

The Educational Reform: reflection and debate

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Reforming from the classroom

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*Balance and challenges
of the Educational Reform*

Otto Granados Roldán

*Quintana Roo in face
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Gabriela Yáñez Rivas

Rocío Estrada Rivera

Ana Razo Pérez

Pedro Flores Crespo

Mauricio Reyes Corona

Jonathan Molina Téllez

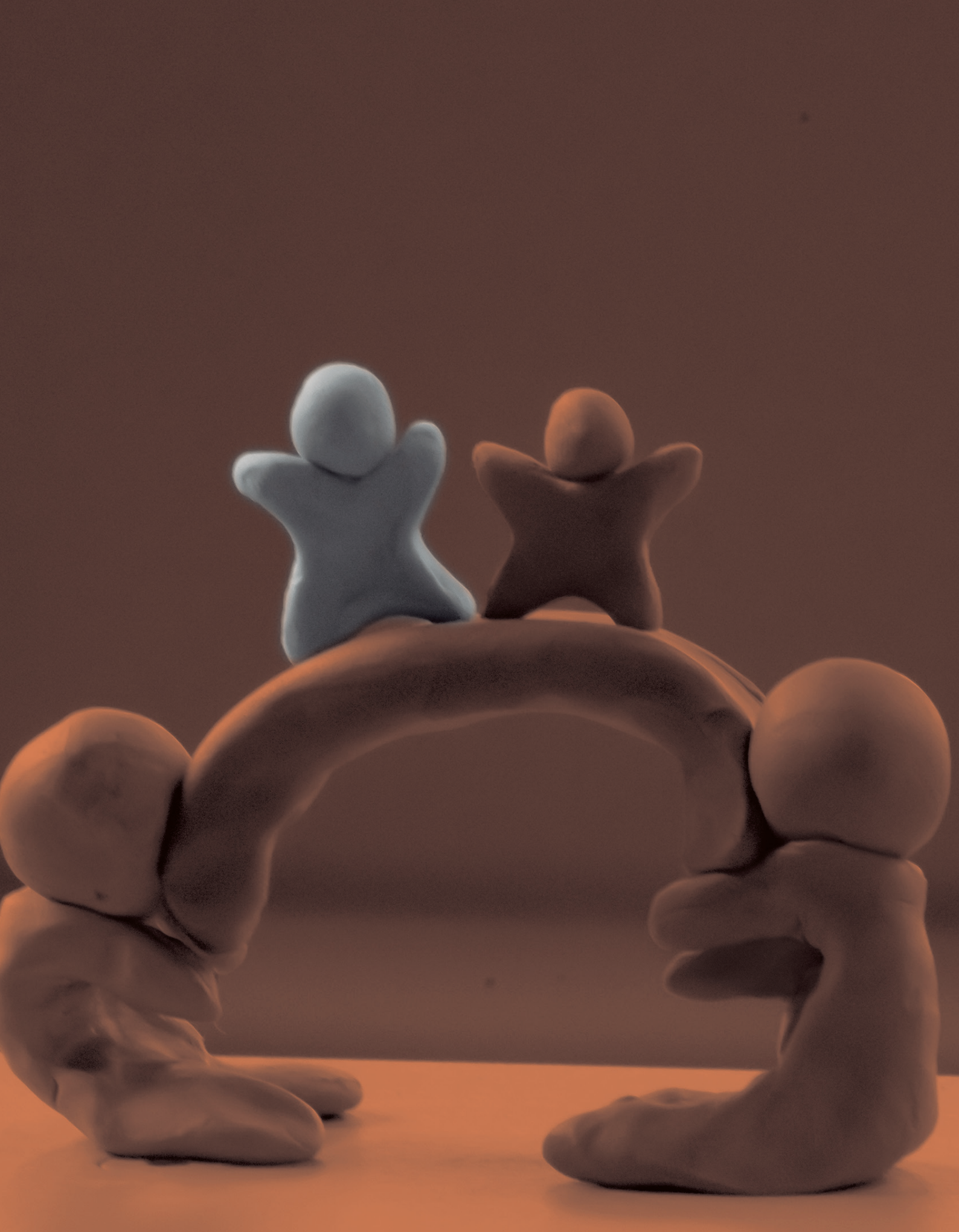
Special guest

New educational model:

a look from

curriculum studies

Frida Díaz Barriga



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Editorial

In this issue, the *Gazette* deals with the subject of the Educational Reform because we think it is time to take stock of the way it has developed in face of two crucial moments: the ousting of the administration that promoted the reform and the end of a cycle which began in 2013 with the constitutional changes that activated the reform.

Certainly, ending a first stage is not the same as having come to the end of a road. On the opposite, the Educational Reform is transformed and progresses constantly. To prove this, it is enough to take a look at the index of this *Gazette*. A plurality of voices and points of view shows the intensity of the debate and it is proof that the Reform is a living process, developing at full, with important challenges ahead and supported by remarkable successes that will help it face them.

As we pointed out, the subject of the reform is tackled from multiple and heterogeneous perspectives; however, all of them agree—with nuances—in something: the key relevance of teachers for achieving the goals of the reform and, as a forced correlate to this, a criticism to the relatively low level of attention paid in the initial moment of the transformation. As it will be seen, numerous articles mention that the next step for improving education is strategically linked with teachers and, therefore, our featured authors demand, suggest, or point out—the tones about it change—not that teachers should have a voice—because they already have it—, but that they should be carefully listened to and allowed to join in the reform process as a condition to enable them to perform their work successfully.

The National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) itself—in its autonomous phase, a product of the 2013 Educational Reform—, through its Governing Board, reviews the compliance of its mandates and main results in the section “In our own hand.”

In “Special guest,” Frida Díaz Barriga offers a precise critique of the reform process from the perspective of curriculum studies.

Out of three articles that form the section “Voices of the Conference,” the first one offers an interview with Bernardo Naranjo, the INEE’s member of the Board who defends the idea that it is necessary to watch directly the place where the educational phenomenon happens, the classroom, in order to achieve true improvement for the National Educational Service. In the second article, the head of the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP), Otto Granados Roldán, argues—using objective data—in favor of the path followed by the reform; he also accepts the challenges that still have to be faced. In the third article, the deputy secretary for Middle-High and Superior Education in Quintana Roo,

Rafael Romero, presents some peculiarities of the reform in his state and points out that its implementation shows differentiated characteristics in each state of the Republic.

In “Road map,” a team from the INEE’s Direction of Guidelines for Improving Educational Resources and Teaching Performance reveals the intricacies of the process which derives in the contribution of solid evidence to support public-policy decisions aiming to guarantee educational quality and equity. In this same section, Arturo Guzmán Arredondo, assistant director for the INEE in Durango, explains the instrumentation of the Professional Teaching Service in that state.

“Special report” includes, in its first part, the positions and critical balances on the reform made by two organizations from civil society: the National Union of Parents and Suma por la Educación. The second part is made up by two articles. “Axes of the Educational Reform” analyzes, from the perspective of governance, five strategic items—educational materials and methods, school organization, educational infrastructure, suitability of teachers and directors, and educational evaluation and improvement—to diagnose the Educational Reform and to offer the desirable direction for it. Also, “The future of the Educational Reform is in the classroom,” signed by researchers of the Latin-American Institute of Social Sciences (Spanish acronym: FLACSO), leans towards a change on the path followed by the reform in order for it to pay special attention to what happens in the classroom and the teacher-student relationship.

In “Dossier,” Roberto Cubas Carlin and Oscar Rodríguez Mercado—from the Coordination of the INEE’s Directorates in the Federative Entities (Spanish acronym: CDINEE)—study the advance of the reform in the states. They also elaborate a rigorous report on the harmonization between state legislations and the organization of local educational authorities, on the one hand, and the legal proposals of the 2013 Educational Reform, on the other.

“Nautical chart” informs us, through the pen of Adriana Aragón—general director of the Coordination of the National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE)—about the Institute’s most relevant activities in recent months. This time, the section offers a review of the SNEE Conference that took place on July 16, 2018, and a deliberation on the work achieved during the Diploma course—offered by the MIDE UC Measurement Center—for developing capabilities in educational evaluation.

We hope that this issue collaborates in the SNEE’s permanent dialogue and fertile debate. ☺

The editors

The Educational Reform from the INEE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE INEE

A product of the Educational Reform, the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) is obliged to report on its activities. Besides the reports it publishes annually—thereby fulfilling this responsibility—, in 2018 it printed the booklet *INEE: Fulfillment of Its Mandates and Main Results* [INEE: *cumplimiento de sus mandatos y principales resultados*], which contains a condensed vision of the Institution's work. The transcribed text hereunder is extracted from the "Conclusions" in the said document.

"With the implementation of the constitutional and legal mandates, it has become manifest that evaluating compulsory education is a complex task that entails going beyond students' learning merely in terms of cognitive results in order to address non-cognitive aspects too, as well as other spheres of their training as persons and citizens. Furthermore, it supposes collaborating in the evaluation of teachers' and school authorities' performance, and evaluating programs, curriculum, materials, pedagogical and institutional interventions, innovations, and a whole range of tasks having to do with teachers' funding, education, and ongoing training, as well as coverage, equity, and educational inclusion. With all this in mind, the Institute has widened its traditional study objects through evaluation and has intensified its activities and projects for the measurement, evaluation, and dissemination of results.

"Within this task, evaluations performed by the INEE have been technically solid and objective. At the same time, the Institute has strived for its proposals of improvement and transformation to be viable and to have enough normative and technical support, which has been expressed in the guidelines it issues. Additionally, the principle of justice within evaluations, respecting the rights of the subjects under evaluation and prioritizing the issues of impartiality, equality, and equity, has been a challenging one, especially in the case of the exercise of the regulatory function, made manifest in the processes of validation and supervision, particularly when evidence shows that the principle of justice has been breached.

"The INEE's Board of Governors is aware of the responsibility entailed in fostering that the information produced—both by evaluations and through their processes—does not end up as part of officials' or academicians' book shelves without any further usage. This is why it takes important actions in order to improve the communication of these evaluations' results to those in charge of the policies. The mandate to contribute to guaranteeing the right to quality education is an obligation to consider—from the beginning

of all efforts—in order to assure the usage of this information by relaying the input of information into actions in terms of education of all the actors involved, from authorities to classrooms. Thus, we recognize advances within the special publications dedicated to officials and teachers, or in the design and implementation of a data base with the results of the evaluations, the Comprehensive System for the Results of the Evaluations (Spanish acronym: SIRE). However, there is still a long way to go for the information produced to be a regular input in the design and implementation of educational policies, and there is still a great distance to cover before we reach school technical councils, classrooms, or student's parents, as regular and effective users of the output of information, or the normative instruments, and even the recommendations for policies produced by the Institute.

"It is especially necessary to highlight the constitutional mandate presented to INEE with respect to the coordination of a system that did not exist before: The National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE). The current norm authorizes the Institute to establish relations with the federal educational authority and the local educational authorities, turning it into an authority that organizes—with different government levels—the actions pertaining to educational evaluation. Thus, a new model for the distribution of competencies on the subject of educational evaluation has been generated, in which educational authorities—as well as participants of the SNEE and the INEE—have attributions to evaluate. In the presence of this new configuration in which the Institute becomes an evaluation authority, we have had to reach and cement the agreements and the necessary coordination to make concurrency on this matter effective.

"For all of this, a scaffolding of interaction has been constructed between the actors involved. The articulation task has not been simple, but as a product of this intent and labor, along with the federal and the local educational authorities, the National Policy for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PNEE) and all the instruments that go with it have been formulated from a collective construction process that has now allowed, on top of that, the strengthening of professionals specialized in evaluation at the state levels, as well as the restoration of their own initiatives, thus paving the way for the operation of an effective federalism. Still pending, however, are the follow-up and the deepening of this labor of promotion and development of evaluation capabilities within the states, always within the setting of a national policy that ensures the pursuit of the common objective of quality improvement.

"Lastly, it is convenient to point out that there are some unresolved matters that will demand greater attention in the immediate future. An issue yet to be explored has to do with the articulation, and possible overlap, within the INEE's and other autonomous organisms' objects of attention and analyses such as the evaluation of educational policies which, because of their nature, are considered part of the greater family of social-development policies. Another matter of outmost relevance has to do with evaluations and guidelines having an effective impact in the decisions for improving

education at all levels. These improvements will need to be evident and palpable, not only for politicians and officials, but for any school community, as well as for students' parents, civil society organizations, and the general public. These issues are certainly still worrisome and still constitute challenges in the agenda—looking towards the future—for the actions of the autonomous INEE, always with awareness

that their resolution will have to go through not only technical aspects, but, above all, a dimension of public policy and institutional development.” €

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATION (INEE) (2018). “Conclusions”. In *INEE: cumplimiento de sus mandatos y principales resultados*, 29-31. Mexico City: INEE.

NAUTICAL CHART

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT: SNEE CONFERENCE AND THE MIDE UC MEASUREMENT CENTER

SNEE CONFERENCE: A SPACE FOR EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES AND ARGUMENTATIVE DIALOGUE

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The Conference of the National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE) is the fundamental collegiate organization devoted to promoting an exchange of experiences and information between the federal educational authority, local authorities, and the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) (article 7, INEE's Organic Statute; article 18, INEE's Law).

From 2013 until today, nine ordinary meetings, two extraordinary meetings, and one installment meeting have been organized. In each of these, various strategic issues have been discussed and analyzed, some of the most relevant are: the SNEE's organization and functioning; reports on the current state of components, processes, and results of the National Educational System (Spanish acronym: SEN); the evaluation of mandatory education students' educational achievements and their schedules; the design, implementation, and follow-up of the Educational Evaluation National Policy; risk prevention for evaluation processes in the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SDE) and its yearly schedules; its medium-term program; the

evaluation of teaching work and its reconsideration; the situation and needs of state evaluation areas; the guidelines for educational improvement issued by the Institute; the Evaluation of Basic Conditions for Teaching and Learning (Spanish acronym: ECEA) in basic and middle-higher education; the Middle-Term Program of the National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PMP-SNEE); as well as the design and implementation of the State Programs for Educational Evaluation and Improvement (Spanish acronym: PEEME) and the National Project for Evaluation and Improvement of Multi-grade Schools (Spanish acronym: PRONAEME).

In 2018, there have been two Conference meetings: the first, an ordinary meeting, took place on April 12; and the second one, an extraordinary one, on July 16. In the latter meeting, federal and local authorities exchanged, together with the INEE, experiences and information on the balance and perspectives of the SPD evaluations; on the proposal for a new teachers' work evaluation model; on the 2019 SPD yearly evaluation program; on the Guidelines for teachers' evaluation in private schools; on the proposal for information tools to be used for decision-making in the states; and on the perception and opinions on the SNEE's performance and results.

All participants endorsed their commitment and recognition for the efforts and progresses achieved

through educational evaluation. They also showed an autocritical and open attitude aiming to modify whatever it is needed—within the framework of each's attributions and competences—in order to build, together, a way to allow for educational evaluation of the SEN's

components, processes, and results to guarantee the constitutional mandate established in article 3 of the Mexican Constitution: to guarantee quality education for all and to have this reflected on students' top educational achievement.

STRATEGIC TRAINING AGENDA TO STRENGTHEN EVALUATIVE CAPABILITIES: COLLABORATION WITH THE MIDE UC MEASUREMENT CENTER

One of the objectives of the seventh axis of the National Policy for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PNEE), "Strengthening of institutional capabilities," is the collaboration with educational authorities to build networks of specialized organisms and superior education institutions (Spanish acronym: IES), both national and state-run, that will help to form the capabilities of all school and local educational actors.

Moreover, among the commitments the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) takes on within the 2016-2020 National System for Educational Evaluation's Medium-Term Program (Spanish acronym: PMP-SNEE), one can highlight the development of educational and training programs on the basis of the alliance with the national and international IES that cater to the development needs of evaluation and educational-improvement related projects.

From 2016 to this date, within such a framework—as it was mentioned in this section of the previous *Gazette* issue—INEE has fostered the establishment of collaboration networks with various IES and national and international organisms for the purpose of generating an education and training offer.

The Diploma course on development of capabilities for educational evaluation, imparted by the MIDE UC Measurement Center—and directed at the teams responsible for State Programs of Educational Evaluation and Improvement (Spanish acronym: PEEME) and the National Project for Educational Evaluation and Improvement of Multi-Grade Schools (Spanish acronym: PRONAEME) in the country's thirty-two federal entities—has been of special importance because of its results and its impact. The course seeks to train those who take it in the basics of measurement and educational evaluation, with an emphasis on the development of instruments to gather information aimed at guiding decision-making based on evidence. This course is imparted by a professional multidisciplinary

MIDE UC team with extensive experience in the investigation and execution of projects within the areas of measurement and evaluation. It started in November 2017 and is scheduled to culminate in November 2018. With a total of twenty credits, its structure consists of four units (table 1).

On the basis of this specific knowledge, it is expected for state teams to acquire concrete tools for the construction of instruments suited for the nature and purpose of what they want to assess. Also, the practical activities and the contents developed in the course have as a central premise the development of tools that can aid the teams in the implementation of the PEEMES and the sub-projects of the PRONAEME. It bears mentioning that participants who comply with the program's academic requirements will receive a certificate issued by the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile¹.

Currently, thirty-four responsible appointees for the PEEMES, and twenty-seven for the PRONAEME, are being educated; that is, a total of sixty-one local officials (table 2).

Based on this and other experiences, the INEE—in collaboration with national and international academic institutions—envisages developing and consolidating training paths in accompaniment to the evaluation for: a) people appointed as responsible for the PEEME and the PRONAEME; and b) technical pedagogical consultants and zone supervisors, so that they will develop capabilities to support school teachers and directors in the internal evaluation, as well as in the interpretation and usage of the external ones.

With this, we will have at our disposal a comprehensive system of education, consultancy, and accompaniment on educational evaluation which will establish

1 a) The minimum score must be 80%, in its weighted average; and b) 75% of attendance is required.

common codes and shared competencies aimed at generating multiplying effects, not only in the development of technically solid, valid, and reliable projects for evaluation, but also in the specific actions for the dissemination and usage of their results. Thus, we contribute to cover the needs of educational improvement in schools and the requirements of those actors who work in them.

The definition of a strategic training agenda stems from the assumption that the implementation of strengthening actions that are technically solid and sustained over time—not only within the local sphere, but also in schools—is fundamental for the development of the National System for Educational Evaluation and the implementation of the National Policy for Educational Evaluation. €

Table 1. Units and contents of the diploma course

Unit	Name	Contents
1	Central concepts for evaluation in the educational context and definition of the object of measurement and development of instruments for evaluation: tests, surveys, and questionnaires	1.1 Fundamental measurement and evaluation notions within the educational context 1.2 Purpose of the evaluation and its implications in the measurement process 1.3 Quantitative and qualitative methodologies for gathering information 1.4 Object of measurement and its evaluation indicators: Definition of the construct to be evaluated on the basis of the PEEMES and the PRONAEME. 1.5 Typology of devices and instruments 1.6 Design of evaluation instruments
2	Development of evaluation instruments: interviews, observation of performance and rubrics	2.1 Elaboration of templates for interviews (closed and semi-structured) 2.2 Design of the assignments for the observation of performance 2.3 Elaboration of comparative checklists 2.4 Construction of rubrics
3	Usage of information gathered by the evaluation and the feedback	3.1 Systematization of the information gathered in the evaluative process 3.2 Feedback for improvement
4	Critical revision of educational improvement projects: evaluation and reformulation	4.1 Components of an educational improvement project 4.2 Quality indicators in an educational improvement project

Source: made by the author based on internal documents from the INEE’s General Board of Education, Training and Certification.

Table 2. People enrolled in the diploma course

Team	Number of registrants
PEEME	34*
PRONAEME	27**
Total	61

Source: made by the author based on internal documents from the INEE’s General Board of Education, Training and Certification.

* One participant for each federative entity, with the exception of the states of Morelos and Oaxaca, with two participants each.

** One element for each state, with the exception of five who made the decision not to participate: Aguascalientes, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.

New educational model: a look from curriculum studies

A critical perspective is offered to us, from the academia, by PhD **Frida Díaz Barriga**, whose vast experience in educational topics, and especially in curriculum studies, has turned her into an authority on the topic. Her article insists that giving a voice to teachers and students is the condition for the possibility of any educational reform that aims to have favorable results.

