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The State of the Guatemalan Education System through an Analysis of
Teachers' Education Programs

Author: Megan Cristina Rothwell Guerra

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Supervisor: Johan Sandberg

Abstract

Improvement of the Guatemalan national education system is a center for development. Many attempts have been made over the years to improve the system; one, in particular, is the creation of the National System for Teacher Training. This paper reviews the changes made to the National System for Teacher Training (SNFD) and places them into the larger context of the Guatemalan educational system. Through interviews, four themes about the general state of the education system were selected. These four themes represent some of the most prevalent problems within the system, these are: a non-inclusive system; administrative and bureaucratic problems; lack of continuity; and the perceived societal devaluation of the importance of education. The study analyzes how these four themes interact with the SNFD, specifically through two of its sub-programs: the Formacion Inicial Docente (FID) or in English “Initial Teacher Training” and the Programa Académico de Desarrollo Profesional Docente (PADEP/D) or in English “Academic Program for Teachers Professional Development”. This is done through the use of grounded theory, Merton’s middle-range theory, and a sociological approach to professions.

Key terms: Guatemala, Education, Middle-range theory, professions, teachers

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Abbreviations

SNFD	Sistema Nacional de Formación Docente (National System for Teacher Training)
FID	Formación Inicial Docente (Initial Teacher Training)
PADEP/D	Programa Académico de Desarrollo Profesional Docente (Academic Program for Professional Development for Teachers)
MINEDUC	Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala (Ministry of Education of Guatemala)
USAC	Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala (San Carlos University of Guatemala)
STEG	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Educación (Education Workers Union)
DIGECADE	La Dirección de Calidad Educativa (The Steering Board for Quality of Education)
DIGEBI	La Dirección de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural (The Steering Board for Bilingual Intercultural Education)
DIGEF	La Dirección General de Educación Física (The General Steering Board for Physical Education)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
EFPEM	Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media (Secondary School Teacher Training)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction

1.1 Context about Guatemala

A brief historical and cultural description of Guatemala will be necessary in order for the research to be fruitful. Guatemala is located in Central America. Its population is estimated to be around 18 million people and is estimated to be comprised of somewhere between 40% to 60% indigenous citizens. The official language spoken is Spanish; however, the state recognizes all 24 other languages spoken in the country. The education system is seen as a point of improvement for the country as the last national census showed that 18.5% of the population was illiterate; that comprises around 2.3 million Guatemalans who cannot read or write (UNESCO, 2022).

Many attempts have been made to develop the education system of Guatemala. One of the biggest changes came following the peace accords signed in 1996, where reform to the education system was proposed as “la Reforma Educativa”. There were many aspects included in the reform, one of importance was improving the teachers' education system; both how teachers received their professional education as well as what was taught to them. This came along with a want to change the perception of teachers both by themselves and society at large. Initial plans to improve teachers' training were met with short-lived and minimal success, until the early 2000s.

In 2004 teachers in service of third and sixth grade were evaluated on their reading and math skills. The evaluations showed that the average amount of right answers was 58% in reading and 26% in mathematics. In 2006 graduating teachers (magisterio) of the country were assessed, 15% passed the reading exam and 2.4% passed the mathematics test. In 2009 the number of middle school graduates that achieved the minimum reading comprehension skills was 18.88%; mathematics scores were 18.61% (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009). It was clear that teachers were not prepared, and this negatively affected the learning outcomes for the children of Guatemala.

Considering the facts mentioned above, between 2006 and 2015 Guatemala made several changes in the education of public school teachers. The end goal was simple: improving the education of teachers will improve the quality of the education students receive.

The change began with round tables and commissions that researched and created plans to raise public school teachers' minimum educational requirements. Later these plans were adapted into the legislature. By 2016 there were several programs and development projects within the country's educational system regarding the initial education of teachers. The years of work produced a National System titled “Sistema Nacional de Formación Docente en Guatemala (SNFD) which translates to “National System of Teacher Training in Guatemala”. However, it is now 2023, and rather than succeed, some would argue that these programs have failed. This thesis aims to identify where these failures emerged and which social factors can be linked to the project.

2. Background

2.1 The education system in Guatemala

In Guatemala, the education system for preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school is managed by the Ministry of Education, better known as MINEDUC. MINEDUC is one of the ministries under the government of the country. Every new government elects its own minister of education who works with the current government plan. The government in Guatemala changes every four years.

The Ministry of Education works more autonomously than other ministries of the country. In an interview held for this paper with a member of the Guatemalan congress, from now on referred to as “congressman”, who formed part of the Commission for Education in Congress, they addressed the relationship between MINEDUC and Congress. The Commission for Education within Congress has the functions of reviewing the financing of the ministry, reviewing the proposals of any new laws, and becoming an intermediate between the ministry and the teachers it employs. MINEDUC works independently from the rest of the government; “I would say that the Ministry of Education is very independent of Congress and very independent from the

government. The toxic relationship between the government and the Ministry of Education happens via the teachers union.”¹ (Congressman, 2023).

Another important factor in the education system is the Teachers’ Union of Guatemala. They were heavily involved in the creation of the SNFD alongside MINEDUC.

Once a person would like to attend higher level education they can choose to study at one of the private universities of the country, or San Carlos University (USAC). Under Article 82 of the constitution of Guatemala, USAC is the only public university in the country, the law also grants them full autonomy (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009).

A final characteristic to note about the education system is the allocation of a budget. In an interview with a former minister of education, referred from now on as “minister”, they mentioned how poorly the budget is allocated to education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a country should allocate 7% of its GDP to education, while Guatemala only allocates 2.8%. The minister stated that while MINEDUC does receive the highest budget compared to all other ministries, the problem is not solely on the distribution but the size of the entire government’s budget, it is far too small. They went on to add that corruption and private interests are the major factors for this (Minister, 2023).

2.2 Reforma Educativa

On December 29th, 1996 the peace accords were signed in Guatemala ending a 30-year internal conflict. The peace accords promised reform in many sectors of the country including the educational sector (Secretaría de la Paz Presidencia de la República, 2006). To this day the peace accords and educational reform that came along with it are important guidelines that officials must use and follow in order to complete their jobs. The educational reform exists to change the system from an exclusionary system to one that purposefully educates students to become intercultural and democratic citizens. One of the main focuses of the reform was reforming the system by which public school teachers were educated.

¹ Text originally in Spanish. Translation made by the author

The education reform also aimed to redefine the role of a teacher in the country. The reason was, during the Civil War normal schools or “escuelas normales”, the high schools where teachers were trained, became the breeding ground for multiple guerrilla and anti-establishment movements. Many teachers were killed during the war because of this. Following the end of the war, it became important to shift the public perception that had been created about teachers (López Rivas and Cortez Sic, 2016). Considering this, we can say that in Guatemala the role of a teacher is defined within a larger cultural and societal context.

2.3 The National System for Teachers' Education

The SNFD consists of eight subsystems:

1. Initial education
2. Continuous education
3. Recognition of studies and the dignification of teachers' profession
4. Education of educators
5. Investigation and technology
6. Licensing and accreditation of programs and institutes
7. Supervision and evaluation of the system
8. Administration of the system

(Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Asamblea Nacional del Magisterio, 2008)

All subsystems interlock in certain ways; however, this research will focus primarily on topics 1, 2, 7, and 8. System 1 is analyzed through the project of “Formación Inicial Docente” (FID) and the Agreement signed on the 8th of October 2013 by the government, MINEDUC, and USAC. System 2 is analyzed through the “Programa Académico de Desarrollo Profesional Docente” (PADEP/D), translated into English as “Academic Program for the Professional Development of Teachers “. Systems 7 and 8 are analyzed through the interviews conducted for this study.

2.3.1 Subsystem 1: Initial Education

Prior to 2013 in order to become a primary school teacher a student would have to complete, beginning at six years old, 6 years of primary school, 3 years of middle school (básicos), and 3

years of high school (Carrera de Magisterio). In those last three years, you could choose what your focus as a teacher would be: preschool, primary school, physical education, home education, music, or bilingual intercultural education. The education that would take place at the level of “magisterio” was the Initial Teacher Training or Formación Inicial Docente (FID). After completing the FID students would then be qualified to teach within the public education system. This means that teacher education was located in the “Nivel Medio” or “middle level” of the education system, and was run by MINEDUC (López Rivas and Cortez Sic, 2016).

In 2013 this system changed, MINEDUC and USAC signed “The Specific Cooperation Agreement for the Transition from Teacher Training to a Higher Level in the Republic of Guatemala”². The agreement stated that from now on in order to become a primary school teacher you would add schooling in the “Nivel Superior” or “Higher Education level”. The previously known “magisterio”, which happened during high school, would turn into a “Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras con Orientación en Educación” or in English “Baccalaureate in Science and Letters with an Orientation in Education”. Alternatively, you could also graduate with a baccalaureate in musical education; productivity and development; or physical education (Programas de Formación Docente del Ministerio de Educación, n.d).

Students who graduate with this baccalaureate would then apply for a three-year university program where they would graduate as either, a professor in primary education, a professor in artistic expresión, a professor in productivity and development, or a professor in fiscal education (Programas de Formación Docente del Ministerio de Educación, n.d). During this stage, they could choose the modality of intercultural education or bilingual intercultural education. During this added phase the USAC would take over responsibility for the FID. The first class began in 2015. The rollout of this agreement will be the focus of study for the FID section of this paper.

