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Essays

En sus aulas, ¿listos? ¡A votar!

In your classrooms, ready? Go vote!

Estão preparados nas suas salas de aula? Vão votar!

Luciana Cuacuas Gómez

Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, México

luciana.cuacuas@alumnos.cide.edu

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5984-4972>

Resumen

El voto es la expresión libre de principios y convicciones individuales. Sin embargo, la manera en la que vota la sociedad puede ser explicada por diferentes formas, entre ellas la educación pública. Más allá de los factores tradicionales —experiencia personal, lealtad partidista o contexto socioeconómico—, los contenidos curriculares funcionan como un canal de socialización política que moldea la forma en que los futuros ciudadanos comprenden y participan en la vida pública. Este texto, mediante un análisis de las reformas educativas impulsadas por los últimos tres presidentes de México, muestra cómo las políticas educativas no son neutrales, sino que transmiten valores ideológicos alineados a los intereses del partido en el poder. La hipótesis central sostiene que los planes de estudio, al promover valores y nacionalismos específicos, influyen directamente en las decisiones electorales de los individuos. Por tanto, la educación pública debe entenderse como un factor que condiciona la democracia, al orientar las preferencias políticas de la ciudadanía y abrir el debate sobre la neutralidad en la enseñanza escolar.

Palabras clave: *voto, educación pública, reformas educativas, México, ideología.*

Abstract

Voting is the free expression of individual principles and convictions. However, the way society votes can be explained by different means, including public education. Beyond traditional factors—personal experience, party loyalty, or socioeconomic context—curricular content functions as a channel of political socialization that shapes the way future citizens understand and participate in public life. This text, through an analysis of the educational reforms promoted by the last three Mexican presidents, shows how educational policies are not neutral, but rather transmit ideological values aligned with the interests of the party in power. The central hypothesis holds that curricula, by promoting specific values and nationalisms, directly influence individuals' electoral decisions. Therefore, public education must be understood as a factor that conditions democracy, by guiding citizens political preferences and opening the debate on neutrality in school instruction.

Keywords: voting, public education, educational reforms, México, ideology.

Resumo

O voto é a livre expressão de princípios e convicções individuais. Contudo, a forma como a sociedade vota pode ser explicada de diversas maneiras, incluindo a educação pública. Para além dos fatores tradicionais — experiência pessoal, lealdade partidária ou contexto socioeconômico — o conteúdo curricular funciona como um canal de socialização política que molda a forma como os futuros cidadãos compreendem e participam da vida pública. Este texto, por meio de uma análise das reformas educacionais implementadas pelos três últimos presidentes do México, demonstra como as políticas educacionais não são neutras, mas sim transmitem valores ideológicos alinhados aos interesses do partido no poder. A hipótese central argumenta que os currículos, ao promoverem valores e nacionalismos específicos, influenciam diretamente as decisões eleitorais dos indivíduos. Portanto, a educação pública deve ser entendida como um fator que condiciona a democracia, moldando as preferências políticas dos cidadãos e abrindo o debate sobre a neutralidade no ensino escolar.

Palavras-chave: voto, educação pública, reformas educacionais, México, ideologia.

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When people exercise their right to vote, they do so with the conviction that their decisions reflect their principles. However, it will depend on citizens' preferences to decide who is the best option among the candidates on the ballot. According to Dr. Olga Rodríguez Cruz, group experience, prior individual beliefs and experiences, lack of information, party loyalty, and socioeconomic context are determinants of the vote (Cruz Rodríguez, 2009). Thus, these characteristics highlight the relationship between external factors and the individual, rather than the other way around.

However, the act of voting is not only influenced by the factors already mentioned; public education is also a crucial factor. The latter not only transmits technical knowledge but also instills values and principles that impact each person's social, economic, and political decisions. In this sense, it is possible to deduce that voting preferences are a result not only of Mexican nationalism—as part of the ideology—, but rather of the education system and, specifically, of the curricular content that promotes partisan values and ideals.

Therefore, the objective of this text is to propose a new perspective on the determinants of voting, focusing on the curricular content to which individuals are exposed during their basic education. In the Mexican case, where education is the primary form of individual instruction, it is crucial to ask why public education can indeed be considered a determinant of voting. The hypothesis posits that the content promoted by the educational system influences citizens' political preferences, such that individuals will tend to vote for political parties with principles that are aligned with—that is, similar to—those instilled during their education. To support this hypothesis, this work draws on the theoretical framework of political socialization and institutionalist approaches that analyze how formal institutions shape civic values and behaviors. Likewise, a qualitative-comparative analysis of the educational reforms implemented during the last three six-year terms in Mexico is proposed, identifying the explicit and implicit values promoted in their curricular plans and their possible alignment with the ideological principles of the ruling parties.