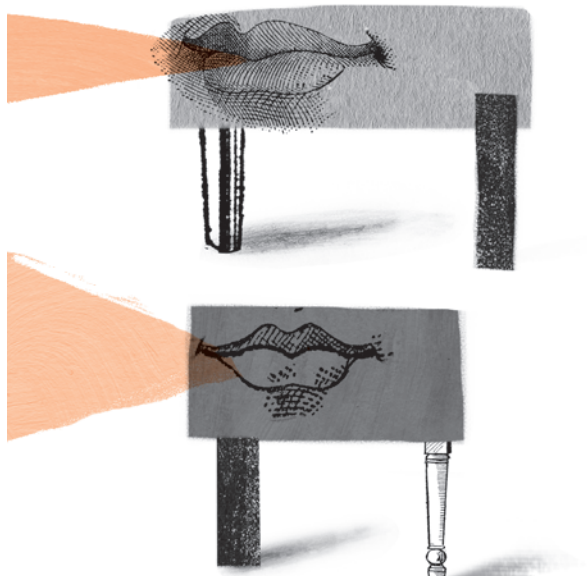
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Introduction

As a member of a scientific community of specialized discourse (the field of curriculum studies), I consider it important to share a reflection around the new educational model and the basic education curriculum derived from the Educational Reform. My task is to achieve an analysis sustained in the knowledge of the curriculum studies from over three decades, integrating the topic of curriculum reforms, the design and development of the curriculum, the role of curriculum actors, and the processes of systemic change in educational reforms. Before the eyes of the educational community of our country, the cycle of changes that stem from a political-labor mandate that recovers what is properly educational but doesn't have as its background—nor as its main basis—a knowledge stemming from curriculum studies seems to be repeated once again. The series of documents presented as its basis, without demerit to the successes they may present, once more expound the *must be* of a formal curriculum project but are not accompanied by the in-depth studies or evaluations required for its substantiation and ulterior design. The analysis must consider different spheres and categories, taking into account the diversity of gazes and interests that converge in a project of such magnitude. In this text, my intention is to share some of them.

Background questions and the basis for the model

The great questions that surround the curriculum, especially from the participation perspectives, come up once again: Where is the representation of the voices and locations of the curriculum? Why have certain approaches been adopted and others discarded? What is the evidence supporting these decisions? On the other hand, where is the viability study or, at least, a plan for the implementation, follow-up and management of the project that takes into account the mosaic of situations and realities that make up the Mexican educational scenarios?



Of course, we are still to delve into the topic of teachers—their conditions, initial and operational training, current context of their profession, employment situation, and evaluation of the teaching task—which is a sensitive topic especially because, as a teacher said, “It is expected that teachers bell the cat.” That is to say, in them lies the huge responsibility of solidifying the project: no more and no less than defining the model and the curriculum even though they have had little participation in its conception.

If we consider the current conditions of Mexican children and youths, who show important indicators of vulnerability in terms of health, security, and emotional and economic welfare, it is impossible not to conclude that the ideal of a curriculum centered around the student, set since the 1990s, is seriously compromised if it remains disconnected from the implementation of policies for equity, inclusion, and social justice. To my judgment, the voice of the subject of education, the student, is the one that has been the least heard during the conception of this project.

The analysis of a new educational model, as well as its educational and structural pertinence approach and the curriculum plan that goes with it, requires considering the diversity that characterizes the actors of the curriculum, because we can't assume a uniformity in the profile and identity of the student. It is necessary to identify the voices (needs, characteristics, life situations) represented in the project and reclaim the principle of a participative curriculum.

Several decades ago, Schwab (1970) conceived the *common referents of the curriculum*, a construct that derived into the notion of the *participative curriculum*, as well as an understanding of the role of the *actors of the curriculum*. For this author, those referents are the professors, the specialists in the subject matters or disciplines, the students, the curriculum experts, and the representatives of the society or the

community. If there is an excessive representation, or an under representation, or a relation of subordination, a *blind spot* will be produced that will eventually undermine the curriculum project. Schwab argued that if professors and students are left out of such project, or the innovations it seeks to introduce, its becoming a reality in the classrooms will be very difficult.

Now, who does this new curriculum plan represent? The question is whether the tendency for the expert's curriculum (or external designer hired for the formulation of the project) has been overcome or not: the criticized tendency for curriculum development *from the top down and from the outside inwards* that has characterized several sexennial attempts for curriculum reform, with unfortunate results.

Similarly, it is convenient to analyze the distance between the *prescribed curriculum*, as an ideal and idealized model of a *must be* to be aspired to, and the *lived curriculum*, as an expression of the educational reality and the real conditions in different contexts where the formal curriculum will be put into practice. It is also necessary to take into consideration the *hidden curriculum*: a series of learnings that are implicit, or apparently not intended—i.e. norms, values, forms of relation and communication, beliefs, etc.—, around the objects of the study, the persons, and knowledge itself (Apple, 1986). Another option for scrutinizing the reform proposal resides in the *curriculum zero* or *null curriculum*, which refers to those pieces of knowledge—topics, theories, models, authors, perspectives, etc.—that are impossible to learn because they haven't been included or have been eliminated from the curriculum project (Eisner, 1985).

There's concern within the educational researchers' community of the curriculum when we see that there is a lack of studies or a lack of dissemination of comprehensive investigations with hard reliable data which allow to understand the current situation of the educational system with regards to those aspects that are to be *reformed*. Neither is there an evaluation and prospective presented of the eventual impact of the current and future educational policies and projects that are oriented towards the aforesaid changes. In the presentation of the new educational model and the curriculum plan, one of the main absences was not offering a state of the question or, at least, a diagnostic report where the proposed modifications were justified.

Undoubtedly, there is scientific research within the fields of curriculum studies, specific didactics, teachers' training, and school learning, that has been profusely generated in the last years by diverse top scientific communities in our country and abroad (for instance, the states of knowledge by the Mexican Council for Educational Research, the international compendia made by experts and educational organisms, and research in academic journals, among others). Sometimes an appeal is made to look at the results of international evaluations (i.e. PISA), which in my opinion are partial and insufficient, and in many cases not pertinent, to argue about the kind of curriculum modifications that a complex educational model entails.

In particular, I consider that the studies that should sustain curriculum models are those that integrate what

teachers, students, and their educational communities are doing in the day-to-day of the educational scenarios, the way in which they re-signify the curriculum, the problems and confusions they face when curriculums are first implemented, the examples of good practices, the dynamics of the pedagogical relationship, as well as the kind of pedagogical devices that are employed and to what results. One nodal topic is school learning, its situated and cultural character, the mechanisms and socio-educational processes that are being associated, the actions of educational agents, as well as the didactic strategies that are effective, and under which conditions. In the basis documents, little is said about that.

Indicated as essential sources of the curriculum are *humanism and modern cognitive science*, without any clarification as to what that means nor what perspectives or concrete authors we are talking about, and even less is said as to what we can expect these sources to derive into. As a consequence, we have to revise and document in great depth the foundations of the curriculum from the perspective of educational sciences, pedagogy, and psychology, but also from other relevant fields of knowledge, always appealing to the solidity of such references, to their current relevance, and to the commitment to having at our disposal a foundation based on first-hand evidence and scientific conceptual frameworks. This doesn't leave out the shared experience of the actors of the curriculum, their practices and their knowledge in context, but it speaks of the need of approaching the understanding from within educational communities, and with their own voice.

Role of context and systemic change in an educational reform

An inescapable issue, posited by the sociologists of educational change (Carneiro, 2006; Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; among others), is that any curriculum reform will fail if it separates itself from the context, the culture, and the human needs of the target groups in the project. The reforms will only be effective if the authorities and the educational communities are committed to them and anticipate the fundamental changes, required and crucial, within the whole system, including its management and the policies that affect the actors.

It is necessary to demonstrate the utmost capability and disposition to confront the conflicts of values and interests that will likely arise and, in our case, the problems entailed by the diversity and inequity of the Mexican Educational System (Spanish acronym: SEM), as well as by the singularity and the challenge that day-to-day situations in schools represent. If there is no understanding (and the anticipation of the action) with relation to the conditions, timing required, transition processes, and tensions that are likely to arise along the way, it is even less likely for the *must be*—encapsulated within the basis documents (declaration of intentions, not a guarantee of change)—to ever materialize and for the expected benefits to be observed.

Because of all of this, it is essential that the strategy for the design, development, and evaluation of the curriculum

stems from a view of *systemic change*, a condition which is absent from the curriculum projects in our country, or at least not visible in the documents presented in 2016. When analyzing them, it is concluded that the gap between the idealized proposition and the possibilities of its implementation is a great one, which compromises the viability of the model and the curriculum plan.

In relation to the consulted basis documents (SEP, 2016a, b, c and d), it is interesting to note that they put *the school as the central axis of the educational system* (SEP, 2016b: 20-34), allegedly seeking a more horizontal relationship and that the educational community is given an ample margin of autonomy for decision-making and the concretion of the curriculum depending on the context, needs, and problem-situations that are faced at each step. This issue is not a novelty: it was postulated at least since the decade of the 1990s by experts in the field of curriculum in relation to the importance of tending to the levels of concretion required in a curriculum project, especially if it is national and centralized, as an option to endow it with a semblance of pertinence and adaptation to the context; that is to say, to be able to speak of a situated curriculum, centered on the student and the educational community. Perhaps it would be more fortunate to say *centered on the community*, as the school is not always separated from the social context in which it is located, and we can't keep on thinking in terms of such an obsolete term as *education within-walls*. Now, when speaking of educational community and social context, something that is often overlooked is the commitment for the personalization of teaching and the required response to the needs and characteristics of our students, an issue that every good teacher takes as a starting point of his labor.

Viability and concretion

The crucial issue is: how are these concretion mechanisms to be established? There is no explicit statement about the way in which the *areas of opportunity and necessity* are to be identified—in case we conduct a necessary investigation of educational communities' current situation (for instance, case studies and even self-diagnosis). This compromises the concretion of the curriculum model to, within a specific school, respond to the requirements of teacher training, the creation and allocation of appropriate didactic materials, and the existence of the indispensable basic infrastructure (material and human). One of the great absences is a viable proposition for the curriculum implementation, follow-up, and management. This curriculum principle, to implant viable and equitable conditions responding to the prevailing situation in the communities, must be included as one of the pillars of the new model. Only thus will it be possible to put into practice other curriculum and educational principles like the attention to the great diversity of contexts, students, contents, and conditions in which Mexican education is immersed. To this date, these do not operate to the benefit of the students; rather, they have translated into important educational gaps, among them the lack of equity in access to a quality education for all, as in practices that result in exclusion and school drop-out.

It is fair to acknowledge that the interest to cater to the access and permanence in schools of students in a position of vulnerability is made explicit (though, again, it is a discourse that reiterates that of other attempts at curriculum reform): indigenous minors, or those in a situation of poverty, migrant children, pupils with learning challenges and in situation of disability, and children and youths that go to school in environments of high violence rates or lousy conditions. However, an analysis is required that enquires into the structural component of the educational system, its processes, policies, and practices, allowing us to understand why the projects, instances, and educational agents that have participated in the last decades in programs of multicultural and indigenous education have not yielded the expected results, beyond a relative coverage or access, in terms of ensuring educational quality and students' well-being.

Unfortunately, besides the fact that our reforms unfold within the logic of *seal projects* of the presidential six-year term, we have often operated through remedial or compensatory policies, or through pilot experiences that never achieve ample dissemination, on which there are no follow-ups or any assessment of impact. It is to be noted that, if indeed there is talk of a *curriculum centered on the student*, there is a lack of a series of diagnose studies that stem from the prevailing reality of Mexican children and youths, who are the point of origin, and the target, of the curriculum project. It appears otherwise limited to merely mention the results of the standardized large-scale assessments that are applied in Mexican schools (PISA, ENLACE, TIMSS, etc.), which have also failed to result in effective policies of educational attention to Mexican students, even less in the training of its teachers. As Ángel Díaz Barriga well said: they measure the temperature, but they don't assess the reason for the illness, much less prescribe a remedy. On the other hand, when reading the official documents, it would seem that the groups in a situation of vulnerability represent minority social sectors, but since we are talking about sixty million paupers in Mexico, about the high rates of violence in all entities in the country, and about the magnitude of the health risks that compromise the development and well-being of Mexican infancy, they do not represent exceptional conditions; they are, indeed, the main target population that this reform must tend to.

We will have to avoid falling into a reductionist vision, considering that everything depends on a good educational model and its successful implementation. In the face of the urgency for a systemic approach, the policy and the new model must find links with different priority issues related to other sectors of the government, like the ones pertaining to health, rights, and well-being of children; security and prevention of crimes on minors, children trafficking and labor exploitation; and prevention of teenage pregnancy and addictions, to mention only a few. Some will say that there are already many social programs that tend to such problems; although that is a topic for another discussion, in their majority they represent welfare-based approaches, or their focus of attention is limited.

In this same direction, a construction of effective support and collaboration networks between the different instances of governmental and non-governmental sectors in direct linkage with the schools is required. Otherwise, educational management in the hands of isolated school institutions, without the necessary supports and abandoned to the resources available to them, will undermine the potential of the desired *track of improvement*, which would become a document that, in practice, would be unfeasible.

It is stated in the basis documents of the reform that “a dignified, safe, and accessible school infrastructure will be ensured” (Nuño, 2016); given the current conditions of public schools and the budget cuts that have been announced, it seems that this goal will be impossible to reach.¹ In fact, experts on the topic indicate that educational coverage is not ensured, that the population's conditions of poverty limit their possibilities of receiving quality education that avoids social exclusion. Thereby, once again, the enactment of an educational reform, in the terms of the basis documents or the formal curriculum model, is not enough if it is not accompanied by concrete policies and social actions related to this issue.² Also, in the basis documents, in the governance section, there is talk of *a very harmonic and productive relationship* between educational authorities and instances like the National Syndicate of Educational Workers (Spanish acronym: SNTE) or the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) (SEP, 2016b: 80 and 84), when the prevailing reality for the actors shows a different scenario, characterized by alliances as well as resistances.

A humanist curriculum centered on the student?

In the new educational model there is talk about a curriculum and a practice *centered on the student and his learnings* (SEP, 2016b: 34-51). Acknowledging that the focus of the

curriculum centered on the student comes from the 1980s and the early 1990s (in that sense it is no novelty), we will have to revisit it and re-think its implementation (Díaz Barriga, 2016). It is imperative to revisit the very concept in the face of the situation of Mexican infancy and youth, and the social, digital, gender, and diversity-linked gaps, which translate into important barriers for learning. Certainly, a curriculum centered on the student implies a humanist gaze, achieving strategic learning (learn how to learn), and fostering academic and communication literacy skills, digital skills, self-regulation of emotions, dialogic and democratic coexisting schemes within school communities, topics that are not novelties as areas included in the school curriculum (they were already found in the basic and middle education curriculum of previous reforms thirty years ago, especially in the 2011 plan, with these and other names).

Such elements may lead to innovative classroom projects and to transform the educational communities as long as in-depth structural changes are made within the prevailing instructional models. Otherwise, they will be doomed to end up being (as they have been for decades) contents located within subject areas that are imparted in a conventional manner, with very little impact on the education of the student or in supposed transversal topics diluted over time in the day-to-day practice and, even worse, which contradict the prevailing *ethos* within the very educational institution.

On the other hand, current tendencies exist that tie up with this point, stemming from different approaches on the psychology of education and pedagogy: the personalization and learning curves, the link between formal and informal learnings, the inter-connection between environments in order to learn in a new learning ecology, the subject of the student who does not only absorb information but also creates knowledge (Coll, 2013 and 2016). In any case, it is required to have knowledge based on research, evidence, and the learning accumulated in the field to allow for its implementation. Once again, the most important thing is that students have not been given a voice concerning these issues: have they been really taken into account from the standpoint of their needs, interests, and dispositions, without being interpreted or inferred by others but proposed by themselves, as current pedagogical tendencies postulate? (Rudduck y Flutter, 2007).

Is this about eliminating the Educational Reform? More than that, it is about performing the major surgery it needs to provide it with meaning and congruence, and re-direct it towards quality, equity, and social justice. €

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- 1 According to the first census of schools, teachers and students of basic and middle education, produced by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2013), out of the totality of public facilities, 48.8% lack drainage systems, 31% don't have running water, 11.2% don't have electricity, and 12.8% don't have bathrooms (Olivares, 2014). Apart from that, the census located 2,241 facilities built with precarious materials (galvanized sheet or wood, for instance); and 18,309 schools with computers that do not work (SUN, 2016). In relation with the Connected Mexico Program, the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (Spanish acronym: SCT) informed in September 2016 that the sexennial goal of connecting 250,000 sites to the internet had been reduced, which is why the administration could end up with 150,000 schools, hospitals or public libraries with such service (La Jornada, 2016b).
- 2 On September 22, 2016, Christian Skoog, representative in Mexico of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), pointed out that at least 4.1 million minors are outside the school system in our country. The report *Boys and Girls Out of School [Niños y niñas fuera de la escuela]* shows that 3.8 million children and youths are not enrolled while other 260,000 do not attend primary school regularly and 631,000 are in drop-out risk. Additionally, only 42% of three-year-old or younger children go to preschool (La Jornada, 2016a).
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Reforming from the classroom

In an interview with the *Gazette*, the graduate of Master in Public Policy—University of California at Berkeley—, and adviser to the Governing Board of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE), **Bernardo Naranjo Piñera**, talks about the challenges faced by the Educational Reform and by the INEE in particular. His idea is to reform, from the classroom, with the help of teachers and managers.

Was the reform necessary?

To what needs does it respond?

The first thing that needs to be defined is which reform we are referring to: whether the one that was originally proposed by the Executive in 2012, or the one that ended up being the frame of reference for the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP) towards the end of the administration, where many other programs and projects were incorporated.

In the initial spirit of the reform, we suggested a constitutional change to address quality issues, to convey greater strength to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE), and, then, to offer to it secondary laws—both those of the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD) and those of the Institute—in order to support it. Then, the Executive gradually incorporated federal programs into this logic.

The problem is that, although it can be seen as a broad reform, it also entails the risk that we talk about it without differentiating a constitutional change from a secondary law, each of which requires the endorsement of Congress. On the other hand, federal programs can be changed on the first day of the next administration, without requiring permission from any other instance, as long as the assigned resources are used. So, the question is: which elements of the reform are the most relevant and necessary ones, those that clearly can contribute more? Undoubtedly, those that have to do with integrating merit as the main criterion for teachers' selection and promotion.

This issue was an old debt of the educational system. In Mexico, before the reform, a person who aspired to be a teacher—and therefore a guide, example, and point of reference for a group of children, young people, or a community—had to perform an illegal act to join the teaching profession.

I say this because, often, teaching posts were sold. They were not part of a system. Rather, they were distributed equally between the union and the states, and it was also legal to do so. Where was the illegality? In the mechanisms that were frequently used to assign these posts to people.

Some states—the minority—began to integrate exams; but we do know that in most states places were distributed with complete opacity—both by the union and by state

authorities—among those who were closest, or those who brought the better offers. It seems to me that we cannot make too much of a distinction in this field.

In the case of vacated teaching posts, there was a *de facto* privatization because they were part of the teachers' own patrimony and they could dispose of these posts as they judged best. Therefore, I think that, by including merit, we not only consolidate a fundamental aspect in the principles of an educational system that aspires to grow in quality, but we also do an act of justice, because we allow anyone to access a position, regardless of whether they have a *contact* or not, or whether they have money or not, and that is also a democratizing factor. That is to say, a graduate—with little monetary resources—of a teachers' forming school will have access to the position just by having a good evaluation. Thus, the criterion of merit as the fundamental element for accessing to the teaching service is being de-privatized, democratized, and consolidated.

Among the main challenges—derived from the 2013 reform— that are in the process of being solved, which do you think are the most important? What is necessary to address the pending subjects?

I am going to refer to the issues that concern secondary laws, and not so much to federal programs. Obviously, the heavier subject in process in this area is that of performance evaluation; not so much by itself, but by the consequences it has in the permanence of teachers in service, as a result of the Law for the Professional Educational Service (Spanish acronym: LSPD). It seems to me that this is a situation that needs to be analyzed, and it requires a profound assessment. We must know if the benefits of this practice are large enough to justify the financial, operational, and political costs involved. With certainty, it will be a very important matter of reflection in the upcoming months.

Of course, there are other processes that concern the scope of federal authority, but those associated with teacher training also seem fundamental to me. Certainly, we hope that in the next administration a great sensitivity will prevail regarding the issue of initial training, that resources will be invested, and that models will be established to allow schools to grow with quality and to strengthen new teachers' systems of first entry.

In face of the fall in demand, we have to be much more proactive in promoting the teaching profession. There has been a lack of a much broader effort to reach out to good students at the high-school level and to convince them that the teaching career is an option, and that it is better paid than most people think. Months ago, we performed a survey on this topic and people's perception is that teachers earn much less than what they actually do.

