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The Indigenous Education Service in Baja California: A Characterization

El servicio de educación indígena en Baja California: una caracterización

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ABSTRACT

In this article it is founded that the indigenous education service in Baja California, which has been operating for more than forty years, has acquired characteristics that distinguish it from other similar services that operate in different states of the Mexican Republic. In this case, its growth is linked to internal migration processes. Hence, the cultural and linguistic diversity in the classrooms. In order to achieve a detailed description of their characteristics, a statistical analysis was carried out with information from the databases of the Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena, the PLANEA test, and the educational statistics of the Formato 911, as well as interviews with key informants. The results allow to identify the type of organization of the schools and the academic and linguistic profiles of teachers and students, as well as their specificities and challenges to continue providing the service.

Keywords: 1. indigenous education, 2. teachers, 3. diversity, 4. border, 5. Baja California.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se sustenta que el servicio de educación indígena de Baja California, el cual opera desde hace más de 40 años, posee características que lo distinguen de otros similares que se desarrollan en diversos estados de la república mexicana. En este caso, su crecimiento está articulado a los procesos de migración interna, cuya diversidad cultural y lingüística está presente en las aulas. Para lograr una descripción pormenorizada de sus principales rasgos, se realizó un análisis estadístico con información obtenida de las bases de datos de la Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena, de la prueba Planea, de la estadística educativa del Formato 911, así como de entrevistas aplicadas a informantes clave. Los resultados permiten identificar el tipo de organización de los centros escolares, los perfiles académico y lingüístico del profesorado y del alumnado, así como sus especificidades y retos para continuar brindando el servicio.

Palabras clave: 1. educación indígena, 2. docentes, 3. diversidad, 4. frontera, 5. Baja California.

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1921, the Mexican government has implemented various agencies and public policies to provide targeted support for the indigenous population. However, a dedicated indigenous service was not established until 1978, with the creation of the Dirección General de Educación Indígena (DGEI) (General Directorate of Indigenous Education) (Vergara Fragoso, 2021).

Since the institutionalization of this agency, there have been political initiatives and specific actions to address the needs of indigenous children. However, these efforts have been questioned over time. Many authors argue that education has been predominantly Spanish-focused, as the official models (bilingual bicultural and bilingual intercultural) have not promoted a differentiated curriculum or stimulated additive bilingualism. Moreover, these models have failed to foster an understanding of the cultural diversity present in Mexico (Bautista Martínez & Briseño Maas, 2011; Bello, 2009; Hamel, 2008; Jiménez-Naranjo & Mendoza-Zuany, 2016; Mendoza-Zuany, 2018; Moya, 1998).

With the implementation of the Reforma Integral de la Educación Básica (Comprehensive Reform of Basic Education) (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2011), specifications were introduced in the curricular proposal for the differentiated attention to indigenous children. Two of these specifications include: a) the parameters for the teaching of indigenous languages, and b) the curricular frameworks for contextualizing the contents. Although books in linguistic variants (Hamel, 2008) of some of the 68 languages recognized by the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI, 2009) were published and distributed before this date, the teaching of the mother tongue was not included in the curriculum.

Currently, within the regulatory framework (Decree of 2019), it is stipulated that indigenous families can choose a service that addresses the linguistic and cultural particularities of their children. This type of service:

> is intended to provide education with cultural relevance in the students' mother tongue, ensuring that these schools have specific materials for strengthening their identity and preserving indigenous languages (Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación [MEJOREDU], 2022, p. 80).

It is important to emphasize that this service is available in 24 out of the 32 states of the Mexican Republic, catering to early childhood education, preschool, and elementary school levels. For the school year 2022-2023, MEJOREDU (2022) reported that indigenous enrollment in preschool and elementary school amounted to 1 192 477 students, representing 7.24% of the total enrollment in general schools (16 482 124). Similarly, it noted that the majority of multigrade schools[5] in Mexico belong to this service: one out of every two preschools and two out of every three elementary

[5] Multigrade schools, also known as *bidocente* (two-teachers for six-grade elementary cicle), *tridocente* (three-teachers for six grade elementary cicle), or unitary schools, are institutions where one teacher can handle more than one single-grade level. In contrast, non-multigrade or single-grade institutions are those that have one teacher per grade level.

schools. In the same school year, a national terminal efficiency rate of 96% was observed, with only a two-point difference from that reported in the indigenous system (94%).

However, academic achievement results (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación [INEE], 2018) reveal a significant gap between both services: 79% of students in indigenous schools achieved level I or below, compared to 50.7% in general schools. Another critical factor concerning the indigenous service is the decline in enrollment (SEP, 2022), which may be linked to school closures between 2020 and 2022. If not addressed, this trend could further exacerbate existing inequalities between educational services and their respective populations.

Baja California is among the states that provide support for indigenous children. Its industrial and agro-export sectors, coupled with the aspirations of many nationals to migrate to the United States, have historically, economically, and socially fostered various waves of migration to this state (Rentería-Díaz, 2018). Additionally, several indigenous groups from southern Mexico have settled in Baja California, enriching the region's cultural and linguistic diversity. Initially, these settlements included members of the Mixteco and Purépecha groups who found opportunities in informal trade and agriculture along the northern border (Clark, 2008). Currently, available information indicates the presence of members from 20 linguistic groups in the region (Dirección General de Educación Indígena Intercultural Bilingüe [DGEIIB], 2022).

More than 40 years since the establishment of the first schools for indigenous groups in Baja California, the indigenous education service has developed distinct characteristics that warrant comprehensive analysis. Therefore, there is a proposal to study these actors and their educational paths to better understand their current composition and teaching conditions.

