Decentralization: Who Occupies the Spaces of Education?
Transformation of the Supply of Schooling in a Mexican City

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Abstract:
This article analyzes the transformation of the supply of schooling at all levels and of all types in the city of León, Guanajuato. The heart of the transformation lies in the policies and actions carried out in Mexico as a result of the so-called “modernization of education,” particularly the decentralization of basic and normal education, the mandatory nature of secondary school, the unique forms of decentralization of high school and higher education, and the implicit restriction of public growth at these two levels. Also listed are the changes in municipal, state and national governments. A comparison is made of observed enrollment in 2000 and in the early 1990s in the city, state and nation. The actors responsible for these transformations are identified and their proposals and effects are analyzed. The most impressive results are: the predominance attained by the private supply of schooling, particularly at the high school and college levels—close to 75% of the total; the statistical location of a significant number of children and teenagers who do not complete the mandatory level, and the large number of educational innovations—urgent and bold although not necessarily efficient—promoted by the state government.

Key words: Decentralization, private education, educational policies, state government, social actors, young people, city of León.

In the 1990s, fundamental modifications occurred in Mexican education, along with profound economic changes such as the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the nation’s entrance in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, and political changes such as the “thinning” of the government bureaucracy, privatization, and in particular, the public sector’s opening to the participation of various social sectors and forces. Such acceptance made possible the access of opposition candidates to municipal, state and even national government.

One of the first programs to express and promote the new conditions and social trends on a national scale was “Modernización educativa” (“educational modernization”), proposed in 1989. In the following years, actions of all types would be taken. Their common denominator would be the triggering of radical changes in the organization and practice of

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Mexican education: the decentralization of basic and normal education and the transfer of the administration and management of the daily operations of all of these grades, formerly the responsibility of the federal government, to the state governments (approximately 70% of enrollment) (Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica, ANMEB, 1992); the mandatory nature of secondary education for all Mexicans (and the corresponding change in the third article of the Constitution, in 1993); the enactment of the Ley General de Educación (general law of education) of 1993; the promotion of preschool and the planned mandatory nature of preschool education in the near future; equal or greater priority for educational quality and equity as for attaining coverage; an emphasis on learning basic, scientific, technological and work skills; the restructuring of technical and higher education not by expanding existing schools, but by creating new decentralized organizations in the states (ODES), backed by the joint participation of the federal and state governments; the creation of new levels of schooling (the fifth level) and degrees; incentives for company participation in managing the new institutions along with greater links to the labor sector, in the form of professional training for students; and visiting professors and professor exchanges.

In addition, a fundamental part of educational reform is the evaluation of persons, institutions and programs as an indicator of quality and criteria for budget assignments, as well as public institutions’ rendering of accounts to society (De Ibarrola, 1995:253-287). In contrast with the reform of the 1970s, in which the action of the federal government was consecrated at all educational levels and on all fronts, the reform of the 1990s is characterized by demanding greater participation from society in solving the nation’s educational problems and, as a consequence, the opening of the space occupied by education to multiple actors.

This paper analyzes the effect of such policies on the transformation of the supply of schooling at all levels and in all types in a certain city: León, in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The study attempts to discover how multiple and diverse decisions, priorities and interests (federal, state and local interests, denotations of international influence) amalgamate and become evident at a certain time and place, and to identify more clearly the groups that promote such decisions and priorities. An attempt is also made to emphasize the effect of the participation of various social actors (having unequal power) in conforming the specific structure of scholastic opportunities—an immediate and direct space in which the population’s daily life takes place and in which educational needs are generated and satisfied.

This article is a collateral result of a study on job training for young people without university studies who live in León. The purpose of the initial research was to learn about all that happens in a certain city in preparing young people for work: schooling (public and private), on-the-job training (public and private sectors) and pedagogical relationships at the workplace. The overall research used several methodologies: the compilation of statistical information on the city’s population, economic activities and schooling, as well as institutional documents of all types regarding schooling and job training; interviews with approximately one hundred of the city’s main actors (government officials, directors and teachers from different educational offices and schools, business leaders, members of the city’s most important chambers, employment training firms); follow-up on the graduates of the fourth and fifth grades; biographies of workers in shoe manufacturing and a survey given to 2,200 of these workers in 36 shoe manufacturing companies, the city’s primary industry.
The organization and analysis of data on the city’s structure of scholastic opportunities, and on the state and local projects to improve this structure, are based fundamentally on the theoretical focuses of studies on educational decentralization. Closely related to these focuses, but even more so to the overall research project, are the new perspectives of regional development and educational policies. In all three cases, a fundamental element is the predominant role played by local actors, the scope of their participation and the interactions established among local, regional and federal actors. Interactions of this type are more fundamental than the direct and exclusive action of any one actor, such as the federal government, which had dominated not only in completely managing education in Mexico during almost all of the 20th century, but also in educational research. Local actors are seen with greater clarity, and occasionally with more innovation, participation and decision that had not occurred previously or had not been visible in the light of other focuses.

Studies on educational decentralization in Mexico became generalized after the signing of the Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (“National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education”), although some earlier studies focused on the decentralization efforts of the 1970s and 1980s (Vázquez, 1999; Loyo, 1999).

The studies in this area during the past decade are aimed at four major problems:

1) The analysis of spheres of decision-making that become the responsibility of other actors: types of decisions and types of actors (Martínez Rizo, 1993). Both the ANMEB and the Ley General de Educación (“General Law of Education”) define (Noriega, 1993) the exclusive and concurrent decisions that remain in the federal, state and municipal spheres; the possible authority of citizen advisory groups and how they are formed, particularly studies centered on the creation of new actors and the processes of negotiation, interaction, conflict, opposing proposals, resistance and in general, the relationships of power between different actors (Pardo et al., 1999).

2) The second major topic refers to the veracity of the reasons for carrying out decentralization, and to efficiency in terms of reaching goals. The general argument for decentralization is greater efficiency in the coverage, quality and meaningfulness of education (Barba, 2000), under the basic assumption that “local jurisdictions are closely familiar with the population’s needs and are in better condition to meet these needs”.

3) The third major topic refers to the risks of decentralization: a loss of national unity and identity; dispersion or repetition of effort; the inability of local actors to take charge of education; deepening contrasts and inequality among Mexico’s states; the possibility of generating multiple disperse inefficiencies in national territory, including broader centralization at the local level; greater submission and control of regions by the federal government or central organizations, which increase their management power by centering on programming, evaluation and assigning the overall budget while transferring to a large degree the problems and costs of operations and processes; the decrease or deviation of the budget for education, and perhaps the most serious of risks—the privatization of education, either through increased opportunities based on the private-sector supply and the restriction of public-sector opportunities, or through the penetration of ideologies of groups with varying interests and degrees of power.

