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Improving Accountability and Transparency in Schools: The Mexican Program of Schools of Quality

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Abstract

This paper is about the experience of designing and implementing a new program in Mexico to enhance the quality of elementary education called: Quality Schools Program (QSP). This program was initiated in 2001 and has amongst its purposes to defeat bureaucratic culture by promoting horizontal relations to share responsibilities, at the schools' level, amongst school directors, teachers, and parents to achieve children's education and schools' improvement.

The paper introduces results of an analysis of QSP implementation to highlight that social mechanisms of supervision could hinder corruption practices in schools, without abandoning the possibility of introducing other formal mechanisms of auditing in public resources' allocation. The National Coordination of the QSP sponsored a study of its schools' project implementation initiative at 25 schools in five Mexican states. This study was undertaken from July to September 2003. The main finding introduced is that QSP design, based on shared responsibilities amongst schools' communities' members (such as the school director, and parents' and teachers' representatives), fosters co-operation and mutual supervision amongst them. This results, first of all, on more efficient and transparent decision making processes inside schools and, secondly, on promotion of an accountability culture. It is emphasized that the QSP design facilitates social prevention of corruption practices.

Resumen

El presente documento analiza la experiencia del diseño e implementación de un nuevo programa en México para mejorar la calidad de la educación llamado: Programa de Escuelas de Calidad (PEC). Este programa inició en el 2001 y uno de sus propósitos es, acabar con la cultura burocrática en el sector. Para hacerlo, promueve en las escuelas las relaciones horizontales y el compartir responsabilidades entre los directores de las escuelas, los docentes y los padres, con el fin de mejorar la educación de los niños y las condiciones de las escuelas.

El estudio que aquí se presenta, analiza los resultados de la implementación del PEC para subrayar que los mecanismos sociales de supervisión pueden prevenir prácticas corruptas en las escuelas, sin eliminar la posibilidad de introducir otros mecanismos formales para auditar la asignación de recursos públicos. Para este ejercicio se estudiaron 25 proyectos escolares en escuelas de cinco entidades federativas del país. Este análisis se llevó a cabo durante el 2003. El principal hallazgo que aquí se presenta es que el diseño del PEC -el cual se basa en la responsabilidad

compartida entre los miembros de las comunidades escolares (como son el director de la escuela, representantes de los padres de familia y los docentes)- promueve la cooperación y la supervisión mutua entre ellos. Esto da como resultado, primero, un proceso de toma de decisiones transparente dentro de las escuelas y, en segundo lugar, la promoción de la cultura de la rendición de cuentas. Se enfatiza que el diseño del PEC facilita la prevención, por parte de la participación de la sociedad, de prácticas de corrupción.

1. Elementary Education Administration in Mexico

This paper is about the experience of designing and implementing a new program in Mexico to enhance the quality of elementary education called: Quality Schools Program (QSP). This program was initiated in 2001 and has amongst its purposes to defeat bureaucratic culture by promoting horizontal relations to share responsibilities, at the schools' level, amongst school directors, teachers, and parents to achieve children's education and schools' improvement.

The QSP has as a purpose to introduce new ways of organization in the Mexican elementary education system. In other words, it was created to solve problems of efficiency and effectiveness in the system as a means to improve quality in education. It was not designed with the purpose of ending specific situations where corruption could be present. The QSP design, however, established amongst its priorities the promotion of transparency and accountability in schools' operation.

As a result, the QSP promotes community participation through formulation and implementation, by each school community, of a *school project* that must foster quality and improvement in the environment for children's education. To achieve its purposes the QSP allocates financial resources to each participating school so they can develop their project. These financial resources are administered directly by school communities. Consequently for QSP it is important that schools' communities' members demand transparency and accountability in relation to their school project objectives and the use of its financial resources. These are means of promoting efficiency and effectiveness in the development of the QSP. In addition, schools' communities' supervision of resources could prevent possible corruption practices.

This paper introduces results of an analysis of QSP implementation to highlight that social mechanisms of supervision could hinder corruption practices in schools, without abandoning the possibility of introducing other formal mechanisms of auditing in public resources' allocation. The National Coordination of the QSP sponsored a study of its schools' project implementation initiative at 25 schools in five Mexican states. This study was undertaken from July to September 2003. The main finding introduced is that QSP design, based on shared responsibilities amongst schools' communities' members (such as the school director, and parents' and teachers' representatives), fosters co-operation and mutual supervision amongst them. This results, first of all, on more efficient and transparent decision making processes inside schools and, secondly, on promotion of an accountability culture. It is emphasized that the QSP design facilitates social prevention of corruption practices.

This paper begins by introducing a brief background of the education sector administration in Mexico. In 1992, the federal government, through the National Ministry of Education, and the National Teachers' Union representatives signed the National Agreement for Elementary Education Modernization. This supported three main policies to reform public elementary education, which were: to reorganize its administration by decentralizing responsibilities to the state governments, to improve teachers' social appreciation, and to reformulate the content of the textbooks used nationally in elementary education schools.

The National Agreement becomes relevant to the decentralization of elementary education if one takes into account that, from 1921 to 1992, this type of education was mainly the responsibility of the federal government and, therefore, delivered by federal teachers and supported with federal transfers to the states. When the process of decentralization took place, in 1992, 21 million students, 800,000 teachers (equivalent to 72.6% of the total elementary education teachers' population in the country) and 154,000 schools were transferred from the federal government to the states for their administration (Barba, 2000:19; Moctezuma, 1994:667).

According to two different usages of the term decentralization, *deconcentration* and *devolution* of decision-making authority (Allen, 1990:4), The National Agreement was an incomplete decentralized policy, or a *functional devolution*, in the sense that responsibilities were assigned but were not accompanied by decision making power (Cabrero *et al*, 1997; Santizo, 1997). In other words, state government administrators have to strictly follow federal directives for education policies leaving few opportunities to develop local initiatives or to foster innovation. Also, the elementary education sector in Mexico has been characterized by the absence of accountability mechanisms, and means to promote transparency, which also reaches the schools' level.

In this context, the QSP is an innovative program because its design focuses on the schools' level and, as a consequence, on the empowerment of schools' communities. This is the first education policy in Mexico that possesses this emphasis. Schools' communities' empowerment comes from their responsibilities in pedagogical, as well as on infrastructure aspects that have an effect on schools' development and the quality of education provided. Through its objectives the QSP is clearly ending the centralization trend that characterized the Mexican education system since its origin until its latest developments.

Furthermore, the Mexican public administrations have been characterized by enacting *governmental policies* leaving aside *public policies'* considerations (Cabrero 2000). In this sense, the QSP is a "detonator" of *public policy networks'* development. Democracy in Mexico is under a process of consolidation, therefore, a program such as the QSP has the challenge to multiply its affects into other public policy sectors. Besides, QSP strategy for

implementation is based on: the construction of more inclusive, or extensive, public policy networks, the improvement of accountability, and transparency mechanisms in public management, as a result QSP principles could derive into a fight against corruption from the most basic unit in the education sector: the school.

Finally, the QSP proposal is based on new public management principles where power relationships, inside the schools, are going to be redefined through community participation, which will provide for checks and balances between schools' community members. The degree of success of QSP implementation is discussed in this paper.

2. Quality Schools Program Design for Implementation

The QSP promotes community participation through formulation and implementation by each school community of a *school project* that must foster the quality and improvement of the environment for children's education. This implies that a project must be the product of negotiations amongst school community members to establish school priorities. For this reason, in the QSP participating schools, interdependent relationships amongst school community members are being developed which enables them to establish agreements to achieve their school project's objectives. These interdependent relationships were analyzed, in section 3, from the policy networks analysis perspective.

