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National Report of Mexico

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Bibliography

Editorial note

UNESCO, in the “Suggestions for preparation: 2004 Series” of the *National Report on the Development of Education* (Official letter ED/BIE/CONFINTED/47/RN. Geneva, 30 September 2003), provides an outline which is reflected in the index and in the preparation of this report.

This report orders pertinent information to formal education (in school and open) and non-formal education aimed at the 12 to 18/20 age group.

In the guidelines for the preparation of the document, UNESCO requests that recent policy developments and innovative initiatives be reported and to “avoid”, as far as possible, the duplication of information submitted on recent occasions to UNESCO and to other international agencies, or information already delivered to the Institute of Statistics of UNESCO, which may be included as an annex if it corresponds to the topic of the Forty-seventh International Conference on Education, “Quality education for all young people: challenges, trends and priorities.”

Therefore, reference is made to previous or extensive documents in the Annexes section. Also included therein is a catalogue of successful experiences in nonformal education for young people conducted by the Mexican Youth Institute (only Spanish Version).

1. The educational system at the beginning of the 21ST century: an overview

Throughout the twentieth century the Mexican educational system grew, extended its coverage and diversified the services it offered. Based on a progressive legislation that proclaims education for all to be a constitutional right, it was put forward from the outset that it should be an instrument of freedom and social justice. Nevertheless, for various reasons the progress made has not been sufficient to fully meet the challenges posed to the country by population growth and cultural, economic, social and political development.

The 2001-2006 National Education Program reconsiders the tasks of Mexican education, with the aim of building the country desired: a fully democratic nation, with high quality of life, dynamic, proudly faithful to its roots, pluri-ethnic, multicultural and with a profound sense of national unity; a country in which extreme social inequality is reduced and the entire population is offered opportunities for development and coexistence based on respect for legality and the effective exercise of human rights, all of this in equilibrium with the environment.

The approach for the 21st century organizes the educational system in keeping with the commitment to offer the entire population of the country an education (see: 2001-2006 National Education Program, Ministry of Public Education) that is:

- **Equitable and good quality**, and that will ensure equality of opportunities for entry, continuance and achievement, not equating equity with coverage, but taking effectiveness into account, under the premise that a school with uneven quality is not equitable.
- **Pertinent**, that will respond to people's needs and to the requirements of national development, addressing the plurality of students' circumstances with a creative supply of options and a rich, diversified range of programs and institutions.
- **Inclusive**, that will address the country's regional, ethnic and linguistic cultural diversity.
- **Formative**, in a comprehensive sense, that will combine scientific and technical aims with a conception of humanism appropriate for our times.

1.1 Principal reforms and innovations introduced in the educational system at the beginning of the 21st century

a) Legal framework of education

- *Creation of the National Council on Education for Life and Work, CONEVyT*

On 22 February 2002 an inter-ministerial commission of a permanent nature was created, known as the National Council on Education for Life and Work, as a collegiate body for advice, technical support and coordination to link actions that guarantee education for life and work. The purpose of the Council is to coordinate, promote, link and further education programs, mechanisms and services for the life and work of young people and adults, with the aim of forming a national system that consolidates and strengthens the unity of the social function of education throughout the country and facilitates access for persons in a situation of educational backwardness to continuous learning processes throughout their lives enabling them to:

- Make decisions affecting the conditions of their individual family and community lives, with greater and improved knowledge;
- II. Further their personal growth to attain a more productive and creative life;
- III. Improve their conditions of access to the labor market and performance at work;
- IV. Achieve more effective democratic participation in decisions affecting national life in general, and that of their locality in particular;
- V. Have better attitudes and abilities in order to further social economic, scientific and technological changes;
- VI. Move easily between the levels and modalities of education and training in order to become incorporated into the country's productive sector, and
- VII. Participate successfully in productive activities and enjoy higher levels of quality of life.

- *Creation of the National Institute for Assessment of Education, INEE.*

The National Institute for Assessment of Education, INEE, is an independent agency created on 8 August 2002 and its purpose is to offer educational authorities and the private sector suitable tools for the assessment of educational systems as regards basic

education (preschool, primary and secondary) and senior high school.

A good assessment system is an indispensable —although not sufficient— requirement of a good quality education, since it offers an appropriate platform for taking decisions on strategies to attain objectives and improve the quality of programs and schools.

The INEE project is based on various national and international antecedents. The Secretariat of Public Education has been carrying out educational assessments since the 70s, and these were strengthened considerably throughout the 90s. Mexico has also participated in assessment projects with other countries, such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the tests of the Latin American Educational Quality Assessment Laboratory of OREALC (LLECE) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the OECD.

- *Compulsory nature of preschool education*

Until the 2003-2004 school cycle, compulsory basic education in Mexico included 9 years of study: primary education with a duration of 6 years and secondary education with 3 years. However, on 12 November 2002 the Decree was published that modified Articles 3 and 31 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States and made preschool education compulsory for children aged 3 to 5. This implies not only the State's obligation to provide it, but also parents' obligation to make their children or wards take the course as a requirement for entry into primary education. The publication of this decree making preschool education compulsory poses important challenges, both for the expansion of the service and for quality improvement (physical facilities and equipment, size of groups, initial and updating training of teaching staff, as well as the transformation of school management).

The timeframes for introducing compulsory preschool education are: 2004-2005 school cycle for 5-year-old children; 2005-2006 for 4-year-olds and 2008-2009 for 3-year-olds.

The reform process for preschool education includes four lines of action: renewal of the level's contents and learning processes; transformation of school management; updating training for serving teaching and administrative personnel; and production and distribution of educational materials.

- *Creation of the National Council of Education Authorities*

The National Council of Education Authorities was formally established (with regulations) in June 2004. The Council holds sessions every three months with the participation of the education secretaries of the 31 states of the Republic and the Minister of Education of the federal government. One of its objectives, in a scheme to fully strengthen federalism, is to follow up on the main programs and actions that have been established to provide a better educational service.

Before its establishment was formalized, the Council had sat every three months during the past three years.

b) Organization, structure and management of education

- *Policy to articulate basic education*

Impetus is being given to reviewing and upgrading curricula and educational materials, as well as educational practices in the classroom and at school, to give continuity of teaching and contents to the three levels of basic education, from preschool level to secondary education, establishing pedagogical and organizational consistency throughout compulsory basic education. To that end, the following actions are being carried out:

- Graduate the abilities and competences to be developed by pupils, and prepare educational achievement standards for each subject and level of basic education, in order to shape the graduation profile for each educational level.
- Develop teaching guidelines for initial (before three years of age) and preschool education.
- Develop a new curriculum proposal for secondary education, widely agreed to by consensus and consistent with the aims of basic education, that takes adolescents' needs into account and provides learning opportunities that make it possible to strengthen basic and higher skills necessary for continuing to learn throughout life.
- Promote a comprehensive transformation of school organization favoring the combined work of educators and managers at the three educational levels of compulsory basic education.

- *Policy of transformation of school management in basic education*

Its objective is to promote new models of organization and day-to-day running of basic education schools, to ensure that the teaching and administrative personnel in each school collectively assume responsibility for educational results, establish relations of collaboration among themselves and with the school's social setting, and commit themselves to the continuous improvement of the quality and equity of education. To that end, the following actions are being carried out:

- Establish the necessary conditions—by means of modification of the regulations, administrative and labor reorganization, strengthening of supervision and impetus to social participation—to guarantee, in each school, effective compliance with the school calendar, optimal use of time and the validity of the labor and organizational norms governing the functioning of schools.
- Strengthen the decision-making powers of school administrators and collegiate bodies with the aim of establishing organizational and pedagogical measures adapted to their particular conditions so as to attain national educational objectives,

and have the capacity to decide on their participation in extracurricular programs or actions convened by internal and external agents of the educational system.

- Reorient the function of school administrative personnel and strengthen their professional competences so that they exercise their academic functions effectively and promote the continuous improvement of the school's quality.
- Promote practices in the classroom and school that are consistent with the fundamental aims of basic education and the principles of democratic coexistence: respect for the dignity of individuals, the right to participation in decision-making, and appreciation of diversity, tolerance and the culture of legality.
- Extend the time effectively assigned to educational tasks in the school day, in accordance with the characteristics of the various levels and forms of basic education and the needs of the schools.
- Establish agreements with the teachers' union representation to improve the functioning of schools and ensure pupils' learning.

The National Council for Social Participation in Education, CONAPASE, is the national body for consultation, collaboration, support and information which enables participation in activities tending to strengthen and raise the quality of basic education and teacher training for this type of students, as well as to expand coverage.

- *Policy of strengthening specific educational contents and production of printed materials in basic education.*

This policy seeks to update the contents and methods of basic education as a result of continuous curriculum review, with the aim of introducing the adjustments and gradual transformations necessary. It also seeks to ensure the use in the classroom of educational resources—especially printed materials—suitable for making it possible to set in motion the modifications or adjustments made to the curriculum. The actions being carried out to that end are:

- Further the acquisition and full development of communication skills as the first priority of the basic education curriculum; in particular, pupils' and teachers' reading habits and skills will be strengthened.
- Strengthen in basic education pupils the ability to recognize, set forth and solve problems, as well as the necessary abilities to predict, verify and generalize results; make conjectures, communicate and validate them; identify patterns and analogous situations; develop imagination; and have deductive thinking.
- Strengthen, throughout basic education, the development of abilities attitudes and values that characterize critical thinking, in order to foster in pupils the need to formulate rational explanations for any event or phenomenon.
- Review and, where applicable, update contents in relation to education for health

within the study plans and programs for basic education and teacher training, and further the implementation of diverse actions with regard to healthy forms of conduct, hygiene and nutrition, among others.

- Establish ongoing programs for health care and prevention at school—at the preschool, primary and secondary education levels—as well as the training of teachers for detection of specific problems.
- Further citizen education and the development of a culture of legality throughout life.
- Strengthen the role of artistic education in the basic education curriculum, recognizing its value in forming creative, critical, thoughtful and tolerant individuals.
- Increase information and encourage attitudes favorable to environmental conservation and sustainable development.
- Diversify and technologically modernize educational resources in the classroom in order to enrich pupils' learning experiences at the three levels of basic education.
- Continue the publication and free distribution of suitable texts and materials aimed at pupils, teachers, administrative personnel and parents in basic education schools, as well as at pupils and teachers in teacher-training education.

- *Quality Schools Program*

The *Quality Schools* program favors the self-management of basic education schools in defining their school project and the quality standards that improve the service they offer and the performance of their pupils, with the collaboration of administrative personnel, educators, pupils, their families and the three levels of government: federal, state and municipal. Private initiative is also involved in this effort. In the 2003-2004 school cycle 15,000 schools were registered as affiliated to the program (two of every three municipalities in our country have a school that participates in the program). This new management model, which operates primarily in urban-marginalized areas, has a bearing on improving drop-out rates, end efficiency and reduction of failure.

- *Curriculum reform of the general baccalaureate*

Studies carried out in 2000 determined the need for a comprehensive reform that should include management and curriculum aspects, since study programs were not up-to-date; the heterogeneity of plans represented obstacles for students' development and mobility and favored rigid school atmospheres. This reform is in the process of being introduced and will conclude in the 2005-2006 school cycle.

The aim is for the graduates of senior high school education (baccalaureate or professional technical training) to share generic skills, aptitudes, values and basic knowledge to face the challenges of life. The curriculum and the institutional norm were streamlined to guarantee students' inter-institutional movement. Moreover, the curriculum

was reformed by incorporating educational approaches focusing on learning and on technical standards of labor competition, and the use of communications and information technologies. The baccalaureate programs given in autonomous universities follow similar processes with particularities.

The lines of action of the reform are: promote that the curriculum is organized around three common formative components: basic, pre-university and professional training; include flexible schemes, tutorial systems and advisory and counseling programs; introduce concepts related to environmental protection and forming of values in study plans; create spaces for participation among the different academic bodies; foster the incorporation of educational contents and practices based on standards of labor competition; renew educational materials and incorporate the use of information and communications technologies; promote the establishment of equivalences between programs; and facilitate continuity in education by eliminating irrelevant bureaucratic obstacles.

The aims of this reform are: reduce the drop-out and failure rates; establish flexible systems of accreditation, certification and equivalence of studies; and facilitate inter-institutional movement.

