

Public Private Partnerships in Primary Education in Mexico City

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Abstract

Globally, public private partnerships (PPPs) have been on the rise in the education sector in recent years, including in Mexico. The effects on the local level have largely been unexplored for this country. The purpose of this thesis is to determine the extent to which PPPs are achieving quality education goals in Mexico City primary schools by looking at two PPP entities operating in the marginalized outskirts of the city. Perceptions of key stakeholders were gathered through interviews and a focus group and then analyzed in terms of Freire's problem posing model of education. A case study format is used to present the findings in terms of four emergent themes. The study concludes that the efforts of the two PPPs in question constitute a problem-posing model of education and have contributed to the formation of genuine learning communities centered around the children and the schools.

Keywords: public private partnerships, PPPs, public primary education, Mexico City, learning community, Paulo Freire, problem-posing education

Dedication

I want to dedicate this thesis to my family who have always supported me in my journey. To my friends and colleagues who have made me the person I am today, without them I would not be here.

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Acronyms

PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
WB	World Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública
IFC	International Finance Corporation
EPEC	European PPP Expertise Centre
FP6	The Sixth Framework Programme
GDA	Global Development Alliance
HCT	Human Capital Theory

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1 Introduction

Public private partnerships (PPPs) are arrangements between public and private actors for the delivery of goods and services (Verger and Moschetti, 2017). This hybrid approach has been used as a novel means of improving efficiency and effectiveness within a number of sectors, including in education. Today, this approach has been implemented to assist with the present deficiencies in education systems around the world, like funding and infrastructure problems. Evidence from entities such as the World Bank have suggested that PPPs can be a strategic approach model to be used (World Bank, 2007). Positive outcomes contribute to the public good by helping to create an informed, literate society that is necessary for proper democratic rule, and to the private good by contributing to individual competitiveness that is necessary for markets to be their most efficient (Robertson, Mundy, Verger, & Menashy, 2012). Regarding this particular sector, (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009) claim:

“PPPs can create competition in the education market. The private sector can compete for students with the public sector. In turn, the public sector has an incentive to react to this competition by increasing the quality of the education that it provides.”

This paper focuses on educational PPPs. Most PPP arrangements involve a private organization that supports the education sector through philanthropic funding activities and a government entity that guides policy, regulations and, in some cases, oversight of the programs (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009). However, the formation and implementation of PPPs varies from country to country and from locale to locale, as ideally the focus of their work addresses the specific needs of the populations they intend to serve. PPPs exist at all scales from the local to the international.

In recent decades, the PPP model is beginning to spread to developing countries, which seek to utilize these programs to bring additional resources into public services in order to achieve an intended social impact. One country that has recently adopted this approach is Mexico. However, PPPs are still a relatively new phenomenon in Mexico's education sector. Given the complexities associated with PPPs, there has been much discussion among country leaders and researchers leading the movement of PPPs, mostly involving western countries with the goal to identify effects and advantages. The World Bank as an entity has repeatedly cited the need for research in countries using PPPs in education in order to better understand

the projects impacts on education, to better shape future projects and understand what works (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009).

The introduction of PPPs into Mexico's education system has been a recent strategy to try to tackle the systematic failure that has been evident for many decades. The mission of the Ministry of Education, also referred to as *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP), is to ensure the provision of quality education in public primary and secondary schools and in higher education. However, 87 percent of school age children in Mexico attend public schools of "poor quality, insufficient coverage, and high dropout rates in levels beyond primary" (Santibañez et. al, 2005, pg. 29). Because of this dire situation, the Mexican government were willing and even eager to experiment with a new approach to funding and enacting education programs that involved collaboration with outside entities. Understanding the complex ways that PPPs are organized and operated can help governments and private entities maximize resources and effectively implement partnerships that improve the lives of the citizens they serve.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this research is to explore the work of educational PPPs in practice and to determine if and how they are substantially contributing to overcoming education inequalities and promoting social cohesion. This research is focused upon marginalized and disadvantaged populations that have historically not been properly served by the traditional mode of education delivery in the country, as these students are the core demographic that PPPs seek to support and nurture in order to reach higher levels of academic achievement. Using a case study approach, the project explores the experiences of leaders working with two PPPs in impoverished areas and schools in Mexico City. By gathering and analyzing the experiences of the program leaders and volunteers, I seek to better understand what these local stakeholders and actors believe they have achieved/are achieving. I seek to explore the more personal and human elements of implementing PPP projects that have been informed, created, designed, or funded by transnational entities, bridging the gap between the development of such programs at the macro level and their implementation at the micro level.

Understanding the perceptions of key actors on the ground will help reveal the effectiveness of PPP mechanisms as they presently exist and inform future policy making efforts. The use of PPPs in the education sector is an emerging phenomenon in Mexico and therefore should be assessed as soon as enough data can be collected, for the future prospects of students being served may depend upon the overall success of the programs. However, around the world, rigorous evaluations on the impact of these types of projects have been limited (LaRocque, 2014). More specifically, the evaluation process has received very limited attention in places outside of the United States and Europe (Patrinós, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009).

Although Mexico has seen significant improvements in its education system, thanks to the efforts put in place by the government and international organizations working in the country, including PPPs, significant issues remain. These include, but are not limited to the number of children not served by the education system and high levels of dropout rates, Santibañes (2005) point out that another major issue in the country is the substantial number of relevant school age children who never enroll in lower and upper secondary school, this can be attributed to several factors as child labor. A main factors is the demand of labor were students choose not to enroll in school and the supply factor in which children do not have a school near their communities or there are not enough classrooms for them to attend school. A combination of factor that are commonly seen in communities were groups of indigenous people congregate, conforming marginalized groups in the outskirts of the urban areas or in rural areas that do not have much government presence (Santibañes, 2005). Another contributing factor for this groups of communities, many times excluded and marginalized from society, is the small amount of representation they have at the local and state level government. This has prompted the government to take a closer look at their policies for the most disadvantaged groups in the country (Santibañes, 2005). Access to quality public education is a major challenge for most people in the country.

Given the repeated efforts by the government to provide a better education I consider vital to further explore the work PPPs are doing and understand how the entities objectives are achieved in the in the communities where they operate. This project proposes analysing group leaders and volunteers perspectives to understand how PPPs achieve their goals. Previous research shows that perceptions of leaders, managers and employees shape the climate and effectiveness of the working environment (O tara, 2011). I seek to understand

how the stakeholder perceive PPPs work, because their perceptions shape their actions and their actions shape how the PPPs are implemented. Not understanding the overall stakeholder perspective means the field is missing an important source of data to better understand how PPPs are implemented, as well as how they achieve their outcomes. A second reason for conducting the study of PPPs in education is to contribute to the long-term effort to understand the complex phenomenon as it contributes to my professional formation as a researcher in the topic.

1.2 Research Questions

The main goal of my research project is to explore the role PPPs have in bringing quality education to the schools of Mexico City through the analysis of key stakeholder perceptions. I seek to answer the broad research question of:

- *To what extent are educational PPPs achieving quality education goals in Mexico City primary schools?*

Specifically, my research explores this phenomenon through the lens of the following subquestions:

- *How do key stakeholders, ranging from program directors to community members, perceive the work of PPPs in Mexico City primary schools?*
- *To what degree does the work of educational PPPs in Mexico City fall within the problem-posing model of education as articulated by Paulo Freire?*

1.3 Significance of the Study

Gaining insight directly from key stakeholders about their perceptions of the PPP programs they work for will shed new light on whether the programs are having their intended effect or not. Evaluating their words will also reveal areas that could be improved and discrepancies between the design of the PPP entities (including their stated mission and goals) and the implementation of the programs in practice. By looking at perceptions, rather than quantitative elements like test scores or graduation rates, this research will reveal the human elements of the selected PPPs and show they are experienced by community members. Their experiences with the programs, while a bit subjective and intangible, are arguably just as important as more tangible outcomes if the programs are actually fostering community and collaboration around the task of improving education. Additionally, quantitative elements may not necessarily reflect if a student is truly learning more or if they are developing a

genuine love of learning. The perspectives of the participants of my study can better answer these questions, as they have firsthand experience with the programs and with the students involved in them. The analysis of their perceptions can thus be used to improve the programs by building upon strengths and opportunities and effectively addressing weaknesses and shortcomings.

This research can also have global implications. International entities can aggregate local case studies, like the one I have conducted in Mexico City, and determine trends and patterns that can inform future policy-making everywhere from the design and development stages all the way to the implementation and evaluation stages. Additionally, case studies like mine can help give a human element to policymakers and PPP developers. This human dimension is an important thing for these actors to consider, as education is, by nature, a very human and personal process that affects families and strongly determines whether or not an individual will be able to achieve self-actualization and achievement of their dreams later in life. However, this human element is ignored in the policymaking process in favor of quantitative data. Those making decisions about the design and implementation of PPPs should strive to utilize multiple sources and types of data in order to ensure they have a holistic view. Ultimately, this research can help improve how educational PPPs do their work and therefore improve the quality of education for students in Mexico City and other places, leading to a more informed and empowered global population and a more equitable world.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which PPPs are increasing the quality of education in Mexico City. In choosing a qualitative approach wherein I analyze the work PPPs are doing in Mexico City through gathering perceptions of key stakeholders, I exclude quantitative data, like test scores and graduation rates, that could also help answer this research question. I chose to do this because I didn't just want to create a picture of academic performance in Mexico City; rather, I wanted to illuminate the human element of these programs and the linkages between efforts to improve the quality of education and community development efforts.

The key stakeholders selected as participants for this study were limited to program directors, coordinators, leaders, and volunteers. While I had informal conversations with teachers,

students, and non-volunteer parents during my fieldwork, the content of these exchanges are not presented or analyzed within this paper. The limited time I had to conduct fieldwork prevented me from diversifying my participants and interviewing a wider variety of stakeholders, which could have created a more holistic picture of how the PPP programs were shaping educational outcomes and the community. Nevertheless, the actors selected were well-equipped to discuss the programs at length and in depth because of their close proximity to them.

Finally, my study focused on only two PPP programs that operate in Mexico City primary schools. My research site was further limited to include just four schools who host the programs. There were other similar programs I could have chosen to investigate, and I could have selected different schools to observe or increased the number I visited. Again, time was a key reason I did not widen the scope of my study, as was the fact that I was only granted access to these programs and their relevant stakeholders because I utilized personal connections I cultivated during my time there. However, I felt that the size and scope of my research site struck a happy medium between being too broad and too narrow, as I was able to engage in significant depth with the entities I was exploring while also gathering data across several settings (the two programs and the four schools) to capture a wide picture of PPPs in primary schools that could be generalized across Mexico City, and potentially to similar environments as well.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This first chapter presents a brief introduction to the research topic and question, and presents my argument for why this research matters to the discipline of education. Accordingly, the structure of the thesis is as follows:

In chapter 2, I present the literature I selected for review in order to situate my research work into the broader context of educational and development research. I begin by discussing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as they apply to education. I then describe the leading entities and actors involved with the development, design, and implementation of PPPs at the international level, with a focus on their reasons for advocating this approach.

In chapter 3, I provide the context of the research site (Mexico City) and the background of the national/local PPPs that have been implemented there.

In chapter 4, I describe the framework of analysis. The analytical framework used is based on the Paulo Freire's critical consciousness model of education. Specifically, I explain the concepts of *conscientização*, dialogue, and praxis from his problem-posing model of education and how I will apply them in my analysis.

In chapter 5, I present the methods and methodology used for the research project. I first justify my decision to use a qualitative research design. Then, I discuss how I sampled participants and why I chose them. Next, I detail the methods I used to collect data and illustrate my thinking that led to me selecting these particular methods over others, and address concerns about validity and reliability. I then outline the data analysis procedure, and conclude with the ethical considerations that shaped my study's design.

In chapter 6, I present the findings from the data collected in a case study format. The findings from the raw data are broken down into four core themes: the perceived failures of the current system, the perceived formation of a learning community, the elements perceived crucial to the creation of a true learning community, and the values perceived important for a community to have.

In chapter 7, I analyze and discuss the themes presented in chapter 5 using the analytical framework outlined in chapter 4.

Lastly, in chapter 8 I present my final conclusions. I answer my initial research question to the extent the data allows, and assess the contribution my work makes to the scholarly literature. In this section I also address the limitations of my research in answering that question. I then provide some recommendations for further research.

2 Review of Selected Literature

In this chapter, I present the literature about what “quality education” from two main theoretical schools. that informed my research about the entities leading the movement of public private partnerships in education. I present a definition for how quality of education is understood at an international level, using a definition provided by UNESCO and then I present a definition used at a national level provided by SEP.

2.1 Defining Quality Education

I begin this section by stating that on the global level, there is no single agreed upon definition of what is meant by “quality education.” The term has evolved over time as different theorists have viewed it from different angles. Hamel (2009) mentions that the term of quality of education has only appeared within the arena of education in the past few decades, but once the term came to form part of the educational literature, it was impossible to argue against it. The following subsections profile two of the dominant narratives surrounding how the educational literature conceives of quality education and then present UNESCO’s definition, which informs a significant amount of international policymaking regarding educational PPPs.

2.1.1 The Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory (HCT) conceives of education as an economic good, an “investment” that yields returns both to individual students in terms of future salary/wage and to a nation in terms of improving employment and economic growth rates (Gillies, 2015). In other words, education and training programs are emphasized as means of improving both personal income and national economic productivity. The provision of formal education is therefore seen as an investment in human capital, argued by many to be as important as physical capital in the information age (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1997). Within this model, educational quality is measured by what people know and the extent to which this affects individual earnings, social income distribution, and economic growth (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007). A quality education within this school of thought is also one that liberates, stimulates, and informs students to learn how and why to make demands in the workplace (Almendarez, 2010). In these ways, HCT provides a compelling model for market-based governance of state-run education favored by international economic

development entities such as the World Bank, OECD, and IMF (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Gillies, 2015). Because of the prominence of these entities, this definition has profoundly influenced plans and programs designed to improve educational outcomes insofar as they result in a more productive, wealthy citizenry. However, this way of thinking about education has been criticized for things like being too narrowly focused and imposing a singular pathway to individual success that ignores socioeconomic considerations such as institutional racism, gender oppression, and the effects of global capitalism (Marginson, 2017).

2.1.2 The Humanistic Theory

In contrast to the results-oriented HCT theory of education, humanistic education is interested in a student's development as a human being by educating the whole person, which constitutes both intellectual and emotional dimensions (Mohammad, Sarem, & Hamidi, 2013). Preserving human dignity, rather than maximizing economic productivity, is the goal of education within this framework (Moskowitz, 1978; Aloni, 2007). As a result, personal imagination, critical reason, individual autonomy are emphasized in the classroom setting (Aloni, 2007; Mohammad et al., 2013). Although institutional knowledge is not neglected in a class that uses humanistic techniques, in an affective or humanistic approach, "students are encouraged to talk about themselves, to be open with others, and to express their feelings" and to learn to think critically (Rivers, 1983, p. 23-24). As a result, a quality education according to subscribers to this school of thought is one that contributes to the development of an individual who is innately curious, who thinks critically, who is adaptable and willing to change their views based on reflection and consideration of information, and who has a strong sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Mohammad et al., 2013). However, this approach has been criticized for focusing too heavily on a student's emotions and not enough on achieving certain learning objectives as a student progresses through the school system.

