

Chapter 4

2013 Mexico's Education Reform: A Multi-dimensional Analysis



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4.1 Introduction

In February 2013, the Mexican Congress approved a constitutional change to shift education policy throughout the country. The new amendment sought to ensure a quality education for all students, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in the twenty-first century, as recognized by organizations such as the World Bank, the OECD, and others (SEP, 2017a). The Mexican constitution previously guaranteed the right of all individuals to a free education, but the new language pushed this concept further - guaranteeing a “quality” universal education that included educational infrastructure, new school organization, and – most polemically – a “suitable” teacher (Mexico, 2016). Coupled with three administrative laws, the education reform that began in 2013 (hereafter referred to as the “Reform”) sought a major cultural shift, first by reasserting federal control over the education sector, and later by promulgating a new pedagogical and curricular model through its “New Education Model” (*Nuevo Modelo Educativo*, “NME”) (SEP, 2017a). However, such a sequencing limited initial stakeholder engagement, leading to political turmoil that ultimately hindered the Reform’s implementation and lasting impact.

Collectively, the Reform had two main goals, one explicit, to improve the quality of education and one implicit, to allow the Federal government to retake control of the education sector, as over time much control had shifted to teacher unions. These changes aimed to fundamentally alter the power dynamics that had existed in Mexico’s education sector and previously limited the state’s capacity to conduct education policy. The architects of the Reform argued that without seizing control

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of the sector from teacher unions, it would be impossible to implement the shift towards twenty-first century competencies (“21CC”) that they envisioned. As a result, the sequence that followed first prioritized institutional and political approaches before focusing on the pedagogical and curricular aspects that more directly affected teaching and learning. Reformers hoped that this succession would radically transform national education culture, however, when combined with the short political cycle in Mexico, this order resulted in a limited implementation of the pedagogic components.

The Reform process began before President Enrique Peña Nieto’s inauguration as part of the structural reform proposed by the transition team and later named the *Pacto por Mexico* (“Agreement for Mexico”). The Reform was one of the first *Pacto* laws to take effect in February 2013, but its implementation took the Department of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*, “SEP”) longer than anticipated, beginning in 2015 and not reaching full implementation until 2017 (see [Appendix A](#)). In addition to creating a new legal and institutional framework, the Reform began by executing a set of teachers’ evaluations that substituted political considerations with a merit-based system to appoint new teachers, promote them within a structured professional pathway, and determine who remained in the classroom. The Reform also transformed relations between schools, communities, local and state governments, and federal entities that make up Mexico’s education sector. Finally, the Reform introduced new pedagogies and curricula to educate students to be twenty-first century global citizens. As mandated in the constitution, the new model contained a set of standards, guidelines and teaching practices that not only prioritized teacher autonomy and revalued teacher agency, but also guaranteed a new type of instruction capable of achieving the Reform’s ambitious goals.

This paper will begin by analyzing Mexico in international and domestic contexts to understand the urgency of the Reform. It will then use Reimers (2020b, c) five perspectives on education change to analyze the Reform and evaluate the sequence in which it was implemented (See [Appendix B](#)). It also argues that an uneven commitment of state governments to implement the policies of the Reform hindered its adoption. The paper concludes by outlining the results of the Reform to date and summarizing the relationship between the five perspectives. Ultimately, we argue that the initial deprioritization of pedagogical aspects stymied the cultural shift towards a 21CC model that the Reform sought. When coupled with a limited political cycle, the Reform’s sequence left little time for full implementation of its more pedagogical and popular aspects, such as the New Education Model (*Nuevo Modelo Educativo*, “NME”), and faced dramatic reprisal from the subsequent presidential administration.

4.2 International Context

The *Pacto* reforms passed at the beginning of the Peña Nieto administration were influenced by international policies and pressures. Scholar Carlos Elizondo Mayer-Serra explains that one factor leading to the broad support of the *Pacto* reforms was a growing consensus around the need for structural reforms to encourage economic growth, especially the reforms that had been suggested by international organizations, such as the OECD, for over a decade (Mayer-Serra, 2017, p. 28). Former Secretary of Education Aurelio Nuño Mayer echoed this sentiment, explaining that the *Pacto* sought a suite of reforms to facilitate greater integration into the global economy through increased economic competition, access to resources, and financial reform (A. Nuño Mayer, personal communication, January 29, Nuño Mayer, 2020).

Results from the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) that situated Mexico at the bottom of the international distribution of student learning outcomes also spurred action (OECD, 2014). A year before the introduction of the Reform, the OECD released a detailed assessment of each participating country's performance on the 2012 PISA exam. An analysis of Mexico's results revealed that, while the country's 2012 scores showed a stark improvement from its 2003 results, it still scored 16% below the OECD average, with a mean of 413 in mathematics that placed students on the second from the bottom of six possible levels of proficiency (OECD, 2013). Further, more than half of 15-year-olds in Mexico failed to meet the minimum achievement benchmark in mathematics, such that there was a 2 year gap in mathematical performance between the Mexican and OECD averages (Cabrera Hernández, 2018).

Analyses of the existing curriculum and Mexico's knowledge assessment, the National Plan for the Evaluation of Knowledge (PLANEA) exam, further demonstrated these gaps. More than 50% of the students did not meet minimum benchmarks in language and communication (INEE, 2015). Even worse, over 66% of Mexican learners did not score above the minimum benchmarks in mathematical knowledge (INEE, 2015). Additionally, the educational model failed to arm pupils with socioemotional skills, namely interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities, that are integral to achieving success in today's globalized world (Hrusa, Moch Islas, Schneider, & Vega, 2020). Global demand and advancement in technology put a premium on education and skilled labor, requiring that education reform experts focus on the development of 21CC (OECD, 2019).

Educator results were similarly discouraging. TALIS results from 2012 showed an important need to update pedagogical practices to better support students in their development of 21CC (Reimers, 2018). Reimers (2018) found that one in ten teachers, and two in five primary school teachers, had not received university training. Likewise, only three out of five teachers in Mexico had received specific training to be teachers, 33% had not received specialized training in the subjects they were teaching, and only three out of four teachers felt prepared to teach (OECD, 2014).

Although the majority of Mexican teachers reported having received some type of professional training, more than a quarter reported that the training they had received was not related to the subject they were teaching (Reimers, 2018).

OECD and PISA reports provide critical context for the Reform's emphasis on universal, 21CC, quality education. Reports from the TALIS and PISA increased international pressure on Mexico. Internally, PLANEA results spurred Mexican civil society to push for a deep pedagogical and political transformation that it viewed as fundamental for the country's integration into an everyday more globalized world.

