SNTE and the Decentralization of Basic Education in Tlaxcala

NORMA ILSE VELOZ ÁVILA

Abstract:
This paper explains the development of policies of educational decentralization in the state of Tlaxcala from 1992 to 1998, in order to analyze the factors that prevented pursuing a project to decentralize the institutional management of education at the municipal level. The focus is on the role played by the bureaucracy of the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (national teachers’ union) in its Tlaxcala sections: the efficient use of inter-bureaucratic overlapping and corporate/political exchange in a climate of great political instability—generated by internal union conflict and an important dissident teacher movement in the state.

Key words: Tlaxcala, SNTE, CNTE, municipalization.

In May of 1992, with the signing of the national agreement for the modernization of basic education—Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (ANMEB)—by the federal government and 31 federated entities, as well as the national union of workers in education—Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE)—a new stage was opened in the history of the Mexican educational system. Although the long and difficult process of negotiating the ANMEB had established a framework of commitments among the different actors involved, what would follow suffered from a large dose of uncertainty, given the breadth and complexity of the beginning reform process, in addition to our very limited knowledge at that time of educational events in local and regional settings.

The research on which this article draws was motivated by a desire to advance in a casuistic manner, given that individual histories, the different configuration of contexts and distinct actor profiles led to expectations of dissimilar processes throughout the nation’s political geography.

In this paper, we explain the development of the policy of educational decentralization in the state of Tlaxcala, during the period from 1992 (the signing of ANMEB) to 1998 (the conclusion of the state administration of José Antonio Álvarez Lima). As we shall see below, the reorganization of the state’s educational system has shown little progress in integrating a structured and coherent institutional apparatus. However, opposite to what a superficial glance would suggest, this situation is not the result of pure immobility, but of the impossibility of making some projects prosper. The most significant aspect of the case, therefore, within the defined problem area, is probably that the changes that have not occurred, as well as those that have, require an explanation.

* Professor/researcher at the sociology department of Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco, Avenida San Pablo 180, Colonia Reynosa Tamaulipas, Azcapotzalco, DF, CP 02200. CE: niva@correo.azc.uam.mx.
Our objective in this article is to show how the intent to rationalize and make the state educational apparatus more efficient—by strengthening a decentralizing policy like the one that had given rise to the so-called federalization of basic and normal education—met with resistance from a pressure group as important as the SNTE (in this case, its Tlaxcala sections), within a climate of great political instability generated by the problems of the state teachers’ union. Without intending to do so, this article may provide clues for understanding the reasons for the unexpected announcement in late 2001, that Tlaxcala could become the first state to return to the federation of the educational services it had received in 1992.

In the first section, we briefly introduce the problem in terms of the theoretical/conceptual framework used, and then explain the case with chronological criteria that define three stages in the period under consideration: 1) adoption of the basic model of decentralization; 2) reform attempts, resistance and conflict; and 3) stabilization without organizational change, followed by the final considerations.

A Problem Involving the Ability to Govern the Institutional Apparatus of Education

The federalization of basic and normal education that resulted from the signing of ANMEB was basically a political/administrative decentralization process of Mexico’s ministry of public education—Secretaría de Educación Pública—that transferred from the federation to the states the management of these levels of public schooling, “with all their technical and administrative elements, rights and obligations, property and equipment and financial resources” (ANMEB). Also included was responsibility for collective labor agreements established with workers in education represented by the SNTE—a responsibility that obligated each state to carry out a process of restructuring (or structuring in some cases) of its own state education system, and particularly its institutional apparatus.

At the base of the work is the idea that public policies and institutional arrangements provide a framework for the action of involved actors, but that it is the actors themselves who define the type of relationships present in such organizational frameworks. We suggest, therefore, that the dynamics of decentralization in each case would depend on the intervening political and social actors, on their adaptation to change and on their utilization of new political/administrative structures. Decentralization in the case under study represented an unleashing of changes in the relationships among actors, and the adjustments in these relationships defined the restructuring of the state educational system.

Decentralization is a process of a dual nature that has an administrative aspect (transfer of competence) on one hand, and on the other hand, a political aspect related to the distribution of power on a vertical scale; i.e., with a redefinition or redistribution of power among the distinct levels of government in an organization, which may reach distinct degrees of depth as a function of the redefinition of the settings of competence and attributions. Decentralization (or its antithesis, centralization) is used to respond to the problem of organization and good government.
As a public policy, the functioning of decentralization depended on the bureaucracy of the state educational sector (which already had this status before ANMEB, in addition to that recently incorporated through federalization); yet decentralization also depended on a peculiarity of the national educational system to be studied below—the union bureaucracy.  

Because of its importance in the development not only of the national educational system, but also the political system itself, the SNTE has been the object of numerous studies. Such studies have placed the SNTE as one of the pillars of the corporatism of the Mexican political system, based on a relationship of political exchange between its union bureaucracy and the state. To understand its strength as a pressure group in the development of the national educational system, this arrangement translated into the ability (up until the time of its crisis) to conduct the national educational system without major conflict (Reséndiz, 1992).

The crisis was a result of the effects of centralism on the national educational system: administrative inefficiency, low capacity for change and innovation, lack of stimulus for the educational action of states and societal participation in problems of public education, and particularly, the authorities' loss of control of personnel in the face of growing union influence (Arnaut, 1992: 8-9).

This situation gave rise to a serious problem regarding the ability to govern the institutional apparatus of the SEP, with an attempted response by various decentralizing policies and strong resistance from the SNTE. At stake for the sector's bureaucracy was the possibility of recovering its ability to direct the technical and administrative process of education by weakening the union stronghold, without losing control of the unionized teachers; while for the union bureaucracy, conserving its overlapping in the political/institutional spaces of the SEP was fundamental for preserving the terms of a political exchange that favored the union.

In 1992, under circumstances impossible to discuss at this time, the SEP's decentralization project was negotiated and put into practice. Having reached this point, let us return to the beginning, but now in a position to formulate the object of this paper in terms of considering how the intra- and inter-bureaucratic conflicts in the educational sector and the SNTE defined the future of the decentralizing policy attempted in Tlaxcala—a policy that was part of the restructuring of the state system resulting from the federalization of basic education.

**Federalization and Educational Decentralization in Tlaxcala**

**Adoption of the Basic Model of Decentralization**
On May 18, 1992, the government of the state of Tlaxcala—presided over by Samuel Quiroz de la Vega—signed (for legal reasons, and in addition to the ANMEB) an agreement with the federal government, along with an agreement with the SNTE to federalize basic and normal education in the state.