In sum, the HCT theory of education essentially views education as a means to an end, while the humanistic theory views education as an end in and of itself, something that is intrinsically valuable. Because this paper is exploring stakeholder perceptions of how well (or not) PPPs are succeeding in improving the quality of education in Mexico City, I am relying a bit more on the humanistic definition, as this is more concerned with process

(process and perceptions are linked). If I were measuring tangible, measurable outcomes of effectiveness, on the other hand, the human capital definition might be more useful.

2.1.3 The UNESCO Definition

UNESCO, one of the largest entities behind international development efforts, draws from both camps as it presents its notions of what constitutes a quality education. UNESCO's earlier reports on the topic specify the need for a democratic political power be in place in order to tackle the problems of the changing universe, which at that time meant the shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy in a global sense (UNESCO, 1972). This initial report states that the purpose of education is not to teach once and for all, but to teach to learn continuously (UNESCO, 1972). It lists the solidarity among governments and people as the basis for cooperation in order to reach a common goal despite different backgrounds, problems, and levels of development across nations. The aim is for the full development of an individual who is not only a member of a family but also a member of a community who contributes to the economic well being of the collective (UNESCO, 1972).

Two decades after this initial conceptualization of quality education was articulated by UNESCO, Delors (1996) produced the "Learning: The Treasure Within" report in which education sees life as being based on four main pillars: (1) learning to know, (2) learning to do, (3) learning to live together, and (4) learning to be (see Figure 1 for what each of these pillars refers to). According to Delors (1996, cited by UNESCO 2005), this notion of education provided a unified and comprehensive view of learning and what constitutes a quality education.

One of UNESCO's first position statements on quality in education appeared in *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education chaired by the former French minister Edgar Faure. The commission identified the fundamental goal of social change as the eradication of inequality and the establishment of an equitable democracy. Consequently, it reported, 'the aim and content of education must be recreated, to allow both for the new features of society and the new features of democracy' (Faure et al., 1972: xxvi). The notions of 'lifelong learning' and 'relevance', it noted, were particularly important. The Report strongly emphasized science and technology as well. Improving the quality of education, it stated, would require systems in which the principles of scientific development and modernization could be learned in ways that respected learners' socio-cultural contexts.

More than two decades later came *Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, chaired by another French statesman, Jacques Delors. This commission saw education throughout life as based upon four pillars:

- *Learning to know* acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and 'external' elements.

- *Learning to do* focuses on the practical application of what is learned.

- *Learning to live together* addresses the critical skills for a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families and their communities.

- *Learning to be* emphasizes the skills needed for individuals to develop their full potential.

This conceptualization of education provided an integrated and comprehensive view of learning and, therefore, of what constitutes education quality (Delors et al., 1996).

The importance of good quality education was resolutely reaffirmed as a priority for UNESCO at a Ministerial Round Table on Quality of Education, held in Paris in 2003.

UNESCO promotes access to good-quality education as a human right and supports a rights-based approach to all educational activities (Pigozzi, 2004). Within this approach, learning is perceived to be affected at two levels. At the level of the *learner*, education needs to seek out and acknowledge learners' prior knowledge, to recognize formal and informal modes, to practise non-discrimination and to provide a safe and supportive learning environment. At the level of the *learning system*, a support structure is needed to implement policies, enact legislation, distribute resources and measure learning outcomes, so as to have the best possible impact on learning for all.

Figure 1: Dakar Framework for Action and Millennium Development Goals (adapted from EFA, 2005).

Quality of education has been reaffirmed by UNESCO as a basic human right grounding. To fulfill this right, education must operate on two levels: the individual and the systemic. At the individual level, "education needs to seek out and acknowledge learners' prior knowledge, to recognize formal and informal modes, to practice non-discrimination, and to provide a safe and supportive learning environment" (UNESCO, 2005, p.30). At the system level, UNESCO talks about the appropriate "support structure [that] is needed to implement policies, enact legislation, distribute resources, and measure learning outcomes, so as to have the best possible impact on learning for all" (UNESCO, 2005. p.30).

In their 2005 EFA report, UNESCO set out to answer more nuances of quality education—namely, "quality for whom and for what?" They determined that a universal meaning of quality is inherently abstract and unlikely to be agreed upon by the international community, but that nevertheless three common principles exist that states and other policymaking entities should strive to achieve. They are summarized as (1) the need for more relevance, (2) greater equity of access and outcome, and (3) the proper observance of individual rights.

UNESCO adheres to the HCT model of education by emphasizing metrics and the provision of ongoing feedback to students as a means of ensuring all in the system have a chance to succeed and contribute to the local, national, and even international economy. The entity hopes to bring developing nations up to speed with those considered to be developed in terms of economic performance. However, it also draws heavily on the humanist understanding of quality education in its methods and policy prescriptions, as reflected here:

Standardized, prescribed, externally defined or controlled curricula are rejected, as these methods are seen as damaging to the possibilities for learners to construct their own meanings and for educational programs to remain responsive to individual learners' circumstances and needs" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 31).

Additionally, they see the role of the teacher as being mere a facilitator in the classroom, and emphasize instead self-assessment and teamwork skills as these contribute to the development of richer consciousness in learning.

2.2 Public Private Partnerships in Education: A Global Perspective

Public sector schools in most countries have limited resources to maintain school infrastructure and offer basic amenities for an appropriate learning environment, let alone provide a quality education as outlined in the previous section (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, & Guáqueta, 2009). As a result, in the past several decades, the private sector has become increasingly involved in the provision of education around the world, despite the fact that the public sector remains the dominant agent by far (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, & Guáqueta, 2009). These partnership arrangements, known within the international community as educational PPPs, are not an effort to entirely privatize or marketize public services; rather, the goal is to make the state actors and agencies more fiscally lean, but also more powerful (Verger, 2008). According to the well-known metaphor of Osborne and Gaebler (1993), the state should focus its efforts on "steering" (designing) rather than on "rowing" (implementing) educational services with assistance from the private sector (Verger, 2008).

The structure and design of educational PPPs are often quite varied, but primarily they take two forms: (1) publicly funded resources that are privately managed, and (2) privately funded

resources that are publicly managed (Chakrabarti & Peterson, 2009). Most PPPs fall into this first category. For instance, a number of governments have contracted with the private sector to provide services related to producing education, such as teacher training, management, or curriculum design. Governments have also contracted with private organizations to manage and operate public schools, as is the case of charter and concession schools. The government provides subsidies or vouchers to existing private schools or groups working within the education system to fund student education. The design of PPPs depends upon whether a nation's education is provided only by the public sector or whether its system is largely publicly funded but privately provided (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009; Verger & Moschetti, 2017).

Because they can take many forms and are still a relatively recent global phenomenon, PPPs remain a controversial enigma (Robertson & Verger, 2012). The following subsections illustrate the arguments that proponents of educational PPPs offer as justification for exploring and implementing these arrangements, and the counter-arguments offered by opponents to the PPP model who warn against a number of potential risks.

2.2.1 Arguments for PPPs in Education

Proponents of PPPs argue that these arrangements can create competition in the education market, as the private sector can compete for students with the public sector. In turn, the public sector has an incentive to react to this competition by increasing the quality of the education that it provides (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009). PPPs can allow for more flexibility than is typically seen within public sector provision of education, for example by allowing more autonomy in the hiring process for teachers or in organizing schools (Patrinos, Barrera & Guáqueta, 2009). PPP contracts can achieve an increased level of risk-sharing between the government and the private sector, which is theorized to increase the efficiency in the delivery of education services (Robertson & Verger, 2012). Additionally, by allowing private actors to assume a could lead to a better use of existing resources by state actors and an expanded funding base for education from private actors (Verger & Moschetti, 2017). Finally, PPPs can allow the public education sector to leverage private sector knowledge, skills and innovation and to promote stakeholder participation, including local communities, in the decision-making and delivery of public educational services. (Verger & Moschetti, 2017).

2.2.2 Arguments against PPPs in Education

Despite these purported benefits, many have been resistant to the implementation of PPPs to achieve educational goals. A major concern has to do with equity; increasing the number of schools available and offering families a choice of where to send their kids can potentially increase socioeconomic segregation if better-prepared students end up self-selecting into high-quality schools, thus further improving their outcomes by excluding students who might slow them down (Patrinos, Barrera & Guáqueta, 2009; Ron-Balsera & Marphatia, 2012). Consequently, poorer and less prepared students will be left behind in deteriorating public schools that will only continue this downhill trajectory as the support of more educated or well-off parents is directed at PPP-run schools (Patrinos, Barrera & Guáqueta, 2009; Verger & Moschetti, 2017). There are also concerns about accountability. While contracts are usually a part of educational PPP arrangements, ultimate responsibility in the event of program failure responsibility typically falls upon the state, which can be problematic for governments that are already hard-pressed for resources (Verger & Moschetti, 2017). Finally, there are real concerns regarding transparency and oversight. If education is to be considered a basic human right, it is also necessarily a public good that needs to be ensured by a public entity; however, PPP arrangements rely heavily on self-regulation and internal oversight and will reduce government accountability for student outcomes (Verger & Moschetti, 2017).

2.3 Major Actors in Public Private Partnerships

The following section describes some of the major entities driving the design and implementation of educational PPPs around the world: The World Bank, OECD and USAID.

2.3.1 The World Bank

One of the major forces driving the work of PPPs around the world has been the World Bank (WB). The WB has been involved in the research, creation, and promotion of public private educational material and at the centre of the PPP discourse in industrialised countries. The Bank's private lending arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), along with other organizations, has developed a number of toolkits and webpages related to the creation and evaluation of PPPs (World Bank, 2017). The WB has advocated extensively for PPPs across the globe, but beyond just advocacy, it has provided individualized support to each country it partners with in order to develop tools, systems, and metrics to tackle the unique challenges

facing a given nation. Given the WB involvement in PPP projects that have aimed either to promote PPPs or to create an environment for the involvement of more private actors in education, the bank is considered to be one of the leading advocates for this type of policy. Furthermore, the WB is committed to the promotion of PPPs and its implementation in order to assist governments in making educated decisions to improve the quality of life for their citizens using this method as a delivery option (World Bank, 2016, Education International, 2009). In the past 15 years the involvement of the bank with PPP projects has dramatically increased in absolute terms, rising from \$900 million in 2002 to \$2.2 billion in 2016. In that same period of time the bank has approved loans having a PPP components totalling \$15.6 billion (World Bank, 2016).

2.3.2 OECD

Similarly, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) has work to promote the use and implementation of PPPs through various activities. The OECD has devoted vast sums of resources for the research of PPPs in general and to provide educational facilities in a number of countries around the globe on the topic, one of the countries they have been working with is Mexico. The studies produced by the OECD have been of great importance when it comes time for policy makers to make decision to engage or not in the implementation of PPPs. OECD reports have been instrumental to country leaders around the world as they are informative, well-structured, and insightful, as the entity takes pride in helping governments maintain competitiveness in various infrastructure sectors (Education International, 2009, OECD, 2016). Likewise, the EU has been a strong supporter of the PPPs. In 2008 EU members formed the European PPP Expertise Centre (EPEC) which mission states in its world wide web page to have been created “to support the public sector across Europe in delivering better public private partnerships” (European Investment Bank, 2017). Specifically, the EU has devoted large sums of resources, this detailed in a 2004 Green Paper listing a series of initiatives which main purpose is to increasing the role of the private sector in public services, promoting PPPs and ensuring the projects have access to the needed funds (Hall, 2004 cited in EI, 2009). EU has been heavily investing in the in the creation of policies around the topic of PPPs in order to “enable a long-term, strategic approach to research and innovation and reduce uncertainties by allowing for long-term commitments” (EU commission, 2016).

2.3.3 USAID

Furthermore, United States Agency for Development (USAID) is another important actor advocating for of work public and private partnerships in general. USAID has a special functional arm, the Global Development Alliance (GDA), which is the dedicated office of the department to mainstream public and private partnership cooperation for the Agency (Brookings, 2014). Since 2001, GDA mission has been to help improve the social and economic conditions in developing countries and deepen USAID's impact by engaging with an estimated 1400 PPPs since its inception in 2000 (Brookings, 2014). Their estimated total investment for the length of the projects has been \$14.3 billion, with a range of investment of \$1.9 billion at the end of its first year, 2001, to \$293 million dollars in 2006 making an average of \$770 million investment a year from 2001 to 2014 (Ingram & Biau, 2014). In terms of commitment GDA has been an important advocate in the implementation for PPPs. Furthermore, the role the US plays in the international cooperation arena has made GDA's work in spreading understanding and implementing PPPs rapidly gain attention from international government looking for funds, private expertise and promising opportunities to work with leading private entities (USAID, 2017). The entity's work has impacted many developing countries with its contributions, making both Africa and Latin America the continents with more aid from GDA (Ingram & Biau, 2014).

3 Context of Research Site

In this section, I present a brief contextual background of the research site Mexico City. I begin by providing an overview of the city, followed by a brief history of the education system in this specific place. It is essential to understand the specifics of the area in order to understand why the PPP arrangements came about. I then provide a description of the two specific PPP programs—the *Reading Program* and the *Community Program*—that I studied, detailing how and why they were created, what their goals are, and the methods they use as they pursue those goals.

3.1 Mexico City

The research was performed in Mexico City, the capital of the country. It is located in the State of Mexico (one of 32 states) that is found in the center of the nation. Established between 1520-1524, the city was one of the first to be built by the early Spanish settlers, but has history that dates back hundreds of years with developments by several indigenous tribes (Christlieb & Merodio, 2011). The State of Mexico covers approximately 7,866 km² and is one of the smallest Mexican states. Despite its small size, the state currently has a population of approximately 26 million people—almost 20 percent of the national population. Figure 2 offers a map showing where this state is found within the nation’s geography.

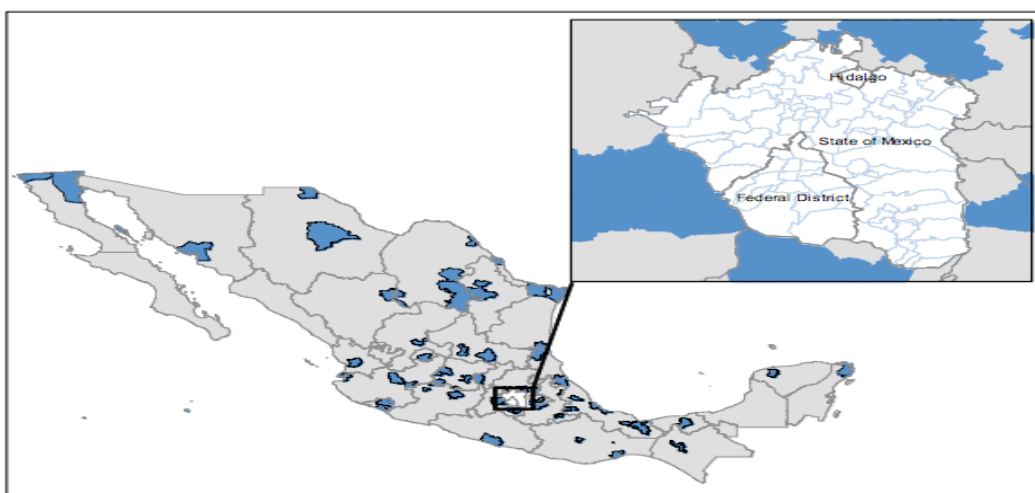


Figure 2: Location of the State of Mexico (OECD, 2015).