The results presented in various sections distinguish the specificities of the indigenous education service in Baja California. They identify the organization of school districts, the institutional characteristics of schools, and the communities where these institutions are situated. Additionally, they describe the professional and ethno-linguistic profiles of teaching and administrative staff at the preschool and elementary school levels. Furthermore, the study details the family contexts, socio-economic situations of students, and their learning outcomes in national assessments. The voices of key actors who played active roles in shaping the service are also highlighted, emphasizing the dedication of many teachers and underscoring the founding conditions of these schools.

METHOD

This study relies on documentary inquiry (Tancara, 1993) and interviews with four key actors involved in the development of indigenous education in the state. Access to these sources was facilitated by information from the Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena (State Coordination of Indigenous Education) (CEEI, 2021), which provided extensive internal databases on teaching staff (including education level, roles, and linguistic profiles), students, and schools. Additionally,

educational statistics from *Formato 911*[6] (SEP, 2021) for the 2020-2021 school year were accessed, along with databases from the Plan Nacional para la Evaluación de los Aprendizajes (PLANEA) (National Plan for the Assessment of Learning) at both the Sistema Educativo Nacional (SEN) (National Education System) and individual school levels. The collected data were analyzed to create a detailed characterization of the communities, teaching staff, administrators, and students (see Table 1).

Table 1. Use of Data for the Characterization of the Indigenous Education Service in Baja California

	Areas of characterization			
Data	School district	School communities	Teaching and management staff	Students
Internal bases of the CEEI	✓		✓	
Educational statistics of Formato 911			✓	
Linguistic profile			✓	✓
PLANEA-SEN		✓		✓
PLANEA Schools				✓
Interviews	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Own elaboration based on data collection and analysis.

It should be noted that the databases of the national tests correspond to the results from the 2015 and 2018 administrations, which are the most recent available as national assessments were suspended due to school closures in March 2020. After data collection, it was necessary to perform data cleaning and processing for analysis using SPSS software version 26. Additionally, four open interviews and another four with key figures involved in the development of the indigenous education service in the region were conducted. Information of various natures was analyzed to identify specificities, notable characteristics, and operational conditions of this service in Baja California.

[6] The Formato 911 is an online registration system coordinated by the SEP, designed to compile statistical information on all schools, teachers, and students enrolled in the diverse types, levels, modalities, and services of the SEN. This registration is conducted at each school and can be accessed online. It is important to note that the educational statistics from the Formato 911 referenced in this article were provided by the Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena de Baja California (State Coordination of Indigenous Education in Baja California).

RESULTS

In the communities of indigenous groups in the state, indigenous education was promoted by specialized entities starting in the 1970s. In 1974, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) (National Indigenous Institute)—now known as the Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Institute of Indigenous Peoples)—coordinated and implemented programs to initially provide health services and educational support for adults in Yuman localities (Castañeda Sánchez & García Poyato, 2021). A former INI worker from that era recalled:

> When I arrived, the indigenous education service was already operational under the first director of indigenous education. He is a Cucapá indigenous person who lives in Mexicali. They had already established schools in Santa Catarina, La Huerta, Quiliwas (which never operated), Cucapá, San José de la Zorra, and here in San Antonio Necua. There were six in total, but they functioned as shelters. In native indigenous communities, settlement patterns are dispersed, so the intention was to bring children from various ranches to population centers to provide them with food, lodging, and education from Monday to Friday. That's where I got to know the first teachers [around 1976] (N. Carvajal, personal communication, September 12, 2023).

Subsequently, the establishment of the DGEI catalyzed the founding of schools in Yuman communities, particularly at the elementary level. Educational efforts for allochthonous groups, primarily from the Oto-Mangue linguistic family, began in the early 1980s (Lestage & Pérez, 2003). In 1982, the Juan José de los Reyes Martínez El Pípila School in the Obrera neighborhood of Tijuana became the first school founded to serve children from migrant indigenous communities, specifically from the Mixteco group, marking the beginning of a series of schools established in urban areas of Tijuana (Clark, 2008; Lestage & Pérez, 2003). The significance of this event lies in its location, as the presence of indigenous schools in urban areas is uncommon within this service and notable for existing only in Tijuana and Acapulco (Páez Cárdenas & Tinajero Villavicencio, 2020). In Nuevo León, particularly in Monterrey, attention to indigenous children has been reported within general schools (Durin, 2007).

Thus, in the 1980s, there was a rapid expansion of the indigenous service, particularly in the San Quintín Valley and the outskirts of the metropolitan area of Ensenada. Tinajero Villavicencio (2007) documented that the first school in the Valley was founded in 1983, and within a decade, the number had grown to 21. The establishment of these schools was driven by the settlement of families and the dedication of teaching staff. A teacher assigned to the CEEI recalled the process of establishing indigenous schools:

> I remember when new schools were established, especially in indigenous education. As a technical advisor for a school district, we had to address the needs of parents. Typically, parents would come to the offices as a committee, requesting the creation of schools. This was the case for the community known as El Zorrillo. Initially, there was no school building or infrastructure. Newly hired teachers visited the community, met with parents in their homes, and eventually identified some vacant rooms where they could start teaching […].

> This is how many indigenous education schools have been established, starting in temporary classrooms and gradually acquiring land, with parents collaborating on leveling, fencing, and supporting the construction of the school (O. Bazán, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

This description highlights the involvement of families and the initial conditions faced by teaching staff. Currently, the indigenous education service in Baja California coordinates four early education centers, 56 preschools, 70 elementary schools, and two middle schools, marking significant growth. Enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year totaled 15 292 students across these levels, supported by 611 teachers (MEJOREDU, 2022).

