

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The stabilization plan implemented by the government in reaction to the peso crisis has required severe cuts in government spending. The problem was exacerbated by the reported transfer of some 150,000 students from private schools to public schools following the devaluation. But at the same time, improving the national education system remains a major priority. By 2000, the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to public education is expected to rise to 8 from 5 percent in 1993.

During the term of former president Carlos Salinas, the *Solidaridad* program, administered by the *Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL)*, Secretariat of Social Development, was the major source of funding both for school construction and student assistance. A total of \$3.6 billion Mexican pesos was allocated to education during the government's six-year term. The *Solidaridad* program has been criticized for undue political influences on spending priorities and it was frozen by the incoming Zedillo government. Knowledgeable observers say that the program is now seen as an impediment to efforts by President Zedillo to distance himself from his predecessor. The decentralization program now being implemented by the new government is also an important factor in the spending freeze.

As a former Secretary of Public Education, President Zedillo is regarded as a strong proponent of spending on education, so the educational components of *Solidaridad* are likely to survive. Most analysts believe that *Solidaridad* will be re-engineered and reinstituted under a new name.

EDUCATION SPENDING UNDER THE SOLIDARIDAD PROGRAM '000 PESOS

Year	Infrastructure	School Improvement	Scholarships
1989	200,200		
1990	309,100	183,257	
1991	377,500	313,709	193
1992	461,100	323,228	527
1993	367,900	353,665	844
1994	447,500	342,787	1,190

Source: *Solidaridad: Seis Años de Trabajo*, Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL), Secretariat of Social Development, 1994.