School reentry and its link to family and working life of three generations in Mexico[1]

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Abstract

Based on the 2011 Retrospective Demographic Survey, this paper analyzes the school reentry of three generations in Mexico (1951-1953, 1966-1968 and 1978-1980) and its associated factors, as well as the level of education attained and type of occupation after school reentry. To this end, life tables, discrete-time logistic models and mobility tables are employed. First, life tables display a clear rise over time in returning to school among females and a slight increase in the third generation among males, after a fall in the second generation. Second, the multivariate analysis demonstrate the importance of a low-intensity job, employment in the public sector, and the child-rearing stage for school reentry. And finally, mobility tables show the opportunity that school reentry provides to achieve higher educational attainment and secure a better job. The results support the importance of education policies that promote school reintegration for young people in developing countries.

Keywords: schooling, employment, children, trajectories, youth.

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Introduction

Formal education has grown notably in the last 60 years in Mexico. Although originally only the first years of primary education were declared compulsory and free, this was gradually expanded to lower and upper secondary education. The three generations studied in this paper experienced this expansion at different levels. The first generation, 1951-1953, experienced the effects of education policies oriented toward the universalization of primary education (Mier y Terán & Rabell, 2001); the second generation, 1966-1968, witnessed the expansion of secondary education in the 1970s, followed by a downturn in academic enrollment as a result of the economic crises of the 1980s (Secretariat of Public Education, SEP, 2007). Lastly, the 1978-1980 generation benefitted from compulsory lower secondary education, enacted in 1993, and the expansion of upper secondary education.[2] By 1995, the year in which this generation completed all years of compulsory education, Mexico had practically already universalized primary education, and achieved 75% coverage in junior high schools and 40% in upper secondary education (SEP, 2013).

As the supply of educational programs grew, so did the demand for formal education in the face of a change in the importance of child-rearing, a drop in fertility, and new job requirements in cities, particularly in industry, education, and services (Gaxiola et al., 1997). However, the transition to adulthood in various social groups with less economic, social, and cultural capitals was marked by school drop-outs and marriage or cohabitation, childbearing and economic participation at early ages. The three generations studied typically dropped out of school at different ages: "In the oldest cohort (1951-1953), half dropped out after completing elementary school. In the 1966-1968 and 1978-1980 cohorts, drop-outs occurred more slowly, and the risk increased after junior high school" (Rabell & Murillo, 2016: 307).

Throughout this last half-century and in particular since the enactment of the National Adult Education Law in the 1970s, attempts were made to develop education schemes for people 15 years or older in convenient time slots, and open education to enable students to complete basic-level education. These education programs were aimed at those who had

[2] Upper secondary education was not made compulsory until 2012, one year after the survey used was conducted.

dropped out of school or had not had the chance to study (Gaxiola et al., 1997). In addition, in the 1990s, a system of distance education for high schools known as *telesecundaria* was introduced to respond to the demand for secondary education in rural areas among marginalized populations, along with a series of scholarships and compensatory programs to improve retention and support school reentry (SEP, 2004). Indeed, such was the reach of the scholarship programs that by 2012 almost 46% of public high school students had a federal scholarship (SEP, 2012).

In an educational context in which the trajectories of young people are strongly marked by social background and gender inequalities, opportunities for returning to school also grew. Indeed, Pérez and Lindstrom (2014) reported that, based on the EDER 1998, the 1966-1968 and 1951-1953 generations of Mexicans returned to school more frequently than the 1936-1938 generation. The authors also pointed out that returning to school was associated with investment in human capital to acquire a better socioeconomic position and was more frequent among single people. However, the authors found no differences with regard to employment status and the presence of children in the household. Our study focuses on these factors.

This study draws on biographical information from the 2011 Retrospective Demographic Survey (EDER 2011, in Spanish) (EL COLEF, INEGI, & UABC, 2013) to analyze levels of school reentry in people from three generations[3] in Mexico (1951-1953, 1966-1968, and 1978-1980), and conditioning factors of this phenomenon, with a focus on the characteristics of employment prior to reentry and child-rearing. In particular, this study seeks to explore how family commitments and certain job opportunities are associated with school reentry trajectories in Mexico. Additionally, it explores attainments in the type of occupation, sector of activity, and level of education once the school reentry period is over. In comparison to the EDER 1998, the 2011 version enabled the study of the relationship between working hours and school reentry, and includes information on the cohort born between 1978 and 1980.

[3] Population under 33 years of age, given that the survey provides data up to this age for the three generations.

This study sets out from a series of working hypotheses based on the idea of interdependence of the family, occupational and educational fields in young people's lives and the impact that roles and responsibilities acquired throughout their life course may have on new roles they undertake (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995). The first hypothesis is that individuals may have returned to school as a result of opportunities for occupational mobility in certain jobs, or public campaigns that supported working while studying at diverse historic stages. For instance, it would be expected that more employees would return to school in the formal sector and in non-manual occupations than in the informal sector and in manual occupations.

The second hypothesis relates to the possibility of combining study and work. We suppose that full-time employment, compared to less time-demanding jobs, have a negative impact on one's ability to return to school, as it is assumed that less intense work, and the resulting possible increase in flexibility in working hours, could result in less conflict between work and school.

