

Analysis of the Dynamics of Public Policies Aimed at Promoting MSMEs from the Perspective of the OECD Development Index in the Municipality of León, Guanajuato

Análisis de la dinámica de las políticas públicas orientadas al impulso de las SME's desde la perspectiva del Índice de Desarrollo de la OCDE en el municipio de León, Guanajuato, México

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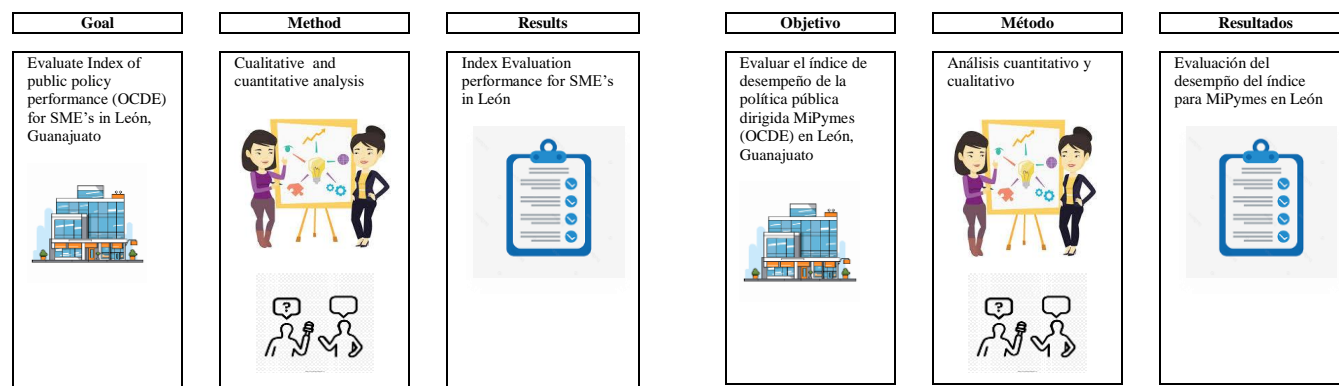


Abstract

The objective of this research is to analyze the current policy environment and its potential influence on decision-making processes concerning business practices among SMEs in León, Guanajuato. The analysis is framed around the eight dimensions of the OECD's SME Development Index (2024), through which key elements can be identified to assess the factors contributing to the creation of favorable conditions for business development in the municipality. This study employs a descriptive-documentary methodology, which involved reviewing and selecting relevant plans, programs, and policy instruments from ten public institutions and organizations engaged in local economic development. A qualitative classification of priorities is proposed to support informed decision-making, with particular emphasis on indicators related to innovation, talent integration and retention, and supply chain linkage. The analysis concludes that current public policy efforts aimed at promoting SME's activity in León are primarily concentrated in the areas of microcredit, digitalization support, and a strong emphasis on the gender dimension. In particular, there is a focused effort to strengthen women's entrepreneurship initiatives, in recognition of the significant increase in recent years in the number of households headed by women.

Resumen

El propósito de esta investigación es analizar el contexto de las políticas públicas del entorno actual que pueden condicionar la toma de decisiones sobre las prácticas empresariales de las MiPymes's en León, Guanajuato considerando las 8 dimensiones del Índice de Desarrollo de SME's de la OCDE (2024) El tipo de investigación es descriptivo-documental bajo un enfoque cualitativo para lo cual se realizó una revisión y selección de planes, programas e instrumentos disponibles en 10 de las Instituciones y organismos públicos relacionados con el desarrollo económico local, así como documentos oficiales de la Secretaría de Economía, organismos estatales, organismos municipal. También se realizaron entrevistas con algunos funcionarios del Distrito de Innovación coordinado por Idea GTO y a partir de ello se establecieron las conclusiones sobre algunas tendencias de las políticas públicas que pueden considerarse como prioritarias para su atención y seguimiento a nivel local. Se concluye que existen brechas importantes que provocan una falta de coordinación entre las políticas orientadas a las MiPymes's y aquellas que se encuentran fuertemente vinculadas a la industria 4.0 en la región.



