



Background Paper The Learning Generation

Managing the Politics of Quality Reforms in Education Policy Lessons from Global Experience

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It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who gain by the new ones.

[Niccolò Machiavelli](#)

Executive Summary

The politics of education reform are under researched and under analyzed. This paper surveys the small academic literature on the politics of reform as well as empirical research on reform experiences, with the aim of distilling out key lessons for reform politics. We focus especially on recent cases of quality-oriented education reforms of basic education in the developing world. Three main characteristics make politics in education reform different from other policy areas: 1) ubiquity and power of teacher unions; 2) opacity of the classroom and consequent difficulties in monitoring reform and performance; and 3) reform results only emerge in the longer run.

Most previous research falls into four categories, according to the main drivers of education politics: 1) voters, elections, the left, and democracy generally; 2) the structure of the economy and the resulting skill needs of business; 3) regime and nation building; and 4) policy entrepreneurs. However, research is still generally sparse with little dialogue among these approaches.

A close review of all major stakeholders is a crucial first step to understanding potential sources of opposition and support. Teachers' unions usually have the strongest interests, are the most organized protagonists, and usually oppose quality reforms. In Latin America, teacher unions usually have formal monopolies on representation and have high member density (78 percent on average). Other stakeholders that oppose or support quality reforms include school directors, business, NGOs, private schools, religious authorities, international development agencies, parents, students, policy networks, and teacher training schools.

Reformers face a series of strategic issues and trade-offs in policy design. Legislation may take longer to enact but often is more enduring than executive action. Effective communication planning can help reformers win the battle for public opinion. In sequencing, some reform trajectories begin with voluntary components that meet less resistance. Lastly, reformers often bundle contentious reforms with other compensatory policies.

Implementation of education reforms is a protracted and politicized process requiring ongoing political engagement by reform teams. The main political questions of implementation strategy revolve around how to manage union opposition to reforms through confrontation, negotiation, and compensatory policies; how to keep pro-reform stakeholders mobilized; and how to win over public opinion.

An inductive analysis of recent comparative experiences with reform suggests a short list of recommendations for would-be reformers: consult with leaders of similar reform efforts; identify all actual and potential stakeholders and analyze their interests; assess political capital; assess technical capital; pass core reforms through legislation; divide opponents; make available compensation or side payments; mobilize sympathizers; engage in the battle for public opinion; communicate directly with teachers;

An appendix checklist is intended as a practical tool for reform champions.

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I. Introduction: Why Politics Matter¹

Education reform is politically risky. Across the world, cases of education reforms that were politically blocked, diluted, or subsequently overturned far outnumber cases of successful, enduring reform. Some recent examples include:

- As part of the Indonesia Teacher Law in 2005, the Ministry of Education sought to raise teacher quality by doubling average salaries and requiring competency testing for all teachers. After protests from various teachers associations, Parliament refused to provide funding for the competency tests, and the Ministry had to compromise by requiring competency "portfolios" instead of tests (Chang et al. 2013). Researchers five years later found that a fiscally costly reform had produced no improvement in student learning. (Dee Ree et al. 2014)
- In May 2008 Mexican President Felipe Calderon signed a major reform program with the national teachers' union, SNTE. The "Alliance for Quality" included clear standards for teacher hiring (eliminating discretionary, union-controlled hiring) and competency tests for teachers in service. Yet, SNTE officials at the state level later repudiated the agreement and boycotted the tests, and the national union leader publicly reneged on the agreement.
- In late 2015 the government of the State of São Paulo proposed a major consolidation of thousands of schools. Within weeks, students had occupied over 200 schools, shut down the Avenida Paulista multiple times, and the governor's popularity rating started to drop. In response, Governor Alckmin fired the secretary of education and suspended the proposed reform for a year.
- In Uruguay in 2015, reformers in the incoming government had big plans for overhauling a seriously underperforming education system but met staunch union resistance and were out of government in less than a year.

¹ We are grateful to Isabel Harbaugh, Martin Liby, My Seppo, and Guillermo Toral for research assistance. We thank this research team, plus Beth King, Liesbet Steer, Greg Elacqua, Harry Patrinos, Nancy Birdsall, Alejandra Mizala, and Violeta Arancibia for comments on earlier versions. We are especially grateful to an extraordinary group of successful education reformers who have provided invaluable guidance and suggestions at different stages, including Julia Gillard, Claudia Costin, Wilson Risolia, Jaime Saavedra, Patricia Salas, Gloria Vidal, Pablo Ceballos, Cecilia Maria Velez, Harald Beyer, Carolina Schmidt, Silvia Schmelkes and Rodolfo Tuiran.

- Globally, teachers participated in 229 strikes and 86 major demonstrations in 85 different countries from 1990 to 2004 (according to calculations from Reuters, see Appendix II).²

Major education reform is almost always a highly charged and politicized process; what gets implemented – and its impact—depends as much or more on the politics of the reform process as the technical design of the reform.³ Yet very little systematic and comparative research exists on the politics of reform (Gift and Wibbels 2014). As Terry Moe put it: “political scientists have failed to shed much light on any of this [education politics] – or its far reaching consequences – because ... they have not embraced education as a target of comprehensive, in-depth study” (2012, 846).⁴ For their part, education specialists show little interest in politics. A search of two prominent international journals – *Comparative Education* and *Comparative Education Review* -- turns up only three articles with “politics” or “political” in the title, all published in the 20th century.

The politics of education is distinct from other public services for three main reasons:

- *Ubiquity and power of teacher unions* – In almost every country, these are more organized and politically powerful than other education stakeholders or unions in other economic sectors
- *Opacity of the classroom* - To affect learning outcomes, reforms must produce change at the classroom level, where teachers have substantial autonomy and reformers have limited ability to monitor implementation.

² The creators of *House of Cards* thought education politics sufficiently dramatic to include in the first season a teacher strike triggered in part over a proposal for performance pay.

³ Our focus is on basic primary and secondary education. Reforms to tertiary education can be equally contentious and often involve disruptive participation by university students in addition to many of the stakeholders we analyze. In many contexts, there is a bias in research on reform politics to higher education (Moe and Wiborg n.d.).

⁴ A number of Latin America countries have enacted major reforms since 2000, yet the last broad academic studies of education reform (outside the World Bank and the IDB) are over a decade old Grindle (2004) and Kaufman and Nelson (2004a).

- *Slow results* – Quality reforms take years if not decades to be fully implemented and produce impacts on learning or employability that are perceptible to reform beneficiaries and policymakers; losers in the reform adoption phase retain substantial scope to undermine reforms during implementation.

These distinctive features have two important political implications. First, teacher endorsement, or buy-in, is crucial to implementation. Second, reformers need to hold together pro-reform coalitions of stakeholders over at least the medium term.

Among stakeholders in education, teacher unions stand out (Moe and Wiborg n.d.; Moe 2011; M. V. Murillo 2003). Much less attention has been given to other stakeholders which can play a pivotal role on the pro-reform side such as business, NGOs, international donors, parents, and policy networks. A full analysis of stakeholders also reveals additional pockets of resistance to some reforms including university faculties of education and religious authorities.

The research base is also unsatisfying on major process questions, which this paper attempts to analyze in detail, drawing on recent cases:

- What are the merits of rapid executive action versus longer legislative enactment?
- How advisable is it to bundle reforms into a “big bang” or sequence them?
- Should reformers negotiate with teachers’ unions and other stakeholders or not?
- Can opposition to reform be diluted with strategies to divide or compensate losers?
- What communications strategies are most effective to win over public opinion and parent support?

Education reforms and their politics vary by levels of development, both of the education system and the country overall (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber 2010). In the earlier phases of education development, when policy is focused on expanding access, the politics are generally congenial as politicians, parties, unions, international donors, teachers, and families all gain by building schools, hiring teachers, and getting children into classrooms (Corrales, 1999: Grindle 2004, 6; Stein 2005). Moreover, experimental research provides clearer policy guidance on improving access than on improving quality (Kremer, Brannen, and Glennerster 2013).

Our focus is on the more complex and contentious politics of the later stage quality reforms more common in middle income countries, where most children are in school but learning much less than they could. Quality reforms attempt to change a critical number of dimensions of school organization, curriculum, time in school, and especially teacher careers. Given the accumulated global evidence that teachers are the most powerful single in-school determinant of student learning outcomes (Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff 2014; Hanushek and Rivkin 2010), quality reforms usually involve significant shifts in teacher policy, such as pre-service training, recruitment standards, job stability, performance evaluation, and career incentives. Additional components can include educational technologies, school choice, system decentralization, school-based management, and parental involvement, but changes in the teacher career path are usually at the core of quality reforms and the dominant driver of reform politics.

The core puzzle in education politics is that successful quality reform is so rare despite the large and manifest benefits to individuals, families, and society as a whole. In some instances reform dynamics follow the Machiavellian logic where potential losers (like teachers) have intense interests and powerful organization, and potential beneficiaries (especially students) have weak interests and little capacity for collective action (Corrales 1999). However, in most quality reforms the possibility for stronger pro-reform coalitions is greater. Individual returns to education are everywhere positive and large, ranging across regions from 6 percent in Latin America and Africa to 13 percent in East Asia in increased income for each additional year of school (Barro and Lee 2010, Figure 7). Unlike other areas of reform where individual beneficiaries can expect modest gains (as with consumers and trade liberalization), the individual benefits in life-time earnings of higher quality education are substantial.

Moreover, on the societal level, the clear consensus is that raising human capital is essential for increasing productivity, the underlying motor of development (Hanushek and Woessmann 2012). Nearly everyone writing on the middle income trap points to human capital as a core and necessary part of the solution (Doner and Schneider 2016). In principle, many powerful businesses would also benefit from more skilled workers. These major and widespread benefits suggest that reformers could forge large latent pro-reform coalitions. So, why have winning pro-reform coalitions been so difficult to construct? And, why has anti-reform resistance been so effective?

We review the existing evidence on low and middle-income developing countries across all regions as well as research on developed countries where relevant. The discussion of select recent cases of comprehensive basic education reform in Latin America (Mexico, Peru, Chile, Brazil, and Ecuador) is deeper and draws on ongoing field research in those countries. The appendix provides narrative summaries of some of these reforms.

Section II provides a brief review of theories in social science of the general dynamics of education politics. Section III examines teacher unions in depth. Section IV considers other stakeholders with interests in education reform. Section V analyzes from a political perspective the factors that inform reform design. Section VI takes a longer-term perspective – necessary for any significant reform process – to consider political aspects of reform implementation. The Appendix includes checklist of questions for each section that helps configure our general analysis for specific country or subnational contexts. Section VII distills out a set of brief, general policy recommendations.

II. Academic Literature on Education Politics

Despite overall neglect, especially in political science, several scholars have contributed to general theories of politics and education. Most research falls into four categories, according to the main drivers of education politics: 1) voters, elections, the left, and democracy generally; 2) the structure of the economy and the resulting skill needs of business; 3) regime and nation building; and 4) policy entrepreneurs. Many of these theories – especially democracy and nation building – focus largely on quantity and spending, rather than quality upgrading. It is striking that these research trends are largely independent, with little dialog among them. As Moe and Wiborg put it more emphatically, “The problem lies with the literature itself, and with the fact that, at least for now, there really isn’t a there there. No substantive focus. No theoretical coherence. Little or no connection between the various strands of research” (Moe and Wiborg 2016, 10).⁵

One prominent line of theorizing argues that democracy and democratization drive educational investment and reform. The basic logic is that authoritarian leaders do not need to respond to citizen demands for education, but democratic ones do. Empirical research on the third wave of democratization after the 1980s showed increases in public spending on education as well as shift in spending from higher to basic education (Brown and Hunter 2004). One line in theorizing on democracy is that all politicians have incentives to respond to voter preferences for better education. In a slightly different view, that of power resource theory (PRT), (Huber and Stephens 2012a), democracy opens up opportunities for labor and the left to influence

⁵ For the most comprehensive review of comparative, historical, and political economy research on education, see (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011b). The review, however, is comprehensive only for developed countries with little coverage of developing countries.

policy, and these are the actors most likely to push for better and more equally distributed education.⁶

Ben Ansell (2010) seeks to develop the first unified theory of the political economy of education. The point of departure for that theory takes education as redistribution. As such in one sense it follows the general lines of PRT and bottom up pressure; the poor vote for the rich to pay for universal education.⁷ However, Ansell adds a necessary twist by noting that education can be targeted and benefits can be reaped by either rich, poor, or middle, so that the rich and middle classes may also press politically for subsidies to higher education often through fiscally regressive transfers.

