

Improving School Leadership and Evaluation in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla



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Foreword

The education system of Puebla is undergoing a transformation. Ambitious national reforms have provided a new framework to improve teaching and evaluation practices, and ultimately raise student learning outcomes. At the same time, Puebla has also launched promising initiatives to improve the quality of education in the state.

Puebla was one of the fastest improvers among all the countries and economies participating in the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Between 2003 and 2012, the average performance of 15-year-olds increased by the equivalent of almost one full school year. However, further efforts are needed to improve the quality of education, as the overall performance remains far below that of OECD countries. This report provides an international perspective on how to strengthen school leadership and evaluation policies, which are two key policy levers to improve student learning.

The report *Improving School Leadership and Evaluation in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* represents the continuation of collaboration between the OECD and the state of Puebla initiated in 2012. The report draws on a field visit in October 2013 and the previous comprehensive OECD report *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla*. It has also benefited from the long-standing collaboration between the OECD and the Government of Mexico.

I hope that this report will help Puebla, and Mexico, in their efforts to bring about real change in the classroom and give the younger generations a fair chance to gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life.



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Executive summary

Raising the quality of education is a priority in Puebla. Ambitious initiatives have already been launched to improve the overall performance of the system and provide greater support to the lowest performing schools and students. Today, the state is looking into ways to strengthen the skills of school leaders and evaluation arrangements to foster school improvement. This report provides an international perspective on these two key policy levers to influence what is going on in schools, and ultimately student learning.

The stronger commitment to education in Puebla comes at a time of groundbreaking national reforms to improve the quality of teaching in basic and upper secondary education. All staff are now required to undergo mandatory competitive procedures for entry and progression and are regularly appraised. The National System for Educational Evaluation has also been strengthened with the renewed importance of evaluation processes.

Puebla can capitalise on the national reforms and take further steps to continue to improve the quality of the education system. In Puebla and Mexico, the overall performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics in PISA 2012 is still far below that of other OECD countries. The progress made in the last ten years, when performance increased by the equivalent of almost one full year of formal schooling, provides an encouraging signal for the road ahead.

Developing leadership skills

School leaders constitute a relatively small group which can have a high impact on improving teaching and learning for all students. In Puebla, as in the rest of Mexico, school leaders tend to focus on operational issues rather than on education outcomes. While waiting for national progress in the redefinition of the leadership profession, Puebla can take steps to help them develop the skills to effectively lead and guide improvements in schools by:

- **Promoting a shift towards leadership for learning.** The improvement of teaching and learning processes in schools should be a central responsibility of school leaders. The best teachers could be encouraged to become leaders of teacher professional learning in schools and successful school leaders could work closely with their peers in low-performing schools.
- **Analysing leaders' professional development needs.** Prior to the design of a leadership development programme, a diagnosis of needs is vital to ensure that training actually has an impact on their job. A diagnosis, either through the regular or a specific appraisal, should inform leaders about their areas for development. It should also be an instrument to prioritise development opportunities and identify what other roles they could play in the system.
- **Designing a high-quality leadership development programme.** The revision of the current professional development offer should lead to the design of a coherent leadership development programme. It should combine theoretical courses with mentoring and on-the-

job practice to enable school leaders to reflect on their professional challenges. Common courses on key issues should be complemented with opportunities for specialisations and context-based adaptation. Training opportunities should be available in each stage of the leadership career and delivered by high-quality institutions.

- **Fostering peer learning through mentoring and professional learning networks.** Learning from peers is an effective way to respond to the specific development needs of school leaders. To promote peer learning, experienced school leaders could be provided with training and incentives to mentor newly appointed ones. Networks of school leaders could also be created to enable them to jointly reflect on their working practices and challenges.

Using evaluation to foster improvement

With the renewed importance of evaluation at the national level, Puebla needs to define what areas are priorities for the state and where state-level interventions can be most effective. A clear area of opportunity ahead in Puebla is to make a greater use of evaluation to foster improvements. Steps in this direction could include:

- **Encouraging a greater use of formative student assessment.** Teachers use assessments to check whether students achieve the established learning standards. Puebla can promote a greater use of assessment to improve pedagogical practice and support student learning. Supporting teachers to develop adequate skills to assess student learning is critical to foster a new approach to student assessment.
- **Fostering the development of effective staff appraisal processes.** The state should continue to support the development and implementation of a national external appraisal. This external appraisal could also be complemented with ongoing feedback and support from the leadership team. Appraisals need to be connected with professional development opportunities inside and outside schools to enable teachers to improve their professional practice.
- **Strengthening school supervision and self-evaluation.** To have an impact on school quality, school evaluation should aim both to hold schools accountable and to foster improvement. School supervision should also look into teaching and learning processes and provide schools with effective support for improvement. In turn, schools should also receive support to engage in effective self-evaluation processes.
- **Improving the evaluation of the state-level education system.** Improving the information available and the capacity to make use of it is vital to improve educational planning and policy development. A stronger evaluation of the Puebla education system would also increase accountability to the educational community as a whole and the public. They are key to the success of the current reforms.

Chapter 1

Setting in motion reforms in Puebla

Education is now at the centre of the policy debate in Mexico and Puebla. A consensus has emerged on the need to raise the quality of the teaching and leadership workforce and to move away from issues other than students' learning. This chapter provides an overview of the main features of the education system as well as key recent policies and initiatives at the federal and state level.

Education is now at the centre of the policy debate in Mexico and Puebla. A consensus has emerged on the need to raise the quality of the teaching and leadership workforce and to move away from issues other than students' learning. Comparatively low educational performance has underlined the need for improvements: the overall performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics was far below other OECD countries in PISA 2012, despite increases of the equivalent of almost one full school year since 2003. In 2013, the urgency to improve the quality of education crystallised in groundbreaking reforms at the national level and in promising initiatives in Puebla. Making the reforms effectively reach schools and fostering improvements in key areas, including school leadership and the evaluation framework, are central to improving the Puebla education system.

The OECD Report *Improving School Leadership and Evaluation in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* is the continuation of the collaboration between the OECD and the state of Puebla. Building on engagement at the national level, the first stage of this collaboration resulted in the OECD report *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* (OECD, 2013). The report provided an analysis of the main strengths and weaknesses of the primary and secondary education system and recommendations for improvement (see Annex A). The current report is the result of Puebla's request for further support in two specific areas: the development of school leadership skills and evaluation arrangements (see Chapters 2 and 3). It begins with an update on the main features of the education system as well as key recent policies and initiatives at the federal and state level (Chapter 1).

The current education system

The governance system

The Mexican states are responsible for the operation of education services. In Puebla, the state runs 90% of primary and lower secondary schools and 65% of upper secondary schools (SEP, 2011). States run the initial teacher education institutions (*Normales*) and can provide professional development for basic education staff, create their own specific programmes for schools, develop evaluation activities to complement those organised by the national government and introduce some regional content into the national curriculum (OECD, 2013).

The national government's role in education policy is to set the overall strategy and assure the uniformity and national character of education services across the country. This includes preparing education plans and programmes, evaluating the quality of the education system, and designing the teaching career. A centralised approach prevails in the distribution of responsibilities and funding (Fierro, Tapia and Rojo, 2009; Zorrilla and Barba, 2008). The national government provides the lion's share of expenditures on education (79% in 2011), which are mainly distributed through earmarked transfers (SEP, 2011). Spending per student is still low by international standards and the allocation of resources to schools bears little relationship to their level of disadvantage.

There are increasing opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to participate in shaping the education system at all levels through social participation councils. Puebla is one of the states with the highest number of social participation councils at the school level (SEP and CONAPASE, 2012). Recent reforms have aimed to reduce the strong influence that the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (SNTE, National Union of Education Workers) has typically had on personnel decisions such as appointments to posts, teachers' tenure, rules on career and working conditions, scholarships and other benefits (Tapia, 2004).

Key features of primary, lower and upper secondary education

With 1.88 million students across all levels in 2010, representing a 21% increase over enrolments in 2000, Puebla has a large education system by OECD standards. Puebla has as many 5-14 year-olds as Portugal, or half the number of students as Chile (OECD, 2015). Compulsory schooling spans from basic education (pre-school, 3-5 year-olds; primary, 6-11 year-olds; lower secondary, 12-14 year-olds) to upper secondary education (15-17 year-olds). Some 58 917 teachers and 6 591 school principals serve 11 575 schools in basic education, while 15 667 teachers serve 1 441 upper secondary schools (SEP, 2011). Students are not separated into different pathways (academic or vocational) until upper secondary education, although primary and lower secondary education offer different modalities of schooling based on the state's linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity.

Almost half of primary schools (44%) in Puebla are *multigrado*: students from different education levels are taught together in the same classroom (INEE, 2012). This kind of school was created as a temporary solution to increase coverage in rural and isolated areas, but offers limited quality and scarce peer and external support structures for teachers (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). In urban areas, Puebla pioneered the creation of 32 *Centros Escolares*, where multiple education levels coexist on the same campus within a conglomerate of schools.

Schools operate under challenging conditions and have little autonomy. School principals have little say in teacher recruitment and dismissal, teacher appraisal, teacher training or career rewards. In addition, schools do not have autonomy over curricula or learning materials. School budgets are limited and highly dependent on the ability of school leaders to participate in specific national or state-level programmes and, in practice, parents' donations matter for some expenditures. School support strategies tend to be fragmented, of varied quality, and are poorly co-ordinated and integrated (OECD, 2013). The student, staff and school evaluation system has scope for greater focus on improvement (see Chapter 3).

The effective learning time is short. Half-day schooling is dominant, few students attend out-of-school programmes and many participate in domestic or paid work (OECD, 2013). While the compulsory instruction time is above the OECD average, 70% of school principals in Mexico report high rates of absenteeism, late arrival of teachers, and a lack of pedagogic preparation as factors that hinder instruction and reduce the quality of teaching (OECD, 2014a).

In upper secondary education, both in Puebla and Mexico as a whole, there are a large number of providers and programmes. In Puebla, the state is the main provider in upper secondary education as *Bachilleratos Generales* cater to half (47%) of upper secondary students. The vast majority of students are enrolled in academically-oriented programmes and Puebla has the lowest proportion of vocational students nationwide (18%) (OECD, 2013). Despite the large number of providers and programmes, students receive little support and guidance on the choices available. To address these challenges, important efforts have been undertaken in recent years to foster greater harmonisation and coherence of the supply of programmes.

Teachers and school leaders

Upon completion of upper secondary education, aspiring teachers can enrol in the four-year initial teacher education programme required for obtaining a permanent teacher post in basic education. Enrolment in initial teacher education declined by 33% between 2000 and 2010, but there are some indications of over-provision with 11 public and 20 private *Normales* (OECD, 2013). Puebla is one of the states with the highest number of initial teacher education students; for example, the state of Mexico has 25% fewer students despite a population which is 2.6 times larger. In addition, the OECD Review provided indications that the quality of *Normales* varies greatly (OECD, 2013).

Attracting and recruiting the best candidates to the teaching profession is a long-standing challenge in Puebla, and Mexico. To ensure that recruitment is based on merit, a Teaching Post Competition was created in Mexico in 2008. The examination was limited to new permanent teaching posts, although in Puebla and other states vacancies were also included. In 2012, only 84 full-time teaching posts and 217 teaching hours for basic education were open for competition in Puebla (OECD, 2013). In the 2013 reform, stronger steps were taken at the national level to reinforce professionalisation of the teaching profession (see below).

Teachers and school leaders often do not seem to receive enough support and recognition for their tasks. School leaders appear to provide teachers with little support to improve their practices and student-teacher ratios are high. This is particularly detrimental for new teachers who cannot benefit from an induction and probation period (OECD, 2013). Many teachers work in very remote or small schools and have few opportunities for teamwork and peer learning. Poor labour conditions also hamper their professionalisation: only 28% of lower secondary teachers in Puebla work full-time, and many have a second job that is often not related to education (INEE, 2012). Since overall levels of remuneration are far greater by the end of the career, some school leaders and supervisors prefer to stay in service despite their advanced ages.

