



OECD Reviews of School Resources

COLOMBIA

Thomas Radinger, Alfonso Echazarra, Gabriela Guerrero
and Juan Pablo Valenzuela



OECD Reviews of School Resources: Colombia 2018

Thomas Radinger, Alfonso Echazarra, Gabriela Guerrero,
Juan Pablo Valenzuela

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Foreword

This report for Colombia forms part of the OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools. Annex A gives further project details.

The “School Resources Review” aims to help countries make resource decisions that support quality, equity and efficiency in school education. The Review provides country-specific and comparative analysis on the use of financial, physical and human resources in school systems. It offers policy advice on how to govern, distribute and manage resources so that they contribute to achieving countries’ educational objectives.

Colombia was one of the countries which opted to participate with an in-depth country review. Country reviews provide detailed descriptions of national policies, a critical analysis of country-specific strengths and challenges and tailored policy advice for improving the use of school resources. This particular review aims to i) provide insights and advice to Colombian authorities; ii) help other countries understand Colombian policies and practices; and iii) provide input for thematic work of the project.

The report was co-authored by Thomas Radinger (OECD Secretariat), also co-ordinator of the review; Alfonso Echazarra (OECD Secretariat); Gabriela Guerrero (GRADE Peru), expert on school provision; and Juan Pablo Valenzuela (Universidad de Chile), expert on school finance. Annex B provides biographies of the team of authors.

The conclusions of the report were informed by a visit to Colombia to carry out interviews with a range of authorities and stakeholders and to visit school communities in different parts of the country. The visit of the review team to Colombia took place in December 2017. Paulo Santiago from the OECD Secretariat also participated in the visit to provide overall guidance and support. For the team’s itinerary, see Annex C. The report presents the situation at the time of the visit.

At the request of Colombia, this report focuses on the funding of school education (Chapter 2), the provision of school education (Chapter 3), and the development of the teaching profession (Chapter 3). Rural education represents a transversal theme of the report within the context of Colombia’s peace agreement and objectives to close rural-urban gaps in social and economic development. Chapter 1 provides the overall context for the remaining chapters. An “Executive Summary” distils the report’s key messages; a section on “Assessment and Recommendations” provides a longer overview of the analysis developed in the report. The report covers all levels of compulsory education as well as transitions between school education and other levels and programmes.

The country review was co-ordinated on the Colombian side by José Luis Sánchez, consultant to the Ministry of National Education, supported by Victoria Gómez from the Office for Cooperation and International Affairs of the Ministry of National Education. Helga Hernández, Vice-Minister for Pre-school and School Education from January 2018, and Luz Amparo Medina, Director for Cooperation and International Affairs, provided general oversight.

An important part of Colombia's involvement was the preparation of a Country Background Report authored by José Luis Sánchez. The background report is an important output of the project in its own right. It was also an important source of information for the review team. Unless indicated otherwise, the data for this report are taken from the background report. The background report and this report complement each other and should be read together for a more comprehensive analysis.

The team is grateful to the many people who met with us during our visit to Colombia despite busy schedules at the end of the year to share their views, knowledge and experience. It is thanks to them that we had the fortune to develop a better understanding of education in Colombia, and experience Colombian hospitality and culture.

We owe very special words of appreciation to the national co-ordinator, José Luis Sánchez. José Luis worked tirelessly to make the School Resources Review of Colombia a success, from the organisation of the preliminary meetings and the country review visit, to the many requests for additional data, the co-ordination of feedback on the review report and the organisation of the launch event for the report. Special gratitude is also due to Victoria Gómez who was critical in helping to get the project started and in providing essential organisational support throughout.

The great kindness and support, excellent sense of organisation, and remarkable sense of commitment and dedication of José Luis and Victoria made our visit and work not only smooth and productive but stimulating and enjoyable. The team is also very grateful to José Luis for providing an excellent background report under a challenging timeline and to all those who assisted him in this considerable task. The Ministry of National Education and its technical teams, under the leadership of Yaneth Giha Tovar, provided crucial support, contributions and clarifications for the project, and we wish to sincerely thank everyone involved.

Lastly, the team wishes to thank colleagues at the OECD. Deborah Nusche, Cláudia Sarrico and Anna Pons provided valuable comments on draft chapters, while Luka Boeskens provided analytical support for some parts of the report. Eléonore Morena provided key administrative and logistical support for the review and was responsible for copy-editing, layout and formatting of the report. Thanks to her skill and talent, the report gained greatly in clarity and legibility. Célia Braga-Schich supported the finalisation of the report. Henri Pearson coordinated communication and supported production. Amar Toor supported the social media campaign. Carmen Fernandez and Florence Guérinot facilitated the publication process. Paulo Santiago provided overall guidance and support as Head of Division for Policy Advice and Implementation.

The analysis of the report seeks to build on and strengthen efforts that are already underway in Colombia. The country's strong commitment to provide all children and young people with a high-quality education on its road to overcome its violent past was evident among all those the team met during its visit. Readers should take into account the difficulties that face anyone, no matter how well briefed, in grasping the complexity of a country and fully understanding all the issues involved. Of course, this report is the responsibility of the author team. While the team benefited from the background report and other documents, as well as the many discussions with a wide range of authorities and stakeholders, any errors or misinterpretations are our responsibility.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

COP	Colombian Pesos
DANE	<i>Departamento Nacional Administrativo de Estadística</i> – National Administrative Department of Statistics
DNP	<i>Departamento Nacional de Planeación</i> – National Planning Department
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECV	<i>Encuesta Nacional de Calidad de Vida</i> – National Quality of Life Survey
FARC-EP	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo</i> - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FECODE	<i>Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de Educación</i> – Colombian Federation of Education Workers
FFIE	<i>Fondo de la Infraestructura Educativa</i> – Educational Infrastructure Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEIH	<i>Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares</i> – Integrated Household Survey
ICBF	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar</i> – Colombian Institute of Family Welfare
ICFES	<i>Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación Educativa</i> – Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISCE	<i>Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa</i> – Synthetic Education Quality Index
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MEN	<i>Ministerio de Educación Nacional</i> – Ministry of National Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAE	<i>Programa de Alimentación Escolar</i> – School Meal Programme
PEI	<i>Proyecto Educativo Institucional</i> – School Educational Project
PER	<i>Programa de Educación Rural</i> – Rural Education Programme
PISA	OECD Programme for International Student Assessment
PND	<i>Plan Nacional de Desarrollo</i> – National Development Plan
PTA	<i>Programa Todos a Aprender</i> – Let's All Learn Programme
SEIP	<i>Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio</i> – Individual Indigenous Educational System
SENA	<i>Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje</i> – National Learning Service
SGP	<i>Sistema General de Participaciones</i> – General System of Transfers
SGR	<i>Sistema General de Regalías</i> – General System of Royalties
SIMAT	<i>Sistema Integrado de Matrícula</i> – Integrated Enrolment System
TALIS	OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey
TERCE	<i>Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo</i> – Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive summary

Colombia is a country of geographical and cultural diversity. The country has become largely urbanised, also driven by rural to urban migration as the result of poor living conditions and violence in rural areas. But rural life still plays a significant role in Colombia: taking density and distance into account, a little more than 30% of the population and between 60% and 76% of municipalities can be considered rural.

While the national economy has grown strongly since the turn of the century following a deep recession in the late 1990s, economic development has been uneven across the country. Colombia's index of inequality of GDP per capita across regions is more than twice as high as the OECD average and slightly higher than in other Latin American countries, such as Chile, Mexico and Brazil. These regional disparities are influenced by the country's topography which limits connections between regions in the absence of efficient infrastructure. Weak institutions, few linkages between rural and urban areas and a focus on traditional agricultural activities also contribute to regional inequalities.

Poverty in rural areas has declined in line with national trends, but differences with urban areas remain substantial. In 2017, multidimensional poverty was still more than twice as high for rural Colombians compared to urban dwellers, and remains particularly acute in remote areas. Social and economic inequalities based on geography particularly affect Colombia's ethnic minorities which are highly concentrated in regions with higher poverty and, in the case of indigenous peoples, in rural and remote areas.

Although the transition to a post-conflict society remains a long-term task and challenge, the signing of the Agreement to End Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in 2016 constitutes a remarkable achievement. The peace accords promise greater social well-being and economic prosperity, in particular for the rural population through a commitment to a comprehensive rural reform. This reform also commits Colombia to the implementation of a specific plan for education - a Special Rural Education Plan - which can play a key role in closing educational gaps between rural and urban areas.

While Colombia has made some progress in creating better educational opportunities for rural children and youth, there is still a long way to go to improve access and quality in education for rural students. For instance, the net enrolment rate of students living in cities and agglomerations and students in remote areas still differ by more than 20 percentage points both for lower and upper secondary education. More generally, there remain significant differences between rural and urban areas in educational outcomes.

In the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015, rural students in Colombia scored on average 38 points below the country's urban students, the equivalent of more than 1 school year. Greater poverty in rural areas explains most of this performance difference, but rural students face additional barriers. Importantly, rural students tend to have lower aspirations for their future education. Rural education provides opportunities, such as smaller classes, but also entails challenges. Less attractive

working conditions often make it difficult to attract and retain high-quality teachers, and low student numbers pose a challenge to offer a broad curriculum, for example.

The review identified the following priorities to improve the effectiveness of resource use in Colombia's school system, and to support efforts to close rural-urban gaps.

Reconcile resource allocations with policy efforts, address priorities gradually while ensuring greater continuity and local capacity, and reform the fiscal transfer system

In recent years, Colombia has set itself many objectives to improve education, from the implementation of full-day schooling, the expansion of early childhood education and care, and the extension of compulsory schooling, to the inclusion of students with special needs and the education of adolescents in the criminal responsibility system. As part of the peace accords, the country has committed itself to the implementation of a Special Rural Education Plan. At the same time, the government has negotiated agreements with the largest teacher union to improve teachers' working conditions. However, all these goals have been set with a shrinking resource base and within a tightening fiscal climate.

In the coming years, the allocation of sufficient resources, therefore, needs to be reconciled with the required efforts to close persisting gaps in educational coverage and quality, including between rural and urban areas. Colombia needs to identify long-term goals and priorities and address these gradually. Since it will be financially difficult to meet set objectives without sufficient funding, Colombia should increase total public resources available for school education, drawing on a range of mechanisms. Given that financing efforts should be permanent, Colombia should discuss a tax reform, but also horizontal equalisation mechanisms to redress the high level of fiscal asymmetries between and within territorial entities. In light of simultaneous demands for increases in funding for tertiary education, authorities should explore alternative options for funding this level, while prioritising gradual investments in the early years.

Since its creation in 2001, the General System of Transfers has been the main source of public funding for school education. While the system has contributed to fiscal sustainability, it has not fulfilled its objective of compensating territories for different levels of disadvantage. The system's financial allocation for education effectively delivers more resources per student to the most vulnerable territories, but the difference is so small that these resources do not offset the highly concentrated contributions of advantaged territorial entities. The review team, therefore, strongly encourages Colombia to reform its revenue sharing system so it promotes greater equity, efficiency and quality.

Ensuring greater continuity in policy and building local capacity should be further key priorities. In order to promote greater stability in the school system and more co-ordination across levels of governance, authorities should re-establish national and subnational education boards. In rural education, specifically, the Ministry of National Education should establish a dedicated unit for supporting and leading efforts to close rural-urban gaps in education. Technical capacities are highly asymmetrical across territorial entities and need to be further developed to equalise learning opportunities.

Improve the organisation of school clusters, build school capacity through greater collaboration, and create a more pertinent educational offer

The organisation of schools into clusters in Colombia brings a series of potential benefits for students in rural and remote areas. They can provide access to education and smooth

transitions to higher levels of education. Moreover, they can help maintain broad coverage of the school network and provide rural communities with additional resources while avoiding the closure of small rural schools. In practice, however, school clusters differ greatly in their number of sites and the distance between them. This can make it difficult for school leaders to manage their schools and to take advantage of these potential benefits. Transport and boarding are crucial parts of provision especially in rural areas but are also scarcely considered at present. Overall, the current organisation of schools thus carries a considerable risk of inequity for rural schools and students.

The central level should encourage the Secretaries of Education of certified territorial entities to review their school networks together with transport and boarding arrangements. Reorganisation should not, in principle, entail closing sites with a very low number of students, but establish schools with an adequate number of sites that provide high-quality conditions for learning. The certified territorial entities should collaborate in their school network planning and involve local communities in their decision-making process. To make school clusters work in practice, education authorities at all levels need to significantly strengthen school leadership and provide more support to schools. Rural schools and teachers have a lot to gain from more systematic networks, for example.

A lack of interest in education is one of the main reasons for adolescents not attending school. Educational aspirations tend to be lower among rural youth. Central and territorial education authorities (in collaboration with the National Learning Service, employers and universities), therefore, need to improve the educational offer in rural areas while building synergies with other policy areas to create opportunities for young people and motivate them to remain in or move to rural areas. For instance, more could be done to promote possibilities for students to develop their own Pedagogical Productive Projects.

Promote a new vision of teacher professionalism and make the allocation of teachers more efficient and equitable

Colombia has taken considerable steps to professionalise teaching over the last two decades. Overall, past reforms have mainly focused on the individual teacher and paid less attention to the organisational and institutional conditions required for effective teaching and learning. Sustainable school improvement, however, is a complex process that needs time, pedagogical leadership and a sense of collective responsibility. In coming years, Colombia should develop a more comprehensive model of teacher professionalism. This model should be based on a vision of schools as professional communities and consider the needs of rural teachers, in particular for their learning and development.

Teacher recruitment in Colombia is essentially based on teachers' rights rather than students' needs, leading to inefficiencies and inequities in the allocation of teachers. Although teachers recognise the benefits of working in a rural school, they generally prefer teaching in more advantaged contexts. Also, a relatively large share of teachers is employed on temporary contracts, and many of these provisional teachers work in rural areas. To address these inequities and inefficiencies in the distribution of teachers, education authorities should help make teaching in rural areas more attractive by shaping the working conditions and professional opportunities in these schools. Stronger financial incentives could also be put in place based on empirical evidence. An adequate supply of high-quality initial teacher education in rural areas will also be essential. The Ministry of National Education should ensure the proper funding and governance of higher teaching schools which educate teachers for rural areas, and encourage and support faculties of education to provide practical experiences in rural parts of the country.

Assessment and recommendations

Context

The economy has grown strongly but there are increasing fiscal constraints, and social and economic disparities between rural and urban areas remain high

Colombia has witnessed strong and sustained economic growth since overcoming a deep recession in the late 1990s. In recent years, weaker trade and a fall in commodity prices have affected the Colombian economy, but the country has weathered these challenges better than other countries in the region. Nevertheless, slower growth and the country's fiscal rule adopted in 2012 have narrowed the space for public expenditure.

Economic development and social policies targeting the most vulnerable have improved the socio-economic conditions of many Colombians. More Colombians have moved up into the middle class and poverty rates have declined markedly, although poverty is still higher than in any OECD country, and particularly pronounced among children and the elderly. As in various other countries in Latin America, inequality has decreased, but remains stubbornly high. This is also of concern in light of low social mobility across generations. Individual circumstances beyond one's control and in particular one's parents' level of education play a significant role for later outcomes in life in Colombia.

Poverty has not only declined on a national level but also in rural areas which account for at least a quarter of Colombia's population. Gaps in social development between rural and urban areas, however, remain substantial despite rural development initiatives that have promoted equitable access to credit and land as well as housing, education and health. In 2017, the share of rural Colombians living in multidimensional poverty was still more than twice as high as for urban dwellers and even more so in remote areas. Social and economic inequalities based on geography particularly affect Colombia's ethnic minorities. Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities have lower levels of well-being overall and have suffered disproportionately from the country's conflict.

School education is provided through certified territorial entities, organised in school clusters and counts with a sizeable private sector

Compulsory education in Colombia lasts 12 years, from a compulsory year of pre-school education to the end of upper secondary education in Year 11. Compulsory upper secondary education is a recent development – only primary and lower secondary education, referred to in Colombia as basic education, used to be compulsory. However, compulsory upper secondary education is currently being introduced gradually until 2030.

Education is provided by public and private schools. Public provision is the responsibility of certified territorial entities – decentralisation in education has been managed through a process of certification of departments, districts and municipalities. While all departments and most districts are certified, only a small share of municipalities has achieved certified status. In non-certified municipalities, the respective department is responsible for

educational provision. The Ministry of National Education maintains responsibility for regulation, policy and planning, and monitoring as head of the sector.

The Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities must guarantee access to free compulsory education for their students – since 2012, co-payments by families have been prohibited in public schools, a significant milestone toward ensuring the right to education. When a certified territorial entity has difficulties to provide education, it can contract a private provider. In 2017, 5.3% of the country's more than 9.3 million students in pre-school, primary and secondary education attended such a government-dependent private form of provision. Parents can choose an independent private school, which was the case for 18.7% of students. Private provision thus represents 24% of all enrolment.

Public schools are organised in school clusters with the main school site typically offering all levels of education, including secondary education, and a number of smaller school sites offering only some levels of education. Traditionally, schools have operated in multiple shifts to expand enrolment, but in recent years, the country has made efforts to move to full-day schooling in public education to expand opportunities for children.

The country has advanced considerably in coverage but trends in performance are mixed and large inequities remain, also between rural and urban students

In the past decades, Colombia has considerably expanded access to education. Enrolment rates have increased in both lower and upper secondary education, and Colombia has also progressed in widening access to early childhood education and care as well as tertiary education. Nevertheless, the country still needs to increase coverage, keep students in school and smooth transitions. Gaps in enrolment rates also persist between urban and rural areas, and disadvantaged and advantaged students, particularly in pre-primary and upper secondary education.

There are also some improvements in learning outcomes but results are mixed and education quality as measured by standardised assessments remains low overall. A significant share of students does not reach satisfactory levels of achievement from early on in their school education. As is the case in other countries, students' socio-economic background has a considerable influence on learning outcomes. Colombia has made some progress in creating better educational opportunities for rural students but still more needs to be done to ensure rural students enjoy the same opportunities as their urban peers. Rural students not only suffer in particular from greater poverty but face additional barriers. In particular, rural youth tend to have lower aspirations for their educational future. Rural education provides opportunities, for instance through smaller classes. At the same time, geographical distance and low population density pose particular challenges, also for the cost of providing a good education.

Strengths and challenges

Education has been a priority in recent years but public funding is insufficient to achieve set objectives for early childhood and school education

Colombia's National Development Plan for 2014-18, *Todos por un Nuevo País*, for the first time identified education - alongside peace and equity - as one of its three main pillars. The plan recognised education as a powerful basis for improving democratic participation, social justice and economic development. Within the framework of the plan, the ministry of education has set ambitious and important goals to: increase access

to early childhood and secondary education; extend the length of the school day; improve the country's educational infrastructure; and promote the inclusion of children with special needs and the rights of youth in conflict with the law.

The signing of the Agreement to End Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace in 2016 represents Colombia's most important achievement during the period of the National Development Plan 2014-18. The peace agreement commits the country to a comprehensive rural reform which not only promotes rural economic recovery but also social development through sector-specific national plans. In education, this entails the implementation of a Special Rural Education Plan to close educational gaps between rural and urban areas. The rural reform thus recognises that it is essential to take advantage of synergies between different strategies - such as the creation of economic opportunities and improvements in education - to reduce the enormous rural-urban gaps.

However, the amount of public resources the central government has allocated to early childhood and school education in the last decade is not consistent with these ambitious and multiple commitments. Although public resources have increased slightly in real terms, they have actually been reduced with respect to total public spending and also relative to the size of the economy. The multiple goals for school and early childhood education compete for resources with goals set for increasing access to tertiary education. This is reflected in the asymmetric increase in allocated resources between sectors as well as a tax reform in 2016 which redirected contributions from school to tertiary education. At the same time, the government has negotiated agreements with the largest teacher union to improve teachers' working conditions, without providing additional resources.

Colombia thus faces a challenging fiscal situation and it will be difficult to meet the objectives set out without increasing the financial resources available for education. The complex financial situation is only exacerbated by changes to the definition of resources allocated to school education through the General System of Transfers – the main source of public funding for school education – and public spending restrictions as a result of slowing economic development and efforts to reduce the country's structural deficit.

While education policy making theoretically supports a long-term shared vision, the institutional framework to ensure continuity in education policy is weak

Colombia holds national elections every four years and the new government transforms its programme into concrete actions through a National Development Plan. National Development Plans steer the allocation of financial resources, thereby linking spending decisions with political priorities, and facilitate the political and technical monitoring of progress towards set goals, a key element of effective governance. Departments and municipalities also develop territorial plans for the medium term that should be aligned with the national plan. In education, specifically, the central government develops National 10-year Plans for Education which should guide the main national policies beyond the term of a single government. National plans and policy frameworks furthermore involve a high degree of social dialogue, providing democratic legitimacy for sectoral priorities. A growing focus on using information on the outcomes of programmes from evaluations constitutes a further important strength.

Despite these valuable frameworks and processes, education policy in Colombia requires greater continuity and sustainability in practice – educational reforms take time before having an impact on teaching and learning in classrooms. National Development Plans are linked to the political approval from successive governments, meaning their continuity is not necessarily assured and programmes often lack stability over time. Many

policies that should have a permanent status lack a specialised institution or dedicated responsibility as well as a regular budgetary framework. Rural education policy is a case in point. Despite its important achievements, the Rural Education Programme was discontinued, and the Special Rural Education Plan requires the approval of future governments to ensure its financing and implementation going forward. Furthermore, the experience of the Rural Education Programme highlights challenges in integrating and articulating initiatives that are funded through international and other sources with national or local policies.

The funding system contributes to multiple public finance objectives but does not adequately consider inequalities between territories, schools and students

Since its creation in 2001, the General System of Transfers has been the main source of public funding for school education in Colombia. The system contributes to multiple public finance objectives. On the one hand, it was one of the main mechanisms that helped Colombia emerge from its fiscal crisis of the late 1990s, contributing to the fiscal sustainability of territorial entities at an aggregate level, although there is great variation across departments and municipalities. On the other hand, the system aims to solve part of the vertical fiscal imbalance in a country where most taxes are collected at the central level. In addition, it represents a tool for territorial and social compensation. Resources are distributed among departments, districts and municipalities according to their level of disadvantage, and fiscal transfers do not require co financing by the territorial entities. Financing, therefore, does not depend on subnational capacities to generate own resources, which tend to be highly concentrated in a few departments and municipalities.

The General System of Transfers represents a stable source of revenue for territorial entities to finance the provision of school education as the system's composition is highly regulated, dedicating specific resources to the funding of education, and is annually readjusted. The design of the system's specific resource allocation for education explicitly recognises that teachers represent a permanent and inflexible cost in the provision of education. Moreover, the revenue sharing system allocates additional funding to finance the provision of education for certain groups of students, implying additional responsibilities and costs for certified territorial entities, such as rural students.

However, despite its objectives, the General System of Transfers (as most other of the country's financing mechanisms) does not reach its objective of compensating territories for social disadvantage and differences in the capacity to generate own resources. While the system's allocation for education effectively delivers more resources per student to the most vulnerable territories, the difference is so small that they have not contributed to reducing territorial gaps and to compensating for inequities in the contributions of territorial entities from their own resource base. As a result, there has been no convergence in student performance across municipalities over time and closing only half of the existing gap in access to upper secondary education would take more than 30 years.

The current design of the General System of Transfers faces a number of further shortcomings. Recent central initiatives such as the inclusion of children with special needs and the provision of education to adolescents in the criminal justice system have not been accompanied with an increase in available resources for the system's allocation for education, but have been financed with existing resources. This reflects a growing centralisation of education policies, results in less flexibility for Secretaries of Education in the use of their resources, and poses a greater risk for future deficits. Resources for the provision of complementary services, such as educational materials, infrastructure

maintenance, student transport and school meals are limited. And the current system provides few incentives for improving the quality of provision while existing ones linked to specific indicators favour urban and advantaged Secretaries of Education.

Furthermore, the current system creates disincentives for the efficient management of resources as well as inequities in resource allocations. The system compensates certified territorial entities for increases in payroll funding throughout the year and funds differentiated payroll expenses specific for each certified territorial entity. This facilitates rapid improvements in educational coverage and the recruitment of qualified teachers, but also generates incentives to maintain a permanent number of teaching staff, effectively reducing incentives to maintain a balanced fiscal situation. It also provides more resources to those Secretaries of Education able to attract teachers with higher qualifications. Lastly, regular modifications to the funding system make available resources less predictable, and efficiency indicators encourage end-of-year spending.

An institutional and legal framework is in place for monitoring resource use in education but there are difficulties in solving problems identified in evaluations

The Colombian government has assigned responsibilities to various institutions and developed legal and regulatory instruments for the production and collection of information to improve the transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of education – one of the main weaknesses of public education in Latin America. A range of databases support the work of schools, Secretaries of Education and the ministry with critical information on management processes, enrolment, infrastructure and education quality. Standardised assessments of student performance and research carried out by Colombia's educational evaluation institute provide information to guide and evaluate public policies.

Multiple mechanisms are in place at different levels to prevent corruption and waste in the use and management of school funding. A Single Territorial Format centralises financial, economic and social information on all territorial entities to facilitate these monitoring and control efforts. These financial data also allow the ministry to evaluate how the sector is financed and the composition and efficiency of public spending. The ministry of education and the ministry of finance collaborate in monitoring the use of central resources transferred to the certified territorial entities through the General System of Transfers. For their part, the Secretaries of Education compile accounting and budgetary reports on schools and, in the case of departments, non-certified municipalities.

The Comptroller General exercises administrative control of financial resources and carries out performance audits at a national level. At the level of departments and municipalities, dedicated entities are responsible for financial auditing and control, and *veedurías*, local oversight committees, also monitor the use of public resources. The Ombudsman and Prosecutor General monitor the proper functioning of the education system to protect the rights of citizens, while the State Attorney investigates possible crimes in educational management and prosecutes these before the courts, if necessary.

These monitoring, auditing and control processes regularly provide an exhaustive evaluation of the administrative, legal and financing processes of public education. However, in many cases, there is difficulty in resolving the identified structural problems, as has been observed in the School Meal Programme. Moreover, the legislative branch, the executive and the territorial authorities do not always have access to timely and sufficient information to evaluate the long-term financial impact of new policies and programmes that would ensure their sustainability and implementation. There is still room for improving and integrating information systems in education to support decision-

making and increase transparency. Information systems are not easily accessible to the public, and the amount of resources finally reaching each school is difficult to assess.

The organisation of the school network facilitates access to education in rural areas but creates challenges for school management and potential inequities

The organisation of Colombia's school network into school clusters gives students, especially those in remote rural areas, access to all years of compulsory education within a single school, potentially promoting smoother transitions and reducing dropout rates. School clusters may help balance the advantages and disadvantages of small and large schools. While smaller sites and classes in earlier years provide more personalised learning environments for younger children, larger sites at higher levels can offer a broader and more specialised course offer thanks to sufficient numbers of students and teachers. Also, the joint management of multiple sites within a cluster can help enhance the efficiency of school networks while avoiding the closure of small rural schools.

However, the way school networks are planned and school clusters are managed in practice in Colombia raises concerns for quality and equity in education, particularly for students in rural and remote areas. Looking at data on the number of schools and school sites suggests an ongoing adjustment of provision, both in terms of clustering and closure of sites. But it is largely unclear how individual Secretaries of Education make decisions about the location and size of schools and their sites. It is also unclear how they work with local communities and, in the case of departments, with their non-certified municipalities, and to what extent the quality of education is considered in their planning.

The current clustering of school sites does not in all cases provide the necessary conditions for effective leadership and management of teaching and learning. The number of sites within a cluster varies greatly, with some schools having more than 20 sites, others only 1 or 2. There is no upper limit to the number of sites a school may have nor is there a clear definition of geographical proximity between sites – there is evidence that some rural sites are very far from the main school. The allocation of resources to schools also does not take the number of sites or the distance between sites into account.

School network planning needs to go alongside adequate arrangements for transport and boarding. These complementary services are particularly important in rural and remote areas to guarantee access to school and transitions between sites and levels. Resources for these services are, however, limited and technical criteria fail to provide effective guidance. This can make it challenging to assess the costs and feasibility to restructure the school network, e.g. in terms of student travel time. Boarding schools have not been sufficiently regulated and often lack adequate infrastructure, staff and other services.

The funding of private providers gives flexibility for public provision, also in rural areas, but there are concerns about sufficient quality assurance

The contracting of private providers has been a very important solution to respond to an increasing demand for school places in urban areas given internal migration and forced displacement, but also to ensure access to school in rural and remote areas affected by the conflict. Agreements with private providers have furthermore taken on an increasing role in the provision of education for special groups of students, such as indigenous students, children with special needs and youth in the Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System. At the same time, Secretaries of Education have become less reliant on private providers thanks to greater coverage of the public school network and a reduction of the school-age population – something which has also been promoted by the ministry of education.

Colombia has a relatively strong regulatory framework in place for all private schools, including those without public funding. Nevertheless, it is unclear how supervision works in practice. New regulations for contracts with private providers have been put in place in 2015, but it is too early to judge their impact on the quality of education. The professional capacity of Secretaries of Education varies widely and those with fewer resources serving rural and disadvantaged students will face greater difficulties in managing contracted providers and in replicating best practices. Further concerns relate to difficulties in monitoring enrolment in publicly-funded private provision, student assignment practices, and a lack of transparency about costs. Many contracts only last one year, which makes it difficult for providers to improve educational quality.

On the other hand, advantaged students are highly concentrated in the private school sector – particularly in independent private schools – while students of lower socio-economic background are over-represented in both public and government-dependent private schools. While the general composition of schools is relatively diverse, private schools are highly homogeneous with respect to more advantaged students. Accumulated evidence at international level shows that this socio-economic segregation leads to an important gap in educational opportunities between schools and students since the socio-economic and cultural capital of families is a major factor in explaining school performance. For Colombia, most of the performance gap between public and private schools disappears when controlling for socio-economic differences at the student- and school-level. The remaining private-school advantage only holds for schools that charge high monthly fees to families and is reversed once tuition fees are taken into account.

School education follows a comprehensive approach with potential benefits for equity but challenges remain in developing a pertinent and articulated offer

Early childhood education and care is fundamental to a strong start in life. School education in Colombia entails one compulsory year of pre-school education which is provided in schools within the framework established by the ministry of education and under the administration of the Secretaries of Education. The mandatory transition year is provided on the same premises as primary education which can soften children's transition into school. Moreover, the employment framework for teachers is the same regardless of the level of education taught, which can help attract high-quality staff, also for earlier years, and create a sense of professional community among all teachers.

The Colombian school system also avoids early tracking and selection into different pathways. Early selection can have negative effects on those in lower tracks without raising overall performance and on disadvantaged students who are more likely to be placed in lower-level tracks. In Colombia, 15-year-olds choose between a general and a vocational option, but the distinction is more one of emphasis than of independent tracks and all upper secondary students gain the right to access tertiary education. Unlike in various other countries, students in the two programmes do not differ in their social background or their academic performance, although vocational options have a lower social status as in several other contexts.

Nevertheless, expanding coverage and improving the quality of provision at both lower and later stages, including in rural areas, are crucial tasks for the years to come. Colombia promotes an integrated approach to early childhood development, which includes pre-primary education, through its *De Cero a Siempre* strategy. But the educational component of early childhood education remains underdeveloped. Provision through two separate systems for early childhood education – through the Secretaries of

Education on the one hand and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare on the other – seems to require greater articulation. Further challenges for the provision of pre-primary education include levels of funding and the quality of data and information systems.

Also, transitions into secondary education and provision at the secondary level need to be further strengthened, and even more so in rural and remote areas which have particularly low enrolment rates at these levels. Transition into lower secondary education is particularly challenging for students. Promising national initiatives have been put in place to strengthen demand for upper secondary education and to articulate provision with tertiary education and other short vocational programmes offered by the National Learning Service, among others. Noteworthy experiences include *Ser Pilo Paga*, a scholarship programme to enable the best students from the most disadvantaged households to access tertiary education, and *Más Jóvenes en Acción*, a training programme for vulnerable youth. Furthermore, Secretaries of Education and schools are free to establish partnerships with tertiary institutions and the National Learning Service, which can provide orientation to students and enrich their education.

But upper secondary programmes are not always pertinent to the needs of students and the competency standards that should be acquired are not clearly defined. A lack of interest in education is one of the main reasons for 14-18 year-olds not to attend school. Educational aspirations are lower among rural than urban youth. Secondary education has failed to adapt to the current rurality and offers rural students a limited option of programmes. Rural schools offer largely general programmes and rarely both, a general and a vocational option. On the other hand, another school with a different upper secondary specialisation may be too far for rural students to access. There is also a lack of qualified guidance counsellors which is especially acute in rural areas. The limited presence of higher education institutions in rural areas is likely a further explanation for low aspirations, and limits potential collaboration between schools and other institutions. Pedagogical productive projects can offer rural students opportunities to develop relevant skills, including in entrepreneurship, but are not always meaningful to students.

Schools have platforms for community participation but there are concerns about the organisation of teaching and learning and weak school leadership

The whole school community is expected to participate in the design and implementation of the school educational project to establish a shared pedagogical vision. Each school must have a directive council which includes representatives of the school community and holds a large range of responsibilities for school management. Several other bodies within the school give students, parents and teachers further opportunities to participate directly in school management. Such links between the school and the community can also help sustain vibrant schools and communities in rural areas.

School communities have considerable freedom to define their own curriculum as part of their educational project and teachers are typically very autonomous in pedagogical decisions within their classrooms, which can allow them to respond to the complexity of teaching. While there is no nationally defined curriculum, school-level autonomy in pedagogical matters has been balanced with central curricular guidelines and learning standards to guarantee that students develop the required core competencies.

However, the number of currently valid guidelines is very large, which makes it challenging for schools to develop their own curricula in line with these standards. Guidelines are frequently updated and not always clear to teachers who also do not seem to receive sufficient training to familiarise themselves with new materials. More

generally, Colombia's school-based approach to curriculum development has to be set within the context of concerns about teachers' competencies, school leadership, and support from Secretaries of Education, all of which tend to be weakest in disadvantaged and rural schools. The devolution of curricular and other responsibilities to schools has not been matched with sufficient efforts to develop school leadership capacity and the extent of technical-pedagogical support by Secretaries of Education varies widely.

If schools do not have the capacity, leadership and support to bring the curriculum to life in ways that engage their students, the potential for curricular autonomy to balance national consistency with local diversity is not realised and can result in inequities in student learning. To assess the actual extent of curriculum autonomy, it is important to look at other elements, such as evaluation and available materials which shape curriculum autonomy in practice. In Colombia, such other elements seem to have turned into a "de facto" curriculum, guiding the work of schools and teachers within classrooms.

Standardised student assessments are the cornerstone of Colombia's approach to school evaluation. They have played a key role in shifting the focus towards students' learning outcomes and are linked to strategies to promote the use of results in schools, such as the *Día E* initiative. Schools are also expected to evaluate themselves annually, identifying strengths and weaknesses. But in the absence of sufficient school leadership and pedagogical support, standardised assessments have taken on a defining role in schools focusing efforts on a narrow set of learning outcomes. Such a focus on cognitive skills – which has recently been reinforced through specific school improvement goals and a school performance index – may also detract attention from broader student development in other competencies which contribute to productive, equitable and cohesive societies.

The school system provides room for pedagogical approaches to meet diverse student needs but more needs to be done to help vulnerable students succeed

The General Education Law recognises the rights of vulnerable students within the framework of the Constitution which defines Colombia as a social state that must ensure equity and freedom from discrimination for any marginalised or vulnerable population. The ministry provides guidelines for the education of vulnerable groups, promotes policies and programmes, and implements strategies with the Secretaries of Education.

Among educational strategies, flexible school models constitute a fundamental and long-standing element to engage students with their local context. Flexible models have played an important role in expanding access to education, especially for students in rural and remote areas. *Escuela Nueva*, the most well-known model, for example provides basic education to rural and remote populations through multi-grade teaching. But flexible models have also helped address consequences of Colombia's conflict, notably through educational programmes for displaced students and ex-combatants and their families.

The government has also been sensitive to the needs of ethnic minorities through a specific policy of ethnic education and consultation processes. Ethnic communities have considerable autonomy to organise their own schools and educational projects, while the ministry maintains an advisory and supporting role. In recent years, the government has further responded to ethnic communities' demands for greater autonomy through a commitment to creating ethnic groups' own intercultural education systems. Considering the concentration of indigenous peoples in rural areas, these ethnic education policies are also important to provide quality education in rural areas.

However, there is considerable scope to improve the use of flexible school models, develop complementary strategies to address educational disadvantage and reflect about ethnic and intercultural education. Not all flexible models have been equally successful and the results the different models achieve vary greatly. Other strategies that should complement the use of flexible models seem to be underdeveloped. The ministry of education and Secretaries of Education, for example, seem to place limited attention on monitoring the outcomes of student groups at risk of low performance. In schools, there are often limited resources and strategies to identify students at risk and there is no clear protocol on what to do for these students. This is likely a particular challenge for rural schools which may lack additional resources both in the school and the community. A shortage of support staff, such as counsellors, psychologists and social workers, which are even greater in disadvantaged schools, hinders comprehensive support to students.

The ministry of education has recently promoted the inclusion of students with special needs in line with a growing body of research suggesting that special needs students could be better served in mainstream schools and that inclusion benefits all students. Nevertheless, a detailed plan for implementation has not yet been developed; many schools lack the infrastructure, trained teachers and specialists to create inclusive learning environments; and it is unclear how rural schools will be supported in inclusion.

Full-day schooling is an opportunity to upgrade infrastructure and advance in quality and equity but implementation challenges need to be addressed

The initiative to establish full-day schooling in all schools by 2030 entails a series of potential advantages. While it involves a significant investment to provide the required facilities and staff, it presents an opportunity to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Attendance of a full school day, which has been highly correlated with students' socio-economic background and enrolment in independent private schools, is also a step to create better opportunities for disadvantaged students. A longer school day reduces exposure to out-of-school risks and may be beneficial for students with single parents.

The introduction of full-day schooling is furthermore an important opportunity to improve school infrastructure with a historical deficit, complementary services such as school meals, and collaboration between institutions and levels of government. As part of the *Jornada Única* programme to implement full-day schooling, the ministry of education developed a National Infrastructure Plan for 2015-18 in co-ordination with the territorial entities. An Educational Infrastructure Fund seeks to secure the required resources by consolidating different sources of funding. The infrastructure part of the programme can furthermore have a greater impact on rural schools which suffer from poorer conditions, but which present more favourable conditions for a rapid roll-out.

Despite these potential benefits, there are important caveats that require more careful consideration. Unless the additional time in school is used effectively for student learning and development, the significant investments in full-day schooling will not translate into better outcomes for students. Research, however, suggests that currently many teachers fall far short of effective instructional time in their classrooms. It also does not seem clear to schools how the extra time should be used. Investments in full-day schooling may furthermore crowd out spending on other important initiatives to improve the quality of education, such as teacher education, and take time away from other activities, such as peer-learning, if teachers and their time in school is not used and managed effectively.

There are also challenges in ensuring the financial and political sustainability of the initiative. The *Jornada Única* programme must be ratified by future governments in the

context of increasing fiscal restrictions. Plans for the expansion of existing school places require monitoring and adjustment since initial analyses were based on existing provision. Increases in coverage in secondary education as well as a projected fall in the total school-age population in the coming decade will also need to be taken into account.

Importantly, the regular financing of infrastructure investments and maintenance is not adequately considered in the current system of school funding. Departments and municipalities have contributed the largest share of funding for education infrastructure, in particular from their own resources and loans, but these are highly concentrated in a few territorial entities. There are also problems in the funding of complementary services, such as school meals, and operating costs which need to be resolved. An additional 20% is provided per student to certified territorial entities as part of the General System of Transfers but these are considered to be lower than the actual costs.

Rural areas face particular challenges: the full-day schooling programme has set less ambitious goals for rural areas; co-funding of central infrastructure investments is more challenging for Secretaries of Education with fewer resources; and property rights on the land where schools are to be repaired or built are often unclear.

Colombia has taken considerable steps towards the professionalisation of teaching but further efforts are needed to build a new vision for the profession

Colombia has taken considerable steps to professionalise teaching over the last two decades, notably with a reform of its teacher employment framework in 2002. The new teacher statute has introduced a fair and transparent teacher selection process, raised entrance requirements, made the salary structure more attractive, made entry into subject teaching more open and introduced teacher evaluations. Recent governments have made particular efforts to foster teacher learning. However, changes that have been initiated still need to be implemented successfully and difficult relations between the government and the largest teacher union have complicated the implementation of past reforms.

The introduction of a new employment framework has also created some long-term challenges. The new salary structure represents a skills- and competency-based approach. The evidence base on such types of compensation is still inconclusive but highlights the role of context, design and implementation. Successful reforms of teacher pay require political will, fiscal capacity and teacher support. In this respect, the new compensation system is unlikely to have the intended effects as it has not been fully accepted by teachers and promotion has been difficult to obtain. Substantial salary premiums for postgraduate qualifications may help raise the social status of teaching but risk having large costs without sufficient evidence that would support these large salary differentials.

While introducing a new employment framework for teachers, the old teacher statute has been left in place, creating different employment frameworks for teachers performing the same responsibilities and tasks – with potential negative effect on schools' working climates and collegiality. Teachers of the new and old statutes differ in two important aspects. First, teachers of the old statute are not evaluated regularly on a mandatory basis and second, they benefit from a single salary scale which provides a predictable career progression. While teachers of the old statute have mostly reached the highest salary steps in their scale, teachers of the new statute are concentrated in the first step of their respective scales. This also leads to inequities in the distribution of resources across the country as teachers of the new statute make up the largest share of rural teachers.

Lastly, there is significant scope to reflect about and develop other aspects of professionalism. Overall, past reforms have mainly focused on the individual teacher and paid less attention to the organisational and institutional conditions required for effective teaching and learning. Sustainable school improvement is a complex and multidimensional process that needs time, pedagogical leadership and professional cultures built around a sense of collective responsibility. School leaders are, however, not fulfilling their role as pedagogical leaders, creating challenges for effective teacher management and development in schools. Many school leaders are not equipped to develop collaborative practices and to provide useful formative feedback to their teachers – challenges that are even more pronounced in schools with many remote rural sites.

Central initiatives have supported teacher learning but overall teacher education and development does not sufficiently support and prepare teachers

Professional learning for teachers throughout their career is essential to create a highly skilled profession that effectively promotes student learning and development. Data from international surveys show that teachers in Colombia are relatively highly qualified, which is confirmed when looking at national data. Nevertheless, there are concerns that teacher education does not adequately prepare and support teachers in their work.

The quality of initial teacher education offered by faculties of education is considered to vary considerably. Tertiary education institutions have considerable autonomy to define their teacher education programmes but undergo a basic registration process to be able to offer their programme. This registration process, however, is generally considered to lack sufficient rigour. A distinct accreditation process to certify a programme's high level of quality is considered to follow clear and well-defined standards. But this process is voluntary and only a few faculties of education and education programmes have sought or achieved this certification. While a career in teaching represents possibilities for social mobility, education programmes are among those with the lowest numbers of applicants, attracting students with weaker performance in the school-leaving examination.

The government's National Development Plan for 2014-18 explicitly recognised the importance of high-quality teaching within the plan's education strategy. To foster teaching excellence, the ministry of education pursued reforms of the quality assurance processes in place for faculties of education. The changes that have been introduced hold the promise of addressing some of the known weaknesses in initial teacher education, such as better links between theory and practice. Changes were, however, not without controversy, highlighting the key role for implementation, monitoring and follow-up.

The Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities hold primary responsibility for teacher professional development. However, resources available for professional development through the country's General System of Transfers are limited and few Secretaries of Education can provide resources of their own. Secretaries of Education, and particularly those providing education to the most disadvantaged and rural students, may also lack the capacity to select adequate providers and monitor the quality of provision. There is also considerable scope to foster school-based teacher development and peer learning, which have proven to be very effective ways for teacher learning.

Teachers require particular pedagogical knowledge and strategies to work with a wide range of learners. To only mention a few examples, teaching in small rural schools requires an ability to teach children of different ages in the same classroom through multi-grade strategies. Teachers also require adequate strategies to support students' social and emotional learning, particularly in post-conflict settings. Initial teacher

education in Colombia, however, is not sufficiently diverse and contextualised for different cycles and disciplinary areas, groups of students and regions of the country. Similarly, there are concerns about the offer and quality of professional development.

Given difficulties in reforming initial teacher education, different levels of capacity and resources to manage teachers' professional development, and limited forms of school-based teacher learning, the ministry of education has developed targeted national initiatives that meet an important need in the system. Most notably, the ministry has implemented an impactful cascade teacher development model through its *Programa Todos a Aprender*. This initiative has contributed to closing achievement gaps between rural and urban areas and to building new professional cultures in schools.

There are inefficiencies and inequities in teacher recruitment and allocation, and greater flexibility is required for the management of teaching staff

In Colombia, a relatively large share of teachers is employed as provisional teachers, which seems to be related to more than the necessary flexibility to respond to changes in student enrolment. It is also related to the central recruitment process of permanent teachers which can be very long and organised only on an intermittent basis in practice. Rigidities in the teacher labour market further contribute to the proliferation of provisional teaching positions. The reassignment of permanent teachers within territorial entities is often difficult and the teacher labour market seems to be segmented between different territorial entities, something that affects departments, in particular.

While the use of provisional teachers can help advance access to education, strengthen accountability and save costs in the short term, it may have a negative impact on teacher morale and the professional status of teaching in the long run. Provisional teachers are moreover concentrated in rural and disadvantaged contexts. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that teachers in rural areas are often hired late in the school year, only teach for a reduced schedule or leave before the end of the school year resulting in lost learning time. Particular recruitment processes are being organised for municipalities most affected by the conflict, but they do not offer a structural solution to inequities in teacher distribution.

Teacher recruitment in Colombia is essentially based on teachers' rights rather than student needs. While teachers recognise the benefits of working in a rural school, such as possibly closer ties with families and the community, they generally prefer teaching in more advantaged contexts. The salary structure provides insufficient incentives for teachers to choose challenging schools. While teachers in remote areas receive some financial and fringe benefits, these are not sufficient. Given the organisation of schools into clusters, there may also be inequities in teacher allocation within individual schools.

Greater flexibility in the management of teaching staff is also required in the context of overall school funding and Colombia's demographic transition. Spending on teachers concentrates a high share of total as well as current expenditure in Colombia. This imposes considerable pressure for new resources and reduces the possibility for other spending, e.g. to hire other pedagogical support staff. It also limits discretion in spending by Secretaries of Education. A future reduction in the school-age population risks deficit situations in certified territorial entities under a model of per capita funding as teachers cannot easily be distributed between classes and schools. A reduction in enrolment may, therefore, imply an asymmetric reduction in class sizes and schools without a major reduction in costs or a more equitable distribution of teachers.

Recommendations

Reconcile the allocation of sufficient resources for school education with set policy priorities, ensure greater continuity in policy, and build local capacity

Colombia needs to reconcile the allocation of sufficient resources with efforts to move towards closing persisting gaps in educational coverage and quality – efforts that will need to be implemented gradually. This should entail the identification of long-term goals and priorities that are feasible to achieve in a restrictive fiscal scenario and that are based on adequate costing and evidence. Given simultaneous demands for increases in funding for tertiary education, authorities should furthermore explore alternative options for the funding of this level, and prioritise gradual investments in early years given the higher returns and potential for equalising opportunities for disadvantaged children.

Colombia must also strengthen the institutional and budgetary frameworks at the level of the ministry of education as well as the Secretaries of Education to ensure greater continuity in education policy. Change in education takes time. For instance, the ministry should establish a unit dedicated to rural education. This unit should lead efforts in closing rural-urban gaps in education, such as the implementation of the Special Rural Education Plan. Existing planning mechanisms, such as the ten-year plans for education should be used to work towards a more sustainable policy. To promote social participation and co-ordination across levels of governance, the national education board with its technical secretariat as well as subnational boards should be re-established.

Since it will be financially difficult to meet the objectives set out in recent years without sufficient financial resources, Colombia should increase total public resources available for school education, while drawing on a range of funding mechanisms. Given that financing efforts should be permanent, consideration should be given to a tax reform that facilitates the collection of greater resources both at the national and subnational levels, including specific revenues for departments. In addition, Colombia should discuss horizontal equalisation mechanisms in education to address the high level of fiscal asymmetries between departments and municipalities and within them.

Greater financial resources, however, do not necessarily ensure an improvement in quality and equity of children's opportunities, also due to mismanagement, corruption and a lack of capacity. The ministry of education and the ministry of finance should, therefore, move towards better quality assurance processes, which should consider a regular recertification system for the municipalities and incentives for improving management. Building the capacity of education authorities at territorial level should be a key priority. The number of Secretaries of Education is small and sufficiently-funded strategies could significantly strengthen their technical capacities, which are highly asymmetrical. A number of Secretaries of Education have strong capacity and a history of innovation. Networks between territorial networks could help spread such good practices.

