

# Foreword

Education is fundamental to the future of any country, to provide equal opportunities for our citizens and to the well-being of our societies as a whole. Better and more diversified skills contribute to strengthening economic growth, development and social cohesion. Thus, it is of central importance for governments to look for the right mix of policies to improve the quality and equity of their public education systems. This report proposes an education reform strategy for Mexico based on comparative analysis of the key policy levers for successful schools and school systems that can also be used to support policy development across OECD and partner countries.

In Mexico as in many other countries the need for education reform has been reinforced by high unemployment and lower participation rates following the financial and economic crisis. Education reform, although ongoing over the past decades, has now become a particular policy priority both in economic and in social terms.

*Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico* aims to reform and improve quality and equity aspects in the education system by putting schools at the centre of education policy. The report provides a diagnosis of the Mexican situation and the underlying key challenges by comparing it with OECD and partner countries. Improving student attainment, reducing drop-out rates (66% of young people aged 15-19 are not in school) and avoiding inequalities are key to the country's social and economic progress. In Mexico, structural conditions and processes do not favour schools being at the centre of education policies. School days are short, effective teaching time is insufficient, and there is a need to ensure quality teaching and leadership in schools. A complex, decentralised education system requires focus on a small number of clear, high priority, measurable goals to improve students outcomes.

The report proposes a comprehensive school strategy for Mexico. It includes recommendations to improve the quality and the potential of teachers through clear national standards and a strengthened focus on training and professional development, recruitment and evaluation processes. It also makes recommendations to improve school effectiveness through school management and leadership by setting national standards, school autonomy, stable and adequate funding and professional hiring and training procedures.

*Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico* is part of OECD's efforts to support reform across OECD and partner countries and follows our agreement with the Mexican Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*) to improve the quality and equity of the education system in Mexico (2008-2010).

The document has been prepared by the members of the OECD Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy in Mexico, a selected group of experts and OECD analysts, chaired by Sylvia Schmelkes. The authors include Inés Aguerrondo, Francisco Benavides, Cristian Cox, Ulf Fredriksson, Andrew Hobson, Ben Levin, Peter Matthews, Hunter Moorman, Beatriz Pont, Sylvia Schmelkes, Robert Schwartz, Diana Toledo Figueroa and Margarita Zorrilla with assistance from Elvira Berrueta-Imaz. Caroline McLaughlin edited the report.

I hope this analysis will be a useful reference for Mexico and other OECD member and partner countries in their quest to improve student outcomes for a better and more equitable future.



**Angel Gurría**  
Secretary-General, OECD

# Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a two-year process of analysis of Mexico's context, policies and relevant international best practices in teaching and school leadership and management policies. This has involved not only analytical reports and working papers but also workshops, seminars, meetings, review visits and consultations with many different experts and stakeholders across Mexico and internationally. More specifically, the report has benefited from analysis and discussions with many Mexican actors during different events:

- A set of review visits by the members of the OECD-Mexico Steering Group and OECD in Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Guanajuato, Mexico Federal District, Nuevo León and Puebla between March 2009 and July 2010;
- Eight OECD-*Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) workshops and several working sessions in Mexico between December 2008 and November 2010;
- The OECD-Harvard Seminar for Leaders in Education reform held in Chile, Ontario (Canada) and Mexico.

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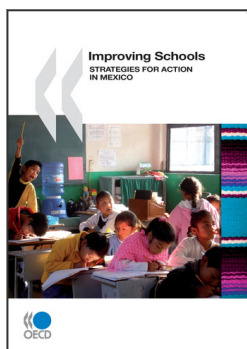
We are also grateful to all those Mexican policy makers and stakeholders who took the time to participate and engage in discussions with the OECD Mexico Steering Group on School Management and Teacher Policy in the different activities and consultation processes mentioned above. We have had the opportunity to meet and consult with representatives from SEP and from many states, and key stakeholders such as representatives from legislators, the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), civil society organisations, directors, teachers, students, parents and academics across Mexico. These discussions and contributions have allowed us to develop and refine the strategy presented in this report and adapt it, as much as possible, to the reality of Mexico. We are extremely grateful to them for their time, help, advice, engagement and contributions.

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Information on all the events and relevant reports produced under the OECD-Mexico Agreement to Improve the Quality of Education in Schools in Mexico can be found on the website: [www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa](http://www.oecd.org/edu/calidadeducativa).



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