Student access, performance and attainment

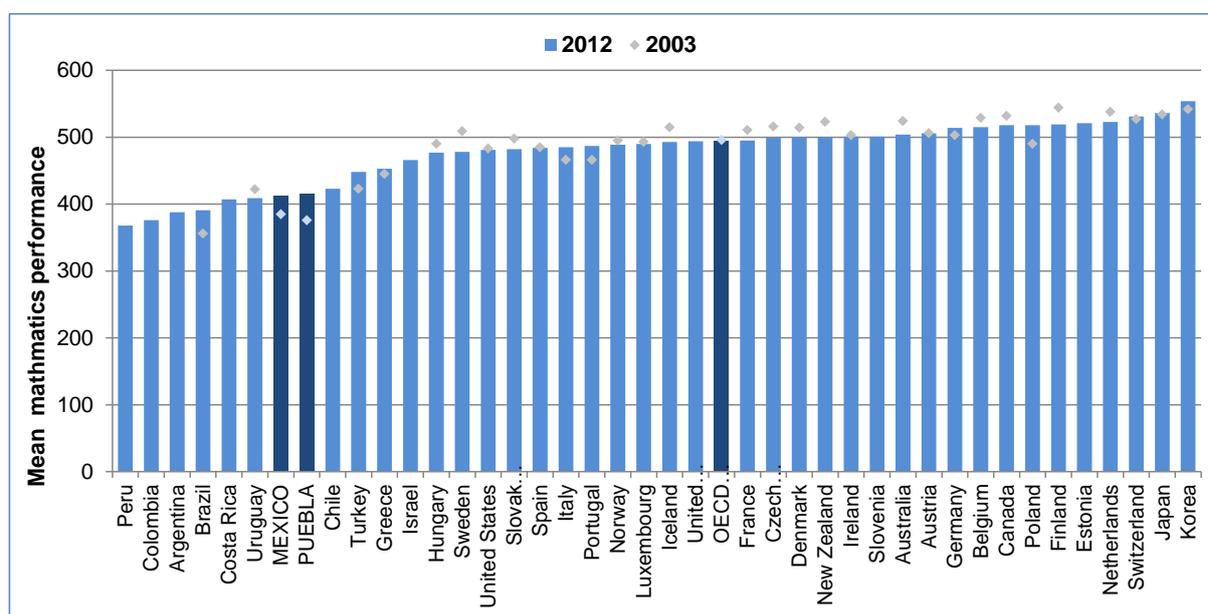
High levels of enrolment have been achieved in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. For example, 84% of 3-5 year-olds in Puebla were enrolled in pre-school in the school year 2011/12 (SEP, 2012a). However, for every 10 students who were enrolled in the first year of primary education in the academic year 1999/2000, only six (62%) completed basic education nine years later (2007/08), and four (42%) graduated from upper secondary education on time (2010/11). While few students drop out from upper secondary education (11%, compared to the national average of 15%), attainment levels are very low in an international perspective. In Puebla, only 35% of 25-34 year-olds have completed at least upper secondary education and 20% of them have completed tertiary education (INEGI, 2011a).

National and international assessments show the need to build upon recent improvements in performance and improve the quality of the education system. Despite improvements since 2003, student performance in PISA 2012 in mathematics remains low (with a mean score of 415 points in Puebla, 413 points in Mexico and 494 points at OECD average) (see Figure 1.1) (OECD, 2014b). Between 2003 and 2012, the mean performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics rose by 39 score points (from 376 to 415 score points), the equivalent of almost one full year of formal schooling and higher than the national increase of 28 score points. Far too many students still perform below Level 2 (53% in Puebla, 55% in Mexico, and 23% in OECD) and the share of top performers is small (0.4% compared to 0.6% in Mexico and 13% in OECD).

The *Examen Nacional de Logro Académico en Centros Escolares* (National Exam of Academic Achievement in Schools, ENLACE), the main national standardised test until 2013, confirms improvements in recent years in both Spanish and mathematics at all levels, with the exception of Spanish in 12th grade, and shows positive results for indigenous primary schools relative to other states. Yet it also indicates that around two or three students out of four achieve poor results (Proyecto Educativo, 2012).

In 2015, ENLACE was replaced by the National Plan to Evaluate Learning (*Plan Nacional de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes*, Planea). The first results of Planea, which was applied to upper secondary students, ranked Puebla at the first and second positions nationwide in language and mathematics respectively. In spite of this, Puebla was also one of the states with the highest number of schools classified as having very low performance, indicating widely varying outcomes across the state.

Figure 1.1. Mean performance in PISA in 2003 and 2012



Source: OECD (2014b), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do - Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science* (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014), PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>.

Education opportunities and outcomes are strongly related to socio-economic background and location. In Puebla, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are almost four times less likely to enrol on time in upper secondary school than those from advantaged backgrounds (22% of students from the poorest 10th of the population enrol compared to 76% of students from the wealthiest 10th of the population) (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). Even if disadvantaged students are enrolled in education, they tend to fall behind their more advantaged peers and those from indigenous groups are particularly at risk as they face multiple obstacles to succeed at school (OECD, 2013).

Moving ahead: Recent reforms provide an opportunity for change in Puebla and Mexico

Puebla has launched promising initiatives

The state of Puebla has undertaken significant steps to improve the quality and equity of the education system in recent years. Since the publication of the OECD 2013 Review, the most relevant initiatives launched are:

- Major restructuring of the Secretariat for Education (SEP-Puebla). The units responsible for basic (primary and lower secondary) and upper secondary education were merged into the Undersecretariat for Compulsory Education. The reform aims to create greater synergies between levels, which can result in smoother student trajectories and economies of scale.
- A new definition of the educational model of the state, including its key educational goals and strategies to guide educational policy (see Box 1.1). What is a *good* school and how it can be measured was also defined.

- Implementation of the Intensive Care Programme (*Programa de Atención Intensiva*, PAI). This programme provides specific support through a summer course for students of second grade who are falling behind and advises parents on how they can help their children at home.
- Initial development of a consolidated offer of training opportunities for teachers. The body responsible for teachers initial and in-service training was transferred from the Undersecretariat of Higher Education to the Undersecretariat of Compulsory Education.
- Development of a strategy to support the lowest-performing schools. Teachers of the hundred lowest-performing *Bachilleratos Generales* in ENLACE 2012 benefited from specific training courses to improve their teaching skills. Building upon the success of this initiative, as measured by the results of these schools in ENLACE 2013, SEP-Puebla plans to extend it to primary education.
- Design of a programme to tackle dropout in lower and upper secondary education within the framework of the new national strategy to tackle school dropout. The programme builds upon a research study on the causes of dropout in Puebla.
- A renewed boost to the digital strategy to provide electronic devices to students, teachers, principals, supervisors, superintendents, and other relevant education actors. The programme also included training for a considerable number of school principals (3 090), teachers (6 608), technical assistants (1 109), and supervisors (480) on how to use these technologies for educational purposes (SEP-Puebla, 2014).

Some of the above-mentioned initiatives are related to the recommendations of the OECD Review *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* (see OECD 2013). The Review analysed the major challenges facing the state's education system, current policy initiatives, and innovative practices, within an international perspective. The Review highlighted that a long-term strategy, a stronger capacity to lead improvements and reforms in the following four main policy areas are keystones for educational improvement:

- Strengthening support to schools and students, particularly in multi-grade schools, and increasing the emphasis on learning of evaluation and assessment.
- Improving the quality of teachers and school leaders, including raising the quality of the *Normales*.
- Broadening access to and enhancing the quality of upper secondary education, particularly in *Bachilleratos Generales*.
- Improving the planning, funding and use of school infrastructure.

Annex A(at the end of this document) provides a summary of the recommendations made in the OECD 2013 Review to strengthen the main initiatives undertaken and sets forth further options that could bring considerable improvements to the education system.

Box 1.1. The Puebla education model

Puebla's education system is based on key educational goals, from which all state education policies are derived. Both the definition of the model, including the concept *good school*, and the way it is formulated are meant to be simple and precise, in order to ensure that it is understood by the different stakeholders, and facilitate monitoring and gauging progress.

The educational goals are to:

1. Increase school attendance among 3-17 year-olds. Indicators of enrolment, coverage and capacity are taken into consideration to measure the attainment of this goal.
2. Ensure that students stay on until completing upper secondary education. Progress is measured through dropout and approval rates as well as the terminal efficiency.
3. Strengthen the quality of *learning* so that all students meet the minimum attainment standards and can make the most of their education. The quality of learning is measured using the results of national standardised assessments (average score and proportion of low-performing students in mathematics and Spanish).

The following strategies guide the state education policies:

1. Place students at the centre of education interventions and consider schools as the unit of education policy analysis.
2. Use targeted policies to increase the effectiveness of the education system. Provide more tailored support to students, teachers, schools and school networks in order to reinforce both quality and equity.
3. Articulate and co-ordinate national and state-level programmes to increase its potential impact and optimise resources.
4. Foster practical innovations to make the best use of the existing successful experiences, introduce good practices from other states, and capitalise on synergies between basic and upper secondary education.

A *good school* is defined as one that serves the interests of the system and its community. It is one that makes progress on attendance, permanence and learning of the underlying population that it serves, while at the same time developing the personality defined by its community. A good school:

1. Combines comparable indicators (state, national and international, see below) with others that are meaningful for each school.
2. Integrates the goals defined by each school based on its character, which are in turn established and developed taking into account the community's needs and opportunities.

Source: *Secretaría de Educación del Estado de Puebla*.

Ensuring that national reforms reach schools

At the national level, the government has undertaken a major educational reform. The reform has entailed important amendments to the Constitution and the General Education Law. These amendments have been concretised in a new national framework for professionals of the sector (General Law of Professional Teaching Service, LGSPD) and the evaluation system (Law of the National Educational Evaluation Institute, LINEE). The new legal framework encompasses both basic and upper secondary education, which previously followed separate legislation. The main pillars of the reform are:

- The creation of the National System for Educational Evaluation which, co-ordinated by the National Educational Evaluation Institute (INEE), provides the framework for evaluating the quality of the educational system in pre-school, primary, lower and upper secondary school. Also, as part of national reforms, INEE became autonomous and is now overseen by a Governing Board composed of five experts designated by the Mexican Senate.

- The establishment of the Professional Teaching Service that regulates the entry and promotion of teachers, school principals and supervisory staff in primary and lower secondary education. The General Law of Professional Teaching Service (*Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente*, LGSPD) encompasses all educational staff and introduces important advancements for the profession (see Box 1.2).
- The creation of the Information and Educational Management System to be based on a census of schools, instructors and pupils. The results of the census in 2014 revealed irregularities for about 12% of teachers in Puebla, a proportion slightly smaller than the national average (13%), which is estimated to cost about 3 to 7% of the budget for education in the state (Mexico Evalúa, 2014).
- The increase in the managerial autonomy of schools to resolve their most basic operational issues, such as the improvement of their infrastructure or the purchase of educational materials.
- The reinforcement of the programme All Day Schools that offers extended days to students so that they can carry out their academic, artistic and sporting activities after the end of the regular school timetable.

Box 1.2. Key aspects of the LGSPD

The General Law for Professional Teacher Service (*Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente*) introduces many positive features into the school system:

- Requires the development of professional standards to clarify the responsibilities and expectations of staff.
- Introduces the requirement to successfully complete an induction and probation period prior to obtaining a permanent appointment.
- Requires the regular appraisal of teachers and school leaders at least every four years, and unsatisfactory performance might require undergoing regularisation programmes and could eventually lead to dismissal.
- Establishes that entrance and promotion to teacher and school principal positions should be based on public and competitive procedures.
- Emphasises the importance of in-service training opportunities, which should respond to the school needs as identified through appraisals and networks for peer learning.
- Establishes a new career structure and opens up opportunities for states to introduce performance-based incentives.
- Establishes the Technical Assistance Service for Schools (*Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela*) to support schools and require an internal school evaluation process.
- Refers to unions only as observers, and sets provisions for other relevant issues for the profession such as the regularisation of commissioned staff, working hours or transfers during the school year.

Source: *Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente*.

Translating reforms into effective change in schools is an important challenge ahead. The reforms of the teaching profession around the world can provide valuable lessons for consideration in Mexico (see Box 1.3). The OECD team formed the opinion that forging a clear and shared vision among the main actors (i.e. SEP, INEE, *Coordinación Nacional del Servicio Profesional Docente* and states) would be key to its successful implementation. The regular regional meetings announced between national and state-level education authorities are an important step in this direction. A well-functioning dialogue will also be needed to agree on issues related to the profession or broader education system which have not been addressed yet (e.g. regularisation of commissioned posts, shortage of indigenous teachers).

To ensure that reforms reach the classrooms, it is equally critical to clearly communicate with and engage the profession in designing and implementing them. It can help build the necessary trust, awareness of the importance of reform, and forge compromises among divergent views. However, the reasons go far beyond politics and pragmatism. Education authorities have a lot to benefit from listening to school leaders' and teachers' advice on how to improve the profession. Moreover, explaining what the reforms will actually entail and reporting regularly on their progress to the staff and education community, as well as to the wider society, is essential to build trust and recover the social status that the teaching profession has lost in Mexico over the past decades.

Box 1.3. Making reforms reach the classroom

Implementing reform of any kind, in any sector, is never easy and it is particularly difficult in the education sector. Several policy lessons have emerged from OECD countries that have implemented reforms in education:

- Policy makers need to build consensus about the aims of education reform and engage stakeholders, especially teachers, in formulating and implementing policy responses.
- External pressures can be used to build a compelling case for change.
- All political players and stakeholders need to develop realistic expectations about the nature and pace of reforms to improve outcomes.
- Reforms need to be backed by sustainable financing.
- There is some shift towards building self-adjusting systems with feedback at all levels, incentives to react and tools to strengthen capacities to deliver better outcomes. Investment is needed in change management skills. Teachers need reassurance that they will be given the tools to change and the recognition of their professional motivation to improve their students' outcomes.
- Evidence from international assessments, national surveys and inspectorates can be used to guide policy making. Evidence is most helpful when it is fed back to institutions along with information and tools about how they can use the information to improve outcomes.
- "Whole-of-government" approaches can include education in more comprehensive reforms. These need to be co-ordinated with all the relevant ministries.

Source: Schleicher, A. (2016) *Teaching Excellence through Professional Learning and Policy Reform: Lessons from around the World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252059-en>.

Putting learning at the centre

The recent national and state-level reforms seek to make deep changes to the education system to bring about real gains in student outcomes. These reforms are the result of increasing economic and social demands for effectiveness, equity and quality in education. The expectation is no longer that governments put in place policies to ensure that children are in school but also that they actually learn.

The 2013 OECD-Puebla Review looked at ways to improve the quality of education in Puebla. This report provides greater focus on two areas which have now become a policy priority in Puebla: strengthening the skills of school leaders and making a greater use of evaluation instruments to foster improvement. These two policy levers have a significant influence on what is taking place in schools and, ultimately, on student learning.

