



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Mexico's Experience in Implementing Competency-Based Teaching: Common Curriculum Framework, Teacher Training, Certification and School Evaluation

Fabio Morandín Ahuerma ^a; Sergio Díaz Carranza ^b; Laura Villanueva Méndez ^c; Abelardo Romero Fernández ^c; Judith Contreras González ^f; Silvia Gisel Hernández Sánchez ^g; Carlos Adolfo Ordoñez Aburto ^h

^{acd}Members of BUAP-CA-354 Transdisciplinary Regional Studies and Research Professors of the BUAP, Mexico.

^bDirector of the Northeastern Regional Complex of BUAP and collaborator of the BUAP-CA-354 Transdisciplinary Regional Studies and Research Professor of the BUAP, Mexico.

^fCollaborator of the BUAP-CA-354 Transdisciplinary Regional Studies and Research Professors of the BUAP, Mexico.

^{gh} Undergraduate students of the Northeast Regional Complex, University Health Complex (CUS).

* E-mail address: fabio.morandin@correo.buap.mx – BUAP, Arias and Boulevard s/n, Col. del Carmen, Teziutlan, Puebla, Mexico, ZIP Code 73800.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0125.0219>

ABSTRACT

This article examines Mexico's implementation of the Comprehensive Reform of Upper Secondary Education (RIEMS), an initiative aimed at improving the quality of upper secondary education through competency-based teaching. The reform, enacted through the National High School System (SNB), focused on three key strategies: the establishment of a Common Curricular Framework (MCC), the professionalization of teachers via the PROFORDEMS program, and the introduction of the CERTIDEMS certification process. Additionally, schools were evaluated through the Quality Registry of the National High School System (PC-SiNEMS), which assessed pedagogical and infrastructural conditions using in-situ evaluations conducted by the National Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education (COPEEMS). The study highlights the core components of the MCC, which includes the development of 11 generic competencies designed to foster self-determination, critical thinking, teamwork, and sustainability awareness among students. Disciplinary and professional competencies were also integrated to provide a comprehensive educational experience tailored to labor market demands. Teacher training emphasized continuous professional development, innovative pedagogical methods, and competency-based evaluations. Despite the RIEMS's ambitious objectives, its cancellation in 2019, due to opposition from teacher unions and concerns about regional disparities, left its long-term impact uncertain. Nevertheless, the authors underscore the importance of competency-based education in equipping students and educators with the skills required for meaningful participation in society and fostering educational innovation. The article concludes by emphasizing the need for future policies to build upon the insights gained while addressing regional and systemic challenges in the Mexican education system.

Keywords: educational reform; generic competencies; disciplinary competencies; professional competencies; teaching; common curriculum base.

Introduction

With the general objective of improving the quality of education provided in upper secondary schools in Mexico, the so-called Comprehensive Reform of Upper Secondary Education (hereinafter RIEMS, by its Spanish acronym) was implemented through the National High School System (hereinafter SNB, by its Spanish acronym). This was an educational policy intended to be long-term, implemented by the federal governments of both the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN). These included the federal administrations of 2006 to 2012, under President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (PAN), and continued from 2012 to 2018, under President Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI), through the Ministry of Public Education. RIEMS began in 2008 under Secretary of Education Josefina Vázquez Mota. Starting in 2013, under Emilio Chuayffét Chemor as Secretary of Education, mandatory educational evaluation as state policy was elevated to constitutional status through reforms to Article 3 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States.

Alveranga et al. (2021) argue that the implementation of the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) as part of the educational reform prioritized employability over what they call an "emancipatory training," focused on developing students' psychological capacities (p. 799). The authors contend that new educational approaches tend to standardize the graduate profile within a work organization exclusively oriented toward satisfying externally imposed neoliberal interests, resulting in the violation of the rights of both students and education workers.

For his part, Pereira (2021) stated that some reforms tend to sideline the deontological elements of educational programs, such as ethics and philosophy, in favor of instrumental disciplines. According to the author, it is essential to return to the origins of critical and creative thinking that the study of philosophy fosters and promotes.

However, it is worth noting that the integration of the humanities into the educational curriculum is essential to forming individuals with a strong sense of citizenship, identity, and culture. National curricular guidelines must continue to emphasize this interconnectedness to foster a more inclusive and relevant education in today's context.

The strategy to raise the quality of education

What measures and courses of action did the Government of Mexico implement to improve the quality of upper secondary education?

First: Implement an education system based on the development of generic, academic, and professional competencies through the integration of a Common Curricular Framework (MCC).

Second: Define and standardize various educational modalities through a syllabus or standardized Curriculum Plan applicable to all or most schools within the National High School System (SNB) (Mexico, 2008a).