4.3 Domestic Context

Mexico was governed by a one-party hegemonic system from its revolution in 1910 until the defeat of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI) in 2000. During this period, the PRI consolidated a corporatist governance structure in which political interest groups such as unions (*Confederación de Trabajadores de México*), farmers (*Conferencia Nacional Campesina*), the military (*Union Revolucionaria*), and others (i.e. *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares*) maintained representation in internal party organisms (Córdova, 2014). There was an understanding that economic and political benefits were granted only to those who aligned with the PRI's interests (Gindín, 2008). Under this corporatist model, it was expected that the government would ignore corrupt practices in exchange for electoral support (Audelo Cruz, 2005). Such practices were common in the most powerful labor union in the education sector, the National Union of Education Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, "SNTE"), that was responsible for position assignments, promotion decisions, and salary allocations for teachers (Tuckman, 2013). As stated in the World Bank's, 2018 report "Learning to Realize Education's Promise," "evidence from...Mexico suggests that union behavior (and ability to resist reform) depends on the influence of partisan identities, organizational fragmentation, and the competition for union leadership" (World Bank, 2018, p. 192).

The electoral victory of right-wing opposition candidate, Vicente Fox (from the *Partido Acción Nacional*, "PAN" - National Action Party), in the year 2000 began a new era of democratic plurality in Mexico (Woldenberg, 2012). This altered political landscape, however, did not translate into a new governance model. Fox continued to rely on existing power structures, perpetuating the political alliance with teachers' unions. Despite largely perpetuating the status quo, President Fox did create a new, independent entity to evaluate the education system, increase transparency, and heighten public accountability (SEP, 2002). The National Institute of Educational Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa*, "INEE") would be a critical actor in all successive education reforms, and signaled a larger shift towards a technical, research-based approach for assessing education policy and progress (Hrusa et al., 2020).

The political alliance that developed between President Fox and the SNTE was further solidified during Felipe Calderón's administration from 2006 to 2012. Calderón depended on a political alliance with the SNTE's newborn political party, the *Partido Nueva Alianza* ("PANAL") to narrowly defeat leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador by a margin of 0.56% in the 2006 presidential election (INE, 2014). Deeply linked to the SNTE, Calderón proceeded to grant SNTE leaders key administrative positions in the SEP, thus entrenching SNTE power over the education sector. In contrast, Enrique Peña Nieto's 2012 electoral victory relied on a coalition that included the PRI but not the PANAL.

Historically, Mexico's education system has been highly centralized under the SEP. With 36.4 million pupils, more than two million teachers and 260,000 schools, this level of centralization can present challenges (INEGI, 2016). On paper, hiring and salary decisions were jointly decided by the SEP and local education authorities ("*Autoridades Educativas Locales*," AELs) through split commissions, however, the SNTE often controlled government appointees and, in many cases, also had allies in key SEP and state-level positions. The only way to gain a public teaching position was by graduating from one of the "Escuelas Normales" (teacher colleges) which guaranteed a post for all graduates. Such a policy took agency away from school principals who had no control over hiring decisions. At a local level, promotions were sanctioned by the unions, and the criteria used were tied to demonstrated loyalty to the union and active participation in union strikes and marches (Muñoz Armenta, 2008).

In a country with stark economic inequality, teaching positions were considered a source of financial stability, which granted unions considerable power over their members, particularly in low-income and rural communities. A perception of the Reform as potentially threatening the livelihood of these communities was particularly true in Mexico's southern states (Chiapas, Oaxaca, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Veracruz), which had the lowest rankings on the Human Development Index (Permanyer & Smits, 2018) in Mexico and where the National Coordinator of Education Workers (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*, "CNTE"), the most radical section of the SNTE, maintained a larger presence. Educational policies that placed life-long teaching positions in jeopardy were perceived as major disruptors to the social fabric, causing significant uproar. This response helped reinforce the message asserted by radical members of the union that the Reform was meant to further marginalize the already excluded communities of these states (López Aguilar, 2013; Ahmed & Semple, 2016). Peña Nieto wanted to demonstrate the extent to which his administration would back the Reform, so soon after it was signed into law, he imprisoned SNTE president Elba Esther Gordillo on charges of embezzlement (Tuckman, 2013). Such an action was intended to show the government's commitment to ending corrupt and clientelistic practices that had become rampant within the education sector (Muñoz Armenta, 2008). Nonetheless, it fueled the narrative that the administration was targeting teachers (Gómez Zamarripa & Navarro Arredondo, 2018).

4.4 Analysis of the *Reforma Educativa* in a Five Dimensional Framework

Viewing the Reform through each of Reimers' five dimensions of the education system elucidates the logic, goals, strategies, successes, and shortcomings of the Reform. While the frameworks are in no way mutually exclusive, Reimers explains that an attention to each dimension allows for the examination of a reform's "internal coherence" and can also guide the sequencing of reform (Reimers, 2020b, p. 9) that emerge as governments set priorities due to limited economic and political resources. The sequence of these stages is important to the success of a reform's multidimensional goals, as is evident in Mexico's case.

The Reform was primarily a political and institutional reform that sought a national cultural shift through the promulgation of a new educational model. The genesis of the reform is most visible when focusing on the political aspects that foreground how "education affects the interests of many different groups, and that those vary within and across groups, and may be in conflict" (Reimers, 2020b, p. 39). An attention to this political dimension not only highlights the Reform's roots in Mexico's shifting political landscape but also its deep connection to Peña Nieto's other structural reforms. The early Reform actions that followed were aimed at institutional aspects of education, what Reimers' defines as "various structures, processes and resources that provide resiliency to the system of education" (Reimers, 2020c, p. 8). Constitutional changes fundamentally altered the legal framework governing Mexican education and necessitated political actions, namely the creation of teacher performance exams that then flared tensions between actors.

It was not until halfway through the Reform that actions emphasizing the psychological and professional dimensions of educational change emerged, such as a new educational model and a push for teacher professional development to promote 21CC. Reimers defines the psychological frame as concentrating on "theories of learning which undergird the learning and teaching process for students, teachers, administrators and parents" (Reimers, 2020c, p. 8). In the case of Mexico, the first clearly communicated focus on pedagogical and curricular best practices surfaced with the New Education Model (*Nuevo Modelo Educativo*, "NME"). Similarly, the professional aspects, those that seek to align current and required levels of professional capacity, did not crystallize until the broad stakeholder engagement during the NME's development. They were further developed in the last years of Peña Nieto's administration when the national strategies for teacher professional development were published.

Adopting Reimers' cultural framework focuses attention to the "broader set of external social expectations, norms, and values which define what are accepted education goals and practices" (Reimers, 2020c, p. 8) and it is here that we see the ultimate goals of the Reform. The Reform sought to induce three major changes to the educational landscape in Mexico: create a student-centered education model, increase educator accountability and professionalism, and shift power from unions to school communities and the SEP (Moch Islas & Schneider, 2018). Each change

would represent a significant shift in the culture around education, and each was ultimately difficult to accomplish due to the limited temporal scope of the reform and the implementation challenges it faced at a subnational level. Arguably, had the dimensions of the reform been implemented in a different order, namely the NME and professional development prior to evaluations, it could have eased the political acceptability of the Reform and allowed for greater progress towards its cultural goals. The following sections will examine the Reform under each of Reimers' five dimensions, ultimately arguing that the sequence in which priorities were addressed led to the Reform's major setbacks, shortcomings, and, ultimately, its repeal. While each section focuses on a particular frame, the policy changes pursued by the Reform ultimately aligned behind two goals: the explicit (improved educational outcomes due to new pedagogical practices) and the implicit (reasserting federal control of the education sector).