With the increasing emphasis on student performance, many OECD countries have increased school autonomy and heightened the expectations of school leaders. School leaders constitute a relatively small group which can have a high impact on improving teaching and learning for all students (Leithwood et al., 2004; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). They are seen as key allies to improve education results by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. They are also expected to play a vital role in ensuring that reforms reach the classroom, and thus improving the efficiency and equity of schooling. Helping school leaders develop skills for leadership for learning, which is the focus of Chapter 2, is vital to empower them to take on these demanding new roles in Puebla.

Evaluation has also emerged as a priority in education policy agendas across OECD countries. Most countries have introduced a wide range of evaluation measures to improve educational practices and student learning in the last two decades. Evaluation can provide a basis for monitoring how effectively education is being delivered to students and for assessing the performance of systems, schools, school leaders, teachers and students, among others. It is also instrumental in recognising and rewarding the work of educational practitioners and in certifying the achievements of students. Improving evaluation arrangements in Puebla, which is the focus of Chapter 3, is in the interest of students and their families, educational staff and school systems.

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Chapter 2

Developing school leadership skills in Puebla

This chapter reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the current policies and practices to provide professional development opportunities to school leaders in Puebla. It explores the close links between the development of leadership skills and a broader policy to raise the quality of school leaders within the current national reforms and strengthen leadership structures and roles. It then looks into key features of the design of needs diagnosis, leadership development programmes and peer learning opportunities through mentoring and professional networks.

Developing school leadership skills is essential in Puebla to foster improvements in both individual schools and the overall education system. Currently, training opportunities for school leaders are of very different quality, content and duration as there is no systematic approach to the development of leadership skills. Puebla is aware of the importance to ensure that all schools are led by highly skilled leaders. Professional development opportunities for school leaders are now under reconsideration as Puebla plans to design a leadership development programme.

The context of Puebla

Structure of educational leadership

In 2010-11, the educational leadership structure in Puebla consisted of 3 675 principals (*directores*), 776 technical-pedagogic assistants (*asesores técnico-pedagógicos*, ATP), 137 subject leaders, 432 supervisors and 73 superintendents for a system with about 13 000 schools, 73 000 teachers and about 1.6 million students in primary and secondary education (Proyecto Educativo, 2012).

Principals are the main authority in schools. They are supported in their tasks by one or two assistant principals in large schools. A large number of teachers are “invited”, or “commissioned” to act as principals; in some cases, in addition to their teaching duties. This is often the case in the many small schools located in remote areas. In 2011, for instance, no principal had been officially appointed since 2000 due to financial reasons and only about 39% of school principals were formally and financially recognised for their tasks (OECD, 2013a).

SEP-Puebla is responsible for the oversight of schools through a school supervision body. The supervision structure consists of superintendents, supervisors, pedagogic assistants and subject leaders. Supervisors (*supervisores or inspectores*) are responsible for monitoring performance in a school zone, which on average consists of 14 schools, 100 teachers, and 2 000 students (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). They report to superintendents (*jefes de sector*), who supervise on average five school zones. Each supervisor and superintendent is supported by pedagogical assistants (*asesores técnico-pedagógicos*, ATP) and in lower secondary education also by subject leaders (*jefes de enseñanza*).

Another territorial structure under the responsibility of SEP-Puebla are the 19 *Coordinaciones Regionales de Desarrollo Educativo* (CORDES), which were created about twenty years ago to bring administrative and legal services closer to schools. In practice, the OECD team perceived that some confusion exists between the role of CORDES and supervisors (Proyecto Educativo, 2012; OECD, 2013a). In addition, the LGSPD requires states to create a *Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela* (Technical Assistance Service for Schools, SATE) to support schools in their internal evaluation and other improvement processes. In Puebla, there are initial plans to create a SATE which includes supervisors, ATPs and school leaders.

Entrance to the profession and promotion

Educational leaders typically start their careers as teachers and are appointed to leadership positions when they have served for a long time. Most education leaders who are in service have been appointed by a joint commission composed of representatives from SEP-Puebla and the SNTE (*Comisión Mixta de Escalafón*) on the basis of their academic preparation (diplomas, 45%), attitude (participation in voluntary activities, 25%), years of experience (20%) and, discipline and punctuality (10%). As in the case of Mexico as a whole, the influence of the SNTE in the recruitment decisions

raised many concerns as aspirants affiliated to other unions faced difficulties in being promoted and appointments were not transparent and weakly related to the specific schools' needs (Fierro, Tapia and Rojo, 2009; Zorrilla and Barba, 2008).

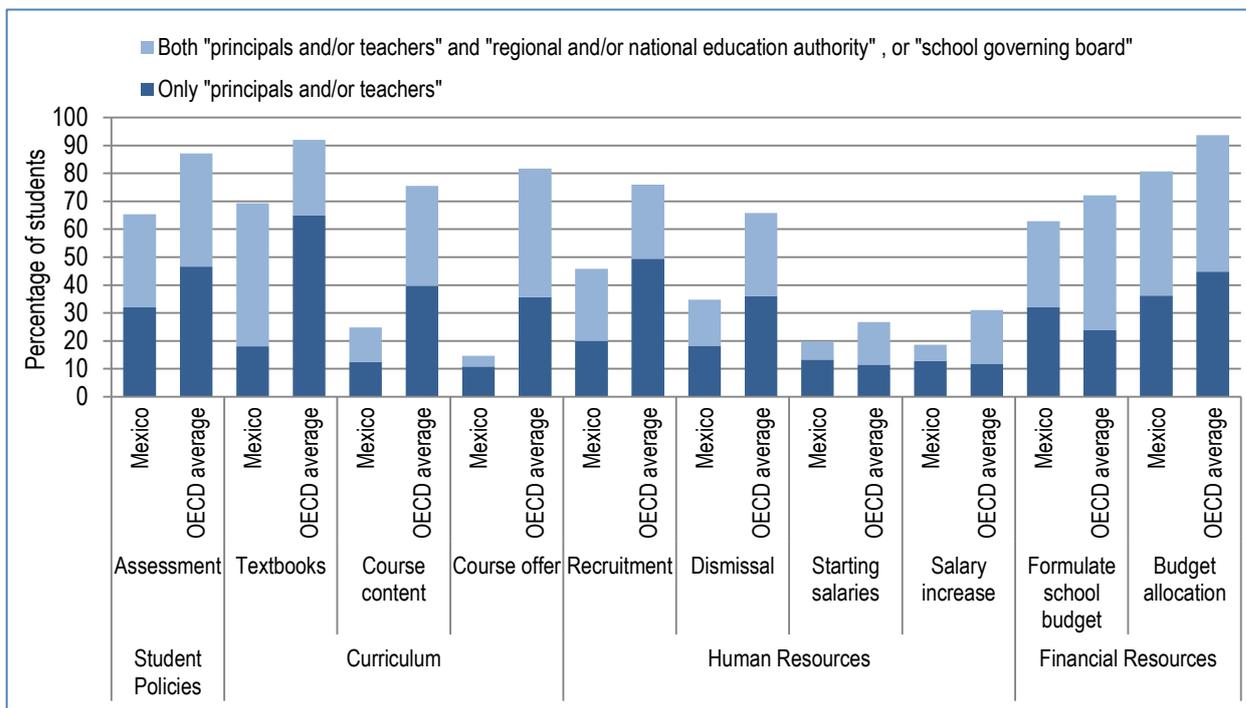
Despite the relatively small weight of experience in the selection criteria, it is difficult to find a supervisor under the age of 45 or a superintendent under the age of 55 in Puebla (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). While the average age of school principals is similar to other OECD countries, the Mexican population structure is considerably younger. In addition, school principals also tend to stay longer in the position. According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey 2013, about 15% of lower secondary school principals have been in the post for more than 20 years in Mexico, compared to only 9% in OECD countries. They also have a longer experience as teachers prior to the appointment: 62% of Mexican lower secondary principals had more than 20 years of experience as teachers, compared to 51% in OECD countries (OECD, 2014).

Increased attention has been placed on improving the recruitment procedures for teachers and school leaders in Puebla, and Mexico as a whole. In 2008, the first national entrance examination for educational staff was implemented in Puebla and in most Mexican states. The examination was limited to newly created positions. However, the reforms of the teaching profession initiated in 2013 have established a competitive and transparent procedure for the entrance into teaching as well as appointment to leadership positions.

According to the General Law of the Professional Teaching Service (LGSPD), approved in 2013, the appointment of school principals in basic education is subject to a period of two uninterrupted years of induction. Induction should include training on leadership development and school management, followed by an appraisal of performance (see Chapter 3 for further information on the appraisal). The LGSPD stipulates that states are responsible for the selection as well as provision of training for principals and supervisors. In upper secondary education, principals shall be appointed by a fixed time, participate in training and be appraised. The LGSPD also includes provisions for the recruitment of ATPs, a position which had not been regulated in the past.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of school leaders have not been defined in clear professional standards. More than 20 duties are laid down in the legislation. These focus on running the schoolhouse by granting principals the highest responsibility for the adequate functioning, organisation, operation and administration of schools (Weinstein et al., 2014). Mexican school leaders also consider that they have a limited role to play in education matters (see Figure 2.1). According to PISA 2012, a small percentage of 15-year-old students attends a school whose principal reports selecting teachers for hire (20%) and firing teachers (18%), establishing student assessment policies (32%), choosing which textbooks are used (18%), determining course content (12%), deciding which courses are offered (11%), establishing teachers' starting salaries (13%) and increases (13%), formulating the school budget (32%), or deciding on budget allocations within the school (36%) (OECD, 2013b). These proportions are lower than in most OECD countries.

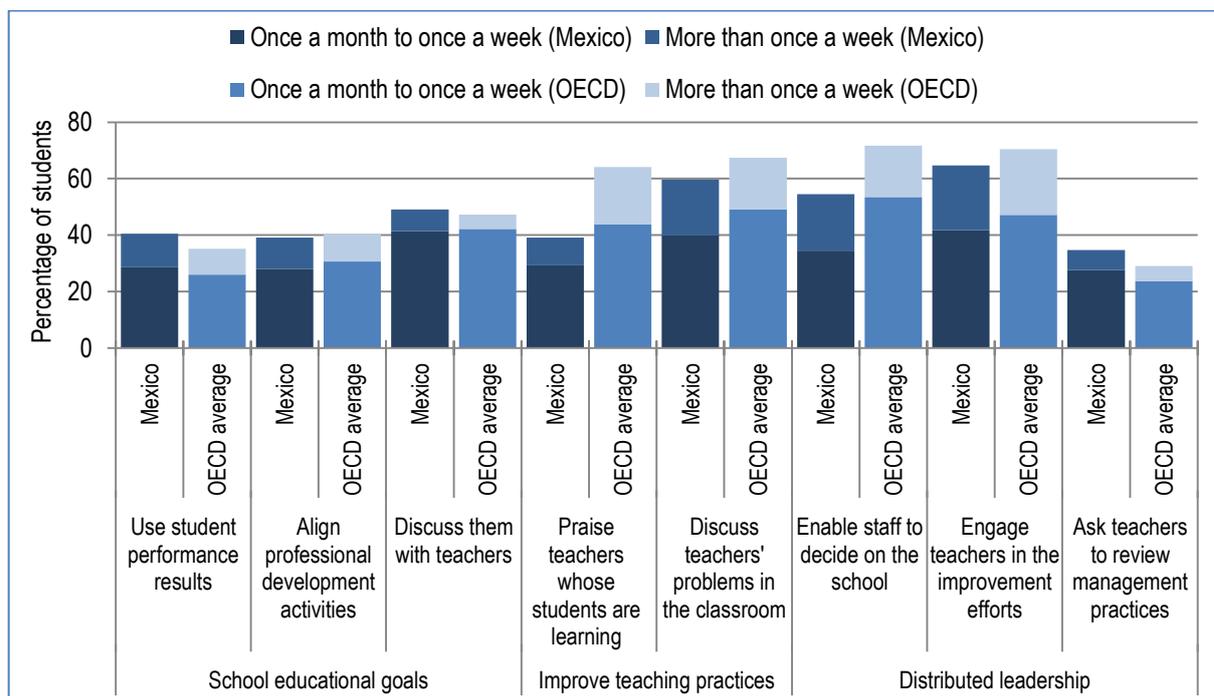
Figure 2.1. Principals views on the distribution of responsibilities (2012)

Note: This figure shows the percentage of students in schools whose principal reported in PISA 2012 that the following groups have a considerable responsibility for the areas of autonomy displayed above: (i) only "principals and/or teachers" (indicated in dark blue); and (ii) both "principals and/or teachers" and "regional and/or national education authority", or "school governing board" (indicated in light blue).

Source: OECD (2013b), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)* OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

School leaders seem to play a weak role in school improvement and, in particular, they seem to have little influence in the education practices of teachers in the classroom. Self-reported data in PISA 2012 indicates that Mexican school principals exercise a lower degree of instructional leadership than their peers in other high-performing education systems, yet at a similar level than on average across OECD countries (see Figure 2.2). A small number of students in Mexico attend schools whose principal reports performing the following tasks at least once a month: make sure that professional development activities for teachers are in accordance with the teaching goals of the school (39%), discuss the schools' academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings (49%), praise teachers whose students are actively participating in learning (39%), and take the initiative to discuss matters when a teacher has problems in his/her classroom (60%) (OECD, 2013b). Also, less than half of students attend schools whose principal reports using student performance results to develop the school's educational goals (40%) (OECD, 2013b).