4) The fourth major topic of interest is oriented to searching for other, undeclared effects of these new opportunities for decision-making and the appearance of other actors—in
terms of their innovative potential as well as their contact with policy, administration, pedagogy, financing, etc.6 In other areas of public administration, increasing numbers of studies are concerned with decentralization in all sectors of Mexico’s government (Cabrera Mendoza, 1998, quoted in Girardo, 2003:28 and ss).

Decentralization leads necessarily to the study of local forums. In the case of regional development—an imprecise concept that has been used to designate territorial and geopolitical realities of very distinct scopes (from a valley to a subcontinent)—“the focus changes radically from the analysis of federal government projects or programs for developing regions, to the recognition of the fundamental role that concrete regions play in globalization and the undertakings of their actors.” Countries cannot be considered homogeneous, and the “natural and historic” specificity of a nation’s different geopolitical locations cannot be ignored (Alba, Bizberg and Riviere, 1998).7 The reasons behind the interest in local matters, according to Girardo (2003), are the world market’s need to multiply and differentiate products and forms of consumption, the changes in company patterns and relationships, as well as the identification of the privileged locations of democracy and social participation.

As a result, regions become actors (by means of individual actors and concrete collectives) that are able to innovate, learn and compete (Hualde, Alba Vega, Girardo, Tapia, in de Ibarrola, 2002). If the ability to learn is considered a basic trait of such regions, then a basis is provided for the importance of local knowledge8 as a result, the role played by the school system, the principal organizer and transmitter of codified knowledge,9 is a priority in the analysis of local development.

The new focuses on educational policies complement the analysis of data concerning the transformation of the city’s educational supply. Such focuses also emphasize the roles of different actors. The building of educational policies—primordial actions for reaching one or more objectives—is based on the consensus of widely diverse actors, whose strength arises from different sources: legislation, the legitimacy of their positions (ethical, technical, scientific, political), the number they represent, their organization and their financial situation. The positions of these actors revolve around proposals for action, as well as the identification of problems and the agenda of necessary solutions. Their positions will depend on the interests, ideology, and knowledge of the actors, under the assumption that their rationality has limits and their strength and abilities are very unequal.10

Another focus that permitted studying the structure of opportunities in the city is a spin-off of studies on young people in Latin America, particularly studies dedicated to learning about groups “at risk of exclusion.” Such groups, in spite of growth in general education in the region, leave school before completing the newer and longer basic education, and may very possibly be excluded from work, even (according to predictions) in the informal sector of the economy. These studies have also attempted to identify the actors interested in finding solutions to this problem, and to offering young people “a second chance,” since their first opportunity—school—was not sufficient. Such actors are often organizations in civil society (Jacinto y Gallart, 1998; Jacinto, in de Ibarrola, 2002; Pieck, 2001).

In spite of the usefulness of the theoretical focuses that orient the integral study of the education of young people in cities, it is important to anticipate the reduced scope of information presented in this paper and the scale used for its interpretation. The study is centered on the geographic space of one city, and it focuses on the structure of educational
opportunities in that city (at all levels and of all types) by comparing observations made in 2000 and in the early 1990s regarding enrollment and scholastic institutions.

This study does not analyze in detail the processes that led to changes (not the primary objective of our research), but such processes are related to national decentralization policies, to state policies for reorganizing educational management and to local strategies for diversifying the city’s economic and cultural offerings, including a high place for education (neither the first nor the last place). The data available for both time periods permit a general analysis of transformations in the national setting and their manifestation at the local setting, based in particular on the nature of the involved actors, as a result of the opportunities provided by decentralization and new regional development.

The excellent work of Cecilia Fierro Evans and Guillermo Tapia García (1999:137-242) offers us a detailed study of Guanajuato’s assumption of the commitments of ANMEE, as well as the implementation of innovations in the state’s educational system. The authors search for precedents since the 1970s and center their study on the period from 1992 to 1995, by analyzing all the processes affecting Guanajuato’s Ministry of Education, Culture and Recreation and the actors related to the ministry in the management of basic education.

This article analyzes the transformation of all levels and types of schooling offered in León, the most important city in the state of Guanajuato, from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, the administration of Vicente Fox proposed changes in the state’s assumption of decentralization, somewhat different from those expressed in the period analyzed by Fierro and Tapia.

León, with a current population of 1,384,842 inhabitants, is classified as one of Mexico’s ten most important cities. It corresponds to a complete municipality (a basic unit in Mexican government), with clearly defined structures and borders from a bureaucratic and governmental viewpoint. The city is known for its shoe manufacturing industry, which employs 23% of the economically active local population (PEA) and generates close to 50% of national production in shoe manufacturing. In recent years, in a context of economic globalization, the industry has faced a serious crisis that has propelled its internal transformation; at the same time, the principal local economic actors have worked with great enthusiasm in creating conditions to convert the city into a regional, national and international center of services: tourism, business, conventions, finance, trade, hospital care, cultural events and entertainment. Such a trend can be observed simply in the transformation of the urban landscape (new streets, plazas, shopping centers, hotels, convention centers) and the growing percentage of the economically active population that is dedicated to these areas.

In the early 1990s, the state of Guanajuato11 and the city of León12 to a somewhat lesser degree suffered from serious educational backwardness that was especially accented in the grades after elementary school. The deficit pointed to the urgency of actions and investments to eliminate stagnation. The situation coincided with important political changes in the entity: the domination at the municipal, state and national level of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) political party, at that time an opposition party. Change began in 1991 with the naming of Carlos Medina Plascencia—the PAN mayor of León in 1988—as interim governor, and continued in 1995, with the constitutional election of Vicente Fox as governor, his announced presidential candidacy of 1997, and his triumph in the presidential elections of 2000.
In 1989, León generated a new administrative system, described by Cabrera Mendoza as the “municipal company” model, characterized by the participation of business leaders in city management, by the implementation of models and techniques from the business sector as an innovative element, and the possibility of citizen participation in determining and carrying out municipal programs and policies (Girardo, 2003: 28).

In light of this situation, the new PAN administrations proposed giving priority to addressing the state’s educational problem, as a visible example of its social concerns. The program advertised under the motto of “*que nadie quede sin estudiar*” (“may no one go without schooling”) can be understood in part as a response to an imperative social need, but also as a strategy of PAN administrations interested in demonstrating their ability to operate with greater fairness and efficiency than former PRI administrations. Neither is there any doubt that the promotion of education was a reaction in part to the political adversaries’ criticism of the PAN officeholders and the presidential candidacy of Vicente Fox, based on the precarious educational situation of Guanajuato. In other words, during the past thirteen years, the educational development of León has been oriented by national policies but especially impregnated with local priorities, political determinations and interests.

The political situation established three characteristics that mark the development of education in León: urgency, audacity and ambition. These characteristics are expressed in the creation of new institutions and educational programs, with minimal planning and discussing of institutions and programs, in order to put them programs operation immediately, and to set spectacular goals to be reached in record time. Another expression is the ephemeral existence of some of the new institutions.