4.4.1 Institutional

The Reform began with major institutional changes that outlined the mechanisms necessary to transform the education sector. Reimers (2020a) refers to the institutional frame as one that "focuses on the educational structures, norms, regulations, incentives, and organizational design which provide stability and meaning to the work of teaching and learning and to all social interactions designed to support them" (Reimers, 2020c, p. 18) The Reform sought to create a new legal and institutional framework, by first amending Article 3 of the Constitution and the General Law of Education (LGE) and then passing the General Law of the Professional Teacher Service (LGSPD), and the National Institute for Education Evaluation Law (LINEE) in September 2013 (Ramírez Raymundo et al., 2016). Rewriting Article 3 was a vital institutional driver of the Reform.

The LGSPD created the new Professional Teacher Service ("*Servicio Profesional Docente*," SPD) to systematize regulations for the hiring, recognition of performance, and contract renewal of teachers, as well as the newly created pedagogical advisors position ("*Asesor Técnico Pedagógico*," ATP). Teachers, ATP's, and school administrators were all evaluated under the new system (Moch Islas & Schneider, 2018). Working in conjunction with the INEE and local education authorities ("*Autoridades Educativas Locales*," AELs), the National Coordination of the SPD was charged with organizing competitive hiring pools from which aspiring teachers would be selected based on clear, rigorous criteria (Mexicanos Primero, 2018). Under the SPD, there were two pathways to advance in the teacher profession, one vertical and one horizontal (LGSPD, 2013). The vertical pathway outlined how teachers could attain leadership positions, moving from roles as a teacher to that of supervisor, ATP, or principal, while the horizontal ladder was tied to one's performance within their given role (SNTE, 2015). Progress on the horizontal ladder, metered by the recognition exam, included salary increases that could add up to more than 122% of their base salary (LGSPD, 2013). Movement on both pathways

was determined by one of four evaluations- hiring (*ingreso*), ability to keep a teaching position (*permanencia*), recognition of performance (*reconocimiento*), and career progression (*promoción*) (LGSPD, 2013). The LGSPD also outlined educators', ATPs' and school administrators' right to professional development and created several institutional mechanisms to provide that training (outlined in Sect. 3.3).

Another component of the legal framework created by the Reform was the LINEE that granted autonomy and new responsibilities to the INEE (INEE, 2018). In conjunction with the LGSPD and changes to the LGE, this entrusted the INEE with five primary tasks:

1. Design and implement assessments of the education system;
2. Coordinate the National System for Educational Evaluation (*Sistema Nacional de Evaluación Educativa*, "SNEE");
3. Create regulatory frameworks to guide the evaluations of teachers, administrators, policies, and programs;
4. Analyze and publicize evaluation results;
5. Issue recommendations that require a formal response from the SEP.

(Hrusa et al., 2020)

This focused mission and newly granted status of an "autonomous constitutional body" (LINEE, 2013) allowed the INEE to become a technical entity that was independent from the political cycles, promoted research-based pedagogies, and served as a "counterweight" to the SEP (Reimers, 2018). The LINEE also positioned the National System for Educational Evaluation (*Sistema Nacional de Evaluación Educativa*, "SNEE"), which consisted of the executive branch of the federal government (President and SEP), the INEE, and the AELs, as the highest authority in education (Martínez Bordón, 2018).

The empowerment of the INEE was closely aligned with the Reform's goals to transition to a merit-based hiring and promotion system, improve student outcomes by empowering community participation in education, and broaden control of the educational sector (Schmelkes, 2018). The INEE fostered the transparency integral to merit-based employment systems and greater social participation by disseminating regulatory frameworks (*lineamientos*) and indicators, overseeing evaluation mechanisms, and publishing diagnostic and evaluative reports (LINEE, 2013). As scholars seek to understand the Reform, it is important to highlight the role of altering institutional and legal systems to shift control from teacher unions to the state. The architects of the Reform viewed these institutional changes as the foundation of this new system (Nuño, 2020). For them, it was a necessary first step to allow for transformations in other areas of the education sector. However, because it was the product of an agreement between the major political parties with limited stakeholder involvement it was perceived as a top-down strategy. This perception caused the more radical factions of the teachers' union to reject the reform and to block the buy-in of constituencies critical to its success: the teachers.

4.4.2 Political

Analyzing the reform from a political perspective focuses attention on the Reform's genesis as part of the *Pacto por Mexico* ("Agreement for Mexico") as well as the initial stages of implementation. This section looks first at the political context of the Reform, identifying the reassertion of state control, after decades of corporatist governance structures (Audelo Cruz, 2005; A. Nuño Mayer, personal communication, January 29, 2020), as a major goal of the Reform (Granados Roldán, 2018; Granados Roldán, 2018b; Hrusa et al., 2020; Martínez Bordón & Navarro Arredondo, 2018). Turning next to implementation, we analyze how the Reform sought to shift political and financial power through the sequence of its priorities and altering of governance structures. Finally, we examine how the Reform sought to empower third-party evaluative bodies in order to increase transparency and accountability of all actors.

Immediately after President Peña Nieto took office, an unprecedented agreement was signed by the leaders of all three major political parties in Congress. The *Pacto por Mexico* was a series of 95 agreements divided into five categories: democratic governance; transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption; civil rights and liberties; security and justice; and economic growth, employment and competitiveness (Mayer-Serra, 2017). Together, the *Pacto* reforms sought major structural changes in the electoral, judicial, fiscal, economic, labor, telecommunications, energy, and education sectors (Echávarri & Peraaza, 2017). When considering the political aspects of the Reform, its emergence within the *Pacto* cannot be ignored. The Peña Nieto administration sought a broad series of policy goals that previous administrations had not succeeded in achieving (e.g. liberalization of the energy sector) (Mayer-Serra, 2017). During the 70 years of hegemonic PRI political control, a strong corporatist model of governance emerged in which the government empowered organized factions, such as labor unions or private business, in exchange for electoral power (Audelo Cruz, 2005). Both the Fox and Calderón administrations had attempted broad reforms after the PRI was defeated in the 2000 presidential election, but neither succeeded in enacting structural change that challenged established stakeholders (Mayer-Serra, 2017).

