



EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK **MEXICO**



EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This policy profile on education in Mexico is part of the new Education Policy Outlook series, which will present comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the substantial comparative and sectorial policy knowledge base available within the OECD, the series will result in a biennial publication (first volume in 2014). It will develop a comparative outlook on education policy by providing: a) analysis of individual countries' educational context, challenges and policies (education policy profiles) and of international trends and b) comparative insight on policies and reforms on selected topics.

Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles will offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile will review the current context and situation of the country's education system and examine its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- Students: How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future
- Institutions: How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment
- System: How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles will contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

Special thanks to the Government of Mexico for their active input during consultations and constructive feedback on this report.

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Sources: This country profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the annual publication *Education at a Glance*, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, vocational education and training, and tertiary education.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the different sources used throughout the country profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and the References and further reading section lists the OECD and non-OECD sources used throughout the document.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).



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HIGHLIGHTS

Mexico's educational context

Students: Mexico's educational performance has improved in recent years. It has raised participation in early childhood education to almost 100%, with some of the highest enrolments across OECD. Children aged 5 to 14 are attaining primary and lower secondary education, but there is a gap in upper secondary enrolment, graduation and performance. For those in education at age 15, mathematics performance improved between 2003 and 2009 (a 33 score-point increase), but performance in reading, mathematics and science remains among the lowest across OECD countries. The impact of students' socio-economic background on their performance and between schools has decreased significantly and stands around the OECD average, demonstrating that there have been improvements in equity of distribution of learning opportunities.

Upper secondary graduation rates have been increasing at an annual average of 3.6% between 2000 and 2011, but at 47% they are well below the OECD average of 83.8%. Tertiary education graduation rates have also been increasing, but they remain below the OECD average, with just 23% of 25-34 year-olds attaining tertiary education, compared to the OECD average of 39%. While new upper secondary programmes provide learning opportunities in remote regions and the technological baccalaureate has been reformed, only 56% of 15-19 year-olds are enrolled in upper secondary education, compared to the OECD average of 84%. Labour market perspectives for students are positive at all levels of education, although lower than the OECD average for tertiary educated students. However, 24.7% of 15-29 year-olds were not in education and not employed in 2011.

Institutions: Schools, their teachers and leaders are building capacity and require support for improvement. Key issues include the process of selecting teachers and assigning them to schools, the balance between formative and summative appraisal in their evaluations, the quality of teacher training programmes, the incentives to improve performance, and the quality of teaching. While a number of different tools have been put into place for selection and evaluation of teachers, transparency and further capacity to use evaluation and assessment to improve student learning are required.

Governance and funding: Within the federal system, the government has been prioritising education and setting objectives through agreements and pacts with the states and main stakeholders. As all 31 states operate education services and administrative norms vary from state to state, there is a need to strengthen capacity. The National Union of Education Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*, SNTE), which has leaders in each state, plays a role in education policy issues. With expenditure on education at the OECD average, Mexico faces challenges for transparent and equitable funding of students and schools.

Key policy issues

Education performance at age 15 and attainment in secondary education are lower than the OECD average. The average impact of socio-economic background on student performance is around the OECD average for students at age 15, but large performance and completion gaps persist, especially for indigenous and low socio-economic status populations. System-level policies should focus on improving educational success of students from diverse backgrounds and delivering quality education across all schools, including upper secondary and vocational education and training. Raising the quality of teaching, professionalisation of school leaders and providing transparency in governance and funding across the system are key issues.

Policy responses

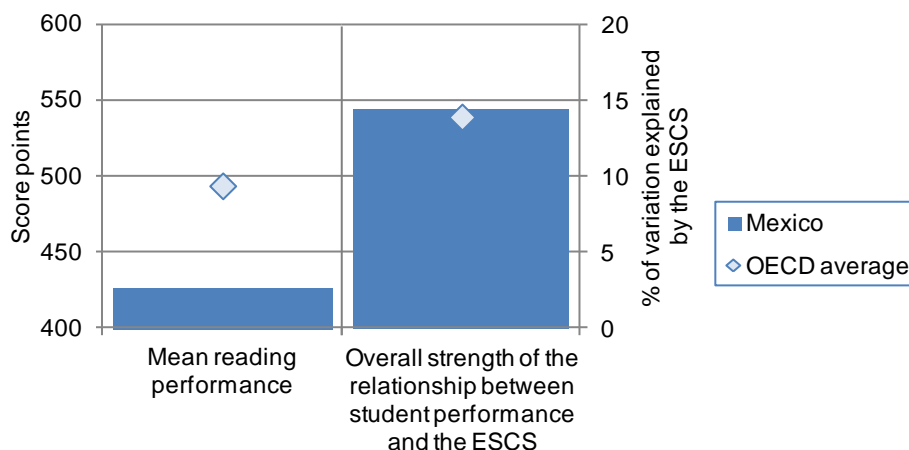
To address education challenges in primary and lower secondary education, the Mexican government has implemented a range of reforms in recent years. The Pact for Mexico (2012) and the Reform of the Mexican Constitution (2013), consolidated commitments in education – in teaching, school policy, and evaluation and assessment. These reforms culminated in the new professional teaching service law (2013), designed to provide coherence to the profession in primary and secondary education. This law aims to clarify selection, recruitment, training, promotion and evaluation for teachers, school leaders and supervisors and promotes a new technical assistance service for schools. Another law has granted autonomy to the National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación*, INEE). A comprehensive reform of basic education introduced a competency-based curriculum (2012).

In addition to making upper secondary education compulsory in 2012 (with a goal of universal coverage by 2022), a National System of Upper Secondary Education (*Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato*, 2009) was introduced to provide a coherent framework of upper secondary education through better academic guidance, more education offer, a monitoring system for institutions, and mechanisms to deliver education (e.g. teacher training, school leadership professionalisation, infrastructure, scholarships).



Mexico's scores in PISA increased between 2006 and 2009 in mathematics, but are lower than average scores in PISA 2009 (425 mean score compared to the OECD average of 499) and the impact of socio-economic status on attainment is at the OECD average (14% of performance variance explained by socio-economic background) (Figure 1).

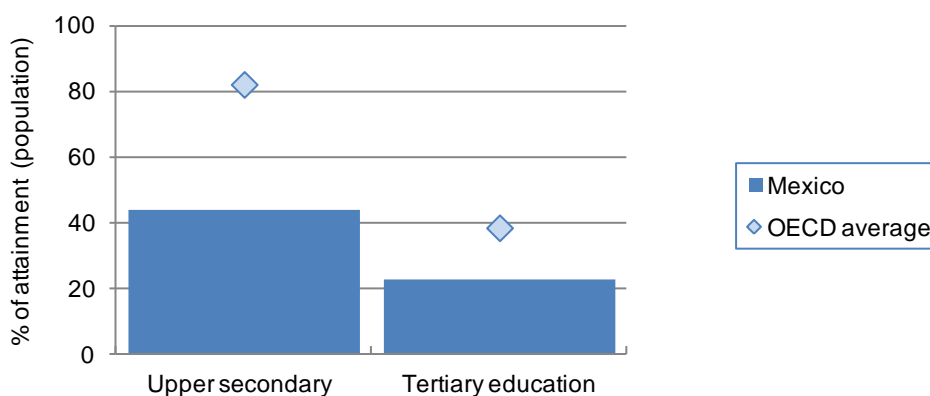
Figure 1. Student performance in reading and relationship between student performance and economic, social and cultural status (ESCS), for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science (Volume I)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en>.