One of the first actions of Governor Fox in 1995—less than two years after the agreement to decentralize basic education to the states—was to enact the educational law of the state of Guanajuato “... *de todos y para todos*” (“by all and for all”) that was widely distributed among the state’s inhabitants in a small volume that includes the third article of the Constitution followed by comments on the law. A detailed analysis of the text is not an object of this paper, but in broad terms, the new law stipulates without ambiguity the lay and free nature of public education, and opens the doors to wide social participation, to new sources of financing, to the promotion of private education as an aid in offering education for all, to career civil servants, to the democratic organization of students, and to various other topics of less interest for this paper.

The transformation of education in Guanajuato, particularly basic education, began with reforms in the state’s ministry of education: a sizeable reduction of its bureaucracy through volunteer retirement programs in 1991; “internal decentralization” in 1997, which divided the territory into eight scholastic regions and created their respective coordinating bodies, including the decentralization of educational and administrative services and the relocation of teachers and other employees as needed to provide better coverage to the state’s 46 municipalities. The goals of this regionalization process were to avoid transportation to the central offices, to increase the presence of teachers in the classroom, to increase social and municipal participation in education, to increase the speed and quality of responses in rendering services, and to take decision-making to the place where events occur.

In this context, León is a privileged place for studying education: it encompasses an entire region (region IV of the state of Guanajuato), it enjoys a wide margin of maneuverability in making local decisions regarding
basic education, and it takes advantage of all types of educational innovations. Educational problems in the
city are attacked on all fronts, in formal and traditional schooling, in informal schooling for adults, and in
experiments with new organizations, institutions and measures.

The Transformation of the Local School System

The distinct levels of the school system report important growth during the decade, as shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1
Rates of Growth and Coverage by School Year
and Location, 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>Guanajuato</th>
<th>León</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>101.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>157.3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the chart indicates, growth rates in the city’s enrollment were generally quite higher than in the remainder of the country, and were sufficient to reach rates of coverage similar to national rates; these rates were also higher than the rest of the state, permitting León to retain its standing throughout the decade as the city with the greatest opportunities for post-secondary schooling in Guanajuato. Federal, state and municipal government, the private sector and the Church have participated unequally in this growth.

Mandatory Basic Schooling

Preschool enrollment increased sharply during the decade (85.9%), and in the year 2000 attained coverage close to 75% of the age group (almost the same proportion as the nation as a whole); enrollment was 42,949 four-and five-year-olds. The private sector’s share of preschool education increased from 15.3% to 32.2% (much higher than the national figure of 9.3%). It is noteworthy that the state achieved coverage noticeably higher than the city of León and the nation.

Elementary school enrollment grew 6.3% during the 1990s (higher than the national rate of -1%). In the city of León, a total enrollment of 173,666 children from ages six to twelve resulted in coverage of 93.2%, lower than that of ten years earlier (99.1%). The decrease of
six percentage points in attending to this age group can be explained by errors in the very high figures for 1990 (suggested by the five-point decrease in state and national coverage). However, it is of interest to point out that according to current data, almost 13,000 children in the city are not enrolled in elementary school, and that the census indicates that the percentage of seven- to twelve-year-olds “with no schooling” more than doubled (from 3.6% to 9.7%) during the period.

In contrast, secondary schooling grew by 44.4% over the decade and coverage for the age group increased from 61.6% to 79.9% (less than three percentage points below the national coverage). Even so, with 60,625 teenagers from ages thirteen to fifteen enrolled in secondary school, the number of teenagers in León not enrolled in mandatory secondary school is slightly more than 15,000.

The private share of elementary and secondary schools decreased somewhat during the decade, in favor of public schools, but continues to be higher than the national average: 16.9% in elementary and 23.3% in secondary.

The major indicators of quality also showed improvement: the graduation rate for elementary school increased from 87.6% (data available starting in 1995) to 89.0% (in 2000); and for secondary school, the graduation rate increased in a more significant manner, from 71.3% (in 1990) to 77.0% (in 2000), another example of the attention paid to this level of schooling.17

Basic education is the only segment of the sector that is organized as a system and able to operate as such, in the hands of the public sector through the state government, and managed by a municipal coordinating council. Plans of study are national and are determined by the federal government, with very few curricular spaces assigned to local content.18 During the decade of the 1990s, in the framework of modernization, another type of important changes was carried out in the state (with a direct and immediate impact on León), including the acquisition of more equipment through an agreement with Intel and Microsoft, which donate computers and software to many schools.

Programs directly related to the educational process were also put into effect. Outstanding actions include: a teacher training mechanism that offers economic incentives to teachers who take training courses or study for postgraduate degrees; the opening of educational development centers (equipped with computer and Internet service) in each municipality of the state (two in León) to provide services and advice to teachers and students; the LEHER program (reading, listening, speaking and writing reflectively) in elementary schools; the creation of the state achievement testing system, which tests students’ knowledge of basic subjects in order to measure their progress according to international standards of minimum knowledge applicable to each grade. The encouragement given to education attempted to envelop itself in a local philosophy expressed in the highly criticized document, “Así educa Guanajuato,” (“Thus Educates Guanajuato”).

In the city of León, however, progress has been hampered by the failure to cover the deficit of basic education: 25% of the age group corresponding to preschool, 20% of the secondary age group and 15,500 children ages seven to twelve are categorized “with no schooling”. Almost 30,000 children and teenagers in the city will not have completed the constitutionally mandatory basic education in the near future, and as such will enter the workforce and community life; or, young people “at risk of exclusion” may start to cause
an increase in the number of people in the city who neither study nor work, and who begin to be identified as a specific category of the census.

Only two or three civil organizations, of a clear philanthropic nature, attend to children and teenagers not enrolled in school. The insufficiencies in basic education suggest a possibility of a significant process of impoverishment of the population and an increase in child labor. Data on the age of the workforce reveal that almost 10,000 teenagers from ages twelve to fourteen work, in addition to a decrease in the level of schooling among the youngest workers in the shoe industry: almost 30% have not completed elementary school, whereas the remainder of their age group shows less than 20% without an elementary school diploma (de Ibarrola, 2002 b).

**High School and Higher Education**

Following the guidelines of the local educational incentive program, post-secondary schooling grew during the 1990s much more than basic schooling, but from smaller beginnings. Secondary education in the 1990s showed an increase of 116%, and higher education, 591.9%. In spite of this effort, only 32.8% of the population from ages fifteen to nineteen is enrolled in one of the city’s 126 secondary schools, and more drastically, only 19.5% of the age group from twenty to twenty-four is now enrolled in one of León’s institutions of higher learning.

From 1990 to 2000, the number of high school students in León doubled (from 15,000 to 32,256), a figure that greatly surpasses the national growth rate (35%); however, two-thirds of these young people remain outside of schools. Such a growth rate follows the national trend towards “bachilleratización” and the local trend towards private schooling.