Like with other *Pacto* reforms, architects of the Reform viewed the disruption of existing power dynamics in the education sector as key to implementing structural reforms. Contact with other stakeholders was thus limited and initial implementation was swift to avoid pressure from interest groups (Mayer-Serra, 2017). Martínez Bordón and Navarro Arredondo (2018) note that while many of the topics addressed in the Reform had circulated in public debate and discussion for much time prior, there remained a lack of stakeholder engagement during the Reform design process. Given the polemic nature of each *Pacto* reform, it was feared that concessions for stakeholders in one *Pacto* agreement (e.g. inviting the SNTE into the design of the Reform) would lead to concessions for stakeholders in all, thus threatening the success of the *Pacto* (A. Nuño Mayer, personal communication, January 29, Nuño Mayer, 2020). The arrest of SNTE leader Esther Elba Gordillo at the beginning of

the *Pacto* sent a clear message to all union leaders that opposition to reforms would not be accepted (Mayer-Serra, 2017).

The most controversial aspects of the Reform, teacher evaluations with negative consequences for failure, were established and implemented in the first phase of the Reform in order to assert governmental leadership of the education sector (Moch Islas & Schneider, 2018). By creating the SPD with its required exams and alternative pathways to entering the teacher profession (INEE, 2017), the Reform claimed control over functions that had historically been carried out by teacher unions. Rapidly enacting institutional changes without pause to involve other stakeholders was political by design, and had significant ramifications for future implementation.

The Peña Nieto administration decided to confront the teacher unions with all instruments at its disposal. When the SNTE retained members' paychecks, the government responded by redesigning the control of federal budget and teacher payroll through the creation of the Contribution Fund for Educational Payroll and Operating Expense (*Fondo de Aportaciones para la Nómina Educativa y Gasto Operativo*, "FONE") (Granados, 2020). When the SNTE paralyzed a state's economy by blocking highways and railroads, the government sent police to break picket lines (Animal Político, 2016). When the SNTE brought 3400 teachers cases before a judge, the court ruled in favor of the SEP in over 90% of the cases (Granados, 2020). After the SNTE walked out of schools to protest, the government amplified the voice of parents who demanded that teachers return to the classroom through press briefings, interviews, and media coverage (Chaca, García, & Martin, 2016). The SEP also asserted political control by redesigning state education agencies that had been heavily influenced by non-governmental stakeholders. In state governments, around 60 to 70% of the local secretaries of education, depending on the year, had some form of an affiliation with the SNTE (Granados, 2020). The most famous example of which is the State Institute for Oaxacan Public Education (*Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca*, "IEEPO").

Responsible for the distribution of teacher positions and SEP-provided financial resources, the IEEPO's organization, members, processes, and operations were largely controlled by the National Coordinator of Education Workers (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*, "CNTE") (Briseño, 2015). On July 15, 2015, the Governor of Oaxaca dismantled the IEEPO and replaced it with governor-appointed public administrators in order to recuperate regional resources and governmental authority (Granados Roldán, 2018a; Granados Roldán, 2018b). This change was predicted to be so polemic that hundreds of state and local police were posted outside of the IEEPO prior to the announcement, demonstrating once again the political priorities and consequences of the Reform (Briseño, 2015). Political tensions came to a head in Nochixtlán on June 19, 2016 when CNTE protests and government forces clashed, leaving six dead and over 100 wounded (Partlow, 2016).

The Reform also created local, state, regional, and national level School Councils for Social Participation (nationally the *Consejo Nacional de Participación Social en la Educación* "CONAPASE" and locally the *Consejo Escolar de Participación Social*, "CEPS") to distribute the power it had gained and share best practices at

different scales. At a regional level, the councils became forums where state governors and the SEP discussed and co-constructed the implementation of learning communities (Nuño, Nuño Mayer, 2020). At a local level, CEPS engaged citizens as key actors in the design, implementation and evaluation of education policy (Reyes, 2018). At a school level, the goal was to bring school leaders and families together to foster co-responsibility in student learning and holistic development. CONAPASE and the CEPS would provide insight into the design and implementation of school improvement plans that addressed school management, culture, and operations (LGE, 2013).

Acknowledging the political nature of the new policies, the architects of the Reform also sought to empower the INEE as a fiscally and politically autonomous body responsible for the evaluation of the education system as a whole. The INEE was given responsibility for supervising educator evaluations, analyzing their results, and issuing recommendations to the SEP and other involved parties. In addition to writing and disseminating the evaluation frameworks, the INEE's external position to the SEP allowed it to perform a certifying role – validating teacher appraisal mechanisms and supervising the appraisal processes (OECD, 2019). It is notable that, in response to criticism, the INEE recommended that the 2016 cycle of performance evaluations be optional to allow for a redesign of the test (OECD, 2019). The INEE played a critical role in not only attempting to quell political tensions generated by the Reform, but also to promote fidelity to the educational best practices laid out in the initial legislation and later the NME. The INEE was a powerful actor in encouraging pedagogical practices throughout the Reform.

4.4.3 *Psychological and Professional*

Reimers' psychological and professional lenses encourage an attention to the technical aspects of the reform- specifically the pedagogical best practices (psychological) and educators' current capacities and knowledge (professional) (Reimers, 2020c). Studying the Reform from these two perspectives, we see that the psychological and professional dimensions were not prioritized until later stages of the reform, first with the development and implementation of the New Education Model ("*Nuevo Modelo Educativo*," NME) in 2015 and then with the published Professional Development Strategy in 2017. The latter was never fully implemented due to the end of the political cycle and a lack of participation from some state governments (Mexicanos Primero, 2018).

Changes to the LGE called for a revision of the education model to be developed with broad participation from stakeholders. In contrast to the top-down approach of the initial set of policies (i.e. the evaluation of teachers) the new model was to be crafted with input from AELs, teachers, unions, experts, and families. The result was an extensive consultation period from February 2014 to June 2014 before the NME was released in 2016 (Mexicanos Primero, 2018). Reimers (2020b) explains that the professional dimension of educational change demands that teachers are

engaged as “subjects rather than objects of the reform” (Reimers, 2020b, p. 32), and the 2014 “National Consultation on the Educational Model” represents the first time that the Reform attempted to do so. Approximately 28,000 participants engaged in 18 regional and three national forums hosted by the SEP, resulting in 15,000 proposals (Nuño, 2018; Díaz-Barriga, 2018). The SEP also sought input and feedback from universities, CTE, and CTZ during this period (Nuño, 2018). The result of the forums was a robust educational model focused on five main topics: curriculum, centering schools, suitability of teachers, inclusion and equity, and governance (Martínez Bordón & Navarro Arredondo, 2018).

The NME succeeded in emphasizing 21CC development both in content, e.g. stressing both cognitive and social and emotional skills, and pedagogical practices, e.g. encouraging student collaboration and self-direction (Hrusa et al., 2020). Specifically, the NME highlighted 11 primary skills that fall under three categories: Fields of Academic Knowledge, Areas of Social and Personal Development, and Spheres for Curricular Autonomy. It asserted a novel approach to achieving these learning objectives by emphasizing questions, projects, and problems which consider student interest and promote personal research, collaborative learning, and inverted classroom models (SEP, 2017a).