² Translation made by the author. Name of agreement in Spanish: EL CONVENIO ESPECÍFICO DE COOPERACIÓN PARA LA TRANSICION DE LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DOCENTE A NIVEL SUPERIOR EN LA REPÚBLICA DE GUATEMALA

2.3.2 Subsystem 2: Continuous Education

The PADEP/D program is the most well-established program within this subsystem; it took in its first group of students in 2009. The program is aimed at training current teachers over a two-year time period. The program aims to update the information current teachers have, as well as provide modern pedagogical tools and strategies. The program also has the goal of reorienting the role of education in society by reestablishing norms and values such as democracy and appreciation of the multicultural aspects of Guatemala. It aims at forming teachers for modern-day Guatemala (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009)

2.3.3 Subsystems 7 and 8: Supervision, Evaluation, and Administration

Prior to the creation of the SNFD, there was no system to regulate or administrate the formation of teachers. Once the SNFD, known as “Libro Azul” or “Blue Book”, was presented by the Sindicato de Trabajadores de Educación (STEG), translated to English as the “Union for Workers of Education”, there was then a national plan to administrate, evaluate, and supervise teachers formation (O.H. López and EFPEM/USAC, 2011).

MINEDUC has three steering boards that work on the continuous formation and supervision of the SNFD. These are the Steering Board for Quality of Education³ (DIGECADE), the Steering Board for Bilingual Intercultural Education⁴ (DIGEBI), and the General Steering Board for Physical Education⁵ (DIGEF).

According to the minister, the SNFD and its subsystems have not been systematically evaluated since its inception. The minister states that Guatemala has a poor system of evaluation for its programs. Evaluations could lead to changes and adaptations; many people oppose changes to the education system (Minister, 2023).

³ Known in Spanish as “la Dirección de Calidad Educativa”

⁴ Known in Spanish as “la Dirección de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural”

⁵ Known in Spanish as “la Dirección General de Educación Física”

2.4 Major Programs: FID and PADEP/D

2.4.1 FID

Teachers' initial education had been historically at the high school level in the country. The “escuelas normales” were highly esteemed institutions, and the role of a teacher within society was highly respected. Somewhere along the way, the teacher's profession started to lose value, and “escuelas normales” were no longer highly regarded in society. The loss can be attributed to the neoliberal policies of the late 19th century that cut the budget of many of these schools and weakened the educational outcome (López Rivas and Cortez Sic, 2016). Parallel to this, “escuelas normales” opened at a higher rate than other vocational high schools. This meant that for multiple rural communities, the only high school degree accessible to them was to become a teacher (UNESCO Officer, 2023). Many people joined the profession as the only option they had. The number of students graduating was also too high for the real demand the country had for teachers, so many did not practice as teachers after graduation.

An added problem to this was the privatization of schools in the country. Private schools can offer the same degrees as public schools but are not as strictly regulated. The teaching strategies and outcomes vary widely amongst schools in this regard. Prior to the law passed in 2013, there were 359 “escuelas normales” in Guatemala; of these 23% belonged to the public education system, and 68% belonged to the private sector (López Rivas and Cortez Sic, 2016).

Many attempts were made after the “Reforma Educativa” to improve and restore the value of the teaching profession. In 2007 work began with the teachers union, MINEDUC, and USAC to design a new system for teachers' education. The work included designing the PADEP/D system and designing the first plan for the restructuring of the FID (Ex-minister, 2023).

The original proposal for the FID transition to higher education was written with the help of the teachers' unions and various experts in the field and was worked on for multiple years. The first proposal suggested dividing FID education into two sections, the high school phase (etapa preparatoria), and the specialization phase (etapa de especialización). The high school phase would continue to be a 3-year program taught in the “escuelas normales”; they would now teach a

“baccalaureate in science and letters with an orientation in education” (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012). This step was approved and became a part of the final law. Where the original proposal differs from the law that came to pass was in the specialization phase.

For the specialization phase the proposal suggested that after graduating from the “preparatoria” phase, graduates could select where they would like to specialize: primary school, preschool, productivity and development, physical education, or musical education. They would then continue this specialization within the same “escuela normal” they graduated from. The program would add three years to their education, and afterward, they would be awarded a certification from USAC. This would make it a degree granted from a higher-level institution (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012). The proposal came by following the example of the School for Nurses of Guatemala which works under a very similar system; the USAC does not provide the classes to nurses but grants their education a high-level certification (Minister, 2023). The proposal to mimic this system for the FID was not approved, as it would interfere with law 82 (mentioned in section 2.1). The proposed plan would render public “escuelas normales” as high-level institutions, and USAC is the only public university allowed in the country. Therefore the change was made to transfer all of the specialization phases to USAC.

The proposal also suggested the two phases be done for both primary and preschool teachers. The law passed only requires primary school teachers to attend university.

Once it was established that the program would be imparted by the USAC, several people suggested that the program also be offered by private universities; therefore, students could choose from multiple institutions and find a program best suited for them. The law does not state that other universities could not impart the program; however, they would need to charge their students tuition. In an interview with the director of “Empresarios por la Educación” (2023), it was stated that at the time of this law's passing, they as an organization suggested a system of scholarships whereby the government would pay for a certain number of spots at the private

universities (Director Empresarios por la Educación, 2023) (Empresarios por la Educación, 2012); this was never done.

The original proposal emphasized a paradigm shift in the way teachers were formed. The plan stressed heavily the creation of teachers who had developed their being, their spirituality, their body, and their communication strategies. They would also navigate towards an intercultural education, “intercultural education will be a means to form habits and basic skills of intercultural, emotional and social openness that can increase communicative availability, beyond tolerance, and that critically base solidarity values.”⁶ (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012).

Additionally, the hope was that by moving the FID education to a higher level more value would be placed on the role of education in the country. The UNESCO Officer interviewed said it best:

“If you want to have doctors, are you going to send premed students at the baccalaureate level to tend to the sick? ... Why are you going to send the young adults from the high school level to teach the kids? When that is the most important part of a country.”⁷ (UNESCO Officer, 2023)

This original proposal was ultimately not used when the law was signed in 2013. In 2014 the first class in “Baccalaureate in Science and Letters with an Orientation in Education” graduated, and in 2015 the first class for professors in primary education was admitted to USAC (EducaGuatemala, 2015). Reports from 2014 showed that prior to the change 20,000 students graduated on average from the magisterium, but in 2014 only 3,356 graduated as baccalaureates in science and letters with an orientation in education; of those, only 57% were admitted to the university program. Additionally, it was shown months ahead of the program starting in USAC that the curriculum was still not finalized, teachers had not been hired to teach incoming students, and financing for the program was undecided (EducaGuatemala, 2016).

⁶ Text originally in Spanish. Translation made by the author

⁷ Text originally in Spanish. Translation made by the author

2.4.2 PADEP/D

The PADEP/D program rests on one fundamental question “How to accompany in-service teachers to constantly improve their performance based on a review of their practice?”⁸ (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009, pg.64). The goal of the program is to help teachers adapt to the rapid social changes the country is facing, as well as provide them with the necessary tools they need to face challenges in their job.

The technical aspect of the program is as follows. The “Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media” (EFPEM), which translates to English as the “School for the Training of Secondary School Teachers”, together with USAC and the National Teachers’ Assembly administrates and runs the program. They offer active teachers the opportunity to get a specialization in one of four programs: intercultural primary education, intercultural bilingual primary education, intercultural preschool education, and intercultural bilingual preschool education. A teacher could apply to one of these two-year programs taught at the USAC, where they would have 2 courses at once that would last around three months. Each class would have 8 in-class periods of 4 hours (a total of 32 hours per course), while the rest of the program could be taken from home. Classes would happen during the weekend or after school. If a teacher were to complete the program and pass the final exam they would receive a salary increase. They would also be incentivized to receive a university education afterward for an additional salary increase (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009).

The PADEP/D program is set to be temporary, with the idea of adding additional education to teachers who graduated from the magisterio prior to the 2013 law change and who would not have received a college education in order to teach (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Asamblea Nacional del Magisterio, 2008).

The two largest goals of the program were to, first, certify teacher training at a higher level as well as provide incentives for teachers to participate, and second, to establish a system that

⁸ Text originally in Spanish. Translation made by the author

ensures “relevant, articulate, functional and flexible training”⁹ (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009). This would be achieved through a shared learning environment where teachers were not only encouraged to act as students but also to share their lived experiences with their classmates.

Teachers who graduated from the program are expected to have improved technical and administrative skills; create a personal and ethical identity as a teacher; and be perceptive, reactive, and adaptive to the social situations of the schools they teach in. They would be expected to design new learning experiences for their students and to promote cooperation through games and exercises. Additionally, they were expected to hold the knowledge of the importance of the peace accords, understand the Educational Reform, and recognize bilingual education as a human right (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009).

The curriculum of the program represents a larger cultural shift that has been present since the end of the civil war. As explained in an interview by an ex-vice minister at MINEDUC, from now on referred to as “vice minister” (2023), a cultural shift has been taking root where now the multiculturalism of the country is being addressed. If we look back 30 years we would have still found classes dedicated to the “hispanicization” of indigenous children. Now these practices are frowned upon and teachers are seen as important actors in recognizing all cultures in Guatemala (vice minister, 2023).

As we can see, the learning outcomes of the program range from technical, to personal, to societal. The program has also been met with success and continues to be one of the longest-standing development programs within MINEDUC (vice minister, 2023). The downsides of the program are not seen in the results of the teachers, but rather the lack of financial and administrative support these teachers receive in their jobs after they have completed the program.

