

## “Atenea Children’s Stay” Project Overcoming Barriers and Finding Strength

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**Abstract:** This project proposes the creation of a children’s stay within the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, with a view to it being a larger project that serves all the faculties and high schools of the university, to reduce in this way the statistics of desertion of mothers and fathers students. It is considered that the project would not only bring benefits in reducing the institution’s dropout statistics but would also prevent student mothers and fathers from seeing their right to continue their studies truncated. In addition, the project could be a space where professional and/or social service practices can be developed by university students.

**Key words:** university dropout, student mothers, children’s stay, social responsibility

**JEL codes:** I24

### 1. Introduction

The theme of education is a guiding axis in government projects and social intervention programs, which can encompass from infrastructure to the theoretical contents of education. However, proposals are also made to make education continuous and to lower dropout rates.

For example, on December 7, 2020, a reform was enacted in the Education Law of the State of Nuevo León, which proposes a containment measure for those young students who become pregnant and prevent it from affecting their academic career.

The right to education is proposed and guaranteed so that any educational institution, of basic, upper secondary and higher level, prior to compliance with the applicable requirements, denies the entry, permanence, enrollment or access of a pregnant or lactating student, so, appropriate protection and facilities must be granted for their permanence or reinstatement.

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Although this reform focuses on solving the problem of non-discrimination of pregnant adolescents and their entry into education, it does not address the issue of childcare, nor the time and attention needed while the student is in school. Within this reform, the creation of childcare spaces for support for mothers in vulnerable situations is not contemplated. Even, the discrimination is single one of the factors that face/the adolescents, since a pregnancy aggravates “the deterioration of the conditions of life of the young mothers and its projects of life, as well as of their descendants, since it accentuates the ignorance, the inequality, and the social exclusion.” (Guerra, 2020, p. 13).

School dropout is a multifactorial and complex problem that encompasses the rhythm of society itself, but an important factor in early school leaving is teenage pregnancy. According with the INEGI (2021) between the years from the 2015 to 2017 the fertility rate on women aged 15 to 19 years in Mexico ascended to 70,6 by each 1.000 women, at ages of full school development and transition between the levels of baccalaureate and university. Comparing these data from the study carried out by INEGI (2021), among the countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Mexico is the country with the highest fertility rate.

Although the figures do not clarify whether adolescents study or work, the INEGI report (2021) contains data from the National Demographic Dynamics Survey (ENADID) applied in 2018, which is focused on this variable. The results show that the dropout rate of adolescent women in Mexico due to pregnancy is 9%, that is, a total of 175,332 adolescents.

It should be noted that there is a percentage of teenagers who are single parents and drop out of university for providing care for their children since they are unable to find sites that support them for childcare while they study. According to data presented in a study conducted by the Women’s Policy Research Institute (IWPR), out of a population of 3.8 million students with children, approximately 1.1 million are single parents who in most cases choose to drop out academically to exercise paternity (Duckworth, 2021).

Therefore, it is pertinent to address this situation on school dropout due to teenage pregnancy, also to avoid that educational inequalities continue to be reproduced and that the percentage that is reflected in the ENADID 2018 can be decreased.

In a survey applied in the 2022 to 23 students of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, with respect to young people whom they have had to leave its university studies by lack of time by the care of its children, 95.5% answered who have had knowledge of at least a case in which presents/displays this problematic one of abandonment of university studies by the lack of time by the care of its children (view annex).

## **2. Detect Necessities**

This project has as a priority the reduction and prevention of school dropout caused by maternity/paternity in university students of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (FFyL) of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL), where the following needs are identified among the student community:

- School desertion in university young people who have children.
- Lack of spaces within the institution to be able to exert a maternity/responsible paternity.

### **2.1 Overall Objective**

The creation of a children’s stay within the facilities of the FFyL of the UANL to take care of children’s student during school hours.

## **2.2 Goals**

- Reduce the dropout of young university students enrolled in the FFyL of the UANL who have children under 4 years of age and thus contribute positively to equity and inclusion among UANL students.
- To promote the development and humanistic vision of the FFyL, by addressing a problem such as the one raised here and that affects the academic life of these students.
- Find a place in the FFyL where there can be space to receive up to 10 children between 6 months and 4 years in each shift.
- Obtaining a budget for remodeling and operation of the space.

## **2.3 Scope**

The Atenea Children’s Stay program aims to influence the student community of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the UANL, having as its target population those students who are:

- Students enrolled in the FFyL of the UANL, regardless of semester and who have children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years.
- Offer the service of stay in the student's school hours.

It is intended that the program works actively and permanently in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the UANL, San Nicolás campus.

## **3. Project Justification**

The development of a project such as the Atenea Children's Stay would encourage the permanence of students with children within higher education, because they are at risk and can fall into university dropout, which in turn will affect them in their life trajectories and brings with it an impediment to seek an upward social mobility linked to the reproduction of social inequalities, being a point that universities must take into account to mitigate these risk situations and guarantee the permanence of these students, especially focused on the accessibility of women in higher education as mentioned in Article 4 of the World Declaration on Higher Education in the XXI Century: vision and action.

