



Education Policy Analysis  
Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas  
Educativas

ISSN: 1068-2341

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Estados Unidos

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The Effectiveness of Mexico's Faculty Improvement Program (Promep) in Public State  
Universities  
Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas, vol. 23,  
2015, pp. 1-22  
Arizona State University  
Arizona, Estados Unidos

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=275041389025>

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## The Effectiveness of Mexico's Faculty Improvement Program (Promep) in Public State Universities

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**Citation:** Guzmán-Acuña, T., & Martínez-Arcos, C. A. (2015). The effectiveness of Mexico's faculty improvement program (Promep) in Public State Universities. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(55). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1446>

**Abstract:** This article evaluates the effectiveness of Promep, a faculty improvement program implemented by Mexico's Federal Department of Public Education (SEP) since 1996 to improve the academic qualifications, performance, and organization of faculty at the public higher education institutions. This evaluation examines the degree to which Promep has achieved its quantitative objectives with regard to the Public State Universities (PSU), which is the higher education subsystem that Promep has been active in for the longest period of time (1996–2013). The evaluation is based on numerous data reports published by Promep, the SEP, and other federal institutions as well as on essential subsystem-wide indicators calculated from data individually collected from each of the PSU for the purposes of this study. The results indicate that Promep has significantly improved the academic qualifications, performance, and organization of the full-time faculty staff of the PSU, but also that by 2013 the program has not been able to meet the quantitative goals it expected to achieve by late 2008, which was its initial deadline. The study suggests that the failure to achieve these initial and manageable goals has

occurred mostly because many PSU have allowed the infringement of their own faculty recruitment, permanence, and promotion regulations and Promep has failed to stop these practices through the establishment of more drastic strategies, such as binding agreements and penalization schemes.

**Keywords:** faculty staff; faculty improvement; higher education; Mexico; Promep; program evaluation

### **La Efectividad del Programa de Mejoramiento del Profesorado (Promep) en las Universidades Públicas Estatales de México**

**Resumen:** Este artículo evalúa la efectividad del Programa de Mejoramiento del Profesorado (Promep) implementado por la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) de México desde 1996 para mejorar el perfil, desempeño y organización académica de la planta docente de las instituciones públicas de educación superior en el país. Esta evaluación se enfoca en el grado en el que Promep ha alcanzado los objetivos que él mismo se propuso alcanzar en el subsistema de las Universidades Públicas Estatales (UPES), el cual es la división del sistema de educación superior mexicano en el que Promep estuvo activo por más años (1996-2013). La evaluación se basa en la información extraída de varios reportes publicados por Promep, a través de la SEP, y otras instituciones federales, así como en datos e indicadores obtenidos de manera directa de cada una de las UPES incluidas en el estudio. Los resultados indican que Promep ha mejorado significativamente el perfil, desempeño y organización académica del profesorado de tiempo completo de las UPES, pero también que para el 2013 el programa aún no había sido capaz de cumplir con los objetivos cuantitativos que él mismo se propuso alcanzar para finales del 2008. El estudio sugiere que este fracaso para alcanzar los objetivos iniciales se debe principalmente al hecho de que muchas UPES han cometido o permitido la violación de las regulaciones sobre reclutamiento, permanencia y promoción del profesorado y al hecho de que Promep no ha establecido estrategias más drásticas para detener estas violaciones, como la firma de acuerdos jurídicos que incluyan penalizaciones para las UPES que cometan violaciones.

**Palabras-clave:** Profesorado; mejoramiento del profesorado; educación superior; México; Promep; evaluación de programas públicos

### **A Eficácia do Programa de Aperfeiçoamento de Professores (PROMEP) em Universidades Públicas Estaduais no México**

**Resumo:** O presente artigo avalia a eficácia do Programa de Melhoramento de Professores (PROMEP) implementado pelo Ministério de Educação Pública (SEP) do México desde 1996 para melhorar o perfil e desempenho e organização acadêmica do corpo docente das instituições públicas de ensino superior no país. Esta avaliação incide sobre o grau em que PROMEP alcançou os objetivos que ele se propõe atingir no subsistema de Universidades Públicas Estaduais (UPES), que é a divisão do sistema mexicano de ensino superior em que PROMEP esteve ativo por mais anos (1996-2013). A avaliação é baseada na informação extraída dos diversos relatórios publicados pelo PROMEP, através do SEP, e de outras instituições federais, bem como de dados e indicadores obtidos diretamente de cada UPES incluídas no estudo. Os resultados indicam que PROMEP elevou significativamente o perfil, desempenho acadêmico e organização do corpo docente em tempo integral das UPES, mas também que, até 2013, o programa ainda não tinha sido capaz de cumprir as metas quantitativas que se deveria atingir para final de 2008. O estudo sugere que essa falha em atingir os objetivos iniciais foi principalmente devido ao fato de que muitas UPES cometeram ou autorizaram a violação dos regulamentos em matéria de recrutamento, retenção e promoção de professores e o fato de que PROMEP não estabeleceu medidas drásticas para parar

essas violações, incluindo a assinatura de acordos legais que incluam sanções por violações das UPES.

**Palavras-chave:** professores; melhoria dos professores; ensino superior; México; PROMEP; avaliação de programas públicos.

## Introduction: Faculty Improvement in Mexico

Faculty improvement, faculty development, or staff development as it is often called, refers to the broad range of activities Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) implement at all levels of the educational continuum (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education) to renew or assist faculty members to improve their knowledge and skills relevant to their institutional setting and faculty position, so that they can properly perform their different academic roles, such as teaching, research and administration (Bland, Schmitz, Stritter, Henry, & Aluise, 1990; Centra, 1978; Whitcomb, 2003). Faculty improvement has become an increasingly important component in HEIs simply because the quality of the education they offer is necessarily linked to the education and training of their faculty staff. Altbach (1977), for instance, considers that faculty improvement is crucial for the transformation of universities because the academic staff are the driving force of the higher education business since: 1) only they carry out the social function assigned to higher education institutions; 2) they control the curriculum and the research agenda; 3) they participate, to varying degrees, in the governance of these institutions; 4) they control the transmission, production and dissemination of knowledge more than any other group in society; and 5) they are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the continuity of the idea of the university.

This article examines the effectiveness of the Faculty Improvement Program (*Programa de Mejoramiento del Profesorado* [Promep]) designed by Mexico's Federal Department of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*<sup>1</sup> [SEP]) and more precisely by its Higher Education Division (*Subsecretaría de Educación Superior*<sup>2</sup> [SES]), with the help of the Mexican Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior*, [ANUIES]<sup>3</sup>) and Mexico's National Council for Science and Technology (*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, [CONACYT]<sup>4</sup>). In essence, the objective of Promep was to improve the academic qualifications (in terms of degrees), performance (in the areas of teaching, tutoring, research, and administration), and organization (in academic groups) of the faculty staff (*profesorado*) of Mexico's public HEIs.