Figure 2.2. Instructional leadership in Mexico and OECD average (2012)



Note: This figure shows the percentage of students in schools whose principal reported in PISA 2012 that he or she engaged from once a month to once a week (dark blue) or more than once a week (light blue) in the actions related to instructional leadership displayed above during the previous academic year.

Source: OECD (2013b), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

Multiple reasons were given to the OECD team to explain the limited attention of school leaders to teaching and learning processes in Puebla. These include (i) a limited focus of recruitment processes on their potential to foster learning improvements; (ii) lack of clear expectations of their roles and responsibilities combined with a large number of external administrative requests; and (iii) limited professional development opportunities to prepare them for such roles.

Supervisors and superintendents also seem to place limited attention on the improvement of learning processes in schools and students' educational outcomes. According to the evidence gathered for this report, supervisors or superintendents in Puebla spend most of their time on administrative issues. Perhaps because they are more comfortable with administrative issues than with pedagogical ones. A survey of supervisors and superintendents in Puebla also revealed that they use different approaches to address the same problems and many of them would like to further develop their skills (Proyecto Educativo, 2012).

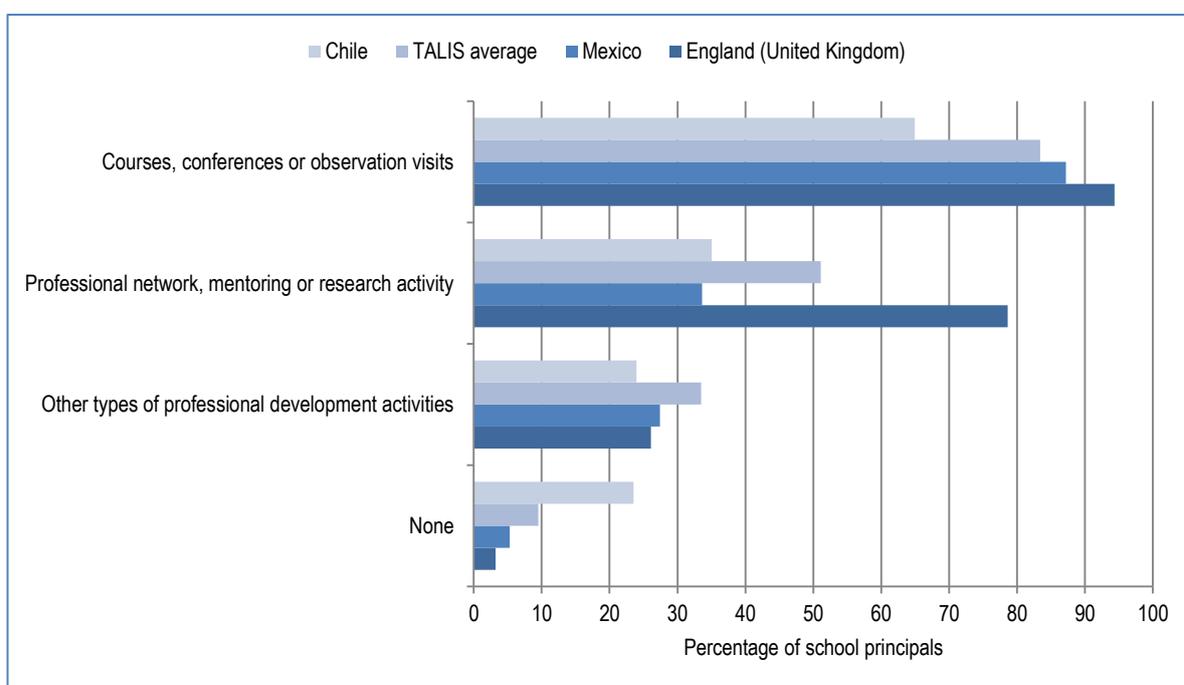
Professional development

In Puebla, most leaders do not undergo prior training before taking office or an induction programme once appointed (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). As a result, newly appointed principals have limited experience in leading schools and supervising teachers. They often end up imitating the methods of their predecessors which might not be the most effective way to lead schools (Proyecto Educativo, 2012).

Across OECD countries, there is evidence that teaching background alone does not provide school leaders with the required knowledge and skills to become instructional leaders and manage human and financial resources in schools (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008; OECD, 2014). In Mexico, the LGSPD aims to address this challenge by requiring a two-year induction period coupled with state-level leadership development opportunities for newly appointed principals.

School principals do participate in a variety of professional development activities in Puebla and Mexico. According to self-reported data of the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), in Mexico, very few principals did not participate in professional development activities in 2013 (5.3%) (OECD, 2014). There are important differences, however, in the type and purpose of professional development activities. Most school principals (87%) participated in courses, conferences or observation visits. Only a smaller proportion (34%) took part in professional networks, mentoring or research activities. This compares to 83% and 51% respectively on average across the participating countries in TALIS (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Participation in professional development activities in selected countries (2013)



Note: This figure shows self-reported data of lower secondary education school principals on their participation rates in professional development activities in the 12 months prior to the survey. Countries have been selected for illustrative purposes only, full data are available in the OECD TALIS Database (OECD, 2014).

Source: OECD (2014), *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

Most professional development opportunities are aimed at classroom teaching. For instance, only 38 out of the 1 053 courses available in the 2013 National Catalogue of Professional Development were targeted at principals and ATPs. In Puebla, only three courses of the Catalogue were targeted at school leaders. Similarly, leadership development options for supervisors are limited, although the *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN)* has recently developed a master's degree programme.

Professional development opportunities are not always relevant to the needs of school leaders. Neither the individual nor the system-level approach to professional development is based on an assessment of their needs. In the absence of a well-established appraisal system, the options available for in-service training are not informed by aggregated information on individual and school needs. As a result, individual school teachers, principals, and supervisors have almost full discretion to choose what courses they want to take (OECD, 2013a).

Policy challenges

A new understanding of the school leadership profession needs to be forged in Puebla, and Mexico. To raise school performance, school leaders should play a greater role in improving teaching and learning processes in schools. The central task for school leadership in an increasing number of OECD countries is to help improve teacher performance, which is the most direct means of improving student learning (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). In high-performing systems, school principals spend around 80% of their time in improving instruction and taking action to better motivate and develop teachers, and their functions and incentives are focused on leadership for learning rather than school administration (McKinsey, 2010).

Moving towards greater leadership for learning requires a redefinition of the profession in Puebla, and Mexico. This means setting clear professional standards and aligning other defining elements of the profession to them (e.g. recruitment, career structures, leadership education, and appraisal processes). High performing systems tend to set coherent leadership frameworks which focus on selecting the best education leaders through a rigorous recruitment system, developing the capacity of those leaders through training and professional development opportunities, and prioritising their efforts on the pedagogical aspects of the job (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

Helping school leaders develop the knowledge and skills required for leading and guiding school's improvement efforts is vital to empower them in their roles. Despite having a background as teachers, a growing body of evidence shows that training opportunities to develop leadership skills can have a positive impact on the teaching and learning environment (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008; Day et al., 2009). As Puebla can have an important say on professional development opportunities, this is an area where the state can start paving the way towards a new leadership profession.

Policy Issue 1. Promoting a shift towards leadership for learning

A stepping stone towards greater leadership for learning would be to develop professional standards that place the improvement of teaching and learning processes at the heart of teachers' tasks. Australia, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore are examples of countries which have developed professional standards that focus leadership responsibilities on improvement processes and specify different roles by career stages. For example, in 2015 New Zealand introduced four new roles within schools with the aim of improving achievement for all students: executive principal, expert teacher, lead teacher and change principal. Now, under the national reforms to professionalise educational staff, Mexico has an opportunity to define a new leadership profession.

Another important step that Puebla could take to promote a shift towards leadership for learning in schools is to encourage the best teachers to become leaders of teacher professional learning. The teachers selected would be mainly responsible to ensure that teachers' individual and collective professional learning is meeting the school objectives. This includes building a collaborative culture in

schools by, for example, setting up mentoring schemes, observing teaching practice and providing feedback, or creating spaces where teachers can work together to improve instructional materials. They would also work closely with principals so that each school has multiple leaders fostering and sustaining school improvement.

Puebla could also encourage successful school leaders to take on system-level leadership responsibilities by supporting their peers in low-performing schools, sharing their experience in professional learning networks, or working with supervisors to foster school change. Box 2.1 provides examples of how countries are getting some of the best talent in the system to focus on raising the quality of teaching in the schools that need it most. In Puebla, where a large number of schools are very small and only have a teacher-principal, creating clusters of schools or forging closer links among them could also be a more cost-effective way to professionalise the leadership force.

Additional steps will also be required in Puebla to help school leaders embrace leadership for learning. Entering a classroom to observe teaching practices might be considered unthinkable today. The redefinition of leadership roles should also be accompanied by opportunities to develop these new leadership skills, the appraisal of their performance in these areas and adequate rewards. In addition, the school supervisors and SATE (see Chapter 3) should also work with school leaders to forge a collaborative culture in schools.

Box 2.1. Building a collaborative culture across schools

In **Shanghai (China)**, the most senior teachers in a school work in a province-wide network to test and spread best practices across schools. And through a process known as empowered management, high-performing schools work with low-performing schools to improve their teaching and school culture.

In **Singapore**, successful principals are rotated periodically among schools with the goal of raising the performance of weaker schools, and senior or master teachers work through the Academy of Singapore Teachers to share best practices across the system.

The **London (United Kingdom) Challenge** was established in 2003 to improve secondary schools in the five lowest-performing boroughs of the city. Successful school leaders and teachers were released for periods of time to work with the low-performing schools. The evaluation of the programme has shown that both the heightened expectations and additional capacity brought into schools succeeded in raising performance significantly in a very cost-effective way.

Source: Schleicher, A. (2016), *Teaching Excellence through Professional Learning and Policy Reform: Lessons from around the World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252059-en>.

Policy Issue 2: Identifying the training needs of current and future staff

Analysing the training needs of current and future staff is an important step to take prior to the design of a development programme. Research on the effectiveness of leadership development programmes shows that the analysis of needs plays a key role in ensuring that the right development is offered to the right leaders (Collins and Holton, 2004). By taking into account their needs, Puebla can ensure that the development programme effectively helps them improve their leadership practices in schools.

The regular appraisal process introduced by the 2013 national reforms should provide valuable information on the strengths, weaknesses and areas for further development of school leaders. It should inform the individual choices for training courses and other professional development opportunities. The analysis of the aggregate results of appraisals should also shed light on the overall training needs in Puebla to ensure that in-service training matches the needs of school leaders. The regular appraisal should also be complemented with a specific skills diagnosis to inform the leadership development programme. Several ways could be explored to carry out a diagnosis of needs, including the following combinable options:

- Checking on-site the skills of supervisors and school principals by specially trained observers to measure behavioural and functional competencies.
- Analysing a portfolio of evidence provided by leaders and testing their knowledge and skills.
- Using self-evaluation tools and surveying staff who have a direct working relationship with school leaders (i.e. a superior, a peer and a subordinate) through, for example, a 360-degree survey (see Box 2.2).

The appraisal should be an instrument to prioritise development opportunities for school leaders who could particularly benefit from them given the size or improvement margin of their school. It could also help identify other roles that leaders could play in the education system. For example, the existence of considerable skill or knowledge gaps coupled with other individual circumstances (e.g. years to retirement, preference for reassignment) and system-level considerations (e.g. vacancies available) might favour the reallocation to other positions. These actions will reduce leadership development costs and increase the effectiveness of the leadership structure.

Box 2.2. The 360-degree Survey for school leaders in Victoria, Australia

The state of Victoria (Australia) has developed the iLead 360° Survey to provide school leaders with a rounded assessment of their leadership capacity. It recognises that leadership effectiveness is contingent on relationships at every level. Consequently, as well as allowing the school leaders to rate themselves, the survey provides them with the opportunity to receive feedback from multiple sources including their peers, reporting staff and principal/manager.

The iLead 360° Survey is intended to assist teachers and school leaders to reflect upon their leadership practice, identify strengths and areas for improvement, map key factors that affect their professional development, assist in setting professional learning goals, and inform the development of their professional learning plan. Survey results should be used to enhance conversations about leadership development and invoke and enrich dialogue linked to performance and development reviews.

Source: State of Victoria (2013), Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/profdev/Pages/devlearningframework.aspx>.

Policy Issue 3: Designing a high quality leadership development programme

Leadership development programmes are instrumental to ensure that Puebla's schools are led and guided by highly competent leaders. The analysis of training needs should result in a well-articulated programme to equip leaders with the abilities, knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their roles. The leadership development programme should differentiate between two types of leaders: (i) current staff in need of further training on specific topics or skills and (ii) newly appointed leaders or candidates to the profession.

Key features of effective programmes

An increasing body of literature looks into the key characteristics of effective leadership development programmes (see for instance Darling- Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood et al.; 2004; Davis et al., 2005; Day, 2009; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). Most studies underline the importance of the following features:

- The curriculum is aligned with professional standards, which in turn ensures alignment with other relevant policies (e.g. recruitment, career progression, appraisal). It is also revised periodically to reflect policy changes and ensure that what is taught remains useful for their regular practice.
- Common courses for all leaders are complemented with specialisation ones. Joint courses provide them with a common language to discuss school leadership and quality issues. Specialisation courses provide them with a more tailored preparation for their specific roles (principal, supervisor, chief of supervisors).
- Context-specific modules to facilitate the adaptation of leadership styles to the specific realities of schools (e.g. level of education delivered, size, governance, staffing), students' characteristics (e.g. socio-economic or indigenous background) or the broader environment (e.g. parental involvement, local and regional resources).
- A practical approach prevails in the delivery of theoretical content, specifically avoiding an over-legalistic approach, and the coursework includes on-the-job training to enable the leaders to reflect on what they will be faced within schools.

