corporaciones de administración delegada*) which receive state funds for each student to cover educational costs. The private school system includes three financing modalities for privately owned schools: fully subsidized by the state, partly or shared subsidized (parents pay part of the costs) and fully private (paid fully by parents).

The majority of students (46.7%) attend private-voucher schools (39.4%); also a high proportion (46%) attends public schools (54%) administered by the municipalities; and a minority of the students (10%) attends fully private schools (6.6%) (Elacqua & Santos, 2013). The Chilean educational system has evolved towards privatization as private-voucher schools increased their share from slightly over 10% in 1971 to almost 50% in 2010 (Elacqua & Santos, 2013). For a comparison of Mexican and Chilean school financing systems see Figure 2.

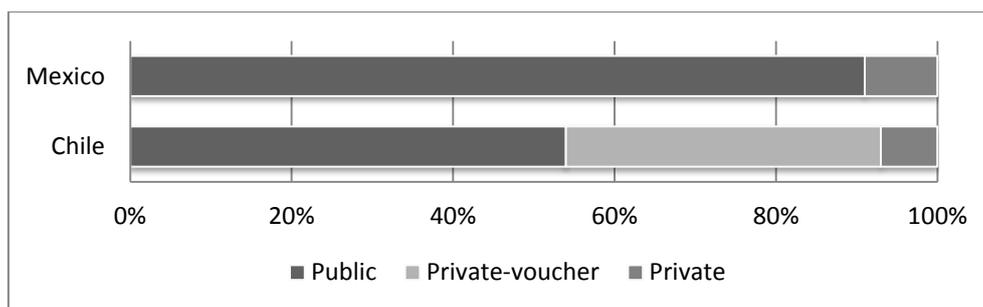


Figure 2. School financing system

Legal framework for inclusive education

Mexico

Mexico signed and ratified in 2007 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2013). Nevertheless, the legislation on the topic of inclusive education is rather general and non-specific in terms of methods, procedures and goals. In 1992, the federal government and the teachers' union signed the National Agreement for the Modernization of Education (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 1992) which resulted, among other things, in the modification of Article 41 of the General Education Law which for the first time referred to the integration of students with special educational needs to the general classroom. Article 41 is the most important and most comprehensive, and yet very general, legal framework to advance towards inclusive education in Mexico. In this article, special education is defined as an educational subsystem devoted to serving students with temporary or

permanent disabilities supporting their educational integration through *the use of specific methods, techniques and materials*; it also considers serving students with outstanding capacities (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 1993/2014: 18)

The General Law for People with Disabilities was promulgated in 2005 and modified in 2008 (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2005-2008). In Article 10, this law establishes that the State is obligated to create and strengthen special education and inclusive education, to guarantee the integration of people with special needs to the National Educational System, as well as to grant access to child care centers, to train teachers and other educational professionals and to establish programs to provide scholarships and other resources specifically for people with disabilities. In 2011, the Law was modified and renamed: General Law for the Inclusion of People with Disability (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2011). The specific regulation for this law was issued in 2012, it defines four formally recognized disabilities (sensory, physical, mental and intellectual), mandates that the Secretariat of Public Education defines the criteria for student placement (in general or special education schools) and offers scholarships for students with disabilities, mainly those from disadvantaged homes. It also mandates the coordination between the Secretariats of Education and Health to provide prosthesis, orthopedic braces and technical supports for students with disabilities (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2012). The main legislation changes towards inclusion are shown in figure 3.

	1990	1993	2005	2009	2010	2011
Mexico	GENERAL EDUCATION LAW- SEN in general classroom	GENERAL LAW FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES -child care, teacher training, scholarships	GENERAL LAW FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. Scholarships (SEN – Disadvantaged homes). Coordination between Min. of Education and Min. Health			
Chile	DECREE 490. School projects – SEN in general classrooms	LAW 19.284. Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities.		DECREE 170. Eligibility criteria for SEN financial support	LAW 20.422. Equal opportunities for persons with disabilities	

Figure 3. Legislation changes towards inclusion

Chile

Chile also signed (2007) and ratified (2008) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (United Nations, 2013). In Chile, the beginning of inclusive education is marked by two legal instruments issued in the early 1990s. First, Decree 490 issued in 1990 allowed for the implementation of school projects to integrate students with disabilities in general classroom; later, Law 19.284 on the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, issued in 1993, further supported the access of students with SEN to general education.

