

Political Dimension Of Inclusion In Higher Education: A Study In The Chihuahua Unit Of The Upnech

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Abstract

The present study analyzes the political dimension of inclusion in higher education based on the experiences of students from the National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua, Chihuahua Unit (UPNECH). A qualitative approach was employed, and a phenomenological analysis was conducted, in order to understand how institutional inclusion policies materialize in the educational trajectory of thirteen students. The analysis of the interviews, processed with Atlas.ti, allowed for the identification of four central categories: institutional support, inclusive admission, sociocultural inclusion, and teacher training. The findings indicate that institutional support is perceived as a personalized and humanistic accompaniment. However, this experience is constrained by the absence of explicit guidelines and specialized training to address student diversity. In regard to the matter of inclusive admission, the testimonies indicate the presence of open and equitable access, thereby allowing for the participation of indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students in vulnerable conditions. However, challenges have been identified that must be addressed in order to guarantee permanence and graduation. The concept of sociocultural inclusion can be defined as a respectful coexistence among multiple identities and realities, a phenomenon that has been shown to enrich training processes. However, this coexistence also demands greater institutionalization. The findings indicate that UPNECH has a strong foundation for advancing inclusive practices; however, it is essential for the institution to fortify its institutional structure to ensure comprehensive inclusion. The study offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities confronting higher education institutions in Mexico as they endeavor to operationalize inclusion policies from a social justice perspective.

Keywords: educational inclusion, educational history, UNESCO, OECD, public higher education.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza la dimensión política de la inclusión en la educación superior a partir de las experiencias de estudiantes de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional del

Estado de Chihuahua, Unidad Chihuahua (UPNECH). Desde un enfoque cualitativo y mediante un análisis fenomenológico, se recuperaron las voces de trece estudiantes con el propósito de comprender cómo se materializan las políticas institucionales de inclusión en su trayectoria educativa. El análisis de las entrevistas, procesadas con Atlas.ti, permitió identificar cuatro categorías centrales: apoyo institucional, admisión inclusiva, inclusión sociocultural y formación docente. Los resultados muestran que el apoyo institucional se vive como un acompañamiento cercano y humano, aunque limitado por la falta de lineamientos claros y capacitación especializada para atender la diversidad estudiantil. En cuanto a la admisión inclusiva, los testimonios revelan un acceso abierto y equitativo, que permite la participación de estudiantes indígenas, con discapacidad o en condiciones vulnerables, aunque se identifican retos para garantizar la permanencia y el egreso. La inclusión sociocultural se expresa como una convivencia respetuosa entre múltiples identidades y realidades, lo que enriquece los procesos formativos, pero demanda una mayor institucionalización. En conjunto, los hallazgos evidencian que la UPNECH posee bases sólidas para avanzar en prácticas inclusivas, aunque requiere fortalecer su estructura institucional para garantizar una inclusión plena. El estudio aporta evidencia contextualizada sobre los desafíos y oportunidades que enfrentan las instituciones de educación superior en México para consolidar políticas de inclusión desde una perspectiva de justicia social.

Palabras clave: inclusión educativa, historia educativa, UNESCO, OCDE, educación superior pública.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the inclusion of marginalized groups within higher education has emerged as a central concern in international, national, and institutional agendas. Contrary to the notion that inclusion is merely an increase in access for historically underrepresented groups, it is currently understood as a structural and multidimensional process involving political, cultural, curricular, and organizational transformations. In this sense, higher education not only perpetuates pre-existing social inequalities, but also functions as a strategic space for the redistribution of opportunities, the recognition of identities, and the expansion of democratic participation. Consequently, the examination of inclusion from a political vantage point is imperative to comprehend the subjects who are legitimized to partake in the educational process, the conditions under which they engage, and the power structures that influence their educational trajectories.

Contemporary discourse on social justice and education, influenced by scholars such as Nancy Fraser (2003) and Iris Marion Young (1990), has demonstrated that inequalities extend beyond the absence of material resources, encompassing institutional mechanisms that impede the voice, representation, and effective participation of diverse social groups within academic institutions. From this perspective, inclusion entails two aspects: the redistribution of resources, including scholarships, academic support, and accessibility services, and the transformation of existing recognition frameworks that have historically devalued certain knowledge, cultures, and experiences. The political dimension becomes evident in the disputes surrounding the delineation of legitimate knowledge, the recognition of valid bodies and territories as legitimate constituents of academia, and the determination of actors with the capacity to influence institutional decisions.

In the context of Latin America, scholars such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2005) have critically examined the historically exclusionary and colonial underpinnings of university systems. They contend that the democratization of knowledge stands as a pivotal challenge in fostering truly inclusive institutions. From these perspectives, the concept of inclusion cannot be reduced to compensatory programs or the mere expansion of enrollment; rather, it must be approached as a political transformation aimed at removing the structures that produce epistemic, cultural, and socioeconomic exclusion. In this context, there is a necessity to subject inclusion policies to critical analysis in order to ascertain their degree of alignment with the authentic needs of students, the way they are operationalized in practice, and the tensions that undergird their implementation.

At the international level, organizations such as UNESCO (2009) and OECD (2021) have underscored the necessity to fortify comprehensive institutional policies that take into account the access, permanence, participation, and graduation of students in conditions of vulnerability. These frameworks underscore the necessity of articulating inclusion with public equity policies, quality assurance systems, and governance structures that guarantee the participation of the various sectors of the university community. From this perspective, the political dimension encompasses not only the design of norms and guidelines, but also the processes through which decisions are made, resources are distributed, and priorities are established within institutions.