The entity responsible for coordinating the school districts of the indigenous education service has undergone several name changes, reflecting shifts in national and state policies. Since 2012, this entity has been known as the Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena (State Coordination of Indigenous Education). However, prior to that year, it had different names, as recalled by a member of the CEEI:

> Before my tenure, it was known as the Dirección Regional de Educación Extraescolar (Regional Directorate of Extracurricular Education). Later, it transitioned through several names: the Departamento de Educación Indígena (Department of Indigenous Education), then the Unidad de Enlace y Representación de Educación Indígena (Unit of Liaison and Representation of Indigenous Education), and finally, it became the Coordinación Estatal de Educación Indígena (State Coordination of Indigenous Education). Interestingly, none of these names appear in any law or organizational chart (O. Bazán, personal communication, March 23, 2022).

Thus, while there is physical space allocated for coordination and administrative personnel, the unit does not officially exist in state regulations. This characteristic may be unique to this service. For instance, in the state of Oaxaca, the indigenous education service operates under the (Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca (IEEPO) (State Institute of Public Education of Oaxaca) but is not listed on its organizational chart, despite its significant size. In contrast, Chiapas does have a Dirección de Educación Indígena (Directorate of Indigenous Education).[7]

The increase in the number of schools, primarily in the southern region of the state, also led to an increase in the number of school districts. Currently, there are seven school districts: two based in Tijuana, two in Ensenada, and three in the south of the state (specifically in San Quintín, Vicente Guerrero, and Camalú). Table 2 provides detailed information on the location of these school districts, their localities, the type of organization, and the number of corresponding schools.

[7] The Dirección de Educación Indígena (Directorate of Indigenous Education) is under the authority of the Secretaría de Educación (Ministry of Education) of the government of Chiapas.

Table 2. General Characteristics of School Districts of the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

District number	District location	Level	Total schools	PETC	Multigrade schools	Location of schools	Year of creation
711	Ensenada	Initial	2	-	-	Ensenada, Mexicali, and San Quintín	1982
		Preschool	9	5	5		
		Elementary	5	5	5		
712	San Quintín	Preschool	8	-	6	San Quintín	1986
		Elementary	12	11	2		
713	Vicente Guerrero	Preschool	7	-	5	Vicente Guerrero	1993
		Elementary	11	8	3		
714	Tijuana	Preschool	5	-	-	Tijuana and Playas de Rosarito	1995
		Elementary	6	-	3		
		Middle	2	-	1		
715	Ensenada	Initial	2	-	-	Ensenada (Maneadero, Ojos Negros, and San Antonio de las Minas)	1999
		Preschool	13	-	6		
		Elementary	16	4	8		
716	Camalú	Preschool	9	-	8	Camalú and San Vicente	1999
		Elementary	14	6	3		
717	Tijuana	Preschool	5	-	1	Tijuana and Tecate	2002
		Elementary	6	1	2		
		Total	132	40	58		

Note: The dashes indicate that some levels do not have schools enrolled in the Programa de Escuelas de Tiempo Completo (PETC) (Full-Time Schools Program) or multigrade schools.

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

Certain characteristics can be observed in the work of the school districts: 1) the schools they serve are located in various localities or municipalities; 2) the schools have different educational organizations, such as single-grade schools (one teacher per grade) and multigrade schools (single teacher, two-teacher or three-teacher), and 3) all school districts coordinate schools at different educational levels. The first two characteristics may be present in many school districts across the country, but not the last one. This circumstance—serving preschools, elementary, and middle schools—makes the school districts work more complex due to the different educational level logics and the support and guidance needs that teachers may require.

The teaching approach in multigrade schools differs significantly from that in single-grade schools (Delgado Gastelum, 2023). Additionally, these schools often face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and limited support structures for pedagogical management (CONEVAL, 2022). Furthermore, the geographical distance between schools and school districts can hinder effective pedagogical support, particularly due to constraints in travel time.

Another aspect of the indigenous education service in Baja California is the operation of extension or annexed schools. These schools do not have their own school code; instead, they use the code of other educational centers, with their enrollment and human resources accounted for under the auspices of an officially recognized school. While this practice addresses the challenge of ensuring access to educational services in communities that require it, it also exacerbates

educational inequality by not receiving resources directly. Currently, three annexed schools are operational in the region.

Finally, it is important to note that over the last decade, 35 elementary schools (more than 50% of the total schools in the state) and five preschools have been affiliated to the PETC (Full-Time Schools Program). This program, operating under annual operational guidelines, included various components such as providing resources to improve school infrastructure and covering meals for students and teachers involved in afternoon pedagogical activities.

In a study conducted between 2017 and 2018[8] on the teaching and learning conditions in indigenous elementary schools affiliated with that program in the state, Tinajero Villavicencio (2018) reported the absence of certain conditions. For instance, in many cases, principals reported challenges with basic services like water, precarious or inadequate infrastructure, as well as insufficient staff and materials. However, they noted no significant issues related to learning management, organization, and school coexistence.

School administrators cited several reasons for joining the PETC, including enhancing students' educational achievement and acquiring resources to improve the conditions of their facilities and food services. Administrators believed that providing meals at schools (even just a snack, according to some) would benefit the health of many students. Two school districts reported the highest number of schools affiliated with the PETC: school district 711, which oversaw all its schools (six preschools and five elementary schools), and school district 712, which had 11 out of 12 schools participating. The closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted the operation of this program, and in 2022, upon returning to in-person classes, the PETC was discontinued by educational authorities. Despite its national scope, it is noteworthy to highlight the number of schools that enrolled and the reasons they provided for their voluntary participation.