Within the state of Mexico, Mexico City has a total land area of 1485 km² and is divided into 16 boroughs. It is the largest metropolitan area in the Americas and the third largest city within the OECD (OECD, 2015). The city houses just under half of the total population of the state, most of whom live in the city—about 8.84 million people. The city has seen a continuous population growth rate of about 1.2 percent annually over the last few decades. However, it is important to note that there has been a demographic shift in recent years, with the urban city center experiencing a decrease in population, and the rural boroughs witnessing an increase. Figure 3 below offers a visual representation of the metropolitan area within the State of Mexico.



Figure 3: Map of the State of Mexico with Mexico City highlighted (Wikimedia Commons, 2018).

The character of Mexico City is in part defined by the political role the city plays for the rest of the country. The city houses all federal government offices (including the SEP offices) where most of the major decisions take place that affect daily life for Mexican citizens and businesses. Most of major national projects that require federal funds are initiated within Mexico City (UNAM, 2000). Additionally, in the past three decades the city has seen an increase in the number of international entities housed there. In addition to being the nation's political center, it is also a key economic hub, with the entire metropolitan area comprising 22 percent of the national GDP (OECD, 2015). Put differently, if it were an

independent country, Mexico City would be the fifth-largest economy in Latin America based on 2013 data (Flannery, 2013). Its political and economic importance means that the city has significantly influenced the trajectory of the entire country and shapes how the most important issues affecting the nation are addressed.

However, that wealth is not evenly distributed across the city. In fact, there is a high level of economic inequality across the metropolitan area. Take for example Tlalpan, the largest borough in Mexico City. Located on the outskirts of the city, it has an area of 312 km², represent 20.7 percent of the entire metropolitan area. Within this borough, 26.8 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty level, with 2.5 percent living in extreme poverty (Pardo, 2016). Twenty-two percent of the inhabitants have a high or very high degree of marginalization according to (Pardo, 2016).

Tlalpan has seven neighborhoods, 125 colonies and nine original towns. However, there are 206 irregular settlements, of which only 23 percent receive intermittent water service and only 7 percent receive drainage service. Twenty-four percent of the settlements lack regularized electricity service. According to the national census of 2010, only 70.5 percent of households had drinking water in their homes, with 21,662 households left without access (Pardo, 2016). In Tlalpan, 39.1 percent of inhabitants do not have access to health services, and 23.4 percent of inhabitants aged 15 years or older do not meet the requirements for holding a basic education (Pardo, 2016).

These statistics paint a clear picture of poverty and marginalization that has been replicated over and over through the generations. It was in this highly marginalized community of Tlalpan that my fieldwork and research took place.

3.2 Mexico City Educational Context

I have just given a brief overview of Mexico City with an emphasis on the defining characteristics of the borough of Tlalpan, the specific site of my study. The following section provides a brief history of the creation and evolution of the education system of Mexico City.

It then details the current reality of education within the region, which directly contributed to the nation's interest in experimenting with PPPs to improve quality.

The current education system that governs the education of the entire country is the result of almost 100 years of work. The Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), or the Mexican Ministry of Education, was created in 1920 during the presidency of Álvaro Obregón under the leadership of José Vasconcelos, who for years had proposed the creation of a secular national education system that would liberate schools from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church (Ávila, 2015). Vasconcelos was a Mexican lawyer, politician, writer, and philosopher who held various political positions inside and outside of the country before coming in to lead SEP (Enciclopedia Biográfica en Línea, 2018). At the time of SEP's inception, the primary stated goals were to battle the high illiteracy rate in the country that hovered around 70 percent and to spread education and culture to all men in the country (Ávila, 2015). Strategies to achieve these goals included the publication of books of classical literature for distribution in schools, the construction of libraries in rural locations, and projects designed to incorporate indigenous populations into the education system and into the mainstream society of the country. To complement the work of SEP, he implemented various art projects nationwide. This included his involvement and support to Mexican muralists as part of a fine arts program that brought murals representative of different national cultural movements to the main federal buildings and the creation of the national library system (Ávila, 2015).

In 1943, Jaime Torres Bodet, who had lead the national libraries department for SEP under Vasconcelos, took over the administration. Torres Bodet, inspired by the legacy of Vasconcelos, pushed for the extension of educational coverage throughout the national territory, again undertaking a large-scale literacy campaign (Enciclopedia Biográfica en Línea, 2018). Notably, in 1945 he created the National Institute for Teacher Training to improve their professional development, which is still in effect today (Enciclopedia Biográfica en Línea, 2018). Another key development was the implementation of the editorial policy that occurred in 1959, which led to the entity taking on responsibility for the edition and distribution of free textbooks for all primary education schools in Mexico (Enciclopedia Biográfica en Línea, 2018).

The third phase of SEP began in the 1960s and continued through the 80s. During this stage, SEP implemented a number of reforms aimed mainly at expanding its reach and influence across the nation and creating a truly centralized and standardized education system (SEP, 2008). (This mission had been in place since its inception of the entity, but it had been left largely unfulfilled.) The provision of compulsory education became a constitutional responsibility of the nation and a right to the Mexican people during this time (SEP, 2008). In this era, one of the major concerns for SEP was rural education, since indigenous people and those in marginalized zones of the country were the ones lagging behind the most in comparison to their counterparts in affluent urbanized areas.

However, as the population of Mexico increased over time, citizens and some bureaucrats began to view this centralized approach as inefficient due to its size. (SEP, 2004). As a result, in the 1990s, the system slowly began to decentralize, with individual states taking over provision of many education services. This was a major reorganization, as management and oversight of education became a state-level responsibility, but the curriculum design and financing remained under national jurisdiction via SEP (SEP, 2004). In large part, this resulted in massive chaos and confusion among federal and state representatives.

This leads us to the current reality of the educational landscape in Mexico City. Unlike other areas of the country that use a state-run system, the public education system in Mexico City is entirely managed by SEP because it is the capital city. This means that in addition to curriculum and funding, SEP is directly involved in the management and operation of schools, including hiring of faculty and school construction and maintenance (SEP, 2004). The work for SEP in Mexico City is therefore a major task given the size of the city's school-aged population and the complexities of meeting the needs of a highly diverse population.

Yet SEP has committed itself to delivering a quality education to all students. The definition provided by SEP is based on the Article 3 of the General Constitution of the Law of Education:

A quality education system is one that trains critical, responsible, democratic citizens, whose knowledge and skills allows one to face the challenges of the modern world. Education provided by SEP must be free and of high quality from preschool to high school. (Miranda Esquer & Miranda Esquer, 2012).

SEP establishes that a quality education system must comply with certain characteristics and presents a list of six elements considered an important characteristics of the education system

Table 1: (Adapted from Robles, 2015, translated by author)

Table 1: SEP Criteria for a Quality Education System
Relevance: Establishes a curriculum appropriate to the circumstances of students' lives and to the needs of society.
Internal and External Effectiveness: Achieves the highest proportion of school age students that have access to schools and remain within the school system until they graduate. Ensures learning objectives are completed on time according to the curriculum designed for each grade.
Impact: Ensures that students assimilate educational content in a lasting manner and that these are translated into behaviors that benefit people and society.
Efficiency: Guarantees sufficient human capital and material resources, and uses them in the best possible way, avoiding waste and unnecessary expenses.
Equitability: Takes into account the unequal situation of students, families, communities, and schools, and offers special support to those who require it so that the educational objectives are reached by all students.

As you will recall from chapter 2, these points reflect a similar understanding of quality to what UNESCO has put forth.

While government has been partly successful in delivering education to children and meeting these criteria, the education provided by the public sector has been highly criticized for its quality for years, especially for those living in the poor rural areas or the outskirts of major urban areas, such as Mexico City (Patrinos, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009). Parents living in underprivileged parts of the county have grown dissatisfied with the quality of instruction in the public school system, and some of them have advocated for better educational opportunities for their children. Parents who can afford it have sent their children to fee-based private schools in rural areas or to the city center, where access to better schools is more readily available. The less well-off families have complained for many years of the quality of their education, but the response from the authorities has been limited.

The borough of Tlalpan is a prime example of this. In many cases, families dissatisfied with the quality of the education have simply stopped sending their children to school and put them to work instead. In other cases, students have dropped out of school of their own accord due to a lack of motivation or lack of interest in the school curriculum, or because of family problems that made going to school very difficult (Royacelli, 2010). The results are staggering: 60 percent of students who enroll in public primary schools in Tlalpan drop out by the time they reach high school or in a baccalaureate program. (INEGI, 2015).

As a response to problems like those observed in Tlalpan, SEP has begun to experiment with the public private partnership model of education. This approach has expanded in recent years as a means of delivering education to students because of the positive results that have yielded from mixing private sector resources and skills with government funds (Patrinós, Barrera, & Guáqueta, 2009). Because the public school system is so vast, PPPs have the potential to address education issues and shortcomings at the local level more effectively than the centralized entity could. However, the design and implementation of PPP projects represent complex processes that must be meticulously done to ensure the outcome is not negative for students and schools.

3.3 Background of Selected Programs

I have just provided an overview of the education system in Mexico City. I now provide the background and context of two major PPPs that have been implemented in Mexico City primary schools: the *Reading Program* and the *Community Program*. These two entities are the primary research objects of my case study.

3.3.1 The Reading Program

The Reading Program was founded in 1979 in Mexico City. The Reading Program was originally formed by a group of parents who saw the need for additional support for children and those of families of lower socioeconomic status (including their own children) in public schools. Several years later, they established a formal organizational structure that could be replicated in more schools.

The Reading Program's founding purpose was to encourage children and youths to read more and to improve literacy skills. A year after the Reading Program's foundation, its leaders made an alliance with an international organization comprised of 76 programs across the globe. During its first years, the Reading Program provided services in sites that were co-located with and owned by partner organizations. In 1983, it finally established its own space to carry out its activities in a rental house. The Reading Program utilized this space for almost thirty years to house its office and library and give rise to the growth of its projects. In 2008, the Reading Program was renamed to emphasize its mission to "increase the number of readers in the country." In 2013, it was chosen by a philanthropic foundation to enter into a

long-term partnership that awarded the entity with a permanent location. This partnership awarded the Reading Program with a fully equipped library to support the entity's mission, while at the same time supporting their literacy and readership program that acknowledges excellence in children and young adult readers.

The Reading Program meets the qualifications of an educational PPP for several reasons. First, it receives funds from both public and private entities in order to operate its programs. Secondly, it provides a service directly to the public—in this case, working in combination with SEP. SEP has a degree of oversight, and the Reading Program takes on limited risk for the services it provides as a result. Thirdly, it designs services (programs) for schools and provides the human capital needed to execute them in compliance with SEP regulations. Lastly, the Reading Program's main focus is to bring tools and resources to schools in order to improve the educational experiences of both students and teaching personnel. The Reading Program has worked closely with SEP for the past thirty years, always seeking to support their efforts to bring higher quality education to all, and never charging a fee for the services it provides to participants.

At the time of my study, the Reading Program had been implemented in sixteen public elementary schools in Mexico City, the state of Oaxaca, and two municipalities of the state of Morelos. This program supports the national reading and writing project implemented as part of a national education reform enacted in 2003. However, during my fieldwork, I was only able to visit one of the schools and the program headquarters. The reading activities were only one of the undertakings implemented by the program in public schools to provide a platform where students reinforced their literacy skills. The program activities I studied were led by one program leader and a groups of volunteers from the different schools. The majority of the volunteers were all parents of students at the school where they participated. Most of the schools where the reading program activities were performed were located in the urban part of the city formed of low to medium income families. All of these schools were referred to as “self-managed schools,” wherein directors and coordinators were no longer involved in administering activities on a daily or even weekly basis because school personnel and program volunteers had been trained and had demonstrated the capacity to run the activities and exercises on their own. However, program representatives did periodically

check in with the schools I studied to provide continuing education trainings, newly developed materials, and general assistance.

Some of the activities the Reading Program performed:

1. Reading out loud in classrooms, including selecting the appropriate texts and demonstrating how to conduct a discussion of the book.
2. Providing technical assistance to teachers, parents, and other volunteers to orient them to the program and directly involve them in implementing the activities.
3. Organized the school library (if there was one) and/or provided a book collection for the schools to have.

3.3.2 The Community Program

The Community Program started in 2005 with a mission to generate opportunities for sustainable social development through the implementation and evaluation of educational strategies. The Community Program began in a northern state of Mexico with the purpose of working parallel to SEP on a newly implemented initiative to relaunch civic education classes in public schools. The director and founder of the Community Program said that he initially came up with the idea for the program when he worked at a multinational corporation. During his time there, he increasingly received requests from other company employees about different paperwork they had received from their employer or from the bank. He claimed that “workers felt comfortable talking to him and asking him ‘their dumb’ questions, as the workers often referred to their concerns, and that they would not approach the people in the office because they were embarrassed.” He said that their questions were a result of “not knowing how to read and/or ask properly structured questions to the administrative personnel.” Several years later, after having left his job with the multinational corporation and having completed a graduate program for Comparative and International Education at Harvard School of Education, the director of the Community Program decided to go back to Mexico and open a not-for-profit organization with the purpose of working alongside SEP.

The Community Program began operations with only two people and with the intention of working with schools located in the marginalized communities the director had identified while still working for the multinational corporation. As the program began to map the schools that were of interest for them and to SEP, they realized there were more schools that

they could ever cover with only two people. Several months later the Community Program employed a group of people and identified possible business partners to fund their work.

The Community Program headquarters is currently located in a northern state of Mexico. In the past 12 years, the Community Program has established offices in five different states of the country, bringing their services to more communities in need. The office that I worked with is located in Mexico City, which is also the newest office. In Mexico City, at the time of fieldwork, the office employed approximately 20 people working in 20 schools. Most of the schools are located in rural communities in the outskirts of Mexico City. Commuting from the Program's main office to the municipality where the member schools were located and back took an average of three hours. Since most of the Community Program leaders live in the center of the city, commuting to and from the schools is considered part of the working agreement. Some of the leaders told me that on several occasions, they have had to cancel planned trips to schools due to bad weather or protests that severely affect transportation through the city.

The Community Program meets the definition of an educational PPP for several reasons. First of all, the Community Program works parallel to the SEP but is not part of it, meaning it is led and operated completely independent of the public education system. Secondly, it is funded by the use of public and private funds for the public good. Third, the program takes on limited risk for the services it provides. The Community Program finances its work and hires and trains its human capital with a mix of private and public funds. Lastly, the Community Program's focus is to bring their resources to the schools in poor communities to generate opportunities for sustainable social development through the implementation and evaluation of educational strategies. According to the definition provided by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) cited by UNESCO, the Community Program can be considered a PPP as its work emphasizes equity, quality, social cohesion, composed with innovative techniques, and vitality through the "efficiency of the private sector, and the compassion and social commitment of the not-for-profit sector."

At the time of the study the community program had thirty-six public elementary schools that were implementing their education strategies in Mexico City. I was able to visit three of the schools. They call their approach successful education strategies, which are designed to overcome the educational inequalities experienced in the school based on the dialogical and

communicative approach. Examples of successful education strategies include creating learning environments wherein a diverse group of students of different ability levels were brought together and implementing opportunities for students to receive extra help outside of the classroom. It is important to mention that 2016 marked the beginning of the Community Program's work in Mexico City schools—now the fifth state the program operates in.

