Inclusive Education in El Salvador: Ensuring Quality Education and Gender Equality at the Primary Level

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Disclaimer

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Chapter I - Introduction

Historical Context of El Salvador

El Salvador is a small, densely populated country in Central America, home to 6.3 million people in 21,041 square kilometres (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2018). The county's official language is Spanish. El Salvador gained independence from the Spanish Empire in 1823 (Tarling, 2017). Today, approximately 10 percent of the Salvadoran population are Indigenous (National Salvadoran Indigenous Coordination Council [CCNIS] & National Council for Art and Culture at the Ministry of Education [CONCULTURA], n.d.; as cited in Minority Rights Group, n.d.); during Spanish rule, Indigenous populations were pushed off their land, assimilated, or killed during uprisings (Minority Rights Group, n.d.).

El Salvador's civil war, fought between the state and alienated middle-class revolutionaries, lasted for twelve years from 1980 to 1992 (Negroponte, 2012). Since then, rates of violence against citizens have remained persistently high, making it difficult for the state to guarantee social rights, such as healthcare and education (Booth et al., 2020). This violence has exacerbated gender disparities and has further disrupted social services for women and girls. El Salvador has a long history of patriarchal systems and culture, and these were reinforced through these persistent rates of violence (Cosgrove & Lee, 2015), including through school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), child marriage, and violence in the home.

According to Booth et al. (2020), violence against women in El Salvador has reached epidemic levels, encouraging President Funes to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the public sector in 2010 and the government to implement the Law of Equality, Equity, and the Eradication of Violence against Women in 2011. Despite these measures and others, women and girls are still victims of discrimination, and 67 percent of

women aged 15 and older reported being victims of violence in 2017, and El Salvador remained one of the worst countries in the world for femicide rates (Booth et al., 2020).

The years of civil war also had a strong impact on education in the country. As in many cases of armed conflict, formal education was difficult to guarantee in El Salvador due to the violence and displacement of people within the country (Edwards, 2018). During this time, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the "rebels" in this conflict, recognized the importance of having an educated base for organizational purposes. They adopted a strategy of popular education with the goal to "identify, understand, and take action against various forms of social, cultural, political, and economic oppression" (Edwards, 2018, p. 153). This education system was run by community councils and was widespread in areas under FMLN control. By the early 1990s, this system employed around 1000 teachers and reached over 13,500 students and influenced future developments in education reform in the country (Edwards, 2018), as will be discussed in another section of this paper.

El Salvador has ratified international agreements defining the rights of women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CEDAW, adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and ratified by El Salvador in 1981 (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner [OHCHR], 2020), defines discrimination against women, which includes unequal rights in the field of education, and provides ways that countries can work to end discrimination based on gender (UNGA, 1979). The CRC, approved by the UNGA in 1989 and ratified by El Salvador in 1990 (OHCHR, 2020), defines the rights of children worldwide, including civil, social, and health rights, stating that:

> Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (UNGA, 1989).

Article 28 of the CRC outlines children's educational rights, stating that all children should have equal rights to an education and that primary education must be mandatory and free for all. Article 29 explains that children's education also has to prepare them to live a life "in the spirit of [...] equality of sexes" (UNGA, 1989). The SDGs, adopted by the UNGA in 2015, also call for equality between men and women and equal access to quality education for all (UNGA, 2015), particularly SDGs 4, 5, and 10.

Since the end of the civil war in 1992, there have been three education reforms in El Salvador, each reform reflecting the international education trends at the time to varying degrees. The Ten-Year Plan came into effect in 1995 and aimed to increase the quality of education while also getting children to school who were left out of the formal education system during the war (Edwards, Martin, & Flores, 2015). Plan 2021, adopted in 2005, focused on equity, special needs education, and teacher characteristics (Edwards, 2013). The Social Education Plan in 2009 aimed to create "full-time" schools that included the community and families in the education of children and pushed forward the idea of inclusive education (Edwards, Martin, & Flores, 2015).

Research Question and Thesis Statement

This paper will examine the connection between quality education and gender equality and will ask whether both can be achieved through education policy reform and, if so, how. The specific research questions are as follows: What factors affected the success of El Salvador's

three most recent education reforms? How has the international context surrounding education influenced these reforms? Who were the actors in these reforms and how did goals change over time? What role did the particular needs of girls play in these reforms? What potential impacts does inclusive education have on educational outcomes and gender equality in a country?

Ethical Considerations

While analyzing the issues at hand and writing this paper, I must remember that I am working from the point of view of my own intersecting identities, the combination of which means I am working from a position of privilege. As a white woman in the Global North with a relatively high level of formal education, I must ensure that my position of privilege is used for good and to present the facts as accurately and truthfully as possible. As I am removed, both physically and culturally, from the people, places and policies I am analyzing, I must consciously work to eliminate and/or minimize my own biases and blind spots. However, my removed position also offers the advantages of an outsider perspective.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Theory

This paper will be built around the feminist theoretical framework. Specifically, the concept of intersectionality will be used throughout to help describe the effects education policy has on young Salvadoran girls. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1989), the term intersectionality is used to explain how aspects of an individual's identity, such as their race, age, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, etc., interact to create specific forms of discrimination. Crenshaw develops her theory around Black women, who are marginalized from both white-centred feminist theory and anti-racist policy and whose experiences are unique to the intersection of being Black and being female. Bowleg (2008) explains that intersectionality

is the “notion that social identities and social inequalities based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex/gender (etc.) are interdependent and mutually constitutive rather than independent and unidimensional” (p. 312).

An intersectional lens must be applied to the entire process of policymaking. The intersecting identities of those who will be affected by a policy must be analyzed, and the results of this analysis must inform policy creation. This analysis will focus on how the intersectionality of being a young Salvadoran girl affects the quality of education they receive.

Research Methods and Data Sources

The research method adopted here is one of a longitudinal single-case study. El Salvador’s education system will be the subject of this case study, and the same data indicators will be evaluated at different points in time. Yin (2018) explains that longitudinal case studies are useful for examining how certain conditions in the selected case and their underlying processes have changed over the specified timeframe. In the selected case of El Salvador, the different points in time that have been selected coincide with the different education reforms; data will be examined in 1995 when the Ten-Year Plan was implemented, in 2005 when Plan 2021 was implemented, and again in 2009 with the implementation of the Social Education Plan (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015). The data used for this study will be those provided to inform the indicators highlighted in the SDGs, where available.

Using data collected to inform indicators from a framework adopted in 2015 to evaluate reforms from the 1990s and 2000s helps to maintain consistency in the data collection and evaluation over the length of the longitudinal study. By examining the data collected that is now being used to inform the SDG indicators, it will be possible to evaluate to what extent the inclusive education system has improved educational outcomes and gender equality in El

Salvador. Maintaining consistency in the type of data used allows for the effects of the differences in the reforms to be measured.

Grindle's (2007) analytical framework emphasizes the international and national contexts, the important actors, the processes and the issues at stake in the shaping of discussions surrounding education reforms. This framework will be used here; each education reform will be analyzed through this lens and these factors will be considered in the discussion portion of each analysis.

Data sources will include, but will not be limited to, official policy documents; international and national statistics on education, gender, equality, accessibility, etc.; grey literature (which includes research and/or policy analysis by the UN, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, think tanks, research groups, etc.); peer-reviewed academic literature on education, gender, accessibility in El Salvador; and news sources (such as websites and newspapers) from El Salvador. Where possible, the same data sources will be used for all data intervals to maintain consistency in data collection methods.

Outline of Paper

The next chapter will review the existing literature on gender and education, the implementation of the international consensus/agenda on primary education, and inclusive education. Chapter III will outline the three education reforms in El Salvador since the mid-1990s, focusing on the elements of Grindle's framework and educational outcomes. Chapter IV will discuss El Salvador's inclusive education system. Chapter V will answer the research questions and discuss the limitations of this paper, followed by areas requiring future research.

Chapter II - Literature Review

Gender and Education

In this section of the literature review, sources examining gender and education will be discussed. How are children's experiences at school influenced by their gender? Children in primary school will be the main focus of this section and this paper. No specific age range has been chosen; this is to be inclusive of children who may have started their formal education at an older age or children who have repeated grades.