Lastly, the third hypothesis is also linked to the difficulty of fulfilling different roles simultaneously – in this case, being a student and raising children. We assume that for school drop-outs who had children, it was easier to return to school when the demands of childcare – both in terms of time and costs – were lower, so parents' reentry into school would be greater once their children had entered the school system.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section discusses the theoretical and empirical background of the research problem. The second section describes the methodology employed to analyze the aforementioned survey. The third section presents the results, including the trends and profiles of young people who return to school, the factors associated with this phenomenon, and the consequences of school reentry on levels of education and type of occupation. Finally, these findings are discussed.

Theoretical and empirical background of conditioning factors of school reentry

In accordance with the life course perspective, in modern societies, the transition to adulthood was marked by a series of events that are generally experienced sequentially, such as leaving school, starting work, getting married or cohabiting, and having a first child. This trajectory may be differentiated by sex, as in some social sectors it is acceptable for women to go straight from being students to being wives and mothers (Hogan, 1978; Elder, 1998; Hogan & Astone, 1986; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). However, in more recent times, the life course has tended to be more flexible, allowing heterogeneous and even synchronous trajectories, some of which are reversible, as is the case with school reentry (Settersten, 2003; Bois-Reymond & López Blasco, 2004; Hostetler, 2008).

One important aspect of the life course perspective is that, while it recognizes that human beings construct their own life course, it also considers that human actions are constrained by the social context (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). Consequently, temporality and the sequence of events that mark the transition to adulthood are governed by social institutions such as family, school, and the labor market. These institutions offer the structures that provide opportunities and enable the development of common trajectories at any given point in time. Furthermore, through these institutions, society imposes upon individuals a set of expectations concerning the roles they should fulfill at any given age, and the ages at which they should transition toward other roles. Thus, accommodations made by social institutions to support the transition to adulthood generally follow a normative pattern (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Harley & Mortimer, 2000; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003).

In this sense, Hogan (1978: 574) contended that even when institutions did offer opportunities to experience nonlinear trajectories, such accommodations were only remedial, as they did not eliminate the inequalities produced by falling outside of standard patterns for trajectories, given that there are “social clocks” that set the temporality and sequence of events. These inequalities may be conditioned by social inequity, educational and employment opportunities, and the extent to which formal education is valued in the labor market. However, other authors like Settersten (2003) argued that in times of social change, evidence of the advantages of following a standard life course is scant and inconclusive, as individuals need to adapt to new situations, pursuing new options for starting a family in order to navigate the dynamics of education and work.

In reality, linear models of transition to adulthood have weakened over time due to several factors such as the increase in school leaving age, the lack of guarantees of employment and social protection, and young people's growing responsibility to construct their own life stories (Bois-Reymond & López Blasco, 2004). For this reason, normative life course models have become de-standardized as young people experience events that characterize adulthood at later ages, life journeys become less linear, and trajectories to adulthood are increasingly individualized and less often the product of collective models (Bois-Reymond & López Blasco, 2004). Unfortunately, the uncertainty of the context leads individuals to take on the risk of opting for a given trajectory among the range of options available in society, in the face of structural barriers.

In this sense, returning to school - once people have assumed other roles - is one of those reversible trajectories in the transition to adulthood, and choosing to do so entails an array of risks. Institutions are able to make accommodations for this irregular sequence of adulthood-defining events by offering the chance to work and study simultaneously, or take care of children while studying, as is the case with programs that offer flexible modes of education to enable students to complete a level of schooling they dropped out of, or study senior high school or higher education in distance or semi-distance learning programs. However, these programs are not always available, or are not flexible enough to meet the demands of family and work commitments. Thus, sectoral public policies (relating to different levels of education and employment, for example) may tend to renormalize young people's transitions (Bois-Reymond & López Blasco, 2004).

In particular, there are mixed results on the consequences of school return. Positive effects have been found on occupational mobility and prestige (Felmlee, 1988; Light, 1995) and personal development (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995). School reentry can provide individuals with the opportunity to obtain a better position at work, and complete expected levels of education. However, short-term negative effects have also been found on the quality of family life for mothers who return to school (Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007), and on students' level of stress in family and work settings (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2010).

Returning to school may be linked to problems of compatibility between family and working trajectories, which constitutes the "cost" of returning to school and explains why only certain individuals have the opportunity to do so and cope with academic demands (Astone, Shoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000). Studying may prove difficult in addition to dealing with the responsibilities that come with working, marriage, or child-rearing (Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007; Hostetler, 2008), which is why it is important to consider the context of the circumstances and commitments undertaken in any decision to return to school.

Family roles, especially, may be inhibitors of school return, as they may demand time and energy that cannot then be invested in other activities. For example, an increased number of children may inhibit school return by reinforcing traditional gender roles and division of labor within the home, requiring that women devote themselves to the home and men hold down full-time jobs to cover expenses (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995).

Another variable associated with school return is the child-rearing stage, because children demand more attention and care costs at a young age and this can have a negative effect on school return (Felmlee, 1988). However, in some cases these results have not been upheld, such as in dual-income households, where, for women, having young children has a positive effect on returning to college, perhaps because a university education is less demanding than a full-time job and having young children may be an opportunity for them to quit their job and increase their educational credentials (Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007; Carr & Sheridan, 2001).

In addition to the roles acquired in the life course, school return is also affected by how useful it is expected to be, as one's predisposition to return to school may vary depending on the benefits that might be gained (Astone, Shoen, Ensminger & Rothert, 2000; Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007). Thus, school return may be driven by a desire for self-improvement, whether due to previous unfinished studies or a failure to attain the desired level of education (Hostetler, 2008).