Secondary and tertiary education attainment in Mexico are lower than the OECD average (Figure 2). Less than half of 25-34 year-olds have attained at least upper secondary education (44% compared to the OECD average of 82%), and less than a quarter of 25-34 year-olds have attained tertiary education (23% compared to the OECD average of 39%).

Figure 2. Upper secondary and tertiary attainment for 25-34 year-olds, 2011



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.



EQUITY AND QUALITY: OVERCOMING IMPORTANT EQUITY CHALLENGES

Equity indicators show that Mexico is working to provide a better distribution of learning opportunities. Mexico had the largest absolute increase in mathematics performance (a 33 score-point increase) together with the largest decrease in the proportion of low performers (students performing below the baseline proficiency Level 2 in mathematics) between 2003 and 2009. The impact of students' socio-economic background on their performance and between schools has decreased significantly and stands at around the OECD average, demonstrating that there have been improvements in equity of distribution of learning opportunities. Nevertheless, in 2009, about 40% of students performed below proficiency Level 2 in reading in PISA 2009 – the largest share among OECD countries (Figure 3).

Inclusive policies in **early childhood education and care** (ECEC) aim for more equity in the education system. ECEC coverage has increased to almost 100% since 2002, when Mexico made education at this level compulsory. Evidence shows that ECEC can help improve student performance later in life and can help reduce performance gaps for students of different social backgrounds. PISA 2009 results (after accounting for socio-economic background) showed that students in Mexico who had attended more than one year of pre-primary school scored about 36 points higher in PISA (almost equivalent to a school year) than those who did not.

Mexico has some **equitable system-level policies**, but other policies, such as grade repetition, can involve high costs for the system without any benefits. Children in Mexico have comprehensive schooling until age 14, and student selection in Mexico starts at age 15 (one year older than the OECD average). In PISA 2009, 17.3% of 15-year-olds reported that they had repeated a grade in primary education (10 percentage points higher than the OECD average). This can be costly for the system, and [evidence across OECD countries](#) shows that repetition may not be an effective measure to help improve student learning.

With a high proportion of **indigenous population** and students with low socio-economic status, there are large performance gaps. About 6.7 million people speak an indigenous language (6.8% of the total population), with almost a million people who do not speak Spanish. Despite improvements, evidence shows that performance gaps in reading have increased for students where the language spoken at home is different from the language of assessment (from 71 score points in 2000 to 95 in 2009). Mexico also has the highest proportion of students in the lowest level of socio-economic status (58%), which is clearly related to poverty rates.

The challenge: Promoting educational improvement for children of low socio-economic background and indigenous populations.

Recent policies and practices

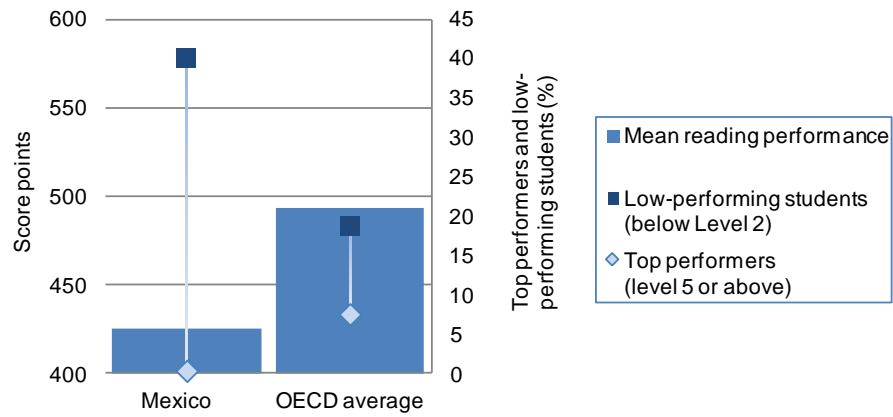
To increase participation in early childhood education and care, Mexico made preschool education compulsory (2002), with implementation in three different phases from 2004 to 2009. Efforts to improve quality and coverage in ECEC include the creation of care centres in urban areas for children of low-income working parents (2007), the organisation of a national system of day-care centres to enhance the quality of day-care, and the creation of a framework syllabus to help ECEC institutions develop a curriculum that meets their specific needs.

Opportunities ([Oportunidades](#)) is a cash transfer programme that targets families living in poverty. It provides grants for activities such as investment in education and medical check-ups for children and pregnant women. Covering around 6.5 million Mexican families, it has helped to increase enrolment rates for secondary school, with particularly beneficial impact for girls.

To support indigenous populations, there are schemes to improve education and employability, often targeting women, including *Programa de Educación Inicial y Básica para la Población Rural e Indígena* and *Programas Albergues Escolares Indígenas*. A [specialised unit](#) in the Secretariat of Public Education coordinates indigenous education.



Figure 3. Mean score in student performance on the reading scale and percentage of top performers and low-performing students, for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science (Volume I)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en>.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: IMPROVING EDUCATION COVERAGE AND COMPLETION

Labour market perspectives can play an important role in the decision to stay in education. In 2010, Mexico was the one of the few countries with higher unemployment among individuals with tertiary education (4.8%, equal to the OECD average) than those with upper secondary education (4.4% compared to the OECD average of 7.3%) or those who had not attained upper secondary education (4.0% compared to the OECD average of 12.6%). The proportion of 15-29 year-olds not in education and not employed (24.7%) was above the OECD average (15.8%) in 2011 (Figure 4). This pattern has remained stable in the past decade in Mexico, suggesting a potential structural mismatch between labour market supply and demand and a higher demand for low-wage jobs. According to government sources ([INEGI](#), 2010), only 16.2% of young people not in education or employment were seeking employment and 83.8% were inactive, with many young women (78.9%) taking care of households. Being neither employed nor in education and training ([NEET](#)) has serious adverse repercussions on employability later in life, self-sufficiency and gender equality.

Mexico is working to expand student access and completion in **upper secondary education**. A challenge shared by countries at this level is to provide relevant education that will prepare young adults for work or education and, at the same time, develop capacity for further learning. Mexico has the highest average annual rate of growth of upper secondary graduation rates among OECD countries, growing by 3.6% annually between 2000 and 2011. Still, in 2011 less than half of the population (49%, compared to a 83% OECD average) were expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime. The strongest predictors of dropout were low grades and course failure, but students who dropped out cited a lack of economic resources. Men expressed the conviction that working was more important than studying, while women viewed parenthood as more important.