In other general theories, business is sometimes pivotal in educational coalitions. For example, Stephen Kosack (2012) argues that broad educational advance requires either an organized coalition of the poor or strong employer pressure. Either alone is sufficient, but each happens only under specific conditions. The poor depend on political entrepreneurs to overcome barriers to collective action (more on political entrepreneurs later). Employers only push educational upgrading if they operate in flexible labor markets where increasing supply of skilled workers lowers their cost, as was historically the case in Taiwan. Where wages for skilled

⁶ This bottom up approach is generally in line with the power resource theories developed to explain overall patterns of welfare spending in developed countries (Huber and Stephens 2012b; Korpi 2006). Where organized labor and allied left parties are stronger, welfare states are overall more generous, including in education spending.

⁷ Given the lack of bottom-up pressure for education reform in authoritarian regimes, general theory on why some authoritarian rulers made mass, high quality education a top priority (Soviet Union, Cuba, Korea, Taiwan, China, Jordan, Singapore, Vietnam) while most do not is lacking. Authoritarian rule of course makes it easier for reformers to overcome opposition from unions, politicians, and other anti-reform stakeholders, but ease of reform does not answer the question of why reform. Several possible motivations might push authoritarian governments to reform education: business pressure (as in East Asia) and regime or nation building discussed later.

workers are inelastic (due to unions or labor regulations), then employers do not benefit when supply increases. Under these circumstances – that Kosack analyzes in Brazil and Ghana – business does not push national educational upgrading but rather demands selective training to address narrower skill needs. Haggard and Kaufman (2008) argue more generally that the reliance on exports and the pressures of upgrading labor skills in competitive international markets encouraged big business in developing East Asia (especially Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong) to press governments (initially all were non-democratic) to invest in high quality education systems.

In contrast to the bottom up or PRT perspective, scholars in the “varieties of capitalism” tradition view educational systems as the outcomes of cross-class coalitions of business and labor (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011a; Hall and Soskice 2001). In the VoC view, core businesses and skilled workers support the institutional complementarities – including the vocational and educational systems – that support their competitive advantage. So, for example, in the coordinated market economies of northern Europe and Japan, cross-class coalitions support the educational, apprenticeship, and active labor market policies (including retraining) that help leading firms remain productive and competitive in manufactured exports. In contrast, comparable cross-class coalitions are rare in liberal market economics such as the United States and United Kingdom where businesses rely either on general basic education in low skill services or tertiary education for high end service and technology sectors (Iversen and Stephens 2008).

While these context specific arguments are complex, the main take away for developing countries is that business engagement in education politics should be understood as depending on a country’s sources of comparative advantage. Thus, in countries where firms rely primarily on

unskilled labor or small numbers of skilled workers, they will be less interested in systemic education reform. In practical terms, the VoC perspective suggests that not all businesses have an automatic interest in higher quality education and that a closer examination of firm strategies and competitive advantages will help reformers identify potential business allies.⁸

Ansell (2010) picks up on these labor market factors in shaping demand for education, but in simpler terms of economic openness and greater integration into the global economy. For individuals, more open economies mean more opportunities to export their skills. When this is the case, increasing education does not reduce skill scarcity or returns to education, creating conditions for a broader middle and working class coalition for universal education. King et al. (2012), from the discipline of economics, take this analysis further. They find empirical evidence that returns to education are higher not just in more open economies but especially where institutions enjoy a higher degree of economic freedom (as measured in Heritage Foundation indices). In countries where enterprise formation is facilitated and labor markets are flexible, gains from trade are maximized, and this increases the returns to skills and education.

The large literature on clientelism, patronage, and administrative reform more generally are also very relevant to analyzing the politics of education reform. In most countries, education is the largest or one of the largest items in government budgets, and education ministries employ a significant share of the economically active population. For clientelist politicians, education

⁸ For Gift and Wibbels (2014, 294), the “main benefit of the VOC approach is to frame the political evolution of school systems not as the result of isolated government policies but as inextricably linked to a country’s broader economic and social environment.” However, the authors think VoC is less useful in developing countries where “parties are less programmatic, social insurance is not as extensive, and unions are weaker.” This critique may construe VoC too narrowly and rigidly. Developing countries may have different set of complementarities that are sustained by different institutions and social groups, especially MNCs and big business (Schneider 2013).

employment -- like all public employment -- offers opportunities to appoint political supporters.⁹

Short time horizons increase this temptation to gain immediate political support rather than invest in technical capacity that might have a long-term pay off to some voters. Scholars have sought to understand when political leaders have incentives to purge clientelism from the bureaucracy and highlight factors such as parity between major political parties (Geddes 1994), stronger programmatic parties (Shefter 1994), economic growth (Stokes et al. 2013), and other factors (Schneider and Heredia 2003). Patronage politics adds another set of stakeholders – clientelist politicians and their appointees (discussed in section IV) -- who may not only oppose education reform but may also occupy key administrative positions that can block the long chain of reform implementation.

A final set of theories focuses on the state building, nationalist, ideological, or religious goals that top leaders may have for the education system. Nation builders of the 19th and 20th centuries saw education as crucial to their project (Anderson 1987) as did communists and theocrats of the 20th century (Corrales 2005). In principle, state and regime building through education can greatly accelerate access reforms – getting everyone into school – but may slow, divert, or derail quality reforms as secondary to the core goals.

Beyond general research on politics and education, a more specific literature focuses on the politics of moments of education reform. Major conclusions in this narrower research are that 1) pro-reform social coalitions are generally weak (Kaufman and Nelson, 2004), and therefore 2) reforms emerge from small change teams (Grindle 2004) or political entrepreneurs in the executive branch (Rhodes 2012).¹⁰ In her review of education reforms in Latin America in

⁹ On Sri Lanka, for example, see (Little 2010).

¹⁰ In his how-to manual for education reformers, Barber recommends recruiting 35-40 highly motivated professionals to a “small, potent unit” outside the line ministries (2011, 22).

the 1990s, Grindle calls reformers, “reform mongers, policy entrepreneurs, heroes, or champions...” (Grindle 2004, 58). The most effective reform champions create political “room for maneuver” through specific actions to strengthen potential beneficiaries and weaken opponents.¹¹

Rhodes (2012) emphasizes the ways policy entrepreneurs can shift or recast the terms of debate over education to make new policies and coalitions possible. Kosack (2012, 2014) emphasizes the importance of policy entrepreneurs in helping the poor to overcome their major barriers to collective action and thus become drivers of education politics.

Other analyses emphasize political leadership and political will, especially on the part of presidents and prime ministers. However, both concepts are vague and tautological (Kingdon 2014): vague in the sense that they do not specify which part of the reform process they affect and how, and tautological because we only know they exist if reforms succeed.

An alternative is to think of amounts of political capital (support from politicians and in public opinion) that heads of government and ministers have and are willing to spend on education reform. Education reform invariably runs into conflict and opposition that can reduce support from politicians and voters. In this view, leadership and will are evident in the levels of political capital that politicians have and are willing to spend on education reform. In the example cited at the outset, São Paulo Governor Alckmin wanted to spend no political capital; as soon as he suffered some loss of popularity, he immediately suspended the reform. In a widely cited alternative case, in 2012 Washington DC Mayor Adrian Fenty stood by the teacher policy

¹¹ A related literature highlights the power of technocrats (Dargent 2015). The power of expertise is primarily in economics rather than social policies, however some of the power may transfer when economists are appointed to top positions in education and mobilize support from economic and planning ministers (as with Saavedra in Peru and Eyzaguirre in Chile).

reforms introduced by Chancellor Michelle Rhee that were bitterly opposed by the teachers' union. Fenty's loss of political capital led directly to a reelection defeat.¹²

In sum, theorizing to date has focused largely on education as a distributional policy where either poor families, business, or clientelist politicians push the state to spend resources on their needs. Although focused less on explaining individual reform outcomes and more on the overall structure of the educational system, these theories can have practical use in identifying the latent reform coalitions which can boost reformers' chances of success. Appendix 1 distills out a checklist with the more practical implications of these theories. Analyses of reform dynamics and change teams' strategies are useful for going beyond vague notions of political leadership and political will. They are also helpful because reformers often have a hard time explaining their own success (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber 2010, 11). Policy entrepreneurship is important for defining the terms of education reform debates and forging new kinds of effective pro-reform coalitions.

III. Teacher Unions: Multiple Interests and Influences

The goal of sections III and IV is to be extensive and intensive; intensive in delving more deeply into the sources of stakeholder interests and influence, and extensive in covering the full range of protagonists that have been identified in reform stories across the world. Teachers' unions usually have the strongest interests and are the most organized protagonists, and merit a section on their own. Section IV turns to other stakeholders.

¹² Ironically, the next mayor retained Rhee's deputy as education chancellor, the reforms continued, and have been credited with producing an increase in teacher quality and student learning results (Dee and Wyckoff 2015). This chancellor has now been retained by a third mayor, and is sustaining the same policies.

Teacher unions vary a great deal across the world. Many scholarly treatments, especially on Latin America and the United States, take a negative view with unions cast as the main, and often very effective, opponents of reform initiatives (Corrales 1999; Grindle 2004; Moe and Wiborg n.d.; Moe 2011). Elsewhere, especially in Europe, teacher unions are viewed more as partners in reform (OECD 2015). The analytic challenge in this section is to understand when teacher unions are likely to oppose reforms and why they have so much power.

Teachers are easier to organize than many other labor groups because members are homogeneous, have similar employment conditions and compressed salary scales, and often face a single, centralized employer (Olson 2009). The incentives are strong both for teachers to join and for activists, who can reap members' dues, to invest in organizing. Even in countries such as the United States or Chile where unions have almost disappeared from the other sectors of the economy, teacher unions are still large and well organized. Overall, in the OECD, teachers are highly unionized, and despite shrinking unions in other sectors, "teacher union membership has remained stable in many countries" (OECD 2015, 175). Teachers usually enjoy tenure (or at least strong job protection) so, unlike workers in private firms, need not worry about employer retaliation for joining unions. More idealistically, many teachers join the profession out of a commitment to public and national service, and this sort of commitment can generate (extra-Olsonian) investment in collective action.

Salary issues are a dominant, unifying concern of teacher unions in most countries. While in low-income South Asia and Africa, salaries for civil service teachers are high compared to similarly educated workers in other sectors, private school and contract teachers earn a fraction of the civil service wage, and reforms aimed at expanding these latter segments can directly threaten teacher unions. In the OECD and LAC, salaries for public and private sector

teachers are more aligned, and on average slightly lower than for workers in other sectors with similar levels of formal education (Mizala and Ñopo 2016).¹³ But with the mass expansion of basic education, teacher pay in many countries has experienced a sharp secular decline over the past 3-4 decades (Fredriksson and Ockert 2007; Grindle 2004, 130; Saavedra-Chanduvi 2004), which makes collective bargaining all the more attractive to teachers.

What is most consistent is the pattern of salary compression in teaching: pay may start on par with or higher than comparable jobs in the private sector but typically increases only slightly over the career through seniority pay.¹⁴ The more compressed the salary scale, the more teachers of varying seniority share common interests in collective bargaining over annual wage increases. This explains why the introduction of individual teacher evaluation and pay linked to performance are often strongly resisted by unions, despite their promise of higher compensation for individual teachers.

Teacher unions' size in comparison to the overall workforce is a major source of political strength. In Latin America, teachers in 2012 represented 4 percent of the overall labor force and

¹³ Whether teacher pay is high or low depends on the comparator group, adjustments for hours worked, and whether or not cognitive skills – and not just formal education – are compared. In many OECD countries and Latin America, teacher pay is lower than for other professions requiring similar levels of formal (university and post-graduate) education. However, scores on university entrance exams in most of these countries show that students who enter teaching are academically much weaker than entrants into medicine, law and engineering and business, so in some sense these professions may not be a valid counterfactual. Within countries, uniform teacher salaries often mean that rural teachers earn more than local counterparts and urban teachers less; nonetheless, even higher relative salaries are an insufficient incentive to attract teachers to remote rural postings in most countries. Similarly, male teachers usually earn less than similarly educated male workers while female teachers earn slightly more. See Mizala and Nopo (2016) for a review.

¹⁴ Among OECD countries the salary differences between starting salaries and salaries after 15 years are minimal in Scandinavia, the United States, France, and Chile (OECD 2010, 110).

over 20 percent of technical and professional workers (Bruns and Luque, 2015).¹⁵ This mass of organized voters attracts political parties, often left and radical, to invest in gaining leadership positions in teacher unions. This vulnerability to politicization adds a layer of interests beyond simple Olsonian logic and thus plays into the positions of allied parties that are supporters or opponents of reformist governments (Corrales 1999).

Another source of union power is through rents and administrative prerogatives that unions come to control. In Latin America, teacher unions controlled positions in national or subnational government agencies in 5 of 12 countries in 2013 (Bruns and Luque 2015, calculated from Table 6.1, 298–301). Union control of education sector administration was most entrenched in Mexico: in 2012, 8 of 31 state education secretaries were appointed directly by the SNTE, as were 38 other high-level education officials (Bruns and Luque, 2015). These appointments are often part of larger clientelist networks noted in the previous section.