A second aspect of the reform is the transition from the open preparatory education plan (established in 1979 and so far not updated) to the non-school general baccalaureate plan (in Mexico, baccalaureate is known colloquially as “preparatory education” or “*prepa*”).

- *Higher Education*

One strategic objective of the 2001-2006 National Education Program is to raise the quality of the programs so that students, regardless of the institution they are attending, have the possibility of acquiring an appropriate education that satisfies their expectations and meets national development needs.

Therefore, as of 2001 the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) called on public universities to participate in a strategic planning process that would result in the formulation of their respective Comprehensive Program of Institutional Strengthening, PIFI. The purpose of these programs is to further a process of continuous quality improvement in the educational programs they offer. The PIFI of each institution of higher education must articulate and give consistency to the different projects for curriculum updating; for creation or elimination of teaching and research programs; for strengthening academic staff; for investment in physical infrastructure and technology, and for renovation in the institution’s governing body and administration.

When an academic program (for instance, the training of physicians or engineers) in a university succeeds in satisfying the respective standards, it can obtain accreditation on the part of the agencies recognized by the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (COPAES). This authority was founded in 2000 and is the only one validated by the Secretariat of Public Education to confer official recognition on the agencies accrediting the academic programs given at this educational level.

The accrediting agencies recognized by COPAES are authorized to carry out the assessment processes leading to the accreditation of programs at bachelor's degree and higher university technical levels (also known as associate professional), in specific areas of knowledge, in public and private universities throughout the country.

With regard to the quality of other services of an administrative nature, certification is granted on the basis of ISO:9000 standards.

The federal government provides special economic supports based on the characteristics and pertinence of each institution's PIFI and on its annual adjustment.

- *Agenda for Good Government*

The Secretariat of Public Education, in the same way as all ministries, is committed to the *Agenda for Good Government* established by the federal government in late 2002, which consists of the following strategies:

- Attaining an efficient government, that is, one that does more with less.
- Guaranteeing a government of total quality as regards the services it offers the citizenry.
- Developing a government that attracts the best men and women to provide them with continuous training and assessment.
- Consolidating a "digital government" that makes the most of information technology and telecommunications.
- Having a government with regulatory reform, that is, more responsive and flexible.
- Guaranteeing an honest and transparent government.

Actions such as the strengthening of federalism; curriculum reforms at different levels; transparent mechanisms for access to the teaching service and the continuous updating of the teaching profession; expansion of the EDUSAT educational television system; creation of a Coordination Office for Citizen Attention that works on the basis of the new Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Information; certification of processes through the ISO:9000 standard; the review of processes for obtaining and renewing recognition of official validity of studies in senior high school and higher education by individuals, based on assessments carried out by agencies and collegiate bodies dedicated to accreditation, colleges of professionals or agencies engaged in external assessment, are examples of follow-up on the agenda for good government and evidence of the commitment the SEP has assumed in order to be in line with a new model of public management.

c) Curriculum policies, content of education and teaching and learning strategies

The curriculum reforms in basic, senior high school and higher education carried out during the period covered by this report constitute a structural and contents reform of significant proportions.

- *Curriculum reform at the preschool level*

Activities for exploration, study and consultation for the reform of preschool education began in 2002.

The reform of preschool education encompasses a compulsory cycle of three grades whose coverage should be progressively expanded until it covers all the population of three-, four- and five-year-olds.

The first phase of application of the new program will be carried out during the 2004-2005 school cycle in a specific number of schools of a general, indigenous and community nature. The process of follow-up and assessment of its application during that year will make it possible to introduce the necessary changes for its generalized application in the 2005-2006 school cycle.

- *Curriculum reform at the secondary level*

The 2001-2006 National Education Program set itself the task of carrying out a Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education, with the aim of achieving curriculum continuity and pedagogical and organizational articulation with the two school levels that precede it. The articulation of basic education is one of the necessary actions for improving its effectiveness and equity.

Undoubtedly this federal commitment offers a unique opportunity to design and implement educational policies that seriously take on the complex problems of an obligatory cycle that has still not succeeded in guaranteeing the right of all to receive a good quality education.

The Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education also represents an opportunity to rethink the meaning of the last stretch of compulsory schooling in a world in which social inequalities are becoming more acute and translate into greater marginalization and violence; in which diversity demands to be recognized as a valuable resource for understanding between nations and within nations, and in which scientific and technological knowledge is being constantly restructured. Rethinking the meaning of secondary education is no mean task, for it means asking oneself about the contribution that schools can make to solving these problems; about the role they should play in forming individuals for the building of democratic societies.

- *Curriculum reform of senior high school education*

The lines of work of the curriculum reform of senior high school education (post-compulsory)—in its baccalaureate aspect—are: incorporating the approach of learning-focused teaching; offering systematic guidelines so that pupils develop a constructive and ongoing activity during their learning process; designing pedagogical structures that facilitate, orient and promote constructive interaction between pupils and their teachers, the object of their knowledge, their school group and their immediate surroundings; incorporating curriculum orientation lines that promote individuals' basic skills as regards

the development of thinking, methodological, communicative and socio-affective abilities based on universal and specific values related to democracy and human rights; and favoring the care and preservation of the environment and a sense of quality as the principle of all human activity. Furthermore, the use of information and communications technologies is promoted so that pupils become integrated into the so-called information society. A culture of assessment has been created which at different times offers students a framework for moving from the subjective to the objective, from error to correctness, from uncertainty to certainty and from the latter to self-confidence to move from challenge to success.

It is assumed that these curriculum orientation lines will permeate the educational system by means of learning strategies that form part of any study program.

d) Main objectives and characteristics of the reforms

- *Preschool education*

In order that preschool education favors a valuable educational experience for all the country's boys and girls—irrespective of their individual characteristics and social, cultural and ethnic origin—a program has been opted for which establishes common basic purposes, bearing in mind the country's cultural and regional diversity, and with characteristics that allow flexible application according to the particular circumstances of the country's regions and localities.

The basic aims are the frame of reference that defines the function of preschool education as a whole and express the achievements that the boys and girls who take it are expected to have. At the same time, they are the basis for defining the competences to be favored in them by means of educational intervention.

Recognizing cultural, social and ethnic diversity, as well as individual characteristics during the course of preschool education in any of its forms—general, indigenous or community—it is expected that all girls and boys will:

- Develop a positive sense of self, act with initiative and autonomy, show willingness to learn, recognize their skills in the different spheres of participation, express their feelings and learn to regulate their emotions.
- Be capable of assuming different roles, work together and support those who need help, settle conflicts through dialogue, and recognize and respect the rules of coexistence in school and outside of it.
- Improve and enrich their expression and comprehension of oral messages in their mother tongue and broaden their vocabulary to satisfy personal and social needs.
- Understand the main functions of written language and know the characteristics of diverse types of text based on their participation in acts of reading and writing.
- Learn to obtain and select information from different sources (other people, mass

media within their reach, printed matter, electronic files, etc.) and take advantage of them as resources for learning, exchanging opinions and making judgments.

- Construct mathematical notions based on situations that require the use of their knowledge and skills to establish relations of correspondence, quantity and location between objects; to count and estimate, to recognize qualities and measure sizes.
- Develop the skill to solve problems creatively in situations involving collaboration, reflection, explanation, the search for solutions by means of their own strategies or procedures and by comparing them with those used by others.
- Develop abilities to observe natural phenomena, ask, predict, compare, experiment, register, seek information and prepare explanations on transformation processes in the natural and social world, and acquire favorable attitudes toward the care and preservation of the environment.
- Show the fundamental values for coexistence in their relationships with others: personal dignity, equal rights between people and genders, recognition and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity; justice and tolerance as an exercise of the rights that correspond to each person.
- Develop sensitivity, initiative, imagination and creativity to express themselves through art (music, poetry, plastic arts, dance, theater) and to appreciate the artistic and cultural manifestations of their setting and of other contexts.
- Improve their abilities of coordination, control, manipulation and movement in organized free play activities and physical exercise that help them to become aware of their achievements and their capacity to face and overcome challenges.
- Identify the changes their bodies are undergoing when performing an activity and during growth; put into practice individual and collective health measures to preserve and promote a healthy life, as well as to avoid risks.

In order to identify, deal with and do follow up on the different processes of child development and learn and contribute to the organization of teachers work, the competences to be favored in children are thus grouped into six formative fields (each field is organized into two or more aspects, each of which specifies the competences to be promoted in girls and boys:

- o Personal and social development (aspects in which it is organized: personal identity and independence; interpersonal relationships).
- o Language and communication (aspects: oral language; written language).
- o Mathematical thinking (aspects: number; form, space and measurement).
- o Exploration and knowledge of the world (aspects: natural world; culture and social life).

- o Artistic expression and appreciation (aspects: expression and musical appreciation; movement and dance appreciation; expression and appreciation of the plastic arts; dramatic expression and theatrical appreciation).
 - o Physical development and health (aspects: coordination, strength and balance; health promotion).
- *Lower Secondary education*

Lower secondary education was made compulsory in Mexico in 1993 and became the final portion of basic schooling. It then acquired a new purpose: providing all citizens with a general education to enable them to develop the basic competences to face a complex and constantly changing world, and become incorporated into life in society to contribute to building a democratic society.

The main indicators—coverage, continuance, absorption, and efficiency—show the important progress the country has made in the last few years. [TABLE OMITTED]

Despite the improvements and achievements, the commitment assumed in 1993 has not yet been fully complied with and there are still certain problems that make it necessary to reform this level of education.

- The opportunities to access and conclude secondary education have not become universal.
- Pupils do not always attain the learning expectations established by the current study plan
- The system has not achieved genuine equity.
- Resources are not always fully utilized.
- School organization limits the achievement of learning demanded today in secondary school.

In order to have a secondary education that shapes young people for their participation in the building of a democratic, integrated, competitive, outward-looking society, it is necessary to strengthen it progressively by addressing the following aspects of its quality:

- Coverage: broaden it substantially until it becomes universal, in the shortest possible time.
- Continuance: appreciably reduce drop-out and failure levels.
- Effectiveness: increase results in learning success.

- Equity: design appropriate models that address different demands and needs and produce equivalent results for all pupils, regardless of their origin and conditions.
- Linkage: a secondary school that takes its place as the final stage of basic education, that is consistent and that is integrated to the other two educational levels, both in its management and in its curriculum model.
- Pertinence: transform the school's atmosphere and conditions to achieve a genuine interest and pleasure of teachers and pupils in the task they perform, which should respond to their needs and interests.

The actions provided for in the Comprehensive Reform of Lower Secondary Education are organized into two major spheres:

- A. Actions for those who do not attend school.
- B. Actions for those who are enrolled in lower secondary education.

A. Actions for those who do not attend school or are at risk of leaving it

- Detection and description of the lag by means of state diagnoses and a diagnosis of the *telesecundaria* education subsystem.
- Articulation of the set of compensation strategies (scholarships, incentives, among others) with the pedagogical strategies that strengthen their efficiency.
- Appraisal and strengthening of the strategies currently offered to deal with the population which, for reasons of geography or organization of their daily lives, do not have access schools within the traditional supply.
- Creation of alternative forms for those who are not being dealt with within the framework of existing national or state strategies.
- Definition of standards with the necessary flexibility to promote entry into school and continuance in it.
- Reconsider the organization of secondary school to improve its capacity to meet young people's demands, prevent pupil drop-out and guarantee that they conclude it satisfactorily.

B. Actions for those who are enrolled in secondary education

The Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education includes three fields for the development of tasks in this sphere: curriculum, school organization and management of the educational system.

School is the formal space that the State builds to ensure everyone's right to learn. This statement is the required, unavoidable point of departure in the definition of the desired school, for it places its fundamental task at the very center: the achievement of learning of all the students.