To receive the transferred institutions with their human, material and financial resources, a legislative decree created, only two days after the signing of ANMEB, the state’s educational services unit—Unidad de Servicios Educativos del Estado de Tlaxcala (USET)—as the decentralized body of the state government (decree number 158 of the state legislature of Tlaxcala, 1992). The general director of coordinated services of public education—Dirección General de Servicios Coordinados de Educación Pública (SCEP, federal administrative unit, formerly under the SEP)—acquired legal status and property under a new name. This new body was placed in first place under a board of governors (formed by the governor, the state’s secretaries of public education and finance, the legal director of the state government and a representative of the parent association) and in second place, under a general director designated by the governor. The position was filled with the previous general director of the SCEP, Héctor Martínez García, from the ranks of the SNTE, and inter-bureaucratic overlapping reached one of its highest points.

The speed of the creation and operation of the new decentralized body that received the federal educational services was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the governor had been in charge, only one month earlier, of the SCEP. But Tlaxcala was also one of the entities that first supported the policy of educational decentralization during the administration of Miguel de la Madrid (when the project did not prosper). We can believe that this support was a result of criteria of viability: the state then enjoyed considerable coverage of basic education (more than 90%), with a very important (majority) share of federal support and the corresponding public spending on state education, along with presumable political and union stability, a state government still inclined to accept central guidelines, and a federal teacher base benefited by salaries higher than those of state-employed teachers.

In spite of the preponderance of educational services transferred, the state’s secretary of public education, headed by Marcelino Zamora Sánchez—Secretaría de Educación Pública del Estado (SEPE)—would be the entity formally in charge of action in the sector, in accordance with state sovereignty.

Starting only a few months later, in January, 1993, until January, 1999, the state government was presided over by José Antonio Álvarez Lima of the PRI political party, and the initial execution of ANMEB policies in Tlaxcala was practically parallel to this administration. Álvarez Lima had broad experience in the educational sector: he had served as assistant director of federal delegations of the SEP when the decentralization process took place during the presidential administration of José López Portillo, and was a member of SNTE because of his work as an elementary teacher. His nomination as a gubernatorial candidate by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) had been received with approval by the SNTE. Even after the statutory reforms of February, 1992, in the SNTE, a clear manifestation of union corporatism was provided by the general secretary of section 31 (also a candidate for deputy at the local congress from the Calpulalpan district) during a meeting with the gubernatorial candidate, when he emphasized the PRI activism of the union members in his section and expressed the commitment to support the gubernatorial campaign based on the “unity of teaching and the PRI in Tlaxcala” (El Sol de Tlaxcala, June 27, 1992).
The state development plan—*Plan Estatal de Desarrollo 1993-1999*—assumed the fundamental objectives of educational modernization: to consolidate educational coverage and improve quality by means of the strategic guidelines marked by the ANMEB. In spite of efforts to expand planning (carried out by educational technocrats who had been sent to the state offices of the SEP during the process of educational decentralization), rather than representing a structured proposal for reform in the educational sector, this plan presents a total of 31 guidelines (actually a confused listing of objectives, policies and diverse guidelines), including mentions of reorganizing the state educational system, unifying control, avoiding duplicity and promoting educational decentralization through regional units (decree number 17 of the state legislature of Tlaxcala, 1993).

The state government’s receipt of the federal services of basic education, through the USET as a decentralized body, did not initially lead to a major reorganization of the state educational system in administrative terms; in fact, the USET and the SEPE continued operating in the same manner as before the federalization. At the beginning of his term, Governor Álvarez Lima designated César Bécker Cuéllar to preside over the SEPE; he had been a direct participant in the attempt to carry out the process of educational decentralization during the administration of President Miguel de la Madrid, as a member of the SEP commission that negotiated with the SNTE. The decision was made to unify the control of the two educational offices by naming one individual to head them both, and Mr. Bécker thus became the general director of the USET as well as the SEPE.

Such a system of unified control had been attempted earlier, for a brief period, after the creation of the SCEP in Tlaxcala in 1984. It was one of the forms that the technocratic bureaucracy began to impose the modernization of education on a traditional bureaucracy more oriented to the normal schools. Other forms were the merger of educational planning processes in both offices and their joint participation in technical/pedagogical events— including the event that resulted in the unification of criteria for educational supervision in the diverse levels of basic education (cf. *Gobierno de Tlaxcala/SEP*, 1990:5). However, the goal at this time was not simply to achieve unified control for effects of coordination, but for the SEPE to guide basic education in the state, including the services rendered by the decentralizing body.

It was an organizational scheme that did not affect the respective spheres of action of the previous federal and state offices. Except for the unification of command, preexisting lines of authority were not altered: the same organizational structure was conserved in each institution, and an enormous series of duplicities was generated in the institutional apparatus as a whole because of this parallelism. Nonetheless, the USET carried out further institutional development to face the policies of educational modernization by creating new areas: Educational Evaluation; Labor Relations; Teacher Training and Development; and Teaching Careers. The new structure’s failure, however, to reflect itself in normative documents was proof of its institutional fragility.

No consideration was given to the possibility of merging the organizations that operated the two state sub-systems into a single administrative structure, or of a partial integration that would conserve the division of lower organizational levels by unifying high levels of command. We believe that this was due to the reluctance of both bureaucratic bodies to cede terrain in the control of their respective spheres of responsibility. Nonetheless, the previous federal
bureaucracy broadened its range of action at the state level in important aspects of educational administration (planning, evaluation, labor relations, teacher training) that had previously been limited to the sphere of its own services; the part shared with the state bureaucracy is simply the system’s operation. As a result, we can observe how the political decentralization of education, instead of granting increased autonomy to the states, permitted greater permeability of federal guidelines in the state educational system.

The SNTE and the Federalization of Basic Education in Tlaxcala

The federalization of basic and normal education in Tlaxcala as well as in other states transferred the labor relations of educational employees hired by the SEP—a federal office—to the state government, leading to the SNTE’s fear of fragmentation and loss of national character, along with a considerable proportion of its political and union strength.

Negotiation at the central level, however, had attained important safeguards for the union, which has two sections in the state of Tlaxcala: Section 31 for full-time workers of a federal origin, and Section 55 for state workers. In response to a fundamental concern, the SNTE obtained recognition as the national organization in charge of employees’ collective work agreements, and also achieved a guarantee for the integral respect of employee rights (which would continue to follow federal standards) with no interruption of the social security benefits provided by the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales para los Trabajadores del Estado (ISSSTE). In this manner, once again through dual systems, the major difficulties for implementing the decentralization of education were solved: differentiation among applicable norms as well as social security systems for employees. As a result, the employees transferred by the federation are now state government employees subject to the norms of those who serve the federation—norms that occasionally do not coincide. This situation would appear to be a legal irregularity based on a political agreement by the involved parties.

In terms of labor aspects, the new situation implied important modifications. The base pay of educational workers from the two unionized sections was ratified without major problems since both sections were subject to the central negotiation of the SNTE; social security benefits, in contrast (due to the above) were maintained separate. Pay scales continue to operate as they did before federalization, according to their respective regulations and mixed commissions.