The creation of Promep in the mid-1990s was motivated by the fact that during that time the faculty staff of most public HEIs in Mexico suffered from serious deficiencies in terms of academic qualifications (most staff did not have a postgraduate degree), performance (most staff focused on teaching and neglected other academic activities, particularly scientific research) and organization (there was a complete lack of academic and research groups in most public HEIs). These deficiencies derived from the fact that since 1960 Mexico experienced an exponential increase in the demand for higher education (see Figure 1), but during that time there were a lack of professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Created in 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly known as the *Subsecretaría de Educación Superior e Investigación Científica*, aka *SESIC*.

<sup>3</sup> ANUIES is an NGO created in 1958 to improve and standardize the teaching, research and cultural promotion programs in both public and private higher education institutions (see <http://www.anui.es.mx/>).

<sup>4</sup> CONACYT was created in 1970 to develop programs to take better advantage of the natural resources of the country, to implement actions to solve deficiencies in the areas of health, food supply, agricultural and livestock production, industrialization, education, rural development, and to decentralize research, which was concentrated in Mexico City (see <http://www.conacyt.gob.mx>).

with an appropriate academic qualification and experience to teach at a university, particularly at the postgraduate levels (Gil-Antón, 1994; SEP, 1996, p. 1). Most institutions were forced to increase the flexibility of their faculty recruitment and promotion systems to attend to the increasing number of students requesting their services. As a result, as several studies have pointed out, from 1960 to 1996 a huge number of part-time and even full-time faculty positions in public HEIs were given to people who did not have the experience or an appropriate academic degree to teach at the university level or to perform any academic activities. For instance, according to Gil-Antón (1994, p. 100), 91.7% of the people hired as teachers by public HEIs from 1986 to 1992 had no research experience<sup>5</sup>.

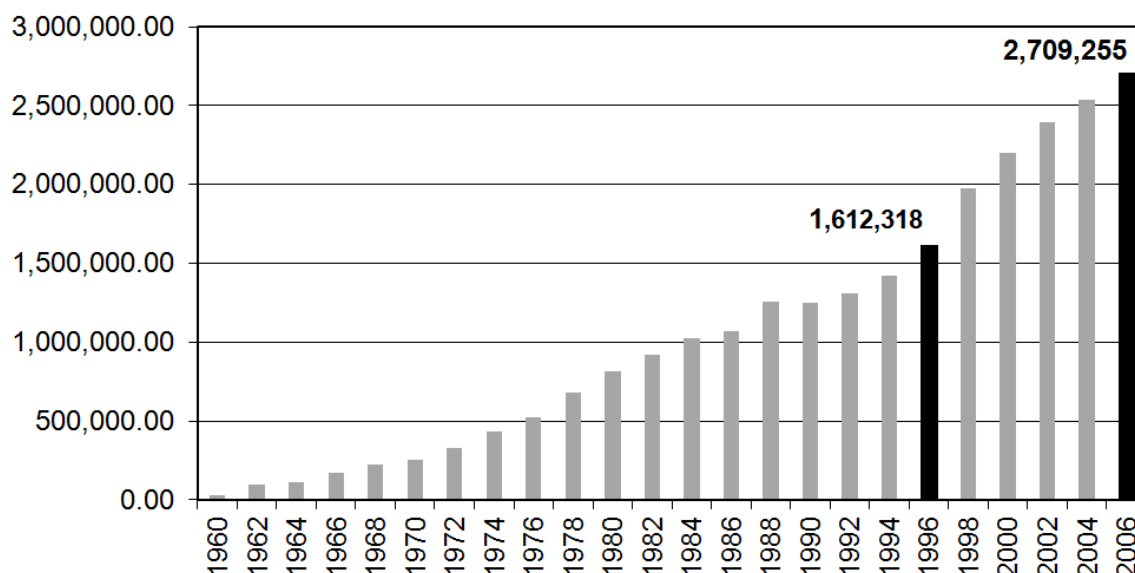


Figure 1. National higher education enrollment in Mexico (1950 to 2006).

Source: Authors' own creation based on data included in SEP (2007b, p. 4)

Despite the fact that the “generation and application of knowledge” was one of the institutional missions of most public HEIs”, up until the mid-1990s most of these institutions had a very low level of research productivity and had no policies in place to promote the formation of researchers, research groups, or scientific research networks. During the mid-1990s, scientific and technological research in Mexico was mostly carried out in the Public Federal Universities (a small but very important branch of the public higher education system that was only funded and managed by the federal government) and specialized research institutes, most of which were created, managed and/or supported by the CONACYT. The only national program that encouraged academic research among the faculty staff of the public HEIs in the mid-1990s was the CONACYT’s National Researchers System (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores* [SNI]), which was created in 1984 to identify and reward (through distinctions and financial incentives in the form of non-taxable

<sup>5</sup> Here it is important to note that, according to some authors like Pérez-Castro (2006, p. 3), before the expansion of the higher education system the faculty of Mexican universities, including the public state universities, was mostly composed of prestigious practicing specialists from different areas who only taught part-time in one or more HEIs, as part of their professional activities.

complements to remuneration<sup>6</sup>) the active and prominent researchers<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, this System was inspired by the merit pay model applied widely in the United States, where wages are based on the academic productivity of each professor. The SNI was created by Presidential decree and by request of the Mexican NGO *Academia de la Investigación Científica* (Academy of Scientific Research) to mitigate the effects of the poor salaries and the worsening working conditions of the few researchers working in the public HEIs and research institutes during the early 1980s, when Mexico was hit by an economical crisis. The main objectives of the SNI were to reduce the risks of brain drain, and to promote and strengthen the quality of the scientific and technology research and innovation in Mexico (see [www.conacyt.gob.mx/sni](http://www.conacyt.gob.mx/sni)).

Despite the fact that in the mid-1990s the academic staff of most public HEIs suffered from severe academic deficiencies, Promep was initially directed only to one of the many subsystems of the Public Higher Education System: the public state universities subsystem, which in 1996 was composed of 39 public HEIs, of which 34 were autonomous universities and the rest were institutions that depended legally and administratively of their respective states (see Table 1). The Mexican public state university subsystem, which receives federal and state funding, is very similar to the public state university subsystem of the USA in terms of educational offer. The Mexican public state universities offer bachelor's degrees (*Licenciaturas*), master's degrees (*Maestrías*) and doctorates (*Doctorados*), and some of them also offer medical specialization degrees (hence, MSD) and associate degrees.

