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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COLLEGE EDUCATION AND THE 2030 AGENDA TARGET 4.3 IN MEXICO, GOAL 4 TARGET 4.3: TO GUARANTEE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND QUALITY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Education, at any grade, is not an easy task to standardize at a global level derived from economic, legal, political and cultural differences. The objective of this research was to evaluate the differences in the possible implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 in the educational sector in Mexico which corresponds to Objective 4 goal 4.3. The study design was non-experimental and descriptive, using documentary analysis as a technique, with public and private documents as primary sources. As the main results, it was determined that it is not feasible to implement Objective 4 goal 4.3 of the 2030 Agenda at a global level because the economic, legal, political and cultural aspects are different in each country and would not allow compliance with the times established by the UN. In conclusion, it was found that it is not feasible for Mexico to comply with the commitment to implement Objective 4 goal 4.3, since the current government would not allow the implementation of educational programs that threaten the privatization of education and violate labor rights of the academic staff of the country's public universities.

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Introduction:-

College education in Mexico has great problems derived from the fact that although there is certainly federal regulation established by the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), private institutions have the obligation to comply with what is established in the law, however the administration of each university depends on a board of trustees that is in charge of general and educational administration. In public universities there are differences that can be considerable. Although they are called autonomous, each university has its own regulations that are approved by the local legislative congresses and that depend on a state government that influences such universities in different ways and depths in which such governments can be from different political parties with different ideological orientations,

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differences in budget perceptions and therefore with substantial administrative differences in budget management. In the case of the two types of universities, each has differences in the organizational structure, philosophy, values and styles of managing education and the resources available, which needless to say, the differences in infrastructure can be considerable. On the other hand, staff labor contracts can be very different in terms of perceptions, benefits and other legal schemes, and in the case of public institutions, the majority have a union that has different types of collective contracts for their assigned academic staff, in addition to unions of other types of workers who may see their interests affected. Will it be feasible for Mexico to comply with Objective 4 goal 4.3 established in the UN Agenda 2030? The objective of the study was to evaluate whether in Mexico it is feasible or not to implement Objective 4 established by the UN in the 2030 Agenda. As a hypothesis, it is proposed that Mexico will not comply with the implementation of Objective 4 goal 4.3 of the 2030 Agenda proposed by the UN to which they committed in 2015.

The UN proposes commitments for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through Objective 4 goal 4.3, however this document presents ambiguous wording that does not mark the scope between what is the universalization of education and everything related to the cultural aspects of each country. Mexico as such has a great cultural diversity throughout the nation, so the social culture is influenced by the groups belonging to the native people, productive and commercial activities derived from the different geographical environments and climates that make educational programs focus in certain fields derived from the predominant activities of each entity. The benefit of the study is to determine if the commitment made to the UN will be fulfilled.

Materials and Methods:-

There are a diverse number of opinions derived from the commitments signed by the government of Mexico in relation to the 2030 Agenda in Objective 4 goal 4.3, since there are a series of doubts regarding the current situation of public universities and legal labor legislation in addition to what is established in collective contracts in each of the universities. The academic aspect is another reason to carry out an analysis since the plans and programs comply with what is established by the SEP however these programs differ from one another. For Pedroza Flores, R., & Reyes Fabela, A. M. (2022, p. 290) [1], these programs point out that:

The Higher Education Institutions (IES) in Mexico have the challenge of renewing themselves in the face of the social change that society demands. The main commitment that they now have is the care and preservation of planetary life which implies systematically addressing higher education. To address this problem, we developed a set of guiding questions for the article: what is the global and national context of higher education? What trend does international higher education organizations see? Is sustainability being considered in HEIs towards the year 2030?

The UN establishes that its General Assembly adopts the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (UN 2015), which establishes that:

- An action plan for people, planet and prosperity, which also intends to strengthen universal peace and access to justice.
- The Member States of the United Nations approved a relationship in which they recognize that the greatest challenge in the world today is the eradication of poverty and affirm that without achieving this there can be no sustainable development.
- The Agenda proposes 17 Objectives with 169 goals of an integrated and indivisible nature that cover the economic, social and environmental spheres.
- The new strategy will govern global development programs for the next 15 years.

By adopting it, the States committed to mobilizing the necessary means for its implementation through alliances focused especially on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Documents from the Government of Mexico referring to the 2030 Agenda (2022), Goal 4.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs) indicates that “by 2030, it must be ensured for all men and women to have equal technical training, professional and higher quality access, including college education.”