Intersecting factors, such as age, social class, sexual orientation, and location, influence girls' experiences at school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015), as well as ethnicity and marital status. According to Tamboukou (2015), considering intersectionality, which is essential in this type of analysis, makes understanding and fighting against inequalities more difficult. Gendered inequalities require a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding, and the risk of not including intersectionality in the analysis is that the issues girls face in education will be misunderstood. In this case, any proposed solutions risk being ineffective.

Historically, it has been argued that education is, or at least has the potential to be, a "social equalizer" for women and girls. However, feminist activists and scholars have explored the multitude of inequitable practices within education systems around the world, focusing particularly on differences based on sex with gendered assumptions (Bailey & Graves, 2016), and they have proven that that is not always the case. Some common issues facing women and girls in education that arose were the perceived inferiority of women and girls; men dominating teaching and leadership roles in schools and educational administrations; women and girls' historical exclusions from formal education; limits to female students' development and opportunities through schooling practices (Bailey & Graves, 2016); patriarchal school structures

that lead to discrimination based on sex (Tamboukou, 2015); and biases in curriculum creation that reinforce cultural stereotypes of gender relations (Bailey & Graves, 2016; Tamboukou, 2015).

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), defined by UNESCO and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI; 2015) as "acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics," is an important barrier facing women and girls in their access to quality education. According to UNESCO and UN Women (2016), SRGBV is caused by gender discriminatory norms, which can lead to men and boys using violence to maintain those norms; social norms, such as the authority of teachers over children that are reinforced through violence; and wider structural and contextual factors such as conflict, income inequality, and weak accountability systems. SRGBV can lead to physical and mental health issues, including the contraction of sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, anxiety and depression, self-harm, and low self-esteem. Educational outcomes include falling grades, disruption in class, and dropping out of school, among others (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016).

Schools are also one of the most important places where children learn and understand gender norms, along with the home (Palhke & Goble, 2015). Tamboukou (2015) explains that how teachers interact with boys and girls can strongly influence how children understand gender. Boys tend to behave worse than girls in the classroom, and teachers respond by giving them more attention than they give girls. Teachers also give boys other positive reinforcements; for example, calling on them more than girls to answer questions, giving them more positive comments than girls, and interrupting them less frequently (Pahlke & Goble, 2015). All of these

reinforcements are exacerbated by the fact that in developing countries especially, there is a lack of female teachers, who are believed to improve the learning outcomes of girls (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015).

The Implementation of the International Agenda on Primary Education

The direction an education reform takes is often inspired by internal political actors and international education frameworks or agendas. Education has been an important priority for the international community since the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1946 and was defined as a universal human right by the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (UNESCO, n.d.). It was in 1990 that the international community really came together to create a concerted effort to improve education around the world. This section will explore important international agendas for primary education and will discuss barriers to implementing these agendas.

In 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All was adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, to give universal access to basic education to all. At the World Summit for Children in New York City, also in 1990, heads of state and other officials created the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, with the education portion focusing on the enrolment of children, particularly of girls (UNICEF, 2002). As these goals were achieved, and as actors realized there was more to successful education than just being in school, international frameworks and agendas moved away from emphasizing the importance of enrolment rates and focused more on the quality of education received once children were in school.

The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments was a framework adopted in 2000 by the participants of the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the follow-up to the Jomtien Conference. Participants from 164

countries adopted this Framework which was made up of six broad education goals to be met by 2015. These goals were:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
4. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2000).

These goals were intentionally made to be broad and unspecific to allow individual countries to set their own targets within a timeline that works for their education system and socio-economic context.

The Framework for Action contains regional frameworks for action; the Framework for the Americas was adopted at the Regional Meeting on Education for All in the Americas in the Dominican Republic in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). On top of the six goals outlined above, the

region committed to focusing on early childhood care and education, basic education, satisfying basic learning needs of young people and of adults, learning achievements and quality of education, inclusive education, education for life, an increase of national investment in education and effective mobilization of resources on all levels, and professional enhancement for teachers, among others (UNESCO, 2000).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the set of development goals adopted by the UN Member States for the period of 2000 to 2015. There are eight MDGs: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development. MDG 2 focused primarily on enrolment rates and getting out-of-school children into schools. MDG 3 was to promote gender equality and empower women and called for the elimination "of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015," again focusing on enrolment rates (UN, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2015 by all 192 Member States of the UNGA and is made up of the SDGs, a set of 17 goals outlining how countries should develop sustainably to rectify problems such as poverty, climate change, and inequality (UNGA, 2015). The issues addressed by the SDGs are present in every country to varying degrees, requiring individual countries to adopt their own implementation plan (UNGA, 2015). Each country has its own priorities in terms of sustainable development, and the SDGs are being implemented to varying levels of success within and across countries. The main barriers to

implementation are governance and government capabilities and the Goals being too broad and unspecific. These barriers are similar to those faced by the frameworks mentioned above.

A lack of good governance is a major barrier to the implementation of these frameworks because, without an efficient administration, it is difficult to make the appropriate decisions and then implement them (Niklasson, 2019). According to Ge et al. (2018), policymakers in sustainable development need to have a comprehensive understanding of the impacts these policies will have on society and individuals' behaviours. Due to the large number of goals and targets that have been adopted with the SDGs, some governments have to prioritize certain goals over others as they may not have the capacity to consider the goals in a whole-of-government or "whole systems thinking" approach (Morton et al., 2017).

The goals were created to be flexible, allowing for each country's specific context to be considered when creating an implementation strategy. However, this also means that governments do not benefit from specific guidelines on how to implement policies that will help them reach these goals (Niklasson, 2019), which is why "strong government and political leadership cannot be sidelined in scaling up the SDGs" (Nhamo & Mjimba, 2020, p. 4).

This flexibility in the goals also means that they are nonspecific concerning implementation strategies, leaving how the goals will be reached up to individual governments (Gusmão Caiado et al., 2018). Since the SDGs are the result of a UNGA resolution, countries have no legal obligation to meet these goals, and more "difficult" goals could be sidestepped completely. The most effective way to ensure continued commitment to reaching the SDGs is group pressure (Niklasson, 2019). Each UN Member State has committed to reaching the SDGs and some will not be reached without every country working toward them together, such as climate action, so pressure from other countries is an important driver to work toward the SDGs.

Morton et al. (2017) explain that the goals are interconnected, and the success of one can depend on the success of another or others. Nhamo and Mjimba (2020) call for governments to acknowledge this interconnectedness and to develop strong partnerships with civil society, businesses, other stakeholders and governments. The goals should be considered as a set and addressed as such when developing a sustainable development strategy (Niklasson, 2019; Morton et al., 2017). The MDGs were interconnected in the same way. This paper will consider how SDGs 4 and 5 are interconnected.

SDG 4 calls for "ensur[ing] inclusive and equitable quality education and promot[ing] lifelong learning opportunities for all," and SDG 5 strives to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UNGA, 2015). Both of these Goals are either explicitly or implicitly connected to others and each other (Kanowski, Yao, & Wyatt, 2019; Rose Taylor & Mahon, 2019). For example, education is explicitly mentioned in SDGs 3, 8 and 13, while gender equality, women and/or girls are specifically mentioned in SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13 and 17 (UNGA, 2015). Both goals are implicitly interconnected with other SDGs, even if they are not specifically mentioned; for example, by improving the quality of education in a country (SDG 4), more people will have better access to higher-paying employment, thereby reducing poverty (SDG 1).

SDGs 4 and 5 are strongly interconnected. Target 4.5 calls to "eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations". Target 4.A calls for schools to be built to be sensitive to gender, among other things. Target 5.1 aims to "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" (UNGA, 2015). It will be argued throughout this paper that these are two goals for

which the success of one depends on the success of the other; quality education for all helps achieve gender equality and empower women and girls, while gender equality and empowering women and girls can help improve education systems.

El Salvador has had three education reforms since the mid-1990s, culminating in the current education policy, which helped adopt the principle of an inclusive education system. The next section will briefly introduce the concept of inclusive education and discuss its potential and limitations.