⁹ Text originally in Spanish. Translation made by the author

3. Research Aims and Purposes

3.1 Purpose

Why study the SNFD? First, the SNFD is a long-term plan; therefore, the research will continue to be relevant in the future. Second, through the interviews it was pointed out that few comprehensive reviews of the project have been performed since its inception; therefore, it is a relevant topic with little research done. Third, it is a social topic, the power dynamics and social reactions in this project describe an interesting culture and society around the education sector in Guatemala.

What is the relevance to the field of sociology? The SNFD rides on the back of the peace accords signed in 1996 in Guatemala as well as the educational reform that was created alongside these. The educational reform guides the education system and promotes this as a place where citizens of full body, mind, and spirit are created. In order to do so, the SNFD promotes redefining the role of the teacher within society. It also addresses cultural differences in society such as race, gender, and class. This thesis will analyze how well these aspects are addressed in the SNFD and the effects it has had within society.

Why study Guatemala? Guatemala is a country that on the outside seems to be ready to develop itself. The government and private organizations constantly create large-scale and long-term plans to develop the country. This is exemplified by the “Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: K’atun Nuestra Guatemala 2032”¹⁰ which was the national development plan instated in 2015. The plan touches on every relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and is subject to systematic revisions every 3 years. The document also outlines risk areas and how these may be fixed. By all means, on paper Guatemala has a plan to develop, but in practice, the effects of these plans are not manifested in the way that are expected (vice minister, 2023). So studying Guatemala's development offers the unique opportunity to study highly detailed and well-documented development ideas and plans, and be able to compare them to real-world outcomes.

¹⁰ Translation made by the author to English: “National Development Plan: K’atun Our Guatemala 2032”

3.2 Overview of the Research Process

For this thesis, field research was conducted in Guatemala from January to March of 2023. Interviews were conducted with teachers in the private school system. Additionally, multiple interviews were conducted with important figures of the Guatemalan educational system, for example, ex-ministers of education, heads of large organizations, and high-ranking government officials. These same interviews provided important supporting documents such as first drafts of the SNFD plan. The importance of this thesis lies in the compilation of first-hand accounts and documents that together form a clear picture of the process of transforming Guatemalan teachers' education. Additionally, this research does not focus so much on the laws that were passed, but rather on the social mechanisms and power structures that had and continue to have an effect on the development of the program.

This case study also serves as a background to explain the complicated dynamics of the Guatemalan Education system. There are multiple development practitioners who may want to implement development programs within education in Guatemala. The inner workings and structures of the educational system make it difficult to achieve development projects. The original plans of the SNFD were very well designed and still fell victim to the political and cultural context of the country. This paper will showcase these larger issues by fitting them alongside clear and recent development projects. This work could then be used by development practitioners as a guide on how to address the Guatemala socio-political landscape to consider when designing future projects.

3.3 Research Questions

1. How does the current Guatemalan education system affect the National System for Teachers' Training?
2. What effects has the current National System for Teachers Training had on the current Guatemalan education system?

3.4 Disposition

In section 1, this paper gives a comprehensive background of the Guatemalan education system from the macro to the micro level. It also includes an in-depth analysis of the FID and PADEP programs. Section 4 presents a literature review of previous studies, as well as the major documents that supported the study. Section 5 touches on the relevant sociological theories. Section 6 presents the methods for the study including data collection strategies, interviews collected, ethical considerations, and limitations.

Section 7 consists of the analysis. First, for the FID program and then the PADEP/D program; it concludes with a cross-analysis. Section 8 is a presentation of the relevant theories in relation to the analysis. The paper will end with a conclusion.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Previous Studies

In regard to previous studies, few exist within the Guatemalan context. A study conducted by Dunia Marcela Marroquín Miranda (2020) titled “Educational Transition to Initial and Continuing Training: from Magisterium to Baccalaureate” serves as one of the studies conducted after the implementation of the programs. A report made by Oscar Hugo López Rivas and José Enrique Cortez Sic (2016) titled “Teachers Colleges in Guatemala: Origin, development, crisis, and current situation” serves as a historical study of “escuelas normales”. Two monthly bulletins by EDUCA Guatemala address these topics as well. One from February 2015 titled “Between doubts: Opening initial teacher training at university level”¹¹, and a second from October 2016 titled “Initial Teacher Training Four years after the Reform (part 1)”¹². No official reports on the projects have been produced by the MINEDUC or USAC (O.H. López, 2023). The studies mentioned above go to show the little research that has been done, this paper will fill a large gap in the literature.

¹¹ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “Entre dudas: Apertura formación inicial docente a nivel universitario”

¹² Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “Formación Inicial Docente cuatro años después de la reforma (parte I)”

4.2 Major References

This research uses reports made by MINEDUC, USAC, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and other organizations to study the plans of the SNFD, FID, and PADEP/D. Some of these were proposed original plans that later on did not get approved; others are the finalized and approved plans. Analyzed as well were reports made by USAID on the state of the profession of teachers and what larger cultural changes would be made to the profession. These documents are all used to analyze the success of the program by comparing them to the interviews conducted. The main documents used are listed below:

- “Specific cooperation agreement for the transition of teacher training to a higher level in the Republic of Guatemala”¹³ (2013) signed by the then president of Guatemala, the minister of education, and the rector of USAC. *This is the law signed to approve the transition of FID from “escuelas normales” to USAC*
- “Curriculum redesign of the Ministry of Education’s professional development program for human resources -PDP-”¹⁴ (2009) written by USAC, and the High School Teacher Training School. *This is the document that outlines the PADEP/D*
- “Teacher training programs of the Ministry of Education”¹⁵(2016) written by MINEDUC
- “Model of the Initial Teacher Training Subsystem -Proposal-”¹⁶ (2012) written by MINEDUC and the Technical Table for Initial Teacher Training. *This is the original proposal for the change in the FID, however, it was not approved once the law was signed.*
- “Bases for the Design of the National Teacher Training System in Guatemala”¹⁷ (2008) written by USAC in agreement with the National Assembly of Teachers. *This is the SNFD we refer to in this paper.*

¹³ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “CONVENIO ESPECÍFICO DE COOPERACIÓN PARA LA TRANSICIÓN DE LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DE DOCENTES A NIVEL SUPERIOR EN LA REPÚBLICA DE GUATEMALA”

¹⁴ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “Rediseño curricular Del Programa de Desarrollo Profesional del Recurso Humano del Ministerio de Educación -PDP-”

¹⁵ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “PROGRAMAS DE FORMACIÓN DOCENTE DEL MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN”

¹⁶ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “Modelo del Subsistema de Formación Inicial Docente -PROPUESTA-”

¹⁷ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original Title: “Bases para el Diseño del Sistema Nacional de Formación Docente en Guatemala”

5. Relevant Theory

5.1 Merton's Middle Range Theory

Merton's middle range theory has an "emphasis on the importance of tightly linking micro and macro levels to one another and his belief in the important role of endogenous social dynamics" (Hedström and Udehn, 2011). His theory is structuralist, meaning it focuses on the creation of theory. He identifies social dynamics and tries to find a theory that can both place it within a larger context without removing the day-to-day aspects of these dynamics; better put, these theories "transcend sheer description or empirical generalization" (Hedström and Udehn, 2011). Making general assumptions or theories about an entire structure would be difficult, and would lead to "grand theories", as Merton refers to them, that would be vague in nature (Hedström and Udehn, 2011). Individual and smaller-scale aspects have connections and impacts on the macro level. Analyzing these links becomes the center of our application of Middle Range Theory.

Middle-range theories, though their sociological nature, are context-bound, they cannot be applied universally (Nee, 2018). The context established for this research is Guatemala.

In order to create a middle-range theory we need to establish both the *explanandum* and *explanans* for our analysis. As explained by Hedström and Udehn (2011), "Any explanation can be said to consist of two types of components: (1) an *explanandum* or that which is to be explained, and (2) an *explanans* or that which is to explain the explanandum (pg. 28)". For our research we wish to explain the causes and effect of the SNFD, more specifically the FID and PADEP/D, this makes it the *explanandum*. Problems in the education system represent the *explanans*. Therefore we can say:

The problems identified in the Guatemalan education system (explanans) will serve as a way to explain the FID and PADEP/D programs (explanandum).

A selection process was made to identify what factors from the *explanans* will be used for the analysis. The selection process was done using Uskali Mäki's theory of isolation applied to middle range theory. Mäki concluded that when selecting explanatory factors one could not use

all factors as part of the *explanans*; rather, you had to make two sets, one that would be used called the *isolated field*, and one that would be purposefully excluded called the *excluded field* (Hedström and Udehn, 2011).

For this research, the *isolated field* is the problems within the education sector that are most prominent as explained through the interviews. The *excluded field* comprises problems identified not as often or of lesser urgency.

5.2 Sociological Theory of Professions

The definition of a profession has been previously discussed in sociology; Thomas Brante is a referent in the subject. At its core, this topic attempts to distinguish professions from occupations. The general consensus is that a professional holds the ultimate knowledge in a certain field. However, sociologists from Burrage, Jarausch, Siegrist, and Freidson have all established other requirements for an occupation to be classified as a profession. Some of these include a controlled division of labor, a monopoly in the labor market, controlled training programs, and serving a great value for society. However, there are three general characteristics of a profession that have been widely established: they are organized, they have some sort of control, and they work within a defined cultural necessity (medicine, knowledge creation, technology, etc.) (Brante, 2011).

Parsons also studied professions and used his pattern variables to define what a professional “man” would be. He labels them with affective neutrality (low emotional engagement in their work), universalism (judging in terms of general standards), collectivity (work for society at large), functional specificity (they work in a specific field), and achieved competencies (through studies they acquire titles and skills) (Brante, 1988).

