

## Reforma a la formación inicial docente. Modelo curricular basado en competencias

*Reform to the initial teacher training. Curriculum model based on  
competences*

*Reforma para a formação inicial de professores. Modelo curricular baseado  
em competências*

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### Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación es describir y analizar la manera en que se han implementado los planes y programas planteados en la nueva Reforma Curricular para la Educación Normal de 2012 en la Institución Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado de Chihuahua Profesor Luis Urías Belderráin. Para ello, se eligió como metodología la investigación-acción, la cual se desarrolló en tres ciclos. Entre los resultados más destacados se puede mencionar la incertidumbre que sienten los catedráticos normalistas durante el proceso de implementación del nuevo lineamiento, así como la escasa experiencia para desempeñar el rol de tutores en las investigaciones que deben efectuar los estudiantes. Las recomendaciones, por tanto, se enfocan en la necesidad de que la nueva reforma se sustente en un diagnóstico plural y representativo que tome en cuenta la opinión y las particularidades de todos los docentes, así como actividades de acompañamiento que les permitan familiarizarse con los principales cambios que se están intentando fomentar.

**Palabras clave:** actualización docente, cambio institucional, diseño curricular, formación de formadores, investigación-acción.

## Abstract

The objective in this research is to describe and analyze the results of the implementation of the curriculum guiding the initial training of teachers in the Institución Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado de Chihuahua Profesor Luis Urías Belderráin, Mexico established since 2012 by the Curricular Reform for Normal Education (Reforma Curricular para la Educación Normal, RCEN 2012). The action research method was chosen, which was developed in three cycles. Among the results, the main finding was the uncertainty that the professor lived during the change process and which he became familiar with during its operation the professors considered that the transition between the curricula should have been supported by a solid structure planned with sufficient time and the limited experience to carry out the role of tutors in the investigations that the students must carry out. The recommendations, therefore, focus on the need for the new reform to be based on a plural and representative diagnosis that takes into account the opinion and particularities of all teachers, as well as accompanying activities that allow them to become familiar with the main ones changes that are trying to promote.

**Keywords:** professional development for teachers, institutional change, curricular design, teacher trainers, action research.

## Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa é descrever e analisar a maneira pela qual os planos e programas propostos na nova Reforma Curricular para a Educação Normal de 2012 foram implementados na Escola Normal da Instituição Benemérita e Centenária do Estado de Chihuahua Professor Luis Urías Belderráin. Para fazer isso, a pesquisa-ação foi escolhida como uma metodologia, que foi desenvolvida em três ciclos. Entre os resultados mais destacados podemos citar a incerteza sentida pelos professores normandos durante o processo de implementação das novas diretrizes, bem como a escassa experiência em realizar o papel de tutores nas investigações que os alunos devem realizar. As recomendações, portanto, concentram-se na necessidade de que a nova reforma se baseie em um diagnóstico plural e representativo que leve em conta a opinião e as particularidades de todos os professores, bem como as atividades de acompanhamento que lhes permitam conhecer as principais. mudanças que estão tentando promover.

**Palabras-chave:** atualização de professores, mudança institucional, desenho curricular, capacitação de treinadores, pesquisa-ação.

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## Introduction

Societies advance in an accelerated way to assimilate changes, which is why learning from experiences with the intention to grow is the best way to adapt to continue on the path of progress and evolution. For decades, the Mexican Educational System has undergone profound changes as a consequence of the rapid development of educational policies, which currently tend to propose a pedagogical approach based on competencies. These innovations, of course, impact all the schools and, mainly, in the normal schools of the country, educational institutions responsible for the initial training of new teachers. A sample of this is the Curricular Reform for Normal Education (RCEN, 2012), established by the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) through the General Directorate of Higher Education for Professional Education (DGESPE), regulatory body of the plans and study programs that establish the regulations to follow.