Another feature of the NME was that it created space to contextualize relevant content for all learners, while ensuring equity principles. As cited in Bonilla (Bonilla-Rius, 2020), former Undersecretary of Education Tuirán stated that, “a quality education with equity and inclusion was defined by NME as one that: expands educational opportunities for all, without distinctions of any kind; favors the integration of heterogeneous school communities; recognizes that students have different abilities, tempos and learning styles; distributed equitably all resources (technical, physical and human) required for teaching and learning; and grants significant and comparable learning to all students” (Reimers, 2020b, p. 118). In seeking to educate the child as comprehensively as possible, the NME was divided into three components- Academic Knowledge, Social and Personal Development, and Curricular Autonomy (SEP, 2017a). It is worth highlighting that socio-emotional learning (SEL) was allocated a specific time in all K-12 grades to promote self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, empathy and collaboration (Bonilla-Rius, 2019).

In addition, the NME asserted two major changes to how education was conceptualized in Mexico by highlighting the importance of early childhood education and “placing students at the center.” (SEP, 2016) The early childhood education program was outlined in the SEP-released report “Start Out Right” (*Un buen comienzo*) (SEP, 2017f) and called for the coordination of different agencies that oversaw early childhood education with the goal of providing education and care from birth (Bonilla, 2020). By “placing students at its center,” the NME defined clear learning outcomes and positioned teachers as facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of knowledge (SEP, 2017a). Respecting teachers’ and administrators’ professional abilities, the NME sought to ensure that teachers, teacher leaders, and principals had additional autonomy and opportunities for peer collaboration (Hrusa et al., 2020).

It was not until 2017 that the SEP published a set of strategies which aimed to transform pre-service teacher training by providing teacher colleges with the resources to innovate and change institutional practices. Outlined in the “Strategy for Strengthening and Transformation of the Teacher Colleges” (*Estrategia de Fortalecimiento y Transformación de las Escuelas Normales*), the SEP sought to steer teacher colleges towards a focus on research and multilingualism, without forgetting the varied cultural contexts of the country (SEP, 2017a, p. 8). The Strategy also demonstrated the NME's commitment to bilingualism, as can be seen in its innovative and inclusive proposals to strengthen indigenous and foreign language instruction (Granados Roldán, Puente de la Mora, & Betanzos Torres, 2019, Granados Roldán, 2018a, Granados Roldán, 2018b). These strategies targeting initial teacher training were published under the “National Program for English Instruction” (*Programa Nacional de Inglés – PRONI*), which mapped learning outcomes, instructional activities, and assessments to achieve proficient literacy in a second language (McCabe, Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, et al., 2013).

The Continuous Professional Development Strategy (*Formación Continua*, “FC”) also proposed novel strategies for ongoing teacher training (SEP, 2017g). The FC recognized and outlined the complexities of implementing the NME and its new methods of instruction. It thus intended to catalyze real change in learning outcomes by identifying areas for teacher growth using performance assessments and personalized attention to ameliorate any gaps (SEP, 2017g).

In line with the Reform's goals of increasing school autonomy, a number of professional development opportunities were envisioned as school based. The School Technical Assistance Services (“*Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela*,” SATE) was created to facilitate professional development within schools through collective learning and mentorship (Hrusa et al., 2020). Designed as spaces to collectively discuss, learn from, and address problems experienced at schools, Regional Technical Councils (“*Consejos Técnicos de Zona*,” CTZ) were established as an additional opportunity for the professional development of school leaders (Mexicanos Primero, 2018). Finally, the SEP devoted 1 day (4 h) every month to School Technical Councils (“*Consejo Técnico Escolar*,” CTE) for teacher collaboration and planning as well as school-based projects and professional development (Reyes, 2018). Despite these new institutions, the Reform struggled to provide the necessary professional development for educators and school leaders to adapt to these changes and truly shift school cultures (Reimers, 2018).

Finally, the NME contained grade level standards and benchmarks that considered different socio-learning environments (family & community; ludic & literary; and formative & academic) (SEP, 2018). Each standard was paired with a corresponding didactic communication activity as well as hands-on activities to help students develop language proficiency and conceptual understanding (Vega & Terada, 2013). For example, the design of the National English Strategy curriculum contained printed texts in their native and second languages to foster the ability to decode unfamiliar words and assist with reading comprehension (Castro et al., 2011).

The NME's brief implementation period greatly limited its scope and reach, as can be seen most clearly with professional development. Reimers (2018) identifies

constructing a system for professional development as a primary challenge faced by any reform. Hrusa et al. (2020) argue that implementation of evaluations before a robust professional development system was established caused a radical faction of educators to view the Reform as punitive, despite reformers' best intentions. Professional development continues to be a challenge. In a 2018 INEE report, more than half of teachers sampled had not taken a course about discipline, student evaluation or social emotional learning in the last 2 years (INEE, 2018).

4.4.4 Cultural

As defined by Reimers (2020b), in order to analyze a reform through a cultural perspective, it is important to consider the “broader set of external societal hopes for schools, norms and values which define what are accepted educational goals and practices” (Reimers, 2020c, p. 8). Many times, these goals are not explicitly described by the authors of a reform, the legal framework, or the entity that is implementing it. In Mexico's case, the authors of the Reform understood the importance of underscoring the pedagogical ambitions, curricular goals, and learning outcomes, goals that the transformation aimed to achieve. They did so in three different documents: Article 3 of Mexico's Constitution (Mexico, 1917 as amended), the statement “Ends of Education in the 21st Century” (SEP 2017a), and in the documents compiled under the title “Key Learnings” (SEP, 2015). The Reform aimed to induce change in Mexico's education culture in four primary ways: building a student-centered system as defined by “Key Learning Outcomes” (2015), increasing accountability and restoring dignity to the teacher profession through the creation of the SPD, altering the school-community paradigm to focus on increased social participation, and shifting power from unions and into the newly created institutions like the INEE and the CONAPASE (Nuño, 2020). In order for the current inequality that prevails in our modern society to disappear, education is key (United Nations, 2015). In these policy documents, Mexico, aligned with the UN view, promoted education not only as a human right, but also as the key to access every other human right. Reform authors made clear the state's obligation and mandate to not only ensure educational access for all, but also guarantee that public education is high-quality and relevant, emphasizing the pedagogical importance of the Reform (Mexico, 2013).

The Mexican Constitution is a set of normative values that outline a collective vision for an ideal country. It recognizes education's role as a key element to shape society. Peña Nieto's administration changed Article 3 of the Constitution to state that education should be public, secular, free, and universal. Importantly, the new language in the Constitution went beyond guaranteeing access to education to define, in almost exhaustive detail, how the state understood quality education:

Title II: The criteria that will guide this education will be based on the results of scientific progress, the fight against ignorance and its effects: servitudes, fanaticism, and prejudice.