The problem Brante, and other sociologists, found with the lists created is twofold. First, is a profession only achieved when every requirement listed is met or is it measurable as a scale? Second, the lists were made before the technological boom and in American and Eurocentric

labor markets. “The attributes of dominating truth regimes determine which attributes are regarded as the most salient for professions during a certain period of time” (Brante, 2011).

Additionally, it is important to determine what type of knowledge generates the skills necessary to practice in a profession. The general consensus is that the best way to answer this question is to define a list of capabilities that can be scientifically justified (Brante, 2011).

Brante (2011) proposes, considering the factors mentioned above, that professions are “Occupations conducting interventions derived from scientific knowledge of mechanisms, structure, and contexts.”

6. Method and Data Collection

6.1 Data collection

The research for this paper was conducted using a grounded theory approach. Fieldwork was conducted in Guatemala City for this study. The collection took place from January to March of 2023.

6.2 Grounded Theory for Field Research

The original authors of grounded theory Glaser and Strauss (1967) define it as “the discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analysed in social research” (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 1). Cathy Urquhart (2013) defined the key point as being that theory produced is grounded in data (Urquhart, 2013: pg. 4). This means that when conducting research, rather than basing a hypothesis on a grand theory (like the ones mentioned by Merton in section 5.1 of this paper), instead the research guides the investigation and lets it generate a theory on its own.

Some key characteristics of using grounded theory for qualitative research are:

- The researcher allows for substantive theory to emerge

- Theory is grounded in the data gathered from fieldwork, through interviews, observations, and documents
- Analysis is continuous and systematic and is done simultaneously to the data collection
- Use of open coding and thematic coding
- Data is constantly compared to emerging data
- Data collection process is altered with emerging data

(Urquhart, 2013: pg. 5)

6.3 Grounded Theory for Field Research in Practice

When research for this paper began, the base idea was to study the Guatemalan education system; however, no set aspect had been chosen at this time. The initial task was finding experts in the field who would be willing to provide one or multiple interviews. The initial stages of the study focused on getting a general understanding of the public education sector in Guatemala. Through the interviews certain themes about the general issues within the system became recurring. It was at this point that a theory was made.

Next, the National System for Teachers Formation was chosen as a development program within the education sector of Guatemala that could serve as a case study. The research method then became identifying key players in the design of the system and locating important documents. Due to the grand history and scope of the SNFD, it was decided that the FID and PADEP/D programs would serve as a study point within. At this stage, the research consisted of identifying problems within the larger education system of the country, and seeing if these were present in the implementation of the two selected programs.

During the data collection, 11 interviews were conducted with various actors including teachers, ex-ministers of education, and heads of NGOs. Additionally, the researcher visited different seminars and events within the education sector. They viewed a two-teacher training for active teachers to gain new skills for teaching a second language. They also visited a meeting of the “Cluster for Education in Emergencies”. Finally, they were able to observe a conference held by the “Mesa de Educación” for the political candidates of the 2023 national elections. These served as data collection points.

6.4 Interviews

All interviews were semi-structured. The interviews were divided into 4 sections: opening questions, questions on the general state of the education system in Guatemala, questions on the national development plans for education, and finally questions about the SNFD.

Interviewees were encouraged to speak for as long as they would like or to bring up additional topics they would like to discuss regarding education in Guatemala. Based on their job they were asked how their unique perspective has offered them insight into the field. The list of interviews is found in Figure 1.

Interviewee	Work and life experience relevant to the research
Teacher 1	Teacher for teachers at an “escuela normal” for preschool teachers
Teacher 2	Teacher at an “experimental” public high school in Guatemala City
Teacher 3	Teacher at a public primary school in Izabal
Teacher 4	Teacher at a public primary school in Baja Verapaz
Teacher 5	A visually Impaired English Teacher who teaches to the visually impaired
Congress member	Current member of Guatemalan Congress, who was secretary for the Commission of Education within congress
Minister of Education	Previous Minister of Education of Guatemala. Doctor in Education Worked on the SNFD, FID, and PADEP/D
Vice minister	The former vice minister of education. Worked on the creation of the “Reforma Educativa” in 2003
UNESCO Officer	National Education Officer of UNESCO Guatemala
Director Empresarios por la educación	Director at “Empresarios por la Educación”
Officer of Education at the PDH	The former head of education at The Human Rights Ombudsperson’s Office (PDH)

Figure 1: table of interviews

All interviews were held and recorded in Spanish, and translated to English for the analysis by the researcher. The translator is a native Guatemalan Spanish and English speaker. The researcher received help from some of the interviews as well on how best to translate their own words into English.

6.6 Coding

The data collected passed through two coding processes. In the first process, the interviews were recorded, and notes were taken on the responses to the questions. The first coding process took place during the field research and therefore formed part of the grounded theory process. Through this first coding process, the main topic of the research was selected, as well as the lenses through which to continue the study.

In the second coding cycle, all of the interviews were sorted through the process of thematic coding. The figure below illustrates the coding process used for the interviews.

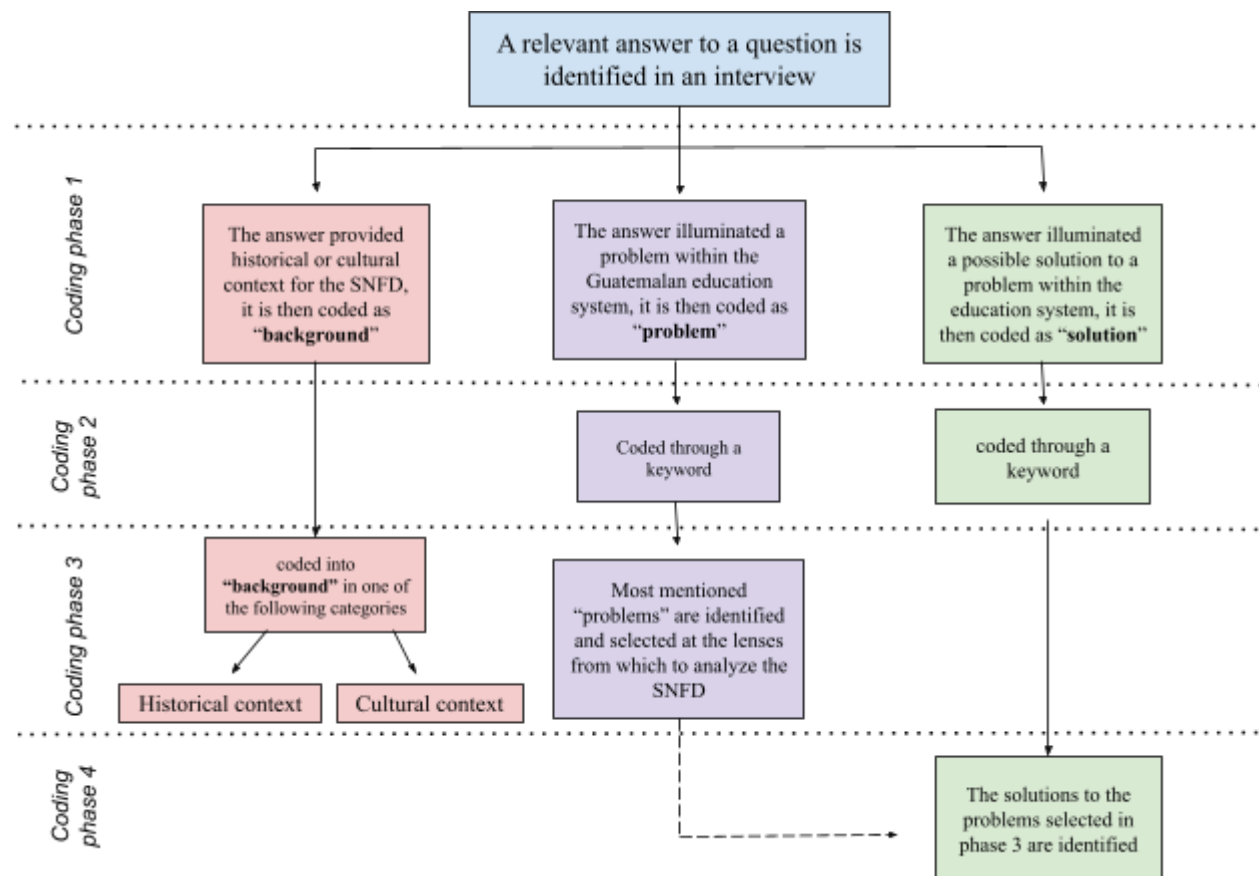


Figure 2: coding process for the Interviews

For phase 1, the respondent's answers were grouped into “background”, “problem”, or “solution”. If an answer to a question provided historical or cultural context for the SNFD the researcher coded it as “background”. If an answer given by a respondent pointed to a problem within the education system, it was grouped into “problem”. Possible solutions to the aforementioned problems were sorted into “solution”.

In phase 2, everything coded into “problem” or “solution” is given a keyword. In phase 3, everything coded into “background” is divided into cultural or historical contexts. Additionally, all of the problems are grouped together by key work, and the most recurrent ones are chosen as the lenses through which to conduct our analysis of the SNFD. The problems identified in this phase represent the most prominent problems in the education sector of Guatemala according to the research, the goals of this study will be to see if and how these problems manifest themselves in the FID and PADEP/D programs.

In phase 4 of the coding process, the solutions to the problems selected in phase 3 will be selected to form part of our analysis.