In each school that undertakes the QSP a School Council for Social Participation (hereafter School Council) is created. Each School Council is in charge of formulation and execution of a school project. As a result School Councils implement the QSP policy. Each School Council is formed by: a school director, which is the president of the Council, a parent representative that in most cases is the President of the Parents Association, and a teachers' representative which is at the same time the representative of the National Teachers' Union in his/her school.

This section is followed by a discussion of how the QSP rules define policy networks' characteristics, and the implications of these characteristics for the promotion of transparency and accountability in the schools. Transparency and accountability mechanisms have an impact on effectiveness and efficiency levels achieved by schools in developing their own education policy through the implementation of their project.

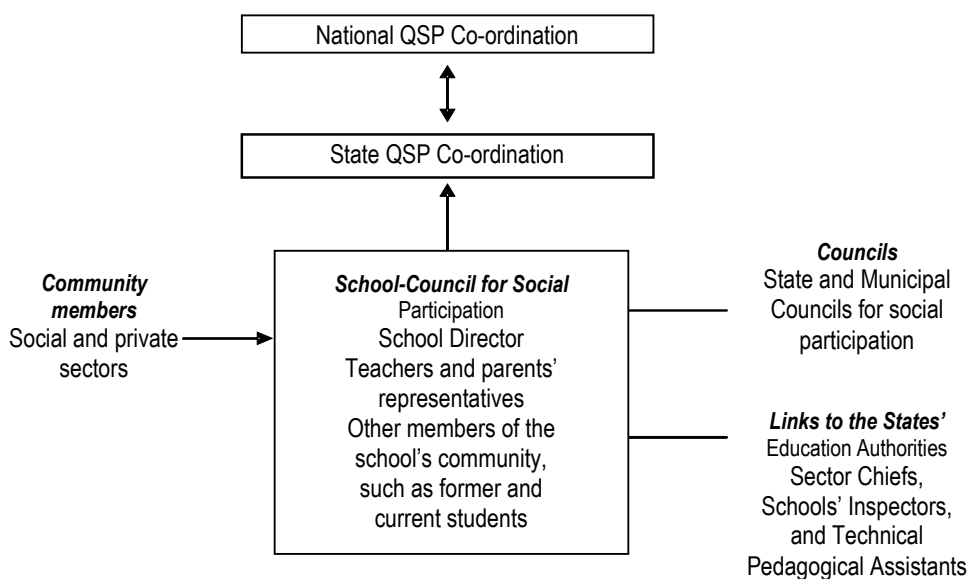
2.1 QSP Administrative Structure for Implementation

Three groups of administrative structures are involved in QSP implementation. The first group is composed by the School Councils that are responsible for QSP

implementation at the schools' level. The National and States' QSP Co-ordinations, formed by education authorities, are part of a second group of administrative structures. In this second group are included those who serve as link between schools and each State QSP Co-ordination, amongst them are: Sector Chiefs, Schools' Inspectors and Pedagogical Assistants for each of them. Finally, in a third group State and Municipal Councils for Social Participation are located. Their main task is to support the QSP development by allocating financial resources to the program or by making donations to schools.

This indicates that each School Council has a direct relationship, through financial reports and evaluations with the State QSP Co-ordination. In a second level of relationships a School Council relates to sector chiefs, schools' inspectors and their pedagogical assistants, referred above as links between schools and state QSP education authorities. Finally, the QSP regulations created a third type of relationship between School Councils and State and Municipal Councils but this is only indirect. All of these relationships are shown in the following Figure.

FIGURE 1
ACTORS INVOLVED IN QSP IMPLEMENTATION



The QSP national operation rules establish that the State Council for Social Participation must select, every year, those schools that will be part of the QSP. Also Municipal Councils for Social Participation should promote the integration of schools to the QSP. These two types of Councils mentioned above

have a responsibility to promote the allocation of additional resources for schools' projects' development which could be provided by private and social sectors in each local community. They also have to know the results of project evaluations and follow the schools' project development.

Sector chiefs, school inspectors and their pedagogical assistants, as links between the State QSP Co-ordination and schools, have as an obligation to validate the SCSP integration, and promote schools participation into the QSP. They also should promote the creation of a QSP participating schools' network to exchange experiences.

Other administrative structures for QSP operation were not included in the fieldwork stage of this analysis. Their participation, however, is reflected through the QSP National Operation Rules which are the regulatory framework of the program under analysis. Amongst these instances are: the QSP's Technical Committees of the States' Trustees, the QSP Evaluators' Committees, and the State Education Authorities that establish priorities in their education policies.

2.2 QSP Allocation of Resources

The QSP financial funds come from the federal and local government resources that supplement financial resources collected by members of each School Council. Each State QSP Co-ordination deposits financial resources, which include funds from federal transferences, for each school's project in a jointly shared bank account whose recipients are: each school director and a representative of the parents' association. In each school its School Council has to oversee the use of its project financial resources. Schools' Councils functions include: the approval of schools' projects, management of projects' financial resources, and supervision of project's objectives' achievement¹. These functions are enounced in the QSP National Operation Rules but each State QSP Co-ordination distributed a brochure explaining School Councils' functions and its members' responsibilities².

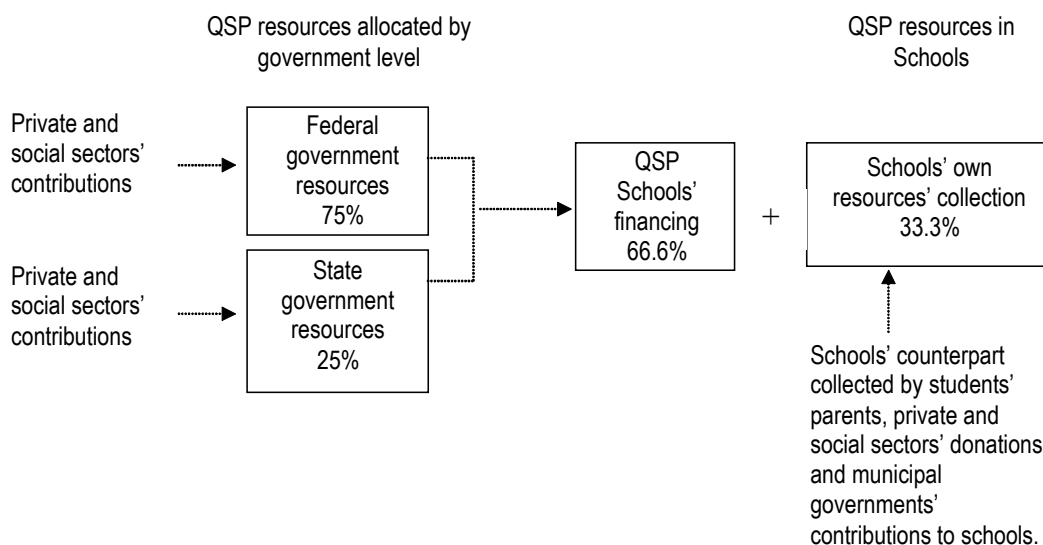
¹ Section 4.4.1.2 of the National QSP Operating Rules 2003. Schools Councils for Social Participation were created before the QSP regulations of 2001, by the General Law for Education of 1993 (see Articles 68 to 73). Schools Councils, however, were given concrete operation functions in 2001 when the QSP was formulated and enacted in the Official Paper of the Federation.

² In practice, each of the State QSP Co-ordinations, visited during the fieldwork stage, distributed brochures, published by the state education authorities, of different extension, while in Aguascalientes their brochure has one page, in Baja California it has 39 pages, and in Zacatecas consists of 8 pages.