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Introduction

This paper presents some relevant background related to the findings of preliminary studies carried out in the years 2019 and 2020 on trends in the indicators of intellectual capital and knowledge management models for the municipalities of León, San Francisco del Rincón and Silao that reported the low propensity for change to innovation and staff integration practices in decision-making (Díaz, C. and Ordaz, C 2020).

By 2024, it was decided to resume the analysis of trends considering the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic as an element that accelerated the change in the perspective of local entrepreneurs on their adaptive capacities to deal with such contingencies. The importance of human development, digitization and sustainability variable, with a strong emphasis on the need for more inclusive models for diversity and social responsibility aimed at the environment and gender equity, is remarkable.

The central question that triggered this analysis is based on the need to maintain continuous monitoring of the importance of public policy in the relationship between government and company at local level. So, we analyze what are the priorities of public policy in terms of supporting and promoting business development in the municipality of León, Guanajuato taking as reference the Index of SME's for AL proposed by the OECD in 2024.

In view of the background to the performance of the indicators of the knowledge economy in the sample of companies in the municipalities of León, Silao and San Francisco del Rincón in 2019 and 2020, a new analysis was proposed from the dimensions of business development proposed at the international level and that represents an integral and flexible perspective on the different aspects to be considered in the evaluation of business development from a municipal level.

The model proposed by OECD (2024) to assess performance of the SME's in Latin America represents a key starting point for identifying areas of opportunity to improve the design of public policies and business practices that strengthen economic performance at the local and regional levels in the post-COVID era.

In the case of León, Guanajuato is notable that it is considered the most important economic engine of the State by being part of the industrial corridor of Bajío for its strength in the manufacturing and services sector at the national level and being part of an important ecosystem of innovation in Mexico. In spite of the political and social conditions that have affected the entity in recent years, corporate management has made significant progress in boosting micro and small enterprises that raise employment, as well as intensive training programs staff at technical and operational level mainly.

The need to reverse the economic impact of COVID and to achieve a faster recovery in recent years has been accompanied by the emphasis in new development goals at the national and international levels. In this sense, the objectives of the 2030 Agenda are set out the need "*forjar un futuro más justo, igualitario y sostenible para todas las personas y cumplir con la promesa de no dejar a nadie atrás, no dejar a nadie afuera*" (<https://economia.gob.mx/secna2030>).

Under this premise, the objectives of the mission and vision of public policies have been established that impact on the business development of the town over the past 5 years, in particular those associated with the drive to the economy, innovation and the consolidation of the supply chains under a social responsibility and sustainability approach as reflected in the main axes of the State Development Plan to 2040.

Economic and social dynamics make it essential to maintain constant monitoring of trends in business development as a central factor in economic growth through employment, investment and the continuous improvement of their processes at different levels of management. In this sense, the academic body "Management and Organizational Innovation" aims to analyze trends at the macro and micro level of management models and the changes and permanencies of the main business practices that exist at the local level as part of the dynamics of economic and social development.

In the end, it is concluded that there is evidence in the information collected from different sources about a great influence that the political dimension has since the government's action on the drive of business activity considering the size and dynamics of the development of the SME's which most lack management tools to take advantage of the opportunities that open up in a hybrid or mixed economy.

Government actions are of great importance in promoting or inhibiting business, by providing better conditions for the regulation of its operations, ensuring the rule of law, generating incentives to innovation and entrepreneurship, among others. Economic policy and programs aimed at business development can make a difference in the dynamism of a locality or region in a country that opens opportunities for continuous improvement.

The development of SME's is a high priority for policy makers, as they not only drive economic growth, but also contribute significantly to job creation, poverty reduction and the fight against inequality. This requires a public policy framework to address various segments of the population through several initiatives (OECD / CAF, 2019 [12]).