Vocational education and training (VET) could help the system provide broader development opportunities for youth. It can help ease entry into the labour market, through school- and work-based programmes. In Mexico, the initial VET system provides learning opportunities in remote regions and support measures for students at risk, and there is evidence of collaboration between companies and training institutions. To help improve the system, Mexico reformed the technological baccalaureate and created trainee grants. However, the VET programme in Mexico is among the smallest across OECD countries. Only 4% of students graduated from upper secondary VET in 2011, compared to an OECD average of 47%. At the tertiary level, only 2% of tertiary students graduated from VET programmes (compared to the OECD average of 11%). According to an [OECD study on VET in Mexico](#), linkages between VET and employers are weak and there is little investment from firms in this sector of education.

Tertiary education coverage in Mexico has progressed significantly, but the gap with other OECD countries is large. As across OECD, the expansion of tertiary education implies providing a sufficiently wide offer of studies to address the needs of the labour market and the interests of the student population. Only 12% of 55-64 year-olds in Mexico have attained tertiary education in 2011. While this percentage almost doubled to 23% among 25-34 year-olds, it remained below the OECD average of 39%. Participation rates for disadvantaged students could be raised through better career guidance and counselling services and financial aid schemes. Internal and external quality assurance within a well-developed framework are needed to improve [the quality of tertiary education](#). Strengthening partnerships between institutions and the business sector can better match educational programmes to employment requirements and formally involve employers and the business community in the development of tertiary education policy.

The challenge: Promoting upper secondary completion and ensuring effective use of skills in the labour market.

Recent policies and practices

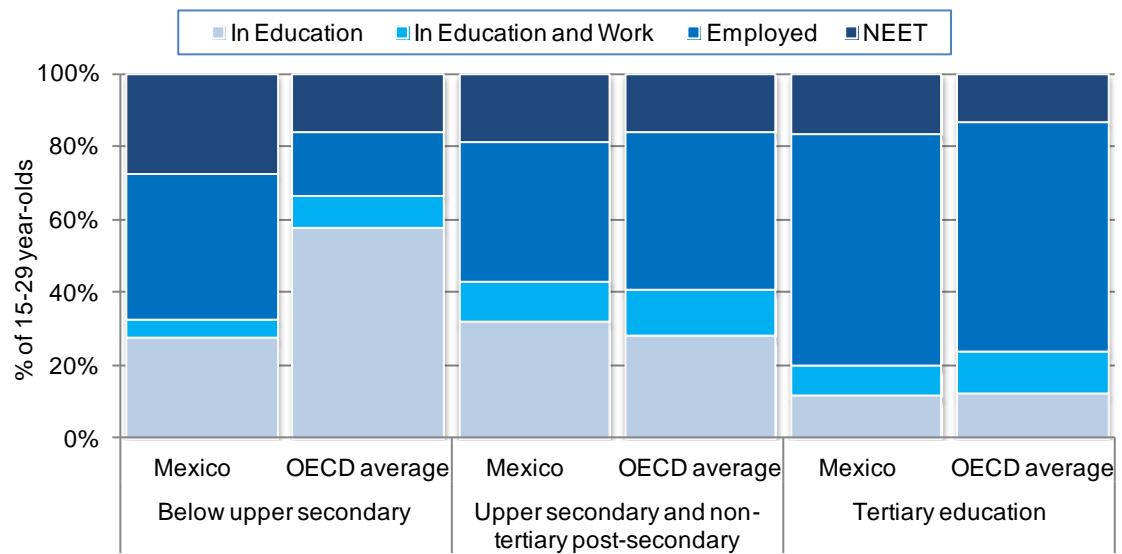
Mexico made upper secondary education compulsory in 2012 with the objective of attaining universal coverage by 2022. A National System of Upper Secondary Education (*Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato*, 2009) aims to provide a coherent national framework through academic guidance, more education offer, a monitoring system for institutions, and investments in teacher training, school leadership professionalisation, infrastructure and scholarships.

To encourage students to stay in upper secondary and reduce the risk of social exclusion, the programme *Constructing Yourself* (*Construye T*, 2008) includes teacher training, support to prepare a diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses, a school project to respond to their challenges, and guidance for students. It has been implemented in almost 33% of schools by the Ministry of Education, assisted by UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and 39 NGOs.

To promote completion of studies, two cash transfer programmes for upper secondary and tertiary education ([Programa de Becas de Media Superior](#), PROBEMS, 2012 and [Programa Nacional de Becas y Financiamiento](#), PRONABES), aim to support and retain low socio-economic background students in public education and to encourage students with excellent performance.



Figure 4. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds in education and not in education, by educational attainment and work status, 2011



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A LARGE AND COMPLEX SYSTEM

The key to raising achievement in Mexico's 251 037 schools (with enrolment of almost 34 million students in the academic term 2009-10) is to develop the conditions for school leaders and teachers to place student learning at the centre of their efforts. Particular to Mexico are the facts that 21% of all primary schools have only one classroom or are multi-grade (teachers instructing two or more grades simultaneously) and there are many rural schools for indigenous populations. Overall, Mexico's **learning environments** are similar to those in other OECD countries, with students reporting good relations with their teachers and motivation from their teachers to read. Principals' views on student behaviour are similar to those of principals in other OECD countries (Figure 5). In [TALIS](#), teachers reported a relatively low percentage of time spent on teaching and learning, apparently because they spend more time on administrative activities than on classroom instruction. Also in TALIS, school principals reported that classroom disturbance, absenteeism or students arriving late at school were factors affecting instruction for about two-thirds of lower secondary teachers (the highest percentage among participant countries).

School leaders have not been required to undergo specialised training or a selection process to take up their post. A vertical promotion regulation (*Escalafón*) set the conditions for teachers to become school principals, but according to an [OECD study on school improvement in Mexico](#), the process appeared to lack transparency. One of the requirements for promotion is to have taken courses from a national training catalogue, but not necessarily courses related to leadership practice. Some initiatives, such as the Quality Schools Programme (*Programa de Escuelas de Calidad*), provide training and tools to help school principals develop better pedagogic and administrative leadership. School leaders have low decision-making capacity on matters key to the functioning of schools, such as hiring or dismissing teachers and determining teachers' salaries. In the long run, school autonomy with appropriate support is a desirable goal for Mexico. A necessary step to achieving it is to ensure sufficient capacity and support at school- and mid-system levels to carry out these decisions, along with a robust and reliable framework for improvement, accountability and transparency which takes into account the context in which the school operates.