But what types of learning should be achieved in schools? How should they function and be organized so that everyone's learning is possible? What teachers do they require and what links should be established with the community they serve? In all, the answers to these and other questions make it possible to delineate the characteristic traits of the secondary school we wish to build, which are listed below:

- A school that ensures that all its pupils fully understand ideas and learn to operate with them effectively, while at the same time nourishing their natural curiosity and taste for study.
- A school that teaches in such a way as to help all its students to find advantageous and diverse ways of access to knowledge, establishing high expectations for each of them and encouraging them always to make their best effort.
- A school that affords all its students the opportunity of learning to live together constructively by appreciating peace and rejecting inequality.
- A school that responds to the needs and interests of adolescents by offering them a range of possibilities for displaying their individual capabilities based on acknowledgment of their differences.
- A school that functions as an educational unit in which the achievement of learning is taken on as the main task and a collective responsibility
- A school that functions regularly, avails itself of the material resources necessary to perform its task and uses the time devoted to teaching effectively.
- A school that promotes the professional performance of its administrative staff and teachers and furthers working together as a central strategy for decision-making, based on the establishment of shared goals.
- A school in which the teaching and administrative staff as a whole assume their responsibility with regard to educational results, assess their duties systematically and use assessment both to strengthen what is done well and to correct what does not work and favor continuous improvement.
- A school open to the community that informs parents about the work it is performing and involves them as allies in the task of education.

Many secondary schools are still a long way from resembling this ideal school. Ensuring that the almost 30,000 establishments at this level in Mexico become true learning communities implies complex, thorough-going and articulated changes in different spheres, and it is therefore a long-term aspiration. In any event, this ideal image is the one

that guides actions for change.

- *Senior high school education*

Curriculum reform at this level is very complex in view of the diversity of programs in the country. A large part of these programs is in the charge of autonomous universities and decentralized institutions.

In the schools that are the responsibility of the SEP there are two elements: general baccalaureate and technological baccalaureate, on the one hand, and mid-level professional training, on the other.

In the general baccalaureate, the new curriculum began to operate in the 2003-2004 academic cycle. The reform is oriented toward strengthening basic academic abilities (mathematics, language and communication) as well as education for citizen life (values, culture of legality, ethical conduct).

This reform forms part of a process of ongoing search for good quality in which all the agents and variables that have a bearing on education are considered, and points towards the development of a project of individual and society consistent with the culture of our times.

The following are among the most important aspects of this project:

- The subject of information technology is given in the first two semesters, so that students have the tools that will provide support in later studies.
- It includes a space on the curriculum to strengthen knowledge, reflection and application of ethical values.
- It increases the time spent on the Reading and Writing Workshop.
- It modifies the strategies for the subjects identified as difficult (mathematics, physics, chemistry) in order to reduce the failure and drop-out rate in the first semesters.
- Pre-university training is strengthened in the last two semesters of the baccalaureate to support students in defining their aptitudes.
- The labor competences approach is incorporated to work-oriented education, with the aim of having a reference on the performance required in the labor sphere and orient training towards achieving that performance, as well as to offer a way out to students who for some reason need to abandon their studies, since they will be able to obtain, in a voluntary manner and by means of an external assessment, certification of the competences acquired.

- It promotes the shift from the approach based on teaching to the approach based on learning, in which the role of the teacher is as a guide, counselor and mediator between the pupil and knowledge and culture.
- It incorporates the development of tutorials for students' individual or group attention; as well as programs of advice and differentiated guidance for pupils with low levels of educational achievement and at risk of abandoning their studies.
- It considers an assessment strategy to follow up on the progress of the curriculum reform.

It should be mentioned that the participation of administrative staff and academics of the coordinated subsystems has been promoted in the design and implementation of this curriculum reform project.

In mid-level professional training, the reform is aimed at structuring study plans based on basic and professional training, by orienting the changes towards priority fields of professional training; improving the quality of the specialties with greater impact on employment and productive dynamics; emphasizing the strengthening of the fundamental values of humanism; and stressing reading, oral communication, mathematical reasoning and methodological research.

In parallel to the curriculum reform of baccalaureate (technical and technological), it has been established that any baccalaureate certificate is valid for applying for entry into any higher education program.

The general policy is to eliminate excluding regulations that hinder students' mobility.

1.2. Principal qualitative and quantitative achievements and the experiences acquired

1.2.1 Access to education

In the 2003-2004 school cycle Mexico catered to just over 31.3 million pupils in all types and levels of education, which meant that one of every three Mexicans received an educational service. In the past four years more than 1,700,000 students have been incorporated into the national education system, representing an increase of 5.8%. To serve these pupils, the number of schools increased from 218,080 in the 2000-2001 cycle to 227,472 in the 2003-2004 cycle, and the number of teachers increased over the same period by 111,045, to reach 1,578,686.

The highest growth in enrollment, in the past four years, was registered in senior high school (baccalaureate and professional) with 16.5% and in higher education with 12.5%.

Growth of enrollment by type and level of education [OMITTED]

With regard to indicators of coverage, absorption, drop-out and end efficiency, a considerable improvement has also been registered. Coverage for the population of 3 to 23 years of age (this group of ages is taken, since according to the recent constitutional amendment, obligatory education begins with the preschool level at 3 years of age; in general, the degree course concludes at 23 years of age) in 2000-2001 was 62.3%, and for the 2003-2004 cycle it reached 65.7%. It should be stressed that coverage in primary education for the 6 to 12 year-old population is practically universal, for it totals 93.0% and that of secondary education, for the population 13 to 15 years of age, is 87.0%.

1.2.2 Equity in education

Coverage by type and level of education [OMITTED]

In general terms, absorption of the graduates from the different education levels has improved: in secondary education it rose from 91.8% in 2000-2001 to 94.7% in 2003-2004; in senior high school it went from 93.3% to 96.6%. Higher education, however, registered a decrease in absorption of graduates from senior high school education, since it dropped from 87.2% to 83.0% in 2003-2004. This may be due more to the high demand that still exists on the part of baccalaureate graduates to find places among the options (administration, law, information technology, etc.) and the institutions (the major university centers of a public nature) which have been saturated for decades, than to a lack of places in more pertinent programs in institutions of higher education.

A second factor that explains this decrease is that as part of a public policy, enrollment in teacher training for primary and secondary education tends to diminish because the demand has been met. With the entry into effect of compulsory preschool education, enrollment will tend to grow once more, since it will be necessary to train educators to meet the new demand.

Absorption rate by type and level of education [OMITTED]

The drop-out rate at primary and secondary levels has dropped by 0.6% and 1.5% respectively, to stand in the 2003-2004 school cycle at 1.3% and 6.8%. In the case of senior high school education, the reduction has been 1.2%. The drop-out rate in higher education is difficult to establish due to the wide variety of options and study plans and programs, the duration of which is different from institution to institution.

Drop-out rate of pupils in primary and secondary education [OMITTED]

Other indicators also reflect progress: the illiteracy rate dropped from 9.2% to 8.5% and the average years of schooling increased from 7.6 to 7.9.

The group that began their primary studies in 1980-1981 and graduated from higher education in the 1996-1997 school cycle had an end efficiency of 63.9% for primary; 40.1% for secondary; 16.9% for senior high school education and 7.1% for post baccalaureate studies. We see the improvement in the group that began primary in the 1986-1987 cycle and concluded higher education in the 2002-2003 cycle, when the end efficiency for primary was 71.6%; 45.7% for secondary; 22.8% for senior high school education and 1.9% for post-baccalaureate studies. Twenty years ago only 2 of every 100 children who began primary concluded higher education (bachelor's degree).

Efficiency of the National Education System [OMITTED]

The above figures show an educational pyramid in which a significant number of young people are left out. The situation is particularly serious in the states and regions with greatest marginalization and among the most vulnerable groups, such as indigenous women, peasants and migrants, conditions which frequently converge in one same individual. The statistics (the indigenous population of five years and over totals 10,253,627 according to INI-CONAPO) show that 39.0% of the indigenous population of five to 24 years, and almost 42.0% if indigenous women in this age group, do not attend school.

A total of 40.0% of the indigenous population of fifteen years and over does not have primary level concluded, and 18.0% has no instruction. (Data taken from INEA. *Intermediate balance and COAFINTEA 2003 Conference. Six years after CONFINTEA V. Status quo and prospects of the education of young people and adults of the National Institute for Adult Education.* Mexico. August 2003.)

In order to deal with people who are in a situation of risk or backwardness, in addition to policies aimed at increasing the number of schools and teachers, in the most remote regions there is a set of programs whose purpose is to compensate the disadvantaged population with the aim of providing equitable conditions for access to study opportunities.

The *Oportunidades* Program provides compensatory elements—such as cash grants, help for transportation and/or school materials, etc.—to favor pupils' continuance at school, while at the same time dealing with gender problems – for example, the amounts of grants for girls and women adolescents are higher. From 1997 to date, the *Oportunidades* Program has succeeded in reducing the drop-out rate in rural primary schools by 17.0% and by almost 10.0% in marginalized urban areas; the failure rate has dropped 13.0% in rural areas and almost 21.0% in urban areas, and it has made it possible to increase first grade enrollment by 85.0% in rural secondary schools and 10.0% in urban ones.

The objective of the National Program of Scholarships for Higher Education (PRONABES) is to ensure that a larger proportion of young people in adverse conditions have access to public higher education services (higher technical and bachelor's degree) in good quality programs and that they conclude their studies opportunely.

PRONABES has been effectively linked to the *Oportunidades* Program, since it provides scholarships for all students enrolled in the referred program who, upon graduating from the senior high school level, gain access to some public institution of higher education (*Oportunidades* only offers support up to senior high school education).

Growing participation by women has been observed in PRONABES. In the 2001-2002 school cycle, 51.0% of PRONABES scholarship holders were women, whereas in the 2003-2004 school cycle this percentage increased to 55.0%. Overall enrollment of women is slightly more than 50%.

In the states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca, the share of scholarship holders of indigenous origin in the 2003-2004 school cycle was 5.0%, 7.0% and 18.0%, respectively.

Research carried out by different institutions of higher education to identify the impact of PRONABES on students' drop-out rates indicates reductions of up to 50.0% in drop-out rates and increases of 60.0% in the rate of regular movement from first to second grade of the study plan.

For the 2004-2005 school cycle the federal government will provide more than 5.8 million scholarships, equivalent to granting a scholarship to one of every five pupils attending public schools.

The National Council for the Promotion of Education (CONAFE) is the federal government agency that coordinates the tasks for attending to people living in the localities furthest away from urban centers and in a situation of high marginalization. In the 2003-2004 school cycle it provided educational services at the levels of initial education (450,712 children benefited), preschool (153,025 pupils), primary (157,597) and post-primary (10,237), by means of two strategies: community education and compensatory programs (supports aimed at reducing the education lag).

As mentioned previously, the federal administration set in motion the National Council for Life and Work, CONEVYT, whose mission is to attend to the population sector of over 15 years in a situation of educational backwardness, by providing literacy, primary and secondary services, with support from the new information technologies and providing

training for life and work. One of its main strategies is the establishment of the so-called “*community plazas*” in which the above-mentioned services are provided. So far almost 3,000 are in operation, some of which serve Mexicans who live in the United States of America. The community plazas operate with public and private support.

As part of the achievements and programs related to improving equity indicators, it is important to mention bilingual education and the education aimed at the children of migrant workers who perform agricultural work in the Mexican Republic.

1.2.3 *Quality of education*

An education without good levels of quality also gives rise to lack of equity. Therefore, the education sector is determined to achieve an improvement in the quality of its functions and its results.

In the last four years, end efficiency has made significant progress. In the 2003-2004 school cycle primary education had an end efficiency of 89.0%, whereas secondary reached 79.7% and senior high school 60.4%.

End efficiency [OMITTED]

Some of the most important actions carried out which have a bearing on quality improvement have been: the creation in 2002 of the National Institute of Educational Assessment, INEE, which will support the task of the authorities and educational actors by providing them with tools to assess each subsystem, and will define and implement—together with the Secretariat of Public Education—a national assessment policy based on previously established and disseminated indicators and standards.

The *Quality Schools* Program, PEC, favors self-management of basic education schools with the collaboration of administrative staff, teachers, pupils, their families and the three levels of government (federal, state and municipal) which enables the establishment of a pertinent school project. Private initiative also contributes to this effort. PEC seeks to shift from a centralized design of education policy to one that favors its formulation from the school. For the 2003-2004 school cycle, 15,000 primary and secondary schools and *telesecundarias* affiliated to the program were registered. Thus, 3.5 million pupils and 165,000 teachers and administrative staff were benefited. The 3.5 million pupils represent almost 17.0% of the total number of pupils in basic education. The program has succeeded in establishing a partial presence in 654% of the country’s municipalities.