Similarly, the perception of citizens towards businesses plays a crucial role, as these entities are crucial for productive transformation and are key sources of investment. Governments in the region should therefore actively implement a number of policies to encourage SME's to boost investment and enhance their capacity to create jobs.

This paper discusses the current dynamics of SMES's support policies from a local (municipal) perspective in Mexico, with reference to the 8 dimensions of the OECD model for Latin America.

As a result, a qualitative assessment is presented of those dimensions that present strength or weakness in support of business development in the municipality of León, Guanajuato.

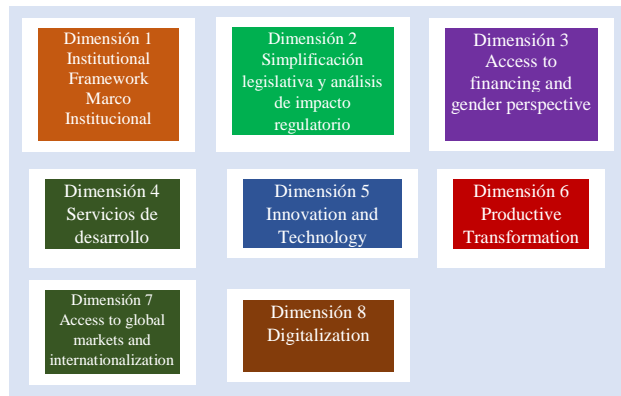
OECD and the Policy Index for SME's : Latin America and the Caribbean 2024

According to the 2024 edition of *the Policy Index for SMEs: Latin America and the Caribbean Towards an inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery* it evaluates regional trends and progress in design, implementation and impact of policies affecting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) in nine countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), and also helps to identify reform priorities for more effective, efficient and cohesive SME's policies, comparing national measures with OECD standards.

The SME's have demonstrated their fundamental role in the social and economic landscape of the region. They make up 99.5% of companies, and almost nine out of ten companies are in the micro-enterprise category. In addition, SME's contribute about 60% of formal productive employment. These attributes, amid complex scenarios, have led to an even greater emphasis on positioning their development as a clear priority for policymakers in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, government actions are relevant as factors that can increase the competitiveness of companies.

The reference document provides an assessment through 8 public policy dimensions and 29 subdimensions, accompanied by descriptions of country-specific challenges and provides a way forward with recommendations at the local or municipal level. For the first time, the evaluation includes an analysis of policies for the digitization of SME's, which is crucial for promoting an inclusive, resilient and sustainable business sector, especially in view of the post-COVID19 pandemic context that forced many companies to connect to the Internet for the first time, first-hand experience the value of digital technologies along with a pilot dimension of green economy and a cross-cutting gender approach.

The dimensions included in the model analysis are shown in Figure 1

Box 1**Figure 1**

SME's Public Policy Index Dimensions in Latin America

Source: OCDE (2024)

This work has identified some programs at the state and local level in the case of Guanajuato and the municipality of León in particular, it is possible to observe the policies of impulse that can be positively evaluated from the dimensions proposed by the OECD to promote stronger links between the SME's and the large companies, taking advantage of the potential of large companies to act as customers, innovation partners and advisers. The dynamics of the links between national cluster organizations and regional innovation actors, reflecting the importance of space proximity as a strategy for enhancing competitiveness.

In this regard, important regional studies have been identified that highlight the importance of business strengthening strategies in the states of Guanajuato and Jalisco as part of public policy around the collaboration of the different production chains and specific sectors where the main local and regional economic activity is concentrated. (Colin and Carbajal, 2025).

On the other hand, it is important to consider improving efforts to close gender gaps and create the conditions and opportunities for the development and growth of women-led or women-owned SME's. The region has made progress in integrating a gender perspective into policies and programs. However, much remains to be done, and it is essential to improve data collection and analysis from that perspective.

This study used a methodology that identified 8 dimensions of analysis to assess the current situation of SMEs for each country in the region, and which can be moved to the local level as part of a micro analysis.

