

The complex puzzle of education systems reform

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Education:

**the sector with the greatest power for
transformation...**

... and usually, the hardest to transform

Contents:

1. The pieces of the puzzle

2. Evolving to a modern education system

3. Actors, stakeholders and interests

4. The complex puzzle

5. Some success factors

¿What should be learned?

- Curricular framework
- Learning standards
- Progress maps

¿What is learning for?

Accessibility

- Food programs
- Conditional cash transfers
- School safety
- Transport

Facilitators-triggers

- Integrated information system
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Intra-government coordination
- Budgeting
- Student assessment



Inputs

- Infrastructure
- Equipment, services
- Materials
- Technology

¿Who, how?

- Urban, rural, marginalized
- Multicultural-Multi language
- In school – virtual, distance
- Standard -Alternative

Learning leaders

- Teachers and teachers standards
- Principals – Standards for school management
- Teacher training, career paths, evaluation
- Mechanisms for community and family participation

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¿What is learning for? **REFORM:**

Learning standards
Progress maps

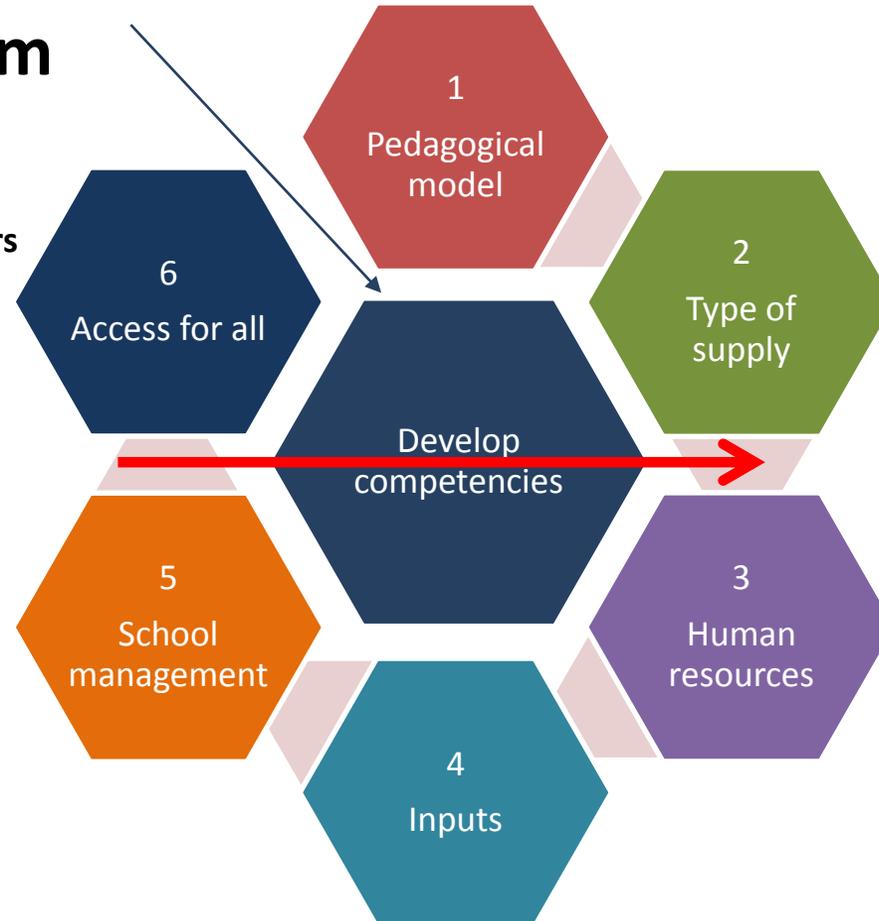
Going From

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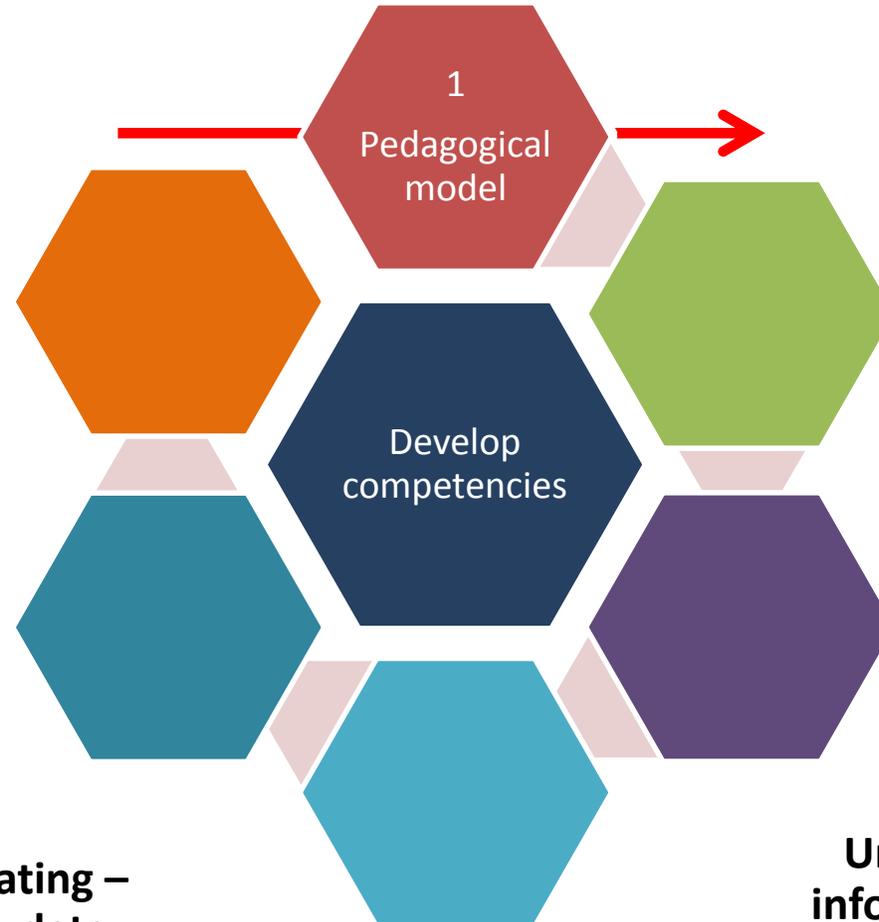
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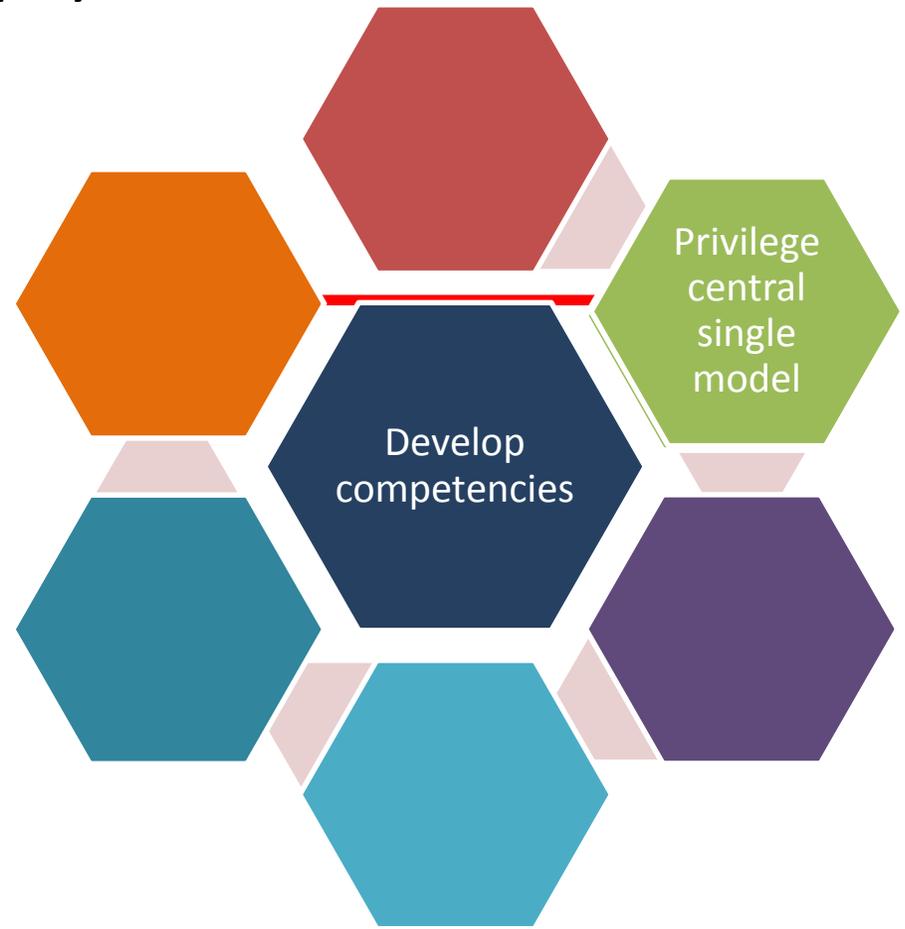