4 Analytical Framework

The subject of quality education is an important issue for every country, given that it is a key determinant of economic and social potential in years to come. As I've stated, this study explores how key stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the educational PPPs they have implemented in Mexico City primary schools in an effort to raise the quality of education in the region. In this study, I analyze the findings of my qualitative research using a theoretical framework based on the work of Paulo Freire. I use Freire's critical consciousness model of education, which is composed of the concepts of consciousness, praxis, and dialogue (among others), to analyze stakeholder perceptions at the local level and assess the extent to which the programs are creating new capacities for students.

In his landmark book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Freire presents his philosophy of education for historically oppressed people. His core argument is that education (specifically literacy) is the key to liberating the potential of the oppressed, particularly those in third-world nations, as it gives them the tools to understand and remake their own reality. However, education as it has been traditionally practiced is not sufficient. He conceives of this method as "the banking model of education," wherein the instructor is an agent and the student is a mere passive recipient:

"Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat...the teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence." (1968: 58)

The problematic consequence of this approach is that students are not empowered to recognize and realize their own capacity for thinking critically about the world around them. As Freire puts it, "The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them." (1968: 60)

The alternative to this approach is "problem-posing education." Shor (1992) conceptualizes it well:

Problem-posing offers all subject matter as historical products to be questioned rather than as central bank wisdom to be accepted...The responsibility of the problem-posing teacher is to diversify subject matter and to use students' thought and speech as the base for developing critical understanding of personal experience, unequal

conditions in society, and existing knowledge. In this democratic pedagogy, the teacher is not filling empty minds with official or unofficial knowledge but is posing knowledge in any form as a problem for mutual inquiry (32-33).

This approach cultivates critical thinking, or as Freire puts it, *critical consciousness*, in students by allowing them to participate in a reciprocal, constructive *dialogue* with their teachers. This *dialogue* precedes *praxis*, or reflection and action upon the environment and circumstances.

The following sections explore these three italicized concepts in more detail, and suggest how I plan to use each one in the analysis of my own primary research findings.

4.1 Critical Consciousness

Freire defines critical consciousness (*conscientização*) as the ability to “intervene in reality in order to change it.” He maintains that when a group is being dominated and oppressed by social and economic structures, there is no room or time for critical thinking. Without critical thinking, which is a prerequisite for developing a critical consciousness, people will be unable to change their current situation and begin the struggle for liberation. This process of *conscientização* therefore requires that oppressed humans become aware of the sources of their oppression. They must begin to understand that many of the social “rules” that have governed their reality may not be inevitable, unchangeable facts, but rather socio-historic systems that have been created and enacted by certain powerful agents and institutions, but can be changed, undone, and/or replaced.

This process of raising critical consciousness, according to Freire, is organic, not linear, and communal, not individual. The organic, communal nature of *conscientização* stems from the fact that consciousness arises dialogically from conversations and reflections that happen within social contexts. If it were linear, it would imply that one person was depositing the knowledge and consciousness into a recipient, according to the banking model of education described above which Freire rejected. Additionally, if it were individual, the process of *conscientização* would not be able to liberate a group of people through changing social and economic structures that affect all of them. As Freire says, “we cannot say that in the process of revolution someone liberates someone else, nor yet that someone liberates himself, but

rather than human beings in communion liberate each other.” (1968:133) Essentially, critical consciousness is a social consciousness, a mutual process that can liberate the oppressed through fostering community, connection, discussion, and action.

Within the socioeconomic context of Mexico City, and specifically within the context of the schools I visited and studied, the PPPs were attempting to increase literacy and critical thinking skills among students. These efforts could be conceived of as means of creating critical consciousness and are analyzed accordingly in chapter 7.

4.2 Dialogue

The concept of dialogue in Freire’s educational model is defined as “the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world.” He holds that naming the world means changing it, as exchanging the “true word” serves as a means of freeing those who were once silenced. Essential to dialogue is the voicing of differences, which are then openly held and acknowledged rather than suppressed within the classroom/educational context (provided that the arguments behind the ideas are valid and not baseless). Based on this notion, Freire’s critical dialogue in education is a necessary element to liberate those silenced by the mechanisms of society.

It is through critical dialogue that education occurs. As Freire writes, “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.” (1968:92-93) Dialogue is created of two dimensions: reflection and action, which together form the idea of *praxis*, which is explained more in the following section. Reflection and action are fundamentally interactive elements of dialogue, meaning that without the presence of one, the other cannot be fully realized either, and true dialogue that holds the potential to change the world cannot occur. As Freire puts it:

An unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements. When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating "blah." It becomes an

empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.

On the other hand, if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into *activism*. The latter—action for action's sake—negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible. Either dichotomy, by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought, which reinforce the original dichotomy. (1968:87)

Through dialogue, people begin to enact their critical consciousness and become authors who learn to write their own life stories and create history, rather than just passively accepting these things.

For Freire, critical dialogue in education does not and cannot exist if people do not believe in humankind and have love and respect for each other and for the world. He sees love as a commitment to others, but not necessarily in a sentimental sense; instead, he believes that true love generates more and more freedom for others. If the aim of dialogue is to name and remake the world, there must be a communal spirit of cooperation and collaboration. If there is any spirit of domination present, true dialogue is impossible because any discussion will only reinforce the existing paradigm of dominator vs. oppressed, and will therefore not contribute to creating a new world based on liberation for all. If domination is present, the dialogue falls back into the banking model of education, with some people actively depositing information and idea into passive recipients who simply memorize it and move on. Accordingly, faith, love, and respect must be present for an exchange of words to be considered a dialogue within Freire's model.

Additionally, in order to ensure that true dialogue could occur and that all voices could speak and be heard, humility has to be present. The presence of humility, together with general faith in mankind, negates the possibility of a dominator vs. oppressed dynamic, or the banking model, to emerge in a dialogic setting. With humility, dialogue becomes horizontal, with no person(s) elevated above others, and mutual trust is established across the group. Circling back around to the beginning of this section, this basis of mutual trust allows the dialoguers to re-imagine and co-create their world in the spirit of hope for a better future.

Many of the activities and exercises observed in my fieldwork and reflected upon by interview participants involved conversation. In my analysis, I situate these activities within

Freire's definition of dialogue in order to determine whether they constitute true dialogical practices.

4.3 Praxis

Freire defines praxis as a process of reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed. In other words, it is the work of the oppressed (and their sincere allies) to put ideas into action in order to transform the world around them, as a community. Entering into dialogue as described above is not enough; people must reflect upon that dialogue and then use their reflections to consciously act to change their reality. Freire writes:

The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection. In this sense, the praxis is the new *raison d'etre* of the oppressed; and the revolution, which inaugurates the historical moment of this *raison d'etre*, is not viable apart from their concomitant conscious involvement. (1968:66)

In other words, the praxis continues cyclically, as people reconvene after action to engage in more dialogue and reflection. This process of reflection and action, of giving voice to the oppressed to understand and challenge their own situation, is at the heart of Freire's concept of education. Put differently, praxis links liberatory, dialogic education with social transformation (Boyce, 1966).

Praxis, like dialogue, has to be underlined by faith in mankind and mutual trust among the people who seek a revolution of liberation through education. Also underlying this understanding of praxis is a sense of hope. Having hope means that it is possible for history's systems and structures (and their present-day legacies) to transform. Unlike the banking model of education, in which a teacher-agent deposits a pre-formed, pre-accepted notion of reality into a student-recipient, Freire's critical consciousness model of education utilizes praxis as a means of exploring and implementing new possibilities with those who have been historically voiceless.

With praxis established as a critical component of Freire's model of problem-posing education, I analyze my findings through this lens. Specifically, I assess the extent to which PPP stakeholders' perceptions of their work reflect the existence of true praxis, or whether

their reflections suggest a dichotomy between reflection and action, with more emphasis placed upon one or the other.

4.4 A Final Word on Freire

Above, I have established and explained some of the core components of Paulo Freire's critical consciousness model of education. The findings of my own research will be analyzed through the lens of the framework established above. Yet it is important to also note two points: (1) Freire's pedagogy, with its emphasis on dialogue, has been profoundly influential in the development of non-formal education programs for marginalized groups, and (2) his pedagogy emerged within the context of mid-twentieth century Brazil, where illiteracy was prevalent and quality education was not widely guaranteed for citizens. Taken together, these points underscore the relevancy of his life's work to my own research project, as (1) the PPP programs I examine could be considered non-formal education programs insofar as they are not a part of the official public curriculum, and (2) the present-day context of Mexico City is quite similar to the context Freire observed in Brazil, with its vast socioeconomic inequality and the resulting systematic oppression. In light of these similarities, his notion of what constituted good or successful education in Brazil—essentially, the problem-posing model—is arguably what will come to define good or successful education within the context of Mexico City.

5 Methodology

In this chapter, I define the methodology and methods used in the research process. I begin by describing and justifying my qualitative research design. Next, I specify the methods selected for the project and provide justification for each. I then describe the sampling of participants and the settings wherein the fieldwork took place. An explanation of the data collection process and the data analysis follows. I conclude the section with the ethical considerations that guided my research process.

5.1 Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative researcher functions under these six assumptions (Merriam, 1988, p.19-20):

1. The focus of the research is on the process rather than outcomes,
2. The research has an interest in meaning—how people make sense of their lives, or what is happening around them,
3. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and the data are mediated through this instrument,
4. Research involves fieldwork,
5. Research is descriptive, seeking meaning or understanding,
6. Research is inductive, building concepts, theory, and abstractions from the details.

I chose a qualitative approach for my research for several reasons. I knew that I would gain more insight into my particular research question by “emphasizing words over quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2012). This is because I wanted to understand how PPP leaders and stakeholders really experience the implementation of PPPs in Mexico City primary schools in practice. While gathering and analyzing quantitative data on certain student performance metrics would have shed light upon whether or not the PPP programs were achieving their stated goals of improving student performance, this research approach has been used often based on my literature review. I determined that understanding perceptions might lead to new insights about how PPPs might be better implemented at the local level.

Additionally, as Yin (2011) notes, understanding the individual perspectives of participants is valuable because the “events and ideas [that emerge] from qualitative research can represent the meanings given to real-life events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers.” It is important to note my own investment and relationship to the research project. I was interested in contributing to the existing body of literature about educational PPPs and their implementation because, as a citizen of Mexico, I hope to see more effective education policies put in place across the country that help ensure quality education, regardless of the socioeconomic status of students. However, I wanted to make sure my research was not influenced by my own personal bias or ideas about educational PPPs, and instead have it reflect the perspective and perceptions of stakeholders.

Upon choosing to use a qualitative method, I had to decide which of the five types of designs to use: ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, or case study. I ultimately chose an exploratory case study approach, which, as the name indicates, explores a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources to find answers to questions of “how” and “why,” particularly when the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin 2009). This approach was also well-suited for my research question because it is theoretically grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which maintains that truth is dependent on one’s perspective. This is supported by the theory of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), which contends that people jointly construct an understanding of the world around them through their shared lived experiences. From these, collective assumptions merge to form the basis of people’s reality. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Because I wanted to learn how program leaders experienced the implementation of PPPs in practice and to determine if that diverged from stated international and national goals, it was important to get a sense of their shared understanding of the reality of the situation. For this reason, a case study methodology was well-suited for my research.

Crabtree and Miller (1999, cited in Baxter, P., and Jack, S. 2008) state that one of the advantages of the method “is the close cooperation between the researcher and the participant, while enabling the participants to tell their stories” (p. 545). Because I wanted to build trust with the people I would be interviewing for the study as well as observe them in their natural, everyday context, this approach made sense for my study.

5.2 Sampling of Participants

For the selection of participants, I used purposive, or selective, sampling. I needed to determine key informants who could provide “the most relevant and plentiful” data for my study (Yin, 2011). Using purposive sampling also ensured adequate representation of individuals who have interacted with the programs and know its methods and techniques. I initially selected this method because I believed that each participant I would interview would contribute important perspectives to my findings. Yin (2011) mentions that while choosing the units of sampling they should “provide the broadest range of perspective on the subject of study” (p.88).

Accordingly, the main participants chosen for interviews were *program leaders* and *program volunteers*. However, I was able to identify which of these participants to target based on preliminary interviews with *program directors* and *program coordinators*, who also provided me with important background information about the programs and the documents I later reviewed as part of my data-gathering process. I should note here that while *program coordinators* played an important facilitative role in my study by helping me identify and connect with the appropriate stakeholders, they did not directly participate in interviews or the focus group for my qualitative research study. However, two *program directors* did participate in interviews, and thus contributed directly to my data.

To clarify, *program directors* and *program coordinators* worked primarily from the administrative offices of the programs, whereas *program leaders* and *program volunteers* worked primarily in schools on the ground. By interviewing program personnel at all levels, I was able to create a holistic picture that revealed the complex ways the programs were developed at the top and implemented on the ground. **Table 1** offers a synopsis of each type of participant, arranged hierarchically in terms of seniority with the programs.

Table 2 Participant Profiles

Program director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee the coordination and administration of all aspects of the ongoing program including planning, organizing, leading, and ensuring program funding. - Manage various ongoing programs to ensure that desired outcomes and objectives are delivered. - Serve as the face of the program in most national and international representation.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate with SEP personnel, school principals, education union representatives, state policymakers, funding agencies, and new partners. - In the <i>Reading Program</i> Director has a background in business administration with a strong background in educational programs. - In the <i>Community Program</i> Director has a background in systems engineering and a graduate degree in education policy.
Program coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage a variety of administrative and program management tasks. - Plan and organize specific program activities and maintains the program's agenda. - Train and oversee program leaders. - Communicate with school supervisors and administrative personnel (including principals and teachers) in order to develop positive relationships and ensure proper adherence to implementation policies and practices in all schools (in conjunction with program leaders). - Communicate with local media and post on social media. - In the <i>Reading Program</i>, one coordinator had a psychology degree and a second had a human resources degree. - In the <i>Community Program</i>, one coordinator had a background in psychiatry and business management and a second had a human resources and administration background.
Program leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement and manage the programs on the ground within schools under their assigned jurisdiction (To be given autonomous jurisdiction, completion of an 100-hour training program and participation in continuing education efforts throughout the year is required. Completion of a background check and a two-day training session mandated by the SEP was also required, due to the sensitive nature of working directly with children in schools. - Lead training sessions for new schools adopting the programs to ensure all personnel understood key objectives, methods, and implementation procedures (in conjunction with program coordinators). - Recruit and train new program volunteers and guided Q&A sessions to clarify any concerns regarding school activities, procedures, vocabulary, and basic program requirements. - Supervise program implementation to ensure all activities are effectively planned, managed, and reviewed based on procedural requirements under the direct supervision of program coordinators. - Maintain productive school workshops and develop strategies to maximize student engagement and interaction with activities. - Take ownership of results in terms of achieving outlined goals and objectives and report results to coordinators. - From an array of backgrounds ranging from psychology, social sciences, and education.
Program volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primarily were student parents and relatives, including grandparents. - For the <i>Reading Program</i>:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate in an initial training led by program leaders. - Shadow a veteran volunteer for at least five hours before beginning work. - Read out loud to students, initiate literary talks about the book(s) assigned, implement various comprehension, critical-thinking, and analysis exercises. - For the <i>Community Program</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate in a six-month training similar that covered how to lead not only reading activities, but also math and conversation activities. - Contribute more actively to program decision-making at the school level (more involved in design than <i>Reading Program</i> volunteers)
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With these distinctions established, I will hereon refer to the combination of *program directors* and *program leaders*—who were active participants in the study—as “leaders,” and I will hereon refer to *program volunteers* as “volunteers.” Essentially, “leaders and volunteers” refers to the entire group of participants I sampled and engaged in my study.