Planning and Business Development in the municipality of León, Guanajuato

The State of Guanajuato is located in one of the emerging regions that have expressed interest in the promotion and adoption of industry technologies 4.0 with the intention of making its manufacturing industry particularly driven by the automotive sector more competitive. (Martínez, et. al., 2022)

On the other hand, the health crisis of COVID led to the need for a shift towards greater digitalization of processes in companies such as telework, virtual meetings, distance training or *reshoring* supply chains.

For its part, the municipality of León as the economically most important city of Guanajuato represents an interesting case study in front of other municipalities of the country considering that its main economic activity has been industrial-manufacturing, which in several cases has been able to be inserted into the production chains of other larger sectors such as the automotive or have managed to take advantage of the foreign market mainly in North America. Despite the political and social conditions that have affected the entity in recent years, corporate management has made significant progress in boosting micro and small enterprises that raise employment, as well as intensive training programs for staff at technical and operational levels.

The need to reverse the economic impact of COVID and to achieve a faster recovery in recent years has been accompanied by the emphasis on new development goals at the national and international levels. In this sense, the objectives of Agenda 2030 are to set out the need "To forge a fairer, more equal, and sustainable future for all people and to fulfill the promise of leaving no one behind, leaving no one out". (<http://economía.gob.mx/secna> 2030)

Under this premise, the objectives of the mission and vision of public policies have been established that impact on the business development of the town over the past 5 years, in particular those associated with the drive to the economy, innovation and the consolidation of the supply chains under a social responsibility and sustainability approach as reflected in the main axes of the State Development Plan to 2040. (IPLANEG, 2018).

The municipality of León, Guanajuato is one of the economic engines of the state, with a population on of more than 1.7 million people and a wide range of economic activities. At present, the main area of the town remains the leather and footwear industry, where exports reach up to 31% according to data from the Ministry of the Economy in 2025.

According to data from the National Statistical Directory of Economic Units del INEGI (INEGI, 2022) in the state of Guanajuato there are a total of 269, 3 37 micro and small enterprises of which 255,093 are classified as micro and 14,244 as small enterprises.

In parallel to indicators at the international level, at the local or municipal level, data on the informal economy account for economic conditions and require coordinated public action.

For the municipality of León, the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) of INEGI for the first quarter of 2025, the rate of labour informality in the state of Guanajuato was 54.7%. This means that they are not incorporated into companies and therefore lack social security protection, benefits or a formal contract.

Although the document "Study of the context of the economy and informal employability in the municipality of León, Guanajuato 2020-2022" does not set an exact figure, it is possible to assume that the informality indicator ranges from 55% to 60% to understand the magnitude of the problem.

According to the Network of Latin American Studies in Administration and Business (NLASAB) in its study for the case of the sample of micro and small companies in León, he noted that the competitive advantages of micro and small enterprises require to optimize the process in human resources, good management of finance in the company and to pay attention to the role played by management (Paredes, et.al, 2024).

Economic and social dynamics therefore make it essential to maintain constant monitoring of trends in business development as a central factor in economic growth through employment, investment and the continuous improvement of their processes at different levels of management.

Methodology to develop

The approach of this research is of a qualitative and transectional documentary nature. With reference to the 8 dimensions of the OECD analysis model (2024), a search was initiated for the main programs and projects at the state and municipal level of the State of Guanajuato and, particularly of León that have had more projection and support in order to identify priorities in public policy aimed at promoting SME's. In addition, some access barriers to programs development were identified as part of the initial diagnosis.

The exploratory study included the review of 10 official websites of agencies related to the support of the SME's, the review of published articles related to the diagnosis of programs and projects of impulse from 2024 to date, and an in-depth interview with an official of the State Office of Innovation Promotion of the Government of the State of Guanajuato (IDEA GTO).