Mechanisms to Collect and Allocate Financial Resources

The federal government, through the National Ministry of Education, provides financial resources to those states that compromise themselves to support the QSP with financial resources. Federal financial resources are provided in a 3 per 1 basis, according to the QSP National Operation Rules 2002 and 2003, therefore the federal government allocates, in each state, three pesos per each peso provided by the states (as shown below in Figure 2). Under the QSP National Operation Rules 2001 the proportion mentioned was on a 2 per 1 basis. Also, the federal government allocates some more resources to the states which are distributed according to the states' population between 4 and 14 years old enrolled in elementary education schools, being the only restriction the amount of resources available in the federal government for the QSP.

F I G U R E 2
RESOURCES FOR QSP IMPLEMENTATION BY TYPE OF SOURCE



Secondly, schools could collect financial resources which (on average) are doubled by the QSP States' Co-ordinations, schools' collection of resources could come from the following sources: 1) the parents' annual quota, or from activities that parents' associations organize to collect funds such as: lotteries, special events, or profits from the school's cooperative as operated during schools' breaks to sell refreshments. This category also includes parents'

voluntary work, which has monetary value as estimated by each QSP State Coordination, 2) financial or material resources' donated to the school by municipal governments, and 3) a school could obtain resources from the private sector or its community entrepreneurs. Once a school has collected resources from these different sources mentioned, the QSP State Coordination allocates resources into the schools' jointly shared accounts.

The amount of resources collected for schools' projects reflects the level of compromise with QSP implementation of the actors' involved. The QSP financial scheme creates vertical and horizontal accountability obligations. Schools Councils are accountable, vertically, to Federal and State Governments for an efficient and transparent allocation of financial resources. School Councils are also horizontally accountable to schools' communities and donors about the impact and use of all types of resources in the schools. One point is remarkable: parents and teachers' representatives are part of each School Council so they are decision-makers and through them school communities could exert checks and balances during projects' implementation. Also, private sector donors that collaborate with QSP implementation have the right to ask for resources' allocation reports and to find out the expenditures' impact on the quality of education. New public management schemes, as the one followed by the QSP administration, favor mutual accountability (as suggested by Behn, 2003³) amongst members in public elementary education schools.

3. Policy Networks for Mutual Accountability

Decentralization as well as *new public management* principles emphasized the need of actors' negotiations and agreements' settlement to achieve public policies' implementation. This in order to constitute a new form of governance that goes beyond hierarchical and bureaucratic relationships only. New forms of governance are analyzed through policy network theories (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992a, 1992b; Marsh, 1998; Marsh and Smith, 1996, 2000).

³ Robert D. Behn (2003) promotes the idea of creating webs of mutual and collective responsibility in the education sector. In this way "each one of us will accept that we all have responsibility for improving education" (2003:43). He emphasizes that everyone wants to be *accountability holder* (to supervise others) but he is proposing to think about each of us as *accountability holdees* (that could be supervised) (2003:56). He wants to end the traditional concept of hierarchical, unidirectional systems of accountability... in particular in education systems where everyone is thinking in terms of holding educators accountable (2003:55-56) or in terms of holding someone else accountable. In contrast, in webs of mutual responsibility parents would be neither clients nor customers nor accountability holders. They would be partners (2003:62). Behn poses the following questions to make us aware of sharing responsibility and respond to others for the consequences of our acts in relation to achievements in education: Why shouldn't we hold districts accountable? Why shouldn't we hold the school board and city-council members accountable? Why shouldn't we hold state superintendents, state legislators, and governors accountable? Why shouldn't we hold students accountable? Why shouldn't we hold parents and taxpayers accountable? Why shouldn't we hold local business executives, union officials, and other civic leaders accountable? Why all these people get to be accountability holders? Why can't we think of them as accountability holdees? (2003:56). "Reginald Mayo, the superintendent of schools in New Haven, thinks that, in addition to the teachers, other people should be held accountable: parents, businesses, higher education institutions, and the faith community" (2003:57).

Policy network analysis emphasizes actors' interactions (negotiations) and resource exchanges based on a *mutual resource interdependencies situation* (Benson, 1982). Interdependencies could be based on material, financial and political resources or in the possession of information and knowledge by some of the interacting actors. Negotiations are based on some type of rational decision making, in the sense that actors gather all the information possible and attempt to obtain the best result possible from each resources' exchange that they undertake.

Classic rationality assumes that actors make decisions based on complete information about their costs and benefits, and those of their possible alternatives, and that all relevant information is common knowledge (Dowding, 1991). Assuming these conditions all actors' decisions will be transparent for the rest of the actors in the society in the sense that all of them know the costs and benefits of each decision and of its possible decision making alternatives. Classical rationality, as a result, has been criticized in different ways but its assumptions allow establishing the conditions in which information exists and flows in policy networks which could determine the existence of different levels of transparency during negotiations and agreements' settlement.

To understand accountability, defined as the obligation to inform, explain and justify a decision, in other words, being responsive to a constituency⁴. It is necessary to consider some assumptions about the interests and objectives of public government officers and employees. One assumption is that government representatives have as their own interest the promotion of the public interest (Laffont, 2000). This would imply that government representatives exchange resources in networks according to the public interest.

The assumptions that i) government representatives make decisions under conditions of complete information, and ii) guarantee the public interest would lead government representatives to make decisions which own transparency would make accountability an exercise without the complexities that it represents in practice.

These assumptions have been questioned in different ways (Simon, 1957, 1997; Tsebelis, 1990; Williamson, 1996). In practice actors' possess private information and could obtain private benefits from it. This is an important problem in the public sector because in the best scenario provokes non efficient and non effective decisions and, in the worst facilitates the emergence of corruption understood as decision making processes to promote personal benefits⁵. There are many factors that affect decisions in policy networks, and as a consequence affect transparency and accountability levels which are relevant to deter practices that could involve corruption or the seek of personal benefits.

⁴ The random house dictionary of the English language (1987), 2nd edition.

⁵ Transparency International, 2003 in www.transparency.org.

First of all, during decision making, some social conventions or operating understandings (Richardson and Jordan, 1979) intervene in negotiation processes. Amongst the most common social conventions in schools are: the director's leadership, as the highest school authority, social leadership exerted by some parents and other members of the schools' communities, as well as the role of parents' associations and within them the active participation of some of its members. In practice a leader could be dominant in the sense that only he/she exerts decision making capacity substituting the role of the whole school community. The important issue to analyze is the influence of dominant decisions' on education policy's objectives achievement, and on the promotion of the school community's interest and on those of the social community.

Secondly, interacting actors possess material, financial or political resources in different degrees. Actors' resources grant power to those who possess them, in such a way that resources distribution amongst actors determines power distribution. One type of resource is actors' legal and political authority, in the schools' administrative structure the director and some members of parents' associations possess these types of resources. Parents have some decision making power when they are elected by the parents' community. The authority granted by the QSP, to these actors mentioned, to administer school projects' resources has to be added. QSP resources' administration is made by a collegiate body which seeks to balance or distribute power amongst different actors. Some actors, therefore, counterbalance to the power of others. It is necessary to acknowledge that school directors, teachers and parents have a common interest in the good functioning of schools which will be reflected on students' achievement (This is supported by an opinion poll recently published (in 2003) by Secretaría de la Función Pública). Differences on interests could develop amongst actors by differences in means to achieve their objectives, therefore, constant distribution of information, to develop trust and reciprocity, and constant negotiation processes are needed to assure the success of QSP implementation.

