

Foreword

Countries across the OECD and beyond are implementing reforms to build education systems that combine excellence with equity. They are aiming to go beyond traditional skills and to help students develop a new set of skills for a more challenging, digital and multicultural world. Today, education systems should focus on nurturing new values, self-awareness, sensitivity and a better understanding of the need to build a more human world. They should also empower students with new competencies to be able to tackle change, to develop and use new technologies, and to thrive in a highly interconnected world. At the same time, it is crucial to focus on the development of social, emotional and critical thinking, teamwork, openness, empathy, tolerance and intercultural understanding in order to build democratic and respectful societies. These are some of the complex challenges faced by Mexico and many other countries.

Mexico has one of the largest and most complex education systems in the OECD, with almost 26 million students, 1.2 million teachers and 225 757 schools in basic education only (primary and lower secondary). The national education system, led by the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), must cater to the educational needs of a large and highly diverse population. Fostering better and more equitable educational outcomes that are not associated with students' socio-economic background is crucial to building a productive, fair and cohesive society in Mexico in the future, where almost half of the population (45%) are under 25 years old.

Aware of the potential gains, Mexico has taken important steps to improve the coverage and quality of its education system and is moving from a system that is driven by inputs and numbers towards one based on quality of education and more focused on student learning. To progress further on this path, it is important for the Mexican education system to continue investing efforts in strengthening the delivery of compulsory education in its schools to improve student learning.

This report presents an assessment of the country's recent education reforms in light of international evidence, with analysis on progress made, remaining challenges and possible next steps to achieve the consolidation of a system that delivers educational improvement.

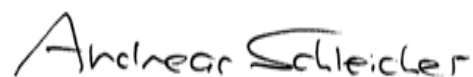
Internationally, education systems require continued policy efforts in areas that are essential for student learning such as: focusing on the need to prioritise equity; providing learning environments that are fit for the 21st century and respond to students' needs; ensuring that schools are run and staffed by high-quality professionals that are well supported; and designing evaluation and assessment frameworks that can support schools and in which policy makers can ensure effective student learning and enhance the quality of education for all. In Mexico, the education system has evolved in this direction by:

- Creating consensus around a countrywide pact for education of quality for all.
- Looking at the future with a set of reforms that focus on 21st century education.

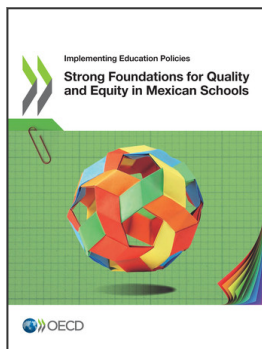
- Focusing on ways to help education professionals raise the quality of their practice.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in the education system.
- Demonstrating the capacity to design national policies at a very large scale.
- Taking decisive steps in the construction of information and data management tools.

While progress has been made, many of the recent reforms in place need time to mature and flexibility to be adjusted as required to ensure schools deliver quality education for all students. In Mexico, like in many other countries, there is a considerable distance between national policymaking and the learning that happens in schools. The SEP has to cater to the individual needs of a large number of schools, students and teachers across the country through its national policymaking. This requires both substantial resources, capacity and support from state authorities, who have an important role to play as operators of the system, as well as from education stakeholders across the country. In complex education systems such as Mexico, “implementation” is not only about executing the policy but also building and fine-tuning it collaboratively.

Serious and well-intentioned policy design has only limited possibilities to succeed if there is no strong engagement from stakeholders (teachers, school leaders, students, parents, teacher unions and organisations of the civil society), if public administration does not make the adjustments needed to correct the asymmetries between the design and the implementation of policies and does not secure enough resources for these processes. We hope this OECD report supports Mexico in this endeavour.



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