In the case of Mexico, public institutions of higher education have incorporated policies aimed at promoting equity and inclusion, albeit with varying degrees of implementation and scope. However, significant challenges persist, including but not limited to territorial inequality, socioeconomic gaps, attention to indigenous, migrant, or disabled students, and the absence of participation mechanisms that allow students to influence institutional decisions. These tensions are particularly evident in teacher training universities, such as the National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua (UPNECH). By its own institutional mandate, UPNECH is responsible for training professionals capable of promoting social justice and inclusion in their future educational contexts. It is imperative to comprehend the configuration of the political dimension of inclusion in these spaces, as it exerts a significant influence on the trajectories of current students and the training of educators who will function at various levels of the Mexican education system.

Within this theoretical framework, the Chihuahua Unit of the UPNECH serves as a pertinent case study for the analysis of institutional policies and practices that aim to advance towards a more equitable higher education system. An exploration of the political dimension of inclusion enables the identification of the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of these policies; the actors involved in the decision-making processes; the tensions between institutional discourses and everyday practices; and the barriers or facilitators that emerge from the perspective of the university community.

The objective of this study is to examine the political dimension of inclusion in the Chihuahua Unit of the UPNECH, thereby providing evidence that contributes both to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and to the definition of lines of action to strengthen institutional policies aimed at equity and educational justice. The objective of this study is to facilitate a shift towards a more critical and contextualized interpretation of inclusion in Mexican higher education. It is acknowledged that the complete implementation of this concept necessitates substantial political

transformations, ensuring the involvement, representation, and acknowledgment of all individuals in university life.

Inclusion policies at the university

Inclusion policies in higher education have been consolidated as a strategic component to guarantee access, participation, and graduation of students from historically marginalized groups. Rather than representing isolated actions, these policies imply structural transformations that encompass normative, organizational, and cultural processes within university institutions. According to UNESCO (2020), the articulation of institutional frameworks is necessary for ensuring equitable access, effective conditions of participation, and permanence. This approach broadens the conventional interpretation of inclusion as care support, situating it within the domain of social justice and university governance.

On a global scale, academic institutions have adopted policies aimed at catering to a diverse range of needs. These policies encompass various strategies, including scholarships, tutoring programs, accessibility initiatives, reasonable accommodations, equality committees, and mechanisms that encourage student participation. However, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018, 2021) has cautioned that a considerable number of institutions encounter a substantial discrepancy between their normative declarations and the practical implementation of these policies. This phenomenon is especially evident in public universities, where the pressure to expand enrollment is compounded by financial and administrative constraints.

From a critical perspective, Fraser (2008) contends that inclusion policies must consider the redistribution of resources and cultural recognition simultaneously to avoid perpetuating structural inequalities. This approach is particularly salient in the university context, where conventional meritocratic standards have the potential to perpetuate exclusionary practices. As Young (2000) emphasizes, the concept of inclusion must extend beyond mere numerical representation, ensuring effective participation in decision-making processes. From this perspective, inclusive university policies must engender deliberative conditions that enable students from diverse backgrounds to genuinely influence institutional design.

In the context of Latin America, De Sousa Santos (2005, 2009) contributes to the existing discourse by introducing the epistemic dimension, emphasizing the necessity for university policies to democratize knowledge and acknowledge non-hegemonic knowledge. These findings bear direct implications for the development and refinement of academic curricula, the design of research methodologies, and the mechanisms by which academic achievements are validated. Institutions aspiring to inclusivity are obliged to undertake a critical examination of their curricula, pedagogical models, and evaluation criteria to circumvent the reproduction of colonial or one-dimensional logics of knowledge.

In the case of Mexico, organizations such as ANUIES (2019) have promoted institutional policies to strengthen equity in higher education, highlighting the need to serve groups such as indigenous students, migrants, people with disabilities, women, and students from rural contexts. However, extant research suggests that the efficacy of these policies is contingent upon the capacity of each institution to translate general guidelines into concrete practices (INEE, 2019). The presence of variability in infrastructure, financing, teacher training, and institutional culture has been shown to generate significant differences in student experiences.

Consequently, the implementation of inclusion policies within academic institutions should be comprehended as a coherent series of initiatives designed to effect profound transformations in institutional frameworks, facilitate the equitable distribution of opportunities, acknowledge and celebrate the manifold identities that characterize the academic community, and ensure the active involvement of all constituents in the democratic process. The success of this initiative is contingent upon the presence of established standards, as well as their implementation within a contextual framework that is both sustainable and subject to critical evaluation. This evaluation should be conducted from the perspective of the individuals who are directly involved in the educational processes on a daily basis.

Current situation of inclusion policies in universities

The National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua, as a decentralized public body, has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to integrating inclusion policies within its educational activities since its inception. The institution's origins can be traced back to December 1979, when it was established as unit 081 of UPN. Initially, the institution's primary objective was to provide professional training to educators across the state of Chihuahua. This initiative was initiated through the bachelor's degree in education program, initially established in 1985 and subsequently revised in 1994. The institution's commitment to educational advancement is further exemplified by its role in the establishment of the inaugural bachelor's degree program in educational intervention during the late 1990s.

The establishment of the line was accompanied by the imperative to prioritize educational areas and needs that were already present within the Mexican state. This was driven by the recognition of the necessity to address these needs in the context of ongoing integration processes. The development of an adequate professional scheme within the education sector to meet these needs was identified as a key objective. This initiative by the National Pedagogical University has led to the proposal of various initiatives, including the establishment of a specific specialty in the area of attention and inclusion within the Bachelor's Degree in Educational Intervention.

The initiation of this degree program was pivotal in addressing the diverse educational requirements that were identified within the academic milieu. This development emerged as a consequence of educational integration, which facilitated the cultivation of future professionals in this discipline. Moreover, it enabled educational institutions to subsequently offer final degrees, thereby completing the educational continuum.

The National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua (UPNECH) was established on August 6, 2011, through the approval of the Congress of the State of Chihuahua. This new entity was created as a decentralized organization with eleven units and a virtual unit. It is noteworthy that UPNECH continues to promote this degree and others, in addition to creating inclusion policies within the university.

