

# Improving Schools

## STRATEGIES FOR ACTION IN MEXICO

### *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*





**Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico** aims to help authorities in Mexico and other OECD countries to strengthen their education systems. It focuses on policies to improve teaching, school management and leadership across schools so as to improve children's attainment in basic education. The report develops a comparative framework of the key policy levers for successful schools and school systems and adapts it to the context and reality of Mexico.

Placing **Mexican schools and students' success at the centre of education policy making**, fifteen recommendations constitute an action-oriented policy agenda for schools, directors and teachers to receive better support to accomplish their tasks in Mexico. The report suggests first developing a long term education strategy with a small number of clear, high priority, measurable goals focused on improving student attainment, reducing drop-out rates, ensuring timely graduation (*egreso oportuno*) and reducing inequalities across the education system. It then proposes a set of recommendations that concentrate on consolidating a quality teaching profession and on improving school effectiveness through leadership, management and social participation:

- Enhancing the role of teachers requires setting clear standards of practice; ensuring high quality initial teacher preparation (ITP) programmes; attracting better candidates; professionalising the recruitment, selection and evaluation of teachers; and linking teachers and their professional development more directly to schools' needs.
- Strengthening leadership and management requires setting clear school director standards; providing training; professionalising recruitment; supporting school autonomy; and ensuring social participation. Schools also need to be better supported with stable sources of funding that respond to their specific needs.

The strategy presented in this report has been developed by the OECD *Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy in Mexico*, composed by well known international education experts<sup>1</sup>. The report has been written after careful analysis of: a) the current situation and key challenges faced in Mexico; b) empirical research and international best practice knowledge that can be contextualised for Mexico; and c) continuous exchanges with Mexican education stakeholders, through a series of workshops, and review visits international and to Mexico throughout 2009-2010. Because there is no single model of education reform that can serve to guide all of the reform efforts in Mexico, the recommendations draw on experiences from over 20 countries, focusing not only on *what* policy changes may be introduced but also on *how* policy reforms may be effective, given local conditions, constraints and opportunities facing education stakeholders at different levels of the system. A parallel publication concentrates on *Establishing a Framework for Evaluation and Teacher Incentives: Considerations for Mexico*.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS IN EDUCATION REFORM

During the last ten years, international comparisons of the performance of national education systems have become increasingly prominent. Data show that countries can substantially improve educational outcomes in a relatively short period of time – from a few years to a single generation. At the same time, there is compelling evidence that quality and equity are not mutually exclusive and that it is possible for nearly all students to achieve excellent results.

Making significant improvements to system-wide educational outcomes is a complex task that requires a multi-faceted approach. No single element may be sufficient for progress, but most are necessary. At the core are policies that focus on improving teaching and learning, including curriculum, teaching skills, leadership and assessment. At the same time, policy design must take into account the context and possibilities for implementation; there is no point in adopting policies that cannot realistically be put into place.

The analysis of high performing education systems shows that there are some core assumptions that guide governments towards real and lasting improvements. These can be grouped as follows:

- Clear goals, related to student outcomes, that focus not only on quality but also on equity;
- A strong focus on recruiting, developing and retaining teachers and leaders of excellence in the system;
- Institutions and infrastructure to support educational improvement;
- Accountability and reporting systems that support the goals and provide professional and objective information on outcomes; and
- Paying attention to the work of individual schools, which is where teaching and learning take place.

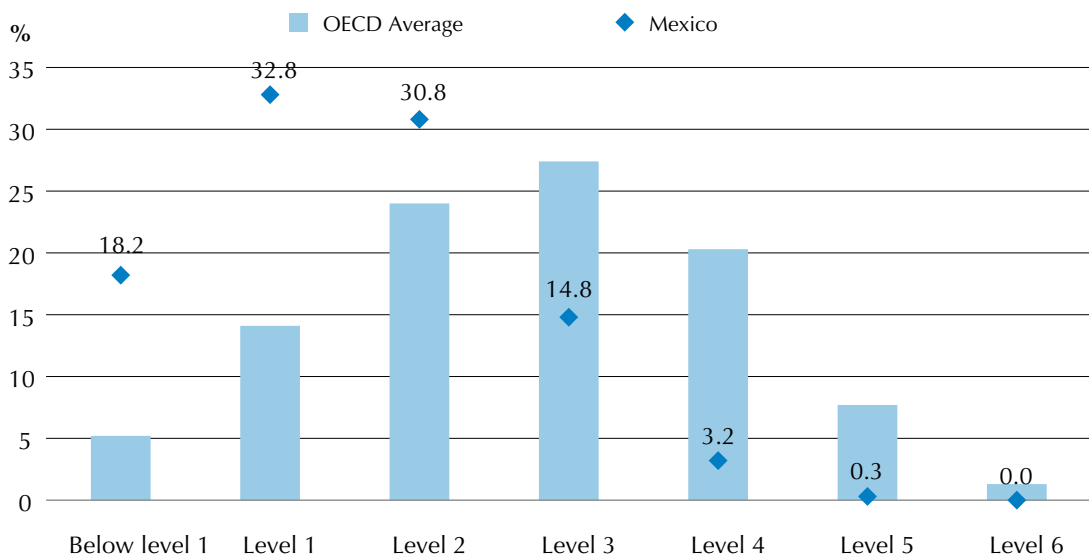
To address these issues is a challenge in any country. Improvements across an entire education system can only come with strong, consistent political support and leadership, sustained over time. It requires years, but examples from successful countries show that it can be done.