The Communities

Based on data from the PLANEA test (INEE, 2018), out of the 67 elementary schools registered that year, 51 were located in communities classified as highly marginalized, 12 in communities with medium marginalization, and data for four schools were unavailable. This indicates that nearly all indigenous elementary schools in the state are situated in communities characterized by high levels of marginalization. Marginalization levels are assessed across dimensions such as education, housing, population distribution, and income from work, each with specific indicators categorized as very high, high, medium, low, and very low (Consejo Nacional de Población [CONAPO], 2013). However, for the questionnaire of the PLANEA test, only three categories are typically used: high, medium, and low (INEE, 2018).

[8] This study investigated the infrastructure, furniture, equipment, educational support materials, teaching staff, learning management, school organization, and school coexistence within these elementary schools.

According to records from the CEEI (2021), out of the 70 elementary schools operating during the 2021-2022 school year, 56 (80%) were located in areas classified with a high and very high degree of marginalization, 11 (15.71%) in moderately marginalized areas, and three (4.28%) did not specify any level of marginalization. These data correspond to an assessment regarding the establishment of these schools by a promoter of indigenous education:

> Yes, they were remarkable. They were children, very enthusiastic young people deeply committed to education. They exerted considerable effort. For instance, Fidel worked at a small school located here in the Santa Lucía field, initially under a tree where children sat on whatever they could find, using pieces of plaster as writing surfaces and a painted board. Víctor worked in the Llamas field, which, relatively speaking, had better conditions with adobe construction that provided decent shelter from rain. However, in the Hamilton field, conditions were dire, with non-functional water facilities. When René, Rubén, and Víctor arrived at the Venustiano Carranza ejido, conditions improved for them (N. Carvajal, personal communication, September 12, 2023).

Teachers and Principals

Teachers constitute the primary resource of the educational service. Initially, a significant number of those entering the service hailed from the southern regions of the country:

> All the teachers already had their credentials in hand, as some had completed high school and middle school education. However, when I mentioned there was a normal school, they informed me about it, and I agreed. Yet, my operational rules stipulated that they must have completed middle school, undertaken a pedagogical leveling course, committed to ongoing education, and crucially, be fluent speakers of the predominant indigenous language of the area. When I asked Professor Pedro about how many of his students at the normal school spoke the local language or were indigenous, he informed me none did. Consequently, an arrangement was made with [a high school institution in San Quintín], which brought teachers from Mexico and Oaxaca who underwent pedagogical leveling courses. Services commenced on September 14, 1984, with the first teachers in San Quintín. There was considerable debate and resistance, with claims that they were adequately prepared and accusations of regression (N. Carvajal, personal communication, September 12, 2023).

Indeed, a recurring criticism towards teachers in indigenous education has been their low level of education (CONEVAL, 2022; Gigante, 2004; Velasco Cruz, 2015). To some extent, this criticism may be justified given their backgrounds. However, in the specific case of Baja California, it can be confirmed that the majority of teachers now have a higher education. Out of 514[9] teachers currently in service, only two report having no higher education. The remaining teachers include 433 with a bachelor's degree, 76 with a master's degree, and two with a doctoral degree. Their bachelor's

[9] The totals for higher education and seniority are inaccurate because several teachers did not provide the missing information in the database.

degrees cover fields such as preschool and elementary education for the indigenous context, preschool education, elementary education, education, and educational intervention.

Based on information gathered in 2022 (CEEI, 2021), during the 2020-2021 school year, all teaching staff—314 women and 200 men—were affiliated with the Instituto de Servicios Educativos y Pedagógicos de Baja California (ISEP) (Institute of Educational and Pedagogical Services of Baja California), indicating they are federal teachers. Table 3 details the distribution of teachers across each monitoring unit.

Table 3. Number of Teachers by School District of the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

School District	Total teachers	Preschool	Elementary School
711	11	6	5
712	99	19	80
713	73	24	49
714	49	14	35
715	102	20	82
716	115	25	90
717	65	16	49
Total	514	124	390

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

According to the previous table, the teaching staff at the elementary level is more numerous in all school districts, except in district 711 (which oversees institutions in Yuman communities). It is also notable that the highest numbers of teachers at both levels are concentrated in district 716, which has 90 elementary school teachers and 25 preschool teachers.

Another relevant element among the teaching staff is the ethnic group to which each teacher belongs. Table 4 presents the self-ascribed ethnicities and their respective frequencies.

Table 4. Ethnic Group Affiliation of the Teaching Staff of the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

	Ethnic group						
	Mixteco	Triqui	Zapoteco	Náhuatl	Purépecha	Paipai	Kumiai
Teachers	363	32	29	26	17	6	4
	Ethnic group						
	Mayo	Totonaco	Cora	Rarámuri	Mixe	Ninguna	
Teachers	2	2	1	1	1	27	

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

The majority of teachers identified themselves as Mixteco for their ethnic group, with many specifying their ethnolinguistic variant as high, low, from the Valley, from the Coast, from Guerrero, from Oaxaca, and from Zaachila. Other groups represented in the educational service include the Triqui, with high and low variants, the Zapotec from the Valley (all languages belonging to the Oto-Manguean family), the Náhuatl from Veracruz, and the Purépecha.

Regarding bilingual teaching staff, their level of proficiency is unknown, as they only indicated whether they were bilingual or not. With this clarification, 439 teachers identified themselves as speakers of an indigenous language (SIL) and Spanish, 72 as non-SIL, and three did not specify. It is important to emphasize that identifying bilingualism within this group is just one aspect of their characterization and does not necessarily indicate proficiency in teaching the indigenous language or promoting bilingualism in classrooms, as per official guidelines (SEP, 2017).