Meanwhile, the SNTE was more concerned about matters other than labor, particularly the reorganization of the state education system and the union situation. With regard to the first, the SNTE had high and middle level management in the SEPE and USET, as well as operations personnel: most areas were being directed by teachers who had left their ranks, with exception of the administrative development and planning areas. It was therefore difficult for any project to prosper if it affected union interests.

Teacher Agitation

The predominance of ex-federal services and their connection with the central bureaucracy of the SEP made it almost inevitable for the bureaucracy of the USET to head the educational sector; the SEPE bureaucracy, however, was able to maintain unaltered its spheres of control. Yet the resistance of the educational sector’s bureaucracies was not the only fact that impeded
profound reorganization in the state system. Later in time a fundamental factor was added: the climate of instability beginning to become evident in the union.

After the federalization of basic and normal education, the leadership of Section 31 of the SNTE—as in all sections of federal origin—acquired new responsibility that made necessary a reform of union statutes: we are referring to the power to negotiate its members’ salary and working conditions with educational authorities and with the state government. This was not a new experience for the leadership of Section 55, but it forced the section to combine forces with Section 31, with which it had previously maintained a distant relationship.

Pressured by the rank and file (who perhaps perceived that federalization offered an opportunity to negotiate demands under better terms due to the more favorable correlation of forces), the leadership of the two sections of the SNTE in Tlaxcala, in clear affiliation with the union’s institutional ideas, put to test their ability to exert pressure (while seeking legitimacy before the rank and file) by presenting to the SEPE and the USET, on July 9, 1992, a petition of 24 points grouped in four areas: economics, labor, professional and benefits. No positive response was obtained, since the state government declared insolvency. The sectional leadership, attentive to indications from the union’s national executive committee (CEN), were reluctant to assume positions of more radical pressure, although they declared to the press that the government was not responding to the commitments assumed in the ANMEB.

The joint action of the two union sections led to rumors of a possible merger, which did not proceed, and in February of 1993, in the framework of the Twelfth Ordinary Congress of Section 31 of the SNTE, the kindergarten teacher, Hilda Ríos Cruz, was elected secretary general of the section, in a process with a single group of candidates on the ballot.

In a climate of open discontent with the leading group, which was not granted representativity, two groups, Nuevo Sindicalismo and Frente por la Unidad del Movimiento Tlaxcalteca, took on strength within the union. They were headed by Prisciliano Molina and Armando Castro Flores, respectively, who questioned the corruption of the sectional executive committees (CES) by denouncing the existence of “aviadores”—the sale of positions and favoritism in educational institutions made possible by the close relationship of SNTE with educational authorities. They also denounced the de-professionalization of the teaching profession in the state, based on data that indicated that 80% of all teachers in basic education lacked an officially accredited degree (El Sol de Tlaxcala, February 5 and 8, May 18, September 21 and November 3, 1993).

The newly elected CES continued to negotiate the petition, but the delayed response and the failure to pay year-end bonuses led to increased and soon-to-be-expressed discontent among workers. In November of 1993, a group of teachers from telesecundarias presented a petition with six economic parts that the government declared it would be unable to cover. Principal demands included a salary increase of 60%, a year-end bonus equivalent to 90 days’ wages, rezoning, a raising of the financial ceiling of the Carrera Magisterial program or its suspension, a vacation bonus equivalent to 20 days’ wages, and increased retirement pensions. At the head of the movement was the Nuevo Sindicalismo group. That year, ten marches were organized to support the demands, which gradually obtained more supporters.
Given the strength being gained by the movement, which had come to call itself Movimiento de Bases Magisteriales (MBM), the state government decided to hold a public discussion in the media on December 7, 1993. Through this discussion, the movement obtained important achievements that year, including a 9% wage increase for teachers; the equivalent of ten additional days on the year-end bonus as a stimulus for productivity; the creation of a trust in the amount 850,000 pesos for making loans to teachers; the donation of 10 hectares of land for building teacher housing; and the regularization of personnel by granting full-time positions to teachers working under contract.18

The state government appeared extremely weak in comparison with the movement, which showed a high destabilizing capacity. In his first annual address as governor, Álvarez Lima referred to the movement:

The governor’s office will not tire in its attempt to communicate to teachers the decision to support their legitimate demands and at the same time offer realistic and responsible solutions. We are convinced that all teachers are acting in good faith and that the solutions achieved can be beneficial for all. Of course we shall always insist on the usefulness of simultaneously meeting social needs that create a climate of agreement and harmony, to strengthen a favorable work environment (Álvarez Lima, 1993).

The dissident movement (which by this time had broken away from Nuevo Sindicalismo and had adhered to the national coordinator of workers in education—Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE)—under the local leadership of Manuel Campos) continued growing until reaching, in 1994, a high enrollment of mobilized teachers. With no support from the sectional executive committees, on January 18 of that year, the movement, which indiscriminately grouped teachers from both sections 31 and 55 under collective leadership, took over two union offices in order to remove from office and dismiss in a plenary session the respective CES, headed by Hilda Cruz Ríos (Section 31) and Ciro Rodríguez (Section 55). The conflict then assumed an intra-union character. An extraordinary sectional congress to elect new sectional leadership became the principal demand of the movement.

After numerous actions—marches (one to the Federal District, March 4-7, 1994), meetings, sit-ins (most importantly, in front of the government palace), partial work stoppages, an indefinite work stoppage (28 days), the taking over of buildings and even the detainment of officials—the movement attained (in June of 1994, after seven months of struggle) the forming of a tripartite commission SEPE-SNTE-MBM to search for alternatives to the conflict. On this occasion, the main achievements were further benefits,20 which in total increased the benefits integrated in the minimum wage of teachers to 3.89 times the general level; in addition, the call to extraordinary sectional congresses in January of 1995, was obtained from the national executive committee of the SNTE.

Reform Attempts, Resistance and Conflict

Attempts to Decentralize Basic Education

In the midst of this complex scenario, relatively and temporarily stabilized, the administration of Álvarez Lima attempted to progress in decentralizing education in the state. In 1994, the
resources (2.5 million pesos) of the preventive maintenance program were transferred to the municipal governments, but the decentralization plan proposed by the administration hoped to go much further.

Another event in 1994 was the public although unofficial appearance in Tlaxcala of a proposed educational law for the state, and the resulting mistrust in the SNTE. The text largely followed the structure of the general law of education—*Ley General de Educación (LGE)*—but omitted certain fundamental rulings to which the SNTE, based on an ideology that draws from “revolutionary nationalism,” has always been attentive: the free and lay nature of public education, as well as the state’s obligation to provide basic and normal education.