5.3 Data Collection

For the study, I (1) reviewed documents provided by the programs, (2) performed semi-structured interviews, (3) ran a focus group, and (4) observed the schools where the selected programs have been implemented. I chose to use multiple methods of data collection, also known as triangulation, to increase the reliability of my qualitative measurements. As Schwandt (2007) states, the “strategy of triangulation is often linked to the assumption that data from different sources or methods must necessarily converge or be aggregated to reveal the truth” (p. 298). In my case, using multiple approaches to collect data helped ensure there was ample evidence to support the theoretical conclusions I drew after analysis.

5.3.1 Document Review

I chose to begin my fieldwork by reviewing a set of documents given to me by program leaders. These documents helped me to better understand the programs and to craft relevant questions that I would later use in the interviews and the focus group. Without this baseline understanding of how and why the programs were designed, my questioning of participants would not have been as focused or productive. Table 2 summarizes the types of documents that were gathered and reviewed:

Table 2 Documentation

Title	Description	Examples	Author	Audience
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Program Development	Described how and why the new national Reading Program was created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the Reading Program would help improve student literacy; - How the local implementation would help achieve reformed SEP goals 	SEP	Program directors
Program Mission	Described the mission and objectives of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve community participation to improve collaboration with local education entities; - Improve how public policies are implemented locally; - Participate in the creation of an involved and active society 	Program directors (informed by SEP)	Principals, teachers, and school administrators
Program Implementation	Detailed the work and activities that program personnel would be enacting in schools and what proper implementation should look like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Techniques on reading aloud to students; - Time management and how to run a group lesson; - Strategies for engaging students in program activities 	Program directors (informed by SEP)	Program leaders and volunteers
Activities and Exercises	Described the exercises to be performed with students and a template for communicating feedback to program leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did the student like the selected book? Was it engaging? Was it challenging?; - Did the student comprehend the selected reading? Could they identify the main characters? 	Program directors	Program volunteers
Student Background Evaluation Sheets	Templates for recording background information about students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find out who read at home, what they read, and with whom; - What activities are performed at home during leisure time 	Program directors	Program leaders and volunteers
Volunteer Training	Tracked participant involvement in training programs to ensure all volunteers were well-versed in program objectives and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of participants; - Gender of participants; - Volunteer hours logged (40 required to complete training) 	Program directors	For internal use
School Evaluation Reports	Evaluated the school and quality/availability of resources for technical understanding of educational landscapes where the program would be implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General state of the school and its libraries; - Internet accessibility; - Adequate electricity and lighting; - Quality and availability of textbooks 	Program directors	For internal use

5.3.1.1 5.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

There were several reasons for using interviews as the primary data source for the research project. I wanted to deeply understand the perspectives and perceptions of program leaders,

and interviews are one of the best tools for investigating these things in depth. I chose to use a semi-structured approach that used a specific set of questions as an “interview guide” but also left room for exploratory or follow-up questions. This flexible interview process was well-suited for getting to how the interviewee understands issues and events, as it allowed room to pursue topics of particular interest to the interviewees. Furthermore, the semi-structured format allowed me to integrate important ideas and issues mentioned by earlier participants into subsequent interviews, making for a richer set of responses that reflected multiple viewpoints on a range of common themes. Finally, the semi-structured approach was intended to open up a genuine conversation that would allow the participant to give as much detail as possible about their experience of their work with the programs. This technique is useful because the researcher “can keep more of an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data” (Bryman, 2012, p.12). Interviews were conducted in Spanish, since it is the native language of program leaders and I wanted to ensure they would be able to speak fluently and confidently about their experiences. All interviews were recorded to my cell phone, later transcribed and analyzed for coding.

5.3.2 Focus Group

The definition of a focus group (Merton et al. 1956 cited in Bryman, 2012) is a group interview in which “there are several participants (in addition to the moderator/facilitator) and the main focus is the interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning” (p.545). I served as the moderator for the focus group I conducted with the Reading Program. I chose to use this method with this group to see if any new insights would emerge in the group setting, as I brought together participants who all had similar levels of experience with the program. Bryman (2012) mentions that this method helps researchers examine the ways in which “people in conjunction with one another construe the general topics in which the researcher is interested” and also allows participants to “voice agreement to something that he or she probably would not have thought of without the opportunity of hearing the views of others” (p.546). This technique was also appropriate for my study because of the limited time I had for my fieldwork. Getting a large number of participants together in a place at once would allow me to save time in terms of both interviewing and commuting to the site. My interview with the focus group lasted an hour and thirteen minutes; I had to cut my interview short since some of the participants had other responsibilities to attend to.

5.3.3 Observation

In addition to reviewing documents and conducting interviews and a focus group, I used observation as a key data-gathering method, as I wanted another reference point with which to compare the data obtained from interviews. While it would have been ideal to act as a fully immersed participant observer and experience the phenomenon and setting under investigation first-hand, the length of my time in Mexico City did not allow me to fully integrate into the program. As a result, my observations came from the standpoint of a non-participant observer. Specifically, my observations followed an unstructured approach, which is useful for creating a narrative account of behavior by recording observed events in as much detail as possible (Bryman, 2012).

With this approach established, I observed four different schools' program leaders, volunteers, and teachers. In one instance, I witnessed activities performed in the classroom with professors, parent volunteers, and students. These activities involved students answering questions and working in a groups to come up with solutions to different activities. For example, in one of the groups, the Reading Program volunteer parent would ask questions about how to correctly complete a sentence, and the children would have to choose a word in the past, present, or future tense to fill in the blank. In another group, the Community Program volunteers led an exercise that required students to add fractions. I also observed a training led by two program leaders that was intended to present the program to parents, teachers, and other school personnel and answer any questions they had about implementation.

Taking field notes was important element of my unstructured observation, as it helped me keep track of activities in each classroom, the approximate number of people participating in the activity, if the activity was led by volunteers or program leaders, characteristics of the classrooms, general aspects of the students, and their level of involvement in the activities. Appendix 2 details the specific observational questions I asked as I recorded field notes.

5.4 Validity and Reliability

Since qualitative research requires the researcher to take an active position in the gathering and interpreting others information, the "meaning making" part of the study, to be trustworthy a qualitative research must be good and reliable. In order to bring trustworthiness

to my study it is necessary to address credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Merriam (2009) mentions that “what make an experimental studies scientific rigorous or trustworthy is the researcher’s careful design of the study, applying standards well developed and accepted by the scientific community” (p.210). Throughout my study I have paid close attention to my design in order to stay aligned to methods known by the scientific community. Bryman (2012) provides four categories for measuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, as compared to the equivalent criteria in quantitative research:

Credibility; this is parallel to internal validity. This measure is linked to the idea of triangulation of findings in order to ensure that the researcher’s account is trustworthy. In my case findings were triangulated by analyzing the data collected produce related results. I did this while reviewing program documents and activities observed during participant observation and applied across the research process.

Transferability; this is parallel to external validity. The measure relates to the level of generalizability of a study. It is assumed that for qualitative research studies no generalizability is possible and I do not attempt to generalize. I seek to shed light on the perceptions of the stakeholders involved with the PPPs work.

Dependability; this is parallel to reliability. It suggests researchers adopt an auditing approach. It suggested that complete records of the process of study are kept at all times, as it could be audit. In my study I have kept all notes, interviews/transcriptions, pictures of documents, participant information from the first day in my computer and hard drive.

Confirmability; this is parallel to objectivity. This measure refers to the impossibility of maintaining subjectivity in social research, but making an emphasis on the researcher to act in good faith. In my study I paid attention to this point so not include personal values in order to avoid interference in the research process.

5.5 Data Analysis Procedure

This research work follows the suggestions for data analysis and coding of Merriam (2009) and Bryman (2012). As a qualitative researcher data analysis assumes a certain way of viewing the world. This as a result defines the modes for data collecting, sampling of participants, analyzing of data and validity, reliability and ethics (Merriam, 2009) Qualitative analysis is an intellectual skill. Since there is not one specific way to achieve qualitative research, data analysis is a method for making meaning out of the data and the process

involves “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said” such a process is complex (Merriam, 2009, p.176).

The process of data analysis was the part of making sense of the raw data collected in fieldwork in order to generate a response to my research questions. The data analyzed in the study were the perceptions and life experience of the program leaders and stakeholders. Beside the interviews I also analyzed what I have read and seen, this is what Merriam (2009) refers to the “process of making meaning” (p.176). The data includes all of the interviews with program leaders, volunteers and the information I collected from program directors. The interviews were transcribed using a combination voice recognition software and listening to the interviews in order to avoid errors during transcription. After transcription, the interviews were categorized using Nvivo software based on whether the participant was from the Reading Program or Community Program, and whether the participant was involved in a one-on-one interview or the focus group. I then analyzed the data by looking for words and short phrases that were repeated across participants to illuminate themes in their perceptions. After several rounds of reviewing the transcriptions for these keywords and concepts, I then generated three broad categories that encapsulated similar themes. Coding for these themes was a very time intensive process, as I wanted to be sure no important concepts were overlooked.

Once I had determined some central themes from the individual and group interviews, I examined my field notes and looked for key pieces of observational data that either confirmed or contrasted what participants had said. In the analysis of themes and creation of the categories I began to give meaning to the stories of program directors, coordinators, leaders, and other volunteers to understand their perceptions.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in social research and more specifically with children of young ages must be well understood and kept in mind throughout the research process. Diener and Granall (1978, cited by Bryman, 2012) list the four main areas of ethics needed to be considered by a researcher; 1) *harm to participants* 2) *informed consent*; 3) *invasion of privacy*; 4) *the involvement of deception*. All four areas have been considered during my study. Because of the nature of my research, which primarily involved interviews and

observations, there was little risk of harm to my participants in physical, mental, or emotional terms. However, in order to ensure I had informed consent, I provided a form to the offices of the PPPs (see Appendix 1) I sought to work with, as well as to each of the individual participants. The form clearly communicated the purpose of my research and explained how their participation would contribute to it. It also stated their right to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. I did not begin my fieldwork until I had secured consent from my participants. Only one participant who had agreed to be interviewed ended up withdrawing, but the reason given was a matter of time, not because of the nature of my research.

To prevent any invasion of privacy, I took steps to secure the anonymity of all participants. Their names and other personal information have been kept confidential, as I use pseudonyms for each participant and only characterize them in terms of their role within the PPP programs. Lastly, all participants were informed of their opportunity to have a copy of my final study once finished and published in an effort to ensure transparency and to not engage in deception of any kind. According to University policy, all information related to the participants and programs used for my study must be destroyed, which I did upon completion of the research analysis.

6 Findings

The final group of participants for my study was comprised of two program directors, six program leaders, and six program volunteers from the two different PPP programs—*the Reading Program* and *the Community Program*—that work in primary schools located in marginalized communities of Mexico City. From the Community Program, there was a total of four participants; from the Reading Program, there was a total of 15 participants.

The participants ranged in age from 33 to 64 years old; nine were female and five were male. Interviewees had a wide range of experience with the programs: one volunteer had only six months of experience, while another leader had over 13 years of experience. Additionally, all participants had previous experience working in the education setting prior to joining the programs. Each of the *program directors* held graduate degrees in education science, and had project administration experience. All *program leaders* had a minimum of bachelor's degree. Four of the six *program volunteers* mentioned having a bachelor degree and two only had a high school degree.

As stated in the section of ethical considerations, for the protection of participants' identities, each program participant has been given a pseudonym. **Table 2** provides a code for connecting each participant's pseudonym with their role and their respective program. Henceforth, only their pseudonyms will be used to characterize them.

Table 2: Participant Code

Name (pseudonym)	Affiliated Program	Role within Program
Jay	Community Program	Director
Pablo	Community Program	Leader
Gabi	Community Program	Leader
Nelly	Community Program	Leader
Ale	Reading Program	Director
Lucy	Reading Program	Leader
Angie	Reading Program	Leader
Lu	Reading Program	Leader
Ana	Reading Program	Leader
Sue	Reading Program	Volunteer
Flor	Reading Program	Volunteer
Leti	Reading Program	Volunteer
Eli	Reading Program	Volunteer
Pat	Reading Program	Volunteer
Max	Reading Program	Volunteer

Finally, since all interviews were performed in Spanish, quotes presented here from the interviews have been translated by me into English.

I now present the main findings from my fieldwork in Mexico City. I do this by constructing four key narrative themes derived from my semi-structured interviews and focus group with program leaders and volunteers, and from my own recorded observations. In doing so, I shed light upon the answer to one of this study's subquestions: How do key stakeholders, ranging from program directors to community members, perceive the work of PPPs in Mexico City primary schools?

6.1 Theme 1: A Failed System

Leaders and volunteers perceive that the existing education system has failed significantly in achieving quality education. I find it important to begin with this finding, because this was the most dominant shared perspective among all participants. Every single participant I formally interacted with, and even those whom I was only able to speak with for a few minutes, had something damaging to say about the current state of the education system. However, different participants identified different problems as being the biggest one, or the root of all the other problems.

6.1.1 Infrastructure

A common issue mentioned was the lack of financial resources from SEP to schools and the lack of books in classrooms. They also described the basic infrastructure needs of the schools, which included things like sewage improvements and retrofits to protect students and teachers in the event of an earthquake. In one instance, students had to be removed from an entire wing of the school into just a few classrooms because of the building's fragility.

My own perceptions based on my observations aligned with these perceptions of the seasoned participants. I visited a school with Nelly and Pablo that had recently reopened its doors to the students and had restarted activities with the Community Program. The school had closed for almost two months because it had flooded and, according to the principal, it was impossible to have the students or anyone in the school. The school principal had taken the position within the last six months because the last principal had retired. According to both Nelly and Pablo, she was one of the best principals from the many they worked with and they described her as someone parents and teachers looked up to. "She is a real leader," they told me. When we arrived to the school and I met the principal, she told us:

Good thing you came to visit our school now, because less than two months ago you could not have walked into this office, the classrooms, the playgrounds or the school in general...everything was all mud. It seemed like a tornado had passed by the school and dropped a ton of mud; it was like a scene from a horror movie. There was nothing to do but to close the school. We had no help from SEP. But thankfully, the community joined forces and with the support of the parents and neighbors, we were able to clean the mud and finally resume classes.

This photo I took captures the extent of the infrastructure problems facing this school:



Figure 1: Photo of classroom furniture after the flood (picture taken by researcher)

6.1.2 Communication

Infrastructure was not the only issue, however. Jay offered me his own reasoning of why he thinks the current state of the education system is failing. He believed there is huge miscommunication between the different levels of the education system, and that in order to make the necessary changes to the education system, help from outside was a must. One reason for this was the complexity and size of the system. He stated, “It is impossible for SEP to tackle all of the issues it currently faces.”

