



# VÉRTICE UNIVERSITARIO



"El saber de mis hijos  
hará mi grandeza"



latindex



# VÉRTICE UNIVERSITARIO

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# Commercial distribution of a traditional soup with innovation

## Distribución comercial de una sopa tradicional con innovación

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### Abstract

Changes in lifestyle, driven by the development of mass media, the incorporation of women into the workforce, the growth of global trade, among other factors, have influenced food consumption habits and led to an increase in the demand for pre-cooked foods. Among the products that have experienced growth are ready-to-eat soups. Considering the market potential of these products, a regional company from Sonora developed a ready-to-eat soup that combines tradition and innovation.

The objective of this study is to identify the acceptance of a traditional Sonoran food product with an innovative twist "Cazuela lista para consumir" within the distribution channel. A cross-sectional mixed-methods study was conducted. Through observation and data collection in commercial establishments, it was found that recipes highlighting emblematic elements of regional cuisine have not reached the shelves of major retail stores.

There is growth potential for innovative traditional soups; however, it is essential to emphasize

aspects such as preparation speed, the symbolism tied to tradition and identity, as well as offering a competitive price.

**Keywords:** Commercialization, Traditional Foods, Innovation

**JEL Code:** M31

### Resumen

Los cambios en los estilos de vida de la población, motivados por el desarrollo de los medios de comunicación, la incorporación de la mujer al ámbito laboral, el incremento del comercio mundial, entre otros, han influido en el consumo alimentario de la población y dado pauta al aumento de alimentos pre-cocinados. Entre los productos que ha experimentado un crecimiento, son las sopas listas para consumir. Considerando el potencial de mercado de estos productos, una empresa regional sonorense, generó una sopa lista para consumir donde se combina la tradición y la innovación. El objetivo es identificar la aceptación que tiene en el canal de distribución un alimento tradicional sonorense con innovación como la "Cazuela lista para consumir", se realizó una investigación mixta de corte transversal, donde mediante la





observación y toma de datos en los establecimientos comerciales, se identificó que las recetas que resaltan los elementos emblemáticos de la cocina regional no han llegado a los lineales de las grandes superficies. Existe un potencial de crecimiento para las sopas tradicionales con innovación, no obstante, es necesario enfatizar aspectos de rapidez en la elaboración, los simbolismos asociados a la tradición e identidad, así como un precio competitivo.

**Palabras claves:** Comercialización, Alimentos tradicionales, Innovación.

**Código JEL:** M31

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been an upward trend in the marketing of traditional or ethnic food. In the United States, for example, such products generated \$12.5 billion in sales in 2018, positioning it as a major global market for these types of foods (Statista Research Department, 2018; Mintel, 2012).

In the Mexican context, and specifically for Sonoran entrepreneurs, the traditional or ethnic food market represents an attractive opportunity. However, entering this market is not simple due to the diverse and highly competitive range of existing products. One strategy to achieve market positioning is innovation, which, according to the OECD (2018:21), is defined as “a new or improved product or process (or a combination of both) that differs significantly from previous products or processes and has been made available to potential users (product) or put into use by the production unit (process).”

In this regard, innovation becomes a viable strategy for small and medium-sized Sonoran food entrepreneurs to remain competitive and gain market share in the global arena. Additionally, it contributes to strengthening the local economy and development by generating direct and indirect employment, and serves as a means of preserving and transmitting culture, tradition, and identity.

It is within this context that the “ready-to-eat cazuela” emerges as a traditional Sonoran dish, specifically a soup or broth, rooted in the culinary traditions of the region. This product has undergone an innovation process that could make it attractive in the current market. While the cazuela is considered a traditional Sonoran product, its consumption

is lower compared to other traditional foods. This is due to “a lack of time to prepare it, limited availability of ingredients, and lack of knowledge on how to cook it” (Sandoval & Camarena, 2015).

The concept of “soup” is defined as “a hot or cold, more or less liquid dish prepared by cooking various ingredients such as meat, rice, and vegetables in a broth. However, in some parts of Mexico, the term does not refer exclusively to a liquid preparation; it can also refer to a broth, cream, rice, or even dry or soupy pasta” (Muñoz, 2000). Although the literature presents a variety of definitions, there is consensus that soup involves a broth made from multiple ingredients. Soup consumption has been part of family habits for generations, with variations over time such as instant or fortified soups.

Instant soups trace back to Germany around the 1870s, when Carl Heinrich Theodor Knorr experimented with dried vegetables and seasonings that preserved both nutritional value and flavor. Meanwhile, the invention of instant soups is attributed to German chemist Justus von Liebig, whose 1847 experiment known as meat extract was launched in Uruguay in 1864 (Sanz, 2003). Another major milestone occurred in Japan in 1958, when Taiwanese entrepreneur Momofuku Andō, founder of NISSIN FOODS, created the world’s first instant noodles, “Chicken Ramen.” Today, the company offers a wide variety of products (NISSIN FOODS, 2012).

Changing environments have led to shifts in lifestyles, including eating habits. Some authors suggest that “as industry and commerce became more important than agriculture, the need arose to solve food-related issues resulting from urbanization and other factors. There was a reduction in time available for food preparation due to increased family involvement in various activities and the physical distance between workplaces and homes. Additionally, the incorporation of women into the workforce, who traditionally were responsible for food preparation, has changed the way individuals relate to food” (Pacheco et al., 2018:29).

Ready-to-eat foods offer several advantages over home-cooked meals or those served at most restaurants. These include shorter preparation times, convenience, and variety benefitting individuals with limited time to shop for and cook meals.

Today, ready-to-eat foods continue to grow in

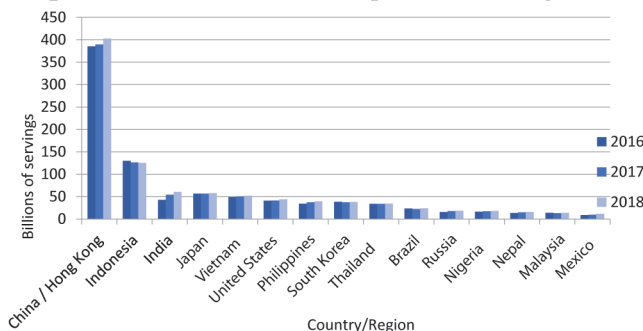


the market, with variations such as pre-cooked, functional, and frozen foods. Some authors note that convenience, health, and premium quality are the three main pillars of innovation in the food sector. This has led to concepts such as fourth and fifth range foods, which essentially refer to ready-to-eat products combined with innovation. Resa (2014:30) states that “the investment made by manufacturing companies in Research, Development, and Innovation (R&D&I) affects the entire sector, as it has been shown that categories with higher innovation levels grow up to four times more than those with low levels of new products. In the first case, market growth is close to 4%, while in the second it barely reaches 1%. The success of innovation is also tied to the distribution channel... it is a key factor, as two out of three consumers learn about new products on the store shelves where they shop.”

Instant soups originally began as simple vegetable and seasoning-based products, led by the Knorr company. Today, Knorr offers a variety of soups tailored to regional tastes in over 80 countries (Franco, 2011). As previously mentioned, the first instant noodles were launched in Japan in 1958 by Momofuku Andō, founder of NISSIN FOODS. These products later expanded to the Americas and Europe and gained global acceptance. The company currently operates 76 production plants in 19 countries (NISSIN FOODS, 2012).

According to the World Instant Noodles Association (2019), global demand for noodles surpassed 100 billion servings in 2012. In 2018, demand reached 103.6 billion servings, with China/Hong Kong leading consumption at 40.25 billion servings. In Mexico, consumption for the same year totaled 1.18 billion servings, placing it second in Latin America after Brazil (2.37 billion servings) and 15th worldwide (see Graph 1).

**Graph 1.** Global noodle consumption in recent years



**Source:** Own elaboration based on data from the World Instant Noodles Association, 2019.

With the development of societies, people's needs have changed, and with them, their food consumption habits. Currently, due to the fast pace of everyday life, there is a tendency toward ready-to-eat products. A study conducted in Spain with a population of European food consumers found the following market trends (Instituto Nacional de Consumo de España, 2000): less time devoted to shopping and food preparation; preference for purchasing meals that require little preparation; a tendency toward single-dish meals or, in any case, less structured meals; and an increase in the purchase of pre-cooked dishes, meals with packaging suitable for consumption on trays in front of the television, and greater use of food delivery services.

In response to these demands, adjustments and improvements in quality have arisen in soups. In this context, healthy instant soups with high nutritional value have been produced, such as the instant soup based on ipomoea batatas (sweet potato) flour made in Guayaquil, Ecuador; instant soup from fava bean flour; and instant soups that use arracacha flour (a root recognized in most Latin American and Andean countries), the latter representing a traditional food (Albán et al., 2011; Macías et al., 2011; García et al., 2007).

## Innovation

Consumer satisfaction is a key element for a company's success. To respond to consumers' changing needs, entrepreneurs not only produce goods but must also innovate by generating new products. Meeting market needs is a complicated task due to the time and resources required to carry out this activity. The literature presents various concepts of innovation. According to Lundvall (1992), innovation is defined as an ongoing process of searching for and exploring outcomes: new products, new techniques, new organizational forms, and new markets. The Oslo Manual (2005) states that innovation is “the introduction of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, marketing method, or organizational method in the internal practices of a company, workplace organization, or external relations.”

Innovation is considered a relevant factor in organizational performance because it involves bringing novel ideas to market that represent value for customers (Fonseca et al., 2015). Business

innovation is an improvement in business activity through changes in business models, processes, organization, products, or marketing to make the business more efficient and achieve a better position in the market (Hernando, 2017). Furthermore, consumers constantly change their minds, leading to changes in consumption habits, demanding changes in the goods they acquire or requesting new ones. Innovation can become a fundamental pillar of competitive strategy, relying on the capabilities marketing provides to an organization, increasing its innovation-generating power (Weerawardena, 2003). Within an organization's competitive strategy is its marketing capability, which includes the skills and resources that add value to products and services to satisfy demand (Potočan, 2013).