Neither did the proposed law show the points gained by the union in discussions regarding the *LGE*: the state’s obligation to grant teachers a professional wage, decent housing and economic improvement, in addition to promoting the social value of teaching. Especially lacking in the proposal, although present in the *LGE*, was the recognition of the SNTE’s responsibility for the collective work agreement. The union was not slow in responding:

> It is important to point out that no part of the proposed law of public education of the state of Tlaxcala—*Anteproyecto de Ley de Educación Pública del Estado de Tlaxcala*—expressly recognizes SNTE’s responsibility for the collective and individual rights of workers in education. The state government is ‘forgetting’ that it must fulfill its promises and meet its commitments, given that in May, 1992, it signed, along with the federal government and the SNTE, the national agreement on the modernization of basic education—*Acuerdo Nacional de Modernización de la Educación Básica*—and as a consequence the federal/state and state/SNTE agreements, which clearly recognize the responsibility of the SNTE for collective work agreements; as mentioned, the state government’s intention is to disintegrate our union organization, in violation of the spirit of the general law of education—*Ley General de Educación* (SNTE. Secc. 31, s/f: 5).

The union’s concern, obvious since the initial national policies of decentralization, appeared with vigor in Tlaxcala, not only because of the existence of other teachers’ unions in the state, but also because of the internal division that teacher dissidence had provoked in the union’s ranks.

The fear of union disintegration increased even more as a result of the proposed law’s third chapter, “Regarding Municipal Authorities,” which stated the legal basis of decentralization. Article 11 pointed out:

> The ministry of public education—*Secretaría de Educación Pública*—will carry out necessary actions for each municipality to have an educational coordinating group functioning at the municipal level, with an occupational and organic structure as determined by the ministry. The labor rights of the personnel designated to work in this organization will not be affected. As soon as an educational coordinating group is established in a municipality, the municipal government will be responsible for the educational services offered in the municipality (proposed law of public education of the state of Tlaxcala).

Directly implied by this statement is the responsibility of municipal authorities for educational services; i.e., the involvement of a legal entity other than SEPE-USET. Therefore, according to this proposal, not only was administrative decentralization being projected, but also political decentralization in the municipal setting, which would transfer the labor relations of
educational workers to the municipal educational coordinating groups. Since the article did not specify which grades would remain under the authority of the municipality, a radical interpretation could assume that all levels, from early to higher education, would be included.

Although the will to decentralize persisted, the project took on new dimensions in terms of a decentralization program. That same year, in the framework of the sole agreement of municipal development—Convenio Único de Desarrollo Municipal—the SEPE (now headed by Jorge Siles Ruiz) promoted the decentralization of basic education in the municipal sphere, which would be carried out in a regulated manner in July of 1995.

Due to the concurrence of different spheres of government and according to the general law of education, and not the unreformed state law of education, two agreements were reached: one by the board of governors of the USET and another by Governor Álvarez Lima (on behalf of the SEPE), to decentralize some administrative services. The first agreement establishes the creation of the educational coordinating groups in the municipalities.

The services to decentralize were located in planning, human resources, payroll and material resources. The purpose of the educational coordinating groups (one for each municipality) however, would be much more than overseeing administrative services, according to article 4 of the agreement of the USET board of governors: “the planning, organization, direction, coordination and operation [and supervision (art. 29)] of the educational services that are decentralized at the levels of early, preschool, elementary, secondary, technical secondary, telesecundaria, indigenous, special, and physical education, and the cultural missions” (Acuerdo de la Junta de Gobierno…, 1995). In other words, the matter at hand was the decentralization of educational services at the above levels.

In general, the functions of these coordinating groups were attributed to the municipalities in the ANMEB, but there were other functions that had not been considered: directing and operating the above-mentioned services, operating the information system for planning and statistics, besides administering human resources, material resources and financial resources destined to decentralized educational services. The eleventh article of the board of governors agreement indicated that educational coordinating groups should contribute to “improving the procedures of control, verification and follow-up that permit knowing with objectivity, precision and regularity the development of educational service at the municipal level,” which implied an adjustment in the supervision function traditionally carried out by unionized personnel who had greater loyalty to the union organization (on which their work, professional, union and even political life could depend) than to a government office.

Each coordinating group would be headed by a coordinator designated (and removed) by the USET board of governors, on the request of its general director. The human, material and financial resources of the coordinating group would be assigned and charged to the SEPE as well as to the USET, while the personnel of the educational establishments would now depend on the educational coordinating groups, without affecting their work conditions (Acuerdo de la Junta de Gobierno…, 1995).

The SEPE and the USET, on the other hand, signed an agreement to coordinate educational functions in order to guarantee the unity of the system of basic education in the state after decentralization. The main points of the agreement include establishing that the coordinating
groups would report directly to the director of the USET and functionally to the SEPE. Both organizations would set the standards and guidelines for the planning, execution and administration of basic education services under the responsibility of the educational coordinating groups; any normative document would have to be signed by both parties. In addition, the SEPE and USET agreed to implement the evaluation of basic education in the state (Convenio de Coordinación…, 1995).

Still more progress was made in the decentralization policy of basic education with the signing of agreements between the government of Tlaxcala and each municipal government, to support the process of decentralizing the administrative services of the SEPE and USET. The agreements bound the parties to safeguard, maintain and provide the necessary services for each municipality’s coordinating group to operate.

Although all seemed ready, these agreements were never officially published or put into effect. The political setting was obviously inadequate: on one hand, the tension of the teachers’ movement, which in its most heated moments even suggested the destitution of the governor; and on the other hand, the conflicts that took place at various locations in order to obtain recognition as municipal leaders, at times with violence. The population’s discontent due to the ineptitude, corruption and abuse of power of municipal officials finally translated into a series of local movements that favored the formation of new municipalities which in 1995, saturated the state’s limited geography with marches, sit-ins, the taking over of town halls and even the detainment of public officials, including the fifteen deputies of the local congress. An important number of these movements (16 out of 26) reached their objective and increased the number of municipalities in the state from 44 to 60; in addition, auxiliary municipal governments were created throughout the state to permit the representatives of the different communities to have a vote on municipal councils.

According to the version of high officials of the SEPE-USET, the project to decentralize basic education, although always referred to as administrative decentralization, was stopped in order to prevent the MBM from taking over and giving it a more radical meaning, such as the municipal autonomy that was being demanded in some municipalities in Chiapas at the time.

Although the general position of the MBM rejected the decentralizing processes that fragmented the unity of the SNTE, it is said (although impossible to confirm) that the director of the movement intended to take advantage of the decentralization policy at the municipal level to take charge of education in his native municipality of Huamantla, where a regional module of services had existed since the decentralization of the SEP.

It is probable that there were also hopes to ratify a proposed law of education for the state (to be referred to below) to provide a legal basis for the actions that would make the project a reality.