In addition to bottom up incentives to unionize, governments may also provide top-down advantages to unions. For example, governments may decide that it is easier to bargain with one union rather than several competing unions and so decree a monopoly of representation (on Mexico, see (Chambers-Ju and Finger n.d.)). More generally, because of their weight in electoral politics, politicians and parties at some point are likely to trade union support for favorable regulation such as monopoly of representation, automatic membership for all teachers, and universal payroll deductions for union dues (on the order of one percent of salary in Latin America).

¹⁵ In the 1990s, teachers ranged from 3 to 9 percent of formal employment across 12 countries in Latin America (Grindle 2004, 125). In the United States, four million teachers belonged to unions (Moe 2011, 16). Globally, “Education International (EI), which represents around 30 million teachers and education workers in 170 countries, is the largest global union Federation” (OECD 2015, 175).

Table 1 shows the variations in the size, structure, and coverage of teacher unions in Latin America, all of which affect their sources of power (Table 1). On absolute size, Mexico leads Latin America with the largest union in the region. The Mexican SNTE also enjoys a monopoly of representation and 100 percent density; Mexican teachers not surprisingly were in 2010 among the highest paid (as percent of GDP per capita) in the OECD (OECD 2010, 110). Although not as remarkable, other teacher unions in Latin America also have high member density (median of 78 percent) and all but a few have a monopoly of representation. In other OECD countries, union density is also very high (80-100 percent) though single, monopoly unions are rarer (Moe and Wiborg n.d.).

Table 1. Teacher Unions in Latin America: Members, Density, and Monopoly of Representation

	Members	Density (%)	Monopoly
Argentina	234,000	51	No
Brazil	925,000	44	Yes, subnational
Chile	72,000	53	Yes
Colombia		82	Yes
Costa Rica	140,000+	100	No
Ecuador		79	Yes
Mexico	1.2-1.5 million	100	Yes
Peru	145-200,000	42	Yes
Uruguay primary	16,000	77	Yes
Uruguay secondary	6,000	34	Yes
Median density		78	

Source: (Bruns and Luque 2015, 240–1).

Another crucial issue in the internal organization of teacher unions is how leaders are elected and how long incumbents stay in leadership positions, though this is an area where basic comparative information is scarce. For example, the SNTE in Mexico had one leader from 1989 to 2013. In Chile during the same period, the Colegio de Profesores had 3-4. Voting and membership can also have a large impact on who gets elected. In the Colegio de Profesores

voting is voluntary, and retired teachers make up a large proportion of members and voters (Mizala and Schneider 2014).

Union leaders often have political ambitions that go far beyond representing the median voter among teachers. In Mexico, the SNTE served as the basis for Gordillo's run for the PRI's nomination for the 2006 Presidential election. Losing that, Gordillo created a new political party. Elsewhere, union leaders are often closely allied with tiny, radical left parties. For instance, in Peru, union leaders have long been Maoist and in Chile, union president Jaime Gajardo belonged to the very small Communist Party. Large unions, with substantial resources, and visible disruptive capacity are attractive to activists from small parties who perceive a payoff to investing time and resources into recruiting and supporting candidates for leadership positions. For some elections, only a small percent of the total membership is sufficient to elect the leaders.¹⁶ Internal factions sometimes campaign more to mobilize turnout of sympathetic members than to appeal to the median union member.

In terms of power, teacher unions have five main strategic resources: i) strikes and street protests; ii) capture of education ministries and other government agencies; iii) linkages with political parties; iv) legal strategies; and iv) union-sponsored research and policy analysis. All of these have been used successfully in Latin American reform experiences over the last ten years to block or contest different reforms. (Bruns and Luque, 2015). Strikes and street protests are especially disruptive and generate intense political pressures on reformist governments. Marches

¹⁶ In the 2013 election for the Colegio de Profesores in Chile, the winner received only about 8,000 votes out of a total of less than 20,000 cast (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaime_Gajardo, accessed 17 January 2016). Membership at the time was approximately 150,000 including some 75,000 active teachers plus an equal or greater number of retired members.

and demonstrations are often sited to be maximally disruptive for citizens and businesses; strikes create huge issues for children and parents, especially working parents.

Education reform is a broad and diverse category, but for political analysis the key dimension is whether, how, and how much each reform component affects various stakeholders. We close this section by distinguishing four main types of reforms depending on how they affect teachers and teacher unions. Similar typologies could be created for other major stakeholders. With unions, it is also important to remember the multiple interests – beyond standard labor relations – that can run through them, including the ideological, clientelist, and rent seeking interests layered through union organizations.

1. *Reforms that directly threaten teachers' core interests:* job stability, individual performance evaluations, pay linked to performance, and other work conditions. Many teachers may view job security as one of the, if not the, main attractions of a teaching career, and many may have opted for the security even if it meant forgoing higher income in other jobs. As a widely shared interest, unions can defend it more vigorously than other issues.

2. *Reforms that negatively affect teachers' interests, but less directly and intensely:* curriculum reform, introduction of ITC, student testing, and length of the school day or school calendar. These reforms mainly affect the autonomy of teachers to run their classrooms. Curriculum reforms can imply substantial additional work for teachers to master new content and prepare new lesson plans; the use of computers in the classroom can be alien and uncomfortable to older teachers, although this is changing over time. Student testing exposes differential teacher performance and creates accountability pressure. Lengthening the school day or the school year may mean extra hours of work, but it can also be implemented in ways that increase hiring or increase hours with more income.

3. *Reforms that teachers generally support*: increased education spending, smaller class size, school-level bonus pay. Teachers and unions usually actively support measures that channel more resources to schools in the form of increased salaries, more and better teaching materials, more hiring (and consequently fewer students per class), and better infrastructure. Since teachers' interests in smaller class size directly align with parents', there is strong inertia in most education systems in this direction. This inertia is so strong that even when countries experience a demographic transition and the number of school aged children declines, it is generally impossible to reduce teacher numbers and restore a more efficient class size. On performance pay, teachers are generally open to group or school-level bonuses, that reward the whole school for learning results. To ensure broad support, it is important that such programs are target-based (rewarding schools for progress from their own baseline) or take into account socio-economic differences among school conditions and students, such as Chile's SNED tournament program does (Mizala and Schneider 2014)

4. *Reforms that affect unions' organizational strength*: education system decentralization, measures that promote private education or charter schools, measures that make union organizing more difficult (e.g. eliminating automatic dues deductions) or reduce union participation in school management (Mexico), and individual performance-based pay.¹⁷ These measures undermine union power by reducing the numbers of members or resources, or divide teachers in ways that make it harder for unions to bargain for common interests, like a single pay scale.

¹⁷ See Carnes (2014) and Murillo and Schrank (V. Murillo and Schrank 2005) on overall distinctions between labor reforms that affect individuals and those that affect unions.

In sum, in virtually all countries, especially more developed and democratic ones, teacher unions are powerful stakeholders in education politics. Among other advantages, teachers are easier to organize than other workers because their conditions of work are more homogeneous and employers are more centralized. In politics, teacher unions have distinct advantages by virtue of their size, geographic coverage, electoral impact, and disruptive capacity. However, comparisons across countries reveal that teacher unions are often much more than simple labor organizations. Sometimes left and radical left movements and parties gain significant influence in union leadership positions (well beyond the proportion of teachers who share their views). In other cases, unions become integral cogs of large patronage and rent seeking machines tied to clientelist parties. These additional layers of interests and influences can be very consequential for reform dynamics.

IV. Other Stakeholders in Education

Outside of teacher unions, a wide range of groups – both inside and outside the education system – have sometimes strong views on quality reforms. Most reform initiatives will not engage all these stakeholders, but would-be reformers would do well to consider them all as potential opponents or allies (see appendix for a summary checklist).

Teachers. Separate from their unions, teachers are also core stakeholders. They affect union strategies by whom they elect and by whether or not they respond to the calls from union leaders for disruptive actions like strikes and demonstrations. They also have a core political advantage in that they are in close contact with students and parents throughout the country. To the extent that part of the politics of education depends on how the reforms are communicated or

sold and how they are interpreted, teachers have distinctive advantages in communicating face to face with students, parents, community members, and local leaders.¹⁸

In many countries large majorities of teachers (often 2/3 or more) are women.¹⁹ There is no research we know of that analyzes the effect of this gender imbalance on teacher interests or politics. In one plausible scenario, female teachers are mostly second income earners in their families, and the crucial benefits for the family come less from the additional income and more from the employment security, public welfare benefits, time off, and flexibility (as in freedom to take days off occasionally). If this is the case, it may explain why tenure is often a more important issue (in career and incentive reforms) than are promises of higher pay for performance. Additionally, the existence of another source of family income may allow teachers to stay out on strike longer.

Although teachers individually, outside of their unions, may not participate visibly in the politics surrounding reform enactment and initial implementation, they are crucial in the longer term implementation (Grindle 2004, 119). Convincing teachers of the merits of a reform

¹⁸ There is evidence that teachers and school directors have worked to mobilize student and parent opposition to standardized testing in the United States and encouraged students to demonstrate in the São Paulo demonstrations noted in the introduction (personal communication, Claudia Costin).

¹⁹ In China, 80 percent of 15 million teachers are women (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/world/asia/wanted-in-china-more-male-teachers-to-make-boys-men.html>, accessed 6 February 2016). For high income OECD, the proportion of women teachers was 82 percent in primary schools (from 71 percent in Denmark to 96 percent in Italy) and 63 percent in secondary education (from 51 percent in Netherlands to 73 percent in Canada) (OECD (<https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/women-teachers.htm#indicator-chart>)).

sufficiently to ensure their support for implementation is a task reformers cannot afford to ignore (OECD 2015, 174).²⁰

School Directors. Directors (aka principals in the United States) are pivotal stakeholders in either resisting or promoting reform.²¹ They can become allies in reforms that help them with overall planning or motivating teachers (Mizala and Schneider 2014). They can also become major supporters if reformers can appoint new reform-minded directors, as happened in Rio de Janeiro state (Risolia 2015) and Poland. Over the longer term, directors are crucial for getting teachers to implement reforms fully. However, if reforms imply new standards and recruitment processes for school directors or tighter accountability, pockets of resistance can be expected. School directors will typically not express their resistance directly to reform champions, but instead work through teachers, parents and the media to undermine the changes. It is important for reform champions to gauge accurately the degree of support from school directors, and to use outreach, new recruitment, and compensatory strategies to build a critical mass of support from this crucial group.

Business. As a major ‘consumer’ of the outputs of the educational system, business should in principle have strong preferences in education reform. Business also has more resources to influence the policy process than other stakeholders. However, business is often not centrally engaged in education reform politics (Kaufman and Nelson 2004b)[p. 267]. In her review of major reforms in the 1990s in Latin America including Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, and

²⁰ The Second Curricular Reform in Shanghai was approved with little contention in 1998, but lack of teacher buy in and implementation planning led a reliance on past practices and limited change in response to the reforms (Tan 2012).

²¹ This was one of the main recommendations of the World Bank’s major study of Indonesia’s ambitious Teacher Law of 2005 (Chang et al. 2013, 23).

Nicaragua, Grindle found that, “parents’ organizations, business groups, or pro-education civic alliances were conspicuously absent from these stories of reform” (2004, 198).²²

Most business associations will put education on their lists of demands for government, however interviews reveal little active lobbying or close engagement in reform politics. As one interviewee in Peru described it, association leaders in the main encompassing association, Confiep, talk about education, but it is cheap talk (*de boca para fuera*), and Confiep leaders do not discuss it much internally (interview with Confiep member, 19 January 2016). In Argentina, the head of an education NGO, had a similar view; big businesses and business associations talk about the need for education reform, but they are not really committed (*‘no hay compromiso,’* interview, 4 March 2015). Similarly, government officials often note a lack of engagement by business in education politics (Schneider 2013, chapter 6).

Following the VoC perspective in section II, the problem with business support for education reform is that many businesses in developing countries do not in fact rely on hiring skilled workers (Schneider 2013). Large firms can either train workers themselves or rely on unskilled labor (as in basic assembly factories or food processing). An IDB report on Latin America summarized the view of many businesses in Latin America as ‘hire for attitude, train for skills’ (Bassi et al. 2012). To the extent firms devise such private solutions to their training needs, they will be less concerned about the performance of the public education system. And, in surveys of business, few rank skills as the greatest obstacle they face (Pages 2009). Of course,

²² One exception to the general rule of business absence from reform coalitions comes from the United States, where an unlikely coalition of business and civil rights leaders pushed the reforms in testing and accountability that lead to the signature No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy of the 2000s (Rhodes 2012).

there are firms – often smaller or higher tech -- for whom skills are a major constraint. We return later to the task of finding and mobilizing these firms to support reforms.