Third: Establish management mechanisms to achieve the objectives of the MCC by professionalizing and certifying teachers. This included the implementation of a Nationally Accredited Diploma Program known as the Teacher Training Program for Upper Secondary Education (PROFORDEMS) (Mexico, 2008c) and the attainment of the Certification of Teaching Competencies for Upper Secondary Education (CERTIDEMS) (Mexico, 2008c).

Fourth: Create a Quality Registry for the National High School System of Upper Secondary Education (PC-SiNEMS) through a process of evaluating each school. This evaluation was carried out by the Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education (COPEEMS), an autonomous and civil organization. Institutions had to provide evidence that their students were developing the competencies outlined in the Common Curricular Framework to gain admission, retention, and promotion within the SNB. Schools were assigned levels ranging from Level IV (the lowest) to Level I (the highest) based on their evaluation results (Mexico, 2010).

1. Competency-based education

Creation of a Common Curricular Framework

The MCC, defined in Secretariat Agreement 444 of the SNB Steering Committee (Mexico, 2008b), established that the objective of upper secondary education should be the acquisition of specific competencies and skills by students. The ultimate goal of education, rather than the accumulation of summative information, was the transformation of students into individuals capable of successfully managing their lives.

To achieve this, the curriculum emphasized the development of 11 generic competencies and their associated attributes within the classroom, fostering a holistic and competency-based approach to education.

Generic Competencies

These competencies define the graduate profile expected of every upper secondary school student and have the following characteristics:

- CG1: Self-determination and self-care with clarity of personal goals. Students can face challenges by understanding their strengths and weaknesses, recognizing their emotions, and knowing when to seek help. They are capable of making decisions within their available alternatives in alignment with a life project, taking responsibility for their actions, and managing resources effectively.
- CG2: Sensitivity to artistic expressions and the ability to participate in or create their own aesthetic manifestations.
- CG3: A healthy lifestyle. Students practice sports, avoid harmful substances, and cultivate healthy interpersonal relationships.
- CG4: Effective communication skills. Students express themselves correctly, both orally and in writing, analyze and interpret discourse, communicate in a second language, and competently use information and communication technologies.
- CG5: Application of established methods to problem-solving. Students employ complex and scientific thinking, construct hypotheses, generate models, and test them through their experiences.
- CG6: Independent judgment. Students build their own criteria based on reliable information, analyze the pros and cons of arguments, and recognize their own biases as well as those of others.
- CG7: Self-directed learning and interdisciplinary integration. Students are autodidacts, able to connect different fields of knowledge, establish relationships, and apply what they have learned to everyday life.
- CG8: Teamwork skills. Students collaborate to achieve goals, propose solutions and strategies, and maintain a constructive attitude in various group settings.

- CG9: Social responsibility awareness. Students participate in democratic processes in their community and country, prioritize dialogue for conflict resolution, understand their rights and responsibilities, and stay informed about local, national, and international matters.
- CG10: Respect for cultural and social diversity. Students value intercultural expressions, diversity in all areas, and different forms of expression, while being conscious of equality, dignity, and universal rights.
- CG11: Commitment to sustainable and responsible planetary development. Students understand the need for balance between short-term interests and long-term environmental impacts.

These competencies aim to prepare students not only for academic and professional success but also for active, responsible, and informed participation in society.

Disciplinary Competencies

A standardized syllabus or Curriculum Plan, to be followed by all schools, is defined in the Secretariat Agreement 656 of the SNB Steering Committee (Mexico, 2012). This plan specifies the following subjects:

- Mathematics: Algebra, arithmetic, calculus, trigonometry, and statistics.
- Experimental Sciences: Physics, chemistry, biology, and ecology.
- Social Sciences: History, law, sociology, politics, anthropology, philosophy, economics, and administration.
- Communication: Reading, oral and written expression; reading and writing workshops; an additional language other than Spanish; and information and communication technologies.

These disciplinary competencies are designed to ensure that students receive a comprehensive education that integrates both theoretical knowledge and practical skills across key areas of study.

Professional Competencies

Although specific professional competencies are not explicitly listed, the inclusion of technical and professional education is not excluded. Flexible curricula are designed to train students in various trades under specific national standards. Examples include technological, agricultural, administrative, and other vocational high schools, tailored to their respective work-training orientations.

While general high schools do not offer workshops within their classrooms but rather experimental laboratories, many schools in Mexico develop and certify students in various technical professions.

Mexico has high schools with different focuses:

- General or preparatory high schools without job training.
- General high schools with job training.
- Technological high schools.
- Professional technical high schools.

These different pathways reflect the diversity of educational needs and labor market demands across the country.

2. Teacher Professionalization

The second phase of the Comprehensive Reform of Upper Secondary Education (RIEMS) in Mexico, as outlined in Secretariat Agreement 447 (Mexico, 2008c), involved defining and developing eight specific teaching competencies and their attributes. These competencies represented the skills required for teaching to align with the Common Curricular Framework (MCC).