- (a) It will be democratic, considering democracy not only as a legal structure and a political regime, but as a life system based on the constant economic, social, and cultural improvement of the people;
- (b) It will be national, insofar as - without hostilities or exclusivism - it will attend to the understanding of our problems, to the use of our resources, to the defense of our political independence, to the assurance of our economic independence, and to the continuity and enhancement of our culture;
- (c) Contribute to the best human coexistence, in order to strengthen the appreciation and respect for cultural diversity, the dignity of the person, the integrity of the family, the conviction of the general interest of society, the ideals of fraternity and equality of rights of all, avoiding the privileges of races, religion, groups, sexes or individuals, and;
- (d) It will be of quality, based on the constant improvement and the maximum academic achievement of the learners;"

(Mexico, 1917 as amended))

The most significant change to the Mexican Constitution which took place during the Peña Nieto administration, was the emphasis that education be of "quality." Further, the new amendment framed quality not as static but "based on the constant improvement and the maximum academic achievement of learners" (Mexico, 2017; Article 3, Title II).

To the Reformers, a "quality" education was based in twenty-first Century Competencies (21CC). Education scholars assert that in our fast-paced world 21CC must be taught with student-centered pedagogies to ensure "higher achieving" citizens fit for the challenges of a globalized world (Gebhard, 2014; NRC, 2012). The Reform sought to achieve learning outcomes, through new pedagogical strategies, that went beyond basic numeracy and literacy. For example, a focus on literacy that extended beyond the ability to decode. Reading comprehension, and the aptitudes to communicate in more than one language, are competences required for success in basic education and to understand the complexities of the world we live in (Gebhard, 2014). These ideals are also considered in the letter "The Ends of the Education in the 21st Century" in which the SEP states the mission of the Reform and the NME (SEP, 2017a).

To highlight and strengthen the fundamental role of schools as a catalyst of the transformation, the SEP promoted an infrastructure plan to improve schools called "Escuelas al cien" that aimed to strengthen schools and position them as the cornerstone of citizenship education. Alongside this strategy, the Reform also promoted greater school autonomy by awarding schools financial decision-making power and thus further weakening unions' control on education spending. The establishment of SATEs further empowered schools by promoting peer-to-peer learning. SATEs sought to improve school functioning and advance best practices for teachers and principals across regions through support, assessment, and monitoring of individualized professional development, knowledge, and capacities (Chapman & International Institute for Educational Planning, 2005). A key aspect of SATEs was a new mentorship program that paired veteran and beginning teachers (SEP, 2017b). Finally, CONAPASE aimed to create learning communities that included all stakeholders in education. School leaders and families came together to foster co-responsibility for student learning and holistic development. To do so, they

participated in the design and implementation of the school improvement plan, development of a productive learning atmosphere, and vigilance of proper school management and operations.

The Reform sought to catalyze a major cultural shift in teaching and learning in Mexico by moving towards 21CC skills and pedagogies. To achieve that goal, the Reform included a variety of strategies that increased school autonomy and peer collaboration (Consejo Asesor, 2014). However, while the Reform claimed to value the role of the teacher, it neglected to engage them early-on in the decision process. Ultimately, there was not enough time to deploy teacher professional development strategies and fully actualize the Reformers' desired cultural shift. The narrative surrounding the Reform then became dominated by union leaders who decried their loss of privileges and later threw their political support behind opposition presidential candidate, Andrés López Obrador. The long term vision of the Reform to accomplish major cultural changes was disrupted by the presidential election in 2018, and the polarized policy changes that followed.

4.5 Results of the Reform

The Reform had two main objectives, one explicit and one implicit, that aimed to alter one of the world's largest educational systems. The explicit goal was to ensure a quality education for all Mexican students by promoting a shift in the school community paradigm, introducing new pedagogical strategies for teacher and student learning, closing the equity gap in educational access, and increasing social participation in the educational system (Hrusa et al., 2020). The implicit objective was to take federal control of the education system from teacher unions in order to break political ties that had allowed for corporatist practices.

Mexico is an important example of how large-scale reforms that require long time frames for implementation exceeding the duration of political cycles are susceptible to dismantling (Reimers, 2018). Cohen and Mehta (2017) assert that the education sector is particularly vulnerable to public opinion and political pressure and we see that clearly in this instance. It is thus difficult to assess the Reform's impact on student learning outcomes given its short and recent implementation. However, there are some conclusions and evidence that point to the Reform's impact. We begin this section by analyzing the results from the 2018 PISA and some of the results published by the CNSPD (*Consejo Nacional del Servicio Profesional Docente*, "CNSPD") regarding teachers' assessments. We then review two studies conducted by independent researchers and the World Bank that compare the performance of educators that were hired through merit-based systems and discretionary systems. Finally, we analyze other outcomes produced by the Reform, such as collaborative mechanisms for teachers and school communities as well as the backlash against the Reform at the end of Peña Nieto's administration.

With the release of the 2018 PISA results we find that average performance scores have remained stable in reading, mathematics and science (OECD Mexico,

2019). However, when comparing 2018 results to earlier PISA administrations, the greatest increases are between 2003 and 2009 and although some gains were made in the sciences from 2009 to 2018, math and reading results flatlined from 2009 to 2018 (OECD Mexico, 2019). The overall results remain below OECD averages. While this data largely reflects the trajectory set prior to the Reform, they are fundamental to measuring the education sector moving forward.

Despite resistance to the SPD exams, the majority of teachers still participated, with high levels of success. Throughout the country, more than 1.5 million teachers engaged in at least one aspect of the SPD, either for hiring/entrance (*ingreso*), promotion (*promoción*) or performance recognition (*permanencia*) during the 6 years of the Peña Nieto administration (México, 2018). In addition, over 206,0000 teachers were hired through the entrance exam process (México, 2018). Out of the vast majority of elementary teachers only 11%, and 16% of secondary education teachers (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2), scored an unsatisfactory grade. It is also notable that 52% of elementary teachers and 54% of secondary teachers performed in the range of “good” to “outstanding,” disproving the popular narrative that current teachers were not qualified for their positions (CNSPD, 2019).

Further there is evidence that teachers who entered the teaching profession through rules-based hiring practices are more effective than teachers hired through other mechanisms. Ricardo Estrada (2017) concludes in “Rules vs. Discretion in Public Service Teacher Hiring in Mexico” that students learn better from teachers who were selected through rules-based hiring, as was scaled up by the 2013 reform, than by teachers that were selected through a discretionary process, as was done prior to the Reform. Estrada analyzes school performance data from 2008 to 2013 when a pilot rules-based hiring program existed alongside traditional discretion-based practices (de Hoyos & Estrada, n.d.). Linking student achievement data from “*telesecundarias*,” secondary schools in rural areas where students are taught all

Table 4.1 Elementary Teachers' Recognition Performance Assessment

School cycle	Assessed	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Outstanding
2015–2016	104,860	13,601	40,221	42,769	8269
2016–2017	24,005	2615	10,365	9151	1874
2017–2018	75,274	7046	23,614	32,925	11,689
Total	204,139	23,262	74,200	84,845	21,832

Source: Adapted by the authors with information of the CNSPD (2019)

Table 4.2 Secondary Teachers' Recognition Performance Assessment

School cycle	Assessed	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Outstanding	Excellent
2015–2016	27,704	4577	9015	11,705	1568	839
2016–2017	7608	1236	2597	3176	410	189
2017–2018	11,801	1809	2149	4064	3583	196
Total	47,113	7622	13,761	18,945	5561	1224

Source: Adapted by the authors with information of the CNSPD (2019)

subjects by one teacher and instruction relies heavily on IT support, to teacher hiring status, this study is able to establish causal effects of hiring models on student performance. This study finds that only 1 year after teachers started working with those students, they were able to improve the scores of their pupils by 0.52 and 0.31 standard deviations, which is a significant result in the context of educational interventions (Estrada, 2017). These results support the idea that the 206,000 teachers who earned their teaching position due to the rules-based hiring practices introduced by the SPD will be more effective than their peers hired through union nepotism. It is expected these new teachers will spearhead the transformation of teaching in Mexico from within the system and that their results will become evident in the upcoming years (Nuño Mayer, 2020).