Table 1

*List of the 39 Public HEIs Supported by Promep as Part of the Public State University Subsystem Since 1996 (ordered alphabetically)*

Centro de Estudios Superiores de Sonora	U. A. de San Luis Potosí
Benemérita U. A. de Puebla	U. A. de Sinaloa
Instituto Tecnológico de Sonora	U. A. de Tamaulipas
U. A. de Aguascalientes	U. A. de Tlaxcala
U. A. de Baja California	U. A. de Yucatán
U. A. de Baja California Sur	U. A. de Zacatecas
U. A. de Campeche	U. de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas
U. A. del Carmen	U. de Colima

<sup>6</sup> Incentives vary from three to 14 times the Mexican minimum wage depending on the category and level of the attributed recognition. There are five research category/levels in the SNI. The first or lowest level, the National Researcher Candidate, is granted to people who have recently obtained a PhD degree and have recently started their research production. The following three levels are categories of "National Researcher" (I, II and III), which are granted to active researchers depending on their productivity level, originality of their research lines, academic trajectory, and participation in activities of dissemination of science and technology. The highest category is the Emeritus National Researcher, which is only granted to researchers who are at least 65 years of age at the moment of application and have received the National Researcher Level III distinction for at least 15 consecutive years (see <http://www.conacyt.gob.mx/sni/>).

<sup>7</sup> In order to be eligible to SNI affiliation, researchers must fulfill one of the following requirements: 1) to have a PhD degree; 2) to have a contract to develop scientific and/or technological research for at least 20 hours per week in public, private or social higher education institutions or research centers in Mexico; or 3) to be Mexican and be involved in full-time scientific and technology research abroad.

Table 1 (Cont'd.)

*List of the 39 Public HEIs Supported by Promep as Part of the Public State University Subsystem Since 1996 (ordered alphabetically)*

U. A. de Chiapas	U. de Guanajuato
U. A. de Chihuahua	U. de Guadalajara
U. A. de Ciudad Juárez	U. de Occidente
U. A. de Coahuila	U. de Quintana Roo
U. A. de Guerrero	U. de Sonora
U. A. del Estado de Hidalgo	U. del Mar
U. A. del Estado de México	U. Juárez A. de Tabasco
U. A. del Estado de Morelos	U. Juárez del Estado de Durango
U. A. de Nayarit	U. Michoacana de S. N. de Hidalgo
U. A. de Nuevo León	U. Tecnológica de La Mixteca
U. A. Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	U. Veracruzana
U. A. de Querétaro	

*Source:* Authors' own creation based on data published by PROMEP (2006).

*Abbreviations:* U. = *Universidad* (University); A. = *Autónoma* (Autonomous).

The SEP's initial focus on the public state university subsystem was surely due to the fact that in 1996 the autonomous public state universities, which were the main type of HEIs included in this subsystem, catered about 673,600 students—632,900 in undergraduate programs and 40,700 postgraduate programs, according to the Cámara de Diputados (2005, p. 24), which was over half (53.90%) of all the students enrolled in public HEIs (1,249,618) and 41.77% of all the students enrolled in both public and private higher education institutions: 1,612,318 (see figure 1). Thus, the public state university subsystem was essential to meet the demand for higher education in the country. Another reason why Promep focused its resources on the public state university subsystem was that at that time this subsystem employed about 35.86% of all the faculty staff working in the public HEIs (120,572 according to the Cámara de Diputados [2005, p. 43]) and 25.38% of all the faculty staff working for both public and private higher education institutions, 170,350 according to the Cámara de Diputados (2005, p. 43).

Promep was designed as a mid-term strategy that would achieve its objectives (which will be detailed in the following sections) in 10 to 12 years, i.e. from 2006 to 2008 (SEP, 2006, p. 7). However, before Promep had achieved its objectives and had been proven effective in the public state university subsystem, in 2002 the SEP decided to make Promep a central and apparently permanent strategy of its Education Development Plans and so started to implement it in other public HEIs. These HEIs were part of other public higher education subsystems, which were surely also in need of support to improve the academic profile and organization of their faculty staff. One of the reasons for the expansion of Promep to other public higher education subsystems was surely the fact that its initial focus on the public state university subsystem and neglecting of the other subsystems was very criticized by many organizations and scholars (see, for instance, De Vries, 2000).

Table 2  
*Number of Public Higher Education Institutions and Subsystems Supported by Promep Since 1996*

Public higher education subsystems	1996	2002	2004	2005	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Public State Universities	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
Public State Universities with Mixed Funding		8	12	12	14	17	21	21	25	22	25
Polytechnic Universities		1	4	4	16	16	23	30	35	43	43
Technological Universities		22	48	51	60	60	60	60	65	77	88
Federal Technological Institutes						110	110	110	111	130	132
Normal Schools							257	250	250	250	255
Decentralized Technological Institutes								49	60	77	82
Intercultural Universities								9	9	8	8
<b>Total public higher education subsystems</b>	1	4	4	4	4	5	6	8	8	8	8
<b>Total public higher education institutions</b>	39	70	103	106	129	242	510	568	594	646	672

*Source:* Authors' own creation based on data included in SEP (2013, p. 77).

In 2006, the SEP offered the first evaluation of Promep (SEP, 2006) and the results were not very positive. However, as part of its 2007–2012 Education Sector Program (SEP, 2007, p. 27), the SEP decided to continue implementing Promep beyond its expected duration and to extend it to even more public higher education institutions and subsystems, in order to try to meet the objectives of the federal government's "2007–2012 National Development Plan" in terms of higher education, which basically were "to consolidate the profile and performance of the academic staff and to extend the evaluation and accreditation practices of the higher education programs" (p. 198).

## Methods

Based on the previous context, this study will examine the effectiveness of Promep based on to what degree it has managed to meet the four goals it set for itself in 1996 in relation to the public state university subsystem, which is the subsystem that has been supported by this Program for the longest period of time: since 1996 to this day. The evaluation focuses on the achievements made by 2008, when Promep was supposed to reach its initial goals, and by 2012, when the SEP's 2007–2012 Education Sector Program came to an end.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of Promep will not take into account its impact on the other public higher education subsystems because they have been supported by the Program for a smaller number of years and because Promep has not published enough data on the results achieved in these other subsystems as to be able to make a substantial evaluation.



This article does not aim to make comparisons about the effectiveness of Promep across the different public state universities, disciplines or geographic areas, but to offer a general picture of its effectiveness to improve the academic qualifications, performance and organization of the faculty staff of the public state university subsystem as a whole.

Since Promep has failed to directly provide clear and recent summaries of its achievements in the public state university subsystem, the data used to evaluate the effectiveness of Promep was collected mostly from nine reports published by the SEP and other three documents published by its Higher Education Division (the SES), all of which offer scattered information that is essential for the evaluation. Other important information which has not been made public by the SEP or Promep (like the size of the faculty in the whole public state university subsystem across the years) was calculated from information obtained from the ANUIES and each of the public HEIs included in the public state university subsystem.

In addition, to better understand the reasons why Promep had not achieved some of its objectives, during the months of February and March, 2013, we briefly interviewed, via email, some of the representatives of Promep at the public state universities. A total of 18 Promep representatives were approached but only 10 of them agreed to comment in an anonymous manner. Their opinions were only used to better understand some of the findings of the evaluation, but not as a tool to evaluate Promep.