Likewise, if education is considered a potential determinant of voting behavior, it must be understood that curricula serve as instruments of political socialization. This concept is understood as “a unidirectional process through which young people acquire an understanding of the political world through their interaction with adults and the media” (LibreText). Spanish, n.d.). According to researchers Víctor Manuel Durand Ponte and María Márcia Smith Martins (1997) [...], the relationship between education and politics is multifaceted, precisely because of this socialization. In this sense, school is transformed into

a space where political values, and not only moral values, are transmitted. This is concerning due to the potential impact of curricular content on citizens' electoral preferences. However, it is important to distinguish between correlation and causation, since the fact that certain groups formed under certain curricula show similar political tendencies does not automatically imply that education is the sole cause of voting patterns, but rather that it acts as a structuring factor that interacts with socioeconomic, familial, and media variables.

Therefore, public education is, in reality, a form of political socialization that impacts the voting behavior of students—the future citizens. According to researcher Ávila Francés (2005), the relationship between education and political socialization has significant consequences: the reproduction of the social structure that favors the interests of the dominant classes; inequality in political participation, which perpetuates social hierarchies; and the legitimization of authority, where students do not question those in power and simply obey orders. Consequently, those in power implement public policies that are not beneficial to their region and/or community (Ávila Francés, 2005). Therefore, if curricula are created from partisan perspectives, they will influence how individuals participate in social life and, consequently, in politics.

The above relates to the promotion of nationalism through public education. Hoyo Prohuber (2009), a prominent researcher on nationalism, mentions that it can be used as a political instrument where the objective is to merge personal and collective will, so that citizens are committed to the nation. To follow this line of reasoning, it is necessary to understand education not as a way to create informed and demanding citizens, but as a channel for indoctrinating each individual with a specific ideology. While the purpose of this text is not to criticize nationalism as a political instrument, it is relevant to mention that, within nationalism as an ideology, there are also political incentives to maintain national unity, where the relationship between politics and public education persists.

Now, to illustrate, it is essential to mention the educational reforms of the last three former presidents of Mexico. On the one hand, the educational reform implemented during the six-year term of former President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa laid the groundwork for a policy favoring evaluation (Echenique Vázquez & Muñoz Armenta, 2013), which could be interpreted as influencing competitive dynamics both within—in the educational system—and outside—in the labor market. The education promoted by Calderón focused on strengthening educational quality as measured through standardized tests such as ENLACE (National Assessment of Academic Achievement in Schools), implemented since 2006

(Ministry of Public Education, n.d.). This reform, aligned with the principles of the PAN (National Action Party), promoted a meritocratic logic oriented toward competition, in which both students and schools were publicly evaluated and compared. Thus, the influence exerted by students fostered academic competition.

Similarly, Enrique Peña Nieto's education reform was characterized by the promotion of competition among teachers, as their job security depended on the "results of external evaluations" (Camacho Sandoval, 2020, p. 129)—administered through the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE). Although Peña Nieto presented a commitment to educational quality, in practice it led to intense competition among teachers, provoking resistance from teachers' unions. Nevertheless, the educational model continued to prioritize individual performance, the development of competencies, and progress measured based on quantifiable indicators.

On the other hand, Andrés Manuel López Obrador's reform focused on integrating individuals into community activities, aiming for a "humanistic" education (Undersecretariat of Upper Secondary Education, 2019, p. 7). López Obrador's curriculum promoted the values of his original party, instilling a sense of community and belonging. However, in his political discourse, the reform was justified as an act of "justice" toward teachers—especially the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE)—in contrast to the punitive evaluation system of Peña Nieto's reform (Gil Olmos, 2018). In this context, the elimination of the INEE (National Institute for Educational Evaluation) and the repeal of mandatory teacher evaluation mechanisms were welcomed by union sectors, although they also generated criticism regarding potential implications for accountability and the professionalization of teachers.

The importance of the aforementioned reforms lies in the fact that the values and beliefs promoted through the curriculum are not neutral, but rather transmit specific ways of thinking. Learning these behaviors influences students' social and political perspectives because associating a moral value with a political party establishes an ideological link with it. Therefore, in this context, education does not produce technically competent citizens, but rather politically inclined ones, by instilling principles that can influence their future electoral preferences. Thus, this type of analysis allows us to observe how principles such as competition, meritocracy, evaluation, or communitarianism are not merely technical decisions, but can reflect ideological orientations consistent with the parties in power.

After understanding the relationship between politics and public education, it becomes possible to grasp that the values promoted by the education system have a significant impact on citizens' political preferences when exercising their right to vote. However, it is important to emphasize that this text only demonstrates that education can indeed be considered a determining factor in voting, but it should not be the sole factor. Using education as the sole determinant would ignore prior individual beliefs and experiences, lack of information, and other factors (Cruz Rodríguez, 2009). Therefore, a coherent analysis of citizen participation would be lacking.

In this sense, while it is not possible to assert a direct and exclusive causal relationship between public education and voting, theoretical evidence and comparative analysis suggest that the education system functions as a mechanism of ideological formation that influences—along with other factors—the shaping of political preferences. Therefore, public education could indeed be considered a determinant of voting behavior, given that biased curricula or educational policies susceptible to the current government do not contribute to a neutral and objective education. Rather, the education system is geared toward a gradual ideological control whose purpose does not appear to be educational quality, objectivity, and neutrality, but rather the perpetuation of a political party in power.

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