Colombia must also introduce a legal guarantee that policies approved by the central government must be properly financed with additional resources from the central level. This should help resolve the asymmetry between central policy making and the lack of resources for local implementation. It would also help in the identification of priorities on the basis of available resources. Moreover, some national policies such as the School Meal Programme, transport, boarding schools and educational materials should be gradually expanded throughout the country, giving a high priority to fairness and equity.

Authorities also need to ensure adequate resources for the *Jornada Única* programme, while prioritising disadvantaged rural areas for the further implementation of the initiative. This will require a study of the actual costs of implementation beyond investment and equipment and especially linked to the greater allocation of teaching hours and other staff. Overall, the country should be conservative in the process of implementing full-day schooling beyond initial commitments and monitor costs and impact, also on equity outcomes. In order to make good use of the longer classroom time, the ministry of education, Secretaries of Education and teacher education institutions need to develop further strategies to improve pedagogical processes in schools.

Moreover, the experience of the full-day schooling programme has shown the enormous historical deficit of infrastructure and materials in public education in Colombia. Thus, there should be regular resources to fund school infrastructure. These resources should respond to an annual investment programme outside of the General System of Transfers, within the budget of the ministry of education and each of the Secretaries of Education, which can also provide resources beyond those defined by the ministry.

Move towards a reform of the General System of Transfers

There is a fairly broad agreement that the General System of Transfers should be modified considerably, in order to make it more equitable and improve incentives for efficiency and quality. Colombia should have a national debate regarding a reform of the revenue sharing system. The review provides some elements that could be valuable in this discussion. First, the review recommends rethinking the permanent fiscal adjustment system, which currently seems inappropriate as it entails a dynamic mismatch between income and expenditure in education. Second, Colombia should rethink the system's main components for the financing of education, which should involve a reflection about the role of non-certified municipalities. The review provides technical details on these proposals. The basis for resource allocations in education should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are in line with political needs (which may change) and to reflect evolutions in data systems. An additional proposed change worth highlighting here is related to financial allocations to rural schools, especially smaller and more remote schools or school clusters with a large number of rural school sites. These schools should receive fixed funds in such a way that they can count on a minimum level of resources to provide education. This additional resource would recognise that not all costs are linear.

Provide additional educational resources at the level of each school and develop an information system that provides transparency about the available resources

Education authorities should facilitate the identification of the final distribution of financial resources to each school to create more transparency about the progress made towards greater equity and to provide a basis for evaluating the effects of different initiatives. This should entail a consolidation of available data in a simple public information system that is regularly updated. This information system should be the cornerstone of better overall reporting on the resource efforts for school education and evidence about educational quality and equity in relation to established policy objectives.

Authorities should also generate more resources at the school level for management and improvement processes beyond their day-to-day operation. In many cases, resources currently available to schools are often too small and only enough to cover the operation of the school itself. Additional resources would facilitate timely improvement strategies and support the participation of school communities in their educational project.

Encourage the review of school networks, improve the regulation and quality assurance of contracted private schools, and address the risk of segregation

School clusters entail a series of potential benefits, in particular for students in rural areas, but also risk inequities in provision if not carefully planned and implemented. The central level should, therefore, encourage Secretaries of Education to play a more effective role in managing their school networks together with school communities and in collaboration with other certified territorial entities. Restructuring should not, in principle, entail closing sites with a very low number of students but mostly aim to increase the number of main schools. The goal should be to establish school clusters with an adequate number of sites that provide high-quality conditions for learning.

Reorganisation efforts should, in general, consider the geographical distance as well as the ease of transport between sites and the main school. Some of the potential benefits of having school clusters are only realised as long as students (and teachers) from remote sites are able to reach the main school. The number of sites per cluster and the distance between sites must also be taken into account for the appointment of co-ordinators, whereas only the number of students is currently considered. Steps to improve school leadership will be essential to take advantage of the benefits of school clusters. Furthermore, the design of school networks needs to carefully consider the planning of transport and boarding for students but also teachers, which are essential in remote rural areas. This includes i) adequate funding; ii) adequate standards and guidelines for the provision of these services; and iii) improved data systems.

Public-private partnerships will continue to be a strategic component for the provision of school education in Colombia but it is necessary to ensure that these alternatives are of quality. The ministry should strengthen regulations, for example on student assignment and monitoring of process quality, while maintaining others in place, such as the prohibition of tuition fees in contracted schools. Improving contract arrangements for private providers so they can plan in the medium term should be a further priority.

Lastly, Colombia should consider developing a multi-sector approach to address segregation between public and private schools, particularly those without public funding charging high fees. Together with other relevant ministries, the ministry of education should investigate the reasons for segregation before piloting and rolling out a combination of measures across domains including education, transport and housing.

Professionalise school leadership and strengthen technical pedagogical support for rural schools leveraging the potential of networks

School leadership, which constitutes the basis for sustainable school improvement and underlies many other proposals of the review, should be a policy priority in the years to come. The age profile of current school leaders provides an opportunity to improve school leadership with new principals that may enter the profession with different preparation, training and support. The review makes a number of recommendations to improve school leadership: i) promoting a shared vision of educational leadership; ii) developing a distinct career structure and reflecting about contract conditions; iii) providing more opportunities to develop pedagogical leadership skills; iv) strengthening regular performance evaluations; and v) building on distributed and teacher leadership.

The ministry of education as well as Secretaries of Education should also encourage more systematic networks for schools, and small rural schools in particular, to overcome

capacity and resource constraints resulting from their location and size. This should involve a deep understanding and reflection on the differences between rural schools and the particular needs of remote sites in contrast to rural sites located in the urban periphery. Moreover, the ministry and Secretaries of Education need to pay attention to what many stakeholders interviewed during the review visit referred to as “the new rurality” in the context of the transition to a post-conflict society. Higher teaching schools providing initial teacher education for pre-primary and primary levels could take on a key role in building the capacity of other schools and in leading larger rural school networks.

Initiate a long-term participatory process to develop a national curriculum framework and develop a more comprehensive approach to school evaluation

Efforts to establish common learning goals over the last three decades have resulted in a vast number of standards and guidelines that are not always clear to teachers. The ministry of education should maintain and strengthen its efforts to establish a more concise and clear version of learning standards. At the same time, Colombia should consider the possibility of starting a longer process of developing a more comprehensive national curriculum framework based on extensive social participation.

The question of curriculum autonomy is not a normative but a contextual one. As such, other elements, including a country’s accountability framework, students’ achievement in terms of quality and equity, and the capacity of schools should be considered. Countries must find their own balance between local autonomy and central direction. In Colombia, arguably, more weight should be given to greater prescription given strong accountability in the form of standardised assessments, low levels of student achievement, considerable inequities between students, and weak local capacity.

Developing a common curriculum framework would provide an important opportunity to engage society to reflect more broadly and create a shared vision of education that meets Colombia’s post-conflict transition and the rural realities of the country. At the same time, a national curriculum framework would not mean that there would not be room for local adaptations. Sufficient room for local adaptation will remain essential for making the curricular framework more relevant for school communities. Regardless of the extent of curriculum autonomy, schools and teachers require greater support to contextualise central standards and to design content and lesson plans, as well as sufficient and up-to-date pedagogical materials. In rural and remote areas, digital resources could be used to facilitate the coverage of the curriculum and a broad curricular offer, based on adequate training and evidence on cost-effectiveness.

Establishing a more concise set of learning goals and standards and building teachers’ understanding of them would also help reduce the potential undesired effects of standardised assessment. The ministry of education, Secretaries of Education and schools generally need to embrace a more comprehensive vision of school evaluation. This should include i) further support by Secretaries of Education and leadership in schools to implement self-evaluations as an opportunity to improve; and ii) the development of whole school evaluation processes (e.g. through the creation of a national quality agency).

Improve the provision of education to meet students’ needs and interests, and provide them all with equal learning opportunities irrespective of background

Colombia has made tremendous improvements in expanding the coverage of compulsory education. Nevertheless, further work is needed to ensure access to school and continuity for vulnerable students. Both, the management of the school system (e.g. through the

development of early-warning indicators for students at risk) and individual schools (e.g. through parental engagement) have a role to play in overcoming disadvantage.

Flexible school models provide an important pedagogical strategy to address different learning needs but the ministry and Secretaries of Education need to maintain more regular oversight to ensure and improve their quality. This could involve reducing the number of models currently recognised by the ministry to those that have proven to be effective, and improving those that continue to exist. There are also flexible models in use that are not regulated or recognised by the ministry. Secretaries of Education need to play a stronger role in the regular review and quality assurance of these models and support schools and teachers in implementing all models irrespective of their owner.

Taking steps to improve the offer of upper secondary education and facilitating students' transitions to tertiary education or the labour market should be a priority in the coming years for the ministry and Secretaries of Education (in collaboration with other actors like the National Learning Service, employers and universities). In rural areas, in particular, education may not always be pertinent to students. Addressing the needs of young people in rural areas goes beyond education alone and also requires the creation of opportunities in rural areas, e.g. through access to markets, credit and technology. Education, however, needs to be connected with rural life and the productive realities, such as the emergence of new sectors, if it is to motivate young people to remain in or move to rural areas. At the same time, schools can play a role in maintaining and revitalising rural communities.

The learning and development of children and young people from ethnic communities also requires further attention: i) the ministry and ethnic groups need to reflect about the processes for developing ethnic communities' own education systems as well as future financing, oversight and relations to regular education; and ii) the ministry should consider developing intercultural education for all students regardless of background.

Finally, resources and support for students with special educational needs should be improved. An implementation plan for inclusion is required, which needs to include adequate standards and protocols for identifying students with special needs, to avoid labelling students, to ensure students receive the support they require and to avoid an increase in costs. Moreover, the plan must provide guidelines to support inclusive education in small rural schools where this is likely to be more challenging and costly.

Further promote the development of a new vision of teacher professionalism built on effective engagement and consensus with stakeholders

Colombia should make strides towards a more comprehensive model of professionalism that considers the ways in which teaching and learning are embedded in complex systems and community contexts. A new vision of teacher professionalism should promote collaboration between teachers to support student learning and development. The quality of individual teachers is critical, but so is the environment in which teachers work.

To put the necessary conditions in place for creating a strong profession, the review has developed options that should be considered for discussion: i) promoting a common and evidence-based understanding of effective teaching practice; ii) improving formative school-based teacher evaluations; iii) creating opportunities for teachers to take on other tasks and leadership roles in line with a new organisation of schools; iv) using resources for teacher remuneration to equalise working conditions for teachers of the new statute and to improve the current system of career progression; and v) establishing a sound

knowledge base of teachers' use of their time. All of these efforts should consider the needs and particular contexts of rural and remote teachers.

Future efforts and policies should be underpinned by the effective engagement of all relevant stakeholders early on, including the largest teacher union (and other unions at local and regional levels), school leaders and teacher educators, and be informed by evidence and research in education. Effective consultation would not only facilitate implementation and help build trust between actors, but could also contribute to greater continuity in teacher policy. Policies should be developed on the basis of adequate forecasting of resource implications – the implementation of initiatives often has implications for the workload of school agents and may require additional resources.

Strengthen teacher learning by connecting school-based with external teacher development and by developing specific models for rural teachers

Efforts to improve teacher education and development are areas that require further attention. In particular, this should involve steps to connect school-based teacher learning with external opportunities and models for teachers in rural and remote areas, for example through distance learning and collaboration within schools clusters.

Initiatives such as Let's All Learn need to be sustained and should inspire initiatives at other levels of school education to establish job-embedded forms of teacher learning. Considering the risk that the effects of teacher coaching may fade over time or that teacher coaching may benefit some teachers more than others, these programmes should be subject to further evaluations to inform adjustments in the future. Investments in stronger leadership in schools and sufficient attention to teachers' working conditions, such as assignment, time, space, materials and access to colleagues are also required.

External professional development also has an important role to play and Secretaries of Education should have the resources and capacity to ensure training is of high quality and available to all teachers, including those working in more remote school sites. Central leadership on teacher learning should be strengthened. The creation of a central institution on teacher learning could support a central role on a long-term basis. The ministry should provide leadership for building the notion in teacher education that strategies for specific groups of students, such as multi-grade teaching, may be beneficial for all learners. It should also ensure an adequate offer of specialised degree programmes to ensure a supply of specialised teachers in areas such as ethnic and special needs education.

Make the recruitment and allocation of teachers more equitable and efficient, also to ensure adequate working conditions in rural schools

The central recruitment introduced as part of the new teacher statute in 2002 has established greater transparency and fairness, but filling positions within a reasonable time has been a considerable challenge. The long recruitment cycle may deter high-quality applicants and has contributed to an overuse of temporary teachers, concentrated in disadvantaged and rural parts of the country. As a result, the system has contributed to different types of employment for staff performing the same work, with teachers in the most challenging schools most likely to be employed under less favourable conditions.

The ministry's goal should be to maintain reasonable numbers of temporary teachers and reduce the number of temporary teachers in disadvantaged areas. This should entail regularising temporary teachers who often bring useful skills and experiences. Steps to

reduce rigidities in the teacher labour market by facilitating transfers across certified territorial entities and by monitoring the efficient allocation of permanent staff within them would also help reduce the use of temporary employment. Together with the national civil service commission, the ministry should make sure the central recruitment better reflects particular contexts, possibly as part of wider public sector reform.

While there is limited evidence on what motivates effective teachers to work and remain in challenging settings, a number of studies consistently find that both financial and non-financial factors are important. General quality of life and issues such as personal security certainly matter and long-term improvements in disadvantaged areas will help attract and retain effective teachers. The ministry and Secretaries of Education, however, can help to make teaching in disadvantaged schools more attractive by shaping the working conditions and professional opportunities in these schools. Initiatives should reflect different contexts, such as working in a remote school rather than a rural school close to an urban area. Stronger financial incentives could also be put in place.

Teacher labour markets have an important local dimension. Improving the supply of high-quality options for initial teacher education in all regions of the country, including rural areas, will also be essential for ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers in these areas. Higher teaching schools fulfil an important function in providing teacher education in more rural parts of the country. It is therefore important that higher teaching schools benefit from adequate funding and governance arrangements to offer high-quality teacher education to their students and favourable conditions for their staff. Initial teacher education should also provide insights to students about teaching in rural areas, for example through practical experiences, shorter visits and field trips to rural schools.

Chapter 1. School education in Colombia

This chapter provides the background to the remaining chapters of the report. It presents an overview of the broader economic, social and political context in Colombia. This includes differences in poverty and well-being between rural and urban areas and the achievement of reaching a peace agreement between the government and the FARC-EP. It also provides a description of the school system, including governance, structure and organisation. Finally, the chapter presents an analysis of the quality, equity and efficiency of school education, highlighting differences in coverage and quality between urban and rural areas, advantaged and disadvantaged students and girls and boys.

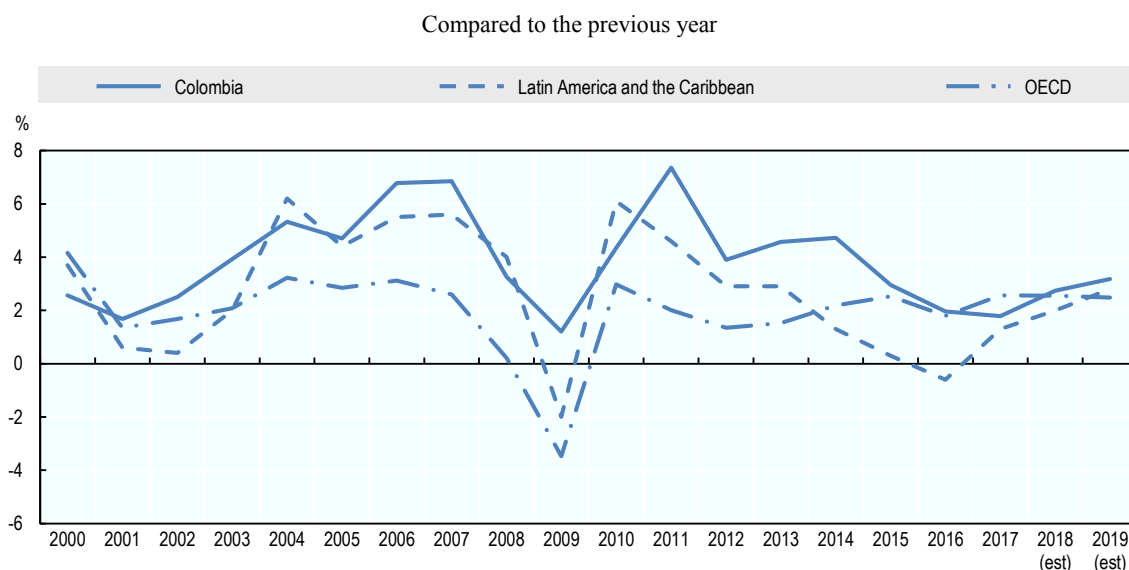
The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Economic, social, demographic and political context

The Colombian economy has grown strongly since the turn of the century but poverty and inequality remain relatively high

Colombia has witnessed strong and sustained economic growth since overcoming a deep recession in the late 1990s (see Figure 1.1). Between 2000 and 2015, the economy grew by an average of 4.3% in real terms despite the global financial and economic crisis. This is significantly more than the OECD average of 1.7%. The economy benefitted from sound macroeconomic policies, structural reforms, a rise in commodity prices and strong investment (OECD, 2017^[1]). In recent years, growth in Latin America has slowed down and the region underwent a recession in 2015 and 2016 (OECD/CAF/ECLAC, 2018^[2]). Weaker trade and a fall in commodity prices have also slowed down the Colombian economy but Colombia has weathered these challenges better than other countries in the region thanks to public investment, private consumption and a large depreciation of the exchange rate (OECD, 2017^[1]).

Figure 1.1. Recent and projected real GDP growth



est – estimated growth

Source: OECD (2018), OECD Economic Outlook 103 Database, <http://stats.oecd.org> (accessed on 01 June 2018); IMF (2018), IMF World Economic Outlook Database, <https://www.imf.org> (accessed on 01 June 2018).

In September 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC-EP) reached a historic peace agreement (see Box 1.1). Building a post-conflict society remains a long-term task and challenge but promises greater social well-being and economic prosperity. Various studies, using different methodologies and types of data, estimate that the conflict had reduced rates of GDP growth by 0.3 to 0.5 percentage points per year (Arias et al., 2014^[3]; Riascos and Vargas, 2011^[4]). Estimates from Colombia's National Planning Department (DNP) suggest that the end of the armed conflict will increase GDP growth by an additional 1.1 to 1.9 percentage points per year, in part thanks to greater security and confidence and growing investments (OECD, 2017^[1]).

Box 1.1. Colombia's agreement to end conflict and build peace

Colombia has suffered from a complex internal conflict lasting more than half a century, with responsibility for violence falling on a differentiated basis on many shoulders: guerrilla groups, the paramilitary and state agents acting outside their legal mandate. The conflict has been one of the most violent in the modern history of Latin America with an estimated number of at least 220 000 deaths between 1958 and 2012, 80% of which were unarmed civilians (GMH, 2016_[5]).

These numbers, however, do not reveal the full dynamics and suffering of the Colombian population. The conflict has resulted in large numbers of victims of forced disappearances, displacement, abductions, unlawful recruitment, torture and abuse, anti-personnel mines and sexual violence (GMH, 2016_[5]). The official victims registry (*Registro Único de Víctimas*) counted a total of 8.6 million victims as of January 2018, with 461 000 being children younger than 5, and nearly 2 million children and young people aged between 6 and 17. An estimated number of 7.2 million people have been displaced by the conflict, the largest number of internally displaced people worldwide (Sánchez, 2018_[6]), with large losses in welfare, which are even greater for poorer families (Ibáñez and Vélez, 2008_[7]). Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been especially harmed by the dynamics of the conflict (GMH, 2016_[5]).

The numbers also do not capture the impact of the conflict in other dimensions, such as economic activity, public infrastructure or social cohesion. The conflict has equally affected children's education and the school system, causing interruptions to the education of displaced students, through recruitment into armed groups, threats to teachers or damage to physical infrastructure (González Bustelo, 2016_[8]). Research reveals that conflict increases prenatal stress for women, with negative effects on the birthweight of children and long-term consequences on cognitive abilities (Camacho, 2008_[9]). The conflict also has had a negative effect on equity in terms of access to education, leading to school dropout especially for disadvantaged children (Vargas, Gamboa and García, 2013_[10]).

The scale of violence has varied over time and across place. While some areas have experienced continuous conflict, in others violence has been largely absent. Following an upsurge of violence between 1996 and 2002, the intensity of the conflict has been decreasing until the present day (GMH, 2016_[5]). On 24 November 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), the country's largest guerrilla group, signed a historic peace agreement promising the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history. Nevertheless, ensuring the effective implementation of the agreement – including through an allocation of the required resources – and building peace will be a major challenge (UN, 2017_[11]). Peace negotiations with the second largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN), have been underway but are yet to be concluded. Illegal armed groups, guerrilla and non-demobilised paramilitary also still exist. In some parts of the country, violence seems to have intensified as reported by Amnesty International (2018_[12]).

The peace agreement is composed of a series of accords all based on the goal to promote the constitutional rights of all Colombians and the recognition of the equality and protection of the pluralism of Colombian society, its territories and communities. The accords entail i) a comprehensive rural reform (*Reforma Rural Integral*); ii) actions to enhance the population's political participation; iii) the end of hostilities and steps to reintegrate former FARC members into civil and political life; iv) actions to find solutions to the problem of illicit drugs; v) a comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition to safeguard the rights of the conflict's victims; and vi) verification and implementation mechanisms. The implementation of the different accords is to be supervised by national and international overseers, ensuring their fulfilment over the 15 years stipulated in the agreement.

The agreement and accords also rest on the implementation of agreed actions in **the area of education**. The rural reform does not only promote the economic recovery of the countryside through land access and use but also the development of national plans to improve public services and infrastructure. For education, this includes the development and implementation of a Special Rural Education Plan (*Plan Especial de Educación Rural*, PEER). In the zones most affected by the conflict and poverty, these national plans, including the one linked to education, will be implemented through Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*, PDET). To strengthen political participation and inclusion, a policy of peace education has been developed and implemented as of 2018. As part of the programme for the social and economic reincorporation of the former guerrilla, the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, MEN) and the National Learning Service (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*, SENA) are developing education programmes adapted to the needs of demobilised fighters and their families (Mesa de Conversaciones [Conversation Roundtable], 2017_[13]).

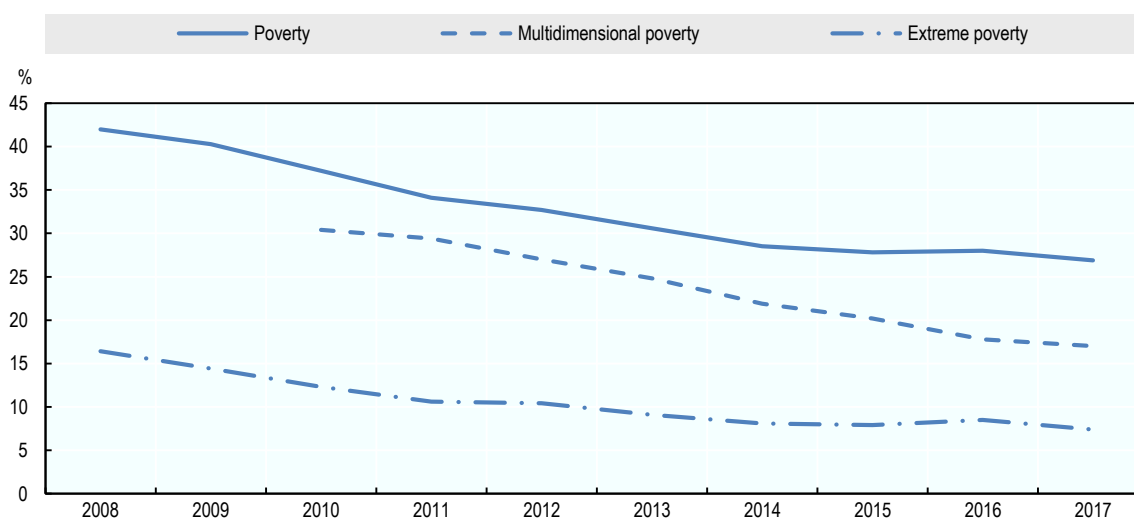
Sources: GMH (2016), *Basta Ya! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity*, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica [National Center for Historical Memory], Bogotá, DC; Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>; Ibáñez, A. and C. Vélez (2008), "Civil conflict and forced migration: The micro determinants and welfare losses of displacement in Colombia", <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.04.013>; González Bustelo, M. (2016), *El Verdadero Fin del Conflicto Armado: Jóvenes Vulnerables, Educación Rural y Construcción de la Paz en Colombia* [The Real End of the Armed Conflict: Vulnerable Youth, Rural Education and the Construction of Peace in Colombia], <https://noref.no>; Camacho, A. (2008), "Stress and birth weight: Evidence from terrorist attacks", <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.98.2.511>; Vargas, J., L. Gamboa and V. García (2013), "El lado oscuro de la equidad: Violencia y equidad en el desempeño escolar [The dark side of equity: Violence and equity in school performance]", <http://dx.doi.org/10.13043/DYS.74.7>; UN (2017), *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of Colombia*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, New York; Amnesty International (2018), *Amnesty International Report 2017/18: The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International, London; Mesa de Conversaciones [Conversation Roundtable] (2017), *Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera* [Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace], Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz [The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace], Bogotá, DC.

Colombia's economy showed signs of a revival in the second half of 2017 with growing investments and a slow recovery in imports and exports. Over the next 2 years, the economy is forecast to strengthen gradually to 3% in 2018-19, supported by lower interest rates, investment in infrastructure, higher oil prices and significantly stronger exports. Trade prospects and commodity prices continue being main risks to the economy in the medium term (OECD, 2017_[14]). Like most of Latin America, Colombia faces the challenge of overcoming the middle-income trap, moving to more knowledge-intensive activities and sustaining the social gains that have been made in recent years (OECD/CAF/ECLAC, 2016_[15]).

The fall in oil prices has put pressure on government revenues and narrowed the space for public spending. The country's fiscal rule adopted in 2011 safeguards fiscal and debt sustainability with a gradual consolidation of the structural deficit to 1% of GDP by 2022. To comply with the rule, public investment was cut in 2015 and 2016. While a tax reform introduced in 2016 is expected to generate new revenues, the need for infrastructure and social spending is likely to exceed revenues in the medium term and require additional sources of revenue (OECD, 2017_[11]).

Economic development and social policies targeting the most vulnerable have improved the socio-economic conditions of many Colombians, including the poorer parts of society (OECD, 2016_[16]) (see Figure 1.2). More Colombians have moved up into the middle class, even though less so than in other countries in Latin America, such as Chile and Mexico (Angulo, Gaviria and Morales, 2014_[17]). Whereas 22.0% of Colombians could be considered to be middle class in 2008, this was the case for 30.4% of Colombians in 2016 (CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2018_[18]).

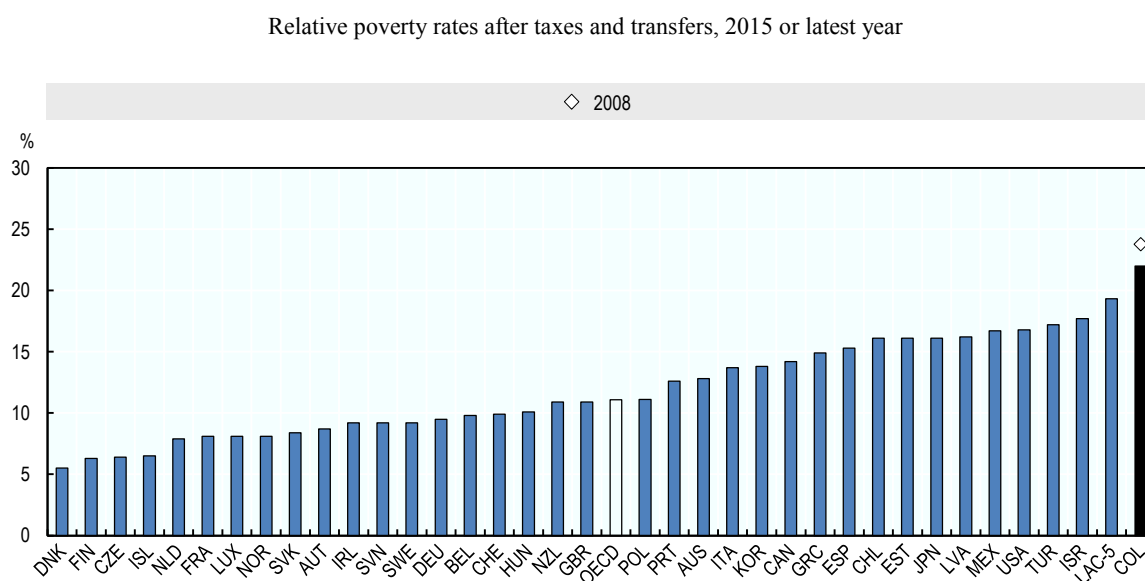
Figure 1.2. Trends in national poverty rates in Colombia



Notes: The poverty rate measures the percentage of the population with a per capita income in the household below the poverty line, in relation to the total population. The extreme poverty rate measures the percentage of the population with a per capita income in the household below the extreme poverty line, in relation to the total population. Both measures are based on income data from the Integrated Household Survey. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is based on five dimensions (education, living conditions of children and youth, health, work, access to public services and housing) and 15 indicators. People are considered poor if deprived of at least five of these 15 indicators. Data are obtained from the National Quality of Life Survey. *Sources:* DANE (2018), *Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH) [Integrated Household Survey]*, <https://www.dane.gov.co> (accessed on 01 June 2018); DANE (2018), *Encuesta Nacional de Calidad de Vida (ECV) [National Quality of Life Survey]*, <https://www.dane.gov.co> (accessed on 01 June 2018).

However, Colombia needs to make further strides to reduce poverty, particularly among children and the elderly, and to create a more equal society (OECD, 2016_[16]). Poverty is still higher than in any other OECD country and many countries in Latin America (see Figure 1.3). Based on a relative poverty line defined as 50% of the median household disposable income, 22% of Colombians were poor in 2015, twice as much as the OECD average (OECD, 2017_[11]). Children are especially vulnerable. In 2011, slightly less than one in three grew up in relative poverty (OECD, 2017_[11]). In 2017, 23.8% of people in a household with 3 or more children under the age of 12 were below Colombia's absolute poverty line (DANE, 2018_[19]).

Figure 1.3. Relative income poverty



Notes: The relative poverty rate is the ratio of the number of people whose income falls below the poverty line; taken as half the median household income of the total population.

Data for Israel refer to 2016, to 2014 for Australia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand and Switzerland, and to 2012 for Japan.

Data for LAC-5 refer to the simple average for Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

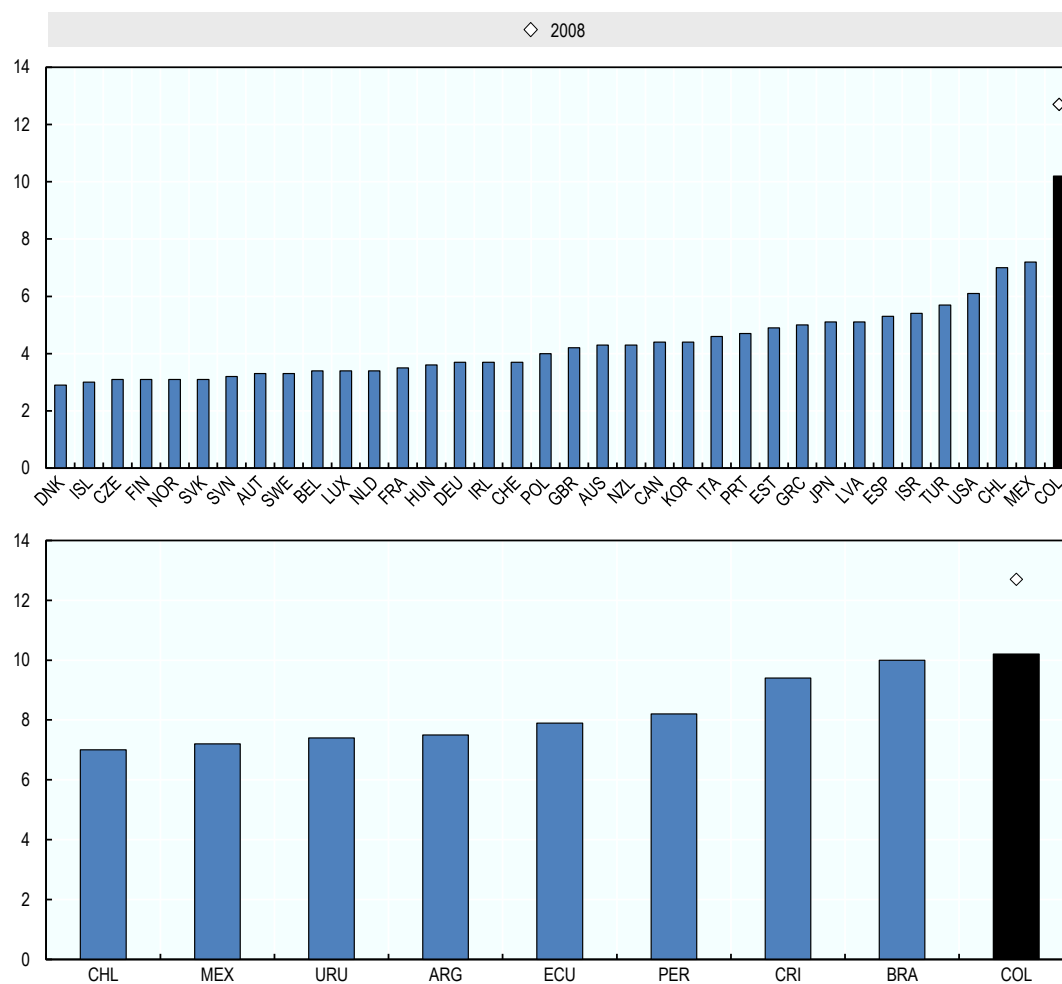
Sources: OECD (2017), OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD), <http://stats.oecd.org> (accessed on 01 June 2018); CEDLAS and The World Bank (2017), Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC), <http://www.cedlas.econo.unlp.edu.ar> (accessed on 01 June 2018).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, income inequality has decreased for most countries in Latin America, one of the most unequal regions in the world. On average, inequality, as measured by the GINI coefficient, decreased from 0.56 in 2002 to 0.51 in 2016, with a particularly stark reduction in the first decade of the 2000s (CEDLAS and The World Bank, 2017_[20]).¹

In Colombia, income inequality dropped as well, from 0.56 in 2002 to 0.51 in 2016, but started to decrease particularly from 2010 onwards (World Bank, 2018_[21]). Redistribution had much less of an impact on poverty reduction in Colombia than in other countries in the region and evidence suggests that poverty would have declined more had economic growth been distributed more equitably (Giménez, Rodríguez-Castelán and Valderrama, 2015_[22]). Compared to OECD countries, inequality in Colombia remains extremely high as shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4. Income inequality across households

P90/P10 ratio, 2015 or latest available year



Notes: The P90/P10 ratio is the ratio of income of the 10% of people with the highest income to that of the poorest 10%.

Data for Israel refer to 2016, to 2014 for Australia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand and Switzerland, and to 2012 for Japan.

Sources: OECD (2017), OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD), <http://stats.oecd.org> (accessed on 01 June 2018); CEDLAS and The World Bank (2017), Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC), <http://www.cedlas.econo.unlp.edu.ar> (accessed on 01 June 2018).

Public social spending has increased, and social programmes have contributed to poverty alleviation, but social expenditure remains relatively low relative to GDP and to the OECD and still redistributes too little. The pension system accounts for a large share of central government spending and is highly unequal. Colombia's tax system also still does little to reduce inequality (OECD, 2016_[16]; OECD, 2017_[11]).

Strong economic growth has improved employment outcomes in recent years, especially for women, young people and older workers. But unemployment remains high and those who are unemployed are at risk of falling into poverty as the level of allowances remains

small (OECD, 2017_[1]). In 2016, 9.2% of the Colombian labour force was unemployed, compared to 7.2% on average across the OECD. Nevertheless, some OECD countries have higher unemployment rates than Colombia, namely France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey (OECD, 2017_[23]).

The informal sector of the labour market remains persistently large. The Colombian authorities have put in place various initiatives to promote the formalisation of labour, and some of these have had an effect on labour market segmentation, but about six in ten Colombian employees still work in informal jobs. While there is voluntary and involuntary, and higher- and lower-paid work in the informal segment of the labour market (García, 2017_[24]), workers in informal jobs often suffer from poor working conditions, the lack of social safety nets and lower returns to their education.

Informality puts workers at a high risk of poverty when they lose their job or retire. And it is closely related to inequality as informal workers are paid less for the same level of education (Amarante and Arim, 2015_[25]; Herrera-Idárraga, López-Bazo and Motellón, 2015_[26]; OECD, 2017_[1]).² More broadly, there is room for improving the quantity, quality and inclusiveness of work (OECD, 2017_[27]) and for considering precarious working conditions for both formal and informal workers (Ferreira, 2016_[28]).

Stubbornly high levels of inequality are a particular concern in light of low social mobility across generations and inequalities in opportunities in Colombia. Various studies suggest that social mobility has improved since the turn of the century. But it remains difficult for individuals to overcome their social background and achieve better outcomes in socio-economic conditions and education than their parents, and more so than in other countries in the region like Chile and Mexico (Angulo et al., 2014_[29]; Galvis and Roca, 2014_[30]; García et al., 2015_[31]).

Angulo et al. (2014_[29]), for example, find that the chances of a child growing up in a poor family to achieve a high income are less than 7%. The lack of social mobility is closely linked to inequalities in opportunities, which, despite improvements, also remain substantial. Individual circumstances that are beyond one's control and in particular one's parents' level of education play a significant role for later outcomes in life in Colombia (Ferreira and Meléndez, 2014_[32]; Vélez and Torres, 2014_[33]).

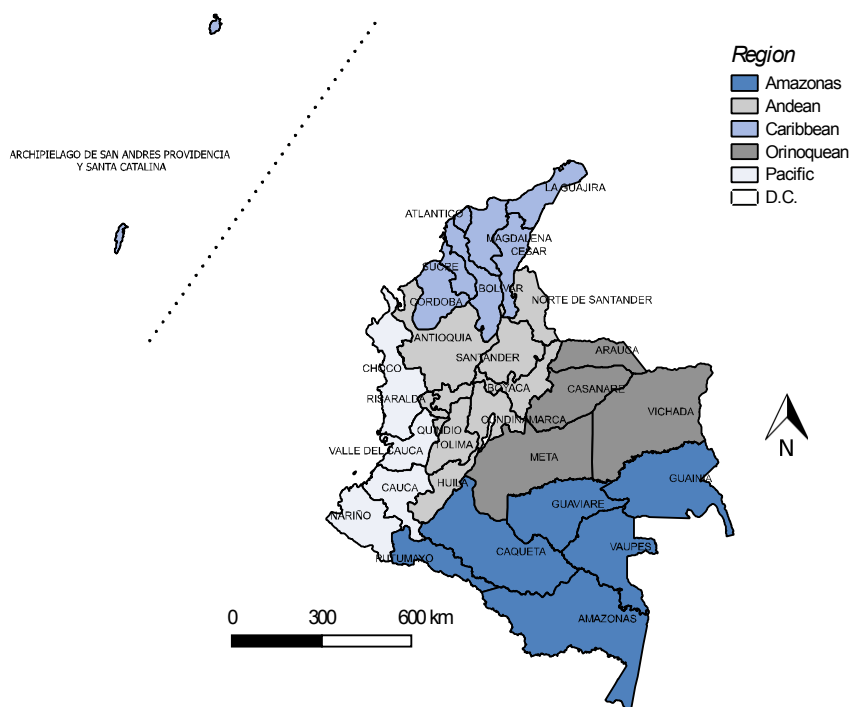
There are large gaps in social and economic development between regions and the armed conflict has particularly affected life in rural areas

Colombia is a country of regions and geographical and cultural diversity. With a land mass of 1.1 million km² (almost twice the size of Texas or France), it is the fifth largest country in Latin America and the only country in South America that borders both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It encompasses parts of the Andes which split into three chains with two long valleys between them, and, to the south-east, the *Llanos*, remote tropical lowlands, and parts of the Amazon. Colombia's population (an estimated total of about 49 million in 2017) is concentrated in the Andean and Caribbean regions where the country's largest cities with more than one million inhabitants – Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla – can be found. Fewer people live in the sparsely populated areas in the south-east and on the Pacific coast (DANE, 2012_[34]).

Colombia is a decentralised but unitary state, with all government offices being located in the capital Bogotá. Politically and administratively, the country is organised into territorial entities. At this territorial level, there are 32 departments, 7 districts,³

1 122 municipalities and indigenous territories.⁴ While departments correspond to the regional level, districts and municipalities refer to the local level. Indigenous territories are governed by their own councils, the *Cabildos Indigenas*, and their own laws. Figure 1.5 shows Colombia's regions and the departments that are part of them (for further details about the political context and the public sector, see Sánchez (2018_[6]).

Figure 1.5. Regions of Colombia



Note: This map presents regions based on social and cultural convention.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Among Colombia's 102 officially recognised ethnic minorities, the Afro-Colombian population (including Raizal and Palenquero) make up the largest group. Based on the census of 2005, more than 4.3 million, or 10.6%, identified themselves as Afro-Colombian. Indigenous peoples make up 3.4% of the population (about 1.4 million), and the Rrom 0.01%. Indigenous communities are highly concentrated in the Amazonas and Pacific regions and the department of La Guajira. Afro-Colombian communities have a high concentration in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions. There are 65 indigenous languages, 2 Afro-Colombian and the Romani of the Rrom, all recognised as official languages within these communities (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

In a similar way to many other countries in Latin America, Colombia has become largely urbanised. Based on estimates, 37.8 million people, that is more than 3 in 4 Colombians (77.0%), lived in urban areas in 2017 (OECD average: 80.7%). The remaining quarter of the population (23.0%), or 11.3 million people, lived in rural areas (OECD average: 19.3%) (World Bank, 2018_[35]).⁵ This process of urbanisation has also been driven by

migration from rural to urban areas, resulting from the failure of public policy, a lack of institutions, violence and poor living conditions in rural areas (OECD, 2014_[36]).

Between 1993 and 2005, 63% of municipalities experienced negative or close to zero rates of population growth. Slightly more than half of municipalities with less than 10 000 inhabitants were losing population in that period, especially young people between 16 and 29 years (PNUD, 2011_[37]). As the National Demographic and Health Survey from 2015 suggests, internal migrations within the 5 years prior to the survey came to 25% from rural areas, particularly from remote rural areas (21%); 27% of rural migrants were 19 years old or younger (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social and Profamilia, 2017_[38]).

Despite these trends, the population in rural areas still tends to be younger than in urban areas. In 2015, almost 31.5% of rural Colombians were less than 15 years old, compared to 25.4% of Colombians living in urban areas. In general, while the country as a whole has been undergoing a demographic transition with declining fertility and mortality rates since the 1960s, the population remains relatively young, presenting Colombia with a demographic boon (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social and Profamilia, 2017_[38]). In 2017, slightly less than 1 in 4 Colombians was under 15 years old (23.5%, compared to 18.0% on average across the OECD) (World Bank, 2018_[35]). The political crisis in Venezuela has been bringing a growing number of migrants, a large share of which is younger than 18 years (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Even though Colombia has become urbanised over the last 50 years, rural life still plays a significant role in the country (DNP, 2015_[39]). Using a definition of rurality that takes density and distance into account, a little more than 30% of Colombians live in rural areas and between 60% and 76% of municipalities can be considered rural (PNUD, 2011_[37]). Colombia's "Rural Mission", a rural development strategy explained in Box 1.2, developed a classification of the country's municipalities to better reflect their rurality.

Accordingly, municipalities can be described as "cities and agglomerations", "intermediate", "rural" and "remote". As Figure 1.6 illustrates based on this classification, the country's periphery and the areas separating the Caribbean from the centre are highly rural. Data from Colombia's population census carried out in 2018 will provide new insights into current population dynamics and demographics.

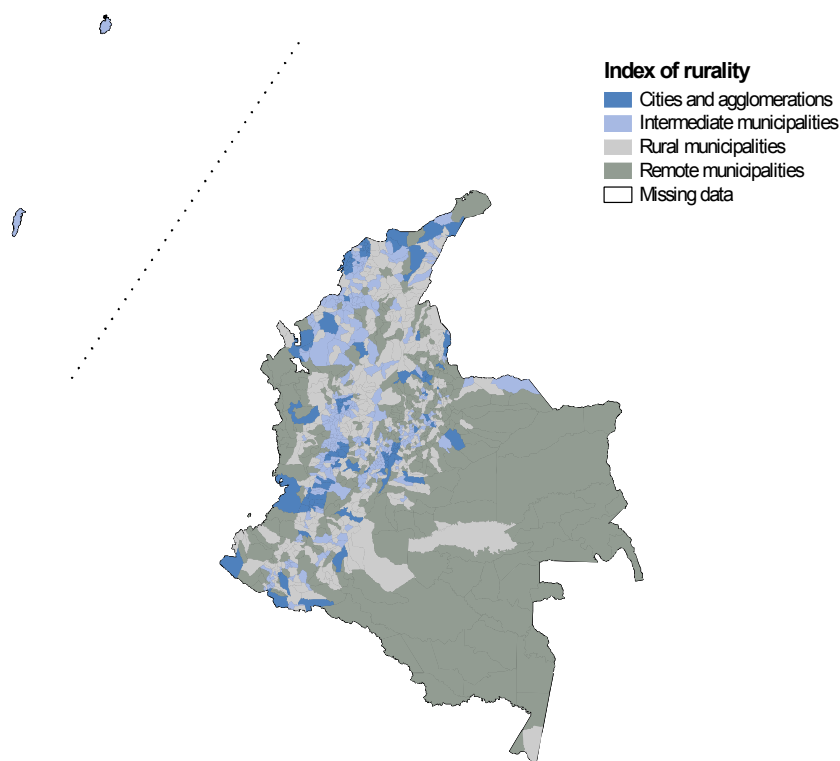
Economic development has been uneven across the country. The Gini index of inequality of GDP per capita across regions provides a measure of the economic disparities between regions in a country. For Colombia, this index was more than twice as high as the OECD average (0.35 vs 0.16), and slightly higher than in other Latin American countries, such as Chile (0.33), Mexico (0.32) and Brazil (0.30) in 2013 (OECD, 2016_[40]).

These regional disparities are influenced by the country's topography limiting connections between regions in the absence of efficient infrastructure. High mountain ranges make building new roads and maintaining existing ones much more expensive than in countries with a flatter topography (OECD, 2017_[1]). Weak institutions, few linkages between rural and urban as well as between rural areas and a focus on traditional agricultural activities also contribute to regional disparities (OECD, 2014_[36]).

Poverty and well-being also vary considerably between as well as within regions and departments, with a clear divide between the country's centre and periphery (Cortés and Vargas, 2012_[41]). Based on data from the National Quality of Life Survey (ECV) carried out by DANE, Colombia's statistical agency, 5.9% of the population of the capital city, Bogotá, lived in multidimensional poverty in 2016.⁶ In the Caribbean region,

multidimensional poverty was more than 5 times as high, at 26.4%. The Pacific region, excluding the department Valle del Cauca, had the highest rate of multidimensional poverty with 33.2% (Sánchez, 2018^[6]).

Figure 1.6. Rurality in Colombia



Note: Municipalities are classified as cities and agglomerations (117 municipalities), intermediate (314 municipalities), rural (373 municipalities) and remote (*rural disperso*) (318 municipalities). This classification is based on the categories established by Colombia's Rural Mission (*Misión para la Transformación del Campo*) to better reflect geographical realities of the country. It takes into account i) rurality within the System of Cities established through the Urban Mission (*Misión de Ciudades*); ii) population density; and iii) the relation between the population in urban and rural areas.

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on DNP (2015), *El Campo Colombiano: Un Camino hacia el Bienestar y la Paz Misión para la Transformación del Campo* [*Rural Colombia: A Path towards Well-being and Peace Mission for the Transformation of Rural Areas*], Departamento Nacional de Planeación [National Planning Department].