Law 20.422 (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2009c) provides specific norms to grant equality of opportunities and the social integration of persons with disabilities. This legislation states that:

General schools should incorporate the necessary innovations and curricular adaptations, infrastructure and support to allow and facilitate the access of persons with disabilities to courses or existing educational levels, offering them the additional resources they require to assure their permanence and progress in the system. (Title IV, paragraph 2, article 38). (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2009c)

Decree N°170 issued in 2009, provides eligibility criteria to offer financial support for students with special needs, defines government support fees by type of disability or condition (auditory, visual,

intellectual, autism, multiple, language and learning), specifies the procedures that need to be followed in order to identify a disability as well as the professional profile of the examiner.

Even though the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) establishes that students with a permanent or temporal disability should study in general inclusive schools, Chilean legislation continues to promote special education schools. In fact, Law No 20.422 defines special education as a modality within the educational system that provides services in general education and special education schools (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2009c).

*The onset of inclusive education and the transformation of special education services
Mexico*

In 1995, two years after the promulgation of the General Education Law, a large research project was requested by the Undersecretary of Basic Education to learn about how educational integration was implemented throughout the country and what kind of support was being given to educational integration by the state governments. The results of this study showed that in most states a great confusion prevailed regarding the philosophy and procedures of educational integration and very few actions if any had been made to implement it (García-Cedillo, 2009).

Based on the aforementioned study, the National Project for Educational Integration with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation initiated the formal process of educational integration in the country through training and follow up in small groups of schools and teachers throughout the country. The project grew from three states and 46 schools in 1997 to 28 states and 642 schools in the school year 2001-2002 when the project became the National Program for the Strengthening of Special Education and Educational Integration (PNFEEIE) (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2002).

Transitioning from the segregation model of special education to educational integration with the ultimate goal of achieving inclusion has been a difficult and is still an incomplete task in Mexico. Prior to 1992, special education services were delivered following more the medical model than the educational-social model, and were organized in two areas: indispensable and complementary services. The first category included *special education schools* for early childhood and basic education children in four areas: intellectual, motor, auditory and vision, *special education labor training centers* and the so-called *integrated groups* within general schools for students with mild intellectual disability and auditory impairment (Escandón, 2007). Complementary services were provided by several institutions that supported students with learning problems, low school achievement, speech, language and/or behavioral problems, as well as gifted and talented students (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2006).

The major changes in the organization and the delivery of services have been the creation of the Support Services for General Education Units (*USAER, Unidades de Servicios de Apoyo a la Educación Regular*) and the transformation of special education schools into Multiple Attention Special Education Schools (*CAM, Centros de Atención Múltiple*). USAER units are groups of professionals serving normally more than one school to support educational integration. The common structure of USAER is a director or coordinator, various support teachers (ideally one per school, oftentimes however, one teacher serves more than one school), a psychologist, a communication teacher and a social worker.

The now Multiple Attention Special Education Schools (CAM) were given some general guidelines to serve in the same school children with special education needs with different profiles and to use the general curriculum instead of the special curriculum used in the old special education schools. These guidelines were not clear enough which originated confusion and lack of organization across these schools (García-Cedillo, 2009).

The National Program for the Strengthening of Special Education and Educational Integration should provide guidelines and some resources to the states to implement educational integration state programs which should be additionally funded by the states (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2002). From the onset, the Program did not have the necessary human resources (experts in the field of educational integration) and its financial resources were very limited, by the same token, the heads of special education at the state level had very little power and resources to make important contributions to improve educational integration (García-Cedillo, 2009). At the end of 2013, this program subsumed into a larger one called the National Program for Educational Inclusion and Equity, nevertheless only general operation guidelines have been published (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2013).

Figure 4, shows the organization of special education services before and after the onset of educational integration in Mexico and Chile.

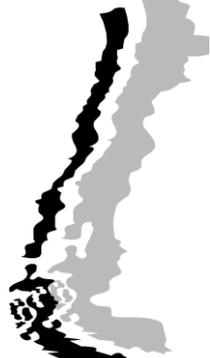
	SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES	
	BEFORE THE ONSET OF EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION	CURRENTLY
 <p><i>Mexico</i></p>	<p><i>Medical model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor training centers • Integrated groups within general schools • Support services institutions • Special Ed. Schools by disability Special curriculum 	<p><i>Educational model</i></p> <p>Diagnosis and educational support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USAER –Support services for general education units, within general schools • CAM – Multiple attention special education centers General curriculum
 <p><i>Chile</i></p>	<p><i>Deficit approach</i></p> <p>Diagnosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-professional groups <p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Ed. Schools Special curriculum 	<p><i>Bio-psychosocial approach</i></p> <p>Diagnosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-professional groups <p>Treatment-Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Ed. Schools Special curriculum • General schools Educational integration projects