Thirdly, policy networks for QSP implementation have the objective of promoting the entrance of new actors. The QSP implementation design delegates responsibility in schools' communities to give them the opportunity to incorporate members from their environment. This fact promotes that education becomes an issue of the school's community and of all those members of a social community that share an interest on education. There is a pecuniary interest when support from entrepreneurs, professionals and authorities in the community is sought but also there is the purpose of making them responsible for their community's children's education. This makes networks for QSP implementation to be appropriate to broaden social participation which differentiates this type of networks from closed communities that policy networks literature has identified as *policy communities* characterized by restricted access and by a commonality of

interests, values and objectives amongst its members (Rhodes, 1986). QSP networks integration makes them more likely to resemble *issue networks*. In issue networks, especially when formed around program implementation, all actors with an interest and valuable resources to exchange (in relation to the pursued objectives) could intervene in debates or define public policy orientation. In these networks there is no clear structure, or entry barriers, exit is also flexible, because actors could belong to the network on a temporary basis, therefore these networks do not have a rigid structure (Van Waarden, 1992).

Networks in general could operate with minimal membership, or a core of members, or could be extended to include more actors with an interest in a particular issue. The Core of each QSP policy network is composed of the school director, the president of the parents' association and a teachers' representative. QSP regulations, however, set the conditions to amplify these networks by involving other actors that could contribute for the community's children's education.

One of the problems that QSP implementation could face is some parents' lack of motivation. This tends to occur when parents are not well informed about the schools' functioning. Some teachers have pointed out that parents sometimes do not agree in paying the annual school's voluntary fees. This is understood, in part, because parents that send their children to public schools have low incomes and, on the other hand, because historically schools' teachers and directors have not provided explanations of financial resources' allocation to parents.

At the same time, public schools operate under restricted financial conditions; therefore, asking for parents' cooperation is common in public schools. If lower levels of trust are shown by parents it is expected to confront higher levels of uncertainty from actors that are not directly linked to schools, but from whom schools are nowadays asking for cooperation. Under these circumstances, policy networks for QSP implementation are confronting difficulties to expand their membership to include social community members that have traditionally been outsiders to schools.

Transparency and Accountability on Networks for QSP Implementation

The culture of mutual responsibility implies delegation of responsibilities to Schools' Councils but at the same time it creates the obligation of Schools' Council to be accountable to its superior authorities (vertical accountability), and to the Schools' Council members and donors (horizontal accountability). This practice will bring transparency to the exchange of resources in schools' networks. At the same time participating actors reinforce their right to be

informed or of receiving explanations about decision making processes inside schools.

Schools' Councils are compelled to inform its community. This means that all Schools' Councils' members should exert this responsibility. As a result school directors, teachers and parents will have this type of obligation, therefore, another positive aspect of QSP implementation is to expand the obligation, not only of governmental authorities, towards the school community of all the Schools' Councils' members. It also implies that School Councils' members are responsible for education and should be accountable to one another. In other words, there should be permanent accountability amongst actors in policy networks for QSP implementation.

Transparency and accountability are institutional elements that introduce some characteristics to policy networks for QSP implementation; this is because actors' resource exchanges directly depend on transparency and accountability processes established amongst them. In policy networks, as mentioned before, resource exchanges depend in part on the balance of power amongst actors. Actors' power derives from the information that they possess, as well as from their political position and the social conventions that prevail in each school. Resource exchanges, as a consequence, depend on the process to elect parents' association members, the relationships that parents have maintained with the school director, as well as the way in which parents' meetings are held. These are some of the factors that would affect decision making processes and negotiations inside policy networks. These factors would affect the mechanisms by which information is transmitted to the school community, in other words, the transparency by which a school community, and its social community in a wider sense, are informed about a school's project development.

4. Fieldwork Results

Field work was undertaken in 25 QSP participating schools, in five states of the country, its results are introduced in this section. The basic assumption made in this study is that negotiations in schools' communities are as dynamic and intense as the *degree of involvement of the actors*. In some cases is not rare that some actors leadership dominates over others, especially of those with some type of authority, which could imply that decisions are made by a few and accepted passively by the rest of the community's membership.

Another factor that conditions social participation is the extent of distribution of relevant information and the actors' degree of knowledge about a situation. During project's implementation relevant information is of different types, such as: knowledge of QSP operation rules, QSP objectives, rights and obligations acquired through involvement in a school project's development, modes of participation during a project formulation, knowledge

about selection processes for services' providers and of building materials' providers. This is because all these types of issues are commonly discussed in School Councils. Knowledge and information about each of these elements will show the degree of actors' participation and the quality of decisions being made.

Dominance of certain types of interests over others in Schools' Councils could have an effect on the QSP's transparency, accountability and efficiency objectives. The dominance of interests has to be explained including how this affects schools' projects' objectives, however, this is an issue that overcomes compliance with operation rules and goes to the sphere of political relationships inside each school community. Considering this, the analysis presented here, was not focused on QSP's formal or legal mechanisms functioning but to the way in which these are interpreted, perceived, and applied by the participating actors during decision making processes.

4.1. Methodological Approach

This research applied qualitative methods, such as: in depth, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The researcher should be able to cover the topics of a topic-guide while allowing the respondent to express his/her point of view about the issues and to expand on them according to the researcher's interests. The researcher should seek clarification and elaboration of the answers on issues of interest for the research, mainly when meanings and opinions are not clear for the researcher or interviewer (May, 1997). In following this technique the researcher has to interpret the content of the interview in relation to the characteristics of the context in which the interview took place. In this type of interviews, it is important to take note of the terms that the respondents employed in their answers because these are part of the information that will allow the understanding of the respondents' point of view and their interests in specific issues.

4.2 Study Cases' Selection

The National QSP Co-ordination selected five Mexican states, out of which three were states where the QSP implementation is considered successful, according to the Schools' Councils' functioning and the institutional capacity of the State QSP Co-ordinations to administer the program. The rest of the states are characterized by having some difficulties to achieve Schools' Councils' establishment and operation, or to execute the program by their State QSP Co-ordinations.

In each state the same following method was followed: the National QSP Co-ordination asked the States' QSP Co-ordinations to select five schools, out of which three were schools with acceptable Schools' Councils' functioning, and another two schools that have difficulties with Schools' Councils' operation. In each school four actors were identified, as they must be informed about Schools' Councils' operations, they were: school directors, a teachers and a parents' representative in the School Council, and finally, the school supervisor. Interviews were undertaken with each interviewee in a separate room. This helped to create an environment of confidence to express their opinion and perceptions about the QSP freely. In addition, confidentiality of their identity was assured.

The five states selected were: Aguascalientes and Estado de México as examples of states where the program was not having the expected results. Baja California, Campeche and Zacatecas were pointed as states where the QSP was having better results. The total amount of interviews was of 118, the following Table 1 shows the total amount of interviewees in each of the states' visited:

T A B L E
TOTAL OF INTERVIEWEES BY ESTATE

AGUASCALIENTES	23
BAJA CALIFORNIA	24
CAMPECHE	29
ESTADO DE MÉXICO	21
ZACATECAS	21
TOTAL	118

4.3 Analyzed Variables

The variables under analysis were social participation, transparency and accountability in Schools' Councils (see Table 2 for those factors included in each variable of analysis). The fieldwork stage provided elements to give a grade to each of them according to observation during QSP implementation. The interviews applied in the schools sought to obtain information about the following issues: Who makes decisions in the school community? Who is more active during negotiations? Which are the passive actors? How does information flows inside a school community? How is a school community informed about decisions related to the school's project and their impact on results?

