Chapter 23

Informational Literacy as Key Element in Social and Digital Inclusion Policies in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

The social and digital inclusion, is currently one of the main concerns of developing countries and peripheral economies (as in the case of Mexico), whereas it is mainly characterized by low levels of information literacy of the general population, causing marked differences in digital, social and employment gaps. This chapter analyzes the problems of Mexico regarding the levels of use and access to information through ICT and its position as a country in relation to others. Furthermore, two fundamental questions of national development strategies in relation to information: a) the status of the general population (which indicates that only 43.5% have internet access) and b) the issues of low generation of knowledge and reliance on information consumption abroad. Finally studies the National Development Plan, questioning whether he truly believes inclusive and if alternative proposals have been raised only in the rhetoric of government documents.

INTRODUCTION

Every country seeks to create effective social and digital inclusion programs through the generation of adequate environments that allow and foster the access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly the internet and all the elements on the web, as well as through the formation of information policies and services that measure the development of a series of information use and management competences, also they develop actions towards the improvement of information institutions such as libraries, archives and other educational and cultural institutions. These conditions are necessary to measure a significant effect on the general population, since when the
elements and conditions described above do not exist, they may exclude great majorities from accessing opportunities for a successful social, digital and labor insertion.

Mexico, like all countries, has developed its own actions aimed at the reduction of any kind of gap (social, economic, technological, etc.). Although this study is focused specifically on digital aspects, it is undeniable there is a relationship with other kind of gaps and they are affected simultaneously. This study develops from the documentary review of the literature on the subject, it is attempted to create points of comparison between their approaches and their correspondence with the public policies set forth in the National Development Plan 2013-2018, issued by the Federal Government of Mexico, taking as specific references the digital and social inclusion, and also the proposals which refer to the development of competences in informational literacy, this related to the possibility of knowing real scenarios and possibilities of inclusion in different communities and sectors of the country.

The main concern of Mexico’s government in relation to the observed condition in the levels of digital gap and social inclusion (especially through the actions taken in the educational sector) is avoiding the emergence of poles of dominion and oppression, creating social differences even more marked than those identified with the individuals’ social-economic level, provoking a wider underdevelopment in the quality of life, income and economic diversification (Serrano-Santoyo & Martínez-Martínez 2003). Mexico’s social disparity comes mainly from an unequal distribution of education, wealth and human development, so the digital gap is conditioned to non-uniform distribution of telecommunications, access to basic technology and social distribution of knowledge, causing high social exclusion rates.

Mexico seeks competitiveness as a nation, but before it compares to a world level, it is mainly concerned by the internal conditions and those observed in other countries in Latin America, though characterized as an emergent economy, in several indicators (especially those related to the digital gap) it is placed below Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia, being in fourth or fifth place in relation to the countries within its own geographical area and with a similar language.

There are factor and conditions of which it is difficult to generate a systematic planning, such as: the geographical distribution of an important sector of the population for which it is complex to improve their conditions; the lack of recognition of regional differences; and the plurality of social and cultural characteristics; in addition to this, unequal opportunities for the population to access education, commodities and sustainable development of their life conditions. Unlike the social and economic behavior of developed countries where the conditions are uniform, Mexico has a marked unequal distribution of the benefits among its population.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

Thus when considering the growing importance of information and knowledge in all human activities and the world, this study provides an overview about the prevailing situation in Mexico on the matter, from two general approaches:

1. The situation of the general population (without differentiating specific traits related to academic aspects) through the presentation of indicators of population behavior in relation to the use of ICTs and the global levels of digital gap and social inclusion observed in the country.

2. The role of the universities in the generation of knowledge, in the understanding that the maximum level of reduction of digital gap is to overcome the dependence on the consumption of information resources that belong to other entities, exchanging these practices for the culture of knowledge generation. It