6.8 Ethical Considerations

The topic of teachers' education, as stated in the background, is a sensitive topic because of the history teachers carry in the civil war. Conducting interviews about this topic needed to be done with the correct tone and considerations (Scheyvens, 2014, pg. 161). As was also stated in the interviews, the state of the education system leaves much to be desired and for many educators to speak on the subject they will inevitably include their personal feelings in their responses. When addressed correctly these “emotional” responses can be very beneficial to this research. Especially when we consider the aspect of teachers' role within society, their honest responses help us gain a deeper understanding of the situation. In order to gain these insights while maintaining trust, all interviewees were explained fully the topic of the interview and were given the chance to ask questions and set boundaries before the interviews began.

Clare Madge (1997) explains that “ethical research should not only ‘do no harm’, but also have potential ‘to do good’, to involve ‘empowerment’” (pg. 114). For this reason, when conducting interviews it was explained to participants that they could use this opportunity to anonymously voice the opinions they have of the SNFD programs. Considering little to no research has been done outside of the government for these programs, they were encouraged to use this space to make themselves heard. While this paper makes no attempts in representing all teachers in Guatemala, especially when we consider the small sample size that could be produced for the scope of this project, we can say that for those who were interviewed and surveyed, their voices were heard.

6.9 Limitations

First, all of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, and while the researcher is both a native Spanish and English speaker, there always exists the possibility that some nuance of the responses has been lost in translation.

Second, we must address the topics of *reflexivity and positionality*. It is important in modern-day development research to speak not only about how positionality can affect research but how it can aid it. Discussing this topic can help position this research within larger debates and theories in the future (Scheyvens, 2014, pg. 244).

The researcher is Guatemalan and grew up in the Guatemalan education system. While the research has been done considering these personal relationships to the topic, the researcher has also been aware of it and worked to reduce possible biases. However it must be stated that the researcher has a middle/upper-class Ladion upbringing in Guatemala, they were also never enrolled in the public school education of the country. These positions make it impossible for the researcher to truly understand the struggles that minority communities face within the education system. However, the work done on this project has focused on capturing the experience of teachers and officials who have a closer connection to these topics and making their voices heard.

The researcher's closeness to the topic has been a positive addition in other ways. Many of the topics discussed have little previous literature written on them, so the insider knowledge helped

locate relevant literature and interviews. Speaking the local language, not just Spanish, but also Guatemalan colloquialisms helped translate the responses from the interviews; it was also a benefit as richer interviews could take place (Scheyvens, 2014, pg. 156). Additionally, due to the time constraints of the research, it was beneficial to have an insider to the culture who could work with previous knowledge to gather more robust data in a smaller time period.

1. Analysis and Results

7.1 Structure

In this section, we will review the results of the analysis, focusing on the themes from the coding process:

- Non-inclusive system
- Administrative and bureaucratic problems
- Lack of continuity
- The perceived societal devaluation of the importance of education

7.2 FID

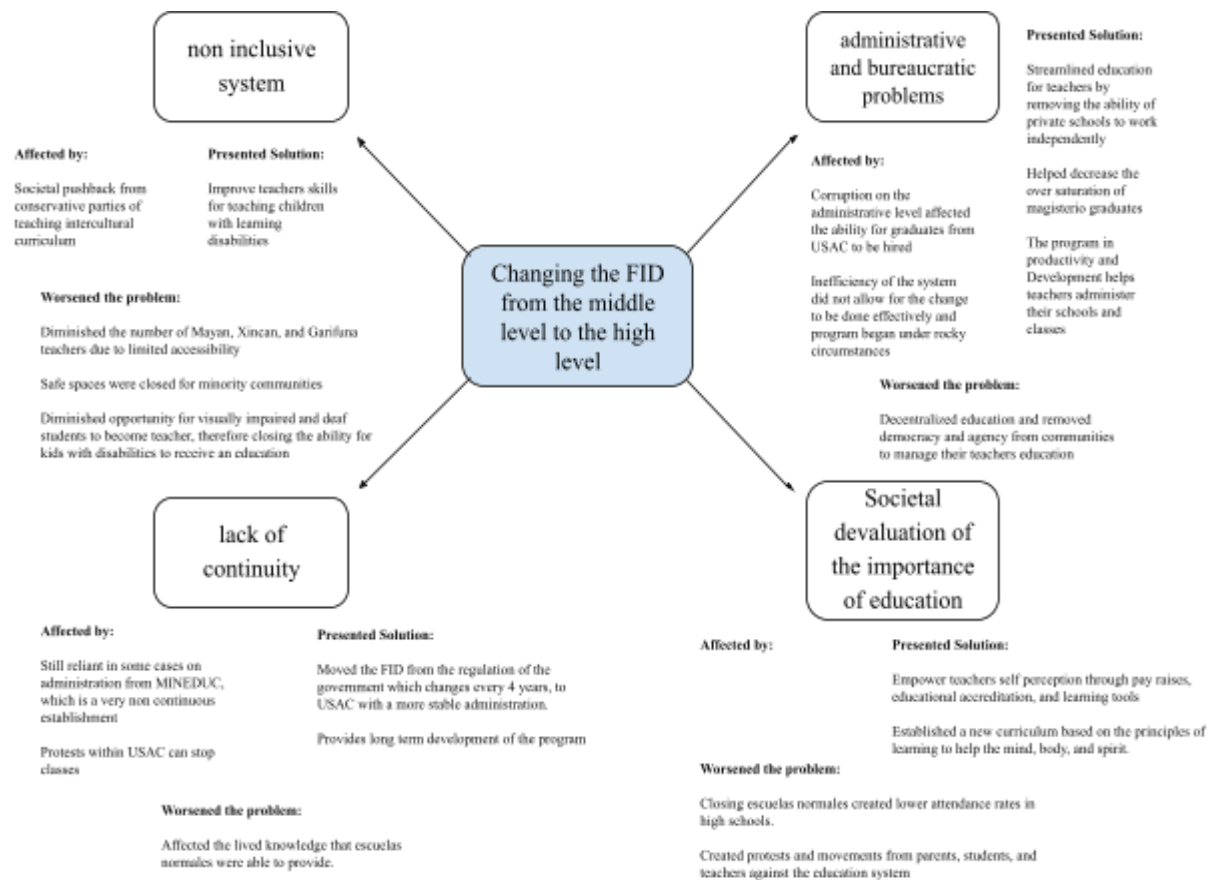


Figure 2: Analysis FID

“Affected by” represents if the FID program was negatively impacted by the aforementioned problem. Whereas “Presented Solution” will show how the FID positively contributed to the lessening of that problem. Finally, “Worsened the Problem” will mention in what ways the FID may have negatively contributed to the problem.

7.2.1 Uninclusive system

The intention of the new curriculum for students at USAC is to provide an intercultural education. This means it will actively teach the history and culture of the four communities of Guatemala: Ladino, Garífuna, Maya, and Xinka; in other words, it teaches historic memory. The program proposes that by teaching the historic memory of these four communities they can promote fraternity, solidarity, and equality (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012). Additionally, the program is intended to promote a shared learning environment. A shared learning environment would provide students the

opportunity to learn about the different cultures from members of these same communities. In theory, the program is inclusive; however, multiple factors lead to this not being done in practice.

In an interview with the former officer of education at the PDH (2023), it was pointed out that there are multiple parties who actively protest against historic memory being taught in schools. Conservative groups within the government and from society discourage teaching with an intercultural approach (PDH Officer, 2023).

Second, closing “escuelas normales” and transferring the education to the USAC drastically limits the number of students from indigenous communities who become primary school teachers. Members of ethnic minorities on average live more in the rural areas of the country, while Ladinos live in the urban spaces (UNESCO Officer, 2023). USAC offers their teacher program at their universities found in urban centers, so just by location alone the change affects the possibility of Xincan, Mayan, and Garifuna students to attend. This will in the long run also affect the entire education system's ability to be inclusive. If the majority of teachers who graduate are Ladino and do not speak an indigenous language then there will be no teachers who can teach the children whose first language is an indigenous language. Teacher 1 (2023), is a teacher at an “escuela normal” for preschool teachers; their school had to start teaching their students classes in Quiche (the local Mayan language spoken in their area); however, none of their teaching staff spoke the language. Furthermore, even if they learned to speak the language, they are not always members of the culture, so they cannot teach prospective teachers how to interact with kids from the Quiche culture. They expressed how the students who are Quiche have a much more difficult time joining the school and adapting when they do not have community members to teach them and they live further away. If this is already a problem for Mayan students at an “escuela normal”, which is still somewhat close to their community, they will face a larger issue when the only program they can attend is at USAC which is much further away and taught by teachers who have never even interacted with their language and culture.

Third, bilingual intercultural schools were made for members of Mayan communities who speak Spanish as a second language. Bilingual intercultural schools were formed when there was a group of Mayan parents who wanted their children to receive an education at “escuelas

normales”; officials, students, and teachers of the schools were against them joining the program, so separate schools were opened where they could study without opposition; these schools were called “Bilingual Intercultural Normal Schools”. These provided indigenous communities with safe spaces. By closing the “escuelas normales” and transferring their education to USAC, a historic Ladino university, these safe spaces were closed. The former Minister of Education (2023) spoke about there still being bilingual intercultural schools that provide the bachelorette with an orientation in Education, but many of the graduates do not choose to continue their studies as teachers because of the lack of opportunities for them, and because ultimately they will have to finish their teachers’ education in a Hispanic predominant setting (Minister, 2023). To mitigate this effect, the USAC program offers a degree in either intercultural training or bilingual intercultural training; however, it is not enough.