Inclusive Education & Education Reform

Inclusive education is the concept that no person is excluded from the education system and that everyone has a right to equal access to equal quality of education, regardless of gender, ability, language, ethnic or cultural background (Thomas & Davies, 1999), religion, class, sexuality, or age (Slee, 1999). Any possible intersection of these characteristics may negatively affect a person's access to or experience in the education system, and inclusive education works to eliminate differentiation within the system. This research will focus on the intersection between inclusive education and gender.

According to Bernstein (1996), a school's purpose cannot be to simply teach knowledge and skills to students in a neutral environment; instead, they must take into consideration the intersections that affect their students' lives at deep levels (as cited in Damiani, 1999). If they do not, schools perpetuate the power relations that are found in society and become an important part of systemic oppression (Bernstein, 1996; as cited in Damiani, 1999). Slee (1999) explains that many education systems are outcomes-based and focus on teaching students a "catalogue of discrete factors" they need to get a certain score in subjects like reading and numeracy and focus less on the complexities students face in life.

A case study conducted on the inclusive education system adopted in post-apartheid South Africa, a country with very large socio-economic inequalities and a history of violent conflict, demonstrates the difficulties of implementing an inclusive education policy (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). There are barriers to inclusion at the school and cultural levels, including teacher training (ensuring they have the tools they need to create an inclusive environment), school personnel support (including principals and school administrators), and cultural attitudes that support inclusive education systems (such as parents supporting all of their children attending school). Donohue and Bornman (2014) also explain that the inclusive education policy in South Africa is quite ambiguous, making it difficult for different actors in the education system to understand how to implement it. They explain how the goals laid out in the policy can be met are unclear, and the Department of Education of South Africa does not have a specific enforcement strategy in place.

Education inclusive of gender has many potential impacts on educational outcomes and gender equality. For example, by understanding and adapting to girls' experiences at school, the education system can better teach girls and treat them better at school. This will increase the retention rate of girls in formal education and ensure that they are learning what they need to be successful and well-rounded members of society, both economically and socially. Inclusive education can improve gender equality by giving girls equal educational access and outcomes to boys and setting them up to have equal opportunities throughout their lives. SDG 5 (UNGA, 2015), has many targets that are directly related to the potential outcomes of inclusive education (Table 1).

To create an inclusive education system, some sort of education reform must take place. This paper will focus on three different educational reforms in El Salvador, the last one being a

5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
5.A	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
5.C	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Table 1: SDG 5 targets related to inclusive education (Source: UNGA, 2015)

reform toward inclusive education. The discussions around these reforms will follow Merilee Grindle's (2007) analytical framework for education reform, which examines the "interests, institutions, strategies, and process to understand the political dynamics of education policy reform" (p. 132).

Grindle (2007) selected five case studies for her analysis: Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. The article shows how teachers' unions and education bureaucracies were the main actors whose interests were against education reform; other actors involved in the decision-making process were the Church, school directors' associations, think-tanks and scholars. In most cases, parents' groups, business groups, and pro-education civil society were absent from these discussions.

In terms of institutions involved in these reforms, Grindle (2007) found that the ministries of education in these cases were generally weak institutions, making it difficult to advance reforms. However, reformers could also use institutional power to their advantage, sometimes finding support for change higher up in the hierarchical structure of the institutions.

Some strategies for successful reform highlighted by Grindle (2007) included working from the top down and working more closely with teachers. Getting support from higher-ups in

government, implementing the reforms, and then demonstrating how these reforms are beneficial to ministers, school directors, and communities was a useful strategy in education reform. Moreover, Grindle demonstrated that getting teachers on board with the reform was a useful way to ensure that it was implemented smoothly and successfully.

Grindle (2007) also considered when certain actors entered into the reform process and how that affected the design of the reform. For example, actors involved at the beginning of the process have much more influence on the outcomes than those who are opposed to the reform. Processes also changed depending on who was opposed to the reform and what kind of opposition they presented. For example, teachers' unions are critical to the success of any education reform process as their approval is needed to implement reforms; during the reform process, teachers' unions would voice their opinions, sometimes even offering counter-proposals to reform initiatives.

Chapter III - Education Reforms in El Salvador

El Salvador's history of colonization, independence, civil war and the subsequent peace led to the heavy involvement of international actors in many aspects of Salvadoran society, and the education sector was no exception to this. According to Edwards (2013), six different donor organizations from six different countries were providing support to El Salvador between 1991 and 2005. Since the end of the civil war, the Salvadoran education system has undergone three reforms led in part by international organizations. Over the same period, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), USAID, and the World Bank contributed US$552 million to the education sector (Edwards, 2013; Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015). Chapter III will explore the three education reforms developed in El Salvador since 1995.

To demonstrate the issues facing education and gender equality in El Salvador, Chapter III will evaluate available data related to both issues over time in the country. This chapter will be divided into 4 sections: the first three sections will examine the education reforms in 1995, 2005, and 2009 respectively. Each section will give the national and international context at the time of the reform, and then will be divided according to Grindle's (2007) framework, which examines the players who were involved and their interests in education reform, the institutional constraints, and the process the reform took. Each section will conclude with the outcomes of the reform. The last section will explore the relevant data to see how the reforms have shaped educational outcomes. Where possible, all data addressing education will be disaggregated by gender to more accurately depict gender inequality, if any, found in the education system and in society in general, where applicable.

The data used in this chapter will be taken from the data used to inform the SDG indicators related to education. The SDGs have a set of indicators to measure each target, and the

relevant data will be compiled and analyzed. The SDG indicators will be used because reliable data has been collected using these indicators for many years, making a longitudinal study possible.

1995 to 2004: The Ten-Year Plan

In 1995, El Salvador completed its first education reform since the end of the civil war called the Ten-Year Plan (TYP) (Edwards, Martin, & Flores, 2015). This reform was in line with the regional trend of focusing on the quality of education while also centring on international trends of improving access to education by ensuring that those who were excluded from formal education during the civil war were brought back into the system.

According to Grindle (2007), education reforms in Latin America in the 1990s generally focused on improving the quality of education. Previously, the focus had been on increasing access to formal education by getting more children to school, regardless of the outcomes of being there. Access reforms are relatively easy to implement because it is easier to garner support for them; these reforms often include building new infrastructure, hiring more teachers and administrators, and increasing budgets, which different stakeholders, such as teachers' unions, parents, and politicians, generally support (Grindle, 2007). These are very visible and tangible outcomes for this type of education policy.

In the 1990s, when most children were in school and it became obvious that these education systems were not creating quality educational outcomes, education reforms were proposed that would focus on the quality of education received. These types of reforms were generally more difficult to implement because some actors actively opposed what it would take to improve quality, such as "improving management, addressing organizational and financial inefficiencies, increasing accountability, reallocating responsibilities, and improving the

performance of administrators, teachers, and students" (Grindle, 2007, p. 134). These reforms sometimes resulted in a loss of jobs, the decentralization of decision making, an increase in responsibilities for certain actors, and a long implementation process.

These regional trends are somewhat contrary to the international education agenda at the time; the World Summit for Children and the World Declaration on Education for All, both from 1990, emphasized the importance of enrolment and getting children into the formal education system. This difference could be attributed to the fact that Latin America had generally succeeded in getting most children into the education system; in 1995, 91.07 percent of children (91.23 percent of boys and 90.92 percent of girls) in the region were enrolled in school, that number rising to 93.97 percent (94.45 percent of boys and 93.48 percent of girls) by 2004 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2020a). Comparatively, South Asia had a net enrollment rate of 75.11 percent in 1995 and 82.3 percent in 2004, while Sub-Saharan Africa had a rate of 55.15 percent in 1995 and 67.51 percent in 2004 (UIS, 2020a). These rates, amongst other regions', drove the international education agenda to focus on issues related to enrollment.