### WORKING TOWARDS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT IN MEXICO

Improving the quality of education is a political and social priority in Mexico. The development of Mexico's human and social capital is necessary for improving the living conditions of its population and for sustained social and economic progress. In addition, higher poverty rates, high inequality and more criminal activity are making the development of good quality and equitable basic public education even more of a priority.

Figure 1

#### Performance of 15-year-old students in Mexico compared with the OECD average, PISA 2006 (science)



Source: OECD (2007), *PISA 2006 Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World, Volume 2*, OECD, Paris, Table 2.1a.

While there has been educational improvement and an increased focus on education policy in recent years, Mexico will need to continue to do this in a more systematic, consistent and efficient manner. This report identifies some of the key structural challenges:

- A wide range of reforms in the past 20 years have led to improvements in enrolment and to strengthening the quality of education; yet a high proportion of young people are not in school, while student achievement is not sufficient to provide the skills Mexico needs, now and in the future. In Mexico, one in two 15-year-olds did not reach the baseline level 2 in PISA, while the OECD average was 19.2% in 2006 (Figure 1).
- Reform processes have not yet ensured appropriate capacity and distribution of responsibilities across the decentralised system, with unfinished decentralisation and low school autonomy.
- Structural conditions and processes do not favour schools being at the centre of education policies: school days are short, with insufficient effective teaching time, and teaching and leadership quality and support are weak in many schools.
- Schools operate with sparse resources that need to be distributed more effectively across schools. Resources are allocated mostly to staff compensation and schools receive funding through a large number of programmes. One of Mexico's challenges is to optimise the distribution of resources, and to ensure that funding structures and programmes are designed to be used efficiently for schools.
- The complexity of the interaction between different actors within the Mexican education system (for example government at the national, state and local levels, the teachers' union and civil society) has grown. This requires greater capacity and building more institutionalised ways to ensure discussions and consensus-building.

**Mexico needs to develop a long-term education strategy** to ensure a higher level of skills and knowledge to facilitate economic growth and better living conditions for Mexicans. One of the first conditions should be to establish a small number of clear, high priority and measurable goals focused on improving student attainment, reducing drop-out rates, ensuring timely graduation (*egreso oportuno*) and reducing inequalities across the education system. A set of guiding conditions can ensure progress in developing this strategy:

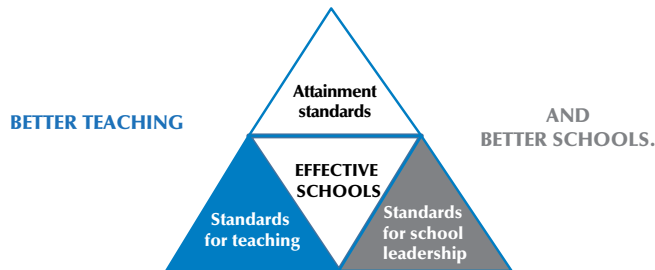
- To provide venues for ongoing dialogue and communication among all relevant stakeholders;
- To ensure the alignment of actors and policies through coordination and distribution of responsibilities between the national, regional and local level, and the availability of resources and their efficient use to reach schools. This may also require revising the structures that will be delivering reforms;
- To match the focus on educating, training, developing and supporting the educator workforce with policy decisions and resources;
- To address the development of national, regional and local capacity building for better school management;
- To continue developing reliable sources of evaluation and improvement, such as ENLACE, EXCALE, PISA and also assessments at the state level.

The key initial point of reform is the need to place Mexican schools and students at the centre of education policy making. Improving Mexican schools will require a rethink of the governance of the system and the roles of school leaders, school supervisors and teachers, to enable them to focus on supporting all children and young people to achieve their full learning potential. The following fifteen recommendations define an action-oriented strategy for schools, directors and teachers to receive better support to improve schools and students results. Figure 2 provides a summary of these recommendations.