This study is important because it focuses on one of the most important and the longest faculty improvement programs ever implemented in Mexico's higher education system. Now that Promep is about to be transformed at the end of 2013 by the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto, it is important to have a clear idea of the degree to which this Program's implementation matched the program's initial objectives in order to be able to determine whether all the money invested in it was worth it. This evaluation is particularly important because the SEP and other relevant government institutions in general have tended to only highlight Promep's achievements and to ignore its very significant weaknesses in some areas and have failed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness. This article is aimed at English-speaking academics and the general public interested in learning about the changing state of this sub-system of public higher education in Mexico.

In order to contextualize the evaluation of Promep, this article starts with the description of Promep's main objectives and strategies. Along this description, the article offers an overview of the situation of the public state university subsystem in the mid-1990s in the areas that Promep tried to improve, in order to establish a point of comparison for the subsequent evaluation. Finally, the study offers an analysis of the achievements and problems of this program, 17 years after its creation.

## Promep's Objectives and Strategies

### The Four Objectives

Since its inception, Promep has strived to achieve four goals in the aforementioned 39 public state universities and each of their Higher Education Units (*Dependencias de Educación Superior*, aka *DES*), i.e. the educational establishments that are in charge of one or more study programs (like bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates) in the form of schools (*Facultades*), departments or multidisciplinary academic units. In what follows, we analyze these four objectives and its degree of novelty or similarly in comparison to previous faculty improvement programs.

**First objective: To increase the proportion of the full-time faculty.** The first objective of Promep for the public state university subsystem was to increase the proportion of the full-time

faculty in relation to the size of the general faculty (which includes full-time as well as part-time and hourly-paid posts). According to Promep, the reason why it focused on increasing the proportion of the full-time faculty was the fact that this sector of the faculty, in comparison to part-time faculty members, is the one that meets the conditions to receive academic professionalization, has the time needed by a state university to properly perform its functions and fulfill its missions, and because it is with this sector of the faculty that the public state universities can establish new levels of commitment to develop new competencies and gain deeper knowledge of their organizational processes. According to the SEP, by 1996 only 33% (14,270) of the total faculty of the public state university subsystem had a full-time post. The goal of Promep in this regard was to double the proportion of full-time faculty in the public state university subsystem to reach 66% by 2006–2008 (SEP, 2006, p. 7).

The public state university subsystem does not have a homogeneous classification of the categories, positions, and levels of the faculty staff, which is mostly referred to as “academic staff” (*personal académico*), even when most of the categories are focused or limited to teaching activities. The most common full-time faculty category in the public state university subsystem is the *Professor de Tiempo Completo* (Full Time Professor), which has three or four sub-categories (D, E, F and G) depending on the academic degree. In Mexico, the university workers with this position are generally known as *profesores de carrera*. None of the public state universities has “research scholar” positions or “research-assistant” job categories.

**Second objective: To increase the share of full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree.** The second objective of Promep was to increase the share of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree to develop academic activities within a university, which for Promep was the highest level of studies, a doctorate (which is the degree that provides scientific research skills and some degree of research experience) or at least an academic degree that was superior to the level of studies in which the full-time faculty was teaching (e.g. full-time faculty teaching in undergraduate programs had to at least own a master’s degree, and those teaching in master’s degree programs had to own a Doctorate). By 1996, the great majority of the full-time faculty was under-qualified. In fact, according to the SEP, by 1996, 65% of the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem had a bachelor’s degree, while 27% had a master’s degree and only 8% had a doctorate SEP (2013, p. 78). In this sense, Promep disregarded the academic development of the faculty staff with part-time and hourly-paid jobs, which is mostly dedicated to teaching, the main activity of the public state universities.

Promep’s goal for 2006–2008 in relation to the academic qualifications of the full-time faculty was to increase the percentage of the full-time faculty with postgraduate degrees from 35% to 100%, i.e. to decrease the percentage of the full-time faculty with bachelor’s degrees from 35% to 0%. The objective was to increase the percentage of the full-time faculty with doctorates from 8% to 22%, and with master’s degrees or MSD from 27% to 78% (SEP, 2006, p. 7).

**Third objective: To increase the share of full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile.** The third objective of Promep was to increase the share of the full-time faculty that had an appropriate academic profile, i.e. an appropriate academic degree plus a competent, productive and balanced performance in what Promep has considered to be the four basic academic functions: teaching, generation and innovative application of knowledge, tutoring, and academic administration. In few words, the third objective of Promep consisted in turning the full-time faculty from teachers, which had traditionally been the main role assigned to the faculty staff, into academics.

Teaching used to be the only academic function assigned to the large majority of the full-time faculty in the public state university subsystem. However, as some scholars, like Gil-Antón

(1994) have pointed out, the majority of the faculty staff with prestige as researchers did not participate in the teaching of undergraduate courses or in the formation of human resources in the area of academic research within their employing universities. For this reason, Promep established that in order for the full-time faculty to be considered to have an appropriate academic profile they had to teach at least one class-based course to students per year. This point is important to make sure that the best academics and researchers actually share their knowledge with undergraduates. However, Promep did not establish any specific goals regarding the performance of the teaching function or the teaching-learning process.

The “generation and innovative application of knowledge” is what is simply known as academic or scientific research in most western universities. The promotion and enhancement of this function was one of the main objectives of Promep because up until the mid-1990s the share of the faculty staff actively involved in research projects in the public state university subsystem was very low, despite the fact that the “generation and application of knowledge” was one of the institutional missions of all the public state universities. The low research productivity in the public state university subsystem was clearly reflected in the statistics of the National Researchers System (SNI): by 1996, of the 5,969 people nationally recognized as researchers in the SNI only 14.29% (853) were part of this subsystem (CONACYT, 2011), despite the fact that this subsystem employed over 50% of the faculty staff working in all the public higher education institutions. For Promep, the research function in the public state university subsystem could be met by the full-time faculty through active participation in at least one research project that resulted in the production of at least one research good-quality product per year. The products valid by Promep as research output are basically the same products accepted by CONACYT to grant the SNI awards: a) peer-reviewed and/or indexed journal articles, b) books, c) book chapters, d) peer-reviewed conference proceedings papers, e) art works, f) patents, g) prototypes, h) intellectual property, i) utility models, j) technical reports, and k) technology commercialization.

Tutoring refers to the advising and scientific and technology training of undergraduate and post-graduate students and particularly, the supervision/direction of dissertations and thesis in order to involve the faculty more in the formation of human resources. Promep considers that this function can be fulfilled with the direction of one thesis per year (from either graduate or postgraduate programs). Here it is important to mention that the promotion of the direction of thesis as a basic function of the faculty staff was very important because up until 1996 B.A. students from the public state university subsystem rarely graduated with thesis, which is often seen as the most difficult of the three graduation options offered to B.A. students in the public state university subsystem: the other two are general examination of knowledge (opportunity given to students with a minimum average mark of 9 (out of ten) and a thesis-substituting course (an M.A. module or a diploma in a related subject).

Finally, for Promep, the “academic administration” function can be performed individually or in a group and refers to the direction of periodical seminars, the organization of academic events, the participation in evaluation committees, and the participation in collegiate organisms (as members or part of special commissions requested by these organisms), among others.