In light of the university's newly articulated vision, there is a growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity in addressing the unique challenges faced by the Chihuahuan community. This recognition is particularly pronounced in various municipalities across the state, where the presence of sub-headquarters of the three units that previously existed in the state is evident. These sub-headquarters were designed to address the specific needs of each community, underscoring a commitment to inclusive approaches that value diversity.

UPNECH has demonstrated a commitment to addressing new challenges in order to reach a greater number of students and promote diversity and inclusion in the field of educational intervention. The institution has also sought to establish itself as a leading authority in educational inclusion within the state of Chihuahua.

Characterization of the National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua

The National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua (UPNECH) is a public institution of higher education with a focus on training, professionalization, and educational research in the state of Chihuahua. The genesis of the institution can be traced to 1979, when the inaugural academic units of the National Pedagogical University (UPN) commenced operations within the state. These inaugural units included Unit 081 in Chihuahua, Unit 082 in Ciudad Juárez, and Unit 083 in Hidalgo del Parral. The establishment of these units was driven by the objective of addressing the escalating demand for teacher professionalization in the region (Caballero, 2016, cited in Carreón-Flores et al., 2024).

Following the educational decentralization process of 1992, the institution gained increased operational and administrative autonomy, enabling the expansion of its academic offerings and the establishment of additional campuses in various regions of the state. Since 2011, UPNECH has officially operated as a decentralized public body, consolidating its institutional identity and expanding its territorial presence through eleven campuses strategically distributed in Chihuahua (Carreón-Flores et al., 2024).

Throughout its history, the university has designed programs with the specific aim of responding to the region's educational needs. Among these programs is the Bachelor's Degree in Educational Intervention, which was introduced in 2002 as part of a national movement towards inclusive education and programs aimed at indigenous and rural contexts. One such program is the Bachelor's Degree in Preschool and Primary Education for the Indigenous Environment (LEPEPMI) (Carreón-Flores et al., 2024). Concurrently, the institution has promoted the development of postgraduate studies by offering master's and doctoral degrees aimed at educational research and social intervention.

The UPNECH is distinguished by its historical commitment to inclusion, its attention to cultural diversity, and its dedication to the social development of the state. As stated by Carreón-Flores, Ponce, and Montes (2024), the university has established an institutional identity grounded in principles of equity, respect for ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, and the enhancement of educational pathways for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ch. 39).

This orientation is reflected in educational practices and internal policies that seek to guarantee access, participation, and permanence of historically excluded groups.

A historical analysis of UPNECH reveals that the institution has confronted challenges related to social and territorial inequality within the state. However, it has developed strategies for academic expansion and curricular adaptation that enable it to meet the needs of the environment, thereby positioning itself as an agent of educational transformation (Carreón-Flores, 2024, Ch. 37).

. The institution's contributions to regional socioeconomic development are manifold. They include the training of professionals with a high social commitment, the establishment of links with local communities, and the generation of relevant knowledge for the educational contexts of Chihuahua.

UPNECH is regarded as a pivotal institution in the enhancement of the state education system, distinguished by its social mission, its inclusive stance, and its contributions to the professionalization of educators and the advancement of educational research. This characterization is fundamental to understanding the institutional framework from which the analysis of the political dimension of inclusion in higher education is developed. This analysis is the central theme of this article.

Objective of the research

Upon completion of the research, the various inclusion policies will be formally established and undergo a thorough review process. This will allow for the identification of potential challenges related to the permanence, institutional support, inclusive admission, and sociocultural inclusion of the UPNECH.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out at the Chihuahua Unit of the National Pedagogical University of the State of Chihuahua (UPNECH). The primary objective of the study was to examine the challenges faced by students in regard to educational inclusion during their university career. These challenges were analyzed from the perspective of inclusion policies that are linked to the development of students within the institutional environment. The study also examined the contextual factors that affect students' academic perseverance. This study assumes particular relevance when one acknowledges the urgency of visualizing how inclusion processes continue to influence university education and restrict participation in genuinely inclusive educational environments.

From a methodological perspective, the research is characterized by a qualitative approach founded on the phenomenological analysis approach, which enabled the exploration of the experiences and meanings of the participants from their subjective dimension. This methodological approach facilitated the interpretation of the meanings constructed throughout their educational trajectories. The present study possesses a descriptive and exploratory character, as the individual and collective narratives functioned as the foundation for the reconstruction and comprehension of the events that transpire within the institution.

The sample comprised thirteen UPNECH students who participated voluntarily. The sole inclusion criterion was the enrollment in an educational program at the institution during the period of research. The sample population was characterized by heterogeneity with regard to academic, social, and economic conditions. The number of interviews was determined to reach theoretical saturation, ensuring sufficient depth for interpretive analysis of the phenomenon under study.

The semi-structured interview was developed as a data collection instrument and was validated using the expert judgment method that was previously documented by Carrera, Vaquero, and Balssells (2011). The procedure in question enabled the evaluation of the univocity and pertinence of each item, thereby ensuring the coherence of the instrument with the objectives of the study and the theoretical foundations that support it. This process served to enhance the methodological consistency of the exploration of student experiences.

The processing and analysis of the information was carried out with the Atlas.ti version 24 software, by reviewing the transcripts and applying axial coding. This process enabled the identification of emerging categories that reflect the most recurrent themes in the

narratives: a) institutional support; b) inclusive admission; c) sociocultural inclusion; d) teacher training. The categories delineated herein offer a clear representation of the experiences shared by the participants. This representation allows for an understanding of the complexity of inclusion processes in a university context.

RESULTS

In the subsequent analysis of the results, the description of the findings in the emerging categories is addressed. The first category is described as institutional support, which is identified in the students' narratives as a reference to the interaction they have with the administrative staff, where accompaniment is provided in the situations faced by the students. According to the participants' testimonies, the provision of support is understood to be structured around a practice of humane treatment, with the objective of fostering the well-being of students in need of assistance.