Figure 2

### An action-oriented strategy for teacher policy, school leadership and management in Mexico

#### RAISE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ...



1. Define effective teaching
2. Attract the best recruits
3. Strengthen initial teacher preparation
4. Improve initial teacher assessment
5. Open all posts to competition
6. Create induction/probation periods
7. Improve professional development
8. Evaluate to help improve
9. Define effective school leadership
10. Professionalise training and appointment of directors
11. Build instructional leadership capacity in and across schools
12. Enhance school autonomy
13. Ensure funding for all schools
14. Strengthen social participation
15. Create an Implementation Working Committee

### TEACHER CAREER PATHS: CONSOLIDATE A QUALITY PROFESSION

The single most important policy reform Mexico can make to improve education outcomes for its young people is to build a powerful system to recruit, prepare, evaluate and develop the best teachers for its schools. Eight recommendations for better teaching suggest a comprehensive strategy both to improve the conditions under which many teachers work and to attract, prepare and develop a higher quality teaching force. They follow a teacher's trajectory from initial training through to permanent status as a full professional, when evaluation and professional development become important elements.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Produce and implement a coherent, aligned set of standards for teachers**

The first step in the process should be to develop and implement a clear set of coherent, aligned teaching standards that define what good teaching looks like, and specify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that all teacher candidates should be able to demonstrate before being licensed to teach.

The current proposal of teaching standards developed by the Ministry of Education (SEP) seems a good start, but still needs to be improved. Some of the main challenges include: establishing authentic consultation mechanisms to engage teachers in the development of these standards; working for more effective and transparent collaboration within the different SEP units concerned with the future use of the standards; and creating useful and applicable standards.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Attract better candidates and raise the bar for entry into the teaching profession, especially at the Teachers' Colleges (Normales)**

In order to improve teaching, Mexico needs better teacher candidates. Therefore initial teacher preparation (ITP) institutions, and in particular Teachers' Colleges (*Normales*), need to improve the calibre of applicants who want to become teachers. A stronger student force is key to making teaching a more respected profession and ultimately building support for improving the working conditions of teachers. One way to achieve this is to raise the bar for entry into ITP programmes and to establish a national entrance screening exam and other assessment tools.

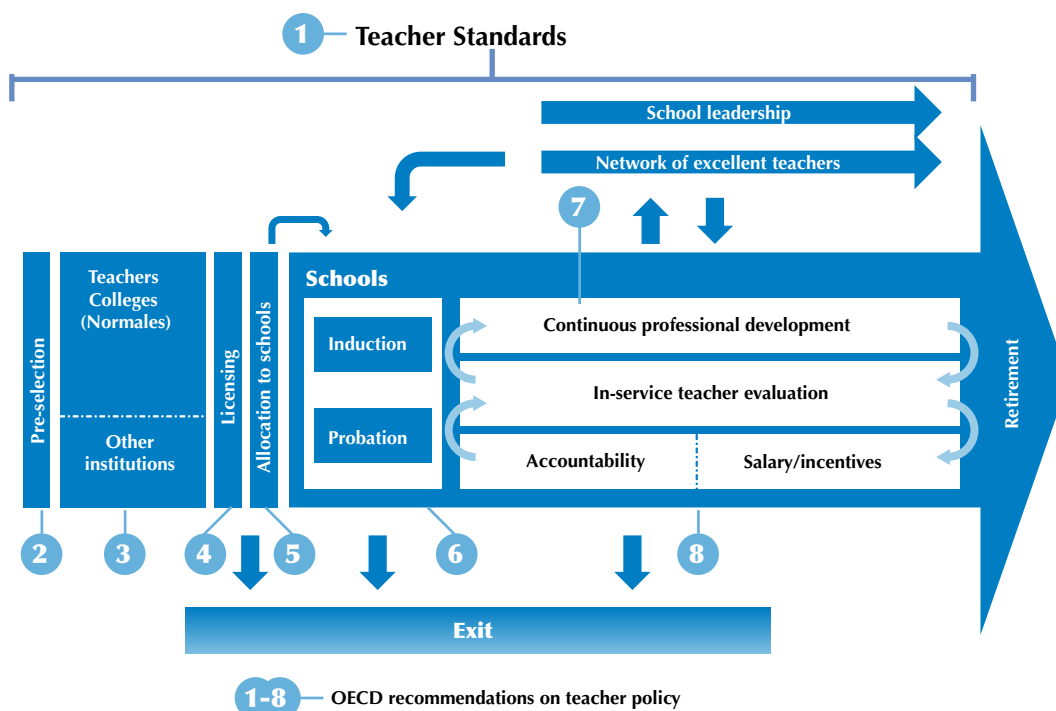
**RECOMMENDATION 3: Create a reliable accreditation system for all initial teacher preparation (ITP) institutions; develop specific standards for those who teach teachers and put in place strong quality assurance mechanisms**