**Fourth objective: To organize the full-time faculty in academic bodies.** The final main objective of Promep was to improve the academic organization and performance of the full-time faculty through the creation of “academic bodies”, i.e. multi-function groups formed by full-time faculty members from the same area of knowledge or related areas of knowledge, who share one or several research lines (or “lines of generation and innovative application of knowledge” in Promep’s terms) and work together to perform the basic academic functions of the public state university subsystem: a) to increase the level of research production; b) to develop human resources; and c) to

strengthen the educational programs and academic planning (SEP, 2006, p. 97). The promotion of the organization of the full-time faculty into academic bodies also aimed to encourage the best academics and researchers to contribute to the development of the academic community of their employing universities. The introduction of academic bodies was an innovative strategy in the public state university subsystem as only very few of the universities that were part of this system had academic bodies or research groups by the mid-1990s and thus it would change the traditional way in which the faculty carry out research in this system, i.e. individually and rarely and mostly motivated by personal interests.

### The Strategies

In order to achieve each one of the ambitious goals described above Promep implemented a series of well-thought and defined strategies and schemes (whose particularities will be described below) and also contacted each of the universities and each of the Higher Education Units (HEUs) that were part of the public state university subsystem to evaluate the particular situation of their faculty staff, and establish specific goals that would contribute to the achievement of the objectives set for the whole subsystem. In order to commit each of the HEUs to contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives and guidelines of Promep, the SEP conditioned the provision of certain federal economic incentives and certifications to HEU to their signing of agreements (known as the *Acuerdos DES-Promep* in Spanish<sup>8</sup>) in which they had to pledge to adapt or align their institutional faculty staff recruitment, permanence, and promotion policies/criteria according to the objectives and guidelines of Promep. In particular, all the HEUs that were part of the public state university subsystem were required stop giving full-time faculty posts to people who were under-qualified or did not fit the needs of their academic bodies and educational programs. These agreements were very important because by the mid-1990s most public state universities had diverse faculty staff recruitment, permanence and promotion policies due to the fact that the large majority of these institutions were autonomous and had the liberty to make their own decisions in these matters.

**Strategy to increase the proportion of the full-time faculty.** In order to be able to afford the cost of increasing the proportion of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree in the state university subsystem, in 1997 Promep started to work in coordination with the SEP's "Fund for the Modernization of Education" (*Fondo para la Modernización de la Educación*, aka FOMES), which was created in 1990 to articulate the application of several federal funds to modernize the infrastructure and the academic-administrative reformation of public HEIs. To this end, the FOMES started to assign resources to the public state university subsystem to hire new full-time faculty staff, and fund the research projects of the new academic bodies, based on the DES-Promep agreements. In 1998, it was agreed that FOMES would assign at least 80% of its resources to infrastructure and preferably to support consolidated academic bodies (De Vries, 2000, p. 5).

**Strategy to increase the share of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree.** To increase the proportion of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree in the public state university subsystem, in October 1997 Promep implemented a postgraduate scholarship program to allow under-qualified full-time faculty members to undertake and complete the postgraduate study program(s) needed to obtain an appropriate academic degree. This program, which allows its beneficiaries to maintain their salary during the length of the scholarship, was only available for under-qualified full-time faculty hired before December 31, 1996, in order to discourage public state universities from giving full-time faculty posts to under-qualified people. In addition, in order to make sure the full-time faculty eligible

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<sup>8</sup> The acronym "DES" stands for *Dependencias de Educación Superior* (Higher Education Units).

for the postgraduate scholarship program only undertook high-quality postgraduate degrees, Promep only authorized scholarships to pursue masters' and doctoral programs that were listed in the Catalogue of Quality Postgraduate Programs<sup>9</sup> produced by the CONACYT and the SEP, through its Higher Education Division (SES) or that were part of highly-ranked international universities.

This postgraduate scholarship program was similar to the "Program for the Improvement of the Academic Staff" (*Programa de Superación del Personal Académico*, aka *Supera*), which was funded by the federal government and designed and implemented, in 1994, by the ANUIES in the public HEIs that were affiliated to it, including the public state university subsystem. *Supera* was basically the first national program focused on improving the faculty's academic qualifications developed in collaboration between the SEP and the ANUIEs, which before that had only focused on creating and implementing programs and commissions to evaluate the study programs of in the public state university subsystem<sup>10</sup>. At the entrance of Promep's postgraduate scholarship program, the *Supera* program was cancelled in the public state university subsystem.

In addition, Promep implemented another postgraduate scholarship program with a bond requirement to allow public state universities to recruit outstanding students undertake high-quality masters' and doctoral programs and bind them to return to work for them for at least the same number of years during which they received the scholarship. This postgraduate scholarship program was similar to the one implemented by CONACYT to allow top students to undertake post-graduate studies in prestigious national and international universities to later incorporate them in its research centers.

**Strategy to increase the proportion of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile.** To achieve this objective, Promep required public state universities to encourage and to assign time to their full-time faculty members to perform the aforementioned four academic roles/functions. In particular, Promep asked the public state universities to reduce the number of hours assigned to the full-time faculty for teaching (which was the activity mostly performed by the faculty staff) and to assign more hours to each of the other academic activities, particularly research. In addition, Promep implemented a system to identify, certify, and economically reward the full-time faculty members who had an appropriate academic profile. The objective of the economic rewards was naturally to motivate the full-time faculty to obtain and maintain their appropriate academic profile. The system used to evaluate the quality and amount of academic output presented by the full-time faculty to receive the appropriate academic profile certification was similar to the one used by the CONACYT to grant the SNI awards: a process of peer review evaluation carried out by Dictating Commissions divided by academic disciplines. This system of appropriate academic profile recognition has a validity of three years, after which the holders have to re-apply to maintain their certification. The rewards consisted of only one-off financial non-taxable bonus: 30,000.00 Mexican Pesos (approximately 2,307 US dollars) for full-time faculty with Master's degree and 40,000.00 Mexican pesos (approximately 3,076 US dollars) for full-time faculty with doctoral degrees. To put the value of these bonuses in perspective, it may be worth noting that, according to Comas (2003), in 1990 the annual salary received by a Mexican academic, without work benefits (like bonuses and premiums), was of 9,380.30 USD (which is less than half of the annual salary received in 1980: 19,964 USD).

<sup>9</sup> Available at <http://www.conacyt.gob.mx/FormacionCapitalHumano/Paginas/PosgradosCalidad.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, in 1978 the ANUIES collaborated with the SEP to create the National System for the Permanent Planning of Higher Education (SINAPPES), the National Coordination for the Planning of Higher Education (CONPES) and the State Commissions for the Planning of Higher Education (COEPES).