## Innovation and tradition: instant soup cazuela “nutricazuela”

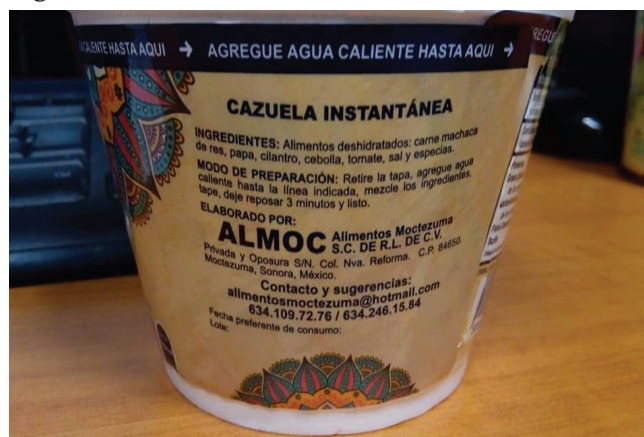
The instant soup cazuela represents the traditional Sonoran stew cazuela or machaca broth in an innovative way, since the production process generates a product ready for consumption. It is a product that, besides its easy preparation, offers practical benefits to the consumer, avoiding the preparation, purchase, and search for its ingredients. Its production has taken care to maintain adequate nutritional aspects as well as preserve characteristics of the traditional product. Additionally, the company is located in a rural region of the state of Sonora, Mexico, which implies the continuation of traditions adapted to the “modern world.” Botanas y Machaca Villarreal is a small family business located in the municipality of Moctezuma in the Sierra of Sonora. In December 2017, the product Nutricazuela instant soup was launched (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Instant soup: Nutricazuela



The ready-to-eat cazuela is made with ingredients harvested from municipalities in the state of Sonora. It is composed of machaca (dried shredded beef), potatoes, green chili, chiltepín, tomato, cilantro, and garlic. The vegetables in this product are dehydrated, which preserves them. Two variants of Nutricazuela are available: one spicy and one mild. Additionally, it includes a nutritional information panel for the product (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Back label of Nutricazuela



## Commercial distribution

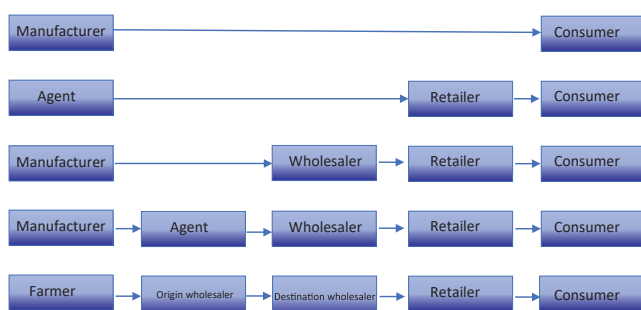
The term distribution is perceived differently depending on the person or establishment engaged in commercial activity. According to the American Marketing Association (n.d.), it has various meanings. Distribution (according to the marketing definition) is the commercialization and transportation of products to consumers. Distribution (according to the commercial definition) refers to the extent of market coverage. Distribution (according to the economic definition) is a study of how production prices are reflected in the market, that is, the reduction of rents, wages, interest, and profits. Likewise, Mercado (2015) defines distribution as the set of operations and activities carried out from the moment products, under their normal form of use, enter the producer's warehouse until they are delivered to consumers or users.

Commercial distribution refers to the set of activities necessary to make goods and services available to the final consumer under the desired conditions of place, time, form, and quantity (Chirouze, 1982). Commercial channels are necessary for product distribution and are fundamental for achieving proper market positioning. The organizations that make up the channel are called intermediaries;

they are distribution companies situated between the producer and the final consumer (Díez et al., 1992). Kotler and Armstrong (2008: 300) state that a distribution channel “is a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer or industrial user.”

Distribution channels are classified according to the activities they perform and their purpose. There are various categorizations; however, Armario's (1993) classification is used here, which emphasizes types of goods. The consumer goods channel is used to transfer physical products from the producer to the final consumers, and various alternatives can be employed. One alternative is direct sales from the manufacturer or producer to the consumer, which is common for some agricultural products or companies that sell through catalogs. Another alternative is selling through retailers, typically used in the automotive sector (dealerships) or the food sector via large stores, mainly hypermarkets and some supermarket chains. A further alternative is using the so-called classic channel, which includes wholesale and retail institutions. Finally, another possibility is that contact between the manufacturer and wholesaler requires the intermediation of so-called intermediary agents, as is the case with imported products, whose origin is highly varied (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Consumption channels



**Source:** Own elaboration, adapted from Santesmases et al., 2014: 235.

The ideal distribution channel for introducing a new product such as the traditional instant soup includes self-service stores, convenience stores, and traditional retail markets. This selection is related to the product offerings they commercialize, which include various instant soups; others sell a significant number of traditional products and also consider the practicality of the products they offer as a key element of their services.

The definition of a self-service store ranges from

basic consumer stores to large chains of self-service stores belonging to multinational corporations (Miranda, 2018). Convenience stores, meanwhile, are small shops located in residential areas, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They offer a limited line of convenience products with high turnover, as well as ready-to-eat food (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).

Regarding traditional retail markets, these are “those that group collective establishments formed by the union of multiple independent stores located in one premises, which may or may not be free of other uses, regardless of whether their ownership is municipal or private” (Juste, 1993 in Fernández 2000: 45). Some may also be specialty stores, characterized by handling a limited product line with a deep assortment within that line (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).

The National Association of Self-Service and Department Stores (PROFECO, 2013) classifies self-service stores based on the size of the premises, the lines of merchandise sold, and additional services offered to consumers. Thus, they are classified as megamarkets, hypermarkets, supermarkets, membership clubs, warehouses, convenience stores, mini-markets, and grocery stores. In this context, the analysis of distribution establishments located in the city of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, in which marketing the instant soup “Nutricazuela” is considered viable, includes self-service stores, grocery stores, large retail chains, and convenience stores. Their selection is due to the presence of other instant soups and the sale of traditional products they carry.

Based on these criteria, 693 retail establishments were identified, and for grocery or “neighborhood” stores, 3,606 commercial establishments (INEGI, 2019) were found, which meet characteristics such as breadth and depth of product lines, geographic location within Hermosillo, store size, and organizational form that allow the distribution of essential consumer goods and traditional products. These establishments are recognized as hypermarkets, supermarkets, membership clubs, warehouses, convenience stores, mini-markets, and grocery stores. Some establishments belong to commercial chains; some are local, but the most relevant come from other states in Mexico or abroad. Based on the number of establishments with these characteristics, 84 stores were located within the



city. Generally, these establishments have full departments and shelving dedicated to instant soups such as pasta, soups, and oriental food. The existence of a prior offering makes the commercialization of Nutricazuela viable and feasible.

## Methodology

Since this is an initial exploration of the commercial characteristics involved in distributing a traditional ready-to-eat food in Hermosillo, Mexico, qualitative methodology was used in the fieldwork. The study began with direct observation on the shelves of ten commercial establishments in the city. Some of these belong to commercial chains, so their commercial policies apply uniformly across their locations, a characteristic considered when selecting them. Through direct observation on distribution shelves, data were collected on product offerings and marketing strategies used for similar or substitute products. Therefore, this was the method selected for defining the products and market. The information obtained allowed identification of the instant soups offered in the local market, as well as important elements such as brand attributes,

price, origin, among others, relevant at the time of commercialization. The shelf visits took place from March to April 2018.

For selecting the establishments for the shelf visits, the proposals of Kotler and Armstrong (2007) were considered. These proposals start from the product offerings the stores provide, the establishment's market positioning, types of products they commercialize, and the brand's place in consumer minds. Additionally, the geographic distribution of establishments in the locality was taken into account, seeking a balanced selection by zones. A data collection instrument was developed that recorded information on articles such as product type, weight, price, nutritional information, type of packaging, origin, expiration date, flavors, brand, department within each establishment where the product is sold, shelf position, and other label-related data.

## Results

Regarding the shelf visits, it was found that 36.1% of the establishments visited are located in the eastern part of the city, 27.8% in the west; meanwhile, the

**Table 1.** Soup typology according to intrinsic characteristics and consistency

Ready-to-eat products according to their state		
Solid	Liquid	Powder
		
		
		

Source: Own elaboration based on information from the available market supply.

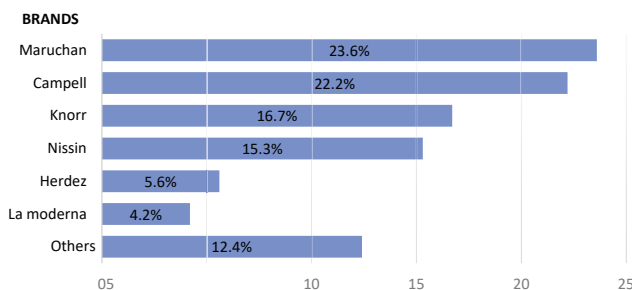
southern and northern zones represent 23.6% and 12.5%, respectively.

Seventy-two observations of instant soups were identified and classified according to their type as liquid, solid, and powdered (Table 1). This classification was done to differentiate the soups according to their appearance, since this characteristic is also taken into account by consumers when making their choice, and also to define the product's direct competition. Liquid soups are those whose particles have greater mobility than solids but less than gases and do not have a definite shape. Solid soups have their own shape and resist being divided, exhibiting firmness, density, and strength. Powdered soups are a combination of solid and powder; powder is defined as a collection of tiny particles resulting from grinding a substance or removing all its water content (Oxford Dictionary, 2019).

Of the references observed, 43.1% are solid; some come with seasoning mixes to enhance the flavor, while 37.5% are considered liquid. The latter feature a combination of different foods such as chicken, tomato, vegetables, onion, rice, or may also include cream-based soups like mushroom, corn, tomato, cheese, among others. Lastly, powdered soups (19.4%), although similar to solid ones, actually contain a greater number of ingredients.

Among the observed products, 16 brands of instant soups were identified. The most prominent was the brand Maruchan, with 23.6% shelf presence, followed by Campbell's with 22.2%. Other brands with lower participation included Knorr (16.7%), Nissin (15.3%), Herdez (5.6%), and La Moderna (4.2%) (Graph 1). Although the supply of instant soups is broad, none of the available brands originate from the region, nor do they offer a recipe with traditional Sonoran characteristics or anything similar to the "Ready-to-eat Cazuela."

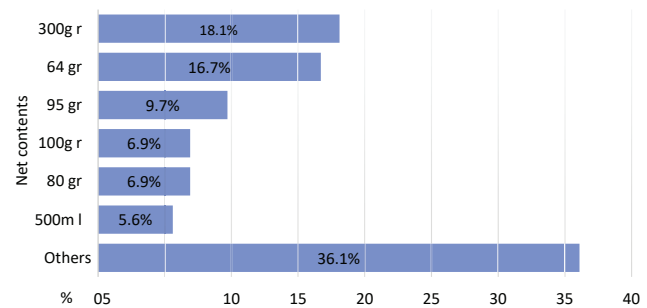
**Graph 2.** Instant soup brands available on distribution shelves



Source: Own elaboration.

The products are distributed in different quantities, measured in units of mass and volume, such as grams and milliliters, depending on the state of the product (solid, liquid, or powdered). Among the most common presentations is the 300 g format, representing 18.1% of the observations, followed by 64 g soups at 16.7%. Next are the 95 g soups, accounting for 9.7% of the available products. The 100 g format represents 6.9% of the observations, as do the 80 g soups, while the 500 ml soups make up 5.6% (Graph 2).