To attract and retain talented young people, the quality of the ITP institutions needs to be improved. Many Mexican students leave ITP without sufficient skills and knowledge to become good teachers and many Teachers' Colleges (*Normales*) suffer from weak connections with other parts of the education sector, in particular with schools and universities.

Therefore a set of rigorous accreditation standards that all Teachers' Colleges (*Normales*) and other ITP institutions must be expected to meet should be put in place. Accreditation standards for ITP should address: the qualifications of faculty members; the processes for initial appointment, evaluation and promotion; the

Figure 3

**A professional career path for teachers of basic education**



quality of the curriculum and its alignment with the curriculum of the schools; and the mechanisms to ensure high quality placements for student teaching. The accreditation standards should also take into account the proportion of graduates from the institutions that pass the National Teacher Examination. The accreditation system should be run transparently and with a clear governance structure. Every institution should be reviewed cyclically beginning with the smallest schools. Those that are weak should be given support to improve. Those that ultimately cannot meet accreditation standards should be merged or closed, since keeping them open is an inefficient use of resources and unfair to those young people who want to become quality professional teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: *Revise, improve and expand the processes for assessing the suitability of teacher candidates and in-service teachers to teach (teacher licensing)***

At present, it will be efficient to continue to employ the National Teacher Examination as a licensing scheme to help make decisions about the suitability of teachers already working (defined as in-service teachers) applying for permanent positions, second teaching posts (*doble plaza*); and newly qualified teachers for appointment as teachers. However, Mexico needs to revise, improve and expand this licensing process in order to ensure that all potential entrants to the teaching profession meet minimum standards, particularly in relation to their practical teaching skills. This would mean continuing to use an improved version of the examination to assess the knowledge of all newly certified prospective teachers. In particular, the examination should progress towards systems based on standards rather than norm-referenced. In parallel, Mexico needs to progress towards more performance-based means of assessing the knowledge and capabilities of teachers. The interviews, portfolios and psychometric examinations already requested or being explored in some states can be adequate complementary tools, if quality and transparency are assured.

The Steering Group suggests introducing a minimum level in the exam that all candidate teachers should reach, independently of the availability of teaching posts. Applicants who do not successfully complete the examination but who score above a minimum level should have the opportunity to undertake additional training before retaking the examination. Beginning teachers who do not get a minimum score in the examination several times should no longer be eligible to become teachers, and in-service (non-permanent) teachers who do not reach a minimum level several times should no longer be eligible for a permanent post. Those applying for a second teaching post who do not obtain the minimum score in the examination should not obtain the second post, and should enter into a carefully designed support and evaluation scheme.

In the short term, governance and operation of the Independent Federalist Evaluation Unit (*Organismo de Evaluación Independiente con Carácter Federalista*, OEIF), the unit in charge of defining the examination, should be revised. It is important to separate technical from political tasks. If Mexico wants to consolidate a professional teacher licensing mechanism it needs to continue working towards establishing an efficient, transparent and fair permanent governance structure of a technical nature, rather than political, focused on teaching quality.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: *Progressively open all teaching posts to competition, and revise the process of initial appointment to teaching posts to allow more selection choice for both candidates and schools***

All teaching posts should progressively be opened to competition; this includes new and vacant posts. The new system being applied has brought greater transparency and fairness, but it has a number of limitations, among them that less than 20% of posts have been open for transparent competition (through the National Teacher Examination); some candidates who did not get the minimum score the examination nevertheless still obtained a – non permanent – teaching post; and lack of transparency remains with regard to the precise mechanisms for appointing teachers to schools in some states. The current system of allocating teachers to schools, linked to the results of the teacher examination, should also be improved to achieve a better match between schools and teachers.



**RECOMMENDATION 6: *Establish a probationary period for beginning teachers with intensive mentoring and support, followed by a performance evaluation before appointment to a permanent post. Create a cadre of excellent mentor teachers to provide such support***

Implementing a formal induction period with substantial support for all beginning teachers can ensure that they have ready access to experienced, accomplished professionals to guide their on-the-job learning. In parallel, a meaningful probation period coupled with an effective final evaluation should also be created. In this period beginning teachers are expected to demonstrate in practice that they are capable of effectively facilitating student learning and successfully undertaking other aspects of their teacher role. All teachers should complete the probation period to a satisfactory standard before obtaining a permanent post.