**Strategy to organize the full-time faculty in academic bodies.** The main strategy implemented by Promep to motivate the full-time faculty to join or form an academic body was to request the CONACYT to condition the assignation of economic resources for research projects to applicants from the public state universities to the membership to an academic group. So in order for researchers from public state universities to obtain funding from PROMEP or CONACYT for their research projects they had to be part of an academic body. Promep, however, did not offer any personal economic incentive to the full-time faculty to be part of an academic body. To make sure academic bodies in the public state university subsystem were able to carry out their duties Promep worked in collaboration with the Fund for the Modernization of Education to provide academic bodies with the necessary economic resources to carry out research activities, filed work, research stays, attend relevant congresses, cover publishing costs, acquire research equipment and materials (books, journals, etc.) and to undertake activities to establish collaboration networks with other academic bodies.

To implement these strategies and to review and process the applications for appropriate academic profile certifications and to pre-evaluate the academic bodies requesting recognition, Promep implemented an office and an institutional representative in each of the 39 public state universities. The emphasis of the SEP on the adoption of this “new” academic profile and on the formation of academic bodies took most leaders and teaching staff of the public state university subsystem by surprise.

From 2001 Promep implemented a scheme of incentives to facilitate the incorporation, in the public state universities, of the new full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree, many of which were expected to be people who had obtained a post-graduate scholarship from Promep and had successfully completed their degree. This scheme offered new full-time faculty members three types of financial incentives during their first year of work: a) one-time bonus to buy essential material and equipment to improve the conditions to perform their academic work (books, laptop, desk, etc.); b) a one-year bonus (paid in a monthly basis) to boost their modest salary and thus motivate their permanence in their HEU; and c) a one-time grant to undertake a research project (whose protocol had to be approved by a committee) to get them started in research activities. This new scheme for new full-time faculty with APP was really a novel and effective measure to help and motivate new full-time faculty to get started in the world of academic research right away after their recruitment.

The same year, the SEP made Promep part of its new Integral Institutional Strengthening Program (*Programa Integral de Fortalecimiento Institucional*, aka *PIFI*), which aimed to improve the quality of the educational programs and services offered by the public higher education institutions, including the state university subsystem. This new program supported the public state university subsystem to implement the new policies or to improve the existing ones in order to fulfill the commitments they had established with Promep in terms of the development of full-time faculty staff with an appropriate academic profile and the creation of academic bodies.

## Evaluation of Promep's Achievements

The following sections evaluate the effectiveness of Promep to meet the goals it set for itself in 1996 in relation to the public state university subsystem. We will focus on examining the results achieved by December 2008, the very end of its first deadline period (1996–1998) and then four years later by December 2012, when the SEP's 2007–2012 Education Sector Program of which Promep was integral part came to an end.

### Achievements in the Growth of the Full-time Faculty

In terms of the size of the full-time faculty in relation to the general faculty in the public state university subsystem, Promep has failed and is very far from reaching the goal it set in 1996: to double the proportion of the full-time faculty in relation to the general faculty from 33% to 66% by 2008. In fact, the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem only constituted 36.39% of the general faculty in 2008 and 38.74% in 2012. After seventeen years of operations, Promep has only managed to increase the proportion of the full-time faculty in relation to the general faculty in the public state university subsystem by 5.74 points.

Here it is important to note that this objective has been difficult to meet because during the time that Promep has been in operation the number of faculty in the public state university subsystem has almost doubled: going from 43,242 in 1996 to about 81,607 in 2012, which is an increase of 88.72%. Meanwhile, the size of the full-time faculty increased from 14,270 in 1996 to 31,615 in December 2012, which is an increase of 121.54%, which is a much greater percentage increase than the one experienced by the general faculty. Also worth noting is the fact that Promep granted and financed 12,867 (or 74.18%) of the 17,345 new full-time faculty posts that were created from 1996 to 2012 in public state university subsystem (Promep, 2013c, p. 3).

Table 3

*Growth of the General and Full-Time Faculty in the Public State University Subsystem*

Year	General Faculty	Full-time Faculty	
		Size	%
1996	43,242	14,270	33.00%
2006	72,580	27,085	37.31%
2007	74,723	28,032	37.51%
2008	79,737	29,017	36.39%
2011	80,249	31,018	38.65%
2012	81,607	31,615	38.74%

*Source:* Author's own creation based on the following sources:

- General faculty in 1996 calculated based on the percentage of the full-time faculty provided by SEP (2006, p. 7), which does not state the size of the general faculty of the public state university subsystem.
- General faculty in 2006 and 2007 calculated from data included in ANUIES (2008).
- General faculty in 2008 calculated from data included in ANUIES (2009).
- General faculty in 2011 calculated from data included in ANUIES (2013).
- General faculty in 2012 calculated from the information published online or provided on request (in February and March 2013) by each of the 39 HEIs included in Promep's public state university subsystem.
- Size of the full-time faculty in all years taken from SEP (2013, p. 78).
- Percentage of the full-time faculty in relation to the general faculty in all years calculated based on the other indicators.

### Achievements in the Academic Qualifications of the Full-time Faculty in the Public State University Subsystem

In terms of the achievements made in the academic qualifications of the full-time faculty in the public state university subsystem, as we can see in the following table, Promep failed to meet some goals but succeeded at meeting others. Positively, Promep reached its goal of increasing the

share of the full-time faculty with doctoral degrees from 8% to 22%, since this share actually rose to 28.64% (8,311) in 2008, which is 6.64 points above the expected percentage. Moreover, this share further increased to 41.01% (12,966) in 2012, which constitutes an increase of 33 points in 17 years. Regrettably, Promep failed to meet the goal of increasing the share of the full-time faculty with master's degrees and MSD from 27% to 78% and thus to simultaneously reduce the share of the full-time faculty with bachelor's degrees from 65% to 0%. This goal was not achieved neither by the end of 2008 or the end of 2012. In fact, the proportion of the full-time faculty with MA and MSD increased from 27% in 1996 to 52.22% in 2008 and then went down to 47.90% in 2012. Meanwhile, the share of the full-time faculty with bachelor's degrees decreased to only 18.73% by late 2008 and to 10.85% by late 2012.

Here it is important to remark that while the proportion and number of full-time faculty with bachelor's degrees has decreased significantly since Promep was implemented, the current number and proportion (3,431 or 10.85% in 2012) are still extremely high considering that Promep has been in operation for 17 years. Still, in the reports issued by Promep in 2006 and subsequent years, the high percentages of full-time faculty with bachelor's degrees has been downplayed, while the percentage of the full-time faculty with postgraduate degrees and the post-graduate scholarships granted to under-qualified teachers is highlighted as much as possible. In this regard, the SEP takes pride in highlighting the number of postgraduate scholarships granted to under-qualified full-time faculty but does not specify how many scholarships were granted across subsystems or in the public state university subsystem in particular, which complicates the evaluation of Promep in relation to this subsystem. For instance, the SEP brags in its last unpublished report presented in 2013 to its representatives in public HEIs that, from 1998 to December 2011, Promep granted 8,141 postgraduate scholarships to full-time faculty with IAP (SEP, 2013, p. 89), but it does not say what percentage of those scholarships was granted to the public state university subsystem.