Private schools. Businesses in many sectors are affected by education quality, but one new and growing segment of business has a much more direct and intense interest in education policy. In recent decades, the expansion of private schools in Latin America has created a group of education capitalists. Some of these entrepreneurs own only one or a few schools (the pattern in Chile), but in some cases they own growing chains of schools with hundreds or thousands of students.²³

Most analyses of reform politics focus almost exclusively on reform in public education. At some point reformers also confront problems with performance in private schools where, on average, education outcomes are not much better than public schools (controlling for socio-economic factors). Reform politics for private education shifts dramatically in that reformers do not confront unions. However, resistance to reform by private school owners, who value their independence, and their allies (e.g., the Catholic Church) can be as intense and effective as from teacher unions. In Chile, associations of private schools, including Catholic schools, were adamantly opposed to a number of the second Bachelet government's reforms of the voucher system – including a ban on profits and prohibiting schools from screening applicants – that were finally adopted in 2016, after a two-year negotiation (see appendix).

Organized civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many countries, both developed and developing, have a range of organizations in civil society that advocate education

²³ Large chains, some foreign owned, with hundreds of thousands of students are now common in tertiary education in Latin America. Total primary enrollment in non-state schools grew by 2012 to 16 percent in low income countries and 12 percent in middle income countries (it remained steady at 11 percent in high income countries). Among regions, growth was highest in Latin America where enrollments reached 18 percent (Steer et al. 2015, 5–6).

reforms. Many of these groups play important substantive roles in education, developing innovative approaches to teacher training, for example, conducting research, and providing technical assistance to schools and government agencies. A relatively new phenomenon since 2000 in the LAC region is the extent to which these NGOs have engaged in reform advocacy and the level of influence they have attained. Table 2 lists some of the most visible education NGOs in Latin America.

Table 2. Major Education NGOs in Latin America

	Name	Date founded	Description
Argentina	Educar 2050	2002	
Brazil	Todos pela Educação	2005	Umbrella organization, formed by business leaders
	Insitituto Singularidades		Founded by a Brazilian businessman
	Fundação Victor Civitas		Founded by a Brazilian businessman
	Fundação Lemann		Founded by a Brazilian businessman
	Instituto Ayrton Senna	1994	Founded by the family of famous race car driver
Chile	Centro de Estudios Publicos		Think tank with sustained business support
Colombia	Todos por la Educación		
Mexico	Mexicanos Primero	2005	Founded by wealthy heirs
Peru	Foro Educativo	1992	Education experts, former policy makers, private sector
Peru	Empresarios por la Educación	2005	Association of business leaders

Mexicanos Primero, founded in 2005, is a leading example. It is not strictly speaking a business backed NGO, but it was founded and funded by heirs to several of the largest family fortunes in Mexico. It has used creative and aggressive tactics to publicize the politicization and dysfunction of Mexican education, including the financing of a feature-length film (*De Panzazo*) exposing the union's abuse of power, and research leading to newspaper exposes of irregularities in education financing. Many credit *Mexicanos Primero* with generating a degree of public

demand for education reform that allowed the Pena Nieto government at the outset of its administration in 2013 to take previously unthinkable actions such as jailing SNTE leader Elba Gordillo and passing a constitutional reform mandating teacher evaluation and other policies previously rejected by the union.

In Peru, a group of educators, business people, and former policy makers created the *Foro Educativo* in 1992 in part in opposition to the education policies of the Fujimori government. The *Foro* had a strong presence through the 2000s but has faded more recently, in part because many of its proposals and personnel were incorporated into government reforms. Nonetheless, it continues to host major events like a three-day national conference on education quality in 2015.

In Argentina, in the midst of the 2002 economic crisis, a small group which included several business executives founded *Educar 2050* in order to promote reform and long term education planning. By 2015, *Educar* had a small staff of seven people, and worked mostly to promote awareness ('to wake people up'). One of their main activities was a week-long event (*Semana de la Educación*) that Educar coordinated with some 65 other NGOs concerned with education (interview with Educar director, 4 March 2015).

Brazil's *Todos pela Educacao*, an umbrella NGO supported by a large number of other education NGOs, is a widely respected source of education data and policy analysis and has promoted national dialogue on key reforms, such as the current national effort to reform the basic education curriculum. It has developed an interactive online program – similar to Australia's My School (discussed later) that allows parents to compare their school's results with those of other nearby schools and with state and national average performance – all using colorful and accessible graphics.

The Lemann Foundation supports scholarships to top US graduate school for promising education economists and has had impressive impact over the past decade in strengthening the policy network in education and “seeding” a number of the most innovative state and municipal secretariats in Brazil with a critical mass of outstanding young staff. It also, along with the Fundacao Ayrton Senna, the Fundacao Vitor Civita and Instituto Singularidades, influences education policy and supports reform implementation in key areas through technical assistance to state and municipal education secretariats.

Similar stories could be told about many other NGOs in Latin America and elsewhere. And, beyond the general education NGOs are dozens of more specialized associations (focused on things like indigenous education, religious, bilinguals, etc.). Education advocacy NGOs have several common traits relevant for education reform including central missions of keeping education in public debate, providing a critical perspective on both government education policy and teachers’ unions, offering forums for dispersed stakeholders to come together, and providing channels for business philanthropy. Education reformers who consult extensively and work closely with local NGOs can create a valuable base of political support.

Parents. As stakeholders who presumably have intense interests in the quality of their children’s education, the absence of parents in most reform politics is at first glance surprising (Grindle 2004; Moe and Wiborg n.d.). A first issue is the collective action problem of organizing, particularly into a national interest group, individual parents whose concerns about education tend to be localized.

Exacerbating this is class. In most developing countries, children of the elites attend private schools. Thus, the richest and most influential groups of parents have little stake in reforming public schools (Corrales 1999; Kaufman and Nelson 2004b). Parents whose children

remain in public school systems are typically less educated, less empowered, and have less time to mobilize politically in pursuit of reforms, or even to inform themselves about their local school conditions and issues. School principals in low-income neighborhoods in developing countries consistently report low levels of parent involvement in local schools.²⁴

Even in countries where school decentralization reforms have granted significant power to school level councils with parent representation, researchers have found that parents often do not feel empowered to challenge the views of school directors and teachers, given income and class disparities (Castro on Nicaragua in Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003). Therefore, despite potentially intense preferences, parents are rarely an organized force in reform politics. However, on topics where teachers' union and parental preferences align – notably, smaller class size – unions can use the certainty of parents' tacit support to bolster their position.

Students. In contrast with the political activism common among university students, it has been much less common for K-12 students to be actively involved in education protests or reform. However, this may be changing, given the role played by secondary school students in the Sao Paulo case cited at the outset, and the march of the *pinguinos* (secondary students labeled “penguins” because of their dark uniforms) in Chile in 2006. Over several months, students in Santiago shut down and occupied dozens of schools, drawing attention to the issue of poor quality secondary schools and forcing the government to establish a reform commission.

²⁴ Class-based differences in education preferences are core to social science theories that view education policy in distributive terms. As noted in section II, wealthier groups favor higher public spending on tertiary education; poorer groups prefer more spending on basic education (Ansell 2010). Also, in societies with lower inter-generational mobility, richer families are the main support for higher quality public education, while in societies with high mobility, all class groups support high quality public education (Gift and Wibbels 2014). These and other distributive theories would expect low interest by most classes of parents in education reform in developing countries.

Although this commission did not lead immediately to sweeping reforms, it was the beginning of a longer reform cycle that played out through the 2010s.

Government reformers and education policy network. As noted in section II, Grindle (2004) emphasized the role of small groups of reformers in the executive branch for getting reforms going in Latin America. Others highlighted the role of policy entrepreneurs. The complexity of implementation and the size of the administrative apparatus requires a team of reformers to staff it, and analyses often identify groups of reformers in key positions in the education ministry and advisors surrounding the minister (or subnational equivalent).

In most countries, these reformers are drawn from -- and well connected to -- a larger policy network that is also reform oriented (Kaufman and Nelson 2004b: 262). Most people in this policy network have graduate degrees and research experience in education. Many come from the education NGOs described above; others are in universities, research centers, think tanks, and many have experience working in or with multilateral development agencies and international NGOs. This policy network is often active in public debates (as in writing op-ed pieces or participating in radio and TV talk shows) and can be a key ally in communication strategies discussed later. In the recent reform experience in Peru, attracting economists from the Ministry of Finance into the reform team at the Ministry of Education has broadened the policy network and technical support for implementation.

International Development Agencies. Multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and other regional development banks, as well as national agencies like USAID, DFID, GTZ are also sometimes important pro-reform stakeholders, both by providing technical assistance (and thereby joining the policy network) and adding resources (Kaufman and Nelson 2004b: 263). Overall, though, funding is minor for middle income

countries and direct influence is relatively limited (Corrales 2005, 10–12). Perhaps the greatest influence of the international development community has come through the increase in research evidence on the impact of different education reforms over the past 10-15 years, which can be linked to the diffusion of certain types of reforms, such as bonus pay, school-based management and information for accountability. Development agencies can also have large negative impacts, sometimes generating a national or religious backlash against foreign intervention and ‘imposed’ educational models.

Religious authorities. Although rarely central protagonists in education reform, religious leaders are important stakeholders in educational politics. In Latin America, the Catholic Church runs many elite private universities and basic education schools, and is careful to block regulations that might affect the autonomy and resources of their private schools (interview, advisor to minister of education in Chile, 7 March 2016). A Jesuit branch of the Church also manages the Fe y Alegría network of low-cost primary and secondary schools which receive government teachers and government capitation subsidies. The Fe y Alegría network comprises over 1,000 schools in 19 countries (most countries in Latin America) and reaches over 1 million children.²⁵ However, many systemic reforms focus almost exclusively on public schools, and church leaders do not have strong interests to defend there.

University faculties of education. Universities and institutes that prepare teachers typically resist reforms that require them to revise their training curriculum or expose the low quality of these programs. In 2012, for example, university education departments in Brazil mounted a public campaign and succeeded in blocking the appointment of a reformist municipal

²⁵ Around 2/3 of the students are in Andean countries, especially Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Bolivia. See: <http://www.feyalegria.org/es/cuantos-somos> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fe_y_Alegr%C3%AD%C3%A1.

education secretary to the Ministry of Education (Secretary of Basic Education), because of her record in introducing higher standards for teachers, curriculum reforms and expanded student testing. In Peru, the Ministry of Education in 2007 tried to raise the quality of new teachers by instituting a national entrance exam for admission into teacher training programs. Admissions into Peru's regional network of *Institutos Superiores Pedagogicos* fell from almost 12,000 to less than 1,000, which threatened the survival of many of the institutions. They mobilized, and by 2010 the Government was forced to soften the test and by 2012 to decentralize control over candidate selection to the institutions themselves.

Politicians and political parties. In principle, one or more political parties in democratic systems should have an interest in developing strong reputations for advocating for improving education. In practice, nearly all parties promise to improve education which makes it almost impossible for voters – even those with strong preferences for education – to find the true educational reform party. Moreover, parties are often weak, changeable, and amorphous in new democracies in developing countries, so they rarely stand out as the main vehicles for connecting voters to reform policies.²⁶

For many parties and politicians, especially in more clientelist political systems, their interest in education derives less from serving voters' long-term interest in quality education than their own short term interests in the political jobs and patronage of one of the largest ministries in terms of spending and personnel (Kingdon 2014). In many countries, a large share of total education spending goes to national and subnational administration, and many of these jobs are open to political appointment. Trading appointments for clientelist support can go to unions, as

²⁶ Chile offers a major exception both in that parties there are stronger and better institutionalized and in the ways the 2014 election revolved around education with the winning coalition campaigning hard on a platform of education reform and tax increases (see appendix).

noted earlier, or to other party supporters. For Corrales, “clientelism, patronage, and corruption are three of the most intense political forces that push states to expand education” (2005, 18).

Reforms designed to depoliticize and professionalize administration and to shift spending from administration to schools are likely to run into strong opposition from clientelist parties and politicians. Politicians with extensive interests in education appointments can be especially tenacious and effective opponents of reform because their political fates may depend on it and they occupy positions of power in government. Since defending clientelist prerogatives does not make for good publicity, opposition is typically expressed through indirect tactics such as strengthening other opponents, erecting legal and congressional obstacles, and lobbying to dismiss reformers in government.

Communist parties historically forced heavy investment in high quality basic education from Cuba, to Vietnam, to East Europe (Corrales 2005, 16–17).²⁷ Part of the motivation was ideological, in using education to reduce inequality and class distinctions. Another part of the motivation was regime-building – to socialize students into communist rule. A third, interesting, explanation is that Communist systems do not face the obstacles – patronage politics and empowered unions -- common in democratic systems.

If we consider as rent seekers all employees (and contractors) of the educational system who were appointed for political motivations (clientelism), or for other reasons do not work at full effort, then education administrations and schools are full of full or partial rent seekers, from the unqualified, politically connected agency director, to teachers who do not show up for work. Viewed in this way, quality reforms threaten a great number of rent seekers in an educational

²⁷ Although still classified as lower middle income, Vietnam’s performance on recent Pisa tests was better even than most developed countries (OECD 2014).

system, both those without training or competence who need to be replaced, and those who are slacking off.