Creating and training a cadre of mentor teachers is not only key to putting in place a fair system for supporting and evaluating probationary teachers, it can also be a powerful strategy for recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers and extending their influence to other schools and districts. Mexico can redirect part of the professional development opportunities and resources to beginning teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: *Build a more relevant system of professional development that combines school-based development options with the course-based options in the National Training Catalogue***

There is general agreement on the need to strengthen teachers' professional development. The current strategies at national and state levels for providing professional development for teachers need to be revised by: 1) completing the revision of the National Training Catalogue to ensure it is relevant to teacher pedagogical and curricular practices; 2) developing approaches for schools and their teachers to define and formalise the specific professional development they need for their schools; and 3) ensuring that these additional professional development programmes are supported and accredited as part of teachers' careers (in the teacher career ladder *-Carrera Magisterial-* for example) and linked to any formal evaluation system (see below). This also implies rethinking how time and resources can be reorganised to free teachers so they can undertake these options.

A more relevant system needs to include more school(s)-based professional development, which is the most efficient way to provide improved teaching. It should be a priority to create space for more school-based activities and to provide schools with more resources, capacity or autonomy to organise relevant training activities. Using the network of supervisors and technical pedagogical assistants (ATP) and providing additional guidance to schools and directors on how to understand needs and find the appropriate training is key.

**RECOMMENDATION 8: *Develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system focused on improving teaching***

Mexico needs to develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system that gradually evolves from a purely formative system that identifies professional development needs to one that also combines summative aspects (for purposes of career advancement, award performance rewards or to establish sanctions for underperforming teachers). Its purpose should be to provide feedback and guide teachers to improve their practice in order to improve student learning. The formative evaluation component should be well established first, accepted and valued by teachers before introducing consequences of significance to individual teachers' conditions.

The evaluation should be based on standards of teaching practice. It is central to the quality of the evaluation process for evaluators to be well selected and adequately trained. A fundamental aspect of teacher evaluation is its effect on improving teaching practices. For this to occur, it is necessary to develop a complex but indispensable school-based professional development system, such as the one described in recommendation 7, which can support the in-service training processes needed for teachers to reach the higher levels in the domains tested in the evaluation.

## **IMPROVE SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

Together with teaching, the quality of school leadership and management is key in raising the attainment of students. But instructional leadership and appropriate support to schools is not a prominent feature of Mexican schools. Directors do not have appropriate training, development, incentives and support to focus on improving the quality of instruction and schools' results, and on strengthening the school's links to the community. The following six recommendations suggest a strategy for schools in Mexico to provide adequate learning and teaching environments for students and teachers. They focus on building a leadership profession, reducing inequities between schools serving richer and poorer communities, simplifying funding arrangements, and providing greater accountability and responsiveness to the community.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9: *Develop a framework of occupational standards for school leadership and management focused on improving school outcomes***

School directors in Mexico perform their tasks within an improvised structure that does not provide them with the required preparation, development opportunities and support for their schools. A clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders is needed to ensure a common understanding of what it means to be a school leader. It should be based on the roles that have the greatest impact on the quality of teaching and learning, focused on supporting, evaluating and working with teachers in doing their job and challenging underperformance. It should take into consideration how much autonomy they have to make decisions and adopt a strategic vision of how the Mexican school system should evolve.

The process of defining a set of standards for directors involves different stages. First, it is important that Mexico reach a shared perspective on what is the core purpose of a director. Next, this core purpose needs to be translated into core areas of competence, and then be made into clear actionable statements for directors. There has been some work on developing standards for school directors and completion of this work should be an urgent, short-term objective. The key is to agree on – at least – a preliminary leadership framework quickly, put it in place and accompany it with feedback mechanisms. These will help to gradually adapt the framework through its socialisation, so that it corresponds to the schools' and teachers' needs and creates consensus.

### **RECOMMENDATION 10: *Professionalise the training, selection and recruitment of school leaders based on the leadership standards***

The standards will provide an important guide to building leadership capacity. This means defining school leadership as distinct from management, identifying teachers with leadership potential, providing leadership opportunities, training leaders and ensuring that the teachers who become directors have demonstrated their leadership knowledge and competence. Mexico also needs to decide where to invest more: in initial director training or in continuing training of its current school directors.