The launching of the *Classroom Libraries* as part of the National Reading Program has made it possible for each of the 850,000 basic education classrooms, including those of the CONAFE community centers and *telesecundarias*, to have a book collection, differentiated by school grade, to promote students’ reading and support the task of teachers. In addition, the number of copies and titles in the more than 156,000 basic education school libraries operating in the country has increased constantly.

The updating of the plans and programs of the different educational levels is another of the aspects in the task of improving the quality of education. This also presupposes

continual updating and specific training for teachers at all levels of education.

Furthermore, accreditation of higher education programs by external collegiate bodies and certification of serving professionals has been strengthened.

All these efforts are aimed at improving the quality of education at the different levels.

1.2.4 Content of education

In 1992 a reform was carried out in secondary education that was insufficient to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge and of students' educational experience; it was not possible to replace the traditional structure and organization by one in keeping with the new conception of basic education for life, nor was it possible to improve the educational atmosphere for adolescents at that stage of their development. Therefore, after three years of consultation, analysis and preparation, a comprehensive reform of secondary education (RIES) is being put forward in 2004.

To respond to the imperatives of educational development and national commitments, it has also been necessary to correct deficiencies in the characteristics of senior high school education. Attention will be paid to the following aspects of the curriculum:

- Contribute to making current plans and programs, and scientific and humanistic contents consistent in the education process of baccalaureate and are reflected in "training for work".
- Further students' particular aptitudes with the incorporation of optional subjects into curriculum structures.
- Streamline the curriculum and institutional regulations to guarantee efficient credit recognition mechanisms, which will avoid school drop-out and individual and family frustration.
- Reform the curriculum so that it responds to the demands of the information society and of the country's social and economic development, incorporating educational approaches centering on learning and the intensive use of information and communications technologies.
- The reform of the general baccalaureate, undertaken in stages as of 2004, seeks to integrate into its study plans and programs a set of common elements that enable students to face the challenges of life in society, of the world of work and of their possible entry into higher education in better conditions.

Coinciding with the 25th anniversary of its creation, the National College of Professional Technical Education carried out an Academic Reform which guarantees the quality, flexibility, equity and pertinence of the academic model, so that all graduates of the College achieve an entry into the labor market that is more prompt, consistent with their area of interest and that enables them to attain higher levels of well-being.

With the aim of providing the new model with the necessary flexibility to cater to a population with different interests and possibilities, in addition to the training process of Technical-Baccalaureate professionals and the obtaining of the corresponding title, lateral ways out are considered at the end of the 2nd semester as Assistant Technician and at the end of the 4th semester as Basic Technician. Moreover, the possibility is being considered of establishing alternative training routes in cases in which the matching of some modules makes it possible to characterize their grouping in terms of labor competence that merits recognition.

This flexibility will facilitate the movement between school and work, allowing individuals' ongoing specialization and their continuous training throughout life, in addition to the recovery of partial knowledge and abilities.

To that end, mechanisms have been established for formal recognition of competences irrespective of the mechanism in which they were acquired.

To facilitate compliance with academic requirements and streamline graduation, social service may be combined with professional practices when the former is provided on the basis of a project related to the specialty of the career in question. Likewise, the title of Technical-Baccalaureate Professional and the baccalaureate certificate will be issued directly, based on criteria relative to the pupil's progress and achievement during his/her training.

1.2.5 Political dialogue, association networks and participation of civil society in the process of educational change.

Finally, with regard to the hub of management and proper functioning of the National Education System, emphasis should be placed on the processes of federalization of education services, which have made significant progress in the past three years: to date only the Federal District is attended by the Secretariat of Public Education, whereas each state of the Federation takes charge of its institutions of basic education and teacher training.

Federalization cannot be understood without the existence of flexible mechanisms of joint responsibility, endowed with the appropriate information. The National Council of Education Authorities has been operating for a couple of years with participation of the secretaries of education of the states and the Minister of Public Education of the federal government. This body sits on a quarterly basis in some state.

Moreover, the National Council on Social Participation in Education (CONAPASE) continues to be a fundamental agency for interlocution that enables the different actors of society to participate in decisions that add pertinence to educational policies and actions.

It should be underscored that in August 2002 an agreement was signed called the Social Commitment to the Quality of Education in which the different levels of government, the education authorities, parents' associations, the mass media, the business sector, the National Union of Education Workers, religious associations and different groups of intellectuals, participate. The premises of this commitment are that education is the main

priority of the current government and that education is an issue that concerns everyone.

By means of political dialogue, networks and associations, the aim is for academic programs to include common components that contribute to the linkage and flexibility of the education system, and at the same time promote a comprehensive education, caring for students' interests and the results of the country's development.

1.3 Principal challenges of education in Mexico

Despite the progress made with regard to coverage, the State has still not succeeded in ensuring the conditions for all young people to take secondary education:

- A total of 16.8% of young people between 12 and 15 years of age (1,427,118) are lagging behind either because they have not taken a single grade of basic instruction or they have ceased to attend school without having completed their compulsory schooling.
- Almost half of this lag (48.0%) is made up of graduates of primary who did not continue studying, whereas 11.0% consists of young people who dropped out of secondary before completing it. Five states show lag percentages higher than 20%.
- The lag of young people between 12 and 15 years of age who have not taken compulsory instruction at national level is slightly higher for women (17.6% against 16%).
- The lag for the population between 12 and 15 years of age that speaks an indigenous language rises to 28%, as against 16% for those who do not speak an indigenous language.
- Of every hundred students who enter secondary, 22 do not finish their studies in the time established; this low end efficiency is caused, above all, by the accumulation of subjects failed, which sooner or later translates into failing the grade. The probability of young people investing more than three years to conclude their secondary studies is very low (1.5%), and therefore failure translates into leaving school.

Young people in Mexico

(Information taken from various documents produced by the Mexican Youth Institute, attached to the Ministry of Public Education. These are “Current situation of Mexico’s young people” and National Youth Survey, Mexican Youth Institute.)

According to data from the Twelfth General Census of Population and Housing, in the year 2000 Mexico’s total population totaled around 97.4 million inhabitants, of which 33.61 million are young people between 12 and 29 years of age, 34.5% of the total population. Of these, 48.5% are men and 51.5% women.

According to the National Population Council (CONAPO), the growth of the young population is more dynamic than that of groups of a lower age, since it is still influenced by the high fertility of the past. The slowdown in population growth has not hindered the population from growing rapidly in absolute numbers.

According to CONAPO’s population projections, it is expected that the youth sector, from 12 to 29 years, which reached its highest relative share of the total population in the early nineties (37% in 1995), will stabilize on a plateau that will continue to the year 2030, and

will gradually decrease until it represents, in 2050, only 19.2% of the total population.

This transformation of the population age structure will give rise to a transitory *demographic window of opportunity* that will remain open during the course of the next three decades. During this period the most favorable demographic conditions for economic development in Mexico's contemporary history will concur, when the population of working age will increase and the population of dependents of less than 15 years will diminish. However, the window of opportunity will begin to close as the pressures to meet the demands of demographic aging increase.

According to the National Development Plan, this window of opportunity or *demographic bonus* could become an important factor for the country's development over the next decade if we succeed in creating the necessary jobs, in favoring greater savings capacity in homes and in implementing more effective strategies for both training and use of available human resources, and accumulation and mobilization of assets.

This national challenge makes one think of young people in a double dilemma; on the one hand they are the most and best educated generation, with ease of dialogue with the new technologies, and with proven capacity for transformation and adaptation of values, standards and social forms. One characteristic of the youth population in recent years is its greater development in the cultural field. Nevertheless, on the other, the levels of social and economic exclusion of the majority of the youth population—precarious jobs, school drop-out, violent atmospheres, restricted leisure and meeting areas, high levels of national and international migration, etc.—question and evidence the need for new forms that public policy should assume to counteract the circuits of lags and inequalities and strengthen young people's social and cultural capital.

The scenario in which youth movements have taken on national and worldwide dimensions can be described with three elements. The first is the shift from an industrial society to an information society, in which access to communication, its production, management, dissemination and decoding will entail a new area of power for some and a new element of exclusion for many others. The second element is the building of a substantial democratic society; and the third, that we find ourselves faced with the intercultural society.

From the above we can conclude that education in Mexico is facing three major challenges: achieving greater coverage with emphasis on equity of access, continuance and students' graduation in time; this requires improving the quality of educational processes and levels of learning; and achieving adequate integration, functioning and management capacity of the education system.

The main challenge, however, is providing an education that awakens, guides, nourishes, orients and realizes young people's potential.

From young people's point of view, the challenge is most complex. On the one hand, it is necessary to attract and retain young people in school, making it relevant for them due to the understanding they achieve in it of themselves and their milieu, as well as its relevance for their future expectations. School should be innovative in its methods and awaken and channel individual and collective creativity. On the other hand, it is essential

for education to root young people in their culture, their country and their milieu, and to give them the tools to appropriate, critically and independently, other cultural forms, means of production of knowledge and goods, as well as universal values. Formal education should be a valuable civic experience for personal and community development, as well as for forming personal, community and national identity. Formal education should, at the same time, contribute to creating an awareness of interdependence and world justice.

The system has attained the necessary maturity to meet the educational needs of the population with differentiated supply; it has begun to depend more on educational assessment and research; and it has been decided to reform study plans and programs, as well as educational methods and materials, to respond more effectively to the challenges of education in Mexico in the 21st century.

The advisability of making the preschool level compulsory was also identified, and the need to ensure the importance and pertinence of the whole of basic education.

Although the senior high school education system has registered significant progress in recent decades, especially as regards the growth of enrollment, it is still a long way from reaching the necessary strength to display all of its capabilities.

In this regard it is important to point out two aspects that must be overcome in order to have a senior high school education that responds, in a timely manner and with quality, to the demands of national development. The first of these is the lack of a clearly differentiated identity with respect to the other types of education. In general terms and for different reasons, most of the modalities of this type of education have been subordinated to higher education to the detriment of the development of its own capabilities.

The second is related to the discrepancy between its high level of absorption of secondary school graduates and its relatively low performance in relation to retention and completion of studies.

Not enough information is available on the most vulnerable groups of young people in the senior high school education system, nor on the main reasons why they enter the system (motivation, expectations), nor the main factors that cause them to drop out. The challenge lies in furthering research on the dynamics of the relationships within schools and between them, on the student body, the teachers and the educational processes and results.

Higher education is a strategic means of increasing the nation's human and social capital, and individual and collective intelligence; of enriching culture with the contributions of the humanities, the arts, science and technology; and of contributing to the increase in competitiveness and employment required in the economy based on knowledge. It is also a factor for furthering the growth of the national product, social cohesion and justice, the consolidation of democracy and national identity based on our cultural diversity, as well as for improving the distribution of the population's income.

Increasing coverage with equity has been possible by broadening and diversifying the educational supply, and also bringing it closer to the social groups with less opportunities

of access, in such a way that their participation in higher education increasingly corresponds to their presence in the population as a whole.

Work is also under way to contribute to the transformation of the current closed system of higher education into one that is open, flexible, innovative and dynamic; that is characterized by intense inter-institutional collaboration; by the operation of networks for academic work with state, regional, national and international scope; by the mobility of teachers and pupils, and by the permanent search for new forms of teaching-learning. A concentration of degree enrollment in few courses with saturated labor destinations still prevails.

Another challenge, therefore, is intensifying the process of diversification of institutional profiles and of the educational supply, including forms of open and distance education; designing programs aimed at covering the deficit of professionals in some areas of knowledge; meeting state and regional needs and those of different ethnic groups, and achieving greater consistency between the educational supply, students' preferences and the requirements of national development.

The majority of educational programs offered in the higher education system are extremely rigid.

Higher professional training is dominated by an excessively specialized approach. Degree courses, in general, foster early specialization, tend to be exhaustive and have very different durations. Others lack intermediate ways out and are not sufficiently concerned with education in values, entrepreneurial individuals and development of higher intellectual abilities.