Obviously, another fundamental issue is to attend to teacher training schools: to update them, to strengthen their teaching faculties, and to encourage public exams to compete for teaching posts in all states, as we have done in basic education today. It is important for this to be replicated.

There is also a great lack in terms of continuing education, and this pervades all teachers in service in the country. Regarding federal programs, a subject that requires urgent,

special, and in-depth attention is that of continuous training—providing support so teachers are trained and, thus, meet the ideal of evaluation as a way to improve.

To the extent that we have much more formative evaluation processes—which, interestingly, tend to be less expensive—and we are able to direct the greatest efforts to continuous training, we will be improving with more clarity the quality of services in schools.

What has been the role of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education now that it has a new constitutional status? What do you think its role should be in the near future?

When the reform was decreed, the Institute was given attributions and models that, clearly, were new in the country. Hence, it was forced to respond urgently to a very sensitive demand—not only academically, but also politically—and a series of issues that, over time, it has sought to adjust and improve.

Within the context of a forthcoming change in the federal administration, certainly also in the Congress, now is a good moment to reflect on how the INEE can adapt in the best way to the requirements of the educational system, which is in a process of change. Although the Education Reform began in 2013, it is just now that we have a new model, as well as new plans and programs, and their implementation in basic education schools is going to be a gradual process.

We are now going to wait for the decisions of the Legislative Power—and, also, of the Executive Power, why not?—regarding the new lines for national educational policies. As a result, the Institute should make this reflection and keep adjusting to respond, in the best way, to the needs of the country.

Indeed, the Institute also has the responsibility of promoting issues that are fundamental in the agenda and that sometimes remain relegated by the very logic of an administration with a six-year duration. I am referring to matters such as the attendance of all girls and boys to school. Undoubtedly, this is the most important debt of the entire educational system. The intercensal survey of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Spanish acronym: INEGI), in 2015, states that there are more than 4.7 million—and I would say almost 4.8 million—of girls, boys, and youths between three and seventeen years of age who are out of school and have not been made visible in the national educational agenda. That seems to me, before any other, the most important challenge we face.

A second issue of relevance is that of permanence, associated with the number of girls, boys, and youths whom we lose in the course of basic education. We know that for every 100 children who entered into this school year—if we continue with the current national indicators—only 55 or 56 will finish their compulsory education after 12 years. That is, if we do nothing, we will lose 44 or 45 students out of every 100, only in the next 12 years. This is a great challenge that must be addressed as soon as possible and, regardless of whether it appears on the agenda of the federal administration, the Institute has to push it and represent it at all times.

There is a third point linked to learning gaps. When an assessment of the system is made, great averages are frequently

used, but in all sincerity, if there is something that characterizes our present system, it is heterogeneity. I like to maintain that we have world-class public schools. This is not just my own perception, it simply takes into account the results of the test of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), where—although not identified—we know, from their socioeconomic level, that there are public schools that are doing very well and achieve results comparable to the average in the most developed countries in the planet.

However, these schools coexist with others with the greatest deficiencies, which we can see very clearly in the Test of the National Plan for Learning Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA). There are many schools in which 80%, 90%, and even all of its students are in level 1, which is of insufficiency, both in Spanish and Mathematics. Clearly, we have a system with good schools, teachers, officials, and supervisors who coexist—even in the same region, the same state, the same area—with schools where students do nothing but spend time with very little effect on their learning. I think this is the third big challenge—instead of thinking about grades, it is necessary to give a privileged, intensive, and strengthened attention to schools with lower academic results.

The INEE's mission is to generate information, through evaluation, for educational improvement. This requires a system coordination that is very difficult to achieve. Which are the Institute's areas of opportunity in that context?

I think they are huge. First, it seems to me that we need to clarify the reasons for each of the Institute's products. Second, we must improve the articulation between different areas and understand that when we point to a decision-maker—a secretary of state education, a principal of a school, or a supervisor—we have to do what is necessary to gather and integrate information in the quantity, formats, languages, and means of delivery that favor each particular audience. The idea is to start being much more analytical in terms of the needs of our large users. That is a fundamental point.

A third relevant line is to aim much more towards schools and school supervision. That does not lead to forgetting, in any way, the state or the federal authority. What is pursued is to think of the school as a unit, because later it will be much easier to do the analyses and aggregations to deliver them to the states and the federation. If we think of those first, it is complicated, if not impossible, to reach the lowest levels. And why is it important to get there? Because the main decision makers of the educational system are there. The most successful educational systems in the world are not those that have the most brilliant ministers, but those that have the most informed school directors with the greatest support for school management, as well as those who know best how to do their job. When we think like this, it is essential to change the logic with which information is organized.

On the other hand, there is a group that we have not attended and that also needs to know how to evaluate, or how to know about schools' or students' evaluation: families. Today,

they have no elements to judge the development of their children and must trust that what is said by the school is correct, which entails many problems. In the first place, sadly, because parents who tend to be closer to schools are those whose children have better levels of performance; and fathers, or mothers, who do not come close to the schools are often the ones who need these supports the most. However, we are not doing anything to try to involve them, although in many cases it is not a question of will: they are working, they have other occupations, they left and became emigrants, and so on. In any case, they require us to accompany them and give them basic elements to participate more closely in the education of their children.

Is the INEE equipped to reach schools directly? Does it have enough budget and powers to accomplish this task?

It seems to me that the pending tasks cost much more in terms of internal articulation than in the financial sense because, at the end of the day, new technologies make a huge difference. For example, if today we make thirty-two requests to the states, we can reach—practically for free—the whole universe of basic education schools in the country, because states have information systems through which they connect with all their schools at any time, while these use such resources to report grades, attendance, etc. They have school records online. Consequently, it is much more about how to integrate information, use the correct means—which are certainly not expensive—and, obviously, before all of the above, it is about being much more strategic and knowing in which instances of the educative sector the results generated by the Institute may be more useful.

And I insist, it seems to me that combining schools and families in this process of accompaniment to quality, and in the evaluations of what their students—or their children—do, can have a great impact, not only in terms of educational quality but even for the families' quality of life.

Thank you very much. Do you want to add something?

I just want to say that in this process of transition, listening to all the involved parties is a very important issue. The INEE should be much more active in terms of reaching out to decision-making bodies; not only at the federal level, but also at local ones. There are plans and mechanisms which we can use for it: we have a Conference that brings together all those responsible for state educational systems and there are technical councils that allow us to understand the vision of experts, both national and foreign.

Surely, we also need to be more proactive and listen to school principals, parents, teachers; those are the users whom we have not yet fully incorporated and of whom we will receive a great response, a greater presence, and, above all, a greater impact in terms of the Institute's mission, which is educational quality. €

Balance and challenges of the Educational Reform

The head of the Ministry of Public Education, Otto Granados Roldán, offers a general balance—based on hard data and a broad vision of the educational system in Mexico—of the Educational Reform. His thoughts on the current educational transformations lived in this country are presented here in a clear and well-assessed way.

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As it is natural in a country with the size and characteristics of Mexico, all the structural reforms carried out by the current federal administration have had—in each case, due to different circumstances—a high degree of political, technical, and institutional complexity. The Educational Reform is no exception to it. However, this public policy is the one most directly heartfelt in society, especially for parents, and this is why—together with historical reasons—there is such a controversy around it.

That also explains why a paradoxical phenomenon has occurred, among some circles, in the case of the Educational Reform. On the one hand, its assessment has followed three different routes with dissimilar standpoints or motivations. On the other, I think that the most relevant aspect of it has been left out: the objective evaluation of concrete advances achieved by the reform and the use of hard data as the fundamental basis of this evaluation which explains, by mere contrast, the high rates it reaches in opinion surveys.

Routes to assess the Educational Reform

The first route is related to a section within academicians files. It would seem as if the numerous specialized researchers, who—during decades—focused on reducing the problem of bad results, yielded by the corporatist logic which prevailed in the ruling of the National System of Education (Spanish acronym: SEN), were suddenly left without a matter of work (and without a *litis*) after the occurrence of a systemic and structural reform which reached far deeper than all previous efforts since the 1960s. In other words: they often criticize the reform—especially when left out from the institutional decision-making system—because it occurred after a legitimate pact between the government and the political parties and not through defined mediators who, at the end of the day, had a *modus vivendi*, but did not offer a public policy.

The second route is the one followed by some of the so-called civil society organizations (Spanish acronym: OSC)



which discovered educational issues almost as a way of salvation to acquire visibility, establish their agendas and interests, and to present themselves in front of their audiences with a bizarre coat of purity (“the hidden soul of ascetic ideals,” as Nietzsche defined that form of resentment expressed in binary terms—good and evil), while aggravating Mexican teachers, often in a savage, unjust way.

The third route is the one found by some who put behind the final and most relevant beneficiaries of an Educational Reform—children and youths—, and colluded with the same interest groups (related to the educational practice) who were responsible for the previous failures and found in some elements of the reform a space for obtaining electoral advantages and turning a profit with the promise of going back precisely to the old discretionary and corrupted system upon which educational management was based.

Evidently, these three points of view were biased by a very serious limitation—their lack of understanding that the essence of politics is to provide sense.

Therefore, it is indispensable to have a realistic, documented, and informed analysis on the conceptual assumptions, components, and punctual progresses of the Mexican Educational Reform.

Education in the 21st century

It is not due to coincidence that education occupies—as never before—a central space in the national public agenda: depending on the day, the Google search engine shows up to five and a half million entries when one types the term “Mexican Educational Reform;” and, at the end of the last regular period of sessions in the Congress, there were almost 170 initiatives and agreement points on educational matters being dealt with for legislation; every day, a good deal of media include news, articles, and comments on education; websites on this subject have proliferated; it is said that there are around 350 private groups devoted to the subject or interested in it; and the Educational Reform has had a main role in the 2018 electoral campaigns.

In consequence, it is worthwhile to reflect on the subject and on the challenges faced within the context of a desirable development in Mexico during the following years. In order to do it, we begin from a basic question: Why is there such interest in something no one—beyond academic cubicles—took such an intense interest on 15 or 20 years ago?

Conventional thinking suggests that education and culture are the basis for a civilized and harmonious development of society. That might be the reason why, for decades now, over fifty countries have set forth educational reforms—of different nature, dimension, and orientation—aiming to improve growth, mobility, and coexistence. In the 21st century, these conditions are still valid, but the environment has clearly changed, and, therefore, the orientation of the educational reforms is different too, as it is the case of the reform established in Mexico in recent years.

On the one hand, the physiognomy of the country has been modified, in contrast to the one it revealed barely four decades ago. Now, we have an urban nation with an open, widely diversified, and complex economy sustained mainly in the manufacturing and services sectors. In parallel to it, the average age of the population is above 28 years, while life expectancy is longer, middle classes have expanded, and educational coverage practically has reached 100% at the primary and secondary levels, and 86% at the senior-high level.

To summarize, Mexico has an enormous educational system today, a very different demography, a growing economically active population, and labor is apparently more and more related to sectors in which added value is dependent on the degree of knowledge invested in the productive activity; that is, education, research, and innovation.

So, if these are some of the real conditions in Mexico—and throughout the world—, which is the best way to deal with them in order to improve the possibilities of having a reasonably successful educational and personal development? Following a strict logic, common sense suggests that the more educated, healthy, prepared, and competitive we are, the better. But it is also worthwhile to take into account other variables.

The first one is that, unlike in the recent past, it is now essential to have a *life-long education*. That is to say that current and future generations of students have to assume that—beyond formal education—ongoing training and updating will

be a constant element throughout their productive lives. The second variable is that school education now competes, almost side by side, with other environments and modalities—such as the new digital technologies—as the way to acquire information and knowledge, and these are accessible even before children enter into preschool. The third one is that, in the past, a certain number of years of education were enough to earn certain wages, and, today, more years are needed to reach the same level; this is due, among other reasons, to the fact that the educational offer has broadened, more people have access to it and they also study for a larger amount of years. The fourth variable is that the educational threshold has been consistently raising and that means that the number of years needed to get a job and to have an adequate level of living is larger than it was in the past. The last variable is that there are numerous successful educational experiences throughout the world, but their design, characteristics, and rhythm are not homogenous and are related to the specific social, cultural, economic, institutional, and even political conditions in each country.

If, up to this point, the conclusion is that education matters; then, the relevant question is whether the current Educational Reform will face up to the challenges Mexico confronts in the 21st century and why it is a priority to consolidate its implementation and to preserve it from opportunism and demagoguery—electoral, pseudo academic, or mediatic. The answer, in both cases, is an affirmation, as long as there is a collective consciousness about the complexity of the educational, labor-related, and professional world in which Mexican children and youths will live in the following decades and about the fact that if what is wanted is to have better tools to compete with, high-quality education is not *an* option, but *the* most relevant and most profound option that Mexico has, in order to offer inclusive and sustainable development with equity to its people.

An unavoidable reform

International experience shows that all educational reforms pass through stages in which some critical and conflictive elements are manifested, especially in terms of short-term factors, which contrast with the long periods required to yield results. Some of these factors are the variable terms of the permanence of public actors; the perception of the assets derived from a reform; the existence of diffuse beneficiaries against the pressure of groups of interest that are well organized and have resources; an insufficient institutional capacity; or the constant temptation to act upon circumstantial circumstances putting politics, and not education, first.

Although we can already quantify some of the concrete advances achieved through the Mexican Educational Reform, its biggest successes will be seen in the following two decades, as long as its implementation is carried on (as it happens in all countries) with the same—or higher—level of energy. That depends on a constellation of actors because, after all, education is a public asset and it is necessary to preserve it as such.

The history of educational policies reflects an accumulation of collective efforts aiming—for decades now—to include a larger number of Mexicans. For many years, Mexico lived—in terms of education—in a mixture of simulation, inertia, and frustration. Schooling was provided, but not education. Political arrangements took the place of quality. Political patronage substituted merit. Corporative interests substituted public interest. Short-term sensationalism blocked long-term efficacy. Notes were given, but not the expected training from true education. Alternatives and solutions were known, but they were put aside due to their political and technical complexity. Several governments tried to promote a deep reform but were unable because they didn't have the necessary political will to do it and they ran into a logic of avoiding the conflicts which would naturally arise, or they simply chose the comfort provided by inertia. Several factors explain this landscape but, at the same time, within an exceptionally fertile context in Mexican politics—such as the one happening in 2013—these precedents provided the basis for the current reform which—in several ways—was unavoidable.

The strong points of the educational reform

Without a doubt, the first strength of the Educational Reform was that it was favored with consensus by the main Mexican political parties. Although, in the case of other structural reforms, some hues were introduced because of different points of view on them, in the case of education, a shared commitment—together with the urgent need of establishing mechanisms for having equity in terms of the opportunities offered to all through quality education—was present. Even now, this reform has the highest level of approval in national surveys.

Assuring such an education will yield—in the medium term—one of the greatest victories in the struggle for equity. Regardless of the social origin of all Mexican students, they will have better conditions to succeed professionally and to achieve social and economic mobility. And this will be the second strength of the reform. To achieve it, good teachers and schools are not enough, good contents are also needed. That is the heart of the New Educational Model, which is thought and designed to foster—through the acquisition of key learnings—the integration of an educational system which is more sensitive, not only towards the innovations in cognitive and curricular processes, but also towards the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic richness and diversity of Mexico.

A third strength of the Educational Reform is that it gave rise to the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: *SPD*) with the object of establishing an organic system to promote the selection, updating, and evaluation of teachers. Until 2017, almost 1,250,000 had taken part in it and 500,000 more will also take part by the end of 2018, reaching a number of 1,750,000 teachers evaluated for their entry, promotion, diagnosis, and permanence. Out of this number, almost 600,000 teachers will have had performance evaluations; while a number close to 190,000 have already obtained the highest notes and they are receiving substantial improvements in their salary as an incentive for their effort and dedication.

Thus, a transparent system—based on teachers' merit, capacity, and talent to provide higher-quality education—is being institutionalized. The new members of the teachers' system—almost one out of four applicants—will gradually have a better academic profile to comply with the educational needs of students in the 21st century. And they will also find a new space in which the only thing that matters is themselves and their capabilities; this not only offers a solid factor for professional and work-related satisfaction, but it also renders meaning to their mission as people and teachers. To have assigned—in a legal, public, and transparent way—almost 188,000 job posts and promotions on the basis of merit alone is not a minor achievement.

But, in spite of these—and other—results, there are still whispers that insist on saying that the reform has been wrongly implemented, or that it offers no positive results. Hard data categorically refutes these statements.

Hard data means clarity

To begin with, the Educational Reform is the best assessed reform in all the national surveys carried out amongst the open population, and in private houses, in three moments during 2017. Some of these surveys indicate that 64% of those who were surveyed agree with the reform; 79% approve teachers' evaluation; 71% support that schools offer extended school times; 71% back the remodeling of schools; 89% agree that teachers have a high level of English proficiency; and, in another study applied exclusively to basic education teachers, almost 60% think that evaluation is key for their own professional development. (Consultation and BCG, July, November, and December 2017). Even more, another survey among people studying to become teachers—although it was only applied in one state of the federation—shows the aspirational, open-to-changes spirit introduced by the Educational Reform: when asked if they think that it is *indispensable*, or that they *like* to earn a better salary upon the basis of their own performance, as well as getting into the teaching profession or earning promotions through exams or periodic evaluations, affirmative answers showed an average, in all cases, of 75% and 94%.¹

Also, positive changes in terms of the quality and performance of teachers can already be seen. For example, in 2014-2015 and 2017-2018, in the exams for entering the basic and middle-higher education, the national average of teachers with a result of *proficiency* increased from 38.3% to 54.5%. And something similar happened by level: those with a higher level of *proficiency* results—and with a sustained increase—are those in preschool, special education, primary school, *telesecundaria* (a system of distance education programs for secondary school), and secondary school, with a range from 15% to 28%. A special mention must be given to teachers in indigenous primary schools, who began at a very low rate and have achieved the highest rise in this number during the most recent school cycle: 28%.

1 Educational Project, "Survey for teachers' schools and UPN in Puebla." 4,076 valid face-to-face surveys were made in May 2017.

In terms of regions, the entities with the highest rate of *proficiency* results are Querétaro, Colima, Mexico City, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Nuevo León, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, and Hidalgo, which have achieved increases of between 12% and 23%.

In the case of performance evaluations, the number of teachers and technicians specialized in basic education with a *remarkable* result have doubled in the three evaluations performed, and the *insufficient* result has been reduced almost 8% in the first two cycles (2015-2017), with the exception of the following cycle, which went up again 3.3%.

In terms of principals and supervisors, improvement has been consistent, in general, throughout each evaluation. The former show an increase of 8.3% in the *outstanding* result and 18.8% in the *good* result, while the latter have stayed practically constant, although the *good* result increased 13% in the two most recent school cycles.

It is clear that all teachers are making bigger and better efforts in personal and academic terms, both on their own and through the accompaniment now offered to them. And even though in 2015 the SEP's training offer for teachers was insufficient and very deficient, last year it reached 626,000 teachers, although the original goal was to reach 500,000. In 2018, the goal is to offer this training to 1,200,000 teachers in all the different lines and modalities of continuous education.

Finally, it is said that the reform was implemented wrongly. However, thanks to it, we moved from having an opaque, corrupt, and discretionary teaching system to a new one based on merit, transparency, and effort. With the Educational Reform, full-time schools grew from 6,708 in 2012 to the 25,134 we have today. Before the reform there was not an ambitious project for modernizing the schools' infrastructure; today, we have one taking care of the 33,000 schools in the worse conditions and we are investing the largest sum in them in, at least, five decades. According to the yearly report of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE): the educational lag of 37.4%, left by the former administration, was reduced to 31.9%; and we passed from a coverage of 65.9% in higher medium education to 85.7%, including all of its modalities; from a coverage of 32% in superior education we passed to 38.4%; and we also passed from having an *undefendable* educational model (as it was called by Juan Carlos Romero Hicks, the president of the Educational Commission in the Senate) to a new system built collectively after a strong consultation process and adapted to the needs of students in the 21st century.

What happens in terms of learning?

It is worthwhile mentioning that in the latest tests of the National Plan for Learning Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA), applied to 3rd grade junior-high students between 2015 and 2017, there is progress in eleven states in the Language and Communication area, and in eighteen states in the Mathematics area. What does this mean? On the one hand, it means that, in the future,—besides consolidating the

architecture and implementation of the Educational Reform nationwide— success in terms of learning times and achievements will mainly depend on state and school management, as it has happened in other countries throughout the world. On the other hand, it means that improvements seen at a subnational level suggest that it is possible to identify areas of opportunity to expand achievements and to establish some tendencies in learning results, as it has happened in certain evaluations—however different and incomparable they may be—which have shown systematic improvements in terms of scores obtained by different countries.