Leadership development needs to be seen as a continuum: 1) encouraging leadership initial training; 2) organising induction programmes; and 3) ensuring in-service training to cover needs and context. School leadership development and training programmes usually involve both *on-the-job* – with a mentor – and *off-the-job* training to share good practice and technical support. A key issue is to ensure funding for training for directors that can be recognised as part of their professional development in the teacher career ladder (*Carrera Magisterial*) or the vertical teacher progression programme (*Escalafón*). The objectives should be to ensure coherence of provision by different institutions, as well as appropriate variety and the highest possible quality and relevance of the training options.

Appointments for directors should, where possible, be made from a shortlist of candidates, all of whom qualified in terms of meeting the standards for school leadership. There should be objective procedures to find suitable candidates, which take account of tests, portfolios and their track record, to ensure that each school is led by a properly qualified and trained director. Where there is a vacancy, an appointment panel that includes representatives of parents or the school council should be convened to decide which candidate will be best for the school and its needs.

**RECOMMENDATION 11: *Build instructional leadership and teaching capacity within schools and groups of schools, encouraging schools to work together in partnerships or groups***

Mexican schools generally work as independent units and therefore many have only limited capacity to undertake high quality school-based professional development, among other management tasks. Schools where good and high quality practice exists need to share with schools who have limited capacity for self-improvement. Schools should be able to build partnerships with other schools so as to pool the expertise of their teachers, ATPs and directors. Examples of ways in which the most talented teachers and leaders in schools can have the greatest effect include: identifying a leading teacher in each “core” subject and allowing them time to work with teachers in other schools; collective local training for teachers; shared planning and evaluation with the aim of improving teaching; or grouping schools in formal partnerships, with an executive director to lead each group cluster and be responsible and accountable for its improvement and performance.

The creation of clusters, partnerships and other forms of school-to-school collaboration is needed. This broader range of infrastructure – known as the “infrastructure of reform” – can also include the operation of some schools as special centres of teacher development, training and consultation. Establishing a National Programme of Leadership could contribute to regulating the supply of courses for school leaders and supervisors. This programme could be managed by a working group in cooperation with universities, the National Pedagogic University (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, UPN) and its state units and some *Normales*, to avoid creating new structures.

**RECOMMENDATION 12: *Enhance school autonomy and encourage innovation***

Directors need to be given the opportunity to exercise their leadership skills and to participate in the key decisions that take place at their school, such as hiring or dismissing teachers. If the degree of autonomy in a school is low and directors cannot participate in the key decisions that affect them, it will be difficult to render them accountable or to support their professional development. Decision structures that are adapted to schools’ contexts can have a positive impact on their achievement. However, gradual steps towards greater autonomy should be aligned with strategies for capacity-building in schools, according to their specific contexts.

At the local level, it is important to be clear where responsibility and accountability lie. Normally the centre for delegation of responsibility and resources is the individual school, and this implies providing the training and resources for the school to act accordingly. Resources should be allocated directly to schools, along with a greater degree of managerial freedom for the school director. This should be accompanied by sufficient support, advice and monitoring provided by the state and a supportive structure within which schools operate (such as intermediate-level support and governance arrangements), which would lie at a level between the state and schools or groups of schools. Greater autonomy, financial delegation and local management can be explored through research and pilot projects involving a small number of municipalities, schools and groups of schools.

**RECOMMENDATION 13: Reduce inequities in school funding and rationalise the programmes to achieve a flexible programme that is adaptable to schools' needs**

In practice, schools have virtually no autonomy and no funds to allocate, and there are differences between the resources available to schools in rich and poor communities. Distribution of resources should be more equity-based, and should avoid imposing unaffordable bureaucratic burdens on schools. It is desirable to reduce and simplify the many programmes, either to a single funding stream or, in the shorter term, to groups of programmes that are needed for different types of schools. Among the solutions to explore are:

- To continue with the development of programmes, allowing schools to opt for those that are most suitable for them, and providing them with intermediary support and guidance to help them choose and follow through on administrative issues.
- To rationalise and simplify the programmes to one or two that are flexible enough for schools to be able to choose their specific focus. This can be done successfully when the leadership and school management is well prepared and has the support to make the choices and managerial decisions required to manage the school. The Schools of Quality Programme (PEC) has already laid the groundwork for one programme that aims to achieve greater school autonomy and more involvement of parents and school councils.
- To work towards the objective of linking funding to the number and ages of pupils rather than programmes, while providing safeguards for small and challenging schools. This has the greatest potential to begin to reduce economic inequities in the provision of education.