A subset of the experiences reported by students indicates an administrative staff attitude of openness, characterized by a consistent willingness to address concerns that extend beyond academics. *In the event of an issue or uncertainty, some secretaries are receptive to our inquiries and endeavor to provide assistance. It is customary for them to utilize telephonic communication to solicit information or to allocate tasks to other personnel* (E4).

The close institutional presence is indicative of a culture of support within the university, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging to the institution. *On several occasions, I have felt a lot of support from the UPNECH staff; they are always available to explain and help us with personal matters of my studies* (E9).

This finding suggests that institutional support from the normative structure is rigid and rigorous, and that everyday situations can naturally demonstrate the willingness of the institution's staff to generate real inclusive elements.

However, an additional element within this category emerges from the referents of the voices. Additionally, there is a dearth of knowledge concerning particular information or specialized training in the realm of inclusion. In situations involving inclusion, the provision of resources typically originates from the individual rather than from a clearly defined institutional framework. *In certain instances, individuals may find themselves uncertain about to whom they should turn for assistance, particularly in cases where they are experiencing a psychological condition. I am at a loss as to whom I should solicit assistance* (E3).

As previously delineated, the finding suggests a concomitant recognition of the intention to provide support and a concomitant perception of a lack of knowledge within the framework of action. "It appears that an inclination towards providing assistance is present; however, there is frequently a lack of awareness regarding the methods to be employed or the relevant parties to be consulted. They instructed us to proceed to the director's office" (E5).

These expressions reveal how care is provided in inclusion processes, generating a notion of support but sometimes without the corresponding training in the processes of institutional practice. This perception can be translated into a lack of training or specific guidelines that guide adequate attention to different student realities. Although it is known that within the functions in the framework of action of each position in the institutional organizational chart, labor compliance is essential, the addition of giving a perspective of inclusion to the faculties and functions of the teaching and administrative staff is crucial. They will establish integral elements within the framework of what

inclusion requires: *The crux of the issue, it seems, lies not in a lack of support from the school, but rather in the apparent absence of pertinent information among certain members of the faculty and administration. On one occasion, the speaker witnessed a deaf girl in the vicinity, and her presence in the director's office prompted concern among the secretaries* (E8).

In this category, these findings suggest that the institutional absence of knowledge creates an opportunity for the inclusive discourse embodied in the legal regulatory framework to consolidate concrete practices in the framework of inclusion. Institutional care as a process of inclusion is most often implemented as a spontaneous response, characterized by a high degree of empathy, rather than as a consolidated institutional policy.

The second category that emerges from this analysis is that of inclusive admission. This category is identified through the voices present in the institutional actions aimed at guaranteeing access to the university. It is perceived that there is no distinction in the identified vulnerable groups, regardless of ethnic origin, physical condition, or social situation. The voices presented herein offer insight into the admissions process at the UPNECH. One participant noted, *I had not previously encountered an indigenous student, as I had never studied with an indigenous classmate. I was unaware of their presence at the university* (E2). This recognition signifies the institution's commitment to inclusivity, acknowledging that the student body comprises individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and personal circumstances who have unimpeded access to educational opportunities. *There is a Tarahumara colleague who studies here, and I see that the university supports her* (E5).

The inclusive admission policy evolves from an administrative procedure to a discernible and transparent process, signifying pivotal inclusion processes for the establishment of academic environments from diversity. *From the moment of my enrollment, I felt welcomed. The observation of a deaf girl led to the discovery that she was a student at this institution. This encounter served as a poignant reminder of the universal right to pursue education for personal advancement* (E10). The findings in this category suggest that inclusive access is a central component of the institutional model, contributing to the comprehensive educational vision by addressing barriers and promoting equity from the outset. The inclusive approach to the participation and coexistence of different groups serves to strengthen the community identity of the university.

The third category, entitled "sociocultural inclusion," acknowledges the university as a nexus for diverse cultural and social groups, where students from indigenous communities, individuals with chronic diseases or disabilities, individuals from other states within the country, and individuals with varied ideologies, beliefs, and lifestyles interact.

A review of the extant literature reveals that the voices of the participants indicate that diversity is a visible and accepted characteristic within the university environment. This contributes to generating a climate of respect, empathy, and coexistence. *Our student body is comprised of a diverse group, including Rarámuris, individuals who have traveled from distant locations, and classmates with various health challenges or disabilities, yet we all participate in the same activities* (E1).

This shared experience underscores the university's commitment to fostering a sense of community and inclusivity by providing a space where differences do not lead to exclusion, but rather to mutual recognition and learning. *I have learned from my classmates, because we come from different backgrounds, but that enriches the classes and activities* (E4).

The voices indicate that sociocultural inclusion is expressed not only as an institutional policy but also as a daily practice among teachers, administrative staff, and students. In

this practice, the diversity of experiences and perspectives is valued. *I have a medical condition, and I have always been treated with respect. It is also noteworthy that individuals from indigenous communities and those of other religious affiliations have not been subjected to discrimination* (E7).

This dynamic fosters a coexistence that enables the identification of an inclusive university culture, wherein differences are embraced as integral components of the educational experience. The presence of students from diverse backgrounds and circumstances contributes to the diversification of sensitivity within the classroom environment. As indicated, *there is a lot of openness at university; you can be who you are, believe in whatever you want, and come from wherever you come from* (E9).

Sociocultural inclusion is a fundamental value within the university's internal life. By promoting coexistence and recognizing diversity in treatment, the institution fosters an environment that values and embraces diversity. This diversity is not perceived as a barrier, but rather as a collective wealth that strengthens the sense of institutional belonging.

The fourth category pertains to *teacher training*, which integrates knowledge to promote inclusive education processes. The voices acknowledge part of the teacher accompaniment from institutionalized training and decision-making: *Teachers, although they are understanding, sometimes do not know how to act when there is a colleague with some special support* (E3).

It has been acknowledged that there are educators who are attuned to the needs of diverse students. Nevertheless, the necessity for ongoing professional development that addresses the realities of the classroom environment has been identified. *It has been observed that some educators endeavor to accommodate all individuals, despite their lack of preparation to manage such diverse groups* (E6).