He told me that in 1992, a major reform of the education system took place called the “education system federalization.” The purpose of the reform was to delegate decision-making to the states, but since it was never implemented adequately, it made the responsibility of SEP ambiguous at both state and federal level. This made tackling education problems seem like a moving target. He stated:

For 11 years we have worked closely with the schools to understand their problems well and understand them from an internal perspective to provide solutions based on the needs...this type of work is something that would not have arisen from the education system; as a rule, "monopoly type" systems rarely generate innovation. For them, it's important to keep the status quo.

While Jay, likely due to his position, focused on the macro-level communication problems, Nelly highlighted the lack of communication that existed *within* the schools. She told me:

In some schools where I have worked, there is no cooperation among teachers. There is much envy, selfishness, and an unwillingness their teaching experience with others. You see a very large communication deficit...teachers do not see the value of cooperation, which is reflected in their actions and as a result it reflects in the students...more communication is needed in order to improve the environment of the schools.

Pablo reiterated this sentiment. One of his concerns was not about the resources of the schools themselves, but the mentality of the teachers working there. (He noted that even in low income areas that lacked vast financial resources, it was possible to find schools that were clean and organized—in other words, that had the basic infrastructure to educate students.) He observed:

The success or failure of the school reflects a lot the *attitude* that the principal and the teachers have within a school. One thing I noticed when working with schools, particularly in the very poor areas, was the lack of desire to work on the part of the school personnel. When the principal did not have quality interaction with the teachers or parents or vice versa, it was reflected a lot in the results of the program; there is no community there...these schools lack the interactions found in other places where you have energetic teachers and principals. In some of the less involved schools when I would hold a volunteer drive, I would get five to seven parents, in comparison with schools where you had 30 to 40 parents show up to a meeting due to prior involvement within the school community. In some of the schools it felt like swimming against the current.

Pablo told me that he had only learned the important role community plays in schools after working with the Community Program for a couple of years.

The perceptions Nelly and Pablo had about the lack of communication among teachers and other school personnel related to what Jay had told me about the state of the education system at the national level. Across the board, it seems, from the macro to the micro scales, participants perceived communication to be a major pitfall in achieving quality education.

6.1.2.1 6.1.3 Training and Support

Lucy emphasized a slightly different issue within the failing school system: the lack of support for students and their families in schools. She explained that when she refers to families she is not always referring to a mother and father, as many of the kids she worked with lived with uncles, grandparents, or other relatives “because in the poor schools, kids don’t always have the fortune to live with their parents as they may be in jail or are dead.” Also, she stated her frustration about her limitations as a program leader to support kids and

relatives that she worked with, she talked about a personal anecdote that marked her professional life:

As part of one of my exercises after reading a book, I asked students to write their own end to the story we just finished. Right then and there I realized there were many problems I would not be able to tackle with my involvement in schools. While one student said, "Here the great Maximo died after a happy life," other children wrote things such as "he died so young, because his uncle was hitting him," and "my dad is now in jail"—clearly from their own life experiences. I wasn't trained through the program to respond to the cruel reality faced outside of the classrooms.

In her view, a disconnect between the school institutions and life outside of them was a major reason the current education system was failing to deliver quality education to students.

6.2 Theme 2: A Learning Community

Leaders and volunteers perceive that their program is leading to the formation of a learning community, which I conceptualize as a group of people coming together across boundaries to improve education and help others understand and appreciate its value in society. Their participation with the entities was spurred by the shared belief that the programs' work was contributing to the continuous development of both the students and parents. Significantly, they identified three main components that make up a learning community. These are reading skills, literacy formation, and lifelong learning skills.

6.2.1 Reading Skills

Focus group participants, as well as individual interviewees, perceived that the program activities had had a profound effect on students' reading skills. Lu talked about how one of the program goals within the school was to help students understand the advantages of developing reading strategies early in life. He said that the PPP personnel do not just show up in schools and start reading; their first goal is that students understand the mission and that we are there for them. His experience working in schools has showed him that in many occasions, one of the main barriers to a student having a successful educational outcome was the lack of being able to read. He mentioned that repeatedly he noticed students demonstrated the desire to read, but without guidance in the classroom, they faced a big challenge ahead of them. Lu did not view it as a problem with the teachers, parents, or the students themselves; in his perspective it was a lack of resources in the classroom for

teachers to address the many issues they face, with reading being only one of them. He stated:

One of our objectives is the transformation of the participants, which can mean many things. We seek that students open and expand their knowledge of possibilities based on reading and literacy exercises that provide participants with a space for open participation and expression. In these sessions, they learn to craft arguments and understand educational language, as well as practice proper speech and pronunciation.

I was able to observe in real time one such intervention led by the school librarian and supervised by Nelly. It was a group of fourth grade students that had chosen to read the book *Los Cazadores de Microbios* (Microbe Hunters) by Paul de Kruif. There were 27 students in the room, all sitting in a circle in the middle of the library in order for students to see each other. The library was one large room with two books stacks and seven computers. The librarian began the activity by inviting students to open their books to review the paragraphs they had chosen to read and discuss during literacy talks. Some students did not have a book and had to share. The discussion began with the librarian asking for a volunteer student to begin discussing their favorite part or asking general questions of the book. Students began by asking questions about words and phrases they did not understand for a few minutes. Eventually, one student was chosen to start reading her selected paragraph. The girl began by saying that the book was amazing choice and that she was grateful the class had chosen to read it. Then she said, "I have never learned in class about this creature and the world of microbes, there are so many small creatures I want to discover now." Then she said, "I also learned that I can make my own pair of eyeglasses if I want to." As soon as she was finished talking, another student raised his hand and was chosen to speak. The student was wearing eyeglasses and asked, "What do you mean by making your own pair of glasses?"

These exchanges in which students asked each other questions and reading, with the librarian stepping in to answer and to mediate the conversations went on for an hour. During the activity, kids did not stop talking with one another, not in a distracted way but in one that seemed highly engaged. They whispered with one another discussing their paragraphs, rather than non-academic subjects. They were interested in asking questions and clarifying the meaning of words, as well as improving the pronunciation of words. The book also presented a lot of new vocabulary, which sparked active inquiry from many in the classroom.

After the exercise was over, Nelly told me that these exercises were designed to facilitate interactions among students in a pleasant and semi-structured way to increase their engagement in improving their reading skills. The librarian confirmed this, saying,

Students love the exercise. They have the opportunity to formulate questions and at the same time learn to listen to what their peers have to say. This gives them a basis for how to do the same both inside the classroom or outside of school.

At the end of the exercise, the librarian pointed out that in addition to enhancing reading skills and interest in reading, this activity has been of great benefit for the students who initially failed to understand the notion of raising their hands to ask questions or why interrupting the person talking was problematic.

In the focus group, Leti pointed out the impact that these exercises were having. She said some of the students who had participated in the program for several years could now be considered “mature readers.” She mentioned the case of a student who was in her sixth grade reading group and had participated with the program for the past five years. She stated the “student demonstrated high levels of reading and comprehension and his appetite for reading was voracious.” To this she said:

After the many years that I have been reading to the students at school, I notice how students have a greater familiarity and handling of words than when I started. I also see that the listening and the active literacy talk is much greater in my groups...he (the student with the appetite for reading mentioned above) has now begun sharing some of the books from his personal collection that thinks would be of inspiration to other students. In several occasions, I have discussed the book with him prior to reading it myself and I am amazed at how critical he is in selecting texts since he is only 12.

Finally, multiple participants in my study indicated that improving reading skills was a large part of their motivation in getting involved. For instance, in the focus group, Max made reference to the topic of reading skills when asked why he participated with the program, saying, “For me, it was important to participate in the formation of young students, as they are the leaders of our future. I want to make sure our kids can read.” Then he asked me to read a poster that was hung on the wall of the room we were in. It said, “A child who knows to read will be an adult who thinks.” The rest of the participants all made gestures and sounds suggesting they were in agreement with what Max had just said. Leti affirmed this further, saying, “I see that reading creates a more educated student, with his own opinions...and that he cannot be fooled as easily as a young man who does not read.”

A final reflection from Ale about her motivation for engaging in the program is worth mentioning:

I read with the idea that children can see that in books, apart from academic texts, that there are also stories with creativity, freedom, imagination—stories that they cannot find elsewhere. I believe that reading brings important knowledge needed to become happy adults and that is what I use as personal logic when I stand up to read in front of the students.

This statement points clearly to the idea that reading skills are essential to creating a true learning community that transcends generations and institutional boundaries.

6.2.2 Literacy Formation

The notion of literacy formation was present throughout the interviews. Literacy formation is defined as being able to recognize “systematic patterns and sounds in spoken language, manipulate sounds in words, recognize words and break them apart into smaller units, learn the relationship between sounds and letters, and build their oral language and vocabulary skills” (National Institute of Literacy, 2009). During the interviews with program leaders and volunteers, all expressed a sense of how their work was contributing to early literacy formation, and how this literacy formation in turn contributed to the creation of a holistic learning community.

A few indicators of early literacy that emerged among students were an interest in books, reading with enjoyment, and indicating preferences related to books and authors. Leaders and volunteers repeatedly noted that students were taking more of an interest and forming defined opinions of the texts they were reading in school and at home. A program volunteer—a mother—confirmed that she had noticed more children checking out longer and more challenging books since the program’s implementation. Additionally, during one of my first interviews with Lucy, she told me about students results during the seven years she had worked with the program. From the time she had started with the project, she had seen a definitive increase in student participation in classroom activities. With years of experience working with schools and parents of different backgrounds, she was keenly able to recognize students who were involved and those who were not. She stated:

One objective of the program was that students become creative readers, joyful readers, with the understanding that reading would give them the tools to empower their written and oral communication. In time, the children started talking about

authors and asking their parents to buy them specific books and wanting to take books they were reading in school back home. Parents noticed these changes and the progress their kids had made. Many dads came to participate because they wanted the chance to observe their children. But it's important to note that the *children* were the ones who made *parents* get more involved in the reading activities as they started requesting books at home. Then we saw a domino effect, where one parent would join the reading activities and invite another parent to observe or accompany their children and read to them.

The involvement and engagement of students was also developed through writing activities, another component of literacy formation. Leti noted that the program activities were helping building student confidence around their own literacy:

Part of the initiative that we take as volunteers is inviting the students to write short stories, stories or their opinion about the stories we read in class, in this way we can support them so that they gain confidence in their writing.

Ultimately, building these literacy foundations was deemed to be one of the most important program objectives by many of the participants in my study. Lu emphasized this by pointing to the perceived results of these efforts. A teacher from one of the schools he oversaw had said that the two programs were yielding noticeable results, as evidenced by improved performances in the ENLACE test, a national standardized test. Lu acknowledged that teachers were aware that this phenomenon could not be entirely attributed to the introduction of the program in schools, but emphasized there was strong perception among teachers that the literacy formation the programs had facilitated contributed in a significant way to these improvements. Teachers also noticed that students who had participated in the programs were more easily able to apply ideas and themes emphasized in program activities to test questions.

On this subject, it is important to note that the focus group participants, who were comprised of both program leaders and volunteers, perceived that communication between the program personnel and the teachers was essential to maximizing the success of the program, as both classroom activities and program activities were shaping students' education and literacy development.

6.2.3 Lifelong Learning Skills

The final component that participants perceived contributed to the creation of a learning community was the formation of lifelong learning skills. They perceived that the skills and

competencies they practiced with students in the program activities did not merely improve reading skills and contribute to literacy formation, but also created an underlying sense of curiosity and an appreciation for continuous learning. Sue illustrated this perception by saying:

We are a bit of a subversive group in that we teach students that they can be critical thinkers, that there is more than what the Internet tells you, that you can have an opinion, and that your life can change from one moment to another if you can read and reason.

In addition to cultivating critical thinking skills, leaders and volunteers agreed that much of their work was creating an impact outside of the classroom. Ale felt that program leaders helped students and families develop life skills like teamwork, time management, self-discovery, and self-esteem that would give them a better chance in life while also getting a better education and improving test scores. Lu echoed this sentiment, saying:

With the program, I have had the opportunity to myself learn important life lessons such as dealing with people from different paths of life, which involves resolving conflicts, being sensitive to cultural differences, and developing different instruction strategies for the groups I teach. Today, I feel some of these skills are the biggest contributions I make to the communities I work with, as I teach students and parents these techniques I've learned. Years later, I have had both students and parents thanking me for showing them how to manage these things.

Lu also described how program activities were helping to make the children more respectful communicators and more confident in their own abilities and thinking processes:

The program seeks to expand inclusion...we hope that the reading exercises help break the trend of the students towards bullying. So during these sessions, they are taught about the meaning of respect for themselves and of their peers, and we stress that during the literary talks, they have the right to say what they think, what they feel...during literacy talks, all students have the obligation to listen with respect.

Both Ale and Jay felt that this cultivation of lifelong skills was a contribution to society as a whole. They perceived that these interpersonal skills, which are naturally more intangible than literacy and reading skills, were just as important to getting the programs to achieve their stated goals as innovative reading exercises were. These aspects were vital, in their view, to creating a learning community that would be self-sufficient over time.

6.3 Theme 3: Community Values

Leaders and volunteers perceive that their program is bolstering the community values already existent within the communities, but that previously did not have a structure in which

they could flourish. The processes by which they introduced the programs into schools and helped students become familiar with the program strengthened the fiber of the local community by creating communal buy-in to the new education system. In this way, their work extended beyond the school setting and into the lives of families and community members.

6.3.1 School Familiarity

When program leaders first began introducing the PPP projects into schools, they were met with significant resistance from teachers. Based on their interview statements, they perceived that teachers viewed their work as intrusive—an interference to normal school activities. Teachers were initially suspicious of outside actors coming into the school setting, were resentful of having external oversight and involvement. Lu, a reading program leader, said:

The teachers, at the beginning, looked at us with jealousy. We noticed how they did not understand the reason of our presence in the schools. So it was hard to have them give you 30-40 minutes of their time.

However, because the PPPs had support from SEP and were involved on school boards in Mexico City, they were able to open the door enough for them to introduce the programs. This needed to be done with great care if they hoped to secure the school community's support of and involvement in the program. While interviewing Pablo, a community program leader, he talked about the steps needed to integrate the program in a school by “sensitizing” the school community to what the programs hoped to achieve. First, the program is introduced with the entire school community comprised of parents and teachers (or as many members as can participate). Then, several Q&A sessions are held to address remaining questions and concerns from the audience, before an ultimate decision is made regarding whether to move forward with the program or not. Assuming the school community pledges their support for the programs, the PPP leaders host a “dream together” session, at which point parents and teachers imagine and list the changes they envision for their school. After this brainstorming effort, the stakeholders work together to prioritize the dreams that will lead to a transformation of the school and its students. Finally, the program leaders and the school community members together make a plan of action that typically requires several subsequent rounds of meetings. They wanted the programs to become self-sustaining, and by getting community/family members involved in the design process, they achieve not only this, but also facilitate community development.