**RECOMMENDATION 14: Strengthen social participation by giving school councils greater responsibilities in relation to the school and the school greater responsibilities in relation to the community**

School councils can be an important asset to improve school quality, but merely creating them will not result in effective social partnerships. Social participation can be a key instrument to help school directors, through effective mechanisms of distributive leadership. A well prepared and advised school council can significantly help the school director to articulate more effectively what happens in the classroom, the school and the community. Most importantly, school councils need to have real power over things that matter, such as the selection of school staff and the school director, resources, curriculum and school organisation arrangements. To improve social participation, Mexico first needs to strengthen its participative culture and training for this.

Other elements that will be needed are information, data and transparency in their working. The benefits of effective social participation go beyond the school itself. School councils can turn out to be effective “schools of citizenship”, promoting more informed and prepared citizens. This learning of democracy and accountability in school practices could also be useful to develop further engagement in finding solutions to systemic challenges faced at the community, state and national levels.

**GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION**

The fourteen recommendations presented above design an action-oriented policy agenda for schools, directors and teachers to receive better support to accomplish their tasks in Mexico. To ensure that these recommendations complete the transition from OECD to Mexico it is necessary that a national group of stakeholders reflects on and takes ownership and adapts them. Experience from international organisations providing support for policy implementation shows that transfer of knowledge and strategic management capacity will be more effective when there is collaboration and engagement from local stakeholders.

Before offering more specific suggestions on organising for implementation, the following can be kept in mind for planning:

1. These recommendations are interconnected and derive from a systemic view of what Mexico needs to do to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the country.
2. It is critical to engage state leaders as partners in every stage of the reform process. One of the advantages of a federal system is the opportunity it offers for different states to take the lead on various aspects of these recommendations, and to build mechanisms for states to learn from one another rather than each having to start from the beginning.
3. It is essential to engage key players as full partners in implementing these recommendations. The recommendations are consistent with the goals outlined in the National Educational Sector Plan for 2007-2012 and the Alliance for Quality Education signed between the Government and the National Education Trade Union in 2008. The Ministry and all education stakeholders have a stake in creating a much stronger professional teaching culture in Mexico.
4. Making the best use of current initiatives can provide extra leverage for change. In particular, the OECD believes that a number of the recommendations align with current reforms (for example the Schools of Quality Programme).

**RECOMMENDATIONS 15: Create an Implementation Working Committee and look for broader support from different sectors of society**

The OECD suggests the creation of an Implementation Working Committee in Mexico for knowledge transfer, to study viability, further contextualisation if needed and to provide guidance to the Ministry of Education (SEP) on potential implementation of the OECD recommendations. This committee should be composed of relevant policy makers from SEP, highly respected members from academia, representatives from teachers and civil society. Similar structures can be created in those states that are willing to pursue the OECD recommendations. Feedback mechanisms should be set up to guarantee an optimal coordination of action and priorities between these actors.

The main task of the Working Committee should be to develop a specific implementation plan, considering the priorities and already existing initiatives in Mexico, including the work of the states, those related to the National Educational Sector Plan, the *Alliance* and the agenda of the National Education Council (CONAEDU) composed of State Ministers of Education. The Steering Group recommends that the Ministry empowers the Working Committee to establish work groups, for example in the following initial areas:

1. Standards for a) teaching and b) school and system leadership
2. The Teachers' Colleges (*Normales*) and other initial teacher preparation (ITP) institutions
3. Teacher development and evaluation
4. School directors and mentor teachers
5. School financing, autonomy, school partnerships and social participation.

Education reform is too important to the future of Mexico to be left to educators alone. The OECD Steering Group therefore urges the creation of a broader “guiding coalition” of top political, corporate, university and civil society leaders that will step forward and take responsibility for championing these reforms in the public arena, advocating for adequate and equitable funding, and holding key education stakeholders accountable for results.

Without a highly skilled and motivated workforce of teachers and school leaders capable of dramatically improving outcomes for Mexico's young people, the nation's ability to increase economic opportunity and

social mobility will be severely compromised. Failure to invest in the comprehensive reforms proposed here in teacher policy and school leadership would, in the long run, be much more costly to Mexico's future than the investments recommended now.

#### **Activity:**

This report is the result of increasing efforts by the OECD to support education reforms across OECD and partner countries. More specifically, an agreement between the OECD and the Mexican Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*) was established to support the design and implementation of education policy reforms to improve the quality and equity of the education system in Mexico (2008-2010). Support was requested specifically in the areas of teacher career paths, school management, leadership and social participation. Additional reports and information is available on the activity website: [www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa](http://www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa).