In a similar way as many countries which managed to improve their academic performance at the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), there are federative entities in Mexico in which the PLANEA for the 3rd grade of Secondary School showed a relevant improvement in terms of included assignments, which can be seen in the rise in scores in the years that were evaluated. An example of it is Sonora, that increased its scores significantly between 2015 and 2017, moving from 476 to 505 points in Language and Communication, and from 473 to 500 points in Mathematics. Another relevant example is Mexico City, which in 2015 already had a higher-to-national average score (521 points in Mathematics, 531 in Language and Communication), and it achieved a significative increase in those scores in 2017, getting to 531 points in Mathematics and 537 points in Language and Communication, which represent some of the highest levels achieved at a national level.

It is very likely that the positive tendencies in most areas of learning identified through these evaluations are attributable to the strategies implemented in the educational systems of various countries, in the PISA case, or to those in federative entities, such as those mentioned in the PLANEA example, and they can be indications that it is feasible to put in place more effective and focalized actions which will have an impact on the improvement of the National Educational System.

The sense of urgency for obtaining through this reform, as soon as possible, the desired results—not only in terms of achievements and learning quality, but also in terms of social and economic mobility—is a shared one, of course. That is the main reason for having a structural and systemic reform. However, it is important not to forget the enormous complexities involved and the time needed for the reform to mature.

This is a reality which must not be forgotten, under any circumstances. Is it reasonable, then, to deny the progresses of the Educational Reform? Is it sensible to go back to the corruption and conspiracies of the past which had to be overcome in order to make possible many of the achievements hereby described? Is it intelligent to cancel the Reform and, by doing so, to cancel the possibilities of a better life and a more promising future for the hundreds of thousands of teachers and millions of Mexican children who are making these changes possible? The answer is categorical: no. €

Quintana Roo in face of the Educational Reform: a State policy, a principle of order

This article, written by the deputy secretary for High School and Higher Education in Quintana Roo, **Rafael Romero**, moves from general to specific aspects; first, it begins with the characteristics current education should have at a global level in order for it to answer to the needs of this changing century, and then it ends up—after reviewing the Educational Reform—by delving into its characteristics in his own state.

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The Educational Reform at a global scale

In a permanent search to raise competitiveness levels in face of the new challenges and scenarios in a more demanding and globalized world, education plays a fundamental role to make sure that development—within a framework of quality—potentiates the capabilities and abilities of all citizens in intellectual, affective, artistic, sport, and civic terms. Education is the way to position a country within the global society but, above all, it is an alternative to solve the core problems of poor, underdeveloped countries, such as Mexico.

In its document *Mexico-OCDE Agreement to Improve Educational Quality in Mexican Schools* [*Acuerdo de cooperación México-OCDE para mejorar la calidad de la educación de las escuelas mexicanas*], the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Spanish acronym: OCDE) establishes the relevance of strengthening educational systems in the countries that belong to this organization. Among other aspects, the document stresses the relevance of “public policies to optimize teaching, leadership, and management in schools to improve outcomes for children studying basic education” (OCDE, 2010: 3).

This report states fifteen suggestions based on the idea that, in order to achieve success in placing schools and students at the center, it is necessary to emphasize the relevance of teachers and the need of strengthening their abilities and capabilities when designing educational and evaluation processes, as well as when professionalizing teachers’ selection, offering support to school leadership and management, assuring social participation (parents, non-governmental organizations), investing resources to cover schools’ needs, and reviewing and updating the curriculum. In face of this, the OECD states the following:



Improving educational quality is a political and social priority in Mexico, especially in recent years, due to the high rates of poverty, a marked inequity, and a rise in criminality. Although, recently, educational improvement and an increasing focus on educational policies have taken place, there is still a high percentage of youths who do not end high school, and students’ performance is not enough to provide the abilities Mexico needs [...]. School days are short and effective teaching time is not enough, leadership quality is low, and the support offered is weak (2010: 4).

Considering some of the aspects pointed out by the OCDE, the Mexican State issued the Educational Reform in 2013, within the framework of a set of structural reforms. This constitutional initiative provided Mexico’s Educational System with a series of elements aimed to improve education and to strengthen equity, while assuring the State’s commitment of guaranteeing quality in mandatory public education, creating a Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD), establishing the National System for Educational Evaluation, and creating the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) as the highest authority in this matter (Gobierno de la República, 2013: 3).

The six objectives of the Educational Reform are not out of pace with the OCDE strategies in the aforementioned 2010 report:

1. Answering to the social demand for strengthening public, secular, free education.
2. Assuring greater equity in access to quality education.
3. Strengthening school management capabilities.
4. Establishing a Professional Teaching Service with rules that respect teachers’ labor rights.

5. Fostering new opportunities for teachers' and school managers' professional development.
6. Laying the foundations in order for members of the educational system to be evaluated in an impartial, objective, and transparent way.

Also, in a document titled *The Position for Education after 2015* [*Posición de la educación para después de 2015*], it is said that:

Education is a right, able to transform people's lives as long as it is accessible for all, as well as pertinent and rooted in fundamental shared values. Since quality education is the most influencing force for alleviating poverty and health issues, and for improving the means to earn a living, to achieve prosperity, and to create more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies, all of us are interested in making sure that it has a central place in the agenda for development after 2015 (UNESCO, 2015: 1).

Almost parallel to this, the fourth point of the *Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030*—a global strategy which stems from the *Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015*—states the relevance of ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and [promoting] lifelong learning opportunities for all” (ONU, 2015: 6), implementing this as a permanent process which should be consolidated during the first third of the century.

The Educational Reform is, then, not only a government initiative for educational public policy, but it is a response to global tendencies aiming to assure that education is a factor for social change and improvement, which offers abilities and tools to all the parties involved in the educational effort in order to have better citizens and societies.

The Quintana Roo case

In a first phase, education in the state must follow the guidelines established in the global and national spheres by the Educational Reform, adhering to what is established in the Educational Law for the State of Quintana Roo (Spanish acronym: LEEQR), published in the state's *Official Gazette* on February, 27, 2014:

Education is the fundamental mean to acquire, transmitting, and improving culture; it is a permanent process that contributes towards individual development and social transformation and it is a determining factor for acquiring knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, aptitudes, and values that make the individual more able to develop abilities for life which will allow him or her to successfully face various tasks, and to form men and women in such a way they have a sense of social solidarity (LEEQR, 2014: 4).

In a second—but by no means less important—phase, after the 2016 political transition in Quintana Roo, and acknowledging that for over 10 years education in the state had lost its way, sense, and order, in the report *Panorama of*

Education in Quintana Roo 2016 [*Escenario de la educación en Quintana Roo 2016*], six big issues related to the educational sphere in the state were mentioned:

1. The educational context shows unequitable conditions in terms of access to programs and school administration.
2. There are high levels of school desertion and low academic levels in all areas of Quintana Roo's educational system.
3. Teachers' professional education programs are not pertinent for the current context.
4. There are deficiencies in terms of students' integral education and these hinder their opportunities to successfully move through the next educational levels and to enter into a social and productive life.
5. A high percentage of public educational offer is not linked to the state's needs and potentialities (there is no social pertinence).
6. There is a lack of an integral, continuous, and permanent evaluation policy to feed the educational system; throughout all educational levels infrastructure is still inadequate or insufficient.

Knowing these issues helped as the basis for educational integration in the 2016-2022 State Development Plan, of which, in its fourth axis, “Social Development and the Fight Against Inequity,” forty action lines were established to achieve quality in public education. Thus, it was sought to guarantee for each child and youth to have the same opportunities for education and learning; to expand coverage; to fight school desertion and illiteracy; to improve levels of school permanence; and to remodel and equip schools so adequate learning environments are achieved.

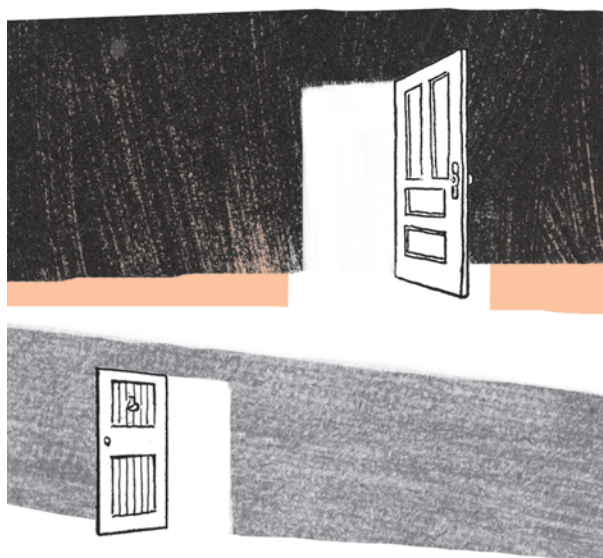
Stemming from this document, the Quality Public Education Sectorial Program 2016-2022 [Programa Sectorial de Educación Pública de Calidad 2016-2022] was published. Its objective is “guaranteeing quality learning at all educational levels, aiming at social development through generating ideal conditions for a true exercise of human rights for all Quintana Roo citizens” (Gobierno de Quintana Roo, 2016: 4).

It is relevant to point out that the content of this program follows in line with the National Development Plan 2013-2018, and the Education Sectorial Program 2013-2018, and it responds to the public policy established for education in the Educational Reform itself, as well as in the Educational Model for Mandatory Education 2017 [Modelo Educativo para la Educación Obligatoria 2017]. This document is the result of a collective and multidisciplinary analysis of citizens' ideas, opinions, and observations which will aim to attend and offer quality and integrated education, as it is stated in the fourth axis of the State Development Plan, through eight big areas: basic education, junior high school, senior high school, higher education, educational infrastructure, educational lags, professionalization of educational actors, research development and scientific innovation, as well as postgraduate studies and training for work (Quintana Roo Government, 2016).

The government of Quintana Roo corroborates its support to the Educational Reform, promoted by the federal government, and wants to stress that this is a democratic endeavor which aims for Mexico to move forward while strengthening the skills and capabilities of Mexico's students and teachers. Its objective is to establish, once and for all, the basis for our nations' development and to establish our country within the international stage, not only as an economic power, but also as a world power in terms of education, science, and innovation. €

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Rethinking teachers' professional development

This collaboration, by the Head of the Management of Guidelines for the Improvement of Educational Results and Teachers' Performance of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education and her team, tackles one of the nodal points of the Educational Reform: supporting with solid evidence those public policies responsible for promoting growth and improvement in teaching performance; that is to say, achieving, in practice, that related evaluations bear fruit.

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Management of Guidelines for Improvement of Educational Results and Teachers' Performance of the INEE

What are the guidelines?

The National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) recently issued the *Guidelines for Improving the Basic Education Policies in Teachers' Training and Professional Development* [*Directrices para mejorar las políticas de formación y desarrollo profesional docente en la educación básica*], which seek to contribute towards the fulfillment of all Mexicans' right to quality education by recognizing the importance of teachers in students' learning. In order to do this, a need stands out: improving and linking the diverse actions that educational authorities develop—from within their spheres of competence—with the aim of strengthening teachers' capabilities and providing them with better conditions for their development and professional practice.

The INEE's guidelines link evaluation with the improvement of education; these recommendations are directed towards facilitating informed decision-making by educational authorities and other relevant actors. Their construction implies the systematization and analysis of evidences brought forth by evaluations and educational research, the retrospective revision of public policies and programs implemented within the spheres they address, and a dialogue with diverse

educational and social actors, among whom teachers and other educational figures stand out, sector officials, academicians, and representatives of civil society organizations. That is to say, they are conformed through a participative process that considers diverse voices so as to give more pertinence and feasibility to the improvement proposals formulated therein.

In the guidelines aimed at improving training policies and professional development of teachers—including the institutional conditions in which they perform their practice—it is acknowledged that such an objective is central within the educational system. This falls within the international consensus around a conception of the teachers' collective as a key actor to guarantee quality and equity in education.

The aforementioned document¹ offers a diagnostic on the main challenges presented by teachers' training in service and professional development in basic education, as well as a set of recommendations aimed at educational authorities and the diverse education actors to undertake actions in order to overcome these challenges.

How to improve teachers' training and professional development in basic education?

The guidelines, as it was mentioned, are always sustained by a diagnostic. The diagnostic that substantiates the guidelines we are now talking about is synthetized hereunder, divided into five topical axes.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A first set of challenges emanates from the lack of a conceptual framework to clarify which are the components and processes involved in teachers' professional development and their implications in the design and operation of the corresponding policies, strategies, and programs. Evidence shows that, if indeed said point is one the main objectives of the Educational Reform, its definition has not yet been clear, precise, and consistent enough as to generate a common understanding and an adequate implementation in practice on the part of educational authorities and leaders (Cordero *et al.*, 2017; Martínez, 2016).

This limited conceptual development has led to multiple interpretations and little consensus, which does not facilitate a clear vision for the policies and programs on the subject with respect to the objectives they seek. It has also caused government efforts to be focused on teaching courses (often unrelated to the real needs of teachers) at the expense of other formative options. Besides, it entails a limited teachers' perspective on their own professional development, as well as their expectations on the training actions and their participation in them.

The diagnosis shows that the lack of a transparent definition has—in this context—effects at the operative order that go from low pertinence and quality of courses, to a lack

of consolidation of both teachers' training situated in the school, of trainers themselves, and of the usage of profile, parameters, and indicators (Spanish acronym: PPI).

Due to a long tradition of external-to-school training and the prevalence of school cultures that conceive teaching as an individual practice, *in situ* teachers' training still faces obstacles to its institutionalization. To that, it is pertinent to add the scarce development of learning strategies between peers, such as observation, feedback, and exchange of experiences (Backhoff and Pérez-Morán, 2015).

In terms of teachers' training, the main challenge is the training of cadres at the local level, since the majority of the state systems do not have them, and do not have strategies nor criteria for their creation (Tapia and Medrano, 2016).

Finally, evidence shows that the usage of the PPI as an instrument to guide the training of educational elements in service has not been consolidated.

In order to overcome these challenges, the first guideline proposes to "Conceptually redefine teachers' professional development as well as the framework for their institutional operation, on the basis of a comprehensive, participative, and contextualized approach" (INEE, 2018: 41).

The aspects that are to be addressed include the joint construction of a conceptual framework for teachers' professional development on the basis of the installation of a national consultancy body and, eventually, a corresponding one in the federative states. This framework will have to consider the articulation of initial training and service training, of training inside and outside of school, as well as the needs of each stage in the teaching career and the weaknesses and professional interests of teachers within their diverse socio-educational contexts. Additionally, it suggests the definition of formative paths, the outlining of strategies aimed at the training of trainers, and the securing of institutional conditions (infrastructure, equipment, and resources) that favor teachers' participation in instructive processes inside and outside school (INEE, 2018).

THE RULE OF EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES OVER THE POLICIES OF TEACHERS' TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A second group of challenges is related to the institutional capability in terms of the development of training policies, strategies, and programs for training and professional development at the federal and local levels. Firstly, a dispersion of competencies is identified in the subject emphasized by the organizational reconfiguration of the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP), derived from the 2013 reform. Even though adjustments have been made in later years with the intent to organize and delineate such competencies between different instances in the education sector, the training of teachers at the federal level depends on diverse areas, among them, the General Board for Basic Education Teachers' Ongoing Education, Actualization, and Professional Development, the General Board for the Development of Educational Management, and the National Coordinating Office for Professional Teaching Service.

¹ The extended document and its executive summary can be read at the guidelines microsite of the INEE's web page, available at <goo.gl/EauUyz>.

In turn, the General Board of Education for Education Professionals manages the initial teachers' training.

Such dispersion reduces the institutional capability of the SEP to develop a public and comprehensive intervention and causes actions for teachers' professional development to be regulated, designed, and executed in an inarticulate way, resulting in the disaggregation of its impact. It also makes difficult an adequate coordination between the states and the federation, which increases the risks of creating vacuums and duplicities in their respective interventions, and hinders the management of the processes that need harmonization between various dependences. In practice, this causes an uncoordinated management that does not take complete advantage of the attributions, resources, and capabilities of each instance.

On the other hand, the constitution of the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD) also generates new challenges for the federal and state areas in charge of service training. In some cases, such areas have shrunk in size and operational capacity, although they have had to deal with new requirements and to adapt to the dynamics that have brought about the reconfiguration of their area within the SPD's framework. Likewise, they have tackled the beginnings of other training options, like mentorship to new teachers and induction towards new functions.

In order to overcome these challenges, the second guideline proposes "To strengthen the ruling of educational authority in the area of teachers' training and professional development, as well as the institutional capabilities within the federal and local spheres" (INEE, 2018:41).

The improvement aspects proposed in the aforesaid guideline include institutional strengthening of those areas responsible for teachers' training and professional development in the federal and local spheres; establishing collegial spaces of intra and inter-institutional coordination; elaborating a middle-term plan for the training and professional development of teachers; creating a quality register of training offer in its different kinds and modalities and of specialized departments for service training inside Teachers' Schools and other institutions devoted to training teachers; improving the quality and transparency in the public expenditure directed to service training; and promoting research in order to strengthen policies on this matter. Finally, it is recommended to revise, modify, and give follow-up to the National System of Formation, Actualization, Training, and Professional Improvement, based on the new conceptualization of teachers' professional development that is yet to be defined.

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES' PERTINENCE, EQUITY, AND QUALITY

The third group of challenges refers to the obstacles to the consolidation of situated training and the services of support, counselling, and accompaniment for teachers, especially the Technical Assistance Service for Schools (Spanish acronym: SATE). Evidence indicates that the lack of human resources is a challenge to its operation in the short term, and it requires more decisive actions. When one sees the suitability results

and the number of teachers promoted to functions of pedagogical consultancy within the last years, the perspective for SATE's composition is not very optimistic because at this pace the system would take nine years just to have the minimal staff required. Besides, its operation faces other challenges, such as the absence of a counselling and accompaniment model that is relevant for the diverse socio-educational contexts present in the country, the lack of clarity in some functions of the ATP and the supervisors, the number of schools attached to each supervision, the administrative overload, and the vagueness of the structure and characteristics of the team inside the local entity in charge of operating the service.

Besides organizational restrictions, the contextualization of SATE brings with it other challenges. The diversity of structures, processes, and socio-educational environments poses differentiated demands on consultancy, assistance, and accompaniment. In order to improve their management, and the pedagogical practices of their teachers, schools that are rural, indigenous, or under conditions of greater socio-economic disadvantage, require specific support and—to a large extent—these requirements haven't been sufficiently considered until now.

In this respect, the third guideline aims to "Guarantee the operation of the Technical Assistance Service for Schools reinforcing the pertinence, equity, and quality of the support, accompaniment, and technical-pedagogical consultancy activities" (INEE, 2018: 41).

This guideline proposes to undertake actions to gradually guarantee the operation of SATE in all school supervisions in the country, based on inter-institutional planning and coordination of strategies between the states and the federation; to develop a model for technical assistance, consultancy, and accompaniment congruent with the new conceptualization of the teachers' professional development that prioritizes the training of management, supervision, and accompaniment, with a boost to the pedagogical leadership and development of internal evaluation; to institutionalize the situated training within the school; to strengthen the functions of technical pedagogical consultancy, including the attraction and revaluation of the staff; and to revise the current configuration of the school zone, with the objective of making the SATE, and school supervision, more effective.

THE LINK BETWEEN EVALUATION AND TRAINING

The diagnosis indicates the scant linkage between the processes and the results of the evaluations and the actions to improve educational actors' training and professional practice. There is little evidence related to the usage of results of teachers' evaluation for diagnosing teachers' needs, which makes it difficult to translate these results into the design of educational actions that will promote the improvement of professional practice and the consolidation of evaluation as a formative input. Besides, we observe an insufficient usage of results in the pedagogical feedback and the strengthening of the teachers' practice.

The fourth guideline endeavors to "Reinforce the relationship between the education, accompaniment and

evaluation of teachers for the improvement of their professional practice”.

This is about strengthening formative teachers’ evaluations, improving the linkage between external and internal evaluation processes, and generating capabilities for the use of teachers’ evaluations results on the part of technical personnel, both federal and state-run, and school personnel.

IDENTITY, VOCATION, AND SOCIAL REVALUATION OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE

Another objective of the guidelines consists in reaffirming the teachers’ collective as a strategic agent for educational and social change, on the basis of strengthening their professional identity and boosting their organization within academic-type groups.

The challenges identified in this area are related to a lack of associations for teachers and other educational actors on the basis of their participation in the decisions and initiatives to organize academic activities that support and regulate the professional ethos and to contribute to teachers’ training.

The fifth guideline recommends “Strengthening the professional organization, vocation, and identity of teachers to consolidate their function as strategic agents for educational and social change”.