Fourth, the Guatemalan school system has worked in a ‘Spartanian’ manner for many years, meaning those students who fit the profile of the “ideal student” are given the chance to succeed, and those who do not fit in do not receive the help necessary to succeed (vice minister, 2023). Teacher 3 talked about how their FID never gave them the tools necessary to teach children with learning disabilities. In many cases, they tried to find ways to work with these students but ultimately there was nothing they could do other than report them to their principal who would then inform the local branch of the MINEDUC. Sometimes these kids would receive help while in other cases they would continue to fail classes (Teacher 3, 2023). The new system for FID attempts to teach staff how to teach children with learning disabilities, but the conditions in the schools still do not allow for them to properly use their training. The FID makes an important contribution on the side of teaching staff, however, it cannot be seen as a solution to the entire problem of inclusivity. Teachers have been left with the responsibility to help these children; however, the administration and school conditions do not provide teachers with the right tools to do so.

Finally, children with other disabilities will see themselves affected by this change as well. Take for example children who are visually impaired. The law already says that no child can be denied an education, so many times visually impaired and deaf children are enrolled at public schools where they have no teaching staff or resources to learn properly. Teacher 5 (2023), is a visually

impaired English teacher who works at PROCIEGOS (the largest organization for visually impaired and deaf people in Guatemala), they spoke about how the best way for a visually impaired child to receive an education is for their teacher to also be visually impaired. However, the USAC program is not built to train visually impaired or deaf prospective teachers. Under the previous system an escuela normal could be established to teach the deaf and blind, and in this way provide them with a teaching diploma, now this option has closed.

7.2.2 Administrative and bureaucratic problems

In the previous system of “escuelas normales” the education system was localized, providing communities with opportunities to participate in their children’s education. Decentralization allowed for a level of independence and structure. It has been proven that decentralizing education in different aspects has provided better outcomes. For example, in the aspect of food for schools, before 2016 the MINEDUC office in Guatemala City organized food for all schools in Guatemala, leading to food getting to the rural part of the country months after being purchased; food would arrive expired to the schools. After 2016 a program was implemented that provided money to the schools and communities for them to organize food for their children; after this, children’s nutrition was improved and it helped support local economies (Minister, 2023). This is one example of how decentralization is a positive aspect for schools, it allows for community involvement. With “escuelas normales” closing, education was passed to the urban centers and one institution (USAC). This limits the ability of society to manage its own education and show democracy (vice minister, 2023).

However, it can be said that prior to this change it was difficult to streamline education. Especially in the private sector of education. Students all over the country would graduate with very different educational profiles. This means teachers all over the country had different knowledge and produced knowledge for children in different ways. Centralizing FID to USAC helps streamline the educational process. Although the centralization that was expected of the program has failed in other aspects. When the law was signed to transition FID to USAC, the suggestion was for the EFPEM to manage the program; however, what was decided in the end was that each branch of USAC would manage the program (Minister, 2023). For example, the

USAC school in Quiche would manage it differently than say the school in Guatemala City. Ultimately this weakened the program's educational outcomes.

The transition did help solve the administrative troubles of graduating too many teachers. Prior to the change, many opted to study "magisterio" because it was the most widespread degree, but more teachers graduated than could be hired by the system. Students also applied to the degree with little vocational interest in the profession (UNESCO Officer, 2023). By moving the education to the USAC, the process became more selective, and therefore teachers who showed real interest in the profession could be hired. Additionally, the number of students could be regulated to make sure that they fit the actual demand of the country.

It has to be noted that, of the students who have graduated from the program in USAC, none have actually been hired by MINEDUC to work in the public education sector. Those spots continue to be filled by teachers who were already practicing. Or spots are still being filled through corruption, filling teacher spots by hiring friends or family or people to whom officials owe favors. Because of this, the results of the program cannot be measured appropriately.

Finally, it must be noted that the bureaucratic inefficiency of the system did not allow for the transition to take place appropriately. The law was signed in 2013 and by the start of the program in 2015 it had been reported that financing had not been finalized, teachers of the program had not been hired or trained yet, and the curriculum was still being drafted (EducaGuatemala, 2015). This can be partially attributed to the inefficiency of the system to work faster. The decision was rushed and not well planned. We know this is an administrative failure because we have other examples from the research on how miss administration rushes projects or impedes positive progress. This was demonstrated by the PDH Officer (2023) who stated that when they worked for the state as head of the education sector in the office of human rights, in their first year they could not implement new programs or strategies easily, but rather had to work with the plan made by the person who held office before them, and then wait a whole year to design the next years plan.

Additionally, it must be stated that however well teachers are taught, if the administrative system does not change parallel to it they will not have the right working environments in their schools to use the skills learned in college. Take for example the case given by Teacher 2, a teacher at an “experimental school”. In an “experimental school” instead of working under the usual four-semester school year like most other public schools in Guatemala, it works with three semesters. However, the Ministry of Education still requires “experimental schools” to report grades and progress reports in 4 periods, and does not adjust their data collection system; this forces teachers to rush exams and skip classes. This problem has been going on for all 80 years since the school has been open. No change has been made to fix this bureaucratic problem. This exemplifies how the success of future teachers is not only dictated by the success of the USAC program they will graduate from but also by the administrative conditions of the schools where they get hired.

In regards to attempts at fixing miss-administration at the school level, the USAC offers a program in Productivity and Development, aimed at helping teachers manage their schools and classrooms (Programas de Formación Docente del Ministerio de Educación, n.d). It is important to note that in Guatemala there does not exist the job of school principal, rather a teacher can choose to become the principal of their school while also teaching a class. They do not receive a pay raise, and their job as principals does not have a defined post within the education system (Minister, 2023). This means that many teachers who choose to adopt the role of principal are not prepared for the job and do not have the specific tools and skills necessary to do so. The program at USAC offers them the ability to learn the skills necessary to manage their class and school, therefore improving the administration.

7.2.3 Lack of Continuity

In an interview with Teacher 1, it was expressed that one problem their schools often face is that a new administration steps into office every four years. This forces them to implement the new government's plans and stop work that had been done using the previous government's plan. It goes as far as each government having its own logo and supplying schools with paper with that logo, when a new government is elected schools are no longer allowed to use the old paper and have to throw it out (Teacher 1, 2023). The Minister (2023) expressed how development in

education cannot be done or measured in short time spans. Plans need to be done in medium or long-term strategies but the education system of Guatemala does not allow for this. Each new minister starts from zero, meaning progress can rarely be achieved.

Changing FID education to the USAC in this instance actually provided opportunities for long-term development. For starters the administration of the USAC does not change as quickly as most MINEDUC administrative positions, therefore the USAC can ensure the longer-term continuity of the FID program.

There is however the fact that the MINEDUC is still to provide the financial means for the USAC to hold this program. Each government may change the financial support or the administrative support, which can create tensions in the maintenance of the program.

There is one way in which the USAC will restrict the continuity of the program. It is not uncommon for the students and/or staff of the university to go on strike. When this happens the university shuts down operations (Cuevas, 2022).

Continuity does not just reference lack of administrative continuity or program continuity, it also alludes to knowledge continuity. In the “escuelas normales” there were teachers who had knowledge and experiences collected over multiple decades of service. They were a key point in the transfer of knowledge to future teachers. With the USAC taking over the program the risk is run to lose all of this community-specific knowledge (Teacher 1, 2023). This in fact can be seen as a contradiction to the SNFD. The change hoped to provide students with knowledge that could allow them to work in any community but with no teachers coming from these communities, this is lost. However, the case can also be made that by switching the education you, in turn, regulate the teachers who teach the program; this is important considering a report by UNESCO and MINEDUC where it was stated that the teaching of teachers has in many instances been neglected (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012).

7.2.4 Societal Devaluation of the Importance of Education

There are two ways in which the importance of education is perceived for this analysis. On the one hand, you have education's perceived value for children. On the other, the need to see how teachers are perceived by society.

Education has for many years had a neoclassical perspective in Guatemala, education is important to make productive people for the market (Minister, 2023). With this view, educational paths were picked based on the job security and financial compensation that could be expected after graduation. The “magisterial” was highly favorable for these conditions for two reasons, one there were plenty of “escuelas normal” so students could receive classes and still go home after work. Two, after studying for 3 years they were able to enter the job market, and if they became teachers they could be hired by the MINEDUC and get job security, since being fired from a teacher job in the public sector is very difficult. The FID establishes that education will now have a focus on the mind, body, and soul with a more holistic approach, it contradicts the neoliberal view of education. While this is a positive step in transforming education, work has to be done for society at large to perceive this shift (Vice-minister, 2023).

The second aspect of the system of devaluation is seen through teachers' self-perception of their role in society (López Rivas and Cortez Sic, 2016). What was before a highly esteemed career path is now looked down upon, not just by teachers but by parents as well. In an interview with Teacher 3 (2023), they shared a time when they met up with a student's parent to discuss their child's education at home and at school, and rather than met with respect, they were yelled at and diminished by the parent.

Changing the FID to USAC had serious consequences on a societal level. For starters, it closed down the “escuelas normales” and a job security route for many students. Parents and prospective students still have a neoliberal view of education, therefore now students have decided to no longer pick the teacher route. We can see this in the decrease in the number of students enrolled in magisterial to the “Bachelorette in Science and Letters with an Orientation in Education”. A study conducted by Dunia Marcela Marroquín Miranda (2020) at the “Normal Institute for Men

of the East”¹⁸ (INVO) and the “Normal Institute for Women of the East”¹⁹ (INSO) showed that in 2014 (the final year of the magisterial program) 145 students had graduated from INVO and 197 had graduated from INSO. In 2015 the first graduating class of bachelorettes with an orientation in education consisted of 32 in INVO and 11 in INSO. This can be attributed to the community, including parents and students, not accepting the proposed change, “moving the comfort zone of the country’s educational communities, causing movements of rejection, of non-acceptance of the proposal by the Ministry of Education [MINEDUC]”²⁰ (Marroquín Miranda, 2020). This in turn only worsens the view of the education system that the public has.