Although considerable progress has been made in improving women’s access to higher education, in many parts of the world there are still various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles to their full access and effective integration. Overcoming them remains an urgent priority in the renewal process aimed at establishing an equitable and non-discriminatory higher education system based on the principle of merit. (UNESCO, 1998, p.5).

Therefore, the project favors the integration and permanence of women at the higher level and generating an egalitarian terrain to achieve a better standard of living, in the same way, with this project it is intended to achieve equal opportunities for this group of students who are mothers or fathers and seek to follow a long academic career to achieve a better quality of life, on equality from the educational is mentioned.

Equal opportunities in the educational environment, based on the premise that schooling is a continuous process and its measurement of achievement can be seen from four dimensions of equality: access regardless of the social group to which they belong, permanence throughout the entire stage or school cycle, results in terms of knowledge and learning obtained; and in the social opportunities to access the labor market (Lozano Medina, 2009 cited by Garizurieta, 2015, p. 6).

The project also seeks to make the FFyL of the UANL a space committed to the well-being of its students in

situations of vulnerability, in addition, that cares not only for the academic life of the student but for their future. The goal of this project is to achieve educational equality from the perspective of student permanence and contribute to the social integration of this specific age sector, that is, "low-skilled sectors, women and young people. The intersection of the three features virtually guarantees poverty and exacerbates the risk of social exclusion." (Filgueiras, 2008, p. 154). Thus, the stay seeks to achieve the preparation of young people making them to have tools for integration and that well-being can be achieved, in a space of non-discrimination and quality for the care of children.

#### **4. Implementation**

Once the dynamics that would be carried out for the project to work have been elaborated, that is, once the operationalization has been raised, it was found that apart from the disposition of the faculty to offer some physical space for the stay, financial resources are required for operate so it is proposed that through social responsibility it can be sought that our university or the private initiative, the government or civil associations make contributions that allow the project to be carried out.

University social responsibility corresponds to new policies focused on the university context that allow us to provide solutions to current problems and generate an impact on society (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, s.f.). From this perspective the problem of university dropout by students who have children is a challenge where USR can be applied to help this group of students avoid abandoning their studies.

Likewise, university social responsibility is presented as the action by the institution to meet the needs either inside or outside it that are generated from the same population and that in turn the fulfillment of these demands that are presented is achieved (Palacios, et. al., 2018, p.149). Therefore, given the need of university students who have children, the university can contribute to carry out this type of projects in favor of USR. As well as being part of the 2030 mission established by the UANL, which proposes an improvement in the level of human development of Nuevo Leon society.

On the other hand, corporate social responsibility can also be another option to finance the project because it is a way to contribute to human development by generating actions or agreements that can improve social capital and the quality of life of society (Responsabilidad Social Empresarial y Sustentabilidad, 2022) therefore, it is relevant its relationship with the project, because reduce university dropout due to the exercise of maternity or paternity of students, contributes to reducing social inequality and that in turn could improve the quality of life in society.

The project is proposed from an idea that can be accessible or low cost for mothers and/or fathers students, it is considered that as it develops, new ideas may arise to optimize their performance and accessibility in terms of costs, for example, the school performance of the student could be considered to establish the fee he or she would pay for the service of the child stay.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The design of this project is in order to generate bases from which it can be started, considering that at some point it can be launched with the purpose of implementing actions that allow reducing the rates of school dropout at the higher level, which likewise we know that there are other reasons why this problem is generated, however, in this case we consider that university students who exercise their parenthood find problems with the care of their

children under four years of age and therefore end up deserting from university careers.

Likewise, at first it is delimited as a specific area within the FFyL of the UANL, however, it is considered pertinent that it can also act as a solution throughout the University, for this reason the following is mentioned:

On August 24, a photograph published by a professor at the Facultad de Artes Visuales of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL) was disseminated on social networks, where she showed one of her students taking classes with her baby aside. Within the publication, the authorities of the Maximum House of Studies were asked to open children's stay for the children of students, who do not have help to take care of their kids. (Alvarado, 2018).

Thus, the Atenea Children's Stay project is carried out in order to meet the demands made by the students belonging to the UANL so that they can continue studying and graduate from university without being an impediment to the care of their daughters or sons.

Therefore, the importance of providing a space for communication with mothers or parents students of the UANL and that the project is with a participatory approach where those who use it can contribute ideas to improve, as it is described.

Participation is said to bring benefits in different dimensions: a) it improves the design of projects, making the diagnosis and forms of intervention adapted to the specific characteristics of the target population; b) enables the control of the target population over the project, thus helping transparency; and c) increases the sustainability of the project by involving beneficiaries in project operation.

Consequently, the project seeks to consider the opinion of those who use it and adapt according to the ideas that arise from the participants, which in this case is the student population that exercises maternity or paternity. In addition, the project could be a space where professional and/or social service practices can be developed by university students.

As well, the project could be considered as an activity linked to social responsibility so that it can attract financing from entrepreneurs or educational institutions. as well as voluntary contributions from society in general or from students who use the service, for the maintenance and function of this and become a sustainable project within the university.

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**Annex**

