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Problem:

Basic education is a right that every child has; however, many children can't access this basic right due to deficiencies in their educational system. Low levels of education among students in rural communities in Mexico is a problem that continues to impact children within these regions.¹ Lack of government support for education leads to higher rates of illiteracy and an inability to advocate for their right to basic education. The object of this brief is to explain and analyze the current policies and propose solutions to help improve the current state of illiteracy in rural Mexico.

Issue:

Through the years, rural Mexico has always had lower education rates than urban spaces and cities in Mexico. This can be attributed to the lack of funding and resources and the inability to commute from home to class. In rural Mexico, about thirty-seven percent of students from preschool to secondary do not have the chance to attend school.² This can lead to many development problems as the early ages in a student's life are vital to their education. In 2021, rural Mexico only had twenty-four point four percent of children who enrolled in basic elementary education.³ Meaning over seventy-five percent of children did not get the chance to attend and start basic education.

Policy Options:

Policy 1:

Unidad General de Asuntos Jurídicos- Artículo 3 is a policy that was put into place to help close the gap between rural and urban early education. The policy states it is the state's responsibility to strengthen teacher training and ensure that schools will be inclusive, taking into account the circumstances and needs of students to eliminate barriers to participation and learning.⁴

Further, the policy indicates that for these barriers to be lifted and improved, the municipal schools must undergo evaluations under the National Education System. The National Education System is assigned to operational, decision-making, and budgetary decisions for the schools in rural areas only if certain criteria are met; additionally, state and federal authorities must address the school's needs.

¹“Políticas Para Mejorar Las Escuelas Multigrado En México,” Instituto nacional para evaluacion de la educacion mexico, accessed October 31, 2024,

<https://www.inee.edu.mx/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Documento7-escuelas-multigrado.pdf>.

² Políticas Para Mejorar Las Escuelas Multigrado En México

³ Corresponsables. “La Educación Rural: Una Brecha Abierta Con Varios Retos.” Corresponsables, January 9, 2024. <https://www.corresponsables.com/col/actualidad/ods-4-educacion-de-calidad/la-educacion-rural-una-brecha-abierta-con-varios-retos/>.

⁴ Anexo 1. Artículo 3° de la Constitución Política de los Estados ... Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://educacionbasica.sep.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/a1.pdf>.

The policy further outlines that the responsibility of making school mandatory for students and schools being inclusive, free, and public falls under the state in which the rural community is founded but also, ensures that the state raises awareness about the importance of education. Furthermore, the responsibility of the state is to ensure that teacher training institutions are strengthened, classrooms are being provided with proper teaching materials, and the infrastructure where the education is taking place is safe and suitable for educational purposes.

Policy 2:

Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo, **CONAFE**, implemented their policy, **Vivir Mejor**. CONAFE's goal is to provide education for children in marginalized communities where having a regular education is not possible with more communal approaches.⁵

The policy outlines that the communities, leaders, and organizations in the rural areas hold the responsibility for the development of children's education.⁶ For instance, CONAFE's policy further states that the parents and municipal authorities within the community are involved in the evaluation aspect of the school's budgetary and operational decisions.

As the policy is community-heavy, it ensures that education is continued at the student's home. Allowing not only teachers to teach children but, having parents promote reading activities with each student to further their education. Additionally, the policy states teacher training is based not only on the resources available to the school and community but, on the evaluation and strength of skills students are or are not showing. The policy further implements the teaching and strengthening of skills for community instructors and promoters.

Policy Drawbacks:

With further investigation of both policies, it is apparent that there are both benefits and drawbacks; despite the benefits, the emphasis of this analysis will be on the drawbacks. A challenge with the first proposed policy, **Unidad General de Asuntos Jurídicos- Artículo 3**, is the difficulty of bringing such attention directly from the community to the state. In addition, the article states that teachers have the right to access the government training system to bring what they have learned back to their community. Although this is a good way to promote education, it leaves those who live in rural areas and those who only speak their indigenous language with barriers such as lack of understanding due to language barriers or rural community teachers uninformed due to their living circumstances.

Examining the second policy, **Vivir Mejor** from **CONAFE** is hindered by the lack of education and literacy within the communities. Adults in these communities who are illiterate will struggle to bring awareness to these issues as they may be unable to express their concerns. Additionally, the policy assumes parents and guardians continue education at home, but this is not feasible if the parents and guardians lack education and literacy. Lastly, the policy determines the amount of

⁵ "Sitio de Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo." Ir a la página inicial. Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://www.gob.mx/conafe>.

⁶ Programa de Educación Inicial y básica para poblaciones ... Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://www.conafe.gob.mx/transparencia1/estudiosyopiniones/programa-edu-ini-basica.pdf>.

influence that each parent in the community has on the budget planning for their community school, a decision that risks creating further issues.

Proposed Solutions:

As a result of this analysis, a proposed solution is a combination of both policies to ensure the best education and resources for students while simultaneously closing the educational gap between rural and urban communities.

One option for integrating the policies is taking the school evaluation from policy one and the involvement of the parents and educators in decisions from the second policy. To integrate both policies effectively while reducing drawbacks, the use of criteria can be kept but it is essential that it is well established, straightforward, and transparent. Additionally, having a balance between state and community responsibility is vital for the success of merged policies.

Another option for unifying the policies is the implementation and structure of educator training from Policy One and home education for parents and guardians from Policy Two. Training for educators can extend to parents and guardians; that way, all adults in the student's lives have the necessary tools to further a student's education. Educational training can and should be taught based on the resources and materials available to each school allowing for students, parents, guardians, and educators to maximize the use of their resources. Furthermore, the strengthening of skills for the community and parents can help develop a student's education and allow an increase in literacy in both children and adults.

Conclusion:

The brief is to bring awareness to the current situation of illiteracy in rural Mexico and the proposed solutions the government has implemented. The goal of this brief is not to persuade the reader to choose one policy over the other but to consider both policies with the information presented, to evaluate the policies, and to determine opportunities for improvement.