Another challenge is to consolidate the national, nongovernmental system of assessment and accreditation of educational programs, based on academic pairs of recognized prestige and integrity that provide references to institutions for the continuous improvement and quality assurance of their educational programs and contribute to the accountability of the IES to society.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the educational lag is concentrated in the country's most marginalized groups and areas, and therefore the task of education should be carried out in coordination with the country's policies for economic, political and social progress.

2. Quality education for all young people: challenges, trends and priorities.

2.1 Education and gender equality

2.1.1 Principal concerns regarding the topic of gender and education

In 1974 Mexico laid down in Article 4 of the Constitution the principle of the equality of men and women before the law. As of this amendment, diverse activities and mechanisms have been developed to combat the exclusion, inequality and discrimination of which women are frequently the object.

For decades, a permanent demand of women has been the incorporation of a gender-sensitive approach in the programs of institutions and civil organizations. This struggle seeks to recognize men and women's differences and complementarities to advance in the creation of spaces that favor the comprehensive development of this sector of the population, especially that of young women.

On 26 April 2004 the Executive Branch submitted a bill for a constitutional amendment in human rights which provides that Article 3, which governs the direction of education, should include respect for human rights and the gender perspective.

In recent years the coverage of educational services for men and women has increased in a balanced manner.

The following tables show a tendency towards achievement of suppression of disparities in enrollment in preschool, primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, it is recognized that affirmative actions need to be favored to encourage the entry and continuance of girls in education, until enrollment parity between girls and boys is achieved. As can be seen, the closing of the gap is gradual.

In senior high school education the growth in women's enrollment has been greater than men's, which has resulted in the proportion of women being greater than men as of the 2000-2001 school cycle.

In higher education, during the 1990-2000 decade, we can see that the proportion of women in enrollment experienced very high growth, from 42.8% in 1990-1991 to 49.0% in the 2000-2001 cycle, and parity was reached in the 2003-2004 school cycle.

Evolution of enrollment by gender [OMITTED]

All in all, notable differences can still be observed, especially in the rural milieu, and particularly in indigenous communities, where girls tend to have significant disadvantages with respect to boys. The adoption of a gender approach in education policies will significantly contribute to consolidating equality of access and continuance at school between men and women.

The main concern with regard to the topic of gender and education is associated with problems of inequality of educational opportunities (access, continuance and mobility at higher education level) faced by population groups in a situation of extreme poverty and marginalization, and where there is a strong incidence of indigenous groups. Even though the female population of an age to attend school is not in itself a vulnerable group in the national population—at least there is no policy that infringes the right of girls and young women to attend school—the fact of being a woman in contexts of marginalization constitutes a factor that intensifies inequality in access, continuance and successful completion of basic education. In this regard, the concern would be oriented towards the marginalization to which girls and young women are subject, in those contexts, for attending school.

Non-formal education

The Mexican Youth Institute has promoted non-formal educational actions with a gender perspective relative to different topics of importance for the life and development of young people. These are implemented on the basis of individual or community youth participation, to promote the values of responsibility and joint responsibility.

One of IMJUVE's programs is aimed at the topic of gender and equity. This program seeks to carry out actions that promote a culture of equity between women and men, basically between young women and young men, for this will have a bearing on the education and values that will be transmitted to future generations. (See Annex. Program 119.1.3.1 IMJUVE. Gender and equity).

2.1.2 Policies aimed at young people that take into account the gender issue in education and training

Basic education

Promotion of equity and the gender perspective in education and in training is carried out in different ways: by promoting the value of women among girls and young women, as well as among the male population, by means of measures that encourage the continuance and promotion of women in the school system, as is the case of granting a larger amount in the scholarships awarded to girls. In the particular case of the curriculum, contents on gender equity and sexuality are included in the study programs and in the training of teachers. Furthermore, concerted actions are promoted with state education authorities and civil organizations that reinforce that aim. Basic education aimed especially at indigenous girls is being strengthened with all the actions in the area of intercultural education.

The basic education curriculum considers aspects relative to gender equity throughout this educational phase. In particular, the contents aimed at adolescents and young people from the final grade of primary education and in secondary education promote reflection on the stereotypes and prejudices that have been shaped around the sexes, as well as analysis on the equality of rights and opportunities they should deserve.

The gender perspective upheld constitutes an approach so that students analyze the

relationships built up among persons and groups, understand the ways in which unequal and discriminatory relationships between men and women have developed culturally and been established, and identify different ways of reconsidering them based on respect, reciprocity and equity.

The updating of teachers also provides for contents on gender equity. Thus, some of the national updating courses (2003-2004 school cycle) that were given on the subject were:

- Building gender equity in primary school.
- On the way to secondary. Actions to support access to secondary from a gender equity perspective.
- Gender equity as a factor of coexistence in solidarity in basic education.
- Gender equity as an essential element of teaching practice in primary and secondary school.

Likewise, the courses offered are supervised so that they incorporate the gender perspective in a transversal manner and form specialized teams in state education agencies.

Senior high school and higher education

The *OPORTUNIDADES* program provides grants for young people from the country's most marginalized communities and with the greatest need, so that they can continue their studies; the amount of the grants is greater for women.

The approximate monthly amount of educational grants in 2003 was: *[TABLE OMITTED]*

The last figures available (2003) show that 230,905 grants and economic supports were awarded to women and 219,504 for men in senior high school education.

Enrollment in the first grade of senior high school in rural schools increased by 38% as a result of the intervention of the Program. In urban and semi-urban areas the increase was 6%.

In higher education support is being given for the continuance of women so that they complete their studies.

As mentioned earlier, the National Program of Scholarships for Higher Education (PRONABES) aims to ensure that a larger proportion of young people in adverse conditions have access to public higher education services (higher technical and bachelor's degree) in good quality programs and complete their studies opportunely.

In PRONABES a growing share of women has been observed. In the 2001-2002 school cycle, 51.0% of PRONABES scholarship-holders were women, whereas in the 2003-2004 school cycle this percentage increased to 55.0%.

2.2 Education and social inclusion

The 42 million inhabitants born in Mexico over the past 25 years (1975 to 2000) (source: National Population Council, 2002 Population Projections) are now young people and children who have lived in a climate of economic instability and accelerated social and technological changes.

The social inclusion of young people poses special needs. In the field of health, the importance of themes such as teen pregnancy, abortion, AIDS, drugs and smoking is obvious. Increased school enrollment of young women—the percentage of women over 15 years of age who are without schooling or have not completed primary school dropped from 72.2% in 1970 to 29.9% in 2000—gives rise to specific needs for greater opportunities and care to benefit their overall development in all aspects of life.

Inequality continues to be the main problem facing education in our country: the population's average schooling level is eighth grade and reflects disparities associated with poverty and social exclusion. Only one out of every five young people has access to high school education. The quest for greater quality and equality will require even greater efforts by the federal, state and municipal governments, as well as the incorporation of new actors to share the responsibility.

a) **What population groups are considered the most vulnerable in the face of the various forms of social exclusion?**

Indigenous young people (source: National Institute of Geography, Statistics and Information Technology, INEGI) are a particularly vulnerable sector. Of the 1,619,418 indigenous people who are older than 15 and younger than 29 years of age (15.3% of the indigenous-language-speaking population in Mexico), most belong to the Nahuatl, Maya, Mixtec and Zapotec ethnic groups. A significant part of this population lives in rural areas and works with very limited labor skills. Extreme poverty and demographic pressure have expanded seasonal migration in search of farm jobs, which forms a network extending thousands of kilometers to reach and even cross the border. For various reasons, indigenous young people migrate to urban centers, where their development possibilities are extremely limited, owing principally to social and cultural barriers.

b) **What challenges must be met to ensure social inclusion?**

The challenge consists of increasing the education system's coverage with equity, expanding the provision of education and moving it closer to the most underprivileged groups, paying particular attention to the incorporation of women, closing the existing gaps between states, social sectors and ethnic groups in the education provided, and strengthening scholarship programs to expand opportunities for access to education beyond the compulsory grade level for students in adverse economic conditions.

At the national level, there are differences in access to education among the states. In high school education, for example, while participation of the age group 16 to 18 years old is close to 80% in the Federal District, it is less than 44% in Chiapas, Puebla and Oaxaca. The differences between the states are even more pronounced among rural populations in very small settlements where migrant workers and indigenous people live. In each of

these categories, women are in a position of greater disadvantage.

c) What specific measures have been taken to ensure that education caters to the most vulnerable groups?

The measures adopted have been to improve the quality of education throughout the system, to use new information technologies to reach remote areas, to make education programs more flexible and to provide scholarships to those who are at risk of dropping out of school for economic reasons and support to their families.

1. Principal problems of the education provided to the population living in conditions with accumulated deficiencies

In **education for young people and adults** there are problems related to operational factors (the need to expand the advisers' training; irregular student attendance; material distribution problems); problems related to the context in which the education is being given (one out of every three adults has difficulties studying because of tiring work days; women who are homemakers have significant limitations for studying); and problems with education results, since only a small number of students complete their studies and obtain a diploma.

In **job training**, findings show that the most underprivileged sectors of the population are not reached. In relation to young people in circumstances of poverty, there is an evident need to renew the existing supply of training aimed at young people with low incomes or in situations of poverty and unemployment. With regard to women, the gender perspective needs to be promoted in staff promotion training programs. In general, there is a need to improve the quality and coverage of this education service.

However, some progress has been made. There have been some innovative initiatives to reach agreements with different job training centers and the National College for Professional Technical Education (CONALEP) to incorporate a gender perspective in their programs and to obtain women's participation in scholarship programs to train unemployed workers. In this way, women are being offered training in skills that are not traditionally for women: carpentry, plumbing, silkscreen printing and automotive mechanics.

It should be noted that most of the advisers and people in charge of education for youth and adults are young. More than 50% of the advisers have schooling beyond a bachelor's degree and are under 25 years of age. However, more than 50% of the advisers have been providing their service for less than one year. This is where a window of opportunity could open up for young people.

2. Response to the need for basic education and job training for the population living in conditions with accumulated deficiencies

Model of Education for Living and Working

This model of the National Council on Living and Working addresses the special needs of the young and adult population over 15 years of age who, for different reasons, were unable to begin or complete their basic education.

The goals being sought in this model are: a gender approach, human rights, a vision of the future; a culture for peace; and the development of a sense of belonging and identity with an awareness of diversity at the same time. The skills that it seeks to develop are: communication, reasoning, problem solving and participation.

The service modalities of the Model of Education for Living and Working are:

- a. Primary education for young people from 10 to 14 years of age
- b. Efforts aimed at young people in the National Military Service
- c. Efforts aimed at migrant farm day-laborers
- d. Basic literacy and “technological literacy” project for the indigenous population
- e. Efforts aimed at Mexican communities abroad

These services are offered at the Community Plazas (almost 3,000 are operating in 2004) jointly established by the government and the social sectors with the support of new communication technologies (satellite network, Internet access, computer equipment, etc.)

3. Compensatory support and scholarship programs

One of the factors emphasized in the current education policy is to ensure equity. Since 1992, compensatory programs have been applied to respond with better education for rural populations with more accentuated economic and social deficiencies where adverse conditions are the cause of their lagging behind in education.

The compensatory programs consist of diverse components aimed at strengthening the educational supply and demand in regions and social groups with major economic, social and cultural disadvantages. The components aimed at strengthening the education supply are: construction and remodeling of education facilities; the provision of school furniture, equipment and material; teacher performance incentives; advisory services and training for teachers and directors; support for school supervision; and the institutional strengthening of state public education secretariats. The main strengthening components are the provision of school supplies; non-formal education on raising children from birth to

four years of age; and promotion of a culture of social participation in school management.

The most evident change is that the Program for Reducing the Accumulated Deficiencies in Initial and Basic Education (PAREIB) incorporated the two previous compensatory programs, and thereby coordinated efforts that have enabled better distribution of resources.

Another boost to activities in favor of equity has been the notable increase in the number of scholarships.

The Opportunities Program, previously called PROGRESA, distributed slightly more than 3 million scholarships to basic education students in the 2001-2002 school year.

For the 2004-2005 school year, there are plans to benefit 4,800,000 students in basic education alone.

In 2001, the Opportunities Program for high school students was put into operation. In the 2001-2002 school year, 267,000 scholarships were granted. The number of scholarship recipients foreseen for the 2004-2005 school year is 803,000.