T A B L E 2
FACTORS INCLUDED IN EACH VARIABLE

VARIABLES OF ANALYSIS	IMPACTS ON QSP IMPLEMENTATION
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	HOW AND WHO SELECTS A SCHOOL'S COUNCIL'S MEMBERS? WHO FORMULATES A SCHOOL PROJECT? WHO DECIDES HOW TO ALLOCATE RESOURCES DURING SCHOOLS' PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION? WHO AND HOW PROMOTES LINKAGES BETWEEN A SCHOOL AND ITS ENVIRONMENT?
TRANSPARENCY	WHICH IS THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION OF THE INTERVIEWED ACTORS ABOUT RELEVANT DECISIONS AND A PROJECT'S EXECUTION AND EVALUATION?
ACCOUNTABILITY	HOW IS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY INFORMED ABOUT THE USE OF ALL TYPES OF RESOURCES? HOW OFTEN INFORMATION IS DELIVERED? DOES SCHOOL COMMUNITY MEMBERS' KNOW ABOUT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES DONATED BY THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY TO THE SCHOOLS' PROJECT?

These variables of analysis are at the same time relevant outcomes of the negotiation processes established during QSP implementation in each school. In practice, inside each one to the visited schools these variables show different levels of attainment. To assign weight to each of these variables those related questions in the topic guide were ranked with the following scale: achievement of low performance equals to *cero*, performance by the rules was assigned a value of *one*, and finally, high performance was given a value of *two* units. Then an average was calculated for each school which shows the level of performance of each school visited in all of the variables analyzed.

4.4 Results' Analysis

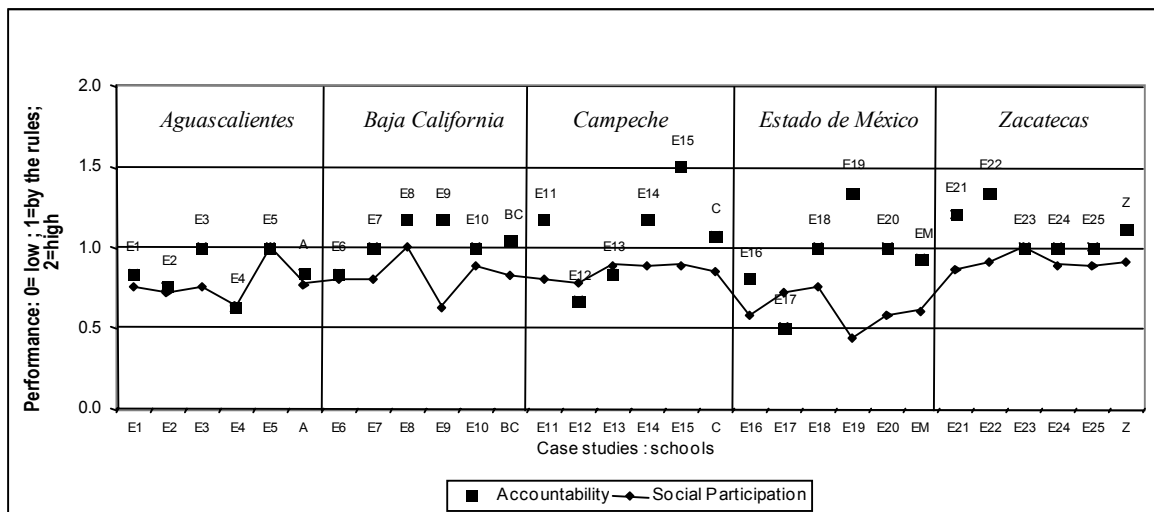
4.4.1 Social Participation: Intensity of Negotiations in Policy Networks for Implementation

Social participation is a relevant variable to measure, on the one hand, the level of compromise of the school community and, on the other hand, the capacity to exert checks and balances to guarantee an efficient use of resources, and as a consequence to limit corruption practices. Social participation is a variable that measures intensity of negotiations in the schools' policy networks under analysis.

Social participation is related to actors' levels of activity in the schools' community and it is exerted when teachers' and parents' representatives for

schools' councils are elected, also through actors' participation during projects formulation, approval and implementation. There is also social participation when levels of expenditure are decided and sources of income are explored. Complains and suggestions reach school directors only when an active school community exists, however some mechanisms are provided in some schools to facilitate this process, such as mail points where letters are posted anonymously. Social participation is also reflected when special events are organized to collect funds for a school's project. All of these activities imply intense negotiations amongst school directors, teachers and parents. The following Graph 1 shows results about levels of social participation and accountability in each of the schools analyzed.

GRAPH 1
ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION LEVELS BY SCHOOL IN FIVE STATES



Graph 1 illustrates that most of the analyzed schools have social participation levels that are under the value of one. This is indicating that social participation is under the levels established by the QSP National Operation Rules. This is a consequence, in part, of the following factors: parents' apathy to get involved in school's issues, some of the teachers' apathy to compromise in the school's project implementation by dedicating some extra working hours. These situations mentioned were found in the following schools: E4, E6, E7, E9, E11 and E12.

These results are not atypical considering that the schools where the QSP is being implemented are characterized by at least the following two factors: i) QSP participating schools are located in low income zones therefore parents'

involvement in schools' activities is limited by economic and social conditions. Even when these conditions are present it has to be acknowledged that most of the school's communities organized themselves around special events to collect additional funds for their school's project. If schools' communities want to collect financial resources then special events are their main source of income as they sometimes do not get donations from municipalities or the private sector, and ii) because the QSP is implemented in low income zones parents cannot gather by themselves the financial resources that each school has to collect to enter in the QSP program, for example, according to the QSP National Operation Rules during 2001 schools were required to contribute with 66,666.00 pesos in order to receive a maximum amount of 300,000 pesos; and during 2002 and 2003 schools were required to contribute with 75,000.00 pesos in order to receive a maximum amount of 200,000 pesos for their annual project. In practice, all the schools faced different levels of difficulty in gathering these resources.

The lack of an extensive social participation in Mexico is a product of a centralized political system where access to policies was restricted in every stage of the policy process. Mexican politics cultivated this culture of social exclusion during several decades. Despite this fact social participation is growing in Mexican politics, although it is true that at the schools' level social participation is having a slow growth, as shown in Graph 1.

The situation described above, does not imply the absence of policy networks, on the contrary these are emerging since the QSP began. Although in many cases different types of leaderships, such as: those of parents or of community leaders have activated together with schools' authorities (directors, teachers and schools' supervisors), those latent networks. QSP implementation is reflecting the installation of policy networks, but in most cases these are of a narrow membership, even when the QSP's intention is to make them all-embracing or extensive networks. However, the fact that networks are narrow does not imply absence of plurality, openness, and democratic practices.

In general, QSP implementation is activated in each school by Schools' Council members. Precisely, in all of the schools visited, school directors' and teachers asked for support to the most active parents only. Active parents are characterized for intense participation, a concern about their children environment to learn, and awareness about the use of resources in the school. This could explain the higher levels of accountability measures in most of the schools analyzed which are above the accountability standards set by the QSP National Operation Rules. As a result, negotiations in networks fundamentally depend on preexistent relationships inside schools which determine the intensity of negotiations in Schools' Councils, as well as the level of actors' participation and their relationships with schools' social community members.