To enable a large number of in-service school leaders to participate, the delivery of leadership development programmes needs to be flexible. In view of the large number of small schools, virtual training and other peer learning activities are particularly important to ease the participation of school leaders from remote areas and complement face-to-face sessions in Puebla (see Policy Issue 4).

Leadership development programmes often include a school-based component. These aim at strengthening school leadership teams by helping them to form a clear understanding of themselves, recognise areas for improvement and realise their own leadership potential within their contexts (Taipale, 2012). In Puebla, the leadership development programme could involve school-based sessions to help establish effective leadership teams and support their work on instilling change in their school.

Puebla should draw upon a broad array of Mexican and international examples in the design of leadership development programmes. Within Mexico, promising training initiatives for education leaders have already been developed in the states of Aguascalientes, Jalisco and Yucatán. Box 2.3 illustrates different international approaches to leadership development. The OECD *Improving School Leadership* report provides a valuable compilation of the preparatory training for school leadership, formal induction programmes for new leaders, and in-service professional development opportunities (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008).

Box 2.3. Selected approaches to leadership development programmes

In **Australia**, the *Eleanor Davis School Leadership* programme is intended for female teachers or assistant principals aspiring to a principal's position at a public school within the next three years. The programme lasts about half a year and includes four supervised workshops, mentoring, shadowing and online work. The aims are to 1) understand the key capabilities required to meet the demands and challenges of the principalship; 2) understand and know how to use educational and leadership research, data and readings as critical tools for school improvement; 3) know how to articulate a clear and compelling leadership vision for themselves and their school communities; and 4) seek a principal's position with confidence.

In **Colombia**, the Transformative School Leaders (*Rectores Líderes Transformadores*) is an innovative programme to foster the development of leadership skills in public schools. It is targeted at school principals but also seeks the participation of the whole leadership team. School principals participate in four intensive courses over a period of 10 months for a total of 40 hours of training per week. At the end of the training programme, they are expected to present a school transformation plan, and they receive technical guidance and support for its implementation during the following two years.

In 2011, **Norway** introduced a government-funded *National Programme for Principals (rektorutdanning)* to develop instructional leadership skills for newly-appointed principals. The programme lasts about 18 months and covers: student learning outcomes and environment; management and administration; collaboration and organisation; guidance of teachers; development and change; and leadership identity. It was initially offered to new school principals with less than two years of experience, and will eventually be offered to more experienced school leaders as well.

In Scotland (**United Kingdom**), school leaders can opt for a postgraduate programme in educational leadership and management (Scottish Qualification for Headship) or for a more flexible and practice-based programme (Flexible Route to Headship). The latter has the creation of a portfolio, a 360° appraisal and meetings with a coach as its central features. In addition, school rotation, whereby an effective school principal is reassigned to another school, is often used to enable them to further develop as a leader and disseminate good practices.

Sources: Adapted from National College for School Leadership (2012), *Annual Report and Accounts*, National College for School Leadership, London.

OECD (2016), *Education in Colombia*, *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD Publishing.

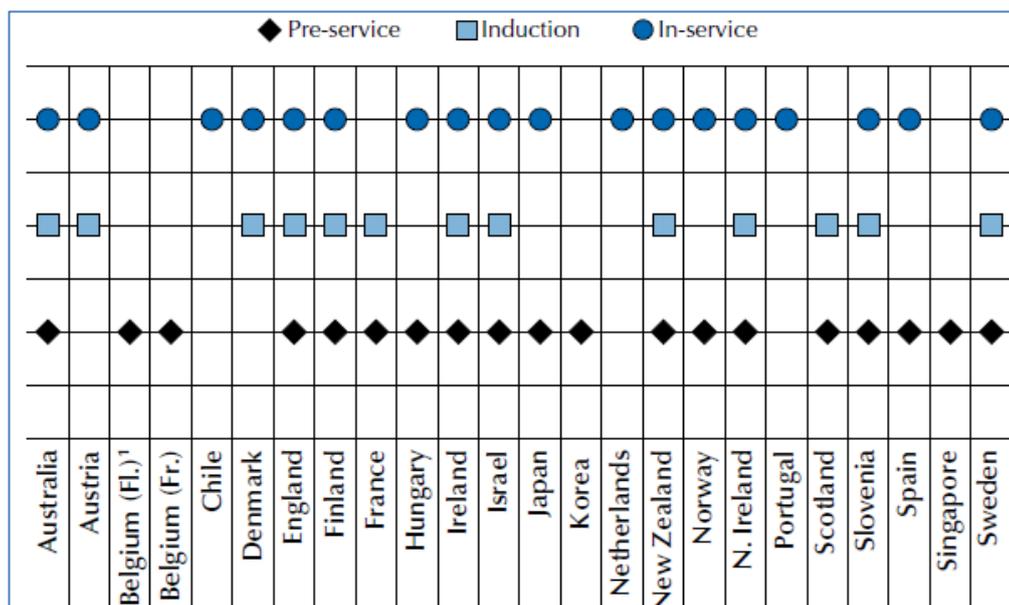
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Making development opportunities available throughout the career

Professional development opportunities need to be available throughout the leadership career. In each career stage, leaders need support to prepare for their specific roles to adapt to changes in educational policies (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). In practice, however, there are significant differences across OECD countries on the extent to which development opportunities are available throughout the leadership career (see Figure 2.4). In some countries, only those enrolled or who have successfully completed pre-service training are eligible for principalship but this can be resource-intensive and restrict recruitment choices.

Figure 2.4 Types of leadership development programmes in OECD countries (2012)



1. Belgium (Fl.): only community schools.

Source: Schleicher, A. (ed.) (2012), *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264174559-en>.

What matters is that leaders are well-prepared and supported in assuming leadership responsibilities. In most countries, principals undergo a training after appointment but prior to accepting the position, immediately after taking up the position or within a certain period after taking up the position (e.g., Germany, France, Shanghai). These are often coupled with induction programmes to help new leaders adjust to their position and environment, shape initial school-leadership practices and build networks through which the leaders can share their concerns (Schleicher, 2012). Participation tends to be voluntary and the length of the programmes varies considerably, from one to three years.

The most experienced leaders should also benefit from in-service training. Alike Puebla, and Mexico, most OECD countries provide training opportunities to all in-service leaders. In-service training can capitalise on the leader's base of experience and mature understanding of the demands of the job to prepare them for further roles. For example, experienced school leaders could be trained to become mentors of newly appointed leaders.

Ensuring that high-quality institutions deliver development programmes

Designing a high-quality leadership development programme is as important as ensuring that the training institution(s) can deliver that level of quality. An option for Puebla to directly influence the quality of the training provided is to create a dedicated institution. Examples of leadership development institutions in OECD countries include the National School for Leadership in Education in Slovenia and the National College for School Leadership in England (which merged with the Teaching Agency to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership in 2013) (see Box 2.4).

Most OECD countries outsource the provision of specialised and high-quality programmes to other institutions in combination with stringent quality-monitoring mechanisms. In Sweden, for example, new principals are required to participate in a publicly-funded training programme provided by one of six tertiary education institutions which are selected through a procurement procedure (Taipale, 2012). The Swedish National Agency for Education co-ordinates the supply of programmes and evaluates their institutional self-assessment report on an annual basis.

Box 2.4. Examples of school leadership institutions in England and Slovenia

In England (**United Kingdom**), there was a strong school leadership body between 2000 and 2014. The National College for School Leadership was the lead non-departmental public body with responsibility to increase both the quality and supply of school leaders. The college remit covered research, training, policy analysis and advice, consultation and information, and strategic national initiatives. It also provided quality assurance for leadership development programmes. In the pursuit of greater efficiency, the College merged with the Teaching Agency in 2013 and its responsibilities were restructured.

Slovenia was an early developer of leadership development programmes. The country now provides initial, induction and in-service training through its National School for Leadership in Education, which was established in 1995. While concentrating on training and development, it has slowly broadened its remit to cover a variety of leadership tasks: implementation of the headship licence programmes; mentoring for newly appointed heads of schools; in-service training and conferences for school leaders; research in the fields of education, educational policy and leadership.

Source: Pont, B., D. Nusche and H. Moorman (2008), *Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264044715-en>.

Policy Issue 4: Fostering peer learning through mentoring and professional networks

Peer learning between school leaders – such as mentoring or professional leadership networks – can also be an effective way to develop leadership skills. The prevailing type of training opportunities in Puebla are courses, workshops or conferences. In contrast, peer learning methods, either in an individual or collective form, have gained prominence in high-performing countries to respond more effectively to developmental needs of school leaders (Weinstein and Hernández, forthcoming).

The main reason why peer learning methods are gaining support internationally is that traditional modalities are often disconnected from the needs, challenges and contexts that school leaders face in schools. Instead, peer learning methods directly respond to them and favour the exchange of tacit knowledge about the responsibilities of the position.

By building relationships, peer learning is also an effective way to break the professional isolation characteristic of the job. Linking school leaders across schools could be particularly beneficial in Puebla given the large number of small remote schools, which are often led by teachers commissioned to the position. This form of training might not only be more effective than traditional modalities but also tends to be less costly in terms of access, time and training costs.

Puebla should take a leading role in developing a mentoring programme and professional networks for school leaders. The greater proximity to schools places the state in a better position to arrange peer learning opportunities than national authorities. The state has a greater understanding of the school system to encourage successful school leaders to become mentors and match them to new school leaders in similar schools.

Developing these new forms of training would also require creating the conditions that can enable the effective participation and commitment of school leaders in Puebla. To encourage school leaders to participate, Puebla could explore ways to formally release time from school leaders' schedules, and publicly recognise their achievements and contribution to system leadership. SEP-Puebla could also put forward a proposal to the SEP to distinguish systemic leadership roles in leadership career structures and requirements for career progression.

Mentoring schemes

Mentoring involves structured feedback conversations based on a continuous assessment of leadership practices. It helps school leaders build confidence and gain new skills, take different approaches in their jobs, increase their wellbeing, gain better balance and feel supported (Bradley et al., 2006).

While there is no strong evidence about the key characteristics of effective mentoring schemes, Weinstein and Hernández (forthcoming) highlight some important aspects that Puebla could consider in the design of mentoring programmes:

- Carefully select and train mentors. Being a successful principal is not enough to be a good mentor. Ideally, mentors would have professional experience in similar schools and a range of skills and personality traits (communication, committed, reliable, proactive, open-minded, empathic) to develop effective relationships.
- Train mentors and provide them with methodological tools to adopt different roles depending on the needs of their apprentices (e.g. acting as role models, critical friends, coaches).
- Define a flexible plan with clear objectives for each individual. The objectives set usually go beyond knowledge and professional skills and include the development of behavioural, personal and social competencies.
- Combine mentoring and coaching with other leadership development modalities (i.e. broader leadership development programme, peer learning network).
- Define frequent meetings over at least one year, ideally two or more, with the purpose of giving principals the necessary support to develop.
- Carefully match mentors and mentees to foster complementarity between them. If needed, enable changes to ensure a safe environment of trust and confidentiality.
- Encourage the use of learning-oriented methodologies and promote the debate on beliefs, practices and leadership challenges. These include active listening, paraphrasing, reflective feedback, and planned questions to force them to think, challenge their thoughts and amplify or deepen their analysis.

Box 2.5. Examples of mentoring schemes in New Zealand and Singapore

New Zealand launched the First Time Principal programme (FTP) in 2001 as an annual induction programme, open to all new principals. The FTP includes i) a 3-day residential course with talks, case studies and networking opportunities; ii) e-learning through curricular units, forums, resources, and group communities; and iii) research and evaluation. FTP defines mentoring as the support of a novice principal by an expert principal, programming three visits annually by the mentor to the school of the apprentice principal. The evaluation showed that the number of interactions is usually greater than originally planned and that participants from more isolated areas especially value group seminars or informal meetings.

In **Singapore**, mentoring has historically been used in the training of school leaders. A year-long mentoring scheme for all recently appointed principals is complemented with opportunities to learn from each other, including access to good role models, providing a support structure for good leadership and orientation on best leadership practices. These efforts are also reinforced by other initiatives such as the recruitment of retired principals to hold offices within the institution and the creation of networks or clusters among schools.

Source: Adapted from Dinham et al., (2011) and Weinstein and Hernández (forthcoming).

Networks for peer learning

Networks for peer learning are platforms that facilitate regular and structured exchanges of experiences, concerns, opinions, information and knowledge. School leaders interact with their peers and engage in a dialogue and shared reflection on their professional practice. To distinguish them from informal principal meetings or other events for professional exchange (e.g. seminars, courses), networks have a determined structure, consistency in the interactions and temporal duration.

In Puebla, well-structured networks for peer learning could be an effective way to connect school leaders, spread best practices and innovations, and develop their leadership skills. These could also be instrumental in Puebla in preventing the sense of isolation of those who work in the large number of small, challenging schools. Norway, Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia are examples of the increasing number of education systems which are investing in professional learning communities to raise the quality of their school leaders.