These limitations, which range from listening to the accompaniment of teachers, end up being a factor in generating environments of trust and participation: *Despite the absence of formal training in inclusive education, some teachers exhibit a willingness to assist in enhancing the quality of their classes, albeit with limited expertise in the area* (E8).

The development and enhancement of teacher training from an inclusion perspective has been a continuous process, evolving beyond mere goodwill and attaining a level that enhances educational practice through substantial training. *It is hypothesized that if educators received more extensive preparation in the area of inclusive practices, the university would maintain its current level of inclusivity* (E10).

This category of teacher training is positioned as a central element within the university. The inclusive spirit that characterizes the institution has a significant impact on the way diversity can be addressed.

DISCUSSION

The findings related to the institutional support category reveal that, according to the students' experiences, the UPNECH Chihuahua Unit is configured as a space where a culture of closeness and human accompaniment by the administrative staff prevails. This characteristic, evident in daily practices such as providing answers to inquiries, active listening, and assistance in personal matters, aligns with the concept of student well-being recognized in the literature as a vital component for the establishment of inclusive educational environments (UNESCO, 2020). The accounts of the participants indicate

that this accompaniment is not confined to formal procedures, but rather encompasses gestures that cultivate trust and a sense of institutional belonging: *"Whenever we have a problem or doubt, some secretaries listen to us and try to support us... they pick up the phone to ask or entrust us with someone"* (E4); *"I have felt a lot of support from the UPNECH staff"* (E9).

This finding suggests that, despite the regulatory rigidity that characterizes university structures, there are margins of action where humane treatment becomes a real mechanism of inclusion. According to Fraser (2008), these practices can be interpreted as expressions of recognition, as they acknowledge the unique experiences and needs of students, thereby facilitating their full engagement in university life. However, the exclusive reliance on goodwill as a basis for inclusion carries the potential to perpetuate inequalities, given its reliance on individual dispositions rather than the implementation of coherent and sustained institutional policies (OECD, 2018).

A salient finding in this category pertains to the recognition of a paucity of information and specific training regarding inclusion within administrative staff. The students' expressed uncertainty regarding to whom they could turn and how to manage certain situations—particularly those related to health conditions, disability, or psychological support—indicates a discrepancy between the intention of support and the technical capacity to provide adequate accompaniment. Testimonies such as *"Sometimes you don't know who to turn to"* (E3) or *"they do want to help, but often they don't know how to do it or who to turn to"* (E5), allow us to infer that institutional support is exercised, to a large extent, spontaneously and not as a result of a consolidated policy.

This phenomenon aligns with the observations made by Young (1990, 2000), who asserts that institutions may exhibit a propensity toward inclusion, yet the absence of formal mechanisms to ensure it can lead to a scenario where the implementation of inclusive practices becomes contingent upon individual initiatives. This, in turn, engenders spaces characterized by vulnerability and inequality. The absence of comprehensive guidelines and specialized training is further exemplified by instances where staff members express feelings of uncertainty in contexts involving functional diversity. This phenomenon is illustrated by the testimony of a student (E8), who recounts the anxious reaction of the administrative staff upon encountering a deaf student. This example demonstrates that the absence of training can act as an impediment to inclusion, even in circumstances where there is a demonstrated willingness to provide support.

The institutional support observed in the student narratives aligns with the findings reported by Carreón-Flores, Ponce, and Montes-Muela (chapter 36). In their historical analysis of the establishment of the UPNECH, the authors observe that "the absence of documentation concerning its characteristics, implications, and purpose has constrained comprehension of its academic and organizational influence." The historical absence of clear guidelines partially explains the continued reliance on informal practices and staff readiness for day-to-day student support, rather than the implementation of institutionalized policies. Therefore, the finding that accompaniment is more likely to stem from individual volition than from the regulatory framework is consistent with the historical review, which revealed "significant gaps" in the consolidation of stable care structures.

From the Latin American perspective, De Sousa Santos (2005, 2009) warns that inclusion requires not only cultural recognition, but also **transformations in institutional practices** that allow democratizing power relations and addressing the multiple student realities. At UPNECH, the findings suggest that the intention to support is already a

significant advance; however, they also reveal that this intention must be accompanied by systematic processes of professionalization and institutional strengthening to prevent the accompaniment from depending on chance or the empathy of certain actors.

Sousa Santos (2005, 2009) offers a nuanced perspective on the concept of inclusion, asserting that it necessitates not only cultural recognition but also systemic transformations to democratize power relations and address the diverse realities of students. Consequently, at UPNECH, this concept implies that the intention to provide support constitutes a substantial advancement, and it is evident that this intention is optimal to accompany in systematic processes of professionalization to circumvent reliance on chance or the empathy of specific actors.

The results of this study indicate a certain tension between the general regulatory framework of inclusion in Mexico, as supported by organizations such as ANUIES (2019) and the international guidelines of UNESCO (2009, 2020), and the daily experience of students, where inclusive practices emerge more from personal sensitivity than from a consolidated structure. This discrepancy between discourse and practice has been identified by the OECD (2021), which notes that numerous higher education institutions possess well-intentioned yet inadequately articulated inclusive policies, thereby constraining their capacity to effectively address student diversity.

In summary, the findings of the institutional support category demonstrate that a culture of human accompaniment is a valuable element that strengthens the sense of belonging and contributes to the inclusion of students. However, these findings also reveal significant institutional deficiencies that necessitate the implementation of training strategies, action protocols, and internal coordination mechanisms. This dual interpretation aligns with the theoretical frameworks that conceptualize inclusion not merely as an act of volition, but rather as a political and institutional commitment necessitating the establishment of structures, allocation of resources, and specialized training (Fraser, 2008; Young, 2000; UNESCO, 2020).

