

Teacher Narratives on Contemporary School Reality in Mexican Border Contexts

Narrativas docentes sobre la realidad escolar contemporánea en la frontera Mexicana

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Abstract

Keywords:

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The present study aimed to analyze the experiences and meanings constructed by teachers regarding contemporary school experiences in educational contexts along the northern border of Mexico. The research emerged from the interest in understanding how migration processes, cultural diversity, and institutional dynamics influence current ways of practicing teaching in border school settings.

The study was developed from a qualitative approach with an interpretative orientation and was supported by a biographical-narrative perspective with thematic-interpretative analysis. Six basic education teachers from public schools in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, participated in the research. Information was produced through semi-structured interviews focused on recovering experiences related to school life, working conditions, and institutional dynamics present in border schools. The analysis was conducted through an interpretative reading of the narratives constructed by the participants.

The findings show that teaching experience in northern Mexican border contexts is shaped by human mobility, multiculturalism, administrative overload, and institutional fragmentation. Participants described classrooms composed of students from different regions of the country and from international migratory contexts, as well as bureaucratic demands and communication difficulties between schools and the administrative structures of the educational system.

The findings allow for problematizing the institutional and socio-emotional tensions present in contemporary border schools, showing how transformations derived from human mobility and multiculturalism reconfigure the ways teaching is experienced and practiced. It is concluded that contemporary border schools constitute spaces traversed by social and institutional transformations that increase the complexity of educational practice and modify the everyday conditions of teaching work.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Narrativas docentes; movilidad humana; multiculturalidad; trabajo docente; escuelas fronterizas.

La presente investigación tuvo como propósito analizar las experiencias y significados construidos por docentes sobre la realidad escolar contemporánea en contextos educativos de la frontera norte de México. El estudio parte del interés por comprender cómo los procesos migratorios, la diversidad cultural y las dinámicas institucionales influyen en las formas actuales de ejercer la docencia en escenarios escolares fronterizos.

La investigación se desarrolló desde un enfoque cualitativo con orientación interpretativa y se apoyó en una perspectiva biográfico-narrativa con análisis temático-interpretativo. Participaron seis docentes de educación básica pertenecientes a instituciones públicas de Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. La producción de información se realizó mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas orientadas a recuperar experiencias relacionadas con la vida escolar, las condiciones laborales y las dinámicas institucionales presentes en las escuelas fronterizas. El análisis se efectuó a partir de una lectura interpretativa de los relatos construidos por las y los participantes.

Los resultados muestran que la experiencia docente en la frontera norte de México se encuentra marcada por movilidad humana, multiculturalidad, sobrecarga administrativa y fragmentación institucional. Las y los participantes describieron aulas conformadas por estudiantes provenientes de distintos estados del país y de contextos migratorios internacionales, así como exigencias burocráticas y dificultades de comunicación entre las escuelas y las estructuras rectoras del sistema educativo.

Los hallazgos permiten problematizar las tensiones institucionales y socioemocionales presentes en las escuelas fronterizas contemporáneas, evidenciando cómo las transformaciones derivadas de la movilidad humana y la multiculturalidad reconfiguran las formas de ejercer la docencia. Se concluye que la escuela fronteriza contemporánea constituye un espacio atravesado por transformaciones sociales e institucionales que complejizan la práctica educativa y modifican las condiciones cotidianas del trabajo docente.

Introduction

Contemporary schools are undergoing institutional transformations, facing administrative demands, and navigating social dynamics that are constantly reshaping the experience of teachers. Beyond pedagogical processes, school life involves everyday forms of interaction, communication, and coexistence that influence how teachers interpret their work and make sense of the educational reality they experience on a daily basis. In border contexts, these dynamics take on particular complexity due to phenomena associated with human mobility, cultural diversity, and social inequality—factors that directly impact the ways schools are organized and the experiences shaped within educational institutions (Pérez Gómez, 2000; Sacristán, 1981).

In various international contexts, recent research has shown that migration patterns and the growing multiculturalism in schools have significantly transformed contemporary educational dynamics. Studies conducted in border regions and contexts of human mobility indicate that schools currently face challenges related to cultural integration, linguistic diversity, social-emotional support, and institutional adaptation in the face of increasingly diverse student populations (Walsh, 2013; Dietz and Mateos, 2011). Furthermore, international organizations have warned that contemporary migration patterns are placing new demands on education systems, particularly in regions where social vulnerability, economic inequality, and constant population movement converge. This research helps us understand that the contemporary school can no longer be viewed solely as a homogeneous educational space, but rather as a setting shaped by cultural tensions, migratory processes, and complex forms of institutional interaction.