Teachers and teaching quality have been a policy priority for Mexico, and current reforms are targeting this area. Key issues include strengthening the process for selecting teachers and assigning them to schools, the balance between formative and summative appraisal in their evaluations, the quality of teacher training programmes, the [incentives to improve performance](#) and the quality of teaching. Also, some teachers teach at one school in the morning and another in the afternoon, while others have a second job in another sector. School principals of around 70% of lower secondary teachers reported that late arrival of teachers, absenteeism or lack of pedagogical preparation were factors that hindered the quality of education provided at the school (the TALIS average for these factors reached one-quarter of teachers).

The challenge: Professionalising teaching and school leadership by attracting, developing and retaining the best candidates through systematic and transparent processes.

Recent policies and practices

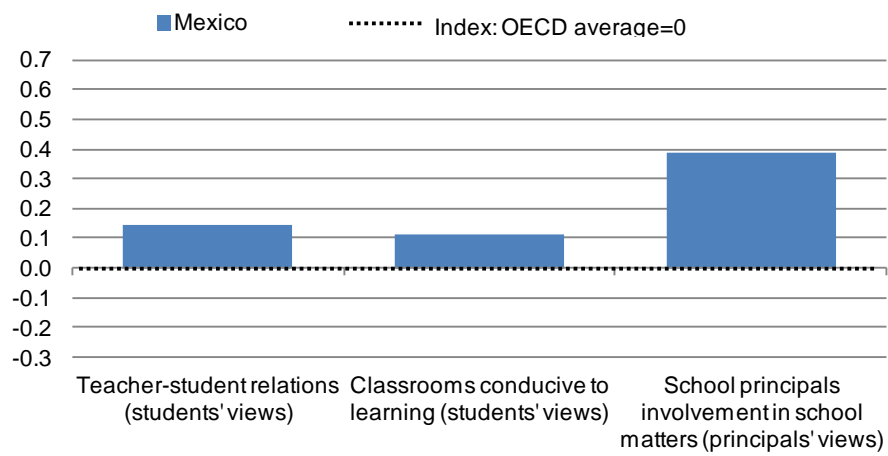
Mexico has been active in teacher policy in recent years, with reforms in teacher training, teacher career progression and evaluation. New legislation (2013) promotes the creation of a clear Professional Teacher Service (*Servicio Profesional Docente*), establishing the basis for professionalising teachers, school leaders and supervisors along the continuum of their careers in terms of selection, recruitment, evaluation, training, career progression and incentives (See Spotlight 1). In addition, selected programmes support school improvement.

The Quality Schools Programme ([Programa Escuelas de Calidad, PEC](#)) allocates grants to finance school improvement plans. It aims to give autonomy to schools and encourage shared decision-making among directors, teachers and parents through Social Participation Councils. Participating schools develop a Strategic School Transformation Plan (*Plan Estratégico de Transformación Escolar, PETE*). Initially, the grant is directed to supplies or infrastructure; in later years, it is directed to teacher development. School leaders also receive training. The project started in 2001, and in 2011-12 it covered 46 876 schools and 34 688 school principals.

The Comprehensive Strategy to Improve Education Achievement ([Estrategia Integral para la Mejora del Logro Educativo, EIMLE](#)) focuses on providing support to schools that had the lowest achievement levels (around 7 395) in the main national student assessment that measures content knowledge or competences in selected years of basic education ([Evaluación Nacional del Logro Académico en Centros Escolares, ENLACE](#)). Launched as a three-year plan (November 2009 to December 2012), it has become a strategy composed of two key elements: a) training networks for teachers and b) personalised capacity building at schools through mentoring. Mexico is promoting the implementation of full-time schools at the national level to offer students longer school days.



Figure 5. The learning environment, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en>.



Spotlight 1. Professionalising teachers and school leaders

New legislation to consolidate a professional teaching service (2013) brings together and updates different components of the teaching profession for both primary and upper secondary education. This law sets out the basis for **selection, appointment, promotion and tenure possibilities for teachers**. It builds upon the National Teaching Post Competition (2008-13) which aimed to improve transparency and quality of the teacher selection process. Among the new policies proposed are:

- introducing an **induction process** in the first two years of teachers' practice
- establishing the main lines of a **teacher evaluation process** for all teachers
- establishing **new horizontal incentive mechanisms** to include or replace the different voluntary programmes currently available (e.g. *Carrera Magisterial*, which was modified in 2011 so that their students' performance on ENLACE standardised tests and other criteria accounts for 50% of a teacher's score, and the Incentives Programme for Teacher Quality [*Programa de Estímulos a la Calidad Docente*, 2008-09] in primary and lower secondary schools, which rewards good performance and relative improvement, and provides incentives for both schools and individuals).

It will be important to ensure alignment of the different policies and clarify their purpose, and also to include a variety of evidence on school results to stimulate teamwork inside the school.

Evaluation takes on an important dimension in the reform. Internal school and teacher evaluation is proposed, to be focused on school improvement. To enter the profession, teacher candidates will have to pass a public selection process (*concurso*). They will be assigned a mentor for the first two years and must get a positive evaluation to be confirmed in their post. In addition, to assess competence and support development, a new mandatory evaluation system has been introduced for teachers, school leaders and supervisors. An important provision is that a teacher's first or second unsuccessful evaluation will lead to individual coaching and a third unsuccessful evaluation will mean dismissal. The law assigns definition of the precise evaluation tools to the National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, INEE*). It will be important to base this definition on evidence of good practice and to use school-based evaluation methods that balance the need for accountability and improvement.

The law also aims to **professionalise school leaders** by introducing a transparent selection and recruitment process and an induction process during the first two years of practice. Public selection processes (*concursos*) will be organised, with candidates expected to have a minimum of two years teaching experience and specific profiles determined by INEE and local and federal authorities. Under this law, school leaders will be confirmed in their post only after positive evaluation. Upper secondary principals will not have permanent positions and will return to the status of teacher if they are not reconfirmed in their post.

A new **service of technical assistance to schools** is being introduced to support teachers in evaluation practices. This will be carried out by school leaders, supervisors and pedagogical advisors (*Asesores Técnico-pedagógicos, ATP*), who are recognised as support staff under the school improvement law. ATPs will also be subject to transparent selection and recruitment processes and can participate in the different promotion mechanisms.

According to the new law, **professional development** for teachers will focus on improving the quality of education, will respond to teacher needs and be relevant to schools, taking into account different evaluations. Staff will choose programmes according to their needs and the results of their evaluation.

Overall, it will be important to communicate on the reform with all those involved, to support implementation, and to allocate sufficient funding to ensure the resources and capacity necessary to deliver this new reform.



EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES: PROGRESS ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT

Defining strategies for evaluation and assessment is an important step towards improving student outcomes and developing a better and more equitable school system. Mexico has made significant efforts to develop **evaluation and assessment approaches** in recent years (Figure 6). The Secretariat of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*) and the National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, INEE*) are responsible at the federal level, for the development and coordination of evaluation in the education system, including the National System for Educational Evaluation (*Sistema Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, SNEE*).

