

CONTEXT FOR THE NATIONAL DATA: MEXICO

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The system of higher education in Mexico is extensive and diverse. The system as a whole comprises more than 2,000 degree-granting institutions and serves about 2.4 million students. The largest part of the enrollment, about two thirds, attend public institutions while 33% of the students are enrolled in private institutions.

The bulk of the undergraduate enrollment (89.5%) attends 4-year programs at universities or technical institutes, 7.2% are enrolled in teacher training programs at "Normal schools" and small but growing minority (3.4%) of the students are enrolled in two-year programs leading to a "Técnico Superior Universitario" or "Profesional Asociado" degree.

The first private higher education institution, not a university but the "Free School of Law," was founded in 1912. The first private university was founded in 1935 in Guadalajara. The private sector in Mexico presents several variations in size, focus, geographical distribution, and capacities. More than two thirds of the institutions are private (70%), however, their enrollment share fluctuates around the 33% of the national total. One can find large elite multi-campus institutions, elite uni-campus universities, religious related universities, and non-elite smaller colleges as the most representative types of private institutions.

There is not a fiscal for-profit status for educational organizations. In this sense it is impossible to talk about a for-profit sector. However, some institutions can be assumed as such given their orientation or the fact that they were purchased by international for-profit groups or investment funds. Smaller institutions, product of small-scale entrepreneurship are also frequently considered as for-profit.

A substantial part of the private institutions, despite their official name of "university" operate as colleges focusing on teaching at undergraduate level and some graduate programs. Research and extension are mainly a carried on by public or private-elite institutions.

There are four main ways to obtain a license for the operation of academic programs at a private higher education institution: (a) Obtaining from the Ministry of Education the federal "Registro de Validez Oficial de Estudios" known as RVOE which consist on the license for operation nationwide. (b) Obtaining the State RVOE which consists basically in the same kind of license. The only difference is that it is given by the State Board of Education and its is assumed as valid for operating in the state (in practical terms, due to the federal system, it poses no legal problem for the institutions or the students). (c) Incorporating the programs to the public university of the state. In this case the state university oversees the quality of the program and gives recognition to the degree given by a minor institution. And (d) Incorporating the programs to the National University (UNAM) or the "Instituto Politécnico Nacional" (IPN), two of the big federal institutions. There is not a system for the accreditation of institutions, only for programs.

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