The Reform also had significant financial implications. A SEP-conducted census of school infrastructure and personnel, combined with the centralization of the payroll, eliminated the practice of “double negotiation,” in which the SNTE negotiated separately with local states and the federal government. As a result of this “double negotiation” unions were receiving benefits from two entities for the same positions, thus severely damaging the finances of many states (Otto Granados, 2020). The Reform also modified the Contribution Fund for Educational Payroll and Operating Expense (*Fondo de Aportaciones para la Nómina Educativa y Gasto Operativo*, FONE) so that all salary payments would be directly deposited into teachers’ bank accounts, eliminating the union’s control of payroll (Nuño Mayer, 2018). The FONE performed a payroll audit that removed 44,000 posts that were not used for teaching, with a value of five billion pesos (Nuño Mayer, 2018).

The Reform also saw gradual acceptance from teachers throughout the country. Aurelio Nuño Mayer explained in his article “Respuesta a nexos: La reforma educativa” that following the reassertion of state control the 2017 Teacher’s Day celebrations occurred without teacher strikes for the first time in more than a decade (Nuño Mayer, 2018). In addition, evaluation processes were gradually normalized, including in the states where resistance was strongest, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca (Nuño Mayer, 2018). In all cases, participation rates above 90% were reached (Nuño Mayer, 2018). It is also interesting to review the high acceptance the Reform had among students in teacher colleges. In a face-to-face survey conducted in 2017, when asked about how they valued different components of the SPD over 94% of students stated that they thought it is “indispensable” or “were happy with” earning more according to a merit-based system, the promotion via an evaluation, and 74% thought the same of the permanence evaluation (Proyecto Educativo, 2017).

While many different mechanisms were used to promote dialogue throughout the Reform, the unnecessarily accelerated pace at which teacher evaluations proceeded reinforced the perception that the Reform was punitive. The intended positive outcomes of the assessment process were never properly explained, solidifying teacher opposition to the Reform (Hrusa et al., 2020), that is educators felt as if they were the targets of mandates and directives rather than collaborators in the development of the reform (Tirado, 2018). Further, while the evaluation framework was detailed in its expectations of teachers and principals, it was not aligned with teachers’ existing knowledge. This misalignment only exacerbated the perception that evaluations

were a form of punishment, rather than an avenue through which to improve (Hrusa et al., 2020). In fact, since the Reform implementation, the idea of evaluation has consistently been used by detractors to attack the Reform as disrespectful of teachers and to frame it as a labor reform rather than an educational one (Granados, 2018a, Granados, 2018b). Crucially, the INEE's framework never secured the backing of the CNTE or SNTE, and was in fact the target of substantial criticism and the subject of widespread resistance (Reimers, 2020a). This lack of acceptance clouded the perception of assessments, not just as a mechanism of the Reform, but in the sector as a whole and ultimately led to López-Obrador's decision to dismantle the INEE (Hrusa et al., 2020).

Former Secretary of Education Nuño Mayer believes that more time for implementation would have led to greater teacher support (A. Nuño Mayer, personal communication, January 29, 2020). The *Formación Continua* (2017) strategy was meant to “promote a profound cultural change, remove baseless beliefs, and begin a pathway through work grounded in trust of teachers” (SEP, 2017a, p. 8). However, the strategy was never fully implemented due to the shift of power in 2018. Its initial focus on implementing legal and political changes, rather than technical professional development strategies, failed to engage teachers. Ultimately, the Reform's attempts to recast teacher evaluations as formative were unsuccessful in combating the power of a narrative supported by teacher unions and the new President (Hrusa et al., 2020). As of February 2020, the Reform has been overruled by a new constitutional amendment to Article 3 now known as the “New Education Reform” proposed and accepted by the Morena majority in Congress and the Senate in 2019 (Gaceta Parlamentaria, 2019).

Even with the new amendment, many of the changes still follow the same spirit of the past Reform. Although the concept of “education of quality,” perceived as controversial by some allies to President López Obrador, has been removed, it was replaced by conceptually similar but semantically different, “excellence in education” (Gaceta Parlamentaria, 2019). Along those same lines, President López Obrador had publicly accused the INEE of being used to “humiliate and degrade” teachers, echoing the narrative put forth by educator unions that the evaluations were purely punitive (Hrusa et al., 2020). President López Obrador then dismantled the INEE and created a similar entity, the National Commission for the Continued Improvement of the Education (*Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación*, “MejorEDU”). MejorEDU was absorbed by the SEP and its president was appointed by the Secretary of Education but appointments still required approval by Congress (SEP, 2020). Even though MejorEDU lacks the constitutional legal and financial autonomy that the INEE possessed, it remains a technically autonomous entity. However, in one of the two commissions that oversee MejorEDU, most of the members have an explicit political affiliation with Morena. On the other hand, each member of the political commission has teaching experience, most in K-12 grades, and the technical council members all have strong academic records in education policy and research (SEP, 2020). Even though the secondary laws of the “New Education Reform” have not been presented, it is expected that the full day schools program (*Escuelas de tiempo Completo*) will remain, albeit with a reduced

budget (Animal Político, 2019). Similarly, it is anticipated that the entrance and promotion evaluations included in the SPD will continue but under a new name, the Unit of the Career System for Teachers (*Unidad del Sistema para la Carrera de las Maestras y los Maestros* “USICAMM”) (USICAMM, 2020). However, other aspects of the Reform such as the National English strategy have been completely defunded and eliminated.

4.6 Conclusion

Analyzing the Reform through different lenses allows for a nuanced understanding that moves beyond the contrasting narratives that dominated media coverage (Hrusa et al., 2020). When seen from an institutional perspective, the Reform achieved a new legal and governance framework. If analyzed from the psychological perspective, the technical foundations, and their translation into programs and policies, had strong foundations in international best practices and were widely supported by Mexican education experts. How these two aspects would interact was dependent on the success of the political transformation- which was also the locus of most controversies. President Peña Nieto’s administration had to counter the narrative, prominent in Mexico’s collective psyche, that the teacher union was able to elect or defeat presidents, as was the case in the 2006 election. This necessitated a firm power grab by the Mexican government beginning with the imprisonment of Elba Esther Gordillo, the SNTE leader, and continuing with the systematic weakening of the CNTE and the SNTE. This caused a major uproar, and union leadership fiercely fought back. Nonetheless, reclaimed political power was given to the newly installed regional, state and municipal CEPS, where the unions became one voice of many in the decision making processes. Despite changing political tides, the Reform had a lasting impact on the relationship between the SNTE and the government.