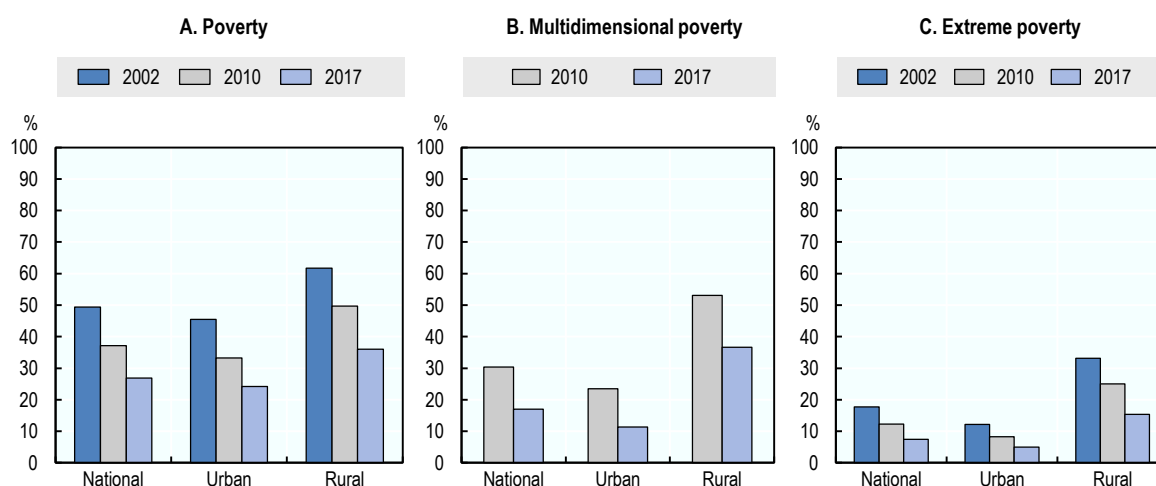
Analysing data between 2009 and 2015, the department of Chocó in the Pacific region was the only department which had not reduced multidimensional poverty (Gómez Arteaga, Quiroz Porras and Ariza Hernández, 2017^[42]). An analysis of spatial poverty in the Caribbean region highlights clusters of high and low poverty that cross boundaries of municipalities and departments (Tapias Ortega, 2017^[43]).

Agricultural departments have the highest poverty levels, also a result of weak property rights and a high concentration of land ownership. Rural development policy has promoted equitable access to credit and land, as well as housing, basic sanitation, education and health (OECD, 2015^[44]). In 2015, The "Rural Mission", which has already

been mentioned, for instance developed a medium- and long-term strategy to close rural-urban gaps, which includes education as one element (see Box 1.2).

As analysed above, poverty for the country as a whole has declined and so has poverty in rural areas. Gaps between rural and urban areas, however, remain substantial. In 2017, the share of rural Colombians living in multidimensional poverty was still more than twice as high as for urban dwellers (see Figure 1.7). As the country's 3rd National Agricultural Census indicates, multidimensional poverty remains even higher in remote areas (45.7% in 2014 vs. 54.3% in 2005) (DANE, 2016_[45]).

Figure 1.7. Differences in poverty rates between rural and urban areas



Notes: The poverty rate measures the percentage of the population with a per capita income in the household below the poverty line, in relation to the total population. The extreme poverty rate measures the percentage of the population with a per capita income in the household below the extreme poverty line, in relation to the total population. Both measures are based on income data from the Integrated Household Survey. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is based on five dimensions (education, living conditions of children and youth, health, work, access to public services and housing) and 15 indicators. People are considered poor if deprived of at least five of these 15 indicators. Data are obtained from the National Quality of Life Survey. Urban refers to municipal townships (*cabecera municipal*), rural to the remaining areas (*resto municipal*), including both populated centres (*centros poblados*) and rural scattered areas (*rural disperso*).
Sources: DANE (2018), *Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH)* [Integrated Household Survey], <https://www.dane.gov.co> (accessed on 01 June 2018); DANE (2018), *Encuesta Nacional de Calidad de Vida (ECV)* [National Quality of Life Survey], <https://www.dane.gov.co> (accessed on 01 June 2018).

Inequalities in social and economic development based on geography particularly affect Colombia's ethnic minorities which are highly concentrated in regions with higher poverty and, in the case of indigenous peoples, in rural areas. Individuals from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities have lower levels of well-being over the course of their life in a number of dimensions, including health, nutrition and education. Individuals belonging to an ethnic minority have also suffered disproportionately from violence and forced displacement (Cárdenas, Ñopo and Castañeda, 2014_[46]).

Achieving decreases in regional inequalities and rural poverty will be crucial in improving the well-being of all Colombians, including Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples, in creating lasting peace as well as reviving rural areas and stemming rural to urban migration. Migrants may not have the skills required to succeed in the urban labour

market and in turn contribute to increasing urban poverty (OECD, 2014_[36]). Internal migration and forced displacement also pose challenges for planning the provision of education in response to falling and increasing student numbers.

Box 1.2. Colombia’s “Rural Mission” (*Misión para la Transformación del Campo*)

The National Planning Department (DNP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), has recently developed a strategy for rural development for the medium and long term. The recommendations were also taken up in the National Development Plan 2014-18.

As the strategy states, “the central objective of the *Misión para la Transformación del Campo* is to propose state policies so that rural society can manifest its full potential, contributing to national well-being and making a decisive contribution to the construction of peace. Peace also offers immense possibilities for rural development, agricultural and non-agricultural, and allows us to think about the advancement of rural areas as one of the pillars of the future development of the country” (p. 4).

The strategy is based on a participatory territorial approach as one of its three key principles and adopts the conception of “new rurality” (*nueva ruralidad*). This conception seeks to overcome the rural-urban dichotomy and looks more at the relationships, synergies and complementarities to close gaps between rural and urban areas.

The strategy proposes six lines of action within a framework that includes economic, social and environmental aspects of rural development: social rights, productive inclusion, competitiveness, environmental sustainability, territorial development and institutional adjustment. The social rights agenda set the goal to eliminate rural-urban gaps by 2030 in the provision of social services (nutrition, education, health, social protection, housing, water and sanitation).

In **education**, it sets the objective to not only close rural gaps in attainment but “to guarantee a relevant and quality education that facilitates productive inclusion and encourages creativity and innovation [...] and that education is a true instrument for social mobility, both for youth deciding to stay in rural areas and those migrating to the cities” (p. 51).

Recommendations for the education sector include the creation of a permanent and specialised directorate within the ministry of education to design adequate and differentiated policies for the rural sector. The report also highlights the following:

- The quality assurance and regulation of flexible school models and the creation of new pedagogical models for secondary education.
- Differentiated education policy according to types of rurality depending on existing demand and population density, possibilities for school transport, infrastructure and teacher supply; differentiated strategies beyond the reorganisation of the school network for schools and students in remote areas; significant investments in infrastructure and transport.
- A relevant curriculum in secondary education that entails elements of food security and entrepreneurship; the great potential of productive pedagogical projects to develop relevant knowledge and skill.

- Efforts to strengthen professional tertiary education (technical, technological and professional-technical programmes), e.g. through articulation with upper secondary education; the creation of new courses by the National Learning Service (SENA); the development of virtual and distance learning; the development of the educational offer of Regional Centres of Higher Education (CERES); the creation of new sites of public universities; and support for rural youth to access tertiary education.
- Greater articulation between the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the National Learning Service (SENA), and a review of the offer of tertiary education in rural areas.

Source: DNP (2015), *El Campo Colombiano: Un Camino hacia el Bienestar y la Paz Misión para la Transformación del Campo [Rural Colombia: A Path towards Well-being and Peace Mission for the Transformation of Rural Areas]*, Departamento Nacional de Planeación [National Planning Department], Bogotá, DC.

School system

Governance of the school system

Goals and objectives of school education

Education in Colombia is both a fundamental right and a public service with a social function as defined in the Constitution adopted in 1991 (Art. 67) – the previous Constitution having been enacted since 1886. As a fundamental right, education is essential and integral to the development of the individual. As a public service, the state guarantees the provision of education. Education shall provide access to knowledge, science, know-how and all other cultural goods and values. It shall educate Colombians in the respect of human rights, peace and democracy and in the practice of work and leisure to enhance culture, science and technology and to protect the environment.

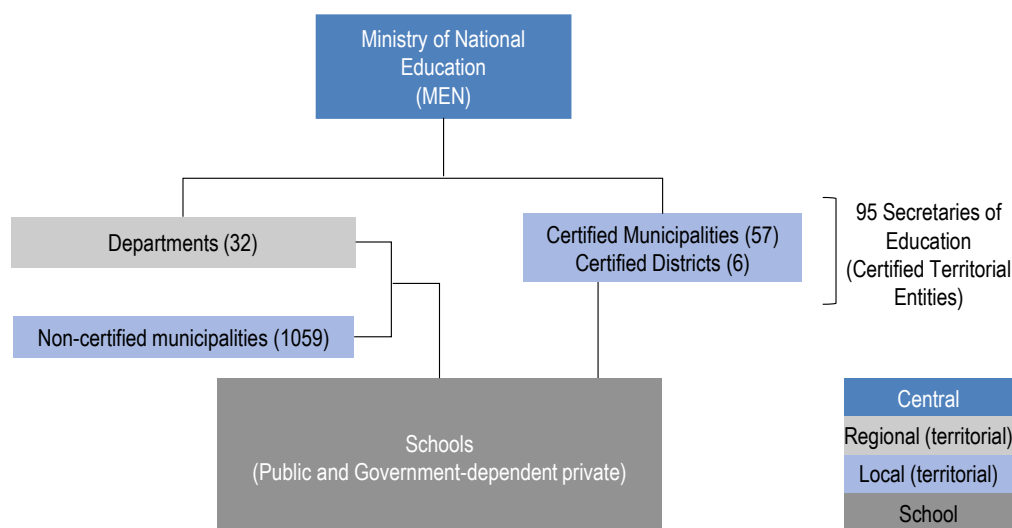
These general objectives of education would later be further specified in the General Education Law of 1994 (Law 115) in the form of 13 general goals for non-formal, informal and formal education. The General Education Law also defines common objectives for all levels of formal education, from pre-primary to upper secondary levels, as well as specific objectives for different levels (for details see Sánchez (2018_[6])).⁷ According to the Constitution, the state, society and family are responsible for ensuring education quality and for promoting access to public education.

Distribution of responsibilities

School education in Colombia is mainly regulated by the Constitution of 1991 and the General Education Law of 1994, which have already been mentioned, as well as the Single Regulatory Decree of Education (Decree 1075) of 2015 and Law 715 of 2001. While Decree 1075 combines all education decrees enacted before as well as after 2015, Law 715 regulates Colombia's system of fiscal transfers across levels of governance, the General System of Transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*, SGP). This revenue sharing mechanism also distributes funding for school education.

Colombia was one of the first countries in Latin America to begin decentralising its school system and, although a unitary state, Colombia has become one of the more decentralised countries in the region. Following first steps to decentralise education to municipalities, districts and departments in the late 1980s and the early 1990s before and after the adoption of the new Constitution, the reform of the fiscal transfer system in 2001 further clarified responsibilities for each level of government.⁸ For school education, there are thus three levels of administration: central, territorial (regional and local) and school levels (see Figure 1.8). The governance framework is the same for all levels of education from pre-primary to upper secondary, and the same authorities are responsible for regulating, funding and providing education for all these levels.

Figure 1.8. Levels of governance for school education in Colombia



Source: Adapted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

At the central level, the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, MEN, hereafter ministry) is the head of the sector. According to the General Education Law, the ministry holds four types of responsibilities: i) policy and planning; ii) monitoring; iii) administration; and iv) regulation.⁹ The ministry formulates policies and objectives, regulates provision, establishes criteria and guidelines, monitors the system and provides technical advice and support, but does not directly provide education. In recent years, the ministry has taken on an increasingly important role in the design and implementation of programmes that target individual schools.

In school education, the ministry works with three different entities: the National Institute for the Blind (*Instituto Nacional para Ciegos*, INCI), the National Institute for the Deaf (*Institucional Nacional para Sordos*, INSOR) and the Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (*Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación Educativa*, ICFES). INCI and INSOR promote public policy for people with a disability. ICFES is the institution responsible for evaluation and assessment in education and for carrying out research on the quality of education. All of these three institutions have administrative autonomy and an independent budget.¹⁰

Decentralisation in education has been managed by a process of certification. While all departments and districts gained the status of a certified territorial entity (*entidad territorial certificada*, ETC) in 2002 with the adoption of Law 715, all municipalities with at least 100 000 inhabitants and municipalities judged to have sufficient technical, financial and administrative capacity were certified by 2003. Other municipalities have since had the possibility to apply to their department for certified status and to provide education. Departments should provide technical and administrative support to their municipalities to gain certification (MEN, 2004_[47]). As shown in Figure 1.8, 95 territorial entities were certified and had their own certified Secretary of Education in 2018: 32 departments, 6 districts and 57 municipalities.

The certified territorial entities are responsible for ensuring coverage and quality, defining and implementing education policy and monitoring the quality of provision in both public and private schools in their territory. They manage the teaching staff of their schools and financial resources received from the General System of Transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*, SGP), their own revenues, and oil and mining royalties.

The provision of education in the non-certified municipalities is the responsibility of the certified Secretaries of Education of the departments, but departmental education authorities co-ordinate with the municipalities' authorities, such as the Secretary of Culture and Sports, in fulfilling this responsibility. Non-certified municipalities support the management of the teaching staff and provide data and information to their department. They also manage a small amount of financial resources they receive from the General System of Transfers (SGP) and can contribute their own resources for school infrastructure, maintenance and quality.

The education of children and young people from Colombia's ethnic minorities has been regulated by a specific decree (Decree 804 of 1995) and schools have had the possibility of offering ethnic education programmes (*programas de etnoeducación*) developed together with the local community. A process is, however, underway to provide ethnic groups with greater autonomy through the creation of their own intercultural education systems (*Sistemas Educativos Propios e Interculturales*).

Among these, the Individual Indigenous Educational System (*Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio*, SEIP), which has been developed since 2010 together with the indigenous communities and was close to completion at the time of writing, is the most advanced. Through this system, administrative, pedagogical and organisational responsibility will be transferred to the indigenous territories, which will function similarly to the certified territorial entities. In general, ethnic communities must be consulted for all policies that concern them, a process led by the Ministry of the Interior.

Since the early 1990s, schools have substantial autonomy in defining their curriculum based on the General Education Law (Art. 77). Every school must develop and put into practice an educational project (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*, PEI) together with the school community. Schools in Colombia also have some budgetary autonomy through the management of their own educational service fund (*Fondos de Servicios Educativos*, FSE) but little influence on the selection or dismissal of their teaching staff who are employed by their Secretary of Education. Responsibility for the management and administration of schools lies mainly with the school's principal and directive council (*consejo directivo*). Schools should provide for the participation of the entire school community and also have an academic council, a school coexistence committee, a parent's association and a student council.

Policy making and stakeholder involvement

The planning of public policy in general and also for education is based on development plans designed at the national and subnational levels for a period of four years. The government plan of the successful candidate presented during the electoral period is approved by the respective chamber of elected representatives – Congress at the national level, and Departmental Assembly and Municipal Council at regional and local (territorial) levels. Development plans guide budget and policy decisions for the term in office and provide a basis for evaluating the achievement of set goals and objectives. The development plans of departments and municipalities must be aligned with the national plan. In education specifically, the plans of non-certified municipalities must also be co-ordinated with the respective department.

The process of transforming the president's electoral strategy into the National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*, PND) is led by the National Planning Department (*Departamento Nacional de Planeación*, DNP)¹¹ and supported by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (*Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público*). The plan entails a medium-term expenditure framework that guides annual budget decisions as well as a multiannual investment budget that contains the country's main investment programmes for implementing the plan.

The plan is widely publicised before its approval and consulted extensively with representatives of departments and municipalities, ethnic minorities and civil society. Prior to consideration and approval by Congress, the plan has to be endorsed by the CONPES (*Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social*), the country's advisory body on economic and social policy. Once passed by Congress, the plan is enacted into law (*Ley Orgánica del Plan de Desarrollo*).

The National Development Plan for 2014-18, *Todos por un Nuevo País: Paz, Equidad y Educación*, established education as one of three key pillars for economic and social development alongside peace and equity (see Box 1.3). The priorities defined in the plan also constitute the basis for formulating national policies and programmes funded through the ministry of education's budget for investment projects.

The education ministry establishes a longer vision and planning horizon for education through the country's ten-year education plans (*Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación*, PNDE). The current ten-year plan was established for 2016-26 following the extensive participation of civil society, including schools and students, and technical advice of experts and researchers through an academic commission (see Box 1.4).

The General Education Law established advisory bodies for education policy and planning and platforms for regular stakeholder participation and co-ordination across levels of governance. As stipulated in the law, a national education board (*Junta Nacional de Educación*, JUNE) and its technical secretaries should provide ongoing advice to the ministry, propose programmes and projects, make suggestions on proposed legislation and regulations, promote research, and monitor and evaluate the system.

Education boards at the level of departments, districts and municipalities (*Juntas Departamentales y Distritales de Educación*, JUDE, and *Juntas Municipales de Educación*, JUME) should advise, verify, oversee and approve politics, plans and curricula for their territory. These boards are composed of government officials of different levels and areas, representatives of the education community, the productive sector, and ethnic communities. All of these advisory bodies have, however, stopped

functioning in recent years. An agreement between the government and the largest teacher union from 2017 nevertheless envisages re-establishing these platforms.

Box 1.3. The National Development Plan 2014-18: *Todos por un Nuevo País: Paz, Equidad y Educación*

The National Development Plan (PND) for 2014-18 set various specific objectives and lines of action to improve the access, quality and relevance of education, with the overarching long-term goal to “close the gaps in access and quality to education, between individuals, population groups and between regions, bringing the country to high international standards and achieving equality of opportunities for all citizens” (p. 85). The ultimate objective is to become “the most educated” country in Latin America by 2025.

Among the lines of actions for school education, the following stand out:

- **Early childhood education (*Educación inicial*):** In recognition of early childhood education as a fundamental right for children under the age of six, the plan contemplates that the national government regulates the articulation of this level with the education system within the framework of comprehensive care/integral attention (*atención integral*) encompassing health, nutrition, protection and early childhood education in different forms of provision within the framework of the From Zero to Forever (*De Cero a Siempre*) strategy.
- **Teacher excellence (*Excelencia Docente*):** Building on and strengthening the implementation of the Let’s All Learn Programme (*Programa Todos a Aprender*, PTA) initiated as part of the PND for 2010-14; taking steps to attract highly qualified candidates into the profession, to improve initial teacher education and professional development, to improve the remuneration of teachers and opportunities for promotion of teachers in the new teacher statute; and strengthening school leadership.
- **Full-day schooling (*Jornada Única*):** Longer and better-quality instruction time for children in pre-school, primary and secondary education. The plan established full-day schooling to be implemented gradually by mayors and governors until the year 2025 in urban areas and until 2030 in rural areas, with a goal of 30% coverage by 2018. As part of this policy, the development of an infrastructure plan (*Plan Maestro de Infraestructura Educativa*), which has resulted in the creation of an Educational Infrastructure Fund (*Fondo de Financiamiento de la Infraestructura Educativa*, FFIE).
- **Upper secondary education for all (*Educación media para todos*):** The plan proposes to advance in the net coverage of this level of school education from 41.3% in 2013 to 50.0% in 2018 and to reach a gross coverage of 83%. To ensure that young people in the country study up to Year 11, the plan established the design of gradual implementation plans with certified territorial entities and established upper secondary education as mandatory – previously, only education up to Year 9 was compulsory.

Source: DNP (2015), *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Todos por un Nuevo País Tomos 1 y 2 [National Development Plan: Everyone for a New Country Volumes 1 and 2]*, Bogotá, DC; Law 1753 of 2015.

Box 1.4. National 10-year Plan for Education 2016-26: *El Camino Hacia la Calidad y Equidad*

The development of the ten-year national education plan for 2016-26 was based on an inclusive and participatory methodology, guided and validated by the Organization of American States (OEA) and the Regional Office of UNESCO for Latin America and the Caribbean (ORELAC).

Three collegiate bodies were created to ensure broad representation:

- **A management commission**, supporting the drafting of the plan based on the input provided through the different participation mechanisms. The commission is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the plan and for articulating the work of different levels of governance.
- **A regional commission**, promoting the involvement of the education community, municipalities, departments and civil society at the local level.
- **An academic commission**, formulating the main challenges for the next ten years based on the input provided by the general population.

A number of innovative tools were developed to facilitate the participation of society. A survey was distributed to more than one million citizens. Children across the country contributed with about 6 000 paintings. Based on these inputs, 135 thematic forums were organised at national and regional levels, with more than 6 500 participants.

The plan should be a roadmap providing general and flexible guidance about the future of education. The participatory nature of developing the plan highlights that not only the state, but schools and others are responsible for contributing to reaching the set goals.

The ten challenges identified by the academic commission are the following:

1. Regulating and specifying the reach of the right to education.
2. Building a system that is fully articulated, participatory, decentralised, and that counts with effective mechanisms for reaching agreements.
3. The development of general, pertinent and flexible curricular guidelines.
4. The construction of a public policy for teacher education.
5. Changing the paradigm that has dominated education until today.
6. The pertinent, pedagogical and general use of new and diverse technologies to support teaching and the creation of knowledge, learning, research, and innovation.
7. Building a peaceful society based on equity, inclusion, respect for values and gender equality.
8. Prioritising the development of the rural population through education.
9. The importance that the state gives to education will be measured through the government investment in the sector as a whole and as a percentage of the GDP.
10. Promoting research that leads to the creation of knowledge at all levels of education.

Source: MEN (2017), *Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación 2016-2026: El Camino Hacia la Equidad y la Calidad* [National 10-year Plan for Education 2016-2026: The road towards equity and quality], *Ministerio de Educación Nacional* [Ministry of National Education], Bogotá, DC.

As also established by the General Education Law, central and subnational authorities organise annual education forums (*Foros Educativos Municipales, Distritales, Departamentales y Nacional*) to share experiences, reflect about the state of education and present recommendations to improve education to the respective authorities.

In general, different stakeholders within the education community shape education policy. Colombia's largest teacher union, the *Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de Educación* (FECODE), has played a prominent role in improving and protecting the working conditions of teachers. But the union has also shaped education policy more broadly. For instance, following a teacher strike in 2017, the government and the teacher union agreed on issues related to career progression, salary levels and bonuses, and health and pension benefits. The agreement, however, also took up demands for a reform of school funding, the expansion of early childhood education and care, the implementation of full-day schooling and peace education (MEN and FECODE, 2017_[48]). There are also teacher unions at subnational levels, such as the *Asociación Distrital de Educadores* (ADE) in Bogotá and the *Sindicato de Maestros del Tolima* (SIMATOL).

Other groups, to mention just a few, include national student associations, such as the *Asociación Nacional de Estudiantes de Secundaria* (ANDES), the private sector – through the *Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia* (ANDI), for example – and civic and social foundations, such as *Empresarios por la Educación* and *Fundación Compartir* at a national and *Proantioquia* at a regional level. International organisations, such as the *Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos* (OEI) or UNESCO, also shape education policy and debate.

Structure and organisation of the school system

Organisation of levels of education and education programmes

Under the General Education Law, formal education is defined as education that is offered by approved institutions, organised in a sequence of cycles and progressive curricular standards, and leads to academic titles and degrees. According to the law, formal education is divided into three levels:

- pre-school education (*educación preescolar*), which is composed of pre-kindergarten (*pre-jardín*), kindergarten (*jardín*) and a transition year/Year 0 (*año de transición*)
- basic education (*educación básica*), which consists of a first cycle of primary education (*educación básica primaria*) and a second cycle of lower secondary education (*educación básica secundaria*)
- upper secondary education (*educación media*).

Table 1.1 illustrates Colombia's system of school education as well as transitions between earlier and later levels of the education system and other types of provision.

Based on Colombia's Constitution of 1991, compulsory education lasts ten years, from the age of 5 to 15, comprising the transition year and all of basic education. Recently, compulsory education has however been extended to the upper secondary level. As set out in the country's National Development Plan for 2014-18, this is being introduced gradually and upper secondary education will be compulsory for all students in urban areas by 2025 and in rural areas by 2030. The analysis in this report is based on upper secondary education being part of compulsory education.

Table 1.1. School education and transitions in Colombia

ISCED 2011	Theoretical age	Year	Levels and programmes			
			Tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) / Higher teaching school (ISCED 4)			
VERTICAL TRANSITIONS						
ISCED 3	16	11	Upper secondary (General/Vocational)	HORIZONTAL TRANSITIONS	Certificate of Professional Aptitude (SENA) (ISCED 5)	
	15	10				
ISCED 2	14	9	Lower secondary (Second stage of Basic education)			
	13	8				
	12	7				
ISCED 1	11	6	Primary (First stage of Basic education)			
	10	5				
	9	4				
	8	3				
ISCED 0	7	2	Pre-school (Integral attention to early childhood)			Provision for 0-5 year-olds (ICBF) (ISCED 0) (Integral attention to early childhood)
	6	1				
	5	0 (Transition year)				
	4	-1 (Kinder)				
	3	-2 (Pre-kinder)				

Source: Adjusted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolre-sourcesreview.htm>.

The School Resources Review of Colombia focuses on education from the transition year to upper secondary education. It also considers transitions from early childhood and pre-school education to school and from school education to tertiary education. Previous OECD Reviews of National Policies of Education of Colombia provide in-depth analyses of early childhood education and care and tertiary education (see OECD (2016_[49]) and OECD/IBRD/The World Bank (2013_[50])).

Pre-school education provided by certified territorial entities lasts for 3 years from the age of 3 to 5. Children and their mothers can also attend community, family and institutional modalities of early childhood education and care from birth until the age of five. These more care-oriented forms of early childhood education are managed by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*, ICBF) and its providers, and operate in parallel to school-based pre-school education for 3-5 year-olds.

All early childhood education and care is subject to Law 1804 of 2016 which institutionalises Colombia's multi-sectoral policy for comprehensive early childhood development *De Cero a Siempre*. In 2017, 960 186 children were enrolled in school-based pre-school education, 746 002 of which in urban areas, and 214 184 in rural areas (see Table 1.2 for enrolments in 2017) (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).¹² Based on data from the ICBF, about 1 million children attended early childhood education and care (MEN, 2017_[51]).

Between the ages of 6 and 14, children study 5 years of primary education (Years 1 to 5 for 6-10 year-olds) and 4 years of lower secondary education (Years 6 to 9 for 11-14 year-olds). With the completion of lower secondary education, students receive a basic education certificate (*Certificado de Estudios de Bachillerato Básico*) which entitles

students to enrol in upper secondary education. In 2017, approximately 7.3 million students were enrolled in basic education. About 5.4 million students attended this level of education in urban areas and 1.9 million students in rural areas (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Upper secondary education lasts for 2 years (Years 10 and 11 for 15-16 year-olds) and enrolled about 1 million students in 2017, 885 814 in urban areas and 180 316 in rural areas. Upper secondary students can choose between a general and a vocational programme. General programmes (*bachillerato académico*) focus on sciences, the arts or the humanities. Vocational programmes (*bachillerato técnico*) provide a specialisation in any of the productive or service sectors, such as commerce, finance and administration, information technology, agriculture and fishing, and tourism (Sánchez, 2018_[6]). In 2017, 61.6% of students in upper secondary education were enrolled in a general programme, 38.4% in a vocational programme (data provided by the ministry).¹³

After completion of basic education, students have traditionally been able to undertake vocational training provided by the National Learning Service (SENA) – an independent and autonomous public institution ascribed to the Ministry of Labour and built on the partnership between government, business and labour that provides technical and technological programmes at tertiary level and short vocational programmes. The SENA also collaborates in the provision of upper secondary vocational programmes in some schools, for example through the involvement of vocational trainers.

Colombia has 137 higher teaching schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*, ENS). These institutions offer all levels of compulsory education, but also specialise in pedagogy and initial teacher education for pre-primary and primary. Students can study a pedagogical specialisation (*bachillerato pedagógico*) in upper secondary education and take a two-year complementary programme in education and pedagogy at these schools. Enrolments in these initial teacher education programmes have been decreasing in recent years. In 2017, 12 443 students were enrolled in the four semesters of teacher education of a higher teaching school, 11.7% less than in 2012 (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

The total enrolment of students at all levels of school education has been decreasing in line with demographic trends. Looking at compulsory education in public and government-dependent private provision, enrolment decreased by 10.9%, from 8.5 million to 7.6 million students between 2010 and 2017. Enrolment in primary education decreased by 14.9%, the greatest drop among all levels. Enrolment trends differ between rural and urban areas. While enrolment in lower and upper secondary education has been decreasing in urban areas (10.28% and 13.09%), it has been increasing in rural areas (7.59% and 21.98%) (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Organisation of schools into school clusters

Public schools in Colombia are organised in school clusters that group different school sites under a common leadership and management (more on this in Chapter 3).

Through a school cluster, individual school sites may offer only some levels of education but are linked with other sites to offer students a comprehensive offer of education from pre-primary to upper secondary education. Typically, the main school site offers all levels of education, while the remaining sites offer only some levels of education. At the upper secondary level, school sites can offer a general programme, a vocational programme or both types of programmes.

Table 1.2. Enrolment by sector and zone, 2017

	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Total by zone and sector
Public					7 104 009
Urban	393 342	2 171 827	1 873 618	664 522	5 103 309
Rural	181 101	1 082 803	577 471	159 325	2 000 700
Government-dependent private					498 913
Urban	19 491	150 397	120 447	39 815	330 150
Rural	17 809	100 543	40 903	9 508	168 763
Independent private					1 750 189
Urban	333 169	704 009	436 953	181 477	1 655 608
Rural	15 274	39 939	27 885	11 483	94 581
Total					9 353 111

Note: Government-dependent private provision refers to providers and schools contracted by Secretaries of Education under different modalities in case of capacity constraints or other limitations. These providers receive public funding. In Colombia, contracted private provision is counted as part of public enrolments. Independent private providers do not receive public funding.

Source: Adapted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

In 2017, Colombia had 9 881 public schools composed of 44 033 school sites. Four out of 5 sites were classified as rural, that is 80.2% or 35 329 school sites. The remaining 8 704 or 19.8% of school sites were classified as urban. On average, a rural public school has 5.9 sites, an urban public one 2.3 sites.¹⁴ The number of school sites within a school cluster, however, differs substantially across the country (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Traditionally, schools and school sites in Colombia operate in double shifts of an estimated 5 to 6 hours a day (*dobles jornadas*), one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Schools may also offer a third shift in the evening, predominantly for adult education. Reportedly, urban school clusters are more likely than rural ones to offer multiple shifts of school education. The General Education Law however stipulates the requirement to offer students full-day schooling (*jornada única*) in all schools and the government has been making strides to lengthen the school day (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Organisation of private education

School education can be offered by public (*matrícula oficial*), government-dependent (*matrícula oficial contratada*) and independent private schools (*matrícula no oficial*). The private provision of education is analysed in depth in Chapter 3.

Public education is provided directly through public schools managed by the Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entity. Where there is limited capacity in terms of infrastructure or teaching staff, or another limitation, Secretaries of Education can provide education through various forms of partnerships with private providers, that is government-dependent private provision. There are also fully independent private schools that generally receive no public funding. In Colombia, statistics on enrolment distinguish public enrolment, which includes public and government-dependent private provision, and private enrolment, which refers to independent private schools.

Of the more than 9.3 million students enrolled in school and pre-school education in 2017, 81.3% were in the public system according to the Colombian definition, with 6.6% of these students, or 498 913 students, being served by a government-dependent private school contracted by the Secretary of Education. The remaining 18.7% were enrolled in independent private schools (see Table 1.2 above) (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Organisation of education for particular groups of the population

The Constitution of 1991 defines all citizens as being born equal and Colombia as a social state (*estado social de derecho*) that must ensure equity and freedom from discrimination for any marginalised or vulnerable populations. Accordingly, the General Education Law defines particular groups of the population at risk of exclusion, poverty and the effects of inequality and violence: i) students with special needs or a disability and gifted students; ii) students who could not complete formal education or wish to gain further education (adult education); iii) students from one of Colombia's ethnic minorities; iv) rural students; and v) students that require rehabilitation and reintegration into society (e.g. former members of armed groups).

Flexible school models (*Modelos Educativos Flexibles*, MEF) constitute a fundamental element in formal education to meet the diverse needs of these particular groups of students and adapt the curriculum and pedagogy. The ministry also formulates central guidelines for the education of vulnerable populations, most recently with a revised version in 2015 (*Lineamientos generales para la atención educativa a población vulnerable y víctima del conflicto armado interno*) and promotes policies and programmes for different vulnerable groups as described in the following paragraphs.

The education of ethnic minority populations, which amounted to 9.2% of enrolments in compulsory education in 2017, has already been mentioned.¹⁵ Colombia's displaced population is another important group with special provisions, going back to the creation in 1997 of a National System for the Integral Attention for the Displaced Population (*Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral a la Población Desplazada*, SNAIPD, Law 387). Provisions were strengthened in 2011 with the Law for the Attention and Reparation of Victims of the Armed conflict (*Ley de Atención y Reparación a Víctimas del Conflicto Armado*, Law 1448).

The peace agreement places education for both victims and the demobilised combatants into the further focus of policy. In 2017, 5.9% of students enrolled in compulsory education were recognised as victims, encompassing a variety of different groups. Displaced students made up the largest share, followed by children of demobilised combatants and former child combatants. These figures do not include adolescents in the criminal responsibility system and victims of landmines (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Education in rural areas has also been given new impetus with the peace agreement between the government and the FARC in 2016. As part of the comprehensive rural reform, it has been agreed to develop and implement a Special Rural Education Plan (*Plan Especial de Educación Rural*, PEER). At the time of writing this report, a revised version of the plan had been drafted but not yet been approved. The peace agreement sets out 13 goals that should be achieved through the implementation of the rural education strategy (see Box 1.5). Using the classification of rurality developed by the "Rural Mission", almost 2 million, or 1 in 4 students, were enrolled in a rural school (24.2%) in 2016; 39.8% of these students in a remote area (MEN, 2017_[51]).

Box 1.5. Objectives of the Special Rural Education Plan (*Plan Especial de Educación Rural*) as part of the peace agreement

The Peace Agreement between the government and the FARC, among others, entails the development of national plans to improve public services and infrastructure in rural areas as part of a comprehensive rural reform programme. For education, this includes actions in the form of a Special Rural Education Plan. The objectives for this plan agreed upon in the peace accords include the following:

1. Guarantee universal coverage with comprehensive/integral attention to early childhood.
2. Offer flexible models of pre-school, primary and secondary education, adapted to the needs of the communities and the rural environment, with a differential approach.
3. Implement the construction, reconstruction, improvement and adaptation of rural educational infrastructure, including the availability and permanence of qualified teaching staff and access to information technologies.
4. Guarantee free education for pre-school, primary and upper secondary school.
5. Improve conditions for access and permanence in the education system of children and adolescents through free access to tools, texts, school meals and transport.
6. Generate an offer of programmes and infrastructure for recreation, culture and sports.
7. Incorporate agricultural vocational training in upper secondary education (Years 10 and 11).
8. Offer scholarships with forgivable credits for the access of poorer rural men and women to technical, technological and university training at tertiary level, including, when appropriate, support for maintenance.
9. Promote the professional education of women in non-traditional disciplines for them.
10. Implement a special programme for the elimination of rural illiteracy.
11. Strengthen and promote research, innovation and scientific and technological development for the agricultural sector, in areas such as agroecology, biotechnology, soils, etc.
12. Progressively increase technical, technological and university quotas at tertiary level in rural areas, with equitable access for men and women, including people with disabilities. Special measures will be taken to encourage the access and permanence of rural women.
13. Expand the offer of technical, technological and university education in areas related to rural development.

Source: Mesa de Conversaciones [Conversation Roundtable] (2017), *Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera* [Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace], Bogotá, DC.

The Rural Education Programme (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER) was a prominent previous initiative to improve education in rural areas. This programme evolved from the peasant marches of the 1990s and the Rural Social Contract pledged in 1996 as a commitment of the state to improve the quality of life of the rural population. It involved a first (2001-06, PER I) and a second phase (2008-15, PER II) and was funded through loans from the World Bank.

In its first phase, the programme worked with 120 non-certified municipalities in 30 departments; in the second phase with 36 certified territorial entities, reaching 72% of the non-certified municipalities. Covering pre-school to upper secondary education, the programme aimed to raise access to a quality education in rural areas, to prevent dropout from school and to make education relevant for the needs of rural students. Additional strategies focused on the improvement of basic competencies in language and mathematics in basic primary education and the teaching of English.

An increasing share of students is identified as having a disability or special needs: 1.75% of students had been diagnosed with a disability in 2016 – an increase of almost 60% since 2010. The government has established legislation for the rights of disabled people, which also cover education. To safeguard the rights of students with special needs, the government adopted Decree 1421 in 2017, committing the state to inclusive education.

Youth in conflict with the law and in the penal system constitute another noteworthy group. In 2015, the government adopted Decree 2383 to regulate the provision of their education within the framework of the Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System (*Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal para Adolescentes*, SRPA), together with central guidelines for Secretaries of Education to put these provisions into practice.

Quality, equity and efficiency of school education

Colombia has achieved important progress in increasing enrolment rates but challenges remain to expand coverage, smooth transitions and prevent dropout

While the enrolment rate for primary education has remained relatively stable, Colombia has experienced a substantial increase in enrolment in lower and upper secondary education over the last fifteen years. Colombia has reached universal enrolment for its 5-14 year-olds defined as an enrolment rate of 90%, although the share of students in this age group is still lower than for all OECD countries and countries in the region with available data (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica) (OECD, 2017^[52]).

As can be seen in Table 1.3, the enrolment rate for primary education has been decreasing but the ministry of education considers this to reflect improvements in the reporting of enrolment data at the local level rather than an actual reduction of enrolment (MEN, 2017^[53]). Enrolment rates in upper secondary education have seen the largest increase. Gross enrolment rates, that is the share of students enrolled regardless of age, help gauge the overall level of participation and the capacity of the system to enrol students in a given level of education. Between 2003 and 2017, gross enrolment rates in upper secondary education increased by almost 20 percentage points, from 60.5% to 80.1%. Lower secondary education shows an increase of about 16 percentage points, from 84.2% to 100.6%. Looking at net enrolment rates, that is taking into account the theoretical age at which a student should be enrolled in a given level of education, reveals a similar trend, with an increase of around 13 percentage points respectively (data provided by the ministry).

Table 1.3. Gross enrolment ratios (%)

	Year 0	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Basic education	Total
2003	88.95	115.64	84.21	60.51	100.61	96.89
2007	90.33	119.19	95.60	70.65	106.84	100.87
2011	88.48	114.52	105.17	80.31	108.16	103.44
2017	84.35	102.09	100.56	80.11	99.69	96.41

Note: The gross enrolment ratio is defined as the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of National Education based on the integrated enrolment system SIMAT.

Table 1.4. Net enrolment ratios (%)

	Year 0	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Basic education	Total
2003	54.03	87.68	57.94	29.59	89.00	86.14
2007	60.13	89.67	66.54	37.96	91.62	89.38
2011	62.23	89.35	72.31	42.53	91.73	90.54
2017	55.26	82.69	71.66	42.79	85.42	84.99

Note: The net enrolment ratio is defined as the total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of National Education based on the integrated enrolment system SIMAT.

Colombia has also expanded access to pre-primary and tertiary education (OECD, 2016_[49]). Gross enrolment rates in pre-school increased from 43.0% in 2002 to 54.7% in 2011, the last year with available data. Gross enrolment rates for tertiary education more than doubled, from 24% in 2002 to 58.7% in 2016 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018_[54]). The latter is the result of both an expansion of programmes and students with the qualifications, resources and willingness to pursue tertiary education (Carranza and Ferreyra, 2017_[55]).

Despite these positive trends, challenges remain in increasing participation, keeping students in school and helping students progress through the system and into the labour market (OECD, 2016_[49]). As Table 1.3 illustrates, enrolment rates in lower and upper secondary education have remained relatively stable since 2010, thus remaining below some other countries in the region, such as Brazil, Chile and Mexico in 2016, particularly at the upper secondary level (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018_[54]). Enrolment rates in primary education also still need to be improved.

Fewer students are leaving school early but the dropout rate remains very high. In 2016, 3.7% of students in compulsory education dropped out of public school, compared to 5.8% in 2006 (MEN, 2017_[53]). The rate of students failing a year and getting delayed in their education has in fact been increasing: 4.9% failed the year and had to repeat a year in 2016, up from 2.3% in 2010; and 7.2% of all students were delayed 2 or more years in their education. Between 2002 and 2009, the share of students a school was allowed to fail was limited to 5% (Sánchez, 2018_[6]). The share of 15-year-olds reporting to have repeated a year in the OECD PISA 2015 was the second highest among participating countries (42.6%, OECD average: 11.3%) (OECD, 2016_[56]).

Transition into lower secondary education is particularly challenging for students (Sánchez et al., 2016_[57]), with a sharp drop in the share of students expected to complete Year 11 as they progress through this level (Sánchez, 2018_[6]). Cumulative dropout by the end of lower secondary education in 2015 was 29.2%. Only Costa Rica had a higher cumulative dropout rate in the region with 33.0%, and Mexico - the country with the third highest dropout rate - had a rate of 10.4% (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018_[54]).

The incentives for young people to complete upper secondary education are relatively low, also considering the size of the informal labour market as explained above and the challenges young people face in their transition from school to work (OECD, 2016_[49]). The difference in employment rates among 25-34 year-olds with less than upper secondary education (73%) and those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (76%) is small; the OECD average difference is 17 percentage points (OECD, 2017_[52]). About 1 in 4 young people aged 18 to 24 years old were neither in education nor in employment, which is partly explained by a large share of young women not seeking employment (OECD, 2017_[52]). Young people are also more likely to work in informally than the general labour force (CEDLAS and The World Bank, 2017_[20]).

Enrolment in early childhood education and care remains comparatively low as does the share of young people expected to enter tertiary education during their lifetime. In 2015, 60% of 3-year-olds and 81% of 4-year-olds participated in early childhood education and care, compared to an OECD average of 78% and 87% respectively (OECD, 2017_[52]).¹⁶ While compulsory education begins in Year 0, only 53.6% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in the transition year and participation has decreased in recent years (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Concerning access to tertiary education, 45% of young people could expect to start a programme for the first time in Colombia in 2015, which was the case for 66% of young people on average across the OECD, 86% in Chile and 39% in Mexico (OECD, 2017_[52]). Some success has been achieved in improving completion rates of tertiary programmes, but dropout rates remain high, particularly for students with lower abilities and from lower incomes who have benefitted from the recent expansion of tertiary education (Carranza and Ferreyra, 2017_[55]).

Despite the significant expansion of tertiary education, average labour market returns remain substantial, which mirrors the situation in other countries in Latin America. Workers with a tertiary degree earned on average more than twice as much than adults with an upper secondary education (OECD, 2017_[52]). Nevertheless, the earnings premium for a tertiary education differs depending on the level of qualification, subject area, type of programme and nature of institution (Ospina-Londoño and Saavedra-Caballero, 2014_[58]; Riehl, Saavedra and Urquiola, forthcoming_[59]).

There are some improvements in learning outcomes but results are mixed and education quality as measured by standardised assessments remains low

Colombia has a system of standardised students assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) in place, measuring performance in different subjects and years. Standardised assessments have been comparable for Years 3, 5 (middle and end of primary education) and 9 (end of lower secondary education) since 2009, and for Year 11 (end of upper secondary education) since 2014. The last round of assessments was carried out in 2017.

Results for Years 3, 5 and 9 show an overall improvement since 2012, particularly for language and mathematics in Year 3 and language in Years 5 and 9. However, looking at changes across time shows slight progress and backward movements in all subjects and

years assessed (Sánchez, 2018_[61]). This compares to a period of relatively stagnant results between 2009 and 2012 (Rivas, 2015_[60]). Results for the school leaving examination in Year 11 similarly suggest an upward trend in learning outcomes, even though results decreased slightly between 2016 and 2017 (Sánchez, 2018_[61]).

A significant share of students, however, does not reach satisfactory levels of achievement from early on in their school education. When grouped into 4 different levels of achievements – unsatisfactory, minimum, satisfactory, advanced – only 28% of students had a satisfactory or advanced level in mathematics at the end of their primary education in 2017 and this share has been decreasing slightly. The picture is slightly better in language and has been improving, but still less than 1 in 2 students achieve satisfactory or advanced levels in Year 9 (Sánchez, 2018_[61]).

Results from international assessments, such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), provide further information about the levels of achievement of Colombian students. These assessments measure the proficiency of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science in countries across the world. Similar to national assessments, results from PISA suggest some improvements over time but these trends need to be interpreted with great care. Both changes in the coverage rate across assessments and changes in the test design, administration and scaling of PISA in 2015 compared to previous years influence the interpretation of trends.

For example, in science (the main subject of assessment in 2015) performance of 15-year-olds in Colombia seems to have increased 28 score points since 2006, the second largest improvement among the 52 education systems with comparable data. When considering the effect of PISA changes, however, performance actually increased only by 3 score points. This could also be the case for reading and mathematics, which could be showing skewed improvements when compared with previous results (improvement of 40 score points compared to 2006 for reading and 20 score points for mathematics).

At the same time, enrolment and coverage in secondary education increased as analysed above. While less than two-thirds of 15-year-olds were included in the sample for PISA when Colombia first participated in 2006, this was the case for 3 out of 4 15-year-olds in 2015. These increases in coverage may, on the other hand, underestimate the real improvements that Colombia has achieved as typically a larger proportion of potentially low performing students will be included in the sample for assessment.

Compared to other countries, Colombian 15-year-olds performed below the OECD average and the mean scores of Chile and Uruguay in mathematics, reading and science in 2015. Mean performance was similar to Costa Rica and Mexico, and higher than in Brazil and Peru in reading and science. In mathematics, the weakest subject in most countries in the region, 15-year-olds in Colombia had on average higher scores than their peers in Brazil and similar ones to students in Peru, but showed a lower performance than students in Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay (OECD, 2016_[61]; OECD, 2018_[62]).

Schools are of course not only places where students acquire academic skills, they are also where children develop many of the social and emotional skills that they need to thrive. Student well-being and development are equally important goals of education systems (Montt and Borgonovi, 2017_[63]; OECD, 2017_[64]). Comparing levels of subjective well-being across countries is challenging as reports might be influenced by cultural or local interpretations of happiness and there are large variations across countries. Similar to some other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean,

15-year-olds in Colombia reported very high levels of happiness: more than 1 in 2 students reported that they are very satisfied with their life (OECD, 2017_[64]).

Students' socio-economic background, place of residence, gender and ethnicity heavily determine educational opportunities of children and youth in Colombia

Differences between students of high and low socio-economic status

In Colombia, students' socio-economic background has a considerable influence on access to education and learning outcomes, as is the case in other countries.

In terms of access, based on household survey data (*Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares*, GEIH) for 2015, children aged 3-5 from the two lowest income quintiles have lower enrolment rates in early childhood education and care and pre-primary education than children from higher income quintiles. The same is the case for youth in secondary education. Students from the two lowest income quintiles are also less likely to attend a private school (CEDLAS and The World Bank, 2017_[20]).¹⁷ While Colombia does not present a high degree of social segregation between all of its schools, there is a strong socio-economic segregation between the public and the private sector, which leads to important performance gaps between them. This is analysed in Chapter 3.

In terms of learning outcomes, students of lower socio-economic backgrounds on average perform below the level of advantaged students. In 2017, 80% of students from the lowest socio-economic quartile did not reach more than a minimum or insufficient level of achievement in the national standardised assessment (*Pruebas Saber*) for Year 9, compared to only 15% of students in the highest quartile (Sánchez, 2018_[6]). As analyses of results from national examinations for Year 11 for 6 metropolitan areas – Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Armenia and Bucaramanga – indicate, educational inequalities have increased over time (Gamboa and Londoño, 2017_[65]).

Students' background influences their academic achievement in all countries but some do better than others in mitigating this impact. Compared to other countries, Colombia presents an intermediate picture in the extent to which socio-economic background influences educational opportunities. As data from the OECD PISA indicate, the relationship between students' socio-economic status and their performance in Colombia (also referred to as the strength of the socio-economic gradient) has become stronger between 2006 and 2015 (from 11.4% to 13.7%). Nevertheless, it was still very similar to the OECD average of 12.9% in 2015. Within the region, it was also similar to Brazil, Costa Rica and Mexico, and less strong than in Chile, Peru and Uruguay. In the last 3 countries, students' socio-economic status explains between 16.1% and 21.6% of performance differences (OECD, 2016_[61]).

As in other countries in the region, the outcomes of disadvantaged and advantaged students (also referred to as the slope of the socio-economic gradient) do not differ as much in Colombia as elsewhere (OECD, 2018_[62]). A one unit increase in students' socio-economic status as measured by PISA is associated with an improvement of 27 score points, compared to an OECD average of 38 points. This equity measure has however also deteriorated since 2006 when this difference was 23 score points (OECD, 2016_[61]).

The likelihood of disadvantaged students overcoming their social background is very low in Colombia. Only 11.4% of disadvantaged students were considered "resilient" in 2015, that is they scored among the top quarter of students in all participating countries, after accounting for socio-economic status, despite their socio-economic status. On average

across OECD countries, 29.1% of students in the bottom quarter for socio-economic status beat the odds against them (OECD, 2016_[61]).