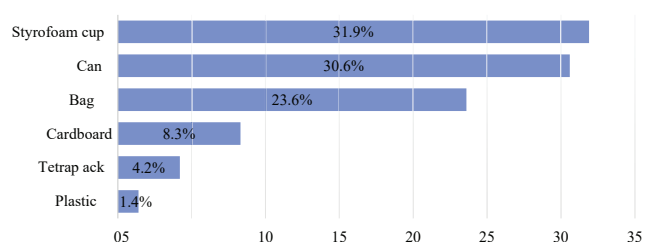
**Graph 3.** Quantity of presentations in instant soups.



Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, it was observed that prices range from \$9.90 to \$40.00 Mexican pesos, with an average of \$16.50. Different types of packaging were also found, with the most common being Styrofoam cups (31.9%), bags (23.6%), Tetra Pak (4.2%), and plastic containers (1.4%) (Graph 3).

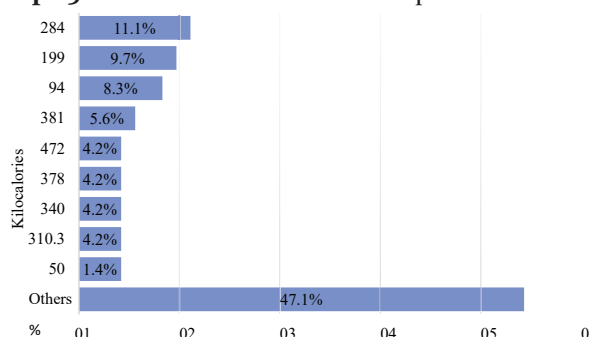
**Graph 4.** Type of packaging



Source: Own elaboration.

Products such as soups contain nutrients, and the proportions vary depending on the different ingredients they are made with (wheat flour, extracts, sodium, seasonings, dehydrated vegetables, sugar, broth, among others). However, energy is also necessary to carry out daily activities, which is why an analysis of the kilocalorie content of the identified products was conducted. The most frequent portion was 284 Kcal (11.1%), followed by 199 Kcal (9.7%), 94 Kcal (8.3%), 381 Kcal (5.6%), and 472 Kcal and 378 Kcal, each with 4.2% (Graph 4).

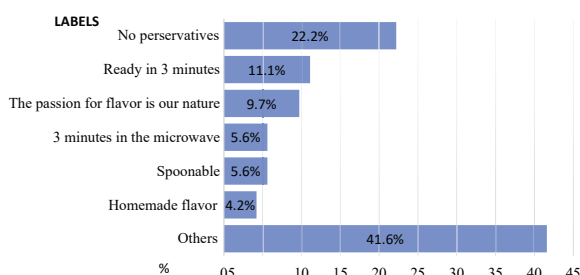
**Graph 5.** Nutritional value of instant soups.



Source: Own elaboration.

Manufacturers provide information on the packaging to capture consumer interest with the goal of selling the product. One of the elements they use is labels that describe the product and its benefits. Some brands use the same label across all their products, while others use more than one. The most frequently observed information includes: No preservatives 22.2%, Ready in 3 minutes 11.1%, The passion for flavor is our nature 9.7%, 3 minutes in the microwave 5.6%, Spoonable 5.6%, Homemade flavor 4.2%. Other information appears in smaller proportions, such as: gourmet, homemade broth, homemade seasoning, just add water, exquisite flavor, among others (Graph 5).

**Graph 6.** Labels on instant soups.



Source: Own elaboration.

During the shelf surveys, various countries of origin for the instant soups were identified. The country with the largest share is Mexico with 69.4%, followed by the United States with 27.8%. The presence of products from the U.S. can likely be explained by geographic proximity and existing trade agreements. Lastly, Japan accounts for 2.8%. Although Japanese products have a small presence, the growing demand for Asian cuisine products encourages their availability, such as noodles. Regarding the countries where the soups are packaged, this coincides with their origin: Mexico is the main producer of the national supply (69.4%), followed by the United States with 27.8%, and lastly Japan with 2.8%.

In the shelf surveys, different shelf positions where instant soups can be found were identified. This depends on the store format as well as merchandising understood as all activities, actions, strategies, and tactics aimed at “attracting the consumer at the point of sale” used in each store (Martínez, 2018). The most common position for instant soups is eye level, with 31.9% of the products placed there. This height is used to attract customer attention and encourage impulse buying. Waist level contains 25% of the products, which facilitates easy reaching. About 16.7% are located at foot level, usually heavier or slower-moving products. Products placed above head level also account for 16.7%, making them very visible and benefiting their turnover. Other less common shelf positions were also noted. According to Escriva (2010), the optimal sales zone is eye level, followed by hand level (which can also be considered waist level), while the highest and lowest levels (above head and foot level) sell less. These heights together represent 56.9% of shelf area usage by brands, with 31.9% at eye level and 25% at hand/waist level.

Stores are divided into sections where similar products or those with related uses are grouped. The departments where instant soups are positioned vary by store format, but they are usually located in the pasta and soup section (88.6%). Next is the grocery section, which includes canned goods, seasonings, and dry products (8.6%), and finally, the Asian food section accounts for 2.9% (Graph 5.9).

## Conclusion and discussion

The fast pace of modern life, the development of communication media, the incorporation of women into the workforce, lack of free time, distances in large cities, the increase in single-person households, among other factors, have led to changes in people’s lifestyles and thus their buying and consumption habits. From a food perspective, lifestyle changes have created demand for new products that are attractive, functional, maintain nutritional attributes, and are quick and convenient to prepare (Tasnim et al., 2017; Costa et al., 2007).

In this context, ready-to-eat foods have emerged for the general population, essentially combining food technology and innovation with consumer needs. Among ready-to-eat foods, soups hold a prominent position. Although they are believed to have





originated in 19th-century Germany in the 1870s, their real market success started in the 1950s. Today, their success is undeniable: in 2018, 1,036.2 billion portions of noodles were demanded worldwide, with Mexico ranking second in demand (11.8 billion portions) in Latin America after Brazil.

Undoubtedly, the presence of instant soups responds to changing market needs. These trends permeate different levels, which is why small businesses also recognize such products as opportunities for innovation and market positioning. Personal initiative, market knowledge, and the desire to transmit traditions have led to the proposal of an instant soup that combines tradition with innovation. To understand the potential of this product in the market and to identify acceptance within the distribution channel of a traditional Sonoran food with innovation like the “Cazuela lista para consumir,” three areas were analyzed: supply, distribution channel, and product. The empirical research involved direct observation on the shelves of ten distribution establishments that market instant soups and traditional foods.

The results show that the instant soup market in Mexico is broad and diverse. There are solid, liquid, and powdered soups, all characterized by quick preparation, but with variations in presentation and consistency. For this research, the Hermosillo market was used as a reference, where 16 instant soup brands were identified. Among the most prominent were Maruchan, Campbell, and Knorr. Other brands such as Nissin, Herdez, and La Moderna were also present but with a smaller market share. Prices ranged from \$9.90 to \$40.00 Mexican pesos, with an average of \$16.50. Different packaging types were found, including Styrofoam cups, bags, Tetra Pak, and plastic. The market offering suggests a saturated market with high competition, particularly from large companies. However, it was also identified that in terms of traditional Sonoran products or recipes, competition is practically non-existent. Although “homemade” recipes have entered the market, those highlighting iconic elements of regional cuisine have not reached the shelves of major retailers. From a marketing perspective, there is significant growth potential; however, aspects such as speed of preparation, the symbolism associated with tradition and identity, and competitive pricing must be emphasized.

It is important to consider that the information

obtained shows favorable results and guidelines for product commercialization. However, it should not be forgotten to analyze consumer acceptance regarding a traditional instant soup. Also, the research was conducted in a city where the product is relatively well-known to consumers; expanding the study to other contexts will provide more precise information on regional or national acceptance.

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# Identifying Strategies for Selecting Expatriate Employees

## Identificar Estrategias Para Selecccionar Empleadores Expatriados

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### Abstract

This research was an investigation triggered by an alarming history of expatriate failure, that is, in that expatriate did not complete their assignments and returned home prematurely. The research showed that very few factors were taken into account when recruiting and selecting expatriate workers, factors that contributed to an early termination of the foreign assignment. These factors include Cultural Intelligence, preparedness, failure to adapt, language barriers, homesickness, and not being able to bring family. Implications for future expatriate success would be to take said factors into account in all the preliminary stages of recruitment and selection, before sending expatriate workers on foreign assignments.

**Key words** Expatriate, Recruitment- Selection, Failure rates, and MNC in Hermosillo Sonora

**JEL:** F23, D21, C1

### Resumen

Esta investigación fue desencadenada por un historial alarmante de fracaso de expatriados, es decir, en el que los expatriados no completaron sus asignaciones y regresaron a casa prematuramente. La investigación mostró que se tuvieron en cuenta muy pocos factores al reclutar y seleccionar trabajadores expatriados, factores que contribuyeron a una terminación anticipada de la asignación en el

extranjero. Estos factores incluyen inteligencia cultural, preparación, falta de adaptación, barreras del idioma, nostalgia y no poder traer consigo a la familia. Las implicaciones para un éxito futuro de los expatriados serían tener en cuenta dichos factores en todas las etapas preliminares de reclutamiento y selección, antes de enviar trabajadores expatriados en asignaciones en el extranjero.

**Palabras clave:** Expatriado, reclutamiento-selección, tasa de fracaso y MNC en Hermosillo

### Introduction

Multinational companies have experienced high failure rates because employees often return home prematurely for reasons related to incapability to adapt to a new culture (Wang & Varma, 2019). Hung-Wen (2007) concluded that many expatriates fail within the first year, resulting in costs between \$1.2 million a year and their emotional costs (Sambasivan et al., 2017); as projects go unfinished, and a sense of failure on the part of the employees. The research I am proposing will consist of a multiple case study, interviewing various managers and HR employees responsible for recruiting and selecting employees to work on overseas assignments.

Managers of multinational companies sending employees to work in foreign branches experience high failure rates because employees return home prematurely for various reasons related to incapability to adapt to a new culture (Wang



& Varma, 2019). Researchers have shown a large number of expatriates fail within the first year, resulting in costs between \$1.2 million a year (Hung-Wen, 2007) and in addition to the financial, there are emotional costs (Sambasivan, et al, 2017) per expatriate and company. The general business problem is managers assigning home country nationals to overseas assignments experience high failure rates. The specific business problem is that some managers lack strategies to select employees as expatriates qualified and willing to work in different countries.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies managers use to select employees as expatriates qualified and willing to work in different countries. The population will be managers of expatriates in four Sonora, Mexico manufacturing companies who have shown significant improvement in terms of selecting employees as expatriates who are qualified and willing to work in different countries. Implications for positive social change are to increase the successful completion of overseas assignments, which can have a positive economic and social effect and increase productivity and quality of life of expatriates in the home country and host countries, as well as quality of life of stakeholders such as foreign employees, their families, suppliers, and clients.

