

Education at a Glance 2002

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Briefing notes – Mexico

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Educational attainment and labour market outcomes

Educational attainment in Mexico has risen steeply over successive generations...

- Mexico has seen significant rises in the proportion of the population that has attained the upper secondary level of education. Among 55-64 year-olds, i.e. those who completed secondary education more than 40 years ago, only 11% have completed the upper secondary level of education, while among 25-34 year-olds, these are 25% (see Table A1.2, page 37).
- This picture is similar at the tertiary level of education where, among 55-64 year-olds, only 7% completed university-level tertiary programmes. A generation later, among 25-34 year-olds, the share has more than doubled. (see Table A2.3, page 48).

...but significant further improvements will be needed to catch up with other OECD countries.

- However, the 25% of the adult population with upper secondary level of education, compares against an OECD average of 64% (see Table A1.2, page 37). With three-fourths of the labour force having not completed upper secondary education, also the labour force is less educated than at the OECD average level (29%) (see Table A3.1b, page 54). In Mexico, 50% of the youths aged 15-19 are not in education, compared with an OECD average of 20%.

Low quality of educational outcomes in literacy....

- The quality of the labour market will be influenced by the levels of educational outcomes of today's school population. In Mexico, only 6.9% of 15-year-olds are at the two highest level of performance in reading literacy (OECD average 31.2%). These students have acquired important advanced skills in reading towards the application and reflection of the information they read. On the other hand, 44% of Mexican 15-year-old students are at or below the lowest level of performance assessed by the OECD, compared with an OECD average of 18%. These students have at most acquired very basic reading skills allowing them to perform only simple tasks such as identify the main theme or make simple connections. These students may not be acquiring the necessary literacy knowledge and skills to benefit fully from educational opportunities (see Table A5.1, page 71).

...high student-teaching ratios...

- The ratio of Mexican students to teaching staff ranges from 1.4 times the OECD average in pre-primary education (with 22.4 students per teacher) to 2.3 times the OECD average in lower-secondary education, where Mexican teachers are responsible for 34.8 students compared with an OECD average of 15 students per teacher (see Table D2.2, page 293). This high ratio is likely to influence the amount of attention devoted to each student as well as the quality of the outcomes.

- Instructional time for Mexican students amounts to 800 hours per year for students aged 9-11 years (OECD average of 841 hours) and 1167 hours for students aged 12-14 years (OECD average of 936 hours) (see Table D1.1, page 283).

...low uses of technology....

- Mexico lags considerably behind other OECD countries concerning the availability and use of computers by 15-year-olds. According to the reports of students, only 47% of 15-year-olds have access to a computer at school at least a few times each week (OECD average 56%, see Table D3.4, page 305) and 50% of students report that they never use a computer at school (OECD average 19, see Table D3.5, page 306). This results reflects in a ratio of students to computers of 23, compared with an OECD average of 13 (see Table D3.1, page 302). Associated with this are principals' perceptions in the majority of schools that learning is being hindered to some extent or a lot by the lack of computers (see Table D3.3, page 304). At home, only 28% of the students use a computer at least a few times each week, compared with an OECD average of 70% (see Table D3.4, page 305).

...and a high teaching load for teachers pose difficult challenges for the Mexican education system.

- At the primary level, the teaching load of Mexican teachers, 800 statutory hours per year, is close to the OECD average of 792 hours (see Table D7.1, page 349). By contrast, a lower secondary teacher in Mexico is required to teach 1482 hours per year, the highest number of statutory teaching hours among OECD countries and twice the OECD average of 720 hours (see Table D7.1, page 349).
- Statutory salaries in Mexico are low by absolute standards (about half the OECD average) but among the highest in the OECD when compared with national income per capita. (see Table D6.1, page 339).

Investment in education

Spending in educational institutions as a percentage of GDP has dropped below the OECD average.

- National income has grown much faster in Mexico than spending on educational institutions. While in 1995, spending on educational institutions was still 5.6% of GDP, in 1999 it was 5.2% of GDP, below the OECD average of 5.5% (Table B2.1a, page 170). When examining this by levels of education, this decrease in expenditure affected mainly the lower levels of education whereas the share of GDP devoted to tertiary institutions remained, at 1.1% of GDP, fairly constant between 1995 and 1999 (Table B2.1b, page 171).
- The share of public funds devoted to education increased, from 22.4% in 1995 to 22.6% in 1999 and is by far the highest share of public funds invested in education among OECD countries (OECD average 12.7%) (see Table B3.1, page 178).

Spending per student remains low but, relatively speaking, upper secondary and tertiary students are better off...

- Spending per primary student is, at US\$ 1096 (adjusted for differences in Purchasing Power Parities) approximately one quarter of the OECD average (US\$ 4148). Spending at upper secondary level is, at US\$ 2226, equivalent to about a third of the spending of the OECD average (US\$ 5919). Finally, spending per tertiary student is, at US\$ 4789 approximately half of the OECD average (US\$ 9210). (See Table B1.1, page 158)
- The premium that Mexico devotes to higher levels of education is higher than in any other OECD country. While OECD countries spend, on average, 2.2 times more per student at the tertiary level than at the primary level, Mexico spends 4.4 times as much. By contract, the

Czech Republic and Portugal spends less than 1.3 times as much on tertiary student as on a primary student (see Table B1.1, page 158).

- And yet, total spending per student over the average duration of tertiary studies in Mexico (US\$ 16390, see Table B1.3, page 160) is less than what Switzerland and the United States spend in a single year (see Table B1.1, page 158).

...particularly if one takes Mexico's low GDP per capita into account.

- When one considers Mexico's low GDP per capita, a somewhat different picture emerges. While spending per primary and lower secondary students only accounts for 13% and 14% of GDP per capita respectively (OECD averages 19% and 23%), spending per upper secondary student is, at 27% of GDP, at the OECD average level. Spending per tertiary student significantly exceeds, at 57% of GDP per capita, the OECD average of 44% (see Table B1.2, page 159).