Many teachers have also rejected the program. “Escuelas normales” were important cultural sites for teachers and with them being closed teachers perceive the MINEDUC as limiting their own autonomy and freedom. This is further exacerbated by what has been considered a failure in the program since no teachers have been hired after graduating from it. The poor administration and implementation only served to devalue the view of education more than empower it.

The change however has been positive in other aspects. It emphasizes the empowerment of teachers by providing them with more tools and education. Aside from that, having a higher educational title establishes them more amongst the community of professionals (Brante, 2011). Lastly, the program has promised higher pay raise for all those who attend which only serves to empower them more (Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala and Mesa Técnica de Formación Inicial Docente, 2012). The program also has a harder selection process, meaning USAC can ensure that the students who are admitted show a high level of interest and possess the right skills for the job.

¹⁸ Translated from Spanish by author. Original text “Instituto Normal para Varones de Oriente”

¹⁹ Translated from Spanish by author. Original text “Instituto Normal para Señoritas de Oriente”

²⁰ Translated from Spanish by author. Original text “Moviendo la zona de confort de las comunidades educativas del país, provocando que surgieran movimientos de rechazo, de no aceptación a la propuesta por el Ministerio de Educación”

7.3 PADEP/D

For this section, we will review the PADEP/D program and how it is either affected by the four main problems, worsened the problems, or in what way it contributed to a solution. We can visualize the analysis in this way.

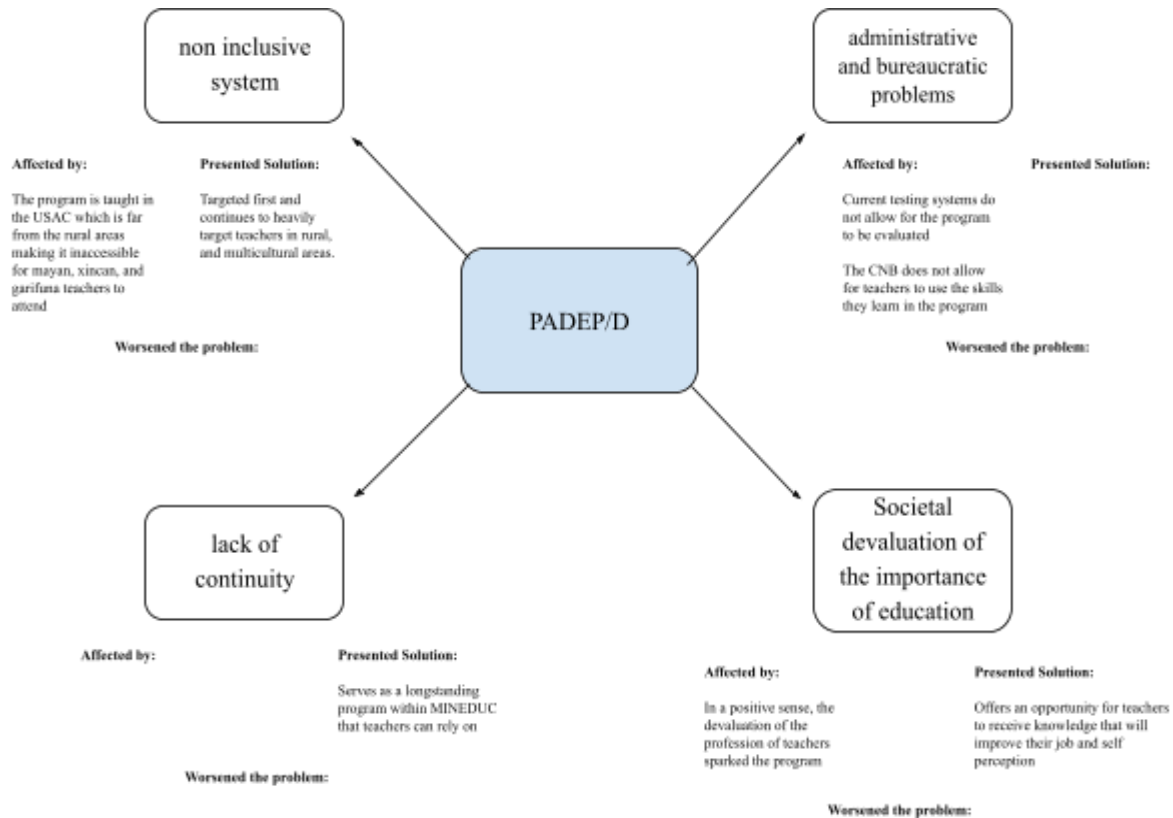


Figure 4. Analysis PADEP/D

7.3.1 Non-Inclusive System

The PADEP/D is targeted at teachers who are in service, particularly those who did not graduate from the USAC degree program for teachers. The aim was to provide these teachers with the skills that new teachers will have in the years to come. This means that the teachers would receive an intercultural education or could even opt for a bilingual intercultural education. In this way, it works on making current teachers more accepting and inclusive of students from every community in Guatemala.

When the PADEP/D program was created it analyzed who should be the first to receive this education:

“The challenge is twofold for those who work in multicultural contexts and in intercultural and bilingual education programs. They have to establish a link with the community and give meaning to the relationship between it, the school, and society as a whole, they must interpret the desires and expectations of the elderly, but also of the young and the students they teach, they have to mediate between individual and collective expectations that may be different from those formulated by the Ministry of Education.”²¹ (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009)

For this reason, it was established that teachers from multiethnic schools should be the first to receive the opportunity to study the PADEP/D program. And the program would make sure to provide the teachers with the skills necessary to tackle the above-mentioned demands.

The minister was part of the planning of the PADEP/D and they confirmed that teachers in rural areas (where most multicultural schools are found) were the first to receive the program. In this way, the program has been successful (Minister, 2023).

The program is done semi-face-to-face, but mostly through self-study at home. This allows teachers to attend after school and on the weekends which makes it easier for teachers from rural parts of the country to attend (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009). However, it has to be said that the program is only offered at the USAC which has its schools in urban areas, so teachers from rural areas who may not have the money to travel cannot easily participate. This is especially troubling considering most of the schools that would benefit from the program are found in the very rural areas of the country and are part of a Mayan, Xincan, or Garifuna population.

²¹ Translated from Spanish by author

7.3.2 Administrative and Bureaucratic Problems

There will be difficulty in assessing the success of the program in the long term. Historically improvements in education have been based on the national tests delivered to third, sixth, tenth, and twelfth graders. The tests only measure mathematics and reading comprehension. Whereas the PADEP/D trains teachers in other strategies to help students form themselves in different aspects (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009). Mathematics and reading comprehension test scores may not show the whole picture of the success of the program. This is an administrative problem that needs to be improved; how to measure educational success in the country.

Additionally, there exists the “Curriculum Nacional Base” (CNB), translated to English as the “Basic National Curriculum”. The CNB is the curriculum established in the early 2000s that teachers use to guide their classes. At the time of its creation, it was praised for providing a national strategy for education; however, it is based heavily on the guiding principles of education from then and has not received an update (Vice-minister, 2023) (Minister, 2023). Teachers who take the PADEP/D receive information to help them teach in a modern setting, but when they return to class the CNB has not been updated to give them room to teach up-to-date knowledge. Improvements need to be made on a higher administrative level in order to allow for the program to flourish.

7.3.3 Lack of Continuity

The PADEP/D has been longstanding and has survived the change in governments. It is one of the few programs to have done so (Vice-minister, 2023). The program however is set to be temporary. The expectation is that at one point all teachers will have received either this education or have graduated from the FID programs at USAC. Logistically this makes sense; however, one could argue that programs to update teachers will always be necessary, especially given the fast-changing pace of the world. For example, teachers could benefit from programs to educate them on new technology, or new pedagogical tools that will be developed in the future. However the plan is for there to be workshops delivered to teachers for all of these subjects in the future, they will not be as extensive as the PADEP/D, but they will serve a similar role.

7.3.4 Societal Devaluation of the Importance of Education

The PADEP/D stemmed from tests done on primary school teachers where many failed to pass a standardized reading comprehension and mathematics tests. For this reason, it was seen as vital to offer them the opportunity to expand their knowledge. But the program does not solely focus on preparing teachers for these tests, they also aim to improve teachers' self-perception and society's perception of teachers. There has been a “generalized perception among members of society that the bad quality of basic education is associated with the low quality of teachers.” (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009). The program, therefore, provides them with a professional and ethical identity. The goal of this is to give them enough information on the philosophical orientation, legal principles, and organization of the education system so they may be more democratic and active in their roles as teachers (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009).

7.4 Cross-analysis between the programs

As we can see from the two charts presented for FID and PADEP/D, the FID program suffered from more issues, and in some ways worsened the structural issues. The PADEP/D however, has no perceived points in “worsened the problem”, and presents multiple solutions. Why is this?