The three methodologies available for research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Stacey, 2011). According to Turner (2010), a researcher using a qualitative method explores phenomena through a small number of research subjects. Using the qualitative method should enable me to explore the strategies and processes managers consider when selecting workers for overseas assignments. A researcher using the quantitative method employs closed-ended questions to test a hypothesis about variables relationships or groups' differences (Stacey, 2011). I am not postulating a theory about variables' characteristics or relationships but instead seeking to identify and explore strategies; therefore, the quantitative method does not align with the purpose of the proposed study. Using the mixed-methods approach requires combining both qualitative and quantitative methods (Stacey, 2011). It is not appropriate for this study as a quantitative approach's statistical analysis is not required for this study's purpose.

Three potential qualitative design options are phenomenological, ethnographic, and case study (Astalin, 2013). A researcher explores the personal meanings of subjective human experience when using a phenomenological design (Byrne, 2017). As such, a phenomenological model would limit me to exploring the different personal meanings of the skills by the workers selected for overseas assignments and their home country managers on a case-by-case basis, which does not align with the proposed study's purpose. Ethnographic researchers explore a cultural group's shared beliefs and behavior (Fetterman, 2010). Since I am not focusing this study on exploring a group's culture, an ethnographic design is not appropriate for this study. I will use a case study design. Qualitative case researchers use data from various sources, such as interviews, observations, reports, minutes of meetings, advertisements, and campaign materials, so case studies rely on multiple data types for analysis (Mills et al., 2010). The multiple case study design is the most appropriate for my research because I will gather data from numerous sources, such as interviews and archival and procedural documentation. Unlike a single case study, a multiple case study will allow the generalization of results to be turned into an analytical generalization (Yin, 1994).

The potential significance of this study is to identify the successful strategies managers use to provide an improved process for selecting employees for overseas assignments. As related to the potential for effecting social change, improving these selection processes could decrease the failure rate of home country employees sent on overseas assignments and improve the result for the home country company. Moreover, these selection strategies once identified, could benefit overseas facilities and the individuals selected (or rejected) to go on overseas assignments. Improved productivity would allow these companies to contribute more to corporate social responsibility initiatives in the communities in which they operate.

The focus of this study is not to solve the problem of expatriate failure rates, but rather identify potential strategies for more successful selection methods. Through this study, I seek to identify strategies and methods to help managers of multinational corporations improve the success of the process for identifying which candidates are likely to complete the overseas assignments they receive. The results



of this study might provide the tools for preparing and motivating employees while on assignments to increase organizations' overseas subsidiaries' performance.

Managers of multinational organizations have been considering employees' overseas assignments solely on an organizational level (Aycan, 2011), but Loes (2015) proposed that over the last 10 years, these managers have started to consider said assignments at an individual employee level. The improved results may prevent both unnecessary stresses on the part of both the expatriates in question and those who assign them, but also to the host country organizations. Managers harnessing this improved productivity could enable allow these companies to contribute more to addressing corporate social responsibilities through enhancing funding of local charitable initiatives.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the proposed study is the international human resource (IHRM) framework (Kumar & Murthy, 2013). Kumar and Murthy built their international human resource framework on an earlier framework, the strategic international human resource management (SIHRM) (Schuler et al., 1993). Schuler et al. (1993) stipulated that SIHRM is sufficiently distinct from standard human resource management (HRM) to warrant its framework to review the concepts, which make up the expatriate recruitment and selection process. Schuler et al. (1993) took into account such intercultural issues as international law, ethics, and cultural intelligence. Schuler et al. (1993) also proposed anchoring SIHRM in the strategic components of multinational enterprises (MNEs), accurately aligning the links between the corporations' separate units and their internal operations. After an overview of the literature on the subject since 1980, Dabic et al. (2015) demonstrated the dominance of a separate theoretical or conceptual framework in this field. Some concepts related to the SIHRM framework of selection include job factors, compensation, and motivation (Schuler et al., 1993). Building on this theory, along with the research conducted into the selection of expatriate workers in the 20 years since, Kumar and Murthy (2013) proposed the IHRM framework for evaluating the possible performance of employees on overseas assignments. The authors

listed five specific factors with many subfactors, including an employee's proficiency (job factors, motivation, and interpersonal skills), cultural training, the compensation structure, cultural intelligence, performance evaluation (task), and context and external factors (Kumar & Murthy, 2013). Identifying the aspects related to the selection of successful expatriate workers is, therefore, directly related to the concepts of IHRM, making the IHRM framework as being a likely appropriate framework for my understanding of the findings from my proposed study.

## Operational Definitions

*Cross-cultural training:* The educative processes used to improve intercultural learning via the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies needed for successful interactions in diverse cultures (Joshua-Gojer, 2012).

*Cultural intrinsic motivation:* Individuals' inherent interest in other cultures, regardless of motivation by external factors (Firth et al., 2014).

*Cultural self-efficacy:* Individuals' belief in their capability to be effective in culturally diverse environments (Firth et al., 2014).

*Expatriate adjustment:* The person-environment relationship in the three dimensions of cognition, feelings, and behaviors (Haslberger et al., 2013).

*Expatriate effectiveness:* The extent to which the expatriate's job performance reflects behaviors that are relevant to the organization's goals, determined by a set of variables, including personality, adjustment, language skill, cultural distance, organizational support, job performance, intentions of an early return, and manager efficacy (Salgado & Bastida, 2017).

*Expatriate failure:* The measurable financial costs of the early return of expatriates and disruption to international operations or as expatriates who are not retained by their organization following completion of an international assignment (Joshua-Gojer, 2012).

*Newcomer socialization:* The process by which newcomers successfully navigate the uncertain aspects of a new job and effectively adjust to the demands of a new work environment (Ellis et al., 2015).



*Self-initiated expatriates:* Expatriates who self-initiate their international relocation, with the intentions of regular employment and temporary stay, and with skills/professional qualifications (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014).

*Work adjustment:* The extent to which expatriates feel comfortable handling their jobs during an international assignment (Firth et al., 2014).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Business scholars have acknowledged that core assumptions, limitations, and delimitations can identify how, why, and to what effect these affect the research in question (Martin & Parmar, 2012). Assumptions are aspects behind the research that have not been proven (Scotland, 2012). Limitations are potential weaknesses in your study and are out of your control (Simon, 2011). The delimitations are boundaries set by the researcher himself for his study (Ellis & Levy, 2009).

#### **Assumptions**

It is essential to acknowledge, in any research, the assumptions behind the research and recognize all assumptions have not been proven (Scotland, 2012). The effect of these assumptions implies that the most significant contributions to the field of research are those contexts and situations that challenge previous assumptions (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Researchers using a case study method explore, describe, or explain phenomena by exhaustive research within its natural setting (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Assumptions are notions or beliefs believed to be accurate by the researcher in question and guide the study. As researchers in previous studies have shown, multinational corporation (MNC) managers who send employees to work in foreign branches see an alarming failure rate in those employees who do not finish their assignments (Firth et al., 2014). The second assumption is between 33% and 80% of expatriates sent by an MNC to work in overseas branches, fail within the first year (Joshua-Gojer, 2012), suggesting expatriates do not complete their assignment as planned. For this study, I will focus specifically on managers of companies sending home-country workers to work in Mexican assembly plants (*maquiladoras*) and their processes for recruiting employees to work in their foreign facilities. The third assumption is that managers lack strategical knowledge about certain controllable

existing factors or currently unexplored options in selecting successful expatriate candidates. Making conscious assumptions and identifying unconscious assumptions will avoid misconceptions related to the research question and measurements.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are problems or weaknesses identified by the researcher before and during the study and duly reported. The first limitation in this research study is self-reported, pertaining to factors of internal and external validity and construct validity. The second limitation of this study is that it is strenuous to provide comprehensive, global research. The difficulty lies in investigating the movement of workers between the world's 193 countries and offer a cohesive consensus as expatriation is truly a global phenomenon in an ever-increasing global economy (Brutus et al., 2013). The third limitation is that focusing on the Mexican portion of the problem of expatriate failure would be to ignore dimensions of a culture completely, as expatriates of different nationalities will react differently to the foreign assignment and the stimuli to send them on foreign assignments. The selection of a limited sample was an acknowledgment of the impossibility of observing all nationalities of an expatriate working on foreign assignments. The many different factors contributing to their success or failure on international transfers are considered. The recognition of limitations ensures that the credibility of this proposed research study rests on the strategies and procedures used. The recognition of limitations also demonstrates self-awareness on the part of the researcher throughout the research process because it will show the level of objectivity applied during both the research and data analysis (Houghton et al., 2013).

#### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the factors that the researcher in question will not consider (McGregor, 2018) and those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study (Simon, 2011). The first delimitation is the sample subjects who are available for interviews in Hermosillo, Sonora. The second delimitation is the availability of participants for interviews. The third delimitation of this study is the reliability of participants to suggest acquaintances for interviewing. Penrod et al. (2003) concluded controlling a sample gives a researcher





the ability to select participants with experiences related to the specific business problem. Because I will not have the ability to select my participants, I will rely on colleagues and acquaintances of foreign nationals working for international conglomerates in Hermosillo who may be less enthusiastic about participating in the study for fear of incriminating themselves or jeopardizing their positions.

## Methodology

For this study, I have decided on a qualitative approach. The qualitative method will allow me to acquire the amount of information needed to draw significant conclusions. The in-depth approach to collecting, categorizing, and analyzing different experiences and opinions provides the most viable approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The three methodologies available for research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Stacey, 2011). According to Turner (2010), a researcher using a qualitative method explores phenomena through a small number of research subjects. A researcher using the quantitative method employs closed-ended questions to test a hypothesis about variables concerning relationships or groups' differences (Stacey, 2011). Using the qualitative method should enable me to explore the strategies and processes managers consider when selecting employees for overseas assignments.

I am not postulating a hypothesis about variables' characteristics or relationships, but rather seeking to identify and explore strategies; therefore, the quantitative method does not align with the proposed study's purpose.

The established method has been qualitative research (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014).

Using the mixed-methods approach requires combining both qualitative and quantitative methods (Stacey, 2011). It is not appropriate for this study as a quantitative approach's statistical analysis is not required for this study's purpose.

When considering international research stages, where many different cultures, and therefore, mores, values, and principles are in play, a qualitative study offers the most viable option. This viability is because it does not limit the number of possible results (Wagner et al., 2014). Previous studies, such

as the expatriates' geographical location and their foreign assignments as a factor of expatriate success rate (Andresen et al., 2014), were only possible using a qualitative approach. The study's sample size was validated by another peer-reviewed paper, outlining the factors that I would need to consider for ensuring the correct sample size for an academically valid study result that holds up to closer scrutiny and criticism (Marshall et al., 2013). The selected research method had a strong influence on the conceptual framework.