The SNTE with regard to the Project for Decentralizing Education

Another reason for the halting of the educational decentralization project was the opposition of the SNTE, which had been completely ignored in the matter. In reference to the agreements mentioned above, the executive committee of Section 31 expressed:
[...] during the months of May and June of this year, the state government and the USET have carried out a series of “municipalizations” in the educational sector, referring to them as municipal coordination, surprising all of society and fundamentally teachers due to the strange and unexpected nature of their actions. We consider the above to be illegal acts since the *Ley de Educación Pública del Estado de Tlaxcala* now in effect does not give the governor authorities of this type, and said law does not contemplate the creation of such coordination, and it is therefore not possible for any regulation to have been issued based on this law; although the state’s governor has the authority to enter into agreements, they must always be within the limits permitted by law; agreements with municipalities have been kept hidden and not revealed to this union by any means; it is therefore not possible to base an administrative legal act on a future law that has not even been categorized as a bill, since law must pass through a legislative process and apply to future acts and not past acts (SNTE. Section 31, s/f: 3).

The arguments presented by the union to support its rejection of the educational coordinating groups were of a different type, including the legal argument presented above:

1) Such coordinating groups are not needed given the geographic, economic, political and social situation of the state. The creation of coordinating groups would only make administrative procedures slower and more complex.

2) Establishing these municipal coordinating groups was not possible within the existing legal framework since the current *Ley de Educación Pública del Estado de Tlaxcala* does not grant the state government authority to create coordinating groups of this type.

3) The proposed law violated the *Ley General de Educación* and the agreements signed in the framework of the ANMEB, in that the entity that receives the federalized educational services and assumes responsibility for them is the state government.

4) Municipalization would duplicate the functions of the municipal educational coordinating groups and the sector heads and supervisors of the various educational levels.

5) The proposal did not disclose the intention to “atomize or pulverize the SNTE” (SNTE. Secc. 31, s/f: 2-3).

Commenting on the first argument is difficult since the economic, political and social situations to which it refers are not specified; neither does it indicate why the coordinating groups would complicate procedures. The legal argument seems valid but adhering to it and negating all political agreements would undo almost all that has been achieved through federalization. However, it seems correct to affirm that the time was not right for advancing a decentralization project if the central structure of institutional education had not attained coherence. The third argument, in contrast, is fallacious in that decentralization from the state to the municipal educational coordinating groups would be subsequent to decentralization from the federation to the state; in addition, neither the *Ley General de Educación* nor the ANMEB agreements had dealt with the matter.

The questions indicated in paragraphs 4 and 5 were undoubtedly central for the SNTE. Concern was not exaggerated, since the *Manual de Organización Tipo* of the municipal educational coordinators (prepared by the *Comisión Interna de Administración y Programación*) indicated the specific objectives of these coordinating groups: “to support the USET in programming and organizing educational services and decentralized support services, as well as in the procedures involving personnel assigned to the work places located in the municipality”
and “to increase the efficiency of the educational system in the municipality by providing educational services, in order to avoid transportation expenses and prevent teacher absences at the workplace” (USET, 1995:11).

Based on the above, the educational coordinating groups were responsible for administering the human, material and financial resources destined to the decentralized educational services (a task still carried out by the bureaucracy at the central level, where the SNTE could exert its influence) and also for supervising compliance with norms for hiring and handling personnel matters (previously carried out by supervisors), among other functions.

Union bureaucracies were affected in various ways by the implementation of these coordinating groups. In first place, by taking administrative offices closer to the teachers of each municipality, the mediating function of the union was weakened. On the other hand, sectional unity was affected by multiplying the number of actors (60 municipal coordinators would be added to the secretary and director of the USET). In addition, supervisors and sector heads were affected (union members with operations positions in the educational bureaucracy) when their tasks were assigned to personnel attached to the new coordinating groups, which were formed by permanent positions not necessarily requiring a normal school education (a bachelor’s degree in business, for example).

Beyond putting the decentralization project into practice, which did not imply transferring educational responsibility to the municipalities as political entities, but to the municipal coordinators as officials of the state structure (and therefore not truly municipalization, although known as such), the mayors have acquired extended authority. For example, in Apizaco, the mayor’s office absorbed the services module already in operation. In other cases, without any legal basis, mayors (some of whom are teachers and union leaders) feel empowered to supervise the teachers in the municipality’s schools; and in other cases, they extract maintenance resources from schools to carry out other projects. This situation has caused wide discontent among teachers, whether dissident or non-dissident.

In 1995, the educational municipalization program was started up with contents that were much more limited than originally planned: that year, the municipalities received responsibility for operating the programs, “Escuela digna” (“Worthy School”), “Infraestructura educativa” (“Educational Infrastructure”) and “Mantenimiento preventivo” (“Preventive Maintenance”); and in 1996, a decree was issued to eliminate the state’s public domain in favor of the municipalities, of all property and equipment destined to offer services of basic, normal, and special education and cultural missions—those that were transferred to the state in 1992 through the ANMEB, as well as those the entity had acquired through other means (legislative decree number 33 of the state of Tlaxcala). The state government also signed an agreement with the administrative committee of the federal program for school construction—Comité Administrador del Programa Federal para la Construcción de Escuelas (CAPFCE)—to decentralize the construction work of new schools for preschool, secondary and special education, so that investment would be made directly by the municipalities.

In this manner, the feared process of municipalization of education was reduced simply to the exercise of municipalities’ legal authority to take charge of the maintenance and conservation of property and equipment, and the regularization of the corresponding property titles. The educational law of the state of Tlaxcala has not been reformed to date.
Intra-union Conflict and the Appearance of Union Parallelism

Although 1993 witnessed the agitation of teachers, 1994 was the year of their great mobilization. Struggles (fundamentally of dissident teachers) occurred in two spheres: the economic sphere, where important progress continued to be made and the political sphere, due to the democratization of the SNTE, which would also have important consequences, as we shall see below.

Once the opposition movement had obtained the issuing of notifications for extraordinary sectional congresses, the dissident teachers oriented their actions to winning congressional delegates; however, institutionally oriented teachers put all their resources into play to prevent the naming of delegates sympathetic to the movement. Finally, on January 19-20, 1995, the First Extraordinary Congress of Section 31 was held. Following heated discussions, at the end of the day on January 20, the institutionally oriented teachers left the congress and installed a new meeting to elect Albino Mendieta Cuapio as secretary general.

The dissident teachers who remained in the original congress considered the institutional teachers' actions as outside of statutory norms. The dissidents decided to form a democratic sectional committee—Comité Seccional Democrático—that was introduced to the educational authorities and began to operate parallel to the sectional committee of the institutional teachers, which was recognized by the CEN of the SNTE and by the state's educational and labor authorities. The democratic sectional committee was formed with all the guidelines marked by the union statutes, under the concept that it is this committee, and not that of the institutional teachers or charros (as known by the dissidents) that complies to standards.

In a similar manner, the rank and file of the movement continued ahead in Section 55: they created their own democratic sectional committee—Comité Seccional Democrático—based on the belief that the third extraordinary congress of their section and the election process of the new institutional CES (to be headed by Luis Carlos Rosete Carrera) was an imposition of the CEN and plagued by irregularities.