Learning networks for school principals show significant organisational diversity. Some elements that can lead to more effective interactions include (Weinstein and Hernández, forthcoming):

- Make participation voluntary to ensure that principals are open to learning and committed to improving their practice. To promote an equal participation, networks do not have pre-established hierarchies and members have equal rights and duties.
- Structure each session with clear and relevant tasks that respond to participants' concerns, demands and needs according to their particular school context. Initiatives must have a structured work methodology that fosters collaborative learning.
- Carefully select internal or external network facilitator with leadership skills and competencies to manage the dynamics effectively and promote opportunities of inquiry and collective reflection.
- Promote the use of technology to broaden access and increase participation, particularly in isolated areas. An online platform for peer learning can complement face-to-face interactions.

Box 2.6. Networks for school leaders in Ontario, New Zealand and Austria

One of the main strategies in **Ontario (Canada)** for strengthening capabilities within the school system has been the establishment of a variety of networks to reinforce a school-based professional community with a district-wide one. Each school has a professional learning community in which principals and teachers collaborate in teams to improve instruction in the school. In turn, each district has a principal learning team in which principals work together to improve their capabilities as instructional leaders, their impact on the practices of teachers and improve the conditions of the school. Moreover, a provincial committee composed of local organisations of principals and the Ministry of Education supports principals and leaders with a range of opportunities and resources for professional learning.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of **Austria** created the Leadership Academy (LEA). Each year, LEA works with a cohort of 300 individuals, including school principals from all regions and types of schools, ministerial and regional authorities, and representatives of educators training institutions. Participants take part of four 3-day forums focused on the design and implementation of a project of personal and professional development. Participants work in Collegiate Coaching (CTCs) groups, which are composed of six participants from different places and roles within the system, to collectively reflect on the formulation of the project, its implementation and its results. CTCs also meet between forums to foster a process of continuous learning between colleagues.

Source: Taipale, A. (2012), *International Survey on Educational Leadership*, Finnish National Board of Education, Helsinki.

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Chapter 3

Using evaluation to foster school improvement in Puebla

This chapter reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the current evaluation and assessment policies and practices in Puebla. It analyses how evaluation and assessment can be an instrument for continuously improving at several levels: students' learning, teachers' and school leaders' effectiveness, overall school performance, and the achievement of the education system as a whole.

There is growing interest in Puebla to make a greater use of evaluation to foster quality improvements in the education system. Some initiatives have already been undertaken in this direction. For example, a formative assessment at the entrance of upper secondary education aims at supporting students who might struggle in the transition to this level. Another example is the use of the external student assessment test results to allocate more resources to the lowest-performing and most disadvantaged schools. There are also plans to strengthen the capacity of SEP-Puebla to harness the opportunities opened up for states in the 2013 national reforms to professionalise staff and strengthen educational evaluation. Building a sound framework for the evaluation of students, staff, schools and the education system as a whole is a key challenge ahead in Puebla.

Context and features

Student assessment

In Puebla, and Mexico, summative assessment prevails over formative assessment in the classroom, although teachers are increasingly engaging in some sort of the latter (OECD, 2013a). Student assessment mainly consists of a bi-monthly report on students' performance based on exams designed and marked by each teacher. At the end of the academic cycle, the scores of the bi-monthly tests are averaged out to obtain the final overall score. Marks are reported in numerical terms as of the 2014/15 school year given the difficulties encountered in the implementation of a reporting system based on letters (*Cartilla de Evaluación*), which provided more opportunities for written feedback.

The prevalence of summative assessment encourages a limited perception of student performance. The OECD Review of evaluation and assessment in Mexico noted that there is little understanding of the meaning of the mark among students, other than the implications of failing a class and consideration of the highest mark as excellence that cannot be exceeded, which narrows the concept of learning and potential achievement (Santiago et al., 2012). Student assessment is also not consistent across teachers and schools. Every teacher establishes his own criteria and assessment method.

With the growing importance of standardised assessments, the attention of teachers in Puebla and Mexico has increasingly focused on student performance. Until 2014, the most prominent external student assessment was the *Evaluación Nacional del Logro Académico en Centros Escolares* (ENLACE, National Evaluation of Academic Improvement in Educational Centres). The increasing stakes attached to ENLACE led to distortions such as teachers teaching specifically to the tests.

The criticisms raised about ENLACE led to its temporary suspension and review by an expert commission. A new set of evaluation instruments, named the National Plan to Evaluate Learning (*Plan Nacional de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes*, Planea), was announced in 2015. Planea includes three different instruments to separately evaluate the performance of students, schools and the system. By doing so, Planea provides a coherent set of instruments that can be used for either accountability or formative purposes at all levels. The assessments typically cover language, mathematics and socio-emotional abilities. The schedule for its implementation is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Scheduled application of Planea

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
3rd year of pre-school			SEN			
4 th Primary	Dc	Dc	Dc	Dc	Dc	
6 th Primary	SEN, CE	CE	CE	CE	SEN, CE	Revision
3rd lower secondary	SEN, CE	CE	CE	CE	SEN, CE	
Last grade upper secondary	CE	CE	SEN, CE	CE	CE	

SEN= Assessment of the national education system.

CE= School-level assessment.

DC= Census-based formative assessment.

Source: INEE (2015), "¿Qué es PLANEa?", INEE, México, www.inee.edu.mx/images/stories/2015/planea/fasciculos_nov/Planea_1.pdf.

With the introduction of Planea, schools and teachers now have a specific standardised assessment to help them adapt teaching strategies and support students in their learning process. Despite the prominence of standardised assessments prior to Planea, the high stakes associated with them hampered their potential formative function. To address the need for formative instruments, Puebla designed its own standardised assessment in 2013 to be applied at the entrance to upper secondary education. The assessment is purported to identify and support students who might struggle in the transition from lower to upper secondary education.

Teachers, school leaders and other educational staff appraisal

The appraisal of educational staff is a complex and controversial issue in any country. In Mexico, staff appraisal has been a particularly sensitive issue for multiple reasons. The main teacher union (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*, SNTE) has traditionally played a prominent role on personnel decisions such as appointments to posts, teachers' tenure, rules on career and working conditions, scholarships and other benefits (Tapia, 2004). Entering a classroom with the purpose of observing teaching practice is unusual for school leaders and other teachers. Moreover, the prevalent focus of the overall evaluation system on accountability has also hampered the openness of teachers to the appraisal.

Another major obstacle for the introduction of an appraisal has been the lack of national professional standards. Without standards, there is no common understanding of what is a good teacher and school leader. Professional standards can provide a clear and concise statement or profile of what teachers and school principals are expected to know and be able to do. They also provide a common reference of professional competence to align teaching policies (e.g. teacher education and professional development, appraisal, career progression).

Important steps have been taken to appraise staff in recent years. In 2012, the *Evaluación Universal* (Universal Evaluation) was introduced nationwide as a mandatory in-service appraisal system for the entire education workforce to be applied every three years. It was intended to serve as a formative and diagnostic appraisal for individual teachers, inform professional development needs and determine career progression. However, the implementation of *Evaluación Universal* faced significant opposition from some teacher groups and only a small proportion of teachers took the exam in 2012. Yet Puebla was one of the states with the largest proportion of staff participating in the evaluation (OECD, 2013a). The considerable weight attributed to student performance in the overall appraisal (50%), which was measured by ENLACE, led to distortions such as teaching to the test.

The national reforms initiated in 2013 are a strong step forward towards an appraisal system that can improve the quality of teaching in Mexican schools. A competitive system for entrance, progression, tenure and reward based on a regular appraisal was enshrined in the constitution in February 2013 and further developed by the *Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente* (LGSPD, General Law of Professional Teaching Service) in September 2013. States are expected to play an important role in the further legal development of the LGSPD as well as in its implementation as indicated in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1. Responsibilities of states in the appraisal of educational staff

The *Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente* entrusts states with the following responsibilities:

- Contribute to the design of the standards and the appraisal system. In basic education, states can propose to the SEP the requirements and standards for the entrance, progression, tenure and recognition as well as suggest complementary standards, parameters and indicators. In upper secondary education, states have to co-elaborate annual and mid-term evaluation programmes with the SEP, determine the standards and minimum requirements and contribute to the definition of parameters and indicators for the entrance, progression, tenure and recognition; and propose the stages, dimensions and methods of the compulsory appraisal processes as well as the instruments for appraisal and profile of evaluators to the INEE. Also, states are responsible for widely disseminating the standards.
- Operate the entrance, progression, tenure, recognition and staff appraisals. Call for and operate an entrance and promotion competition following the INEE's guidelines and allocate places strictly based on the rankings. Also, states have to operate, and if required, design reward programmes for in-service teachers, school leaders and supervisors. States have to select and train evaluators and applicators, participate and grade the stages of the staff appraisal processes, and establish mechanisms to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organisations and parental associations as observers, following the guidelines set by the INEE. Establish agreements with authorised public institutions to operate competitions and appraisals. Also, states will offer catch-up programmes for those who fail the appraisals.
- Offer professional development opportunities to in-service staff, including courses to develop capacity for evaluation. In basic education, there is an emphasis on providing free, relevant and coherent offer, building capacity for internal evaluation and offering relevant leadership and management programmes.
- Contribute to the reorganisation of the teaching service. The LGSPD replaces the former figure of ATP (Asesor Técnico-pedagógico) with newly created support figures inside and outside schools. States can determine which teaching positions will be part of the Service within the permitted occupation structure. In basic education, states can develop guidelines to enable horizontal changes of functions and have to organise and operate a new Technical Assistance Service to support schools in self-evaluation processes and in understanding external evaluations following the guidelines of the SEP. Also, states are encouraged to better allocate teaching hours to increase the number of full-time staff and can provide financial incentives based on performance-based appraisals.

Source: Authors, based on the LGSPD.

School evaluation

There is an increasing interest in evaluating the performance of schools in Puebla and Mexico. The results of students in standardised assessments have gained prominence in the external evaluation of school performance. School results are compared with previous years, the national average, the state average and the results of similar schools. The results are expected to be widely disseminated to inform parents and the community. A poster is displayed visibly in schools and a detailed school performance report is available on line.

A well-established body of supervisors performs an external evaluation of schools. Supervisors spend most of their time checking compliance and performing administrative tasks to the detriment of the evaluation of the academic performance of schools (Santiago et al., 2012; OECD, 2013a). The limited focus on teaching and learning processes is partly related to the absence of clear guidelines on school quality and clarity on their expected responsibilities. A survey of supervisors in 2012 showed that each of them applies different criteria to determine the performance schools (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). It also indicated that supervisors focus on the qualitative aspects of the assessment (i.e. interviews with the principal, teaching staff and parents) in detriment of the quantitative aspects (e.g. analysis of the results of bi-monthly assessments, ENLACE assessments and indicators of dropout).

The heavy workload of supervisors can also help explain their limited attention to teaching and learning processes in schools. In Puebla, supervisors are responsible for an average of 14 schools, 100 teachers and 2 000 students in their own school zone (Proyecto Educativo, 2012). The rugged geography of the state can result in long travelling times and limit the frequency of school visits. In spite of this, supervisors are supported in their administrative or academic tasks by one or two technical-pedagogic assistants (asesores técnico-pedagógicos, ATP), who until the recent national reforms were usually teachers commissioned to this specific position.

School self-evaluation is increasingly gaining ground in Puebla. The inclusion of a required annual self-evaluation process in the flagship national Quality Schools Programme (*Programa Escuelas de Calidad*, PEC) has been instrumental for its expansion in basic education, in Puebla and nationwide. The self-evaluation process currently consists of a diagnosis, formulation of a programme of work by the school, and evaluation of its accomplishment. In upper secondary education, some providers such as the CONALEP and CECyTE have introduced internal feedback procedures, despite the absence of external requirements for school self-evaluation.

School self-evaluation has become a requirement for all schools under the 2013 national reforms. School principals are responsible for co-ordinating and leading the internal evaluation of schools to improve professional practice and foster school improvement. The internal school evaluation process, however, is not clearly defined and is separated from the staff appraisal.

The LGSPD also provides for the creation of a *Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela* (Technical Assistance Service for Schools, SATE) to support schools in their internal evaluation and other improvement processes. In Puebla, there are initial plans to create a body out of existing structures (e.g. supervisors, teachers' trainers, and newly appointed pedagogical advisors) whose main functions would be to:

- use and provide schools with information such as performance indicators and students' assessment results to diagnose and prioritise schools, teachers and students with the most urgent need of support
- co-ordinate the supply of training courses for teachers, principals and supervisors to ensure their quality and relevance to specific needs
- help schools identify opportunities for community engagement as well as help the community get involved in the activities of schools.

System-level evaluation

Standardised student assessments are considered the main basis for judgements on the quality of the Puebla education system. Like the majority of Mexican states (see Annex 3.A1), Puebla has not developed its own system-level assessment instrument. The national assessment Planea and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are the main instruments used for system-level evaluation. Planea provides information about the overall performance of the state-level education system every two years (see Table 3.1). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) also enables states to compare internationally the performance of 15 year-old students in literacy, numeracy and scientific skills since 2003.

Another important source of information is the broad array of national indicators which enable states to monitor progress in key areas (i.e. enrolment, grade repetition and dropout) and facilitate benchmarking. To improve the quality of the data available, a nationwide census of schools, staff and students was carried out in 2014. The results are expected to feed a new *Sistema de Información y Gestión Educativa* (Education Management Information System). In Puebla, steps have also been taken to develop a management information system that includes key indicators at the state, school and student levels.