In effect, the 2012 RCEN replaces the curricular design of the 1997 Primary Education degree and the 1999 Preschool Education degree, renewed educational programs at the Institución Benemérita y Centenaria Normal School of the State of Chihuahua Professor Luis Urías Belderráin (IBYCENECH), where the present investigation is carried out. However, it is worth noting that in this time elapsed demands have arisen that require a constant evaluation of the processes implemented so far to recognize the strengths and, at the same time, overcome the weaknesses, which will benefit the institution itself, other schools normal and to those who must make organizational decisions in terms of educational policy.

The findings presented in this work allow us to contribute to the generation of knowledge in the training processes, an area defined by the Mexican Council of Educational Research (COMIE) with the purpose of promoting studies of initial and continuing teacher training, mainly of those who work in the basic level (Ducoing, 2003).

## Referential theoretical framework

In the educational field, from long ago, the teacher and teacher training institutions have an important role in the configuration of the required structures. The teacher is delegated the responsibility of shaping the individual demanded by society, which is evidenced by a curricular design that defines a teaching profile with certain knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes. This means that the curricular design underlies everything related to the preparation and description of the study programs, as well as the suggested content planning and the methodology to execute them. In this regard, Díaz (2010) notes the following:

The curricular design can be understood as a dimension of the curriculum that reveals the methodology, the actions and the result of the diagnosis, modeling, structuring and organization of curricular projects. It prescribes a determined educational conception that when executed aims to solve problems and satisfy needs and in its evaluation enables the improvement of the teaching-learning process (párr. 28).

While it is true that there are positions that recognize the development of plans and programs of study only as an integral part of the curriculum, there are also concepts with a more focused vision where they are handled as synonyms. This is the paradigm of the SEP disseminated by the DGESPE, responsible for a curricular design for which it has implemented a series of strategies with the purpose of allowing education to be a key, efficient and effective part through a paradigm based on training by competences, which was already veiled in previous reforms.

In effect, the background of the 2012 RCEN goes back to 1984 when the most radical and transcendental reform for the normal schools of the last decades arises. This incorporated the initial teacher training to higher education at the undergraduate level and increased the academic demand in the career by establishing the compulsory nature of the baccalaureate level for the entry and exit of a professional education (Official Gazette of the Mexican Federation, 1988 ). With this curricular approach, theoretical training was prioritized with the argument of having a better response when relating knowledge with the corresponding reality (Arnaut, 2004).

For this, the agreements, legislations or programs were raised and operated in the following two decades to implement the support for the transition from a technical teaching to a professional training. These initiatives, however, by themselves, lacking the corresponding supports to give life to the new curriculum (that is, the funding for obtaining bibliography, the

training of teachers, the renewal of infrastructure to respond to new demands, among others) made expensive and difficult the teaching work, which was not overcome by the will of the teacher of the normal schools.

The following reform for the normal education established by the SEP (first realized to the curricula of studies of level of degree) took place in 1997, where a profile of exit for the novel teacher was established, which was grouped in five great fields of knowledge and skills to be developed: "Specific intellectual skills, mastery of teaching contents, didactic competences, professional and ethical identity, and ability to perceive and respond to the social conditions of the school environment" (SEP, 2002, p.31) .

Subsequently, the change of the plan and programs in normal education of 1997 emerged as an alternative to advance towards permanent and decentralized learning of specific knowledge, approach from which an education based on competences was outlined, although implicitly, because in this they began to point out the knowledge, skills and abilities that should be acquired during training (SEP, 2002).

The next transition between the plan and the study programs occurred with the RCEN 2012, where "the design and structure was made from three curricular lines or orientations: focus on learning, based on competencies with curricular, academic and administrative flexibility "(Official Gazette of the Mexican Federation, 2012, p.30). It is worth mentioning, however, that this flexibility is relative, by allowing the entities to design and offer some optional courses appropriate to each region, which depend more on the possibilities of the institutions and the approval of the DGESE through of a rigorous process with the participation of normalist professors and higher education authorities in the state.

This means that, from a theoretical point of view, the RCEN 2012 can be considered as a closed curriculum approach due to the specific and specific description of each of the issues to be addressed "even to the smallest details of its operation; that is to say: structure, areas or curricular subjects, objectives, contents, methods, types of activities and didactic resources, evaluation model, and also in what refers to organization "(Casanova, 2009, p.29).