Table 4

*Growth of the Full-Time Faculty According to Academic Qualification (1996–2012)*

Year	Full-time faculty	With Doctorate		Master/MSD		BA/Other		Unknown	
		Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
1996	14,270	1,142	8.00	3,853	27.00	9,275	65.00	0	0.00
1998	18,093	1,524	8.42	5,864	32.41	10,705	59.17	0	0.00
2002	22,987	3,421	14.88	10,730	46.68	8,836	38.44	0	0.00
2004	25,428	4,863	19.12	12,276	48.28	7,712	30.33	577	2.27
2006	27,085	6,663	24.60	13,788	50.91	6,480	23.92	154	0.57
2008	29,017	8,311	28.64	15,153	52.22	5,434	18.73	119	0.41
2010	30,127	10,187	33.81	15,493	51.43	4,355	14.46	92	0.31
2012	31,615	12,966	41.01	15,146	47.90	3,431	10.85	72	0.22

*Source:* Authors' own creation based on data included in SEP (2013, p. 78).

### **Achievements in the Development of Full-Time Faculty With an Appropriate Academic Profile**

In terms of the development of full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile (*Perfil Deseable* in Promep's terms) in the public state university subsystem, Promep has never set quantitative goals in this regard so we cannot really affirm whether it has failed or succeed to reach its objective. However, as we can see in the following table, which lists the number and share of the



full-time faculty that has obtained the appropriate academic profile certification from Promep, it is clear that Promep has made important progress in this area.

As we can see in the following table, the share of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile certification increased from 14.98% in 1997 (the first year of certification) to 37.13% by late 2008, and then to 53.56% by late 2012. However, although 53.56% may sound like a decent percentage of proper academics in the public state university subsystem, the fact is that they only constitute less than a quarter of the general faculty of this subsystem.

Another negative figure in this regard is that by December 2012 only 60.95% of the 27,783 full-time faculty members with an appropriate academic degree had the appropriate academic profile certification, which means that almost 40% of the full-time faculty members were not properly performing their four academic duties/roles. According to the majority of the Promep representatives interviewed for this study, the main reason why a large sector of the full-time faculty fails to obtain and keep the appropriate academic profile certification is that they are not able to produce the requested average of one quality research product per year during three years.

Table 5

*Growth of the Full-Time Faculty With an Appropriate Academic Profile (2007–2012)*

Year	Full-time faculty	Full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile	
		Size	%
1997	18,104	2,712	14.98%
2008	29,017	10,775	37.13%
2012	31,615	16,935	53.56%

*Source:* Author's own creation based on the following sources:

- Full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile in 1997 included in SEP (2006, p.74), in 2008 included in SES (2009, p. 18), in 2012 included in SES (2013, p. 42).
- Full-time faculty in 1997 calculated based on the size and percentage of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile certification in 1997 included in SEP (2006, p.74).
- Full-time faculty in 2008 and 2012 taken from SEP (2013, p. 78).
- Percentages of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile calculated based on the previous data.

In addition, although according to Promep the full-time faculty holding the appropriate academic profile certification is properly performing the four basic academic functions, the appropriate academic performance of this sector of the faculty is questioned by the fact that only a fraction of it has achieved the SNI award, which also takes into consideration the applicant's teaching activities, tutoring and training of researchers and research groups, and has a much better reputation and a more objective and strict evaluation system. For instance, in 2012, 53.56% of the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem had Promep the appropriate academic profile certification, but only 17.75 of the full-time faculty had the CONACYT's SNI award (SEP, 2013, p. 35).

### **Achievements in the Development of Academic Bodies**

Like with the development of the appropriate academic profile in the full-time faculty, Promep did not establish quantitative goals with regards to the development of academic bodies to organize the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem, so we cannot really evaluate whether Promep has failed or succeed to reach its objective in this regard. However, based on the analysis of the data provided so far by the SEP it is clear that Promep has struggled to make

significant progress in the consolidation of the system of academic bodies within the public state university subsystem.

First of all, it was not until 2000 when Promep created the first national database about the development of academic bodies in the public state university subsystem. And it was in 2001 when Promep created a system to classify the academic bodies according to their levels of consolidation, which was based on: 1) the academic degree and profile of their members (who can only be members of the full-time faculty); 2) their research production; 3) participation in knowledge and research networks; 4) and participation in institutional academic activities (SEP, 2006, p. 99). Promep recognized three types of academic bodies: the consolidated academic body (*cuero académico consolidado*), the nearly-consolidated academic body (*cuero académico en consolidación*), and the developing academic bodies (*cuero académico en formación*).

As the name suggests, the consolidated academic body was the best type: most of its members hold doctoral degrees, the appropriate academic profile certification and the SNI award; its team research production is constant and published in important journals; its members demonstrate an intense academic activity (through regular and frequent participation in congresses, seminars, panel discussions, and workshops). In terms of participation in knowledge and research networks, it has established links with their counterparts in Mexico and abroad. On the other hand, the nearly-consolidated academic body was the one in which just over half of its members hold a doctoral degree and the appropriate academic profile certification; its members produce and publish research in a regular but not intense basis; its members have established links with other academic bodies and supports their HEU through the formation of human resources. Finally, the developing academic body is not really a productive academic body as it has only defined its line of generation of application of knowledge but has not produced relevant results and has established contact with similar academic bodies but has not worked with them; in addition, less than half of its members hold a doctoral degree or have obtained the appropriate academic profile certification.

As the SEP has recognized (2006, p. 103), still by 2001 most public state universities did not understand well enough the concept of academic body and thus registered as such other figures like “departments”, “divisions”, “disciplinary academies”, and “colleges” (SEP, 2006, p. 110). For this reason, the same year Promep elaborated a guide to clarify to the public state universities the features and expected functions of the academic bodies and in 2002 carried out a series of workshops across all the public state universities to explain to their administrators and faculty staff what academic bodies were supposed to be (SEP, 2006, p. 99–100). In addition, in 2001 Promep also introduced the category of *grupo disciplinar* (disciplinary group) to identify the groups of academics that aimed to be recognized as “academic bodies” but did not meet the requirements to achieve even the lowest category. However, in 2003 the “disciplinary group” category was absorbed by the “developing academic body” category (ANUIES, 2006, p. 105).

As Table 6 illustrates, if we look at the general number of academic bodies without taking into account their degree of consolidation, it seems that there was a significant progress in this area from 2002, when the academic bodies were counted and evaluated for the first time. The total number of academic bodies recognized by Promep went from 2,359 in 2002 to 2,903 in late 2008. However, this number actually decreased to 2,869 in 2012.