Following the initial visioning process, the PPP stakeholders I interviewed perceived a gradual transformation within the parents as a result of being invited to participate in the project directly and as a result of parents interacting with other parents to come up with solution. A powerful example of one such transformation came from Lu:

In several instances we had parents—for the most part moms or aunts—who, after attending the information meeting and deciding to integrate into the program, changed their appearance. An example was a prostitute who joined the program because she wanted to help her two kids but had never had the opportunity to do it. When she first approached the program leader to volunteer, she told me about her profession. She told me that some people knew what she did for living and that she had not many friends in the school among other parents, but she said that her job allowed her to support her children so they could go to school, that she could feed them, and generally support them to get out of the situation they were in. I could sense that she wanted a better life for her children, and she told me that even though she was not proud of her job, she knew it was a mean to an end.

When this woman first started coming to the school, Lu told me, her hair was frequently a mess, and her makeup appeared to be left over from the night before. Her clothing choices were not very appropriate for being in a school as well. However, as this woman became more involved in the PPP program, she began to present herself in a more put-together fashion, as she began to see herself as one of the other mothers, rather than different from them.

As part of my observations I was able to see the interaction parents and teachers had in the classroom. The appearance of the parents appeared to be of humble backgrounds, moms were wearing generic brand shoes, like things you would see at a bulk store, and very simple clothing. Their way of communicating was representative of farm/rural communities, as their voices lacked confidence and their word choices were not very advanced. However, according to the leaders and based on my observations of the school activities, parents' characteristics and backgrounds did not affect their involvement in the program. In fact, leaders and volunteers reported that some of the parents from rural areas were some of the most involved in the program activities.

Leaders agreed that parent involvement was a pivotal element of the program's success in improving the quality of education, and also led to a stronger community centered around the school. Lu indicated that some of the early parent volunteers "motivated the rest of the

volunteers and made the groups stronger,” and bore coordinating and organizing responsibilities that allowed leaders to focus on other aspects of program management.

6.3.2 Student Involvement

Program leaders perceived that introducing students to the programs in the early stages of implementation in a carefully constructed way led to greater community involvement in the long run, specifically with parents. Essentially, as students became more familiar with the program objectives and activities, they began talking about them more at home. Like Sue says:

Some of the children have invited their parents to participate in reading outside of school, and there they tell them how active reading works in school activities. It is then the parents start to really get involved in reading with the children.

This eventually led to more parents and community members seeking to become involved in the programs as volunteers, which, as I indicated in the previous section, was a vital element of program success.

Furthermore, my participants discussed the ways in which program activities were empowering students and developing their confidence beyond metrics like literacy and writing skills. Pat said, “I notice that many of the students...are more imaginative and creative with the tasks that are assigned to them in normal classroom activities” after they have been participating in the program for a while. Additionally, Lucy stated:

One of the things I noticed in the students participating in the program was that they were more assertive. I could also see that they were more united as a group and participated more as a team. I think this was partly because they realized that there were no incorrect answers, that they were not being judged, and that the activities could be fun rather than feeling demanding and stressful.

Leaders and volunteers perceived that cultivating these personal attributes—such as imagination, creativity, assertiveness, and teamwork—in their students was important groundwork to be laid if these young people were to grow up to be active and engaged citizens who would participate themselves in this process of improving education at a community level.

6.4 Theme 4: A New Model of Education

Ultimately, leaders and volunteers perceive that the PPP programs they have introduced to marginalized school communities in Mexico City are creating a new model of education that is significantly more participatory than the model that has historically operated in this place. By working to foster a learning community and to cultivate strong community values, the Reading and Community Programs are transforming the educational paradigm that was the basis of the failed system into one that inspires hope and possibility. The following paragraphs paint a “before and after” picture of the educational landscape surrounding program implementation.

Program leaders and volunteers felt that before the programs were implemented, schools existed primarily as a place where teachers and students showed up out of expectation or obligation, but there was little enthusiasm for teaching or learning. Regarding teachers, there was a shared perception among participants that teachers were stretched thin, just trying to get by. Students as well were engaging in activities that felt frustrating and rather pointless, and consequently failed to inspire curiosity or critical thinking. Eli illustrated this phenomenon well:

Students were required to read 20 minutes every day, with parents required to count the words they managed to read and record this in a notebook. This is without having been taught how to properly do it, and without any way of measuring if students were comprehending what they are reading. Kids would come home and be frustrated, the parents would be frustrated and at the end, the activity just pushed kids away from wanting to read...this is a bad way for kids to learn to enjoy and appreciate the practice of reading.

As this example suggests, parents were barely involved with school activities before the programs were implemented. They were expected to work with kids at home on school assignments, but given little direction. Essentially, there was limited communication between parents and teachers.

Leaders and volunteers noted a number of shifts that occurred after the programs had been implemented. First, teachers began to see the benefits of the programs and how they supplemented students’ learning, such that daily classroom activities became more effective and engaging. A teacher was quoted in one of the program documents I reviewed as saying:

“[The program] makes you change the mentality you have; you keep on updating it. It makes you think about how to make the [learning] process more fun and how to get involved with the community within your school.

Additionally, Pablo told me that some of the teachers worked in multiple schools—some of which had the programs in place, and some of which did not. He said that “teachers who had already experienced the program and taken the trainings and are familiar with the benefits have been encouraging the principals [in schools where the programs had not yet been put in place] to take on the projects.” Despite their initial hesitance or resistance to having new actors come into the schools as previously noted, they soon began to actively promote the programs once they had experienced them in action. They came to realize, as Nelly noted, that the programs were not just additional work for them to manage, but actually supplemental to normal classroom activities.

The role of parents in the education system was also transformed after the programs were implemented. Consider this quote from Nelly:

After a while, the relationship we had with parents changed. They took the time to sit down with the children to read and spent part of their days working in school activities...When I asked the children how they felt about their parents coming to work in school with them, some students responded that they liked it because they knew there was no other time they could spend together for schoolwork. These were the most significant changes I saw in my role with the project: creating a new relationship between parents, students, and the school, all in the pursuit of learning.

Pablo also noted these changes within the parents. He noted that one of the program goals was to raise the self-esteem of all participants, which included the parent volunteers, especially since many of them came from impoverished backgrounds. He said:

One thing that I heard repeatedly was how the dynamics of the household had changed after beginning participating [in the program]. Parents changed how they prioritized their kids' chores according to school assignments, and made time for family activities based on what they had learned through the programs, instead of just watching T.V.

In fact, parents became so invested in the education system after they got involved with the programs that they began taking initiative all on their own, coming up with creative ideas to encourage even more learning for their children. Angie gave this example:

Suddenly, parents wanted to organize special events—for example, inviting an author whose book had been read in class to give a talk to the school. Principals and teachers were very open and supportive of the initiative, but of course it was difficult to have

all the authors who lived outside of the city come to the schools. However, the collective effort gave results. With parents' involvement, the schools would organize parties, meetings, and talks about the books especially around holidays as a way to raise funds to invite authors and enhance the experience of the students.

In these ways, parents' involvement in their child's education was drastically different after becoming involved with the PPP activities.

Of course, all of these changes would be relatively insignificant if they did not translate into changes for the students. But leaders and volunteers all agreed that the new programs succeeded in cultivating genuine interest, curiosity, and critical thinking skills in the students who became involved. Angie provided an excellent example of this:

In some of the schools where the program had already been going for a year or so, you could notice that the students enjoyed the consistency of the program. Suddenly, if one of the volunteer readers missed a day, the students themselves would offer to read for the groups. It was beautiful to see the confidence of the students grow; they had become empowered so much that they felt comfortable doing the readings and did not hesitate to read for their classmates like they used to.

Eli also perceived these changes among students, notably with regard to their confidence and inquisitiveness. He said:

As time passed and students got to know us better and began to pay more attention, I noticed how the [literacy] exercises increased their confidence to open up the conversation. Today I can tell you that most students ask the meaning of words from the books when they do not understand it, rather than remaining quiet and not asking questions.

Additionally he noted that those involved with the activities were "committed to align with the program norms of polite communication and respect of other students; they get it." This demonstrates that students were not only becoming better readers, but also becoming more mature as they developed beneficial interpersonal skills.

Finally to this point, Nelly noted that "among all the parents, the common theme reported was the progress they saw in their children's educational development and a change in their attitude toward going to school." As parents arguably have the most contact with their children and would be most likely to notice these changes, this is a very significant outcome of the programs' work.

In conclusion, the PPP program leaders and volunteers perceived they were having an important and sizeable impact in the communities where they operated. As Pablo said, the “theoretical model of the project aims for schools to, by themselves, seek their own transformation into learning communities—it has to be something natural that comes from the people in the community.” The programs simply facilitated this transformation that came from empowering teachers, parents, and students in their own right. To achieve this, consider these final words from Angie:

Our process is to create social cohesion. We want to make sure to involve all the actors that intervene in some way in the educational process of the students and that participate actively in that educational process. We want to be in constant training and communication with teachers, with family members, and always keep the administrative personnel aware of project issues, questions, changes, or community concerns, so that they are aware of the processes by which the school community is formed and can continue to adapt the programs to produce better outcomes.

In this way, the PPP programs created a participatory environment from which a true learning community could emerge and reverse the trajectory of students who had been part of a failed—and failing—education system.

7 Analysis and Discussion

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the data collection process that included one-on-one interviews, a focus group interview, a review of program documents, and my own non-participant observation. The descriptive narrative presented in four themes in chapter 6 attempted to capture the full scope of participants' perspectives and perceptions, triangulated with the other data sources. In this chapter, I discuss and interpret these themes through the lens of the analytical framework presented in chapter 3 based on Freire's model of education in an effort to answer the other core subquestion of the study:

To what degree does the work of educational PPPs in Mexico City fall within the problem-posing model of education as articulated by Paulo Freire?

7.1 Critical Consciousness

Based on the feedback from participants regarding how they view the work of the selected PPP programs in Mexico City primary schools, the programs are raising the critical consciousness of the school communities and therefore engaging in the process that Freire calls *conscientização* that I described in chapter 4.1 As indicated in chapter 6.4, schools were initially just going through the motions of education, with teachers and other school personnel stretched thin in terms of time and resources. Parents were also not directly or actively involved in the education system before the selected PPPs were implemented. With the infrastructure woes, the communication problems (both among teachers and between schools and larger education governance entities), and the lack of training and support for teachers that I reported in chapter 6.1 based on my observations and interviews, it seems as if the entire school system within these marginalized Mexico City communities was stuck. As a result, students were entrapped in a system that Freire would have characterized as part of the banking model of education, with teachers simply depositing knowledge into students without engaging in dialogue or praxis that would foster critical thinking. The example of how reading used to be given as homework, with the parents attempting to track and record progress in terms of number of words read per 20 minute session, illustrates this banking model as well, as the emphasis was not on comprehension or critical analysis, but on a mere quantitative measurement.

However, as the program leaders demonstrated new ways of interacting with learning and literacy, it became evident to the school communities that they had the power to change their own situation and determine their own futures. This was apparent in the behavior of teachers, who may have initially been suspicious of the outside agents coming into their classrooms, slowly warming up to the idea and even going so far as to pitch program implementation in new schools. This was also evident with the parents, many of whom became more invested than ever in their children's education after becoming program volunteers, and began suggesting novel ideas of their own to bolster the program activities. Finally, participants perceived that students themselves have gained a newfound appreciation and interest in reading and critical thinking, based on their thoughtfully formed opinions of books they had read and the initiative they would take if an adult volunteer was absent for the day. While the students, being primary school-aged, may not have necessarily realized that these developments constituted their awakening to their reality and to their own power to change it, they were nevertheless gaining the competencies by which they could act upon their environment effectively in the future.

This brings me to my final point about *concientização*. As explained in chapter 4.1, raising critical consciousness is inherently a social and communal process through which people together liberate one another from old, limiting paradigms through community and collective action. It cannot be something done by one individual for himself, or by one individual for others; this would cause all people involved to fall back into the old banking model of education by reinforcing the idea that some people were in an elevated position compared to others. The examples given in the preceding paragraph, as well as throughout chapter 6, point undeniably to the fact that the selected PPP programs in Mexico City have fostered community around the common goal of education. With traditional actors, such as teachers and principals, reinvigorated in their work after seeing students progressing in new ways, and new actors, like program leaders, parents, and community members, all becoming involved in the program activities, it seems that the programs are succeeding in raising critical consciousness by ensuring that the social and communal interactions necessary for this to occur were facilitated.

7.2 Dialogue

It also appears, based on participants' perceptions of the work, that the Reading and Community Programs have in fact facilitated genuine dialogue according to Freire's conceptualizations of it. To reiterate, dialogue is the process of naming the world in order to change it, and occurs when authentic words are exchanged in an egalitarian setting—in other words, one that holds space for all participants' voices and ideas to be respectfully heard and considered. The Reading Program in particular was successful at achieving this end, as its activities allowed the young students to voice their own critical opinions of the texts they were assigned, and even gave them the opportunity to select books and authors based on their own preferences. Instead of simply going home and having their parents count how many words they could successfully read in a 20 minute period as they had previously been assigned to do, students began expressing interest in books and authors of their own and actively looking for ways to incorporate reading time into their home lives (see chapter 6.4). It is unlikely that this level of interest would have been cultivated if not for the dialogic exercises they practiced as participants in the Program. These exercises also constitute a shift away from the banking model of education and toward the problem-posing model, with students engaging in mutual inquiry into the texts and analyzing them using critical thinking skills rather than merely being told what to think about them by an instructor. Ultimately, by practicing critical thinking skills and articulating personally-held ideas and opinions within the Program settings, students engaged in true dialogue with program leaders and volunteers.

Additionally, as previously stated in chapter 4.2, love, respect, and humility are essential elements of true dialogue. The exercises practiced with program leaders and volunteers maintained these core tenets of the practice. Apparent throughout the interviews was a deep love and care for the young students, and not just in sentimental terms. Parents, for example, expressed a love that went beyond the familial and took the form of a passionate, active love that fits within Freire's understanding of the word: a love that inspires liberation from the cycle of poverty and creates more and more freedom for those involved. This love was what motivated them, as well as the program leaders, to volunteer their own time to contribute to a liberatory education for their children. My own observations confirmed that these values were present within program activities, as leaders and volunteers demonstrated great respect and encouragement for their students and their ideas. The fact that my participants all perceived an increase in student confidence and initiative also suggests that true dialogue

was occurring, breaking down the unequal relationship between teachers and students that had characterized the traditional educational methods within the schools I studied. By having love, respect, and humility at the heart of their work, leaders and volunteers were modeling how to break down and move beyond the oppressed vs. oppressor dynamic that Freire says is essential to authentic dialogue, as the spoken word either reinforces this model or challenges it in order to remake it.

It is worth noting that there was a less obvious manifestation of dialogue that the programs fostered that occurred beyond the scope of concrete program activities. This manifestation appeared in *how* the programs were introduced and implemented in schools. When leaders would first come into new schools to pitch the program and get personnel on board with the idea, they did not just demand to be let into the schools and tell teachers and principals what they should do. Rather, they introduced the programs slowly, leaving plenty of time for questions and reflection with the teachers and prospective parent volunteers (see chapter 6.3.1.). Additionally, by having the “dream together” sessions wherein these stakeholders would brainstorm and envision desired outcomes of program activities, the PPP leaders embodied humility and respect and created a space for genuine dialogue to unfold and new ideas to emerge for consideration. In this way, these dialogic exchanges, just like those with the children, served to breakdown inequality, or the oppressed vs. oppressor dynamic. Freire would consider them just as important to the program’s overall success in creating a path to liberation, as he holds that every action or conversation either reinforces the status quo or presents/perpetuates an alternative vision.