In sum, in most societies a large number of citizens and diverse groups have strong interests in how educational reform unfolds. Although multiple and diverse interests are at play, government reformers are usually the main protagonists and teachers' unions the key antagonists. The other potentially important stakeholders are parents and business. Potential is the key modifier here as parents and business often do not have a history of participation, but can in theory be allies in reform implementation. We return to this potential in section VI.

V. Reform Design

Several key political decisions enter in to the design of systemic education reform. A deep understanding of stakeholders' likely responses is critical for key decisions on the bundling or sequencing of different reforms, and the mode of enactment. For most of these decisions, there are few simple, universal policy prescriptions. Rather, each option has costs and benefits, some of which are general and universal; others of which can only be fully gauged by considering the specific context.

Reform sequencing. A first issue is whether and how to sequence reform components. Some sequencing has a technical logic, in that school or teacher bonus pay, for example, cannot be based on learning results until a functioning testing system is in place. But most sequencing decisions are political calculations, for example to introduce less controversial reforms first, or conversely to introduce the biggest impact reforms first. For example, teachers and teacher unions are generally less opposed to collective, school based performance incentives or bonuses (Mizala and Schneider 2014). Once collective incentives are in place and functioning, individual

incentives and performance pay may become more acceptable to teachers (though not to unions). This was the evolution in Chile and in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (proposed but never implemented), Brazil.

Similarly, reformers in several countries – Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia – started with voluntary teacher evaluations for teachers in service and accompanying bonuses before moving (in the cases of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador) to compulsory evaluations and more systematic pay for performance. In some cases, this was a strategy by necessity, as the opposition was too great to move straight to compulsory systems. The downside is that voluntary opting in is often minimal (10 percent or less of teachers). The upside is that reformers have a pilot system to use to work out problems in evaluation tools. A functioning teacher evaluation system may make a later universal, compulsory roll out smoother and less likely to provoke resistance.

Legislative vs. administrative enactment. Another strategic choice is whether to pursue legislative – or Constitutional – enactment, or push reforms via administrative decree. Often reformers do not have a choice because the features they want to revise are already in legislation (as is often the case with teacher careers), and thus require legislation to change them. Conversely, when the government has little hope of getting legislation through Congress, executive action is the only possible course.

When reformers do have a choice, the legislative route has major benefits, even though it comes at the cost of potentially long delays. Cox and McCubbins distinguish between resolute policies which go through many veto points but therefore are sticky, and decisive policies (like administrative decrees) which do not encounter any veto points and are therefore easier to adopt

but also easy to overturn.²⁸ For reformers with short or uncertain time horizons, decisiveness has obvious appeal. However, given the large numbers of reforms that have been diluted or overturned by subsequent governments, resoluteness should be a higher priority.

Bundling. Another design issue is whether to bundle multiple reforms into one package or narrow the design to a few key reforms.²⁹ An advantage of bundling is that reformers can put into the package measures likely to meet with resistance from teacher unions such as teacher evaluation with measures likely to please teachers like increases in base pay or lengthening the school day (in a way that requires hiring more teachers). This bundling can be seen in successive reforms of teacher evaluations and pay for performance in Chile from 1990 to 2010 (Mizala and Schneider 2014).

In Peru, Minister Salas in 2012 bundled mandatory entry into the new teacher career path (which links pay and promotion to performance and allows for dismissal of chronic low performers) with the sweetener of a significant increase in base salaries and a higher overall salary trajectory. Peruvian Minister Saavedra since 2014 has bundled implementation of the teacher evaluation program with much increased spending on school infrastructure (which is

²⁸ In their general argument, “*As the effective number of vetoes increases, the policy becomes more resolute, and less decisive.* The reverse is also true” (Cox and McCubbins 2002, 27).

²⁹ Although not themselves deep reforms, programs of school consolidation offer an interesting perspective on the politics of bundling and sequencing. Consolidation through closing unnecessary schools is an increasingly important issue in countries where the school-aged population is declining, as it can free up resources for other programs. However, closing schools is politically very difficult because of the disruption it causes to students and families that are shifted to other schools, sometimes much farther away. As noted in the introduction, the state of Sao Paulo launched a system-wide consolidation program that met with so much resistance that the governor fired the secretary of education and tabled the plan. In contrast, the state government of Rio de Janeiro devised a similar system-wide consolidation plan but implemented it in gradual phases over four years, with extensive consultation with the communities affected (Claudia Costin). In tactical terms discussed below, Rio municipality’s sequencing strategy belongs in the category of divide and isolate potential opponents, as well of course, consulting and communicating extensively with affected groups.

popular with both teachers and parents) (interviews). In Australia, Julia Gillard bundled the 2008 reform that sharply increased schools' (and states) accountability for results with a substantial increase in education funding for disadvantaged schools, teacher quality and numeracy and literacy training.

Another type of bundling seeks to enact in one go – a “big bang” – a set of complementary reforms that, together, maximize the chances of producing visible, early education results. This was the strategy of Michelle Rhee in Washington DC and Rio state secretary Wilson Risolia in 2011, who said “When a system is completely dysfunctional, you have to tackle the whole menu if you want to make the kind of leap that is needed. You have to work on all fronts – curriculum, materials, incentives, infrastructure – and do it coherently, or nothing will work.” Risolia combined: a major personnel reform -- radical streamlining of the central administration; the elimination of politically-appointed regional supervisors; meritocratic appointment of school directors; a major curriculum review (to make sure learning standards, materials and the student assessment system were aligned); the introduction of performance targets and bonus pay for schools; major new infrastructure investments to support a longer school day; and six-monthly meetings of the entire 1,000 person state management team (central managers, regional supervisors, and school directors) to track implementation progress and resolve issues. Although this program generated political push-back and major implementation challenges, it produced impressive results that probably could not have been produced in a less comprehensive effort. Increases in student learning and reductions in repetition and dropout lifted Rio state from 26th to 4th place in the national education quality rankings in four years (see appendix).

President Pena-Nieto's 2013 package of constitutional reforms in Mexico is another example of bold bundling, as was the wave of teacher policy reforms introduced by Peruvian President Alan Garcia's from 2007-2009, and Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa in the same period. The downside of bundling, seen to some extent in all of these cases, is that starting wars on multiple fronts can unite multiple stakeholders against the reforms. This was also seen in the 2014 Chilean reforms, aimed at both reducing fees and selection at private (voucher) schools and reforming the teaching career. Although not allied or coordinated, both the *Colegio de Profesores* and private schools vigorously opposed the reform program. However, both sets of reforms were ultimately adopted and, in combination, are likely to have greater impact on education quality than either alone.

Corrales argues that from a political standpoint the optimal strategy is limited bundling of quality reforms with a limited number compensatory reforms (Corrales 2005).³⁰ From an education policy perspective, the optimal strategy is bundling as many complementary quality reforms as politically possible, given the reality that education quality is enhanced by the alignment of curriculum and assessment policies, hiring standards and incentives, and robust public and private education sectors.

Communications. A final key strategy is the use of communications to defuse resistance and strengthen support (Corrales 1999). Prior to announcing or enacting policies, reformers often attempt to set the stage or prime the debate by emphasizing the crisis and dire condition of education. National and international tests can allow reformers to make benchmarking comparisons that create a sense of urgency around change, and this strategy was used

³⁰ Barber's how-to manual for education reforms also recommends a narrower, clear focus (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011, chapter 1).

aggressively by both Alan Garcia and Rafael Correa. The national education rankings in Brazil clearly set the stage for the Rio state reforms discussed above; media attention in 2010 surrounding the state's shocking underperformance as a wealthy state in second-to-last place forced the newly re-elected governor to fire the prior education secretary, hire Risolia, and, most importantly, give him the political opening for major change.

Negotiation with unions. A major issue in the design phase is whether to negotiate with teacher unions on elements of the proposed reforms. Whether or not it makes sense to negotiate depends on a range of factors from how politically radical the union (or government) is, whether other institutions favor compromise, whether officials and union leaders have a history of negotiation, and so forth. Given the range of factors, it is not surprising that the historical record varies enormously across countries. On the compromise extreme of the spectrum, reformers in Chile engaged the teachers union in the collaborative design and negotiation of a series of ambitious reforms, beginning with school-based bonuses (*SNED* in 1998) and including the longer school day, individual teacher performance evaluations (*Docentemas* in 2002) and individual bonuses (*AEP* and *AVDI*) in 2004 (Mizala and Schneider 2014).³¹

In the major reforms in 2014 and 2015, the teacher union supported the first wave of reforms that forbade profit, selection, and copayments in voucher schools. The union initially opposed the proposed teacher career law and went out on strike for two months against the government's bill. However, the union returned to the negotiating table and reached a set of compromises that allowed the bill to proceed with union support (interview with Guillermo Scherping, 21 March 2016). Although sometimes contentious and disrupted by teacher strikes,

³¹ Similarly, a recent OECD report comes out strongly in favor of negotiation: "To conduct reforms in education, building consensus on reform objectives and actively engaging stakeholders – especially teacher unions – can lead to success" (OECD 2015, 174)

the negotiations in Chile usually ended in compromise and a unanimous recommendation for new legislation that Congress then quickly passed.

On the other end of the spectrum, negotiations are pointless if the parties are not acting in good faith. In Mexico in 2012, union leader Gordillo repudiated the reform package she personally had negotiated earlier with President Calderon. In the early 2000s, Peruvian President Toledo and education minister Nicolas Lynch negotiated an agreement on competency testing for teachers, but the union contravened the first application by intercepting the test items and leaking them across the country. In both Peru and Ecuador, it was not possible to negotiate the recent (2010, 2012) major reforms of the teacher career path, and the new laws proceeded only after protracted strikes and violent clashes with the unions. In both cases, the unions' disruptive actions led public opinion to shift against the union and towards support for the government's program, which facilitated legislative adoption of the reforms (see Appendix III).

In sum, before launching education plans, government reformers need to make a series of decisions on sequencing, bundling, legislative or executive action, and negotiation. In shortest form, recent experience in Latin America suggests some sequencing and bundling, and legislation and negotiation when possible. We return to these recommendations in section VII.

VI. Reform Implementation

Unlike exchange rate or interest rate policies, the announcement of education reform is just the beginning of a long process of implementation during which major stakeholders continue to mobilize to push, slow, block, or change the reforms as they are implemented. Losers in the enactment phase know they will have opportunities later to attempt to influence reforms. Systemic reforms that seek to change teacher performance take an especially long time to

implement fully. The main political questions of implementation strategy revolve around how to manage union opposition to reforms through confrontation, negotiation and compensatory policies; how to keep pro-reform stakeholders mobilized; and how to win over public opinion.

This is the point at which many analyses and reports from multilateral agencies conjure up leadership, political backbone, and so forth. Certainly charm and charisma help with any difficult government task. But urging will and leadership both obscures and evades more rigorous political analysis of political costs and resources and gives a false sense of optimism. Education reform is like Weber's politics, 'the slow boring of hard boards.'

Confrontation vs. Negotiation. The ability of governments to carry through on reforms in the face of resistance from powerful stakeholders depends on both the willingness of the government to pay the political costs (strikes, street protests, negative opinion polling) and the scarce political capital and budgetary resources it has to spend on this reform (in competition with other costly reforms in other areas). In some cases, much of the political capital comes from popular, newly-elected presidents or governors who give reforms and reformers their unconditional support (FHC in Brazil in the 1990s, Garcia in Peru in 2006, Correa in Ecuador in 2007, Pena-Nieto in Mexico in 2012, the governor of Rio state in 2010, Humala in 2012). In other cases, or later in their administrations, presidents lack popularity, so ministers are left on their own to generate support (as in Peru when president Humala dropped in opinion polls while education minister Saavedra remained popular).

As in other reforms affecting large groups of public employees, the chains of implementation are long and run through several hierarchical layers. Schools are per force highly decentralized and scattered throughout the territory. To be effective, reforms have to reach into even the most distant classrooms, which means they may have to go through multiple

levels of administrative hierarchy, including provincial, municipal, and school-level directors any of whom can delay, dilute, or distort reforms. Often, though, these positions are not tenured, and central policy makers can replace recalcitrant regional administrators and school directors, as did Risolia in Rio state. (Risolia 2015).

Reform teams are often technocratic with little political experience, so the learning curve is steep.³² Many reformers have had little contact with unions and other major stakeholders prior to entering government. Bringing unions on board at this stage (if not before) is optimal and boosted reform programs in a wide range of cases from Chile (Mizala and Schneider 2014), San Jose California (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011, 33), to a range of OECD countries (OECD 2015, union chapter).³³ As Prime Minister, Julia Gillard offered the Australian Education Union a role in the future design of the government website that transparently disseminates schools' funding and results (My School) and was able to avert a strike and boycott; she considered this win-w (Gillard, 2015).