System evaluation includes a wide range of initiatives, with common references and strong capacity at the national level. The system aims for equity and inclusion, and there is growing pluralism of stakeholders involved. At the same time, the system needs to provide links between existing components and develop others, revise its governance, broaden its vision by strengthening its approach to improvement, and ensure alignment between the new curriculum and the evaluation framework, while strengthening the capacity of all players to implement it.

External **monitoring of schools** is undertaken by the supervision systems of the states. An [OECD study on evaluation and assessment](#) found that supervisors' capacity to carry out these exercises currently appears limited. In addition to this external monitoring, Mexico has also promoted a self-evaluation approach, with different instruments and materials, which still needs support to become consistent and sustained.

Teacher appraisal is generally perceived positively as a regular component of teachers' careers, but it appears complex and fragmented. Currently, it is predominantly a mechanism to grant rewards to teachers, mostly based on instruments that only indirectly measure the quality of teaching. According to the [OECD study](#), a teacher appraisal model with the following two components can strengthen teachers as professionals: an improvement component (emphasising developmental evaluation) and a career progression component (a model of certification of competencies for practice within and across career paths, associated with career advancement and based on a greater variety of instruments).

Student assessment is done through a [wide range of instruments](#), ranging from national standardised assessments to continuous formative assessment in the classroom. For example, there is a national full-cohort external assessment (National Assessment of Academic Achievement in Schools, [Examen Nacional de Logro Académico en Centros Escolares, ENLACE](#)) in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. It is used for diagnostic and improvement purposes but is perceived as having high stakes for teachers and schools. Some strengths in the system are that teachers in Mexico see student assessment as part of their professional role, and there is progress in aligning marks with expected learning outcomes. Some pending issues are the prevalence of teaching to the test across the school system, excessive reliance on multiple-choice tests and the high number of objectives for ENLACE.

The challenge: Providing coherence across the system, building capacity and balancing accountability and improvement functions.

Recent policies and practices

Mexico implemented an extensive curricular reform in 2012, the Comprehensive Reform of Basic Education ([Reforma Integral de la Educación Básica, RIEB](#)) which introduced learning standards focused on competencies to improve the coherence of the system and its emphasis on student achievement.

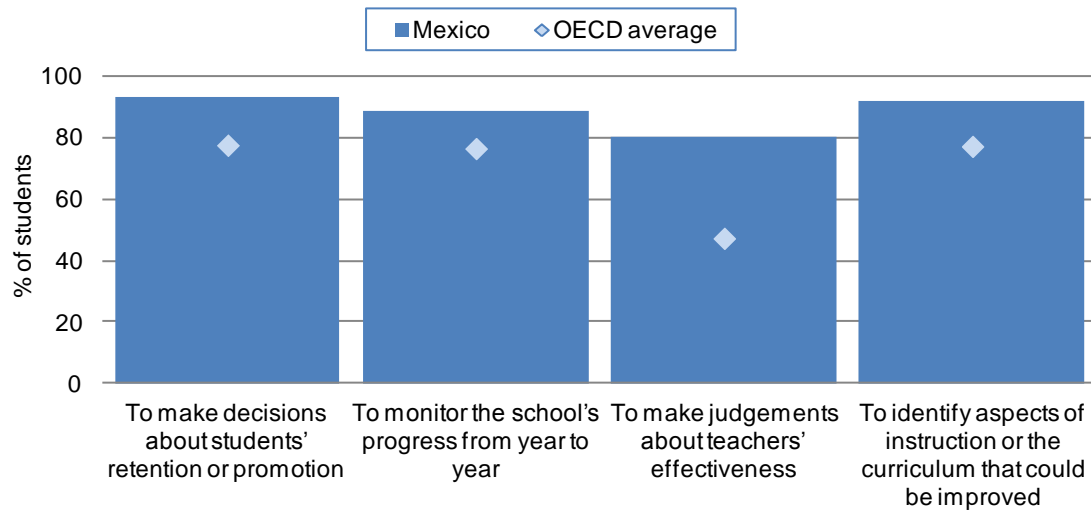
Mexico has introduced a teacher evaluation system designed to raise teaching quality and help detect what areas teachers need to improve. In 2011, a Universal Teacher Evaluation was introduced and it has been revised and included in the Professional Teaching Service Law, 2013 (see Spotlight 1).

Mexico recently (2012) granted autonomy to the National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (INEE) as an autonomous and technical standard-setting body to move forward on a strategic and unified vision of assessment and evaluation. It will establish the teacher evaluation process and collaborate with the Secretariat of Public Education and decentralised bodies to strengthen evaluation.

To clarify available resources and facilitate better planning and improvement, a National Registry of Students, Teachers and Schools ([Registro Nacional de Alumnos, Maestros y Escuelas, RNAME](#)) was set up in 2011. In 2013, it is being complemented and transformed into the National System for Education Information and Administration ([Sistema Nacional de Información y Gestión Educativa](#)).



Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students in national modal grade for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en>.



GOVERNANCE: BALANCING STAKEHOLDER AUTONOMY AT FEDERAL AND STATE LEVELS

The national education system in Mexico is led by the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP). It is organised into four main Undersecretariats: Basic Education (SEB), Upper Secondary Education (SEMS), Higher Education (SES), and Educational Policy Planning and Evaluation (SPEPE). Other bodies that shape education policy include the following:

- The Federal Administration of Educational Services coordinates the compulsory education system in the Federal District and reports directly to the Secretary of Public Education.
- The National Council of Educational Authorities ([Consejo Nacional de Autoridades Educativas, CONAEDU](#)) is composed of the Federal Government, representatives of the 31 states and state educational authorities. Chaired by the Federal Secretary of Education, its role is mainly advisory.
- The National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (INEE) shares responsibility with SEP for evaluation of the education system.
- Other education stakeholders include the National Union of Education Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, SNTE*), which teachers must join.
- A variety of non-government associations and parents' groups have developed to press for improvements in for education.

Since 1992, the 31 **federal states operate basic education services** (pre-primary, primary, secondary and initial teacher education) within their territories (see Spotlight 2). SEP sets the main guidelines of education policy for the country and operates the education system of the Federal District. According to an [OECD study on improving schools in Mexico](#), reform processes have not yet ensured appropriate capacity and distribution of responsibilities across the decentralised system.

There are varying degrees of **autonomy** at the different levels of education. In primary and lower secondary education, schools make only about 17% of decisions, while the Federal Government makes about 41% of decisions and the states 42% (Figure 7). This pattern has remained stable since 2003. Developing capacity to support autonomy at state and school levels is key. In upper secondary and tertiary education, institutions have had much wider autonomy. In tertiary education, with 854 public and 1 740 private institutions (2010), recommendations focus on more strategic planning, coordination and quality control and better regulation of private providers.

