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OECD BRIEFING NOTE – 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 per cent have completed the upper secondary level of education, while among 25-34 year-olds, these are 25 per cent (Table A1.2, page 41). At the same time, improvements in upper secondary qualifications in most other countries were more significant so that Mexico has fallen from rank 29 among 55-64 year-olds to rank 30 among 25-34 year-olds.
- This picture is similar at the tertiary level of education where, among 55-64 year-olds, only 7 per cent completed university-level tertiary programmes. A generation later, among 25-34 year-olds, the share has almost doubled. (Table A2.3, page 53). In university-level education, improvements in completion rates have moved Mexico up from rank 25 among 55-64 year-olds to rank 20 among 25-34 year-olds.

...but participation in education remains low...

- One way of looking at participation in education is to estimate the number of years during which a five-year-old child can expect to be in either full-time or part-time education during his/her lifetime. In OECD countries, a child in **Mexico** and Turkey can expect to be in education for 12 years or less, compared to 19 or more years in Australia, Belgium, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Chart C1.1, page 252).

...in four OECD countries, more than 10 per cent of students never finish.

- While participation rates in most OECD countries are high until the end of compulsory education, they drop below 90 per cent before the age at which students are no longer legally required to be enrolled in school in **Mexico**, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United States (Table C1.2, page 258).

Employment-to-population ratios for young male tend to be higher than for young female after leaving education.

- To be out of education and out of employment is very uncommon in Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway yet common in Austria, Italy, **Mexico**, the Slovak Republic and Turkey. In these countries, over 10 per cent of young people aged 15 to 19 are neither at school nor in work (Table C4.1, page 294). The problem affects more young male than female in Austria, Finland, the Slovak Republic and Sweden, and the reverse is true in Greece, **Mexico**, Portugal and Turkey, differences between the sexes remain small in the other countries (Chart C5.1, page 298). In **Mexico**, 53 per cent of young female aged 25 to 29 are neither at school nor in work, which is the highest proportion among OECD countries just after Turkey (Table C4.1b, page 296).

Low quality of educational outcomes in reading 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 per cent of 15-year-olds are at the two highest level of performance in reading literacy (OECD average 31.2 per cent). These students have acquired important advanced skills in reading towards the application and reflection of the information they

read. On the other hand, 44 per cent of 15-year-old students are in **Mexico** at or below the lowest level of performance assessed by the OECD, compared with an OECD average of 18 per cent. 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 (Table A5.1, page 79).

...with large gender differences.

- In all OECD countries, 15-year-old male are more likely to be among the lowest-performing students in reading literacy (*i.e.* to perform at or below Level 1 on the combined reading literacy scale); the average ratio of male to female at this level is 1.7 among OECD countries, ranging from 1.3 in **Mexico** to 3.5 in Finland (Box 11.1, page 133).

High student-teaching ratios...

- The ratio of students to teaching staff ranges in **Mexico** from 1.5 times the OECD average in pre-primary education (with 22 students per teacher) to 2 times the OECD average in lower-secondary education, where teachers are responsible in **Mexico** for 29 students compared with an OECD average of 15 students per teacher (Table D2.2, page 330). 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 students amounts in **Mexico** to 800 hours per year for students aged 9-11 years (OECD average of 813 hours) and 1 167 hours for students aged 12-14 years (OECD average of 900 hours) (Table D1.1, page 318).

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

- At the primary level, the teaching load of teachers in **Mexico**, 800 statutory hours per year, is close to the OECD average of 792 hours (Table D6.2, page 390). By contrast, a lower secondary teacher in **Mexico** is required to teach 1 182 hours per year, the highest number of statutory teaching hours among OECD countries and 1.7 times the OECD average of 714 hours (Table D6.2, page 390).

Rather low salary per teaching hour in Mexico...

- The average statutory salary per teaching hour after 15 years of experience is US\$ 37 in primary, US\$ 45 in lower secondary, and US\$ 52 in upper secondary general education.
- In primary education, Hungary, **Mexico**, the Slovak Republic and Turkey have relatively low salary costs per teaching hour (US\$ 19 or less). By contrast, costs are relatively high in Denmark, Germany, Japan and Korea (US\$ 50 or more). (Table D5.1 page 379)

... but a major investment in human resources despite lower levels of national income.

- Statutory salaries in **Mexico** are low by absolute standards (about half the OECD average) but among the highest in the OECD when compared with GDP per capita. The ratios of salary after 15 years of experience to the GDP per capita, for **Mexico** in primary and in lower secondary education, at respectively 1.69 and 2.14, are above the OECD average of 1.31 and 1.34 (Chart D5.1 page 369 and Table D5.1 page 379).
- Between 1996 and 2001, teachers' salaries have, in general, grown more slowly than GDP per capita but the inverse situation is prevailing in some countries such as the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Japan, **Mexico** and New Zealand (Chart D5.2, page 372).

Male teachers are predominant for almost all education level in Mexico.

- In all OECD countries, teachers are predominantly female in the lowest education levels. And male tend to become in majority for tertiary education and advanced research program. But in **Mexico**, more than 50 per cent of teachers are male for all secondary levels. With Japan and Luxembourg,

Mexico has the highest percentage of male teachers in lower secondary schools (60, 59 and 50 per cent respectively). (Table D8.2, page 409)

Investment in education

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

- Although spending on education has increased by almost 30 per cent between 1995 and 2000, national income has grown much faster in **Mexico** than spending on educational institutions. While in 1995, spending on educational institutions was still 5.6 per cent of GDP, in 2000 it was 5.5 per cent of GDP, below the OECD average of 5.9 per cent (Table B2.1a, page 207).
- 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 per cent of GDP, fairly constant between 1995 and 2000 (Table B2.1b, page 208).

... but public expenditure on education remain important for the government.

- The share of public expenditure on education as a percentage of total public expenditure increased in **Mexico**, from 22.4 per cent in 1995 to 23.6 per cent in 2000. It is by far the highest share of public funds invested in education among OECD countries (OECD average 13.0 per cent) (Table B4.1, page 227).

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

- Spending per primary student is in **Mexico** at US\$ 1 291 (adjusted for differences in Purchasing Power Parities), approximately one quarter of the OECD average (US \$ 4 381). Spending at upper secondary level is, at US\$ 2 317, equivalent to about a third of the spending of the OECD average (US\$ 6 063). Finally, spending per tertiary student is, at US\$ 4 688, approximately half of the OECD average (US\$ 9 571). (Table B1.1, page 197)
- The premium that **Mexico** and the Slovak Republic devote 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** and the Slovak Republic spend respectively 3.6 and 3.8 times as much. By contrast, Portugal spends less than 1.3 times as much on tertiary student as on a primary student, and Greece about the same amount (1.03 times). (Table B1.1, page 197)
- And yet, total spending per student over the average duration of tertiary studies in **Mexico** (US\$ 16 044, Table B1.3, page 199) is less than what Switzerland and the United States spend in a single year (Table B1.1, page 197).

...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 14 per cent of GDP per capita respectively (OECD averages 19 per cent and 23 per cent), spending per upper secondary student is, at 25 per cent of GDP, at the OECD average level. Spending per tertiary student significantly exceeds in **Mexico**, at 51 per cent of GDP per capita, the OECD average of 42 per cent (Table B1.2, page 198).