

Education at a Glance 2006

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OECD Briefing Note for Mexico

Mexico has made major investments in education...

- Between 1995 and 2003, spending on primary and secondary education in [Mexico](#) increased by 49%, the steepest increase in the OECD after Turkey, Greece, Poland, New Zealand, and Ireland. Spending per student increased by 32%, at a somewhat lower rate, because enrolment also rose by 13% (Table B1.5).
- Also at the tertiary level, educational spending increased significantly between 1995 and 2003, by 67% (most of it due to an increase between 2001 and 2002 as spending increased by 22% between 1995 and 2001). However, since tertiary enrolment rose quickly (by 48%), spending per tertiary student only increased by 13% (Table B1.5). This has decreased the large gap between spending per tertiary student and spending per secondary student in [Mexico](#) somewhat, but it is still the 2nd largest gap among OECD countries, spending per students in tertiary education being more than 3 times the level in secondary education (Table B1.1.a).
- Educational spending as a percentage of GDP in [Mexico](#) continues to remain above the OECD average. In 2003, it was 6.8%, above the OECD average of 5.9% (Table B2.1a).
- At 24%, the share of public spending invested in education is the highest among OECD countries and almost twice as high as at the OECD average level (13%). In 1995, the share was still at 22% (Table B4.1).

Despite high levels of spending relative to GDP as well as available public resources, spending per student remains low in absolute terms.

- Spending per primary student in [Mexico](#), at US\$ 1656 (adjusted for differences in Purchasing Power Parities), is still very low and is approximately one third of the OECD average (US \$ 5450). Spending per student in lower secondary education (US\$ 1495) is approximately one quarter of the OECD average of \$US 6560 (Table B1.1a).
- At the upper secondary level spending per student is, at US\$ 2790 significantly higher, but represents only one third of the OECD average level (US\$ 7582).
- Furthermore, at the tertiary level, spending per student is, at US\$ 5774, slightly more than half of spending per student at the OECD average level (US\$ 11254). Although tertiary students are far better off than primary or lower secondary students, spending per tertiary student over the average duration of studies in [Mexico](#) (US\$ 19747, Table B1.3b) is equal or



less than what the United States and Switzerland spend per student in a single year, namely US\$ 24074 and US\$ 25900, respectively (Table B1.1c).

Most of educational spending is tied up in current spending...

- Most of educational spending in [Mexico](#) is tied up in current spending. About 2.8% of spending at primary and secondary levels is for capital spending, leaving little room for improving the educational infrastructure (OECD average 8.2%). The share of capital expenditure has increased at the tertiary level to 5.2% but is still only just over half the OECD average of 10.3% (Table B6.2).
- Moreover, most of current spending at primary and secondary levels goes to the compensation of staff, leaving at the primary level only 6.4% for other current expenditure, such as instructional materials (OECD average 19.8%). Non-salary current expenditure have benefited very little from the significant increases in overall spending on education in recent years (Table B6.3). However, new policy initiatives that were launched recently may well change this balance in the future.

...including high teacher salaries...

- Statutory salaries in [Mexico](#) are low by absolute standards (little more than half the OECD average) but among the highest in the OECD when compared with GDP per capita. The ratios of salary after 15 years of experience to GDP per capita, for [Mexico](#) in primary and in lower secondary education at respectively 1.64 and 2.09, are well above the OECD average of 1.30 and 1.32 (Table D3.1). Moreover, since 1996, teachers in [Mexico](#) have seen the second steepest increase in salaries, with gains for a teacher with 15 years of experience of 34% over the period at the primary level and 40% in lower secondary education (Table D3.3).
- At the primary level, the teaching load of teachers in [Mexico](#), 800 statutory hours per year, is slightly below the OECD average of 805 hours (Table D4.1). By contrast, a lower secondary teacher in [Mexico](#) is required to teach 1047 hours per year, the highest number of statutory teaching hours among OECD countries except the United States (OECD average 704 hours).

...leaving little room to improve student/staff ratios...

- The ratio of students to teaching staff in [Mexico](#) has increased in pre-primary education to 28 students per teacher, as a result of policies to increase participation and to make this level mandatory in 2002, 13 more than the OECD average. A similar difference exists in primary education. In secondary education in [Mexico](#), there are over twice the number of students per teacher compared to the OECD average (Table D2.2). This high ratio is likely to influence the amount of attention devoted to each student as well as the quality of the outcomes. These ratios raise important challenges for teachers, but they also indicate progress in increasing educational participation and thus student numbers.

...or to invest in instructional time or spending on other educational resources.

- Instructional time for students amounts in [Mexico](#) to 800 hours per year for students aged 9-11 years (OECD average of 831 hours) and 1 167 hours for students aged 12-14 years (OECD average of 928 hours) (Table D1.1). Mexico is seeking to address this problem through its reform of secondary schooling.



Mexico has seen limited progress in ensuring that young people leave schools with strong baseline qualifications...

- Only 25% of 25-34-year-old Mexicans have completed a baseline qualification at the upper secondary level, by far the lowest level among OECD countries, where this level of education is now becoming the norm. More worryingly, there has been much less progress in Mexico in raising educational attainment than in most other countries, such that Mexico has fallen behind in relative terms over past generations, from rank 28 among 45-54-year-olds to rank 29 among 35-44 year-olds to rank 30 among 25-34-year-olds. In contrast, over the same period Korea moved from rank 23 to 1 (Table A1.2a).

...and even those who continue up to upper secondary school often show poor results.

- Whereas the great majority of 15-year-old students in OECD countries have achieved at least a basic level of mathematical proficiency (being capable of tasks at PISA level 2), the proportion who lack such sufficient proficiency varies widely: from below 10% in Finland and Korea to above one quarter in Greece or Italy and more than 60% in **Mexico**. This is an indicator of how many students are likely to encounter serious problems in using mathematics in their future lives (Table A4.1). Mexico is seeking to address this problem through its reform of secondary schooling.

More people around the world are completing university courses and other forms of tertiary education than ever before. However, progress has been uneven across countries and some have significantly fallen behind, potentially compromising their future ability to keep up with economic and social progress.

- Almost all OECD countries have seen a rise in the educational attainment levels of their citizens over the past decade, and in some countries the increase has been spectacular. Enrolment in tertiary education, which covers university-level education and high-level vocational programmes, increased between 1995 and 2004 by more than 50% in the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Korea, **Mexico** (52%), Poland, Sweden and Turkey (Table C2.2).
- Despite increases, university-level attainment in **Mexico**, at 16% among 25-34-year-olds and at 8% among 55-64-year-olds, among the lowest levels in the OECD. However, different from secondary education, Mexico has managed to increase its relative standing among OECD countries slightly, from rank 26 among 55-64-year-olds to rank 24 among 25-34-year-olds (Table A1.3a).
- In most OECD countries, employment rates rise with the level of attainment. In Mexico, tertiary education attainment is associated with a 17 percentage point increase in the employment rate (from 65 to 82%) (Table A8.3a).

Education in Mexico can build on a growing foundation in early childhood.

- OECD's thematic review of early childhood education and care has underlined the importance of a strong start for children. In **Mexico**, 45 children under age 4 for every 100 3-4-year-olds now participate in pre-primary education (Table C1.2). Although this is significantly below the OECD average of 66%, it is more than in a fair number of other OECD countries, including Australia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Korea, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland. Noteworthy, spending per child at the pre-primary level is, in **Mexico**, higher than at the primary level (Table B1.1a). Further progress can be expected if three years of pre-primary education will become mandatory in 2008.



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