In the 1990s, women's groups, national NGOs, and governmental institutions worked together to create El Salvador's first National Women's Policy (NWP), partly influenced by the international education agenda to create a policy with a gender component (Edwards, Libreros & Martin, 2015). Forty grassroots women's organizations came together and collaboratively created the Salvadoran Women's Platform, an agenda for the country focusing on issues surrounding gender equality. This Platform led to the creation of the NWP in 1997, which called for "increasing women's access to formal and non-formal education and changing sexist practices" (Moreno Pérez, 1997). Although a collaborative effort, the NWP was never fully implemented due to disconnected activities included in the approach and a lack of technical

expertise and commitment from political actors and institutions (Edwards, Libreros & Martin, 2015). However, the NWP did demonstrate that there was interest and a need for a gender-responsive education policy in the country much earlier than was acknowledged by the Ministry of Education (MINED).

The TYP found its inspiration in the popular education system, the EDUCO program, which was developed by the FMLN during the civil war. The party recognized that their base would be stronger if they were educated; they also saw many government-run educational services become either inaccessible or cease completely during the war (Edwards, 2018). To fill this gap, the EDUCO program decentralized the education system and gave control to the communities, allowing them to manage education themselves. Popular education became a source of increased literacy rates in the country but also allowed the FMLN to teach participants about the political and ideological values for which they were fighting the civil war. This system promoted social justice values, particularly human rights (Arévalo, 2011). The program was formally adopted by the MINED through the TYP (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015).

As mentioned previously, international actors were very active in the education sector in El Salvador. Although initiated by the MINED, USAID and the World Bank were the two principal sources of funding for the reform, forcing the government to align their reform efforts with the preferences laid out by the organizations if they wanted to receive the funding (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015). The EDUCO program was strongly supported by UN organizationss and the World Bank and was being implemented in other developing countries; all actors involved in this reform were working to ensure it would continue to be a success in El Salvador as well. This widespread level of support ensured that the program received the

necessary financial and technical support, leading to its extensive implementation around the country (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015).

Twelve members from different areas of Salvadoran society were chosen to form a Presidential Commission, which created a proposal containing input for the reform. Consultation sessions were held with students, teachers, parents, and members of the teachers' union (Guzmán, 2005). The Commission and the consultations were used to help inform the creation of the TYP.

This financial support for the TYP translated into institutional support as well. The MINED and the World Bank worked to ensure that they created an appropriate institutional framework and that they had the required leadership capacity and resources to implement the reform (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015). However, while the MINED and the international donors were working together, an issue that arose in this values-based system was the choice in whose values they would support: the Salvadoran values or those from the international community.

The reform process was a long one. The EDUCO program was already well established in the country, so that part of the reform was already implemented. Parents and community members were charged with hiring teachers and determining their pay, and classes took place outside or in a community member's house (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015). The reform process for the TYP began with consultations with different stakeholders, including teachers' unions, donor organizations, women's groups, community-based NGOs, universities and the MINED. These consultations showed that morality, democracy and human rights were among the values that were important to Salvadorans (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015). A diagnosis performed by Harvard University, the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) and the Fundación

Educativa para el Desarrollo (FEPADE) in 1993 and 1994 showed that equity and quality in education were also important in creating a culture of peace (Arévalo, 2011). The objectives of the TYP were to improve the quality of education at different levels; increase the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the educational system; democratize education by expanding educational services; create new modalities of service provision; and strengthen the formation of human, ethical and civic values (Arévalo, 2011).

This reform created a community-management model of education and emphasized rebuilding and improving infrastructure. As Grindle (2007) noted, decentralization is a key part of improving quality in education, as decisions can better reflect the local context when made locally. El Salvador created departmental offices across the country and the MINED served a supervisory role (Arévalo, 2011). According to Arévalo (2011), the TYP prioritized basic education aimed at preparing the population for the labour market, transforming education into less of a human right and more into something to be consumed individually.

The implementation of the TYP was extensive. The reform reflected international and regional trends, had support from international and national actors, and one of its programs was already a success across the country, making it easy for the TYP to be fully implemented (Edwards, Libreros, & Martin, 2015).

2005 to 2009: Plan 2021

Policy reform efforts often correspond with presidential campaigns; candidates promise reforms as part of their platforms. In El Salvador, the MINED was preparing for the TYP to expire in 2005, and education policy reforms began around the same time as the 2004 presidential elections (Edwards, 2013). Presidential candidates and international organizations were all preparing their platforms, everyone hoping to advance their own education agendas.

El Salvador based their education reform from 2003 to 2005, Plan 2021, on the international agenda for education, which focused on Education for All and the MDGs at the time. Plan 2021was based on research on equity, information needs for decision making, special needs education, and teacher characteristics (Edwards, 2013), and the Plan's objectives were to work toward the integral formation of the person and ensure 11 grades of schooling for everyone (Arévalo, 2011).

These points of focus were reflective of the Education for All framework. In terms of equity, point 3 of the framework called for "ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes," and point 5 aimed to eliminate gender disparities in education access. Concerning special needs education, point 3 of the framework includes children with special needs and learning disabilities. Finally, teacher characteristics fall under point 6 of the framework, which highlights the need to improve every aspect of the quality of education, which includes teacher training (UNESCO, 2000). The MDGs also influenced the Plan; guaranteeing 11 grades of schooling would help achieve universal primary education for all.

Plan 2021 was formed through a joint effort between international actors, such as USAID and the World Bank, national politicians and experts, and the MINED. Although each organization had different specific goals, generally Plan 2021 was an extension of the TYP and the different actors believed in using education to further El Salvador's economic growth (Arévalo, 2011). A key actor in this reform, Antonio Saca, the presidential candidate of the right-wing ARENA party and the soon-to-be-president, aligned his education platform with the international education agenda outlined above (Edwards, 2013).

Starting in 2003, the MINED, USAID and the World Bank conducted public consultations, giving the process a sense of credibility but allowing the discussions to centre on issues put forward by the external actors (Edwards, 2013; Arévalo, 2011). A Presidential Commission was created in 2004, made up of 16 Salvadorans from the Catholic Church, both of the major political parties, the business sector, think tanks, and academia, which created recommendations for the education reform. Over this time, research was being conducted by a joint research committee made up of personnel from the Academy of Educational Development, the MINED, and USAID and it was primarily this research that influenced the content of Plan 2021. However, the Plan was finalized in March of 2005 by the MINED, who supported the findings of this research and based the Plan on the international education agenda (Edwards, 2013).

According to Arévalo (2011), the implementation of Plan 2021 was difficult due to a lack of available funding; in 2005, the central government debt as a percentage of the GDP was at 56.22 percent (World Bank, 2020).

The final product of this reform process aimed to raise the level of education by setting a minimum of 11 years of formal education for all and by introducing different delivery methods. It also aimed to make El Salvador's education system more competitive; the policy emphasized the importance of teaching science and technology and English in schools (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015).

2009 to 2014 and 2014 to 2019: The Social Education Plan

On June 1st, 2009, Mauricio Funes, the candidate for the FMLN, became President of El Salvador, the first left-wing President to be elected since the end of the civil war (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015). One of the new government's initiatives was education reform, and in

2009, they created the Social Education Plan (SEP). This section will explore this policy reform, its players and process and will examine some of its programs in more detail.

The slogan for this reform was "¡Vamos a la escuela!" [Let's Go to School!] (MINED, 2014), and the focus of the SEP was to ensure that all Salvadoran children and adolescents had the right to go to school and to receive a quality education while they were there. These goals reflect the international education priorities at the time; article 28 of the CRC and Goal 2 of the MDGs both address access to primary education, while the Dakar Framework for Education for All emphasizes the need to ensure quality education.

Institutional constraints facing education at the time of this third reform were numerous. For example, schools were lacking appropriate resources, including books, updated technology, and equipped laboratories. Teachers did not receive sufficient support, either during training or while teaching, often having to deal with the high rates of grade repetition and school dropout on their own. Their training was not updated to reflect advances in technology or pedagogical practices. Most importantly, however, the education system was disconnected from the realities faced by students, who learned through memorization and less about making connections to the real-life social, economic, political and cultural issues they were facing (MINED, 2014).

The main goal of the SEP was to provide all children with free, quality and equitable access to education to promote the development of people and ensure their participation in a democratic, equitable and sustainable society (Arévalo, 2011). The MINED (2014) defines quality education as how relevant the skills and knowledge learned at school are to the professional and labour markets and socially integrating young people into society. To ensure a higher quality of education, the MINED recognized in the SEP the need to properly train teachers, continuously update learning materials, and maintain and update school infrastructure,

including by providing necessary technological tools. By ensuring that education was equitable and inclusive, the SEP attempted to acknowledge barriers to education, such as gender, socio-economic status, and ethnicity (MINED, 2014).

