

Tertiary Education in Mexico

Pointers for policy development

PLANNING, CO-ORDINATING AND REGULATING TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Strategic planning needs improvement through a comprehensive body, such as a National Council or Forum of Tertiary Education, to assist with the integration of strategic leadership, policy planning and co-ordination.
- Management of enrolment policy and the development of public institutions (including new public institutions in the science and technology) should be submitted to rigorous impact and cost benefit evaluations.
- Better regulation of private tertiary providers is needed with clear rules that guide competition toward social ends, assure transparency and correct for asymmetry of information.

RESOURCING THE TERTIARY SYSTEM

- Government bears a disproportionate share of the costs of tertiary education when there are growing pressures on public spending. The student support system needs to be expanded and diversified with means-tested scholarships along with a universal income-contingent loan scheme, allowing students to share the costs after graduation.
- Tertiary institutions should be funded through a transparent formula-based allocation that reflects quality of outputs, supports excellence in institutional activities and is based on appropriate input and output indicators.
- Clear guidelines are needed for institutions to diversify and enlarge their income from sources other than public funds and tuition fees, in ways that are consistent with their mission.
- More stability in funding should be provided so that institutions can take a strategic approach to their long-term development, consistent with their strengths and capabilities.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT / ACADEMIC CAREER

- The academic profession in Mexico is struggling with growing external expectations, modest pecuniary recognition, a still developing research capacity, and a significant share of low-qualified members.
- Institutional leadership needs to provide the frameworks for linking individual work to organisational strategic goals, with flexibility in defining the roles and workloads of individual academic staff.
- Efforts to enhance the qualifications and quality of academic bodies (e.g. PROMEP), are decisive and should be continued. The proportion of full-time academic staff in each institution should be evaluated.
- Mechanisms within institutions should support and reward academic excellence. Base salaries, especially at the early stages of the career, should be raised and merit-based pay should remain.
- More attention needs to go to performance management which defines expectations for staff and provides feedback and development opportunities. This should include teaching performance.
- Enhanced collaboration among institutions and between institutions and external organisations would diversify the professional prospects of many academic staff.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- A well co-ordinated quality assurance system is needed: current fragmented responsibilities could be brought under the umbrella of a single agency. (Evaluation of research quality should remain separate.)
- The system should combine internal quality processes and external quality assurance mechanisms and cover all Mexico's tertiary institutions. External quality assurance should validate internal quality assurance mechanisms.
- The external agency should be able to initiate selected external evaluations and institutions should keep the option to voluntarily submit their programmes to either external assessment or to external accreditation.
- Improved processes are needed for authorising new programmes and the official recognition of the associated qualifications. All new programmes should be assessed for relevance to qualify for public funding.
- Quality assurance evaluations need to be followed-up. Internal quality assurance processes need to trigger the intrinsic motivation of staff to generate a sustained quality improvement in teaching and learning.

EQUITY

- Career guidance and counselling services in Mexican schools should strengthen their role in making poorly informed school children aware of the benefits of tertiary education and in raising their attendance aspirations.
- A means-tested financial aid scheme could encourage students to complete upper secondary education. Better pathways from vocational upper secondary to tertiary could raise participation of under-represented groups.
- Tertiary education institutions also need incentives to widen participation by less represented groups and assist those groups with extra support. Further development of intercultural universities is to be encouraged as they respond to a particular need in Mexican society and provide aspirations to indigenous communities in harmony with their culture.
- Tertiary education institutions need to engage further in lifelong learning and be more responsive to the needs of adult learners. Attendance on the basis of recognition of acquired competencies should be envisaged.

STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL ROLE

- Decentralizing the supply of tertiary education programmes promotes regional economic revitalization. But all regional actors need to co-operate to improve efficiency for regional planning.
- New and flexible learning schemes can help attract students but require flexible schedules, semi-distance learning components, and greater mobility between different parts of the system and the labour environment.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- Mexico should increase public expenditure in R&D to reach the targeted level of 1% of GDP and stimulate R&D investment through government-industry matching funds for collaborative research and tax incentives.
- The role of local tertiary institutions in regional innovation systems could be strengthened, adapting educational, research and community activities to support regional industry needs.
- Raising the level of qualifications and quality of research staff in Mexican institutions should be sustained by strengthening PROMEP and providing adequate support for graduate studies in Mexico and abroad.

LINKS WITH THE LABOUR MARKET

- Reinforce partnerships between institutions and the business sector to better match educational programmes to employment requirements and evaluate partnerships more carefully for effectiveness. Formally involve employers and the business community in the development of tertiary education policy.
- Make information about programmes, labour market outcomes and employment requirements available to students, institutions and employers.
- A formal qualifications framework offers the potential to co-ordinate the demands of employers, the expectations of students, and the courses offered by institutions.
- Tertiary education institutions need to engage further in lifelong learning and provide services for adult learners to upgrade their competencies and to diversify their income (e.g. through training company employees).

INTERNATIONALIZATION

- Specific institutional capacities for international student and academic exchanges especially in universities, technological institutes and research centres need strengthening and public policies can play a supporting role.
- Exercise Latin American leadership in ALCUE through quicker progress on compatible and comparative quality assurance especially with the European Union and an academic credit system which allows student mobility.

FURTHER READING

These pointers for policy development are drawn from [OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education, Mexico](#) published in 2008.

Further information about the Thematic Review of Tertiary Education and *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, published in 2008 is available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review.