Figure 4. Special education services before and after the onset of educational integration

Chile

The legal framework for special and inclusive education described above has been instrumental in promoting educational integration in Chile. In 1998, Decree 490 for the first time supported the educational integration of students with disabilities in general classrooms. This initiative is advanced by other laws and regulations that followed. Currently, the Chilean educational system has a very clear set of procedures to provide education in general education and special education schools to people with disabilities. Public schools have a maximum quota for students with disabilities, while private institutions are not obligated to receive students with disabilities, as having an integration project for them is optional.

Before 1990, when inclusive education was formally fostered in Chile, the so called multi-professional groups conducted diagnosis for students with disabilities who were educated in special education schools under special curricula focusing on their habilitation or rehabilitation. In the 1980s, some students with sensory disability were integrated (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2005).

With the Decree 490, a new type of service was created, as educational integration projects were fostered. This fundamental change required other services and provisions to accommodate to this new modality, but the structure of the educational system remained almost the same. Special education schools were not modified, they have evolved as any other institution would have; multi-professional groups have also evolved, as well as general schools. The theoretical perspective of special education has moved towards a bio-psychosocial approach, leaving behind, at least at the policy level, the deficit approach. Many special education teachers have developed new competencies and created innovative ways to work with students with special needs in the general classroom as well as to work collaboratively with other teachers and professionals. It is worth noting that Decree 170 has been especially useful in promoting the integration of students with temporary or permanent special education needs to general

schools, as it provides detailed and updated guidelines to implement integration projects in general schools.

Nowadays, following Decree 170, when a student with SEN is identified, his/her parents have the option of registering their child in a general or special school. In any case, the student is eligible for financial support which is given to the school administrators, so that they hire the support professionals and services according to the specification of the case. Eligibility is revised once a year for temporary conditions and twice a year for permanent ones.

Results on inclusive education

Mexico

The provision of services and teacher training are among the most important positive results of educational integration. Currently 28,000 schools have the support of USAER. Special education serves 650 thousand students (143 thousand have a disability) (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2012a). No data however is available on the number of students with SEN in regular classrooms. Several courses, seminars, and certificates on the topic of inclusive education have been offered to teachers across the country. One such course, consisting of three modules, was developed by the first author of this paper and has been delivered to over 40 thousand teachers. Overall, there is a positive attitude towards educational integration as many schools accept students with disabilities even without the support of USAER (García-Cedillo, Romero-Contreras y Fletcher, 2014).

Chile

The integration of students with disabilities in the general classrooms in Chile is still lagging. Nevertheless, in 2005 the Ministry of Education promulgated the National Policy on Special Education 2006-2010 and reported that: (1) Special education subsidy had increased 330% between 1990 and 2005; (2) The policy for the integration of students with disability in the general classroom had been implemented; (3) The number of children and youth with special education needs integrated in general classroom increased from 3,365 in 1997 to 29,473 in 2005; (4) Textbooks for the first cycle of elementary education had been adapted to Braille; (5) Over 20,000 teachers had been trained in educational integration; (6) One hundred and eighty teachers were trained abroad (Spain, Israel and Canada) on educational integration between 1998 and 2005; (7) Two hundred and eighty teachers specialized in the integration of elementary and high-school students with visual impairment; (8) Didactic materials to support educational integration were produced for the different educational levels (MINEDUC, Ministry of Education, 2005).

In Chile, there is a positive attitude towards people with disabilities. However, in the last few years, the implementation of Decree 170 has promoted a new way of understanding and practicing educational integration, as it has encouraged the increase of integration projects to benefit students with special education needs without a disability, for example, those with language delay. Moreover, the increase in subsidies to support special education schools and the growing number of such schools have delayed the process of integrating students with disabilities in general schools.

Challenges to achieve full inclusion

México

In service teachers still need more training to provide quality education to students with special educational needs. Professional development strategies need to focus more on the principles and strategies of inclusion and offer both theory and guided practice to teachers. Pre-service general teachers would benefit from a more inclusive approach program. Currently, preschool and elementary teacher training programs only include two courses on inclusive education (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2012b, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2012c), which leaves teachers with little preparation for effective inclusion.