This research made an indirect observation of the actions of the main bodies related to the formulation or implementation of policies aligned to the 8 dimensions of the model. The organizations were grouped according to their level of incidence in the subdimensions, among which they were located in Secretariat of Economy and Sustainable Developmente, COFOCE, CIATEC, IMPLAN, IPLANEG, INMUJERES, AMEXME, CANACINTRA LEON, IDEA GTO mainly.

Once the programs and projects were identified, the public policy index for the case of León was established based on the scale of 1 to 5 in order of maturity or implementation proposed by the OECD model, obtaining the following data as shown below in Table 1.

Box 2

Table 1

Comparative table of the Public Policy Performance Index for SMEs (AL, Mexico, León)

Model Dimensions	Índex LATAM	Índex México	Índex León
Dimensión 1. Institutional and Legislative Framework	3.875	4.22	4.05
Dimension 2. Operative Environment and Administrative Simplification	3.205	3.867	3.95

Dimensión 3. Access to financing	3.24	4.12	4.26
Dimensión 4 Bussiness Development Services	4.2	4.18	4.16
Dimensión 5 Innovation and Technology	3.97	4.14	4.4
Dimensión 6. Productive Transformation	3.96	4.23	4.19
Dimensión 7 Access to global markets and globalization	4.32	4.35	4.35
Dimensión 8. Digitalization	4.15	4.28	4.07

Source: Author's own elaboration

Results

As a result of the review of the selected information, the following was observed based on the 8 dimensions for the context of the programs and projects in force for the promotion of the SME's in the municipality of León, Guanajuato.

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Regarding dimension 1 of the Institutional and legislative framework, it was noted that it is fragmented as the laws governing support for the SME's are dispersed in different programs and projects that cause the spraying of resources. Like the indicators at international level, the municipality de León has a high percentage informal economy.

In dimension 2 on operating environment and administrative simplification it is possible to say that there are support such as credits or certifications, however, it requires multiple procedures to various institutions when it comes to support credits with public funds provided by the Guanajuato Funds program and the Ministry of the Economy. A large number of companies, especially in peripheral areas, do not have legal advice or administrative support which creates barriers to entry.

In dimension 3 on access to financing, the most important initiative is financial "Tu puedes Guanajuato". This program offers nine credit options with competitive interest rates. The amounts range from 10,000 to 3 million pesos.

According to the documentary research carried out, at least 8 programmes derived from public funds are identified with maximum amounts of 3 million pesos, which can be said that the size of the economy is below the national average at the municipal level. Other programs at the municipal level are " *Suma tu Negocio* "which funds furniture, equipment and / or tools to strengthen y our business units. There is also support for rural entrepreneurs through the Directorate General for Rural Development with specific support to support rural community entrepreneurs with equipment and marketing spaces. Despite the presence of these programs, the requirements may be complex especially for companies with no credit history, and no experience in processing documentation to ensure a return rate for the creditor.

In this dimension, emphasis should be placed on the cross-cutting gender approach, as it has been given a special emphasis at the municipal level on microcredit access to women entrepreneurs, which reflects a commitment to the principle of gender equity in policies of access to finance. Thus, specific programs of institutions such as AMEXME León, INMUJERES León were identified.

According to INEGI data, it is estimated that one in three companies (approximately 33%) in the state is led by a woman. The Secretariat for Sustainable Economic Development (SDES) in Guanajuato has reported similar figures, indicating that about 34% of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the entity are in the hands of women.

If we believe that, according to the Population and Housing Census 2020 conducted by INEGI, 3 1.5% of households have a woman as head of th e family, the growth potential of the SME's is raised in this sector as we are talking in the same case of one third of SME's headed by women and in many cases also heads of the family (INEGI, 2020).

In August 2025 the municipal government of León announced a series of programs and support amounts for women-led companies. An investment of more than 72 million pesos was confirmed in strategic programs focusedexclusively on the development and inclusion of women by 202 5 distributed in some programs such as:

Suma Tu Negocio (enterprises); *Unidas Avanzamos* in collaboration with the Bank Affirms with 1,318 credits granted and others such as *En Marcha* that provides equipment for business and "*Ellas en los Negocios*" focused on leadership training and business strategies.