One crucial variable in determining the utility of returning to school is the level of education attained. According to the human capital theory (Becker, 1993), studying incurs direct and indirect costs. This means that in addition to the direct costs of course materials,

tuition, and living expenses, there are indirect or opportunity costs, which is the income that must be forfeited during study. As a result, the expected yield in the labor market must be higher than the loss in income while studying. Under this logic, previous studies support the idea that those who return to school are those with the most to gain by pursuing an education, and that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to return to school (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Astone, Shoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000).

Returning to school may also be indicative of a need for increased credentials or job skills, either because skills for certain jobs have become obsolete and employers encourage further education, or because conditions in some jobs are so harsh they drive workers to switch to a career requiring higher qualifications (Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007). In the best case scenario, returning to school provides appropriate training and, given favorable conditions in the labor market, access to a successful, better-paid career.

In this regard, one work-related variable that has been explored in several studies, due to its positive impact on school return, is low work intensity. Part-time workers are more likely to return to school than full-time workers or those outside the workforce, as they have not only time available to study but also an income that can help to fund their education (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Astone, Shoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000). However, these results are not unequivocal: a direct link has also been found between returning to school and working on a more full-time basis (Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007).

With regard to the relationship between working conditions and school reentry, it has been found that women who held administrative jobs before their first child was born tended to return to school more than women who never worked or who had other occupations (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995). Other characteristics linked to school reentry in the United States have included earning a low salary and performing a low-prestige job (Felmlee, 1988), having a job that does not correspond to the skills learned in school, and job dissatisfaction in terms of remuneration, opportunities for mobility, or job flexibility (Hostetler, 2008).

It should be noted that in Mexico, few young people follow the linear trajectory to adulthood, meaning that they finish formal education first, then enter the workforce, and

finally start their own family. Zenteno and Coubès (2005) found that although this is the most common trajectory among Mexican men and women from the 1966-1968 cohort, it was only the case for 44% of young men and 29% of young women, as there are a range of alternative trajectories. Upon comparing the trajectories of different generations, the authors found no growth in this pattern among men, whereas in women, the normative pattern increased over the 1936-1938, 1951-1953, and 1966-1968 generations, as a result of women's increased participation in the workforce.

In women, as the normative pattern increased, so did the school return trajectory, after having worked, gotten married, or had children. Pérez and Lindstrom (2014) found that, in the aforementioned generations, around 1 in 10 individuals returned to school, with school reentry being higher in young women. The authors found that while in the first generation, men were more likely to return to school than women, in the last generation this trend was reversed, and corresponds to an increase in female education and labor force participation. This pattern is an example of the social change experienced in Mexico, which is linked to social expectations of appropriate gender roles, and increased educational and job opportunities for women.

Pérez and Lindstrom (2014) also showed that school return in Mexico was associated with a range of personal and family characteristics in the aforementioned populations such as younger age, higher levels of education, better socio-economic status, being single, and having a migrant background. Most of these variables showed that returning to school is a decision that entails an assessment of the costs and benefits to be gained from education.

In sum, from the life course perspective, returning to school has been conceptualized as a transition that occurs due to past experiences and socio-economic background, in addition to individual motivations, the costs and perceived utility of this human capital investment, and opportunities provided by the social context at any given time (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Astone, Shoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000; Hostetler, 2008). In the case of this article, the trends in school return of three generations in Mexico analyzed in this paper historically correspond from the end of the 1950s to 2011, the year the EDER survey was conducted.

Methodology

Information source and methods

The information source is the EDER 2011 (INEGI, El COLEF, & UABC, 2013), which is a representative survey of urban areas in Mexico. This survey was appended to the National Occupation and Employment Survey (ENOE) in the 32 self-represented urban and metropolitan areas, which make up 86% of urban areas in the country, and therefore keeps the same stratified cluster probability sampling design. The EDER 2011 comprises 2,840 retrospective questionnaires completed by individuals from the 1951-1953, 1966-1968, and 1978-1980 birth cohorts. This information source provides full trajectories on education, work, migration, births, and marriages or cohabitation, age by age from 6 years old.

This study is based on a subsample of 2,721 individuals with information on variables of interest before the age of 33. Only information from these ages was included in order to compare transitions to school reentry during youth for each generation (and not overestimate exposure to the risk of school reentry in older generations).

Survival analysis was employed to achieve the stated objectives. The study used life tables that were corrected for truncated cases; that is, they took into account episodes of risk exposure that remained open. Then we used descriptive statistics to identify the profile of school returnees by selected variables, and generated three logistic discrete risk models to analyze associated factors of school reentry (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008). Separate models were estimated for all explanatory variables related to the type of occupation, as they exhibited a strong correlation. Lastly, mobility matrices were used to describe the changes that occurred in the level of education, type of occupation, and sector of activity following a return to school.

Analysis variables

In the models, the dependent variable was a return to school after at least one year out of school. In total, 603 events of school reentry were obtained from 46,923 person years at risk of returning to school, which resulted from the 2,721 individuals studied. Episodes

outside of school were constructed from the person years in which individuals were at risk of returning. Risk was considered to begin the year after the individual left school, whether by dropping out or upon completing a level of education. Episodes that ended in a return to school were considered "closed", and "open" episodes were those that were truncated, either because the trajectories of subjects were not observed anymore or reached the age of 33.