In this sense, the plan and programs of the RCEN 2012 are instituted in a horizontal and vertical structure that are divided into five paths as fields of knowledge for professional training: 1) psychopedagogical, 2) preparation for teaching and learning, 3) additional language and technologies, 4) professional practice and 5) elective courses (Official Gazette of the Mexican

Federation, 2012). It is worth mentioning that the courses (subjects) with credit value are taught semiannually and that this organization is called curricular mesh.

The 2012 RCEN, on the other hand, is based on the socioconstructivism of competences and suggests as a methodology the elaboration of projects not only for the detection of concrete problems or critical incidents, but mainly to try to find creative solutions (Mercado, 2013). This design also exposes various dimensions (such as social, philosophical, epistemological, psychopedagogical, professional and institutional) where the elements of impact on the nature and development of pedagogical practices according to current needs in different contexts are identified. (*Diario Oficial de la Federación Mexicana*, 2012).

## Research method

In this work, research-action was chosen as a methodology because it was considered adequate to approach the object of knowledge and to influence it, since it seeks to "solve problems of daily life and immediate (...) [and tries] to do comprehensible the social world and (...) improve the quality of life of people "(Álvarez-Gayou, 2003, p. 159). Inserted in the qualitative paradigm, action research, according to Alvarez-Gayou (2003), provides the possibility of interacting acquiring experience during the practice, strengthens the professionalism of the teacher, allows the reflection of the processes themselves and constant innovation to the operation of the planned strategies.

In this sense, the present study was carried out through different cycles or stages, following a line of "practical-deliberative" vision (Álvarez-Gayou, 2003, p.160). To do this, we started with a diagnosis to detect immediate attention needs. Then, with the recovered data, an action plan was drawn up, applied and evaluated, which was constituted in the first cycle of the investigation. Subsequently, the results of this evaluation were the input for the planning of the next cycle, and so on.

In the diagnosis process certain weaknesses were evident, which, through a collegial work with the teachers of the normal school, became the objectives of the action plan that were proposed as short, medium and long term goals. This diagnosis served to detect a high degree of uncertainty among teachers, as well as the need to receive information and relevant guidance in advance of the processes.

It is a cross-sectional study where the first five years of the implementation of the curricular design by competences are considered. For the recovery of critical events observed in reality, the investigator's journal, the logs and the reports of the joint work sessions (teachers' academies) are used. Likewise, participant observation is used, it is also relevant to emphasize the situation where the researcher himself is part of the teachers in charge of educating future teachers with the RCEN 2012, for which there is permanent access to the phenomenon in question to observe and register in the organization and ordinance of the process.

The indication of the SEP to start with the RCEN in the normal schools was completed in August 2012, for the training given in Mexico City 9 of the 19 IBYCENECH professors attended, who are assigned the responsibility of working with the new plan and programs (table 1).

**Tabla 1.** Asistentes de la IBYCENECH a la primera capacitación general de la RCEN de 2012

Total de profesores en la IBYCENECH	78
Profesores de la IBYCENECH involucrados en la RCEN	19
Asistentes de la IBYCENECH a la capacitación general	9

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Derived from the analysis of the observations and to clarify the doubts that arose, interview scripts are designed to know the perspective on the phenomenon in question of the teachers attending the training for the presumption of greater knowledge of reality. The number of teachers participating in the research through the various instruments designed exprofeso varies through the various cycles of the RCEN, in the first of them is considered with the interview to 47.3% corresponding to the nine teachers already mentioned.

To point out specific elements of the RCEN 2012, such as the relevance of training, access to materials, academic infrastructure and others, multiple choice surveys are carried out through the use of the online web tool encuestafacil.com. The use of this instrument is one of the most complicated due to the common saturation of teachers' work (and the reluctance observed in some) so when receiving an email with the instrument, they forgot to answer it.