Three potential qualitative design options are phenomenological, ethnographic, and case study (Astalin, 2013). A researcher explores subjective human experience's personal meanings when using a phenomenological design (Byrne, 2017). A phenomenological design would be limited to exploring the different personal meanings of the experiences by the workers selected for overseas assignments and their home country managers on a case-by-case basis, which is not aligned with the proposed study's purpose. Ethnographic researchers explore a cultural group's shared beliefs and behavior (Fetterman, 2010). A definition put forward is that ethnography is defined as a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group (Parker-Jenkins, M., 2017). As I will specifically not be studying a group with a shared culture, but the opposite, this method is deemed not appropriate.

I will use a case study design. Qualitative case researchers use data from various sources, such as interviews, observations, reports, minutes of meetings, advertisements, and campaign materials, so case studies rely on multiple data types for analysis (Mills et al., 2010).

The multiple case study design is the most appropriate for my research because I will gather data from numerous sources, such as interviews and archival and procedural documentation. Unlike a single case study, a multiple case study will allow the generalization of results to be turned into an analytical generalization (Yin, 1994).

Qualitative case researchers use data from various sources, such as interviews, observations, reports, minutes of meetings, advertisements, and campaign materials, so case studies rely on multiple data types for analysis (Mills et al., 2010). A case study approach will allow me to adjust the study

design's dynamic as the situation presents itself or communication problems, contact, or willingness arose. A case study approach allows for multiple collection methods (reviewing documents, artifacts, archives, observation, and interviews) and allowing me to focus on individuals, small groups, and the organization they belong to as a whole (Yin, 2014).

Case study methods allow for a study where no fundamental theory or hypothesis has been stipulated (Lewis, 2015). A case study avoids following strictly laid assumptions and procedures. Case study research can help prevent constricting the narrative of social life within theoretical descriptions (Tavory & Timmermans, 2009, & Yin, 2013).

As the purpose of the study is to provide insight into expatriate workers' success factors, we must allow for a research design that would enable participants to identify factors freely. Case study research can identify previously unidentified categories, which will reveal themselves as the study continues.

The multiple case study design is the most appropriate for my study because I will gather data from various sources, such as interviews and archival and procedural documentation. Unlike a single case study, a multiple case study will allow the generalization of results to be turned into an analytical generalization (Yin, 1994).

### ***Role of the Researcher***

As the researcher in this study, I am responsible for processing data collected through interviews in an objective and nonarbitrary manner. Walsh (2014) noted that the researcher is removed from the study subject and therefore is not a part of the subject's natural environment. In case studies, the researcher's inherent subjectivity must be considered (Mabry, 2008). Qualitative research emerges as the preferred method when looking at current international business research trends (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). My relation to the research participants must be objective, and I must ethically protect the subjects of the study against any possible reprisal by their superiors. I will have no prior relationship with the subjects of my research to guarantee objectivity.

In researching strategies for selecting expatriate workers, expatriates' geographical location and foreign assignments have shown to be a factor

in terms of expatriate success rates (Andresen et al., 2014). Zhuang, et al (2013) posited that local mentors' psychosocial support, role modeling, and career development functions were related to expatriate employees' general adjustment to a foreign environment and work dynamics, office interaction adjustment, and work adjustment. The expatriate employee's geographic location contributes either positively (an expatriate worker completes their foreign assignment) or negatively (an expatriate worker does not complete their foreign assignment). Long-term or short-term assignments (meaning the amount of time an expatriate worker is to spend in an overseas environment to complete set tasks) are also crucial to completing the assignment. Long-term goals signify that the expatriate worker spends more time away from their homes, family, co-workers, and friends (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015).

In qualitative research, validity and objectivity are addressed by following the Belmont Report guidelines, which will allow me to engage with research subjects. Abiding by standards set out in *The Belmont Report* will also allow me to comply with the ethical guidelines of Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB).

I will employ a procedural document called an interview protocol, which will allow me to conduct interviews consistently and impartially. This protocol will be a standardized script that will include predetermined questions and information on the background and reasons for the study and a section for informed consent of interview subjects. The interview protocol will ensure consistency and validity during the process of data collection analysis.

The responsibility of the researcher is to determine the appropriate sample size of interviewees. In a qualitative study, small sample size is used to extract significant answers (Burns & Bush, 2006), in that the conclusion is not derived from statistical analysis. To consider the correct sample size for an academically valid study result, the sample will be determined using an interval method, which is a method to determine the maximum and the minimum number of results necessary for a valid analysis (Burns & Bush, 2006).

### ***Participants***

The focus of this study is companies sending employees to work in foreign branches and high





failure rates because these employees return home prematurely. Participants in this study will be members of a specific population stratus. Participants will be foreign expatriate workers sent to Hermosillo to work in a foreign company's local operations. Participants will include expatriates residing in Hermosillo, and these participants will consist of managers or HR expatriates residing in Hermosillo. Managers in these corporations have experiences and perspectives regarding sending their employees to staff their operations in other countries.

Firth et al. (2014) put limitations on participants, such as age, gender, educational level, and years having worked with the company that sent them. Firth et al. (2014) did not try to look for success rates related to a specific demographic. Therefore, I will identify selection by managers of multinational corporations of employees for overseas assignments within a specific demographic, relating successful completion of overseas assignments to factors such as age, gender, geographic location, presence of family, and financial stimuli. The family factor has proven to be very decisive in terms of whether employees accept foreign assignments (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998).

I will identify factors that contribute to the successful and unsuccessful completion of expatriates' foreign assignments. Successful selection of expatriate employees by managers relies on the perceived trustworthiness of the organizations in which they are employed, as both recruiters' and expatriate workers' attitudes regarding benevolence, integrity, and ability influence successful selection outcomes.

Two sampling methods selected for this research were convenience and snowball sampling to reach an adequate number of participants. A qualitative sample does not need to be large to be accurate (Burns & Bush, 2006). This study is a case study design, so the sample size need not be significant, as using overly large samples leads to redundancy and saturation of information. Marshall et al. (2013) recommended a maximum of five interviews for a case study.

Expatriates often form closed communities and a microcosm within the foreign offices (Arman & Aycan, 2013). As a researcher, it is helpful to have contacts within the expatriate community to identify research subjects who can arrange the first and consecutive interviews. From previous experience investigating foreign employees in

Hermosillo, executives and managers of foreign companies are reluctant to agree to sit down for in-depth interviews.

To establish confidentiality, the working relationship must be based on professionalism and trust (Morse 1998). However, it must never become a relationship based on friendship, which would affect the study's perceived validity and subjectivity (Brewis, 2014).

### **Research Question**

What strategies do managers use when they select employees as expatriates qualified and willing to work in different countries?

### **Population**

I have the responsibility of processing the data collected through the interviews in an objective, nonarbitrary manner. When it comes to qualitative research, the necessity for validity and objectivity is often heightened. Qualitative research has allowed for a much deeper insight into the investigated questions (Sarma, 2015). The use of a qualitative researcher in this study is not only valid; it is required to elicit the necessary responses. The measurement of the significance that the researcher himself had as part of the subject is essential to establish his objectivity (Mowbray, 2003).

The subjects of this study will be supervisors, mentors, and other superiors who influence the expatriate employee's work experience (Zhuang et al., 2013). I will be interviewing supervisors and managers of different MNCs in Hermosillo who recruit foreign workers to come to Hermosillo. The researcher's location in the host country of the expatriate workers in this research must be considered. Additionally, their organizations' role and their influence on their employees must be minimized for the sample to be representative and acknowledged when it is not (Kyvik, 2013). The effect of the research on the community of which the organizations are part must be considered (Nelson et al., 2015).

### **Sampling**

It is also the responsibility of the researcher to determine the appropriate sample size of the interviewees. The sample size was based on previous papers outlining the factors that would need to be considered to ensure the correct sample



size for an academically valid study result, which holds up to closer scrutiny and criticism. As set forth by Marshall et al. (2013), the preferred sample size is 5, so I will be interviewing supervisors and managers of 5 different MNCs in Hermosillo who recruit foreign workers to come to Hermosillo. The sampling method used will be a snowball method (Burns & Bush, 2006) as it will be essential to have referrals, considering the expatriate community is closely knit. Additionally, their organizations' role and their influence on their employees must be minimized for the sample to be representative and acknowledged when it is not (Kyvik, 2013). The effect of the research on the community of which the organizations are part must be considered (Nelson et al., 2015).

### ***Ethical Research***

Any research in the Human Resources field is extremely sensitive, as it contains personal information of participating companies' employees' personal decisions and their personal lives. Asking employees of multinational corporations about their experience of being sent abroad by their companies, and by which factors they were selected are always both professional and personal experiences that are often difficult or uncomfortable to share with a third party, not involved in the said process. Therefore, when conducting this research, I must be completely removed from said experience whatsoever, to be subjective (Brewis, 2014). That is to say; the researcher cannot have an immediate work relationship with the participants of the study, to avoid any influence on the data provided by the research subject. (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

Therefore, to ensure the security and comfort of the subjects involved, it is necessary to employ the snowball, or referral method of sampling (Burns & Bush, 2006). In this manner, the participants in the study will feel validated, and assured that the information they divulge would be handled in a correct and sensitive manner, as they were referred to by acquaintances. This referral will either establish a bond of trust between the researcher, and research participant, or establish from the start that such a bond will not be possible, thus allowing to identify for the sample participant as unsuitable, and be discarded (Shaw, 2008). As all participants in this study have participated as having been referred to by acquaintances, there is an understanding that the information shared will be confidential, and

handled sensibly. Nevertheless, for purposes of establishing a firmer bond of trust and legal nature (Thorne, 2013), consent forms will be issued and signed by all participants in the study.

### ***Data Collection Instruments***

I will be the primary data collection instrument of this study. As the design of the study is case study, the main form of data collection will be through structured interviews (Yazan, 2015), with additional data being collected through a review of archival documents on earlier selections and selection methods, field notes (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016), and finally, through observation of expatriate workers while they work (Baškarada, 2014), with the express permission of Human Resources, which would also be very helpful, considering their experience in interpreting nonverbal cues.

Considering the five main qualitative research methods, most of these approaches (i.e. ethnographic, narrative and phenomenological) would not render sufficiently diverse results, and the research data would be too uniform (Atkinson & Delamont, 2010). This incompatibility stems from the fact that grounded theory creates new theories of interrelated concepts rather than testing existing theories, and DBA research is more aligned to testing current theories and applications in the pursuit of improving on their respective applications. Therefore, I decided on a case study approach. This is based on the fact that a case study approach allows for multiple means of collecting data, the recommended ones being: reviewing documents, archival data, reviewing artifacts and conducting interviews (Yin, 2014).

This possible adjustment, as mentioned previously, is due to the evolution of qualitative research itself, finding new approaches to ensuring its validity (Amsteus, 2014). Even though much research is based on empirical data, qualitative research in general, and case study research specifically has seen much substantive and methodological development (Johnson, 2015).