However, confrontation with unions is sometimes unavoidable. Particularly where unions have placed members in administrative positions or where unions have gained formal or informal influence in teacher hiring, reforms necessarily run straight into conflict with union leaders. This was clearly the case in Mexico. Presidents negotiated with the SNTE over decades from the 1990s through 2000s, but the union either undermined negotiated agreements during implementation (the *Carrera Magisterial* during the 1990s; teacher competency testing in 2010) or reneged altogether (*Alianza para la Calidad*). Immediately after his election in 2013, the

³² Among recent reformers in Latin America, Jaime Saavedra, Wilson Risolia, Nicolas Eyzaguirre, Gloria Vidal and others lacked either prior experience in government and politics or prior experience and training in education.

³³ In San Jose in the mid-1990s, the superintendent of schools met every Monday morning with union leaders for three hours (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011, 39).

government of President Pena Nieto jailed the leader of SNTE and passed a constitutional reform that drastically reduced the powers of the union. The Mexican case was extreme, but it does highlight how unions can be captured by rent seeking and political groups with little interest in representing teacher interests.

Compensatory Policies. Although they may be conceived during the design phase, compensatory policies for potential losers from reform are rolled out during implementation. Many compensatory policies link measures teachers and unions may oppose with others they welcome such as across the board pay increases and improvements to schools and equipment (Corrales 1999).

Another compensatory policy is grandfathering: reforms may target only subgroups of teachers, most commonly by applying new measures only to new hires or to subgroups hired under different types of contracts. This was used in Colombia's 2002 reform of the teacher career and in the *Carrera Publica Magisterial*, the first reform of the teacher career path adopted in Peru under Alan Garcia (Colombia 2002, Peru CPM 2010).

Strategically, partial compensation works to divide teachers and makes it harder for unions to mobilize unified opposition. In San Jose, California close cooperation between the superintendent and unions leaders led to a plan for early retirement of 300 teachers and their replacement with new pro-reform teachers (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011, 39). Arne Duncan, head of Chicago schools (2001-08, and later national secretary of education) launched a plan to open 100 new (non-union) schools and close an equivalent number of failing schools. Close relations with the Chicago Business Roundtable provided crucial support in implementing this reform (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011, 40)

Sustaining pro-reform coalitions. As noted in section III, many potential beneficiaries of education reform, especially parents and business, are surprisingly mostly found watching on the sidelines. In part passivity is the natural result of the collective action and free riding problems both groups face: business because it is so diverse across size, sector, and skill needs and parents because they are so dispersed geographically and/or stratified socially. Given these difficulties, strategic reformers think of ways to help pro-reform stakeholders overcome these obstacles.

One effective strategy can be to draw key stakeholders into high-visibility reform commissions or expert panels. At a time when the Chilean voucher system was under attack, the 1998 Brunner Commission forged a consensus that the voucher schools should remain, but be complemented with a new system of school bonuses (SNED) and other reforms. Concerned about inequities in Australia's funding of schools, Julia Gillard in 2010 set up an expert panel, chaired by a respected business leader, to conduct a review. She was careful to draw key stakeholders into panel, including representatives of Catholic schools, NGO schools, indigenous schools, other political parties and a noted economist. The Commission provided both political cover and solid technical ideas for a major reform. In the United States, states as diverse as New York and Georgia have commissioned expert panels to propose major reforms in the past five years.

Drawing key stakeholders into processes that build the case for reform and/or outline key elements creates a solid block of stakeholder support for the subsequent process. Not all education commissions are productive; the Chilean panel on secondary education established after student protests in 2006 did not lead directly to proposals for change. And even where concrete reform proposals emerge, they are not always implemented. But a panel of respected

individuals that achieves consensus around major reform directions can be a strong political asset for education reform champions.

Communicating reform progress. Framing reform goals powerfully and communicating progress effectively are critical tasks for education leaders. Underlying every major education reform in a democracy is a battle for public opinion that ultimately determines how much political ‘room for maneuver’ a reformer will enjoy. During the initial phase of education reform, all key stakeholders will try to shape public opinion and make their case in the press, as democratic deliberation should allow in any policy area. However, the battle for public opinion is where technocratic reform proposals can founder; specialists who have worked in education for decades may mistakenly assume that everyone else will logically see the value of the reforms and not put major efforts into publicizing, debating, and promoting them. In fact, much of the debate is often over terms, rhetoric, and framing rather than the real substance of the reforms. In Latin America and the US, for example, reforms successfully labeled ‘privatizing education’ can lose support. Conversely, in the US, reforms can also be torpedoed if successfully labeled ‘government overreach’, such as with the common core curriculum.

Winning over the press and public opinion is crucial in the adoption of major education reforms. Prime Minister Julia Gillard invested substantial time in outreach to both news media and the business community and had explicit strategies for both. With the news media, she made a point of briefing them personally in advance of new proposals or actions; she also kept them supplied with school-level stories that put a human face and compelling narrative around a reform process that might otherwise sound abstract. With business leaders, she held regular “boardroom lunches”, and framed reform goals and results in language that would resonate, such as ‘education markets’ and ‘cost-effectiveness’.

Effective communications strategies were key to the adoption of major teacher policy reforms in Mexico, Ecuador and both phases of reform in Peru, with the initial 2010 reform of the teaching career (*Carrera Publica Magisterial*) in the Garcia government and in the deeper 2012 reform of the teacher law (*Lei de Reforma Magisterial*) under the the Humala government and Minister Patricia Salas (Bruns and Luque 2015). Presidents Garcia and Correa staked substantial political capital on the first phase education reform programs in Peru and Ecuador and, as gifted communicators, were successful in mobilizing popular support in the face of protracted and violent union opposition. Successive ministers in Ecuador and Minister Saavedra in Peru have been active and effective communicators throughout the implementation of the teacher policy reforms.

Drawing on networks of experienced reformers from other countries can also help communicate reform progress and build public support. Julia Gillard invited New York City Chancellor Joel Klein to Australia to talk about the accountability-enhancing and market-oriented reforms he implemented. While in substance NYC's policies were no different from her reform agenda in Australia, Gillard notes wryly that Klein's words were 'received as words of wisdom from afar'. (Gillard 2015).

Developing country education ministers meet regularly at international conferences, but it is not common for successful reformers to visit other countries in order to share lessons or help communicate publicly the payoffs to sustained reform. A conference on teacher policy reform in Latin America jointly sponsored by the World Bank and Harvard in 2014 invited six of the region's most successful education reformers to a closed-door, three-day meeting aimed at facilitating frank dialogue and exchange of lessons. More regular events of this type might build

a network of experienced reformers who could provide informal guidance and support to other education ministers and secretaries contemplating major reforms.

The most critical communications challenge reformist leaders face is winning the hearts and minds of their teachers. Given the opacity of what transpires in the classroom, major education reforms cannot succeed without some degree of teacher buy-in and support. As education secretary of Rio de Janeiro municipality, Claudia Costin was one of the first in the world to use Twitter to communicate directly, daily, with her 55,000 teachers. She also made a point of responding to critical feedback without defensiveness and publicly acknowledging and acting upon useful suggestions, which signaled to teachers that she was listening to them, and built trust and support through a four-year process of very progressive reforms. Julia Gillard spent substantial time visiting schools across Australia during her years as education minister and Prime Minister, in order to hear directly from teachers and school directors; this helped both to zero in on implementation issues and to gain the frontline stories that enabled her to communicate personally and effectively what was being achieved. In reflecting on the sources of his success in raising test scores and graduation rates in the state of Rio de Janeiro, former secretary Risolia said his number one strategy was ‘staying close to schools’ – visiting schools constantly and simply listening to teachers’, directors’ and students’ feedback (Appendix IV).

VII. Preliminary Lessons from Comparative Analysis

Preliminary recommendations for reformers in developing countries that follow from the analysis in previous sections are, for sake of clarity, presented in simple, unnuanced terms. The real world is of course more complicated, and any recommendation needs to be carefully adjusted to the specific country context. Moreover, given the paucity of empirical research on

the politics of reform, these “lessons” should be taken as hypotheses to be confirmed in future research.

- 1) Consult with leaders of similar reform efforts. International agencies such as the United Nations, World Bank, and regional development banks can facilitate this process by systematically engaging reformers – both successful and not so successful – after they have left office to reflect on the lessons they learned, such as the World Bank has done with education ministers and secretaries in Latin America over the past several years. Reformers could also be invited to make themselves available for consultation with new ministers and secretaries of education in other countries. This sort of brain trust would likely be most useful on a regional basis, and perhaps focused on specific types of reform, to facilitate a deeper discussion of reform design and implementation challenges. Multilateral agencies or regional NGOs could institutionalize annual meetings of past, present, and future reform teams.
- 2) Identify all actual and potential stakeholders and analyze their interests. Crucial information in this regard is to confirm the most intense preferences and issues, that are likely to provoke opposition. Once the latter are known, stakeholders can be assessed for possible compensatory measures to overcome opposition. Consulting informally early and often with key stakeholders is the best way to gauge their preferences and anticipate their reactions.
- 3) Assess political capital. Quality reform almost always generates conflict at some point. In many countries, turnover in ministerial appointments is higher in education than other areas in part because ministers often resign (or are asked to resign) when their reform proposals generate too much political heat for the government.³⁴ Education leaders need to calibrate the degree of political support they can count on and plan the size and scope of the reform program accordingly. Maintaining the trust of the principal (President, governor, mayor) is also crucial and often hinges on providing straight information early when things go wrong.
- 4) Assess technical capital. Many reform programs stall or fail because implementation details -- especially the time, funding and technical skills required – were not thought through. Building systems of standardized student assessment and teacher performance evaluation that are technically sound and implemented with integrity are particular challenges. Successful reformers spend substantial time assessing institutional capacity, plan realistic timetables, seek technical support from all available sources, and work closely with the Ministry of Finance to cost out programs and build credibility by delivering on schedule.

³⁴ Ministers of education in Latin America often do not last long in government. For the 25 years from 1990 to 2015, Peru had 20 ministers with average tenure of little more than a year (from Wikipedia). In the same period, Chile had 15 ministers, for an average tenure of 1.7 years. Colombia had 11 ministers over those 25 years, for an average tenure of more than two years. However, the long tenure of two ministers from 2002 to 2014 increases this average.

- 5) Pass core reforms through legislation. This may slow the reform process in order to build a winning coalition in Congress. But experience shows that purely executive action often does not survive the transition to the next president. Legislation can be overturned as well, but the costs are higher.
- 6) Divide opponents. If the teachers' union is the likely source of most opposition, consider strategies that have differential impacts on sub-groups of teachers. For example, grandfathering the previous labor regime for older teachers, or establishing a new regime initially only for new hires, or incentives for early retirement. A number of countries have overcome resistance by making teacher evaluation and pay for performance initially voluntary. Voluntary schemes may be the only politically viable option, but the Latin American experience is that uptake may be very slow, leaving the Ministry with the challenge of managing two parallel labor regimes for a protracted period.
- 7) Compensation or side payments can also be part of a strategy to divide the opposition. For example, offering early retirement to older teachers may remove opposition from those with most to lose from loosening tenure protection and subjecting teachers to evaluation. Compensation can also be broader, as in granting significant salary increases to all teachers or investing heavily in school infrastructure.
- 8) Mobilize sympathizers. Two key sets of potentially pro-reform stakeholders -- parents and the business community-- are subject to major constraints on collective action. Business and NGO support may be galvanized by drawing respected leaders into an education reform commission. In Ecuador, President Correa engaged parents by placing them (and students) on school-level councils with significant powers. Targeted communications strategies -- being able to frame the reform goals in terms that resonate with different audiences -- is important.
- 9) Engage in the battle for public opinion. Any major education reform triggers public debate. Teacher unions are vocal in national press (and individually at the school level) in trying to frame reforms in negative terms. Reformist officials, politicians, and NGOs have a major challenge to get out a compelling counter narrative. National or internationally benchmarked data on education outcomes (for example on PISA) can provide evidence that the system is currently failing students, undermining national competitiveness, and requires major change. Other data damaging to teacher unions and clientelist politicians -- for example on teacher absenteeism, or incompetent appointees -- can also galvanize public support for change, although it may also provoke more direct retaliation from these groups.
- 10) Communicate directly with teachers. Ultimately, no meaningful education change is achieved without the active cooperation of teachers in the classroom. Even if union opposition makes it impossible to engage teachers formally in reform design, education Ministers and secretaries do well to maintain a schedule of continuous visits to schools, with no agenda other than to "listen" to teachers. This can generate

feedback that genuinely improves the design and implementation of reforms, as well as build ground-level support for programs over time.