The aspects that are suggested for attention entail reinforcing—from the point of initial education—professional autonomy for the teaching practice; boosting professional organizations, academies, practice communities or teachers’ networks that foster the exchange of experiences and learnings; promoting and supporting the establishment of a code of ethics for the profession on the basis of teachers collectives’ initiatives; institutionalizing their consultation and their participation in educational decisions; promoting the development of educational studies, events, and recognitions towards innovation in the teaching practice that contribute to improve the professional practice of educational elements; conducting periodical studies of teachers’ perception on aspects related to their job; creating digital platforms of resources and psycho-pedagogical supports for the teaching practice; and promoting actions to revalue teachers’ educational and social functions.

Changes and improvements we seek to achieve

As a starting point, a clear and comprehensive conceptualization of the professional development of teachers will favor an articulate and coherent design of policies and programs on the subject and their corresponding operational framework. Likewise, it will help to establish clear paths for professional development, in which the initial and service education merge, and the different education options in and outside of the school articulate, including collegiate teaching labor. It will also contribute to elevate the quality and pertinence of the diverse training activities, by taking into special consideration the needs of the teachers who work in the most adverse socio-economic contexts.

On the other hand, this is about reinforcing the legal framework and the required institutional capabilities to boost

the policies for teachers’ education and professional development through an adequate normative and institutional framework to design, direct, and manage them at the federal and local levels. Likewise, the aim is for the dependencies and instances responsible for the strategies, programs, and actions that integrate such policies to have at their disposal human, financial, and technical resources for their optimal implementation. This will allow the transformation of the National System for the Education, Actualization, Training, and Professional Improvement for Teachers of Basic Education into a real system for teachers’ professional development.

Having school supervisions with enough human, material, and technical resources will open opportunities to develop actions aimed to provide pertinent and systematic quality support, consultancy, and accompaniment. In turn, this will give a renewed boost to situated training, internal evaluation, and the development of strategies for the exchange of experiences between teachers, schools, and school zones.

There’s also the ideal of a scenario where internal and external evaluations are articulated and provide key information for decision-making, particularly to define the training and accompaniment actions of educational elements in such a way that the latter—and the states’ technical teams—have capabilities to analyze their results.

Finally, the aim is to consolidate a professional culture in which teachers reinforce their commitment to ethical values, high performance levels, and a proclivity towards public interest. This will only be possible through participation mechanisms which will allow them to recover their voices in the definition of local and national educational policies, especially those related to their own professional development.

To conclude, the guidelines seek to contribute towards the well-being of teachers and a better valuing of their profession, so teachers can play—with greater success—the key role they play in national development. €

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Educational Reform: achievements and challenges of the Professional Teaching Service in Durango

Arturo Guzmán Arredondo explains, from Durango, the specificities and nuances of local experience in the instrumentation of the most delicate part of the Educational Reform: the Professional Teaching Service.

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This participation responds to the purpose of making a balance, within the frame of the Educational Reform in the state of Durango, of the processes and results associated with the Teaching Professional Service (Spanish acronym: SPD) in basic education, following the teachers' evaluation for purposes of admission, promotion, and performance, as well as some of its implications.

The identification of the SPD's achievements and challenges in Durango, during the final stretch of the 2017-2018 school cycle, and five years after the constitutional reform, represents an opportunity to reflect on the essential components of the Educational Reform, on the processes and results of the evaluations, as well as on its main progresses and pending subjects.

Limiting the analysis of the Educational Reform to the SPD in basic education of one federative entity responds to the acknowledgment of the complexity that a comprehensive evaluation implies, which exceeds the professional competencies of this author and the space reserved for this article.

The start of the most recent educational reform in Mexico

When talking about the Educational Reform a question arises, the answer to which seems obvious... until you try to answer it objectively: when does it start? There are several answers to this question, such as the following:

1. Within the political sphere, it starts with the signing of the Pact for Mexico, in December 2012.
2. Within the legal sphere it begins at the period that goes from February 2013, with the decree of constitutional reform to the 3rd and 73rd articles, to September 2013, with the reform to the General Law for Education (Spanish acronym: LGE) and the creation of the General Law for the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: LGSPD)

and the Law for the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: LINEE).

3. In the realm of SPD's administrative implementation, it starts with the 2014-2015 school cycle, with the first edition of the contest for admission in basic and middle education.
4. Within the curriculum it takes off with the *Educational Model for Compulsory Education. Educating for Freedom and Creativity*, implemented in the classrooms of basic education during the 2018-2019 school cycle.
5. In teachers' acceptance, within the area of performance evaluation, it is currently underway.

Components of the Educational Reform

A reform such as this is a change in all elements seeking the improvement of educational results. Among other factors, teachers' actions that aim to improve the quality of students' learnings play a part of the utmost importance. In Mexico, the changes made to elevate the professional profile and performance of teaching personnel within the education service come from the acceptance of a lack of institutionalized mechanisms that ensure the existence of a set of basic characteristics to manage the processes of teaching and learning.

Just like some countries have orchestrated actions in order to regulate access to the teaching role, the evaluation of teachers of compulsory education through the SPD was established since the Educational Reform of 2013. Since the enactment of the modifications to the third article of the Constitution and the LGE, along with the publication of the secondary laws, teachers' evaluation was the main reason for conflict between the educational authority and the teachers' associations.

The government of the Republic (Gobierno de la República, n.d.) published the document *Educational Reform. Executive summary* [*Reforma Educativa. Resumen ejecutivo*], establishing as its main transformations the following points:

- Autonomy of school management
- Technical Assistance Service for Schools (Spanish acronym: SATE)
- Participation of parents
- Responsible and efficient educational system
- System of Information and School Management (Spanish acronym: SIGE)
- Teaching Professional Service (Spanish acronym: SPD)
- Ongoing education and professional development
- National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE)
- National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE)
- Transparent, objective, and fair evaluations of teachers
- Strengthening of equity and inclusion
- Contribution Fund for the Educational Payroll and Operational Expense (Spanish acronym: FONE)
- Centralization of the payroll payment to federalized personnel
- Budget for schools to strengthen autonomy in management



Of the components transformed by the Educational Reform, it is important to highlight the SPD and the evaluations associated to it.

The SPD: an essential component of the reform

The LGSPD defines the Teaching Professional System (SPD) as a:

[...] set of activities and mechanisms for Admission, Promotion, Recognition, and Permanence within the public educational service and the push for continual training, with the aim of guaranteeing the suitability of knowledges and capabilities of the Teaching Personnel, and the Personnel with Management and Supervision Functions in Basic and Middle Education, imparted by the State and its Decentralized Organisms (article 4, paragraph XXXII).

The SPD entails joint responsibility for the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE), the educational authorities and the local decentralized organisms, and the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP). The law establishes for these different actors, the following attributions, among others:

1. *INEE*: Defining the evaluation processes; issuing guidelines to which educational authorities and decentralized organisms will conform to perform their corresponding evaluation functions for admission, promotion, recognition, and permanence; and supervising the evaluation processes and the issuance of expected results.
2. *Educational authorities and local decentralized organisms*: Opening calls for admittance contests to the teaching

function and promotion; offering gratuitous programs and courses for continual education, actualization of knowledge, and professional development; and managing the allocation of seats in strict compliance with the established order, based on the scores obtained—from higher to lower—of candidates found suitable during the contest.

3. *SEP*: Determining the profiles and minimal requirements for admittance, promotion, recognition, and permanence in the service; proposing to the INEE the stages, aspects, and methods comprised in the mandatory evaluation processes; and approving the open calls for admittance and promotion contests.

With regard to the evaluation of professional teachers' performance, Schmelkes (2015) stresses that its purpose is to improve the quality of teaching practice on the basis of recognizing those who are education professionals. The author states that, within the professional evaluation of teachers, it is unavoidable to consider the way in which they perform as teachers.

With these considerations in mind, the evaluation model of teaching-performance evaluation—according to information in a presentation by teacher Sylvia Schmelkes, advisor of the Governing Board of the INEE—has passed from four stages in the year 2015 (report of fulfillment of professional responsibilities by the school authority; file of evidences of teaching; examination of didactic knowledge and competencies; and reasoned didactic planning), to three stages, in 2017 (report of fulfillment of professional responsibilities by the school authority, expanded with the identification made by the teacher himself of his strengths and his room for improvement; teaching project; and assessment of pedagogical, curriculum-related, or disciplinary knowledge).

Progress in Durango's SPD

Within the state, one of the main breakthroughs of the Educational Reform, on the subject of the SPD, is the gradual and sustained acceptance of the notion of professional merit as the guiding principle for the trajectory of teachers and managers of basic education. The accompaniment labor, on the part of local educational authorities and school authorities, has been fundamental for moving from clear-cut rejection to teachers' evaluation to unprecedented acceptance levels within the entity. As Barber (2010) puts it, rejection evolves from irate to moderate, when referring to the transitions that happen when the services improve.

Another important breakthrough is visible in the issuance of a document, on the part of the SPD's National Coordination, that regulates the allocation of teaching and management seats, as well as the promotion programs: *Provisions on the Subject of the Teaching Professional Service (Single Document of Normative Instruments Issued by the National Coordination of the Teaching Professional Service)* [*Disposiciones en materia del Servicio Profesional Docente (documento único de instrumentos normativos emitidos por la Coordinación Nacional del Servicio Profesional Docente)*], published on July 14, 2017, and updated on November 14, in the same year. The said text has

contributed to giving legal certainty to the allocation and promotion procedures that are conducted in Durango.

Within the national context, through the teachers’ evaluation, the SEP established—in its Release 73, on February 29th, 2016—the transit from an opaque system to one that favors teachers’ merit and professional effort as strategic achievements of the Educational Reform. In 2015, the results of the performance evaluation placed 48.5% of the subjects in the categories of *excellent*, *outstanding*, and *good*; 37.6% in *sufficient*; and 14.1% in *insufficient*.

In Durango, the performance evaluations of teachers and teaching technicians for the purpose of permanence have scored the results shown in table 1.

The comparison with the national results demonstrates a substantial progress in Durango. The unfavorable gap for the entity, in basic and in middle education, of approximately six percentage points in 2015, was reduced to less than one point in basic education and it disappeared in middle education in 2017. Regarding the results of the state itself, between 2015 and 2017, a progress was made of twenty points in basic education and fourteen in middle education.

Challenges for the Teaching Professional Service in Durango

Three years ago, Bracho González and Zorrilla Fierro (2015) noted a set of challenges for the Educational Reform in general. In the particular case of the SPD, the authors mention the following:

1. *The instauration of professional merit as a guiding principle to build a system oriented towards elevating teaching labor quality.* In this respect, even though important progress has been made in Durango, some power struggles have been identified in the allocation of seats for teachers and managers.

2. *The idea of the teachers as subjects with rights and duties, who must be treated as persons with dignity.* One of the main rights refers to the institutional offer of training and ongoing education programs for teachers and managers that corresponds to the needs identified in the evaluation. Durango and the other federative entities have the opportunity of facing this challenge by answering the *Guidelines for the Improvement of Policies for Teachers’ Education and Professional Development in Basic Education* [Directrices para mejorar las políticas de formación y desarrollo profesional docente en la educación básica], recently issued by the INEE.

3. *The construction of cooperation between the system’s parts, creating autonomies and modifying subordinations.* In order to face said challenge a horizontal collaboration is required between the SEP, the INEE, and the local educational authorities. The latter have more pressure on the part of the teachers and less attributions, which means they face a clear asymmetry.

Besides making a comeback on the previous points, the strengthening of the SPD in Durango requires economic support from the SEP. An example of such need is the demand to create seats for technical pedagogical advisers (Spanish acronym: ATP) in basic education, whose budgetary difference with respect to the teaching seats that are cancelled is made at the expense of the vacant seats in the entity.

Another challenge the state faces is the consolidation of the State Coordination of the SPD in the Secretariat of Education’s organizational structure. Even though it has a staff of more than forty people, they need to document and systematize the procedures they develop, as well as to progress in the integration of their areas and to more effectively link the processes in basic and middle education.

Table 1. Results of the performance evaluation in Durango

Educational type	Year	At least sufficient percentage	
		National average	Durango
Basic education	2015	75.9	70.3
	2016	94.4	95.4
	2017	91.1	90.4
Middle education	2015	77.6	71.5
	2016	94.1	96.4
	2017	85.2	85.3

Source: made by the author with data from the National Coordination of the Teaching Professional Service (Spanish acronym: CNSPD).

In Durango, the agility of the procedures conducted in the National Coordination of the SPD is perceived as a challenge: There are formal requests from the local educational authority that are not answered in an expedient way, which makes the operation of the service within the entity more complex.

The subjective feeling of stagnation in the processes of the SPD, on the part of the National Coordination, the normative vacuums, the insufficient resources and the non-systematized procedures must not become obstacles to objectively appreciate the huge progress that the SPD has represented on the matter of the instauration of merit as a guiding principle for the teaching career and the recuperation of leadership on the subject of education.

Two bets on the immediate future

During four school cycles (from 2014-2015 to 2017-2018), the allocation of seats and adscription places based on the precedence lists has been conducted. For the 2018-2019 cycle, we can anticipate a notable progress in this process, mainly due to the following reasons:

1. capitalization of accumulated experience;
2. timely implementation of changes of adscription of teachers and managers in service, with adherence to relevant regulations and a careful systematization from the issuance of the open call to the acceptance of said change on the part of the candidate, and a careful evaluation of applicants' files and the identification of vacant seats and places available within the schools;
3. the usage, for the first time, of software that guarantees a greater accountability of the process.

This effort has meant an unprecedentedly systematic work that involves three areas of the Ministry of Education: the State Coordination of the Professional Teaching Service, the Board for Planning and Evaluation, and the Board of Human Resources. The supervision of said process conducted by the Board of the INEE in Durango will allow us to corroborate if the process of seat allocation within the state is being consolidated.

The tendency for improvement in the results of performance evaluation in basic education for the purposes of permanence and granting economic incentives, from 2015 to 2017, also allows us to anticipate a re-positioning of Durango with respect to the other federative entities in the evaluation pertaining the 2018-2019 cycle, as well as a progress in relation with its own results. €

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Special report: what about the Educational Reform?

Two different parts shape the following *Special Report*. In the first one, we asked members of civil society—closely linked to education—to offer a balance, from their particular viewpoint, on the central subject of this *Gazette*: the Educational Reform. Leonardo García Camarena (president of the National Union of Parents) and José Francisco Landero Gutiérrez (head of Suma por la Educación) take a critical gaze at the Reform's *musts* and *facts*, pointing at omissions and challenges but also recognizing the advances achieved from 2013 until today.

The second part offers a voice to academicians and it is further subdivided into a couple of articles: "Axes of the Educational Reform" is part of an ongoing study made by the National Institute of the Evaluation of Education and the United Nations Development Program, and it summarizes the progresses achieved by the Reform; the article brings together five specialists in these issues and it was coordinated by Lorenzo Gómez Morin. On the other hand, "The future of the Educational Reform is in the classroom" is an article signed by researchers from the Latin-American Social Sciences Institute, and it underlines the need to focus efforts on the area where the educational phenomenon actually happens—the classroom.

Voices of civil society

Educational Reform: educating better citizens

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Shortly after the so-called *Pact for Mexico* was signed, in December 2012, with the previous consensus between the President of the Republic and the main Mexican political parties, a reform that civil society—including the National Union of Parents (Spanish acronym: UNPF)—had requested for a long time, aimed at improving the educational quality in Mexico, was published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación* on February 26, 2013.

The reform is a guide to direct all efforts to achieve this goal, because the results obtained before it—both in national and international measurements—showed an educational emergency situation that demanded immediate action in order to guarantee the right to quality education.

During the first stage of the reform, the National System for Educational Evaluation was created, the Professional Teaching Service was instituted, the educational census was carried out, and the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) became an autonomous organization.

Then, among other transformations, the reform of study plans and programs took place and focused—in general—on key learnings; that is, those that contribute to the integral development of students with the intention that they continue learning throughout their lives; textbooks were reformed and adapted to the new plans; and just a few days ago (June 2018) the books for the first and second grade of elementary school, and for the first grade of secondary school, were released.

Today, the Educational Reform is a reality and continues to advance despite the challenges it still faces. However, there is a lot to do yet. For example, teachers' universities have been systematically neglected and the reform should have placed, from the beginning, the education of teachers as a key element, even before teachers' evaluations. It is necessary to dignify the great actor of change. We cannot understand a reform in education without the strengthening, training, and development of teachers, who are the ones who devote their lives to this noble task.

In the field that directly concerns the UNPF, the reform also has many pending issues, for it has not achieved a real and effective involvement of parents in decision making, both in each school campus and in the creation of educational policies. As these actors are the first and main educators

of their children, there should be an organization formed by them to be present in decisions related to educational contents and the civic, ethical, and human education that students must receive within schools.

Although it is true that before the Educational Reform there was already the figure of the School Council of Social Participation, it has not finished maturing and, in many cases, it only exists on paper, since in practice it lacks the autonomy and strength to contribute as a true actor in the life of the school campus.

It would also be advisable to review the relationship of the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP) with teachers' unions, since in some states the leaders of these organizations have hindered the implementation of the Educational Reform, and they enjoy privileges that no other labor sector has and, in many cases, bend authorities at their whim.

Definitely, private funding schools are the great forgotten element by the Educational Reform, for they are demanded a number of requirements that public schools do not have to comply with. They have even been renamed to turn them into *commercial businesses*, instead of encouraging them and treating them for what they really are: educational institutions that collaborate with the country in the noble task of human education. In addition, they have been given an excessive tax burden that greatly hinders investment in their facilities: they have to endure a double taxation, paying all their taxes and being obliged, in addition, to grant a certain number of scholarships—something that happens in no other sector—and they do not have any type of stimulus or financing.

There are many challenges that have to be overcome if we aspire to achieve a significant progress in educational quality. It is certain that this reform cannot be reversed by the will of certain groups with interests unrelated to the quality education we wish for all our students.

In addition to knowledge, it is necessary to pay special attention to human education. The Educational Reform must have, as its main function, a humanistic education that trains students with values, with love, with ethics, and with a culture of peace to face poverty and inequity, violence and insecurity, corruption and impunity. It is time to form an authentic school community in order to educate the citizens we want for México.

The challenge: to continue with the transformation of education in Mexico

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Changes to improve education in the country did not begin in 2013 with the enactment of the Educational Reform. They also didn't begin with the promise of providing adequate educational infrastructure or through the government's commitment to endow students and teachers with modern educational materials and methods. Educational transformation began with the citizens' demand for changes to the 3rd constitutional article so that the education received by girls, boys, and young people was of quality and useful, both for their personal development and for that of the country.

The Educational Reform has gone through an atypical process of design and execution which, though not ideal, has been necessary in accordance with the power structure that the teaching profession has held for years. The government started by recovering the rectory of education—although this has not yet been fully achieved, especially at the state level. Later, it continued with the evaluation, the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD), the training, and the curricular model. Strictly speaking, it should have started from a vision of the nation and the citizen that the country requires in order to follow from there to the curricular model, the training, the SPD, and the evaluation.

The process was not ideal, but it was the one that could be carried out in face of an educational rectory that for many years was left in the hands of some power groups within the teaching profession, especially the leadership of the National Coordination of Educational Workers (Spanish acronym: CNTE).

Among the positive aspects of the Educational Reform, the following three stand out:

1. Today, there is a National System for Educational Evaluation, coordinated by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE), which is responsible for providing tools and elements to improve educational policies in the country. Its counselors have been elected through professional processes: their career and abilities have been heeded. Thus, the Institute has been endowed with social sensitivity and transversal approaches for equity and participation.
2. In the final phase of the 2012-2018 six-year period, a new educational model was announced and designed on the basis of three components: key learnings, personal and social development, and curriculum autonomy; and, although it will begin to be applied as of the next school year, it promises an important change in student learning and in the competences that basic education will acquire.

3. There is a transition towards a conception of the teacher as a learning professional and not only as a transmitter of knowledge. The reform pictures more involved and transparent schools, although there is still a lack of tools and culture—governmental and social—to achieve it.

These three are pending aspects of the Reform:

1. The need to open and operate, truly and efficiently, the councils of social participation in education, so they really become collaborative spaces that help solve the challenges presented in schools. One of these challenges is English teaching. In 2014, Mexico ranked thirty-nine out of sixty-three countries evaluated in the domain of that language.
2. The lack of connection between the results of teachers' and students' evaluations, with actions and commitments aimed at training and learning for these two important actors. A great omission of the educational authority was the lack of communication with teachers beyond the magisterial establishment; currently, teachers have no means to overcome union control and a deeply vertical bureaucratic structure. With regard to educational federalism, although it was necessary to centralize the payroll to reduce discretion and corruption between state governments and the teachers' elite, this decision has left the entities' governments with no economic incentives and no social recognition when they manage to improve educational indicators.
3. Last, it is crucial to deepen into the anthropological concept that the student—child, young, or adult—is the center and purpose of education. This seems obvious, but sometimes—for government and union leaders—the teacher occupies that place. On the other hand, for parents, grades and the time spent by their children at school—and not their learning and integral human education—are appreciated as the ends of the process. Such anthropological conception should lead to educational decision-making.