The first explanatory variable was the child-rearing stage, classified according to children's age as a proxy of the differences in demands due to their involvement in school: from 0-2 years, before preschool; from 3-5 years, the preschool years; and from 6 years of age up, basic-level education ages onwards. In addition, 12 and 15 years of age were also considered two possible key times for parents' return to school, due to a change in education levels and the possibility of greater child independence, but no differences were found.

Regarding job conditions, the study included job intensity, sector of activity, and type of occupation (non-manual/manual) in the year before returning to school. Job intensity was defined by the length of the working week, namely whether they were part-time or full-time or longer (40 hours or more per week). For the sector of activity, the classification by Coubès (2005) was used to identify formal or informal sectors of activity from the variables available in the EDER survey (activity branch and number of workers in the business or company). [4] This classification includes within the formal sector both public employment (in public administration, education, and health) and employment in medium or large enterprises (with over five employees in the tertiary sector and over 15 in industry). Furthermore, within the informal sector, the classification makes a distinction between agricultural employment (any work in agriculture, fishing, or forestry) and micro or small enterprises, namely any business in the tertiary or industrial sector that does not fall into the category of medium or large enterprises.

[4] The EDER does not include other variables, beside the sector, to evaluate job informality, such as employment benefits or the existence of contracts.

For the type of occupation, we used the classification established by Pacheco (2005), which makes it possible to differentiate manual occupations from non-manual occupations.[5] Workers were considered to be in manual occupations if they were agricultural workers, craftspeople, factory workers, fixed machine operators in industry, helpers, laborers and similar, itinerant workers providing personal and domestic services, or transport dispatchers and timekeepers. Workers in non-manual occupations were those that, as a corollary, did not fit into the previous category.

Control variables included sex, cohort, age, mother's level of education,[6] and size of the locality where individuals lived at the time they returned to school. The size of the locality of residence is a variable that changes over time and is provided by the survey to ascertain whether the locality is urban (15,000 inhabitants or more) or rural (under 15,000 inhabitants) for each calendar year and for each interviewee. Individuals' migrant background, the level of education attained, and marital status were also considered. All these variables were recorded as of one year before the return to school (in other words, they were offset by a year to be included in the model). It should be noted that the migration variable includes internal or international changes in locality until the year before returning to school, or both. We hypothesize that the opportunities and incentives associated with returning to school differ depending on these characteristics, as found in previous studies (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Hostetler, 2008; Pérez & Lindstrom, 2014).

[5] No distinction was made between levels of qualification within manual and non-manual occupations, as for non-manual occupations it was not possible to disaggregate data to this extent due to the size of the sample of school returnees. Furthermore, regardless of the level of qualification, manual occupations exhibited the same behavior with respect to returning to school, so it was decided to keep them together within a single category.

[6] Mother´s schooling is only considered, because a higher frequency of father´s schooling was unspecified in the survey. Besides, mother´s schooling has a greater influence in children´s aspirations and the socioeconomic and cultural capitals at home, and therefore, in children´s educational progress (Haveman & Wolfe, 1993; Hausmann & Szekely, 2003).

All the explanatory variables' interactions with sex and cohort were tested, as it was thought there may be a differentiation by sex due to the gender division of labor in households, and by cohort due to historical differences in labor markets and the expansion of education, but these were not significant (they did not improve the model's goodness-of-fit). In contrast, the interaction of cohort with sex was significant, and therefore included in the models.

Results

Trends and profiles of young people who return to school

In total, 18% of the population of the three generations studied (1951-1953, 1966-1968, and 1978-1980) returned to school at least once (Table 1). This percentage is much greater than the 10% recorded for the 1936-1938, 1951-1953, and 1966-1968 generations as a whole (Pérez & Lindstrom, 2014). Among men, this percentage went from 18.2% in the first generation to 17.0% in the second, and 20.2% in the last generation, whereas in women, the figure increased gradually from 13.3% in the first generation to 16.1% in the second, and to 21.2% in the third. This means that for women, school reentry increased over time, whereas in men, the frequency dropped slightly in the second generation, and then rose a little in the third generation. In the first generation, men returned to school more than women, but over the generations this difference dissipated and in the most recent generation, women exhibited a higher rate of school entry. This suggests that, as time passed, there were fewer structural barriers to education for women. This may be linked to changes in social gender norms, and greater incentives for formal education in the workplace.

Table 1. Population who returned to school up to age 33 by number of returns, sex and generation. Mexico, 2011

School returns	Men			Women			Total
	1951-1953	1966-1968	1978-1980	1951-1953	1966-1968	1978-1980	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
None	81.8	83.0	79.8	86.7	83.9	78.8	81.9
One	12.9	15.3	16.6	10.1	13.0	17.4	14.8
Two or more	5.3	1.6	3.6	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
At least once	18.2	17.0	20.2	13.3	16.1	21.2	18.1
n	418	422	502	413	442	524	2,721

Source: Own estimates based on EDER, 2011.