The challenge: Achieving balance between central and regional governance, and ensuring capacity and effective engagement of different stakeholders.

Recent policies and practices

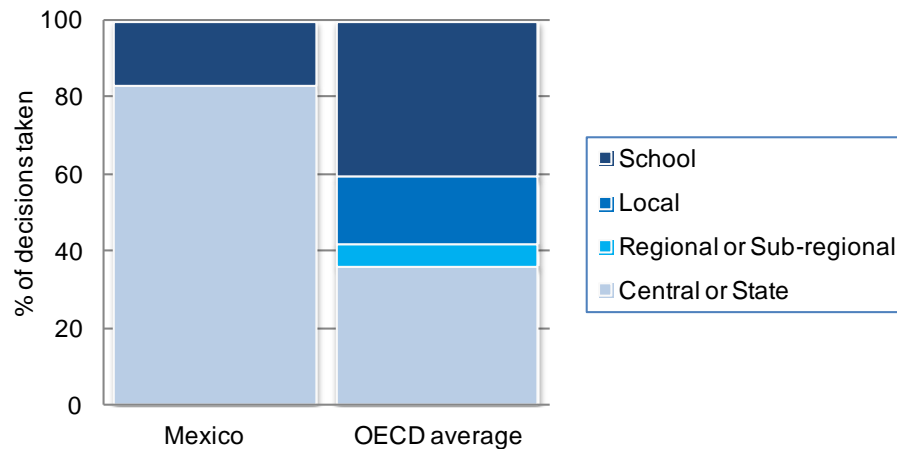
In recent years, the national government has prioritised education. In December, 2012, the Federal Government signed the [Pact for Mexico \(Pacto Por México\)](#), an agreement between the most important political parties and the Federal Government. It sets out clear commitments on education: to increase education coverage in upper secondary (80%) and tertiary education (40%); to improve teaching and learning conditions by providing more autonomy to schools and establishing full-time schools; to create a professional teaching service and promote system improvement with more transparency and consolidation of the evaluation authority. The Pact has been followed by a Reform to the Constitution enshrining these commitments and new legislation.

The [Alliance for the Quality of Education](#) (2008-12) was signed between the Government of Mexico and the national teachers' union (SNTE) based on guidelines established in the Sectorial Education Programme 2007-12. It focused on: 1) modernisation of schools, 2) professionalising of teachers and education authorities, 3) students' well-being and personal development, 4) students' preparation for life and work, and 5) evaluation to improve the quality of education. This led to a number of reforms, including the introduction of the National Teaching Post Competition.

[School participation councils \(Consejos Escolares de Participación Social\)](#) have been promoted to ensure parental and society engagement in education, increasing from 4% to 44% between 2009 and 2010. School councils are composed of parents, school principals, teachers, union representatives, former students and community members.



Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken in public lower secondary schools at each level of government, 2011



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>.

Spotlight 2. Raising education outcomes at the state level

The OECD has recently conducted a review of basic and upper secondary education system in the state of Puebla that provides a perspective on how to raise education outcomes at the federal state level. The report, *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* (2013), concludes that improvements will require a long-term strategy, reforms of governing structures and action in four main policy areas:

1. Strengthening support for schools and students, particularly in the early years and multi-grade schools.
2. Improving the quality of teaching and school leadership, including raising the quality of initial teacher education (*Normales*).
3. Increasing completion and quality in upper secondary education.
4. Improving the planning, funding and use of school infrastructure.

An effective governance structure at the state level is also key to fostering improvements. Puebla could take steps towards a more policy-oriented governance structure. This may include strengthening the capacity to diagnose, plan, innovate, evaluate, reach individual schools, coordinate within and outside the SEP, engage in a more professional relationship with the SNTE and broaden stakeholder participation.

Improvements in the federal state of Puebla will also benefit from national long-term planning, a clearer distribution of responsibilities and greater role for states in policy design, better intergovernmental coordination mechanisms, and a more efficient, equitable and accountable national funding system.



FUNDING: STRONG EMPHASIS ON STAFF AND DIRECTING FUNDING WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED

Investment in educational institutions in Mexico has increased to the OECD average in recent years. Expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP increased from 5% in 2000 to 6.2% in 2010 (compared to the OECD average of 6.3%) (Figure 8). As in most OECD countries, a large portion of expenditure on educational institutions comes from public sources (80.5% compared to the 2010 OECD average of 83.6%), but the share of private expenditure in Mexico is above the OECD average (19.5% compared to 16.4%). A larger share of expenditure is devoted to primary and lower secondary education in Mexico (3.1% of GDP compared to 2.6% of GDP on average in OECD countries).

Annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education (USD 2 993) is among the lowest levels among OECD countries (OECD average of USD 9 313). However, from 2000 to 2010, expenditure per student increased by 23% at the primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level and by 19% at the tertiary level, as expenditure increased at a faster rate than growth of the student population over this period.

Compensation of staff is the main driver of expenditure. Three main trends of school funding in Mexico stand out compared to other OECD countries. First, Mexico allocates one of the lowest proportions of total expenditure on pre-tertiary education to capital expenditure, such as school infrastructures and educational materials (2.5% in 2010, compared to the OECD average of 8.7%). Second, the compensation of educational staff (particularly teachers) accounts for one of the highest proportions of current expenditure at pre-tertiary levels of education (93.3% in 2010, compared to the OECD average of 78.2%). Third, Mexico has one of the largest gaps among OECD member countries in expenditure per student between pre-tertiary and tertiary education.

Funding for schools comes from various sources: federal, state-level, and autonomous or private sources. Some schools receive funds from the Federal Government through the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and other state secretariats or federal agencies. Schools that receive state-level funds are administered and supervised by the states' boards of public education. Autonomous schools usually receive a subsidy from federal and state governments, which they administer themselves. Privately supported schools are self-financed and administered. Funding at all levels of education is shared across the different levels (2009 figures): federal government (62.8%), state-level governments (15.9%), municipalities (0.2%) and the private sector (22.1%). Federal funding for the provision of educational services is allocated through specific earmarked allocations and can vary widely across states. A significant part of education services and funding is provided through specific programmes. These programmes are structured interventions, with specific goals and activities, to which a budget is usually attached. They can be federal or state programmes, and in any given year several could be running at the same time in particular states.

Mexico faces challenges for equitable funding of schools. Mexico was one of the countries in PISA 2009 to show the strongest relationship between the availability of resources at schools and the schools' socio-economic intake. According to an [OECD report on improving schools in Mexico](#), schools generally rely on parental donations to cover their operational needs. This can lead to inequities, as schools serving more prosperous communities may receive more money. Public schools can receive specific allocations through federal or state programmes that focus on specific objectives and activities of education improvement. However, only about 50% of schools actually have access to them, and many schools in the poorest or isolated regions are unable to access these programmes and the human, capital and financial resources they represent. PISA shows that the amount of resources invested in education does not necessarily translate into better student outcomes, but the way resources are allocated is important. This suggests the need for Mexico to give more consideration on how to distribute resources for schools more equitably.