In order to remedy this situation, we personally go to the localized professors carrying an electronic tablet and requesting that they grant no more than fifteen minutes to answer the



questions raised. All data is obtained from the staff of IBYCENECH, who are for the work described the subject of study; they also consider the vision of authorities and students as protagonists, reason for another text.

Gradually, with the advance of the reform, an average of twenty teachers per school year are incorporated into the curricular change, although the number of subjects with whom one inquires in each cycle of the IA varies, a representation of between 30 and 40% is sought of the population of the Normal School, although that percentage includes the population of novice teachers in the IBYCENECH who replace the retired.

In the last stage, the whole institution is immersed in this transformation and inquires with representative groups of the processes of greatest need of intervention, as it is with the teachers who are entrusted with the degree of students with the thesis modality where they arise. Multiple problems and concerns resolved through the collegial work of those involved. Here it is important to know the experience of the teacher to face this assignment, his professional profile and the most pressing needs to self-manage the training.

## Discussion of results

In this section, each of the cycles discussed in the previous section is studied in greater depth. In principle, it should be noted that the path traveled by IBYCENECH has been a rough one to comply with the guidelines of the 2012 RCEN. Indeed, the diagnosis made indicates that the teachers of the institution are exposed to this reform without a prior analysis of reality. and the educational conditions for teacher training in normal schools. This generates an ignorance of the real needs of each particular context, despite the fact that the official argument holds that the transformation obeys the characteristics of the country's social demand.

However, as happened with the 1984 and 1997 reforms, the RCEN 2012 is a model copied from those implemented in other countries, such as France, Chile and Argentina (Arnaut, 2004). This means the lack of consideration of one of the main problems in Mexico, the training and the adequate follow-up to allow the evaluation of the educational processes.

It is true that the RCEN 2012 has been implemented gradually to eliminate previous programs, hence the DGESPE is slowly making the materials, the complete curricular design and the other integrating elements. This situation, however, has been interpreted by teachers as a lack of planning to know the general approach and to glimpse the goal set.



Likewise, and to gather evidence related to the use of the new study plans, DAGESPE applied a digital survey to twelve of the nineteen IBYCENECH professors responsible for initiating the 2012 RCEN. However, it was not possible to obtain the answer from all the professors due to their different occupations.

However, because the implementation of the RCEN 2012 coincided with the arrival of new students, the beginning of the semester had a delay of fifteen days to review the plans and programs and to talk with the teachers attending the training course. on the indications of change and the route to follow.

In this period, it was decided to document this process. It is worth emphasizing that the first teachers' perceptions of this new reform were uncertainty, pressure and even annoyance, since they considered it to be unstructured.

In the diagnosis made between the months of August, September and October 2012 it was determined that the teachers demanded guidance to reduce the stress produced by the dilemma of not knowing precisely if the interpretation made to the assigned course was correct.

Likewise, it should be noted that during the first semester of work with the RCEN 2012 (August 2012-January 2013) it was difficult to arrange collegial meetings. However, due to the teachers' concern and interest, informal spaces were gradually generated to exchange ideas on this topic. Subsequently, in February 2013, the authorities of the institution scheduled a course for all the university professors, which was taught by the personnel that participated in the curricular design coordinated by the DAGESPE.

Another obstacle to this first approach to the RCEN 2012 was the difficult access to the plans, programs, readings, videos and multimedia resources recommended in each of the courses. The cause of this was found in the lack of timely accommodation of such materials on the website of the SEP.

Due to the above, for the first cycle of action research carried out in this study, the main goal was to work on training, access to materials and the search for strategies to minimize stress and professional burnout generated by the application. of a reform that was tried to be implemented without previous work and after having passed two decades without substantial changes in the curriculum.

This training, however, was also affected due to another new policy dictated by the governor of the state, who in order to reduce the number of young people without study and without work issued a rule so that all candidates for a university degree were accepted. This

generated that the average number of students per classroom increased from 23 to 39, which resulted in overcrowding that interfered in the work of planning, correction of work, etc., of the teachers of IBYCENECH.