Table 2. Characteristics of school returns by sex and generation. Mexico, 2011

Characteristics	Men			Women			Total
	1951-1953	1966-1968	1978-1980	1951-1953	1966-1968	1978-1980	
% of spells that ended in a return to school	19.5	16.3	19.6	14.6	16.9	21.3	18.4
Mean years out of school	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.5	4.7	4.1	4.0
Mean age at return	19.6	20.6	19.6	18.7	20.8	20.6	20.2
Age at return, percentile 25	16	17	16	15	16	16	16.0
Age at return, percentile 75	23	22	22	22	27	26	23.0
n returns	104	81	113	77	87	141	603
n spells	513	496	598	485	513	640	3,245

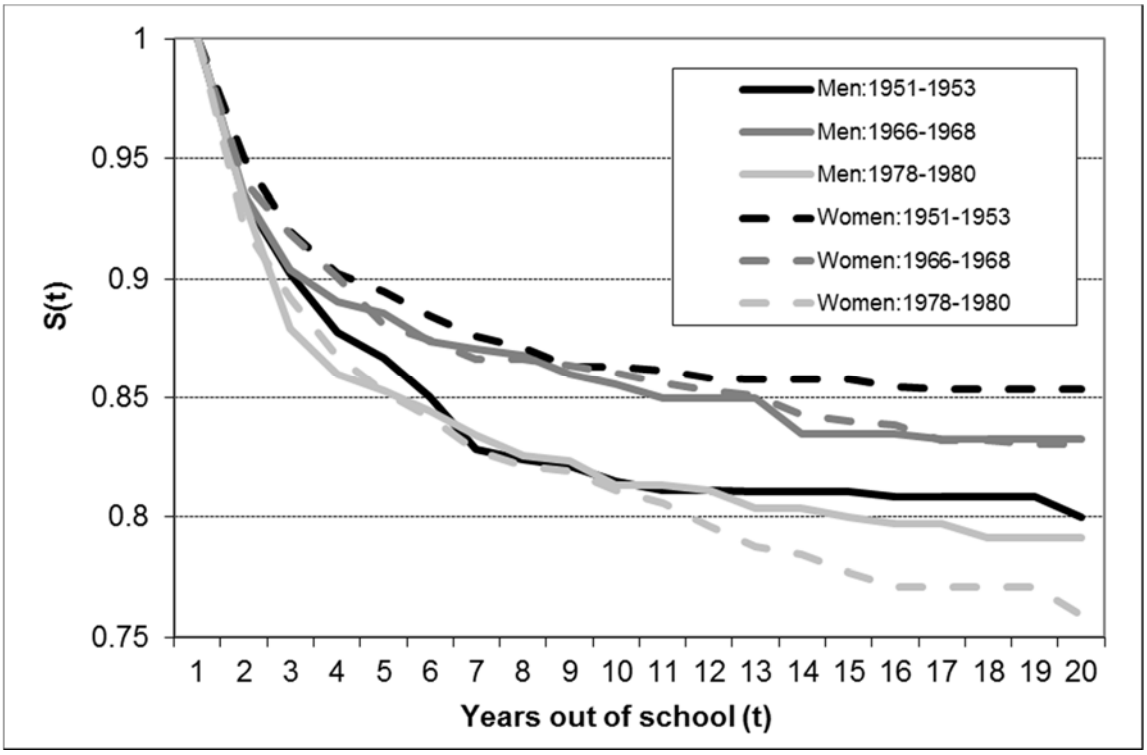
Source: Own estimates based on EDER, 2011.

By evaluating episodes out of school and the occurrence of school reentry within episodes (Table 2), it can be observed that in the last two generations, women also exhibited a higher mean duration out of school before returning, and a higher mean age upon school reentry than men. Furthermore, the interquartile range of ages upon return increased among women while for men it remained stable, reaching – in the last cohort – 11 years (from 16 to 26 years old) in women and 7 years (from 16 to 22 years old) in men. This means that this acquisition of human capital was spread more diffusely in women than men, over a longer period in their life course, indicating the complexity of returning to school for women,

perhaps due to the difficulty of combining educational activities with family responsibilities, as found in previous studies (Hostleter, Sweet, & Moen, 2007).

Survival functions of school reentry (Graph 1) reveal conspicuous disparities between men and women in the first generation and visible gaps in the third generation. Unlike the earlier generations, for which a higher school reentry was observed in men than women, for the last generation women had a greater cumulative probability of returning to school than men, beginning 12 years after leaving school. This confirms the diffuse nature of female schooling.

Graph 1. Survival function of school reentry, by sex and cohort. Mexico, 2011.



Source: Own calculations based on EDER, 2011.

Table 3. Selected characteristics of population during the years of school return and no school return. Mexico, 2011

Independent variable	Category	Return	No return	Total
Child-rearing stage	No children	85.6	46.8	47.3
	Children aged 0-2 years	7.3	30.2	29.9
	Children aged 3-5 years	4.3	13.8	13.7
	Children aged 6 years or more	2.8	9.2	9.1
Labor participation (lag)	Full time or more	43.2	60.4	59.1
	Part time	7.4	5.9	5.9
	Not working	49.4	33.7	35.0
Sector of activity (lag)	Medium or large enterprise	41.5	42.0	42.0
	Agriculture	4.8	3.9	3.9
	Micro or small enterprise	32.2	39.9	39.8
	Public sector	21.5	14.2	14.3
Type of occupation (lag)	Non manual	64.5	52.4	52.6
	Manual	35.5	47.6	47.4
Cohort	1951-1953	18.3	24.6	24.5
	1966-1968	33.9	40.0	40.0
	1978-1980	47.8	35.4	35.5
Sex	Hombres	47.9	46.0	46.1
	Mujeres	52.1	54.0	53.9
Age	- - -	20.2	25.2	25.1
Level of education (lag)	Elementary	31.1	37.8	37.7
	Junior high school	31.3	28.3	28.3
	High school	23.9	13.8	13.9
	Technical or vocational	4.7	9.8	9.7
	Professional	9.0	10.3	10.3
Previous migration (lag)	No	54.6	54.3	54.3
	Yes	45.4	45.7	45.7
Civil status (lag)	Married or cohabiting	13.2	53.4	52.9
	Single	85.0	43.0	43.5
	Divorced or separated	1.8	3.6	3.6
Mother´s years of schooling	No formal education	14.9	27.9	27.8
	1-5 years	25.1	24.1	24.1
	6-8 years	29.8	27.1	27.2
	9-11 years	15.3	8.5	8.6
	12 years or more	10.0	6.2	6.2
	Unspecified or no mother	4.9	6.2	6.2
Size of locality	Rural	9.2	8.5	8.5
	Urban	88.6	88.7	88.7
	Unspecified or other country	2.2	2.7	2.7
n		603	46320	46923