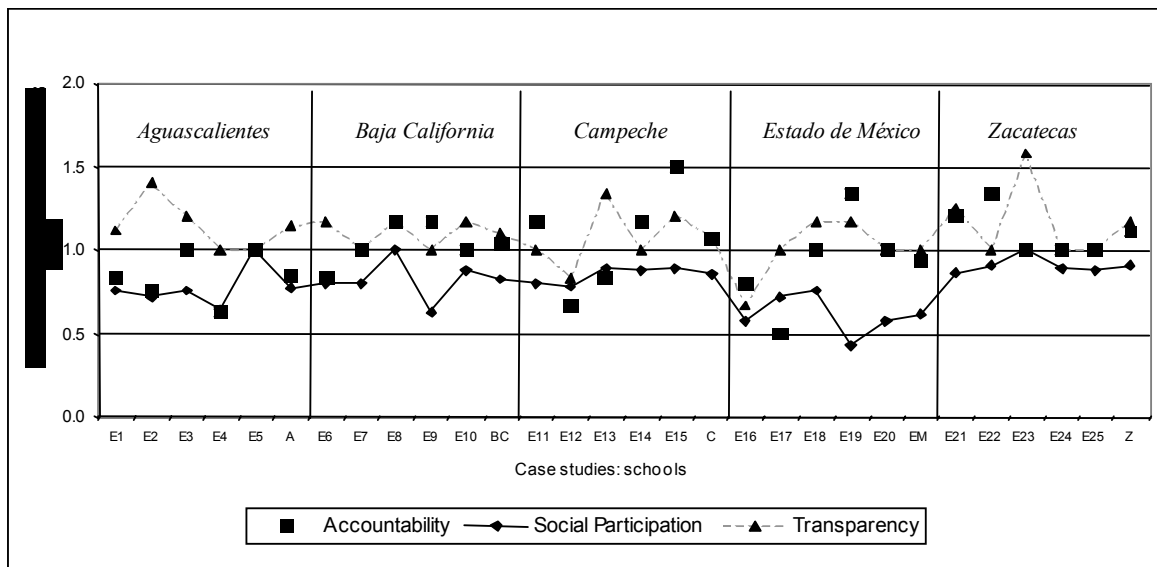
4.4.2 Transparency and Accountability

Above social participation was considered as a variable that is able to explain the frequency of negotiations in policy networks for project implementation. Low social participation not necessarily affects in the same direction those measures of accountability and transparency, in other words, low social participation not necessarily reduces the levels of transparency and accountability.

This could be explained by the function of school community's members that are part of Schools' Councils which generally are the most active parents. In this analysis low levels of social participation are considered not efficient because these derive from passive parents. Active parents not only do what they are told to do by the school director, or teachers, on the contrary they demand more transparency in decision making which results in an increase in the flow of information amongst actors or an increase in transparency. The same could be said about accountability because active parents also demand reports about a school's activities. By itself QSP implementation requires several actors' participation, not only as a matter of its design but for the variety of activities that QSP participation implies. This last is one of the reasons why a school director and teachers need the support and assistance of other actors such as parents.

The results found about accountability and transparency are a consequence of the most active actors in the school community's behaviour, in other words, of the School Council members' behaviour. Fieldwork results about variables such as: transparency, accountability and social participation are shown in Graph 2.

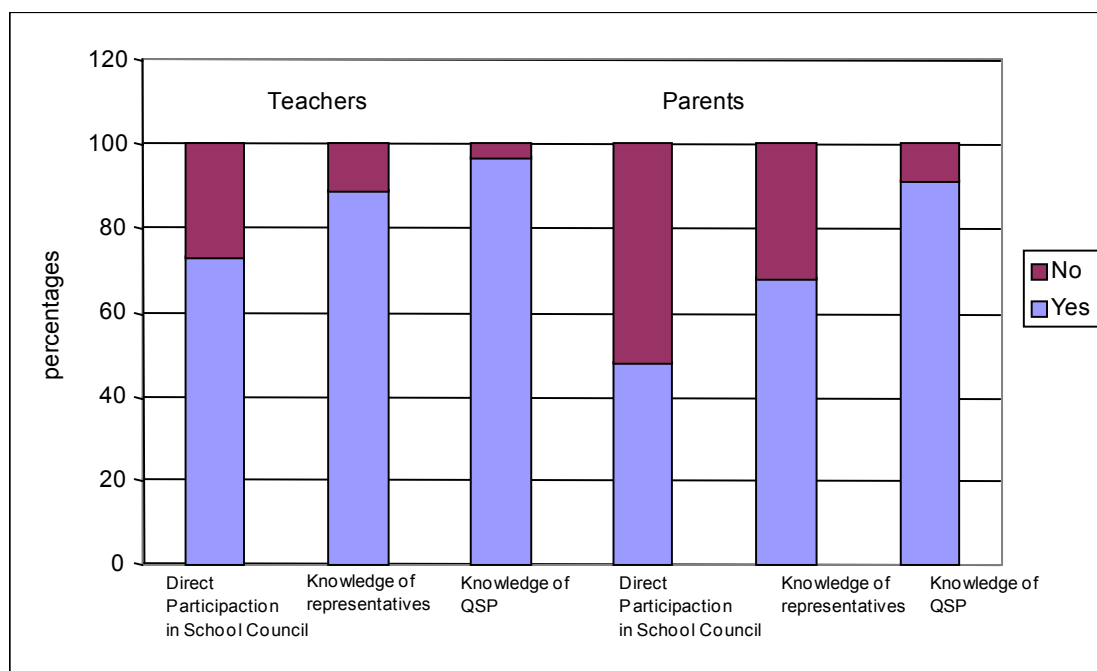
G R A P H 2
ACCOUNTABILITY, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, AND TRANSPARENCY MEASURES



As shown in Graph 2, transparency and accountability have in general higher values, according to the measures set by this analysis, than social participation. This indicates that these variables are independent from social participation in part because as explained above, only the most active actors implement the QSP.

Higher levels of transparency and accountability were shown during QSP implementation in a survey by the Secretaría de la Función Pública (2003) where teachers' and parents' knowledge about their schools' project's development was considered as an indicator for transparency and accountability at the schools' level. Social participation was measured according to teachers' and parents' direct involvement in schools' councils. Graph 3 below shows the results of the survey by Secretaría de la Función Pública (2003), mentioned above, about parents and teachers' knowledge of QSP implementation which resulted a higher indicator when compared to their knowledge of their representatives in Schools Councils and their direct participation in them. These results support those found in the present research for accountability and transparency which were higher than social participation in Schools Councils (see Graph 2 above).

G R A P H . 3
SURVEY APPLIED TO SCHOOLS' COMMUNITIES



4.4.3 Performance by School

It was mentioned in the methodological section that QSP State Coordinators selected some schools that have been successful, or have good performance, when implementing the QSP. That selection obviously was based on what each Coordinator considers as a success which is not easy to define. The present analysis would not have been possible without the Coordinators selection of cases but their selection does not necessarily coincides with the present analysis' criteria for success during QSP implementation.

Most of the schools analyzed here have been following the QSP National Operation Rules and, as a consequence, the requirements of the National and State QSP Co-ordinations. Differences amongst schools consist on the way in which the rules are executed. Variations in the QSP rules' execution are determining the types of interactions observed in each school policy networks for project implementation. The following Graph 4 shows all the study cases developed according to their average performance mark (as developed in this analysis) for accountability and transparency variables. As a result, schools were grouped in the following three categories: *high performance*, *performance by the rules*, and *low performance* (as shown in Graph 4). This classification served the purpose of assisting the schools' characteristics' explanation. Graph 4 is showing each school position according to their average mark on transparency and accountability measures.

Those schools in the category of *performance by the rules* comply with most of the QSP National Operation Rules, although some rules are not followed, this group of schools are closer to high performance than to bad performance. This group of schools has as its main characteristics the following:

- There is knowledge about the school participation in the project.
- There is communication amongst teachers, some active parents and the school director.
- The school director, and in other cases the school supervisor, is interested in the school's improvement through its participation in the QSP.