Enrollment in private high schools, which was higher than the enrollment in public high schools at the beginning of the period, increased its participation from 55.8% to 59.7%, to become one of the highest rates in the nation. As a result, in spite of the innovations of the state capital, such as the Centros de Educación Científica y Tecnológica del Estado de Guanajuato (CECyTEG)(Centers of Scientific and Technological Education of the State of Guanajuato) and video high schools, the increase of more than 100% at the high school level was due more to the opening or expansion of private schools. The participation of autonomous control grew to 6.8%, but continues to be marginal.

The bachillerato high school degree (in its two versions, general and technological) was consolidated as the most common, growing from 78% to 84% as a reflection of the national growth trend at the high school level through the bachillerato. The general bachillerato in León continues to be predominantly private-sector and receives 78% of all bachillerato students (a figure much higher than the city’s average for private schools), with a high total of 84 schools.

In contrast, most technological bachillerato high schools were already public in 1990 and continued to be so in 2000. Students in this type of high school are enrolled in ten main schools: the federal CETIS and CBTIS schools, and since 1994, the state CECyTEG schools as well.

It is important to point out that recent changes have occurred in León in bachillerato high schools: starting in 1997, the technological bachillerato began to gain ground over general
bachillerato schools, by increasing its absorption of total enrollment from 22% to 35% between 1990 and 2000; following this trend, accelerated growth began to be seen only three or four years ago in private technical bachillerato schools, whose enrollment of 3% in 1997 came to represent 36.3% of the total in 2000. The recent trend in private investment in this type of schooling is an effect of the cancellation of mid-professional studies in private schools. Data show that private schools reacted more slowly and abruptly in following the national and state trend favoring bachillerato schools, and within bachilleratos, the technological type. At present (2000), the high school professional concentration has 5,090 students, in contrast with 27,166 students in bachillerato high schools (general as well as technological).

During the 1990s, bachelor degree programs in León experienced a spectacular increase (592%), with enrollment reaching 21,800 students. The private schools have been the main promoters of such growth. This segment is covered by a total of twenty-four institutions of higher education (IES), seven public institutions with 24.6% of the enrollment (5,600 students) and seventeen private schools (16,200 students). Private control, already the majority at the beginning of the period (with 62.1%), increased its share even further, to 75.4% for the 2000-2001 school year, more than twice the national indicator. In fact, the Universidad Tecnológica de León (UTL) is the only public institution of higher education created during the decade. The marked growth in higher learning, which began ten years ago, continues today. At present, it attends to 19.5% of the age group, similar to the national percentage and almost twice the state percentage. However, eight out of ten young people in the age group are not reached by IES.

In the 1990s, practically all of the city’s postgraduate studies were developed. In 2000, León offered 16 specialties, 62 master’s degrees and 3 doctorate degrees, with a total enrollment of 2,078 students; private institutions once again predominated, with 72.1% of the enrollment.

In contrast with basic education, high school and college in León are far from operating as a system. Both levels are offered by a complex and heterogeneous mixture of schools. Two subsets exist, with a high degree of segmentation and diversification of public institutions (relatively few) and private institutions (the majority). Some institutions that were created in the 1970s represent many difficulties in planning and operating jointly and systemically because they compete in terms of tuition, budgets and enrollment. Public high schools have the common characteristic of pertaining to a central institution, such as the Universidad de Guanajuato, Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Industrial (DGETI), Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica (Conalep) or CECYTEG and therefore share curricular and administrative orientations, norms and practices. In contrast, private high schools are numerous, and their direction, organization and management in most cases are carried out by an individual owner or group. Many of these schools do not even have their own facilities, but have been installed in old houses and buildings, mostly leased, in downtown areas. The most “systematic” aspect of private schools is their formal adherence to plans and programs of study from universities, DGETI or authorized by the ministry of education.

One of the main policies or orientations of high schools and higher education during the 1990s, was the attempt to implement education based on skills (EBC). Although this idea has been based much more on discourse than on practice (due to the difficulties implied by the definition of skills for each major and specialty), its curriculum, evaluation, certification
and implementation in the daily management of schools, have required technical schools to
analyze the specific activities performed by professionals who work in the majors offered,
and to search for closer relationships with business and the professions. An example is the
generalization of plans of study of “professional practicum”; i.e., the curricular requirement
that all students complete periods of stay in companies or institutions where they carry out
activities related to their fields of work.

In general, higher education has the same characteristics of high schools (private schools,
diverse, some elite); however, there is greater coordination among certain private
institutions that pertain to important national systems such as the Instituto Tecnológico y
de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) and the Iberoamericana, La Salle and
Anáhuac universities. Along with these institutions, the city has generated a small state
system of private higher education supported mainly by the Universidad de León, with
schools in different cities around the state.

The pertinence of high school and college training for the city’s economic development—
pertinence that supposedly would be achieved by local and private management of
schooling at these levels—deserves discussion. The central focus is on computers and
information systems, accounting, administration and secretarial studies, repeated in almost
all institutions. The seventeen mid-technical majors and five health majors offered would
seem to respond to the general needs of any city. Only three majors related to the main
local industry are offered: leather tanning, shoe production, and maintenance of machinery
and tools in shoe production are available in one of the city’s two Conalep schools. There
are still no specific mid-level majors, however, for implementing the services the city is
attempting to provide: hostesses for events, interpreters, health technicians, hotel work,
security, etc..

Outstanding at the college level are the accounting, administration and commerce majors,
which cover 35% of local enrollment, followed by information systems, computers and
communications with 31.8%, and engineering in third place with 18.6%. In the humanities
and social sciences, law concentrates 82% of all students in the area, in contrast with the
national percentage of 12.4%. At the bachelor’s level there is not a single major in the
exact or natural sciences, and only two (with close to 1,000 students) are oriented to the
shoe industry: design and systems.

Postgraduate studies include various medical specialties (given the important presence of
the medical school and nursing school in the Universidad de Guanajuato), in addition to
the Centro de Investigaciones en Óptica and the Instituto de Física, with master’s and
doctorate degrees in their respective fields of optics and physics—the only programs
dedicated to the hard sciences in León.

The public sector is promoting technical training at the high school or college level, while
the private sector is oriented to administrative and organizational training.

It is not possible to conclude, however, that the private sector is responding to a traditional
demand for more schooling. On one hand, the private sector has greatly promoted all
studies involving computers and information systems, although the outside observer
cannot easily discern the area of the economy or labor market to which they are oriented.
On the other hand, the excessive demand for administrative and accounting, and for
information systems and computer majors is not a serious error from the viewpoint of
young students who aspire to more schooling and the institutions that offer such majors.
We are able to deduce, based on an analysis of occupations in the shoe industry and the growth trends of services in the city, that the new managerial and organizational positions in production and services are requiring specific scholastic training; technical training for direct production is obtained in other ways (De Ibarrola, 2002; Cuevas, 2002; Mijares; 2002). A response is being given, therefore, to the structure of the labor market, but not to the vision of development or “social needs” such as pollution problems. On the other hand, private institutions are responding to a clear demand from the city’s young population: the possibility to study and work concurrently, as proclaimed by the slogan of the new and highly populated Universidad de León: “work and study.” The young people who participate in both activities made up the largest category in the follow-up study on graduates of levels four and five, carried out by Fernando Cuevas (2002).