Other factors, such as family structure and ethnicity, which are related to socio-economic disadvantage, also contribute to inequities in Colombia. Children in large families tend to have worse outcomes than children with a small number of children, as do children with single mothers or with parents in a non-marital relationship (García et al., 2013_[66]; Sanabria, 2008_[67]).

Students from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities are often at a disadvantage due to high poverty rates and low levels of education in these communities but may face additional barriers, such as low aspirations or discrimination. As Sánchez Jabba (2014_[68]) finds, 40% of performance differences in the *Pruebas Saber* for Year 11 in 2010 were not explained by observable characteristics, and performance gaps were larger in regions with a larger presence of ethnic communities.

Differences between urban and rural students

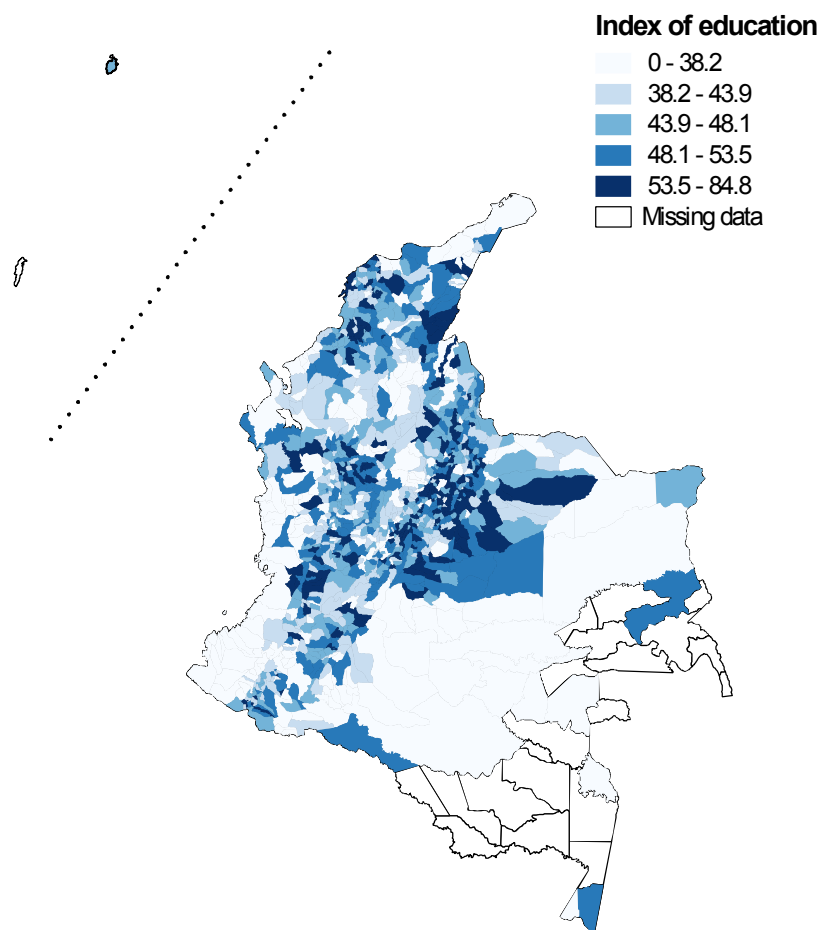
Colombia has made some progress in creating better educational opportunities for rural students, but there is still a long way to go to ensure children and young people have equal opportunities irrespective of where they live. Closing the considerable gaps between regions and improving the quality of education in rural and remote areas, which have suffered the most from the armed conflict, will be central among wider efforts to improve life in rural areas in the country's post-conflict context.

Colombia has not only achieved progress in greater coverage overall as highlighted above but has also managed to advance in the reduction of enrolment gaps between rural and urban students. Between 2006 and 2016, the difference in total net enrolment rates decreased by 11.1 percentage points, from 20.1% in 2006 to 8.6% in 2016 (MEN, 2017_[53]). Whereas net enrolment rates in secondary education on a national average remained relatively stable between 2010 and 2016, they increased in rural areas by 9.9 percentage points for lower secondary and 8.8 percentage points in upper secondary education (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Nevertheless, further strides need to be made in closing remaining gaps at all levels, including and in particular pre-primary and upper secondary education, and even more so in remote areas. For instance, using the classification of rurality developed by the “Rural Mission”, the net enrolment rate of students living in cities and agglomerations and students in remote areas differed by more than 20 percentage points both for lower and upper secondary education (75% vs. 54% and 48% vs. 26%) (MEN, 2017_[51]).

More generally, there remain significant differences between regions in the quality of education and student outcomes. The National Planning Department (DNP) has developed an index to measure the performance of public authorities at the local level. The index (which was revised in 2016) includes a results component that entails four well-being dimensions, one of which is education.

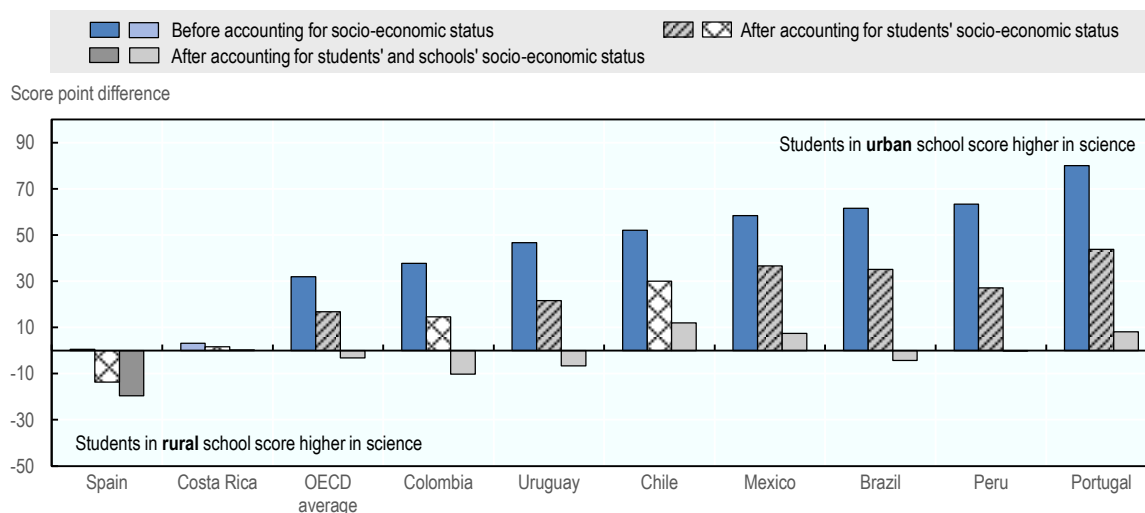
Looking only at the education component which is based on coverage in the transition year and upper secondary education as well as results in the school-leaving examination *Saber 11* in mathematics and language demonstrates significant geographical disparities across the country (see Figure 1.9). As a study of Loaiza Quintero and Hincapié Vélez (2016_[69]) of gaps in learning outcomes on a municipal level furthermore shows, regional gaps have persisted over time.

Figure 1.9. Disparities in educational outcomes across municipalities

Note: The index of education performance is based on i) coverage in upper secondary education; ii) coverage in the transition year; and iii) *Pruebas Saber 11* (Mathematics and Language). The variables are standardised between 0 and 100 with defined maximum and minimum values. Municipalities with 0 have the lowest performance in results, those with 100 the highest outcomes.

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on DNP (2016), *Nueva Medición de Desempeño Municipal: Primer informe de Resultados 2016* [New Measurement of Municipal Performance: First Results Report 2016], Departamento Nacional de Planeación [National Planning Department], Bogotá, DC.

Looking at the Synthetic Education Quality Index (ISCE), an index developed to evaluate educational performance at different levels of the system,¹⁸ illustrates the challenges Secretaries of Education in particular parts of the country face in ensuring a high-quality education. The departments of Amazonas, Guainía and Vichada all serving largely students in disadvantaged rural and remote contexts with a high share of indigenous students, have an index one point lower than the national average for primary education. Similarly, the certified municipalities of Uribia in the department of La Guajira at the Venezuelan border, and Tumaco in the department of Nariño close to Ecuador have very low indices. Both Tumaco and Uribia demonstrate the low quality of education in border areas which have been highly affected by violence (Sánchez, 2018_[6]).

Figure 1.10. Rural-urban differences in science performance, PISA 2015

Notes: Rural schools are those located in towns of 3 000 inhabitants, urban schools are located in cities with 100 000 inhabitants or more.

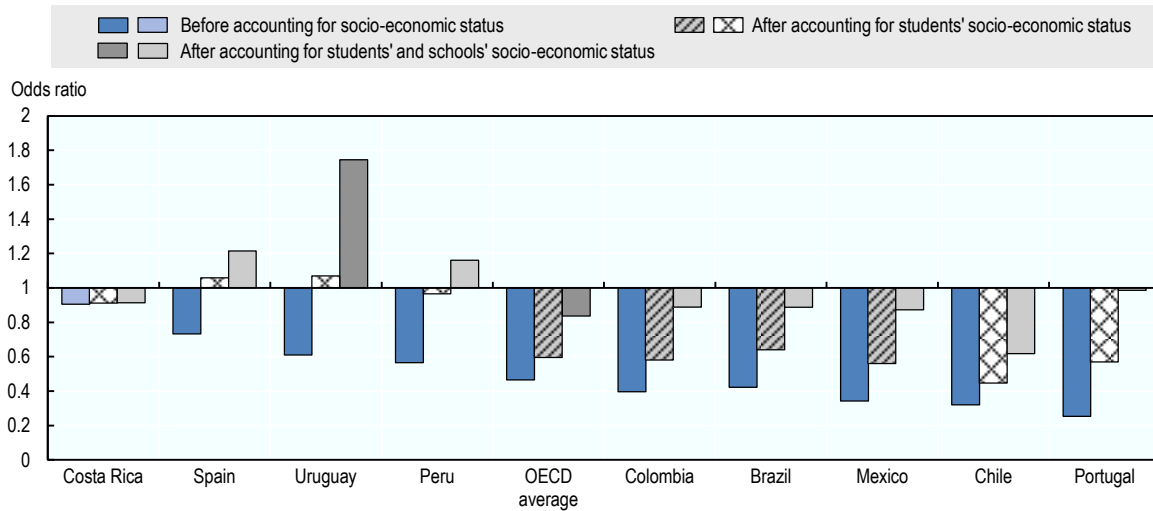
Results are based on linear regression models.

Countries are ranked in order of the score-point difference before accounting for socio-economic status. Statistically significant coefficients are marked in a darker tone.

Source: Adjusted from Echazarra, A. and T. Radinger (forthcoming), “The challenges and opportunities of delivering rural education: Evidence from PISA and TALIS”, *OECD Education Working Paper Series*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Insights from the OECD PISA 2015 put rural-urban gaps in learning outcomes in Colombia into a comparative perspective. Rural students in Colombia scored on average 38 points below the country’s urban students, the equivalent of more than 1 academic year. The gap is higher than the average score difference across OECD countries. Among selected Latin American countries, however, the performance difference is much lower than in other countries with available data, except for Costa Rica where rural 15-year-olds perform on par with urban students. The performance difference in Portugal, the country with the sixth highest rural-urban gap among all countries participating in PISA 2015, was twice as high as the one in Colombia. Colombia was also only one of two out of the six countries analysed here in which the rural-urban gap disappears once students’ socio-economic context is taken into account (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming^[70]). In other words, greater poverty in rural areas poses particular challenges for schools and students in these areas to achieve.

But rural students face additional barriers, for example in terms of their aspirations and transition to tertiary education. As in many other countries, even those where rural students have higher levels of academic achievement than urban students, 15-year-olds in Colombia are much less likely to expect to complete a university degree than urban youth (see Figure 1.11). This gap persists after taking students’ socio-economic background into account. Rural education provides opportunities, such as smaller classes and more cohesive communities, but also entails challenges in providing rural students with a high-quality learning environment beyond social disadvantage. Importantly, geographical distance and low population density make it costlier to provide education, attract and retain high-quality teachers, offer a broad curriculum and provide material resources (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming^[70]).

Figure 1.11. Rural-urban gaps in educational expectations, PISA 2015

Notes: The odds ratio is a measure of the relative likelihood of a particular outcome across two groups. An odds ratio below one denotes a negative association; an odds ratio above one indicates a positive association; and an odds ratio of one means that there is no association. For instance, an odds ratio of one implies that students in rural and urban areas are equally likely to expect to complete a university degree. An odds ratio of 1.2 would mean that rural students are 20% more likely to complete a university degree than their urban peers. And an odds ratio of 0.8 would mean that rural students are 20% less likely to expect to complete a university degree.

Results are based on logistic regression models.

Rural schools are those located in towns of 3 000 inhabitants, urban schools are located in cities with 100 000 inhabitants or more.

Statistically significant odds ratios are marked in a darker tone.

Countries are ranked in order of the odds ratio before accounting for socio-economic status.

Source: Adjusted from Echazarra, A. and T. Radinger (forthcoming), “The challenges and opportunities of delivering rural education: Evidence from PISA and TALIS”, *OECD Education Working Paper Series*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Differences between girls and boys

There are important gender gaps in education in Colombia. While dropout is a concern for all students, boys are particularly likely to leave school early. This is evident in diverging enrolment rates as students progress through the system (see Table 1.5). Net coverage rates in the transition year and primary education are equal, but gaps emerge in lower secondary and deepen in upper secondary education. In 2016, girls had a 5.9 percentage points higher net enrolment rate at lower secondary level. This advantage for girls increases to 10.9 percentage points in upper secondary education (Sánchez, 2018^[6]).

Various factors may explain the higher risk for boys to leave school early. Within the context of the country’s armed conflict, male students may drop out to join illegal groups or migrate. Risky behaviour like engaging in drugs or alcohol may also disproportionately affect young men (Muñoz, 2014^[71]). Other potential factors include the need for young men to work, difficulties to associate education with a life project, or more opportunities in the labour market as discussed below.

Table 1.5. Net enrolment rates by gender (%), 2016

	Year 0	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Basic education	Total
Girls	53.13	83.78	74.02	48.34	85.91	85.94
Boys	54.07	83.39	68.15	37.49	85.41	84.88

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on data in Sanchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

The difference in the share of girls and boys expected to reach the end of lower secondary education, that is the survival rate for what was the last stage of compulsory education in Colombia, is very high for the region. While 77.1% of girls were expected to complete lower secondary education in 2015, this was the case for only 65.0% of boys. In Costa Rica and Mexico, the difference was 9.8 and 4.4 percentage points respectively. In Chile and Peru, girls and boys had about the same chance of completing this level (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018_[54]).

Women in Colombia are thus likely to reach higher levels of education, as tertiary attainment rates also demonstrate: 31.5% of women aged 25-34 had attained a tertiary degree in 2016, compared to 24.6% of men in this age group (OECD, 2017_[52]). However, this educational advantage does not translate itself into the labour market where significant gender gaps persist in formal employment, unemployment, wages and job quality. Unpaid time spent on caregiving and housework remains a significant obstacle to women's participation in the labour market throughout the life course, and even more so for mothers relative to women without children (OECD, 2017_[1]).

The high share of young men with low performance and social disadvantage dropping out of school also in large part explains gaps between girls and boys in terms of learning outcomes at a later stage of school education (Muñoz, 2014_[71]). In the OECD PISA 2012, Colombia had the largest gender gap in favour of boys in mathematics among participating countries. By 2015, this gap had however narrowed significantly and come close to the OECD average (OECD, 2017_[64]). Regardless of this gap, girls are less likely to be high performers in science and mathematics compared to boys (OECD, 2017_[64]), something which is not affected by the dropout of boys (Muñoz, 2014_[71]).

Notes

¹ A GINI coefficient equal to zero expresses perfect equality with everyone having the same income and a GINI coefficient equal to one expresses maximum inequality with one person having all income.

² Herrera-Idárraga, López-Bazo and Motellón (2015_[26]), for example, show that informal workers receive around half the return to their education compared with formal workers and that they suffer considerably more from educational mismatch than formal workers.

³ Districts have an independent legal, political, fiscal and administrative status based on their role for the economy, culture, geography or administration. The first district was created with the capital district of Bogotá in 1861, with the cities of Barranquilla, Cartagena and Santa Marta gaining the status with the adoption of the new Constitution in 1991. Buenaventura, Mompox and Rihacha have since also become districts. In 2018, there are thus a total of 7 districts which are counted as part of the country's 1 122 municipalities.

⁴ Based on the Constitution of 1991, indigenous territories are territorial entities but there is no consensus on their number as they have not been fully regulated.

⁵ It is widely acknowledged that, even within a country, no unique definition of rural-urban concepts can fit all purposes. As a consequence, no unique and internationally recognised definition of the concepts of rural and urban exists. Nevertheless, in OECD countries, “urban” is usually defined by agglomeration size and density measures, while “rural” is usually defined by a lack of agglomeration (and density) and/or distance. In Colombia, the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) classifies municipalities based on their number of inhabitants either as urban (*cabecera municipal*) or as rural (*resto municipal*), which includes both populated centres (*centros poblados*) and rural scattered areas (*rural disperso*) (OECD, 2014_[36]).

⁶ The Multidimensional Poverty Index is based on five dimensions (education, living conditions of children and youth, health, work, access to public services and housing) and 15 indicators. People are considered poor if deprived of at least five of these 15 indicators.

⁷ The common objectives for all levels of education from pre-school to upper secondary levels include an ethical and moral education, the development of a healthy sexuality, a conscience of international solidarity, road safety education and the development of skills to enter higher education and the labour market.

⁸ In the late 1980s, Law 12 of 1986 gave responsibilities for the construction and maintenance of schools to municipalities, while Law 29 of 1989 devolved the administration of human resources to municipalities in co-ordination with departments. Planning and curriculum remained at the central level. In the early 1990s, following the adoption of the Constitution, Law 60 of 1993 certified all departments, districts and the municipalities of Armenia and Pasto to provide education. The General Education Law of 1994 gave schools autonomy to define their own curricula. In the early 2000s, Law 715 of 2002 certified all departments and districts that year, and all municipalities of more than 100 000 inhabitants as well as other municipalities with the technical, financial and administrative capacity as of the year 2003. Municipalities with less than 100 000 inhabitants can seek certification from their department if they acquire the sufficient capacity.

⁹ Law 715 of 2001 establishes 22 responsibilities of the nation in education. These are similar, although they are not divided in four types of responsibilities and include specific responsibilities for the SGP. The responsibilities of the Law 715 do not eliminate the ones established in the General Education Law.

¹⁰ There are two additional entities which mainly collaborate with the ministry in tertiary education, the Colombian Institute for Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad (*Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior*, ICETEX) and the Higher Education Development Fund (*Fondo de Desarrollo de la Educación Superior*, FODESEP).

¹¹ The National Planning Department is an administrative department belonging to the executive branch of government and depending directly on the Presidency of the Republic. It is a technical body responsible for fostering the implementation of a strategic vision for the social, economic and environment development of the country as well as the design, guidance and evaluation of public policy.

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, total enrolment numbers in pre-school and school education include students in public, government-dependent and independent private provision.

¹³ These data on the share of students in upper secondary education by programme type include only students in public and government-dependent private provision.

¹⁴ School clusters are categorised as urban if all sites are located in an urban area or if the main school site is located in an urban area. Urban school clusters therefore include school clusters with

a mix of urban and rural sites. School clusters are categorised as rural if all sites are located in a rural area, including the main site. For the simple average of sites per school cluster, the number of urban public sites is divided by the number of urban public school clusters, including those which combine both urban and rural sites under their leadership. The number of rural public sites is divided by the sum of rural clusters.

¹⁵ Data on enrolments of vulnerable groups generally refer to compulsory levels of education from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education in public, government-dependent private and independent private provision. Enrolment data on students in rural and remote areas as well as students with special educational needs include all pre-school years in addition to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

¹⁶ These data include both pre-school and early childhood development programmes.

¹⁷ Caution should be taken when analysing data from the integrated household survey as it only represents 24 of the 32 departments.

¹⁸ Since 2015, the ministry of education and the educational evaluation institute ICFES calculate a Synthetic Education Quality Index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*, ISCE) – a multidimensional index of school performance for primary to upper secondary education. The index is calculated individually for each level of education and ranges from 1 to 10. It measures the performance of schools, certified territorial entities and the system as a whole.

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Chapter 2. The funding of school education in Colombia

This chapter analyses how the school system is funded in Colombia. It presents a description of the level of expenditure on education, the sources of funding, and the specific funding mechanisms, including the Sistema General de Participaciones. While focusing on school education, the distribution of funding across different levels is also considered, including for early childhood education and care and tertiary education. The chapter analyses strengths and challenges with a particular focus on the extent to which the current funding approach helps address inequities between territories, schools and students. Finally, recommendations are presented, highlighting the need to reconcile the allocation of resources with set objectives, the need for a gradual approach in policy, and the importance of investing in greater local capacity.

Context and features

Expenditure on education

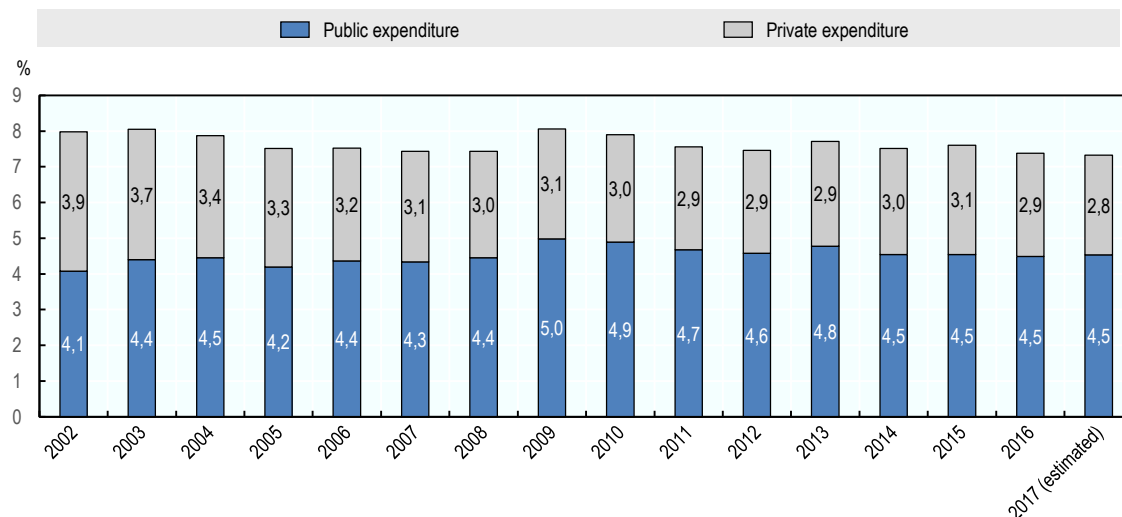
Since the steady increase in public spending on education as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) between 2002 and 2009, when spending at all educational levels increased from 4.1% of GDP to 5.0%, a gradual reduction has been observed during the 2010s, reaching an average of 4.5% between 2014 and 2017 (see Figure 2.1). The Colombian education system has historically been characterised by an important contribution from the private sector, especially by family payments for the tuition costs of tertiary education, but also fees in independent private schools without public funding. In 2017, independent private schools served 18.7% of students in pre-primary to upper secondary education (Sánchez, 2018^[1]). Private spending on education has remained at between 2.9% and 3.1% of GDP throughout the 2010s (Sánchez, 2018^[1]). This represents a share close to 40% of total spending on education in Colombia and is well above the average of 15% for OECD countries (OECD, 2017^[2]).

The decrease in public spending on education with respect to GDP in past years is explained by the adjustment of the public sector after the end of the “commodities supercycle”, especially the price of oil. The drop in commodity prices caused economic growth to fall from an average of 4.8% per year in the period 2010-14 to 2.5% in 2015-17 (MEN, 2018^[3]). The gradual adjustment in line with the government’s aim of reaching a structural deficit of 1% of GDP or less by 2022 also contributed to lower public spending on education. In addition, due to a steady growth of public debt, the cost of interest payments has begun to reduce the space for increasing social spending. This restrictive fiscal situation is expected to continue in the coming years. Compliance with the structural fiscal deficit rule by 2022 entails a significant debt service burden, so the rate of increase in annual public spending will be closely linked to economic growth (MinHacienda, 2017^[4]).

From a comparative perspective, considering total spending on primary, secondary and tertiary education, Colombia spent more than the OECD country average in 2014, with the combined contribution of the public and private sectors representing 5.8% of GDP, compared to an average 5.2% in the OECD. Colombia’s total spending on education was also higher than that of other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico, very similar to Portugal and well above Spain. However, this was the result of a greater private sector contribution to the education system. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, regarding public spending, Colombia spent less than the OECD average in 2014 (3.9% of GDP compared to an average of 4.4% in OECD countries) (OECD, 2017^[2]).

Compared to other Latin American countries with available data, total education spending by the Colombian public sector only surpassed that of Chile but was below the level of Argentina and Mexico (also see Figure 2.2). Similarly, a study of 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, showed that total public spending on education in Colombia is below the average of 5% of GDP in the region, although it is higher than Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, and very similar to Chile, Nicaragua and Uruguay (Cetrángolo and Curcio, 2017^[5]).

Figure 2.1. Trend in public and private spending on education as a share of GDP in Colombia



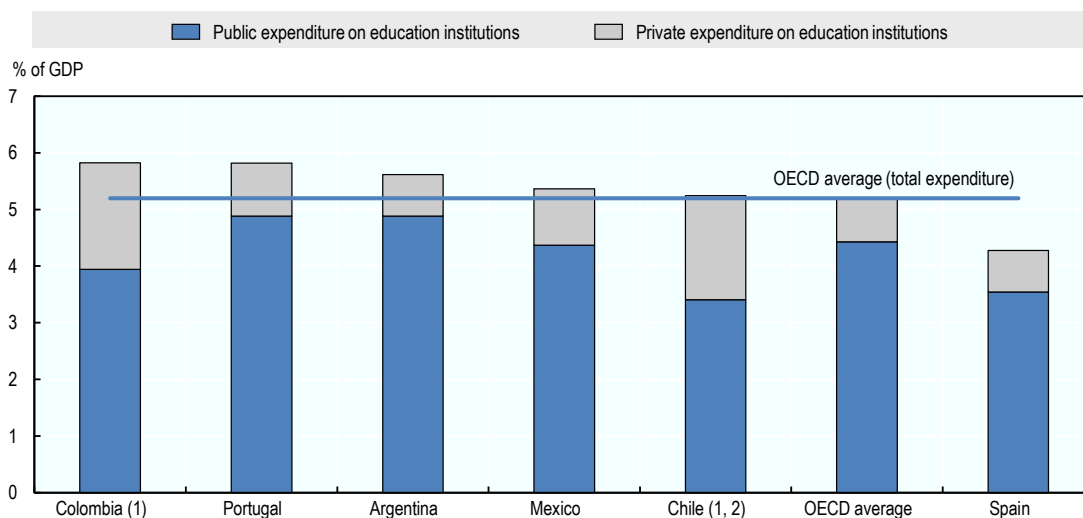
Notes: Expenditure includes all levels of education, including pre-school education, tertiary education and adult education. It also includes educational administration.

Values for 2017 are only estimated. At the time of writing, final figures were not yet available.

Source: Adjusted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>; Based on calculations from Advisory Office of Planning and Finance (OAPF) of the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and data from the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE).

Figure 2.2. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

From public and private sources, primary to tertiary education



1. Data refer to 2015.

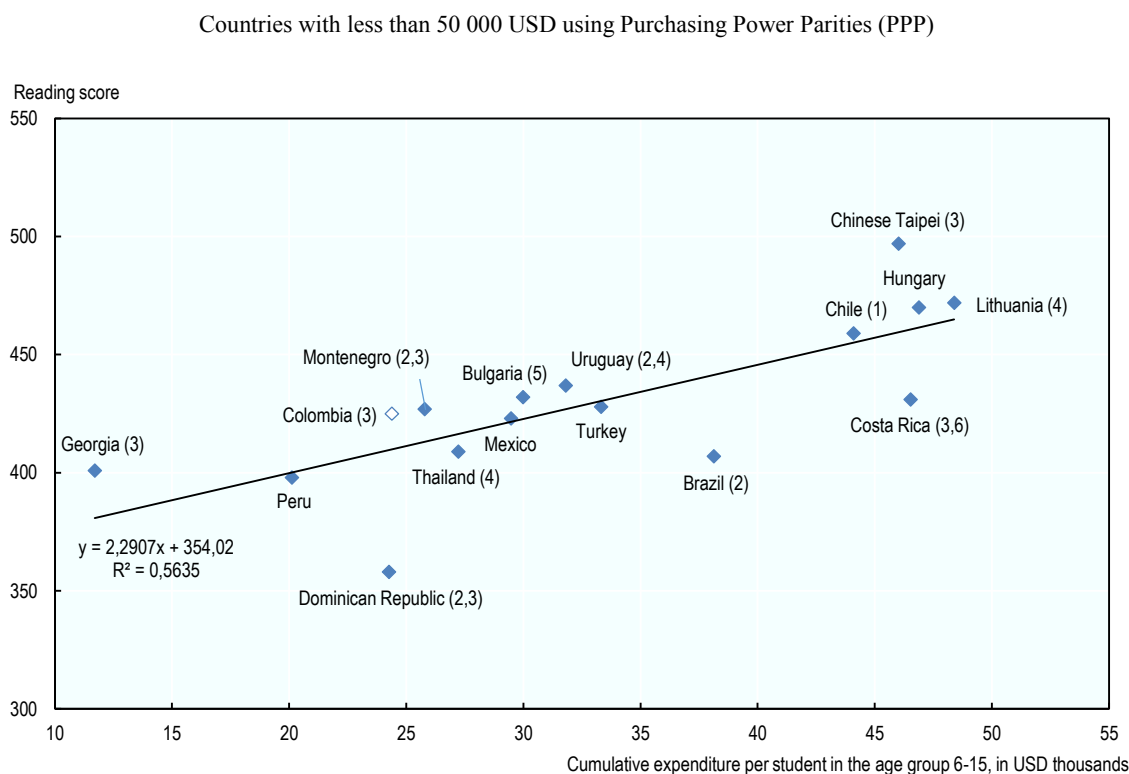
2. Public expenditure does not include international sources.

Note: Countries are ranked in descending order of total expenditure from both public and private sources.

Source: Adjusted from OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Figure B2.1.

Spending on education per student in Colombia is well below the average of OECD countries, as shown in Table 2.1. Per-student spending in primary education reached only 28.5% of the OECD average in 2014, and 35.9% for secondary education. This figure is also the lowest among Latin American countries with comparable information, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico (OECD, 2017^[2]). Comparative data suggest that higher spending per student, among low- and middle-income countries, is positively correlated with average academic performance, as observed in the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA). Here, Colombia was slightly above the expected performance for its current level of spending per student (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Relationship between spending per student and average reading performance in PISA



1. Year of reference for expenditure data 2015.
2. Expenditure for public institutions only.
3. Year of reference for expenditure data 2013.
4. Total expenditure data include pre-primary education.
5. Year of reference for expenditure data 2012.
6. Expenditure combined for public and government-dependent private institutions.

Notes: Cumulative expenditure per student refers to 2015 calculated using the theoretical duration of studies. Average reading performance in PISA refers to the year 2015.

Source: Adjusted from OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Figure B1.a.

However, the low level of spending per student in Colombia can be explained both by its lower per capita income – lower than the other Latin American countries with which Colombia is compared in Table 2.1 – and by the large proportion of school-age children and youth among the country's population. For this reason, an indicator that better reflects the relative public spending per student is spending as the proportion of per capita

income (see Table 2.2). This indicator shows that Colombia's spending per student in primary education in 2014 was quite similar to Chile and surpassed Argentina and Mexico. In secondary education, it was quite close to Argentina and Brazil and surpassed Chile and Mexico. At both education levels, Colombia's spending per student is not very different from Portugal and Spain, given their higher level of economic development.

Table 2.1. Annual expenditure per student in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

In equivalent USD converted using Purchasing Power Parities (PPP), based on full-time equivalents

	All early childhood education	Primary education	Secondary education
Colombia (1,2)	1 011	2 490	3 060
Argentina	2 747	3 356	4 790
Brazil (3)	3 768	3 799	3 837
Chile (2)	6 153	4 321	4 478
Mexico	2 668	2 896	3 219
Portugal	6 349	6 474	8 821
Spain	6 674	6 970	8 528
OECD average	8 858	8 733	10 106

1. Early childhood education includes only pre-primary programmes.
2. Year of reference is 2015.
3. Expenditure includes only public institutions.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Tables B1.1. and C2.3.

Table 2.2. Annual expenditure per student relative to GDP per capita in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

By level of education, in percentage of GDP per capita

	All early childhood education	Primary education	Secondary education
Colombia (1,2)	7.5	18.6	22.8
Argentina	13.5	16.5	23.5
Brazil (3)	23.3	23.5	23.7
Chile ²	26.6	18.7	19.4
Mexico	14.8	16.1	17.9
Portugal	21.4	21.8	29.8
Spain	19.2	20.1	24.6

1. Early childhood education includes only pre-primary programmes.
2. Year of reference is 2015.
3. Expenditure includes only public institutions.

Source: Authors' calculations based on OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>.

Similar results are observed comparing this indicator for primary and secondary education to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, where Colombia's level of spending was similar to the regional average (Cetrángolo and Curcio, 2017^[5]). Even so, the comparison for early childhood education shows a significant investment deficit since spending per student was half or less than expenditure in other countries studied. This result has been repeatedly highlighted in national (Bernal et al., 2018^[6]) and international reports (OECD, 2016^[7]).

In sum, these results show that Colombia's current level of spending in primary and secondary education is reasonable given its current level of economic development, but

that significantly greater efforts need to be made in early childhood education. Given the still low levels of coverage in secondary education in Colombia as described in Chapter 1, it can be expected that additional resources will also be required to maintain stable spending per student while increasing participation at secondary levels.

Financing at different educational levels

Table 2.3 shows public and private spending as a percentage of GDP by level of education for 2014. The results indicate that Colombia's public spending on primary and lower secondary education was higher than the OECD average and similar to other Latin American countries, despite the fact that the contribution of the private sector at these levels was the highest among the 37 countries for which information was available.

Table 2.3. Public and private expenditure by level of education as a share of GDP in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

	Colombia (2)	Argentina	Chile (1,2)	Mexico	Portugal (3)	Spain	OECD average
All early childhood education	0.5	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8
Public sources	0.3	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.7
Private sources	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
Primary	2.1	1.9	1.5	2.0	1.8	1.3	1.5
Public sources	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.7	1.6	1.1	1.4
Private sources	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Lower secondary	1.5	1.5	0.6	1.0	1.3	0.8	1.0
Public sources	1.2	1.3	0.5	0.9	1.2	0.8	0.9
Private sources	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Upper secondary	0.5	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.4	0.9	1.2
Public sources	0.4	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.2	0.8	1.1
Private sources	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Tertiary	1.7	1.2	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.6
Public sources	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.1
Private sources	0.9	0.2	1.3	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5

1. Public expenditure does not include international sources.

2. Year of reference is 2015.

3. Some levels of education are included with others.

Note: Figures for total expenditure public and private sources combined by level of education as a share of GDP do not always add up due to rounding to one decimal.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Table B2.3.

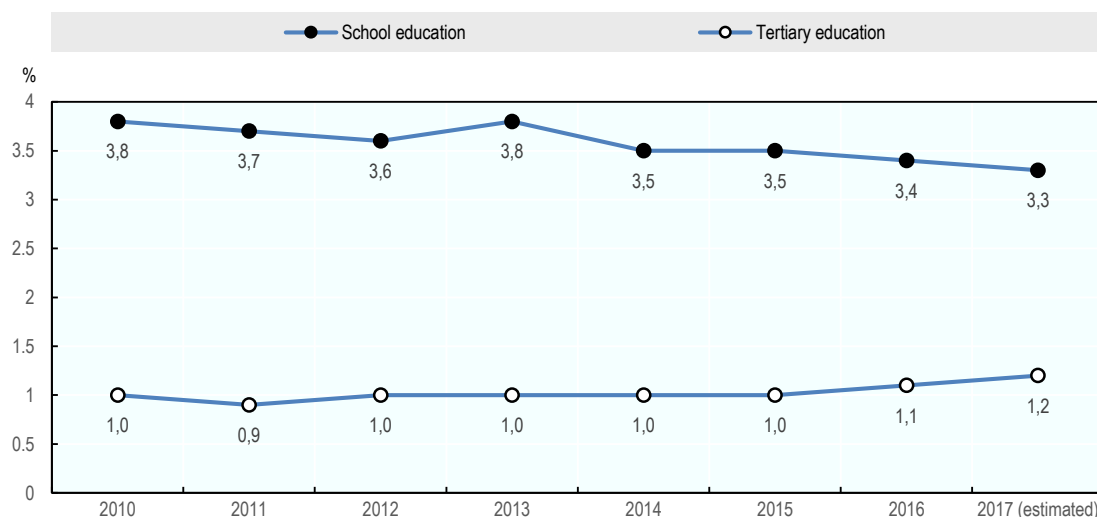
On the other hand, public spending on early childhood and upper secondary education is far below the level observed among the different countries in the comparison, which is mainly linked to problems of educational coverage that are particularly critical in rural areas as highlighted in Chapter 1.

An intermediate case is seen in public spending on tertiary education, which, despite being lower than the OECD average, is very similar to the levels of other Latin American countries such as Chile, and also in line with Spain and Portugal.

During the current decade, there has been a restructuring of public spending on education. Since 2010, public spending on school education as a proportion of GDP has been gradually reduced, down from 3.8% of GDP in 2010 to 3.3% in 2017.¹ At the same time, public spending on tertiary education remained at around 1.0% of GDP between 2010 and

2015, rising to 1.2% in 2015-17 (Figure 2.4). This reorganisation in public spending on education is also reflected in the different rate of increase in public resources in real terms at each level, which rose by 12.8% between 2010 and 2017 for school education, while the increase in spending on tertiary education over the same period amounted to 42.1%.

Figure 2.4. Trend in public spending on education as a share of GDP by level in Colombia



Notes: School education includes pre-school education, including the compulsory transition year. Values for 2017 are only estimated. At the time of writing, final figures were not yet available.

Source: Data provided by Ministry of National Education (MEN).

Sources of funding for education

Distribution of public and private expenditure

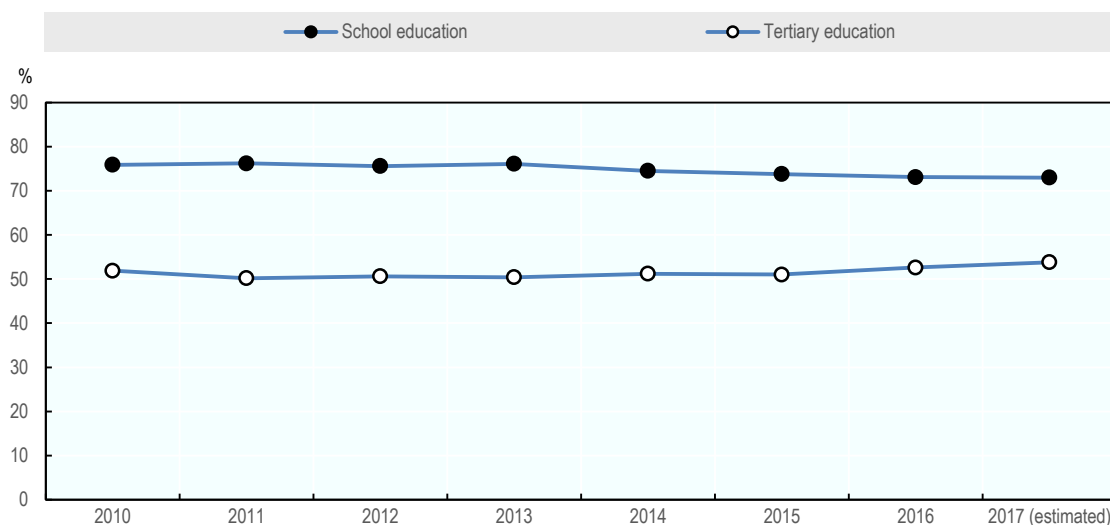
Most funding of school education in Colombia comes from public sources. In the period 2010-17, the state financed between 73.2% and 76.1% of the total expenditure in the sector, reflecting a high stability in the state's participation in education funding, although with a slight decrease in recent years (Figure 2.5). Even so, this percentage is still the lowest for countries with information collected for OECD *Education at a Glance* and is well below the average for OECD countries – only Australia, Chile, New Zealand and Turkey have private financing of more than 17% for school education (OECD, 2017_[2]).²

In Colombia, almost all of the private financing at these levels of education corresponds to families that enrol their children in independent private schools financed with monthly tuition payments. Since 2012, co-payments by families with children in public schools between the transition year³ and Year 11 have been prohibited, although payments are still permitted in adult education and the four semesters of initial teacher education in higher teaching schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*).⁴

Looking at tertiary education, the percentage of private funding has also remained high and stable. Since 2010, it has remained slightly above 50% of total spending, despite the increase in public spending at this educational level, by 41.2% in real terms from 1.0% to 1.2% of GDP. This demand for higher public spending on tertiary education will be maintained in the coming years as tertiary enrolment is growing rapidly, both in public

and private institutions. This reflects the growing coverage of secondary education, an important goal set out by the government in office at the time of writing through its National Development Plan, as well as a demand for regular funding sources, such as the student loans programme for tertiary education of ICETEX, a state agency promoting higher education through student finance, or the *Ser Pilo Paga* initiative, tertiary scholarships for the best students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 2.5. Trend in public spending on education as a share of total expenditure by level in Colombia



Notes: School education includes pre-school education, including the compulsory transition year. Values for 2017 are only estimated. At the time of writing, final figures were not yet available.
Source: Data provided by Ministry of National Education (MEN).

Financing by level of governance

The financing of the school system in Colombia is highly centralised. Of the total financial resources that the public sector allocates to school education, the central government contributes close to 90%, a level that has remained between 90.4% and 90.9% since 2010, while the country's 95 certified territorial entities (*entidades territoriales certificadas*, ETC) and non-certified municipalities (*municipios no-certificados*) contribute the remaining close to 10%.⁵ Despite the low direct contribution of the certified territorial authorities responsible for providing education at the regional and local level, the high heterogeneity in their fiscal capacity, management and priority assigned to education generate high inequality in the resources available to students in different parts of the country (Bird, 2012^[8]; CGR, 2017^[9]; OECD, 2016^[7]). This is analysed in depth below.

In this context, spending on public education is financed mainly through transfers from the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, MEN, hereafter ministry/ministry of education) and other public entities to the certified territorial entities, non-certified municipalities and public schools. This means 80% of public spending for school education is executed by the territorial entities and their educational institutions, although this percentage has shown a slightly decreasing trend, falling from 83.3% in

2010 to 79.7% in 2017 (Annex 2.A shows the different sources of financing and how they are used).

Specific mechanisms for financing the public school system

As mentioned previously, the financing of the public school system is highly centralised, since almost 90% of the total resources are provided through the national budget (*Presupuesto General de la Nación*), a percentage that has remained stable between 2010 and 2017. The main sources of financing are:

1. The General System of Transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*, SGP), a system for sharing revenues between the central and subnational governments, which represents about two-thirds of the resources for the school system, reaching 79.4% in 2017, including social security payments to teachers through the National Teachers Pension Fund (*Fondo Nacional de Prestaciones Sociales del Magisterio*, FOMAG), which is financed with tax revenues and managed by the ministry.
2. The General System of Royalties (*Sistema General de Regalías*, SGR), a system for sharing royalties from the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, especially oil.
3. Own resources of the territorial entities.
4. Transfers and programmes of the ministry of education financed through the ministry's investment budget financed from the national budget, and resources from programmes administered by other entities, such as the Department for Social Prosperity (*Departamento de Prosperidad Social*, DPS) or the Ministry for Information Technologies and Communication (*Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones*, MinTIC).
5. Resources from the private sector, especially co-operatives.

Table 2.4 shows the trend in public education spending and the role of different sources of funding.

The General System of Transfers (Sistema General de Participaciones)

The main funding mechanism for public school education is the General System of Transfers (SGP). The system was created in 2001 by Law 715, and amended by Law 1176 in 2007, in order to help solve the country's fiscal crisis in the late 1990s, when the co-participation of territorial governments in tax revenues increased rapidly and subnational authorities were granted more flexibility in servicing debts (CGR, 2017^[9]; OECD, 2014^[10]). At the time of writing, a reform of the system was under discussion.

The SGP is a revenue sharing system designed to supplement the resources of territorial entities to help them carry out some of their functions. The SGP was constituted in 2001 with a fixed amount of resources rather than a certain share of fiscal revenues, and this amount was readjusted annually until 2016, according to inflation and a general additional rate. The system's resources for education received a readjusted additional annual rate of 1.3% in 2008 and 2009, 1.7% in 2010 and 1.8% per year between 2011 and 2016. However, since 2017, the SGP's funding is readjusted according to new rules linked to the average increase in national income in the previous four years, while the education sector no longer receives a readjusted additional rate.

Table 2.4. Trend in public spending on education in Colombia, 2010-17

Figures in billion Colombian Pesos (COP), in 2017 currency, average 2017

		2010	2014	2017 (estimations)	Increase (%) 2010-17
B.N	TOTAL BASIC EDUCATION PUBLIC SECTOR	27 384	31 240	30 700	12.1
B.N.1	TOTAL BASIC EDUCATION PUBLIC SECTOR (CENTRAL LEVEL)	24 745	28 267	27 908	12.8
B.N.1.1	Transfers	20 602	24 020	24 515	19.0
B.N.1.1.1	General System of Transfers (SGP) - Budgetary allocation	17 973	19 380	20 061	11.6
B.N.1.1.2	Integral attention to early childhood (SGP allocation for increase in GDP by more than 4%)	x	x	173	
B.N.1.1.3	School meals – SGP	51	167	172	14.3
B.N.1.1.4	National Teachers Pension Fund (FOMAG)	2 464	4 325	3 965	60.9
B.N.1.1.5	Rest (other transfers)	14	149	144	916.6
B.N.1.1.5.1	Other transfers Ministry of National Education (MEN)	8	142	137	1 658.9
B.N.1.1.5.1.5	School meals Article 145 of Decree 4923 of 2011	x	132	128	
B.N.1.2	National investments	4 143	4 247	3 393	-18.1
B.N.1.2.1	Investment Ministry of National Education (MEN)	777	1 417	1 344	72.9
B.N.1.2.1.1	Infrastructure	307	236	345	12.4
B.N.1.2.1.3	Coverage, Quality and Efficiency	234	265	478	103.9
B.N.1.2.1.4	Early childhood	235	13	6	-97.5
B.N.1.2.1.5	School meals	x	903	515	
B.N.1.2.2	Expenditure of other central entities in education	3 366	2 830	2 049	-39.1
B.N.1.2.2.1	Computers to Educate (CPE)	111	244	88	-20.9
B.N.1.2.2.2	Compartel	206	125	320	54.9
B.N.1.2.2.3	More Families in Action	797	1 577	1 009	26.6
B.N.1.2.2.4	School meals (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, ICBF)	620	103	x	-100.0
B.N.1.2.2.6	Royalties	1 440	783	632	-56.1
B.T.2	TOTAL BASIC EDUCATION PUBLIC SECTOR (TERRITORIAL [DEPARTMENTS AND MUNICIPALITIES])	2 640	2 973	2 793	5.8
B.P.3	BASIC EDUCATION PRIVATE SECTOR (only contributions of co-operatives)				
B.P.3.1	Rents with specific destination	55	43	44	-19.4
S.N	TOTAL TERTIARY EDUCATION PUBLIC SECTOR	7 512	9 032	10 610	41.2
S.N.1	TOTAL TERTIARY EDUCATION PUBLIC SECTOR (CENTRAL LEVEL)	7 288	8 766	10 353	42.1

x : Not applicable

Notes: Numbers are expressed in short scale, one billion meaning a thousand million (10⁹), one trillion meaning a thousand billion (10¹²).

Values for 2017 are only estimated. At the time of writing, final figures were not yet available.

Source: Authors' estimations based on data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEN).