To achieve this, large-scale training programs were implemented for all high school teachers under the Teacher Training Program (PROFORDEMS). This initiative primarily included the following:

A "Diploma in Teaching Competencies for Upper Secondary Education" provided by universities affiliated with the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES).

A "Specialization in Teaching Competencies" offered by the National Pedagogical University (UPN).

These programs aimed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to deliver competency-based education effectively, ensuring alignment with the objectives of the MCC and improving educational quality across institutions.

Required Teaching Competencies

The teacher profile defined in Secretariat Agreement 447 (Mexico, 2008c) stipulates that every teacher in upper secondary education must possess the following competencies:

- CD1: Capacity for continuous professional development. Teachers must organize their ongoing professional development, including their own knowledge construction processes, which translate into effective teaching and learning strategies. They should be willing to undergo evaluation, actively participate in teaching communities, and be proficient in ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), TACs (Technologies for Learning and Knowledge), and a second language.
- CD2: Mastery of general and specific knowledge to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Teachers must link classroom content with students' life contexts, making learning relevant and impactful.
- CD3: Planning teaching and learning processes aligned with the MCC's competency-based approach. Teachers should contextualize knowledge within broader disciplinary, curricular, and social frameworks. They should also adopt teaching methodologies focused on problem-solving and community-based student research projects.
- CD4: Effectiveness, creativity, and innovation in teaching practices. Teachers should use various technologies, provide reliable bibliographic resources, and promote students' holistic development.
- CD5: Practice formative and competency-based evaluation. Teachers should monitor students' academic progress, provide constructive feedback for improvement, and employ diverse evaluation methods, including diagnostic, formative, summative, self-assessment, peer assessment, and cross-disciplinary evaluation.
- CD6: Create environments conducive to collaborative and autonomous learning. Teachers should encourage students to develop self-directed learning skills and leverage available technologies.
- CD7: Foster a healthy and inclusive learning environment. Teachers should ensure that students can express their ideas while respecting human rights, including freedom of belief, values, and social practices. They should promote civic and ethical awareness, use dialogue to resolve conflicts, and encourage students to maintain a clean and healthy school environment, practice self-care, and preserve their health.
- CD8: Participate in the continuous improvement of their institution and support school management. Teachers should engage in institutional improvement projects, participate in academic bodies, collaborate with society, and contribute to the creation of educational communities.

These competencies outline the teacher profile necessary for implementing a competency-based education framework within the Common Curricular Framework (MCC). They highlight the importance of both professional expertise and a commitment to fostering meaningful, inclusive, and dynamic learning environments.

Certification

Teachers who completed the PROFORDEMS Diploma or the Specialization in Teaching Competencies offered by the National Pedagogical University could apply for the Certification of Teaching Competencies in Upper Secondary Education (CERTIDEMS).

This certification process required candidates to submit a portfolio demonstrating their teaching and learning practices aligned with the Common Curricular Framework (MCC) and the teaching competencies developed during PROFORDEMS. Additionally, candidates underwent an interview with a specialized Academic Evaluation Committee. A verdict was then issued, either granting or denying certification to each participant.

It is important to note that both PROFORDEMS and CERTIDEMS were "creditable," allowing teachers multiple opportunities to pass if they initially failed any part of the process.

According to Agreement 286 (Mexico, 2017), teachers without a university degree (Bachelor's) were offered the opportunity to take a General Knowledge Exam through the National Center for Higher Education Evaluation (CENEVAL).

CENEVAL continues to provide: Entrance exams for bachelor's programs via the National Higher Education Entrance Exam (EXANI-II).

Graduation exams through the General Exit Exam for Bachelor's Programs (EGEL) for more than 60% of Mexican universities and bachelor's degrees.

It is important to clarify that CENEVAL does not evaluate educational institutions but focuses solely on individual knowledge and skills assessment.

3. In-Situ School Evaluation

As a third measure under the Comprehensive Reform of Upper Secondary Education (RIEMS) for admission into the National High School System (SNB), each school was subject to an in-situ evaluation. This involved a team of evaluators, typically with teaching or administrative experience, visiting the school to verify its pedagogical and material conditions.

This evaluation was conducted by the National Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education (COPEEMS) through Support Organizations for Evaluation (OAEs). These OAEs were civil society organizations composed of accredited teachers. To be included in COPEEMS' registry of

evaluation service providers, these organizations had to meet specific legal and material resource requirements, essentially functioning as civil associations dedicated to evaluation. The cost of evaluation varied depending on the size of the school, the number of students, the required evaluators, and the evaluation level, ranging from approximately 1,933 USD to 10,545 USD. Level IV and Level IVa: Applied to distance or alternative education institutions, these evaluations were conducted through documentation and did not require an OAE visit, making them free of charge.

Evaluation Teams: OAE teams could range from a single evaluator to seven evaluators, depending on the number of students at the school being evaluated. This process ensured a comprehensive assessment of the institution's readiness and alignment with the standards set by the SNB, while also considering the unique circumstances of each school.