The Participation of the Business Sector

In the city’s public high schools and colleges, the participation of the organized business sector is widespread. Federal and state decentralization policies have created new legal and organizational solutions that allow business leaders to participate on government councils, on partnership committees and in curricular decision-making involving public institutions; various business leaders, backed by powerful, efficient and time-honored business organizations, have taken maximum advantage of these possibilities to establish commitments and exchanges with some schools.

The Universidad Tecnológica de León, for example, was established in the city on the urging of business leaders, since the other two in the state had been created due to a governmental decision and an imprecise social demand, in areas offering no other opportunity for higher education. The business chambers have taken full advantage of the generous options offered by the Universidad Tecnológica as well as the Conalep for shared curricular planning; they promote agreements so that diverse business leaders, particularly young professionals open to change, can offer positions in their companies for the professional practicum required by the schools’ plans of study; they promote guest professorships in industry and the movement of professionals between companies and schools.

Worthy of analysis is the case of Conalep I, which has established two forms of close business links. The first program is known as “Conalep en la empresa” (“Conalep in business”). Major factories such as Flexi, Emyco, Loredano and Suelas Winnie have formed groups of approximately thirty workers from ages 30 to 35 to be trained as “Conalep technicians”, primarily in-house: the teachers of the practical courses are their supervisors, and professors from the Conalep school teach basic subjects in the afternoons and on the weekends, either in the factory or at the school. The company pays for the material used for practice and permits the use of its facilities, Conalep pays the teachers’ salaries, and the students pay Conalep the established fees. Five classes of technicians have graduated from this program in the Emyco company.

The majors offered are specific specialties for companies that sign the agreement: technicians in tanning, in shoes and in industrial maintenance. Course contents attempt to be “made to measure” and are defined in close cooperation with the interested businesses, and in particular with their representatives in the shoe industry chambers and their suppliers (CICEG and ANPIC).
The program open to “normal” young students is the “three/three plan” for spending three days of the week at school and three at the company, starting the third semester. Approximately fifty companies have signed agreements for each major. In this manner, assures the school director, “the school has the most modern facilities for shoes and tanning… the companies have them.” A company employee is hired by Conalep as an “internal advisor” responsible for the students’ performance at school and their evaluation. As practicum, the students develop a certain type of projects considered formative by the school. The other subjects are taken and evaluated by “normal” teachers in the school’s facilities during the three remaining days.

New Programs of State Initiative

In addition to the national programs resulting from the cooperation between state and federal government (such as the state schools of scientific and technological studies, of which twenty have been opened in Guanajuato since 1992, including two in León; the technological universities and the technological institutes of higher studies—ITES), Governor Fox promoted various projects aimed fundamentally at the state’s young people and adults. Described below are three of them, all with bases or offices in the city of León.

The advanced system of high school and higher education of the state of Guanajuato (SABES) is responsible for the creation of 220 videobachillerato high schools, located primarily in the state’s rural areas and marginal urban zones. At the present time, twenty-four of these new centers are located in the city of León, with an enrollment of 2,650 students, greater than that of the university high schools. The creation of these videobachillerato high schools is supported by cooperation from the benefited communities, which must provide the physical space, television, a VCR and furnishings, as well as funding to cover the cost of materials. The state government provides the teaching material (videocassettes and teaching guides for each subject in the bachillerato curriculum) and one instructor per group.

Due to the urgency of obtaining results, the program initially followed exactly the same teaching model and materials as used in the telebachillerato schools of the state of Veracruz, which has twenty years of experience operating this type of school. In 1999, the Guanajuato government began to adapt its teaching strategies and materials to the particular conditions of the state. It should be mentioned that the challenge of teaching and designing the curriculum that is implied by operating the videobachillerato schools is justified by the cost per student, which is estimated at one-half of that of other schools.

SABES has also promoted the Universidad Interactiva y a Distancia del Estado de Guanajuato (UNIDEG) “as an educational opportunity for rural and suburban communities,” for all high school graduates, regardless of age. Nine units and one program for university technicians in industrial processes have been created, once again a challenge for college training and technological training in particular. One of the interesting traits of this university for distance learning is that it has transformed the state’s technological universities: from fifth-level schools to schools that offer a bachelor’s degree or sixth level. As Fernando Cuevas has discovered, thirty graduates from the Universidad Tecnológica de León have been able to continue their college studies by transferring courses that are backed and certified by SABES. This state policy has generated conflicts with the federal under secretary of higher education, which sustains that technological universities do not and should not continue up to a bachelor’s degree.
Another institution created under Guanajuato’s educational transformation program is the Instituto de Financiamiento e Información para la Educación (Educafin).

In order to function immediately and progress rapidly, the institute was designed according to a similar model previously created in the state of Sonora, with support from a Latin American association of educational financing institutions, of which it is a member.33

Educafin manages three large programs: the educational financing program for low-income students enrolled in high school, college or postgraduate studies in the state of Guanajuato, in another state of Mexico or abroad, in schools that charge an enrollment fee and tuition. This program offers loans with preferential interest rates and no inflationary costs.

The second program, known as BK 2000, provides grants to low-income high school and college students from rural or suburban areas in the state of Guanajuato. The grants help cover the costs of transportation, supplies, clothing and shoes, and can even be used for tuition if the student is enrolled in a private school. The argument is made that paying tuition is more viable for the state than creating new opportunities in the public sector, which implies building infrastructure, buying equipment and hiring teachers. Some officials of SEG, relatively new in their positions (since the PAN victory), have expressed satisfaction with the encouragement given to private institutions rather than continued support for public schools, which they consider costly and problematic.

The third program consists of “special” support. In all cases, students are required to have a GPA of 8.5/10.0, and in return for the support received must carry out a concrete, timely and feasible development project for their community in an area such as education, public works, health, sexuality, cultural preservation, production, ecology, etc.. In the year 2000, the Instituto handled 18,000 cases of individual support.

**Nonschool Education for Young People and Adults in the City**34

In spite of the presence of the Instituto Nacional de Educación de Adultos (INEA) in the state of Guanajuato, the new Instituto de Educación Permanente (IEP) was created in October of 1998, to plan, program, operate and coordinate educational systems that “establish and aid the permanent integral education of the state’s adult population.”