Finally, the last aspect identified was the date of entry into the teaching service, which provides insight into the trajectory of this personnel. During the 2020-2021 school year, the majority had seniority ranging from 11 to 25 years. Descriptively, 9 teachers had between 31 and 35 years of service, 48 between 26 and 30 years, 86 between 21 and 25 years, 70 between 16 and 20 years, 84 between 11 and 15 years, 49 between 6 and 10 years, 66 between 1 and 5 years, and finally, five teachers who joined in 2021 can be considered novice teachers.

Another indispensable human resource in schools is their administrators. In the indigenous education service of the state, there were 103 administrators (64 women and 39 men), distributed among the seven school districts, as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Headcount of Administrative Staff by School District in the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

School District	Total principals	Preschool	Elementary School
711	11	6	5
712	12	3	9
713	8	3	5
714	10	5	5
715	22	12	8
716	23	10	14
717	11	5	6
Total	95	44	52

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

According to the previous table, the school districts that concentrate the highest number of administrators are districts 715 and 716, with 22 and 23 administrators respectively. In contrast, districts 712, 711, 717, 714, and 713 each have between 8 and 11 administrators. Additionally, the educational level at which they work was identified: of the 95 registered principals, 43 work at the preschool level and 52 at the elementary level. Most of the administrative staff hold the title of principal, followed by acting principal with or without a teaching group (mostly in multigrade

schools).[10] This indicates that not all currently functioning schools (56 preschools and 70 elementary schools) have an officially assigned principal. Primarily, multigrade schools lack this resource. Similarly, the ethnic group to which the administrative staff belongs is also relevant. Table 6 provides details on their self-ascribed ethnicities.

Table 6. Ethnic Group Affiliation of the Administrative Staff in the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

	Ethnic group					
	Mixteco	Náhuatl	Kumiai	Paipai	Zapoteco	Cucapá
Administrative Staff	67	7	6	6	4	3

	Ethnic group					
	Purépecha	Triqui	Totonaco	Mixe	Mayo	Ninguna
Administrative Staff	2	2	1	1	1	3

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

Within this group, 93 identified themselves as speakers of an indigenous language (SIL), two as non-SIL, and one did not respond; the majority of them are Mixtecos. Additionally, their level of education was determined. Out of the total, four have completed high school, 61 have a bachelor's degree, 29 have master's degrees, and two have doctoral degrees. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the majority of administrators have a bachelor's degree, with the most frequent fields being basic education, educational sciences, educational intervention, and preschool education. Meanwhile, the most representative master's degrees were in preschool education, education, and teacher training.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the majority of administrative staff had seniority ranging between 25 and 21 years and between 15 and 11 years. Additionally, 33 administrators had experience ranging between 30 and 26 years, and between 20 and 16 years. In descending order, nine administrators had between five and one year of service, eight between 35 and 31 years, four between 41 and 36 years (representing the maximum seniority among the administrative staff), three between 10 and 6 years, and finally, two who joined in 2021.

The Students: Contextual and Socioeconomic Characteristics

From the narratives of the interviewees, two particularly stand out, providing a contextual insight into indigenous childhood. An employee of the INI from those years highlighted:

> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, women started being involved in fieldwork, transforming migration from a solitary endeavor. Initially, their role was to prepare meals, but they later became active participants in the work. This change occurred notably in Maneadero, the first

[10] The classifications adhere to the entirety of the educational statistics data from Formato 911.

> shelter that opened, where children had previously been left unsupervised, resulting in accidents (N. Carvajal, personal communication, September 12, 2023).

On the other hand, a consultant from CEEI highlighted the contrasts in the environments where schools are situated, underscoring the difficulties faced by families:

> In indigenous communities, particularly among the Yuman people in migrant contexts, it's very challenging for fathers to contribute. Many lack formal education, with some not having completed elementary school and others being illiterate, especially within indigenous settings. Unfortunately, not all parents possess educational qualifications. In places like San Quintín and Maneadero, most parents work in agriculture. Conversely, in Tijuana, where we have indigenous schools, the environment is more urban, and parents tend to have higher levels of education. Despite this, supporting their children remains very challenging for them (O. Bazán, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

The initial reference concerns the establishment of the first shelter for indigenous children in Ensenada in 1980. Today, contextual insights derived from the PLANEA test, gathered through surveys, provide an understanding of the living conditions of indigenous children. These surveys were conducted among sixth-grade students during the 2017-2018 academic year (INEE, 2018). The sample size from the indigenous education service of Baja California was relatively small, consisting of only 100 students. Nevertheless, based on this sample, it is inferred that current students continue to exhibit similar contextual, familial, and socioeconomic characteristics (Table 7).

Table 7. Contextual Information of Elementary School Students

Access to basic services and goods	Percentage	Transmission and communication	Percentage
Electricity	91	Landline number	55
Running water	61	Pay TV	74
Sewer system	53	Television	82
Stove	92	Internet	45
Refrigerator	83	DVD or Blu-ray	59
Washing machine	78	Mobile phone	21
Car	79	Computer	46

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the PLANEA-SEN test (INEE, 2018).

The figures presented reveal a persistent reality. For example, according to questionnaire results, there continues to be a lack of basic services in the communities where students reside, particularly concerning running water and drainage infrastructure. The percentages concerning goods usage surpass those related to access to services.

Similarly, the collected data reflects the limitations students face in terms of technological access: only 45% have such opportunities. An aspect that gained relevance during school closures due to the COVID-19 contingency was access to electronic devices, which became primary pedagogical tools

during the *Aprende en Casa* strategy (SEP, 2020). During the year of the PLANEA test registration, only 46% of families reported owning a computer or laptop, covering just half of households, and 21% of students indicated having access to at least one mobile phone or cell phone at home.[11] Furthermore, when asked if the computers or laptops at home were available for students' use, only 21% reported using them for school activities.