Source: Own estimates based on EDER, 2011.

Regarding differences by cohort in the survival function of school reentry (Graph 1), a clear increase over time in returning to school is observed in women. Men, on the other hand, show a slight increase in the third generation with respect to the first generation, following a decrease in the second generation. The small drop in school reentry in the second generation of men may be due to the effect of continual economic crises in the 1980s that affected young people's educational opportunities. At that time, there was a need to increase the number of workers in each household, so more young men entered the workforce to contribute to household income, whereas women supported their mothers in household chores (García & Pacheco, 2000).

Table 3 shows the socioeconomic profiles of populations at risk of returning to school in the years in which school reentry occurred and years in which it did not. It was found that returning to school was more frequent at a younger age, during lower and upper secondary education and when subjects had no children, were single or had mothers with higher levels of education. Furthermore, returning to school was more frequent among those who did not work or who worked less than full-time, and among those working in the public sector or in non-manual jobs. These frequencies suggest that these variables may be associated with school reentry. To confirm this, multivariate models are estimated below.

Conditioning factors of school reentry and attainment

The multivariate logistic models are presented in Table 4. The child-rearing stage was a determining factor in returning to school. The risk of returning to school when children were very young (0-2 years old) was 33.0% lower than for those without children, but this risk increased when children were of elementary school age (6 years or older). In this case, the risk of returning to school was double that of childless individuals. In other words, as parental demands decreased, returning to school became an option for young parents. It should be made clear that the child-rearing stage, and not simply having children, was the variable associated with school reentry, as in the stage when children are young, the tendency to return to school was lower, but when children reached school age, it was greater than for those without children.

With respect to work-related variables, not working increased school reentry, as did working under certain conditions. There were no significant differences in returning to school between having a part-time job or not working; however, working full-time or more reduced the risk of returning to school 35%, compared to those not in employment. On the one hand, this may be indicative of the difficulty of combining full-time work and study. On the other hand, it also suggests that having a part-time job may provide an incentive to return to school to improve job opportunities, and as a result, may be similar to not having undertaken work commitments.

Working in the formal sector *per se* was not associated with school reentry, as initially proposed. Working in the public sector doubled the chance of reintegrating into school, compared to those working in medium or large enterprises. In contrast, there were no significant differences in the risk of returning to school for workers in micro or small enterprises and in the agricultural sector, with respect to the same reference category.

Since the 1970s, but especially since the 1980s and over the last decade, the public sector has encouraged its employees to return to school through the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) (SEP, 2009). Furthermore, this return to school may be linked to the possibility of job mobility that comes with education in this sector. For example, some education workers' unions have promoted ongoing training for teachers or academic staff to obtain a higher position. Similarly, in recent years, through the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), the federal government created the High-Level Training Program for the federal public administration, which encourages civil servants with high potential to return to school to undertake postgraduate studies, in Mexico or abroad, by granting them a series of attractive economic incentives through scholarships covering the cost of registration and living expenses (CONACYT, 2014).

Table 4. Odds ratios of returning to school of three generations (Discrete logistic model). México, 2011

Independent variable	Category	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		OR	P>|z|	OR	P>|z|	OR	P>|z|
Child-rearing stage	Children aged 0-2 years	0.67	*	0.67	*	0.67	*
(No children)	Children aged 3-5 years	1.31		1.31		1.31	
	Children aged 6 years or more	2.11	*	2.08	*	2.10	*
Labor participation -lag	Full time or more	0.65	***	- - -		- - -	
(No)	Part time	0.86		- - -		- - -	
Sector of activity -lag	Agriculture	- - -		1.13		- - -	
(Medium or large enterprise)	Micro or small enterprise	- - -		0.96		- - -	
	Public sector	- - -		2.04	***	- - -	
	Not working	- - -		1.60	**	- - -	
Type of occupation -lag	Non manual	- - -		- - -		0.85	
(Not working)	Manual	- - -		- - -		0.53	***
Cohort* Sex (Women 1951-1953)	Men 1951-1953	1.51	*	1.56	*	1.60	*
	Women 1966-1968	1.15		1.15		1.16	
	Men 1966-1968	1.08		1.12		1.14	
	Women 1978-1980	1.36	+	1.41	+	1.39	+
	Men 1978-1980	1.18		1.24		1.24	
Age	- - -	0.84	***	0.83	***	0.84	***
Level of education (lag)	Junior high school	2.00	***	2.02	***	1.98	***
(Elementary)	High school	4.12	***	4.04	***	3.76	***
	Technical or vocational	1.20		1.11		1.11	
	Professional	2.82	***	2.49	***	2.42	***
Previous migration (lag)	(No)						
	Yes	1.56	***	1.54	***	1.54	***
Civil status (lag)	Single	2.92	***	2.89	***	2.89	***
(Married or cohabiting)	Divorced or separated	2.11	*	2.18	*	2.08	*
Mother´s years of schooling	1-5 years	1.86	***	1.86	***	1.85	***
(No formal education)	6-8 years	1.67	***	1.63	**	1.61	**
	9-11 years	2.55	***	2.53	***	2.48	***
	12 years or more	3.17	***	3.09	***	3.04	***
	Unspecified or no mother	1.20		1.19		1.16	
Size of locality	Urban	1.49	*	1.53	*	1.48	*
(Rural)	Unspecified or other country	0.77		0.80		0.79	
Spell out of school							
(First)	Second or subsequent	2.55	***	2.57	***	2.53	***
Log-pseudolikelihood		-14159757		-14109014		-14130882	
Number of person years		46923		46923		46923	

