



Education

In early Mexican civilisations, such as the Mexica (Aztec), Maya and Olmec, religious figures were in charge of educating the people. They were respected as the wisest, most knowledgeable members of society.

Aztec children began education in their homes from the age of three. In Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City but once the Aztec capital, the sons of Aztec noblemen went to one school (called the *Calmecac*) and the sons of middle class families to another (called *Telpochcalli*).



Some of the subjects they studied were history, medicine, astronomy, writing, and mathematics. There were also military and music schools.

After the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519 and the colonisation of Mexico, Spanish missionaries educated the indigenous people. The missionaries learnt native languages so that they could translate religious books and manuscripts, and teach the people about the Catholic religion.

They also taught them to read, write, sing and speak in Spanish. The missionaries would often educate noblemen's sons, who would in turn teach their own parents.



In 1551, the first University was founded in Mexico City, one of the earliest in the Americas.

Religion has always had an important influence on education in Mexico. However, nowadays, public education in Mexico is secular (not based on religious beliefs).

Today Mexico invests 7% of its GNP in education and has obtained total coverage in basic education: 100% in primary school and 85% in secondary.

The Ministry of Education provides free textbooks to every child of pre-primary, primary and first grade of secondary school. In some indigenous communities where the children are bilingual, primary school is taught both in Spanish and the local language (such as Nahuatl, Mayan, and Zapotec).



Today, children go to nursery school, followed by pre-primary school when they are 5 or 6 years old.

More than 25 million students go to primary school between the ages of 6 and 12. Approximately 1 million of these children

attended a school taught in an indigenous language, such as Nahuatl, Mayan or Zapotec.

At 12, students attend Secondary school. At 15, teenagers can go to preparatory school for three years and then to a Technological College or University.

Like in Britain, most children attend public schools, but there are also many private schools in Mexico, for all levels. In most schools, children have to wear a school uniform.



Due to the **large number of students**, some public schools have two timetables. Usually children go to school in the morning from 8 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and some (the minority) attend school in the afternoon from 2 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.