The role of universities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Institute for the Future of Education of the Tecnológico de Monterrey (2020) it is mentioned that:

The country's leading institutions, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Tecnológico de Monterrey, were ranked number 62 and number 101, respectively, in the Impact Ranking

published by the Times Higher Education. Both universities jointly coordinate the SDSN of Mexico, established just a year ago and first-hand with its entity in Chile. This network of institutions continues to develop proposals that encourage involvement in local and global problems. Unfortunately, “our country fails in eight of the 17 SDGs, while the remaining nine obtain an intermediate score since at the regional level in Latin America and the Caribbean the main challenges have to do with the high levels of inequality, violence and insecurity,” explains Miguel Ruiz Cabañas for CONECTA.

Bórquez Polloni, B. & Lopicich Catalán, B. (2017) concluded that in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and whose 17 Goals to be achieved in the next 15 years formulate a paradigm shift with respect to the traditional conception of development based on a mainly economic vision, was adopted by the countries that fully complied. The introduction of the social and environmental spheres show that development must not only be quantitatively evaluable but also qualitatively possible.

In his economics column in the newspaper El País (July 12, 2016), M.F. called “The company progresses if it is committed: The United Nations invites corporations to get involved in the goals of global development”, he mentions that:

The agenda introduces three main important things: it is universal, it affects all countries, and it also introduces the idea that the responsibility of eradicating poverty is not exclusive to Governments, and this includes universities, civil society, the private sector...”, summarizes Paloma Durán, Director of the United Nations Fund for Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015) establishes that in goal 4, education must guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The feasibility that it is possible to carry out what is established, taking into account the year 2015 as a starting point, will not be enough in 15 years to be able to implement all the necessary changes to meet the goals that are reestablished in Objective 4. goal 4.3 since this depends on the capacity for adaptation and resources available to each university educational institution. Pedroza Flores & Reyes Fabela (2022, p. 295) [2] mention that:

The reconfiguration that technologies bring to education is clear; cultures, practices and academic architectures are disrupted. The idea of combination, mixed, hybrid, complementarity, acquires a level of belonging in higher education, between digital literacy and the intellectualization of deep and creative learning oriented to innovation and change.

The considerations that must be addressed are of extreme importance because each institution must use its economic and human resources to comply in a timely manner with what was established by the UN and which was accepted by Mexico as a commitment for 2030.

On the other hand, there are international organizations that promote the 2030 Agenda and in which Pedroza Flores & Reyes Fabela (2022, p. 291) [3] mention that:

International organizations such as the World Bank (WB), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have published various documents and studies aimed at the reform of higher education. In the latest documents prepared by these organizations, coincidences more than differences are found. The greatest coincidence is that they conceive higher education as a lever for economic growth, they focus more on overcoming economic and social lags than on combating climate change and the degradation of the planet.

The fact that international institutions are involved in Objective 4 goal 4.3 suggest that the model proposed to be implemented in education would have a privatizing approach in Mexico's education which is opposed to the traditional educational schemes of public universities that although they are not free, the tuition is considerably low compared to private universities and such tuition also depends on the public university and its statutes.

Likewise, Pedroza Flores & Reyes Fabela (2022, p. 291) [4] mention that:

International organizations have configured, approximately in the last 40 years, a higher education model, which is expected to continue promoting in the current decade, it is the archetype of higher education as a factor of economic growth based on quality management for the achievement of efficiency; Therefore, the trend generally maintains the following features:

- The universalization of education.
- Financing linked to institutional performance.
- Relations with companies, civil society and non-governmental organizations.
- Wage deregulation through compensatory policies.
- Transformation of corporate-type forms of government.
- The internationalization of higher education in the academic market.
- Generation of research through knowledge networks.
- The diversification of the tertiary education system.
- The diversification of virtual and non-virtual modalities.
- The consolidation of evaluation systems based on meritocracy.
- Transparency and accountability.
- Flexible and competency-based curricular reform.