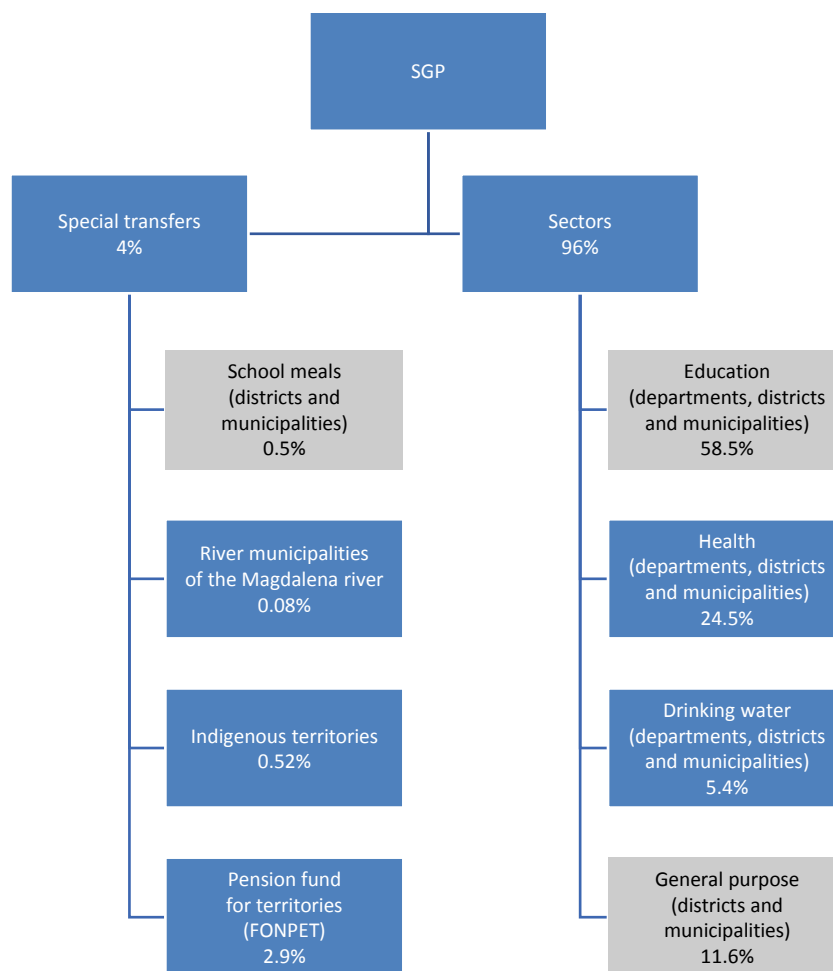
This regulatory framework reflects two considerations. On the one hand, the creation of the SGP prioritises fiscal discipline over the responsibility and autonomy of subnational governments, eliminating fiscal co-participation between levels of government, and reducing over time the relative weight of transfers to territorial entities, without strengthening their capacity to generate their own tax revenues (Bird, 2012^[8]). At the same time, the SGP shows the higher priority of education for the central government, particularly school education.

On the other hand, the SGP is characterised by its strict spending requirements, since it specifically determines which sectors receive resources, as well as the percentage of the SGP that each receives. This was justified to guarantee each citizen access to a basket of public services of comparable quality throughout the country. Education is the most important sector, receiving 58.5% of resources (see Figure 2.6) after discounting 4% for special transfers. However, the SGP also collaborates in the financing of other actions related to education, such as the transfer of 0.5% of the total resources to municipalities and districts for the provision of school meals. Municipalities and districts can contribute resources to education from the 11.6% of the total resources they receive for general purposes. The law furthermore stipulates that in periods in which the economy grows more than 4%, the certified territorial entities receive additional resources to supplement the cost of comprehensive care/integral attention for early childhood (not shown in Figure 2.6).

The distribution of SGP resources among subnational governments is specific to each sector. In the case of education, resources cover pre-school to upper secondary education.⁶ The funds are transferred annually to the ministry of education from the national budget (*Presupuesto General de la Nación*), which in turn transfers them to the Secretaries of Education, that is the education authorities of the certified territorial entities, and other territorial entities or directly to public schools. Once the resources have been transferred, the territorial entities and schools are free to distribute and use the funds according to their needs, while respecting the general purpose of the transfer stipulated by law.

The methodology for the ministry of education to allocate resources among the territories is mainly regulated by Law 715 of 2001, which establishes the criteria on which this distribution should be based: i) attended population; ii) population to be attended efficiently; and iii) equity.⁷ However, the legislation gives the central government considerable flexibility to regularly modify the form in which it distributes resources among the certified and other territorial entities responsible for providing education.

At the beginning of each year, the ministry of education, through the National Planning Department (*Departamento Nacional de Planeación*, DNP),⁸ estimates the initial amount of resources for education (SGP Education) to be transferred based on two criteria: i) the provision of education, aimed at ensuring the delivery of a basic basket of services to all students in the public education system, including adult education; and ii) efforts to improve the quality of education. There is also a small allocation, called Cancellations of Payments for Social Benefits (*Cancelación Prestaciones Sociales*), which includes resources for pensions paid to retired teachers (Law 43, 1975) not covered by FOMAG, the entity responsible for managing teachers' pensions mentioned above. In 2017, these payments represented 1.8% of the resources allocated to SGP Education (DNP, 2017^[11]). The distribution of resources for the different allocations to certified and non-certified territorial entities and schools is shown in Annex 2.A.

Figure 2.6. Distribution of resources through the General System of Transfers (SGP)

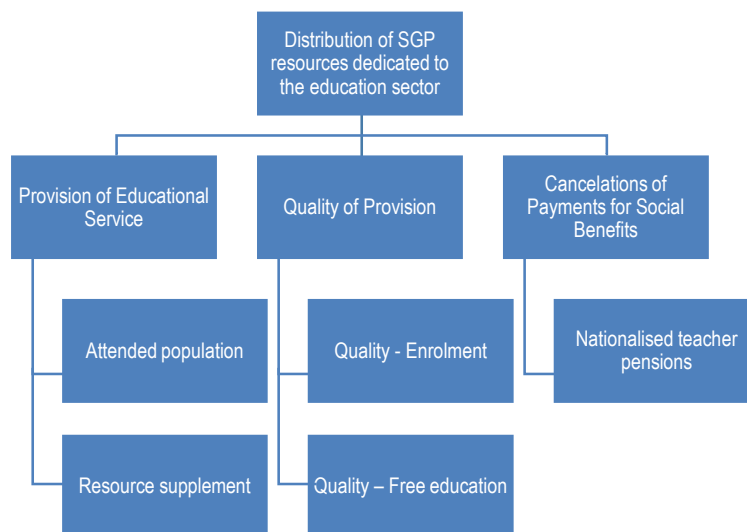
Source: Adjusted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

The following describes the individual components and sub-components that compose the resource allocation of the General System of Transfers for education (see Figure 2.7).

1) Provision of Educational Service or Allocation by Attended Population

This is the most important component of the SGP Education, which represented 89.7% of the fund's total resources for education in 2016. All of these resources are transferred to the Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities, although, in the future, funds earmarked for indigenous education will be transferred to the Individual Indigenous Educational System (*Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio*, SEIP) explained in Chapters 1 and 3.⁹ The priority of this allocation is to at least cover the cost of salaries of teachers and school leaders, including their respective social benefits; the funding of private providers in the event public schools cannot meet demand, for example, due to a lack of teaching staff or infrastructure (analysed in depth in Chapter 3); and administrative costs.

Figure 2.7. Distribution of resources of the General System of Transfers for education (SGP Education)



Source: Adjusted from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Only once these costs, and in particular staff payments, are covered can other elements be financed from this component, such as construction and maintenance of school infrastructure, educational quality, etc. In this regard, the allocation considers three sub-components: i) provision of the educational service; ii) share authorised for administrative expenses; and iii) resource supplement for financial deficit.¹⁰ All these sub-components are distributed in relation to the effective enrolment of students (attended population), both in the form of public and government-dependent private provision (*matrícula oficial y contratada*), estimated according to student enrolment from the year prior to the effective date of the distribution of the SGP (for a list of typologies for the distribution of this item and for each certified territorial entity, see Sánchez (2018_[1])).

Provision of educational service: Although the methodology for distributing resources to the respective Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities has been gradually modified (CGR, 2017_[9]) and, since 2015, the particular characteristics of each certified territorial entity are recognised, its specific design has varied every year between 2015 and 2017. For example, in 2016 an incentive was added for quality and efficiency in the management of spending, which was excluded in 2017 due to the higher constraints in resources available for distribution among the certified territorial entities.

For each certified territorial entity, the average per capita cost, based on the cost of maintaining the current payroll of teachers and school leaders, is added to the maximum approved administrative expenditure, based on the previous year's enrolment, since this expense represents the largest proportion of the total cost of education and is relatively stable over time.

Based on the average per capita cost for each certified territorial entity, cost ratios are estimated for each level of education (the funding level is equivalent to a proportion of the average cost, which is 0.8 for the transition year and primary education, 0.9 for lower secondary education and 0.95 and for upper secondary education). These proportions are

estimated based on the technical relation developed by the ministry of education for the ratio of teachers and students/classroom by level of education at a national level. In the case of adult education, an average value of 0.25 is assumed for Cycles 2 to 6,¹¹ and a value of only 0.6 if the student drops out of the programme within five months.

The resources for operating costs recognise the different costs faced by each certified territorial entity to ensure their payroll for teachers and administrative staff. In order to compensate the higher cost for the provision of rural education, the values of each level described in the previous paragraph are adjusted by an approximate additional 30% if the student attends school in a rural area - in 2017, rural students made up 28.7% of public enrolment in compulsory education.¹² Additional contributions are also added to the estimated values for each level according to specific student characteristics (see Table 2.5), which are intended to “co-finance” the higher cost to ensure education provision for these students (DNP, 2017_[11]).

Table 2.5. Adjustment in the distribution of resources for the provision of educational service

Categories of students that qualify to receive additional funding	Coefficient for additional funding per student (%)	Use of resources
Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System	20	Develop strategies, specific modalities and the implementation of educational models according to age and academic level
Boarding school	25	Facilitate access of children to education who live far away from schools, especially in remote rural areas
Special educational needs and gifted education	20	Hire support services, train teachers, and provide educational materials for these students
Full-Day schooling	20	Cover the additional payroll requirements implied by the extended instruction time

Source: Authors’ elaboration based on Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

To finance the annual **administrative expenses** faced by each certified territorial entity, the ministry of education authorises a specific percentage of the estimated resources for the sub-component of attended population that can be spent for this purpose. Nevertheless, in the last two years, the ministry authorised a total amount of administrative expenditure rather than a share of operating expenditure in consideration of the increasing allocation of resource supplements as explained in the next paragraphs. For 2017, the amount authorised for administrative spending represented between 6.4% for Floridablanca and 24.5% in Guainía (for a full overview, see Sánchez (2018_[1])).

Resource supplement (payroll adjustment and compensation): To ensure the financing of minimum operating costs, supplementary resources are provided to those certified territorial entities that report an initial deficit.

The payroll adjustment refers to a one-time allocation of resources destined to finance certified territorial entities that fail to accumulate sufficient funds to cover their payroll expenses as based on the ministry’s estimated resources for Provision of Service, Quality and Efficiency. This situation is quite common, with 35 of the 95 certified territorial entities receiving resources from the General System of Transfers for this purpose in 2015.

Meanwhile, the compensation part consists of a one-time additional payment to the certified territorial entities to partially cover the difference in the resource allocation compared to the previous year for the attended population. In 2015, resources for compensation were transferred to 18 of the 95 certified territorial entities whose attended population allocation was lower than in the previous year. As reported by the National Planning Department (DNP), the compensation part was not planned to be included in future allocations.

The additional resources for resource supplement have been considerable. Between 2008 and 2015, they exceeded the resources allocated for the Quality component of the SGP for almost this entire period. In 2010, they reached 10.1% of the total resources of the SGP Education. Due to the considerable increase in resources distributed for the Provision of Service component in 2016, no resources were allocated as resource supplement in 2017 (CGR, 2017^[9]).

In addition to the resources transferred to the certified territorial entities for the Provision of Service, the payment of teachers' pensions in the certified territorial entities is carried out directly by the ministry of education through the National Teachers Pension Fund (FOMAG). These resources have grown steadily in the last decade, reaching 14.2% of the total funding provided by the central government for public school education in 2017. As a result, about 80% of public resources are used to cover payroll costs for teachers, school leaders and administrative staff.

Given the enormous financial strain involved in covering teachers' salaries, payroll expenses cannot exceed the resources allocated by the SGP Education to the respective Secretary of Education, which means the certified territorial entity cannot authorise the hiring of more teachers or administrative staff or staff promotions covered with these resources. If the entity fails to comply with this rule, such expenses will not be recognised for reimbursement and the cost increase will be the responsibility of the official who authorised it.

2) Resources for Quality of Provision

This component is comprised of two sub-components, Quality-Enrolment and Quality-Free Education.

The methodology for distributing these resources has been modified, and during recent years, an attempt has been made to balance the amount of resources allocated for both sub-components. The methodology is mainly associated with five factors: i) enrolment in the previous year; ii) rurality; iii) level of education in which students are enrolled; iv) indicators of educational performance; and v) indicators of school improvement, where the weight of performance indicators exceeds those of improvement.

The resources for the **Quality-Enrolment** element are distributed among districts and certified and non-certified municipalities, as well as the non-municipal areas of the departments of Amazonas, Guainía and Vaupés (see Decree 1122, 2011), according to two main factors: the performance of schools in these districts, municipalities and non-municipal areas, and the share of students from rural areas in total enrolment.

These resources cannot be used to finance payroll, but rather for strategies to improve the quality of the provision of public education, such as investment in infrastructure, equipment, professional development, or to complement resources for the School Meal Programme (*Pograma de Alimentación Escolar*, PAE) or school transport. These funds can also be used to cover costs related to the basic operation of schools and the payment

of public services (e.g. water and electricity). The share of this sub-component of the total resources of the SGP Education has remained stable over time, representing just over 4%.

The **Quality-Free Education** element serves to complement the central government's efforts to provide universal free education in the Colombian public school system. Since 2008 and building on previous experiences, for example in the capital Bogotá (Bonilla and González, 2012_[12]), this policy has been gradually implemented, allocating SGP Quality resources to cover monthly payments for vulnerable groups of students in public schools as defined by levels SISBEN 1 and 2,¹³ as well as for displaced and indigenous students (CGR, 2017_[9]). However, since 2012, family payments to public schools have been prohibited in all public schools that serve children between the transition year to the end of upper secondary education in order to provide free education and thereby ensure access and retention of all children in the education system.

These resources are transferred directly to each public school through their Educational Services Fund (*Fondo de Servicios Educativos*, FSE), that is the school accounts. The school principal and directive council of each public school, that is the school board, determine how these resources are used, ensuring that they are allocated to the provision of free education and to actions linked to the school's educational project (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*, PEI) as long as they follow the use of funds allowed by law.

Funds are not transferred to private entities that are contracted and publicly funded to provide education in the event of capacity constraints or other limitations. Publicly-funded private providers are however also not allowed to charge students attending via these contracts for tuition, complementary services or other elements of provision, but these costs are covered by the Secretary of Education through the contract.

In 2017, the resources provided for this sub-component reached 3.2% of the total allocation for SGP Education (DNP, 2017_[11]). The amount of these resources increased considerably between 2010 and 2016, especially since free public education was made universal in 2012, rising to 3.3% of SGP education resources in 2016 from 1.5% in 2010.

3) Other resources allocated through the General System of Transfers (SGP)

Of the remaining SGP resources, there are several elements that provide additional resources to the public school system. For example, 0.5% of the total resources are allocated to districts and municipalities – both certified and non-certified – to finance the School Meal Programme (*Programa de Alimentación Escolar*, PAE). Another item of the SGP for Special Transfers covers pensions for staff in education and healthcare of territorial entities, with 2.9% of resources transferred to the National Pension Fund of Territorial Entities (*Fondo Nacional de Pensiones de las Entidades Territoriales*, FONPET). Municipalities and districts can furthermore contribute resources to education from the 11.6% they receive for general purposes. In 2017, this investment amounted to COP 223 billion.¹⁴ In addition, the 2007 reform of the SGP established that, in periods when the economy grows more than 4%, the ministry of finance would provide additional resources to the SGP to supplement the financing of comprehensive/integral attention to early childhood.

General System of Royalties (Sistema General de Regalías)

This mechanism was created to distribute royalties from the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, especially oil. Traditionally, royalties were mainly distributed to the departments where the exploited natural resources were located.

However, the system of royalties was redesigned in 2011-12 to distribute the resources more equitably among the different territories, with a focus on the most disadvantaged areas and on promoting inter-institutional agreements for development.

Although initially the system's resources could only be used for investment projects, gradually their use has been made more flexible. Resources from royalties today are generally allocated to 5 types of expenditure: i) infrastructure and materials; ii) education quality; iii) school transport; iv) school meals; and v) initiatives for access and retention in education. According to data from the ministry of education, the General System of Royalties contributed COP 1.4 trillion (2017 currency) to public education in 2010, representing 5.3% of the total resources for public education. In 2017 this amount was reduced to COP 600 billion, representing only 2.1% of total resources that year.

Resources of subnational governments

Colombia's departments, districts and municipalities can make complementary contributions to the school system with their own resources. These can be used to hire additional teachers not covered by the General System of Transfers or improve the working conditions of staff, fund infrastructure investments, complement resources for national programmes, such as the School Meal Programme or Full-Day Schooling (*Jornada Única*) programme, a national policy to extend instruction time for students, or to develop new initiatives, such as the programme *Un Buen Comienzo* by the Secretary of Education of Medellín.

In 2017, these contributions reached 9.1% of total public spending on education, only 5.5% higher than in 2010, although highly differentiated according to the capacity of the respective territorial entity to generate their own resources, analysed in depth below.

Contributions and programmes of the Ministry of National Education

The Ministry of National Education is the main institution that plans, manages and supervises the financing of Colombian public education, including resources that are transferred to the Secretaries of Education. Of the total public resources allocated to the school system, in 2010 the ministry's budget represented 78.1%, increasing to 84.2% in 2017, due to the reduction of resources of the General System of Royalties and the transfer of responsibilities for the School Meal Programme from the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) to the ministry of education in 2011-12.

In real terms, the total amount of resources administered by the ministry of education for public education rose from COP 21.4 trillion in 2010 to almost COP 26 trillion in 2017, with 80% of this increase explained by higher resources for the General System of Transfers (SGP) and pensions fund managed by FOMAG.

In addition to managing the resources of the SGP, and according to the priorities of each government and its respective National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*, PND), the ministry of education also supports a set of other initiatives in the school system. These resources are distributed through transfers, such as for the School Meal Programme, and programmes included in the ministry's investment budget.

Important programmes implemented as part of the National Development Plan 2014-18 include infrastructure initiatives, transfers to the certified territorial entities for the School Meal Programme, a set of initiatives to improve the coverage, quality and efficiency of the school system, such as the programme Let's All Learn (*Todos a Aprender*, PTA) and

Colombia Bilingüe (a programme to improve English competencies), as well as initiatives related to rural education and policies related to the peace agreement and post-conflict.

Given that these programmes and the amount of resources involved depend on the priorities of each central government and their respective development plan, they are additional resources for the certified territorial entities, and therefore not a regular source of funding for territorial authorities to ensure coverage and improve the quality of education.

Contributions and programmes of other national public entities with relevance for education

Despite the low number of initiatives in this category, they are very important and have a large budget. For example, the Department of Social Prosperity (*Departamento de Prosperidad Social*, DPS) provides conditional cash transfers to the most vulnerable families through the More Families in Action programme (*Más Familias en Acción*) to reduce poverty and inequality. Payments are provided on the condition that families access health and education services. It, therefore, forms part of a national strategy to meet two of the goals set by the government for its 4-year term between 2014 and 2018: reducing the school dropout rate to 5% and achieving universal coverage in basic education (primary and lower secondary levels).

Despite a significant reduction in resources for 2017 compared to previous years, the programme has an annual budget of more than COP 2 trillion, which is a figure greater than the total amount of resources transferred from the ministry of education for the administration of the School Meal Programme (PAE) in 2017.

The Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (MinTic) supports the technological development of the school system with two important initiatives and the use of ICTs in the processes of continuous education and collaborative learning, such as Compartel and Computers to Educate (*Computadores para Educar*). The use of digital resources in school education is analysed in depth in Chapter 3.

Contributions of the private sector for social purposes to public school education

The private sector can also contribute to the budget of public education, mainly from the co-operative sector, since companies that contribute at least 20% of their net income to formal education are exempt from income tax. Following a tax reform in 2016, co-operatives will pay a tax rate of 20%, but these resources will be dedicated entirely for tertiary education, with the public school system losing 1.5% of its annual income.

Strengths

Education policy making has the potential to create a long-term shared vision, and education has been a priority in recent years

Beyond the ongoing efforts by recent Colombian governments in education, there has been the political will to prioritise education in terms of increasing public resources for education and making sustainable progress in educational coverage and quality.

Medium-term planning of national priorities and policies, based on strong social participation in their design and a growing use of robust information

Colombia holds national elections every four years and the new government transforms its programme into concrete actions through a National Development Plan (PND), which indicates the priority areas and specific goals to be achieved during the four-year presidential term. This entails not only the political and technical monitoring of progress towards these goals but also makes the financial distribution of the state's resources a top priority. As part of the development plan, the central government develops a four-year investment plan, indicating the resources needed to implement each programme or project in each of the years, considering the projected availability of resources for the coming years. In this way, the National Development Plan is co-ordinated with a broader set of mechanisms and instruments used to plan the main public policies and national strategies in the medium term, as well as the budgetary framework, which facilitates fiscal sustainability and links spending decisions with political priorities (OECD, 2013_[13]).

This process of developing policy frameworks for the medium term is replicated in departments and municipalities. After governors and mayors are elected, their programme must be presented to the Department Assembly or Municipal Council for approval. Their proposed territorial plans must be aligned with the National Development Plan. Non-certified municipalities must co-ordinate their education policy with the Secretary of Education of their respective department which bears overall responsibility for the provision of education in these municipalities.

The design of development plans but also other policy frameworks specific to education at the national level involve processes of democratic participation and legitimacy for sectoral priorities as well as evaluation and monitoring – all key elements for effective governance (Burns and Köster, 2016_[14]). The elaboration of the National Development Plan is actively discussed by the executive and the National Planning Department (DNP), the authority responsible for co-ordinating the design of the plan, must organise stakeholder consultation processes to inform the design of the plan. Representatives of departments and municipalities, ethnic minorities and civil society are thus involved in defining national priorities. Once the ministry of finance has given its approval if the plan is compatible with the country's financial restrictions, the plan must be endorsed by the CONPES, the country's advisory body on economic and social policy, and be presented in Congress to be approved as a law (OECD, 2013_[13]).

In education, the central government develops national ten-year plans (*Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación*, PNDE), which should serve as a guide for the main national policies over that period of time. This creates the potential of a timeframe that is longer than that of a single government, although there is a perception among many actors that past ten-year plans have not met their main objectives in guiding individual governments and creating stability in education policy (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). As the National Development Plan, the design of this plan for the period 2016-26 involved a high degree of dialogue and participation of different actors in society, including schools and students, and across levels of government (see Box 1.4 in Chapter 1).

Another important strength of Colombia's education system is its growing focus on collecting robust information on the achievement of the objectives set by the main education programmes and strategies, as well as improving the professional capacity for monitoring and evaluating education initiatives. The National Planning Department has a system of rigorous and systematic evaluations to monitor progress and difficulties in the implementation of the National Development Plan and provide information for future

spending decisions, gathered by *SINERGIA*, a tool that is considerably more advanced than similar tools in many OECD countries (OECD, 2013^[13]). Recent evaluations have contributed to knowledge about the impact of flexible education models, full-day schooling or *Ser Pilo Paga*, among others.

In addition to the efforts of the DNP, the public sector, especially the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, directly carries out or commissions studies from research centres, universities or in co-ordination with international co-operation agencies, such as the IDB, OEI, OECD and the World Bank, all used to evaluate the results of programmes and help improve them. These experiences have made it possible to evaluate the impact of programmes such as *Todos a Aprender* and have contributed to the current discussion to reform the General System of Transfers.

Beyond evaluating and providing information about learning performance, the Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (*Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación Educativa*, ICFES), also has a research office to monitor different initiatives directly or in association with other entities with high technical capacity and prestige. For example, it is currently evaluating the *Aulas Sin Fronteras* (Classrooms without Borders) programme together with the Universidad Nacional, among others.

In addition, there are other public and civic entities which make regular efforts to generate high quality research that has helped to highlight main challenges and to improve the design, implementation and effectiveness of many education initiatives. This includes, among others, the Bank of the Republic (Colombia's central bank), the Comptroller General of the Republic, universities such as the *Universidad de los Andes*, or public-private associations, such as *Corpoeducación* or *Fundación Luker*.

The high priority of education in the National Development Plan for 2014-18 and the importance of education in the Peace Agreement

The National Development Plan for 2014-18, titled All for a New Country (*Todos por un Nuevo País*), for the first time identified education - alongside peace and equity - as one of its three main pillars, recognising education as a powerful basis for improving the quality of democracy, social equality and long-term economic growth (DNP, 2015^[15]).

Beyond the financial instruments to ensure the budgetary priority of the educational commitments set out in the plan, the Colombian government has assigned responsibilities to various institutions and developed legal and regulatory instruments for the production and collection of information to improve the transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of educational policies, and the distribution and use of financial resources – one of the main weaknesses of public education in Latin America.

Similarly, as part of the plan's pillar on building peace in Colombia, education also plays a fundamental role. The most important achievement of the Colombian state and authorities during the period of the National Development Plan for 2014-18 is the signing of the Agreement to End Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace in 2016 (also see Box 1.1 in Chapter 1) (Mesa de Conversaciones [Conversation Roundtable], 2017^[16]). Among other components, this includes an educational plan for peace and education programmes for demobilised combatants and their families. As one of its main lines, the peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC-EP) commits the country to a comprehensive rural reform (*Reforma Rural Integral*).

The comprehensive rural reform not only promotes the economic recovery of the countryside through land access and use but also social and economic development through sector-specific national plans to improve public services and infrastructure. This entails the development and implementation of a Special Rural Education Plan (*Plan Especial de Educación Rural*, PEER). This plan will have a 15-year implementation period and is tasked with closing the gaps between the rural and urban population (see Box 1.5 in Chapter 1). The comprehensive rural reform thus recognises that the challenges linked to reducing the enormous gaps in rural development compared to urban areas imply the need to take advantage of synergies between different strategies, such as the creation of economic opportunities and improvements in education.

As highlighted in an upcoming OECD report, education policy alone cannot address all challenges of rural development. Educational policies that target the needs of rural areas should therefore be ideally integrated with broader rural development initiatives to build prosperous and sustainable rural communities (OECD, forthcoming^[17]). In this regard, it is worth noting that the National Development Plan and its initiatives also incorporated some of the suggestions of the Rural Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside (*Misión Rural para la Transformación del Campo*) carried out in 2014-15 (see Box 1.2 in Chapter 1). This also reflects the importance the Colombian authorities have given to incorporating proposals and lessons learned over time about their territorial challenges in their planning strategies (OECD, 2016^[18]).

Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach (*Programas de desarrollo con enfoque territorial*, PDET) constitute another important element within the framework of the Peace Agreement and the comprehensive rural reform. These development plans focus efforts on those zones most affected by the conflict, poverty and weak institutions. The Territorial Renewal Agency (*Agencia de Renovación del Territorio*, ART), created as part of the peace architecture to articulate the efforts of different sectors in rural areas and to manage and supervise participatory planning at the local level, is also responsible for co-ordinating the various Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach. Although the Special Rural Education Plan applies to all rural areas, it will target the 170 municipalities within 16 sub-regions that form part of these programmes.

For example, within the framework of the Special Rural Education Plan, an innovative initiative called Get Down to School (*Manos a la Escuela*) is being carried out to improve school infrastructure in remote or small rural communities. This ministry initiative finances projects to improve infrastructure and equipment in rural schools for an amount of up to COP 50 million (USD 17 000) in any of the 170 priority municipalities.

This initiative can be interesting as a learning process, although it has a very limited scope since in the second round only 140 initiatives were financed, just 9% of the total applications for funding. In addition, it is not co-ordinated with efforts to accelerate the infrastructure investments that are part of the country's Full-Day Schooling (*Jornada Única*) programme. One of the lessons learned by the team working on the National Education Infrastructure Plan (*Plan Nacional de Infraestructura Educativa*, PNIE) was that the Educational Infrastructure Fund (*Fondo de Financiamiento de la Infraestructura Educativa*, FFIE) is effective in highly populated urban and rural areas, but not so much in remote rural areas targeted by *Manos a la Escuela*.

In this regard, the Special Rural Education Plan could become an inter-institutional management model for planning, co-ordinating and implementing the actions needed to reduce the huge gaps between urban and rural areas. However, as observed in other educational policies, such as full-day schooling or the School Meal Programme, and as

highlighted below, its resources are insufficient to fulfil all of the commitments made by the national authorities. Similarly, as for public and education policy in general, the continuity of the Peace Agreement, the Special Rural Education Plan and the Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach across governments is not ensured. The rural education plan still requires ratification by the national authorities to ensure its financing going forward.

Co-ordination between levels of government for territorial management

A recent innovation that allows inter-institutional co-ordination between different levels of government, with enormous potential for the education sector, are the *Contratos Plan*. During the last five years, the National Planning Department (DNP) has developed this new tool for the co-ordination of public investment among various levels of government and between the national, departmental and municipal development plans. The *Contratos Plan*, which have been identified as the best mechanism to achieve territorial collaboration, are promoted through a regional fund (*Fondo Regional para los Contratos Plan*), created in 2016, and managed by the Project Development Fund (*Fondo Financiero de Proyectos de Desarrollo*, FONADE), a financial enterprise under the DNP offering services for the financial planning of development projects (OECD, 2016_[18]).

In education, the *Contratos Plan* are an important financial tool for planning and co-ordination since they have focused on the priorities of the National Development Plan for 2014-18. They have helped to co-ordinate strategic actions within departments and between municipalities or departments, as well as co-ordinating with resources from oil and mining revenues through the General System of Royalties (SGR). Sixty percent of the fund's contributions should come from the national level, while the remaining 40% should be from territorial entities.

At present, *Contratos Plan para la Paz* are being implemented in 13 departments, which are focused on territories where the population has faced violence and armed conflict in the past. In 2016, 7 contracts were signed with close to 100 municipalities for a total of COP 14 trillion, with education being one of the most important sectors.

The funding system promotes financial sustainability and national priorities for quality and equity

Prioritising mechanisms that provide stability in the financing of education and recognising higher costs in the provision of education

As detailed in the previous section, the educational component of the General System of Transfers (SGP) has been, since its creation in 2001, the main source of public financing for the Colombian school system. Including resources to finance social benefits for teachers, this funding represents more than 80% of the total resources of the central government for the sector and over 75% of all resources in the last decade, when contributions by subnational authorities are included.

The fact that the composition of the SGP is highly regulated, that it is annually readjusted and that it includes specific components to finance the education sector, makes it a stable source of revenues for subnational educational entities. Moreover, since fiscal transfers do not require co-financing by the certified territorial entities, financing does not depend on subnational capacities to generate own resources, which tend to be highly concentrated in a few departments and municipalities of the country (Bird, 2012_[8]).

Greater fiscal discipline with the end of automatic sharing of tax revenues in the 1990s improved regulation of subnational government debt, and reforms implemented in the early 2000s, such as the creation of the SGP, have contributed to the overall fiscal sustainability of subnational entities at an aggregate level (Bernal et al., 2018^[6]; Daude and de la Maisonneuve, 2016^[19]), although there is a high degree of heterogeneity within departments and municipalities (Sánchez and Zenteno, 2011^[20]).

Moreover, it is very important that resources provided through the SGP Education allocation explicitly indicate that their main objective is to finance teachers' salaries and administrative expenses through the Provision of Educational Service component. This component is the most important one for estimating the allocation to each certified territorial entity. Given that most teachers are national permanent staff, making for a highly inflexible and permanent expense over time, this SGP funding allocation provides stable financing for the largest part of public expenditure on education.

Since funding for this component is based on staff levels approved at the end of the previous period and certified territorial entities can ask the ministry of education for an increase in payroll funding (i.e. hiring staff) throughout the year, the mechanism has facilitated rapid improvements in educational coverage throughout the entire country. Similarly, the process of approving different payroll expenses for each certified territorial entity enables hiring more qualified teachers, although these teachers with higher qualifications and professional experience tend to be distributed asymmetrically throughout the country, with a lower proportion of higher qualified teachers working in schools in the most disadvantaged territories and the most isolated and rural areas, as analysed in Chapter 4.

It is also important that the design of the General System of Transfers (SGP) includes coefficients for financing educational requirements for certain groups of the population implying a higher cost or programmes entailing additional costs to the ones defined in the educational basket (*canasta educativa*).¹⁵ For example, if a student attends a school in a rural area, the estimated financial allocation based on attended population is increased by 30% with respect to the general allocation. Greater resources are also provided for students with special educational needs or any type of disability (20%), as well as those who attend boarding schools (25%), or who are in the Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System (20%).

Although regulations for the provision of education for these groups of students entail greater responsibilities for Secretaries of Education to ensure their right to education, education authorities receive more resources from the SGP for these students, recognising the higher cost of providing education for these groups. In this regard, as part of the government's commitment to extending instruction time and increasing the coverage of full-day schooling, the SGP provides an additional contribution of 20% for each child attending a full-day school, which partially reimburses Secretaries of Education for the higher operating expenses.

Reform of the General System of Transfers (SGP): Ensuring access to universal free education

Various programmes and policies during the last decade have focused on improving educational opportunities for children and young people, while also increasing coverage. Among these initiatives, prohibiting co-payments by families of public school students between transition year and Year 11 since 2012 was an important milestone in the move

towards universal free public schooling, with the exception of adult education and teacher education in higher teaching schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*).

Although the impact of this policy on educational coverage at the national level has not been evaluated, it is clearly an important measure to ensure the right to education of all children and youth and moves towards the adequate public financing of education as a fundamental right. This result is consistent with the evaluation of the early free education policy of the city of Bogotá (Barrera-Osorio, Linden and Urquiola, 2007^[21]), which improved educational coverage for students of the most vulnerable levels in primary education and for those from medium-low socio-economic levels in secondary education (SISBEN 1 and 2 respectively according to the system for targeting social protection).

As previously mentioned, to partially compensate public schools for the resources that they stopped receiving from families, the Quality-Free Education sub-component was implemented within the General System of Transfers (SGP), which distributes funds to all public schools for actions to guarantee free education and improve the quality of education linked to school's educational project (PEI). However, the creation of this sub-component did not imply any additional resources for the SGP, which means the net resources administered by public schools were reduced. Similarly, there was no gradual compensation for the resources previously obtained by schools from students' families, implying an asymmetric effect on the availability of resources among public schools.

Moreover, since the policy was not co-ordinated with the certified territorial entities, its design and implementation followed a logic that strengthened the central government in the decisions on education and reduced the responsibility of subnational education authorities. On the other hand, the small amount of resources available entails the need for disadvantaged families to pay for the provision of complementary services to ensure the regular attendance of their children at school in practice.

It is very important for school leadership teams to participate in decisions that directly affect them, as well as the design of pedagogical and professional teacher development programmes. As shown by the experience of countries participating in the OECD School Resources Review, a certain degree of school responsibility in budgetary matters can provide schools with greater flexibility to use the resources allocated according to local needs and priorities when accompanied by good school leadership, management structures and accountability (OECD, 2017^[22]). This is more relevant in a context where most financial resources are transferred to the Secretaries of Education, which are almost entirely responsible for the distribution of resources and for providing support for the generation of professional capacities in their schools.

In this context, the school communities interviewed for this report highlighted the fact that, since the implementation of universal free education in 2011, each public school in Colombia directly receives resources from the bag for Quality-Free Education. These funds have allowed school directive councils to finance or co-finance various initiatives that are critical for the improvement of the quality of education or the operation of the school in line with their school educational project (PEI). Schools can also generate other sources of income (e.g. through the sale of services, leasing of rooms, among others) or apply for programme initiatives to receive equipment or infrastructure improvements.

However, the total amount of resources allocated directly to schools is quite small. In 2017, the initial budget for the Quality-Free Education sub-component represented only 3.2% of the total resources of the SGP Education, which means the impact school leadership can have on solving their school's main challenges is very limited.

Other important programmes to ensure the right to education and improve access and retention in schools are related to school meals, school transport and textbooks, which receive some funding from the General System of Transfers (SGP). In particular, there is a specific SGP component to partially finance the School Meal Programme (PAE). However, the resources allocated to these items of the SGP are also very small. What is more, the sources of financing and distribution of responsibilities are not clear (as analysed below), especially in the case of the departments that share funding and responsibility for these parts of educational provision with their non-certified municipalities.

In sum, universal free education has been achieved in the Colombian public school system through the end of compulsory monthly co-payments as well as other initiatives, such as the School Meal Programme (PAE), which also provides resources to students who are not disadvantaged. But the complementary services needed to safeguard the right to universal free education are not always guaranteed, in particular for students belonging to the most vulnerable groups, even though the coverage of complementary services as part of free education is established by law. On the contrary, complementary services have greater coverage in those certified territorial entities with more resources that prioritise investment in education, implying important asymmetries across the country.

Reducing territorial inequality in the distribution of public resources: The reform of the General System of Royalties (SGR)

The reform of Colombia's General System of Royalties (SGR) shows that it is possible to modify the institutional design of financing mechanisms, which have helped promote greater territorial equality in the distribution of resources. The SGR is an important source of resources for investment by subnational governments, especially for departments that have scarce resources of their own (Bird, 2012_[8]). It is also important for education, being the sector with the second largest number of projects financed with these resources after transportation.

The legislation previously regulating the distribution of resources from the SGR generated multiple weaknesses. Among others, royalties were concentrated in a few departments and municipalities with extractive industries, in particular, Arauca, Casanare, Cesar, Cordoba, Huila, La Guajira, Meta and Santander, where these resources did not contribute to reducing poverty and improving the provision of public services, such as education, also stemming from weak long-term planning capacity (OECD, 2014_[10]). Moreover, resources were not distributed more widely between departments and municipalities, thus also not contributing to diminishing interregional inequalities. Resources were also distributed on a cyclical basis, thus not representing a stable source of funding (Hernández and Herrera, 2015_[23]).

In order to correct these weaknesses, the SGR legislation was modified in 2011 and 2012, providing all territorial entities with more equitable access to funds and making regulations regarding the use of resources more flexible (OECD, 2014_[10]). A Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (*Fondo de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación*, FCTI) was created, which receives 10% of the resources; another 10% were allocated to the pension system for territorial entities (FONPET); and 30% of resources were allocated to a Savings and Stabilisation Fund (*Fondo de Ahorro y Establización*, FAE) to mitigate the highly cyclical component of the generation of SGR resources, which depend completely on the fluctuation of international prices of commodities.

Of the remaining resources, 20% go directly to the departments and municipalities where these commodities are mainly produced, as well as the maritime and fluvial ports where these resources or products are transported. The other 80% of the remaining resources are distributed between two funds: 60% to the Regional Compensation Fund (*Fondo de Compensación Regional*, FCR), the purpose of which is to finance projects with a regional or local impact on the poorest territorial entities of the country, according to criteria of unmet basic needs (*necesidades básicas insatisfechas*, NBI), population and unemployment, and with priority given to coastal, border and peripheral zones; the remaining 40% are for the Regional Development Fund (*Fondo de Desarrollo Regional*, FDR), which aims to improve social, economic, institutional and environmental development, with resources distributed by department according to their relative population level and unmet basic needs index (NBI) relative to the national level. Both, the Regional Development and Science, Technology and Innovation Funds are aimed at financing regional projects agreed between territorial entities and the national government.

The redesign of the SGR has also enabled multiple innovations. First, it has facilitated co-ordination between different levels of government, through the creation of a Steering Committee (*Comisión Rectora*) with representatives of the three territorial levels and the National Congress, and the organisation of Affiliated Administrative and Decision Entities (*Órganos Colegiados de Administración y Decisión*, OCAD) responsible for designing, evaluating, prioritising and approving investment projects.

The system furthermore facilitates planning and quality control, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the system, since 1% of the resources are allocated to the Comptroller General of the Republic for supervising the system. For its part, the National Planning Department performs monitoring and evaluation tasks. It also allows resources to be executed on a multi-year basis, avoiding the incentive to spend resources on unnecessary actions and promoting innovation at a regional level, since it assigns 10% of its resources to this component (OECD, 2014_[10]).

A study by Hernández and Herrera (2015_[23]) shows that despite the pro-cyclical nature of the resources of the SGR, they represent a fifth of the total resources of the departments and an even higher percentage for the most disadvantaged, achieving the main objective of the reform: greater equity among territorial entities through the distribution of resources. If in the period 1994-2009, the poorest departments received 12.8% of resources, they benefitted from 56.1% in 2015-16.

However, this distribution does not correlate with the evolution in education coverage, reflecting that the system for sharing revenues from oil and mining royalties is too small to achieve a significant impact on tackling national challenges. Similarly, the authors indicate that one of the pending challenges is to increase the execution rate of the fund's available resources. When analysing 124 highly vulnerable municipalities with a high incidence of violence, it was concluded that they received a smaller proportion of resources compared to the total population and that resources have not been allocated to the sectors where they are most needed, reflecting the technical difficulties of designing and planning investment projects in vulnerable parts of the country.

Innovation by subnational entities with technical and financial capacity

Despite the high territorial inequality in socio-economic and educational terms, Colombia has some good experiences in the educational management of Secretaries of Education of certified territorial entities, which are generally those with a large amount of their own

financial resources and good management of human resources. These Secretaries of Education have been able to develop innovative and high-impact initiatives to improve educational coverage, pedagogical quality and inter-institutional co-ordination, as well as developing public-private partnerships to advance educational objectives. However, there is enormous potential to improve identifying and recognising the best territorial practices in education and promoting replication in the country's other Secretaries of Education.

For example, the experience of Bogotá during recent decades has been a model of learning in new educational policies, such as free education, the implementation of full-day schooling, intercultural education, the improvement of school meal provision, the development of a school transport programme, and the development of educational infrastructure concessions to expand access to education in a rapidly expanding city. Many pilot programmes have been incorporated in national government programmes. The city also has a tradition of education research programmes, including through its Institute for Educational Research and Pedagogical Development (*Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedagógico*, IDEP) created in 1994.

Similarly, Medellín's experience in implementing the successful early childhood development policy, *Buen Comienzo*, which provides early childhood education and promotes comprehensive development during the first five years of life, has served as a reference for the national strategy From Zero to Forever (*Cero a Siempre*). Also, the case of the Secretary of Education of the municipality of Manizales, smaller than Bogotá or Medellín, is a reference point with its internationally recognised initiative Active Urban School (*Escuela Activa Urbana*) supporting highly disadvantaged schools. The municipality's Secretary of Education is also characterised by its close public-private partnership in innovation in view of improving educational quality and equity.

The remarkable results shown by the cities of Bogotá, Cali, Manizales and Medellín in the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) reflect these efforts. The only four subnational entities in Colombia participating with a larger sample of students in all or some rounds of international assessment between 2009-15, these cities showed a sustained increase in all evaluated competencies. While not strictly comparable, the results of Bogotá in PISA 2015 were higher than the average for Chile, the country with the highest performance in the region (OECD, 2016_[24]).

The central government can promote priorities by investing in education programmes and has developed compensatory schemes for greater equity

In addition to compensatory resources for rural areas, special educational needs and juvenile delinquency, among other types of disadvantage considered in the allocation of the resources from the General System of Transfers for education to the Secretaries of Education, there are three types of programmes and compensatory resources targeting disadvantaged students, schools and territories that require greater funding to access the school system, reduce their dropout rate and close the gap in educational opportunities.

The first type of programmes is financed mainly with ministry resources, whose budget for programmes to improve efficiency, quality and coverage, not considering infrastructure or school meals, more than doubled in real terms between 2010-17 (an increase of 103.9%). While the funding of programmes also has drawbacks, it can help to compensate for educational inequalities, especially if combined with a stable funding allocation that promotes equity, and to generate and disseminate innovative practices as the experience of countries taking part in the OECD School Resources Review suggests (OECD, 2017_[22]).

Among these, the *Programa Todos a Aprender*, supporting teachers in underperforming primary schools analysed in depth in Chapter 4, has a considerable budget, nearly half of the total investment budget of the ministry's quality directorate. After two evaluations that did not show an effect on the learning of students in the participating schools, a third recent study indicated positive effects of the programme in the improvement of performance in the country's standardised assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) in language and mathematics, particularly in rural schools. This is an important outcome as the programme is focused on individual schools rather than the territorial authorities responsible for the provision of education.

A second line corresponds to the design of more flexible co-ordination and financing programmes and mechanisms to support strategic issues between different territorial levels and levels of governance, under the leadership of the ministry of education. These programmes include in recent years the Rural Education Programme and the Full-Day Schooling programme, which are analysed in the following.

Towards the design of a policy for the improvement of rural education

The implementation of the Rural Education Programme (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER) between 2001 and 2015 was a very important experience (see Chapter 1 for a full description). The programme, which was financed by a World Bank loan, involved a first phase and a second phase. In its first phase, the programme worked with 120 non-certified municipalities in 30 departments; in the second with 36 certified territorial entities, reaching 72% of non-certified municipalities.

Targeting pre-school and school education, the programme aimed to increase access to quality education in rural areas, reduce dropout rates and make education relevant to the needs of rural students. An impact evaluation of the first phase of the programme found that it had increased promotion rates and reduced dropout (Rodríguez, Sánchez and Armenta, 2010_[25]). The analysis of differences in student achievement between urban and rural areas as measured by the OECD PISA 2006 and 2012 also suggests that these initiatives have had an impact on reducing urban-rural performance gaps in Colombia (Ramos, Duque and Nieto, 2016_[26]). The programme has furthermore offered very relevant lessons for improving rural education, which were gathered in the publication *Colombia's Rural Territory: An Educational Policy for the Countryside* (MEN, 2015_[27]).

The Full-Day Schooling programme: An opportunity to improve school infrastructure and equipment, as well as teaching and learning

Although the Colombian government has tried to move from traditional multi-shift schooling to a full school day since adopting the General Education Law in 1994, the high costs of the initiative required for capital investments and staff costs implied that the implementation of this policy was postponed until the adoption of the National Development Plan for 2014-18 through Law 1753 of 2015. The *Jornada Única* programme, which was subsequently regulated mainly through Decree 501 in 2016, aims to extend the time each child spends in school to improve the quality and equity of children's educational opportunities, also in relation to independent private schools which have been offering a longer school day to a greater extent.

In order to implement the infrastructure component of the programme, the ministry of education developed a National Infrastructure Plan (PNIE) for 2015-18 in co-ordination with the territorial entities. This plan has three main objectives: i) to ensure that the infrastructure conditions to implement the full school day are in line with the best

minimum standards; ii) to generate a new institutional framework to manage infrastructure projects that optimises the use of financial resources; and iii) to improve the information and data systems related to infrastructure issues (DNP, 2015_[28]).

For the first objective, a national study was carried out which identified the need to build more than 50 000 new classrooms throughout the country to meet that target by 2030. New quality standards were also set for infrastructure projects, entitled *Colegio 10*. The total costs and the resource implications for the objective of increasing full-day schooling coverage from 11.2% in 2013 to 30% by 2018 were estimated at COP 4.5 trillion (about USD 1.6 billion). The share of students enrolled in full-day schooling remained relatively stable during the period 2014-16. Of the total classrooms to be built in 2017-18, approximately 70% were envisaged as construction of classrooms in new schools, and the remaining 30% as expansion, reconstruction or recovery of existing schools.

To address the programme's second objective, securing the resources to finance the infrastructure and equipment required to provide children with safe and adequate spaces for learning, the Educational Infrastructure Fund (FFIE) was created. This fund is designed to perform three tasks: i) consolidate resources from different sources and channel them towards educational infrastructure investments; ii) manage the resources efficiently; and iii) prioritise and select projects located in areas with the greatest potential impact.

The FFIE is a special account of the ministry of education designed to manage the fund's resources, develop financing instruments, channel funds from different sources, co-ordinate public-private actors at the national and subnational level, and approve public-private projects subject to funding availability. The fund receives regular public resources from the ministry of education¹⁶ to finance educational infrastructure; contributions from the General Royalties System (SGR), with the ministry of education as executor of these resources; contributions of the certified territorial entities; and any surpluses from the education allocation of the General System of Transfers (SGP Education). In the event the infrastructure fund has additional resources, internal or external credit may be requested, with a guarantee from the state; in these cases, financing is established through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

The different sources of public financing operate as an instrument called autonomous equity (*patrimonio autónomo*), which is governed by private norms and is comprised of all the resources committed by the various institutions contributing to this initiative. Another advantage is that they can perform credit operations with state guarantees, which makes this the most important instrument for the financing of greater educational coverage, committing future resources that are valid until 2023.

Colombia has long-standing experience of PPP, partnership schemes through which public entities contract with private entities for the construction of infrastructure projects and associated services, involving the operation and maintenance of said infrastructure, generating a return in a period not exceeding 30 years. In the case of the Full-Day Schooling programme, part of the infrastructure requirements will be developed under a PPP scheme, reducing public sector direct investment. Initially, it was estimated that 13% of the new classrooms and additional resources would be financed under this modality.

Under the programme's framework, the certified territorial entities should co-finance 30% of the cost of the initiatives, but for the most disadvantaged departments, that contribution was reduced to 15% and, according to the interviews conducted as part of the review team visit, down to 10% for initiatives in rural areas. The first call for new

initiatives was in 2016 with financing from the ministry of education and Secretaries of Education, but it was of limited coverage and especially aimed at implementing a full school day in schools with extra capacity. Since 2017, the participation of public-private partnerships has also been included.