OR: Odds ratios; ***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05 +p<.1 ; reference category in parenthesis

Source: Own estimates based on EDER, 2011.

Regarding the rest of the independent variables, men were more likely to return to school in the first generation than women, but this trend was reversed in the last generation, as shown above. In this sense, school reentry in younger women has benefitted most from adult education policies and changes in gender role concepts. Furthermore, school reentry was more frequent the lower the age, so it is logical to believe that the less time has passed since leaving schools, and the fewer commitments undertaken, the easier it is to reintegrate into school.

It was also confirmed that returning to school was more frequent in senior high school, followed by higher education and then junior high school, in comparison with elementary education. This could be linked to higher drop-out rates at these levels, mainly when finishing high school and beginning higher education (Brunet, 2016), and also to the fact that compulsory education was expanded to the upper secondary level (SEGOB, 2012) and a high-school diploma is necessary for many jobs in the formal sector.

Another characteristic associated with school reentry was having migrated during one's lifetime. Although internal and international migration have a direct effect on school drop-outs and interruptions, and an indirect effect on the educational attainment of young Mexicans (Giorguli et al., 2010; Vargas & Potter, 2011), migration and school reentry may be complementary in cities, because of migrants' socioeconomic selectivity, their educational motivations (which may be associated with the pursuit of better job opportunities), and the educational opportunities offered by receiving cities (Peinador, 2005).

Variables associated with young people's environment and social background were linked to returning to school, which supports the extensive evidence found in developing countries (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001). Living in urban areas and having mothers with high levels of schooling – above 9 years – were linked to greater school reentry. In cities, the school infrastructure is greater and better, and a higher value is placed on education due to opportunities provided by the labor market. Furthermore, having parents with a high level of schooling is linked not just to a higher socioeconomic status, but also to greater cultural capital within the household, which benefits children's performance and attainment at school (Farkas, 1996). A higher level of maternal education has a positive influence on children's

educational aspirations, due to the role played by mothers in the socialization process of their children, and on children's socioeconomic opportunities (Hausmann & Szekely, 2003).

The multivariate analysis also confirmed that school reentry occurred more frequently in the absence of a partner, or following life events associated with marital dissolution such as becoming separated or divorced, compared to those in a relationship. Just as previous studies have proven that school drop-out is directly associated with moving out of the parental home and taking on conjugal roles (Rabell & Murillo, 2016; Brunet, 2016), the likelihood of returning to school is greater when conjugal roles have not been taken on or have ceased.

Lastly, to assess the possibility of educational or occupational mobility in young people who returned to school, mobility tables were created for level of education, sector of activity, and type of occupation before and after returning to school in closed episodes, meaning episodes that ended in another exit from school (Table 5).

Firstly, significant educational mobility was observed, and was greater for those who returned to school at the junior high school level (Panel A of Table 5), 79% of whom reached a higher level of schooling. These were followed by those who returned to elementary education (73% achieved a higher level), and finally, those who returned at the vocational or teacher-training school level (65% reached a higher level). Among those who returned at the senior high school level, 10.3% reached university; they had already gone further in their studies. These results show that returning to school has a positive impact on young people's educational trajectories.

Mobility in the sector of activity after the episode of school reentry confirms the importance of this investment in human capital. Among those who did not work before returning to school, half continued not to work, a quarter went on to work in a medium or large enterprise, and around 8% in the public sector. Among those who worked in the informal sector (micro or small enterprise, or agriculture),[7] close to 30% went on to work in medium or large enterprises and a further 3% in the public sector. In contrast, worker

7 The two sectors were combined due to the very small sample size in agriculture.

transition from formal employment sectors to an informal employment sector, or no employment, occurred less frequently.

Regarding mobility based on the type of occupation, mobility at time B was greater for those in manual employment at time A than among those performing non-manual work. In other words, upward mobility was greater, with 31.5% of those in manual employment going on to perform non-manual work. In contrast, only 8.4% of those in non-manual employment went on to perform manual jobs.

Table 5. Mobility tables before and after returning to school for selected variables. Closed spells of three generations of Mexicans.