Along the same lines, the frequency with which students used the internet for educational purposes was examined. It was determined that at least 22% used it daily to support their school work. Consequently, it can be inferred that the majority of daily internet use was devoted to activities not related to school work.

This situation may be linked to the observed shortcomings results of the Aprende en Casa 1, 2, and 3 strategie that was implemented nationwide to ensure continuity in basic education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports indicate that the strategy relied on open television and internet platforms but did not reach all students within the indigenous education service across the country (Gallardo Gutiérrez, 2020; Portillo et al., 2020; SEP, 2022). Studies conducted to date indicate that teachers in indigenous schools adapted the government's strategy to their specific operational contexts. These adaptations included creating workbooks, sending assignments via WhatsApp, and occasionally visiting schools to address doubts and exchange these workbooks (Dietz & Mateos, 2020).

Now, based on the figures gathered from the PLANEA test (INEE, 2018), it is important to highlight the educational attainment of parents and mothers. Table 8 indicates the percentages.

Table 8. Education Attainment of Parents of Indigenous Children

Education level	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)
Middle School	26	21
Incomplete Middle School	16	16
Incomplete Elementary School	16	14
Elementary School	11	9
Incomplete High School	6	6
Bachelor's Degree	-	5
No formal education	4	13
Don't know	17	14
I don't have a dad	3	-
No response provided	1	-
Multiple response	-	2

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the PLANEA-SEN test (INEE, 2018).

[11] The percentages do not sum to 100 due to missing data reported.

As observed, the highest percentage of parents' (69%) and mothers' (60%) education levels of children enrolled in indigenous schools do not exceed basic schooling. This is related to the limited ability of this group to provide academic support to their children. The data indicate that 60% of parents never reviewed their children's notebooks or textbooks (or did so infrequently), while 40% did so frequently or always. Nevertheless, students have expectations regarding their studies: 7% wish to finish elementary school, 16% secondary school, 15% high school, 36% a university degree, and 26% consider pursuing a postgraduate degree. In this regard, most students expect to advance to a higher educational level.

Another noteworthy aspect is the linguistic profile of the students. In a study conducted in 14 schools in the region, Velasco Ortiz and Rentería-Díaz (2019) found "a cultural diversity among the students that indicates a heterogeneity of historical-regional and linguistic origins, with Spanish as the dominant mother tongue" (p. 22). During the 2021-2022 cycle, the CEEI (2021) created a school linguistic profile that gathered information on the linguistic diversity present in the classrooms. In other words, despite the predominance of Spanish, there is now a greater understanding of the linguistic origins of the students. Table 9 consolidates the state-level figures of the ethnic groups to which the students belong and the languages spoken by their families.

Table 9. Ethnic Group of Affiliation of Students in the Indigenous Education Service of Baja California

Ethnic group	Initial	Preschool	Elementary School	Middle School	Total
Tsotsil	0	2	5	0	7
Ch'ol	0	1	6	0	7
Cora	0	2	5	0	7
Mixe	0	4	4	0	8
Mazahua	0	5	4	0	9
Mayo	0	0	11	0	11
Tarahumara	0	3	8	0	11
Amuzgo	0	15	0	0	15
Tlapaneco	0	10	6	0	16
Cucapá	0	7	22	0	29
Paipai	0	2	27	0	29
Tseltal	0	1	30	0	31
Purépecha	0	13	29	0	42
Kumiai	9	21	64	0	94
Mazateco	0	1	101	0	102
Náhuatl	0	40	182	0	222
Zapoteco	0	113	555	0	668

(continues)

(continuation)

Triqui	0	112	684	0	796
Mixteco	19	890	4 629	34	5 572
Other languages	0	52	271	0	323
Spanish	16	1 954	5 359	*	7 329

Note: * This data was not recorded in the linguistic profile.

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

According to the previous table, most students for whom information was collected were Spanish speakers, with many recognizing it as their mother tongue. The indigenous language with the highest representation in basic education was Mixtec, with 5 572 students, followed by Triqui with 796, Zapoteco with 668, Náhuatl with 222, and Mazateco with 102, among others. Notable data include the higher number of students belonging to migrant indigenous groups compared to those affiliated with regional groups: only 29 Cucapá, 29 Paipai, and 94 Kumiai students were recorded; additionally, the Yuman language is represented by only 1% of the students. Another relevant aspect is the greater linguistic diversity observed within the elementary school level, as there are only two indigenous middle schools in the state. However, it is important to note that the linguistic profile only refers to the languages of the students' affiliated indigenous groups and does not reflect their level of bilingualism.

The contextual information collected by the PLANEA test (INEE, 2018) indicates that 43% of parents or grandparents are speakers of indigenous languages (SIL), while only 24% of students are reported as SIL. This indicates that language displacement continues in both domestic and academic spaces.