The Evaluation Process

The Ministry of Public Education (SEP) requested COPEEMS to evaluate the schools that contracted its services. COPEEMS, in turn, assigned one of its designated Support Organizations for Evaluation (OAEs) to carry out the task.

The *in-situ* evaluation typically took three days, depending on the size of the institution, and was conducted according to the "Manual for Evaluating Schools Applying for Admission and Promotion to the National High School System, Version 3" (COPEEMS, 2013). By 2018, COPEEMS' Academic Secretariat had prepared a fourth version of the manual, incorporating improvements and the expertise gained from over 2,000 visits that had been shared and systematized. However, the "Manual for Evaluating Schools Applying for Admission or Remaining in the Good Quality Registry of the National Upper Secondary Education System, Version 4.0" was never implemented (COPEEMS, 2018).

The evaluation process. The Secretariat of Public Education requested COPEEMS to evaluate the schools that contracted this service and COPEEMS, in turn, designated one of its respective OAEs.

The on-site evaluation was carried out in three days, depending on the size of the educational institution and was done according to a "Manual to evaluate schools that request entry and promotion to the National Baccalaureate System, Version 3" (COPEEMS, 2013). By 2018, the Academic Secretariat of COPEEMS had already drafted a fourth version of the Manual with a series of improvements and the expertise of more than 2 thousand socialized and systematized visits; however, the "Manual to evaluate schools that request entry or remain in the Good Quality Registry of the National Upper Secondary Education System, Version 4.0" was never used (COPEEMS, 2018). The aspects to be evaluated, through an internal instrument called the Observation and Verification of Evidence Guide (GOVE), were the following:

Plans and programs. Evaluation of the study plans and programs that corresponded to the educational-pedagogical model and that included the entry and exit profiles; the curricular structure with the subjects they were taking; the specific programs for each subject; the bibliographies; and, diagnostic, formative, summative, self-evaluation, hetero-evaluation, transversal evaluation mechanisms, etc. and, that all the previous aspects were in accordance with competency-based education and the RIEMS guidelines.

Teacher job description. That the profiles of the teachers were in accordance with the subjects they were teaching through a job description that clearly stipulated the degree of each teacher and the subjects they could teach and those they could not.

Teacher observation. Teacher evaluation through review of the teacher's curriculum vitae, academic degrees, portfolio of evidence and most importantly, a random sample of teachers who were observed and videotaped while teaching their classes, with the evaluator filling out a checklist with the rubric that demonstrated whether or not the teacher taught his class based on competencies, that is, whether or not he applied Agreement 447 of the National Baccalaureate System.

The above was accompanied by a brief survey of five students at the end of the class to verify the teaching skills and the naturalness of the class taught. Basically, three moments were observed: opening, development and closing. At the end, a score was given that determined whether the student was considered a "traditional teacher" or a "teacher with a focus on competencies". It should be noted that only those teachers who had already accredited both the PROFORDEMS and the CERTIDEMS were evaluated, preferably.

Collegiate bodies. Another important aspect of the evaluation was the internal academic processes, that is, that the teachers were formed in the Academies corresponding to each general area of knowledge: basically Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Humanities and Communication-English. Academies corresponding to Physical Education and Artistic Education were also created. In each case, they had to present evidence of formation, periodic meetings with the agreements and the follow-up of those agreements.

Tutoring, counseling and psychopedagogical support. It was also verified that the students had support through tutoring, which was evaluated in two aspects: tutoring as a process of support for the student and support during their training, identifying needs and problems through personalized monitoring by the teacher-tutor and, on the other hand, a Psychopedagogical Department that could provide personalized service to students who required it, whether due to family problems, addictions, desertion, unwanted pregnancy, low grades, risk of failure, etc., as well as the necessary vocational guidance.

It was important to verify that each of these programs had permanent and systematized support activities, that is, a schedule, an exclusive place for interviews, permanent talks, connection with parents, among other activities.

Administrative services. It was also observed whether the school had adequate school administration services, for example, that a competent record of grades, academic trajectory, documentation was kept, as well as the possibility of generating statistical data analysis based on the results obtained by the students.

It was also determined whether they had the possibility of revalidating subjects between one school and another, regardless of the system or subsystem to which they belonged (general, technical, agricultural, etc.) high school. Monitoring graduates was another important aspect to know the fate of each student: if they entered university, a labor field, if they emigrated, etcetera.

Infrastructure and building conditions. The school's infrastructure was assessed through tours and lists of compliance or non-compliance with basic operating provisions, as well as the applicable Mexican Official Standards (NOM, for its acronym in Spanish). Photographs were taken of each of the areas for a detailed subsequent report.