To fund the higher operating costs involved in the implementation of the *Jornada Única* programme, an additional 20% is provided per student to certified territorial entities in the allocation for the provision of the educational service as described above. However, there is broad discussion in the country regarding the insufficiency of these resources to address the actual costs required for widespread implementation.

This initiative is an opportunity not only to strengthen the conditions of public school infrastructure in the country, which has a historical deficit. As analysed in Chapter 3, the *Jornada Única* programme is also an opportunity to improve teaching and pedagogical management, making it possible to improve teaching and learning within schools. It is also a chance to improve complementary services that are indispensable for the implementation of the full school day, such as school meals, since the programme requires certified territorial entities to ensure that all children attending schools with *Jornada Única* are served lunch, although this is not necessarily financed with resources for the School Meal Programme (MEN, 2018_[29]). At the same time, the programme is an opportunity to test an inter-institutional co-ordination model that can serve in the future to plan and implement various multi-year school improvement strategies.

Moreover, considering differences between rural and urban areas, the infrastructure dimension of the programme can have a greater impact on rural schools where basic conditions such as sanitation, access to gas and electricity, and the availability of libraries or laboratories tend to be much worse than in urban ones. The rapid roll-out of full-day schooling is also more feasible in rural schools given they are more likely to have the space available to accommodate students than urban schools, which are often already at the limit of their current capacity, also given the organisation of the school day into double-shifts (Lugo, Hernández and Colmenares, 2016_[30]).¹⁷

Initiatives to strengthen the demand for education: Más Familias en Acción

In addition to the programmes of the ministry of education, which focus on individual schools as well as co-ordination mechanisms and financing at different territorial levels, a third line of national programmes focuses directly on families, youth and children.

Since 2001, following the country's economic crisis at the end of the 1990s, Colombia has implemented the programme *Más Familias en Acción*, conditional cash transfers that provide payments to the poorest families on the condition they take up education and health services. Funded and managed by the Department of Social Prosperity (DPS), with a budget in 2017 of more than COP 2 trillion, which more than doubles the total resources of the ministry programmes for educational coverage, quality and efficiency, the programme has proven to be an important instrument to reduce poverty and promote access to education and other social services for children between 5 and 18 years of age from disadvantaged families, particularly in rural areas (Baez and Camacho, 2011_[31]; DNP, 2012_[32]; OECD, 2016_[33]).

For example, the DNP (2012_[32]) found that *Más Familias en Acción* has positive impacts on several indicators. The programme significantly improves the nutrition and height of children and reduces food insecurity in the beneficiary households. In addition, children from beneficiary families are more likely (6.4 points) to finish secondary education and

children aged from 7 to 11 are less likely to be working (1.3 percentage points). On average, participation in the programme increases the education of young people aged 18 to 26 by 0.6 years. Fitzsimons and Mesnard (2013_[34]) found that *Más Familias en Acción* also helps to counteract the negative effects of the permanent departure of the father from the household on school enrolment of children and labour participation in rural areas. Such positive results have led to programme changes over the years. Initially, the programme was limited only to enrolment in basic education (primary and lower secondary) but has recently been extended to include upper secondary education.

However, the programme's results have not found a long-term impact on student achievement as measured by standardised assessments (Baez and Camacho, 2011_[31]). Higher attendance, therefore, does not necessarily translate into better learning, making it necessary to complement this type of programme with interventions in the classroom (García, Maldonado and Rodríguez, 2014_[35]). There is also room for further improvements to the programme, for example by creating greater synergies with rural programmes such as *Oportunidades Rurales* (Moya, 2016_[36]), or by further improving conditions and incentives to remain in school education as suggested by the National Planning Department (DNP).

An institutional and legal framework is in place for the collection of data about education management and for monitoring resource use in education

A range of information systems supporting decision-making

Since 2002, the ministry of education has been improving and strengthening information systems to facilitate decision-making, although there is still considerable scope for the integration of different systems (OECD, 2016_[7]). Sectoral information is centralised in the ministry's Advisory Office for Planning and Finance (*Oficina Asesora de Planeación y Finanzas*, OAPF), which supports processes of planning, analysis, formulation, evaluation and monitoring of education policies.

Regarding financing, the Law 962 of 2005 created the Single Territorial Format (*Formato Único Territorial*, FUT), which centralises financial, economic and social information collected on all territorial entities in order to control, monitor and evaluate their performance. The General Accounting Office (*Contaduría General de la Nación*), a government entity in charge of the preparation of National Accounts, consolidates this information at the national level for the fiscal supervision of government entities. In addition, based on information from the Single Territorial Format, legislation allows the ministry to measure and evaluate how the sector is financed, as well as the composition and efficiency of public spending, among other indicators (Law 1753 of 2015).

Territorial and national authorities also receive updated information on enrolment (Integrated Enrolment System, SIMAT), school infrastructure (Interactive School Infrastructure System, SICIED) and students, teachers and schools (National Directory of Schools, DUE, and National Primary and Secondary Education Information System, SINEB). Meanwhile, the Educational Quality Management Information System (SIGCE) is highly developed and brings together information from schools (school educational projects, PEI), Secretaries of Education (school improvement support plans, PAM) and the ministry (about the quality and performance of teachers and students). These databases support the work of schools, Secretaries of Education and the ministry of education by providing critical information on management processes in the education system (for further details about these databases, see Sánchez (2018_[1])).

Traditionally, Colombia's educational evaluation institute ICFES has evaluated the performance of students in the last year of secondary school, with the results of these examinations used by most tertiary institutions to select applicants. However, since 2009, examinations for Year 11 students have been complemented with standardised assessments for students in Years 3, 5 and 9, all of which provide information that is used to guide public policies. Since 2015, the ministry, together with ICFES, have calculated a school performance index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*, ISCE) annually. This index which is calculated for each level of education in each school can be used to target improvement efforts by Secretaries of Education and provide information for schools and Secretaries in their joint reflection on school improvement (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

However, the ranking and evaluation of schools based on standardised assessments such as Colombia's *Pruebas Saber* can have counterproductive effects on teaching and learning, and care must be taken to ensure that Secretaries of Education, schools and parents understand that assessments are resources to monitor progress and challenges and are not the objective of the educational process itself, as analysed in depth in Chapter 3.

Monitoring and control mechanisms for financial management at all levels of governance of school education

There are multiple mechanisms at different levels of the system to monitor and control the use of resources in school education, which are important in a context with a high risk of corruption and waste (OECD, 2016_[7]). In addition to the ministry's sub-directorate for financial oversight with responsibilities related to the monitoring of resources transferred to the certified territorial entities, the ministry, together with the Directorate of Fiscal Support (*Dirección de Apoyo Fiscal*, DAF) in the ministry of finance, monitors the resources distributed by the General System of Transfers (SGP) to identify situations of risk. In a third function, the ministry supervises labour debts in education.

The ministry audits and supervises different components of the Secretaries of Education and realises visits to provide technical support in financial aspects, human resource management and enrolment processes, in order to improve school effectiveness, avoid corrective measures and reduce risk in the use of resources transferred from the central to the subnational level. In order to control the management of the certified territorial entities, the ministry has created a Global Index of Educational Management, which includes indicators of coverage, quality, personnel and financial management that are used to annually evaluate the Secretaries of Education. For their part, Secretaries of Education are responsible for administering and managing their own resources, including regular accounting and budgetary reports on schools and non-certified municipalities in the case of departments, which creates the possibility to generate strategies for redistributing available resources.

The Directorate of Fiscal Support (DAF) in the ministry of finance also collaborates in the monitoring, supervision and control of the certified territorial entities. While the ministry of education develops the diagnostics, the directorate conducts field visits to the certified territorial entities identified as having the greatest administrative and financial risk to investigate the causes, and later discusses its findings and recommendations with the ministry of education. If the problems are not resolved, corrective actions can be proposed to the certified territorial entities. The information is provided to the national oversight agencies, such as the Comptroller General (*Contraloría General de la República*, CGR) and the Office of the State Attorney (*Fiscalía General de la Nación*), to determine administrative or legal sanctions, if applicable.

In some cases, the corrective measures have led to the temporary suspension of the management of education. In these cases, a team designated by the ministry of education assumes temporary responsibility for the provision of education in the department, district or certified municipality, as was the case in the department Chocó for the last eight years. Since 2017, the department of La Guajira has been under temporary administration by the ministry of education.

In addition, since 2006, the Directorate of Sustainable Development (DDTS) in the National Planning Department (DNP) has used an Integral Development Index (*Índice de Desempeño Integral*, IDI) to evaluate public management and decision-making in the use of municipal resources, which includes three indicators related to education that represent a combined 25% of the total index score (DNP, 2017^[37]).

The Comptroller General has administrative control of financial resources, including performance audits, but only with respect to national resources, since there are specific entities for each department and municipality. For its part, the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General (*Procuraduría General de la Nación*, PGN) monitors the proper functioning of the education system in order to protect the rights and interests of citizens, while the State Attorney (*Fiscalía*) acts as the judicial arm of the executive to investigate possible crimes in educational management and, if necessary, prosecute these before the courts.

As a general rule, the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General and the Comptroller General supervise all public administration processes, but there is also control at the local level where *veedurías*, local oversight committees, also monitor the use of public resources. Each committee has limited powers, but they can pass on information about any illegal activity to the corresponding authorities, such as the State Attorney, for disciplinary or penal action. The Ombudsman and Prosecutor General may impose administrative sanctions, for example by removing a person from public office or prohibiting him/her from holding a specific position for a certain period of time. Local monitoring and control processes, such as those carried out by the *veedurías*, have the potential to ensure that the use of resources responds to local needs for educational improvement, provided there is the capacity to hold local authorities accountable (OECD, 2017^[22]).

Challenges

During the last decade, the financing of the Colombian school system has focused on improving education coverage and quality. Despite important achievements in coverage since the 2000s, there are still important challenges in early childhood education, secondary education and especially in rural education (see Chapter 1). Various programmes aimed to improve quality and equity in education for all students, regardless of their place of residence, ethnicity, socio-economic level or any other disadvantage, in line with the goals of the National Development Plan for 2014-18 (see Chapter 3).

However, despite some progress, there remains an imbalance between the multiple policy objectives and the availability of financial, human and institutional resources, especially in a context where the financial and management capacities of certified territorial entities – departments, districts and certified municipalities – responsible for administering public education are highly asymmetrical, and the country has run a fiscal deficit with significant spending restrictions since 2017 (Bernal et al., 2018^[6]). At the same time, there is a growing demand for more public funding for tertiary education as analysed at

the beginning of the chapter. All of this represents important challenges to balance objectives of equity and quality with the adequate design of policies and funding.

Public funding for education is insufficient to achieve set goals of educational coverage, quality and equity

The National Development Plan for 2014-18 set important goals for Colombia's education system, not only for coverage in early childhood and secondary education but also in terms of reducing geographical gaps in areas with greater difficulties linked to armed conflict and social disadvantage. The plan also put in place an ambitious infrastructure programme and a programme to extend instruction time. However, the amount of resources allocated by the central government to school education in the last decade is not consistent with these goals. Although public resources for school education have increased slightly in real terms, they have actually been reduced with respect to total spending in the public sector (from 13.9% in 2010 to an estimated 13.7% in 2017) and also relative to the size of the economy, falling from 3.8% to 3.3% of GDP in that period.

This inconsistency between national commitments and resources is repeated in early childhood education, which has a low public financial priority as could be seen above, despite its strategically important role in ensuring opportunities are equal for children throughout their lives. In fact, the current low participation has generated criticism as has low spending per child which does not ensure high-quality provision (OECD, 2016). Evidence clearly shows that early childhood is the period of life when there are the greatest opportunities to improve the present and future opportunities of children, particularly the most disadvantaged, and maximise the positive effect of new investments in education and other social sectors in later life (Berlinski, Galiani and Gertler, 2009^[38]; Cunha et al., 2006^[39]; Heckman, 2017^[40]; Heckman and Kautz, 2014^[41]).

The inconsistency at this level of education appears again considering agreements between the central government and the largest teacher union (FECODE) to expand coverage with comprehensive care from one year of pre-school in the compulsory transition year to three years of pre-primary education, or the commitment of the Peace Agreement to guarantee universal coverage for early childhood education in rural areas. There is, however, no budgetary allowance to meet these goals.

At the same time, the multiple goals of the school system and early childhood education compete for resources with the challenge of increasing coverage in tertiary education, as well as greater public financial aid to allow more students from lower socio-economic levels and the middle class to attend tertiary institutions. This is reflected in the asymmetric increase in national resources allocated to both sectors already highlighted above. Between 2010 and 2017, real public resources for school education increased by only 12.8%, while resources for tertiary education increased 42.1%. It is also reflected in the 2016 tax reform, which increased sources of tax revenues to finance tertiary education, while revenues to finance school education did not receive an explicit increase. In fact, contributions to school education that used to be provided by co-operatives were reduced and redirected to tertiary education (MinHacienda, 2016^[42]).

This inconsistency between set goals and resources allocated for achieving them has been exacerbated in the 2018 budget, where the resources for school education have not increased in real terms. This is not only due to the change that has occurred since 2017 in the formula used to determine the resources of the General System of Transfers (SGP) - the main source of public financing of school education - but is also due to lower growth

in public spending as a result of the economy's lower growth and efforts to comply with the country's fiscal rule (MinHacienda, 2017_[4]). Unless there is a boost to economic growth, the fiscal situation will be highly restrictive in the years to come.

In addition, compliance with national goals for the school system is further restricted by the negotiations that have been carried out by the national government and the largest teacher union (FECODE) as described in Chapters 1 and 4. These agreements have not been accompanied by an increase in financial resources from the national government. On the contrary, since the resources required to implement the agreements will come from the General System of Transfers, they reduce the amount of resources available for other programmes and expenditures beyond payroll expenses. Payroll already accounted for 93% of the total available resources before the negotiations (Villar et al., 2016_[43]) and represents a high level of inflexibility in distributing resources for education (see below).

These severe restrictions explain the difficulties observed in recent years to advance in closing gaps in educational coverage and quality, as well as in obtaining a budget that ensures the implementation of the commitments of the Peace Agreement, including a Special Rural Education Plan, solving the problems observed in recent years in the School Meal Programme, or in improving the low level of coverage of full-day schooling.

The institutional framework to ensure the continuity of education policy and the long-term sustainability of programmes is weak

Meanwhile, some of the policy initiatives are not financed with a regular budgetary framework, but rather form part of a pool of common resources, reducing their financial and operational sustainability over time as well as limiting control mechanisms, monitoring and public accountability. Many policies that should have a permanent status, lack a specialised institution or dedicated responsibility for their management and implementation, as is the case for rural education, the School Meal Programme (see below) or the *De Cero a Siempre* strategy. This criticism has also been raised by the Commission on Public Expenditure and Investment (Bernal et al., 2018_[6]).

More generally, education policy in Colombia faces a challenge of ensuring more sustainable and long-term policies in practice. As highlighted above, the National Development Plan receives high political priority at the central level, facilitates medium-term planning, and includes long-term goals beyond a single presidential term. A National 10-year Plan for Education developed with broad social participation provides a longer-term vision for education specifically. But the National Development Plan requires political approval from each government, meaning that its continuity is not necessarily assured. There is also a tendency for individual governments to implement changing programmes to further their goals for the sector, reducing the stability of programmes over time. Education policies and reforms however take time and require sustainability to have an impact on teaching and learning in classrooms (Burns and Köster, 2016_[14]). As suggested by an analysis of educational reforms in the United States, the most significant effects were seen between 8 and 14 years after the start of a reform (Borman et al., 2003_[44]).

This same lack of stability is seen in rural education policy. Despite its important achievements, the Rural Education Programme (PER) did not receive additional financing from the ministry of education after using up the two credits from the World Bank for its design, implementation, improvement and evaluation, reflecting the need for sustainable funding, long-term planning and a budgetary framework in the national budget.

Nevertheless, the natural heir of this initiative is the Special Rural Education Plan which is contemplated in the Peace Agreements analysed above.

The experience of the Rural Education Programme highlights furthermore risks of dependence on international sources of funding, both from multilateral organisations and various foundations. If not scaled up or integrated into national or local policies and practices, and financed with resources from the Colombian school system, such initiatives fail to create lasting opportunities for schools and their communities. Other sources of funding may also not always be well articulated among each other, missing opportunities to create synergies and greater impact.

Part of the problem is the lack of an institutional framework within the ministry of education that gives continuity to policies and programmes as has already been mentioned. Such an institutionalisation would also be necessary to address the specific challenges of rural education in terms of coverage, quality, pedagogical development, human resources, infrastructure, financing and territorial co-ordination. These are all issues where rural areas are more precarious than urban areas, and which must be addressed in a comprehensive and sustained manner that does not depend on temporary government programmes that may be discontinued. The Special Rural Education Plan with its model of social and inter-institutional co-operation may be the initiative that develops the necessary experience to respond to these requirements at a national level.

Multiple national policy objectives do not adequately consider estimated costs and face difficulties in solving structural problems identified in evaluations

The various instances of monitoring, auditing and control, such as the General Comptroller of the Republic, the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General or the ministry of finance, regularly provide an exhaustive evaluation of the administrative, legal and financing processes of public education as highlighted above. However, in many cases there is difficulty in initiating legal and administrative processes to resolve the structural problems identified in these instances, as has been observed in the difficulties experienced in solving the problems identified in the School Meal Programme (PAE), in the redesign of the revenue sharing mechanism SGP, or in closing the significant gaps in education between rural and urban areas.

The ministry of finance's financial impact assessment, which provides the basis for discussing new initiatives and legislation that affect the funding of public education, seems inadequate. There seems to be a lack of quality and timely information to evaluate the long-term impact of policies, which in turn affects the feasibility of new policies and programmes that demand financial resources. For example, it seems inconsistent to approve new agreements between the ministry of education and the largest union that imply additional funding from the SGP Education from 2018 onwards given that the SGP Education's resources have not increased in real terms in the 2018 budget (MinHacienda, 2017^[4]).

As a result, the legislative branch, the executive and the territorial authorities do not always have access to timely and sufficient information, which would enable them to avoid financial problems and difficulties in the implementation and future sustainability of the policies and programmes they have approved.

Moreover, although information systems in the education sector have improved and become more complex as described above (Villar et al., 2016^[43]), their quality and articulation still need to be improved considerably to support strategic decision-making

and improve the levels of transparency and inter-institutional co-ordination. This lack of transparency and co-ordination makes it difficult to adequately identify infrastructure requirements, allocate resources to the School Meal Programme (PAE), or for Secretaries of Education to distribute their budgets for the provision of education or teacher resources (MinHacienda, 2015^[45]; PGN, 2016^[46]; Sánchez, 2018^[1]). The information system on school infrastructure (SICIED), for example, did not yet provide updated information to the different levels of governance at the time of writing.

One of the difficulties is that these systems are not easily accessible to the public, although the DNP has, for instance, made progress in developing a public portal with territorial information including statistics, financial information and service provision. In addition, there is a backlog of requests for information from schools and Secretaries of Education, as this information is not automatically shared by the different databases, which implies outdated data on enrolment, coverage and infrastructure, especially in the most disadvantaged, rural and remote areas. The existence of many sources of financing for various initiatives - the School Meal Programme has six different funding sources, for example - not only generates important co-ordination problems, but also creates difficulty in oversight, as well as an overload of work in responding to the administrative requirements of each source of resources (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Important challenges remain in the implementation of the Full-Day Schooling programme, which requires monitoring and improvement

Many challenges have been identified regarding the implementation of the *Jornada Única* programme, which are not only specific to this educational policy but illustrate again the common challenges the country faces to improve the long-term planning and implementation processes of key national policies in education.

The first has to do with the sustainability of the programme since it is a policy that must be ratified by the new government in the context of a tight fiscal situation while drawing on lessons learned during the implementation of the initiative during the period 2014-18. A second important challenge is to update the guidelines for its implementation since these guidelines (estimating the classroom deficit for example) were initially developed based on existing educational provision and not on those needed to solve the current coverage problems, especially in secondary education. For example, the number of Year 11 classrooms is equivalent to only 68.7% of the Year 9 classrooms or just 39.7% of Year 5 classrooms (DNP, 2015^[28]), even though children will remain in full-day schooling during the entire educational cycle and the extension of compulsory education will mean schools require additional classrooms through to Year 11.

A third challenge is to adequately solve the financing of the programme's complementary services, such as school meals. In its current form, the Secretaries of Education are responsible for providing a lunch service only. Since the programme requires students to be at school for a longer time, students, especially the most disadvantaged, will require more than one meal to ensure proper nutrition and improve the potential contribution of the programme. This challenge is even more complex considering that it must be resolved in a context in which the School Meal Programme (PAE) is severely underfunded in most certified territorial entities.

It is also important for the ministry of education, Secretaries of Education and teacher education institutions to develop strategies for pedagogical improvement to make good use of the longer classroom time through teaching-learning processes. These challenges

are analysed in depth in Chapter 3. Otherwise, the additional hours spent in school will not necessarily imply better quality in the educational outcomes of schools and children.

As concluded by different actors during a meeting in Bogotá, not only must schools have sufficient financial resources, but they must also focus on pedagogical processes, classroom environments and local technical capacities so that the programme impacts educational quality in a positive way (Bayona and Ballén, 2017^[47]). These considerations have been established as conditions for schools to participate in the programme (MEN, 2018^[29]), which may imply that the speed of its implementation is reduced to below that initially proposed in the National Development Plan 2014-18.

If the programme does not focus on pedagogical aspects, such as the effective use of teachers' time and sufficient school leadership capacity to manage teachers' schedules, it is possible that a reform of this size will not only involve substantial public resources to finance capital costs, greater pressure on school meals and costs of maintaining the new infrastructure but could also result in postponing investments in the quality of teacher education. The implementation of full-day schooling could quickly require an increase in the number of teachers, and thus payroll expenses, to cover additional teaching hours.

Another point is that the programme's impact on the deficit of required classrooms must be monitored, since it was based on an estimate considering a number of children per classroom that is considerably higher than the current situation, with numbers expected to continue declining as the school-age population falls by about 10.5% by the year 2030.

Finally, better school infrastructure and equipment must be accompanied by a mechanism for the regular financing of maintenance and replacement costs. Since these costs are not adequately considered in the existing financing system, some districts, municipalities and schools must allocate part of the resources from the SGP Education Quality component for these expenses.

Existing financing mechanisms do not adequately consider existing inequalities as well as the context of territories, schools and students; and the complexity of current funding arrangements leads to inefficiencies

The main source of education funding has multiple territorial objectives, but meeting the objective of territorial compensation is still pending

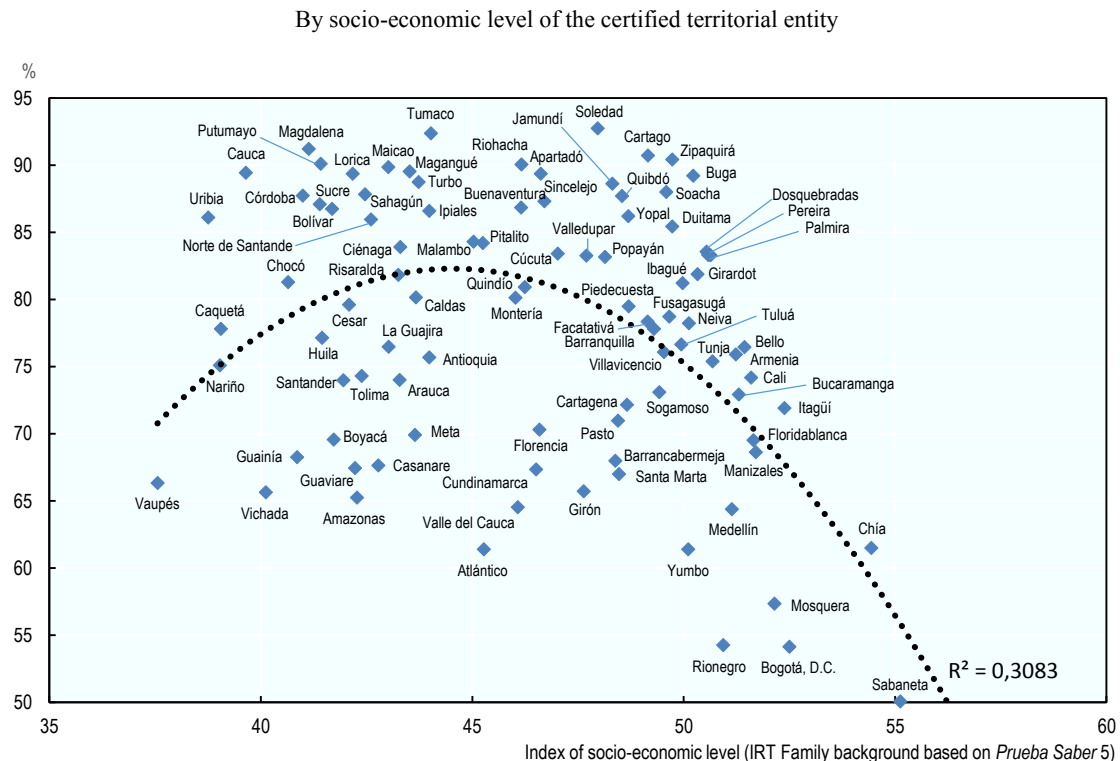
The system of sharing revenues between the central and subnational authorities, the General System of Transfers, SGP, created in 2001 and reformed in 2007, was one of the main mechanisms that helped Colombia emerge from the fiscal crisis of the late 1990s, and it contributes to multiple public finance objectives.

On the one hand, it aims to solve part of the vertical fiscal imbalance in a country where most tax collection is done by the central government. In addition, it is a tool for territorial and social compensation since it redistributes resources among departments, districts and municipalities according to their level of disadvantage. It provides funding to cover operating expenses in the poorest municipalities in the country since 11.6% of the total resources distributed through the SGP are allocated to districts and municipalities for general purposes without the specified use of funds.

However, most of the annual budget of the SGP is earmarked for financing education and health services, which receive 58.5% and 24.5% of resources respectively. In the case of education, the SGP Education is the main source of funding, as shown in Figure 2.8. For

70 of the 95 territorial entities certified to provide education in Colombia, funding from the SGP Education represented 70% or more of the total resources invested in public education in 2017, a percentage that is even higher among those Secretaries of Education serving more disadvantaged students, such as the departments of Cauca, Chocó or Magdalena, where it represents more than 80% of total funding.

Figure 2.8. Share of resources provided through the SGP Education of the total expenditure on public education, 2017



Note: The resources of the departments include the respective resources of non-certified municipalities.
Source: Data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEN), based on the Single Territorial Format (*Formato Único Territorial, FUT*) for 2017.

In only nine entities, the contribution of SGP Education was less than 65% of their total resources for education. These are the capital district Bogotá; the Atlántico and Valle del Cauca departments; the certified municipalities of Medellín, Rionegro and Sabaneta in the department of Antioquia; Chía and Mosquera in the department of Cundinamarca; and Yumbo located in the department Valle del Cauca. Most of these Secretaries of Education serve less disadvantaged students.

Despite the many objectives of the revenue sharing mechanism, neither this system nor other central government funds, with the exception of the General System of Royalties, meet the objective of providing territorial compensation based on social disadvantage and fiscal capacity in the generation of resources by municipalities and departments.

As a result, fiscal territorial asymmetries are not compensated adequately in the school system. Recent estimates of the Comptroller General for the General System of Transfers

show that its territorial distribution of funds is mainly according to student numbers, without greater compensation for the degree of social and economic disadvantage of the departments (CGR, 2017^[9]). After incorporating other sources of transfers, and the contributions made by the certified territorial entities from their own resources to complement the financing of public education, there are important gaps between different departments (Heras Recuero and Olaberría, 2018^[48]; OECD, 2016^[7]). For example, the highest spending per student is in the capital city, Bogotá, which spends almost twice as much per student as the national average, followed by the cities with the largest populations and highest standards of living, such as Cali, Manizales and Medellín.

The departments with the lowest expenditure per student are those in the Amazon region (Caquetá, Vaupés and Vichada), which are all vulnerable departments, with large rural and remote populations. This is explained because the municipalities that concentrate 20% of the population with the lowest index of unmet basic needs (INBI) account for 39.9% of tax and 42% of non-tax revenues of local governments, while those municipalities with the 20% of the population with the highest index only collect 8.2% of tax revenues and 3% of non-tax revenues (CGR, 2017^[9]).

An additional estimate for the 95 certified territorial entities with data from 2017 shows a relatively similar result to the one provided by the analysis of the Comptroller General. While the total expenditure on education per student of the certified territorial entities tends not to be linked to the level of social disadvantage of the attended population, there is a high heterogeneity among the most vulnerable departments and municipalities. For example, in Guainía and Vaupes, public spending per student is about double that of the certified municipality of Uribe or the department of Caquetá, which serve a similarly disadvantaged student population. Similarly, the certified territorial entities that provide education to less advantaged students, on average, show a high variation in per capita spending, although with a tendency for higher spending overall.

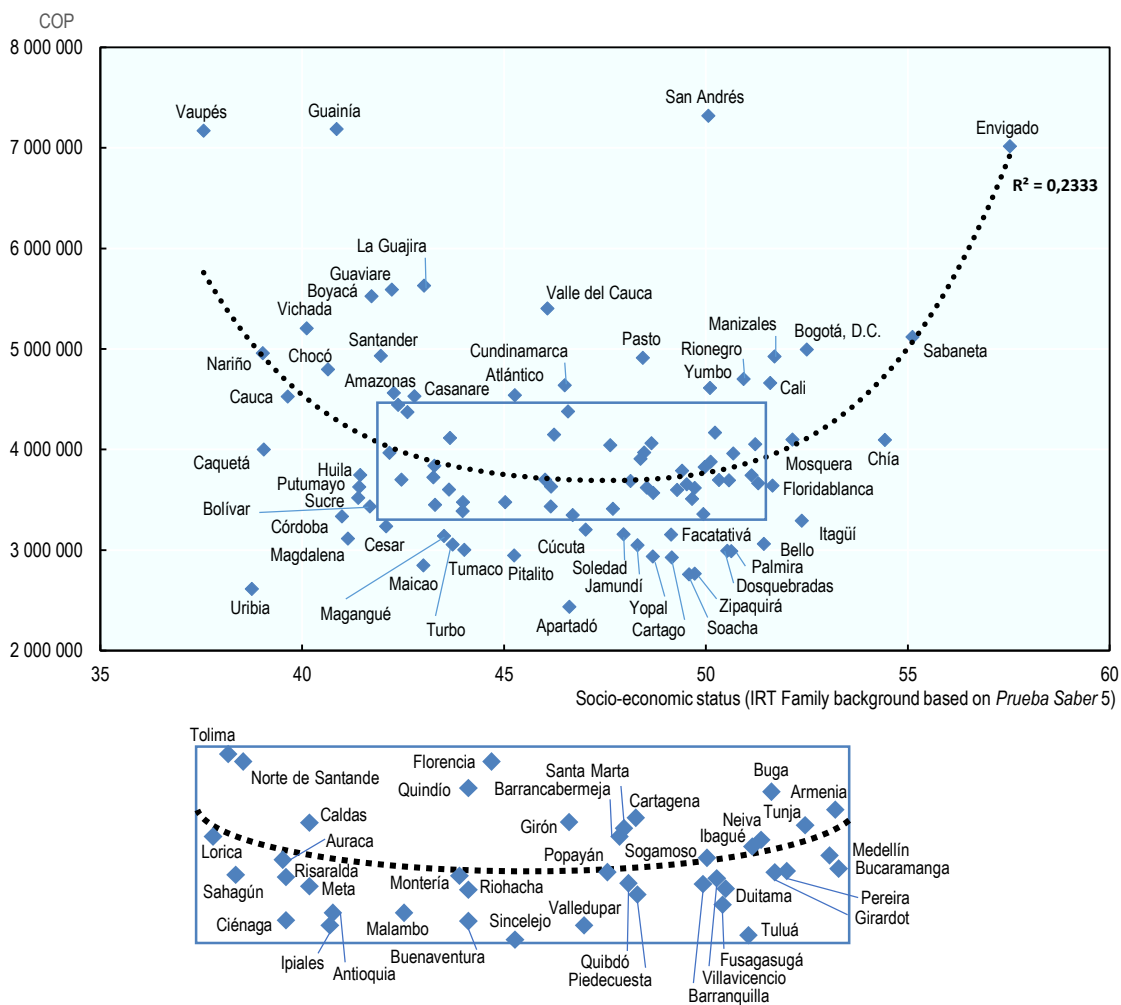
In sum, greater disadvantage does not necessarily entail a greater allocation of public resources. For example, the total spending per student in the district of Bogotá is very similar to the level observed in the departments of Chocó, Nariño or Vichada, which are among the poorest of the country (Figure 2.9).

This asymmetry is mainly due to two factors. On the one hand, the low financial capacity of the SGP Education, which effectively delivers more resources per student to the most vulnerable Secretaries of Education, but with such a small differential that, as previously noted, they have not reduced territorial gaps in the educational opportunities of Colombian children and young people. For example, students in the department of Chocó receive only 12% more than those in Cali or Manizales (see Figure 2.10). The second factor is due to the asymmetry in the contributions from the territorial entities' own resources. Only some of the certified territorial entities are able to make significant contributions to complement transfers from the central government for education.

This asymmetry of resources by territory, mainly explained by the different capacities in the generation of funds by certified territorial entities, has meant that there is no convergence over time in the educational performance of students at the municipal level, considering the average results of the school leaving examination in Year 11. However, there is a gradual convergence in educational coverage, although closing only half of the existing gap would take 17.6 years in primary and lower secondary education and 32.5 years in upper secondary (CGR, 2017^[9]).

Figure 2.9. Total expenditure per student in public education, 2017

By socio-economic level of the certified territorial entity



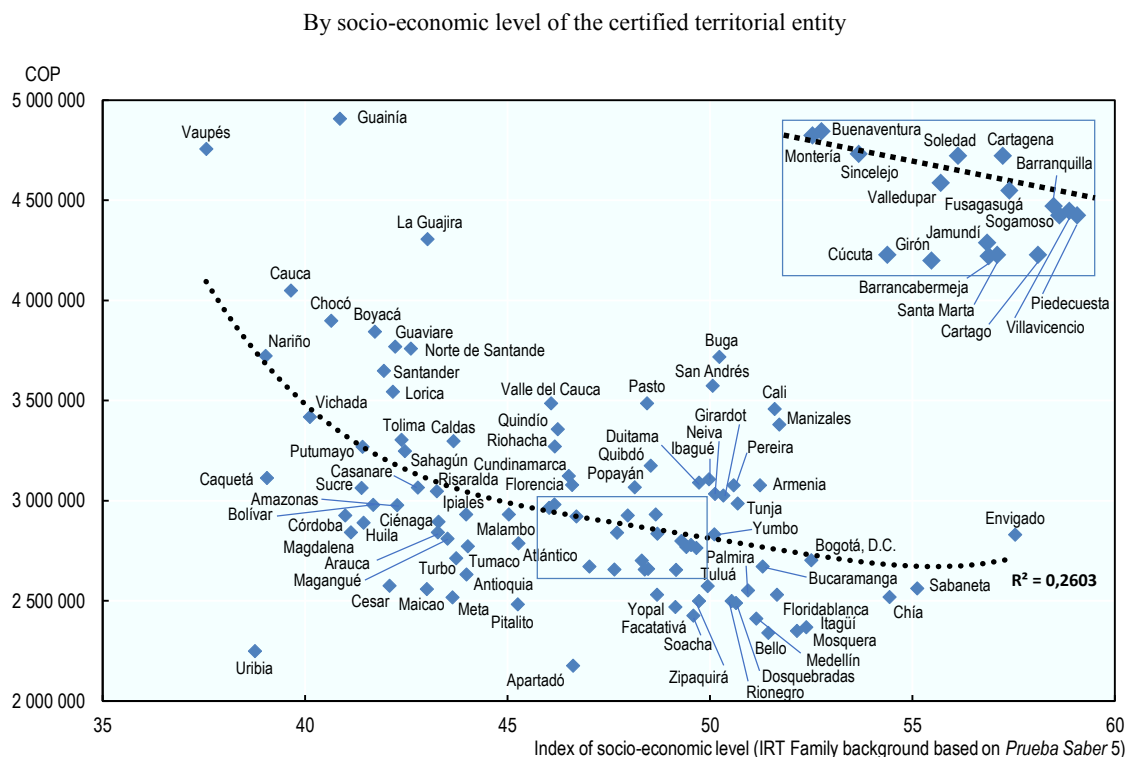
Note: The resources of the departments include the respective resources of non-certified municipalities.

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEN), based on the Single Territorial Format (*Formato Único Territorial, FUT*) for 2017.

Various national policies do not include new financing mechanisms, which is jeopardising their sustainability and increasing the level of centralisation in education policy

In recent years, the central government has promoted multiple structural reforms to improve the coverage and quality of education provision. First, the National Development Plan for 2014-18 calls for the implementation of a full school day, increasing the time that all students in public school spend in the classroom. This policy has entailed an increase of 20% in the per-student allocation of the Provision of Educational Service component of the General System of Transfers (SGP Education) to finance the operating costs of this policy. Some certified territorial entities have also used a budget surplus in resources from the SGP Education to co-finance investments in infrastructure (MEN, 2018_[29]).

Figure 2.10. Spending of the SGP Education per student, 2017



Note: The resources of the departments include the respective resources of non-certified municipalities.

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEN), based on the Single Territorial Format (*Formato Único Territorial, FUT*) for 2017.

Additionally, the ministry has promoted the inclusion of children with special educational needs and with a disability into the education system, steadily increasing the enrolment of this group of students. A further policy aims to provide education to young people in the juvenile criminal justice system, which also entails an increase in the allocation of the SGP Education's component related to educational service. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of initiatives to provide education to these groups of students.

Meanwhile, the ministry has agreed to work with Secretaries of Education to administer the School Meal Programme, facilitating the delivery of contributions from the funds of certified territorial entities for co-financing the programme. The ministry has matched the payment per child enrolled in kindergarten, the second year of pre-school, with a similar contribution to the one in the transition year, the compulsory pre-school year (DNP, 2017^[11]). Furthermore, the ministry has held negotiations with the largest teacher union to improve working conditions of teachers, with the agreement reached in 2017 set to have multi-year effects on the resources of the SGP Education (Decree 2015 of 2017).

In each of these cases, additional resources have not been included in the financial allocation for SGP Education, nor in other funding items that would provide permanent contributions for the financing of these policies. On the contrary, these initiatives, which reflect a growing degree of centralisation in educational policies, are financed with the existing resources of the SGP Education, which imposes greater budgetary demands, lower flexibility in the use of resources by the certified territorial entities, as well as an increase in the probability of future deficit situations. This problem has been exacerbated

since, in 2017, the SGP Education lost 1.8% of the resources that it had temporarily received from the central government since 2011, and its resources are now calculated based on the average growth of national income in the previous four years.

Moreover, even though the basic basket of educational provision (*canasta básica educativa*) financed by the SGP Education includes materials for students, such as textbooks, infrastructure maintenance expenses, transport and food services, these are only provided through the Provision of Services component once payroll expenses for teachers and administrative staff have been covered, which means an increasingly reduced amount of financing for these complementary services that are very important to improve access, retention and learning of students, especially the most disadvantaged.

Costs of policies and their institutional management are underestimated in determining adjustments in the distribution of the SGP resources

Despite the remaining challenges to improve coverage of early childhood, secondary and rural education, most of Colombia's main challenges are related to reducing inequality and improving the quality of public schools, which requires a stronger institutional framework and financing mechanisms that ensure progress in these objectives.

There are various challenges related to the increasing priority given by the central government to educational policies, such as the *Jornada Única* programme, and the related investments in infrastructure, human resources and school meals. Other challenges include the discussion about the expansion of the transition year to a compulsory second or third year of pre-primary education and the coverage of secondary education. The multiple objectives related to reducing educational inequality, such as closing urban-rural gaps, inclusion policies for children with special educational needs or the indigenous population, which entails an autonomous system in the design and management of their communities (SEIP), require effective financing and management to ensure that these policies offer more equal opportunities to different groups of students and territories.

For example, according to the technical teams of the ministry of education interviewed during the review team visit, the additional allocation of 20% per child to cover the higher operational cost for the implementation of full-day schooling was not based on an empirical estimate of the actual costs required, but on an estimate that would ensure the programme's financial sustainability.

A recent simulation estimates that the higher cost for teaching staff would exceed the 20% additional allocation per student (Simpson, Delgado and Trujillo, 2016_[49]). Even this estimate could be low since the authors assume that the requirements of additional teaching hours could be implemented with part-time contracts for teachers. This presents difficulties as permanent teachers in Colombia are employed on contracts of 40 hours, of which between 20 and 25 hours are allocated to classroom teaching in schools with full-day schooling depending on the level of education as ratified by the ministry and the largest teacher union in Decree 2105 of 2017. The decree also sets limits to the flexible allocation of teachers' teaching assignment by school leaders.

In the same vein, adequate costing is required for the necessary funding allocation for the inclusion of children with special educational needs, adolescents in conflict with the law and for ethnic minority students. There is also no empirical analysis of the costs required to ensure a quality education for rural students and students with socio-economic disadvantage nor for the higher cost involved in the provision of vocational upper

secondary education compared to general education. Both types of programmes currently receive the same level of funding.

At the same time, the allocation of additional resources for children with special needs creates an incentive for schools to identify children with these needs to obtain additional resources in the absence of strong protocols to diagnose special learning needs as analysed in Chapter 3. This not only risks labelling students but also an increase in costs if this allocation is not combined with rigorous monitoring and control (OECD, 2017_[22]).

There is no regular funding model for educational infrastructure in urban or rural areas and financing lacks co-ordination at the territorial level

Secretaries of Education are responsible for maintaining the infrastructure and equipment in public schools, but in most of the country, there is an investment lag of decades, which is a situation that is even more precarious in rural schools.

In 2015, it was determined that classrooms in 70% of school sites offering secondary education in urban areas were overcrowded, 41.6% did not have a library and 30.3% did not have laboratories. Although the problem of overcrowding is somewhat lower in rural school sites (55.6%), 55% of rural school sites did not have a library and about 90% did not have a laboratory (Lugo, Hernández and Colmenares, 2016_[30]).¹⁸ Even more critical is the evidence from the draft Special Rural Education Plan, which suggests that, in 2014, 80% of rural school sites did not have a connection to a gas network and 70% did not have sewerage services (MEN, 2017_[50]).

The difficulty of the public sector to resolve educational infrastructure problems is also reflected in the fact, given the lack of capacity to provide education directly in public schools, Secretaries of Education have to contract educational services by funding private providers. In urban areas, more than 330 000 students were enrolled in such government-dependent private provision in 2017 (6.1% of the total urban enrolment).¹⁹ Similarly, precarious infrastructure conditions in public schools could be part of the reason for the steady increase in independent private school enrolment without public funding between 2010 and 2017, both in rural and urban areas, together with other factors such as a growing middle class. In the same period, enrolment dropped in both rural and urban areas in public education (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

The poor state of educational infrastructure is explained, in part, by the historically low amount of funding available from the central government for investments in school infrastructure, which accounts for less than 2% of its annual expenditure in the sector. It is estimated that in the period 2010-14, these resources allowed the annual construction of only 300 new classrooms per year and that the projects financed with these resources were only implemented by a third of the country's Secretaries of Education, including the construction of so-called *megacolegios*, large schools providing education to many students, located in the largest urban areas of the country (DNP, 2015_[28]).

These resources are complemented by the contributions from the General System of Royalties (SGR), which financed its second-largest number of projects in education, after transport (2012-14). These resources, however, represent a lower amount than the funding provided directly by the ministry of education with high volatility.

The most important source of investment in public education infrastructure has been the contribution from municipalities and departments. For example, in 2013 they allocated close to COP 830 billion to co-finance educational infrastructure projects, with 60% of the resources coming from their own resources and loans, and the rest from the quality

component of the revenue sharing system SGP (DNP, 2015_[28]). This is more than twice the resources contributed by the ministry and royalties combined.

However, these resources are highly concentrated in those territorial entities with the highest enrolment and with the greatest capacity to generate their own income. For example, even though the central government was unable to implement a longer school day between 1994-2002, some municipalities with the largest resources, such as Bogotá and Cali, have implemented full-day schooling gradually on their own initiative since the 2000s. In 2019, Bogotá is expected to achieve 30% enrolment in the *Jornada Única* programme and 35% in the extended day provision (Bayona and Ballén, 2017_[47]).²⁰

In other words, there is no permanent funding for the maintenance of infrastructure and equipment of schools from the central level, despite the fact that it is considered one of the components of the basic educational basket (*canasta básica educativa*) that the General System of Transfers (SGP) must finance. In addition, prior to the *Jornada Única* programme, there was no multi-year funding programme with inter-institutional co-ordination for the maintenance, expansion or construction of new schools or school sites. In the case of departments and non-certified municipalities, these investments and expenditures must also be co-ordinated between authorities since the non-certified municipalities receive the resources from the quality component of the SGP.

The reforms of the General Royalties System (SGR) are a step in the right direction and serve as an example for the reforms to the SGP (Hernández and Herrera, 2015_[23]), but this fund is reduced in magnitude, unstable over time and does not solve the asymmetry of technical capacities between the territories to elaborate and present the projects that are required to solve the problems of the educational infrastructure.

These weaknesses are exacerbated in rural areas due to greater difficulties in developing projects that are technically feasible given that, in many cases, property rights on the land where schools need to be repaired or built are not identified. Secretaries of Education in different parts of the country may also face technical challenges in ensuring adequate temporary learning spaces for their students. As reported during the review team's visit, climatic conditions may make it difficult to use temporary structures such as containers due to heat and humidity.

Another problem in these areas is that various policies, such as the Full-Day Schooling programme, do not only include less ambitious goals for achieving general coverage in rural areas (e.g. a difference of five years for universal coverage in full-day schooling between rural and urban schools). Lastly, bidding for central infrastructure funding require territorial entities to provide a minimum of matching funding, a disadvantage for those with fewer resources.

The School Meal Programme (PAE) requires structural reform

The School Meal Programme is one of the oldest education programmes in Colombia, which complements the food that parents provide their children for school, and which seeks to improve access to and retention in education. Under Decree 1852 of 2015, the ministry of education provides co-financing to the certified territorial entities to implement the programme. In 2017, almost 6.5 million daily rations were given to disadvantaged students, of which about 800 000 were for school meals as part of the *Jornada Única* programme.

The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), which was previously responsible for the School Meal Programme, had already set the goal of achieving universal coverage of the programme (Law 1176 of 2007), starting with the most disadvantaged municipalities and giving priority to schools serving rural and indigenous communities, and those with the highest share of vulnerable population as defined by the SISBEN (levels 1 and 2). Once the provision of school meals for these groups of students would be assured, the programme would increase coverage to other students.

However, for 2016, the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General indicates that coverage still reached only 37.5% of students, considering all students in the education system and not only the most disadvantaged (PGN, 2016_[46]). In addition, there is lower coverage among the poorest parts of the country (La Guajira, Magdalena or Santa Marta) since the programme does not consider that it is children's right to access the school system, nor does it compensate students in poor areas (CGR, 2017_[51]).

The programme is funded by resources from many sources (making up a joint bag of resources) shared by multiple public authorities. This includes the general national budget, the General System of Transfers, the General System of Royalties, *Contratos Plan*, the territorial entities own resources, as well as other additional sources. This creates different timeframes for planning, decision-making, execution and regulation, and requires complex models of co-ordination, monitoring and control which entail a high level of administrative and technical difficulty.

The greater fiscal restrictions facing the central government in recent years are reflected in the fact that the resources allocated to the programme have only increased slightly in real terms, from COP 770 billion in 2010 to an estimated COP 820 billion in 2017, according to ministry data. Half of the programmes' budget is financed from other sources. In 2016, the ministry of education's contribution to directly finance the programme was reduced by 50%, although in 2017 it increased again. This reflects an enormous instability in the sustainability of the programme. Given the need for greater coverage of school meals, and the restriction of ministry resources for the programme, the increased demand for resources from the certified territorial entities has made it more pressing to reform the programme. Some departments have even threatened to return shared management to the ministry.

However, the most significant challenges of the programme do not only stem from the insufficient resources transferred from the central government to the territorial entities, certified or not, and the difficulty of co-ordinating the diverse sources of financing. They are also related to problems of governability, management, lack of transparency and corruption (CGR, 2017_[51]; PGN, 2016_[46]), although the ministry of education provides training to the Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities in different aspects of the programme (e.g. operational, financial, judicial), as well as to school communities to exercise social oversight at a local level.