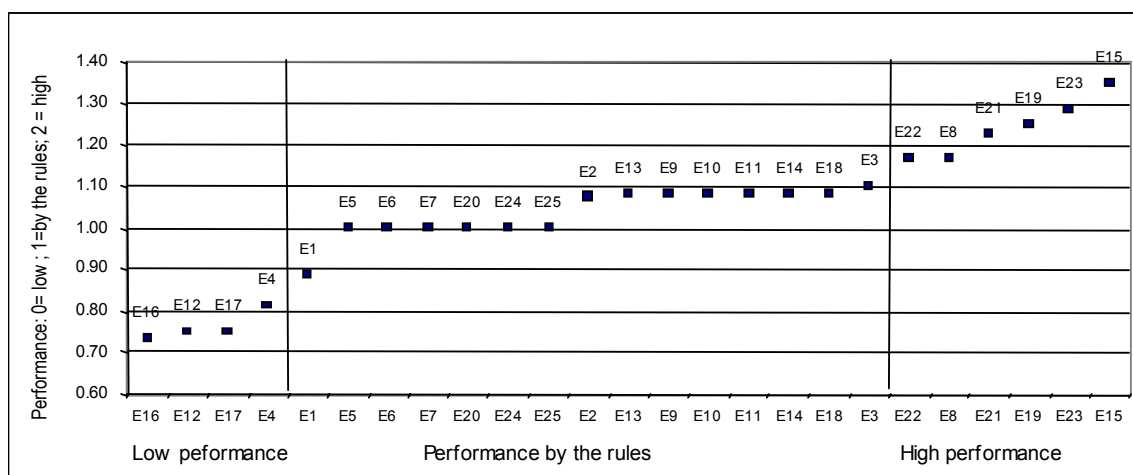
On the other hand, those schools inside the groups of high and low performance are distinguished by the following characteristics:

The group of *high performance* schools and that of *low performance* schools are the opposite sides of this analysis qualification of activities to comply with schools' project implementation as conceived by the QSP National Operation Rules. In this sense, those schools with high performance in the development of their school project while observing the rules they also strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms. High performance schools' members could

share their experiences with those members of schools that are performing according to the rules or have low performance.

High performance schools are characterized for developing work jointly. There is also an active participation of the School Council members, in some cases the School Council is divided in commissions to comply with different requirements of the school project. In these schools the school community is constantly informed about the project objectives' achievement.

G R A P H 4
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY MEASURES' AVERAGE



Some characteristics that assisted in identifying levels of compliance with the QSP regulations amongst the schools analyzed are shown in the following Table 3.

T A B L E 3

SCHOOLS' CHARACTERISTICS DURING QSP IMPLEMENTATION ACCORDING TO HIGH PERFORMANCE, PERFORMANCE BY THE RULES, AND LOW PERFORMANCE AS REVEALED BY THE INTERVIEWS

HIGH PERFORMANCE IN QSP	BAD PERFORMANCE IN QSP
<p>ACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PARENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO VERIFY EACH NEW ACQUISITION. • PARENTS SUPPORT THE SCHOOL WITH FINANCIAL RESOURCES. • PARENTS HAVE DONE SOME VOLUNTARY WORK IN THE SCHOOL. 	<p>ACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PARENTS ARE NOT INFORMED ABOUT THE SCHOOL PROJECT. • THERE IS LOW FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PARENTS. • FEW PARENTS ATTEND PARENTS' MEETINGS. • SOME PARENTS THINK THAT BY MANDATE THEY CANNOT BE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE SCHOOL PROJECT. • THERE IS LACK OF TRAINING FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS. • SOME TEACHERS SHOW APATHY IN RELATION TO THE QSP. • IN SOME CASES THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR SHOWS APATHY ABOUT THE SCHOOL PROJECT.
<p>SCHOOL COUNCIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THE SCHOOL COUNCIL IS FUNCTIONING AND WHEN A PARENT CANNOT ATTEND A MEETING A WRITTEN REPORT IS SENT TO HIM/HER. • SCHOOL COUNCILS ARE ARRANGED BY COMMISSIONS TO ENGAGE IN DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SCHOOL PROJECT. • THERE IS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR, TEACHERS AND PARENTS BEFORE THEIR PROJECT'S RESOURCES ARE EXPENDED. • DECISIONS ARE TAKEN BY CONSENSUS OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL'S MEMBERS. • THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR, TEACHERS AND PARENTS HAVE LEARNED TO WORK AS A TEAM. 	<p>SCHOOL COUNCIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR ASKS SUPPORT TO THE MOST ACTIVE PARENTS ONLY. • THERE IS NO INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES. • THE SCHOOL COUNCIL DOES NOT WORK PROPERLY. • THERE ARE NO PLANNING ACTIVITIES. • THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR DECIDES WHERE TO BUY ITEMS TO ACHIEVE THE SCHOOL PROJECT OBJECTIVES. • THERE IS ONLY ONE FINANCIAL REPORT ABOUT THE SCHOOL PROJECT AT THE END OF THE SCHOLAR YEAR. • THERE IS NO REAL EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL'S NEEDS.
<p>EXECUTION OF PROJECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PARENTS, TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR COMPARE PRODUCTS' PRICES AND THEIR QUALITY BEFORE BUYING. • PARENTS KNOW SOME RESULTS OF ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS TO MEASURE THE SCHOOL PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES ACHIEVEMENT. • THEY CONSIDER THEY HAVE MAXIMIZED THE USE OF THEIR RESOURCES BY EXCHANGING IDEAS IN THE SCHOOL COUNCIL. • FINANCIAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THE SCHOOL PROJECT IS POSTED IN OPEN PLACES, SUCH AS: THE SCHOOL'S ENTRANCE. • THERE ARE MEETINGS TO INFORM ABOUT THE PROJECT AT LEAST 3 TIMES A YEAR. • THERE IS FEEDBACK AMONGST TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES DURING THE SCHOOL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION. • THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR, OR HIS/HER TECHNICAL PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANT, SHOWS INTEREST IN THE PROGRAM. • SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE IN THE PROGRAM CALLED: "GESTIÓN ESCOLAR" OR SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT. 	<p>EXECUTION OF PROJECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THERE IS NO SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT. • IN SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS THERE WERE NO PARENTS OR TEACHERS' ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE PROJECT, THEREFORE, THEY DID NOT OBTAIN THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF RESOURCES POSSIBLE FOR THEIR PROJECT. • IN SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS THERE WAS A HISTORY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES MISMANAGEMENT. • THERE IS NO ASSISTANCE FROM THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR. • THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR DOES NOT KNOW COMMON PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE SCHOOL PROJECT.

In general, those schools classified as *high performance* schools provide information on a regular basis to the school council and school community's members, and also have mechanisms to obtain their points of view. While in *low performance* schools, even when they do school meetings at the beginning and at the end of the scholar year, there is contradiction amongst some teachers and parents' versions on the information given. Schools in both of these groups do not deliver written reports of resources allocation to financial resources' donors, such as: municipalities or local entrepreneurs.

In relation to acquisitions, *high performance* schools search for prices and compare products' quality so they can evaluate their options before buying. In this activity teachers and parents share responsibilities, or take turns to find out prices, and decisions are made in school council's meetings and parents' association meetings. In these meetings, also the work to do and the work already done are informed. In contrast, in some of the *low performance* schools teachers and parents do not know who was responsible for certain decisions and how these decisions were made. Examples of important decisions not made collectively in schools' councils were about acquisitions, elaborations of diagnostics about schools' needs, and formulation of the school project.

It is important to notice that the variables analyzed are composed of factors derived from the formulation, execution and evaluation of the schools' projects. As a consequence, positive and negative aspects of each of the variables were found in all the schools' analyzed but what made differentiations (for marking purposes) amongst variables possible was the predominance of some factors over others. As a result, those schools with better performance obtained an average mark above the value of *one* in accountability, as well as in transparency. In other words, these schools show performance levels above the expected by the QSP in its rules compliance. On the other hand, those schools with *low performance*, such as E4, E12, E16 y E17 obtained marks below *one*. Giving differences amongst groups it will be useful to transform low performance schools and schools performing by the rules in high performance schools by increasing the amount of information delivered to them by the State QSP Coordination and by promoting the exchange of experiences amongst schools at different performance levels that share the same territory, such as the same municipality or the same education zone.