VIII. Conclusions

The first and most definitive conclusion of this survey is that academic researchers have neglected the politics of education reform and left a yawning gap in the knowledge base that reformers need for the design of more effective policies. Even as research evidence accumulates on the policies and interventions most likely to improve education outcomes, little research exists on how to get those interventions implemented in classrooms in contentious political contexts. Empirical research of all sorts is needed; from macro, cross-national assessments of how successful reform may be correlated with ministerial tenure, clientelism, union negotiation, and media support, to closer, micro, case-based empirical examination of successful strategizing by reform teams. Some of the most recent reform programs (eg, Mexico) are building in evaluation from the beginning, to track whether reforms and interventions have expected impacts on learning outcomes. The same could be done for politics, building in ongoing evaluation by both policymakers and academics on what parts or processes of reform went well or poorly and why.

Like the few existing political analyses (Bruns and Luque 2015; Corrales 1999; Grindle 2004), this paper emphasizes the central role of teacher unions in reform politics. What we have added is the crucial notion that additional political interests are commonly layered or imbricated through teacher unions. Teacher unions are not only labor associations representing member interests, but also partly incorporated into state functions, clientelist networks, and wider rent seeking. Analytically unpacking this organizational and political complexity is essential for reformers' strategy on how best to deal with teacher unions.

Our discussion of stakeholders also went beyond previous studies, to make the list as exhaustive as possible. Not all stakeholders will matter in every context, but it is useful to have a checklist (Box 3 in Appendix I) to think through possible hidden opponents (e.g., teacher training schools) and hidden supporters (e.g., school directors). If one of the key functions of successful policy entrepreneurs is to find and mobilize latent pro-reform constituencies, it makes sense to start with as complete a list as possible.

Achieving the SDGs will require substantial progress on student learning in virtually all developing countries, including those that have not yet achieved universal access. From our review it is clear that the education reform agenda this implies will be politically contentious. In this context, Latin American may present a microcosm of what are likely to be broader global trends over the next decade and a half. First, the region has shown the disconnect that can develop when education coverage advances rapidly but school quality and student learning lag. Second, the region has displayed many, and egregious, examples of the education system dysfunction that can arise in democracies when clientelist governments and large, powerful teachers' unions find rent-seeking symbiosis.

But, third, and most importantly, the region's experience over the past decade offers some encouragement. A number of countries have launched and sustained major reforms to raise the quality of teachers and schools through higher standards, incentives and accountability for performance. Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, states and municipalities in Brazil have adopted reforms that directly threatened the interests of teachers' unions and government bureaucrats and in several cases have faced bitter opposition, with protracted strikes, marches and violent confrontations. Yet most of these leaders have persevered -- and have demonstrated a number of political strategies that are likely to be relevant elsewhere: sequencing and bundling reforms to

maximize support and impact; compensating losers; and using effective communications strategies to mobilize pro-reform stakeholders in civil society and the business community. This wave of education reforms is still being implemented and one of the lessons of global experience is that the implementation phase is both crucial and vulnerable, if teachers and directors are not committed. But however these reforms ultimately play out, it will generate further lessons from the Latin American experience.

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Appendix I: Reform Checklist

Box 1. Class politics and economic interests

____ Are social groups likely to support reforms to basic education -- workers and lower middle class -- well represented in the political system?

____ Given the overall structure of the economy, which business sectors and firms have the greatest skill needs? Are they organized into associations? Are any of these groups active on education issues?

____ Has the economy recently been opened to international trade and otherwise liberalized thus creating more opportunities for skilled workers?

____ Is the economy open to international trade and otherwise liberalized, thus creating more opportunities for skilled workers?

Box 2. Teacher Unions

____ Does the teacher union have a monopoly of representation?

____ If more than one union exists, which is most likely to support reforms?

____ How popular is the union's current leadership? How effectively does it represent teachers' interests?

____ Is the teacher union allied with government party, opposition party, or smaller fringe, usually left, parties?

____ Are there people receiving teacher salaries working in union positions or government offices?

____ Have politicians had the power to appoint supporters to positions in the education bureaucracy, union staff, or school administration? If so, how numerous are these and where are they distributed? What political parties are they allied with?

____ Are past relations between the government and teacher unions characterized more by conflict or negotiation?

____ What is the public perception of the teachers' union and its leadership? Have past disruptive actions (strikes and protests) negatively affected students and parents?

Box 3. Other Stakeholders

___ Which business sectors and firms have the greatest interest in better educated workers? How are they organized? Have they been active on education issues? If not, are they informed about potential benefits from the proposed reforms? Are there any business sectors or firms that could be negatively affected by the proposed reforms?

___ Is there an association of private schools? How will the proposed reforms affect private school owners? (eg, are there any expected impacts on private enrollments? Teacher salaries or hiring? Tuition levels? Capitation grants? Curriculum? School calendar?)

___ Is there an association of religious schools? How will the proposed reforms affect religious schools? (eg, are there any expected impacts on their enrollments? Teacher salaries or hiring? Tuition levels? Capitation grants? Curriculum? School calendar?)

___ How will the reform affect institutions that train teachers? Would it affect admission standards and possibly enrollments? Curriculum (requiring faculty to design new courses)? Career prospects of graduates (eg, by instituting an exit exam)? Transparency of performance (eg, by showing which schools' graduates perform best on an exit exam)? Market for in-service training?

___ Are there local NGOs active in education? How many? What are their particular interests? Can they all be expected to support the reforms? If not, which are the most influential and important to bring on board?

___ Which media outlets are most critical for public opinion? Are there any media outlets with a good track record covering education? Can they help build the case for reform, for example, by reporting on system problems (eg, poor performance on international tests, teacher absenteeism, incompetent political appointees, dilapidated infrastructure)?

___ How active is the Ministry/Secretariat's policy dialogue with multilateral banks (WB, IBD, AfDB) and international donors? Are these providing any technical or financial support for the proposed reform program? If not, could this be mobilized? If so, are there any negative political consequences locally to the support from outside?

___ Could establishing an education reform commission help engage some potentially supportive stakeholders (such as business or NGO leaders) into reform design and advocacy?

Box 4. Reform Design

___ Does the reform champion have the full political support of his or her principal (President, governor, mayor)? Does the reformer know how far he or she can go without risking that support (eg, would a major strike or demonstration be tolerated? For how long?) Does the reformer have any other support within the cabinet (eg, Minister/Secretary of Finance)? Does the reformer have any adversaries in the cabinet (eg, Health or social welfare secretariats that may lose resources or visibility or the political space to pursue major reforms of their own)?

___ What is the political process map for each of the proposed reforms? Which reforms require changes in legislation? Which can be changed through regulation? What is the minimum timetable for legislative reforms (how long to draft? How long for legislative review? How likely is passage?)

___ Which legislators are reform allies, and opponents? Have the sympathizers helped craft a legislative strategy for reforms that require new legislation (eg, a potential timetable for its introduction, a preliminary sense of where the votes are, and guidance on how to craft the law to maximize chances of success)?

___ What is the stakeholder support map for each of the proposed reforms? For example, for a reform of the teacher career path, are there some groups of teachers (eg, new hires, contract teachers who would be regularized, or high-performing teachers) that stand to benefit from the proposed reform, even if the union opposes it?

___ Are students and schools regularly assessed using standardized tests? Can these provide a basis for tracking reform impact?

___ Have students participated in international tests? Can these provide a justification for the proposed reforms?

___ Can schools be offered collective bonuses for improved performance (a politically popular way of introducing or strengthening the focus on results)?

___ How does current education spending compare with regional and international norms? Are there resources available for compensatory reforms such as infrastructure improvements, salary increases, new hiring?

___ Would acceptance of the reform be helped by making it applicable only to new hires (eg, grandfathering existing teachers)?

___ Are there any elements of the proposed program that could be piloted and evaluated first? Or phased in using random assignment, such that their cost-effectiveness can be rigorously evaluated?

___ Can reform elements be sequenced to generate some “quick wins” – early results or visible gains for some groups of stakeholders (eg, higher salaries for teachers or school directors who pass competency tests, or bonuses for schools that improve graduation rates and learning)?

Box 5. Reform Advocacy

___ What are the means for getting reform proposals favorable media coverage? How can the team keep the reforms in the media over the medium term? What early results might be publicized? Which school directors, teachers and students are likely to provide compelling stories that can give the reform agenda a “human face”?

___ Is the Minister/Secretary (reform leader) communicating directly with teachers through all possible channels: Twitter, email, social media, school visits, teacher conferences and workshops? Are communications short, personal and aimed at building trust and encouraging feedback? Is feedback followed up?

___ Is the reform leader consulting regularly with all of the key stakeholders: business, private schools, religious schools, teacher training institutions, education NGOs – and communicating a genuine willingness to listen and incorporate their feedback?

___ Has the reform leader been able to get his/her principal (President, Governor, Mayor) to publicly advocate for the reforms (assuming that this is a politically advantageous)?

___ Have similar reforms been implemented in any other country in the region that is an economic and political peer, or model? Have policymakers and the technical team from that country/countries been consulted for advice – on both reform substance and politics?

Box 6. Reform implementation

___ Has the reform champion been able to identify and/or appoint 30-40 committed, qualified people within the education ministry/secretariat (including regional and district levels) to create a large, loyal change team?

___ Has the reform team prepared a detailed, timebound and costed plan for all major reform elements? Are intermediate steps identified, to facilitate monitoring?

___ Has the reform team identified particularly innovative or costly elements of the reform that merit rigorous impact evaluation? If so, have academic partners to carry out the evaluations been identified? And possible funding sources?

___ Does the change team have the authority to replace regional supervisors and school directors immediately? Does the change team have enough reform minded, qualified professionals to appoint as new supervisors and directors?

___ Has the reform champion established a “change and implementation team” that includes all of the key officials at the regional, district and school levels and established regular face to face interaction with this group (typically 500-1,000 people)? Six monthly meetings of this expanded change team to celebrate successes and report and resolve problems can be a powerful way of building broad implementation support.

___ Does the reform champion make weekly visits to schools, to hear directly from teachers and directors?

___ Does the reform champion have an open door to communications from the teachers union?

___ Does the reform team have the capacity to keep leading media outlets supplied with regular information on progress being made, and school-level stories and interviews that provide human interest?

Appendix II. Strikes and Demonstrations over Education

Countries With Largest Numbers Of Strikes And Protest Demonstrations Led By Educators* 1990-2004		
Strikes		Protest demonstrations
Lebanon (18)		United States (23)
United States (15)		Ecuador (7)
France (12)		Colombia (3)
Niger (11)		Indonesia (3)
Colombia (7)		Kenya (3)
Romania (7)		Lebanon (3)
Argentina (7)		Turkey (3)
Nigeria (6)		United Kingdom (3)
Sierra Leone (6)		Benin (2)
Canada (5)		Bangladesh (2)
Croatia (5)		France (2)
Ecuador (5)		Greece (2)
Greece (5)		Japan (2)
Kenya (5)		Mexico (2)
Morocco (5)		Niger (2)
Algeria (4)		Peru (2)
Cambodia (4)		Ukraine (2)
Cote d'Ivoire (4)		Argentina (1)
Peru (4)		Brazil (1)
United Kingdom (4)		Croatia (1)
Bolivia (3)		Egypt (1)
Chile (3)		Germany (1)
Jamaica (3)		Hungary (1)
Poland (3)		India (1)
Portugal (3)		Iran (1)
TOTAL STRIKES / PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS WORLDWIDE	229	86
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AFFECTED	77	37
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY STRIKES OR PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS	85	
Source: J. Craig Jenkins, Charles Lewis Taylor, Marianne Abbott, Thomas V. Maher and Lindsey Peterson. 2012. The World Handbook of Political Indicators IV. Columbus, OH:		

Mershon Center for International Security Studies, The Ohio State University.
(<https://sociology.osu.edu/worldhandbook>).

As the authors note, “the data set is computer-generated parsed information from Reuters newswires into categories of actors and events” which raises questions about what types of events and what countries Reuters covers better. The dataset reports separately the events led by “unions” and the events led by “educators.”

Appendix III. Summaries of Reform cases in Latin America.

Peru³⁵

The *Ley de la Carrera Pública Magisterial* (CPM), passed in 2007, instituted more stringent evaluation of teachers, making career progression contingent on examination, and introduced the possibility of dismissal of teachers who repeatedly failed teacher exams. The reform was promoted by the National Education Council (*Consejo Nacional de la Educación*), constituted by former ministers of education and university professors, and opposed by the national Teachers' Union (*Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú*, SUTEP) (Bruns and Luque 2014b).

Ollanta Humala took office in 2011, with education reform high on his agenda. In August 2012, the cabinet sent the bill, *Ley de Reforma Magisterial* (LRM) to congress. The proposed reform sought to increase teacher quality by, among other measures, increasing pay, making pay-scales simpler and more transparent, and increase accountability mechanisms in the form of examinations and evaluations. In September, Suteper went on an indefinite strike over pay and the fact that the new legislation would not apply to contracted teachers who lacked tenure (nearly half of all 200,000 teachers). The call for a strike, however, was only partially followed by the union's members, many of whom continued to carry out their work. By the end of the month, Suteper ended its strike after negotiations with the government about wages, but maintained its opposition to LRM. In November, LRM passed in Congress and Humala signed it into law.