Even so, upon completion of a complete period of the Reform from 2012 to 2016, the items raised at the beginning with those who were incorporated gradually are investigated with the total of teachers, in addition because the teaching staff was renewed year after year and for the By the end of this date, many teachers had not been considered. 72% said they had received some kind of guidance to know the conception of the plan and the study programs, although 15% also considered insufficient the time dedicated to such training to clear all doubts. In fact, the 13% affirmation of the teachers who support the general recommendations of the courses stands out, as well as the suggested links to websites did not bring anything new (table 2).

**Tabla 2.** Percepción de los profesores sobre la capacitación recibida

Asistencia total de profesores	94 %
Es enriquecedora para la labor docente	72 %
Poco tiempo dedicado al curso	15 %
No aporta novedades significativas	13 %

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Likewise, the Direction and Academic Subdirectorate of the IBYCENECH requested to the coordination of the degrees the compilation of the required inputs (readings, videos, etc.) in plans and programs of each formative, course and semester course to download them of Internet and to record them in digital files, so that these could be preserved. These resources, in addition, were identified as indispensable jointly with the teachers to use them in the curricular courses of the RCEN 2012.

Likewise, progress was made in the acquisition of bibliographic material with resources granted by the Program to Strengthen the Normal Schools (PROFEN) and the Program for the Improvement of Teaching Staff (PROMEP). Likewise, and to offer some of the readings indicated in the plans and programs of the RCEN 2012, each teacher was given a book suggested by one of the trainers in charge of general training.

However, it is worth mentioning that 62% of the professors pointed out that this type of tasks presented certain annoyances, since they had to review the books and select at their

discretion which chapters or pages they considered most useful, which did not happen with the plan. 1997 studies, since it was enough to read fragments of works that were more expeditiously in the library of the institution.

These new readings, in fact, according to 71% of the teachers involved in the curricular change, have caused in them some uncertainty due to the ignorance of the curriculum, the purposes and the suggested treatment in each of the approaches, hence in many discover them at the same time as the students. Added to this, the new courses assigned in each semester by the Academic Subdirectorate and the coordination of each degree have created obstacles to become familiar with the programs, locate materials and plan the didactic activities.

On the other hand, in the second action-research cycle, two main elements were considered for the planning of the actions: the general and continuous training of the professors, as well as the specific training for the teachers who were to act as directors of the qualification document in the preschool and primary education careers. According to the RCEN 2012, in these careers there are three modalities of qualification: the research thesis, the report of professional practices and the portfolio of evidences (Official Gazette of the Mexican Federation, 2012), documents elaborated from the research results of implemented processes. In the case of theses, the student must choose the research topic from the fifth semester of the career; then, in the sixth, you must prepare a protocol of the chosen study, which is a requirement to enter the seventh semester. Then, in the eighth semester, the research is developed, and the modalities of the report and the portfolio are addressed in the last year of training.

On this aspect, it can be indicated that 98% of the directors of these inquiries had no experience in this task, so they had to hold workshops, read research works or attend conferences to try to play this role in the best possible way. For this reason, specific training courses were scheduled between August 2014 and January 2015, and DGESPE offered an online course for the integration of the evidence portfolio during the 2014-2015 school year. On these initiatives the teachers expressed as an inconvenience the fact that these courses coincided with the end of the semester, that is, a period where they were saturated with work.

Also, and at the suggestion of a DGESPE trainer, in the following school year (2015-2016) two symposiums were scheduled: one in September 2015 and another in February 2016. In the first one an attempt was made to encourage the student to present the research protocol

before their classmates and teachers. Then, in the second colloquium, we tried to expose the progress of the work to receive specific guidance.

In this process it was evidenced that the results and the quality in the final products exposed by the students were conditioned to a large extent by two types of knowledge that teachers had to master: the methodological (to guide an investigation) and discipline (to guide the student in the chosen theme).