In both Section 55 and Section 31, great nonconformity was shown towards the CEN representatives sent to mediate the conflict, whose proposal to integrate MBM representatives in the institutional CES was considered an opportunistic and neocharra, action, and was rejected. In addition to the democratic CES, the MBM incorporated the plenary assembly as a collective management body in the new union organization.

What must be emphasized in the development of these parallel union representations is the treatment they apparently received from the administration of José Antonio Álvarez Lima, who opened dialogue and negotiation with them without recognizing their legal personality. In this manner, dissident teachers were heard, through their strength, and considered valid speakers, although official recognition was given to the representation of the institutional teachers.

The movement continued to present its demands with persistence and was able to negotiate with the educational authorities, who at all times gave official responses to the officially recognized CES. Nonetheless, the dissident movement exerted strong pressure on improving
the salary and working conditions of teachers in Tlaxcala. During practically the entire administration of Álvarez Lima, due to various mobilizations each year, the MBM obtained a long list of advances, not only for its followers but for all union members in the sections of the SNTE. For example, the government response to one of the strongest demands of the movement—the granting of a year-end bonus equivalent to 90 days of wages—was to add five additional days per year, so that by December of 1998, an equivalent of 75 days was received by teachers as a year-end bonus. Another attainment of these parallel CES was the building of the first housing units for teachers, for which they had arranged mortgages through the ISSSTE and the state civil pension fund.

In December of 1995, the CNTE propelled a new national mobilization based on a petition, a plan of action and a negotiating commission for the twenty-three involved union sections. Although the negotiation of demands took place with the respective educational authorities in each state, the opposing pressure of previous years led to new concessions in 1996 for teachers at the basic and normal level in Tlaxcala, within the state’s budgetary limits.

The MBM pronounced its opposition, along with other dissident movements within the SNTE, to the reforms of the ISSSTE law, and—particularly for the case of Tlaxcala—its opposition to the changes occurring in civil pensions, such as the closing of the store and plans to create a state social security institute—Instituto de Seguridad Social de Tlaxcala. But the organization also united with the institutional sections from which it had previously separated, based on pronouncements that included it within SNTE opposition to the so-called municipalización and to the proposed state education law. Thus, in spite of political and ideological differences, the internal movements of the SNTE tended to coincide in defense of union rights.

The administration of Álvarez Lima was obligated to accede to teacher demands, in spite of limited state finances. This situation forced the state government to negotiate with federal authorities to obtain the state’s educational budget. The federation often resorted to advancing to the state a portion of the budget for the following year, which generated a considerable deficit in state finances. However, during his fourth annual address, the governor expressed:

We shall continue to address teacher demands. They are legitimate. The government is sympathetic to them. We request teachers in their struggle to improve living conditions, to act with maturity and responsibility in order not to damage education. We exhort them to stand as the principal agents of social change and the privileged conductors of the modernization of education for the young people of the state (Álvarez Lima, 1996).

Stabilization Without Organizational Change

After the serious teacher conflicts of 1994 and 1997, the educational setting in Tlaxcala experienced a period of tense calm. The government achieved political stabilization through its de facto recognition of the democratic sections of the SNTE. On the other hand, in order to obtain union balance and have the institutional sections of the SNTE serve as a counterbalance to the dissident movement, the government also had to set aside all important transformations in the state educational system. A valuable factor of conciliation with the institutional SNTE was the naming of Joel Molina Ramírez, a previous union leader, as the state’s secretary of
education in 1997. In this manner, the overlapping of the union organization and the directive structures of the educational sector reached its highest level, causing a waterfall effect in the remaining levels of the institutional educational apparatus.

The Division within the Dissident Movement of the SNTE

By the end of 1997, the MBM had sustained four consecutive years of protest, with a high level of mobilization. Its difficulties and internal division, however, began to become evident, especially in the areas of finance and organization, where one-half of the members of the CES were obligated to return to their place of work. Criticism, self-criticism and calls to participate became particularly frequent in the publications of Sección 55 Democrática in 1996, such as the following:

We democratic sections are instruments of struggle, a movement that corresponds to the base, and in defense of this organization, responsibility is shared between the direction of the movement and the teachers. In this area, we indicate that unlike Section 31, in Sección 55 Democrática we need coherence in our work, especially in activities leading to the consolidation of the teachers’ movement. However, the role that we must play as leaders in the struggle for democracy has not been taken seriously (without confusing political struggle and management), primarily because we have not been closely linked with the base, nor has the base required us to render accounts in a periodic and systematic manner (La Clase, 1996, núm. 4:6).

The CES democrático then presented the need to reorganize the section’s structure, a task that remained pending. At the end of the three-year term of the CES, a new sort of cooperation was implemented for MBM, making evident its internal division and reproducing one of the most important discussions within the CNTE: parallelism or composition.

Faced by the succession of union leaders, Sección 31 Democrática proposed becoming a new section of the SNTE, while Sección 55 Democrática reaffirmed its position of promoting the democratization of existing union structures, without creating new structures that could weaken teacher unity.

Sección 55 Democrática, however, acted erratically. In October of 1997, as a result of its first plenary meeting, the decision was made to participate in the election with a team of candidates in the statutory congress (institutional); yet one month later, in November, the call was made in a democratic congress to form a new executive committee of Section 55, which this time pronounced its opposition to the so-called composition committees, based on the argument that “union charrismo will never be able to free itself from its ties to the politics of bad government; its function will always be to control workers in order to submit them to a pattern,” making it impossible to form an instrument of struggle created by the base (La Clase, 1997, núm. 11:3).

Two-sided action is evident in the document that announces the taking office of the new democratic committees of Sections 31 and 55: on one hand, the change of strategy is recognized as responding to “the current conditions of the movement of the bases of Sección 55 Democrática and non-compliance with agreements” (La Clase, 1998, núm. 12: 6), with an affirmation of disagreement “with the position that eternalizes the parallelism of the sections” (loc. cit). The suggestion was
made to reinforce the section's structure by creating action committees by school and by union delegation in order to arrive at the following statutory congress (in 2001) in better condition.

One reason more for the disagreement between democratic sections was their position regarding the state's political processes. Given the upcoming election for governor, Sección 31 Democrática participated actively: its principal leader, Manuel Campos, entered the PRD's primary race for governor, but did not obtain the party's candidacy. Sección 55 Democrática, on the other hand, opposed the electoral process, loyal to a class-based philosophy of Maoist nature, which contends that the action of the masses produces change. After the election, the members of Sección 31 Democrática determined that keeping the organization independent from political parties was preferable.

In March of 1998, the new democratic sectional committees (elected in February along with the institutional committees of the SNTE) took office. In spite of their political and ideological differences, the democratic sections of 31 and 55 remained united in their struggle: both sides of the Movimiento de Bases Magisteriales participated jointly in local mobilizations and in those coordinated by the CNTE.