Consequently, this category constitutes an opportunity for UPNECH to transition from spontaneous inclusive practices to a robust institutional model that guarantees adequate, pertinent, and equitable attention to all student realities. The consolidation of these practices would facilitate progress towards educational justice, as promoted by both the international regulatory framework and national benchmarks.

The results indicated that the UPNECH Chihuahua Unit has effectively established an admission process that is regarded as open, accessible, and free of discriminatory bias by the student body. This phenomenon is evidenced in the recognition made by the participants regarding the presence of students from indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and diverse social conditions in the student body. The findings indicate that the admission policy is not merely an administrative procedure; rather, it is perceived as a genuine gateway to educational opportunities.

This phenomenon aligns with the assertion put forth by UNESCO (2020), which posits that the foundation of inclusion lies in access and that institutions must ensure that diversity does not function as an exclusionary criterion. Indeed, the testimonies demonstrate that the UPNECH has effectively cultivated an environment where admission signifies an inaugural act of recognition and equality of opportunities, thereby aligning with Fraser's (2008) social justice approach, particularly regarding the dimension of redistribution, which aims to eradicate structural impediments that impede the access of historically marginalized groups.

Conversely, the favorable attitude of students toward the presence of diverse identities and backgrounds within the university can be understood as an indication of progress in the democratization of access to higher education in multicultural contexts, such as Chihuahua. De Sousa Santos (2005) posits that the integration of subjects historically marginalized within the university milieu constitutes a pivotal stride in the metamorphosis of institutions imbued with colonialist tenets. The presence of Rarámuri students, students with disabilities, or students from socially marginalized backgrounds, as expressed by the voices of the study, reflects a process of openness that contributes to overcoming the historical homogenization of the university profile.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that inclusive admission encompasses more than mere access; it entails the establishment of equitable conditions that facilitate participation and sustained engagement within the institution. In this regard, the OECD (2021) emphasizes the necessity of inclusive admission processes, accompanied by explicit policies that ensure permanence, accessibility, and academic support. While the testimonies of the participants highlight the openness and absence of discrimination in admission, they do not describe with the same clarity the specific institutional mechanisms that ensure equity after access. This suggests the need to strengthen comprehensive strategies that articulate admission, trajectory, and graduation.

A study of the historical trajectories of inclusion in public higher education in the context of UPNECH reveals that the institution has been consistently characterized by an "inclusive spirit, attending to cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and sexual diversity, among others" since its inception (Carreón-Flores, Ponce, & Montes-Muela, chap. 39). This historical vocation is concomitant with the student perception of openness in access, wherein the presence of Rarámuri, migrant, or disabled students is regarded as an inherent component of university life. A historical analysis reveals that following its decentralization in 2011 and subsequent transformation into UPNECH, the institution has endeavored to "constitute a university with an inclusive spirit" and address the diverse regional needs. This background corroborates the findings reported by student voices, which acknowledged the right to education for all individuals. This observation indicates that the incorporation of inclusive admission processes is not merely a rhetorical element but rather a structural attribute that is in a state of development.

Another relevant aspect is that student voices interpret the presence of diversity as an indicator of institutional support: *"There is a Tarahumara colleague who studies here, and I see that the university supports her"* (E5). This perception coincides with Young (2000), who states that inclusion implies not only incorporating diversity in access, but also generating conditions for the effective participation of subjects in educational spaces. Admission thus becomes a political act that recognizes the legitimacy of different bodies, identities and knowledge in university life.

According to ANUIES (2019), inclusive access constitutes a fundamental tenet of equity policies within the Mexican higher education system, particularly with regard to teacher training institutions, whose mission entails addressing the nation's diversity. In this sense, the findings indicate that UPNECH advances in the direction of what is indicated by these national and global frameworks by promoting access that recognizes the cultural and social plurality of students and incorporates it as part of the university identity.

However, the discussion also invites us to consider that the perception of openness in income must be complemented with systematic efforts to detect and address additional barriers that could affect the trajectory of vulnerable groups. The diversity present in the

admissions process, although positive, does not in itself guarantee sustained inclusive practices, as indicated by UNESCO (2009) and the OECD (2018). This suggests that the institutional challenge is not only to permit entry, but also to ensure that this income translates into tangible opportunities for learning, participation, and graduation.

It is evident that UPNECH has effectively cultivated an inclusive admissions category, thereby establishing an equitable and accessible educational environment. This development signifies a substantial advancement in the realm of educational justice within the Chihuahua context. The testimonies indicate that the university is regarded as a space where diverse identities coalesce and where difference does not manifest as a barrier. Nevertheless, this accomplishment underscores the necessity to fortify post-entry policies with the objective of ensuring that inclusivity is actualized throughout the academic career.

Category 3 Sociocultural inclusion

The results associated with the sociocultural inclusion category demonstrate that the UPNECH Chihuahua Unit constitutes a space where cultural, social, and personal diversity is not only visible, but also valued as a legitimate component of the training process. The voices of the students describe a daily coexistence between Rarámuris, students with chronic diseases, people with disabilities, individuals from other regions of the country, and students with diverse religious beliefs or lifestyles. This interaction is perceived as an element that enriches both the academic experience and the human dimension of learning.

These findings align with the proposals put forth by UNESCO (2020), which argue that the concept of inclusion must extend beyond the removal of physical or administrative barriers to become an institutional culture that acknowledges difference as a pedagogical and ethical resource. The narratives demonstrate that UPNECH has cultivated sociocultural practices that promote equitable participation, thereby fostering an environment conducive to democratic coexistence.

The pertinence of this sociocultural heterogeneity can be situated within the framework of the contributions of Carreón-Flores (2024) in *Public Higher Technological Training Institutions in Chihuahua: Trajectories and Social Influence*. In her analysis, the author highlights that higher education institutions in the state in particular and in the country in general—including those dedicated to teacher training—play a fundamental role in the construction of social cohesion, since they function as spaces where heterogeneous identities, trajectories, and experiences converge. From this perspective, sociocultural inclusion is conducive not only to educational equality, but also to social development by training professionals capable of understanding and addressing the diversity of the contexts in which they will work.