Likewise, the use of case study methods allows the researcher for a study where no initial theory or hypothesis has been stipulated, and not one specific data collection method has been selected, but rather use different means of collecting data (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider that case study allows for, even encourages the worldview of



the researcher (Annells, 1996, & Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014), and avoids following strictly laid assumptions and procedures.

In this same manner, the one of the most prominent, though not exclusive, instrument for collecting the data for this proposed research, as has been shown in previous investigations, is through a series of in-depth interviews (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). For this study I will conduct these interviews with foreign expatriate workers in Hermosillo, Sonora. These subjects are to be selected from expatriate workers in maquiladoras in Hermosillo, and Mexican maquiladora workers who had worked on foreign assignments. Most of the selection will be made through referral, as most foreign expatriate workers occupy management positions, and are initially reluctant to participate, without a co-worker or acquaintance putting me in contact with them. This referral would ensure the confidentiality of their participation and the information gained through this, as the research participants enjoy the confidence of their co-workers enough to be referred to me by them.

Additionally, I will be using observation and review of archives and documents. Observation, as is the case with case study is often argued to not being able to provide a general theory. However, proponents of case study, and observation along with it argue that it can. One proponent offers the example of Galileo rejecting Aristotle's law of gravity was not based on observation on a wide range, but that this made the theory and proof he produced not any less true (Flyvbjerg, 2004). Finally, I will be reviewing documents and archival data related to the selection processes of expatriates, with the distinct consideration that these may be subject to internal bias on part of the organization, as it is noted that case studies relying heavily on archival data need to be sensitive to these possible biases and to take steps to counteract them (Yin, 2013).

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use during the separate stages of the selection process, such as recruitment, investigation, and/or interviews to identify employees for overseas assignments?
2. During the selection process, what requirements for an expatriate assignment's selection do you explain to the candidate?

3. What key requirements do you make the candidates aware of that determined their selection?
4. What are the key requirements that are considered during the recruitment process that would determine if the candidate is to be selected for an overseas assignment?
5. What was the reasoning behind this consideration?
6. How do you determine that a candidate complies sufficiently with the key issues to be selected for an overseas assignment?
7. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for candidates complying with several, but not all key requirements, and to what extent will they be eligible, while not be 100% compliant?
8. What else can you share with me about your organization's strategies for the selection process of expatriate employees for overseas assignments that we have not discussed?

### **Data Analysis**

As mentioned before, in qualitative research, data analysis can be a much more complex process than in quantitative studies, due to the large amount of data that is collected during the study (de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012). After gathering data from the interviews, I will code the said data according to the most common themes. It is important, though, not to completely discard information gathered that may not be duplicated much in separate interviews, or at all, as this still needs to be analyzed. It will be important to note in the final publication that this aforementioned data does not represent the majority of expatriate experiences. I will analyze the data twice to make sure no themes are overlooked and that all data is transcribed correctly. I will then enter said data into NVivo to help develop and organize the major themes (Anderson, 2010, and Smith & Firth, 2011). I will analyze the major themes in the data collection process according to the conceptual framework mentioned previously. After a thorough analysis of the key themes gathered from NVivo, and remembering to include the aberrations for a complete picture, I will also relate these themes to themes found in the literature review, and thereby identifying the new information and conclusions generated by this study.



## Conclusion

Through interviews with foreign managers representing Multinational Corporations here in Hermosillo, who were in charge of recruiting and selecting expatriate workers to come and work in the plants in this city, a pattern emerged. Almost all acquiesced that they had seen large number of turnover of foreign workers coming to work in Hermosillo. The reasons varied, but several factors remained most prominent, and these were related exactly to the selection and recruitment process of said expatriate workers. Failure to adapt to the culture, both in general, and in the business environment, was a leading factor. This means that expatriate workers were not sufficiently questioned whether or not they were willing or able to move to a foreign country, and adapt to its culture.

Language was also mentioned often, as workers selected did not speak the language and as a result felt even more estranged in both the work environment and the culture in general.

Time was also of the essence, as many workers signed up for assignments for a duration of time they were not comfortable with, as it would signify a considerable amount of time away from family, friends and coworkers.

Finally, family was a key point to expatriate success. As mentioned above, not being able with family was a key factor in expatriate failure rates. Those who were able to bring their families with them, had a much higher success rate in completing their assignments than those who were not able to.

Managers of foreign companies hiring expatriate workers to come and work abroad, not just in Hermosillo, but anywhere in the world can use these factors to first identify which candidates are most likely to succeed on their overseas assignments.

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# Human development and Education: an education perspective focused on human development

## Desarrollo humano y Educación: una perspectiva de la educación enfocada al desarrollo humano

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### Abstract

This paper seeks to answer the question: Education for what? It also addresses another issue: What kind of education is needed to help meet individual and social needs? In this regard, it explores a general answer: for human development.

The first part focuses on the role of education in the human development indicators of the UN, OECD, and UNESCO. It reviews the changes in the factors adopted to measure it, highlights the importance of formal education in these indicators, and concludes by stating that despite its recognized relevance, education as it is currently understood seems unable to meet the challenges posed by these demands.

The second part proposes an alternative educational perspective—one grounded in the experiences of individuals, present both in schools and all social organizations, that influences intellectual, behavioral, emotional, and intuitive aspects. Its content, beyond instrumental knowledge, includes everyday life.

The third part illustrates the need for this alternative form of education aligned with the principles of human development.

**Keywords:** Education, human development, formative experience

**JEL Codes:** g1, I2, I21

### Resumen

En este trabajo se intenta responder a la pregunta ¿educación para qué? Interesa también otra cuestión: ¿Qué educación se requiere para contribuir a satisfacer las necesidades individuales y sociales? En este sentido se explora una respuesta general: para el desarrollo humano.

La primera parte enfoca hacia el papel de la educación en los indicadores de desarrollo humano de la ONU, OCDE y la Unesco, se revisan los cambios de los factores adoptados para medirlo, se señala la importancia de la educación escolar en ellos y se concluye diciendo que no obstante su reconocida relevancia, la educación, tal como es asumida, parece no responder a los retos planteados por esas demandas. En la segunda parte se propone otra perspectiva educativa, una fundamentada en la experiencia de los agentes; presente en la escuela y en todas las organizaciones sociales; que incida en lo intelectual, lo conductual, y en lo emocional y lo intuitivo; cuyos contenidos, además de los

instrumentales, sean los de la vida diaria. En la tercera parte, se ejemplifica la necesidad de esa otra educación en la línea marcada por el desarrollo humano.

**Palabras clave:** Educación, desarrollo humano, experiencia formativa

**Código JEL:** 9I, I2, I21

## 1. The measurement of human development and well-being

Education for what? The answer can be conventional, narrow, and simplistic: for the training of human resources necessary to meet the needs of the productive system. A more complex answer might place Human Development (HD) at its core: to contribute to it. For Amartya Sen (1998), HD involves expanding human freedoms in terms of capabilities, functionings, and agency; a person must possess resources or “goods” to carry out an activity, enabling them to exercise the capability to be or to do, with the freedom and opportunity to choose. Thus, a response to the question Educate for what? could be: for human development for the formation of free individuals who exercise their liberties and rights and create opportunities for others. Moreover, this purpose may require immediate responses and conditions, meaning that education should already operate within the conditions of human development forming free individuals who, from the outset, exercise their freedom and rights and promote opportunities for others.

Accepting this answer has profound implications, which calls for a brief review to understand what HD frameworks refer to and the role education plays in them. For this purpose, this paper will draw on a review of documents from internationally funded and high-impact organizations, given their influence in shaping public policy and the proposals that accompany international funding. Other dimensions of the relationship between education and HD such as conceptual and methodological aspects will be addressed in future works.

Throughout the 20th century, economic growth was the central objective of public policy, and progress

across countries and regions was measured in those terms. Accordingly, studies focused on the factors that stimulate it namely, physical capital (infrastructure), human capital (health, education, interpersonal relations), and technology. Education was therefore seen as a decisive element for the development of both countries and individuals, though its outcomes are influenced by structural, institutional, and personal factors. In any case, education and the human dimension are granted significant value in the study of well-being.

In this context, Sen (1985) became a pioneer of a new multidimensional approach requiring more comprehensive data to measure well-being economics. He redefined well-being not as a property of objects but as something experienced by individuals, emphasizing the real freedom people have the freedom to be and to do for well-being and distinguishing between what individuals are capable of doing (capabilities) and what they actually do (functionings).

Sen (2000) argued that education can be viewed both as a freedom and as a capability for development, as it enhances individuals' ability to improve other capabilities and is therefore essential to well-being. In his approach, Sen suggested that the relevance of education in development should be assessed both in terms of its direct contribution to economic growth and its role in expanding other capabilities. However, it's important to mention that the Human Capabilities framework does not explain the causes of the phenomena being investigated, nor does it allow for predictions. Rather, as many authors have noted, it is essentially an evaluative approach that has been used, discussed, and adapted by various disciplines and countries.

Significant changes in the global measurement of progress and well-being began in 2009, particularly in response to the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission Report (2009), which challenged the identification of well-being with material wealth. That is, social progress and well-being measurement must consider how people feel about their lives, alongside data on their objective conditions. One innovation in measuring well-being is the incorporation of individuals' subjective perspectives how they self-evaluate aspects of their lives, including their overall life satisfaction,



momentary feelings, or the sense of meaning or purpose in their lives. These measures focus on what people believe and report they feel, not just on their objective conditions (OECD, 2019).

### 1.1 Changes in the measurement of human development and well-being

Over the past three decades, new indicators and indexes have been developed to include other dimensions that influence the development of countries and to monitor these resources. The objective has been to create tools to identify the different groups formed throughout the process of human progress and to use this information to inform policy measures that reduce gaps and expand opportunity areas.

#### 1.1.1 The Human Development index

In 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) promoted the creation of the Human Development Index (HDI), with the purpose of consolidating and adding various indicators into a single index that did not rely solely on economic income, but also considered education and life expectancy. The HDI was proposed as a composite index that quantifies three basic pillars of human development: “the ability to lead a long and healthy life, measured by life expectancy at birth; the ability to acquire knowledge, measured by average years of schooling and expected years of schooling; and the ability to achieve a decent standard of living, measured by gross national income per capita” (PNUD, 2018a). This makes it possible to compare countries based on the extent to which their inhabitants have the capabilities to be or do what they wish in other words, the possibility for individuals to achieve a better quality of life.

The measurement of the HDI has evolved continuously, following the recommendations of expert groups and in response to global challenges, becoming more and more comprehensive. Since 2010, adjustments have been made to incorporate three new composite indices: the Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI), which reflects the HDI in relation to the magnitude of inequality; the Gender Inequality Index, which emphasizes the empowerment of women; and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which measures components of poverty not related to income (PNUD, 2010). In

2014, an additional index was proposed: the Gender Development Index, which contrasts the HDI levels between women and men (PNUD, 2018a).