In cities like Ciudad Juárez, located on Mexico's northern border, schools have become places where students from different states across the country come together, and in recent years, migrant children and adolescents from countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, Honduras, and Colombia. This cultural and social diversity transforms the dynamics within the classroom and places new demands on teachers, who face school environments marked by constant mobility, educational disparities, adaptation processes, and social needs that go beyond the roles traditionally associated with teaching. In this sense, the border school can be understood as a space where multiple cultures and social realities converge, constantly reshaping school dynamics (González, 1994).

Recent research conducted in educational settings characterized by migration and cultural diversity has shown that schools face growing challenges related to educational inclusion, intercultural coexistence, and the socio-emotional well-being of migrant students. Studies conducted in Chile, Ecuador, and Mexico indicate that multiculturalism in schools transforms teaching practices and requires new forms of institutional and teacher support in contexts characterized by constant population mobility and social vulnerability (Stang-Alva et al., 2021; Pérez, 2025; Ramírez-Iñiguez, 2025). It has also been noted that many educational institutions continue to operate under organizational structures that are inadequate to address the complexities arising from contemporary migration processes (Zavala, 2025).

From a sociocultural perspective, educational institutions serve not only as settings for the transmission of knowledge, but also as spaces where symbolic relationships, forms of interaction, and shared understandings of the educational process are constructed. School culture is manifested through practices, traditions, unwritten rules, and ways of interacting that guide the behavior of members of the school community. Various authors have noted that these cultural dynamics tend to operate in a naturalized manner within

schools, influencing the integration, recognition, and participation of teachers and students in school life (Bolívar, 1996; Elías, 2015). Consequently, understanding the reality of today's schools requires analyzing not only pedagogical or administrative aspects, but also the social and cultural relationships that shape the day-to-day functioning of educational institutions.

In addition to these conditions, there are processes of institutional bureaucratization and administrative fragmentation that are also part of the reality of contemporary schools. Teachers face not only pedagogical challenges related to diversity in the classroom, but also administrative demands, excessive workloads, and difficulties communicating with the governing bodies of the education system. Various studies on contemporary teaching practice have shown that policies related to evaluation, accountability, and institutional oversight have increased teachers' administrative workload and altered the day-to-day conditions of educational work (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Day and Gu, 2015). Recent research also warns that bureaucratic and administrative demands affect professional well-being, lead to emotional burnout, and limit opportunities for educational support within schools, especially in complex educational settings characterized by social vulnerability and high student turnover. In many cases, these conditions lead to feelings of burnout, institutional disorganization, and a lack of support in addressing the real needs of school settings.

The complexity of today's schools has also led to changes in traditional teaching methods. Currently, teachers are involved not only in teaching and learning processes, but also in activities related to social-emotional support, conflict mediation, family support, and the cultural integration of students. In contexts characterized by population mobility and social diversity, these functions take on particular importance because schools serve as spaces where a wide range of social and community issues converge. As Tardif and Lesard (2014) point out, teaching is a profession deeply intertwined with human relationships, social interactions, and emotional processes that go beyond the purely pedagogical dimension.

In this context, giving teachers a voice again allows us to gain insight into aspects of the school experience that are difficult to discern from institutional indicators or official discourse on education. The narratives constructed by teachers do not merely describe events; they also express ways of interpreting school life, explaining everyday tensions, and making sense of the conditions under which educational work takes place. As Larrosa (2006) argues, experience gains meaning through what individuals construct and interpret from their lived experiences. From this perspective, telling the story of the school also involves interpreting its dynamics, relationships, and contradictions.

The construction of meanings regarding the teaching profession is also closely linked to life experiences and personal references that influence how teachers view their educational practice. A teacher's professional identity is shaped not only by technical or academic knowledge, but also by emotional, cultural, and social factors that are developed throughout their personal and professional journey. From a biographical-narrative perspective, lived experiences are fundamental to understanding the ways in which individuals construct meaning regarding their practice and the institutional contexts in which they carry out their educational work (Bolívar, Domingo, and Fernández, 2001).

In recent years, various studies have examined the teaching experience in relation to professional integration processes, identity formation, and institutional dynamics within the school environment. In the context of Mexico's northern border, recent studies have shown how certain cultural and organizational conditions influence teachers' work experiences and the ways in which they engage with the school environment (Chávez Segura and Cangas Arreola, 2024; Chávez Segura and Segura Lazcano, 2026). These studies have

led to the recognition that schools function as complex spaces where professional relationships, forms of recognition, and institutional dynamics converge and shape teachers' day-to-day experiences.

However, there are still few studies specifically focused on analyzing the narratives through which teachers construct meanings about contemporary school life in border contexts characterized by human mobility, cultural diversity, and institutional tensions. Much of the research in education has focused on structural, administrative, or policy-related aspects, while the ways in which teachers interpret and discursively represent the issues encountered in everyday school life have been relegated to the background. Although there has been recent research on the educational inclusion of migrant students and intercultural coexistence in Latin American school settings, there are still few studies that focus specifically on teachers' narratives in border regions of northern Mexico.