The purpose of the National Program of Scholarships for Higher Education (PRONABES) is to provide a greater proportion of young people in adverse conditions with access to public higher education services

In the 2001-2002 school year, PRONABES granted 44,442 scholarships. In the 2002-2003 school year, 28,238 who fulfilled the established requirements renewed their scholarships (63% renewed) and 66,301 new scholarships were granted, which means that PRONABES benefited 94,539 students. In the 2003-2004 school year, almost 137,000 students received scholarships from PRONABES, 60,000 of whom were able to renew them (68% renewed), and 78,862 students are receiving economic support for the first time to initiate or continue studies in some public institution of higher education.

Of the total number of scholarship holders, 16% come from families whose monthly incomes amount to one minimum salary; 38%, between one and two; 38%, between two and three; and 8%, between three and four.

In research conducted by various institutions of higher education (see: Undersecretariat of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Secretariat of Public Education—SEP, 2004) to determine the impact of PRONABES on student dropout rates, reductions of up to 50% in student dropout rates were observed, in addition to an increase of 60% in the regular passing from the first to the second level in the study plan.

The activities of the Program to Support the Higher Education of Indigenous Youth is aimed at providing economic incentives to low-income indigenous students to carry out higher education studies and thereby contribute to forming indigenous cadres of a high academic level.

4. Bilingual intercultural education

The General Coordinating Office for Bilingual Intercultural Education, created by Federal Executive agreement on January 22, 2001, has the following powers and responsibilities:

- To promote the participation of the states and municipalities, as well as the different sectors of indigenous society, peoples and communities, in developing bilingual intercultural education;
- To train teaching, technical and administrative staff;
- To develop and disseminate indigenous languages;
- To produce materials in indigenous languages;
- To conduct research on intercultural matters.

2.3. Education and competences for life

2.3.1. Concept for the renovation of secondary education

Basic education

The program for Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education (RIES) sets forth four lines of action for renovating the secondary level:

- a. School and institutional management and operation
- b. Curricular transformation
- c. Training and refresher courses for teachers and directors
- d. Resource generation

Since the RIES is still in a phase of broad consultation, the lines have progressed to differing degrees. The progress obtained to date in the curricular transformation line is described below.

In the curricular sphere, the RIES has proposed adjustments in the organization and sequence of course subjects, as well as the redistribution of hour load. In addition to changes in the curriculum map, an in-depth review of the current study plans in each subject has been made to reduce the quantity of its content, to underscore the major lines that mark its development and to highlight the links that should exist between the three levels that form basic education. The RIES curriculum proposal also includes the use of diverse types of communication and information technology (ICT), both in general and to teach a series of specific subjects.

2.3.1.1. Criteria used for guidance in determining the curriculum proposal

On the basis of the previous arguments in the framework of the Reform and to fulfill the

goals at which the RIES is aimed, the following criteria were defined for preparing the curriculum proposal:

a) *The linkage of basic education*

The graduate profile of basic education has served as a guide for preparing this proposal that seeks to achieve curricular continuity, and to contribute to the pedagogical and organizational linkage of secondary education with preschool and primary school levels. The goals of each of the fields of knowledge studied at the levels prior to secondary education have been reviewed in order to define the study programs of the different courses.

This proposal also seeks to favor the integration of courses by specifying the relationships that exist in the contents of each and emphasizing the subjects that are the responsibility of several courses in the curriculum.

b) *The development of basic skills and the definition of performance expectations*

The curriculum proposal focuses on work based on skills to achieve the graduate profile traits. Its goals include enabling students to mobilize their knowledge inside and outside the classroom: to be able to apply what they have learned to everyday situations and, when pertinent, to take into account the personal, social and environmental impact of applying it. Acquiring and applying knowledge, advocating attitudes and values that will benefit the comprehensive development of the students, peaceful coexistence with observance of the law, and care and respect for the environment are what the proposal seeks. Another goal is for secondary education to enable students to direct their own learning on an ongoing and independent basis throughout their lives, either to continue with their studies—which should be promoted so that increasing numbers of young people enter the high school level—or to enter the job market or other activities without remuneration.

To provide guidance for teaching efforts related to the development of skills established for each course and basic education in general, the study programs outline performance expectations that indicate what the students are expected to know and be able to do. This seeks to facilitate teachers' decision-making and to encourage the creation of the strategies they consider appropriate to attain the goals proposed. The performance expectations are also an important reference for improving communication and ties among teachers, students and parents.

c) *Recognition of adolescents' reality*

Developing a curriculum whose priority is benefiting adolescents, without forgetting their heterogeneous nature, involves considering their learning interests and needs, as well as creating opportunities in which the students can express their concerns and put into practice what they have learned. Consequently, in the curriculum proposal of the program for the Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education (RIES), each grade includes open spaces where relations between course content and adolescents' reality can be established and student motivation and interest in some of the proposed areas can be encouraged.

In this sense, the courses promote work by project, case study or the solution to problematic situations, as curricular spaces where the development of skills can be combined with addressing some adolescent needs, both in personal and social contexts.

d) Greater depth in the study of fundamental content

The growing multiplication and diversification of knowledge, as well as its sources, means it is impossible to teach and learn it all. Thus, one of the goals of basic education should be training individuals to be able to learn continuously, based on the development of cross-cutting skills and the selection of content on which they can understand and delve more deeply into other fields of knowledge.

For this selection, each course has taken into account the way in which the discipline has constructed knowledge; the fundamental concepts that allow it to be understood as a socially and culturally constructed field of knowledge; the concepts that can be learned in secondary school; the most important concepts for training needs, student interests and the building of skills; and, finally, the inclusion of different sociocultural contexts (global, national, regional and local) in the study of each course.

e) The compacting of courses to take advantage of time and encourage communication between teachers and students.

One of the aspects frequently referred to in national and international research on academic performance problems in secondary education is the number of courses that comprise this level. For students it involves remaining in school many hours and coping with more than ten teaching styles in both general and technical secondary schools. (Although in the *Telesecundarias*, the students have only one teacher, their work load has an impact on student learning achievements, above all in the schools referred to as being uni-teacher or bi-teacher schools.) Furthermore, In view of the working conditions in most places, the teachers have very little time to plan their work, deal with the students and establish relationships with them.

To address these circumstances, the RIES has sought to reduce the number of courses per grade in order to benefit communication between teachers and students, encourage the integration of courses and have a positive influence on student learning. A curricular map that has nine courses and takes advantage of the closeness of the approaches and content of courses that comprise the area of natural sciences and those that comprise the area of social sciences, respectively, has been proposed. Thus the courses of biology, physics and chemistry, on the one hand, and geography, world history and history of Mexico, on the other, have been distributed by grade on an equitable basis.

f) Identification of common skills and attitudes

Another of the goals being sought through the curriculum renovation is to encourage the establishment of common lines of work. This measure provides several benefits, but perhaps the main one is to favor training from various curricular spheres. Work on developing the graduate profile traits can be carried out jointly, simultaneously, solidarity and in an integrated manner from any course to the benefit of student learning.

Common lines that exist in the different courses can be approached from goals, skills or content. In the case of content, the curriculum proposals indicate the compatible themes from which cross-cutting lines could be derived. Agreement was also reached on the general cross-cutting lines for dealing with problems such as environmental deterioration, human rights, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, undesired pregnancies and the prevention of addictions, owing to the importance of these themes. This explicit definition of the relationships between the diverse courses that form the curriculum proposal increases opportunities to integrate spheres of knowledge, skills and values included in the distinct areas of learning. Consequently, the development of communication skills becomes extremely important.

g) Opening up options for flexibility

The RIES curriculum proposal has entrusted the teachers with selecting the teaching strategies to develop the themes indicated in the course programs, but has provided a number of performance expectations to be reached by all the students as a reference for the task. The selection of the teaching aids that each teacher considers the most appropriate for achieving the goals will play an outstanding role, not only in reference to textbooks, but also to a number of other available materials such as classroom libraries and a school video library. The supply of materials will also be enriched by strengthening school libraries.

In each course, there are opportunities provided for the teachers to adopt the decisions they deem pertinent to include topics that are of interest to their students and related to the reality nearest to them. Flexibility can also expand through the organization of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities to meet both the needs and concerns of the adolescents and those of the community.

h) The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the classroom

The use of ICT in teaching is fully justified if we take into account that one of the basic objectives of education is to prepare students to be citizens in a plural, democratic and technologically advanced society, on the one hand, and that these technologies offer learning and teaching possibilities of great scope, on the other. These possibilities make it feasible to argue that the main purpose of introducing technology in the classroom is to consolidate the acquisition of basic skills and the development of advanced skills by the students.

It should be noted that the RIES does not advocate tendencies that believe technology can replace the teacher, that it is an end in itself, or that its mere presence will improve the quality of education. In ICT use in the classroom, this view can have consequences that will work against both the goals of basic education and attainment of the expected graduate profile.

The RIES tries to avoid the tendency to underuse technological resources. This usually occurs when the use of technology makes no significant contribution that improves learning in comparison with what can be obtained through the usual means of teaching. The RIES promotes the use of ICT models that allow knowledge to be appropriated

through new ways in which the students are active agents in their own learning, express their own concepts and give critical thought to what they are learning. This approach to CT use for education will require selecting appropriate tools and computer packages, as well as a design for learning activities, to promote teamwork, group discussion and timely, substantive and substantial intervention by the teacher.

ICT use in the classroom, based on the above-mentioned characteristics, will help enable students to gradually become competent users of information gathered from different sources; to develop key skills such as logical thinking, problem solving and data analysis through the use of graphing, calculation and symbolic manipulator packages; to manipulate and analyze geometric configurations through dynamic geometry packages; to achieve the capacity to read and write as means of developing and communicating ideas through the use of different word processing tools, and to share, exchange and discuss texts at a distance; to explore and analyze phenomena of the physical world by representing them and manipulating their variables with simulation, modeling, graphing and database packages.

In addition to their use in each course, ICT favor interdisciplinary work in the classroom through the possibility of showing screen displays of various representations of the same situation or phenomenon and of simultaneously manipulating distinct computational frameworks (for example: numerical tables, graphs, equations, text, data, diagrams or images). Thus, the design of activities that cut across the curriculum such as, for example, activities to explore the behavior of natural or social science phenomena through the manipulation of numerical representations or graphs of the mathematical models of these phenomena will help students profit from the mobility of knowledge from different courses and access to powerful ideas belonging to distinct areas of knowledge. This type of interdisciplinary approach to teaching with technology will result not only in students attaining and applying advanced cognitive skills in their school work, but also in preparing citizens that can put such skills into practice beyond the school sphere and after they complete their basic education.

The introduction of ITC into the daily school work involves, in synthesis, presenting both teachers and students with the problems of new types of literacy. This is an issue that is taken into account in the curriculum reform and should be included in the teacher refresher programs.

2.3.2. *What skills should basic education develop?*

Skills should be considered from the standpoint of all the courses. The definition of the graduate profile traits is based on the following skills:

Skills for ongoing education. These skills involve the possibility of apprehending, assuming and directing one's own education throughout life, of becoming part of the written and mathematical culture, and of mobilizing diverse cultural, scientific and technological spheres of knowledge to understand reality.

Skills for handling information. These skills are related to searching, evaluating and systematizing information; to thinking, reflecting, arguing and expressing critical judgements; to analyzing, synthesizing and utilizing information; and to knowing and

handling different systems of logic for constructing knowledge in diverse disciplines and in different cultural spheres.

Skills for managing situations. These skills are linked to the possibility of organizing and designing life projects, taking into account diverse aspects such as social, cultural, environmental, economic, academic and affective factors and having the initiative to carry them out; to managing time; to encouraging changes and facing those that emerge; to adopting decisions and assuming their consequences; to facing risk and uncertainty; to proposing and carrying out procedures or alternatives to solve problems; and to managing failure and disappointment.

Skills for peaceful coexistence. These skills are harmoniously linked to others and to nature; they include effective communication; teamwork; adopting decisions and negotiating with others; growing with others; harmoniously managing personal and emotional relationships; developing a personal identity; and recognizing and valuing the elements of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity that characterize our country.