To implement the SEP, it contained several programs aimed at making schools more inclusive, equal and relevant (MINED, 2014). A good example of this is the Integrated System of Full-Time Inclusive School (SI-EITP): the "full-time" schools that involve the family and the community in students' learning experiences (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015). This program worked to ensure students who entered school stayed until they were done by implementing mechanisms that reduced the dropout rate, such as creating networks of schools of different levels that encouraged the transition to the next grade or level. The schools in a given network could also share resources, such as computers, sports fields, instruments, and school psychologists. The SI-EITP "extended" the school day by assigning students practical activities inside and outside the classroom (MINED, 2014). The SI-EITP also made learning more accessible to all by introducing flexible modalities, which include blended and accelerated classes. Blended classes allow students to learn in and out of the classroom by completing independent schoolwork outside of school, and accelerated classes allow students to complete certain classes or grades faster than normal (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015).

While the SEP did not put forward a new curriculum, it did propose changes to how subjects were taught and how teachers were trained. The MINED (2014) wanted to prepare students for their integration into the productive and professional world while also preparing them to be active, informed, and inclusive citizens and training teachers to deliver these lessons was an important part of the SEP. Another program included in the SEP provided school supplies to students to increase equity of access within and among schools (Arévalo, 2011). The

Improvements of School Environments and Educational Resources program endeavoured to provide schools with safe and functional infrastructure and equipment that met the pedagogical needs of students to ensure they have safe, dignified and motivating learning environments (MINED, 2014).

Based on the MINED's report (2014), many programs included in the SEP had positive outcomes. Overall, they claim the SEP increased public opinions of the MINED due to increased confidence and credibility in the institution. Within the first five years of the program, there were 266 SI-EITP in 100 municipalities throughout the country and the system benefitted 629,167 students by 2014. The Teacher Professional Development Program had helped over 42 thousand teachers improve their teaching skills by then; 85.5 million US dollars had been invested in infrastructure and equipment through the Improvements of School Environments and Educational Resources program.

The SEP also had an Inclusive Education Program, described by the MINED (2014) as offering "equitable opportunities for access, permanence and effective learning to children and youth at all educational levels, regardless of social, cultural and gender differences, as well as students with individual special needs, differences in skills and abilities, or students at social risk." To create an inclusive educational environment for all students, the program encouraged the inclusion of diversity in the system to eliminate all barriers, particularly institutional, pedagogical, curricular and cultural (MINED, 2014). The implementation of this program has led to mixed results; creating inclusive spaces in schools requires resources, training, improved infrastructure, and increased support staff that some communities and schools in El Salvador may not have access to (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2015). This policy will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

Educational Outcomes

The three educational reforms presented here varied in context, specific objectives, institutional constraints, processes, and outcomes. Some similarities between each reform included the actors, each reform being driven by local actors, such as the MINED and the Salvadoran government, and international actors, including the World Bank and USAID. The reforms were also strongly influenced by international education trends at the time, but never presented gender as a central component, although present in international agendas. This section will examine the outcomes of the reforms by comparing educational data from each reform period based on the SDG indicators, as explained previously. Data from 1998 will be used as a baseline for this comparison as this is the first year much of these data were available. This is not ideal as it does not allow for an accurate depiction of the state of education at the time of the first education reform. Table 2 contains the data available for the SDG 4 indicators that will be discussed here (UIS, 2020a). Where data was not available for the year specified in the table, the data from the closest year with available data was provided instead.

As mentioned in the section on the TYP, the out-of-school rate in 1998 is in line with the regional trends of Latin America and shows how the issue of getting children to school had mostly been resolved by then. The increase in out-of-school children throughout Table 2 can be attributed to high rates of violence in schools, families and communities not seeing the value in sending their children to school, low education quality, or children and youth joining gangs (UNICEF, 2017). According to UIS (2020a) data, the regional out-of-school rate for Latin America and the Caribbean was only 2.83 percent in the same year. Moreover, according to a UIS Information Paper (2019), even if children are in school, the quality of education they are receiving may be so poor that they are not actually learning what they should be learning. As

	Year				
Indicator	**1998**	**2005**	**2009**	**2014**	**2019**
4.1.4[1]	Both sexes: 15.76% Female: 9.31 Male: 22	Both sexes: 4.34% (2003) Female: 4.28 Male: 4.4	N/A	Both sexes: 6.84% Female: 6.64 Male: 7.03	Both sexes: 13.70% (2018) Female: 13.30 Male: 14.08
4.1.5[2]	Both sexes: 48.28% Female: 31.38 Male: 64.15	Both sexes: 25.70% Female: 22.79 Male: 28.42	Both sexes: 21.56% Female: 18.56 Male: 24.35	Both sexes: 17.82% Female: 14.45 Male: 20.92	Both sexes: 13.46% Female: 10.69 Male: 16.03
4.c.1[3]	N/A	Both sexes: 94.87% Female: 95.65 Male: 92.89	Both sexes: 93.16% (2008) Female: 94.06 Male: 90.77	Both sexes: 95.61% (2015) Female: 96.38 Male: 93.33	Both sexes: 95.45% (2018) Female: 96.26 Male: 93.19

Table 2: SDG 4 indicators and data (Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020a)

discussed in the literature review of this paper, girls are often affected by this more than boys, making girls' lower out-of-school rates shown in Table 2 insufficient to assume they are learning more than boys. Girls' learning outcomes may be less relevant or effective than boys'. Additionally, it must be noted that the out-of-school rate more than doubled between 2014 and 2018, a trend that is very concerning from an inclusive education point of view. However, the out-of-school rate for boys increased slightly more than for girls, so this increase is not at risk of increasing gender inequality for girls.

Since 1998, indicator 4.1.5, the percentage of children who are over-age by at least 2 years for their grade in primary school got progressively lower. The UIS (n.d.) explains that when this indicator has a low value, children are generally starting school when they are supposed to and have low rates of grade repetition. Starting school late and repeating grades can

[1] Out-of-school rate (primary); Administrative data
[2] Percentage of children over-age by at least 2 years for grade (primary)
[3] Proportion of teachers in primary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching, by sex

contribute to lower educational outcomes. It can be assumed that the high rate of over-age children for their grade in 1998 was due to the uneven access to education during and after the civil war, and this rate decreased as more children entered the formal education system. The accelerated classes implemented by the SEP in 2009 may have also played a role in this decrease, as students may have been able to catch up with children of the same age by completing some grades faster than a typical school year.

A key element of quality education is quality teaching. Indicator 4.c.1 evaluates the "proportion of teachers in primary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching" (UIS, 2020b). The 1983 Constitution of El Salvador states that teacher accreditation is legally required to be able to teach in the country, which explains the high proportions of teachers who have received teacher training, as shown in Table 2. However, as with any level of education, enrolment and attendance do not necessarily translate to quality learning, meaning that there is no guarantee that individuals studying to become teachers are learning the necessary skills to adequately teach children. Pre-service training, which is teacher education before they begin teaching, lasts three years in El Salvador and, according to the MINED (2014), the quality of the training is insufficient for what they need to learn. In-service training, which is continued teacher training while they are already teaching, has remained voluntary and outside of school hours, detrimental to professional development (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2016). Some issues facing quality teacher training include a lack of resources, minimal MINED supervision for in-service training, low admission requirements for pre-service training, a lack of quality-control at teacher training sites, curriculum design for teacher training, and who teaches the teachers (Edwards, Martin & Flores, 2016).