Furthermore, the existing literature on border schools has often focused on institutional perspectives or structural analyses, while studies centered on teachers' subjective experiences and the meanings they construct regarding the tensions that shape contemporary school life remain scarce. From a sociocultural perspective, schools function as spaces where practices, meanings, and forms of interaction—historically constructed within each educational community—converge (Elías, 2015). In this regard, understanding teachers' narratives provides insight into the symbolic and relational dimensions that help explain the current changes taking place in schools.

Similarly, narratives about teaching help us understand how contemporary social changes have altered traditional approaches to teaching. The constant presence of students from different backgrounds, economic inequalities, linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as changes in family and community dynamics, present new challenges for schools and for those who work in education within them. In this context, teachers not only impart academic knowledge but also play a role in providing emotional support, fostering social integration, and addressing issues that reflect the complexities of today's border environment.

From this perspective, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of contemporary changes in border schools by examining the narratives constructed by elementary school teachers, focusing on how they interpret the cultural, institutional, and workplace tensions present in their daily experiences.

Specifically, the study focuses on understanding how contemporary changes in the teaching experience at the border are interpreted by teachers through narratives related to human mobility, cultural diversity, and institutional dynamics present in today's schools. From this perspective, teachers' narratives provide a window into the meanings that emerge within schools and into the ways in which educators explain the complexities of their professional practice in educational settings undergoing constant social and cultural change. The aim of the research was to analyze the narratives through which teachers interpret contemporary changes in the school experience in Mexican border contexts, particularly those related to human mobility, cultural diversity, administrative overload, and institutional fragmentation.

Method

Research Design

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with an interpretive focus, driven by an interest in understanding how teachers construct narratives about contemporary school life in educational settings along Mexico's northern border. Qualitative research is based on the recognition that social phenomena cannot be understood solely

through quantifiable measurements or linear causal relationships, since human experiences are shaped by meanings, interpretations, emotions, and specific sociocultural contexts. From this perspective, social reality is understood as a dynamic construct shaped by individuals through their daily interactions and experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012).

The qualitative approach made it possible to explore teachers' experiences from the perspective of those directly involved in school life. Rather than identifying variables or making universal generalizations, the focus was on understanding how teachers interpret institutional dynamics, changes taking place in schools, and the social conditions that shape their professional practice. In this regard, the study draws on Geertz's (2003) interpretive framework, which posits that social analysis seeks to understand the "webs of meaning" culturally constructed by individuals within their life contexts.

The interpretive approach was deemed appropriate because the study focused on understanding the meanings constructed by teachers regarding their daily school experiences. From this epistemological perspective, the teaching experience is not understood as an isolated objective fact, but rather as a symbolic and social construct shaped by processes of interaction, language, and interpretation. For this reason, the stories shared by the participants were understood as ways of representing and explaining the realities experienced within border school settings.

The study drew on a biographical-narrative approach focused on a thematic-interpretive analysis of teaching experiences. From this perspective, the narratives made it possible to uncover the meanings constructed by the participants regarding contemporary school life, while the analytical process was carried out by identifying and interpreting recurring themes in the stories. This approach made it possible to gain insight into the lived experience through the voices of those directly involved and to understand how teachers interpret the changes taking place in border school settings.

As Bolívar, Domingo, and Fernández (2001) point out, the biographical-narrative approach makes it possible to understand the meanings that people attribute to their life stories within specific historical, social, and institutional contexts. Through storytelling, individuals organize events, recall meaningful experiences, and construct interpretations of the realities they encounter in their professional and personal lives. From this perspective, the experiences described served as the primary analytical tool for understanding how teachers interpret the reality of today's schools.

Teachers' narratives were understood not merely as descriptive accounts, but as discursive constructions through which participants make sense of their experiences within the school. Ricoeur (2006) argues that narrative allows us to give a temporal structure to human experience, organizing events and generating interpretations of what has been lived. Based on this logic, the narratives analyzed made it possible to identify forms of representation related to human mobility, multiculturalism, institutional bureaucratization, and school communication dynamics present in border educational contexts.

Furthermore, the biographical-narrative method made it possible to uncover the emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions present in the participants' professional trajectories. Goodson (2010) notes that life stories are an important way to understand the relationship between individual experiences and broader social structures. Consequently, the teachers' narratives made it possible to interpret how institutional, cultural, and administrative conditions influence the ways in which teachers construct meaning about their work and about contemporary school realities.

Participants and Context

The research was conducted in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, located on Mexico's northern border. This context is characterized by constant human mobility, cultural diversity, and

complex social dynamics that directly impact students' school experiences and the ways in which schools are organized. The choice of the border context stemmed from an interest in understanding how these social conditions contribute to the construction of teachers' narratives about the contemporary educational landscape.