The growing capacity for evaluation in SEP-Puebla has not kept pace with the proliferation of indicators about the quality of the education system in the last 15 years. The capacity to understand and translate data into policies and practices that lead to improvements at all levels is still limited. The administrative structure of SEP-Puebla continues to focus mainly on the operation of education services (OECD, 2013a). In most ways, the weaknesses in capacity of Puebla today, mirror the Latin America region-wide weaknesses in evaluation noted in the early stages of the development of national capacity for evaluation (Ravela et al., 2001). In recent years, two proposals have emerged for the creation of a dedicated body external to SEP-Puebla to strengthen the capacity for educational evaluation, although these initiatives seem to have lost momentum:

- *Instituto Poblano de Evaluación e Innovación Educativa* (Institute of Education Evaluation and Innovation of Puebla) was proposed in December 2012 to focus on the development and application of evaluation instruments in the state, similar to the prevailing functions of already existing evaluation institutes in other Mexican states (Chiapas, Sonora, Nuevo León, Estado de México) (see Annex 3.A1).
- *Consejo de Evaluación y Calidad Educativa* (CECE, Council for Educational Evaluation and Quality) was announced in 2013 to support SEP-Puebla, teachers, school leaders and parents in the use of evaluation for improvement. Its main task would be to analyse the existing sources of information whilst the design of new instruments would be limited to areas that genuinely require additional data (SEP-Puebla, 2014).

Closer links are also being forged between the state of Puebla and the National Educational Evaluation Institute (INEE), which is the body responsible for educational evaluation in Mexico. While the relationship has often been dominated by specific ad hoc requests, the *Ley del Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación* (LINEE, National Educational Evaluation Institute Law) provides opportunities for more systematic collaboration. It also creates a *Conferencia del Sistema Nacional de Evaluación Educativa* (Conference of the National System of Educational Evaluation) to facilitate co-ordination and a more effective implementation of evaluation and assessment processes. The INEE, the federal SEP and eight representative states on a rotating basis (Aguascalientes, Tlaxcala, Durango, Tabasco, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, Puebla and Distrito Federal in 2014) participate in the meetings, which should take place at least twice a year.

Policy challenges

Evaluation processes have gained prominence in the last two decades internationally as a way to measure and improve student learning. Evaluation provides a basis for monitoring how effectively education is being delivered to students and for assessing the performance of systems, schools, school leaders, teachers and students, among others. In Puebla, and Mexico, standardised student assessments have helped build a sense of urgency for educational reform and aligned the focus of all school agents on improving student outcomes and achieving student learning objectives. Yet, more can be done in Puebla to harness the potential benefits of evaluation to improve student learning.

With the increasing opportunities for evaluation opened up by the national reforms, the definition of what areas are priorities for the state and where state-level interventions can be most effective is particularly relevant. The following sections examine the options available to improve each evaluation component in the state: *i)* assessment of students' learning; *ii)* appraisal of teachers, school leaders, supervisors and other educational staff; *iii)* evaluation of overall school performance; and *iv)* evaluation of Puebla's education system as a whole.

The use of evaluation instruments to foster improvement is a particularly promising area for further development in Puebla. Evaluation procedures have been traditionally narrowly understood in Puebla, and Mexico, as mechanisms to hold school agents accountable for their performance. In high-performing countries, the evaluation system also focuses on identifying strengths and weaknesses with the aim of providing feedback and support for improvement. The proximity of state-level authorities to schools makes them better placed to play a greater role in, for example, supporting teachers and school leaders use of evaluation results to improve teaching and learning processes.

When defining the potential roles of Puebla, drawing an overall evaluation framework can help foster synergies and coherence between national and state-level arrangements. In Mexico, as in most OECD countries, a whole range of provisions for student assessment, teacher appraisal and school evaluation have been developed quite independently of each other. Bringing them together will reduce the risks of inconsistencies and excessive evaluation. It will also help to ensure that each evaluation is meaningful for those that participate in them.

Policy Issue 1: Encouraging a greater use of formative student assessment

Assessing students' learning outcomes is key to measure progress towards national learning standards and improve teaching and learning practices in the classroom. In Puebla, and Mexico, assessments are mostly used to check whether students have achieved the established learning standards. High levels of grade repetition suggest that assessment is seen as a punitive tool and that little support is granted to students after failing an exam. Instead, assessment should be a powerful instrument to support students at risk of falling behind and improve teaching practices in schools.

Building a new understanding about student assessment and helping teachers embed formative approaches in their daily practice is vital to use assessment more effectively in Puebla. Only when assessment instruments are used effectively are students provided with a rounded picture of their performance and encouraged to achieve their full learning potential. To make a greater use of assessment for formative purposes, Puebla should encourage teachers to:

- Embed formative methods in regular classroom assessment practices. As in many other OECD countries, summative assessment tends to prevail over formative assessment in the classroom. Teachers should provide students with timely, specific and detailed suggestions on the next steps to enhance further learning.

- Make use of the purportedly census-based standardised student assessment instrument of Planea for formative purposes. Planea, the new external evaluation, can provide teachers with a reference of student performance vis-à-vis national learning goals. In this way, teachers can support students early on and improve pedagogy in schools.
- Improve reporting to students and parents. Teachers should be encouraged to provide students with qualitative descriptions of their performance, such as an explanation of the meaning of the marks awarded, and details about their progress, strengths and identified needs. Helping students and parents understand assessments is vital to foster their engagement in learning.

Supporting teachers to develop adequate skills to assess student learning is critical to foster a new approach to assessment in Puebla, and Mexico. An important component of initial teacher education programmes should be the development of a variety of assessment approaches and understanding of different aspects of their validity, including what different assessments can and cannot reveal about student learning. Specific guidelines, workshops, materials and online tools can also help in-service teachers to embrace more effective assessment approaches. An increasing number of OECD countries are also investing in strengthening assessment practices. New Zealand, for example, has developed a school-based peer learning programme to promote a new understanding about student assessment tools and facilitate the exchange of best practices on their implementation in the classroom (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. Strengthening teachers' skills for student assessment

In New Zealand, Assess to Learn (AtoL) is a whole-school professional development programme which supports teachers in primary and secondary schools. Over a period of two years, it helps them choose adequate assessment tools and analyse assessment information so as to further advance student learning. A 2008 evaluation of the programme reported a significant impact on teacher professional practice and important improvements in student learning, especially for students with initially low achievement levels.

Source: OECD (2013b), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.

Policy Issue 2: Fostering the development of effective staff appraisal processes

The regular appraisal of all educational staff introduced by the 2013 national reforms aims to professionalise the teaching workforce and raise the quality of teaching. Teacher appraisal is increasingly used in OECD countries as an important tool to help teachers improve their practice and reward them (OECD, 2013b). By improving the quality of teaching, appraisal can improve student learning, which is ultimately the product of what goes on in the classroom.

While the design of appraisal processes is led at the national level, Puebla should actively provide input to the national government in the definition and revision of key elements of its design and ensure its effective implementation in the state. An important challenge ahead in Mexico is to move towards an appraisal system based on multiple sources and instruments to capture all important aspects' of a teacher's performance (e.g. classroom observation, interviews with the teacher, teacher self-appraisal, student performance data, feedback from students and parents). The OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment (OECD, 2013b) provides information about the wide array of approaches to teacher appraisal in OECD countries.

To ensure that appraisals lead to professional improvement, Puebla should also explore ways to create stronger links between teacher appraisal, professional development opportunities and school improvement. International practice shows that teacher appraisal is unlikely to improve teaching practice unless it is linked to professional development. In the United Kingdom, for example, a study

shows that connecting individual needs, school priorities and professional development activities increases performance (OECD, 2013b). School leaders should discuss with teachers their professional development courses in order to ensure that they develop the skills most needed in the school. SEP-Puebla should analyse the results of appraisals and put forward a structured offer of professional development to the national government.

Puebla could also consider introducing internal appraisal processes in schools for formative purposes. Internal appraisal processes can complement the informal feedback that school leaders might already provide to teachers throughout the year with a more structured session drawing upon several classroom and portfolio observations. The appraisal of teachers by school leaders would be a significant cultural change and could need careful preparation in Puebla. To ensure that internal appraisal becomes a meaningful exercise, specific attention will need to be placed in training school leaders to set objectives, link school objectives to personnel development plans and provide constructive feedback. Similarly, teachers also need to be trained in the use of formative assessment techniques to assess their own progress.

Heightened standards, regular appraisals and increased demands from the teaching and leadership workforce should go hand in hand with adequate recognition, rewards and incentives for their work. Whilst the national government is tasked with the design of the career structure, Puebla could explore ways to improve the working conditions of the profession. For example, the appraisal could help identify effective school leaders who could be given incentives to mentor other school leaders to improve their professional practice. The appraisal could also be an opportunity to adequately phase the regularisation of commissioned staff.

Throughout the design and implementation of appraisal processes, a frequent dialogue with staff professional organisations and clear communication of procedures and results is vital to ensure that appraisals are perceived as useful, objective and fair. This will also help staff understand appraisal procedures and how to benefit from regular appraisal for their professional development. In Chile, for example, engaging in a close dialogue with teacher unions was indispensable to forge an agreement on a teacher evaluation system from an initial absolute rejection (see Box 3.3). Puebla could also consider creating a teaching council to ensure that the professional dialogue persists over time. Several OECD countries have established a teaching council to provide teachers and other stakeholders groups with a permanent forum for policy development and professional dialogue.

Box 3.3. Moving from absolute rejection to acceptance of an evaluation system in Chile

Since 2004 Chile has had one of the most sophisticated systems of teacher performance evaluation in operation. The Teachers' Act of 1991 introduced a teacher evaluation system which enabled the dismissal of teachers who were negatively evaluated two years in a row. This evaluation system, however, was not implemented because of objections from the Teachers' Association about the composition of the evaluation committees, and the fact that the system focused on punishment rather than improvement.

Teacher evaluation continued to be a topic of public and political concern throughout the 1990s. The Minister of Education established a technical committee comprising representatives of the ministry, the municipalities and the Teachers' Association. The committee reached agreement on a model for teacher evaluation: it agreed to prepare guidelines for standards of professional performance and to implement a pilot project in several areas of the country to evaluate and adjust the procedures and instruments to be used. After wide consultations, a framework for performance standards was developed and officially approved.

Source: Schleicher, A. (2016), *Teaching Excellence through Professional Learning and Policy Reform: Lessons from around the World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252059-en>.

Policy issue 3: Strengthening school supervision and self-evaluation

School evaluation, either externally- or internally-led, can trigger improvement. The evaluation process provides an opportunity to reflect on the holistic context of schools, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and align the efforts for improvement of the whole school community. A challenge ahead in Puebla, and Mexico, is to establish internal and external evaluation processes which focus on ways to improve teaching and learning in schools.

Many OECD countries have increased the focus of evaluation on school quality in recent years. Korea, for example, moved from a model focused on administrative compliance to a model with both external and self-evaluation activities based on a set of core common quality indicators. A review of the school evaluation process in Korea has shown that this new model gives greater opportunities for schools to reflect on their educational activities, promotes information sharing and exchange among school members, and helps them broaden their interest and understanding of overall school affairs (OECD, 2013b).

Placing a greater emphasis on improvement in the external evaluation

School supervision should place a greater focus on teaching and learning processes to trigger and support school improvement. Currently, supervisors mainly focus on whether schools comply with regulations and perform administrative duties. While ensuring compliance matters, school supervision has a limited influence on the quality of schooling. A meaningful school evaluation should involve an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of schools; an assessment of strengths and areas for development, followed by feedback, coaching, support and opportunities for development; an opportunity to celebrate, recognise and reward the work of schools and to identify best practice; and an opportunity to identify underperforming schools (OECD, 2013b).

The OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment provides extensive information about evaluation arrangements in OECD countries that could be considered to redesign Mexico's school supervision system. Important aspects for consideration include the range of evidence used, the reporting of results to schools and the follow-up after the evaluation for schools that fail to meet the standards. Box 3.4 describes how school evaluation is organised in Victoria (Australia) and how internal and external school evaluation can be articulated to reinforce each other.

Placing a greater emphasis on improvement is likely to require changes in the current supervision structure. An option suggested in the OECD Review of Puebla (2013a) is to separate the body of supervisors into two: *improvement supervisors* could focus on providing support to improve teaching and learning practices, and *administrative supervisors* could check schools' administrative compliance with regulations and assume part of the administrative burden that now falls on schools. The newly created *Servicio de Asistencia Técnica a la Escuela in Puebla* (Technical Assistance Service for Schools in Puebla, SATEP) could also play part of these functions.

Box 3.4. School evaluation in Victoria (Australia)

Australian states and territories have a variety of school evaluation systems, which derive from their particular circumstances and traditions. There are two main forms of evaluation, school self-evaluation and school external performance review, in a sequence of activities that begins with self-evaluation and proceeds through a planning, reporting and review process which both satisfies external requirements and is an engine of school improvement.

In the state of Victoria, external school reviews can be one of four, increasingly intensive, types: negotiated; continuous improvement; diagnostic; and extended diagnostic. The nature of the review in any particular school is dictated by an assessment of risk as indicated by evidence of levels of performance. Reviews are designed to go beyond the conclusions of the self-evaluation process to provide a holistic evaluation of a school's performance and capacity to improve. They seek to promote internal accountabilities and see the school and the School Council as the main audience.

Reviewers are drawn from former principals, officials or academics and must satisfy criteria covering knowledge of the Victorian education environment, expertise in school improvement and data analysis, interpersonal and communication skills and high ethical standards. They are then subject to an accreditation process and must participate in ongoing professional development. The review process, including the quality of reports, is itself subject to evaluation by stakeholders and officials from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Source: OECD (2013b), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.