El Salvador does not collect data for some SDG indicators that could paint a much clearer picture of the quality of education received by Salvadoran children. Table 3 contains the SDG indicators for which there is no data, but which could be useful in determining the true quality of education, and any gender (dis)parities there may be in that quality. Achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics, as indicated by indicator 4.1.1, shows whether or not students are learning what they should be learning at the very least. When disaggregated by sex, this data can show if girls and boys are receiving the same quality of education. The completion rate of different levels of education, indicator 4.1.2, could show how

4.1.1	Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex
4.1.2	Completion rate (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary education)
4.6.1	Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex
4.a.1(f) and (g)	Proportion of schools with access to: (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per WASH indicator definition)

Table 3: SDG indicators for which data are not collected in El Salvador

prepared and encouraged students feel to continue their education; if they have the knowledge and understanding to continue, they will finish that level of education. If parents and teachers understand how to support the students in their education and why it is important, they are more likely to continue as well. Indicator 4.6.1 is similar to 4.1.1 in that it could show how well students are learning basic skills, such as reading and counting, in school. Having proper single-sex washrooms and basic handwashing facilities, as would be shown with indicator 4.a.1, can increase the quality of girls' education. According to Sommer, Kwauk, and Fyles (2018), not having access to proper sanitation facilities "can negatively affect adolescent girls' abilities to

concentrate, stand up and respond to questions, write on the blackboard, and feel confident and comfortable attending school on days when they are menstruating."

By not collecting data on these indicators, El Salvador is not showing an accurate picture of the outcomes of their education system, and gender equality in education cannot appropriately be measured. It must be noted that no country is currently collecting data for each SDG indicator; this would require an extreme amount of coordination and would be expensive. However, these indicators could more accurately represent the education system and could show gendered educational outcomes that would determine whether or not El Salvador's inclusive education system properly considers questions of gender equality.

Chapter III utilized Grindle's framework for evaluating education reforms for El Salvador's three reforms since the end of the civil war: the Ten Year Plan, Plan 2021, and the Social Education Plan. Analysis of data from the years of these reforms showed significant improvements in certain areas of education, such as the proportion of children who are in the appropriate grade for their age, youth literacy rates, and access to electricity and computers for pedagogical purposes in schools (UIS, 2020a). Nonetheless, shortcomings in educational data collection mean that the outcomes of the education reforms on gender equality in school cannot be properly measured. Chapter IV will discuss El Salvador's approach to inclusive education through a gender and intersectional lens, noting what has been done already and what could be changed to ensure gender equality in educational outcomes.

Chapter IV - Inclusive Education in El Salvador

The concept of inclusive education began gaining momentum in the early 1990s around the world (Dyson, 1999). In Latin America, the ratification of the CRC (UNGA, 1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; UNGA, 2006) spurred the development of inclusive education policies, as did other international treaties, such as the Education for All Convention, the MDGs and the SDGs (Muñoz Morán, 2019). As with a lot of legislation, however, there was a stark contrast between what was proposed and agreed upon, and what was implemented in schools and classrooms. Chapter IV will build on the definition of inclusive education laid out in the literature review of this paper, followed by a discussion on El Salvador's efforts to offer inclusive education to its students. Finally, the characteristics of other inclusive education policies will be presented, and a comparison with El Salvador's system will show where it could be improved to be more inclusive of gender.

According to Muñoz Morán (2019), education has developed over time to act as the training of citizens as opposed to the training of human resources for economic development. Educational policies should, therefore, represent what society deems important for the formation of future citizens. Based on rates of gender equality, gender-based violence and femicide and the patriarchal "machismo" culture in El Salvador, it is no surprise that the education system in the country is not fully inclusive of gender. Mobilia (2020) explains that machismo culture has shaped every aspect of Salvadoran society and strongly affects the safety of women and girls. She explains that gangs and impunity lead to increased rates of gender-based violence and contribute to El Salvador's rates of femicide of epidemic levels. Machismo culture is so prevalent in the country that a power dynamic between women and men has been created and

normalized, making it acceptable for men to mistreat women and for women to accept being treated this way (Mobilia, 2020).

El Salvador's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.667, ranking 124th in the world. A country's HDI is a "summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and hav[ing] a decent standard of living" (UNDP, n.d.). Table 4 highlights some data that shows the state of gender equality in El Salvador. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is quite high, meaning the HDI value for men

Gender Development Index[4]	0.969 (2019)
Gender Inequality Index[5]	0.397 (2019)
Prevalence of gender-based violence in the public and private sphere experienced by women throughout their life[6]	67.4% (2017)
Violence against women ever experienced, intimate partner (% of female population ages 15 and older)[7]	14.3% (2019)

Table 4: Gender Data from El Salvador

and women are almost equal (a value of 1 indicating full equality for the Index). The Gender Inequality Index (GII) shows gender-based disadvantage and ranges from 0 to 1, 0 meaning men and women fare equally and 1 meaning "one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions" (UNDP, 2019). A GII of 0.397 indicates that gender inequality is present in El Salvador and negatively affects human development achievements in the country. Table 4 also shows that a very high percentage of women and girls experience some form of gender-based violence throughout their life, and 14.3 percent of all women and girls experienced intimate-

[4] Ratio of female to male HDI values; Source: UNDP
[5] A composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market; Source: UNDP, 2020
[6] Source: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 2018
[7] Percentage of the female population ages 15 and older that has ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner; Source: UNDP, 2020

partner violence (UNDP, 2020). This means that gender-based violence is also present in other facets of their lives, such as violence from parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The intersecting identities of being young and female exposes girls to a wide range of possibilities of violence from those around them.

School-based gender-based violence (SBGBV) is a pervasive problem in El Salvador. According to a Salvadoran girl writing for Plan International, a non-governmental organization advocating for children's and particularly girls' rights, girls are in constant fear of sexual abuse while travelling to school and while there (Vicky, 2016). The threat of gang violence follows them wherever they go.

Femicide is the most extreme form of gender-based violence and is defined by the Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (2018) as the "extreme form of gender-based violence against women [...], in the public and private spheres, made up of the set of misogynist conducts that lead to social or State impunity, which can culminate in [the] violent death of women"; in other words, the murder of a woman because she is a woman. El Salvador experiences one of the world's highest femicide rates at 386 femicides in 2018 (Observatorio de violencia contra las mujeres, 2020), for an average of one every 22.69 hours.

With the equality and safety of women and girls a low priority in El Salvador, it is not surprising that the concept of inclusive education does not focus on ensuring girls get the same quality of education as boys. Instead, the policies and programs are broad and call for the inclusion of all children who are left out of formal education. While that is important, inclusive education should not only strive to physically include children in education but should provide "a framework within which all children — regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin — can be valued equally, treated with respect, and provided with equal opportunities at

school" (Thomas & Davies, 1999). As was mentioned in the literature review of this paper, schools are one of the most important places where children learn social norms (Palhke & Goble, 2015), and inclusive education allows children to learn about others who are different from them and to become adults who are more accepting of a diverse society (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

The next section will examine the elements of El Salvador's inclusive education system, as well as the gaps in that system to truly be inclusive of all.

El Salvador's Inclusive Education System

El Salvador's inclusive education system has come together over time through different policies and programs, such as the Social Education Plan in 2009, the Inclusive Education Policy in 2010, the Five-Year Development Plan in 2014, and the Plan de acción: Programa de país 2016-2020. Together, these policies and programs have emphasized the need to provide higher quality education to Salvadoran children but fall short of ensuring that girls receive the same quality education as boys.

Inclusive Education Policy

In 2010, the MINED created the Inclusive Education Policy, hoping to remove some barriers to education (Muñoz Morán, 2019). The main priority of this policy was outreach and getting children at higher risk of educational exclusion into school. The action areas proposed in this policy were: management regulations and policies; pedagogical management practices; school and community culture; and educational environments and strategic resources (MINED, 2010). The main strategies in this policy were articulated in the SEP (MINED, 2010). Although detailed with a clear and seemingly attainable logic model, the policy is still quite general and does not explicitly mention gender as a barrier to quality education. In fact, the high-level

definition of inclusive education given in the policy lists disability, creed, race, social and economic status and political choice as potential barriers to inclusion in education (MINED, 2010). However, the action area focusing on pedagogical management practices lists incorporating a focus on diversity and inclusion into the curriculum of teacher education, which could include teaching teachers how to ensure boys and girls are treated the same in the classroom. Despite this action item, the goal of the policy was nonetheless to include excluded children in education, so how they are treated and what they learn at school is not necessarily addressed here.