In the third cycle of action research, based on the experience generated with teaching activities, tutoring, professional practices and degree programs, the analysis and reflection for the programming of strategies to favor the transit through the reform in the 2016-2017 school year. In this sense, the teachers expressed the need to have specific guidelines to guide the thesis counseling procedure and to know the role of the student's advisor. As a result, efforts were made to develop a procedures manual that conformed to the characteristics of IBYCENECH. This document specified the content that each of the sections of a thesis should have, as well as some elements of form, especially those related to the use of APA standards, among others.

The RCEN 2012 on the other hand has favored the collaborative work of the teachers involved in the change, as well as the communication with the authorities of the institution, aspects that have been indispensable to face and resolve the presented barriers and to promote the curricular change in the initial teacher training.

It should also be noted that the transition towards the reform has been strengthened through the federal policies issued by the SEP and the funding of the Educational Quality Support and Transformation of Normal Schools (PACTEN) Plan, which has served to improve the infrastructure of the institution through the installation of computers, video projectors and screens in the 45 rooms of IBYCENECH, as well as in the meeting areas for teaching colleges. However, there is still a demand for teachers and students everything related to Internet connectivity, since from the RCEN 2012 the plans, programs and work inputs are available on the DGESPE website.

Even so, the teacher must be aware of his obligation to specialize in the courses assigned and to locate, compile and offer his students the materials necessary for the development of the professional, general and specific competencies of the 21st century.

This is in accordance with the provisions of the DGESPE for the process of qualification of students of the normal schools, since from the 2012 RCEN is established as an indispensable requirement the professional certificate of master's degree and preferably of the doctorate of the

professor in charge of assuming the substantive functions of teaching, research, extension and diffusion (Program for the Professional Development of Superior Type [PRODEP], 2017).

Finally, and as a limitation of this study, it should be noted that the results presented can not be generalized, although they can be used to be compared with those obtained in other inquiries involving the initial training institutions. In this way you can know the actions taken in the solution of problems similar to those indicated in this document.

This work, therefore, represents a contribution to the field of knowledge of the training processes, since the results allow to promote the culture of social research in the normal schools, even though it is known that it is difficult to perform this type of tasks due to the scarce financing that is usually received.

## Conclusions

In this work it has been shown that most of the teachers consulted point out that some elements are still needed for the 2012 RCEN to be considered as successful and friendly, as was the case with the previous reforms of 1985 and 1997. This perception is justified because it still lacks a plural and representative diagnosis that takes into account the teacher in front of a group, as well as an accompaniment that can foster the change that is to be promoted. In other words, instead of training some teachers to then offer their colleagues the information they managed to assimilate, the possibilities offered by the new technologies should be exploited, since that way other strategies of greater penetration in the population can be planned. teacher. For this, however, it must also be considered that certain designs are not always coherent with the reality and characteristics of the target populations.

On this forecast, it should be noted that in Mexico the initial training of teachers is subject to the educational policies disseminated by the SEP, as it is believed that this is a task of the State; that is, the Federation is responsible for the design of plans, programs and selection of materials, so the role of the teacher is limited to being the executor of these assignments. Even so, and paradoxically, it is the teacher who is usually attributed the greatest responsibility when problems arise in the educational process.

On the other hand, the evaluation of the resulting experiences in the previous plans and programs should be used to make the appropriate adjustments based on the teacher's experience. In this sense, it is necessary to evaluate and systematize the previous results in order to help

train professionals with humanistic perspectives, who are committed to finding solutions to the common problems of the region.

In this process, the normalist professor must seek to satisfy the needs of his context through the construction of a curriculum mediated by reflective processes that allow him to work for dignity, respect for diversity, as well as for the inclusion of all, mainly of those who most need to benefit from the culture and the desired progress of the country.

In the 2012 RCEN, finally, it is evident the epistemological, teleological and social vacuum to guide the required transformation, since the basic sustenance, as already mentioned, has been raised from the point of view of the people in charge of the SEP. In other words, the foundations of this reform have been imposed in a hurried way, with vexations and obstacles to effectively play the teaching role; this in a national context where the work of the professional of education is less and less recognized and constantly pointed out.

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