In dimension 4 on business development services, there are multiple agencies that provide training, legal advice and business linkages. There are bodies such as the CIATEC (<http://ciatec.mx>) that are aimed at innovation, industrial property and technology management. The COFOCE, which specializes in support of internationalization and e-commerce (<http://cofoce.org.mx>) and CANACINTRA AND CONCAMIN, which support formalization and certification processes. There are also programmes from IDEA Gto that seek to boost the innovation of the SME's by linking with research groups of universities and research centres and have physical spaces and laboratories for collaboration.

According to Gabriel Santos Navarro, Director General of Scientific and Technological Development of the Institute of Innovation, Science and Entrepreneurship for the Competitiveness for the State of Guanajuato (IDEA GTO), the policy of promoting innovation revolves around the creation of the Innovation District and the initiative of the Mentefactura Valley within the State's Inner Port (personal communication, 20 January 2025).

In that space are located important national and international companies and other bodies that facilitate communication between academia, government and company. This facilitates the link and development of specific actions such as meetings, workshops, training that function as a link between companies and research groups.

However, the approved projects focus mainly on companies linked to strategic sectors with a medium or high level of knowledge in the field of innovation and technology, especially in view of the drive for industry 4.0 so that access for SME's companies is very limited despite the existence of programs such as entrepreneurship funds, the Manufacturer program and the creation of a Global Network of Mentors for business advice.

In dimension 5 on Innovation and Technology, the municipality of León is part of an ecosystem with a high concentration of technological capabilities. The state of Guanajuato has been consolidated with an innovation ecosystem with 8 technology parks and 10 business clusters that promote collaboration, competitiveness and the development of new technologies in strategic sectors such as agro-industry, automotive, fashion, ICT's and recently aerospace. This ecosystem has been known as the "Mentefactura Valley" which seeks to move from manufacturing to an economic model based on knowledge and innovation led by I IDEA GTO.

According to the Dr. Gabriel Santos, the government of the State of Guanajuato has sought to promote an innovation policy based on strategic alliances whose focus is on the priority themes of the development agenda such as agriculture, the automotive industry, information technologies and to some extent an open science and gender perspective, although the latter limited in many respects. (personal communication, 20 January 2025).

In dimension 6 of productive transformation, an active process of modernization is detected in traditional sectors, especially in footwear, leather, fashion and textiles where clusters have promoted automation, export and certification. The presence of specialized industrial parts such as PILBA or Colinas de León has encouraged the attraction of investments and companies that adopt clean technologies.

In dimension 7 on market access and internationalization, the programs of the Coordination for the Promotion of Foreign Trade (COFOCE) that have been accompanied by the imposed on the adoption of new export technologies through programmes such as *Ecommerce Go Export* and the creation of digital villages for traditional sectors through e-commerce and which seeks to support particularly small and medium-sized enterprises in the manufacturing sector.

The dimension 8 on digitalization has been developed digital platforms for job and business links and support for the development of e-commerce, virtual shops and digital marketing.

In figure 1 it is possible to see that for the case of the municipality of León, the performance rate of public policy is very close to the average of the index in respect of Latin America and the national in Mexico, which shows that in public policy there are initiatives to boost the economy of the SME's. However, the high rate of informality and the heterogeneity of the business structures in terms of the size, organizational development and training of human capital does not have the expected impact for proper monitoring.