Six teachers from public elementary and secondary schools affiliated with the state and federal education systems participated. The participants worked at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels and had diverse career backgrounds within the education system. Some participants had recently begun their teaching careers, while others had been working in schools for a longer period of time, a situation that allowed for the gathering of diverse perspectives on contemporary educational dynamics.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. This type of sampling is used in qualitative research when the primary focus is not on statistical representativeness, but rather on the ability to capture meaningful experiences related to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). In this case, the selection criteria included willingness to participate, experience in a border school setting, and the ability to share detailed accounts of their teaching careers and the conditions of everyday school life.

Initial contact with the participants was made through direct outreach at educational institutions and professional networks related to the field of education. The academic purpose of the study was then explained, and those who met the established criteria were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Once their participation was confirmed, dates, times, and locations were set for the interviews.

In order to better understand the contextual characteristics of the sample, general information regarding the participants' educational background, professional experience, and institutional affiliation was compiled, while strictly adhering to ethical standards of confidentiality and the protection of identity.

Table 1

General characteristics of the study participants

Informant	Educational level	Antiquity	Subsystem
D1	Preschool	3 years	State-owned
D2	Elementary School	6 years	Federal
D3	Middle School	10 years	State-owned
D4	Elementary School	4 years	Federal
D5	Middle School	8 years	State-owned
D6	Preschool	12 years	Federal

Note. Compiled by the author based on information provided by the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Participation by the teachers was voluntary, and the academic purpose of the research was explained to them in advance. In addition, permission was requested to record the interviews and to use the information solely for investigative purposes. Six elementary school teachers from public schools in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, participated in the program; they were assigned to different grade levels and school subsystems.

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, alphanumeric codes (D1, D2, D3...) were used during the analysis and presentation of results. Similarly, the names of individuals, institutions, and other identifying information were omitted. The recovered testimonies were used solely for academic and research purposes.

In addition, we sought to maintain an ethical approach based on respect for the experiences shared by the participants, recognizing that teachers' narratives contain personal, emotional, and professional dimensions linked to their career paths. As Eisner (1998) argues, educational research requires ethical sensitivity to the voices of those involved in it, particularly when it involves experiences related to institutional tensions or complex working conditions.

Finally, assurances were given that the information obtained would not be used to pass judgment on educational institutions or specific individuals within the school system, but solely for the purpose of understanding and academically interpreting the realities described by the participating teachers.

Information Production

Semi-structured interviews with a narrative focus were used to gather data. This technique made it possible to facilitate open discussions aimed at exploring experiences related to professional development, institutional dynamics, school relationships, and ways of interpreting the contemporary educational landscape. Kvale (2011) notes that qualitative interviews seek to understand the world from the perspective of the participants, prioritizing interpretive depth over obtaining closed-ended or standardized responses.

The interviews were conducted between September and October 2024 at locations previously agreed upon with each participant. Some meetings took place within educational institutions, while others were held at external locations chosen by the teachers in order to foster an atmosphere of trust, privacy, and comfort during the conversation.

Although an initial set of guiding questions was provided, the interviews were conducted in a flexible manner to encourage more detailed accounts of the teaching experience. The guide covered topics related to career paths, entry into the education system, school experiences, institutional dynamics, human mobility, multiculturalism, and communication within schools. However, the narrative approach allowed participants to freely explore the events and experiences they considered most significant in their professional practice. The guiding questions used during the interviews included: How would you describe the current state of schools within your educational context? What experiences related to human mobility and cultural diversity have influenced your teaching practice? How do you view the dynamics of communication and institutional support within schools? And what situations do you find most challenging in today's teaching practice in border regions?

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. With the prior consent of the participants, the conversations were recorded in audio format using digital devices, with the aim of fully capturing the narratives shared during the research process.

Transcription and Analysis of the Information

The interviews were then transcribed manually, preserving the participants' original words. The transcription process was a key phase of the research because it provided an initial analytical approach to the teachers' narratives. During this stage, expressions, pauses, and narrative styles relevant to the interpretation of the meanings constructed by the teachers were preserved.

Once transcribed, the interviews were organized and categorized for interpretive analysis. The analytical process was carried out through repeated readings aimed at identifying recurring themes, representations of the school, and shared experiences among the participants. According to Coffey and Atkinson (2003), qualitative analysis involves a continuous process of interpreting, organizing, and reconstructing data with the aim of generating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The analysis was conducted in a gradual and thoughtful manner. Initially, an exploratory review of the transcripts was conducted with the aim of identifying significant experiences related to the contemporary school environment. Subsequently, an initial coding process was carried out by identifying narrative fragments related to experiences of human mobility, multiculturalism, institutional dynamics, bureaucratization, and school communication.