4.4.4 Education Sector Links with Schools, and Other Actors Related to schools' Policy Networks

Education sector links are a support for QSP implementation in schools. In part, the success of the program depends on their activities, such as: on time delivery of information, advice on schools' pedagogical and organizational issues, and authorization of working hours for collegiate work in schools.

The nature of the supervisors' tasks and their position in the education system's structure makes them to have a direct relationship with the schools' directors and teachers. Their relationships with parents, however, are rare or inexistent. As a result, from the parents point of view, education links (such as: supervisors and their technical pedagogical assistants) are unknown to the school community.

This explains why if the QSP program is having the support of education links, as part of the hierarchical structure of the system, their relationships with parents should be of a different nature. This is because in a program like the QSP, where decisions should be taken by a collegiate body, supervisors and their assistants would have to combine their responsibilities as hierarchical authorities, where schools' directors have to inform them, with an institutional relation with the QSP. This last type of relation implies close contact with Schools' Councils where besides education authorities, such as: schools' directors, there are teachers, parents and former students.

Fieldwork results demonstrate that education sector links possess divided opinions about the QSP. A group of 10 of the education links interviewed have a positive perception of the QSP, while another 9 have a negative perception about the program, being the main reason for this last point of view the extra working hours that they have to allocate to comply with the program requirements. Schools E21, E22 and E23 which have a high performance mark also have supervisors with a positive perception of the QSP. This fact, however, is not common to other high performance schools, such as schools E15 and E19, which supervisors have a negative perception of the QSP. This fact above indicates that supervisors' role is important but not determinant for the QSP development. This is because some schools that were not supported by supervisors achieved high performance through the work of their Schools' Councils. This last confirms the importance of a good functioning of the Schools' Councils for the schools' project development.

Conclusions

It was made clear in the present analysis that QSP implementation has to cope with different schools' circumstances or reception conditions. As a consequence levels of achievement in the schools projects' objectives were also different.

QSP formulators' intention is to promote policy networks' formation in schools for QSP implementation. Their formation depends, in each school, not only on the conditions of reception, and the type of mechanisms and instruments required by QSP, but also in a large extent, it depends on the local conditions, the culture or social conventions for community involvement, and on legitimate leaderships in the schools' communities. It was observed that the characteristics of the context in which the networks operate contributed to shape a structure of dependencies amongst the actors in the schools' networks analyzed.

Amongst the factors identified, in this analysis, as determinant for QSP to contribute to the emergence of school policy networks are the presence of the following three factors, in the same school's context: compromised and sensible supervisors to the needs of a school project, directors and teachers with awareness about the program requirements and with training in schools and education management, the existence of parents' leaderships or active parents. When all these factors are present QSP is implemented successfully, and at the same time transparency in schools' management increases, and accountability mechanisms are enhanced in a daily basis.

This analysis' findings revealed that the situation described above was common in 6 out of 25 cases, however, most of the schools show performance levels that comply with the QSP design requirements. There were only 4 cases where the situation found is far from what is expected by the QSP, this is due to the lack of compromise with the school project of some actors. Examples of this last situation are: supervisors that are not interested or compromised with their schools' projects, school directors and teachers that are not sensible, or do not have the necessary training, to perform a more open and efficient role in the QSP, as well as the presence of parents that are not interested or are not informed about their new role in the schools' councils.

Common difficulties faced in implementing QSP

- A. Planning requires the building of agreements amongst schools' members in issues such as: the setting of goals. Thus, QSP's requirements imply an increasing amount of negotiations to come up with a schools' members' accepted plan for action. Negotiations, however, require time for explaining and convincing others about what every member in a School Council should do. Teachers were, in most of the cases, not used to negotiate amongst them, or in other words, negotiations amongst

colleagues were not common. Each teacher used to have a high degree of autonomy in planning his/her activities. Thus, planning requires not only more negotiations amongst a school's faculty but knowledge on behalf of all about what tasks and compromises each one of them is going to have so the school as a collective body could reach its objectives. For these reasons it is advisable to institutionalize *mutual responsibility* by providing information about its benefits. This could be part of a more aggressive strategy of the states' co-ordinations to make clear the benefits for schools of QSP's requirements.

- B. In practice, in QSP, searching for funding is taking time from the director, teachers and parents at the schools level. This does not please directors and teachers that have a teaching agenda to cover, set by federal and states' education authorities, and reduced time to comply with it. In some states, the QSP State Coordination is assisting schools by promoting them in their municipalities so municipal authorities could know the implications for a school to be in the program, such as: social participation, social supervision of funding allocation, and the completion of an annual working plan. In this way, some municipalities are getting interested in supporting QSP's schools facilitating these schools search for funding. State co-ordinations should have a strategy to inform all possible donors and to bring them closer to schools. Social recognition of donors' actions, on behalf of the states' education systems, could motivate them to get closer to schools. Also, the State QSP Coordination Could help schools to receive donations by making these free of taxes.
- C. Parents' involvement has not been easy as they were always left out of the schools' activities and concerns. In some schools, teachers have devoted some time to explain parents how they can help at home with their children's education. It is only through parents' orientation that they collaboration has been possible, as most of the parents in the QSP's schools did not complete their elementary education. It is crucial to strengthen the QSP State Co-ordination communication with parents so they feel a crucial part of this policy.
- D. Most of the teachers were used to have a "closed doors' classroom", what QSP is doing is opening a dialogue, so teachers explain to other teachers (and to parents) what is their plan for action, what are they trying to achieve with their plan, and how are they going to achieve it. In this way teachers receive feedback from other teachers and parents understand better the complexity of teachers' tasks. The State QSP coordination could provide an incentive to an "open classrooms policy" by offering an official recognition (a QSP's diploma) to those teachers that are fostering changes.

If we consider the context in which the education sector has evolved in Mexico, the QSP, as mentioned, has been an innovative and challenging program. It was not clear, from the beginning, if schools and their communities were ready to assimilate the changes that QSP is proposing. It was not clear, also, if empowerment through intense social participation and mutual responsibilities in schools' communities were going to be nurtured. It was not easy either to promote these types of changes inside the education sector bureaucratic structure. This is because the QSP was an "experiment" that ended the traditional (bureaucratic) way in education policy making that lasted several decades.

As we have seen, in this study's results, some of the schools' analyzed have reacted efficiently, and some have gone further initial expectations, as intense participation was identified in several actors at the schools' communities' level. Further more, school directors are actively interacting with their immediate environment, and teachers are abandoning hermetic attitudes by opening channels to exchange experiences with other actors and reach agreements. An important group of schools, most of the schools analyzed here, have made significant progress, and are incrementally accepting the QSP as equivalent to an efficient, and open, networking situation in public policy. In this group of schools parents are adopting dynamic attitudes.

In both types of schools described, *mutual accountability* is being practiced; transparency mechanisms are being adopted and, as a result, corruption and *clientelismo* are fading away. It is of relevance that in those cases where practices have been improved, and policy networks have made their way, consolidation comes in the short term. To achieve this, the QSP could identify best practices, and support and publicize them.

In relation to those cases where QSP practices have not flourished, it is necessary to analyze its causes to develop strategies for prevention and avoid that obstacles make their way in the future. There are still many challenges to overcome, and supplementary actions to implement, however it is very gratifying to see progress in a program that radically changed schools' perceptions of their contribution possibilities in the education system in Mexico. The fact that the QSP is being able to end inefficient routines, that lasted decades, give us certainty about the feasibility of introducing innovations in the education system, as well as confidence in achieving efficiency, social participation and effectiveness in Mexican schools.

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