In 1997, Governor Fox held intense negotiations with the state’s business leaders and the state congress to approve a 2% payroll tax that would permit financing the new institute; the negotiations were unsuccessful, however, and financing was arranged by decree. Establishing the IEP was justified primarily by two main arguments: a) a much broader and more integral vision of permanent education based, in particular, on the recommendation of the UNESCO report on education “throughout life” (Delors Report) and b) the need to give the contents of elementary and secondary school for adults greater “state pertinence” than that offered by the INEA.35 The IEP proposal, however, was not backed by the INEA, hindering certification. In 1999, the IEP reported having served close to 250 thousand adults in the state, yet elementary certifications, dependent on the INEA, were almost nonexistent.36
The Centro Interuniversitario del Conocimiento (CIC) was created in April, 1996, also by the gubernatorial degree of Vicente Fox. The direction of the project, presented during the gubernatorial campaign, was determined by “the existence of many daily activities that are requiring increasingly more training, and not traditional academic training, but practical, intensive, brief training that can be easily accessed by the population, with specific and varied courses for peasants, laborers, taxi drivers, waiters, public servants, bus drivers, mayors, business leaders, produce sellers and all activities that support an individual or a family.” The Centro carried out its functions by means of two major strategies:

1) The “state network of knowledge,” charged with distributing practical knowledge among the population through “horizontal tasks of coordination and synergy that allow the demand for knowledge to approach the existing supply in multiple and diverse scholastic and productive institutions in the state, by means of school/workplace linking strategies. The network was implemented with the creation of “circles of knowledge” that would give priority to four sectors of the population: Indians, women, the elderly and people who have micro-businesses.

2) In addition, the Centro had the ability to recognize and certify workers’ knowledge and skills acquired through experience. For certification, it promoted the creation of committees of two or more experts in certain areas of production, with whom a simple format of occupational profile and performance standards was completed. Later established was a certification committee of persons and institutions of “recognized prestige and a solid trajectory.”

In 2000, we were informed that “the creation of the CIC has implemented an agile and dynamic process that has permitted the certification of almost 15,000 workers, who have received a diploma and a type of work card from the state of Guanajuato [...] that certifies them to be qualified, specialized workers in operations, professionals or specialists.” In 2001, the CIC had certified the state’s taxi drivers, the workers of some public transportation companies, and hotel cleaning personnel, according to the standards prepared by the center, with state validity.

The CIC was a local alternative to the very complex processes of evaluation and certification established by the Consejo Nacional de Certificación de Competencias Laborales (Conocer), which to date has had difficulties in certifying the national standards of competence for the shoe industry.

These two interesting state initiatives, described to us with enthusiasm at the beginning of the research, were justified on one hand by a search for local pertinence. On the other hand, they expressed the very understandable desire of local actors to design and construct the contents of training to be offered, in the face of assumed federal insensitivity to “local needs”. The programs were created in spite of duplications with other institutions of federal origin already present in the state and city: the reason for duplicated efforts of the INEA and the IEP, the IEP and the Centro Interuniversitario del Conocimiento, and the CIC and Conocer. When the new governor took office in 2000, the decision was made to merge all programs into the new Consejo Estatal de Educación para la Vida y para el Trabajo, the product of a new federal policy proposed by President Fox for the education of all citizens over their lifetime.

Actors of Local Transformation in the Supply of Schooling
Proposed below is a systematization of the participation of various actors in the supply of schooling in the city, and the scope of their actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Supply of Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal government</td>
<td>Defines national curriculum of basic education and certifies basic education. Decentralizes management at the state level. Promotes standards of work skills to influence the design of plans and programs for high schools and higher learning. Sustains industrial bachillerato centers and the Instituto Tecnológico de León.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and federal governments jointly</td>
<td>Participate jointly in forming UTL, CECyTEGS and managing Conalep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State government</td>
<td>Operates preschool, elementary, secondary and normal education. Registers and authorizes high school and higher education in most private institutions. Creates new types of schools: the institutes of technical training of the state of Guanajuato, videobachilleratos, SABES. Creates EDUCAFIN and finances access to high school and college education, both public and private. Creates IEP and CIC for adult training (which later merged into the Consejo Estatal de Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo) (Educational Council for Life and Work).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal government</td>
<td>Becomes decentralized region of the SEG and operates all education in the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de Guanajuato</td>
<td>Supports a university high school in the city; incorporates the plans of study of some private high schools. Supports the departments of medicine and psychology and the school of nursing and obstetrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>Operates 32.2% of preschools, 16.9% of elementary schools, 23.3% of secondary schools, 59.7% of high schools, 75.4% of higher learning and 72.9% of postgraduate studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business leaders</td>
<td>Participate in founding and managing UTL. Participate in the management and curricular design of majors at UTL and training at the city’s Conalep. Offer positions of professional practice to students from the city’s public and private institutions (without distinction). Organize work training programs jointly with high schools and colleges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil organizations</td>
<td>Very few and for providing aid. Attend to small groups of the most excluded and marginal population. Some offer elementary and secondary schooling to children who would otherwise live in the streets. Utilize new advanced systems of high school and college education to make their facilities more efficient for the city’s marginal groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Mandatory basic schooling is not covered. Almost 30,000 children and teenagers are not participating in mandatory schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All actors attend to only 30% of the population of high school age and 20% of the college-age population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above listing emphasizes the diversity of actors in charge of education in the city. The local viewpoint, in the context of decentralization, radically modifies systems of simply federal or state government participation; other actors and the interaction among actors can now be identified.
The outstanding characteristic of the accelerated growth in enrollment in the city of León is undoubtedly the high rate of participation of the private sector in school management—a rate much higher than the state and national average, especially at the high school and college levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private participation in schooling (% of enrollment, 2000)</th>
<th>León</th>
<th>Guanajuato</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nature of this research did not permit a precise explanation of the diversity of the “private sector entities” included in this group. Private religious schools are undoubtedly present, and some are involved in all levels of the school system—from preschool through college degrees, such as the Instituto Lux, associated with the Universidad Iberoamericana de León. Also present are educational units of the large private systems of higher education, such as the ITESM and the La Salle and Anáhuac universities, with a vision oriented to forming modern business leaders. In other cases, groups offer educational services of unequal quality to a very high demand that cannot be met by the public sector, especially at the college level.

Conclusions

1. The primary effects of the educational decentralization of 1992 included the triggering of a large number of educational proposals that had been latent in the states, the multiplication of strategies and mechanisms to carry out national education on the local scale, and the specification of values, meanings and contents attributed to education in each entity or at each location. In this sense, León and Guanajuato can be considered as privileged references for analyzing educational decentralization carried to an extreme degree: far from being passive receptors or simple witnesses of decentralizing measures, the city and state generated and implemented their own educational development project that often differed from and surpassed the purposes and limits of federal policies—sometimes with confrontation as a result. Many educational innovations were implemented, local and federal institutions and programs were duplicated, and arrangements were made to convert UTL into an institution with a sixth level, a contradiction of its original purposes.