In a second stage, the identified codes were grouped into interpretive categories based on recurring themes found in the teachers' accounts. This process made it possible to identify connections between shared experiences, modes of interpretation, and meanings constructed by the participants regarding the conditions found in today's border schools.

Although the research draws on accounts related to teachers' career paths and experiences from a biographical-narrative perspective, the analysis was conducted through a thematic and interpretive organization of recurring themes present in the narratives constructed by the participants. This approach made it possible to link individual experiences with common challenges related to human mobility, multiculturalism, and institutional dynamics in today's border schools.

This process gave rise to categories related to human mobility, cultural diversity, bureaucratization of schools, intensification of labor, institutional communication, and organizational fragmentation. These categories made it possible to organize and interpret the experiences shared by teachers regarding the conditions found in today's border schools.

Finally, the analysis sought to identify both common elements in teachers' experiences and specific situations linked to their personal backgrounds and particular school contexts. Based on this reasoning, the narratives that were identified were understood as social and cultural constructs that shed light on the ways in which teachers experience, explain, and interpret contemporary changes in schools.

In order to enhance the study's credibility and interpretive consistency, the interviews were read repeatedly, and the emerging categories were cross-checked against the original narrative excerpts. Furthermore, a reflective approach was maintained throughout the interpretation process, recognizing the importance of critically examining the researchers' subjective implications in the analytical construction of the findings.

Results

The experiences shared by the participating teachers highlighted the fact that the current reality of schools in educational settings along Mexico's northern border is shaped by social, institutional, and cultural dynamics that directly impact the day-to-day practice of teaching. Through their accounts, the teachers described a school shaped by population mobility, cultural diversity, administrative demands, and social issues that are constantly transforming the ways in which the school community interacts and is organized. In this regard, the teaching experience in border areas is linked not only to instruction but also to processes of social adaptation, emotional support, and addressing the diverse needs present within educational institutions.

The narratives that emerged also revealed that many of the changes taking place in today's schools are perceived by teachers as rapid-paced processes to which educational institutions do not always have adequate mechanisms to respond. Some teachers noted that they feel constantly forced to adapt to new school dynamics, administrative demands, and social issues that are changing traditional teaching practices. From the teachers' perspective, the contemporary border school is characterized by uncertainty, constant change, and the ongoing reorganization of institutional dynamics.

Based on an interpretive analysis of teachers’ narratives, the emerging categories were understood as interrelated dimensions of contemporary changes in the teaching experience in border school settings. These categories made it possible to organize the meanings constructed by the participants regarding the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics present in today’s school environment.

Table 2

Interpretive Dimensions of the Teaching Experience in Border Regions

Interpretive Dimensions of the Teaching Experience in Border Regions	Identified issues
Human mobility	Professional adjustment, student transition, and school restructuring
Cultural diversity	Multiculturalism, integration, and social-emotional support
Administrative burden	Bureaucratization in schools, workplace burnout, and increased workload for teachers
Institutional fragmentation	Limited communication and administrative distance

Note. Compiled by the author based on the stories shared by the participants.

The Border and the Teaching Experience in Contexts of Mobility

One of the most common themes in the teachers’ experiences was the constant turnover that characterizes educational settings in border regions. Several participants described adaptation processes related to moving to a new city, commuting to work, and reorganizing their family dynamics following their entry into the educational system in Ciudad Juárez. Some teachers reported having moved from other parts of the state to join the education system on the northern border, a situation that required them to adapt to new circumstances related to housing, being far from family, and new school dynamics.

A preschool teacher said:

“When I arrived in Ciudad Juárez, it was very difficult because I was far from my family and didn’t really know how the schools worked here.” “At first, I felt a lot of uncertainty and fear because everything was new to me” (Preschool teacher, personal communication, September 26, 2024).

Similarly, another participant described how they began working at the border during the pandemic, a situation that significantly altered their experience of entering the teaching profession and building relationships with the school community:

“I entered the education system right in the middle of the pandemic, and that made it even harder for me to adjust.” “A lot of the time, we didn’t know how to interact with students and colleagues because everything changed so quickly” (High school teacher, personal communication, October 20, 2024).

These experiences show that the border is not merely a geographical space, but a social arena marked by constant movement, human mobility, and the reshaping of personal and professional paths. From an educator’s perspective, working in border contexts means operating in environments characterized by constant change and diverse forms of social interaction.

In addition, some participants noted that student mobility also affects classroom dynamics due to the constant influx and departure of students within groups. This situation creates challenges related to academic continuity, school adjustment, and educational support, particularly in contexts where population mobility is a part of daily life in border communities.