Five-Year Development Plan 2014-2019

The SEP was part of the 2009-2014 Development Plan, which was followed by the Five-Year Development Plan 2014-2019 (Gobierno de El Salvador [GOES], 2015), extending the SEP until 2019. This Development Plan centred on three main priorities: productive employment generated through a model of sustained economic growth, education with social inclusion and equity, and effective citizen security. Education was a priority because there were continued challenges that the last reform did not resolve; repetition and dropout rates were still high, and access to quality education was still not equally available to all. The State was no longer responsible for overseeing the training of teachers, leaving universities to do so as they pleased and without any consistency or supervision. These issues remained in part due to a lack of public investment in education and the low quality of teaching (GOES, 2015). The Development Plan also highlighted some educational successes made possible by the SEP, including the implementation of full-time inclusive education in 1,365 schools and an increase in the average schooling rate from 5.9 grades in 2009 to 6.8 in 2013. 120,000 people became literate and 15 municipalities were declared free of illiteracy between 2009 and 2014 (GOES, 2015).

The educational targets of the Development Plan were to strengthen the quality and performance of teachers, as well as increase pedagogical support to them; improve and modernize the infrastructure and equipment in schools; improve access to education for marginalized children and youth; improve the quality of education; and ensure students are safe from violence in schools (GOES, 2015). A gender analysis of these targets shows that they could be beneficial for girls if met. For example, improving the quality of teachers may eliminate the difference between how teachers interact with boys and how they interact with girls, as was discussed in the literature review. Better school infrastructure may lead to single-sex or single-unit bathrooms, making it easier for girls to attend class while menstruating. A violence-free school would eliminate school-based gender-based violence, encouraging girls to stay in school and helping them to learn more while they are there.

Unfortunately, these may be difficult goals to meet as the Development Plan emphasized the need to ensure teachers have just the minimum capacity in pedagogical skills and removing gender biases in teaching may be too advanced for the time being. The Development Plan also stressed the need to focus on schools that are in critical conditions due to violence or natural disasters, so bathrooms for girls may not be a priority. Teachers and school personnel, along with parents, are the principal perpetrators of violence against children, and a deep shift in power dynamics and appreciation for children's rights and gender equality is needed before they are completely safe from violence at school (UNICEF & GOES, 2016).

Plan de acción: Programa de país 2016-2020

The Plan de acción: Programa de país 2016-2020 is an action plan agreed upon by UNICEF and the Government of El Salvador with the objective of improving the lives of children, adolescents, and members of more vulnerable communities, particularly women

(UNICEF & GOES, 2016). This Action Plan stems from advice from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who recommended addressing the high vulnerability of children and adolescents when it comes to violence, school desertion and low enrolment rates, among other issues. The Committee also recommended addressing social and cultural norms that negatively affect children, adolescents, and women, and to prioritize children more in public policies and budgets (UNICEF & GOES, 2016). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women called on the Government to eliminate sexist stereotypes in schools and to address the high rates of gender-based violence in the country.

The Action Plan (UNICEF & GOES, 2016) focused mainly on four components: protection against violence, inclusive education, a healthy start in life, and social inclusion and monitoring of the rights of children and adolescents. The inclusive education component aimed to improve access to quality education and the completion rate, with a focus on the gendered causes of these problems. Another strategy proposed in the Action Plan (UNICEF & GOES, 2016) to ensure quality education was to implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to determine whether or not policies were being followed in schools, and why or why not. Additionally, UNICEF highlighted the fact that education is still not understood as a right for all children and expressed the need for a positive societal behaviour change toward education if quality education for all is going to be achieved.

Gaps in El Salvador's Inclusive Education

El Salvador's policies and programs relating to inclusive education still mostly focus on access to education and getting children to school. While the country's out-of-school rate has been higher in recent years than previously, it is still comparable to Guatemala and Honduras, neighbouring countries with similar cultures and issues. In 2018, El Salvador's out-of-school rate

was 13.70 percent, and Guatemala and Honduras' were 10.63 percent and 17.46 percent (2017), respectively (UIS, 2020). By focusing on giving every child the same quality of education while they are in school, the Government may increase retention rates and improve public opinion of the value of education.

Another gap in El Salvador's approach to inclusive education is not naming gender as a barrier to quality education. When listing intersecting identities that can affect a child's experience at school, only those included in the list will be addressed. If gender is left out, as it was in the Inclusive Education Policy, there will be no effort to ensure all genders are treated the same in school and benefit from the concept of inclusive education. Furthermore, Muñoz Morán (2019) explains that the Inclusive Education Policy does not go into detail on the person the policy is trying to include and does not describe how their differences will be acknowledged and valued in education. By not naming or defining an issue, it will not be measured and cannot be resolved. When teachers and administrators are not fully trained on how to practice inclusive education, an unclear or nonspecific policy will fall short of its intended outcome.

How can El Salvador Improve Inclusive Education?

This section will explore barriers to inclusive education and elements that can make up an effective education policy inclusive of gender. Teacher training, resources and infrastructure, curricula, and cultural norms must all be addressed, as well as the inclusion of girls, mothers, and female teachers in the creation of a gender-inclusive education policy.

When creating a policy, it is important to consider how it will affect those for whom it is intended. Inclusive education policies should be informed by consultations with those who are most easily excluded from formal education, such as girls, children with disabilities, Indigenous children, and children from poorer communities, among others. By taking an intersectional

approach to policymaking, unintended consequences of the policy can be avoided because people's complex experiences will be accounted for in the policy. Damiani (1999) proposes questions to consider when creating an inclusive policy: Where are the voices of those usually excluded from the policy process? How are different identities regarded in the society in question? How are those differences illustrated in the school culture? Are they represented in the curriculum and pedagogy and in the school organization? Considering these types of questions will increase the likelihood of properly representing the experiences of all children in education.

Teacher training is essential to educational inclusion and quality education. As has been discussed throughout the paper, El Salvador has difficulty in ensuring that their teachers receive consistent and effective training (MINED, 2014). They also do not receive quality in-service training, failing to keep their methods and knowledge up-to-date with the education policies in place. To provide inclusive education, teacher training should explicitly discuss inclusion and provide teachers with tools to make sure all students are included and treated the same in the classroom (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Since the classroom is a place where children learn many of their biases, teachers have to be willing and capable of challenging gender stereotypes and teaching their students inclusive behaviours. Education officials and teachers need clear guidelines and training on how to make the education system fully inclusive (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

Improved infrastructure and increased resources are an important part of inclusive education. Proper infrastructure is important to guarantee the safety of students against the elements and the comfort and safety of girls while using the bathroom. In the short term, the Government must increase funding to repair any schools that have been damaged by violence or natural disasters (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). In the longer term, schools must be renovated

and new schools must be built using gender-sensitive plans, and these plans must be made through consultations with girls to discuss what they need, including single-sex bathroom facilities and proper sanitation (Global Monitoring Education Report, 2018).

Cultural norms, such as norms surrounding gender and disabilities, are an important barrier to educational inclusion; they determine which children are sent to school and which are not (Donohue & Bornman, 2014), as well as how they are treated when in school. Muñoz Morán (2019) argues that the programs MINED have implemented that physically support families in sending their children to school, such as food and uniform programs, are not sufficient in guaranteeing inclusion. These programs do not address the cultural norms that exclude children from school in the first place, including keeping girls home and sending boys to school if there is not enough money to send all children, or affect how they are treated at school, such as getting less attention and positive reinforcement from teachers (Pahlke & Goble, 2015) and the presence of gender biases in curricula (Tamboukou, 2015).

A cultural change in beliefs and behaviours must take place to create structural and systemic changes (Muñoz Morán, 2019). These types of behaviour- and belief-altering projects, such as awareness-raising campaigns, take time and resources, often taking years or generations to completely alter a culture. A concerted effort needs to be made to engage with the MINED, teacher trainers, teachers, school personnel, and community members such as religious leaders, parents, and children to change cultural norms. Teaching children at the school level about diversity and inclusion is a good place to start, as raising children to be accepting of differences will create more accepting adults, who will raise more accepting children, etc.

Overall, El Salvador's policies and programs addressing inclusive education focus mainly on getting out-of-school children to school, while minimal attention is being paid to the different

experiences of children, particularly girls, who are already there. By addressing the barriers to inclusive education outlined above, the MINED could greatly improve the experiences of children in school, decreasing dropout rates and increasing quality education for all.