In these ways, both the program activities themselves and the methods used for implementing them in new schools qualify as genuinely dialogic endeavors that the PPPs engaged in on the ground in the effort to create a new model of liberatory, problem-posing education.

7.3 Praxis

Finally, I posit that the PPP programs I studied did engage in what Freire calls “praxis.” However, from analyzing my participants’ perceptions of their work through the PPP programs, it seems that they were slightly more engaged with action than they were with reflection. To summarize from chapter 4.3, praxis is the term that Freire uses to describe the

reciprocal, cyclical process of action and reflection that connects liberatory education with social transformation. It is the method by which those who have been historically voiceless and marginalized can imagine, explore, discuss, and finally implement new possibilities, and then reflect upon these actions to communally move forward in a more enlightened way. Freire insists that these two components (action and reflection) must be weighted equally for true praxis to exist.

Reflection was most evident in my participants' thoughts about the failed system described in 6.1. Program leaders and volunteers had similar ideas about the ways the public school system had failed as historically administered by SEP and also why these failures had occurred. Their reflections on infrastructure woes, communication problems, and lacking training and support for schools directly impacted what they targeted and prioritized with program activities and with volunteer training or efforts to familiarize the schools with the PPPs. The aforementioned "dream together" sessions also constituted reflection on their present reality, as they collectively imagined what outcomes they would like to see after program implementation. The teacher's quote from the document about how the program has made her change her mentality and constantly be updating it also demonstrates that reflection is occurring as a part of praxis, as this quote suggests she is actively using her observations and critical thinking skills to reimagine again and again what it means to be an educator (see chapter 6.4). Interestingly, my study itself seemed to facilitate the reflective component of praxis, as the questions I asked of my participants seemed to get them thinking and reflecting upon their work more deliberately than they might do on their own on a regular basis.

However, the PPPs' work seemed to emphasize action a bit more than reflection. My participants spent most of the interview time discussing the activities and their effects on improving reading skills, forming literacy, and developing lifelong learning skills. They emphasized the progress they had made for students and in bringing the community together to effectively address the shortcomings of the education system. Much of their excitement and enthusiasm as expressed in the quotes I presented in chapter 6 and in their non-verbal communication cues came from celebrating the extent to which they had achieved program goals, rather than reflecting on these to inform next steps. Nonetheless, both components of praxis were found within my participants' perceptions of their work through the PPPs.

Additionally, I think there would have been more evidence of reflection among the actors I interviewed and observed if the representatives of the two programs actively communicated with one another. As part of my fieldwork, I discovered that the two entities I studied did not have much communication among them, and some did not even know about the work performed by the other entity. I realized from working with the two programs separately that they would greatly benefit if each understood the work being carried out by the other in order to avoid duplication of work and resources (both financial and human) and to be able to implement a collective, aligned strategy to improve the quality of education with clear objectives and jurisdictions. Communicating in this way would have been the action component following deep and thoughtful reflection about the inter and intra-entity communication problems articulated in chapter 6.1.2.

Finally, as indicated in section 4.3, praxis must be accompanied by a sense of faith, trust, and hope in mankind. Without these, it is impossible to truly imagine new possibilities and ways of being in the world and work to make those come alive. It was apparent from my participants' feedback that their actions with the program were motivated by faith and hope. Take for example the quote from Lu found in chapter 6.2.1, repeated here:

We seek that students open and expand their knowledge of possibilities based on reading and literacy exercises that provide participants with a space for open participation and expression. In these sessions, they learn to craft arguments and understand educational language, as well as practice proper speech and pronunciation.

If these words can be extrapolated to the other program leaders and volunteers, it seems that they have a great amount of faith that things can be made better for students, as their work emphasizes helping kids imagine new possibilities and craft compelling arguments, both of which can be considered essential elements to enacting change. Additionally, the increasing involvement of parents and their enthusiasm about bringing authors to the schools and getting other parents and community members involved embodies this faith in mankind and hope for a more equitable, quality future for the education system.

7.4 Concluding Thoughts

Ultimately, the participants in my study perceive that the Reading Program and the Community Program are transforming the education system of Mexico City in meaningful ways that more actively draw upon Freire's notions of raising critical consciousness,

participating in dialogue, and engaging in praxis. In these ways, the PPP programs are working to end the cycle of poverty that has existed within the marginalized communities where they work by using a liberatory approach to education. While the participants never referenced Freire's theories directly, their work embodies an implicit understanding of his critical pedagogy and belief in the ability of education to transform and liberate entire communities. The transformations witnessed not only in students, but also in parents, points to the profound impact the PPP programs are having in achieving systemic change that extends far beyond simply improving reading skills and literacy rates among young students.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Key Findings

The purpose of this project was to explore the role PPPs are playing in achieving higher quality education in the schools of Mexico City by gathering and analyzing program stakeholders' perspectives. This question was deemed to be significant following a review of the literature. This review presented a few different approaches to understanding the concept of “quality education” and then discussed the phenomenon of educational PPPs from an international vantage point, and ultimately revealed that while there is a lot of theoretical support for implementing PPPs to improve education quality, there is a less nuanced understanding of their practical dimensions on the local level—particularly in the developing world and in historically marginalized and oppressed communities. As the context of Mexico City was described, I demonstrated why the outskirts of the city constitute an economically marginalized community and therefore were an appropriate choice for the research site. Next, I presented key aspects of Paulo Freire's theories to construct an analytical framework for understanding my research. I then discussed why I chose a qualitative research design—specifically a case study approach—and then detailed how I sampled my participants and went about the data collection process, in a valid and reliable way. I then presented the findings in the format of four core themes that I found encapsulated my participants' perceptions, and then analyzed this qualitative data according to the framework I established based on Freire and determined that the PPPs I studied were very nearly embodying his problem-posing model of education.

All of this was done in service of my central research question: To what extent are educational PPPs achieving quality education goals in Mexico City primary schools? Based on the perceptions of participants, triangulated against program documents and my personal observations, the PPPs called the Reading Program and the Community Program have been valuable tools for improving the quality of education in marginalized areas of Mexico City. They have brought much needed resources to impoverished schools in Mexico City and have helped to open and stock libraries, addressing some of the infrastructural issues my participants perceived to be part of the failure of the current SEP-run education system. The programs helped students reach new heights with their reading and literacy skills, and

transferred to them some more intangible characteristics like confidence and self-esteem and interpersonal skills like teamwork and conflict resolution. Above all, my participants saw a love of learning and inspiring curiosity blossom among the young students.

My participants shared the perception that active community involvement in the education system was key to transforming a school into a true learning community and to implementing a new, more effective model of education. While a pure causal relationship cannot necessarily be determined between community/parent involvement in learning activities, participants of varying roles within the program felt strongly that their success was a product of this emphasis on community, communication, and continuing education through ongoing training and support.

Finally, considering the direct perceptions of my case study participants in chapter 6.4 in conjunction with the analysis presented in chapter 7 in terms of Freire's problem-posing model of education, it appears that the PPP programs operating in Mexico City are subverting the old means of delivering education that largely followed the banking model of education as theorized by Freire. The new model they are enacting is much more participatory and closely aligns with Freire's notion of a problem-posing educational model that is grounded in the processes of raising collective critical consciousness and engaging in dialogue and praxis. The programs by their design and methods have addressed the problems that participants perceived stemmed from a lack of communication within schools and from a lack of training and support for school personnel. By engaging the community in the activities and even in the initial brainstorming of school-specific objectives, they brought much-needed, hands-on, cost-free assistance into the schools while simultaneously fostering community development centered on the children whose success in life will arguably shape the area for generations to come.

8.2 Contributions of the Study

Other research, such as that presented in my literature review, has been carried out to study the PPP educational model and derive best practices, particularly at the international level through entities like the World Bank and OECD. These studies have typically looked at

marginalized communities and proposed strategies for improving things like the quality of teaching through investments in training and incentive programs and access to resources like food, books, libraries, and a generally safe school environment. However, in using a qualitative approach to gather the direct perceptions of key stakeholders regarding how they experience their work through the PPPs, my study illuminates the human dimension of these programs. My research thus contributes a new understanding of the impact these governance arrangements have not only on schools and learning outcomes, but also on entire communities. Taken in sum, my research contributes to the body of research that depicts the implementation of innovative, participatory education programs as a community development endeavor.

This case study also contributes to the body of scholarly work that seeks to define and implement “quality education.” It is my view that gathering as many individual, close-up examples as possible is helpful for creating a holistic picture of what quality of education means in different parts of the world and what themes remain constant across all settings. By establishing international and regional commonalities, while also paying attention to the specifics and nuances of one particular case, researchers can better tackle educational quality issues around the globe. My particular research will be especially useful for key stakeholders and municipal policymakers in Mexico City, as my findings give direct insight into the geographic, socio-cultural space of the city’s outskirts. National policymakers could also use it as they evaluate the newly implemented education reforms that have taken place in recent years. Additionally, since educational PPPs are a relatively new phenomenon in Mexico City, my research contributes to understanding the essential benefits and pitfalls this approach can have for the entire sector of education.

8.3 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Although there was a relatively high number of participants in my study that provided relevant information for understanding the work PPPs are doing in Mexico City, the sample could have included a more diverse and comprehensive set of stakeholders. It would have been valuable to gather student perceptions of program activities and outcomes, as well as the perspectives of parents who were not involved directly in the programs as volunteers. To this point, by interviewing only program leaders and volunteers, there was likely an inherent

bias among my participants that skewed their viewpoints to be more optimistic and positive than those who did not actively enact the programs in schools. It seems apparent that if these individuals had chosen to devote their time and energy to the programs that they believed in their mission and methods and thus might not be as critical of the organizations. Hearing more from participants who might not have had such a positive experience with the program or who had witnessed some failures or shortcomings could have ensured a more accurate representation of this work. For this reason, future research should take the voices of all involved in the creation of a school community into consideration.

Another limitation is the scope of PPP entities reviewed. The Community Program and the Reading Program are two small and similar examples of this type of education governance. While the findings of my research can be applied to other such programs in similar contexts, they cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other arrangements like publicly funded private schools, school vouchers, and public schools that are fully operated by private entities. In other words, because PPP arrangements can take such diverse forms in terms of funding, management, and oversight, my findings may only be useful for understanding a select type of arrangement that is similar to the Reading and Community Programs. It would be useful for researchers to explore the extent to which these findings about creating learning communities based on stakeholder perspectives did in fact apply in other PPP contexts—perhaps keeping within the location of Mexico City to allow a constant variable to exist and genuine comparison to occur.

Finally, while I noted in the previous section 8.2 that my research offers a new angle for understanding PPP arrangements by focusing on the personal, human element of the program implementation, it would be useful to track the quantitative outcomes of the programs over time to gain even more insight into the contribution these entities are having on the road to quality education. It seems that considering both qualitative data regarding perceptions of people on the ground with statistical analysis of quantitative data would allow the PPPs to adapt and change in the most informed way possible and achieve maximum impact in schools and in communities at large.

A key theme that emerged from my research is the importance of family and community involvement in the efforts to improve quality of education in marginalized areas. These groups were able to informally supply much-needed resources to students, supplementing

their education in new ways that resulted in remarkable benefits for them. It would be useful to explore this relationship further to determine to what extent a community-based, participatory approach to education reform is essential to improving quality education in historically oppressed communities.

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Appendix 1: Consent Letter

Title of Study: Exploring the Role of Public Private Partnerships in Primary Education of Mexico City: a case study of stakeholders perspectives

Investigators:

Name:	Ramon Rolando Marroquin	Dept:	Education	Phone:	+47 48663007
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Introduction

- You are being asked to be part of a research study about the effects of PPPs in primary public education (public private partnerships).
- You were selected as a possible participant because the researcher considers your knowledge of the topic valuable for the study.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to explore the effects of PPPs have on primary education
- Ultimately, this research may be published as part of a master thesis paper.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: participate in a meeting with the researcher for a period of up to two hours and always at your convenience, and answer a number of questions related with your participation with the project

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are not known risks associated with the study
- If at any time you do not feel comfortable with any of the questions you may leave the interview session

Confidentiality

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. All audio recordings will be kept in an external hard drive protected by password. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.
- The University of Oslo is responsible (data controller) for the project

· The estimated end date for the project is 07.11.2017, at this point the all data collected will be destroy.

Payments

· You will **not** receive payment or reimbursement for your participation

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

· The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

· You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Ramon Rolando Marroquin at rrmarroqui@gmail.com If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators, you may contact Teklu Bekele +47-22855367 or by email teklu.bekele@iped.uio.no

· If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you can report them to the Teklu Bekele at the number above or email. The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent

· Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Participant Name
(print): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. What is your name and the role you play within the program?

2. How long did you participate in the program?
 - a. If somehow your role changed, tell me what that implied.

3. In how many schools do you work with the program?
 - a. In which zone are they located?
 - b. What are the primary challenges you see for schools? Primary opportunities for schools?

4. Tell me a little about the methods you implemented within the schools where the program is carried out.
 - a. Is there a certain method or approach in particular that you believe works better/best in the time you have implemented this project?

5. Based on your experience, tell me about the relationship that exists from the theory to practice (guide participant in this question).

6. Tell me about the objectives of the program, based on the schools you worked on, and how these will change over the course of the program.

7. Based on your experience, tell me about the growth of the program. (Based on the analysis of documents that I did, I was able to observe the growth of participants over the years. How does this impact the dynamics of the project?)

8. Let's talk about how you work with different members of the educational establishment (i.e. parents, students, teachers, administrative personnel.)

9. Tell me about the process of integrating the program between the different schools where you participated. Based on technical differences of the establishment to. (from having a library or not, internet, a collection, trained personnel, etc.)

10. During your years within the program did you see any change in the program, in relation to the implementation process, methodology, etc.?

11. What changes or differences did you see within the groups that participated in the program?

12. Tell me about the preparation for the program leaders

a. Advantage

b. Disadvantages

13. Tell me about the impacts of the NEL program in the groups / schools where you participated.

a. To the teachers

b. To the parents

c. To the students

d. Community

14. What is the opinion of the popes about the contribution of the program

15. What is the opinion of the teachers about the contribution of the program

a. Advantages they notice

b. Disadvantages that they notice

16. (If there are disadvantages) In your opinion, what are some of the difficulties and obstacles that the program has faced?

a. How do you get included in the solution

Appendix 3: Observations checklist

Characteristics of the School

1. General observations as I approach the school

General aspect of the buildings (paint, window, common areas)

2. Aspects of the classroom

Chalkboard or whiteboard?

Is the classroom clean?

Teacher presentation

Is there a library inside the classroom?

Is there a computer/projector in the classroom?

How are the student desks organized (circle or rows)?

Are there enough desks/chairs for each student?

Are there trash cans inside the classroom?

Classroom Activities Observations

How many students in classroom?

How many parents/volunteers/leaders in the classroom?

Students engaged in the activity, who talks the most boys or girls?

Is the parent(s) active and able to lead the activity?

Do they have a good understanding of the activity?

What are the student's aspects (shoes, clothes, notebooks)?

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS I WANT TO NOTE

How are the program leader perceived in school?

What is the general feeling of me being there?