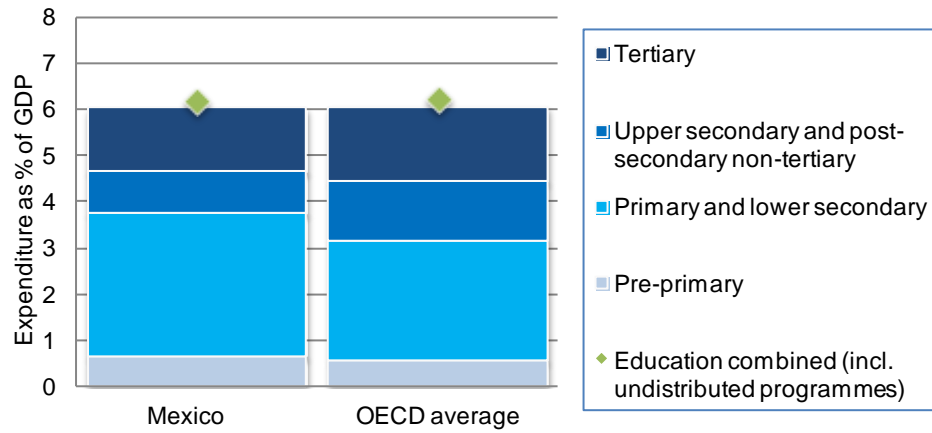
The challenge: Establishing more transparent and equitable funding mechanisms to reach schools and students most in need.

Recent policies and practices

Through the *Better Schools Programme*, Mexico has refurbished 19 000 schools most in need of repair across the country, from pre-primary to lower secondary education. This programme is implemented with the participation of school communities.



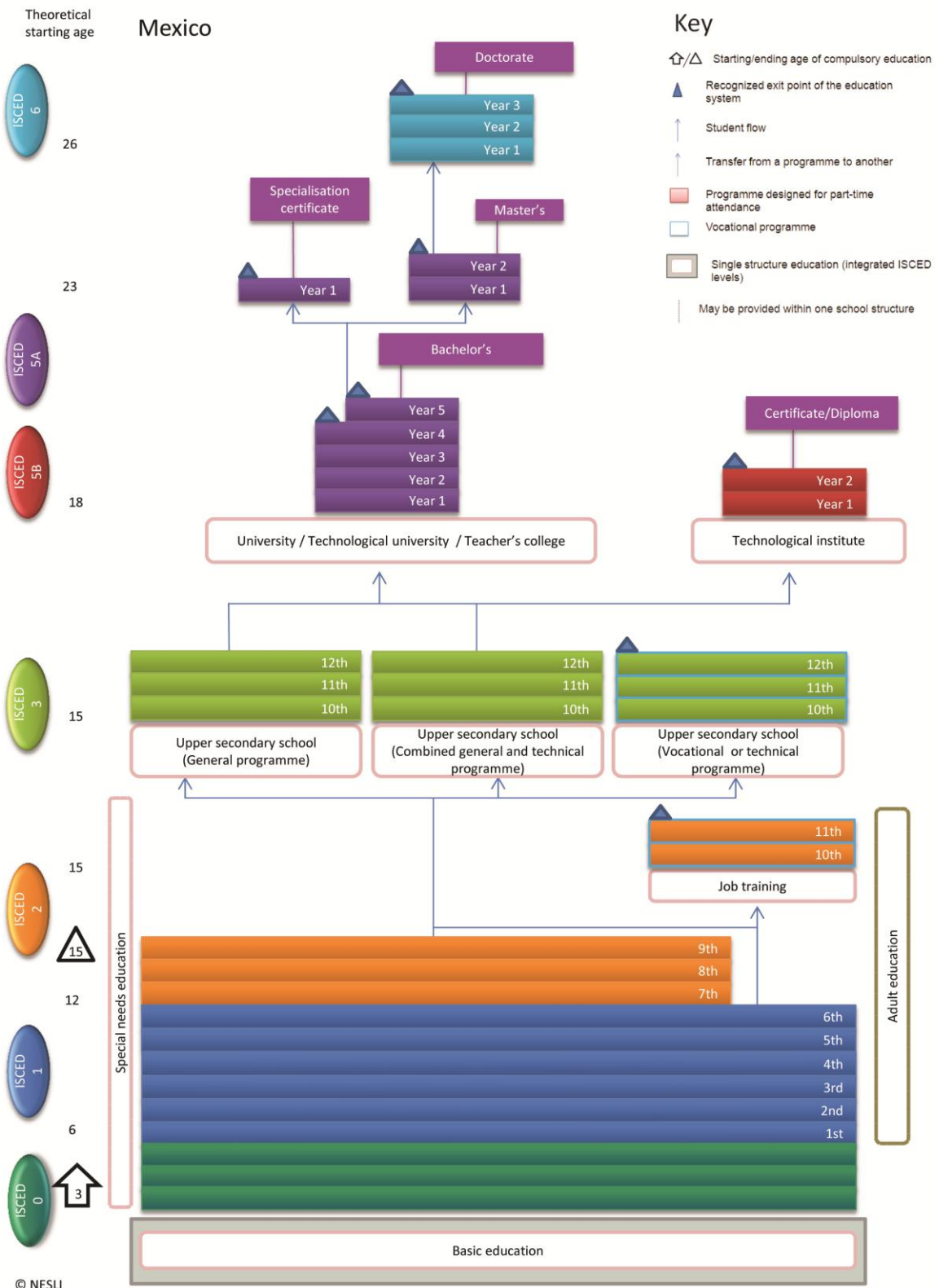
Figure 8. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by level of education, 2010



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.



ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF MEXICO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM



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ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators	Mexico	Average or total	Min	Max
Background information					
<i>Political context</i>					
1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)	5.3%	5.8%	3.8%	8.8%
<i>Economy</i>					
2	GDP per capita, 2010, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (EAG 2013)	15 195		15 195	84 672
3	GDP growth 2011 (OECD National Accounts)	3.9%	1.8%	-7.1%	8.5%
<i>Society</i>					
4	Population density, inhab/km ² , 2010 (OECD Statistics)	56.0	138	2.9	492
5	Young people, aged less than 15, 2010 (OECD Statistics)	28.1%	17.3%	13%	28.1%
6	Foreign-born population, 2009 (OECD Statistics)	0.8%	14.1%	0.8%	36.9%
Education outcomes					
7	Mean reading performance (PISA 2009)	425	493	425	539
8	Change in mean reading performance, 2000-09 (PISA 2009)	3	1	-31	40
9	Change in mean mathematics performance, 2003-09 (PISA 2009)	33	0	-24	33
10	Change in mean science performance, 2006-09 (PISA 2009)	6	3	-12	30
11	Enrolment rates in early childhood education and primary education, ages 3 and 4, 2011 (EAG 2013)	72.4%	74.4%	11.6%	98%
12	Population that has attained below upper secondary education, 25-64 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	64%	25%	7%	68%
13	Population that has attained at least upper secondary education, 25-34 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	44%	82%	43%	98%
14	Population that has attained tertiary education, 25-34 year-olds (EAG 2013)	23%	39%	19%	64%
15	Population whose highest level of education is vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary, 2011 (EAG 2013)	m	33.5%	8.4%	73.9%
Unemployment rates, 25-64 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
16	Below upper secondary	4%	12.6%	2.7%	39.3%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	4.4%	7.3%	2.2%	19.2%
	Tertiary education	4.8%	4.8%	1.5%	12.8%
Students: Raising outcomes					
<i>Policy lever 1: Equity and quality</i>					
17	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2009)	15	14	10	16
Proficiency levels on the reading scale (PISA 2009)					
18	Students below Level 2	40.1%	18.8%	5.8%	40.1%
	Students at Level 5 or above	0.4%	7.6%	0.4%	15.7%
Between- and within-school variance in reading performance (PISA 2009)					
19	Between schools	3 583	3 616	665	6 695
	Within schools	3 869	5 591	2 795	8 290
20	Students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2009)	21.5%	13%	0%	36.9%



#	List of key indicators	Mexico	average or total	Min	Max
21	Variance in student performance explained by student socio-economic status (PISA 2009)	14%	14%	6%	26%
22	Difference in reading performance between native students and students with an immigrant background, after accounting for socio-economic status (PISA 2009)	85.0	27	-17.0	85.0
23	Gender differences in student performance on the reading scale (PISA 2009)	-25	-39	-55	-22
<i>Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future</i>					
Upper secondary graduation rates, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
24	General programmes	45%	50%	18%	82%
	Pre-vocational/ vocational programmes	4%	47%	4%	99%
25	Change in upper secondary graduation rates (average annual growth rate 1995-2011), (EAG 2013)	3.6%	0.6%	-1%	3.6%
Graduation rates, first-time graduates, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
26	Tertiary-type 5A	21%	40%	21%	60%
	Tertiary-type 5B	2%	11%	0%	29%
	Tertiary-type 5A (average annual growth rate 1995-2011)	3.1%	4%	-1%	11%
	Tertiary-type 5B (average annual growth rate 1995-2011)	5.7%	0%	-20%	14%
27	Youth population not in education, employment or training 15-29 year olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	24.7%	15.8%	6.9%	34.6%
Institutions: Improving schools					
<i>Policy lever 3: School improvement</i>					
28	Index of teacher-student relations based on students' reports (PISA 2009)	0.14	0	-0.42	0.44
29	Index of disciplinary climate based on students' reports (PISA 2009)	0.11	0	-0.40	0.75
Teachers younger than 40 years old, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
30	Primary education	m	41%	15%	60%
	Lower secondary education	m	39%	11%	56%
	Upper secondary education	m	34%	7%	47%
Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
31	Primary education	800	790	589	1 120
	Lower secondary education	1 047	709	415	1 120
	Upper secondary education	848	664	369	1 120
Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
32	Primary education	m	0.82	0.44	1.34
	Lower secondary education	m	0.85	0.44	1.34
	Upper secondary education	m	0.89	0.44	1.40
33	Change in teachers' salaries between 2000 and 2011 in lower secondary education (2000 = 100), (EAG 2013)	3.07%	16%	-9%	103%
34	Impact of teacher appraisal and feedback upon teaching, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)	69.1%	33.9%	10.9%	69.1%
35	Teachers who wanted to participate in more development than they did in the previous 18 months, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)	85.3%	55%	31%	85%
36	School principals' views of their involvement in school matters, mean index, (PISA 2009)	0.39	-0.02	-1.29	1.03



#	List of key indicators	Mexico	average or total	Min	Max
<i>Policy level 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes</i>					
Assessment purposes (PISA 2009)					
37	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	93.4%	78%	1%	100%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	88.5%	77%	35%	98%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	80.1%	47%	8%	85%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	92%	77%	47%	98%
Frequency and source of teacher appraisal and feedback, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)					
38	Once every two years or less	21.1%	35.8%	13.8%	65.6%
	At least once per year	49.1%	52.2%	27.6%	68.6%
	Monthly or more than once per month	29.8%	12%	3.3%	29.8%
Systems: Organising the system					
<i>Policy level 5: Governance</i>					
Decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2011 (EAG 2012)					
39	Central or state government	83%	36%	0%	87%
	Regional or sub-regional government	0%	6%	0%	36%
	Local government	m	17%	4%	100%
	School government	17%	41%	5%	86%
<i>Policy level 6: Funding</i>					
Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)					
40	Pre-primary education	2 280	6 762	2 280	20 958
	Primary education	2 331	7 974	1 860	21 240
	Secondary education	2 632	9 014	2 470	17 633
	Tertiary education	7 872	13 528	6 501	25 576
Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2010 (EAG 2013)					
41	Public sources	80.5%	83.6%	57.9%	97.6%
	All private sources	19.5%	16.4%	2.4%	42.1%
	Public sources, index of change in expenditure on educational institutions (2000-10)	139	136	101	195
	All private sources, index of change in expenditure on educational institutions (2000-10)	196	211	104	790
<i>Note: The average, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in TALIS where they refer to participating countries. "m" refers to data not available.</i>					
<i>PISA values that are statistically significant are indicated in bold.</i>					

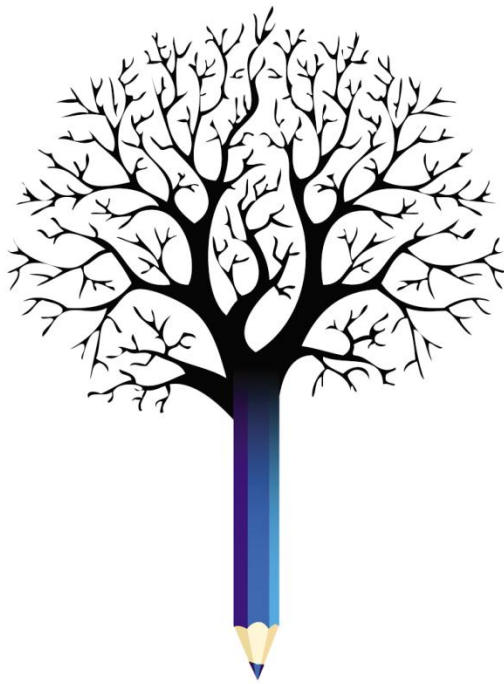


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