Skills for life in society. These skills refer to the capacity to adopt decisions and act with critical judgment in relation to social and cultural values and standards; to act in favor of democracy, peace and respect for the law and human rights; to participate, taking into account forms of working in society, governments and companies, individuals and groups; to participate, taking into account the social implications of the use of technology; to act with respect for sociocultural diversity; to fight discrimination and racism; and to express an awareness of belonging to one's culture, one's country and the world.

2.4 Education and the key role of educators

One of Mexico's principal educational achievements in the 2003-2004 period is what we have accomplished with regard to updating educators' skills. Of the 860 thousand primary and secondary school educators in service, 73 percent, that is, 628 thousand educators, were enrolled in one of the National Continuing Education Courses, which were from 120 to 300 hours in length.

The Professorial Improvement Program (PROMEP) is a strategic program that was created with the aim of achieving substantial advances in the training, dedication and performance of the academic staff of universities as a means for increasing the quality of higher education.

PROMEP launched its operation at the end of 1996, and from that time up to July of 2003, it had granted 5,074 scholarships (3,195 within Mexico and 1,487 for use abroad) for career professors at public universities for engaging in postgraduate studies in programs of recognized quality. Thus, 1,993 have graduated (938 with doctoral degrees, 1,033 with masters degrees and 22 from specialized courses).

Within the framework of this same program, and with a view to contributing to stronger academic staffing in institutions of higher learning, in that period 7,679 new positions were

provided to public universities for contracting full-time professors holding master's degrees, or preferentially, doctorates.

To what extent have the Declaration and the recommendations of the 1996 International Conference on Education had an influence on national policies concerning the condition and role of educators?

Since 1996, the Secretariat of Public Education, in coordination with educational authorities in the states, has developed the Program for Academic Development and Improvement at Teachers Colleges. In formulating the Program, in addition to including the proposals and suggestions gained through a broad process of national consultation, some international experience was reviewed and, in particular, the Declaration and Recommendations approved by the 45th UNESCO International Conference on Education held in 1996 which were disseminated through a publication that was part of the Library Notebook series for Continuing Education for Teachers, together with the comments made by Juan Carlos Tedesco at that Conference.

From 2001 to the present, the activities conducted by the Secretariat of Public Education that focus on the status and role of docents include the following, which reflect the influence of the recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Hiring educators: Attracting the most competent young people to the teaching profession.

In this regard, the SEP has issued to the state educational authorities a package of recommendations addressing criteria and mechanisms to improve admission processes for candidates wishing to enter the teaching profession. Among the recommendations, the following are notable: seek a grade-point average of at least 8.0 (eight) or above—on a scale of one to ten—in high school studies; and use a test of general knowledge designed by national and state agencies with experience in those processes, in addition to other evaluation tools relevant to the type of service or modality for which the new teacher wishes to receive training. Applying these recommendations has made it possible to incorporate people who have demonstrated greater aptitude for teaching into the beginning level of study for professors of basic education.

Recommendation 2. Initial training: Improve the articulation of initial training with the requirements of innovative professional activity.

In order to make basic education professors' initial training more relevant and to link it with the educational needs of children and youth who are involved in that type of education and to the requirements of schools, the SEP has continued to update the curriculum for degree programs for training new teachers, while also continuing to review and enhance the study plans and programs for the degree programs amended between 1997 and 2000.

The degree programs reshaped during the period covered by this report are: Physical Education Degree, 2002 plan; Special Education Degree; Primary Education Degree with an Intercultural Bilingual focus. The degree programs that were already reformulated, but which continue to be revised and updated are: Primary Education Degree, 1997 plan;

Preschool Education Degree, 1999 plan; Secondary Education Degree (with ten areas of specialization) 1999 plan.

The features of the updated degree programs are linked to several ICE recommendations, for example: a linkage between the knowledge of the discipline-specific content and the methods and focus used for teaching; the preponderant role given to training in the teaching practicum under actual working conditions; the development of intellectual and critical thinking skills; strengthening the professional and ethical nature of the job such that the future teacher incorporates into his or her professional behavior an appreciation and respect for human rights and recognition, respect and appreciation for cultural diversity, as well as respect and promotion for care for the natural environment and sustainable development.

Recommendation 3. In Service training: both the right and the duty of all people working in education.

This recommendation is primarily addressed through the activities of the National Continuing Education Program for basic education teachers (*Pronap*). As regards initial training, we are promoting the commitment and attitude that every teacher should have about continuing to learn on an ongoing basis throughout his or her career.

Recommendation 4. Participation of educators and others in the process of changing education.

This recommendation is addressed by the activities of the Quality Schools Program, which seeks to improve schools working with those directly involved by starting with definition of their needs and proposing activities for innovation and change in school management.

As regards institutions for teacher training, since 2002 the Program for Improving Institutional Management of Teachers Colleges has been under way and aims to promote the participation of school communities in the processes of planning, organization and evaluation of the institution's activities, as well as in the design and implementation of activities that enhance and transform the services it offers. Through the annual working plans that schools present and Program Operation Rules, the SEP grants economic resources to schools for the promotion of projects for innovation in education. Through this program, greater decision-making autonomy is given impetus in schools, as is a culture of evaluation and accountability.

Recommendation 5. Educators and associated participants in the educational process: education is everyone's responsibility.

The reforms made in plans and study programs for the initial training of basic education teachers have been preceded by discussion and analysis processes in which teachers college communities, working professors of basic education, authorities, directors, union representatives, parents, researchers and specialists in the subject have taken part. Those processes are designed to incorporate the suggestions, proposals and viewpoints of the participants in education and to reach broad consensus on the reforms that are implemented.

In particular, in 2003 by agreement of those responsible for education in the states and within the SEP, a national consultation process was conducted that was oriented toward formulating a comprehensive policy for the training and professional development of basic education teachers. This process enjoyed broad-based and qualitatively relevant participation, which resulted in the National Policy Guidance Document for Training and Professional Development of Basic Education Teachers. This policy seeks to link the services and programs involved in training teachers with the needs of basic education; initial training with continuing education; and teacher training programs with the teaching career path (admission, initial training, entry into service, continuing education, promotion, tenure and incentives). By the same token, the above-mentioned document establishes some mechanisms for coordination of the national system and the state systems for training, continuing education, skill-building and professional advancement for basic education teachers.

Recommendation 6. New information and communications technologies: serving to improve the quality of education for all.

Through the Program for Improving Institutional Management of Teachers Colleges support has been provided for the procurement of audiovisual and computer equipment, with a view to having these institutions make it available to education professors and students as support for their initial and ongoing training and as educational resources that the future teacher can use in the educational process.

Recommendation 7. Promotion of professionalism as a strategy for improving the status and working conditions of educators.

As part of the National Policy for Professional Training and Development for basic education teachers, an action item has been established to “Guarantee that the incentives for teachers are related to improvements in educational results and professional performance—be it individual, collective, or school-wide—ensuring respect for their rights and complete fulfillment of their responsibilities and duties to society.” Thus, we seek to associate teacher promotions and incentives both with the preparation they acquire through various continuing education courses offered to them and with the achievement of the educational goals of the students for whom they are responsible. Similarly, the above-mentioned policy document indicates the necessity of establishing profiles, criteria and guidelines for evaluating the performance of professors, and of establishing clear procedures for hiring, promotion and tenure for basic education teachers and professors of education.

Recommendation 8. Solidarity with educators working in difficult circumstances.

Teaching staff who support the efforts of the National Council for the Promotion of Education are young people between the ages of 14 and 24 who have completed either secondary school or high school. They provide Educational Social Service addressing the academic deficiencies of children and youth in communities that are rural and marginalized, indigenous and made up of migrant populations. They teach preschool, primary or post-primary courses in the educational programs and modalities used by CONAFE.

CONAFE has formulated and strengthened strategies that benefit and consolidate ability of the Council's former educators to continue and complete their education in high school, university or vocational training schools through programs promoting education such as the Educator Study System (SED)

All SED beneficiaries receive a monthly stipend so that they may continue and complete their studies.

In addition, educator salary scales provide for compensation for teaching staff who work in remote or marginalized areas.

Recommendation 9. Regional and international cooperation: An instrument for promoting teacher mobility and competence.

Reviewing Mexican and international experience has been an important element in developing the activities of the Program for the Transformation and Academic Improvement of Teachers Colleges. Likewise, the experience gained with regard to initial training in our country has drawn attention and prompted consultation with teachers and administrators responsible for initial training in other countries. Furthermore, one of the activities that has contributed to the process of formulating the National Policy for Professional Training and Development for basic education teachers was editing the *Discussion Notebooks* series, in which several issues addressed experiences and the results of research on educator training in other countries.

2.5 Education and sustainable development

a) To what extent is the issue of sustainable development in the current curriculum and study programs?

From the first international discussion more than 30 years ago about the state of the environment and the role that education should play in its preservation, Environmental Education emerged as a way to contribute to preventing and resolving problems in this area. Later, in 1987, after studying the living conditions of people in poor and rich nations, in the Brundtland Report “Our Shared Future” Sustainable Development was set forth as one of the proposals that would enable the majority of the population to reach a decent standard of economic well-being with social equity and environmental quality.

In Mexico, environmental education has been incorporated and reinforced gradually, but on an ongoing basis, at the various levels of the National Educational System. The proposal to favor sustainable development in our country has been viably articulated with the strategy for environmental education.

Sustainable development is a concept that is still being formulated. However, it may be defined as a *social and economic development strategy that makes it possible to meet the fundamental human needs of the present generation, while respecting the capacity of ecosystems to restore or regenerate themselves, in such a way that future generations have the same options for meeting their own fundamental human needs....without altering or limiting the ability of other regions to satisfy their own needs.* (See: Addition to the Brundtland Report by Nu Lu Kan, 1993; cited in *Environmental Education in Secondary School Study Guide*. SEP National Continuing Education Program (PRONAP). Mexico. 1999. p. 65.)

By the same token, to achieve the purposes of education for sustainable development in Mexico one must consider the following priority areas in any Federal Government activity, project or program: (see: “Priorities within Programs and Activities for Achieving the Objectives of the DESD”—United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development—, in the *Register of Activities, Programs and Projects for Sustainable Development of SEP Agencies*, Mexican Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO—CONALMEX, Mexico 2004)

1. Eradicating poverty
2. Gender equity
3. Promoting health
4. Conserving the environment and biodiversity
5. Rural transformation and civics education
6. Respect for human rights

7. Intercultural understanding and peace
8. Sustainable production and consumption
9. Cultural diversity
10. Use of information and communication technologies

The Secretariat of Public Education has adopted these priorities to help address them within its sphere of responsibility and powers, while recognizing and participating in the public policies aimed at giving impetus to Education on the environment and for Sustainability in Mexico. For this reason, we can state that the educational system is engaged in an ongoing and progressive process of strengthening these subjects in the various educational levels and modalities.

Thus, the subjects of the environment and sustainable development are reflected in the curriculum and current study programs, as well as in teaching and support materials. However, it must be noted that much of the incorporation of environmental aspects has occurred in technology and natural sciences programs, while little has been incorporated into social science and humanities programs.

Therefore, the curriculum reform includes content and exercises aimed at developing knowledge, attitudes, skills and values with regard to the environment and sustainable development in all areas of learning.

At the junior/senior high school level there is great potential for enhancing and strengthening content related to environmental and sustainable development topics. The reforms to the general and technical high school degree programs include this content both in courses devoted to these subjects as well as in interdisciplinary courses.

Higher education has demonstrated noteworthy progress (see, for example, *Action Plan for Sustainable Development in Institutions of Higher Learning, National Association and Institutions of Higher Learning—SEAMARNAT— 2002*, primarily in its diagnostic section.) The growth of majors, specialties, postgraduate studies and courses of research on environmental matters in the last 20 years has come as a result of the operation of more than 1,179 academic programs in 177 institutions of higher education (see: 1999 data from *SEMARNAT*. The directory of institutions of higher learning with academic programs related to the environment and sustainable development can be consulted at: <<http://www.semarnat.gob.mx/cecadestu/>>). However, traditional degree programs and postgraduate studies, principally those in the areas of social science and the humanities are still to a great degree failing to address the subjects of environmental preservation and sustainability.