2. Enrollment in León is growing at rates much higher than national and state rates, partly because the city’s situation at the beginning of the decade was very precarious, and national rates were reached ten years later. The enormous presence of the private sector, a dominant trait of the new educational supply in León, clearly expresses the private sector’s interest and strength—which are also seen in the strong presence of business leaders in directing both public and private high schools and colleges. This factor is obviously not distant from the city’s economic problems and to the need for a more educated population in order to solve such problems, according to the city’s main actors.
Doubt remains about whether in a centralized system the federal government would have been able to increase scholastic opportunities to the degree and at the speed accomplished by the private sector, given the state government’s opening to participation and the clear perception—of both the city’s youth and the promoters of economic development—of the importance of improved education.

3. This trait is not necessarily repeated in other cities in Mexico; a determination would have to be made in each case if open spaces are being utilized, and by whom. It is clear, however, that because of decentralization, the study of education must consider concrete geographic locations as units: states and even cities or municipalities are the places where the modification of the educational supply and group possibilities to access education are meaningful. Results can vary enormously by virtue of each city’s specific and unrepeatable factors, even within the same state.

4. The development of the educational system in León in the 1990s shows five main characteristics:

   a) Development has been concentrated in the growth of secondary schools, high schools and colleges, without attaining universal elementary education.

   b) Marked contrast is evident between large increases in post-elementary enrollment and the still low educational coverage.

   c) Accented during the period was the conformation of two clearly differentiated major segments: first, basic schooling, mostly public; and second, from high school to postgraduate studies, mostly private.

   d) The conformation of a heterogeneous and disperse post-secondary supply, given the majority control of private entities and the resulting adherence to the diverse designs and interests of individual owners.

   e) The design of a state educational supply for young people and adults, supported by relatively novel programs and measures of still unproven efficiency and quality.

5. Major educational policy decisions have been made in the city:

   a) The most important seems to have been to broaden the scope of private education and allow high growth in supply at the high school and college level, and even offer grants from public funds to cover transportation, food, supplies and tuition payments in private schools, as a privileged form of growth rather than the creation of new public institutions; this supply responds to the structure of the labor market and the demand of young people, but not to visions of development, attention to the young population or a response to social needs.

   b) The public sector has generated new educational systems, particularly for high school and college, and has done so exclusively in a decentralized manner through agreements between the federal and state governments, according to national policy; the public supply includes majors oriented to solving local problems.

   c) The state government has introduced interesting options for public education by taking advantage of multiple spaces and times and utilizing the media and the design of educational materials to extend the teaching role to various types of advisors, tutors and instructors. Further evaluation of their impact and quality in solving the city’s educational needs is required. The fact that these programs are defined as bivalent and
are centered on employment training points to an enormous pedagogical and didactic challenge, and makes research on their efficiency transcendent at the national as well as local level.

d) An attempt has been made to provide knowledge of a practical and useful nature, far from the rigidity of academic learning, within reach of the state’s entire population, in a quick and easy manner.

e) An attempt has also been made to recognize and certify quickly the knowledge acquired at the workplace, although such recognition has not yet been accepted by the society. Both programs have a clear presence and acceptance in the city. The coverage of these public efforts is not significant with regard to private efforts.

6. In contrast with the federal incentives for education in the 1970s (whose effects in León were characterized by a still low educational supply in the early 1990s), the modernization and decentralization policies of the 1990s have modified the educational interest of the federal government and particularly of the state government. The state has begun a series of “novel” programs to attend to the young and adult population outside of school. Many of these programs repeat federal initiatives promoted by unqualified and currently nonexistent local actors. Outside of León, changes in the state are continual, the public education project seems not to have become consolidated, and institutions are created and disappear faster than in the previous federal setting. The federal government participates at these levels only to the extent agreements are reached with the state. The handling of “mixed” institutions outside of the state capital allows a wider margin for decision-making and action to respond to local interests, such as the case of programs designed and developed by the Conalep and the city’s Universidad Tecnológica.

7. One of the dangers of the innovative state efforts is a possible effect of decentralization: a series of programs was implemented that duplicated efforts carried out in the national setting (of lesser quality, according to some) and then suspended.

8. The national policies of restricting public higher education and the ambiguous handling of public high schools are expressed clearly on the local scale. Faced with the existing bonus of a potential demand of a population avid for further education, and the absence of an active public policy directed to respond to this demand, the growth of high school and college education has been favored by the creation of private institutions at a rate twice as high as the remainder of the nation, with a tendency for further increases.

9. Childhood education has experienced relatively important growth in the zone, yet overall statistics indicate the existence of a large group of young people who have not completed basic education, who “neither study nor work” and have unknown training. On the other hand, the new opportunities for high school and college education are beneficial for a very small number of young people. A question deserving of further study is if the state policies for financing private school tuition (according to the argument that paying tuition to private schools is cheaper than creating new public institutions) represent a policy of social participation in education or a clear privatization of the city’s high school and college education.

10. There are two visible effects of this privatization: the anarchy of supply and the growing inequality among the population with respect for school opportunities that some can access while others cannot. The polarization of inequality among the city’s youth, as a function of the inequality of the education they receive, seems to be one of the most transcendental
results of this new structure of the supply of schooling and the unequal presence of actors in its conformation.

Notes

1 This article is derived from the final report of the research project entitled “La formación de los jóvenes no universitarios para el trabajo en el desarrollo regional de México” (“Training of Young People without University Studies for Work in Mexico’s Regional Development”). The project was designed and directed by María de Ibarrola. Enrique Bernal was responsible for researching and integrating the statistics necessary for the project and the chapters on the supply of schooling. Research was carried out from 1999 to 2002, with financing from the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología. This paper analyzes the city’s schooling, which was studied along with training for and on the job in order to focus on the topic in an integral manner. Synthesis and writing by María de Ibarrola.

2 Over four years, the focus and methodology of the research concentrated on changing qualitatively the way of approaching the knowledge of relationships between education and work. The idea was to surpass the linear research carried out up to that time and oriented to relating the educational level attained with the type of position or income level; to carry out a linear follow-up of classes graduating from certain institutions (based on the diploma received) and graduates’ entrance in the labor market, or a review of institutional processes by which scholastic institutions determine, select, manage, operate and evaluate employment training from the company’s point of view.

3 Case studies from five states, coordinated by María del Carmen Pardo (1999), are a clear example of this focus. The identified actors and their actions are so different that the authors discard “the pretense of establishing a common methodology.”

4 In her doctoral thesis, Cristina Girado (2003) offers a systematization of the main arguments of decentralization in the framework of globalization. The thesis formed part of the overall research project mentioned in Note 1.

5 Luis Castro Obregón (1993) offers a listing of the risks foreseen by the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación. To date, “federalization” has encountered major resistance from various union members, particularly those from the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación.