It would be suitable that criticisms to the Educational Reform—the voices that accuse it of being a labor reform that punishes teachers—were converted into proposals to improve what has been achieved and change, or adjust, what is not well designed. Compulsory education in Mexico requires ensuring the professionalization of teachers, but also recovering their social prestige. It is essential to train future teachers well and to train—on a continuous basis—those who already are in service, and this can only be done through good evaluations. Those who claim that teachers are punished with the new regulations fail to say that, currently, new teachers who assume the challenge of training new generations arrive at schools thanks to a selection process supported by their ability to transmit knowledge, and not by political, union, or inheritance quotas.

The Educational Reform represents a change and a step forward, but it brings a cumulus of challenges with it, both in its design and in its implementation. Improvement of teachers' universities, equity, reduction of inequity gaps, practical contents of subjects within the framework of the new model, systematic and real participation of parents to improve

educational achievement, and de-ideologization of educational contents are some of those great challenges.

Recently, the largest election in the country's history brought a new government to power. This government must respond efficiently to the challenge of having better citizens. This will only be achieved through an integral education of quality. The permanent challenge of the new government will be to place students—and not other actors—at the center and end of all related decisions. If this does not happen, failure is assured.

As part of organized civil society, we will continue, as we did before the promulgation of constitutional changes, demanding compliance with the right to quality education established in the Constitution and in the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents. €

The axes of the Educational Reform

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Introduction

The 2013 Educational Reform has tested the Mexican State's capacity to implement the changes in normative, institutional, and organizational terms, as well as in the assignment of public resources to reach the goal of having all children and youths exercising their right to quality mandatory education with equity.

Five years after the reform, the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: inee), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (Spanish acronym: pnud), promotes the project "Evaluation of educational policies in the framework of the Mexican Educational Reform", with the purpose of establishing a balance between achieved successes and pending tasks from a governance perspective. This evaluation is articulated around five thematic axes: 1. educational materials and methods; 2. school organization; 3. educational infrastructure; 4. suitability of teachers and directors; and 5. Educational evaluation and improvement.¹

What follows is a brief advance of this current work.

Axis 1. Educational materials and methods

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The search for equity, pertinence, and horizontality

The project "Evaluation of educational policies in the framework of Mexican Educational Reform" is organized around five axes which correspond to those proposed by the Educational Model for Mandatory Education with the goal of reorganizing the system. Axis 1 includes the evaluation of educational methods and materials regarding their curricular design. Work is centered on evaluating the design of the main policies, programs, and actions implemented regarding these elements on the basis of analyzing the related significative characteristics; that is, curricular congruence, coherence of the curriculum and national educational purposes, assuring the equity contemplated in the curricular design, and its pertinence for students and the whole country. All of these elements are studied from the viewpoint of governance.

The aim of evaluation is to identify how State interventions contribute in regard to this first axis to strengthen the National Educational System (Spanish acronym: SEN). The starting point for such an effort is to consider the explicitly clear double intention presented in the Educational Reform's phase of normative changes implemented in 2013. The double purpose consists in recovering the authority of the State and to lay the foundations for reorganizing the mandatory public education system according to the demands and requirements of the contemporary world to benefit the future citizens who, today, are students in it.

The need to reorganize the SEN arises from realizing that the prevailing educational model began with Vasconcelos' initiative for creating the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP), in 1921, to educate Mexican children and youths. This model adapted to the growing challenges of a nation that experienced a remarkable economic and demographic development throughout the 20th century. However, with the considerable increase in average education of Mexicans—from one year to over nine—, this traditional model no longer fully reflects, in terms of its organization and educational contents, the current needs associated to Mexico's position in an economically globalized, culturally communicated, and socially highly competitive world.

Today, the demographic and productive scale is much bigger than the one which prevailed for the last fifty years in the last century. Democratic rights and perspectives on the cultural, identity-related, and ideological diversity of our country have been strengthened. The educational model needs to be renewed in order for it to be compatible with

¹ Taken from Ana Razo's text.

a society which is more and more educated, plural, democratic, and inclusive, and that is placed within a world where knowledge and its applications point towards new paths.

Among the challenges faced by the educational model, focusing on Axis 1, the following could be mentioned: achieving a coverage that includes all children and youths so they have a space in mandatory education until they successfully finish it; reducing structural inequities in the educational system; closing gaps between different educational levels and modalities as well as different social groups and regions.

To achieve this, materials and methods have to be designed in a way that assures that educational work is implemented with equity and pertinence and in an operative way which includes all children and youths in the country until they reach a maximum learning achievement regardless of their origin, gender, socioeconomic condition, or capacity.

The design of this methodological proposal considers a curricular organization plan which covers two dimensions. The first one is a set of six educational areas based on disciplines common to both basic education (Spanish acronym: EB) and middle-higher education (Spanish acronym: EMS): *a)* Language and Communication; *b)* Mathematical thought; *c)* The natural and social world, which in the EMS is divided into Social sciences and Experimental sciences; *d)* Arts, which becomes Humanities in EMS; *e)* Physical education; and *f)* Socioemotional development. The second dimension has to do with a profile for mandatory education graduates, integrated on the basis of generic and disciplinary capacities, and designed to foster coexistence and personal development for work life and further studies. The great curricular map of mandatory education arises from the articulation of these two dimensions.

Also, it is essential—in order to reorganize the SEN—to move towards a more horizontal model made up by schools with greater administrative autonomy, to overcome the vertical relation between educational authorities and teachers, and between teachers and students, through building learning environments, collegiate work, and pedagogical principles that place students' learning at the center.

Considering that current society faces a change of era which demands educating children and youths so they can face the difficult moment they will have to live as adults, the axis of materials and methods' evaluation aims to identify and to value the logic congruence of the proposal, the coherence of the national purposes on education, the equity in terms of contents and operation, and the pertinence of this education for the challenges and opportunities of the current world.

Axis 2. School organization

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The administrative model as a way of governance

In 2013, the Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico (Spanish acronym: CPEUM) reformed its article 3 to include educational quality so “educational materials and methods, school organization, educational infrastructure, and suitability of teachers and directors guarantee a maximum level of learning achievement for students” (2013, article 3, paragraph III).

Since *school organization* is one of the essential components to achieve educational quality, it must be valued, from a governance viewpoint, which are “the rules, institutional spaces, mechanisms, processes, and practices that guarantee the convergence of the various actors”¹ which take part in it. It is assumed that such convergence favors the improvement of children's learnings as they study through the basic educational level. From a perspective of the policies' cycles, the objective is to verify the pertinence of governmental decisions to favor coherence between the design and implementation of the said policies, in the understanding that this has a positive effect on results (a change in learnings).

In the Educational Reform evaluation performed by the Latin-American Social Sciences Institute (Spanish acronym: FLACSO), together with the United Nations Development Program, it is recognized that even though there is no linear relation between school organization and learnings, the role played by this aspect within the totality of the strategic governmental intervention axes is a central one. School organization becomes relevant after the political decision of conferring a *central role for schools* through decisions, policies, programs, and actions aiming—in general terms—to create the best conditions to guarantee that children receive a basic education with quality and equity. That is to say, School at the Center represents a decision that aims to realize one of the crucial aspects in the 3rd constitutional article: assuring and guaranteeing quality learnings for all children studying basic education in Mexico.

In this sense, school organization—through its decisions, policies, programs, and actions—is the axis responsible for: *a)* guaranteeing that educational policy decisions reach schools and classrooms; *b)* generating the best conditions within schools under directors' leadership; *c)* creating conditions which foster convergence of different actors (governance in school management) and between school

¹ PNUD (20185). Términos de referencia para la evaluación de las políticas educativas en el marco de la Reforma Educativa.

management and the immediate community (local governance); and *d*) providing a follow-up for school management results. In order to accomplish this, the System of Educational Information and Management (Spanish acronym: SIGED) is essential.

Regarding the first aspect—guaranteeing that decisions reach schools and classrooms—, it is essential to rebuild the implementation chain, from the federation to the classroom, which entails identifying the key actors in such chain (federations, states, school supervision, technical-pedagogical counseling, directors, teachers).

With respect to points *b* and *c*, it is necessary to begin from the renewed momentum given to autonomous school administration, to school management programs and the improvement route, and to master instruments of change in schools. It is essential to rebuild the decisions and interactions between the actors who converge in school management (directors, supervisors, technical-pedagogical consultants, teachers) and between them and the immediate community (municipal presidents, political representatives, and others). The Full-Time Schools Program (Spanish acronym: PETC) deserves a special attention as it has been acknowledged that the model which characterizes it favors learning improvement, unlike what happens in basic-education schools, where schedules have not been extended.

For the last action, follow-up of school-management results, the main objective is to identify the interaction between responsible officers in the System of Educational Information and Management at the Sub-secretary for Planning, Evaluation and Coordination, and those in the Sub-secretariat of Basic Education—both of them are part of SEP—, in order to verify the role of this new system as a source of information to foster the relation between the decision-taking process and guaranteeing the best possible results at schools and in the classrooms.

Besides the identification of the main actors—as part of an administration in terms of governance—who have taken part in the school-organization axis, it is essential to evaluate the pertinence and coherence between the diagnosis (the definition of the problem, from which the need for an intervention in school organization stems), the goals of educational policies, and the actions taken in order to guarantee that schools and their autonomy are placed at the center.

To summarize, evaluation of the school-organization axis must comprehend, basically, two aspects: *a*) identification of the actors who take part in school organization and management in terms of governance; and *b*) coherence between design, implementation, and results in this specific area.

Axis 3. Educational infrastructure

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Description of evaluation in the infrastructure axis

School infrastructure is one of the essential elements for educational systems operation. Indirectly associated to educational results, the effect of the availability and quality of school infrastructure in the learnings of students in Mexico is still one of the least studied aspects, especially when compared with other elements such as educational materials, technology availability, or other kinds of interventions in school communities.

In this context, it is relevant to analyze and to understand the presuppositions which justify an intervention in this area. There are three goals for the axis of educational physical infrastructure (Spanish acronym: INFE) within the framework of the Educational Reform:

1. financing the construction and remodeling of educational spaces in order to contribute towards diminishing the lag in physical conditions of basic public education schools in our country;
2. strengthening school management autonomy through school-infrastructure investment programs; and
3. broadening the availability and use of information and communication technologies in school communities as an element for developing teaching activities.

It is relevant to identify the efforts made in this area before the 2013 reform. In order to address the INFE's deficiencies and lags, and to guarantee structural quality and security, since 2007, governmental actions have taken place in Mexico, at all educational levels, and these can be classified within two main groups:

- The first englobes those programs and strategies which do not have as their main axis of action solving the INFE issue, but have an effect on school infrastructure through some of its elements: for example, Educational Inclusion and Equity, Full-Time Schools, and the Fund of Contributions for Social, State, and Municipal Infrastructure.
- The second englobes programs specifically created to deal with the INFE issue, such as the Educational Physical

Infrastructure Program, the program for Basic Physical Infrastructure, and the program Educational Reform and CIEN Schools¹. All of these programs and components have an explicit orientation and definition towards providing resources to be used in infrastructure-related specific actions.

Among the programs englobed in the second group, there are two which were implemented as part of the 2013 Educational Reform: the Reform Program and the CIEN Schools Program. These programs directly aim to solve the INFE issue in school communities, at least according to what is said in terms of their design and objectives in their normative documents.

Evaluation objectives

As part of the evaluation performed by the Latin-American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO), three analytical exercises—with different viewpoints and profundity—will be made. First, design evaluation will be checked; then, information will be gathered to verify the implementation process; and, finally, the probable results and objectives of the programs will be identified in order to establish the likely benefits associated with the execution of these programs.

The design of this evaluation stresses the study of governance, an aspect which is studied in a transversal way, according to the analytic categories in each segment of the study in accordance to the requirements of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE). What has already been done, until now, is the design evaluation based on a descriptive study through clerical work aimed to gather the programs' administrative information directly related to school infrastructure: Educational Reform and CIEN Schools. Also, the programs' designers have been interviewed in order to complement the revision of documents and to identify patterns which help to better understand the findings derived from available related information.

Main findings

Although it is still premature to assert something conclusive, the analysis of current components suggests that the Educational Reform captures two of the dimensions—widely recognized in related literature—on how to promote and use administrative autonomy: assigning resources available at the school, and the capacity conferred to school communities to decide on the acquisition of infrastructure and equipment. However, the preliminary analysis on the design and the reach of the program suggests that some relevant elements to effectively promote administrative autonomy have been left out: capacity of hiring staff, curriculum development, and monitoring and evaluating students' and teachers' performance (Arcia *et al.*, 2011). These components, which go beyond the program's explicit purposes, are linked to the

Educational Reform through the strategy known as Schools at the Center, or through the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD). In other words: there are opportunities for integrating and aligning these programs with other initiatives or interventions that are part of the transformations promoted by the 2013 reform.

Regarding the program CIEN Schools, it is yet necessary to analyze the focalization criteria in the face of the possibility that some problems—which have been detected in the evaluations of similar programs (such as possible regressive effects in infrastructure-related attention to schools)—will arise. Although this program is explicitly focalized on schools with bigger infrastructure lags, on the long term, those with a higher degree of human capital and administrative capabilities could be the main beneficiaries of these interventions.² This is particularly evident in those elements which depend on the proactivity of school communities, such as it is the case of component five (improving physical infrastructure conditions of basic education public schools with a high-priority attention level), which demands a letter signed by the school director, documenting school needs.

A last aspect that has to be underlined in this stage is the need to identify the link between educational infrastructure programs and pedagogical-related goals. Although the mechanisms through which infrastructure investment will help to render a better academic performance can be inferred from the objectives in both programs, these are not explicitly established.

Final comments

The initial stages of this evaluation allow the highlighting of some points which require attention for their consequent development and, above all, the identification of possible strategies in order to improve these programs. First, it is necessary to perform an analysis on the complementarity of such programs and other similar educational strategies or interventions. Second, the urgency to improve access mechanisms for each program—so it is possible to verify the information presented in administrative documents—has been identified. Third, it is essential to define objectives which allow to know about the consistency and coherence of the program's intervention at each level as well as to build indicators which consent individualized follow-up. Fourth, the evaluation has to better define potential, target, and attended populations in order to verify if the program is in line with the coverture goals. Finally, it is important to check if the tension between schools' technical needs and the pedagogical need of each school community has been solved. This is a relevant point because programs included in this axis require—just as other similar national and international interventions—to clearly establish the link between infrastructure investment and better students' learning.

1 Issuance of National Educational Infrastructure Certificates (Spanish acronym: CIEN).

2 See, for example, Reimers and Cárdenas (2007).

Axis 4. Suitability of teachers and managers

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Choosing the best teachers is a great challenge. Surely, this is one of the biggest challenges of any educational system. With it in mind, five years ago, in the context of the Educational Reform, the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD) was created for regulating the entrance, permanence, and promotion in the teaching career with the objective of selecting, preserving, and strengthening the best teachers in the educational system. The logic behind this decision considers that the quality of students' learnings is directly linked to the quality of teaching.

This article suggests three objectives related to the SPD: on the one hand, to refer the proposed evaluation approach to measure the suitability of teachers and managers in the National Education System (Spanish acronym: SEN); on the other hand, to describe some of the main elements found so far in the assessment; and, finally, to think about the relevance of a future stage.

Evaluate the suitability of teachers from a governance approach

Governance refers to the distribution of power at all levels of the education system, from the ministries of education to schools and communities (UNESCO, 2009). It refers to the processes of coordination, exchange, and participation of political and social actors in the public policy decision-making process during the stages of design, implementation, and evaluation, which improves legitimacy.

Under these considerations, the evaluation that measures the suitability of teachers and managers seeks to account for the relationship of new articulations and interdependencies—formal and informal—among governmental actors of different orders and levels, as well as contexts, strategies, and actions that mark the path for the teaching career's policy. The aim is to elaborate, from a systemic perspective, an analysis of the construction of institutional and normative consensus on the professional service of those who educate our students. This assessment ranges from the causal logic in the design of initiatives, to the regulatory framework that structures the SPD's actions towards improving the quality of compulsory education in our country. Its objective is not to examine the implementation of the SPD or the results of academic achievement standardized tests, but to understand the coordination, decision, and communication processes of the said educational policy action.

Changing the regulation of the teaching career is no simple task. It implies transformations—both in everyday practice and in the normative framework—that will take

time before their results and effects can be fully visualized. Meanwhile, it is necessary to reflect and learn from the new forms of coordination and organization of knowledge, as well as from the consensus and practices put in place to improve the entry and permanence in the teaching practice.

Of all the initiatives derived from the Educational Reform, the SPD is the axis that has raised the most questions.

Elements for SPD assessment: findings to date

Since 2013, within the framework of the Educational Reform, game rules in the teaching profession's related politics have changed. New mechanisms have been established for admission, promotion, recognition, and permanence within the teaching service. Various types of evaluation have been considered—tests to evaluate knowledge, teaching projects, and evidences, self-assessment questionnaires, among others—as well as a mixed evaluation system: diagnostic, summative and formative. Likewise, the SPD contemplates a system of standards—profiles, parameters, and indicators—as specific referents for good teaching, and an incentives program based on the results of these evaluations.

The size of the implementation is not a minor one. There are several areas of opportunity—as many educational texts and analyses have emphasized—and they should be addressed with rigor and professionalism. Regarding governance-related challenges, it is worth anticipating some of the identified elements.

From the policy design:

- Regulatory frameworks should reflect institutional coordination at the federal level. But they should also pay attention to diversity in the SEN, so regulations start considering characteristics according to educational level, service modality, and educational function, among others.
- The SPD is only one element of the Educational Reform and it is fundamental to maintain a systemic vision; therefore, it is necessary to align and coordinate its actions with infrastructure and equipment policies and programs, study plans and programs, textbooks and educational materials.
- It is imperative to review the pedagogical consensus on teacher training, so it is consistent with the country's educational challenges and the new educational model: on the one hand, from teachers' initial education, with the transformation of teachers' training schools; and, on the other, from permanent training, through interventions focused in terms of professional origin, level, and educational modality, specialty, performance group, and federative entity.
- In this sense, the revision of the regulatory and operational framework of the Technical Assistance Service for Schools (Spanish acronym: SATE) is essential to strengthen the teaching profession.
- The attributions of instances involved in the SPD should be analyzed, clarified, and—when appropriate—redefined, specifying the corresponding attributions to local educational authorities.

- It is necessary to conciliate and strengthen the implementation of teaching assessment with all federative entities, from the revision of the normative framework that contemplates the actions related to vacancies, priorities, kinds of positions, etc., as well as the operation in the different types of dates, processes, and stages.
- The foregoing also involves reviewing the degree of decentralization of our educational system and its ability to function in a network.

From policy operation and communication:

- It is essential to consider strategies in order to support the development of institutional, administrative, and technical capacities for the SPD's management and operation in the entities.
- The SPD's ultimate goal is to raise the quality of education. In that sense, it is necessary to analyze the instruments and to review the results in order to ensure that the projected mechanisms effectively select the best teachers.
- It is necessary to meet the needs of schools through the use of evaluation results and establishing mechanisms for participation and interpellation.
- Finally—and, undoubtedly, this is very relevant—returning prestige to the teaching profession is a pending debt. We need to better communicate the purposes, decisions, and results of teachers' evaluations. It is essential to modify and inform the adjustments of those elements that led to the idea of punitive actions to the detriment of their profession.

What can be done in the future for the SPD?

A public action with the size of the SPD's proposal is an ambitious task for the SEN. Drawing and maintaining the best candidates for the teaching profession is a huge challenge, but this does not support, in any way, inaction in the identified areas of opportunity nor it justifies discrediting the lessons learned throughout this process.

Beyond the financial resources invested, the time for logistics and operational coordination, and the participation of a large number of involved people, it is about achieving learning in the implementation of teacher reforms, to have evidence, and to analyze what is worth improving and what we do not want to repeat.

In other words: there are valuable lessons learned on the road towards achieving a fairer policy for the teaching career. It is necessary to do what is relevant, from each trench, to contribute—with research, public service, civil society organizations, school community—with rigor and professional commitment towards all that is required to make adjustments that allow the improvement of educational reforms.

From this point of view, one of the central challenges of governance is in the coordination among different agents, institutions, and levels of government to achieve the suitability of teachers and managers. This is a complex matter

that requires agreements and consensus about the policies to be implemented and the paths to follow in order to succeed.