In the education of youth and adults, the *INEA* (National Institute for Adult Education) has incorporated environmental aspects in the content of its Basic Core and Advanced Core Studies, which offer these modules: “Our Planet, the Earth” and “Mexico, Our Home”, as well as “Let’s Get to Know Ourselves Better” and “Let’s Live Better”. Within its Diversified Studies, a package called “For a Better Environment” will soon be introduced.

The SEP offers initial educator training in Teachers Colleges and continuing education (through *ProNAP*) which has designed several courses on environmental education and sustainable development. The national course on environmental education for secondary school has been taught to more than 30,000 educators, and a new general course to be offered beginning in 2004 is being reinforced with new program modules.

Owing to all of the above, environmental education promoted by the SEP has tended to contribute to sustainable development in Mexico. We are working to strengthen, consolidate and give impetus to environmental education and for sustainability by addressing it in an interdisciplinary way with a view to ensuring its presence in the curriculum of the three levels of basic education (preschool, primary and secondary) from the basic purposes to the content and performance expectations (in the case of secondary education). After all, Mexico's environmental situation and sustainable development are the responsibility of all citizens, including teachers, students and parents. In these tasks, the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources and its decentralized administrative agencies are collaborating, especially the National Water Commission and the National Ecology Institute, as is the Secretariat of Energy.

b) What measures, if any, are being implemented to ensure that sustainable development is considered one of the central topics of education and is it reflected and supported by the contents?

In the process of educational reform outlined in the *2001-2006 National Program for Education*, the policy of reinforcing specific educational content and the production of printed materials establishes as part of its goals those of "in the basic education curriculum, updating content for environmental education and sustainable development," and "promoting a culture of environmental preservation and sustainable development through educator training and the promotion of public participation." It also creates collaboration agreements with the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (*SEMARNAT*) "in order to encourage in basic education schools programs for environmental education and sustainable use of natural resources." The foregoing has been done with the goal of making possible "better quality and greater relevance of teaching to students in basic education." (See: *2001-2006 National Education Program. SEP, Mexico 2001, p. 144.*)

The Comprehensive Reform of Secondary Education (*RIES*) seeks to strengthen Environmental Education and education for sustainability on the basis of a proposal to favor an interdisciplinary approach. This implies more clearly articulating the content covered at the preschool, primary and secondary levels of education in order to make its continuity and importance clear and to make it more easily understood. Similarly, strengthening the study of the environmental situation and strategies for sustainable development from systemic, multidimensional, interdisciplinary and comprehensive perspectives is also a relevant task. In this sense, we seek to foster a hopeful vision of the future, so that we can begin to build it in the present, improving the quality of life in situations near to students, in which they can participate and take responsibility for their decisions and behavior as well as contribute to the extent they can to sustainable development in their own home town, their state and their nation.

Reinforcing the environmental dimension in Basic Education consists of reconciling among academic areas the characterization and educational purposes of education regarding the environment and for coherent sustainability with the Exit Profile for Basic Education (PEEB), as well as sharing responsibility for its development and implementation. The objectives proposed for environmental and sustainability education in Basic Education suggest that by the time they finish their secondary education, students will:

- Understand human beings' concurrent evolution and interrelationships with nature, on the basis of a comprehensive view that enables them to see themselves as part of the environment (with its natural, social, economic and cultural components, among others) and to appreciate the consequences of their activities as they function.
- Understand that their respectful behavior, responsible consumption and solidary participation contribute to maintaining and enhancing the environment and to benefiting their present and future quality of life, as well as to contributing to sustainable development in their home, state and nation.

For preschool education, a new educational program is under development in which we propose to work on the basis of two formative fields: "Exploration and Learning about the World" and "Health and Physical Development", which will strengthen the proposal for environmental and sustainability education that is provided to Mexican boys and girls at an early age.

In primary education, the definitions of biodiversity, environment and sustainable development are being studied and updated, as is the consistency in the continuity, depth and interrelationships with which we address the content related to each concept in the various subjects in order to reinforce a multidisciplinary approach.

Other factors that we know must be addressed and strengthened to contribute to achieving the hoped-for results and regarding which the SEP is conducting careful study are the following:

- Systematic evaluation of the accomplishments set forth for education on the environment and for sustainability with regard to students, educators and the system in general.
- Initial training for future educators of the various subjects with regard to education on the environment and for sustainability.
- Continuing education for educators and updating the states' technical teaching equipment.
- Teaching in a way that promotes the formation of knowledge (concepts, skills, attitudes and values) in order that students might understand the current environmental situation; participate in an individually and collectively committed way in environmental conservation through study, prevention and reduction of environmental problems in the places where they live; and know the impact of

their action when they participate in monitoring and evaluation, as well as ensuring that they move forward from the present to improve their quality of life and to build a desirable future. We want students to analyze, appreciate and take responsibility and pride in their contribution to sustainable development in Mexico.

- Clarity as regards the differentiated responsibilities in creating environmental problems and addressing them (understanding, prevention, reduction and solution) in accordance with people's ages (children, adolescents and adults) and the parts of society that participate (schools, families, NGOs, businesses, among others).
- Interdisciplinary work within each school.
- The relationship between the school and the community.

Consistent with the proposal UNESCO formulated for operation of the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, in 2004 the Secretariat of Public Education has begun to establish alliances with various sectors in order to assure that we meet the Decade's goals. Along these lines, we were signatories to an alliance with *ANUIES* (National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Learning) and, we will soon sign on to an alliance between the Secretariat of Public Education, the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources and *CANACINTRA* (National Manufacturing Industry Chamber of Commerce) for the same purpose. In the coming months, the results obtained from working in concert with other strategic sectors, such as the communications media, will be defined in order to establish the corresponding alliances.

Curriculum reform for general arid technical high school programs used environmental education and sustainable development as one of its cross-discipline subject areas. In the beginning grade level "Ethics and Values", which lasts two semesters, is devoted to environmental education for sustainable development as one topic among five. This course seeks to address current problems with regard to the care, enjoyment and deterioration of the environment by using the concept of citizenship as a point of reference in order to identify the rights and duties of citizens in relation to the environment. By the same token, ecological, social and economic implications of local environmental problems are analyzed. On the basis of the foregoing, the student develops the ability to recognize environmental problems and to propose feasible solutions on the basis of the concept of the quality of life.

Higher education has made an important leap forward with regard to offerings for degree and professional studies linked to the subjects of the environment, natural resources and sustainability. In addition, a consortium of 12 institutions of higher learning called *Complexus* has been created, which has put more comprehensive institutional policies on these subjects into effect. Thus, in the year 2000, the National Academy for Environmental Education was founded.

Mexico's universities and scientific and technological institutes, both public and private, have provided support and space for young people by supplying aid for internal and

external projects, as well as training in specific areas of education. For example, the organization of young Mexican environmentalists contributed to the efforts of several Mexican participants in the Rio Summit + 10, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. Through the National Youth Consultation a proposal was put forth to identify how informed young people are regarding Agenda 21 and its implications for national and local development, not only with regard to environmental matters, but also addressing related subjects such as reproductive rights, equity and gender, all aspects of health, regional development, social communication, indigenous rights and political participation, to mention a few of the topics in which young people are actively influencing events.

In other words, planning and the development of policies, strategies and action with regard to environmental matters and natural resources that benefit Mexican youth have contributed to motivating young people, who form part of the foundation of society, and to consolidating a citizenry that seeks stability and social equity, while at the same time promoting the protection and improvement of the environment for the well-being of current and future generations, in addition to promoting sustainable development and participating as a sector of society in the formulation of environmental laws and policies (source: 2002-2006 Young Peoples' Environmental Program).

The Mexican Institute for Youth is an organization created with our young people in mind. Among its many activities is the conduct of the Young Mexicans' Environmental Forum, which is itself an indication that many youngsters live in Mexico who are working to improve the environment by making their daily labors more efficient so that they may contribute as a group to building a sustainable Mexico. The Forum's goals were to: exchange experiences about the participants' environmental work; strengthen the communications and cooperation mechanisms among the country's young environmentalists and offer tools to reinforce the environmental work of youth groups (source: Mexican Institute for Youth.)

In this context, the National Young People's Competition for Sustainable Rural Development Projects is an opportunity for purposeful participation that the Federal Government makes available to Mexico's young men and women in order to stimulate and promote their creative ability with a focus on the creation and development of alternative projects. Through the creation and innovation of these projects, our youth generate models for the growth and development of the Mexican countryside, thereby contributing to improving living conditions of young men and women, their communities and the regions where they live. The subjects involved are: *Use and Management of Natural Resources; Environmental Impact; Technologies for Sustainable Rural Development; and Rural Education.* (Source: Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources.)

The 2002-2006 Young Environmentalists Program seeks to incorporate youngsters into the processes for environmental management as promoters of increased environmental awareness and as leaders in the conduct of specific actions to preserve and enhance the environment and thus their quality of life. This program is designed to promote and support the participation of young people, especially indigenous youngsters and those in extremely poor communities, in the design and development of sustainable productive projects; to foster the shared responsibility of the various sectors of society in creating activities that benefit young people; to provide opportunities and spaces for education and

training using a sustainability approach for youth both within and outside of school; to encourage their environmental awareness and stimulate their active participation in all environmental management practices, ranging from research and analysis of the current situation to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of processes for natural resources restoration, conservation and management to processes involving sustainable production and consumption.

Furthermore, it also seeks to reinforce the preservation, teaching and exchange of traditional knowledge for the sustainable management of natural resources, as well as to establish opportunities for linkage and ongoing communication with young people and youth groups that will enable us to receive feedback on environmental subjects; to support and stimulate the development of outstanding initiatives by young people for protecting biodiversity, educational communications, dissemination of environmental information, restoration and sustainable management of natural resources, and to establish mechanisms for distributing information on environmental topics and activities for young people.

GEO Youth Mexico

The GEO Youth project for Latin America and the Caribbean is an initiative of the United Nations Program for the Environment's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The goal is to conduct an evaluation of the current state of the environment from a young person's perspective through a participative process. Creating the GEO reports has made it possible to identify the main causes of environmental deterioration, which are: continued poverty of the majority of the world's population and excessive consumption by a minority.

GEO Youth Mexico is a project that has been put together in the context of the GEO Youth process for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is led by young people between 15 and 28 years of age. The report highlights environmental subjects from a young person's point of view. The youngsters identify Mexico's primary environmental problems and their origin. Similarly, the report describes the impact of these problems in their communities and, finally, it proposes solutions and concrete action plans in each case. In Mexico, the project is coordinated by the *PNUMA*, the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (*SEMARNAT*), the Mexican Institute for Youth, the Mexican Young Environmentalists Network (*RAJ*). The objective is to contribute with some research work, case studies, narratives or photographs. The young peoples' collaborative products will be received, compiled and presented in a final report entitled GEO Youth Mexico.

According to our young people, the most serious problems we confront today are climate change, air pollution, water scarcity and contamination, and the deterioration of the ozone layer, together with the loss of biodiversity and disappearance of ecosystems caused by the growth of urban areas that have spread owing to the activities of human beings.

These activities have affected the environment in three primary ways: changes in land use for agriculture or cattle raising, extraction and degradation of natural resources, and generation of waste and untreated wastewater. These problems have been created to a great extent as a result of the lack of knowledge that existed—and still exists—with regard

to the processes that sustain life on our planet.

In general, the environmental field is a complex social arena comprising an enormous variety of discourse and ideology with extremely varied degrees and levels of radicalization. In this arena, environmental education also plays a role, one that is often counter to the cultural and economic mores touted by the communications media, above all because the problem has been exacerbated by commercial exchange that accompanies the neo-liberal economic lifestyles idealized by globalization.

Environmental education has much to contribute in the process of building new social identities to respond to the challenges of our difficult present. Because in the process of building this new field of education, we are increasingly distancing ourselves from the initial proposals that coupled environmental education with naturalism, conservationism and other approaches associated with the viewpoint that emphasizes preservation of the natural environment without taking into account the needs and prospects for social change of the human groups who inhabit that natural environment.

As is evident in the plan agreed upon at the World Summit on Environment and Development, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, the main themes revolved around eradicating poverty, modifying the models for production and consumption, and quality of life. These themes include a strong environmental conservation component, but one that is framed by social and economic considerations that shape the current international situation. This will aid in defining a new profile for the educational processes that will go hand in hand with policies on the environment and sustainable development.

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