**Memorizing – repeating –
accumulating facts, data,
information**

**Understanding, using
information for concrete
purposes, being creative,
analytical, proactive**

Expansion model to capitalize economies of scale and reach more students rapidly

Supply adapted to culture, socioeconomic context, environment, that promotes learning

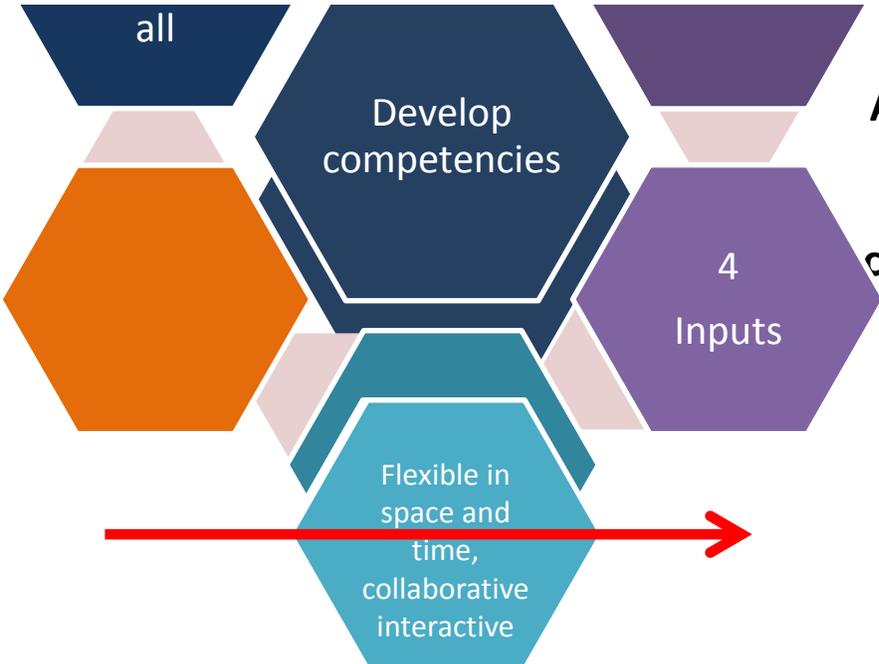




**Instructor, gives orders, shows
the way to be followed**

**Partner in learning, facilitates
competencies development,
promotes strategies to assure
progress**

Fixed classroom with everybody set to pay attention to instruction



Allows for different pace, interacts with the environment, promotes collaboration - interaction



**Administration of resources for
teaching to happen
(school principal = administrator)**

**Management for learning to
take place (involvement with
teacher development,
adaptation of school space-
technology, innovation)**

**Focus on increasing supply
(more students in school)**

**Focus on more students in
learning environments
(adaptation, flexibility,
accessibility, adaptation to
different circumstances)**