Chapter V – Conclusion

Throughout this paper, El Salvador's efforts to reform the education system have been examined to determine whether education and gender equality can be achieved through education reform. The three education reforms completed since the end of the civil war, the Ten-Year Plan, Plan 2021, and the Social Education Plan, were discussed, followed by an analysis of policies and programs that make up El Salvador's inclusive education system. Here, the research questions will be answered and gaps in the research will be addressed. To conclude, topics for future research will be proposed.

The research questions explored in this paper were inspired in part by Grindle's (2007) framework for evaluating education reforms. The analysis of each reform was informed by the international and national contexts, the actors and their interests, the reform process, and the different issues considered. In particular, the questions surrounding the factors that affected the success of El Salvador's reforms, the influence of the international context on the reforms, and the actors and their goals were adapted from this framework.

El Salvador's three most recent education reforms influenced educational outcomes to varying degrees, and each reform was affected by different factors. The TYP was influenced by the EDUCO program, making it a relatively easy reform to implement as the program was already in place around the country. A lack of available funding made the implementation of Plan 2021 more difficult. The introduction of the integrated system of full-time inclusive schools through the SEP facilitated the sharing of resources between schools, increasing educational outcomes for all students at those schools. The SEP had several effective programs, helping to improve public opinion and credibility of the MINED. All three reforms had public and stakeholder support because they were presented as tools for advancing economic development

by preparing children for the job market through the development of relevant skills and knowledge.

All three reforms were influenced by the international education agenda of the time to an extent, but the international agenda was always more progressive on gender matters. The TYP was in line with the international trend of getting children to school but was also guided by Latin America's general push toward providing quality education to all. Plan 2021 and the SEP were both strongly influenced by the CRC, Education for All, and the MDGs. International technical and financial partners provided a lot of funding for these reforms, influencing their priorities.

The major actors in all these reform processes were international partners, particularly the World Bank and USAID, the Ministry of Education, and politicians. While other actors such as the Church, women's and parents' groups, and community members were consulted at various phases of the different reform processes, they did not play a significant role in the reforms. The World Bank and USAID provided funding for the TYP and pushed to keep the EDUCO program, ensuring the reform was successfully implemented

The particular needs of girls did not influence these reforms very much and in this respect, Salvadoran reforms were out of step with the overall tenor of the international agenda on educational reform. The first two reforms cannot be considered inclusive, barely recognizing that children may have different experiences at school depending on factors that make up their identity. However, the SEP highlighted how the education system did not consider the realities faced by students and emphasized the need to help them make connections between what they were learning at school and the social, economic, political and cultural issues they were facing in the real world. The SEP was the beginning of the inclusive education system in El Salvador and paved the way for overcoming barriers to education, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and

ethnicity. Unfortunately, the particular needs of girls were not the principal drivers behind the adoption of inclusive education, and these needs are still not considered strongly enough in the education system.

The reforms failed to realize the potential gains of inclusive education. As highlighted in the literature review, inclusive education should ensure girls are taught and treated better at school than they have been historically and increase their retention rates. Inclusive education also has the potential to help countries reach the targets set in SDG 5 (see Table 1), but El Salvador's system fails to address factors that would help those targets be reached. For example, targets 5.1 and 5.2 call for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls and of all forms of violence against all women and girls (UNGA, 2015), but a policy not inclusive of gender will not address these topics.

Gaps in the Research

There are gaps in this research that could lead to misrepresentation of the causes of some of the issues discussed here. First, this paper only focuses on two aspects of identity: gender and age. Many other factors influence children's experiences with primary education, including their ability, whether they live in an urban or rural community, the socioeconomic status of their family, their race, preschool attendance status, etc. The theoretical framework of intersectionality argues that no one part of someone's identity should be analyzed without the others as they are all interdependent and mutually constitutive. However, the scope of this paper did not allow space for more levels of analysis, and in any case, the availability of data on these issues in El Salvador is limited. In particular, the experiences of trans and nonbinary children at the primary school level were not discussed, and neither were the experiences of Indigenous girls. Although

they form a small portion of the population, Indigenous girls in the country most likely experience barriers and prejudice in education.

Some problems highlighted throughout this paper are undoubtedly created and/or influenced by other factors, such as violence, economic inequalities, parents' level of education, etc., or a combination of these factors. For example, exclusion from formal education in El Salvador is often related to migration and family separation, a topic not broached here. For context, the net migration rate, which is the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants, in 2020 in the country is -5.873 per 1000 people, which means that more people are leaving the country than are entering it (UN DESA, 2020), and most immigrants are headed to other Latin American countries or the United States. There are also differences in education and educational outcomes within El Salvador; there is a rural versus urban divide as well as differences between regions in access to education and the quality of education received.

Finally, the lack of available educational data limits the research that can be done on this topic. Key questions surrounding the educational outcomes of the reforms cannot be answered without these data, including the literacy and numeracy rates of children in grades 2/3 and at the end of primary school (SDG 4.1.1), and the primary education completion rates (4.1.2).

Areas for Future Research

To fully understand the current situation of education and gender equality in El Salvador and to use inclusive education to its full potential, more research is required to look into all aspects of children's identities and how they intersect to affect their experience with education. Future research should also look into other causes of school exclusion as mentioned above. Additionally, conducting the same kind of analysis as was done here but with children and youth

of secondary school age could be interesting; would similar conclusions be made regarding educational outcomes? Would inclusive education be more or less useful at the secondary level?

COVID-19 has presented both an important challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because this global health and economic crisis has completely changed how we live our lives, but it is an opportunity because we have the chance to rethink certain systems and to rebuild them so they work better for more people. When considering the education system, this rebuilding process should focus on implementing inclusive education policies around the world to ensure that countries are on track to become gender equal by 2030, a goal set by the SDGs (UNGA, 2015).

Closing schools for prolonged periods can have many negative effects on children. Most importantly, their learning is interrupted, which can affect children unevenly. Many children live in areas where online learning is not accessible, while children with disabilities may not have the tools to learn at home (UIS, 2020b). According to the *Framework for Returning to Schools* (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, World Food Programme & UNHCR, 2020), disruption in children's instructional time in the classroom can be very detrimental to their ability to learn. Closing schools has many negative effects on the wellbeing of children; especially in low- and middle-income countries, schools are often a main source of food for students, and closing them has increased malnutrition (UNESCO et al., 2020). Closing schools also increases the risk of violence in the home. Schools provide necessary mental and physical health resources that many children do not otherwise have access to (UNESCO et al., 2020).

As with any other barrier to education, school closures affect different children differently. The barriers to education discussed in this paper are exacerbated by crises, and children who were already at risk of educational exclusion or lower quality learning are at even

higher risk now. Primary school children are particularly at risk because they are generally not able to learn independently, requiring more attention from their teacher than secondary school students (UIS, 2020b). Educated parents are better suited to help their out-of-school children learn than parents with little to no education, further exacerbating existing inequalities between these groups of parents, such as socioeconomic wellbeing. According to the COVID-19 Global Education Coalition Gender Flagship (2020), this crisis has the potential to severely set back progress made in the last decades in girls' education. Moreover, the longer marginalized children are out of school, the less likely is it for them to go back when schools reopen (UNESCO et al., 2020).

Schools in El Salvador have been closed since March 2020, and the Government recently announced that they will remain closed until at least December 31, 2020 (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2020). The MINED's website contains a plethora of online resources for both teachers and students (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2020). While these resources are detailed and widely available, they do not address the barriers that their students face that were discussed previously. They are also very internet-focused, limiting the accessibility of these learning tools to students and teachers who have access to a computer and the internet.

When considering how and when to reopen schools, El Salvador must consider ways in which they can make the system better for all children. The inclusive education model developed in this paper would be a good place to start, as it highlights the importance of ensuring all children have equal access to equal quality of education. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been negative for most, it has also offered an opportunity to rethink systems that have stopped working for the majority of people. El Salvador is not alone in this: education systems the world over can and should be rethought and rebuilt to be more inclusive of all children.

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