An analysis of the HDI measurement results from its inception in 1990 through the most recent report in 2017 shows that, in general, all countries, regions, and the various groups into which they can be categorized have improved over time in terms of their initial positions. If we consider the global HDI value in 2017 of 0.728, this reflects a 21.7% increase from the 1990 value of 0.598. Furthermore, we can observe a general global increase in life expectancy, years of schooling, and purchasing power. Using 1990 data as a reference, we can say that the average life expectancy has increased by seven years and that slightly more than 130 countries now have universal enrollment in primary education. On the other hand, the results observed over these three decades show that there are a variety of alternatives for achieving human development, meaning that it is not possible to replicate a single set of policies or models to reach this goal (PNUD, 2018a).

#### 1.1.2 The Millennium Development Goals

In the year 2000, during the Millennium Summit, a commitment was signed by 189 countries called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the purpose of addressing, before 2015, the principal human rights challenges and “fighting extreme poverty in various dimensions: hunger, disease, income poverty, inadequate housing, social exclusion, educational problems, and environmental sustainability, among others” (PNUD, 2015). For the first time, a global initiative was undertaken with the definition of chronological goals and indicators that made it possible to measure progress and fulfillment of the objectives over the fifteen years of the initiative and thus monitor improvements in the quality of life of participating countries.

This initiative was composed of 8 goals, 21 targets, and 60 indicators and was the first effort at a global scale to simultaneously improve the standard of living of millions of people around the world. The MDGs represented a tool with a universal agenda of priorities that outlined a clear path for the development of countries. We are now twenty years from the launch of this initiative at the start of the new millennium, and we have still not succeeded in



eradicating poverty and hunger. However, there was evident progress during the 15 years covered by the commitment. Reported data indicate that hunger and extreme poverty decreased by nearly half, fewer children died, and more children were attending and completing primary education. This initiative assumed schooling to be an indispensable means by which people could develop their capabilities (PNUD, 2015).

#### 1.1.3 OECD'S better life initiative

In 2011, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched the Better Life Initiative as part of its effort to propose measures for evaluating well-being beyond merely considering Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This strategy is composed of two main elements: the How's Life? report and the Better Life Index.

The How's Life? report presented, for the first time in a single document, international indicators that allow comparison of countries and regions in terms of well-being measurement, based on the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission (2009). This publication evaluates eleven specific factors to characterize individual well-being within the domains of quality of life and material conditions. The quality-of-life group includes eight factors: health, work-life balance, education and skills, social connections, civic engagement and governance (community), environmental quality, personal security, and subjective well-being (life satisfaction). Meanwhile, material conditions are made up of three factors: income and wealth, jobs and earnings, and housing. Additionally, the initiative takes into account four types of resources that support the sustainability of future well-being in developing countries: natural, human, economic, and social capital. These forms of capital were also part of the recommendations in the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi framework (2009).

The OECD Better Life Index is an interactive tool that invites the public to assess "Subjective Well-being" through its online platform. Its philosophy is based on the need to capture people's perceptions of their living conditions and of what, in their view, is most important, thus treating individuals as subjects, not merely as objects of measurement. Unlike other indices, this initiative aims to encourage citizen

participation in the continuous process of pursuing social well-being (OCDE, 2017), inviting users to rate each of the eleven elements on the website and thereby reflect their own perspective on how to measure and compare well-being. The results are presented graphically in the shape of a flower, showing how citizens in each country understand, prioritize, and evaluate well-being (OCDE, 2019).

#### 1.1.4 The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations committed to adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, replacing the MDGs. This new agenda includes 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, drawn from the experience and outcomes of the MDGs. Its purpose is to promote the well-being of humanity and reaffirm international commitment to ending poverty and hunger by the year 2030, as well as to protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity (PNUD, 2018b).

The initiative aims to address and resolve the world's most pressing problems through a global and ambitious vision of prosperity that affects everyone. Its objective is to involve the entire world while "leaving no one behind," including everyone in the creation of a more sustainable, safe, and prosperous planet for humankind (PNUD, 2018b).

Once the SDGs and their corresponding targets were defined, a full 2030 Agenda was developed, representing a shift not only in focus but also in vision, policy, and development programming. Each participating country commits not only to monitoring its progress but also to identifying the most feasible strategies for achieving transformation based on its own needs and resource capacities. Countries are expected to define priorities according to their development stage through strategies, partnerships, and means of implementation (PNUD, 2018a).

#### 1.1.5 Comparison of the HDI, MDGs, OECD's Better Life Initiative and the SDGs

In a study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) to measure progress on the SDGs, the researchers proposed an SDG Index (Teksoz, 2016). In the first part of the study, Graph 1 presents



a positive and significant correlation between the 2015 HDI rankings and their proposed SDG Index, indicating that these countries “are performing well in meeting basic human development needs, but perform worse in other SDG dimensions” (Teksoz, 2016).

### The MDGs and the SDGs

The main differences between the MDGs and the SDGs lie in universality and commitment. The MDGs focused only on developing countries, while the SDGs emphasize that a development agenda cannot be implemented without addressing all problems in an interconnected way, and in all countries. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs mark the first time that all countries in the world are held accountable for these commitments (see Table 1).

### OECD's Better Life Initiative and the SDGs

Regarding the differences between the OECD's Better Life framework and the SDGs, it is important to consider that the former is an analytical and diagnostic tool for assessing the conditions of OECD member countries. It provides input for focusing on universally valued outcomes to evaluate the conditions of people and communities. The SDGs, by contrast, are embodied in the 2030 Agenda as a list of political commitments agreed upon by world leaders. They focus on the interrelationships among the goals and their impact on well-being. Notably, the 2030 Agenda encompasses all the dimensions addressed in the OECD's well-being framework (2015).

In summary, as can be observed, the objectives, targets, and indicators used to measure human development have expanded since 1990, through the introduction of these various initiatives. This expansion has also included a broader scope in terms of country participation even beyond the OECD member states. In addition to the increase in the number of objectives, these have diversified to encompass a richer social life and a progressively broader and more complex concept of development. One clear trend is evident: it is no longer sufficient to focus solely on economic development or quantitative social indicators; it is now essential to consider the subjective dimensions of well-being, based on people's perceptions of their own lives.

**Table 1.** Comparison of the HDI, MDGs, OECD's Better Life Initiative and the 2030 SDGs

Initiative	Validity Period	Pillars and/or goals and countries	Indicators and/or targets
HDI	Since 1990	3 pillars 189 countries	4 indicators
MDGs	2000-2015	8 goals 193 countries	(2000) 17 targets (2002) 21 targets and 48 indicators (2008) 21 targets and 60 indicators
2030 SDGs	2015-2030	17 goals	169 targets and 232 global indicators
2030 SDG Index	Since 2015, annual	17 goals 193 countries	88 indicators (Sachs, 2018)
How's life? OCDE	2011, 2013, 2015 y 2016	11 pillars 41 countries	34 indicators
OECD Better Life Index	Since 2011	11 pillars 184 countries	24 indicators

Source: Own elaboration based on information from UNDP (2010, 2015, 2018a and 2018b), OECD (2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019), Teksoz (2016), and Sachs et al. (2018).

### 1.2. The importance of education in the measurement of human and sustainable development

Regarding the central theme of this paper, the permanent and central presence of education is highlighted from the very first initiative. In the formulation of the Human Development Index (HDI), the ability to acquire knowledge was taken into account through expected and achieved years of schooling. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognized as their second objective the achievement of universal primary education. The OECD's Better Life Initiative included school education tied to competencies as a component of individual well-being. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed quality education, moving beyond a sole emphasis on coverage (see Table 2).

It is also notable though not clearly emphasized thus far that education has been mostly considered in terms of schooling, and within this focus, primarily basic education. In this section, we review more specific aspects, such as those just mentioned, of the presence of education in these initiatives.

**Table 2.** Education indicators in the HDI, the MDGs, the OECD's Better Life Initiative, and the SDGs

Initiative	Pillars, goals	General Education Goal	Education Indicators
HDI	1 pillar: 2 indicators		1. Adult literacy rate. 2. Gross enrollment ratio.
MDGs	MDG 2A 1 goal(2A): 3 indicators	Goal 2A. Achieve universal primary education by 2015	2.1 Net enrollment rate in primary education. 2.2 Proportion of students starting first grade who reach the last grade of primary education. 2.3 Literacy rate of people aged 15–24, women and men.
2030 SDGs	SDG 4: 10 goals 43 indicators	4. Ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promote lifelong learning for all	Listed in Appendix 1.
2030 SDG Index	SDG 4: 8 indicators		1. Average years of schooling. 2. Net primary enrollment rate (%). 3. Literacy rate of population aged 15–24, both sexes (%). 4. Population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%). 5. PISA test score (0–600). 6. % of variance in performance explained by students' socioeconomic status. 7. Students performing below Level 2 in science. 8. Resilient students.
How's life? OCDE	3		1. Education levels. 2. School dropout rate. 3. Average years of schooling.
OECD Better Life Index	3		1. Years of education. 2. Student competencies in math, reading, and science. 3. Education level.

Source: Own elaboration based on information from UNDP (2010, 2015, 2018a and 2018b), OECD (2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019), Teksoz (2016), and Sachs et al. (2018).

### Measurement of Education in the SDGs

A substantive difference between MDG 2A and SDG 4 is that MDG 2A was based on a very specific and measurable set of indicators, which helped increase the capacity to monitor development in certain countries in those particular aspects, whereas the targets of SDG 4 are more complex and broad, thus including concepts that had not been previously quantified globally, which generated new challenges in developing indicators to monitor progress toward those SDG 4 targets.

As seen, in the 2030 Agenda education occupies a central place since it is included as a goal in itself

(SDG 4), broken down into 7 targets and 3 means of implementation (Table 3).

It is also noticeable that the emphasis on primary school education placed by the HDI and the MDGs begins to fade in the SDGs, where lifelong learning is proposed. Thus, SDG 4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” has a broader vision than MDG 2A “achieve universal primary education.” This is especially evident by including as an indicator the percentage of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education. Below is Table 3, which shows the targets corresponding to Goal 4.



**Table 3.** Target to fulfill  the SDG agenda

4.1	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university.
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.
4.b	By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, particularly least developed countries, small island developing states, and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering, and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.
4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.

Source: UNESCO-UIS (2016)

We return to the comments. For the purposes of this work, it is especially important to highlight aspects that lead us to think about the responsiveness of the school system and schools in relation to the development goals, targets, and indicators established by the initiatives, in this case those of the 2030 Education Agenda of the SDGs.

The 10 targets of SDG 4 cover different aspects of education. Seven of the targets are expected outcomes, and three are means or mechanisms of implementation focusing on how to achieve the seven outcomes.