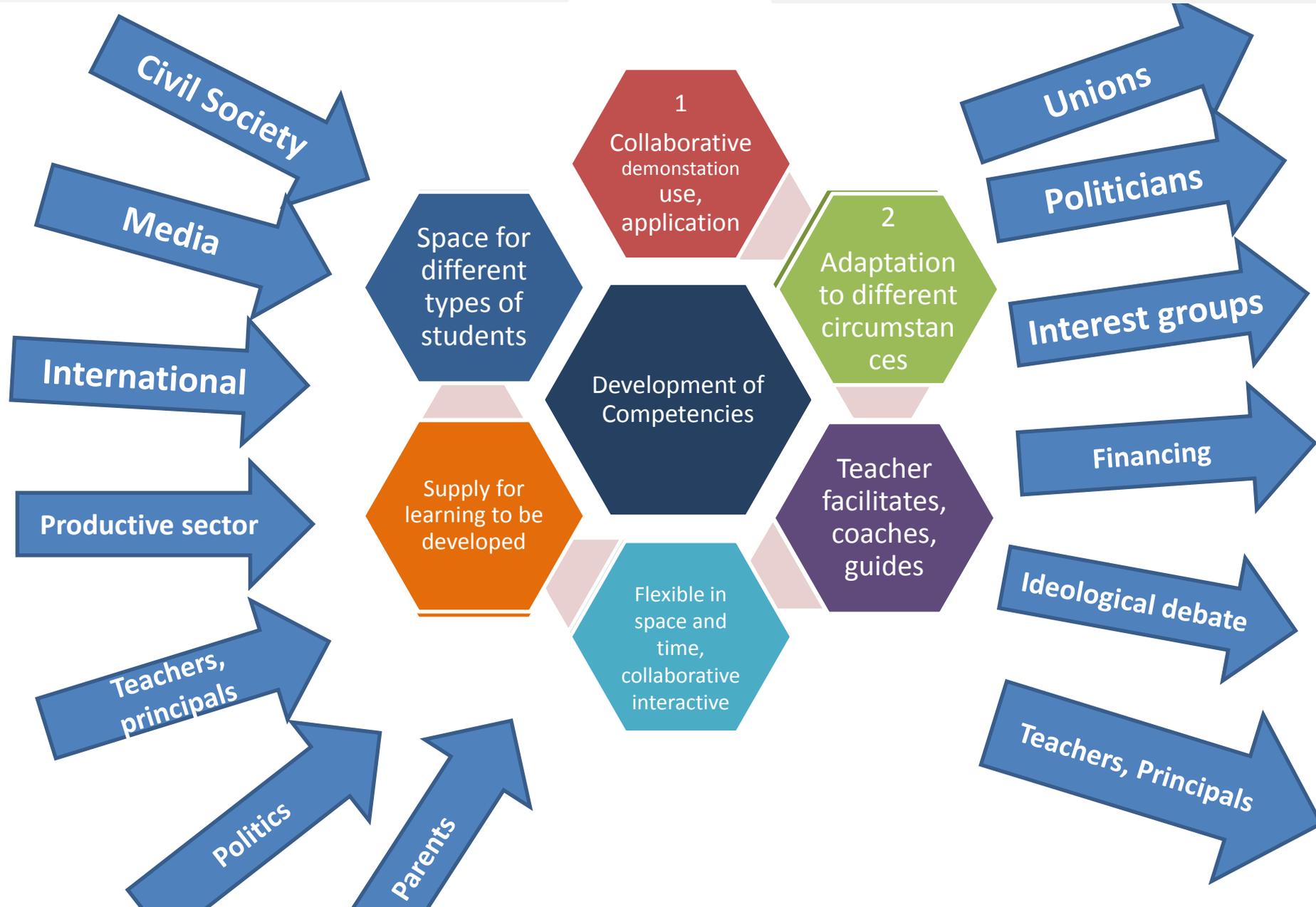


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Push Factors

Pull Factors



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Elements of Complexity

1. **Size**: Typically a very large sector financially and demographically
 - Large invested interests;
 - Large numbers of individuals employed leads to powerful unions and organizations (the complexity of agglomeration);
2. **Difficult to measure success and /or failure in the short run:**
 - Difficult to “vote with your feet” since service users in the public sector do not normally pay directly – “captive” clients that have to go to school
 - Diffuse ownership system (with powerful unions on the other side of the equation)
 - Low accountability: system users cannot claim their rights retrospectively
3. **Process that takes many years (12 basic education) , with complex production function**
 - Requires sustained structured effort that goes beyond political cycles;
 - Difficult to measure the effect of each component (each teacher, technology, materials) – many actors involved, many stakeholders along the way

Elements of Complexity

5. Multiplicity of objectives

- Reaching everyone vs education quality
- Primary vs Higher Education
- Providing good conditions for workers in the system
- Addressing issues that are relevant for different groups
- Commonly confuses privileging the process with privileging the final objective

6. Normal resistance to change

- Requires changing behavior
- Harder when the rest of the elements of the system are not aligned
- Requires fine tuned sequence for implementation
- The problem of misaligned incentives (e.g. workers rights vs quality)

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1. Shared diagnostic

A clear and technically sound diagnostic is the “Presentation Card” for gaining legitimacy for involving actors, aligning incentives, and positioning the issue in the public domain.