The situation gets worse if we focus on the development of consolidated academic bodies, which is the only category of academic bodies that should actually be counted as such, since this type of academic body is the only one that: a) is formed by full-time faculty with an appropriate academic profile; b) performs their academic functions as expected; and c) produces a regular and coherent number of research products. The number of consolidated academic bodies went from just 34 in 2002 to 298 in late 2008, and then to 654 in 2012. Based on this figure there is currently an

average of just 17 functional academic bodies in each of the 39 public state universities served by Promep, which is a very low number, considering the fact that each state university has an average of 20 higher education units/establishments and each of those units has an average of six programs of studies, and each of these programs needs at least one academic body to function properly.

In terms of the development of collaboration networks, in 2009 Promep recognized 113 projects for collaboration networks, which had the participation of 331 “academic bodies” (consolidated and nearly consolidated), 46 national research groups and 67 international research groups from 22 countries.

The Promep representatives interviewed for this study generally indicated that the main reason why many academic bodies dissolve shortly after their creation or fail to reach a consolidated category is that they struggle to produce a regular number of research products in which all the members participate.

Table 6

*Evolution of Academic Bodies, Total and by Categories (2002–2012)*

Year	Total	Developing		Nearly consolidated		Consolidated	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
2002	2,359	2,155	91.35	170	7.20	34	1.44
2008	2,903	1,988	68.48	617	21.25	298	10.26
2012	2,869	1,260	43.91	955	33.28	654	22.79

*Source:* Author’s own creation based on the following sources: data about 2002 taken from ANUIES (2006, p. 105), 2008 from SES (2009b, p. 7, 30), and 2012 from SEP (2013, p. 84).

Here it is important to remark that Promep has not released much information about the number of members of the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem that is part of these academic bodies. In fact, the only year about which the SEP provides this information is late 2011, when according to it only 34.46% of the full-time faculty was part of an academic body (Promep, 2012), but only about a fifth of them were part of a consolidated academic body. This highlights the fact that the great majority of full-time faculty is currently not part of an academic group despite the expectation that they do so.

## Conclusions

The review of Promep’s results and strategies indicates that this program has dedicated important economic resources and made very important logistical efforts to implement a series of well-planned strategies and policies to increase the size, academic profile, performance and organization of the full-time faculty of the public state university subsystem. Moreover, other strategic programs of the SEP have also collaborated with Promep and used part of their resources to help Promep to achieve its goals. For instance, since its implementation (in 2001) to 2012, the PIFI has destined 1,963,093,459.39 Mexican Pesos (approximately 154,780,849.70 USD) to finance 2,607 projects destined to the “strengthening of the faculty’s academic profile and the system of academic bodies”; 499,046,818.18 Mexican Pesos (approximately 39,275,952.94 USD) to finance 3,862 research projects carried out by consolidated and nearly consolidated academic bodies; and 108,264,332.00 Mexican Pesos (approximately 8,535,924.79 USD) to finance 129 projects for the “creation of academic networks” (SEP, 2013, p. 33).

In addition, in order to further encourage the full-time faculty to obtain and maintain the appropriate academic profile certification and to participate in academic bodies, in the last decade

many public state universities have started to offer, from their own budget, personal annual economic rewards to the full-time faculty members with the appropriate academic profile certification and membership to an academic body. Moreover, after the implementation of Promep, some public state universities created the categories of *Profesor-investigador* (Professor-researcher) to recognize the members of the faculty staff that have an outstanding research production.

This study has shown that the implementation of Promep has had a very positive and truly transcendental impact on the provision of regulations and policies to promote and fund the constant academic improvement of the teaching staff and the development of a research culture in the public state university subsystem. However, as this study demonstrates, Promep has failed to fully meet some of its goals and to establish some specific quantitative goals in some of the areas it aims to improve. In particular, Promep has failed to meet its two main objectives: 1) to increase the proportion of the full-time faculty in the public state university subsystem in relation to the general faculty to 66% and 2) to eradicate the full-time faculty whose highest degree was the bachelor's degree.

It seems that the failure to increase the proportion of the full-time faculty in the public state university subsystem to 66% in relation to the general faculty is the responsibility of the SEP, which is the institution in charge of authorizing and financing more full-time post for public HEIs. The SEP has failed to provide the new posts despite the fact that there are economic resources and plenty of highly-qualified national professionals who are not only available and eager to work at higher education institutions, but have also graduated from universities with advanced research and academic culture. In this sense, if increasing the proportion of the full-time faculty to 66% is no longer the main objective of Promep it should then start to expand its faculty improvement schemes to the part-time faculty staff of the public state university subsystem.

The failure to reduce the proportion of under-qualified full-time faculty members in the public state university subsystem (currently around 10%) is the shared responsibility of: 1) many public state universities which have not only allowed under-qualified full-time faculty members (who have shown a lack of interest and willingness to make an effort to meet the minimum academic requirements to work at a university) to keep their full-time post and associated benefits despite having failed to produce a postgraduate degree but have also continued to give new full-time faculty posts to under-qualified people, despite this goes against their internal legislation and the DES-PROMEP agreements; and 2) Promep, for allowing the previous practices, of which it is aware, and failing to implement more drastic binding recruitment, permanence and promotion agreements with public HEIs and a system of penalties for the public HEIs that do not comply with them.

The fact that a large share of the full-time faculty with an appropriate academic degree still does not have the appropriate academic profile certification and is not part of an academic body is also the shared responsibility of: 1) many of the public HEIs that are part of the Public State University Subsystem and have failed to convince and/or force this sector of the full-time faculty to properly perform their four academic duties to obtain the appropriate academic profile certification and join an academic body despite they have paid-hours assigned to perform each of the four activities; and 2) Promep for allowing the previous and failing to implement academic performance agreements with the full-time faculty and a system of penalties or demotion for those failing to comply with their duties.

Finally, it is important to highlight that Promep has and still continues to fail at making public some of the data and indicators needed by independent researchers to monitor its achievements and failures in relation to the public state university subsystem as a whole. For example, Promep has not made public a year-by-year database of the size of the faculty staff of the whole public state university subsystem, the size and share of the full-time faculty that participates in

academic bodies in this subsystem, the share of the full-time faculty from this subsystem that has obtained the SNI award. Thus, for this analysis we had to calculate much of the previous data based on unclassified data provided by other sources, like the ANUIES. Promep has also failed to update the information in its website ([www.promep.sep.gob.mx/](http://www.promep.sep.gob.mx/)), where for instance, the “Presentation” section still in June 2013 only promoted the achievements made by December 2011.

These findings on Promep’s achievements and weaknesses can be useful for policymakers and government authorities from countries interested in designing programs to improve the faculty of their public higher education institutions in the areas of teaching, research, tutoring and/or administration. The results of this study should be taken into account particularly by Mexico’s federal government, the SEP and its Higher Education Division in the design of the new version of the Promep that will try to give continuity to its objectives: *PRODEP - Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente*. The main recommendation for those in charge of designing and adapting faculty improvement/development programs is to establish reachable goals and to reach strict agreements with the higher education institutions that will be served by the program to make sure they abide by the operation rules and regulations and do not tolerate cheating tactics in the evaluation of the faculty.

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Volume 23 Number 55

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

ISSN 1068-2341

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