PANEL A	LEVEL OF EDUCATION B						
LEVEL OF EDUCATION A	Elementary	Junior high school	High school	Technical or vocational	Professional	TOTAL	n
Elementary	27.2	47.1	8.3	14.7	2.7	100	105
Junior high school	0.0	21.0	36.1	35.4	7.6	100	91
High school	0.0	0.0	35.1	25.9	39.0	100	66
Technical or vocational	0.0	0.0	0.0	89.7	10.4	100	29
Professional	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100	38
TOTAL	7.6	18.9	20.7	28.9	24.0	100	329
PANEL B	SECTOR B						
SECTOR A	Not working	Informal	Medium or large enterprise	Public sector		TOTAL	n
Not working	51.4	14.9	25.4	8.3		100	174
Informal	8.5	58.7	30.1	2.7	- - -	100	69
Medium or large enterprise	10.4	17.7	58.0	14.0	- - -	100	66
Public sector	6.4	7.9	0.8	84.9	- - -	100	20
TOTAL	31.2	24.2	32.5	12.1	- - -	100	329
PANEL C	TYPE OF OCCUPATION B						
TYPE OF OCCUPATION A	Not working	Manual	Non manual			TOTAL	n
Not working	51.4	18.3	30.4	- - -	- - -	100	174
Manual	5.3	63.3	31.5	- - -	- - -	100	76
Non manual	12.7	8.4	78.9	- - -	- - -	100	79
TOTAL	31.2	26.0	42.8	- - -	- - -	100	329

Source: Own estimates based on EDER, 2011.

Conclusions

This paper shows the importance of returning of school in the life trajectories of the three generations of Mexicans. In both sexes, returning to school was slightly more common in the 1978-1980 cohort than in the previous cohorts, with approximately 1 in 5 young people returning to school at some point in their lives. Adult education campaigns beginning in the late 1970s, changes that support gender equity in education, the demand for more highly qualified workers in certain sectors of the labor market, and the expansion of basic-level education are all social processes that may be linked to this trend.

Gender differences were recorded, with women exhibiting a higher increase in school reentry. Brunet (2016) found that women from the 1966-1968 and 1978-1980 generations had greater opportunities to remain in school, with respect to the 1951-1953 generation, but that this increase in student retention was not significant in men. In the same way, this study shows that women from the 1978-1980 cohort significantly increased their chances of reintegrating into the education system, but this was not the case for men, who already displayed high frequencies of school reentry in the first generation studied.

It is important to note that increased rates of school reentry were recorded in levels of education that have been the "bottleneck" in terms of continuity of studies, meaning levels at which the likelihood of dropping out is also greater, as is the case with senior high school. Furthermore, inequalities in socioeconomic context and background played a key role in young people's opportunities to return to school. Young people with greater human and cultural capital at home, and city dwellers, showed a greater tendency to return to school. In this sense, it is clear that opportunities to return to school are greater for those higher up the social scale. The results confirm that among the disadvantaged, it is the most advantaged who are able to return to school (Hostetler, 2008).

Regarding the factors associated with school reentry, this study shows that the educational, labor, and family trajectories are indeed intertwined, and it is in the context of these intersections that individuals opt to return to school. Thus, this transition is indicative of the interdependence between the different areas of human activity, and human agency in response to social changes that encourage the acquisition of human capital (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Hostetler, 2008). Both the child-rearing stage and job

conditions were important in tendencies in returning to school. As we expected, young Mexicans reentered school when they were able to combine their student roles with other roles, such as working and parenting, or when they had not taken on these roles. The time demands and costs of other family and occupational activities significantly hinder school reintegration.

The results confirm, on the one hand, that it is not simply having children that is detrimental to school reentry, but rather the family commitments associated with raising young children, which compete for time and resources that may be invested in study. On the other hand, it has also been found that high-intensity work hinders school enrollment. In other contexts, part-time employment is associated with greater school reentry than unemployment (Bradburn, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Astone, Shoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000), due to the need to fund continuing education. However, in Mexico there were no significant differences between not working and having a part-time job for school reintegration. This may be linked to the role played – particularly at the higher education level – by public education programs and schools in our country, which are low cost, while in other countries they are highly privatized.

Another finding was that school reentry occurs when job conditions provide an incentive for this investment. Among drop-outs, the workers most likely to return to school were those in non-manual jobs and in the public sector. This partially confirmed the initial hypothesis, as we suggested that workers with greater opportunities provided by employers, and higher labor mobility motivations, would return to school, and we included all formal and non-manual workers within this profile. However, results showed that workers in medium and large enterprises did not necessarily have the same opportunities as public sector workers, despite working in the formal sector. Industry, for instance, which employs large numbers of workers, provides intensive work that is difficult to juggle with formal education (Hernández & Vargas, 2016).

However, upon observing the mobility tables, clear benefits for employment can be noted for those from these less advantaged sectors. In general, upward labor mobility was much greater than downward labor mobility among all school returnees. Furthermore, substantial mobility was recorded between levels of education, which supports the promotion

of adult and worker education programs that are flexible enough to serve a population that experiences fragmented or heterogeneous school trajectories and meaningful enough to contribute to occupational training and mobility.

The findings of this study show that, over time, young people increasingly sought reversibility in educational trajectories. Education policies oriented toward school reentry for young people have contributed to this trend. However, we still observe marked inequalities in school reentry among young people with small children, long working hours, manual employment and those in non-public sectors. Given that society no longer provides the employment guarantees and social protection of the past, the State could further influence school reentry in young people by providing day care and early education facilities for the children of young mothers in school, and establishing partnerships with private companies to hire students and create jobs with flexible working hours. The aim would be to allay the uncertainty felt by young people with non-linear models of transition to adulthood and who wish to make a greater investment in education while continuing to work and raise children.

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