School financial resources are insufficient to meet the needs of students with SEN. Currently, the schools with USAER support get some materials such as books in Braille. However, there are no additional supports to make other necessary adjustments to school conditions (i.e. reduce noise in classroom) or to students learning materials or other professional supports (i.e. sign language interpreter). More importantly, there is no specific mechanism to apply for such resources.

USAER tend to replicate the segregation model within the school as support teachers take the students into the resource room to work with them individually or in groups. Teacher collaboration is still a major

issue, as general and special education teachers are not always prepared to work together and support each other (García-Cedillo, Romero-Contreras y Fletcher, 2014).

Legal provisions are far from reality in Mexico, so one of the major challenges is to take the printed word to the real world. For example, a recent Regulation states that the Secretariats of Education and Health must coordinate to provide the necessary equipment (prosthesis and the like) to students with SEN (DOF, Official Gazette of the Federation, 2012), this measure has not yet been implemented and there is no indication that it will be in the near future.

Chile

Regarding educational integration, Chile faces structural challenges. The first one is to align educational policies with a human rights approach. This is not an easy task; given that the country's educational system is highly influenced by the market. Therefore, the right of inclusive education is subordinated to educational freedom, which promotes the maintenance and expansion of special education schools as state subsidies privilege educational settings with less than eight students per each student with disability. This student ratio can only be sustained in special education schools.

While regulations implemented in the 1990s have increased the likelihood of students with SEN to study in general education settings, special education policies have kept educational integration only as one option and not as a right. Thus, not all students with disabilities have a real opportunity to study in an inclusive setting; because of this, many families end up sending their kids to special education schools. Moreover, with the implementation of the Decree 170, issued in 2009, the idea that inclusive education is best suited for students with transitory or minor disabilities, such as language delay or attention deficit disorder, is expanding. Educational norms indicate that in each general classroom only five students with transitory SEN and two with permanent SEN can be integrated, however, data on integrated students does not include this classification, therefore it is impossible to know how this quota plays out in reality. Therefore, another challenge is to provide more specific statistics in order to measure the magnitude and direction of the impact of Decree 170.

In summary, the Chilean educational system presents a perspective oriented by inclusive values; however there is not a coherent system to support an inclusive approach mainly because the educational system is based on the voucher system which has deepened inequalities. Moreover, this practice has caused an increase in over diagnosis. For example, the population of students with language impairment has increased dramatically and the number of special education schools serving these students has also grown inexplicably (Heusser, 2012, January 16).

Conclusions

Mexico and Chile have very different educational systems. In Mexico most students attend public education schools, and private education only serves 10% of students. In Chile there are three systems: public, subsidized and private. The subsidized system has grown (serving now over 50% of students) while the public system has downsized; the private system serves less than 10% of students. Both countries ranked the lowest among OECD members in the last PISA assessment (OECD, 2010); and ranked above other Latin American non-member countries. At the onset, Mexico and Chile implemented similar educational integration policies; in the last few years, each has followed different paths. In Mexico, educational integration depends on the support of special education teams (USAER) each serving five general schools on average; while in Chile, the State provides economic support to schools to hire special education services depending on the amount of students with SEN enrolled.

In Mexico, two thirds of special education professionals had received some training on educational integration, as opposed to a third of general teachers. Most special education professionals still favor the strategy to work with students with SEN in the resource room (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2004). In the school year 2010-2011, less than 15% of the general schools received support from special education teams (USAER) (SEP, Secretariat of Public Education, 2011).

In Chile, the number of students with non-permanent SEN and of part-time special education schools has increased. This has been favored by the financial structure of the educational system, as schools with more students with SEN receive more financial support to hire special education services. As of 2005, only 23% of general schools had integrated students with SEN (Aznar, 2005).

These data show that both countries still face enormous challenges to reach full inclusion. The proportion of schools integrating students with SEN, in both countries, is still very low, so the expansion of services constitutes a major challenge. To expand and improve services, Mexico requires intense and well organized training programs for general and special education professionals, as well as the opening of working positions for special education staff. Chile, in turn, needs to revise the financial structure of the educational system to avoid over diagnosing students and granting attention to students with permanent SEN. Both countries have made progress in implementing educational integration policies; however they need to advance in their understanding of inclusion and the promotion of inclusive school and social practices.

Comparative research on inclusive education is still scarce, as there are mayor methodological challenges such as the definition of terms (inclusive education, SEN, barriers for learning and participation, among others) in each country or region, service delivery modalities, professional profiles and so on (García-Cedillo, 2009). We believe that analyzing and discussing how different countries face the challenge of providing inclusive education can contribute to more creative ways to promote more successful experiences.

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