Implementing LRM fell to Jaime Saavedra who was appointed Minister of Education in October 2013. Saavedra pushed three main policies: implement LRM, improve school infrastructure, and increase total education spending (at below 4 percent of GDP, spending levels in Peru are among the lowest in Latin America).

Chile

Michelle Bachelet was elected president of Chile for a second time in December of 2013, taking office on March 11, 2014. She headed the *Nueva Mayoría* center-left coalition, which in addition to the original members of the *Concertación* (PS, PPD, DC, PRSD) included the Communist Party (PC), and had the support of several independent candidates with their political roots in the student movement. In addition to capturing the presidency, *Nueva Mayoría* won control of both chambers of congress, though lacking the two-thirds majorities needed to pass constitutional reforms. Although she had avoided offering specific policy proposals, Bachelet had incorporated the major demands of the student movement – free education, greater investment in public education, and an end to profit-making in the sector – into her program. Education, thus, constituted a key part of her reform agenda and was closely tied to her proposed tax reform, another major promise, which aimed at raising another 3 percent of GDP to be

³⁵ From background report by Martin Liby, December 2015.

directed towards education and which was pushed through congress in a highly contentious process prior to education reform.

Despite its strong popular and congressional support, education reform had a troubled start. Nicolás Eyzaguirre (PPD), a former minister of finance in the Ricardo Lagos government, who was given responsibility for the changes as Minister of Education received a mixed reception from Bachelet's allies. While Jaime Gajardo, the head of the Teachers' Union (*Colegio de Profesores*), voiced his support, student movement leaders were more skeptical, noting his lack of experience with education policy and his commitment to the existing economic model.

The first education reform package was unveiled in May 2014. The *Lei de Inclusión* focused on three key demands of the student movement and promises of the Bachelet campaign: to (1) ban profit-making in all publically funded educational activities, (2) end the ability of government-funded institutions to also charge tuition fees, and (3) prohibit publically financed schools from using admission criteria or select students. The reform package met with immediate resistance from the political right, parents associations, private schools, and the Catholic Church. Nor did the proposals satisfy students. The University Student Federation's (CONFECH) spokesperson Melissa Sepulveda both criticized the reforms for not going far enough and the process itself for lacking proper consultation with students.

The arrival of the reform package in the Chamber of Deputies at the beginning of the summer marked the start of a highly contentious 8-month long legislative process. Conacep (*Corporación Nacional de Colegios Particulares y Subvencionados*), the interest organization for schools that receive government support and charge tuition, and Confepa (*Confederación de Padres y Apoderados de Colegios Particulares Subvencionados*), the parents' association for the same institutions, mobilize protests against the reform, and receive support from both RN and UDI, as well as the Catholic Church. The reform package's progress through the two chambers of congress yields several attempts at modification of the law from both the right and the left. Yet, the amended legislation passed by the two houses of congress on January 26, 2015 promises to bring significant changes to Chile's education system. Schools receiving public funding will no longer be able to charge tuition fees – but to accept voluntary donations – or to make a profit. The ability of either private or publicly-funded schools to employ any form of selection mechanisms in their admission process is sharply reduced.

In April 2015, Minister of Education Eyzaguirre introduced legislation aimed at changing teachers' education, the transition from training to teaching, and professional development. While the Teachers' Union supports some of the proposals, such as making studies in pedagogy mandatory for teaching and the reduction in classroom hours (from 75% to 65%) for teachers, they resist parts of the reform would introduce new teacher evaluations and increase heterogeneity in career trajectories. The Teachers' Union, which on several occasions goes on strike in the April-September period, receives support from the student movement and, within the *Nueva Mayoría*, from PS and PC, which both vote against the reform in congressional education committee. The reform package, now stewarded by Eyzaguirre's successor Adriana Delpiano (PS), stalled in congress when the Colegio went on strike for 2 months in mid 2015. Camilo Vallejo and other legislators convinced the Colegio and representatives from the executive to join negotiations which accommodated some of the Colegio demands and convinced teachers to call off the strike. After some further modifications in the senate, Congress passed the Carrera Docente.

Ecuador³⁶

Beginning in 2006, an intensive period of far-going education reform began. It involved access as well as quality reforms to both primary and secondary education and included improvements in education infrastructure, changes to the curriculum, student performance evaluations, and changes to the teacher career. The reform period culminated with the inclusion in 2008 of important parts of reforms in Ecuador's new constitution and a new teacher career law that was adopted in 2009 and came into effect in 2011. By 2013 reforms had contributed to improvements in education outcomes and in progress towards meeting the goals of Unesco's *Educación para Todos* (EPT).

Reforms took place against the background of an ailing and under-performing education system. Economic and political instability in the 1990s contributed to persistent lack of funding, significant discrepancies in coverage between rural and urban areas, and poor results in the few international tests in which the country took part. In 2000, at Unesco's International Forum for Education in Dakar, Ecuador signed up to *Educación para Todos* (EPT), committing to take action to improve education.³⁷ During the years that followed NGOs, including the Unicef-sponsored *Observatorio de los Derechos de la Niñez y Adolescencia* (ODNA) and *Fundación Observatorio Social Del Ecuador, y del Contrato Social por la Educación* as well as the Unesco-supported *Foro de Ex Ministros de Educación* and *Foro Nacional por la Educación* kept education high on the political agenda. Yet, opposition from the main teachers union *Unión Nacional de Educadores* (UNE), continued political instability, and high turnover in both the presidential palace and the Ministry of Education thwarted reform efforts.³⁸

The year 2006, however, marked a turning point. The new Minister of Education Raúl Vallejo, who had first held the post in the early 1990s and on December 29 2005 had been reappointed, negotiated a far-reaching reform package. The deal, which became the *Plan Decenal de Educación* (PDE) and included increased spending on education, improved equipment and infrastructure, and changes to teacher training, had the support of key stakeholders such as the Teachers' Union (*Unión Nacional de Educadores*, UNE), the national organizations for Catholic and secular schools, and the Ministry of Finance. It was approved in a referendum in October 2006 and the two leading contenders in the December presidential elections, including the eventual winner Rafael Correa, committed to implementing the changes.

³⁶ This summary is primarily based on the background paper prepared for the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, Education for All 2000-2015: achievements and challenges*: María Daniela Araujo y Daniela Bramwell. 2015. "Cambios en la política educativa en Ecuador desde el año 2000 /Changes in education policy in Ecuador since 2000". It also draws on the following two works. Barbara Bruns and Javier Luque. 2015. *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*. World Bank. Alex Ruiz Euler. Forthcoming. *LAC Regional Study: Building Better Teachers, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru*.

³⁷ The goals of *Educación para Todos* covered six points, not all pertaining to primary and secondary education reform: (1) pre-school access and quality; (2) primary education access; (3) secondary education access; (4) adult education and analphabetism reduction; (5) gender equality; (6) education quality.

³⁸ While Ecuador has several smaller and regional teacher unions in addition to UNE, only UNE is considered relevant for national education politics.

Following his victory, Rafael Correa retained Vallejo as his Minister of Education, ensuring unprecedented continuity in the position. The new constitution enacted in 2008 incorporated parts of PDE, not just underlining citizens' right to education, but also aspects of teacher remuneration and training. Moreover, Correa proved willing to go beyond proposals advanced as part of PDE, and to challenge core teacher union interests, advocating sweeping changes to teachers' career, including periodic evaluations, pay for performance, and job dismissal based on repeated poor performance. While Correa's proposals were partially watered down in the face of intense and sometimes violent opposition from UNE, the 2009 *Ley de Carrera Docente y Escalafón del Magisterio* linked teachers' career progression to performance on mandatory evaluations, reflecting Correa's willingness to spend political capital on, and publically campaign for, reform. Furthermore, the government's 2009 four-year economic and social policy plan (*Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir 2009-2013*, PNBV) included measures, such as continued increases in education spending, aimed at implementing PDE.

After Vallejo left the cabinet to serve as Ecuador's ambassador to Colombia in 2010 he was succeeded by his Vice Minister Gloria Vidal ensuring further continuity. On her watch implementation of the government's reforms continued and although implementation of proposals pertaining to teachers careers was slow and opaque (results of teacher evaluations have not been made public) the first results in terms of education outcome, and particularly access, could be seen. As of 2013 primary school coverage had increased to 96%, compared with 89% in 2000, secondary school coverage had increased to 81% from 60% in 2000, and Ecuador displayed improvements on international assessments of student learning.

Mexico³⁹

On December 2nd 2012, one day after taking office, President Enrique Peña Nieto unveiled a comprehensive education reform package. The reforms, aimed at raising the quality of Mexican schools, particularly via improvements in the quality of teaching, included far-reaching changes to teachers' careers and training. The following year reforms overcame teachers-union resistance and were enacted by congress. Since then, and despite further opposition and obstruction from teachers unions, a slow process of implementation has begun.

Education reform constituted part of a comprehensive push for structural reform. Following his victory in the 2012 presidential elections, Peña Nieto negotiated the so-called "Pact for Mexico" with leaders of the main opposition parties, the left-wing PRD and the center-right PAN, with the purpose of advancing reforms aimed at kick-starting the economy and promoting long-term growth.⁴⁰ Mexico's education system had long been under-performing, with the country scoring near the bottom in OECD comparisons, and was considered a drag on development. For years organizations such as the business-supported NGO *Mexicanos Primeros* and the free-market think tank *Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad* (IMCO) had worked to put quality-centered education reforms high on the political agenda. But reform efforts had been

³⁹ This summary is based on a background report prepared by Martin Liby Alonso, 15 February 2016.

⁴⁰ The "Pact for Mexico" included reforms of the judicial system as well as the energy and the telecommunications sectors. It unraveled in the fall of 2013 following the departure of the PRD from the agreement.

consistently prevented by resistance from the two politically powerful teachers unions, *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza* (SNTE) and the *Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (CNTE).⁴¹

The education reform package, which intended to increase teaching quality and reduce the power of the teachers unions, included three core components. First, it sought to complete a teacher census in order to weed out “ghost” teachers, who were employed by the state but worked for the unions instead of in the classroom. Second, the reform made it illegal to sell teacher positions or to pass ones on to family members, with the intention to reduce rent-seeking from the unions. Third, the reform established an independent monitoring agency in charge of evaluating teachers via examinations, regulating the entrance into and progression through the career, with the purpose of increasing teacher quality.

While the SNTE first expressed a willingness to discuss reforms it quickly moved into opposition with CNTE. SNTE, however, found itself significantly weakened after its leader of the past 20 years, Esther Gordillo, was jailed on corruption charges in the spring of 2013. With the support of the three main parties – PRI, PRD, and PAN – the education reforms were fast-tracked through congress and on February 26, 2013, Peña Nieto signed them into law. Over the course of the summer supporting legislation was passed and on September 10 2013 signed into law. During the summer PRD left the “Pact for Mexico” because of disagreements over the energy reform and while the party continued to support the education package it adopted a more critical tone.

In August 2015, Peña Nieto’s then-chief of staff Aurelio Nuño Mayer replaced Emilio Chuayffet as Minister of Education, ensuring both continuity and further high-level political commitment to the reform process. He has since then been overseeing implementation of the education reform, which has continued to meet opposition from the teachers unions that sometimes have sought to obstruct its implementation by, for instance, discouraging teachers from taking part in examinations.

⁴¹ SNTE is the larger of the two unions and has historically close ties to PRI, which ruled Mexico for more than half a century before the election PAN’s Vicente Fox in 2000 and which since the election of Peña Nieto in 2012 is back in power. CNTE broke off from SNTE in the late 1970s, has most of its strength in southern Mexico, and is generally more radical than SNTE.

Appendix IV. Summary of Lessons Learned in Education Reforms in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

From Wilson Risolia, Secretary of Education, 2010-14⁴²

“What I learned:

- **Start with a solid diagnosis** “Know Your Customers”– two months of planning
- **Plan “like a business executive”** – think, plan, implement, measure, and correct if needed
- **Biggest challenge is winning confidence of system actors** (directors, teachers, students, families): “a reformist Secretary is an antigen in the system; he stimulates the production of antibodies” and communication is the only strategy
- **Biggest asset I had** – support of Governor
- **Second biggest asset** – Rio has two teachers’ unions: one was very professional and supported the reforms; helped reduce the power of the other unions
- **“Be close to the schools”**

Source: Risolia (2015)

⁴² In the 20 years before Risolia, the state of Rio de Janeiro had had 17 different secretaries of education who averaged 14 months in office (<http://www.rj.gov.br/web/seeduc/exibeconteudo?article-id=448317>, accessed 5 February 2016)

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