We can attribute most of the “worsened the problems” points in the FID analysis to the poor planning and quick implementation of the project. In the original proposal for the change, more thought was put into the social considerations of the program. For example, if the original plan has been followed, the extra three years of school would have been taught at the “escuelas normales” instead of the USAC. If this had been done they could have possibly avoided the following problems (all of these have been taken from the FID analysis graph, figure 2):

- Diminished the number of Mayan, Xincan, and Garífuna teachers due to limited accessibility
- Safe spaces were closed for minority communities
- Diminished opportunities for visually impaired and lead students to become teachers; therefore, the ability for kids with these disabilities to receive an education

- Decentralized education removed democracy and agency from communities to manage their teachers' education
- Affected the lived knowledge that “escuelas normales” were able to provide
- Closing “escuelas normales” created lower attendance rates in high school
- Created protests and movements from parents, students, and teachers against the education system

Instead of following the plan that had been developed between the USAC, MINEDUC, specialists in the field of education, and the teachers' unions, it was replaced with a program that was less structured, and poorly planned. This may be attributed to the low planning culture of Guatemala **“The plans are there but no one pays attention to them”**²² stated the vice-minister (2023).

The PADEP/D program on the other hand has a proposed plan made by many agencies of the education sector and was followed through in its entirety. It was a system made by society for society and therefore it exhibited higher success rates.

The PADEP/D also received much more positive support from the public and from the body of teachers. The FID on the other hand has received backlash from teachers (Marroquín, 2020). Public and professional support can “make or break” a program. It would be important to assess now: what makes the PADEP/D program appealing to teachers and how can these lessons be applied to increasing public support of the FID program?

It was important for this paper to analyze both of these programs with the same parameters, to identify how a project within the education system of Guatemala can succeed and where it can fail. Additionally, both projects use the SNFD as a theoretical basis so they can be compared on a higher level. Comparing them allows for a strong argument to be made about project development within the education system of Guatemala.

²² Translated from Spanish by the Author: Original text “Los planes estan ahí pero nadie le hace caso.”

The SNFD states that the PADEP/D program will be temporary; as more teachers graduate from the FID program at USAC the need for a higher lever accreditation will not be necessary (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Asamblea Nacional del Magisterio, 2008). Both programs studied in our research aim to provide teachers with a longer education, one that is accredited by a university; therefore, both programs should give their students the same capabilities. It then becomes imperative to compare both programs to each other in order to ensure that their outlooks align.

There are aspects where they both align, for example, by providing pay raises to teachers who have received either of these degrees. There are however significant differences that can affect their outcomes. The PADEP/D program for example provides more opportunities for Mayan people to participate. The program is more accessible both in content and location. The FID program lacks this aspect.

8. Theoretical Problematization of Results

8.1 Middle Range Theory

Merton's theory helps us establish a link between the micro and macro levels of the education system of Guatemala. At the macro level, we have the entire education system, a system that is large and complex. The four themes seen in the analysis represent the macro level. On a micro level, we find teachers and their education system. The micro level is analyzed through the SNFD, FID, and PADEP/D programs.

In the research, we refer to smaller instances within the SNFD and relate them to the much larger education system. An example of this can be seen in section 7.2.1 where moving the education of teachers to the USAC, bilingual intercultural schools were closed which provided opportunities for students of minority communities to become teachers in a safe and culturally sensitive environment. The closing of these schools is on the micro level of the education system. With these schools closing, however, Mayan, Xincan, and Garifuna students are less likely to become teachers; this, in turn, leads to children of these communities being less likely to receive primary

education in their native language, or from a member of their own community. This affects their chances of success in the long run, and furthermore goes against the educational reforms plan to make the Guatemalan education system more inclusive. The effects of the change on a micro level, are seen on the macro level.

Relationships can also be from the macro to the micro level. We see this in the analysis of how the neoliberal policies of Guatemala affected the funding of the “escuelas normales”. This, in turn, lead to the privatization of these schools, which led to unregulated curriculums and a loss of structure for the teachers' education. This led to the devaluation of teachers which lead to situations like the one mentioned by Teacher 3 where parents no longer trust teachers and condemn their work (Teacher 3, 2023), leading to a personal feeling of devaluation from individual teachers. A macro effect in the country leads to events at the micro level.

The middle-range theory allows us to understand how development work in the Guatemalan Education System. You need to identify how a development project is situated between the macro and micro levels; how they are in the middle. On the one hand, the SNFD program is affected by but also tries to solve macro-level problems. On the other hand, its concrete actions are made mostly at the micro level.

Middle-Range Theory attempts to build theory. While more research would be needed in order to build a theory on the research collected in this paper, we can propose the beginning of a theory. This paper studied development projects within education, and how larger institutionalized factors are both affected by and affect these development projects. Therefore we can say we have made the start of a theory on development work within education in Guatemala.

8.2 Sociological Theory of Professions

In order to measure the success of the SNFD we need to define the profession of a teacher. For this, we refer to the analysis of professions done by Thomas Brante (2011).

We define a teacher within the social mechanisms, structure, and context of modern-day Guatemala. Considering this we will take what the SNFD and the education reform define as a teacher.

The education reform defines a teacher as someone who has “a profound sense: of respect for cultural identity, of solidarity and social responsibility. Solid scientific, technical, and humanistic competence; capacity and initiative to face the educational problems and their own practice, with critical and reflexive attitude; and they involve themselves in permanent processes of education.” (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and Escuela de Formación de Profesores de Enseñanza Media, 2009)

If we revisit Parsons’ pattern variables we may ascribe different ones to Guatemalan teachers considering the history and context. We can say they are affective (as they work with the historic memory and emotional competencies of children), they are particular (depending on the community they are assigned to they are encouraged to restructure their classes and teach for the particular community), they are still collective (work for the common good), they have an achieved competence (through the FID and PADEP/D program), and finally, they have specificity because they learn the very particular skills to teach within Guatemala.

A list of capabilities for teachers in Guatemala has been made by USAID. The report states what capabilities teachers should have in culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse contexts. They use the definition of capabilities described in another report made by USAID for Guatemala titled “International investigation about basic life skills”; the report defined capabilities as: “the ability to successfully face complex demands in a determined context (functional approach), through the mobilization of psychosocial resources that include knowledge of specified content, cognitive abilities and practices, motivational, emotional, ethical volitional components”²³ (Rychen, 2008, pg. 10). For teachers in Guatemala the list of capabilities is divided into interpersonal capabilities, didactic capabilities, disciplinary capabilities, and professional capabilities (Proyecto USAID, Reforma Educativa en el Aula and Escuela de Formación de

²³ Translation made by the author from Spanish to English. Original text: “la habilidad para enfrentar con éxito demandas compeljas en un contexto determinado (enfoque funcional), mediante la movilización de recursos psicosociales que incluyen conocimiento de contenido específico, habilidades cognitivas y prácticas, componentes motivacionales, emocionales, éticos, volitivos.”

Profesores de Enseñanza Media de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, n.d.). As we can see the larger goal of redefining teachers' competencies has been to establish a more inclusive and holistic education system.

In order for the SNFD to succeed in the long term, it is important to establish a definition of the profession of teachers in Guatemala. What distinguishes them as a profession and not an occupation? We realize through the analysis that the goal of the SNFD programs is to establish them as the center for intercultural knowledge. They will possess all of the skills necessary to provide students with a positive learning environment where they enrich themselves in a holistic manner.

How can it be established as a profession? Brante (2011) gives us a list of commonly accepted attributes of a profession, “ethical knowledge, long education, examinations, licensing, specific association, organization, various types of control, collegiality, ethics, work for the common good, autonomy, discretion” (Brante, 2011). The SNFD programs could attempt to establish some of these attributes.

The PADEP/D program offers teachers multiple courses that center on giving teachers some of these attributes, for example, multicultural and intercultural education, investigation and professional development, attention to special needs education, and the evolutionary development of the child. These courses were designed by the EFPEM by experienced teachers.

The transition of the FID to the universities is a step in re-establishing the profession of teachers. For many, one of the attributes of a profession is ‘long education’; however, as we can see long education could have been achieved in the “escuelas normales”. When attempting to add one of the attributes it worked against others. For example, collegiality, the “escuelas normales” were centers for teachers to meet and work together, they empowered teachers, and closing them removes this element (refer to sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.3). The program was also not organized well so it removes the aspect of the organization (refer to section 7.2.2).

9. Conclusion

This paper presents both the historical and cultural background of the Guatemalan education system, particularly in relation to teachers' education. Through interviews and document analysis, a timeline of events, as well as a mapping of important actors has been made about the SNFD and two of its programs: FID and PADEP/D. The interviews conducted with teachers and officials in various areas of the Guatemalan education system highlight larger systematic problems. These problems were then analyzed in relation to the FID and PADEP/D.

The analysis provides an example of how to assess and analyze development projects within the education system. It allowed us to place these into the much larger cultural system of education in Guatemala. By applying grounded theory and Merton's middle range theory, we were able to tie these micro and macro levels. This proved useful in both contextualizing a large system for one case study and in taking lessons from one case study that can be applied to future development projects.

What lessons have been learned? First, public reception and support of a project are necessary for successful results. Second, the current administration of the Guatemalan education system limits itself from realizing its full potential. Third, the stratification of the system is in a precarious situation; it has to be dealt with. Programs not only need to promote a more inclusive system, but they must also realize the negative consequences they themselves can have if not done properly.

To finish this paper, here is a list of possible research areas in this subject for the future. First, what other aspects of the education system can be analyzed from the themes used in the analysis? In what other areas can this research method be used? For example, one could investigate the current national curriculum (Curriculum Nacional Base or CNB in Spanish); or the infrastructure projects for schools. Second, it is clear that the FID and PADEP/D programs need to be assessed and evaluated by the MINEDUC and USAC. These evaluations would serve as a stepping stone for possible improvement. Research can be done on how best to evaluate these programs. Finally, research should be done to assess the sociological impact these programs have had on teachers in the field. This would be a much larger study and would focus on the micro level, speaking to

teachers from all different parts of the country and different ethnic groups, to assess how the SNFD impacts day-to-day activity.

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