6 Justa Ezpeleta (1999) outlines this type of possibilities when referring to the “notables ruptures” in the forms of teaching, the production of teaching, and the professional competence of teachers generated by the educational reform of the new law and agreement.

Carlos Alba Vega et al. (1998) compiled a series of studies from Mexico and other countries different from how they were done in the 1970s and 1980s, when regions were seen only as “poles of development within the context of the national economy.”

8 The topic of knowledge holds a privileged place in regional studies. New focuses on knowledge distinguish between two types of knowledge—tacit and codified—and between two major forms of the production of knowledge—linear and nonlinear. See the projects by Casas et al. (2001), Novick (2002) and Villavicencio (2002).

9 Codified knowledge can be “explained, described, stored and transferred,” while tacit knowledge refers to practical knowledge, knowledge acquired by each individual through experience, transfers or exchange with other individuals” (Villavicencio, 2002).

10 These positions are expressed very clearly by Luis F. Aguilar in his book, Problemas públicos y agenda de gobierno (1993). Some additions are the result of my reflections for the course on educational policies and problems in Mexico, which I gave in 2002 in the department of
educational research, based on texts by March and Olsen (1997) and Reimers and McGinn (1997).

11 Guanajuato occupied the lowest places in the nation in almost all educational indicators. For example, in 1995, the proportion of its population aged fifteen and over, with education beyond elementary school was 12.6% less than the national average; Guanajuato was in last place in the rate of absorption from secondary school, in thirtieth place in the rate of absorption from high school, and in twenty-seventh place for higher learning. See INEGI (1997:28-30).

12 Excluding elementary school, the city’s educational system attended to very low percentages (from 61.6% to 3.7%) of the age groups from other levels.

13 The director of one school clearly attributed this program to the governor: “Fox gave a very strong push to education and there was a promotional campaign that said ‘that may no one go without schooling’ (Cecytegdf interview, 15-VIII-99).

14 Some segments from this section were the rough draft of the letter from the Observatorio Ciudadano de la Educación (“Citizens’ Watch on Education”) with regard to education in Guanajuato, written by María de Ibarrola and published in La Jornada, August, 2000.

15 According to Fierro and Tapia, Fox withdrew the proposal of the previous governor and sent a new proposal to the local congress (1999:229).

16 All the statistics used in the text were obtained directly from the ministry of education of Guanajuato: SEG-SIETE-under ministry of educational development. Estadísticas e indicadores educativos básicos, Guanajuato: SEP (annual publication); data from 1995 to 2000 were obtained directly from the Department of Educational Information of the SEG, which provided copies of the complete electronic files.

17 The graduation rate from elementary school in Mexico increased from 77.7% to 84.7%, between 1995 and 2000, and the graduation rate from secondary school increased from 73.9% to 75.1%, between 1990 and 2000.

18 Outstanding in this respect is the book, Yo vivo en León, by María de la Cruz Labarthe Ríos and Adriana Ortega Zenteno, a reference book for basic education in the municipality of León, with an introduction by the mayor and the general director of municipal education.

19 As the director of one school affirmed: “[...] due to that program, the doors of many schools were opened, educational spaces were built and school buildings were overflowing with people but … easy come, easy go, because there is no attainable academic level in secondary school [...] but there were schools that doubled their enrollment from one school year to the next [...]. The same thing happened in the videobachillerato schools, in the state’s CBTAS […] it was something like ‘throw the nets in the water because they are going to catch everything they can’ [...]. Business leaders made a commitment […] there was a scholarship program, there was a transportation program in communities far from school […] resources were assigned to reading material, there was a very, very complete program [...]” (Cecytegdf interview, 15-VIII-99).

20 The indiscriminate trend toward bachiller schools harbors the risk of putting excess pressure on higher education (one of the main problems terminal education hoped to solve), of limiting the years spent in school and the acquisition of scholastic content, and of increasing the devaluation of diplomas, without guaranteeing pertinent, continual education.

21 In contrast, on the national scale, private high schools represent only 21% of the total.

22 From 1991 to date, the CECyTE increased from 14 to 20, and their enrollment grew from 2,650 to 8,934 students in the entity.

23 Bachillerato schools in the nation increased by 46.5% during the decade, and professional high schools decreased by 11.7%. 
This group encompasses an enormous diversity of schools: large public schools, like the high school of the Universidad de Guanajuato, with 2,050 students and the videobachillerato of Ciudad Deportiva, with 270 students; small public schools like the videobachillerato de Duarte, with 40 students; large private schools, like the Centro de Estudios Técnicos with 1,260 students, the Instituto Lux with 569 students, and the Preparatoria del ITESM, with 450 students; and small private schools, like the Hispanoamericana with 30 students and the Instituto Prado with 41, in terms of sizes and not categories.

Where this level of government supplies salaries for teachers and personnel, it no longer participates in the SNTE; nor does any other union or the federal government provide for building facilities.

In contrast, college at the national level represents only 29% of the total.

Nationwide, postgraduate studies grew 157% during the same period, but only 39.8% was private.

Guillermo Tapia, a researcher at the Universidad Iberoamericana de León kindly offered us a copy of his charts on total postgraduate studies in the municipality of León at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year, the source of this summarized information.

For example, DGETI provides technical and curricular leadership because its plans of study are utilized by other public schools such as the CECyTEG or are utilized as a reference for authorizing the plans of many private technical bachillerato schools. In order for the SEG to authorize a certain technical major in a private school, its plan of studies and programs must be equivalent to the standards (credits, schedule, basic subjects) handled by DGETI. Individual schools, however, establish their own procedures to credit formal equivalence.

The 1995 education law of the state of Guanajuato defines the reorientation of ten policies: “education towards the achievement of life skills” and “teacher development towards the achievement of pedagogical skills”.

Cuevas Fernando (2002). This thesis also formed part of the project referred to in Note 1.

Interview with the rector of Universidad Tecnológica de León (July, 2000).

Interview with the director of planning of Educafin (July, 2000).

Not included in this section are the training processes for and on the job, which formed another dimension of the overall project.

By that date, the INEA had not implemented its educational model for life, an alternative for basic education centered on ten modules.

Interview with the director general of the Instituto de Educación Permanente del Estado de Guanajuato, (February, 2000).

Interview with the director of Centro Interuniversitario del Conocimiento (August, 2001).

By 2002, 95 work skills had been certified in the shoe manufacturing industry, in which more than 60,000 people work. Information provided by the CIATEC, the field’s center of official certification.

Cited sources were used for researching data for León. The sources for Guanajuato and national data were statistics from the ministry of education and ANUIES, 2000.

Except for some cities, like Monterrey and Puebla. But neither of these two cities has more private education than León. For the case of Puebla, see Muñoz Nava (2002:655-664).

Concept by Enrique Bernal.
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Article Received: June 5, 2003
Accepted: July 29, 2003