A high school teacher noted:

“In several groups, there were students who were constantly coming and going.” “Some came from other states or even other countries, which made it difficult to track their learning progress” (High school teacher, personal communication, October 17, 2024).

The narratives show that human mobility affects not only students’ educational trajectories but also the ways in which teachers organize their daily practice, build school-based relationships, and interpret the dynamics within border educational institutions.

Cultural Diversity and New Realities in the Classroom

Another significant aspect identified in the teachers’ experiences was the growing cultural diversity within border schools. The participants described school groups made up of students from different regions of the country and, more recently, of migrant children and adolescents from Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, and Honduras.

From the teachers’ perspective, this diversity significantly alters school dynamics and creates new pedagogical and socio-emotional challenges. Some teachers reported facing challenges related to cultural differences, educational gaps, and adjustment issues stemming from the constant movement of students.

One of the participating teachers explained:

“There were students in the classroom with very different backgrounds.” Some came from other countries and had trouble integrating or adjusting to the school environment. “Often, it was necessary to focus more on the emotional aspects than on the academic ones” (Elementary school teacher, personal communication, October 19, 2024).

Similarly, another participant noted:

“There were very complex family and social situations that could not be resolved through school activities alone.” “Many students arrived with difficult experiences related to migration or financial problems” (Elementary school teacher, personal communication, October 25, 2024).

In several accounts, participants noted that many schools lack sufficient institutional resources to address contexts characterized by multiculturalism and population mobility. Similarly, some teachers noted that the diversity found in classrooms requires educators to develop integration and support strategies that were not previously central to teaching practice.

The shared experiences also show that teachers perceive a growing need for training related to addressing cultural diversity and providing social-emotional support to migrant students. Although some teachers recognized multiculturalism as a learning opportunity, they also said they felt overwhelmed by social issues that go beyond the traditional scope of their work as educators.

These experiences show that cultural diversity not only transforms the demographic makeup of classrooms, but also the nature of pedagogical relationships and the emotional demands placed on teachers in contemporary border contexts. From an educational perspective, multiculturalism is linked to ongoing processes of institutional adaptation and socio-emotional support that add complexity to everyday school dynamics.

Administrative Overload and Daily Burnout

The experiences shared by teachers revealed a consistent perception of administrative overload in today's school environment. Several participants noted that a significant portion of their professional time is spent on paperwork, documentation, digital platforms, and institutional activities that limit their teaching work in the classroom.

In various accounts, faculty members stated that administrative demands have increased significantly in recent years, forcing them to juggle academic, institutional, and social responsibilities simultaneously.

A preschool teacher said: "We often spent more time filling out forms or uploading documentation than planning activities for the children." "I felt that administrative tasks took up a large part of our work" (Preschool teacher, personal communication, October 8, 2024).

Similarly, another participant noted: "Teachers currently have too many responsibilities." "Teachers don't just teach; they also have to deal with administrative, family, and emotional issues at school" (High school teacher, personal communication, October 20, 2024). In addition, some participants expressed feelings of burnout stemming from the constant accumulation of institutional responsibilities. Teachers noted that, in addition to teaching, they often have to deal with issues related to school administration, students' family problems, interpersonal conflicts, and administrative requirements that go beyond their traditional teaching duties.

The accounts gathered show that teacher burnout is not solely related to the amount of work, but also to the perception of a lack of institutional recognition and the feeling that many bureaucratic requirements are out of touch with the actual needs of schools in border areas.

Teachers' accounts reveal that the current intensification of work is not limited to an increase in administrative tasks, but also reflects broader changes in the responsibilities socially and institutionally assigned to teachers. In this context, participants view bureaucratic requirements as factors that affect their professional well-being and the opportunities for pedagogical support within schools.

Institutional Fragmentation and Lack of Communication

Another recurring theme identified in teachers' experiences was the perception of a disconnect between the actual needs of schools and the decisions made by the administrative structures of the education system. The participants noted that many of the issues facing schools are not heard or addressed in a timely manner by the governing bodies, leading to feelings of uncertainty and institutional disorganization.

Several accounts mentioned the idea that administrative decisions are often made in settings far removed from the day-to-day reality of schools. Some participants described experiences involving poor communication between departments, conflicting guidance, and a lack of institutional support in addressing issues within school communities.

One of the participating teachers recounted: "When I tried to enroll in the school system, no one clearly explained the procedures." "The information varied from place to place, and that was very frustrating for me because I even missed out on a job opportunity" (High school teacher, personal communication, October 17, 2024).

Similarly, another participant said: "At first, I felt like I didn't have any support." "We often learned about administrative procedures through conversations with colleagues because official information arrived late or was confusing" (Elementary school teacher, personal communication, October 19, 2024).