#### **Methodology:**

A specific methodology has been designed to promote effective policy design and implementation. Three types of contributions include comparative analysis, communications (workshops, conferences and country visits) and recommendations (presented in this report), delivered by the OECD Mexico Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy. The OECD-Harvard Seminar for Leaders in Education Reform was also part of the programme. It combined an active training programme with country visits to Chile and Ontario, Canada for high level policy makers.

#### **Group of experts:**

This report has been prepared by the OECD Steering Group on School Leadership and Teacher Policies in Mexico, a group of senior representatives of the international education community and OECD analysts: **Inés Aguerrondo** – Consultant to UNESCO. **Cristián Cox** – Head of the Curriculum and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education of Chile. **Ulf Fredriksson** – Senior Lecturer in Education at Mid Sweden University. **Ben Levin** – Professor and Research Chair, University of Toronto and Former Deputy Minister of Education, Ontario, Canada. **Peter Matthews** – Education Consultant and Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. **Sylvia Schmelkes** – Director of the Research Institute for the Development of Education at Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico. **Robert Schwartz** – Academic Dean and Bloomberg Professor of Practice at Harvard Graduate School of Education. **Margarita Zorilla** – Head, National Institute of Evaluation, Mexico. **Beatriz Pont** – OECD Senior Analyst and Project Manager. **Francisco Benavides** – OECD Policy Analyst. **Diana Toledo Figueroa** – OECD Policy Analyst. **Andrew Hobson** – Associate Professor in the Centre for Research in Schools and Communities. **Hunter N. Moorman** – Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of the Foxfire Fund, Inc, and a member of the Middlesex School Alumni Association Board of Directors

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#### **For additional information to this publication please contact:**

Beatriz Pont, Project Manager, [beatriz.pont@oecd.org](mailto:beatriz.pont@oecd.org), Tel: +33 1 45 24 18 24

#### **Related readings:**

*Evaluating and Rewarding the Quality of Teachers: International Practices* (OECD, 2009)

*Establishing a Framework for Evaluation and Teacher Incentives: Considerations for Mexico* (OECD, 2010)

### NOTE

1. It is part of the OECD-Mexico Agreement to Improve the Quality of Mexican Schools signed between the OECD and the Mexican Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP).

# ANNEX 1

## List of recommendations from the OECD Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy for Mexico

Teacher Career Paths (Chapter 3)	1	<b>Define effective teaching:</b> Produce and implement a coherent, aligned set of standards for teachers
	2	<b>Attract best recruits:</b> Attract better candidates and raise the bar for entry into the teaching profession, especially at the Teachers' Colleges ( <i>Normales</i> )
	3	<b>Strengthen initial teacher preparation:</b> Create a reliable accreditation system for all initial teacher preparation (ITP) institutions, develop specific standards for those who teach teachers and put in place strong quality assurance mechanisms
	4	<b>Improve assessment:</b> Revise, improve and expand the processes for assessing the suitability of teacher candidates and in-service teachers to teach (teacher licensing)
	5	<b>Open all teaching posts to competition:</b> Progressively open all teaching posts to competition, and revise the process of initial appointment to teaching posts to allow more selection choice for both candidates and schools
	6	<b>Create induction/probation periods:</b> Establish a probationary period for beginning teachers with intensive mentoring and support, followed by a performance evaluation before appointment to a permanent post. Create a cadre of excellent mentor teachers to provide such support
	7	<b>Improve professional development:</b> Build a more relevant system of professional development that combines school-based development options with the course-based options in the National Training Catalogue
	8	<b>Evaluate to help improve:</b> Develop and implement a rigorous teacher evaluation system focused on improving teaching
School Leadership, Management and Social Participation (Chapter 4)	9	<b>Define effective school leadership:</b> Develop a framework of occupational standards for school leadership and management focused on improving school outcomes
	10	<b>Professionalise training and appointment of directors:</b> Professionalise the training, selection and recruitment of school leaders based on the leadership standards
	11	<b>Build instructional leadership capacity in and across schools:</b> Build instructional leadership and teaching capacity within schools and groups of schools, encouraging schools to work together in partnerships or groups
	12	<b>Enhance school autonomy:</b> Enhance school autonomy and encourage innovation
	13	<b>Ensure funding for all schools:</b> Reduce inequities in school funding and rationalise the programmes to achieve a flexible programme that is adaptable to schools' needs
	14	<b>Strengthen social participation:</b> Strengthen social participation by giving school councils greater responsibilities in relation to the school and the school greater responsibilities in relation to the community
Implementation (Chapter 5)	15	<b>Create an Implementation Working Committee:</b> Create an Implementation Working Committee and look for broader support from different sectors of society

Source: OECD (2010), *Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico*, OECD, Paris.