Carreón-Flores (2024) underscores that the coexistence of students from diverse backgrounds fosters the cultivation of respect, acknowledgement, and intercultural dialogue, a notion that aligns with the observations made at UPNECH. The daily interaction between students from diverse backgrounds, including indigenous peoples, rural areas, diverse urban contexts, and contrasting socioeconomic conditions, serves as a significant source of social learning. This interaction contributes to the expansion of professional competencies among future teachers and education specialists. Consequently, sociocultural inclusion emerges as a strategic training component, thereby reflecting the broader social influence of public institutions of higher education in Chihuahua.

The findings align with the approaches outlined by UNESCO (2020), which emphasizes that inclusion should extend beyond the removal of physical or administrative barriers, emphasizing a coexistence that acknowledges and values sociocultural diversity as a pedagogical and ethical resource. The student experience demonstrates that this coexistence manifests in practices of respect, empathy, and mutual recognition, which accounts for an institutional environment that facilitates the equitable participation of all. From Fraser's (2008) perspective, the sociocultural inclusion of UPNECH can be interpreted as a manifestation of recognition, understood as the validation of diverse identities and experiences within university life. The finding that students with diverse personal conditions perceive themselves as being treated with respect, as E7 expresses, demonstrates that there are practices present in this educational setting that challenge historical forms of invisibilization or stigmatization that are also present in other educational spaces. This recognition exerts a profound influence on both emotional and relational domains, while concurrently manifesting significant political ramifications. It facilitates enhanced participation among individuals as equals within educational processes, thereby promoting inclusive learning environments.

Conversely, the category of sociocultural inclusion is directly related to the approaches delineated in Chapter 37, which examines how educational institutions influence social and economic development. As stated by Carreón-Flores, Ponce, and Montes-Muela (ch. 37), Public Higher Education Institutions (IESP) in Chihuahua have played a central role in the "promotion of social mobility and social cohesion" through the formation of diverse human capital. This has contributed not only to economic development, but also to the generation of values for democratic coexistence. The recognition of diversity in daily coexistence by students—including indigenous peoples, students with chronic diseases, individuals with diverse beliefs, and individuals with different life trajectories—corresponds with the social and cultural character that IESPs play as spaces for citizenship education. The author posits that public education serves as a catalyst for equity. However, she also cautions that "disparities in access that perpetuate structural inequalities" endure, a finding that aligns with the reported tensions among students concerning the dearth of institutional training to address certain sociocultural realities or specific needs.

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Similarly, the voices of students have been instrumental in highlighting that sociocultural inclusion is not confined to explicit programs or policies. Instead, it manifests as a

quotidian practice involving teachers, administrative staff, and students. Young (1990, 2000) posits that the principles of justice and inclusion necessitate conditions of participation that acknowledge differences without rendering them disadvantageous. At UPNECH, the perception of dignified treatment towards individuals with medical conditions, diverse religious practices, or indigenous affiliation suggests that the institution has effectively promoted the development of a climate that does not exclude individuals based on their differences but rather fosters collective learning opportunities. In this sense, the findings also coincide with the vision of De Sousa Santos (2005, 2009), who states that the university should become a space for intercultural encounter that recognizes knowledge and experiences from diverse realities. The daily presence of students from indigenous communities and heterogeneous social contexts presents opportunities to interrogate and transform the epistemic hierarchies that have historically privileged certain knowledge over others. While the study does not explore the formal integration of diversity into the curriculum, it does demonstrate a social climate that supports the democratization of relationships in the classroom.

ANUIES (2019) contends that sociocultural inclusion is a fundamental pillar of equity policies in higher education, particularly in institutions dedicated to training, such as UPNECH. The testimonies of students reveal that living with sociocultural diversity is not exceptional or problematic, but rather a naturalized part of university life. One student stated, "You can be who you are, believe in what you want, and come from wherever you come from" (E9). This experience suggests that the concept of sociocultural inclusion has transcended the institutional discourse and materialized in daily practices that strengthen the sense of belonging.

While the results of the study indicate an environment that is conducive to sociocultural inclusion, they also prompt further consideration of the necessity to consolidate these advances through explicit policies that integrate this diversity into academic and teacher training. The OECD (2018, 2021) has expressed concerns that the absence of clear institutionalization in the pursuit of sociocultural inclusion may result in its confinement to subjective practices or its reliance on the sensitivity of specific actors. At UPNECH, the recognition of diversity is a visible and valued element; however, its sustainability requires systematic strategies that ensure that this experience is maintained, strengthened, and translated into meaningful learning for the entire community.

Therefore, the sociocultural inclusion category demonstrates that UPNECH has effectively cultivated an environment that acknowledges and appreciates diversity as a collective asset. This fosters a university culture that promotes the strengthening of coexistence and comprehensive education through the recognition and valorization of differences. This finding signifies a substantial advancement in the domain of educational justice, exemplifying the university's capacity as a diverse, humanistic learning environment receptive to a myriad of perspectives.

In the domain of teacher training, the text expounds on the notion that inclusive university environments mirror the obstacles and the faculty's aspirations. This finding aligns with recent research that emphasizes sensitivity to diversity, a critical aspect of educational inclusion training.

The extant literature indicates that there are areas of opportunity in the training of teachers to guarantee inclusive practices (Crespo-Castillo, 2024). While teachers may exhibit empathetic attitudes, they frequently lack the pedagogical tools necessary to address the unique needs of students (Kimhi & Bar Nir, 2025). This observation aligns

with the reports from participants who acknowledged that, despite the absence of formal training in inclusive education among some teachers, their willingness to assist is notable. The extant literature corroborates the notion that meticulously planned teacher training programs exert a substantial influence on the enhancement of pedagogical competencies, the adoption of inclusive methodologies, and the mitigation of prejudice toward students with special needs (Llorent et al., 2024). However, they also emphasize that educational inclusion cannot rely on individual goodwill, but rather on an institutional project with accompanying resources and teacher professional development (Robles, 2022).