The succession of leaders in the CEN of the SNTE also occurred at that time. Taking office as secretary of organization and labor rights VII was the previous secretary general of Section 31, Professor Albino Mendieta Cuapio, which would reinforce the position of the institutional movement in Tlaxcala.

Conclusions

In the case of Tlaxcala, the federalization of basic education following ANMEB adhered to the basic guidelines established by the federal bureaucracy in education, which had gained control of the planning and programming functions of state education when policies of decentralization were put into effect during previous administrations. In other words, educational services were received by a decentralized organization that functioned in parallel form to the state office responsible for the educational sector. The most important change in the reorganization of the state system was the changed legal status of the previous federal body (with important implications), but this change has not led to major restructuring of the system.

In this situation, the role of the union has been definitive: on one hand, its strong presence in the state educational bureaucracy and in the local political system resists the attempts to grant the previously federal educational bureaucracy control of the subsystem of basic education. The state is far from integrating a single institutional structure without duplicities, given that such a process would alter the power of the state educational bureaucracy—which strongly overlaps the SNTE. The government, on the other hand, must make room for both groups, which are both linked to the state's political class.

The complex and tense union situation (which places the entity's SNTE sections in a difficult situation that does not discard the risk of dissidence) leads to a climate not conducive to change. Tension is added by the government's interest in following the strategic guidelines of decentralization policy—especially municipal decentralization—and ensuring the survival and strength of a union organization that has played an important role in the local political system.
In the state of Tlaxcala, administrative decentralization, which made the state government responsible for operating basic and normal education, could not progress towards decentralization at the municipal level due to various important factors: the latent unresolved conflict between the state and transferred bureaucracies; and the declared opposition of the SNTE sections in the state (along with opposition at the national level, and especially in some contexts, such as Guanajuato, where the SNTE was against all municipalization of education). These sections viewed the municipal educational coordinating groups, operated by full-time personnel not necessarily linked to the union, as a threat to the supervisory positions in operations (sector supervisors)—positions most clearly show inter-bureaucratic overlapping and the use of union tactics as factors of power within the union as well as within the educational institutional apparatus.

An additional factor was the political atmosphere that was extremely rarified by the strength of a teachers’ movement outside of the control of the union’s institutional sector. The teachers’ movement has obtained important benefits for the state’s educational workers, but has also placed the state in a very difficult financial position. Neither can we ignore the importance of movements in recognizing new municipalities in order to limit their responsibility in educational municipalization to the building and maintenance of educational infrastructure. Faced by this problematic context, advancing in decentralization would have meant putting not only the ability to govern of the educational system at risk, but also that of the state.

Profound decentralization was not possible given the limitations initially established by the ANMEB. Little change occurred in the centralist political relationship that existed between two spheres of sovereign government—the state and federal level—even in a more open and competitive political system. However, it cannot be discarded that in the future, based perhaps on another organizational scheme (such as regionalization, for example), a decentralizing project may obtain progress, with further advancement toward restructuring at the micro level—where formal and informal relationships in union matters permit the political control of the main body of teachers. This idea is fundamental in the political exchange that supports the union bureaucracy in the political system with the government bureaucracy and also affects the overlapping of the educational and union bureaucratic structures.

Based on the above, we believe it pertinent to consider that in spite of the changes experienced in institutional public management in the state’s education system, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación played an important role during the period covered in this study, by making efficient use of inter-bureaucratic overlapping and corporative political exchange.

Notes

1  This article is based on one of the chapters of the thesis entitled La federalización de la educación básica y el Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación en Guanajuato y Tlaxcala: un estudio comparativo, used by its author to earn a master’s degree in political sociology at the Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, in 1998.

2  This is the concept in its broadest sense. Spinning off it is a series of variants that have led to numerous definitions and typologies. In this text, we adhere to the conceptualization of Sergio
Boisier, who distinguishes between *decentralizing* (recognizing certain competency from bodies having a preset legal personality and standards of functioning) and *de-concentrating* (“transferring ability to make exclusive and permanent decisions—from a certain level of the administrative structure or another lower level—within the organization itself”) (Boisier, 1991: 31).

3 Applicable to this case are two different meanings of the term, *bureaucracy*: one, the set of members of the administrative body of government in charge of operating state policies; and two, the political actor that, having arisen from a relationship of representation or a specialization of functions in an organization, exchanges its functional hierarchical relationship for one of dominion and tends to generate its own interests, which may differ from those of the rank and file. Struggles or disputes for the control of decision-making processes and organizational resources and for the transformation of projects into policies are generated between and within the public education and union bureaucracies (cf. Street, 1983).

4 This *political exchange* was presented in terms of “quotas of power” in the form of elected positions at the highest levels of the union bureaucracy, as well as direct participation in the guidelines of national educational policy and the administration of resources among groups, beginning with union management, in exchange for electoral support for the official party—of which the union formed part—and the control of teacher groups, which for many years had seen their living and working conditions deteriorate (cf. Reséndiz, 1992).

5 A problem of the *ability to govern* appears in the event of excessive distance between elected leaders and the electorate, and is an obstacle to following through on decisions (Slater, 1996).

6 This problem is thoroughly discussed in Arnaut (1998), Reséndiz (1992) and Miranda (1992).

7 A former local deputy and former senator, he directed from 1990 to 1992 the organization responsible for the federal educational services in the state before federalization (SCEP). Only one month after the signing of ANMEB, he assumed responsibility for the governor’s office as substitute governor, after the resignation of Beatriz Paredes Rangel, who would become the general secretary of the PRI. Replacing him in the SCEP was Héctor Martínez García, former director of the state’s Colegio de Bachilleres and member of the SNTE.

8 Each state government did the same and in the same terms. Through these agreements, the parties promised to carry out ANMEB rulings, established the corresponding obligations and agreed on the bases for the reorganization of the state educational system, the educational reform, the revaluing of teaching careers and the financial system to be followed.

9 According to this decree, the USET would have the purpose of “directing the educational services that the federation transfers to the state government” and “following the guidelines and policies of the state’s department of public education” (legislative decree number 158: 2).

10 A study by a well-known consulting firm had designated the state as having average willingness to change (Miranda, 1992).

11 In the early 1990s, the weight of the federation in basic education services in Tlaxcala was very important: it received approximately 73% of state enrollment, with 70% of schools and 74% of teaching personnel; i.e., the SEP was responsible for operating almost three-fourths of basic education in the state (SEP, 1997). In November, 1992, at the end of a six-month transition period following federalization, the transfer from the federal educational system to the state was complete, of 1,411 pieces of property, 15,687 teaching posts, 2,134 administrative positions and the budget assigned by the federal level for basic and normal education. (cf. The document that concludes the transfer of educational services in the state of Tlaxcala according to the ANMEB).
Álvarez Lima was a local and federal deputy as well as a senator from his state; in the Chamber of Deputies as well as the Senate he participated on the educational commission. He was also a professor in the political science department of the UNAM and the Universidad Iberoamericana.