Box 3

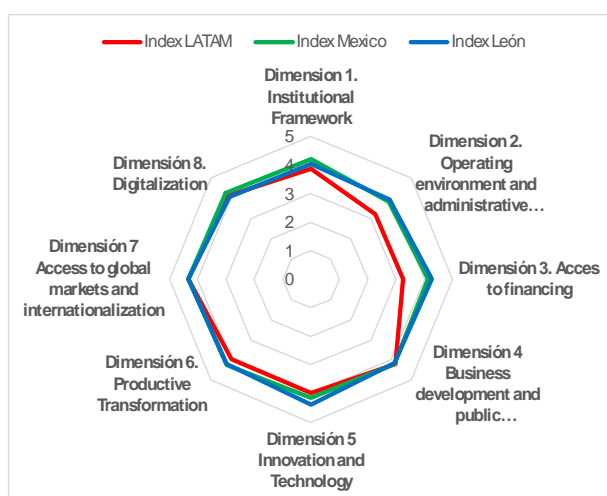


Figure 1

Public policy performance index for MiPymes by dimension (AL, Mexico, León)

Source: Authors Own Elaboration

Conclusions and recommendations

Taking into account the 8 dimensions of the OECD public policy analysis to assess the development of the SME's and using the information analyzed between 2024 and 2025 in the sources of information consulted, we can conclude the following:

- There is a public policy to promote SME's which is administered through State public bodies, but there is little coordination to assess the impact of programs on performance indicators.
- Important programs of access to finance are recognized by providing credit to small entrepreneurs. It also recognizes important training and advisory programs for micro-entrepreneurs through government agencies and units, however, no official figures were found where it is possible to verify the number of companies or persons benefiting.

- Highlights the momentum and support for women entrepreneurs, recognizing the importance of the gender approach in the municipal and state policy aimed at women & entrepreneurship development in line with the gender mainstreaming that is included in the OECD study.

The government of the state of Guanajuato, which has benefited the municipality of León for its activities in the manufacturing and commercial services sector, as well as its proximity to the technological parks and industrial clusters, has made it an important aspect of innovation. It is therefore possible to highlight this as one of the most valuable dimensions in the analysis, although innovation policy has been largely used by large companies associated with industry 4.0

Latin America and the national in Mexico, which shows that in public policy there are initiatives to boost the economy of the SME's, however, the high rate of informality and the heterogeneity of the business structures in terms of the size, organizational development and training of human capital does not have the expected impact for proper monitoring and monitoring of the results.

Finally, the lack of coordination and monitoring of programs results in an uneven scenario for companies where most do not have the physical and human infrastructure to access the benefits of these programs, so it is necessary to design new management processes between the government and the beneficiaries to maximize the resources available by combining training, access to financial resources and promoting a culture of access to digital media, entrepreneurship and in general towards organizational change.

Statements

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest. There are no economic interests or personal relationships that may have influenced this article.

Contribution by author

Claudia Leticia Díaz González: Leader of the academic body "Management and Organizational Innovation," development of the main idea of the research project, proposal of the approach and method of research on the subject, analysis of data and generation of conclusions.

Carla Patricia Ordaz Picón: Collaborator in the generation of the theoretical-conceptual framework based on other models of analysis.

Raquel Alatorre Herrera: Collaborator in the project, participated in the analysis of the dimensions of the model and in the validation of the information.

Fátima Guadalupe Olmos: A 9-semester student from Engineering in Business Management contributed to the documentary review, classification of sources and preparation of the final report.

Availability of data and materials

The data presented in this paper are public and are available in the OECD Latin American Performance Index Report (2024). For the data generated for the specific case of the municipality of León, Guanajuato are available directly with the author or to her e mail as well as the content of the interviews.

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Abbreviations

AMEXME	Association of Women Entrepreneurs of León
CANACINTRA	National Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry
CIATEC	Center for Innovation in Competitive Technologies
COFOCE	Council for the Promotion of Foreign Trade
CONCAMIN	Confederation of Industrial Chambers of the United Mexican States
IDEA GTO	Institute of Innovation, Science and Entrepreneurship for Competitiveness for the State of Guanajuato
IMPLAN	Municipal Planning Institute
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography
INMUJERES	National Institute for Women
IPLANEG	Guanajuato State Planning Institute
SME's	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
OCDE	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RELAYN	Latin American Network of Management and Business Studies
SDES	Secretariat of Sustainable Economic Development

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Background

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