Finally, a stable institutional context with clear rules for all is needed. This is fundamental for this and any other long-term educational change. During the mentioned reform process many teachers asked: "What went wrong with the previous educational reforms? What should I change in my practice with this new proposal?" It is worth having these questions in mind before deciding to give a *clean slate*, because these questions will surely arise again at each change of administration.

Axis 5. Educational evaluation and improvement

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Towards a public-deliberation based governance

CONTEXT

The strategies derived from the 2013 Educational Reform lacked parliamentary debate, collegiate discussion, and public deliberation. In the spirit of *moving Mexico* to better stages of growth, it was forgotten that arguing, persuading, and dialoguing have a deep relation with the formulation of political policies (Majone, 1997) and with developing trust. However, the outgoing administration wanted to rule, mainly, through novel laws, far-reaching reforms, a selective administration of justice, a marked centralism, and substantial expenses in terms of public image.

The balance of such governmental model is being questioned thanks to the actual state of Mexican democracy. In fact, there are talks about the need to build an *effective governance* that, according to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE), must "ensure that all authorities in the educational system have the necessary competences so educational administration fosters joint responsibility and participation of all educational actors" (Backhoff *et al.*, 2018: 26). Under this notion, the Institute suggests: "to preserve the adequate role of the teachers' union, so it defends legitimate workers' rights without taking part in functions that are the authorities' responsibility, and without subordinating educational interests to gremial, personal, or group benefits" (Backhoff *et al.*, 2018: 26).

It is noteworthy that an autonomous, technical, and political organization such as the INEE proposes that a public policy objective should be to build a different kind of governance—an *effective* one, as it is said. At least three elements can be derived out from this notion. First, the professional advancement of federal and state bureaucracy—not only of

teachers—so they reach the *necessary competences* to manage efficient administrative processes.

Second, the mention of a *joint responsibility* of all political and social actors in relation to educational matters in our country: researchers, academicians, journalists, the staff working at state and federal ministries of public education, legislators, civil society representatives, as well as the media, judges, business owners, intellectuals, and parents; all of them are responsible for what happens in terms of Mexico's children, youths, and adults' learning.

Third, the need to have a normative referent when talking about governance; apparently, it is of *public interest* that the whole of society has the same opportunities to learn, improve its capacities, and reach global development. According to the INEE, accomplishing this must be put first, even before educational actors' own benefit. But, how are we going to convince a labor union about the supremacy of the *public interest* before their own benefit? Certainly, a reasonable amount of argumentation and open public debate will be needed.

Due to the clear plurality of the political actors in the national and global educational sector, and to the permanent ideological struggle among them, caused by the various viewpoints on reality they all have, it is suggested to seriously consider including public dialogue and deliberation in the new plans for educational governance. This proposal is based on three points: one of them is theoretical, another one institutional, and the third one has a practical nature.

THEORETICAL BASE

Policy analyzers agree that courses of action that solve social problems are not exclusively formed by cold, rational calculation (Majone, 1997; Aguilar, 2006); rather, there are more complex dimensions which have to be considered when formulating and implementing public policies. For example, there are histories, mores, and traditions within the *worlds of life* which can be discussed and renegotiated through *communicative rationality*. According to Jürgen Habermas (1987), this concept entails the institutionalization of mechanisms to freely express and defend criticisms from different social worlds and not only from the highest realms of power. This philosopher even states that actions can be rational if they are justified on the basis of an open debate in which actors participate under equal conditions (Baert, 1998).

INSTITUTIONAL BASE

In order to build an educational governance based on public deliberation, it is necessary to create an institutional structure which offers possibilities—and not only limitations—to broaden opportunities for free participation under *equal conditions*. This is a pending debt of all Mexican democratic governments (2000–2018). We all have the right to express ourselves, but some political and social actors have a larger capacity to do so; that is to say, in our current democratic system there is an asymmetry of power in terms of expression, protest, access to information, or dissent. In Mexico, educational lag comprehends over 30 million people, why do we rarely listen to the voices of those unable to read and write in socio-digital

networks, official speeches, or in the reports made by civil society organizations and think tanks? “Because illiterate people do not burn buses or block avenues,” answered a well-known researcher when this question was posed to him. To summarize, it is necessary to have a governance based on public deliberation and to create a structure of opportunities to broaden our deliberative and democratic competences.

PRACTICAL BASE

The first step towards establishing a governance based on deliberation for Mexico's educational sector has to do with recognizing that the resources generated by the evaluation policy—of which the INEE is responsible—have not effectively *encouraged* society to participate. The third issue of the magazine *Reformas y Políticas Educativas* offers and attempt to answer the question of how democratically elected governments and society have changed, through evaluation, their relations and the way they are organized; that is to say, the relation between evaluation and governance. One of the articles published in that magazine, signed by Felipe Hevia (2018), talks about the importance of including citizens in learnings evaluations. To do so, he selects five school-achievement tests—Program for International Students Evaluation (PISA), Third Comparative and Explanatory Regional Study (Spanish acronym: TERCE), National Plan for Learnings Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA), English Language Use and Understanding Test for Secondary School Graduates (Spanish acronym: EUCIS), and Independent Measurement of Learnings (Spanish acronym: MIA)—and compares them in order to evaluate their levels of consultation, participation, and scope. His conclusion is that, in spite of the fact that new educational-system governance forms have appeared, learnings evaluation and citizens' participation seem to be dissociated. Hevia's observation opens room for doubt in relation to the principle of *evaluating to improve*.

If governance is “a process through which actors in a society make decisions about their goals of coexistence [...] and the ways to coordinate themselves to achieve them...” (Aguilar, 2006: 90), a good amount of public deliberation and open dialogue will be needed to solve conflicts, to reconfigure dominant policy models and, perhaps—at last—to build more effective policies for the benefit of all children, youths, and adults in our country. €

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The future of the Educational Reform is in the classroom

The authors take a look into the future of education and sketch out the orientation that the Educational Reform should have in order to take to the classroom, where they are needed, the changes that will prepare Mexican children, teenagers, and youths to face the 21st-century demands.

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From the 18th to the 21st century: the educational paradox

Today, thinkers from all around the world agree that traditional educational models have achieved the purpose for which they were created (Gerver, 2013); however, by maintaining their core—principles and values—virtually intact, they do not meet today’s expectations, nor are they suitable to face the challenges of the 21st-century society—learning and innovation.

It is not a coincidence that this critical posture exists in the face of such panorama, for the results achieved—measured with international standardized tests like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Exam for Educational Quality and Achievement (Spanish acronym: EXCALE), and the International Survey on Teaching and Learning (Spanish acronym: TALIS)—in countries with economies similar to Mexico are widely known. In some cases, such results are considered a disaster because generations nowadays are not being formed with the abilities, competencies, and learnings needed to successfully face present-day society.

Cobo and Moravec (2011) state that there is a paradoxical coexistence of *education 1.0* with *society 3.0*. They explain that the former reflects the norms and practices that prevailed from preindustrial society to the industrial one (from the 18th century to the late 20th century). *Society 2.0* (20th century) is characterized by workers who interpret information, favor knowledge management, and make use of technology to share new ideas and propose new interpretations. Finally, *society 3.0* is viewed by these authors as the immediate future, brought about by rapid social and technological changes, constant globalization, horizontal redistribution of knowledge and relations, as well as the innovation society, guided and propelled by *knowmads*.¹

Just as it happens in many other developed or developing countries, our educational system maintains remnants of the past: teaching is led by the professor (who acts rather as a disseminator of contents); it is impersonal, homogenous, and promotes the standardization of evaluations; it is characterized by a division into levels, lessons, and assignments; and it is ruled by a strict activity timetable.

This teaching-learning system worked for the society which created it. With the industrial surge of that time, children began to perform precarious—even dangerous—jobs, until they ceased being employed as a part of the workforce. However, the decision was made to prepare them to respond to the economic model of the time, industrializing education: adults became transmitters of knowledge; hierarchical relations were established in the aim of identifying the link with children; and the jobs they were being prepared for were disconnected of one another in the aim of avoiding chaos and ambiguity, thus fragmenting knowledge.

In the 21st century we continue to educate with the same more-than-two-hundred-year-old model (or its remnants), professing to prepare with it the people who will face a future of global challenges—such is the paradox of education.

The Educational Reform set in motion by the Mexican State in 2013, among other objectives, aims at overcoming that model; however, for the living conditions of children, teenagers, and youths to change in a positive way, it is necessary for such reform to reach the classroom.

1 Cobo and Moravec define *knowmads* as “knowledge nomads. Creative, imaginative, innovative workers capable of working with anyone, anytime, and anyplace” (2011: 197-198). That is, they are valued for their knowledge.

Who is being evaluated in the 21st century?

Let's focus our gaze on the middle-higher level, the last stretch of compulsory education. Being young means finding oneself in a time of change, and it presents a fundamental opportunity for making momentous decisions: to leave infancy behind, to acquire new responsibilities, and to assume a different role in society. In Mexico, youths live in a highly-segmented society, generally associated with social and economic inequities, which are still part of the structural challenges faced by the country.

The passage to adult life represents a stage in which decisions that have an effect on the future are made: abandoning or finishing the middle-higher level, getting to legal age and entering the labor market, continuing on to higher education (in a lesser proportion), leaving the family core and forming a new home, as well as cohabitating, or marrying to one's partner, or becoming a mother or a father (Lloyd, 2005; Echarri and Pérez, 2007).

Youths have abilities to understand and use technology. They are better prepared to face today's challenges, and they are more aware of the world that surrounds them. Marc Prensky (2013) asserts that technological revolution has altered the physiology of their brains, which means they are capable of processing a huge amount of information at a great speed. They have even created a new form of communication: *textisms* (the use of parentheses, colons, numbers, and emoticons).

What to do? To educate 18th-century workers? Or, rather, to educate *knowmads*, leaders in the innovation and learning society? Undoubtedly, it is necessary to overcome the industrial paradigm in the understanding that we all possess different profiles and abilities. A teaching-learning system cannot maintain its relevance focused on enhancing particular competencies—such as fragmented memorization as opposed to synthetic and creative thinking—and particular evaluation instruments that leave many students behind because they are not capable of measuring the abilities nowadays required.

Currently, youths are being prepared for professions that will disappear in a future which (as we said before) is challenging and evolves at great speed. Following Prensky (2013), Moravec (2008) and Khanna (2016), youths must be formed to continually learn throughout their whole lives. In this framework, gradual development of competencies becomes greatly relevant—from basic to complex, particularly in regards to the creative use of learnings.

Youths of the current world process a huge amount of information, they learn on the Web and, most of the time, out of school. Thus, competencies will have to be understood as putting into play, in an articulated manner, and at the same time, the application of diverse learnings and knowledge, along with abilities and emotions, in such a way that they have tools to influence—in a substantiated manner—on social issues that are relevant and interesting for them: global citizenship, environmental conservation, safety in the Web, and addictions, among others.

Although the proposal of the new curriculum for middle-higher education looks towards the future, it is necessary to teach (and evaluate) in a more adaptable, flexible, dynamic,

and less segmented way for each disciplinary field. It is vital to stress that students are the very architects of their own knowledge and that new evaluation instruments must include those *invisible competencies and abilities* not yet found in current curriculums and that go even beyond the National Plan for Learning Evaluation (Spanish acronym: PLANEA) and PISA.

Without teachers, the Educational Reform will not reach the classroom

Since the 2013 Educational Reform, the Mexican State is building an institutional and normative apparatus with the aim of generating conditions of technical viability and feasibility—but also financial and institutional capabilities—for the implementation of the public policies associated to it.

Furthermore, a boost is given to the consolidation of educational evaluation culture in Mexico by endowing the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE) with autonomy, and by establishing the National System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE) as the instance responsible for organizing the actions and mobilizing the actors in order to implement a policy on the matter. Thus, the aim is to generate conditions for State action to reach schools.

However, there is a risk that, when students find themselves in the classroom with school desks and well-defined schedules, they will be able to predict how they will be evaluated three weeks later at eleven o'clock. What is more: they will do so in a space where the number of students increases, the professor is only a content disseminator, new technologies are incorporated into old practices, and the storing of disconnected information and its memorization are prioritized, generating *post-evaluation amnesia* (Cobo and Moravec, 2011).

We are moving towards an innovation and learning society (*society 3.0*), which is why we cannot allow for the disarticulation between the taught abilities and the ones required for the present world (and for creating and responding to a challenging future) to carry on.

Educating in the 21st century means substituting mechanical repetition of data for a transformation and practical utilization of knowledge; that is, to focus more in *how to learn* than in *what to learn*. In order to do so, it is necessary to combine systematically acquired knowledge (formal) with soft abilities (individual experiences and their interaction with others). This is not about replacing the channels for learning, but transforming them so they are pertinent to the reality of children, teenagers, and youths.

One of the consequences of the industrial model, from which our educational system stems, consists in establishing labels on human potential: winners-losers, advanced-lagging. This boosts focusing on measurable goals and segmented evaluations in the short term, instead of placing the focus on the real purpose of education—to learn, develop, and consolidate the ability to learn throughout one's whole life.

Let's return our gaze to middle-higher education. All youths learn and have a potential to achieve significant learning, as long as favorable conditions are generated. For

this, *teachers who design learning experiences* are needed to foster everyone's contribution to the learning of others. This means that the way of thinking and interacting of students in the classroom must change, and we must acknowledge that students learn in multiple ways, at different paces, and with different capabilities. That is:

- with the teachers' guidance, they are co-apprentices and co-teachers of the others;
- they analyze and study the problems that intrigue and fascinate them;
- they seek knowledge, abilities, and skills to solve them;
- they focus on problems, not on rigidly-divided subjects;
- they don't follow a single vision of excellence as a blueprint for life; and
- their challenge is to establish a vision of the future and build it with creativity, innovation, and every resource available.

Thus, a class can be designed to generate a *natural flux* by way of activities that foster reasoning and research, and of techniques that foster a global vision of day-to-day issues and focus on collaboration.

The multi-level usage of evaluations

For them to reach the classroom, evaluation results must be used differently by the actors who, at different levels and spheres of government, participate in the design, implementation, management, and operation of public education policies' programs, strategies, and projects.

Government organizations and public officials, independently of their responsibilities or normative powers, must place students as the focus of their decisions and of the design, formulation, and execution of their interventions. The challenge that stems from the construction of the New Educational Model for compulsory education is a major and complex one.

Another variable that it is necessary to consider is the one relative to the PLANEA results. These convey that, for the moment, the desired goals have not been reached, and that challenges and obstacles can be foreseen in the short and medium terms. In this sense, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that some of the interventions associated with public educational policy will be the object of adjustments, redesigning, or substitution on the basis of an evaluation based on robust studies and analyses from a technical and methodological perspective.

It would seem like there's still a long way to go until all government interventions reach the classroom, place the students at the center, and become more oriented towards achieving effectiveness (not only efficiency and efficacy) for public educational policy understood as the real change in the living conditions of children, teenagers, and youths.

Final thoughts

The following proposals to build the future of the Educational Reform in the classroom are presented:

- Considering *educational nano-evaluation*; that is, using evaluation results (strategic educational indicators and PLANEA indicators, for instance) to develop more pertinent and relevant interventions from the school and in the classroom.
- Developing an instrument that allows a longitudinal follow-up to the path of each student in compulsory education (from admittance and initial education to their graduation from the middle-higher level) with which to compile and systematize qualitative and quantitative data (educational indicators) on girls, boys, teenagers and youths, and to make it available for teachers, managers, and supervisors.
- Initiating the Technical Assistance System for Schools (Spanish acronym: SATE), which is, without a doubt, the cornerstone of the Educational Reform and the necessary condition for the latter to reach the classroom.
- Fostering an effective curriculum autonomy for basic education schools, focused on complying with the national curriculum but allowing for school communities to take decisions on parts of it, and to design their own educational contents to guarantee their pertinence, relevance, and interest.
- Developing and promoting a culture that considers evaluation as a fundamental decision-making tool that can have an impact on the improvement of education, on the comprehensive assessment of the educational system's quality, on the pedagogical improvement in schools, and, finally, on a transparent and timely accountability. €

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The Educational Reform in the federal entities

This research represents a first step towards diagnosing the present harmonization stage between state legislations and the organization of local educational authorities, on the one hand, and the legal standpoints of the 2013 Constitutional Educational Reform, on the other. It is a vast and comprehensive report that offers a broad view on the subject.

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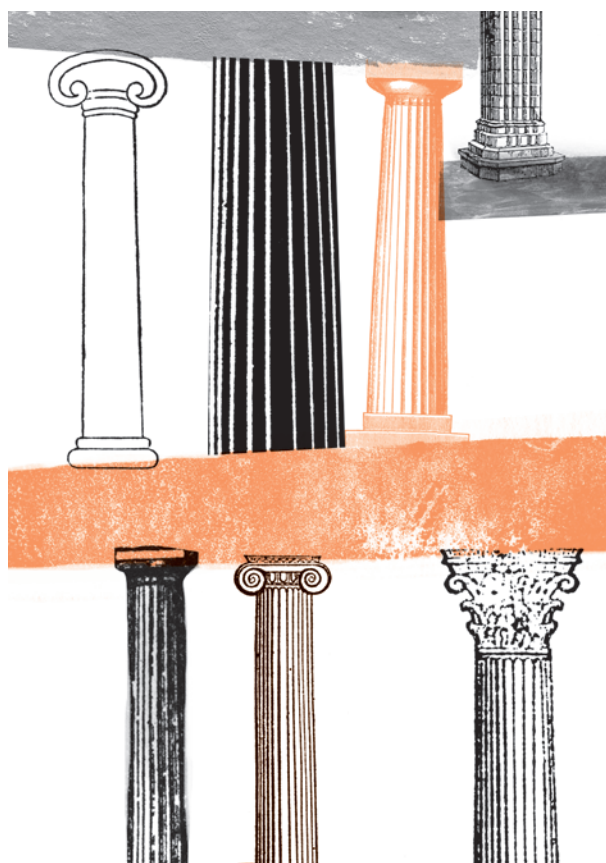
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Background

In 2013, articles 3 and 73 of our Magna Carta were reformed to propose a new institutional order by requiring that the State guarantees the right of every person to quality education. There were three main objectives to this change: recovering State governance over education, improving the quality and equity of basic education, and increasing the coverage and quality of high-school education.

The modification to the legal framework implied a series of measures focused on guaranteeing quality in the provision of the educational service, including the creation of the Nation a System for Educational Evaluation (Spanish acronym: SNEE), and the constitutional autonomy granted to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Spanish acronym: INEE). Also, provision was made for the creation of the Educational Information and Management System (Spanish acronym: SIGED), with the aim of generating precise information about the components of the National Educational System (Spanish acronym: SEN) and the autonomy of school management as a way of placing schools at its center.¹

Likewise, the Professional Teaching Service (Spanish acronym: SPD) was established so that admission, promotion, permanence, and recognition of teachers is carried out on the basis of individual merit. The constitutional reform developed in the consequent modifications to the General Educational Law (Spanish acronym: LGE), the enactment of



¹ Although provisional article 13 of the General Professional Teaching Service Law (Spanish acronym: LGSPD) stipulates that the SIGED must start operations within two years after this regulation comes into effect, the general guidelines were published in the *Federal Official Gazette* (Spanish acronym: DOF) on March 20, 2018.

the General Professional Teaching Service Law, and the INEE Law (Spanish acronym: LINEE), with the aim of regulating the new provisions and distributing responsibilities among the spheres of government pertaining to the educational system.¹

These transformations affected the organization of the Ministry of Public Education (Spanish acronym: SEP). These changes, gradual and resulting from various reforms to its *Internal Regulation*, were intended to bring greater efficiency in the operation of the new educational policy approaches. The Under-secretariat for Planning and Evaluation of Educational Policies, which was previously an administrative department with the same name, was created in 2013 (DOF, 2013). However, the following reform to its regulation did not occur until 2016, with various substantial changes directed towards consolidating the implementation of the Educational Reform.

The Under-secretariat for Planning and Evaluation of Educational Policies changed its name to Under-secretariat for Planning, Evaluation and Coordination because of the concurrent responsibilities, between the three orders of government and the INEE, regarding evaluation. This Under-secretariat incorporated the General Directorates for Educational Planning, Programming and Statistics, and for Educational Information and Management System. The Under-secretariat of Basic Education created the General Directorates for Educational Materials, Educational Management Development, and Continuous Education, Updating, and Professional Development for Teachers of Basic Education (DOF, 2016).