Classrooms. During the on-site visit, it was assessed that the classrooms were properly lit, ventilated, with technological resources such as a projector and other teaching resources such as a blackboard, sufficient tables and benches, a table for the teacher and that the capacity was less than 50 students for Level III, 45 for Level II and 40 for Level I.

Laboratories. That the science laboratories and workshops included the necessary equipment, furniture, tools, instruments, materials, operating manuals, safety signs, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, appropriate spaces for handling and storing hazardous materials and substances, showers, eyewash stations, to name a few aspects.

ICTs and TACs. That the educational facility had the appropriate information and communication technologies for the teaching and learning process, such as computers connected to the Internet and different required software, in addition to an office automation system.

Library. That students had a library system that was appropriate to the requirements of their study programs. Whether it was a library with printed books or a digital library that everyone had access to, as well as databases, access to remote libraries and home loans, in the case of printed books. The library space had to offer ventilation, lighting, chairs, tables, a catalogue of titles, internet access and enough books, at least one copy for every 25 students in Level III, 20 copies per student in Level II and 15 copies per student in Level I.

Teachers' lounge. It was also not ruled out that teachers had their own exclusive space, a room or a teachers' lounge with the facilities to carry out their work outside the classroom: preparation of teaching materials, review of homework and grading of exams, etc. and that had internet access.

Sports fields. In terms of promoting healthy lifestyles, the school had to have areas for the practice of some sport, either within the facilities or even outside, through some agreement with local authorities. This means ensuring that young people have access to basketball, volleyball or soccer fields, which are the most common sports here. Almost all curricula in Mexico include the subject of Physical Education at least once a week. It was also desirable to have spaces for the development of other recreational, artistic and cultural skills, such as music, dance and other creative expressions. Many schools have a "war band", which consists of a group of students who play drums or bugles for the "flag honors" ceremony, which is the parade of an escort of students with the national flag and then the singing of the national anthem. This ceremony is held in many schools every Monday morning.

Extra services. It was also supervised that the school had adequate basic services, such as drinking water, enough bathrooms for students and workers, as well as additional services that could be a cafeteria with healthy food, transportation service, stationery, medical service, public security, perimeter fence, use of uniforms, access to different scholarships, and some other specific to each school.

Maintenance. It was also supervised that the entire infrastructure was under the care of permanent cleaning and maintenance personnel, since they had to have the material, tools, supplies and logs that demonstrated this.

Civil Protection. Another aspect to be evaluated was whether the school had an adequate Contingency Plan, that is, a Civil Protection Manual in which the respective rescue committees are designated, the necessary materials such as full and unexpired fire extinguishers, stairs, marked evacuation routes, designated meeting points, and that all of this was endorsed by the corresponding local Civil Protection authority. It was also evaluated whether the school had the necessary access for people with some motor disability.

Sustainability. It was also desirable that the students, together with their teachers, carry out actions for the sustainability of the planet, which could be carried out from an energy saving program within the school, through the collection of recyclable materials such as PET, to sanitation actions in spaces such as vacant lots, aquifers or planting trees inside and outside the school, that is, specific local actions to generate a global ecological awareness.

Director's profile. Another important aspect of the evaluation was Agreement 449 of the SNB, which referred to the profile of the school director. In addition to a review of his/her curriculum vitae, the director was also considered to determine whether he/she had any training within the Specialized Program in Management Skills within the SNB, and to what extent he/she maintained a Continuous Improvement Program (PMC, in its Spanish acronym) that consisted of a diagnosis of the strengths and needs of the educational community and infrastructure, as well as monitoring of indicators of failure, dropout, and terminal efficiency, among others. As well as the concrete actions he/she took to improve the general conditions of the school. His/her leadership within the educational community was even evaluated. All of this was done through an interview with the director, a survey among the administrative staff, and weighting of the profile in accordance with "Agreement 449, which establishes the competencies that define the profile of the director in schools that provide upper secondary education" (Mexico, 2008d).

Student survey. Finally, to find out the students' general impression of the services they received, two evaluation instruments were applied: the first was a survey with 16 questions to the group leaders; the second, a broader online survey, in which 10% or more of the total population participated, in which an x-ray of the school was made.

Opinion. Based on the results of the evaluation obtained with these instruments, an Opinion was generated by the OAE in which, in addition to informing the school of the specific observations and recommendations for improving the quality of the educational services offered, they were granted a Grade of advancement in their entry and permanence in the SNB, consisting of the classification of School Level III (entry); Level II (superior) and Level I (consolidated). They were granted a period of two years to address the observations and 6 months for those urgent observations that had to be addressed, for example, related to basic security measures for the educational community.

Similarly, the teachers observed were rated with a score, and if they were below or above the average scale, they were called “competency-based” or “traditional” teachers, and in the latter case, they had to take the appropriate measures to reformulate their teaching style to achieve the specific goals of the RIEMS, as well as the evaluation of “suitable” or “unsuitable” if they met or did not meet the professional profile requested to teach each subject.