Teacher training constitutes a strategic element that has the potential to fortify environments characterized by trust and participation. These environments are conducive to fostering coexistence and a sense of belonging within the university community. The inclusive approach to university pedagogy necessitates comprehensive, critical, and reflective preparation that surpasses mere awareness, thereby fostering sustainable professional competencies over time (Alvear Román et al., 2024).

In summary, the results of this study support the idea that teacher training is decisive in the construction of an inclusive university. It has been determined that a willingness or empathy on the part of the teacher is insufficient in and of itself. Rather, in order to enable teachers to act safely, fairly, and effectively in the face of the diversity of the student body, it is necessary that they receive continuous, systematic, and contextualized training (Gallego, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The evidence obtained in this study suggests that inclusion in the UPNECH Chihuahua Unit is a dynamic process, wherein valuable institutional practices coexist with structural tensions that necessitate reinforcement. The political dimension of inclusion, conceptualized as the aggregate of decisions, norms, power relations, and organizational dynamics that determine the participants and the conditions under which they partake in the university space, is articulated through the four categories that emerged from the analysis: institutional support, inclusive admission, sociocultural inclusion, and teacher training.

Firstly, institutional support constitutes a fundamental pillar for the experience of inclusion on campus. Students have identified human accompaniment practices that are rooted in the empathy and willingness of the administrative staff, which fosters a sense of trust and belonging. However, this strength is constrained by the absence of explicit guidelines and specialized training to address situations pertaining to diversity, disability, and emotional health. This phenomenon underscores the notion that institutional support is predominantly driven by personal volition rather than by formal mechanisms. This observation aligns with the insights provided by Fraser (2008) and Young (2000), who emphasized the necessity of consolidating institutionalized processes to ensure the sustained and equitable inclusion of all individuals.

The second category, inclusive admission, indicates that UPNECH has effectively implemented an open, perceptible, and discrimination-free admission process, aligning with UNESCO's (2020) principles of access as the fundamental condition for inclusion. The presence of indigenous students, students with disabilities, students with specific health conditions, and students from diverse socioeconomic contexts demonstrates that the university functions as a democratizing space for access to knowledge. However, the

analysis also reveals that inclusive access must be complemented with systematic policies that guarantee permanence, academic accompaniment, and adequate conditions for graduation.

The third category, sociocultural inclusion, underscores the university's success in fostering a coexistence where diversity is recognized as a collective asset rather than a hindrance. Student voices are integral to fostering an environment characterized by respect, openness, and recognition. In such an environment, cultural, personal, and social differences can serve as significant sources of learning. This finding aligns with the perspective of De Sousa Santos (2009), who conceptualizes the university as a space for intercultural engagement, necessitating the acknowledgment of diverse forms of knowledge and the redress of epistemic inequalities. Nevertheless, the cultivation of sociocultural inclusion must be reinforced through training and curricular processes that institutionalize this value, thereby ensuring that it does not rely exclusively on individual dispositions.

A comprehensive evaluation of the available data indicates that UPNECH has achieved substantial progress, largely attributable to its institutional history and its commitment to serving diverse populations (Carreón-Flores, Ponce & Montes-Muela, 2024). However, they also reveal the need to consolidate policies, programs, and specific guidelines that allow the institutional discourse to be articulated with sustained practices throughout the educational trajectory.

The study's findings substantiate the notion that the political dimension of inclusion transcends regulations and guiding documents, manifesting instead in practices, interactions, organizational structures, and institutional conditions. Achieving full inclusion necessitates a concerted commitment that encompasses the following: first, the enhancement of staff training; second, the establishment of explicit protocols; third, the assurance of universal accessibility; and fourth, the facilitation of student involvement in the decision-making process. UPNECH is well-positioned to achieve this objective. The institution's commitment to the development of inclusive policies, coupled with its ongoing efforts to translate its institutional mission into equitable, fair, and transformative educational practices, lays the foundation for success.

Bibliometric section

The bibliometric analysis of the article "Political dimension of inclusion in higher education: a study in the Chihuahua Unit of the UPNECH" enables the identification of the intellectual framework and the primary theoretical lines that underpin the study. A review of the extant literature reveals that the scientific production utilized in this study originates from three primary fields: critical theory of social justice, international educational policies, and Latin American studies on inclusion and higher education.

In terms of historical productivity, the contributions of Fraser (2003, 2008), Young (1990, 2000), and De Sousa Santos (2005, 2009) stand out, as these authors have been widely cited in studies of inclusion, democratic participation, and structural inequality in the last two decades. Its inclusion in the article's bibliography corroborates the trend identified in databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, where the field of research has been firmly established as an interdisciplinary and expanding domain since 2015, propelled by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global equity agendas.

The article also presents a solid base of international institutional documents, particularly from UNESCO (2009, 2020) and the OECD (2018, 2021). These organizations have guided global regulatory frameworks on educational inclusion, accessibility, and

participation in higher education. In Mexico, both the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES) and the Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE) are regarded as pivotal sources for comprehending the national context of public policies.

In the realm of local and contextualized literature, recent contributions by Carreón-Flores, Ponce-Ramírez, and Montes-Muela merit particular attention. These scholars have pioneered research strands within the broader framework of the institutional history of the UPNECH, the processes of inclusion, educational vulnerability, and social development from the regional vantage point of Chihuahua. These publications, cited in various sections of the article, provide empirical evidence in a field where there are still bibliographic gaps, especially on teacher training institutions.

The set of references indicates that the current bibliometric trend is moving towards critical and multidimensional approaches to inclusion, incorporating concepts such as redistributive justice, cultural recognition, political participation, and democratization of knowledge. In this sense, the article is firmly embedded in an emerging body of research that aims to comprehend not only educational access but also the power structures and institutional conditions that shape the student experience in higher education.

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