It should clearly reflect the costs of not engaging into the improvement of the system (e.g. international comparisons)

Advantages

- Clarity about the starting point;
- Contributes to build public support
- Clear parameters and indicators for monitoring progress
- Allows for capitalizing achievements Along the process

Challenges

- Requires investing political capital (acknowledging that things are not right; who is to balme?)
- Transparency entails risks

2. Clarity of objectives and of rules of the game

Objectives are mobilizers and triggers. Given the time it takes for improving education it is key to set realistic expectations

If the rules for consensus building are clear, differences along the way will not necessarily mean failure

Assuring continuous and clear information on objectives and rules, is key

Advantages

- They can eliminate ambiguity and clarify each actor's role
- Can go beyond political cycles and provide guidance for continuity

Challenges

- Commitments entail political risks
- Objectives provide a clear target for opponents and anti-reformers
- Negotiating clear rules may require giving voice to a variety of actors that aim at impeding change

3. Convincing vs imposing (aligning incentives)

Since reform entails important changes in the way in which people are used to behave and perform, devoting resources to convincing pays off (importance of identifying type A, B, C and D);

Essential to build a sense ownership, and to clarify “who gains what”. However, aiming at unanimous support may be utopic, so what matters is the balance

Advantages

- Leads to aligning incentives
- Allows conveying a critical mass for support;
- Can help increase the number of “potential winners”
- Plans and strategies can be considerably Improved (two minds think more than one)
- Allows confronting the strategy with reality continuously

Challenges

- Opening up for debate may lead to “freezing” the initiative
- Can lead to the impression that authorities are incapable and do not know what should be done, and how
- Consultations and participation should be handled professionally to assure that debates are not ideologized or made captive

4. Assuring resources (monetary and political)

Transformation inevitably requires of economic resources and political support.

Adequate budgeting from the outset is essential for guaranteeing viability

Conveying change that is not accompanied by political support is not normally credible. Best time to start is when political capital is high (normally the start of political cycles) – political capital should be carefully used.

Important to incorporate costs for truncating the process in the future.

Advantages

- Credibility is an asset that enhances effort
- Allows rewarding and incentivizing actors for accelerating change
- Involves legislators that are responsible for assuring resources

Challenges

- Hard to assure financing in difficult times
- Competing country needs
- Political capital is normally scarce
- Difficult to know exactly how many Resources will be needed

5. Sequence and pace are critical

A strategic map for placing each piece in the puzzle is critical for administering economic and political resources effectively. Starting where it is possible to promote change, might be more effective.

Adding up small gains in the launching stage may lead to large accomplishments in the future

Optimal sequencing allows for each component to trigger synergies with the rest. Key do identify obstacles and the extent of change possible

Advantages

- Optimal sequencing implies efficiency
- Allows each piece of the puzzle to Fulfill its purpose
- Enhances rationality and credibility
- Allows for planning and anticipation of difficulties

Challenges

- The best sequence is not always along the fastest or shortest road.
- There is normally pressure to get quick gains and distribute benefits among stake holders
- Not always viable politically, or economically

6. Institutionalizing the process

Verbal agreements are valid and useful, but it is much better to have the formalized, and if possible institutionalized by law.

Signed formal agreements reduce the maneuvering space for discretion future amendments and are necessary for transiting through political cycles

To provide solid foundations, decisions must depend on rules and laws and not on the discretionary decisions of individuals

Advantages

- Long term viability
- Certainty for all actors involved
- Provide credibility

Challenges

- The cost of institutionalizing might be high and may delay or impede the process
- May require of compromises that undermine the transformation power of Reforms
- May be so complex that it discourages central actors

7. Setting an M&E system from the outset

It is key to set clear indicators, goals and objectives, and to incorporate mechanisms for following them continuously.

Indicators should be pre-defined and should be clear, solid technically, credible, tractable, and transparent

Advantages

- They allow for transparency and accountability
- Are necessary for capitalizing achievements along the way
- Necessary for fine tuning and continued improvement in design and implementation

Challenges

- Evaluation entails the risk of not fulfilling expectations and may fuel criticism by anti-reformists
- May require the use of political capital to ameliorate criticism and
- May have negative financial implications in some circumstances

So, reforming education systems

=

a complex puzzle

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