The Comptroller General establishes three factors as the structural causes of this situation: i) inefficient control by the ministry of education since neither the ministry nor the territorial entities have indicators to monitor compliance with the programme's objectives, nor do they have a reliable information system; ii) the lack of government co-ordination, especially among municipalities and departments, showing that certified territorial entities are not able to adequately co-ordinate sources of financing to manage contractual processes or provide quality services; and iii) insufficient training of the territorial entities in the management of the common pool of resources – composed by the

multiple sources of financing – or in the general administration of the programme, from the pre-contractual process to the meal contract (CGR, 2017_[51]).

In order to improve the control and monitoring of the programme, the Comptroller General has worked closely with communities to strengthen local accountability, organising 49 *veedurías* (local oversight committees) in 24 municipalities of 10 departments, training thousands of citizens and providing a tool so that the *veedurías* can detect problems in the provision of the service (CGR, 2016_[52]). This process has shown that problems in the administration of the programme are in fact widespread.

Moreover, reports by the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General on the School Meal Programme indicate that it fails to meet its nutritional goal, since it does not ensure that minimum standards are met; it does not take a rights-based approach, but only provides social assistance; and there are no guidelines for contracting providers, complicating control. Similarly, multiple financial and management problems were detected, which have not been resolved over time (PGN, 2016_[46]).

For example, there are no resources to carry out follow-up studies, resources are lacking to expand programme coverage, the value of the food serving defined by the Secretaries of Education is insufficient to cover the technical and nutritional requirements, no cost differences are considered for urban and rural areas, and private providers are hired that repeatedly fail to provide an adequate service. The prosecutor general also identified management problems in the ministry of education to adequately monitor all the financial, technical, administrative and operational aspects

Finally, despite the minimum conditions defined by the ministry of education for the school meal provision required for the implementation of the Full-Day Schooling programme in a new school, the technical difficulties in provision significantly affect the viability of the *Jornada Única* programme. Due to the high budgetary restrictions of the School Meal Programme, it has been agreed that the operation of full-day schooling will only require ensuring the provision of lunch for each student – representing 30% of students' daily nutrition. However, this does not imply that it should be financed by the School Meal Programme as it is assumed that many families could provide lunch.

This condition seems insufficient for children of 5-17 years to attend a long day at school, especially for the most disadvantaged children, who may not have the minimum resources to ensure their right to adequate nutrition and health. As a result, securing financing for this component of the *Jornada Única* programme, as well as financing the increase in teaching hours, have been defined as two important restrictions to expand coverage of full-day schooling in 2018 (MEN, 2018_[29]).

There are few incentives for territorial entities to improve the quality of education

In addition to the lack of compensatory resources for the most disadvantaged territories, schools and students, the current financing system offers few incentives aimed at improving the quality of provision. The existing incentives, on the other hand, have not been evaluated in terms of the fulfilment of their objectives.

Currently, there are two components in the part of the General System of Transfers dedicated to education which are related to quality: Enrolment and Free Education. However, only the first one recognises efforts to improve performance in educational management by granting territorial entities more flexibility in spending their resources. The second component, Free Education, grants greater autonomy to each school in implementing its educational project and provides resources to guarantee free education.

The Quality- Enrolment sub-component is nevertheless small since it is equivalent to only 4% of the total resources of the SGP Education. Although it allows a fairly flexible use, with the exception of financing the payroll of educational staff, it is transferred to certified and non-certified districts and municipalities. This seems inconsistent since non-certified districts and municipalities are not responsible for the improvement of the quality of the schools in their respective departments. The Secretaries of Education of the respective departments (with the exception of Amazonas, Guainía and Vaupés), on the other hand, do not receive resources for this component.

This represents a missed opportunity to incentivise improvements in their financial management, the professional development of their teachers, ensure territorial co-ordination and improve the quality of education. These Secretaries of Education, however, serve the most disadvantaged students in the country and receive about half of the resources of the operating component of the SGP. As with the allocation for the Provision of Services component, the higher cost in the provision of rural education is not fully recognised since the additional contribution for this attribute amounts to only 10%.

Providing incentives to improve the quality of education management seems to be a low priority, which also reflects the increasing fiscal constraints. The allocation of resources for the component for the Provision of Services of SGP Education in 2017 did not consider quality and efficiency as one variable to determine the allocation (DNP, 2017^[11]). Unlike in previous years when this contribution was allocated to all the certified territorial entities, including departments, these resources have been allocated to assure the financing of the regular payroll of the teaching staff. This quality component within the SGP bag for Provision of Services was considerable, accounting for 14% of all resources allocated to the SGP Education in 2015 (Villar et al., 2016^[43]). This was more than double the resources for Quality-Free Education and Quality-Enrolment combined.

However, most of the variables used to distribute the resources for quality in the Provision of Service component put the most disadvantaged and rural Secretaries of Education at a disadvantage: six of them are linked to the average performance of each certified territorial entity, and three related to their improvement. This represents a lost opportunity to improve the performance of these certified territorial entities where efforts to improve coverage, decrease repetition and increase retention should have a greater impact in rural and disadvantaged areas.

As it stands, 70% of the indicators were linked to concrete achievements, where the most vulnerable Secretaries of Education systematically present a more precarious structural condition. This shows that the allocation of these resources was not adequately designed. Again, the distribution of resources did not consider an adjustment for the conditions of the territories, especially regarding disadvantage and rurality, nor had the resource allocation been evaluated in terms of achieving its objective.

The General System of Transfers (SGP) generates disincentives for Secretaries of Education in the efficient use and management of their resources

The distribution of the SGP Provision of Service component is based on a specific model for each certified territorial entity, which combines enrolment with the effective payroll costs. This generates incentives to maintain a permanent number of teaching staff since efforts to adjust their number of staff made by each Secretary of Education do not result in a greater degree of freedom in the use of available resources.

In addition, the Resource supplement sub-component within the Provision of Service component, which represented almost 5% of the total of the SGP Education in 2016 (DNP, 2016_[53]), ensures the payment of the payroll for teaching staff in case of a deficit. This reduces the efforts of the Secretaries of Education to maintain a balanced fiscal situation.

Regular changes to the formula to distribute resources of the SGP Education, both in its Provision of Service and Quality components, also affect financial management in education. These regular modifications reduce the predictability of available resources as well as the interest in improving the efficiency of provision within the framework of a multi-year work plan. They furthermore limit objective of ensuring the financing of the payroll of the teaching staff, especially in those Secretaries of Education with fewer resources.

Lastly, an important indicator of efficiency in financial management is the total expenditure of resources available during the fiscal year, which promotes the execution of all annual resources, instead of encouraging the generation of multi-year and more strategic planning of available resources (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Greater flexibility is required for the management of teaching staff that make up the bulk of funding allocated to public education

Although Colombia's capital expenditure in school education is quite similar to the OECD average, with 7% of the total expenditure on primary and secondary education, which is somewhat lower if we consider all pre-tertiary education (see Table 2.6), spending on teachers concentrates a high percentage of total spending as well as current expenditure in education. This situation is even more pronounced in public education where 84% of current expenditure goes to teacher's compensation (OECD, 2017_[2]).

This high share of teachers' salaries in the total spending is expected in a sector like education, which requires a high number of teaching professionals. But spending on teaching staff as a proportion of the total cost is higher in Colombia than in the 28 other countries with comparable information for the OECD *Education at a Glance 2017*, and considerably exceeds the average for OECD countries, which reaches 62% (Table 2.7).

This situation implies a high level of inflexibility in the financial management of public education. Although a relatively large share of teachers is employed on fixed-term contracts, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas as analysed in Chapter 4, teachers are usually full-time permanent staff. This implies not only permanent costs over time, but also affects the resources required for education considering agreements reached by the largest teacher union (FECODE) and the national government on better working conditions (Simpson, Delgado and Trujillo, 2016_[49]). Moreover, the teacher labour market is segmented across territorial entities and permanent teaching staff are often not willing to work in rural areas, which leads to inefficiencies through the contracting and funding of private providers or teachers on short-term contracts.

The high share of teacher salaries as total expenditure not only imposes a high level of pressure on the permanent increase of new resources for education, but it also reduces the possibility of hiring other pedagogical support and technical staff to support teaching and learning in schools and in the administration of Secretaries of Education. As analysed in Chapter 3 and as shown in review team's visits to schools and Secretaries of Education, Colombia faces a significant shortage of other types of professionals. This is also evident

in Table 2.7, with Colombia only allocating half of the total current expenditure to the compensation of other staff compared to the OECD average.

Table 2.6. Share of current expenditure in total expenditure in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education		
	Public	Private
Colombia (1,2)	94	88
Argentina	92	..
Brazil	94	..
Mexico	98	..
Portugal	98	92
Spain	97	94
OECD average	92	91

1. Some levels of education are included with others.
 2. Year of reference is 2015.
- .. : Missing data.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Table B6.3.

Table 2.7. Compensation of staff as a percentage of current expenditure in Colombia and selected countries, 2014

Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education						
	Teachers		Other staff		Total staff	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Colombia (1,2)	84	78	8	4	92	81
Argentina	70	..	23	..	93	..
Brazil	73	..
Mexico	80	..	12	..	92	..
Portugal	80	54	13	9	93	63
Spain	73	69	10	8	83	77
OECD average	62	56	15	15	79	72

1. Some levels of education are included with others.
 2. Year of reference is 2015.
- .. : Missing data.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Table B6.3.

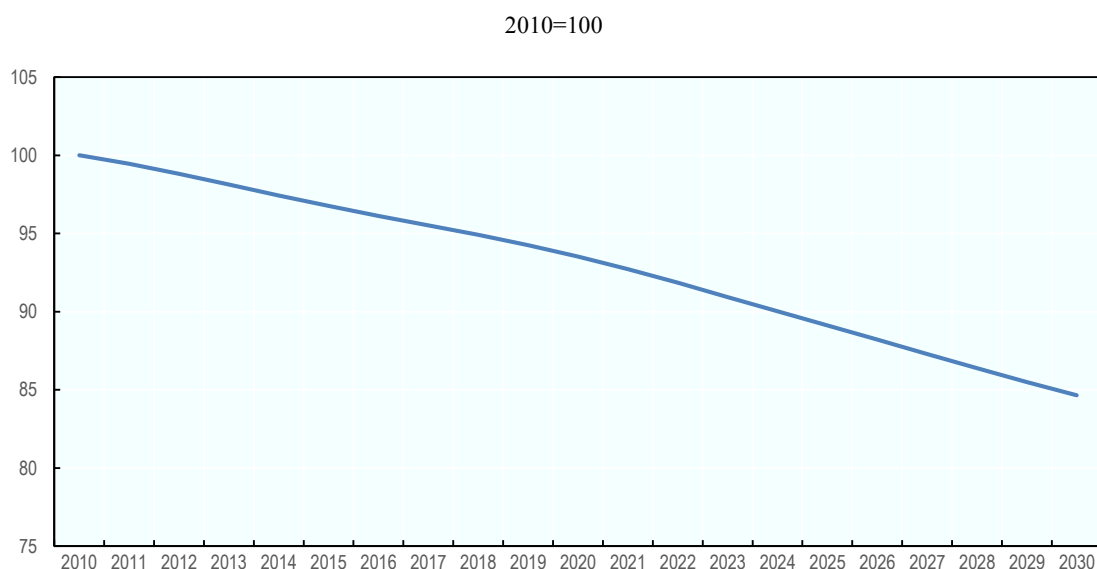
The high share of teacher salaries as part of education spending furthermore implies great difficulty to include more resources for complementary services to improve the conditions for students, such as health and nutrition, continuing professional development, psychosocial support for students or cultural activities, all essential for a quality education, as is also analysed in Chapter 3.

This situation is replicated in financial management at the school level. Although Secretaries of Education and non-certified municipalities have theoretically large degree of discretion in the distribution of resources between the schools (and school sites) under their charge, they have little flexibility in practice since most of these funds finance the salaries of the teaching staff. Secretaries of Education have a low influence on this

component and, in the absence of any considerable increase in official student enrolment, this expenditure will remain over time.

In this context, the demographic transition that Colombia is undergoing, which implies a reduction of the school-age population of 10.5% between 2018-30 (Figure 2.11), requires greater flexibility in the management of teaching staff. Otherwise, instead of being an opportunity to reallocate resources to territories with less educational coverage and additional teaching staff to disadvantaged schools and students, this transition will only entail a reduction in average classroom size without altering the existing territorial asymmetries or the degree of flexibility in educational financing.

Figure 2.11. Projection of the school-age population in Colombia



Note: School-age population refers to 5-19 year-olds.

Source: DANE (2018), Proyecciones de Población [Population Projections], <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/proyecciones-de-poblacion>.

In the same vein, the future reduction of school enrolment may imply a deficit situation in the certified territorial entities if the model of per capita funding is maintained. Teachers cannot be easily distributed between classes and schools. A reduction in enrolment may, therefore, imply an asymmetric reduction in class sizes and schools without a major reduction in costs.

Inequalities between schools and lack of transparency in the allocation of resources

There is also a strong structural inequality between schools in the financing of education, and there is a lack of adequate information on the amount of resources that are allocated to each school in order to analyse the social and territorial inequality in the distribution of resources and to estimate public spending per student (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

The typology for the distribution of Provision of Service resources for education of the General System of Transfers (SGP Education) is different for each certified territorial entity, based on the specific cost of their respective teacher payroll, defined by the type of qualification, experience and evaluation. A teacher with a master's degree receives a

salary that is double that of a teacher with a qualification of a higher teaching school (*Escuela Normal Superior*, ENS) when they have the same evaluation in the promotion system, not taking into account the degree of disadvantage of the children they teach.

As a result, those certified territorial entities, schools within territories and even sites within school clusters with more qualified teachers, will receive many more resources on a regular basis. Teachers with higher qualifications are not randomly distributed among different parts of the country as analysed in Chapter 4, implying again a lower investment per student in the most vulnerable, rural and isolated territories. The current design of the career structure, but also working conditions and professional environments do not motivate more qualified teachers to settle in the places where they are most needed. The organisation of schools into school clusters, with schools having a different number of sites at a different distance from the main site, also does not seem to be sufficiently taken into account in the distribution of resources at the local level, as analysed in Chapter 3.

Policy recommendations

Address the challenge of increasing public resources allocated to the school system in a more restrictive fiscal context and strengthen conditions for greater continuity in education policy

During the last few years, the ministry of education has incorporated additional reforms to universal free education, such as the *Jornada Única* programme, attention to special groups such as children with special needs and adolescents in conflict with the law. It has, at the same time, negotiated two agreements with the largest teacher union to improve teachers' working conditions. All these goals and commitment have been made using the same General System of Transfers resources and even with a reduction of these resources as a result of the change of the annual adjustment of the SGP resources since 2017.

This has led to complex fiscal situations in several certified territorial entities, and projected deficits in the future. As a consequence, it will be financially difficult to meet the objectives and address the challenges set out by the authorities without increasing the amount of financial resources available for education.

This complex financial situation is only exacerbated when considering efforts to improve coverage, especially at the levels of early childhood education and upper secondary education, but also access to tertiary education for disadvantaged students, and the objective of closing gaps between rural and urban areas. In addition, Colombia is likely to face a more restrictive fiscal situation for the next few years due to its effort to reduce the country's structural deficit.

Therefore, the challenge for the coming years will be to reconcile the allocation of sufficient resources with efforts to gradually move towards closing the gaps in educational coverage and quality that still persist in the country. This should entail the identification of priorities and long-term goals that are feasible to achieve in a restrictive fiscal scenario and with increasing financial demands including in tertiary education. This also requires adequate costing of initiatives and evidence of their effects.

Authorities should furthermore reconsider the allocation of limited available resources to different levels of education. As analysed above, early childhood and school education have competed for limited funds with tertiary education, with a reallocation of funding to tertiary education. Investments should prioritise early years given the higher returns at this level and the potential for equalising opportunities for children from disadvantaged

backgrounds (see Box 2.1). For policy recommendations and options to improve the funding of tertiary education, see OECD (2016^[7]) and OECD/IBRD/The World Bank (2013^[54]).

Colombia must strengthen the institutional and budgetary frameworks at the level of the ministry of education as well as the Secretaries of Education to ensure greater continuity and sustainability of education policy. This would create greater stability for the school system, including individual schools and teachers, to improve teaching and learning and enable policies to have a greater impact over time. For instance, in the country's efforts to close rural-urban gaps in education, the ministry should establish a unit dedicated to leading these efforts. This unit should evaluate rural policies and programmes, such as the Special Rural Education Plan, to advance rapidly and expand the programme beyond the 170 rural communities targeted at the beginning of the programme.

Existing planning mechanisms, such as the National Development Plans, and the National 10-year Plans for Education should be used to promote a more sustainable policy and shared vision for education. The government should re-establish the national education board with its technical secretariat as well as subnational education boards.²¹ These advisory boards have the potential to significantly contribute to greater continuity, social participation, and co-ordination across levels of governance

Opportunities for improving and modernising the management and financing of programmes as well as the funding mechanisms should also be identified. This includes greater inter-institutional co-ordination at the territorial level and commitment from territorial entities to improve their technical and management capacities in education.

The following proposals should be part of steps to address this challenge:

Increase total public resources for school education

It is essential to increase the total public resources available for school education, especially in those areas related to the challenges raised previously. The amount of resources allocated to the school system has been falling in recent years and is currently below the level of other countries in the region and the OECD. This additional financing should draw on a range of funding mechanisms, especially considering the financial constraints in the coming years, as noted above.

Given that financing efforts should be permanent, consideration should be given to a tax reform that facilitates the collection of greater resources both at the national and subnational levels. This should identify specific tax revenues in the departments, which can be assigned to the school system and were not considered in the tax reform of 2016, and which in fact reduced the amount of resources allocated to school education.

Consider horizontal equalisation mechanisms for the funding of school education

The high level of fiscal asymmetry, both between departments and municipalities, and within these entities, should involve the discussion of horizontal equalisation mechanisms for the financing of public education.

The experience of Brazil with the operation of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Teaching Assessment (FUNDEF) can be a reference for this discussion. The FUNDEF came into force in 1998 and was subsequently revised in 2007 in the form of the Maintenance and Development Fund for Basic Education (FUNDEB). All levels of government contribute resources to this fund

for redistribution to improve the quality and general conditions of public education. In the analysis of Alcázar and Lovatón (2005_[55]), the system led to a more equitable territorial distribution of resources, and improvements in quality, coverage and teachers' working conditions (see also Morduchowicz (2010_[56])).

The Chilean experience of the Common Municipalities Fund (FCM) is another example, although it is not specifically linked to education. The FCM is financed with part of the taxes and fees charged by the municipalities, due to the extreme territorial concentration of these resources, and with contributions from the central government, redistributing them in such a way as to reduce basic horizontal inequality among all municipalities.

Box 2.1. Increasing resources for early childhood education and care

The OECD report on education in Colombia (2016_[71]) has shown the enormous challenge that the public sector faces to increase the resources allocated to early childhood education and to improve the quality of provision. In the context of important financial constraints and multiple, simultaneous educational policy challenges, it seems reasonable that proposals to extend the current coverage of pre-primary education from one year (transition year) to three should not be contemplated in the short term, as this would accentuate the problems of insufficient resources in the SGP to respond to current requirements. On the contrary, it seems reasonable that the increase in resources and coverage of this level come mainly from inter-institutional agreements to improve programs and coverage in rural areas and encourage the effort of local governments for greater investment with their own resources in early childhood education, and also through alliances with the private sector. Many OECD countries have responded to the need for more public funding through government partnerships with the private sector and with non-governmental organisations. In parallel, it is possible to advance in determining the cost to ensure a higher quality of provision in the transition year, as well as providing an incentive for the *Jornada Única* programme in the provision of infrastructure and equipment in the new facilities for early childhood education, developing pilot initiatives that could be tested and scaled up in the medium term. At the same time, it is important to ensure an articulation of provision between authorities responsible for school education (ministry of education and Secretaries of Education) and early childhood education and care provided through modalities managed by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), with the goal of ensuring an efficient use of resources to improve coverage and quality. This concerns in particular provision for 3-5 year-olds, who can attend early childhood provision or pre-school education.

Resolve the asymmetry between the centralisation of educational policy and the lack of resources for local financing and implementation

A third important reform refers to the legal guarantee that policies approved by the central government and that permanently affect the cost of public education must be properly financed with additional resources from the central government. This legislative agreement should make it possible to separate the lack of fiscal responsibility of the central government for the educational policies that it approves, but that must be implemented and executed financially by the Secretaries of Education at a regional and local level. This would also help to recognise priorities regarding the level of national

economic development since the source of resources should respond to the type of expense agreed. For example, if they are remuneration expenses, they should be considered in the SGP, while expenses for infrastructure or school meals should depend on specific funds for these programmes.

Develop institutional capacities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system

The technical capacities of the Secretaries of Education are highly asymmetrical, and greater financial resources do not necessarily ensure an improvement in the effectiveness and equity of children's opportunities. Mismanagement, corruption and the lack of complementary policies to support local capacity to improve schooling prevent the effective use of additional funds to improve performance (OECD, 2017^[22]). Going back to the example of Brazil's experience with revenue sharing through FUNDEF, hampered by pervasive leakage, diversion of funds and misreporting despite its achievements, highlights the need for co-ordinated auditing and monitoring (UNESCO, 2017^[57]).

In Colombia, it seems essential to move towards better quality assurance and capacity development, especially for the Secretaries of Education, and to strengthen existing processes within the ministry of education and the ministry of finance. As was the review team's impression during its visit, for example, corrective measures such as the temporary suspension of responsibilities for education did not sufficiently work on the development of local capacities so that certified territorial entities can regain control under better conditions, avoiding corrective measures in the future.

The number of Secretaries of Education is small, and Secretaries could increase their effectiveness considerably through regular and sufficiently-funded strategies to strengthen their capacity, as well as the sharing of best management practices as elaborated in Chapter 3. Better quality assurance and capacity development should also consider a regular recertification system for the municipalities and the creation of incentive mechanisms for Secretaries of Education to improve management quality.

This approach should be based on the most critical aspects identified during this report: the need for up-to-date and coherent information systems; the design of mechanisms to provide technical-pedagogical to schools; the responsible management of the main educational programmes, such as the School Meal Programme (PAE); and further progress in the goals of coverage, quality and equality.

Moving towards a reform of the General System of Transfers

There is a fairly broad agreement that the General System of Transfers (SGP) should be modified considerably, in order to make it more equitable and improve incentives for efficiency and quality. Villar et al. (2016^[43]) carried out a comprehensive review of various national and international studies on the main funding mechanism of public education, as well as drafting a proposal that seeks to link the problems identified with the international experience of comparable transfer systems.

The national debate regarding the reform of the SGP is unavoidable and the review team shares some elements that could be valuable in this discussion.

Rethinking the permanent fiscal adjustment system

The current system of permanent readjustment, which is linked to the lagged average of the nation's expenditure, seems inadequate, since it entails a dynamic mismatch between

the income and expenditure of the education sector, as mainly required for teachers' payroll. The most appropriate rule, therefore, seems to be an annual readjustment based on at least two additional conditions: i) the inclusion of complementary resources that the central government should commit to implementing approved programmes or additional policies, which require additional and regular financial resources; and ii) a readjustment similar to the average agreed by the central government with the teacher union and approved annually in the respective budget law.

Rethinking the main components for the financing of education

It seems reasonable that the transfer mechanism should contain four main components for financing education: i) financing the regular teacher payroll; ii) financing of the operation of the rest of the education basket (*canasta educativa*); iii) a compensatory fund for greater disadvantage; and iv) the direct transfer of resources to schools.

These components, and the basis for allocating their resources, should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are in line with political needs (which may change) and to reflect evolutions in data systems. In the design of the components, a balance must be reached between simple formulas, which would not reflect the different needs with total precision, and complex formulas that would be difficult to understand. The selection of indicators for the allocation of resources should be based on i) data that cannot be manipulated at the level of the territories or schools to ensure integrity in the allocation of funds; and ii) studies and evidence of costs and use of funds for the elements that they are intended to finance (OECD, 2017_[22]).

A **first component** should ensure the financing of the regular teacher payroll of the Secretaries of Education, an effort that has been reflected in recent years in the SGP distribution mechanism. However, this mechanism must be adjusted so as not to exacerbate inequalities between the different certified territorial entities. This component provides more resources to those that have more qualified teachers, to the detriment of those in rural and remote areas with a greater disadvantage, which concentrate less qualified teachers and with lower salaries.

Therefore, incentives should be generated for the Secretaries of Education to improve the management of their teaching staff, not losing the resources generated by greater efficiencies in the allocation of their teachers. Likewise, more effective incentives should be created to attract and retain more qualified teachers in the most vulnerable areas. Greater flexibility in the management of the teaching profession by the Secretaries of Education is also needed in order to resolve asymmetries between the need to quickly adapt staffing to changes in enrolment and the availability of resources. Chapter 4 discusses these issues in depth and provides proposals.

A **second component** should be for financing the operation of the rest of the education basket (*canasta educativa*). This component should be estimated based on reliable data and distributed on a per-student basis that is adjusted for the socio-economic background of the students and differences between regions and territories, especially to reflect the different costs of a quality education in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas, which are scarcely considered at present.

The design of this component should also include a reflection on the purpose of this financing and the distribution of responsibilities. The current component that covers the financing of the rest of the education basket, the Quality-Enrolment sub-component, is delivered to both certified and non-certified districts and municipalities, which seems

incoherent since the latter are not responsible for improving the quality of schools in their respective department. It also complicates accountability for fulfilling assigned responsibilities.

Consequently, the allocation of this second component to all the certified territorial entities, including the departments which serve the most disadvantaged groups of students in the country and receive about half of the resources of the operating component of the SGP (Provision of Educational Service), should create the opportunity for these education authorities to improve their financial management, professional learning of teachers, territorial co-ordination and quality of education. However, this does not imply that the non-certified municipalities should be excluded from educational management, rather their role should be rethought.

A **third component** should be a compensatory fund because of the greater disadvantage of students in certain areas. If this adjustment is not considered, it will be impossible to converge in the educational opportunities of students throughout the country, since a quality education has different costs among more or less disadvantaged students. The experience of the Netherlands (Ladd and Fiske, 2011^[58]) or of the Preferential School Subsidy (SEP) in Chile can serve as a reference for its design in Colombia.

This compensatory fund based on disadvantage could also consider the provision of additional resources for the integration of students with special needs, especially for minor or transitory special needs, such as language impairments. This would reduce the incentive for the excessive labelling of children as students with special needs (OECD, 2017^[22]). At the same time, the ministry of education, the Secretaries of Education and the school communities (e.g. the school directive councils) should monitor the use of resources to respond to the needs of these children.

Isolated actions helping certain students will not have an important impact on the educational opportunities of this group of children. To respond to severe special needs, a specific programme should be developed that includes learning strategies in its design and implementation. This strategy should estimate the real cost of delivering a quality education, including the difference between the care of children with permanent and transitory special needs (OECD, 2017^[22]).

A **fourth component** should be that, beyond the Quality-Free Education sub-component, the transfer of resources to schools should ensure their equitable distribution. These resources could be partially distributed to the schools and the Secretaries of Education in such a way as to ensure the co-ordination of multi-year educational improvement strategies and not only the financing of specific actions.

This component could provide an incentive for schools that show progress in reducing inequality during a period of time, which could be delivered as a salary bonus to the group of teachers and school leaders, and/or to the financing of a relevant project for the improvement of the pedagogical activities of the students. Unlike the current incentives considered in the Quality component, these incentives should be based on comparisons between groups of relatively similar schools. At present, they have a high bias towards urban areas and authorities with better performance independent of the socio-economic conditions of their students.

An additional proposed change is related to the allocation to rural schools, especially smaller and more remote schools or school clusters with a large number of rural school sites. These schools should receive fixed funds for their operation in such a way that they count with a minimum level of resources to provide education. This could be calculated

by each school so that the school has enough resources for supervision, collaborative work and support for specialists to visit the schools so as not to jeopardise the educational opportunities of its students. This additional resource would recognise that not all costs are linear. At the same time, it would maintain incentives for efficient organisation of the school network for most schools (OECD, 2017_[22]). Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion of the organisation of schools into school clusters and provides proposals for a more effective organisation of clusters.

Simplify the financing mechanisms for functions of education provision that are complementary but strategic for provision

During recent years, the central government, with the support of the Secretaries of Education, has proposed to advance in multiple objectives and programmes of high impact to deliver a better quality, more equitable education. However, some of these initiatives have been previously developed in the most advantaged territorial entities of the country, implying that they cannot be replicated throughout the rest of the country in a limited period of time. As a consequence, these programmes must be prioritised since many of them have a high cost and only a sustained process of economic growth in the country will facilitate their gradual implementation.

In this context, it seems reasonable to identify some national policies that should be managed gradually throughout the territory and be designed using a management model that facilitates efficient management, transparency in the use of resources and the generation of lessons learned for replication and adaptation over time, as well as placing a high priority on the fairness of its territorial distribution between schools and students.

Several initiatives have been identified that should operate within the framework of specific programmes managed by the ministry of education and should count with a regular annual budget. It should be possible to replicate these initiatives for financing and implementation in the different Secretaries of Education. Secretaries of Education should allocate the resources transferred from the ministry on an annual basis and may or may not complement their operation with additional budgetary resources. In other words, as suggested by the Commission on Public Spending and Investment, these initiatives should be regular programmes with a dedicated budget and technical teams, which facilitate the definition of coverage goals, accountability, mechanisms for evaluating results and management in each of the certified territorial entity that implements these initiatives (Bernal et al., 2018_[6]).

These programmes should be 1) the School Meal Programme, and 2) transport, boarding schools and educational materials. Specific proposals have been identified for the Full-Day Schooling and infrastructure programmes further below.

1) School Meal Programme

Previously, the chapter described the multiple challenges that this programme faces, especially in aspects of financial and administrative management, capacity building and inter-institutional co-ordination. The programme should become the responsibility of the ministry of education and actioned by the Secretaries of Education, excluding non-certified municipalities (the programme will be the responsibility of the certified territorial entity). In this context, the annual budget of the programme will define the national resources contributed by the ministry of education. The budget of each certified territorial entity will determine the available resources it has in its territory to allocate to the programme.

The improved management of the programme faces multiple additional challenges, but this organisation should allow its structural improvement, allowing the amount of each food serving to be differentiated by region and the Secretaries of Education to include their own resources in the budget, defining coverage goals and strategies, as well as plans for the coverage by each municipality that can be monitored by the territorial entities.

This programme should also oversee the construction, equipment, maintenance and management of facilities and canteens in each school, which should be included in the programme's budget to solve problems in its implementation.

2) Transport, boarding schools and educational materials

Based on the visits made for this report, it can be concluded that these complementary services, which are highly important to ensure the right to education, as well as minimum quality standards, are offered in a differentiated manner due to the availability of resources of each Secretary of Education.

Given its strategic nature, the ministry of education should fund a programme in each certified entity, which includes annual actions to advance in the expansion of these services in the medium term for the entire public education system. Proposals for school transportation, boarding schools and pedagogical materials can also be found with respect to the provision of education in Chapter 3.

Ensure adequate resources and financial sustainability for the Jornada Única programme, prioritising disadvantaged and rural areas for the further implementation of the programme

This programme entails substantial resources for its implementation, especially in infrastructure and equipment, although it also requires additional resources for operational expenses, linked to additional staff - teachers and non-teachers. Further resources are required for implementation, such as the adequate provision of school meals and the professional development of teachers and school leaders.

The first challenge with respect to the programme is to determine the real costs of its implementation, beyond the identification of investment and equipment costs, which is currently the most advanced aspect. In this regard, it is urgent to determine the effective operating costs, especially linked to greater allocation of teaching hours, and other professionals and staff, since part of the extension of time at school will not involve more hours of academic instruction. An additional 20% contribution was defined in relation to spending per child in a full school day. The experience for Chile, for instance, implied that the additional contribution per student was increased by 35%.

In addition, it is essential to estimate the costs of school meals and transport services so that the full school day can be adequately implemented. These services are currently required for implementation, but only with a coverage of basic nutritional requirements. It also seems important that the initiative forms part of the programme budget in the ministry of education and Secretaries of Education, in order to monitor gradual implementation, coverage to be achieved and resources involved.

Overall, the country should be conservative in the process of implementing the policy beyond the initial public commitments. It is important for this programme to have a sustainable monitoring process in each Secretary of Education, and at the ministry level, since it not only entails huge costs of infrastructure and operation but also because it is not clear it will have a high benefit in terms of learning relative to the enormous costs

involved. Chapter 3 analyses these challenges for the effective use of learning time and makes proposals in this respect. The full school day could also generate pressures on the recruitment of teachers that could put strain on the financial management and staff resources of the certified territorial entities.

The programme should furthermore take into consideration whether the construction of new classrooms responds to the effective demand at different levels of education as far fewer rooms were planned for secondary than primary education in the initial estimation.

In addition, the expansion of the full-day schooling should prioritise rural areas and those of greater disadvantage in the next stages, unlike the current situation favouring urban areas and those with greater financing capacity. In this way, the programme would work as a powerful tool to close the enormous gaps in the educational opportunities of children in these areas, as well as make up for the precarious condition of the educational infrastructure. To achieve this goal, it is essential that bidding processes reduce or eliminate the co-financing contributions of the Secretaries of Education in these areas.

Areas of urban expansion should constitute another priority. Due to the lack of capacity for public education to ensure coverage, government-dependent, as well as independent private schools, assume an important role for the provision of education in these areas. This creates the risk of a greater degree of social segregation in the school system as analysed in Chapter 3. It also leads to a decoupling of the different public initiatives in strategies of greater equality and quality from the school system and impedes a greater degree of social cohesion and improvement in quality through more inclusive schools.

Advance in the generation of sufficient resources for public educational infrastructure

The experience of the Full-Day Schooling programme has shown the enormous historical deficit of infrastructure and equipment in public education in Colombia. Thus, there should be regular resources to fund school infrastructure, which should be outside the budget of the General System of Transfers and respond to an annual investment programme within the budget of the ministry of education and each of the Secretaries of Education, which can also include resources beyond those defined by the ministry.

Colombia has developed various institutional mechanisms for co-ordination of subnational investments, which should be used regularly by the certified territorial entities and promoted and encouraged by the ministry with the delivery of co-financing resources, recognising regional inequalities and national priorities. These initiatives include Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which are part of the implementation of the *Jornada Única* programme but also the *Contratos Plan*. These partnerships should become the main tool to identify and finance improvements in the infrastructure and school equipment based on the identification of territorial requirements and improving the standards of educational provision, especially in rural and most disadvantaged parts of the country, through medium-term development strategies.

These tools should generate multi-year investment plans to resolve the deficit of public education coverage in areas of urban expansion, as well as ensuring greater coverage in the most deficient levels of education, such as early childhood and secondary education.

This infrastructure programme, with a steady budgetary framework, should also consider resources to strengthen the technical capacities of the most disadvantaged Secretaries of Education. This would ensure the quality and timeliness of infrastructure investment projects and initiatives, and that the infrastructure deficit is not responsible for the

inequitable distribution in the allocation of resources and educational coverage. The Coverage Plan of the secretaries should be used as a tool in co-ordination with the territorial investment programmes to be developed by the certified territorial entities. At the same time, the Coverage Plan should include the regular revision of the school network and the identification of the effective distribution of schools in rural and remote areas as analysed in depth in Chapter 3.

To allow all territories to benefit from the General System of Royalties (SGR), it is also essential that the central government create technical teams to support more disadvantaged territorial entities in preparing better, more relevant and strategic projects, and in using resources efficiently once they are allocated.

Finally, better infrastructure and equipment should be accompanied by a mechanism for the regular financing of maintenance and renovation costs, and a clear distribution of responsibilities. At present, these resources are not considered in the financing system, and some districts, municipalities and schools allocate part of the resources coming from the SGP Education component for Quality to partially cover these expenses. The solution lies in increasing the funds that go to schools to meet this objective and promote the signing of agreements between Secretaries of Education and schools.

Provide additional educational resources and support improvement at the level of each school

Develop an information system that provides transparency about the resources available for each school and improve general reporting

The Colombian public education system must advance considerably in reducing inequality, not only in educational opportunities but also in the distribution of financial, staff and programme resources. One of the best strategies to facilitate transparency in the progress toward meeting this challenge, and to evaluate the effects of different initiatives on these results, is to facilitate the identification of the final distribution of financial resources by each school (OECD, 2017^[22]).

Colombia has made considerable progress in collecting data and information, especially through the Single Territorial Format (FUT), as well as information on enrolment, teaching staff and infrastructure conditions. Going forward, these different components should be consolidated in a simple public information system, which is regularly updated. The development of a public information system should be the cornerstone of better overall reporting on the resource efforts for school education and evidence about the quality and equity of the system in relation to established policy objectives and targets.

Together with the technical support provided to the Secretaries of Education, the updated database and the use of different indicators based on this information should be used in mechanisms of certification, evaluation and delivery of quality incentives to the certified territorial entities. As previously suggested, the priority should be to help teachers, schools and territorial authorities to transform the growing available information into improvements and to inform policies and practices (OECD, 2016^[7]).

Generate more resources at the school level for management and improvement processes beyond their day-to-day operation

The direct management of financial resources by schools allows the timely implementation of actions to improve management and quality, as well as increasing the

participation of school communities in their school educational project. Each Secretary of Education should work with schools to develop multi-year school improvement plans - for example, four or five years - with an annual update of their progress and outcomes. The resources allocated to the schools by the General System of Transfers as proposed above, as well as resources supplemented by the Secretaries of Education themselves, should be the financial framework for implementing this proposal.

The current resources from the Quality-Free Education sub-component of the SGP are too small in many schools to have an impact on the improvement of quality, and in many cases, they are only enough to cover the multiple requirements for the operation of the school itself. Therefore, it is essential that these resources complement each other and can be co-ordinated with other resources from the Secretaries, to generate economies of scale and move towards longer-term actions that are more binding on quality. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the leadership of schools as discussed in Chapter 3.

Notes

¹ These data on the funding of school education include resources for pre-school education.

² Data for the OECD publication *Education at a Glance* include primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

³ In Colombia, compulsory education includes one year of pre-school education, referred to as transition year or Year 0.

⁴ Higher teaching schools provide initial teacher education for pre-school and primary education in addition to other levels of school education.

⁵ In Colombia, decentralisation in education has been managed by a process of certification of departments (the regional level) and districts and municipalities (the local level). All departments and large municipalities are certified to provide pre-school and school education and referred to as certified territorial entities. Education in municipalities that have not been certified is under the responsibility of the respective department. Districts are municipalities with an independent legal, political, fiscal and administrative status based on their role for the economy, culture, geography or administration. Districts are part of the local level and counted as part of municipalities. Chapter 1 provides a full description of the governance of school education.

⁶ In past years, the allocation of funding for the provision of service through the *Sistema General de Participaciones* has however only taken the transition year into account.

⁷ The criterion for the attended population refers to the per-student allocation for the previous year's student enrolment. The criterion of the population to be attended efficiently refers to the extension of coverage through the allocation of a residual sum based on a per child allocation that is based on a share of the per-student allocation for the attended population. The criterion of equity refers to a residual sum allocated based on poverty indicators of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE).

⁸ The National Planning Department is an administrative department belonging to the executive branch of government and depending directly on the Presidency of the Republic. It is a technical body responsible for fostering the implementation of a strategic vision for the social, economic and environment development of the country as well as the design, guidance and evaluation of public policy.

⁹ A process has been underway to grant ethnic minorities greater autonomy for the provision of education by developing ethnic groups' own intercultural education systems (*Sistemas Educativos Propios e Interculturales*). Among these systems, the Individual Indigenous Educational System

(*Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio*, SEIP) is the most developed, expected to be finalised in 2018. Once implemented, this system will operate like a certified territorial entity and will be exclusively responsible for the organisation, administration and technical-pedagogical support of education for indigenous communities.

¹⁰ The legal framework of the SGP also included the provision of resources for new school enrolment (population to be attended), since funding for the previous components is based only on school enrolment in the previous year. However, these resources were gradually reduced and, since 2014, no funds have been distributed for this component.

¹¹ Adult education is organised in special integrated instruction cycles (*Ciclos Lectivos Especiales Integrados*) to provide education in primary and secondary education in a shorter time than in regular instruction. Cycle 1 refers to Years 1-3, Cycle 2 to Years 4 and 5, Cycle 3 to Years 6 and 7, Cycle 4 to Years 8 and 9, and Cycle 5 to Year 10 and Cycle 6 to Year 11.

¹² This includes enrolments from the transition year to upper secondary education in public schools and government-dependent private schools. In Colombia, government-dependent private provision is counted as part of public enrolments.

¹³ The *Sistema de Identificación de Potenciales Beneficiarios de Programas Sociales* (SISBEN) is an information system designed to target social protection to families in need in Colombia. Using data from a register about individual and household characteristics and taking into account local circumstances, a set of algorithms computes a continuous index that ranges between 0% (highest vulnerability) and 100% (lowest vulnerability). Within this range, social programmes apply different cut-off points to determine their target group. Groups within cut-off points are referred to as SISBEN levels. The register questionnaire and scoring method are revised every few years.

¹⁴ Numbers are expressed in short scale, one billion meaning one thousand millions (10^9), one trillion meaning one thousand billion (10^{12}). COP 1.4 trillion are therefore COP 1 400 million.

¹⁵ The educational basket represents the technical criteria that define the resources required for providing education. The educational basket includes a basic basket to ensure a complete educational service and a complementary basket to support access and retention in education.

¹⁶ These resources are composed of resources from the national budget and a special fund with resources related to Law 21 of 1982. According to this law, 1% of the monthly salaries of personnel in the territories are deposited in a special fund in the ministry to finance infrastructure.

¹⁷ In the study carried out by Lugo et al. (2016_[30]), on school infrastructure in Colombia, 42% of rural schools were found to have the capacity to implement full-day schooling immediately and another 44% could do so with additional investments. In urban areas, by contrast, this was the case for only 17% and 33% respectively.

¹⁸ In Colombia, public schools are organised in school clusters with a main school site typically offering all levels of education, including higher levels, and a number of smaller school sites offering only some levels of education. For further details on the organisation of schools see Chapters 1 and 3.

¹⁹ Covers enrolment from the compulsory pre-school year (transition year) to upper secondary education.

²⁰ Extended school days (*jornada extendida*) are optional and have been put in place to complement the school day and provide additional time for academic instruction. For further details, see Sánchez (2018_[1]).

²¹ As explained in Chapter 1, the General Education Law established education boards at the national, departmental/district and municipal levels. These include the National Board of Education (JUNE), departmental and district education boards (JUDE) and municipal education

boards (JUNE). JUNE was created as an advisory body to the ministry of education, while the departmental, district and municipal boards have a role of advising, monitoring and even approving policies, plans and curricular frameworks at the level of their respective territories. However, these boards have stopped functioning in recent years. Agreements between the largest teacher union and the government from 2017 envisage re-establishing these boards, but efforts were not yet underway at the time of writing.

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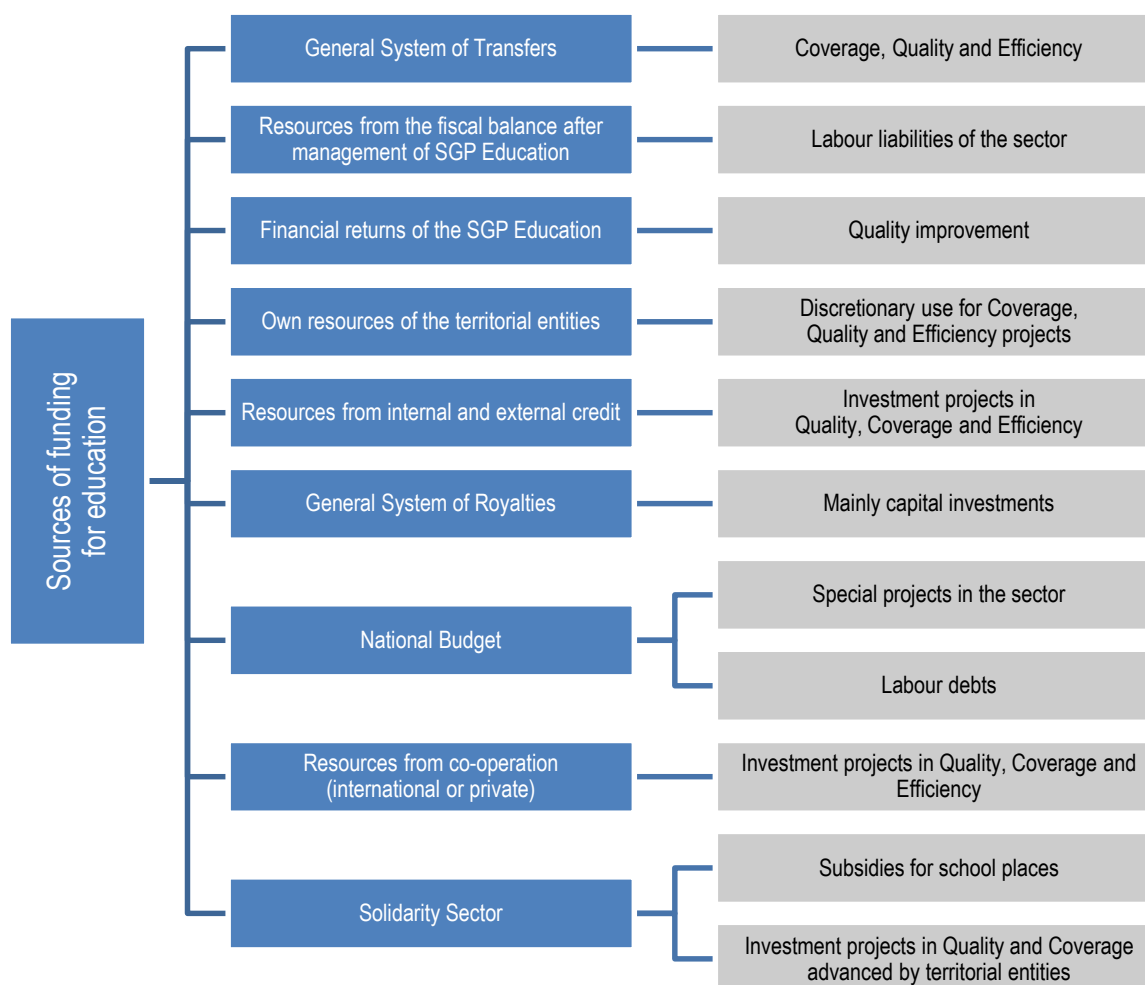
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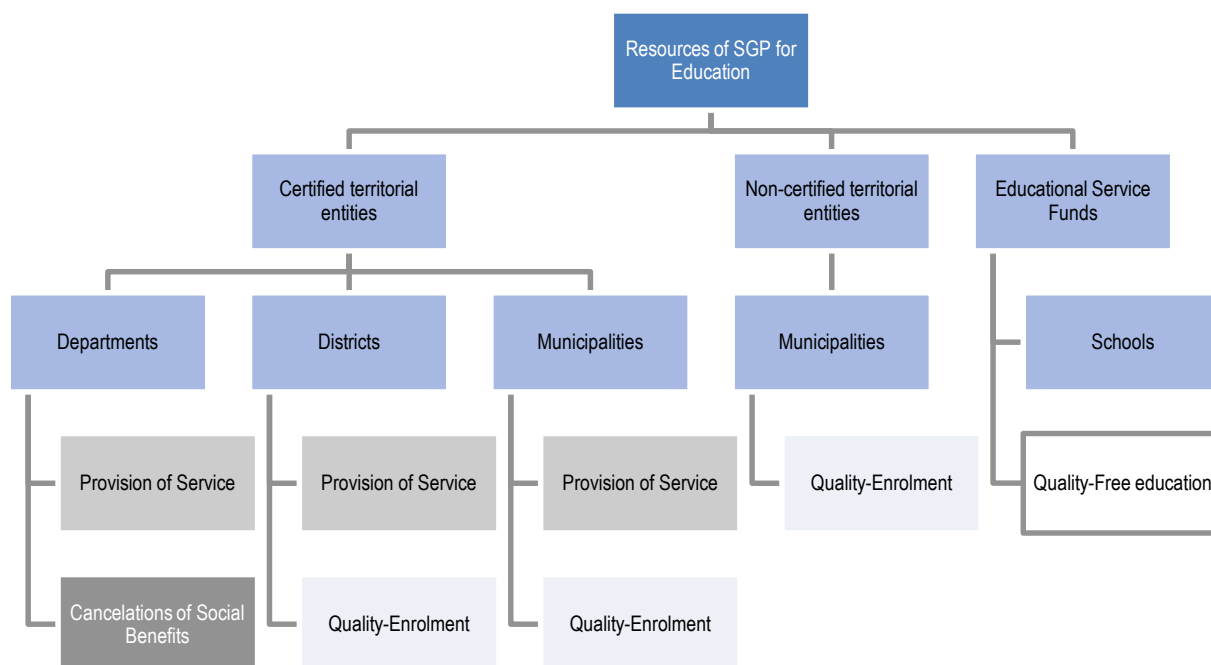
Annex 2.A. Funding sources and flows in school education

Annex Figure 2.A.1. Sources of funding for public education



Source: Adjusted from MinHacienda (2013), *Guía para la Ejecución, Monitoreo, Seguimiento y Control a los Recursos del Sistema General de Participaciones [Guide for the Execution, Monitoring, Follow-up and Control of the Resources of the General System of Transfers]*, Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público [Ministry of Finance and Public Credit], Bogotá, DC.