General coordinations were also established for the Decentralized Agencies and the Para-State Sector, Citizen Services, and the Presidential Instruction and Commitment Monitoring Unit in the Educational Sector. Furthermore, the inclusion into the organization chart of the Professional Teaching Service's National Coordination and General Coordination @prende.mx was formalized—given the promotion of the use of information and communication technologies (Spanish acronym: TIC)—as decentralized agencies of the SEP. The last 2017 reform included the General Directorate for Federalized Educational Wages Administration, responding to the creation of the Contributions Fund for Educational Wages and Operational Expenditure (Spanish acronym: FONE) within the Chief Administrative Office (DOF, 2017).

However, given the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the three orders of government, it was necessary to harmonize and coordinate the corresponding legal framework in the federal entities and in the organization of local educational authorities (Spanish acronym: AEL). This process has been uneven and it has faced difficulties in the 32 states.

This work addresses the aforesaid laws in the different entities, the transformations undergone in the organizational structures of local authorities, and the degree of harmonization with the federal legislation. It is divided into two sections. In the first one there is a balance regarding this last point; the legal framework considers the Political Constitution of each state and its educational laws, placing emphasis on the Professional Teaching Service. The second presents a brief exercise in the analysis of modifications made to the organizational structures of each secretariat and decentralized body.

The information presented here forms part of the work of the INEE's Coordination of Administrative Offices in the Federal Entities, the purpose of which is to give an account of the implementation of the Educational Reform within the local contexts.

Harmonization of state legislation

FEDERAL ENTITIES' POLITICAL CONSTITUTIONS

Although the Magna Carta in each entity must be adapted to the provisions included in the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States (Spanish acronym: CPEUM), at least regarding education, its contents do not include many elements present in article 3 of the federal regulation. Most constitutions have not been amended since the 2013 reform, and, therefore, they do not include the Professional Teaching Service, the actions of the INEE, educational evaluation, or the concept of *quality* as a characteristic of the provision of educational services. It is worth mentioning that most state basic and high-school education are compulsory, as a result of the reform to article 3 of the Constitution, published in February 2012.

Only the Political Constitution of the State of Sinaloa (Spanish acronym: CPES) mentions the INEE as the body in charge of issuing guidelines that the Executive Office will be subject to “through the competent agency” (CPES, 2018: 57), in order to comply with the responsibility of evaluating state-level education. The same regulation is the only one to mention the Professional Teaching Service, but does so in general, stating that they are “subject to compliance with the stipulations of the corresponding law” (CPES, 2018: 57).

There is no state political constitution that mentions the SNEE, the criteria for educational improvement, or the evaluation guidelines, among other elements that should set the pace for regulations in local education law. There is no reference to the SIGED either.

On the other hand, most local constitutions specify that the educational service will be provided under the terms of article 3 of the Constitution and its regulatory laws. It must be noted that the harmonization of the political constitutions was never discussed, only state-education laws. Therefore, the legal framework resulting from state constitutions is weak and does not have a great relevance in the national debate, despite representing a fundamental void in the pyramid structure of any legal framework.

¹ One may find a detailed analysis of the modifications to the LGE, and the content of the LGSPD and LINEE, in Bracho and Zorrilla (2015).

STATE EDUCATION LAWS

General Laws are rules and regulations issued by the Congress of the Union with the purpose of distributing powers among the spheres of government in specific areas. Regulation of constitutional articles has the objective of defining a common ground that state governments must adhere to when issuing their own laws. Consequently, general laws do not exhaust the legal process because they attempt to make federal entities to fulfill the responsibilities conferred on them as well as to incorporate elements that reflect their own peculiarities. Therefore, there should be agreement between the two legislations, and the conferred powers, and responsibilities should be assimilated without violating any laws that are exclusive to each.

Since the enactment of the LGE—in 1993, after signing the National Basic Educational Modernization Agreement (Spanish acronym: ANMEB) in May 1992, which implied the decentralization of the federalized education system—, the state congresses enacted laws to govern their own education systems. These must be periodically harmonized with the constitutional changes and the General Laws; therefore, a process of this kind took place in 2014, and it faced a series of difficulties in the local parliaments. Although, in a way, the SEP backed the harmonization process, there were constitutional controversies in eight entities and various observations were made regarding state legislations.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONTROVERSIES

The distribution of educational legislation's responsibilities among the three orders of government—municipal, state, and federal—, as well as the emergence of an autonomous organism, produced an unspecific distribution of powers that had an impact on the harmonization of local laws. Lobbying and pressure from teacher groups clouded the process and resulted, among other issues, in eight constitutional controversies solved by the National Supreme Court of Justice (Spanish acronym: SCJN).

The new distribution of powers within the framework of the Educational Reform resulted in confusion and problems within the context of harmonization. Subjects regarding the SPD as well as the INEE's autonomy caused ambiguity and complicated the activities of local congresses. The SEP's Legal Affairs Unit organized regional meetings in order to provide orientation on the task at hand, and even published a text with this aim: *Harmonization of Local Legislation in View of the Educational Reform* [*Armonización de la legislación local con motivo de la Reforma Educativa*] (Rodríguez, 2017). The aspects to consider, mentioned in this text, include elements of each of the three general laws —LGE, LGSPD, and LINEE—that must be included in state regulations.

The main reasons for the constitutional controversies revolved around the reassignment procedures for personnel with permanent appointment without satisfactory results after three performance-evaluation opportunities upon the entry into force of the General Law. The speed with which the Federal Executive power filed the claims following the publication of the state education laws' reforms is worth

mentioning: they were all introduced in 2014 and were resolved by the Supreme Court of Justice the next year. With particular attention, the government of the Republic followed the punctual compliance with the modifications by local congresses.

Adjustments were made in practically every state after the first reform, because they infringed on or did not fully integrate the stipulations of the general laws. Today, all state laws are in accordance with such laws. There are only two examples which may be legally liable: Nayarit, which does not include the components of the educational system in its state law; and Oaxaca, which omits the SPD as one of the components of the educational system in the entity. However, their legislations have not been modified in this regard.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING SERVICE

One of the most relevant points of the 2013 Educational Reform was regarding the SPD. In it, admissions, promotions, permanence, and recognitions are subject to periodic evaluations, therefore their regulation is indispensable. The powers of local education authorities in the subject are very broad, but the one that stands out is the administration of priority lists and the allocation of positions. However, in fourteen state education laws there is no chapter or section referring to the SPD or, if there is a mention to it, it is merely limited to establishing its supplementary nature with respect to the general laws.

For example, the Education Law of the State of Sonora (Spanish acronym: LEES) establishes the following in its title 1, chapter 12, "Professional Teaching Service":

Article 80. In basic and high school education, the admission, promotion, recognition, and permanence of teachers and personnel with managerial and supervision functions in the State educational institutions and their decentralized organisms, as well as the town councils, will be subject to the provisions of the General Professional Teaching Service Law, the General Education Law, and the Law of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (LEES, 2017: 38).

The Education Law of the State of Guerrero is merely a summary of the general regulations; it is limited to faithfully reproducing the issues pertaining to the AEL and those concurrent with the federal educational authority, established in articles 13 and 14 of the LGE, and in article 15 with regard to the town councils. In relation to the SPD, title 8, "Professional Teaching Service," it is only mentioned that the processes will be carried out based on the provisions of each article of the general laws.

Political pressures from teacher groups around the country, and not only militants of the National Coordination of Education Workers (Spanish acronym: CNTE), influenced the legislation process, especially in relation to the reassignment of personnel in service after failing to pass in three performance-evaluation opportunities. The most frequent motive for constitutional controversy was the reassignment process in the case of teachers who do not attain the level required

after their third opportunity. According to the LGSPD, personnel permanently appointed to their positions in this situation upon the effective date will be reassigned to administrative functions or offered participation in a voluntary retirement program.

To name one case, the Education Law of the State of Zacatecas, contested by constitutional controversy 48/2014, mentions four reasons for contesting. First, it grants an undue extension of the reassignment benefit to personnel without permanent appointment upon the entry into force of the LGE. Second, it permits reassignment in educational positions, not only administrative ones, as stipulated by the LGE. Third, it consents to reassignment within the public service, according to the acquired labor benefits and conditions. Lastly, it invades the exclusive powers of the INEE by assuming the right to define the components and mechanics of teachers' evaluation.

On the other hand, the Education Law of the State of Michoacán was contested in its article 139 for invading the federal sphere of competence in the intent to regulate the evaluation of teachers' performance.

With respect to the Education Law of the State of Sonora, constitutional controversy 40/2014 was based on the fact that it modifies the reasons for entering the SPD. In the explanatory statements, it mentions that "entering the service of basic and high-school education [...] shall be in order to fill positions that have been available once the right to promote oneself has been exhausted, a right of the workers based on their service" (SCJN, 40/2014). The document promoted by the Supreme Court argues that the mentioned text establishes a differentiated regime for entering the service, as it grants workers a basis for the right to participate preferentially in relation to those who are not.

One case that is worth further study is Baja California. There, the Congress issued a state law for the SPD, which was overridden by the SCJN through a sentence (47/2014) regarding a constitutional controversy. Its cancellation was due to an invasion in the exercise of responsibilities; to the establishment of a work regime for teaching personnel different to the one foreseen in the LGSPD; and the modification of the rules of reassignment to the service when a sufficient level is not achieved in the third permanence evaluation. The Professional Teaching Service Law of Baja California was issued in the exercise of legal responsibilities that correspond to the sphere of competence of the federal order. Its text assumes that, through it, the SPD is regulated by regulating the criteria, terms, and conditions for admission, promotion, recognition, and permanence in it. It also intends for work relations to be governed by state laws, when the definition and regulation of the SPD is a power reserved for the federation, which was exercised appropriately when issuing the general law on the subject.

Although we are faced with a concurrence of operational nature of the federal entities, they can only issue the necessary legislation to exercise the powers reserved to them by the federation regarding the SPD. Finally, provisional article 5 of the Professional Teaching Service Law of Baja California

modifies the terms for reassignment of personnel that does not pass evaluations for their permanence in the service.

Although there are no legal voids, and, generally, legislation is complied with, it is true that local laws do not surpass general law, and do not issue the necessary regulation to exercise the powers granted by the federation. Naturally, this generates obscurity in the institutional mechanisms regarding sensitive issues such as the selection of teachers to present the performance evaluation, and the assignment of positions to those who achieved the highest positions in the priority lists.

Organizational modification of local educational authorities

The orientation of educational policy at a federal level, and the responsibilities and powers granted to the AEL, have had an impact on the latter's organization. It is worth mentioning that the development of the organizational reforms has been unequal and conditioned by its evolution after the signing of the National Basic Educational Modernization Agreement (Spanish acronym: ANMEB). First off, there are still the nine decentralized bodies created in 1992 to receive the transfer of the federal education system, which function with their corresponding peculiarities.

The centralized bodies of Chihuahua, State of Mexico, Morelos, Nayarit, and Querétaro operate the federalized system with their own structure, and have a degree of coordination and collaboration with state secretariats. In Baja California and Tlaxcala, there is fusion and unified command in some areas. The cases of Colima and Quintana Roo also show unified command, but only in the case of the head of this area. The case of Oaxaca is peculiar, as the State Institution of Public Education of Oaxaca (Spanish acronym: IEEPO) entirely administers basic and normal education in the entity, as there were no state-supported schools prior to signing the ANMEB.

Although in twenty federal entities educational authority falls only on the ministries of education, they all have areas dedicated to the attention of state or federalized personnel separately. In Aguascalientes, the State Education Institute administers the educational system. In Mexico City, it is centrally controlled by the Federal Educational Authority of Mexico City, which is a public decentralized body of the SEP.

In a first analysis, the structures of local educational authorities include two aspects that do not appear to be fundamental to the understanding of its evolution: the organization of compulsory education and the areas of the SPD. This is because compulsory-education orders, at a federal scale, have propitiated significant changes in the organization of the AEL and also because the SPD has been the issue of greatest impact in the Educational Reform.

ORGANIZATION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Although entities have autonomy to organize their educational systems—as long as they comply with the stipulations in the general laws—, there is a notable trend of inertia towards mimicking local structures following the federal

model. This circumstance has been influenced, among other aspects, by the orders of compulsory enforceability of different educational levels. For example, the publication and implementation of the Program for Educational Modernization 1989-1994 and the signing of the ANMEB resulted in a reform to the internal regulation of SEP in 1994, which included the creation of the Under-secretariat for Basic and Teachers' Education and was itself rapidly reproduced in the structures of the local secretariats (as both levels—basic and teachers' university—had been transferred to the ANMEB framework).

Education in Mexico has been expanding in the last decades with the orders of compulsory high-school education in 1993, and preschool in 2002. Thus, in the first years of the 21st century, the segment of basic education was consolidated as compulsory. Sure enough, this caused modifications in the organizational structures, both in SEP and in educational agencies in the federal entities. The 2005 reform of the *Internal Regulations* of the Ministry of Public Education set the example for the new organization of the whole system.

Although teachers' college education was elevated to the rank of university studies in 1984, the SEP kept it linked to basic education in their organizational chart up to 2005, when the General Directorate of Higher Education for Education Professionals (Spanish acronym: DGESEPE) was created, attached to the Under-secretariat of Higher Education.

It also included, for the first time, the Under-secretariat of High School Education, a level which was granted special attention within the 2001-2006 Education Sector Program. With the order of compulsory enforcement of high-school education, enacted in 2012, and with its consequent expansion, federal entities granted this level greater importance. First, although slowly, the under-secretariats or directorates

of basic and teachers' higher education have lost relevance to give way to differentiated attention at every level: in Oaxaca, State of Mexico, and Zacatecas they are still acting.¹ Second, during the first decade of the 21st century, basic education was consolidated with the creation of the secretariats for exclusive attention to this educational sector; which resulted in independent attention to high school education. Third, most local education agencies have high-school and higher-education under-secretariats and directorates.

As a result of the 2012 order and the impulse provided by the 2013 Educational Reform—which ratified the 2008 Comprehensive Reform of High School Education—a trend has been observed towards the separation of high-school education from higher education. There are three secretariats that group compulsory education exclusively: Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Yucatán.² Puebla is the only state with an Under-secretariat of Compulsory Education (table 1).

It is appropriate to observe that the changes made have been gradual and slow, with no congruence with the powers and responsibilities granted to local education authorities in the last 25 years.

- 1 We must wait for the effects of the new educational model in the organization of this sector, as the improvement strategy for teachers' schools includes a redesign of the school curriculum based on the compulsory education plans and programs.
- 2 The Ministry of Education in Yucatán was reorganized after the order of compulsory high-school education was implemented; therefore, its organic structure does not include areas related to the attention of issues present in the 2013 Educational Reform.

Table 1. Organization of compulsory education

Secretariats of Compulsory Education	Under-Secretariat of Compulsory Education	Under-Secretariats of Basic, High-School and Higher Education	Under-Secretariat of Basic and Teachers' Education
Guanajuato Jalisco Yucatán	Puebla	Chiapas* Querétaro	State of Mexico Oaxaca** Zacatecas
Under-Secretariats or Directorates of High-School and Higher Education			
Aguascalientes Baja California Baja California Sur Campeche Chihuahua Coahuila	Colima Durango Guerrero Hidalgo Michoacán Morelos	Nayarit Nuevo León Quintana Roo San Luis Potosí Sinaloa	Sonora Tabasco Tamaulipas Tlaxcala Veracruz

Source: made by the author based on information provided by the members of the 32 DINEE, within the CDINEE's project "Legal framework and organizational design of local education systems".

* In Chiapas, the Under-secretariat of State Education has the direction of High-School Education and Higher Education.

** The IEED is the public decentralized body created in 1992 for basic and teachers' education. The entity has a Coordination of High School, Higher Education, Science, and Technology.

SPD'S STATE COORDINATIONS

One of the pillars for the 2013 Educational Reform was the creation of the SPD to regulate the admission, promotion, permanence, and recognition of teachers and management, with the purpose of placing merit as the guiding principle for a career as a teacher, and to end corporate clientelism. To exercise its powers in the subject, on November 14, 2013, the SEP created the Professional Teaching Service National Coordination (Spanish acronym: CNSPD), a decentralized body with technical, operational, and managerial autonomy.

Despite the fact that it was not regulated by any legislation, joining the skills and powers with local education authorities—included in the LGE and the LGSPD—led, as of 2014, to the creation of the state coordinations of the SPD. Their development has been uneven, as we will see below.

Only in the State of Mexico, it is a decentralized body of the Ministry of Education.

Querétaro and Veracruz are the only entities where the functions related to the SPD fall on the Basic Education Services Unit (Spanish acronym: USEBEQ)—in the State of Querétaro—, and the Unit for Planning, Evaluation, and Educational control, in Veracruz. The case of Querétaro is somewhat confusing, where it only operates the evaluation processes for the federalized system, administrated by the USEBEQ, but there is no such unit in the Ministry of Education to administrate the state system.

Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, and Quintana Roo have their own coordination at an under-secretariat level: the second presents an interesting variable, as the duties fall on the Under-secretariat of Human Resources and Professional Teaching Service. The Secretariat of Education of Quintana Roo has an Under-secretariat of Professional Teaching Service, with three directorates: Educational Evaluation of the Professional Teaching Service, Professional Training, and Development; the first is in charge of evaluating the local educational system, and it represents a unique case in the country.

In Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Durango, Sonora, and Zacatecas, the coordinations depend directly on the Head of this area.

A different situation prevails in Chiapas, Guerrero, Jalisco, Nayarit, Tabasco, and Yucatán, where there is no order for the creation of coordinations, and there has been no incorporation into the organic structure of any institution.

In four states, it was detected that a certain area of their Ministry of Education works as a liaison with the CNSPD: in Michoacán, it is the Teaching Career Directorate; in San Luis Potosí, the Department for Updating Teachers in Service; in Yucatán, the Department of Administrative Procedures; and in Oaxaca there is only one person named to carry out this function (table 2).

Conclusions

This brief description of the regulations and organizational design of educational authorities presents the voids in their legal frameworks and structures from their constitutional changes in 2013. This is translated into low relevance for

compliance to the assigned tasks. From a federal perspective, large gaps can be observed that need attention in order to achieve the correct implementation of the Educational Reform. Initially, no major transformation was undertaken within the SEP; instead, some areas were created for attention to different aspects of the reform. There was also no follow-up in the federal entities for the harmonization of local legislation and organizational structures, nor were any mechanisms created for coordination between the different orders of government. This resulted in very different processes in the evolution and development of the AEL. Also, differences in their technical capacities and specific pressures of local environments resulted in different legal voids that are translated into an incipient regulation of actions, and the persistence of discretionary practices.

This is a deep problem, because the harmonization of the political constitutions in the various federal entities has not even formed part of the debate, at least in the last five years. Although initial attention was centered on state education laws, their harmonization is still incipient and the distribution of powers and skills among the different educational authorities is unclear.

The organization of the AEL shows an alarming disparity if we consider that processes, such as those corresponding to the SPD, should be carried out with a certain uniformity. This is seen in other cases, such as the evaluation of the educational system and continuous education for teachers in service.

These legal voids necessarily influence the operation of the Educational Reform—and any other federal order—because if not even this legal framework is duly ordered, then there is room for obscurity and for discretionary practices. Achieving these changes in a federal system is a very complex task, given the autonomy of the states, and it is a determinant factor when fulfilling projects of this dimension.

It is essential to explore the link between the legislation in force and the actions for improvement presented in government-planning documents; that is, the state-development plans and the sectorial programs. This activity must not lose sight of the regulations regarding state planning because, although regulation alone is not sufficient for the promotion of the necessary changes, it is of great concern that we have an incipient legislation as the basis for the operation of the national education system.

Although lack of efficacy in the task of implementing educational policy is mostly attributed to the will of a few actors, it is true that there are no robust and solid-enough legal frameworks to operate national regulations and local initiatives on the subject.

This work opens up another path of analysis and research of the actors and political groups in the local environment, but the original problem—we sustain—is related to the existence of legal voids that permit a higher degree of discretionary practices. Although, to a certain level, diversity in the framework of a federal State is *normal*, it is also true that it does little to help incipient state legislation to advance towards the correct decentralization of national public life. €

Table 2. Hierarchical level of the SPD's state coordinations

Under-secretariat / Directorate	Directorate	Head of area's personnel	Decentralized body	Without legal form	Function absorbed by another area
Aguascalientes Guanajuato Quintana Roo	Hidalgo Morelos Nuevo León Puebla Sinaloa Tamaulipas Tlaxcala	Baja California Baja California Sur Campeche Chihuahua Coahuila Colima Durango Sonora Zacatecas	State of Mexico	Chiapas Guerrero Jalisco Michoacán Nayarit Oaxaca San Luis Potosí Tabasco Yucatán	Querétaro Veracruz

Source: made by the author based on information provided by the members of the 32 DINEE, within the CDINEE's project "Legal framework and organizational design of local education systems".

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