Making school self-evaluation a helpful process for schools

The LGSPD requires all schools to undertake an annual self-evaluation process. Supporting schools to engage in a self-evaluation process is critical to ensure its effective implementation. Evidence on the implementation of self-evaluation processes in other OECD countries has shown that its impact hinges on the value that school agents attach to this process. Adequate support is a key factor to ensure that self-evaluation is not seen as an additional legal requirement but a helpful process to catalyse the efforts of all agents towards improvement. Puebla should consider ways to support schools in the process and encourage a results-oriented approach.

School leaders have a critical role to play in driving school, parental and community efforts to evaluate the quality of the school as a whole. A range of resources can be provided to facilitate their work. Developing clear guidelines and practical tools for self-evaluation can be a starting point. The definition of a good school, which has been developed by SEP-Puebla, could be turned into practical guidelines for evaluation. In Scotland (United Kingdom), where school evaluation processes are well-established, guidelines have played an instrumental role in its implementation (see Box 3.5). Ongoing support by supervisors and/or the SATEP can also help schools effectively implement self-evaluation processes and understand external ones.

A results-oriented focus is needed from the outset to ensure that internal evaluation leads to school improvement. It should result in an action plan for improvement and enable monitoring progress towards its achievement. Then, the School Council for Social Participation, which gathers all the relevant stakeholders in schools, could play an important role in monitoring the level of accomplishment in both a particular year and within a longer time perspective. The evaluation of school leaders and external evaluation of schools could also serve as instruments to strengthen the value of internal evaluation.

Box 3.5. Tools for school self-evaluation in Scotland (United Kingdom)

The external evaluation body in Scotland (**United Kingdom**) has developed a comprehensive set of tools for schools and school leaders to structure school-level evaluation. This resource, known as Journey to Excellence, has grown and developed over two decades and is very widely used by schools and by all Scotland's 32 local authorities. The school quality indicators at the heart of the package are also used by external school evaluators for external review of schools. The resource is regularly updated and there are plans to support schools in the process of developing long-term strategic thinking and managing major change in a school context. The complete Journey to Excellence package now includes the following parts:

Part 1: Aiming for Excellence explores the concept of excellence, what is meant by "learning" and "barriers to learning" and introduces ten dimensions of excellence.

Part 2: Exploring Excellence explores the ten dimensions in detail, giving practical examples from real schools which show the journey from "good" to "great".

Part 3: How Good is our School? and The Child at the Centre present sets of quality indicators for use in the self-evaluation of schools and pre-school centres respectively, along with guidance on their use.

Part 4: Planning for Excellence provides a guide for improvement planning in schools and pre-school centres.

Part 5: Exploring Excellence in Scottish Schools consists of an online digital resource for professional development containing multi-media clips exemplifying aspects of excellence across a wide range of educational sectors and partner agencies. It also contains short videos from international education experts and researchers.

Source: OECD (2013b), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.

Policy issue 4: Improving the evaluation of the state-level education system

A state-level evaluation can provide valuable information to improve education policies and outcomes. It can also strengthen accountability to the educational community and society as a whole. Across OECD countries, education policy is increasingly conferring a central strategic role to evaluation as an indispensable tool for improvement, accountability, educational planning and policy development. Improving what is known about Puebla's education system, both in terms of the information available and the capacity to make use of it, is vital to evaluate the performance of the system more effectively.

Improving the evidence available

A first step to improve the evaluation of the Puebla education system is to take stock of the information available. The results of standardised assessments are a prominent indicator of student performance but fail to cover the whole range of student learning objectives and policy priorities. Identifying what is currently measured or not measured is important to design a long-term strategy to improve measurement tools. It can also help raise awareness among stakeholders about the limitations of current indicators.

Qualitative reports can also provide valuable information to gauge the quality of the Puebla education system. Aggregate information from staff appraisals, school external evaluation reports, stakeholders surveys or research studies can inform about the needs of staff and schools. It can also help identify best practices to be spread across schools. Similarly, overarching or thematic reports on educational policies and the overall quality of provision can also provide valuable information to improve the *Normales* or *Bachilleratos Generales*.

Information about the performance of the Puebla education system needs to be made public. In the current major reform process, widely disseminating the state-level evaluation is particularly important to foster accountability and build further support for reform. An annual report on the state of Puebla's education system could be elaborated to assess whether or not the education system is achieving the objectives set in the Education Sector Plan. This report could be discussed in the parliament and with key stakeholders, disseminated to the media, and shared with other authorities at the national and state level. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, for example, the Ministry of Education holds annual consultations with stakeholders to discuss what can be learned from the results and possible implications for policy and practice (OECD, 2013b).

Building capacity for evaluation at the state level

Making a greater use of evidence to inform policy-making will require strengthening the capacity of SEP-Puebla. To adequately evaluate and use the results of system-level evaluation for improvement, the statistical, analytical and research competencies of SEP-Puebla need to be strengthened. Additional to changes in the human resources (e.g. recruitment processes, training), Puebla could reconsider the institutional arrangements to build greater capacity for evaluation. Some OECD countries have created specific arrangements within their ministries to support an evidence-based approach to policy development (OECD, 2013b). In the Netherlands, for example, the Ministry of Education has established a "Knowledge Directorate" to manage the increasing volume of knowledge and information to ensure that it is correctly interpreted, shared between and within departments in the Ministry, and adequately examined in the evidence base of policy proposals.

The creation of a dedicated evaluation agency, a separate body from SEP-Puebla, could be a stepping stone to build capacity and support for evaluation in Puebla. Dedicated evaluation agencies are increasingly present in OECD countries at the national level and, to a lesser extent, at the subnational one -- recognising the need for specialised expertise, capacity to deliver evaluation policies and independence vis-à-vis education authorities (OECD, 2013b). The creation of an evaluation body at the state level was already recommended in the OECD reports *Evaluation and Assessment Review of Mexico* (Santiago et al., 2012) and *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* (OECD, 2013a).

The main task of Puebla's evaluation body could be to lead the improvement of evaluation processes and use of results. With the current national reform efforts, the creation of a dedicated evaluation body becomes even more relevant to support its adequate development and implementation. This body could be the natural counterpart of the INEE and play the following functions:

- technical leadership (e.g. developing evaluation instruments, guidelines, education indicators)
- implementation of evaluation and assessment procedures (e.g. national student assessments)
- monitoring the education system (e.g. analysing the needs for professional development, thematic reports on educational policies)
- spurring innovation and scaling up best practices on the basis of research results
- building capacity for evaluation and assessment across the system (e.g. supporting schools in self-evaluation processes)
- knowledge mobilisation and management
- developing an evaluation culture.

Strengthening the links with other institutions that have expertise in educational evaluation should also help build capacity in Puebla. These include the INEE, other states, academia and the private sector. In particular, a stronger, mutually beneficial collaboration could be established with the INEE. Participants in the OECD visit agreed that, over the years, the INEE has built a strong reputation and technical capacity from which Puebla could benefit more. At the same time, the INEE could also capitalise on Puebla's local knowledge and outreach to schools to strengthen national evaluation efforts.

Annex 3.A1. Overview of state-level student assessments in basic education

Table 3.A1.1. Legal framework, responsibilities and assessment type

States	Evaluation of education in local legislation in Education	Autonomous Evaluation Institute	In-house assessments at the state level	Sphere of assessment
Aguascalientes*	✓			
Baja California*	✓			
Baja California Sur*	✓			
Campeche	✓			
Chiapas		✓		
Chihuahua	✓			
Coahuila*	✓		✓	Learning
Colima*			✓	Learning
Durango	✓			
State Of Mexico*	✓	✓	✓	Teachers
Guanajuato*	✓		✓	Teachers, sector heads and supervisors
Guerrero	✓			
Hidalgo	✓			
Jalisco*	✓		✓	Learning, teachers, programmes
Michoacan	✓			
Morelos*	✓			
Nayarit				
Nuevo Leon*	✓	✓	✓	Learning
Oaxaca	✓			
Puebla*				
Queretaro				
Quintana Roo*	✓		✓	Learning
San Luis Potosi	✓			
Sinaloa*	✓	✓		
Sonora**	✓	✓	✓	Learning
Tabasco	✓			
Tamaulipas	✓			
Tlaxcala	✓			
Veracruz	✓			
Yucatan*	✓			
Zacatecas*	✓		✓	Learning

Source: SEP and INEE (Secretariat of Public Education and National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation) (2011), *OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes: Country Background Report for Mexico*, www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

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Annex A. Moving forward: Stronger foundations for the Puebla Education System

The OECD report *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla* analysed the main strengths and challenges in basic and upper secondary education and recommended options for policy development to: *i*) strengthen support for schools and students, *ii*) improve the quality of teaching and school leadership, *iii*) increase completion and quality in upper secondary education, and *iv*) improve the planning, funding and use of school infrastructure. A summary of the recommendations is reproduced below (for further information see OECD, 2013a).

Policy priority 1: Strengthening schools' and students' support

- ***Recommendation 1: Provide high-quality and supportive learning experiences for all, particularly focusing on early years and multi-grade schools.*** Specific strategies should be developed for multi-grade schools, including greater local adaptation of the curricula. Schools could be encouraged to explore different time and staff arrangements, strengthen individual support for students and promote greater parental engagement.
- ***Recommendation 2: Further develop and exploit the potential of early warning systems and the use of assessment for learning.*** The information system should be further developed to take greater account of socio-economic conditions, monitor and improve low performing schools, track students throughout their education career and identify and support those at risk early on. This should be complemented by a state-wide policy on assessment to inform and guide students, parents and schools.
- ***Recommendation 3: Foster a more efficient distribution and use of resources, particularly in multi-grade schools.*** Expert learning teams and schemes to share learning resources could be introduced to reinforce the support and mitigate shortages. Groupings of schools, such as the *Centros Escolares*, could be explored to foster economies of scale and ease transitions.
- ***Recommendation 4: Restructure school supervision, support and evaluation systems.*** Most supervisors' administrative tasks could be transferred to existing or new professional administrators to enable them to focus on support, improvement and evaluation of schools. A state-level evaluation agency could facilitate school evaluation and inform policies with a greater consideration of the specific needs of the state.

Policy priority 2: Improve the quality of teachers and school leaders

- ***Recommendation 1: Foster the development and use of standards to clarify the roles and set high expectations for teachers and education leaders.*** The state could put forward nationwide standards for teachers, school principals, supervisors and other education leaders, which should be aligned with the support and evaluation system and widely used.
- ***Recommendation 2: Adjust the provision and raise the quality of the Normales.*** An analysis of the number of teachers needed should result in an adjustment plan to reduce over-provision, select only the best applicants, raise the quality of the faculty and promote research on pedagogical innovation.

- **Recommendation 3: Develop and consolidate a professional development system more responsive to teachers' and schools' needs.** One institution should consolidate all professional development opportunities, which should include a mentoring and probation period for beginners, more school-based training and could have a greater basis on a fully implemented and refined teacher appraisal.
- **Recommendation 4: Better select and prepare current and future school leaders and supervisors.** The selection process should be competitive, commissioned posts should be reviewed and voluntary early retirement schemes could be introduced. New and current leaders should receive specific training.

Policy priority 3: Enhancing access and raising the quality of upper secondary education

- **Recommendation 1: Improve governance mechanisms to ensure that a coherent and high-quality upper secondary education is accessible to all.** A comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the system should feed an improvement strategy and enable the state to take a stronger leadership role in consolidating the system. The Council for Planning and Programming of Upper Secondary Education (CEPPEMS), higher education institutions and the business sector could have a greater role.
- **Recommendation 2: Raise the quality of upper secondary education, focusing on teachers and Bachilleratos Generales, and increase the relevance of vocational programmes.** In addition to continuing support for incorporation into the National System of Upper Secondary Education (SNB), the state should progressively raise the quality bar and support them.
- **Recommendation 3: Promote access to and ensure completion of upper secondary education, particularly among disadvantaged students.** The introduction of early warning systems could facilitate identifying students at risk of dropping out and supporting them with tailored strategies, such as professional counselling; measures to encourage back into education those who have dropped out are needed.

Policy priority 4: Improving infrastructure planning and ensuring the quality of facilities

- **Recommendation 1: Entrust a single body with the overall responsibility for school infrastructure and develop a long-term school infrastructure plan.** Assigning the overall responsibility for school infrastructure to one body, either CAPCEE or another institution, can facilitate better planning, delivery and compliance; particularly when developing a long-term infrastructure plan is crucial to meet present and future education needs.
- **Recommendation 2: Secure adequate and equitable funding for schools.** The *Peso-a-Peso* programme should be a function of the fiscal capacity of municipalities rather than matched amounts. Also, a capital expenditure plan and further measures to increase transparency and limit the impact of parental contributions on equity are necessary.
- **Recommendation 3: Ensure that the design and use of the existing or new school infrastructure fosters student learning.** Engaging with users in the construction process, setting minimum quality standards, and encouraging the development of school master plans and sharing of facilities are avenues for making the most of education spaces for learning purposes.

Improving School Leadership and Evaluation in Mexico: A State-level Perspective from Puebla

Building on the previous OECD report *Improving Education in Mexico: A State-Level Perspective from Puebla*, this report focuses on how Puebla can further strengthen the skills of school leaders and make a greater use of evaluation to foster improvements at all levels. It reviews promising national and state-level initiatives, and provides recommendations and country examples to accelerate the transformation of the Puebla school system.

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Chapter 2: Developing school leadership skills in Puebla

Chapter 3: Using evaluation to foster school improvement in Puebla

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