Reforms that suggested, among other points, the introduction of secret and direct (although not universal) voting for the election of leadership positions; proportional representation in directing bodies; the recognition of movements within the union; freedom of political/party action of union members; the prohibition against simultaneously holding posts in the union and positions of popular or party representation; and the creation of the national committee of political action—Comité Nacional de Acción Política—to channel the political participation of the union (Benavides y Velasco, 1992).

According to an article in the press, Crisóforo Morales, the secretary general of Section 31 of the SNTE, found support for his campaign from the director of the USET, a member of his union section, who authorized the transportation of administrative and janitorial personnel to attend the campaign rallies of the deputy candidate, not a native of the region he was to represent (Síntesis, September 29, 1992).

This entity does not yet have a culture of planning, although planning is carried out to comply with official rulings. For example, since the administration of Álvarez Lima did not have a state program of educational development beyond the guidelines of the Plan Estatal de Desarrollo, its actions in the sector were guided directly by the Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo 1995-2000. The most important exercise of sector planning is the Programa Operativo Anual, which has been prepared since the establishment of the SEP's federal delegation in the state, but with a high degree of generality.

It should be pointed out that in various areas, the social security benefits of state employees (granted by the state's office of civil pensions) are greater than the benefits of the transferred employees covered by ISSSTE (cf. Veloz, 1998:147-148).

An example: In the state of Tlaxcala, the labor law of public servants of the state of Tlaxcala and its municipalities—Ley Laboral de los Servidores Públicos del Estado de Tlaxcala y sus Municipios—stipulates employees' free affiliation with the union of their choice (five exist in the educational sector), while the legal statute of federal government employees—Estatuto Jurídico de los Trabajadores al Servicio de la Federación—granted exclusivity in the collective work agreement, giving SNTE the monopolist nature that formed the basis of its strength.

Also attained at that time: a subsidy of one thousand pesos for supervisory personnel for transportation expenses; equivalency of directors of telesecundarias and of general and technical secondary schools; compensation in the amount of 200 pesos each month for personnel on cultural missions to stimulate relocation; a regular bonus in the form of a regular grocery package, plus a one-time bonus of 500 pesos for workers who support and assist education; and the inclusion of SEPE employees in the institutional insurance policy of Aseguradora Hidalgo.

During an interview, Edvino Delgado from the press commission of the MBM, calculated the number at 10 thousand; this type of estimation, however, tends to be inexact.

The economic advances of early 1994 include the granting of five days' wages for Teachers' Day, five additional days as a productivity incentive, economic recognition for teachers with 30, 40 and 50 years of service, and increases in the amounts corresponding to a major in education.

Siles Ruiz, second secretary of education for the period, had been the coordinator of labor affairs for the SEPE, and therefore had greater experience in dealing with the SNTE.
22 According to legislative decree number 158, the director general of the USET could propose the creation of the technical and administrative bodies necessary for developing the activities of the transferred educational services.

23 In 1989, a study at the Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala (Martínez y Abarca, 1989) warned of the extensive and generalized social discontent in the municipalities: from 1967 to 1987, 233 conflicts had occurred in 44 of the state’s municipalities, with 187 between residents and authorities.

24 As expressed in an interview with the general secretary of Section 55 of the SNTE, Efrén Ricardo Oropeza.

25 The sub-coordinator of basic education, for example, would be responsible for “coordinating, supervising and evaluating the municipality’s decentralized educational services.” Another version of the same Manual de Organización indicated the purpose of this position: “To detect the problems and deviations in basic education in order to propose the adjustments required or to refer them to the corresponding areas” (USET, 1995).

26 In a detailed manner, the economic gains of the movement in late 1994 were: five days’ wages for Teachers’ Day; five more as a productivity bonus, which brought the total to 15 days in addition to the year-end bonus; a permanent annual bonus of 750 pesos for support personnel; ten hectares of quality urban land for the special housing program—Programa Especial de Fomento a la Vivienda; compensation equivalent to a teacher’s base pay for a teacher’s commitment to one-room schools and two-teacher schools; five thousand pesos for supervisory personnel for buying an automobile; the building of two child development centers; and the granting of three hectares and 500,000 pesos for building a recreation and sports center.

27 When interviewed, the dissident teachers spoke of threats, of full-time job offers and other pressure mechanisms.

28 The representatives of CEN from SNTE who were sent to mediate the conflict were Tomás Vázquez Vigil (later secretary general of the union) and Miguel Alonso Raya (leader of Nuevo Sindicalismo).

29 According to MBM version in La Clase. The movement is defined against charrismo, oportunismo and reformismo. In particular, Section 55 upholds a class-based union policy (La Clase, núm 1, 1995).

30 In 1995, the administration of Álvarez Lima continued responding to teacher demands. In May, a 4% salary increase for teachers was authorized, retroactive to January 1, and a 12% increase effective May 16; for support personnel, the increases were 7% and 13.2%, respectively, in addition to a wage increase for all positions in the institutional catalog. The concept of fortalecimiento a la actividad docente (“strengthening of teaching activity”) was created, resulting in a 3% bonus for teachers of basic education, in addition to a 100% increase in payments for study towards a bachelor’s, master’s or doctorate degree. Supervisors, inspectors and teaching leaders were granted an additional 200 pesos per month in wages, with a 70% increase in the incentive for years of service for support personnel in basic education who had been transferred. Only four months later, in September of 1995, new benefits were granted: an increase of four days in teachers’ vacation bonuses, to total 10 days annually, in two payments; five days more as an incentive for productivity, to total 20 days per year, in two payments; and a payment of 10 thousand pesos to teachers at the time of their retirement. For support personnel: an increase in the grocery bonus and economic aid for purchasing school supplies; and specific support for other workers, such as the creation of new job categories for transferred social workers and three hours more for the beginning positions of teachers in physical education, art and technology, to total 22 hours.

31 The list includes the change to the wage scale of economic zone II, resulting in a 6.5% increase for workers in general. For basic education teachers the concept of Servicios cocurriculares (“co-curricular services”) was created to grant 152 pesos per month for positions by hour/week/month. Three
hours were added to the positions of teachers of art and technological education. A new factor was applied to the wages of administrative and supervisory personnel in secondary education, in order to establish its own salary system. Five teacher training centers were installed to support the activities of the national program for ongoing teacher training—Programa Nacional para la Actualización Permanente del Magisterio.

32 In March of 1998, a meeting of both sections was held to promote unity, and various agreements were reached to promote recognition and mutual respect for projects.

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*Article Received: February 18, 2003
Accepted: July 7, 2003*