On the other hand, Pedroza Flores & Reyes Fabela (2022, p. 292) [5] assure that:

The WB, the OECD and the IDB advocate cross-border higher education, within the framework of academic and commercial exchange for the mobility of people, academic programs, curricula and study plans, research projects, innovation projects, academic projects and commercial services that cross territorial borders and national jurisdictional boundaries. This represents an acceleration in competitiveness in the export and import of higher education as an interchangeable good, which has modified the scenario of the internationalization of education due to the opening of franchises, foreign campuses, academic companies, global liaison offices and virtual campuses.

The federal government 2018 - 2024 has the policy of strengthening educational institutions and the National Council of Humanities, Sciences and Technology (CONAHCYT), for education and it modified the Educational Reform of the administration 2012 - 2018 to avoid the possible privatization of education university. Pedroza Flores & Reyes Fabela (2022, p. 290) [6] state that: the higher education policies that prevail until today are neoliberal. They are policies with almost forty years of existence and that are maintained in the current policy of the Fourth Transformation, promoted by Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

There are a series of ambiguous terms that can be misleading from the point of view of writing. First of all, what is the true meaning of the universalization of education? Does it mean only generalizing knowledge or ignoring the cultural aspects of each region/country? Secondly, is the privatization of public university education being considered? With the infrastructure that the country has, how do they plan to reach the most remote places?

There are different points of view with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Objective 4 goal 4.3, in the magazine of the Workers Union of the University of Sonora, Status enLínea (2023) in an article called "The Educational Model 2030 in UNISON and the effects it will bring", it is mentioned that:

- It will be detrimental to the academic training of students
- It will destabilize the academic-administrative organization structure, eroding interdepartmental relations
- It will affect the working conditions and rights of academics.

The implications that it will bring as a consequence can be evaluated by each educational institution, under its responsibility and risk. As already mentioned, they have different regulations in collective contracts with marked differences.

In the case of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua (UACH), the following questions can be generated: Does the UACH have a convincing plan according to its own goals to adjust to Objective 4 goal 4.3 of the 2030 Agenda? Does the UACH have sufficient financial resources to face the commitment? What will the employment impact of the academic staff be? Does the UACH have the installed technical capacity to face the commitment of the 2030 Agenda?

In the case of UNISON and UACH, they have identical concerns, but different ones in substance derived from the difference in their own statutes, differences in budget management, differences between the collective contracts of academic staff, differences between the installed infrastructure, etc. This problem as such is experienced by all autonomous universities, technological universities that also depend on state governments, since technological universities are federal institutions with the same rules for all of them.

Results:-

The federal administration policies of 2018 - 2024 are aimed at maintaining and strengthening public university education, which would complicate the implementation of Objective 4 goal 4.3 of the UN 2030 Agenda. In 2024, federal elections will be held, and it is expected that a similar policy to the current one can continue because the government profile like the current one is highly accepted by the population. The relationship of the government of Mexico with international financial organizations has been cordial however they have also been distant and this administration has not accepted any loan that they have offered, derived from a policy of austerity and fiscal discipline that has allowed the government to evade loans from the WB, IMF and IDB, something that has not been welcomed by these institutions despite the pandemic and international conflicts.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Objective 4, goal 4.3, would imply a total or partial privatization of public education that goes against the provisions of the constitution of the United Mexican States, and which is not envisioned as being modified in subsequent administration through the Congress of the Union. In the 2012 - 2018 federal administration, an educational reform that was implemented, aimed to gradually privatize education at all levels, which was when the government of Mexico signed the acceptance of adherence to the 2030 Agenda. In response to the hypothesis raised that Mexico will not comply with the implementation of Objective 4 goal 4.3 of the 2030 Agenda proposed by the UN to which it committed in 2015, it is confirmed for contradicting the principles of public education embodied in the constitution. Due to the economic conditions of Mexico as a developing country, it would be impossible or very difficult for a very important sector of the population to pay for a university education in private institutions.

Conclusion:-

The commitments acquired by the government of Mexico were accepted and signed during the 2012 - 2018 federal administration, which were related to a political-economic scheme with the UN, and many of the guidelines established by the 2030 Agenda in substance and form would allow this assignment not to have major problems for implementation. However, in the 2018 - 2024 federal administration, a radical change was applied in the educational and social policy that distances Mexico and the UN in the intentions that the fund entails that were established in the document and suggests that at that point educational institutions would tend more to be private than public, having as a risk, social and economic stability derived from the fact that the predominant model is the one established in developed countries that contrast enormously with developing countries where basically the biggest difference is resources, economic and infrastructure in addition to educational and labor legislation.

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