A first aspect relates to “Target 4.2 Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education.” Besides proposing the universalization of so-called pre-primary education (which takes place in a school), it aims to ensure that girls and boys receive care in early childhood to achieve their development. In the “Means of Implementation of SDG 4,” it is established that to fulfill this target, appropriate educational facilities must be built and safe learning environments created, as well as having qualified teachers. Regarding this, in the “SDG 4 Indicators,” preparation indicators include the proportion of children under 5 years old who are on track in their health, learning, and psychosocial well-being development, and the percentage of these children who “experience positive and stimulating learning environments at home.” However, when specifically looking at the respective “Means of Implementation,” no references are found to indicators related to these stimulating and positive home learning environments.

A second aspect relates to Target “4.7 Education for sustainable development and global citizenship,” which states that it must be ensured that “all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, among other things through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development, among other means.” For this, the “Means of Implementation of SDG 4” propose the same statements for all the targets of the 2030 Agenda: adequate school facilities for children and persons with disabilities regarding gender issues, with “safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all,”

increasing scholarships in developing countries, and a substantial increase in qualified teachers.

The “SDG 4 Indicators” primarily consider as indicators: the degree of educational provision expressed in the incorporation of global citizenship, education for sustainable development, gender equality, and human rights in education policies, curricula, teacher training, and student assessment; in knowledge, the percentage of students adequately understanding global citizenship and sustainability, as well as environmental and earth sciences knowledge; and in provision, the percentage of establishments educating about HIV and sexuality, and the degree of implementation of the global human rights education program.

The 2030 Agenda includes education-related targets within other goals, meaning that education is an important component for achieving other goals, specifically those related to health (3), gender equality (5), economic growth (8), decent work (12), responsible consumption and production (13), and climate action (16) (see fig. 7). On the other hand, education results and progress can also be linked to achieving other SDGs, for example, through better living conditions, healthier behaviors, increased environmental awareness, and civic participation, as well as positive social outcomes such as economic growth (fig. 8). In this sense, the 2030 Agenda addresses, from a multidimensional approach, the connections between measurements and the drivers of economic, social, and environmental transformation, which define public policies starting from one SDG and having synergies with other goals, triggering a multidimensional effect that accelerates sustainable development.

Regarding the general classification of the 43 education-related indicators of SDG 4 concerning the following key concepts: learning, completion, participation, provision, readiness to learn, competencies, equity, policies, knowledge, resources, environment, scholarships, qualified and certified teachers, motivation, and support, these proposed indicators are described in Annex 1.

It is understood that many development goals, targets, and indicators could be achieved if schools were improved not only as innovative schools like those described by Alfredo Hernando Calvo (2016) in his book “Journey to 21st Century Schools,” but all schools and even the entire school system. However, there are educational aspects and

processes that cannot be resolved solely by schools’ efforts; it is necessary to think of an educational society as a whole. In this regard, proposals have existed for some time, such as social pedagogy or social education, though still linked to the school. Generally, these proposals consider broadening the school’s perspective to connect it more to social problems and simultaneously make society more participative in school issues.

The challenge is enormous, and to advance in this direction, broad social participation is required. Next, to contribute to the dialogue, we propose some reflections to consider education as formation rooted not only in the school but, as a social institution, present in all social organizations, which must be structured and guided in terms of human development.

## 2. What is understood by education

From our perspective, education is the formation of individuals based on their lived experiences.

A broader definition: education is a process of forming individuals, primarily of meanings (about being and the importance of things, the world, society, and oneself), of purposes (the individual and social life project), and of identities (the formation of personal, communal, and social self), arising from their lived experiences, constituted by their practices, other individuals, content, their interactions and social relationships, their spheres, organizations and institutions, and broad social contexts. Formation is usually spontaneous. Intentionally, it is desirable to guide it from a human development perspective.

Initially, two concepts help ground this perspective: institution and organization. The first refers to “a social regularity, which (alludes) to norms and laws representing social values and guiding the behavior of individuals and groups by setting their limits” (Fernández, 1998, p. 13); the second names the social forms that express and promote that social regularity collective structures created to enact the institution. According to this line of thought, social life is regulated through the set of different institutions and organizations, such as family, production, military, economy, religion, education,



and many others. Each institution and its respective organizations regulate a “part” of social life; for example, family regulates the reproduction of individuals within social groups; the economy regulates the production and consumption of material satisfiers of those group members.

Among the social institutions and organizations, here we are interested in educational ones. We propose, initially, to consider, as said before, the educational institution as the process of forming individuals, their meanings about life content, the world, society; their identities of self and others; their purposes for their own life and communal and social existence. It is a formation generated in and among individuals as part of their lived experiences, constituted by their practices, by the life content of those experiences, by their individual and social interactions and relationships, all within specific spheres of organizations and institutions and broad social contexts. This formation is usually guided spontaneously according to prevailing and dominant cultural perspectives; when guided intentionally, it could be conducted under a human development perspective. Although this process takes place mainly in the school organization, it encompasses experiences constructed in all spheres of social organizations and institutions.

The life of the individual is constituted by an infinite set of lived experiences. Part of those lived experiences are what we call experiences. A lived experience is what happens to the individual at a given moment and immediate context. It is a situation, a sensation fully and completely felt, but at the same time diffuse, since emotions, perceptions, and conscious and unconscious records of that situation and context combine in the individual, though without major disruptions or notable events, like a kind of constant and ongoing flow. From the lived experience, the experiences arise.

Experiences refer to the specific construction, by the individual, of a particular situation within the framework of their lived experiences. Although it is something specific, it is also complete, as it is constructed with the participation of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects, carried out under concrete conditions and settings. Other individuals, certain types of relationships and

interactions, practices and actions, and the content upon which these activities are exercised, all play a role in those experiences.

Within and because of this experiential framework, individuals construct meanings about things, about other individuals, about the processes that surround them, and about themselves, which are expressed in knowledge, feelings, and behaviors. In experience, meanings are assigned to the natural and social world, including the individual themselves. Therefore, individuals acquire a certain representation of natural things, their objective properties, and their subjective attributions. Other individuals also acquire certain meaning; they are such and such, have a certain value, are loved, ignored, or despised. To educate and to educate oneself based on meanings in favor of human development would imply forming meanings related to freedom, rights, equality, and diversity.

In experience, meanings are also constructed, that is, a certain direction is given to one's life; certain goals and orientations are assigned to what one does, says, and feels. One attributes to oneself and one's actions, within one's spheres of existence, a certain direction and purpose, which are woven with the past and current life conditions. Of course, this meaning can be expressed weakly, diffusely, and uncertainly, as if the individual were an object of circumstances, or clearly, persistently, and precisely, as if the individual were capable, to a good extent, of navigating those circumstances. On this continuum between being a bystander, actor, or author of the experience lies the sense and orientation, or lack thereof, toward human development; that is, constructing goals and conscious purposes to form and develop oneself as a fully realized human being.

In experience, individuals construct their identity. They construct themselves, recognizing themselves and recognizing others. The subject, the self, builds in that interaction an idea of their person, develops a self-image, a self-concept, and attributes a certain self-esteem.

The processes of constructing meanings, senses, and identities are formative processes. The individual moves through the world in a continuous flow of lived experiences. In this torrent, certain relevant



events occur to them, or they cause some important events to happen, from which experiences arise, in a complex mixture of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional processes. These experiences shape them, as mentioned, regarding what the world is, what they are, and their present and future life; about what things mean, about who they are, and about what their life is and will be in other words, the meaning of their life.

In personal experience, other individuals both individual and collective and the interaction with them are always present: experience always occurs within a context or sphere where certain practices or activities take place regarding some content or object on which those activities are exercised, in a permanent flow or trajectory.

Individuals are the actors or authors participating in an experience. This involves the experiential subject and other participants, actors, and co-authors of it. The spheres and contexts constitute the social, architectural, economic, and historical means both immediate and mediated of the experience.

Practices or actions refer to culturally significant human activities that individuals carry out with an object. Contents refer to what human action is directed at, whether things themselves or patterns of behavior, knowledge, feelings, values, about oneself or others. These are culturally significant and, as such, considered valuable and essential for the constitution of the social and the individual, according to certain contexts. Social relationships refer to the bonds individuals establish with their social group and society as a whole. These are relationships that individuals establish with others as part of a social category; they are broad and medium-range relationships that influence interactions.

Interactions refer to close, face-to-face relationships that individuals establish with others in their daily lives. And just as social life is not merely the sum of its members, interaction is not just two or more individuals in the same sphere, nor simply an exchange between them. The formative trajectory, transit, or journey of individuals refers to the continuous process of their formation from birth to death, not only in school and related to their

academic performance records but in all spheres of their life and according to their experiences and how these shape them to change.

Could a perspective on education as outlined here contribute to achieving the development goals, targets, and indicators established by the development initiatives presented here? Our idea is that it could. As a conclusion, we will show some examples in this regard.

## **Conclusion. Education for human development: some elements**

Schools, as they currently exist, might not have the capacity to respond to development goals. At least in Mexico, only small advances are achieved regarding the traditional mandate of school education to improve performance in instrumental subjects. Thus, we are pessimistic about achieving development goals in education if new problems are added to that mandate, such as those mentioned in Goal 4.7: theoretical and practical knowledge about sustainable development, “the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development.” Incorporating these into the tasks of schools and the system implies not only a broad curricular reform that accommodates them without displacing other content but a reform of the entire school system and a change in the agents of education. Even so, we believe that would be insufficient.

A shift in perspective is necessary, as noted in the previous section, because the goal is no longer merely social integration and the training of human resources within schools, but also the formation of human beings for freedom and happiness—for well-being.

Moreover, the perspective presented here considers the individual's experience as the foundation of education, which aligns, to some extent, with the OECD's approach of evaluating education based on individuals' perceptions of their living conditions that is, based on what people themselves consider important. This implies recognizing them as subjects, not merely as objects of measurement.

Similarly, the concept of lifelong learning for all does not align with the idea of granting schools exclusive responsibility for educational processes. Schools only cover certain life stages. Conceiving education as formation based on experience allows for a more fitting vision of lifelong education. This approach could also shift the focus from solely acquiring structured content knowledge to forming meanings, senses, and identities, thereby promoting a more holistic education. And if the formation of these core aspects is accepted, then education should make room not only for the development of knowledge, but also for the cultivation of feelings and intuitions.

Finally, envisioning education as formation based on individuals' life experiences allows us to place it not only within schools but also across other social settings meaning it is also grounded in other organizations such as the home, the workplace, the community, and the city itself. These spaces should be recognized as having an educational purpose, and we should begin to think and act within them as intentional agents of human development. This could make it possible to effectively realize "Target 4.2: Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education," which implies the involvement of other educational spaces such as the home. In relation to the initiatives reviewed here, this would mean introducing new objectives, targets, and indicators to evaluate their contribution to human development.

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