However, the fact that professional aspects of the reform were used to weaken unions rather than support teachers undermined the effectiveness of Reform strategies. From a political perspective, by establishing a merit-based educator career pathway without the support necessary to ensure teacher growth, the Reform lost major support and was viewed as punitive, rather than generative. As stated by the Reform’s architects, there was not enough time to deploy the set of professional development policies that would have enhanced and solidified the Reform among teachers. Even though the Reform had widespread support among the general public, and most of the policies (aside from the performance recognition exam) were also popular with teachers, the narrative deployed by López Obrador and teacher union leadership was one of conflict.

From a technical standpoint, also referred to as the psychological perspective, the Reform appears robust. The Reform followed international best practices for a comprehensive system-level change that integrated all the different elements of the education sector to generate a student-centered transformation to foster global citizenship and 21CC competencies. The autonomy granted to the INEE ensured that

education statistics would remain independent from politics and that any unforeseen consequences of the Reform's implementation would be corrected, as was the case when the SEP and the INEE paused evaluations for a year in order to adjust and improve them. The NME was further proof of the comprehensive plan to achieve ambitious learning outcomes that not only emphasized content knowledge and student-centered pedagogies, but also addressed socio-emotional skills and promoted well-rounded students with strong interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cultural competencies.

Analyzed through the cultural perspective, the ultimate goal of the Reform was to radically change the education culture in Mexico and create a system based on accountability and autonomy. The late implementation of the NME, only beginning a year before the start of López Obrador's administration, did not allow for the full results of the Reform to emerge. However, the idea and importance of teachers' evaluations as well as the shift of paradigm seem to have been internalized by a new generation of teachers (Proyecto Educativo, 2017). Additionally, the Reform elevated the role of early childhood education, as well as of socio-emotional learning by making them a central component of the NME. Both topics have continued to occupy a prominent role in López Obrador's own education reform.

In 2018, the teacher unions became a key ally of López Obrador's coalition. López Obrador's campaign promise to repeal and replace anything done by the previous administration fit perfectly with the desires of the teacher union leadership who hoped to overturn the Reform (Olmos, 2019). Just months after his inauguration, the new administration released Elba Esther Gordillo, stripped the INEE of their autonomy, reinstated all teachers removed from the classroom during the previous administration (regardless of why they had been released), and appointed union members in key positions within the SEP and AELs.

Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline of Mexico's Education Reform

December 2012	The president formally announced the launching of the educational reform and sent three education bills to Congress.
March–September 2013	Legislative process that amended the constitution –to include the responsibility of the state to provide quality education and the organization of teachers' appraisals, associated to quality education– And the enactment of three new education acts.
January–June 2014	First public consultation with the purpose of defining the education goals and the educational priorities for developing the curriculum (basic education, upper secondary & teacher training colleges).

(continued)

February 2016	The National Board of directors of the strategy <i>School at the Centre of the System</i> was formally established, with education officials from SFP and the 32 states governments as its members.
July 2016:	The first drafts of the NME, Mexico's twenty first century goals, and the curriculum (Prck-9) & (10–12) were published.
July–December 2016	Second public consultation and debate on the recently published documents.
March 2017	The final versions of NME and <i>Goals for Twenty First century Education and Route for the implementation of the New Educational Model</i> were published.
June 2017	Publication of the final version* of the curriculum (Prck-9) & (10–12).
July 2017	Started NME's implementation route.
August 2017–August 2018:	Several implementation actions to disseminate the national curriculum (Prck-9) in all schools: Pilot project (phase 0) of curricular autonomy implemented in 1027 schools; online in-service training for one million plus teachers, and several other academic activities, at the national, regional and school levels.
December 2017	The final version of the curriculum for early childhood (0 to 3) was published.
July 2018	Presidential election.
August 2018	Application of the national curriculum (Prck-9) started in schools.
December 2018	A new federal government takes office.

Source: Elisa Bonilla in Reimers (2020b, p. 133)

Appendix B: Glossary

AEL	<i>Autoridades Educativas Locales</i>) Local Education Authorities
ATP	<i>Asesor Técnico Pedagógico</i>) Pedagogical Technical Advisor
CEPS	<i>(Consejo Escolar de Participación Social)</i>
CNSPD	<i>(Consejo Nacional del Servicio Profesional Docente)</i> National Council of the Professional
CNTE	<i>(Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación)</i> National Coordinator of
CONAPASE	<i>(Consejo Nacional de Participación Social en la Educación)</i> National School Councils for Continued Improvement of the Education
CTE	<i>(Consejo Técnico Escolar)</i> School Technical Councils
CTZ	<i>(Consejos Técnicos de Zona)</i> Regional Technical Councils

Education	Educational Payroll and Operating Expense
Education Workers	Evaluation Law
FC	<i>(Formación Continua)</i> Continuous Professional Development Strategy
FONE	<i>(Fondo de Aportaciones para la Nómina Educativa y Gasto Operativo)</i> Contribution Fund for
IEEPO	<i>(Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca)</i> State Institute for Oaxacan Public
INEE	<i>(Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa)</i> National Institute of Educational Evaluation
LGE	<i>(Ley General de Educación)</i> General Law of Education
LGSPD	<i>(Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente)</i> General Law of the Professional Teacher
LINEE	<i>(Ley Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa)</i> National Institute for Education
MejorEDU	<i>(Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación)</i> National Commission for the
NME	<i>(Nuevo Modelo Educativo)</i> New Education Model of Knowledge
PAN	<i>(Partido Acción Nacional)</i> National Action Party)
PANAL	<i>(Partido Nueva Alianza)</i> New Alliance Party
PLANEA	<i>(Plan Nacional para la Evaluación de los Aprendizajes)</i> National Plan for the Evaluation
PRI	<i>(Partido Revolucionario Institucional)</i> Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRONI	<i>(Programa Nacional de Inglés)</i> National Program for English Instruction
SATE	<i>(Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela)</i> The School Technical Assistance Services
SEL	<i>(Aprendizaje Socio-Emocional)</i> Socio Emotional Learning
SEP	<i>(Secretaría de Educación Pública)</i> Department of Education Service
SNEE	<i>(Sistema Nacional de Evaluación Educativa)</i> National System for Educational Evaluation

SNTE	(<i>Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación</i>) National Union of Education Workers Social Participation
SPD	(<i>Servicio Profesional Docente</i>) Professional Teacher Service System for Teachers Teaching Service
USICAMM	(<i>Unidad del Sistema para la Carrera de las Maestras y los Maestros</i>) Unit of the Career

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