The evaluation report was a synthesis of the different aspects evaluated at the school and had to be integrated with the information collected in the various reports, which were the questionnaires, surveys, infrastructure evaluation scripts and interviews, used to obtain information and evidence, before and during the evaluation visit. Finally, the school received a “School Evaluation and Opinion Report” of approximately one hundred pages from COPEEMS, which detailed the evaluation methodology, the results of the visit, the aspects evaluated and each of the specific observations and specific recommendations for each aspect: plans and programs, teaching staff, library, technology, toilets, classrooms, sports areas, improvement plan, tutoring, academics, civil protection, sustainability, security, linkage, etc. As we have already mentioned, the certificate was valid for two years to be evaluated again, if the recommendations had been resolved.

The counter-reform

As the reader can imagine, a detailed evaluation process that covered so many aspects of educational life, not only of teachers but of school principals, administrators, as well as various union and labor interests involved, unleashed voices that were against the process continuing.

Despite the benefits that any process of monitoring and evaluating educational quality brings, the RIEMS as such was basically cancelled due to pressure from groups of teachers, especially those belonging to the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE, for its acronym in Spanish) who vehemently opposed the evaluation, arguing that it was a policy imposed by international economic organizations and second, that the development conditions of the various regions of the country did not allow a standardized evaluation due to the backwardness of some entities such as Oaxaca and Chiapas, so they could not be measured with the same criteria; They also complained that, rather than an educational reform, it was a labor reform that violated the rights of teachers themselves and threatened their entry, permanence, and retirement within the then-called teaching career (Alarid, 2016).

However, the Ministry of Public Education argued from the beginning that the need to increase the quality of education was not an exclusive policy of some foreign organization but a historical policy of Mexico and the United Nations as a whole, within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to combat structural inequalities, lack of opportunities, gender equality, tolerance, a healthier life and, in general, the basic skills for a better life for students.

COPEEMS had stated that the evaluation criteria considered the development conditions for each region of the country and served to make visible the specific needs and support required in each population; Many school principals even wanted their material deficiencies to be documented so that they could be addressed by the central educational authorities (COPEEMS, 2018).

As for the teaching and learning methods in teacher evaluation, it brought to light the vices of teachers who did not comply with their study programs, silenced cases of violations of the rights of students, absenteeism, mistreatment and other harmful practices that should and still should be eradicated in the teaching profession (Rodríguez and Nava, 2021).

As for labor rights, the evaluation process carried out by COPEEMS did not consider the employment situation; in any case, it defined an ideal profile that was achieved through adequate training to obtain competencies; in fact, those who had already taken the PROFORDEMS were evaluated, and preferably already certified through the CERTIDEMS (COPEEMS, 2018).

However, on the morning of Wednesday, January 16, 2019, through a brief statement, the President of COPEEMS, Mtro. Antonio Gago Huguét, announced that “due to various factors” the General Assembly had determined the dissolution of the Council, but not the Quality Registry of the National System of High School Baccalaureate, but that was the last public activity of the organization (COPEEMS, 2019).

The latest figures on the PC-SiNEMS for 2018 were that 2,308 schools had been accredited out of a total of 17,799, which represented 13% of all secondary schools in Mexico. Of these, 22 schools were in Level I, 190 in Level II, 1,279 in Level III and 817 in Level 4 (COPEEMS, 2018).

Subsequently, on May 15, 2019, a Decree was published in the Official Gazette of the Federation repealing various provisions on educational matters: one of them was the third paragraph of Article 3, which determined that entry into the teaching service and promotion, both in basic and upper secondary education, would be carried out through open competitive examinations to guarantee the suitability of teachers. It also referred to the specific application of criteria, terms and conditions for mandatory evaluation for entry, promotion, recognition and permanence in the professional teaching service. The entire paragraph referring to the above was repealed, ending the so-called Comprehensive Reform of Upper Secondary Education. However, months later, on October 1, 2019, at the initiative of the current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-2024) and as part of the educational policy called the New Mexican School, the National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education (MEJOREDU, for its acronym in Spanish) was created, which contemplates the improvement not only of secondary education, but education in general; among others.

Discussion

The implementation of a common curricular framework and the integration of generic, disciplinary, and professional competencies represented a significant step forward toward a more comprehensive education aligned with the needs of the 21st century. This approach sought to develop critical skills, collaborative work, and autonomous thinking among students, essential abilities for their personal and professional lives.

The professionalization of teachers through programs such as PROFORDEMS and the CERTIDEMS certification strengthened their capacity to implement innovative and competency-based pedagogical approaches. This highlights the importance of investing in the continuous development of teachers to improve educational quality.

The in-situ evaluation processes designed by COPEEMS revealed areas of opportunity within schools and provided a mechanism to identify and address the specific needs of each region. However, resistance from certain sectors underscored the need to adjust evaluations to better reflect regional disparities and ensure their acceptance.