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

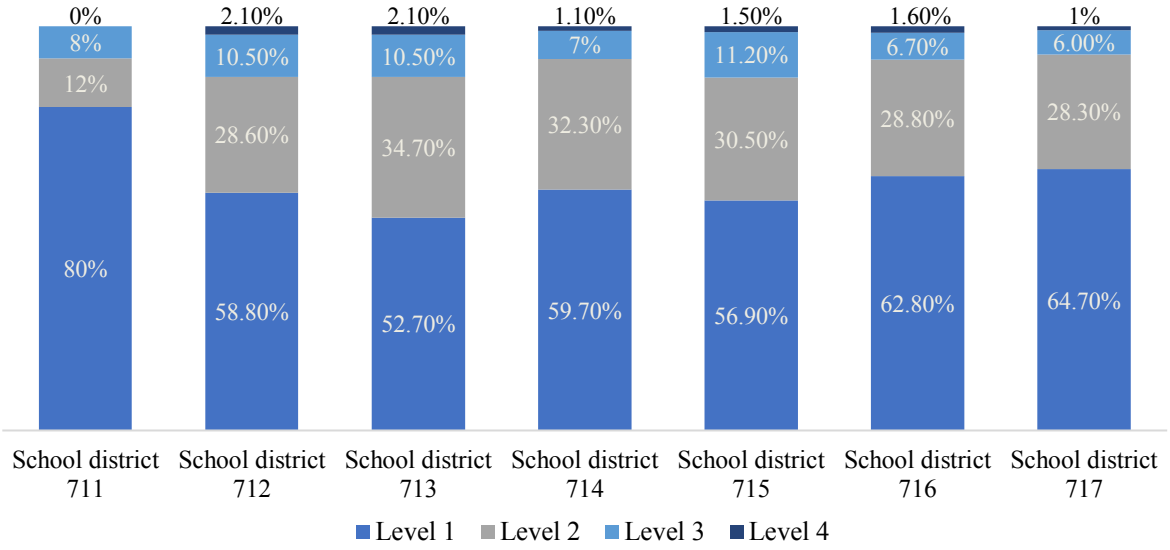
The achievement assessment related to the PLANEA test (Schools) was administered to sixth-grade students in 67 schools within the indigenous education service of Baja California during the school years 2014-2015 and 2017-2018. It is important to note that the number of participating schools corresponds to the total number of registered institutions during the years of assessment.[12]

Student results in these tests are categorized into four levels: 1, 2, 3, and 4. The first level signifies insufficient proficiency, highlighting learning gaps that may impede students' future development if not remedied. The second level encompasses basic curriculum learning. Level 3 denotes satisfactory mastery of curriculum content. Finally, level 4 indicates outstanding proficiency, demonstrating comprehensive mastery across all assessed learning areas. It's important to note that each level includes specific descriptors tailored to each diagnosed area.

[12] For the 2020-2021 school year, there were modifications in the organizational types of indigenous schools, with some transitioning from incomplete to complete organization.

As depicted in Graph 1, the highest percentage of results in the Language and Communication test are at level 1. A notable example is found in school district 711, overseeing schools in Yuman communities. School districts that achieved higher levels of proficiency among their students were school district 713 (schools located in Camalú) and 714 (institutions in Tijuana).

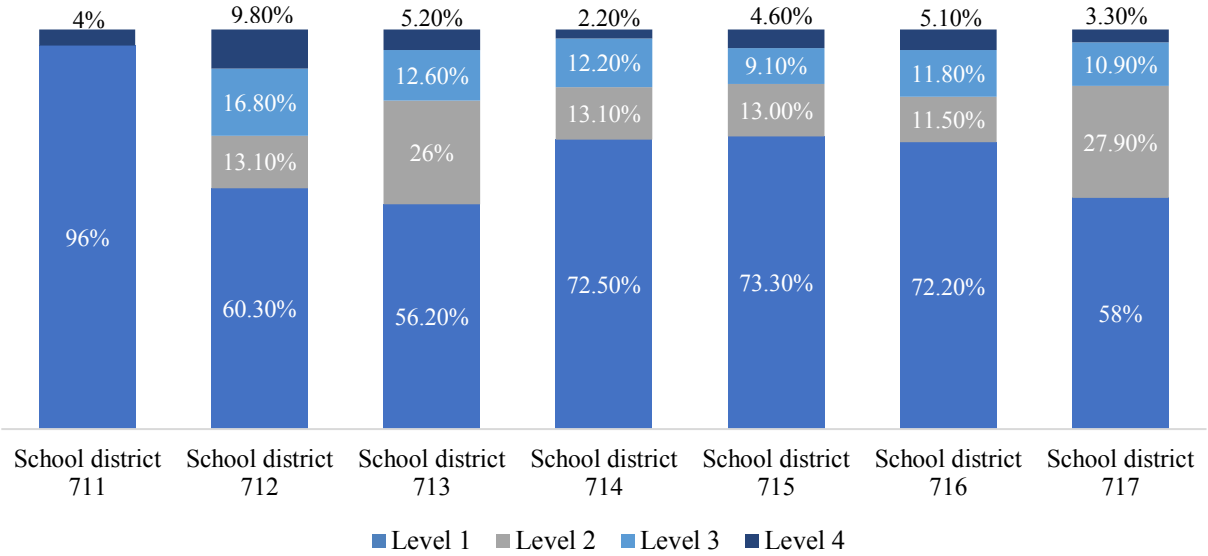
Graph 1. Language and Communication Achievement by School District, School Year 2017-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

On the other hand, Graph 2 displays the results of students in the Mathematics test in 2018.

Graph 2. Mathematics Achievement by School District, School Year 2017-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the CEEI (2021).

In the preceding graph, it is evident that the percentages of students at the insufficient level increase compared to the Language and Communication area, except for school district 712. School district 711 remains noteworthy once more.

National educational achievement tests consistently indicate that children enrolled in indigenous education services achieve lower learning outcomes compared to students in the general education system. A specific aspect discussed in these tests relates to the Spanish proficiency of students attending indigenous-mode schools. While there is general information about monolingualism in Mexico (CONEVAL, 2022), the extent of Spanish proficiency among school-aged students remains uncertain. It is evident, however, that monolingualism decreases as students advance through grades in the SEN.