Several teachers also noted that much of the institutional information is shared through casual conversations among colleagues rather than through formal communication channels. This situation creates confusion and uncertainty, particularly during processes related to school placement, administrative changes, and school organization.

From the teachers' perspective, institutional fragmentation is also reflected in the limited support available to address issues related to school violence, educational disparities, and students' social-emotional needs. In this regard, the experiences reviewed show that many border schools face complex challenges without sufficient institutional support mechanisms.

The experiences shared show that institutional communication difficulties are not merely isolated administrative problems, but rather manifestations of broader processes of organizational fragmentation within contemporary education systems. From the teachers' perspective, these dynamics create uncertainty, disorganization, and a sense of detachment from the governing structures of the education system.

Discussion

The experiences shared by the participating teachers reveal that contemporary schools along Mexico's northern border are undergoing social, cultural, and institutional transformations that are significantly altering the way teaching is carried out. Through their accounts, teachers describe school settings characterized by population mobility, multiculturalism, administrative demands, and social issues that complicate day-to-day dynamics within educational institutions. In this context, teaching practice is linked not only to the instruction of academic content but also to processes of emotional support, social integration, and addressing situations of vulnerability that arise in everyday school life.

The study's findings reveal that border schools currently serve as places where students from diverse cultural and regional backgrounds are constantly arriving and passing through. Teachers' accounts show that human mobility profoundly alters school dynamics due to the ongoing influx of students with diverse educational backgrounds, complex migration experiences, and needs for social and academic adjustment. Based on teachers' experience, these conditions call for more flexible approaches to teaching and new strategies for fostering a positive classroom environment.

These findings are consistent with recent research conducted in educational settings involving migrant populations in Latin America and the United States, which has shown that human mobility transforms the ways schools are organized and places greater socio-emotional demands on teachers (Stang-Alva et al., 2021; Zavala, 2025). Furthermore, studies on intercultural education have shown that contemporary schools face growing challenges related to linguistic diversity, educational inclusion, and institutional adaptation in the face of increasingly heterogeneous student populations (Walsh, 2013; Dietz and Mateos, 2011).

Beyond describing processes of cultural diversity within schools, the findings highlight how multiculturalism transforms traditional forms of pedagogical interaction and redefines the roles assigned to teachers in border educational contexts. From this perspective, teachers' accounts reveal that contemporary schools function as spaces where social, cultural, and institutional tensions converge, extending beyond strictly curricular dimensions. The multiculturalism found in border schools is not merely a demographic characteristic, but also a factor that shapes the ways in which people interact, coexist, and construct meaning within educational settings.

Teachers' accounts also show that the diversity found in classrooms represents both an opportunity for learning and a constant source of professional challenges. Participants noted that they often felt overwhelmed by issues related to educational disparities, cultural differences, and the social-emotional needs of migrant students. Some teachers felt that many schools continue to operate under organizational structures that do not fully address the social realities of today's border regions.

In this regard, the insights gained allow us to examine the institutional limitations that currently exist in addressing educational contexts characterized by constant mobility and cultural diversity. Recent research on migrant education indicates that many school systems continue to operate under homogeneous teaching models that hinder the development of truly intercultural and inclusive practices (Ramírez-Iñiguez, 2025; Pérez, 2025). According to this logic, the challenges described by teachers reflect not only pedagogical difficulties, but also broader issues of inequality, institutional fragmentation, and insufficient professional support.

Another key finding identified in the study was the persistent perception of increasing workloads among teachers. The participants noted that administrative and bureaucratic tasks currently take up a significant portion of their work time, limiting the development of educational processes and leading to emotional burnout. From the perspective of educators, contemporary institutional demands have profoundly transformed the day-to-day conditions of educational work.

The narratives collected show that teachers simultaneously face pedagogical, administrative, and social responsibilities that go beyond the roles traditionally associated with teaching. Some participants described feelings of exhaustion stemming from the constant accumulation of tasks related to institutional platforms, administrative paperwork, dealing with family issues, and resolving school conflicts. These findings are consistent with the observations of Day and Gu (2015), who note that contemporary changes in education systems have increased work-related pressures on teachers and altered the ways in which teachers achieve professional well-being and stability.

In this regard, the increased workload described by the participants can be understood as part of contemporary processes of institutional reorganization that have progressively expanded teachers' pedagogical, emotional, and administrative responsibilities. The recovered narratives show that contemporary teaching is increasingly shaped by a multitude of social and institutional demands.

Furthermore, these findings align with international research on *emotional labor* and teacher burnout, which indicates that today's teachers face increasing emotional demands stemming from complex school environments and ongoing processes of institutional adaptation (Hargreaves, 2001; Zembylas, 2022). From this perspective, teacher burnout cannot be understood solely as the result of an accumulation of administrative tasks, but also as a consequence of emotional stress, institutional uncertainty, and a lack of professional recognition within contemporary education systems.