Although RIEMS presented ambitious objectives, its cancellation due to union tensions, regional inequalities, and perceptions of international imposition limited its potential impact.

We believe the experience of RIEMS offers valuable lessons for future educational initiatives in Mexico. It highlights the need to balance national objectives with regional adaptations, involve educational communities in the design and implementation process, and prioritize the continuity of long-term educational policies.

Contrary to claims that RIEMS infringed on teachers' labor rights, the process was designed to respect these rights while establishing clear standards of quality and competency. While it required all educational actors to improve and commit to continuous improvement processes, these demands challenged traditional dynamics that, in some cases, tolerated ineffective practices both inside and outside the classroom. The reform promoted greater accountability and professionalism among teachers and educational institutions, aiming to raise the overall quality of the system.

We consider that, although RIEMS was interrupted, its design represented a viable model for transforming upper secondary education in Mexico, driving both teachers and students toward higher standards of performance and educational quality. Its legacy, along with the specific lessons learned—such as school evaluation and improvement as well as mandatory teacher training—should be considered as a foundation for future educational policies.

Conclusions

So far, some indicators were presented that show the degree of development of upper secondary education in Mexico and the strategy that the Federal Government implemented until 2019 to improve educational quality basically through three actions was described: a Common Curricular Framework, the training of teachers through PROFORDEMS, and certification with CERTIDEMS; as well as the strategy of generating a Quality Registry of the National System of Upper Secondary Education Baccalaureate which was accessed through the curricular and procedural evaluation of teaching, and an on-site evaluation of the various aspects that make up the school and the competent services that they must provide.

The generic competencies that students should develop were described, as well as the teaching competencies that teachers should acquire to improve their practice inside and outside the classroom. Each of the aspects that were evaluated in the plans was also listed and the COPEEMS evaluation process through the OAE was described in broad terms. The initial and final question is: What has the Mexican experience left behind? Although the RIEMS process was cancelled, it is still not possible to take the appropriate distance to be able to assess its long-term effects.

The skills and competencies that must be developed in secondary school students—such as defining their own life goals and generating the appropriate mechanisms to achieve them; self-determination and self-care; being sensitive to art and its expressions; thinking critically, innovatively, constructively; working in a team and always privileging dialogue for conflict resolution, to mention a few—are something that should not be given up regardless of the pedagogical approach that education has.

In relation to teachers: the fact of organizing their continuous training; mastering and structuring knowledge to facilitate meaningful learning experiences; planning teaching and learning processes; putting into practice creative and innovative teaching in their context; evaluating teaching processes with a formative approach; Building environments for autonomous and collaborative learning is necessary to provide quality education, regardless of the country, time, and much less the political context.

Mexico has a long road ahead to be able to unify the educational criteria appropriate to its own experience and the new educational policy of the incoming federal government of Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo (2024-2030) of the Morena Party is undoubtedly a fundamental step to achieve the quality learning objectives that the Ministry of Education and the educational community as a whole have set for the coming years.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Management of the Northeast Regional Complex of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla for the facilities provided for the completion of this research work within the project “Study of perceptions and practices in mentoring” CRZN-2024.

References

Alarid, J. D. (2016). Reforma educativa o reforma laboral: Reestructuración del trabajo y la identidad docente en México [Educational Reform or Labor Reform: Restructuring Work and Teacher Identity in Mexico]. *Red Estrado. XI Seminario Internacional de la Red Estrado*, 1–20. <https://bit.ly/3dnJTbP>

Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación del Tipo Medio Superior (COPEEMS). (2013). *Manual para evaluar planteles que solicitan el ingreso y promoción al Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato (Versión 3)* [Manual for Evaluating Schools Applying for Admission and Promotion to the National High School System (Version 3)]. Mexico City. <https://bit.ly/3GfRhJj>

Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación del Tipo Medio Superior (COPEEMS). (2018). *Manual para evaluar planteles que solicitan ingresar o permanecer en el Padrón de Buena Calidad del Sistema Nacional de Educación Media Superior (Versión 4.0)* [Manual for Evaluating Schools Applying for Admission or Remaining in the Good Quality Registry of the National Upper Secondary Education System (Version 4.0)]. Mexico City. <https://www.inee.edu.mx/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/copeems-manual-para-evaluar-planteles-sf.pdf>

Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación del Tipo Medio Superior (COPEEMS). (2019). *Comunicado, 16 de enero de 2019* [Comunicado, January 16, 2019]. Mexico City. <https://bit.ly/3rKRr0y>

Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación del Tipo Medio Superior (COPEEMS). (2018). *Indicadores para la evaluación para el ingreso, permanencia y promoción de instituciones educativas en el PC-SINEMS* [Indicators for Evaluating Admission, Retention, and Promotion of Educational Institutions in PC-SINEMS]. Mexico City.

Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación (MEJOREDU). (2021a). Página oficial [Official Page]. Mexico City. <https://www.gob.mx/mejoredu>

Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación (MEJOREDU). (2021b). *Acuerdo SOJD/09-21/5-R* [Agreement SOJD/09-21/5-R]. Mexico City, September 29, 2021. https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/684275/Sugerencias_MCC_EMS_Mejoredu_2021.pdf

Díaz-Carranza, S. (2024). Replantear la evaluación docente: hacia un modelo formativo que fortalezca la calidad de la educación en México [Rethinking Teacher Evaluation: Toward a Formative Model to Strengthen Education Quality in Mexico]. *Revista Multidisciplinaria de Ciencia Básica, Humanidades, Arte y Educación*, 2(8), 40–46. <https://www.mjshae.org/2024/10/replantear-la-evaluacion-docente-hacia.html>

México. (2017). *Acuerdo número 286 por el que se establecen los lineamientos que determinan las normas y criterios generales, a que se ajustarán la revalidación y equivalencia de estudios, así como los procedimientos por medio de los cuales se acreditarán conocimientos correspondientes a niveles educativos o grados escolares adquiridos en forma autodidacta, a través de la experiencia laboral o con base en el régimen de certificación referido a la formación para el trabajo. Diario Oficial de la Federación, Ciudad de México, 17 de abril* [Agreement number 286 establishing the guidelines that determine the general standards and criteria to which the validation and equivalence of studies will be adjusted, as well as the procedures through which knowledge corresponding to educational levels or school grades acquired in a self-taught manner, through work experience or based on the certification system related to training for work will be accredited. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, April 17]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, April 17. <https://bit.ly/3osdTJR>

México. (2009). *Acuerdo número 3/CD/2009, por el que se establecen los lineamientos para la creación del Consejo para la Evaluación de la Educación Media Superior* [Agreement Number 3/CD/2009 Establishing Guidelines for Creating the Council for the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, August 26. <https://bit.ly/3ps3tJA>

México. (2008a). *Acuerdo número 442 por el que se establece el Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato en un marco de diversidad* [Agreement Number 442 Establishing the National High School System within a Framework of Diversity]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, September 26.

México. (2008b). *Acuerdo número 444 por el que se establece las competencias que constituyen el marco curricular común del Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato* [Agreement Number 444 Establishing the Competencies Constituting the Common Curricular Framework of the National High School System]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, October 21.

México. (2008c). *Acuerdo número 447 por el que se establecen las competencias docentes para quienes imparten educación media superior en la modalidad escolarizada* [Agreement Number 447 Establishing Teaching Competencies for Teachers in Upper Secondary Education]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, October 29.

México. (2008d). *Acuerdo 449 en que se establece las competencias que definen el Perfil del Director en los planteles que imparten educación del tipo medio superior* [Agreement 449 Establishing Competencies Defining the Profile of Principals in Upper Secondary Education Schools]. Official Gazette of the Federation, Mexico City, December 2.

Rodríguez, F., & Nava, J. (2021). *Motivación y ausentismo laboral en instituciones de educación media superior en México* [Motivation and Absenteeism in Upper Secondary Education Institutions in Mexico]. *Revista In Memoria*, 7(18), 3–29. <http://colpamex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/18-IM.pdf#page=3>

Romero-Fernández, A., Villanueva-Méndez, L., Morandín-Ahuerma, F., Díaz-Carranza, S., Hernández-Sánchez, S.G., y Ordoñez-Aburto, C.A. (2024). Perceptions of First-Semester University Students on their Strengths in English Skills: A Study in the Sierra Nororiental of Puebla, Mexico. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(12), 2623-2627.

Romero-Rodríguez, A., Villanueva-Méndez, L. & Morandín-Ahuerma, F. (2024). Calidad de la Educación Superior Regional desde la Perspectiva de Estudiantes de Psicología en la Región Nororiental de Puebla, México. *Revista Cubana de Educación Superior (RCES)*, 43(2), 418-433. Universidad de La Habana. <https://revistas.uh.cu/rces/article/view/10353>

Romero-Fernández, A., Mendoza-Díaz, J. H., Villanueva-Méndez, L., Morandín-Ahuerma, F., & Santos-Cabañas, E. (2023). Adaptación docente a clases de inglés en Educación Superior de Puebla Nororiental durante la contingencia COVID-19. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 15(1), 137-149. <https://rus.ucf.edu.cu/index.php/rus/article/view/3525/3469>

Tapia, I. (2021). *Remembranza del PC-SiNEMS: el sistema de la RIEMS que mejoraría la educación media superior en México* [A Remembrance of PC-SiNEMS: The RIEMS System That Aimed to Improve Upper Secondary Education in Mexico]. *Educación Futura*, July 28. <https://bit.ly/3ldx08k>