Currently, there has been a rise in the utilization of the mother tongue within the school environment. As noted by a teacher from an indigenous school: "We follow the guidelines of the indigenous language, implementing specific projects tailored to each grade level, such as numerical concepts, national anthem, and dedicating a set amount of time weekly, similar to any other subject" (O. Bazán, personal communication, March 23, 2022). However, it cannot be asserted that this constitutes bilingual education.

Based on the above, this description can be succinctly summarized with the following points: the indigenous education service in Baja California exhibits diversity and heterogeneity, marked by varied linguistic, cultural, and professional profiles among teachers, alongside distinct community settings (urban, rural, and peri-urban). It also demonstrates heterogeneity in terms of institutional organization, encompassing both multigrade and single-grade structures. Moreover, it is differentiated from general education services by its supervision of diverse educational levels—from early childhood to secondary education—requiring comprehensive educational expertise from supervisory authorities. Lastly, it is dynamic, characterized by the proactive roles of teachers and parents in managing school environments and addressing community needs, thereby facilitating ongoing school transformation.

To summarize, it is noteworthy that the indigenous education service in this region stands as a unique case, influenced by economic dynamics that shape its linguistic and cultural diversity. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the contributions of various stakeholders (teachers, parents, and social agents) who have enabled the establishment of environments aimed at upholding the educational, social, cultural, and linguistic rights of children from Mexico's indigenous communities.

Based on all this information, it is also essential to highlight the specific case of the Yuman communities, as their schools present distinct characteristics: all of them operate as multigrade institutions, comprising 12% of the total, and are environments where significant linguistic displacement has been documented. Particularly noteworthy is the insight provided by an advisor associated with the CEEI, which underscores this diverse and varied reality:

> I wish for better coordination with enhanced supervision and coverage, greater integration of children from other states across the country, including Yuman communities. A service with more prominent participation in the educational system, aimed primarily at achieving better educational outcomes. (O. Bazán, personal communication, March 23, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these findings, the specific characteristics of the indigenous education service in Baja California are underscored, drawing from official documents and insights from key informants. This service has been established in the state for over four decades, aligning with federal policies aimed at indigenous communities nationwide. It caters to indigenous populations originating from both Baja California and southern Mexico, encompassing groups such as Mixtecos, Zapotecos, Triquis, and Nahuas, among others.

For the functioning of the indigenous education service in the region, there is a state coordination that does not exist in the organizational chart of the state Ministry of Education. Enrollment and the number of schools have expanded to accommodate indigenous children from non-native groups. Specifically, there are 65 elementary schools catering to children of migrant day laborers, in contrast to the five multigrade schools in Yuman communities.

School districts 711, 712, 713, and 716 oversee educational centers situated across various rural areas of the state. Two other districts, based in Tijuana, manage schools in urban areas, while district 715 predominantly coordinates schools in periurban areas of Ensenada. There are distinct differences among these school districts, not only in the number of schools they oversee but also in their organizational structure. A notable percentage of institutions in these school districts operate as multigrade schools (34% in elementary schools and 64% in preschools). Moreover, they serve diverse educational levels, spanning from early childhood to middle school education. Only one district caters to schools located in Yuman communities (three groups of four). This district has the smallest student enrollment and the fewest number of teachers. However, it exhibits the greatest geographical dispersion among its schools, covering two municipalities: Mexicali and Ensenada. Additionally, it reports the lowest percentage of students achieving satisfactory academic performance.

Educational attention has expanded its geographical coverage, with schools now present in all municipalities of the state. However, it is predominantly concentrated in the southern region (San Quintín), where agricultural fields are abundant, and many schools are situated in areas with a high degree of marginalization. Additionally, the school districts face challenges in advising and supporting school principals. These challenges include the significant distance between the schools and the school district units—many campuses are located in different localities and municipalities—and the varying needs according to the educational levels they serve (early childhood, preschool, elementary, and middle school).

In the specific case of Baja California, most of the teaching staff are women with higher education degrees (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees) and, like the students, they exhibit

cultural and linguistic diversity. The majority of teachers have between 11 and 25 years of service (46%), indicating a significant career trajectory. Additionally, 66 teachers have between one and five years of service, and five teachers who joined in 2021 can be considered novice teachers (13%). However, although many identify as speakers of indigenous languages, there is no reliable information on the degree of bilingualism within this group, and monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers are also recognized within the service.

The results of the 2018 PLANEA test highlighted the low achievement levels in compulsory education for elementary level students in the indigenous education service. Although our results, in general terms, indicate that they are better than the national average (79% of students placed in Level 1), a considerable percentage of students continue to score insufficiently. The students with the greatest educational lag are those from Yuman communities. Regarding the other six school districts, the results vary in both Language and Communication and Mathematics. Even for schools classified as urban (all in Tijuana), the results still show that more than 50% of the students have insufficient learning outcomes. In addition to this already endemic situation for children enrolled in indigenous schools, the learning gap worsened due to the pandemic, as it was almost impossible to implement the Aprende en Casa strategy as designed. Thus, the existing gap between students in general and indigenous schools widened as a result of the school closures.

The characterization of the indigenous education service offers an insight into its components and acknowledges how it has addressed the needs of indigenous group members residing in Baja California. For over four decades, this service has provided education to indigenous children in the state, whether they come from native or migrant communities. However, the indigenous education service faces several challenges, one of the most significant being the teaching and, in many cases, the revitalization of indigenous languages (particularly Yuman languages). This challenge requires actions at the central level, as indigenous languages still do not have a socio-communicative and academic function in educational spaces.

Translation: Erika Morales.

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