Similarly, the experiences shared help us recognize that teacher burnout is not solely related to the amount of work, but also to the perception of insufficient institutional support in addressing the challenges faced within schools. Some participants expressed feelings of uncertainty and institutional disarray stemming from unclear administrative processes and limited communication between school leadership and school communities.

Several accounts also noted the perception that many institutional decisions continue to be made in settings that are out of touch with the actual conditions in border educational contexts. From an educational perspective, this institutional gap makes it difficult to address issues related to educational disparities, school violence, social-emotional support, and student mobility. As Vaillant and Marcelo (2021) point out, contemporary education policies need to promote more hands-on and collaborative forms of professional support that acknowledge the actual conditions under which teachers carry out their daily work. These rediscovered experiences also provide an opportunity to reflect on the contemporary changes in the roles historically attributed to schools. Educational narratives show that educational institutions currently face challenges related to social inequality, family

vulnerability, population mobility, and community fragmentation—situations that significantly expand the responsibilities assigned to teachers. From this perspective, it can be argued that the contemporary school functions as a space where multiple social demands converge, demands that often exceed the available institutional capacity.

Another key finding from the research concerns the importance of teachers' narratives as a means of understanding the contemporary educational landscape. The experiences shared by the participants show that giving teachers a voice again brings to light aspects of school life that are often overlooked in institutional discourse on education. The narratives recovered not only describe everyday events; they also express ways of interpreting tensions in schools, making sense of teaching practices, and explaining the changes taking place within educational institutions.

In this regard, the experiences examined align with the perspectives of Contreras and Pérez de Lara (2010), who argue that teachers' narratives help us understand the human dimension of the educational experience and recognize teachers as producers of pedagogical and social knowledge. From this perspective, listening to teachers' voices also means recognizing the importance of their lived experiences as a legitimate source for interpreting the challenges facing contemporary schools.

Finally, the findings show that institutional communication issues are a significant factor contributing to the tensions present in border school settings. Participants noted that much of the institutional information is disseminated in a fragmented, ambiguous, or delayed manner, creating uncertainty within school communities. As Kaplún (2002) points out, communication within educational settings is essential for building relationships, fostering participation, and supporting institutional organization. Consequently, these insights help us recognize that communication difficulties are also part of the processes of institutional fragmentation present in contemporary schools.

Taken together, these findings suggest that contemporary changes in border schools cannot be understood solely through the lens of isolated administrative or pedagogical factors, but rather as complex processes in which human mobility, multiculturalism, bureaucratization, and institutional tensions converge, constantly reshaping the ways in which teaching is practiced and school experiences are shaped in Mexican border contexts.

Conclusions

The study's findings suggest that the current state of education along Mexico's northern border is characterized by increasing complexity stemming from social, cultural, and institutional changes that directly impact current teaching practices. Shared experiences show that border schools serve as spaces shaped by human mobility, multiculturalism, institutional bureaucratization, and social demands that are constantly reshaping school dynamics.

The teachers' accounts reveal that educators carry out their professional practice in environments characterized by uncertainty, constant adaptation, and an expanding range of professional and socio-emotional responsibilities. In this context, teaching goes far beyond the mere transmission of curricular content; it involves processes of cultural integration, emotional support, conflict mediation, and addressing the complex social issues present within border school communities.

Furthermore, the study shows that many educational institutions continue to face challenges related to professional support, institutional communication, and addressing contexts characterized by population mobility and cultural diversity. From the teachers' perspective, administrative demands and organizational fragmentation lead to emotional

burnout and hinder the development of teaching methods that are more closely aligned with students' actual needs.

From an academic perspective, this research provides insights into how teachers construct meanings regarding contemporary changes in schools based on their everyday experiences within border educational contexts. By drawing on teachers' narratives, it became possible to shed light on emotional, cultural, and institutional dimensions that are often overlooked in approaches focused exclusively on administrative or structural indicators of the education system.

The study's contribution lies in reclaiming teachers' narratives as a lens through which to interpret contemporary changes in border schools, bringing to light institutional, emotional, and cultural dimensions that are often overlooked in approaches focused exclusively on structural indicators of the education system.

Among the study's limitations are the contextual nature of the experiences analyzed and the small number of participants; therefore, the findings pertain specifically to the realities of the border context under study. Nevertheless, these recovered narratives offer insight into the challenges faced by many schools located in educational settings characterized by human mobility and cultural diversity.

Finally, it is considered appropriate to continue conducting research focused on analyzing teachers' experiences in border school settings, particularly those related to multiculturalism, professional well-being, institutional bureaucratization, and socio-emotional support for teachers. Similarly, it is important to promote research that focuses on teachers' perspectives and the ways in which they interpret the complexities of the contemporary school environment.

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