Annex Figure 2.A.2. Funding flows of the General System of Transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*) in education



Source: Adjusted from MinHacienda (2013), *Guía para la Ejecución, Monitoreo, Seguimiento y Control a los Recursos del Sistema General de Participaciones [Guide for the Execution, Monitoring, Follow-up and Control of the Resources of the General System of Transfers]*, Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público [Ministry of Finance and Public Credit], Bogotá, DC.

Chapter 3. The provision of school education in Colombia

This chapter looks at i) the organisation of the school network, including private school provision; ii) school governance, leadership and community participation; and iii) the organisation of teaching and learning in Colombia. This includes flexible school models, ethnic and special needs education, learning standards, instruction time, educational materials and evaluation. Transitions between school education and other levels and programmes, such as early childhood education provided by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare and vocational training provided by the National Learning Service are also considered. The chapter analyses strengths and challenges with a particular focus on access to a good education in rural areas. Finally, recommendations are presented, highlighting the need to improve school clusters, transport and boarding while strengthening school leadership and collaboration between schools.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Context and features

School network

Compulsory education in Colombia lasts 12 years. Students enter the education system with a year of pre-school (Year 0 or transition year, age 5) and have five years of primary (*básica primaria*, Years 1-5) and four years of lower secondary education (*básica secundaria*, Years 6-9). Students then progress to two years of upper secondary education (*media*, Years 10-11), following a general (*académico*) or vocational (*técnico*) track. The general track strengthens students' abilities in a specific area of their preference, preparing them for tertiary education. The vocational track prepares students to enter the labour market upon graduation. Compulsory upper secondary education is a recent development – only primary and lower secondary education, referred to in Colombia as basic education, used to be compulsory. However, compulsory upper secondary education is currently being introduced gradually until 2025 in urban and 2030 in rural areas.

Recent policies have led to a significant expansion of participation in education in Colombia. Enrolment rates have increased in both lower and upper secondary education over the last fifteen years, and Colombia has also progressed in widening access to early childhood and tertiary education. Since 2012, public education has been free of charge from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education, although indirect costs such as learning materials and transport remain. Additionally, other policies and programmes such as conditional cash transfers, scholarships for tertiary study, flexible school models, ethnic education, boarding schools and school meals have all contributed to reaching vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable way to go towards increasing coverage, keeping students in school and smoothing their transitions. Gaps in enrolment also persist between urban and rural areas, and disadvantaged and advantaged students, particularly in pre-primary and upper secondary education. For details about the organisation of the school system and trends in quality, equity and efficiency of education, see Chapter 1.

Education is provided by public and private schools. Public education is provided directly through schools managed by the Secretaries of Education of the department, district or certified municipality. In Colombia, decentralisation in education towards the regional and local levels has been managed by a process of certification as explained in Chapter 1. The Secretaries of Education of the departments and certified municipalities are responsible for planning the school network and for opening and closing schools within their territory. Technical regulations for the ratio of students to teachers defined by the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, MEN, hereafter ministry/ministry of education), which consider factors such as the dispersion of students or the size of classrooms, provide indications for the opening of a school or school site.

Where there is limited capacity in terms of staff or infrastructure or some other limitation, Secretaries of Education can provide education through various forms of partnerships with private providers (*matrícula oficial contratada*) regulated by Decree 1851 of 2015. These largely include i) schools that are privately operated with autonomy over the use of resources, but publicly funded, that is government-dependent private schools; and ii) school vouchers for a limited number of low-income students to attend independent private schools (see Annex 3.A). The cost for contracting private providers covered with resources provided through Colombia's fiscal transfer mechanism, the General System of Transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*, SGP), must not exceed the per-student funding allocation defined by the central government. Independent private schools

(*matrícula no oficial*) are owned by natural or legal persons (churches, co-operatives, associations, foundations, or for-profit entities) and can charge tuition and other fees according to regulations established by the ministry as well as a performance ranking established on an annual basis. These schools generally receive no public funding (for full details on the regulations of independent private schools, see Sánchez (2018_[1])).¹

Parents and students are free to select the public or private school of their choice. If parents choose a public school, Secretaries of Education assign students based on national regulations that specify the order of assignment depending on student characteristics (Resolution 7797 of 2015).² Of the more than 9.3 million students in the Colombian school system in 2017, 81.3% were in the public system, with 6.6% of these students being served by a school hired by the Secretary of Education under the different mechanisms, that is government-dependent private provision. The remaining 18.7% were enrolled in independent private schools.³ Based on data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015, enrolment in independent private schools is much higher than in many other countries (19% of 15-year-olds compared to 4% on average across the OECD) (OECD, 2016_[2]). As in other countries, students in rural areas in Colombia have less school choice than their urban peers (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming_[3]). In 2017, only 4.2% of rural students attended an independent private school compared with 23.4% of urban students (calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[1])).

All schools must fulfil three requirements to be authorised to operate: i) to have an operating license (for private schools) or be officially recognised (for public schools); ii) to have the necessary administrative structure, physical infrastructure, and educational resources to provide education, also referred to as the educational basket (*canasta educativa*); and iii) to have a school educational project (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*, PEI) (MEN, 2009_[4]). Public and private schools (both government-dependent/contracted and independent private) work under the direct supervision of the Secretaries of Education, who have the main responsibility of assuring educational quality and coverage in their territories, in accordance with national laws and the regulations and normative framework provided by the ministry (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Schools, and especially public schools, in Colombia are organised as school clusters with a number of sites or *sedes* in Spanish. The main site, also referred to as educational institution (*institución educativa*), offers all levels of compulsory education. The remaining sites, classified as educational centres (*centros educativos*), offer only some levels of education. A school cluster includes one educational institution and a number of educational centres. This organisation of schools goes back to the provisions set out in the General Education Law of 1994⁴ but has been promoted in the case of public schools in particular since 2002 within the framework of Law 715 of 2001 and Decree 3012 of 2002 (Econometría Consultores, 2013_[5]).

According to official records, at the end of 2002, 48% of schools only offered primary education, another 35% pre-school and primary education, and only 5% all levels from pre-school to upper secondary education (MEN, 2008_[6]). The ministry therefore promoted the clustering of nearby schools in order to ensure all students have the opportunity to complete their education within a single school cluster, to promote smoother transitions between levels and reduce student dropout.

Looking at the organisation of the school network in 2017 compared to 2004, that is at the beginning of the increased drive to cluster public schools under one leadership, illustrates the change the public school network has undergone. In 2004, there were still 20 924 public school clusters with a total of 44 471 individual sites (Econometría

Consultores, 2013^[5]). In 2017, these had been reorganised into 9 881 clusters with 44 033 sites. Most of the sites today are located in a rural area, where the number of sites is higher than in urban areas even though the number of students is lower (see Table 3.1).

The number of sites in a public school cluster varies significantly across schools and parts of the country. Especially in remote rural areas, school clusters are often comprised by a large number of smaller sites while clusters in urban areas typically unite two or three larger sites under a single administration.⁵ Private schools usually have only one site and can, therefore, be rather considered single-site schools. This also explains why 9 768 or half of all schools are private, while private enrolment (independent) only makes up 18.7% of total enrolment in pre-primary to upper secondary education. Public schools are also larger than private ones. In 2015, the average public school cluster had 783 students, the average private school 152 students in a single site (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Table 3.1. The organisation of the school network in Colombia

	Number of school clusters (2017)	Number of school sites (2017)	Average student enrolment per site (2015)
Public	9 881	44 033	
Urban	3 850	8 704	696
Rural	6 031	35 329	68
Private	9 768	9 773	
Urban	9 301	9 306	187
Rural	467	467	182
Total	19 649	53 806	
Urban	13 151	18 010	435
Rural	6 498	35 796	70

Notes: Public school clusters are categorised as urban if all sites are located in an urban area or if the main site is located in an urban area. Urban public school clusters therefore include school clusters with a mix of urban and rural sites. In 2017, 1 110 urban public school clusters administered both urban and rural sites. Public school clusters are categorised as rural if all sites are located in a rural area, including the main site. The number of school sites includes both main sites (*instituciones educativas*) and attached sites (*centros educativos*). Average enrolments per school site are based on enrolments in compulsory education, from the transition year to upper secondary education.

Source: Authors' elaboration, data from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>, based on SIMAT (integrated enrolment system) and DUE (Single Directory of Educational Establishments).

School governance

School autonomy

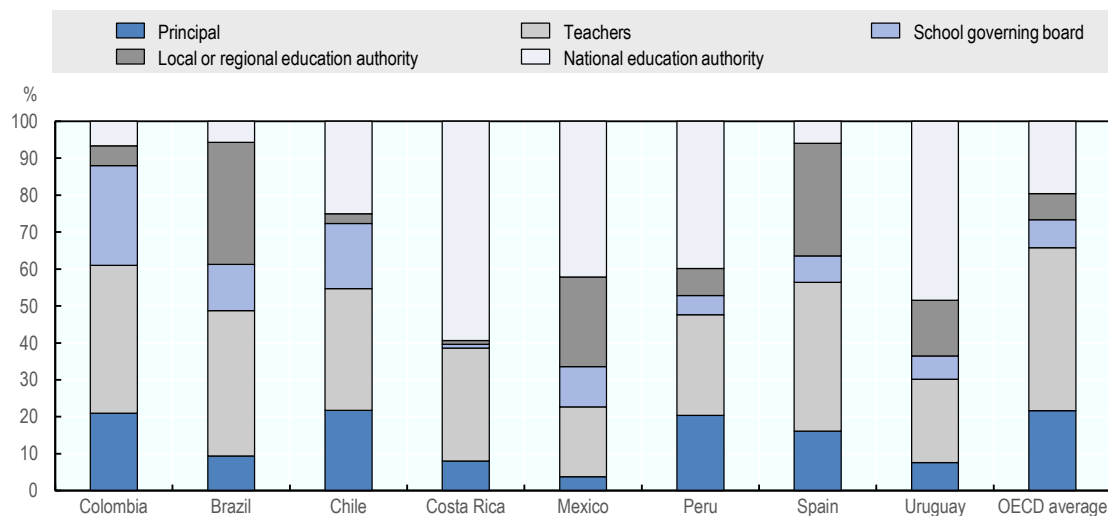
Colombia has not been indifferent to a general trend towards devolving responsibilities for education (OECD, 2017^[7]). Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the operation of education has been progressively devolved to the regional and local levels. As has already been mentioned, decentralisation in education has been implemented by a process of certification of departments, districts and municipalities as certified territorial entities (*entidades territoriales certificadas*, ETC), based on the fulfilment of certain requirements. Education in municipalities that are not certified is provided by the respective department and its Secretary of Education. Chapters 1 and 2 provide further details on governance and funding. The General Education Law (Art. 77) gave schools

substantial autonomy to define their own curriculum and study plan – one of the most distinctive characteristics of school education in Colombia. Schools also have some budgetary autonomy as explained in Chapter 2, but little influence on the selection or dismissal of their teachers as analysed in Chapter 4.

Data from the OECD PISA 2015 based on school principals' reports illustrate the degree of autonomy for schools in Colombia (see Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2). Looking at responsibilities for pedagogical and curricular decisions, school principals, the school board (in Colombia the directive council as explained below) and teachers make most of the curricular choices. Education authorities have fewer responsibilities over the curriculum than in most countries participating in PISA 2015, whether this means choosing textbooks, determining course content or deciding which courses are offered.

Figure 3.1. Distribution of responsibilities for the curriculum, PISA 2015

Results based on school principals' reports

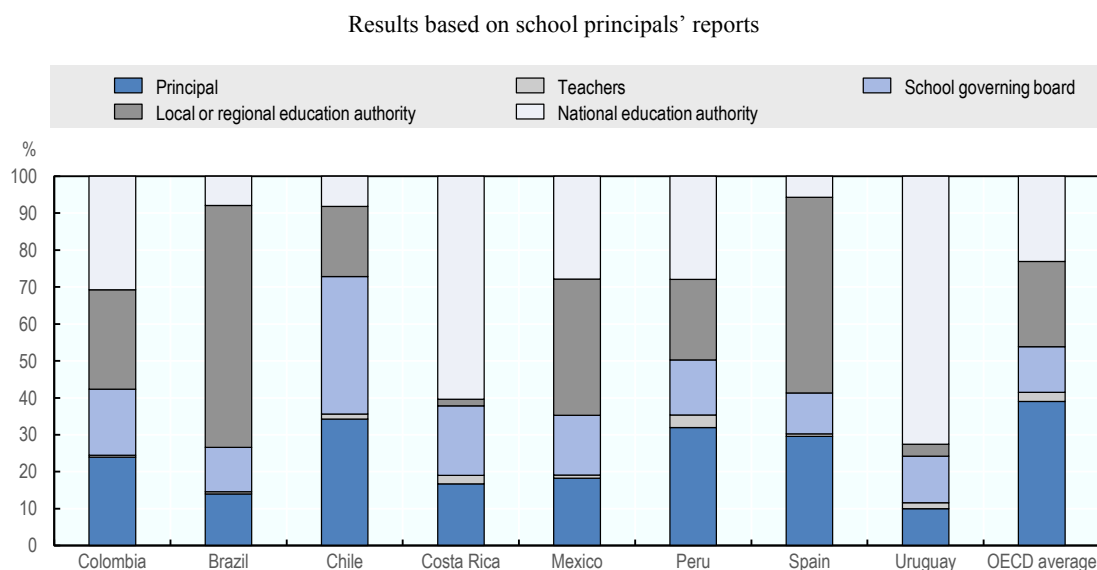


Notes: The three tasks categorised as responsibilities for curriculum include choosing textbooks, deciding which courses are offered and determining course content. The figure is based on the assumption that the responsibilities of the five actors combined amount to 100%.

School governing boards differ widely across countries in their composition and function. In the case of Colombia, the school governing board refers to the directive council.

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.4.2.

For instance, in Colombia, approximately 12% of the responsibilities over the curriculum are held by education authorities, compared to 27% on average across OECD countries, and 28% in Chile, 39% in Brazil, 47% in Peru, 66% in Mexico and 64% in Uruguay. Teachers hold 40% of responsibilities for the school curriculum and the school board 27%. The share of decision-making power for the school board is, in fact, the second highest among all participating countries. Teachers are also involved in setting student disciplinary policies within their school through their school board which makes 90% of decisions in this respect (OECD, 2016_[2]).

Figure 3.2. Distribution of responsibilities for resource management, PISA 2015

Notes: The six tasks categorised as responsibilities for resources include selecting teachers for hire, firing teachers, establishing teachers' starting salaries, determining teachers' salary increases, formulating the school budget and deciding on budget allocations within the school. The figure is based on the assumption that the responsibilities of the five actors combined amount to 100%.

School governing boards differ widely across countries in their composition and function. In the case of Colombia, the school governing board refers to the directive council.

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.4.2.

Individual schools are therefore responsible for the elaboration and implementation of their school educational project (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*, PEI) within the normative framework established by the ministry and the certified territorial entities. According to the General Education Law, the school educational project must be responsive to the needs of the local community in general and students in particular, and be concrete, feasible and suitable for evaluation. Among other aspects, it establishes the school goals and objectives, the human and material resources required to achieve those goals, the pedagogical strategy and study plan, the school community handbook (*manual de convivencia*) and the school's governing bodies and their responsibilities.

The project must be elaborated with the participation of the entire educational community with the support of the territorial entity's Secretary of Education, which will also provide technical-pedagogical support throughout the school year for the implementation of the educational project. The project is registered with the Secretary of Education and should be periodically updated. Schools have five weeks of institutional development throughout the school year, led by the school principal, to work on their PEI, the study plan, pedagogical developments, self-evaluation, and partnerships with other institutions.

School leadership

School principals (*directores*) are responsible for the leadership, administration, supervision and co-ordination of education provision in schools. According to the ministry's Manual of Functions, Requirements and Competencies for School Leaders and Teachers, school principals must fulfil essential functions in four areas: directive;

academic; administrative and financial; and community relations. Accordingly, school principals should lead the elaboration and implementation of the school educational project; chair the directive and the academic councils; co-ordinate with the other school governing bodies; administer the school's human and financial resources; provide support to teachers; and formulate and execute annual quality improvement plans (MEN, 2016_[8]). The school principal is responsible for all the sites in the cluster. A principal in a main site located in an urban area can thus be responsible for school sites located in rural areas. School principals must be present at the school during the eight hours of the school day, unlike teachers who have a minimum of six hours of work at the school premises.

As highlighted above, schools and school principals have little autonomy to make employment decisions about their staff and less so than in many other countries, even though school principals may informally inform employment decisions through contacts with their Secretary of Education. Since the adoption of a new employment framework for teachers (and school leaders) in 2002, explained in depth in Chapter 4, school principals in Colombia have responsibility for evaluating some of their teaching staff to confirm their probationary period and as part of regular performance management.

For the OECD PISA 2015, 24.2% of school principals reported to have considerable responsibility for hiring, and 22.0% for firing teachers, compared to an OECD average of 70.3% and 57.4% respectively. Within the Latin American context, school principals in Colombia are more likely to report such responsibility than their counterparts in Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay, but less so than in Chile and Peru. Principals in Brazil report similar levels of responsibility for decisions about teaching staff (OECD, 2016_[2]).

The manual of functions for school leadership acknowledges two other leading roles besides the school principal: rural directors (*directores rurales*) and co-ordinators (*coordinadores*). A rural director is appointed when an individual school site within the cluster (that offers only one or more of the levels of compulsory education but not all) has more than 150 students. This director is responsible for the administration of the site and has no academic workload. A co-ordinator is responsible for supporting school management and directing the different initiatives and programmes defined in the school educational project. They also co-ordinate the work of teachers and facilitate and guide the school's educational processes. Co-ordinators are assigned by the Secretary of Education based on the number of students, as shown in the following table. Additionally, if the Secretary has enough resources, another co-ordinator can be appointed for evening school or for schools with more than 5 sites or 6 000 students.

As explained in Chapter 4, there are two main teacher statutes in Colombia, one for teachers and school leaders employed before 2002 (Statute 2277), and one for those employed after 2002 (Statute 1278). Teachers and school leaders in ethnic education are employed under separate regulations (Decree 804 on ethnic education).

The selection of school leaders follows a similar process as the one for teachers. Candidates must have acquired the same minimum qualifications as those required to become a permanent teacher — at least a university degree in education (*licenciatura*) or a relevant knowledge area. In addition, they are required to have relevant experience in teaching and managerial roles: at least six years of experience for school principals, at least four years of experience for rural directors and at least five years for co-ordinators. School leaders employed under the new statute are evaluated on a regular basis by the governor of their department or mayor of their district or certified municipality.

Table 3.2. Criteria for appointing co-ordinators

Enrolment of cluster	Co-ordinators
≤ 500	0
501-900	1
901-1 400	2
1 401-2 000	3
2 001-2 700	4
2 701-3 500	5
3 501- 4 400	6
4 401-5 400	7
>5 400	8

Source: Reproduced from Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

School leaders follow the same career ladder as teachers in their same statute, but their salaries increase depending on their school leadership role and the levels of education offered in their school. Salary increases are higher for school principals than for co-ordinators and rural directors, ranging between 25% and 30% for the former, and 20% and 10% respectively for the latter. Compensation is also higher if the school has more than 1 000 students enrolled or offers more school shifts (an additional monthly bonus of between 20% and 30%). School leaders working in remote areas receive a monthly bonus of 15% over their monthly salary. Principals and rural directors can receive one extra monthly salary each year if they fulfil the criteria of an education management indicator of the ministry, which includes the school performance index (ISCE) explained below.

In 2017, there were 20 855 school leaders (principals, rural directors, co-ordinators and others) in Colombia,⁶ with the majority working in urban areas (65%); 5% of school leaders were not assigned to any position which is related to the organisation of schools into school clusters, but also school leaders taking leave of absence to study or assume a position in the teacher union. School leaders are generally older than teachers and more likely to be male. About 4 in 10 school leaders (39%) are between 55 and 64 years old, and more than half (56%) of school leaders are men. School leaders hold high levels of qualifications: 68% held a postgraduate degree in 2017, half of which in education (51% of these school leaders) (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Community participation

Legislation in Colombia establishes democratic school governance arrangements and encourages community engagement in school. The entire school community is expected to participate in the development of the educational project and the management of the school through different bodies.

The responsibility for the administration of the school lies mainly with the school principal and the directive council (*consejo directivo*). The directive council in public schools is composed of the school principal, acting as head of the council, two teachers' representatives, two parents' representatives, a students' representative, an alumni representative and a representative of the productive sector. Some of the council's responsibilities are: planning and evaluating the educational project; taking all decisions that affect school management; solving conflicts between teachers, management and students; defining the school community handbook (*manual de convivencia*); taking part

in the assessment of teachers; and defining the procedures for the use of the school's infrastructure, among others.

Additionally, schools have an academic council (*consejo académico*) – also headed by the school principal and made up of co-ordinators and teacher representatives – mainly responsible for the organisation, pedagogical orientation, implementation and continuous improvement of the school curriculum and study plan. A school coexistence committee (*comité de convivencia*) made up of representatives of the entire school community provides advice in matters of school climate and discipline to the directive council.

Besides involving parents in the directive council and coexistence committee, schools should establish specific bodies for parental participation: a general assembly of parents (*asamblea general de padres de familia*), responsible for enforcing parents' rights and duties regarding their children's education; a parents' council (*consejo de padres de familia*), involved in the elaboration of school improvement plans; and a parents' association (*asociación de padres de familia*), responsible for supporting the implementation of the educational project of the school.

Students also participate in school management. Aside from having a representative in the school directive council and the school coexistence committee, students elect an ombudsman (*personero*) and a student council (*consejo estudiantil*). The ombudsman is a student from Year 11, elected to promote students' rights and obligations. The student council is the highest collegiate group for student democratic participation. It is composed of a representative from each of the years of the school, except for pre-school and Years 1-3 which are represented by one student. The student council then elects one representative to participate in the directive council to represent all students, but without decision-making power (*sin voto*) (MEN, 2008_[6]).

The organisation of teaching and learning

Learning standards and guidelines

Although schools have substantial pedagogical and curricular autonomy, the ministry has developed a series of standards and guidelines that schools must take into account when designing their own curricula, and that should guide teachers in their work in classrooms (see Table 3.3). All of these standards and guidelines were valid at the time of writing.

The curriculum guidelines (*lineamientos curriculares*) were established in 1998 to support schools in the design and development of their own curriculum according to their educational project (MEN, 1998_[9]). At the beginning of the new century, the ministry issued basic competency standards (*estándares básicos de competencia*, EBC) (MEN, 2006_[10]; MEN, 2006_[11]). These standards establish what students must know and know how to do and provide criteria to assess the level of development of students' competency. They are not only a guide for the design of a school's curriculum, but also a reference for the development and selection of textbooks and other classroom materials, and the design of the school's evaluation system. Standards are established by cycle rather than by individual year,⁷ and they are progressive to indicate an increasing level of complexity of students' competency. To provide guidance on teaching practice, the ministry has complemented these documents with pedagogical guidelines for different subjects and competencies (MEN, 2013_[12]).

As part of a national strategy named *Día E* (later explained in this chapter), the ministry issued Basic Learning Rights (*Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje*, DBA) to further define

the learning framework for each level and subject area (MEN, 2016_[13]). These guidelines have been revised following feedback and consultation with teachers and other stakeholders. Unlike the previous curricular documents, basic learning rights are not only meant to inform schools and teachers, but also parents about the competencies that children should acquire in each year (OECD, 2016_[14]). To help teachers with the implementation of the DBA, the ministry published a new set of pedagogical and didactic tools in 2017 (*Mallas de Aprendizaje*). These tools establish the relationship between the basic learning rights and the previous, still valid curricular documents, providing teachers with guidelines and suggestions on how to support students in their learning (MEN, 2017_[15]). Also, in 2017, a new curricular tool (*bases curriculares*) was issued for early childhood education and pre-school to clarify previous guidelines and support educators.

Table 3.3. Learning standards and guidelines

	Subject or competency areas	Educational levels and years
Curriculum Guidelines (1998)	Core and compulsory subject areas defined by the General Education Law	Pre-school to upper secondary education
Basic Competency Standards	Language, mathematics, science, citizenship (2004) and English (2006)	Primary to upper secondary education
Pedagogical Guidelines (2008-10)	Philosophy, physical education, artistic education, technology	Primary to upper secondary education
Basic Learning Rights (2015-16)	Language, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, English	Transition year (Year 0), primary to upper secondary education
<i>Mallas de Aprendizaje</i> (2017)	Language, mathematics, natural sciences	Primary education
Curriculum Foundations (2017)	Early childhood development	Pre-school education

Instruction time

The school calendar is defined each year by each Secretary of Education and with prior approval of the ministry. The school year lasts 40 weeks and is split into 2 semesters with 12 weeks of holidays. There are two calendar options for the start and end of the school year. Calendar A emulates the calendar year with the school year starting in January and finishes in December. Calendar B starts around mid-year and ends at the same time in the following year. All public schools follow Calendar A, while some private schools follow Calendar B. Calendars are flexible to adapt to the regional context and local traditions. For instance, in rural contexts or areas with ethnic education programmes, the school calendar is usually adjusted to the agricultural calendar (Sánchez, 2018_[11]).⁸

The number of hours of compulsory instruction per school week and year is established for each level: 20 hours per week or 800 hours per year during pre-school and the transition year, 25 hours per week or 1 000 hours per year during primary education, and 30 hours per week or 1 200 hours per year for lower and upper secondary education. At least 80% of this time must be used for teaching the mandatory and fundamental subject areas set out in the General Education Law of 1994, which should be reflected in the school's study plan and educational project (Sánchez, 2018_[11]).⁹

Compared to OECD countries, Colombia has a very high number of average hours of annual compulsory instruction as well as total hours of compulsory instruction during primary and secondary education. Colombian students have 2 262 hours more total compulsory instruction time during their primary and lower secondary education than the average student in the OECD (9 800 vs. 7 538). Total compulsory instruction time from

primary to upper secondary education in Colombia is almost as high as in Chile, the country with most instruction time among countries with available data (12 200 hours vs. 13 091 hours) even though Chilean students have one year more of schooling. The relatively large number of instruction hours is also related to a relatively long school year. Colombian students attend at least 15 days more of school per year than the OECD average (OECD, 2017_[16]). The time per week 15-year-olds reported to spend in regular lessons in Colombia according to the OECD PISA 2015 is around the OECD average (27 hours a week) (OECD, 2016_[21]).

The number of school hours per day is one of the most debated topics in education in Colombia (Sanchez, 2018). The General Education Law of 1994 established full-day schooling for all schools instead of the morning and afternoon shifts that had been in place to expand enrolments. The full school day, however, was never fully implemented in schools. The National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*, PND) for 2014-18 established a policy for the implementation of full-day schooling, regulated subsequently through Decree 501 in 2016. By 2030, all schools must offer a full school day. The length of academic hours in full-day schooling varies according to the level of education: five hours per day in pre-school, six hours in primary and seven hours in lower and upper secondary education, that is at least one hour more for pedagogical activities per school day than previously. In addition to these pedagogical hours, schools must provide time for other activities, such as recreation and meals.

To be part of the Full-Day Schooling (*Jornada Única*), programme, a school has to comply with four requirements: adequate infrastructure; a meal plan for students that includes lunch; sufficient human resources; and operative public services. The ministry aimed to enrol 20% of students in public schools in full-day schooling by 2018 (Sánchez, 2018_[11]). In 2017, slightly less than one in five public schools offered a fully school day to more than 730 000 students, or about 10% of enrolments (MEN, 2018_[17]). The remaining schools still offer multiple shifts. To achieve this goal, the programme has been investing in infrastructure, school meals, educational materials, and technical assistance to Secretaries of Education as analysed in Chapter 2.

Additional learning time may also be provided in the form of complementary or extended school days (*jornada complementaria* and *jornada extendida*). These forms of provision – which are optional – have been put in place to complement the school day and in some cases to provide full-day schooling. The complementary school day is normally used for extracurricular activities, while the extended day extends academic instruction. While the extended school days are set to be replaced by the full school day, complementary days may continue offering extracurricular activities (for further details, see Sánchez (2018_[11])).

Modalities of educational provision

One of the most distinctive features of school education in Colombia is the existence of a wide range of education modalities targeting the needs of different students.

Flexible school models (*Modelos Educativos Flexibles*, MEF)

Flexible models aim to address different needs, from rural and adult education to peace education (or education for reconciliation) among others, by adapting their curricula and pedagogy to the context in which they are implemented and the students they serve. In 2016, more than 850 000 or 11.2% of students enrolled in public education participated in some form of flexible education, a share that has been largely stable over the last years.

Flexible models are particularly important in rural areas: 95.6% of students in flexible models studied in rural areas (data based on SIMAT provided by the ministry).¹⁰

A recent count identified 28 models recognised by the ministry (see Sánchez (2018_[11]) for a detailed list of all available models). Among these, the New School (*Escuela Nueva*) is the single most widespread model, providing basic education (primary and lower secondary education) to rural populations following a multi-grade teaching methodology. Other models which are currently being implemented by the ministry include:

- Accelerated Learning (*Aceleración del Aprendizaje*), primary education for overage children who need to rapidly complete this level to transition to secondary level.
- Walking in Secondary Education (*Caminar en Secundaria*), an accelerated learning model to help overage students in a rural context enter secondary education.
- Post-primary (*Postprimaria*), lower secondary education for rural students provided by primary school teachers responsible for teaching all subjects with limited additional support.
- Rural Upper Secondary (*Media Rural*), to support rural students in finishing their formal education.

Ethnic education (*etnoeducación*)

Since the late 1970s, Colombia has developed a specific policy for its ethnic minorities (Afro-Colombian, which includes Raizal and Palenquero; indigenous; and Rrom communities) with the purpose of respecting and maintaining ethnic language, culture and values. In the early 1990s, this policy was formalised in the General Education Law with the creation of ethnic education.

The ministry defines ethnic education as an education that is provided to ethnic groups or communities with their own culture, language, traditions and forms of social and political organisation (MEN, 2009_[4]). Accordingly, education for these communities must have the two following characteristics: first, education has to be bilingual, based on the mother tongue of the communities; and second, the teachers must be selected in consultation with the ethnic populations (and preferably be members of the community) and receive adequate training. In 2016, about 280 000 students or 3.7% of public enrolment followed an ethnic education programme, up from 2.4% in 2010. As for flexible models, the largest share of these students – 87% – were enrolled in an ethnic programme in a rural school (data based on SIMAT provided by the ministry).

Ethnic education is regulated by Decree 804 of 1995 which grants ethnic minorities full autonomy to organise their own schools and curriculum, in accordance with their needs, interests or expectations. The government only retains an advisory role in curricular development, the elaboration of textbooks and pedagogical materials, and teacher education. This decree also regulates the employment of educators of ethnic minorities (*etnoeducadores*). For details on teacher preparation for ethnic education, see Chapter 4.

There is also a sectorial policy with an intercultural and multilingual emphasis established as a result of the joint effort of the government and the authorities and representative organisations of the country's ethnic minorities. This policy is currently transitioning from ethnic education as a policy of recognition of diversity, identity, respect and

inclusion to the construction of ethnic groups' own intercultural education systems (*Sistemas Educativos Propios e Interculturales*) (MEN, 2014_[18]).

Among these systems, the Individual Indigenous Educational System (*Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio*, SEIP) developed together with CONTCEPI, the National Work and Concertation Commission on Education for the Indigenous People, is the most developed. It has been a seven-year process that was about to be finalised in 2018. Once this system is implemented, it will operate like a certified territorial entity and will be exclusively responsible for the organisation, administration and technical-pedagogical support of education for indigenous communities. Until functioning in full, a transitional decree allows Secretaries of Education to hire indigenous organisations to provide education for their communities. In 2016, 24 Secretaries of Education hired 59 different organisations to manage 863 schools with 131 776 indigenous students (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Similar own intercultural education systems are being developed for the Afro-Colombian and Rrom populations (MEN, 2014_[18]). Judging from the experience of the development of the system for indigenous peoples, this process may take several years.

Special needs education

Finally, the adoption of a policy to promote the inclusion of children with special educational needs, or children with a disability, in mainstream schools is another recent development in the Colombian school system. This policy puts into practice the principle of inclusion already established in the General Education Law of 1994.

In accordance to Decree 1421 of 2017, every school must develop an Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments (*Plan Individual de Ajustes Razonables*, PIAR) to make all the necessary curricular, infrastructure and other adjustments to guarantee learning, participation, retention and promotion for all students. Schools must adapt their educational project and the school community handbook (*manual de convivencia*) accordingly to create more inclusive schools. Schools must also report their number of students with any type of disability or special educational need in the Integrated Enrolment System (*Sistema Integrado de Matrícula*, SIMAT), the country's database for the registration of students in public education. For these students, an additional 20% of per-student allocation is transferred to the Secretaries of Education through the country's system for sharing revenues across levels of governance, as explained in Chapter 2.

While quality data are lacking, an increasing share of students is being identified as having a disability: 2.16% of students had a disability in 2017 – an increase of 59% since 2010. About one in five students identified as having special educational needs attended a rural school. The General Education Law and guidelines for the provision of education for vulnerable students also recognises the needs of gifted students. About 80% of gifted students attended an urban school (data based on SIMAT provided by the ministry).

Educational materials

As explained previously in this chapter, schools in Colombia have considerable autonomy for curricular matters and the selection of textbooks has been the prerogative of each school since there is no national curriculum nor are there national textbooks. Nevertheless, the ministry has distributed textbooks and educational materials to schools in the context of large national programmes.¹¹ Since the establishment of universal free education in 2012, individual schools should allocate part of the resources from their Educational Services Fund (*Fondo de Servicios Educativos*, FSE) to the purchase of

textbooks and other educational resources. Chapter 2 provides further information on the funding for educational materials and textbooks and schools' services funds.

ICT resources in Colombian schools are mostly provided by the government programme Computers to Educate (*Computadores para Educar*, CPE), implemented by the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communication (MinTIC) together with the ministry of education since 2000. The programme has three main phases: i) access, providing schools with a computer for every 20 enrolled students; ii) teacher education, developing teachers' skills on how to incorporate ICT into their pedagogical work; and iii) maintenance and computer repositioning (Barrera-Osorio, Maldonado and Rodríguez, 2012_[19]).

In 2016, the programme provided 259 005 terminals across the country, benefiting more than 4 million students and teachers. The programme also trained 47 271 teachers and school leaders, and 154 978 parents, and gave 43 463 tablets to teachers. Colombia's difficult economic situation resulting from a drop in commodity prices has had an important effect on the programme resulting in a decrease of funds in recent years.¹²

The MinTIC also implements the Live Digitally strategy (*Vive Digital*) which provides ICT resources (*Kioskos Vive Digital*) in several communities in the country, mainly in rural areas. By 2017, more than 7 000 *kioskos* had been installed, several of which in schools with exclusive use for academic purposes during school hours (Sánchez, 2018_[11]).

Evaluation and assessment

Schools in Colombia have a large degree of autonomy over the definition of policies to assess student learning outcomes, including the choice of assessment methods and criteria for student promotion and year repetition (OECD, 2016_[14]). The school principal and teachers must establish in the school educational project the criteria for school-level student assessment, which will help them identify students' progress towards the learning objectives and standards stated in the project. According to the ministry, students' assessment in the classroom is expected to be permanent, integral, and flexible; and must help teachers to tailor the learning process to their students' needs. Additionally, the results of students' assessment should be used by each school's evaluation and promotion committee (*comisión de evaluación y promoción*), composed of the school principal, three teachers from each year and a parent representative, to determine student promotion and recommend support activities for students at academic risk (MEN, 2009_[4]).

In the last three decades, Colombia has developed instruments to measure the performance of schools in terms of learning outcomes. These standardised assessments, called *Pruebas Saber*, are developed under the leadership of the Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (*Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación*, ICFES), a public institution connected to the ministry, but with administrative autonomy and an independent budget.¹³ Assessments are administered periodically in Years 3, 5 and 9 for a sample of students and assess mathematics and language in all years and science or citizenship in Years 5 and 9. The examination of students in Year 11 carries high stakes for individual students and determines access to tertiary education. It measures students' competencies in language, mathematics, social science and civics, natural science and English. Additional assessments seek to provide incentives for students to perform well, such as *Supérate con el Saber*.¹⁴

Since 2015, the ministry and the educational evaluation institute ICFES calculate a Synthetic Education Quality Index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*, ISCE) –

a multidimensional index of school performance for primary to upper secondary education. The index is calculated individually for each level of education and takes into account four components as described in the following table. It ranges from 1 to 10 and is used to measure the performance of schools and certified territorial entities, but also the system as a whole (for an overview of ISCE results for 2017, see Sánchez (2018^[11])). Since the index is a government policy, it depends on future governments if it will be continued.

Table 3.4. Synthetic Education Quality Index (ISCE)

Component	Weight (%)	Criterion
Progress	40	Progress in <i>Pruebas Saber</i> in comparison to the previous year
Performance	40	Average score students obtained in mathematics and language assessments
School environment	10	Assessment of the conditions for learning in the classroom
Efficiency	10	Proportion of students who have passed the school year

Note: For ISCED 3, “Efficiency” makes up 20%, while the “School environment” is not taken into account.

All actors in the school system have specific improvement goals in terms of their ISCE performance until 2025 when Colombia aims to become the best educated country in Latin America: the Annual Minimum Improvement (*Mejoramiento Mínimo Anual*, MMA) and the Excellence Goal (*Meta de Excelencia*, MDE). Schools exceeding their MMA and meeting the MDE receive a financial bonus. Every year, by decree, all levels of the system organise a day called Education Excellence Day (*Día de la Excelencia Educativa* or *Día E*) dedicated to analysing results and to initiating plans for improvement within the school community. To support schools in their organisation of *Día E*, the ministry and the educational evaluation institute provide guiding materials and organise workshops for some schools. Through the Always E Day strategy (*Siempre Día E*), schools receive additional pedagogical, curricular and assessment materials and reports on their assessments results to help them improve their pedagogical processes.

Colombia does not have a national body responsible for evaluating school processes, but school principals are required to conduct school self-evaluations every year, supported by national guidelines. Based on the results, they must develop a school improvement plan (*Plan de Mejoramiento Institucional*, PMI) (MEN, 2008^[6]).

Strengths

School network

School clusters facilitate access to education in rural and remote areas and have the potential to increase the efficiency of the school network

In the last two decades, Colombia has made remarkable progress in increasing students’ access to education as explained above and in Chapter 1, and the country is now committed to expanding the coverage of pre-primary and upper secondary education in the years to come. Upper secondary education is envisaged to become universal by 2030. As set out in Colombia’s peace agreement putting an end to the 50-year conflict between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC-EP), the country is also committed to closing rural-urban gaps in education (see Chapter 1).

Besides access, the ministry is concerned with assuring students' continuation throughout the 12 years of compulsory education (Years 0 to 11). The organisation of public schools into school clusters – promoted in particular since the early 2000s – gives students, especially those in remote rural areas, access to all the years of compulsory education within a single school cluster, potentially promoting smoother transitions between levels and reducing students' dropout rates. Transitions of students between levels of education within a school cluster may, for example, facilitate the sharing of information about students' strengths and weaknesses between a student's old and new teachers.

School clusters may also help balance the advantages and disadvantages of small and large schools, by providing more personalised learning environments for younger children who are most likely to benefit from smaller schools and classes, and by enabling schools to offer their students a broader and more specialised course offer at higher levels thanks to sufficient numbers of students who may be interested in taking such courses. Ensuring a broad curricular offer is often a particular challenge in rural schools given the small number of students and teachers (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

A study of the reorganisation of schools on a series of educational indicators provides some evidence about the effects of the promotion of school clusters in Colombia since the beginning of the century (Econometría Consultores, 2013_[5]). The study found a decrease in dropout rates between 2004 and 2012 in primary and lower secondary education, regardless of the number of sites in the school cluster. The results were mixed however in the case of upper secondary education, where the largest reduction in dropout rates was observed in large school clusters with more than 16 sites.

In relation to repetition rates, the study found a decrease in primary education between 2004 and 2012, particularly in large school clusters with six or more sites, although this reduction is also related to a policy of automatic student promotion between 2002 and 2009. On the other hand, repetition rates in lower and upper secondary education tended to increase between those same years, with the largest increase observed in smaller school clusters with five or less sites. The study furthermore collected qualitative information on perceptions of the school community on the reorganisation of schools which suggest that school clusters had eased rural students' transition between levels and sites.

Since small schools typically face higher costs per students, school networks with a large number of small schools tend to be expensive to operate. Jointly administering multiple schools as part of a cluster can help to enhance the efficiency of school networks and the capacity to provide high-quality instruction by generating economies of scale while maintaining the school network's geographic coverage and avoiding the closure of small rural schools. For example, a school cluster can share equipment and materials, or motivate high-quality teachers to stay in rural areas by providing them with better development opportunities and a larger professional community (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

This has been the case also in Colombia where school clusters have been perceived as granting small rural school sites access to school resources and infrastructure such as a library, computer lab and sports facilities (Econometría Consultores, 2013_[5]). The review team's visit similarly showed that school clusters provide small rural sites with access to ICT resources such as the *kioskos Vive Digital*, even though there are challenges in using these materials effectively for teaching and learning, and in co-ordinating the provision of these services between responsible authorities (e.g. for supplying and connecting ICT materials) (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

School education follows a comprehensive approach with potential benefits for transitions and equity

One of the most relevant characteristics of the provision of school education in Colombia is its comprehensive approach until the end of lower secondary school, avoiding early tracking and selection into different pathways (OECD, 2016_[14]). Early student selection can have a negative impact on students assigned to lower tracks, without raising the performance of the whole student population. Additionally, it risks exacerbating inequities since students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often more likely to be placed in the least academically oriented tracks (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

In Colombia, upper secondary education requires students at the age of 15 to choose between a general and a vocational option which can vary and be adjusted to local and regional labour market needs. Students, however, follow most of the same subjects, making the distinction more one of emphasis than independent tracks; 80% of time should be dedicated to the same core areas. Students also gain the right to access tertiary education regardless of their track. According to ministry data, 61.6% of students in upper secondary education were enrolled in a general programme, 38.4% in a vocational programme in 2017.¹⁵ The share of 15-year-olds reporting to be enrolled in a general programme according to the OECD PISA 2015 is around the OECD average (79.2% vs. 81.9%) (OECD, 2016_[2]). Students in general and vocational programmes in Colombia do not differ generally in their socio-economic status nor in their academic performance (García et al., 2016_[21]), although vocational education is perceived to have a lower status.

This is different to quite a few other countries as data from the OECD PISA 2015 highlight. On average across OECD countries, 15-year-olds are more likely to be enrolled in a vocational programme if they attend a disadvantaged school. Together with Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, Colombia is among the 8 out of 72 countries in which students in vocational programmes in fact outperform their peers in general programmes (OECD, 2016_[2]). Since school sites can offer a general programme, a vocational programme or both types of programmes, both options may be pursued in the same type of institution which has the potential for improving the status of vocational education, even if maintaining a specialised offer (OECD, forthcoming_[20]). In 2014, nevertheless, only 13% of all school sites offered both programmes. In rural areas, this was only the case for 6% of sites compared to 20% in urban areas (García et al., 2016_[21]).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is fundamental for a strong beginning in life and in learning and development (Cunha et al., 2006_[22]). Both national (Bernal, 2014_[23]) and international evidence (Berlinski, Galiani and Gertler, 2009_[24]) highlight the short- and long-run benefits of ECEC on children's well-being as well as for families and society in general. As an OECD report on transitions between ECEC and primary education found, providing ECEC and primary education on the same premises can soften children's transition to school as children and parents usually do not have to change buildings and are already familiar with the space as well as staff (OECD, 2017_[25]). In this respect, it is positive that children should attend one year of compulsory pre-school education which is offered within school clusters, potentially smoothing transitions.

Nevertheless, expanding the provision of pre-primary education, including in rural areas, and improving quality remain important challenges for Colombia to provide children with a strong foundation for life and for reducing the impact of their background on their outcomes in schooling and the labour market (see OECD (2016_[14]) for an in-depth analysis of and recommendations on ECEC in Colombia). In 2016, only 53.6% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in the transition year according to their age, even though this

year is compulsory. In rural areas, this was only the case for 45.3% of children (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). According to data from the OECD PISA 2015, Colombian students have on average less than two years of pre-school education, while the OECD average is three years, and the impact of attending pre-primary education on students' performance at a later stage of their schooling is lower than in other countries (OECD, 2016_[2]).

Colombia promotes an integrated approach to early childhood development, which includes pre-primary education, and has made this a presidential priority with its Early Childhood Comprehensive Care Strategy *De Cero a Siempre*. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of children in comprehensive care almost doubled (MEN, 2017_[26]). But the educational component of early childhood education remains underdeveloped and there are challenges to articulate provision and resources between two different systems – the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano para el Bienestar Familiar*, ICBF) manages ECEC services for 0-5 year-olds as explained in Chapter 1. In 2017, 38 000 out of about 276 000 5-6 year-olds attending ECEC services managed by the ICBF in the year before had not yet entered the transition year (MEN, 2018_[17]).

Ensuring sufficient funding as analysed in Chapter 2 and improving data and information systems are particular challenges to expand access to high-quality provision and particularly so given the country's commitment for universal coverage in rural areas as part of the peace agreement. Based on the review visit, there are no quality data available on enrolment rates in the two previous pre-school years for 3- and 4-year-olds, for example.

Policies strengthen demand for tertiary education, and encourage partnerships between schools, tertiary institutions and vocational providers

The recent inclusion of upper secondary education as part of compulsory education is of paramount importance for Colombia. Completion of upper secondary education is increasingly regarded as the minimum required for full participation in society and the economy, not only in OECD countries but also more widely (OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015_[27]). Upper secondary education allows students to consolidate and deepen the core skills needed to continue to tertiary education or enter the labour market (OECD, 2016_[14]). As research suggests, the extension of compulsory schooling can raise the education of those most likely to leave early, produce other social benefits, such as a reduction in crime, and benefit the children of those gaining higher levels of schooling as a result of this reform. Although costly to implement, investments may be offset by private returns, higher taxes and lower dependence on social welfare (Harmon, 2017_[28]).

Since compulsory upper secondary education is only a recent development in Colombia, the country needs to strengthen the social demand for this level of education and articulate upper secondary with tertiary education and short vocational programmes offered by other providers. Expanding demand among rural youth will be a particular challenge considering lower levels of aspirations and expectations as analysed below. At a national level, promising policies have been put in place, even though this has also led to increasing budgetary pressures and an increasing resource allocation for tertiary education relative to school education as analysed in Chapter 2.

One of the most well-known initiatives of the government in office at the time of writing this report is *Ser Pilo Paga*, a scholarships programme for tertiary education for the best students from the most disadvantaged households. As the results of an evaluation of the short-term impact of the programme for the first two cohorts of 2014 and 2015 reveals,

the programme has contributed to closing the socio-economic gap for access to tertiary education (Alvarez et al, 2017).¹⁶ There is also some evidence that the programme has contributed to improving the performance of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the school leaving examination *Saber 11* (Laajaj, Moya and Sanchez, 2018^[29]; Londono-Velez, Rodriguez and Sanchez, 2017^[30]). As Urquiola (2015^[31]) suggests, the organisation of the school system, labour market returns and access to tertiary education may play an important role in influencing students' efforts and attitudes to learning. Youth in Action (*Jóvenes en Acción*), a training programme for unemployed youth, is another noteworthy experience (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Youth in Action (*Más Jóvenes en Acción*)

The programme introduced in the early 2000s provides 3 months of classroom training (in a legally registered training institution) and a 3-month apprenticeship in a job (in the formal sector) to young people aged 18-25 belonging to the poorest parts of society classified in the two lowest levels of SISBEN – an information system designed to target social protection at families in need. Training institutions have to guarantee apprenticeships to be paid by the government for the provision of training, a conditionality that ensures institutions are offering courses and developing skills that are relevant for the labour market (Kugler et al., 2015^[32]).

The programme entailed a randomised design and its short and long-term effects have been extensively documented. One of the most interesting findings regarding the programme is the complementarity between vocational training and formal education: relative to non-participants, randomly selected participants are more likely to complete secondary school and to attend and persist in tertiary education eight years after random assignment. Moreover, training also has educational spill over effects on participants' family members, who are more likely to enrol in tertiary education (Kugler et al., 2015^[32]). Other remarkable results of the programme include improvements to both male and female labour market outcomes at a similar scale; and the programme proving to be a cost-effective approach to reducing informality and improving labour market outcomes in the long run (Attanasio et al., 2017^[33]).

Source: Kugler, A. et al. (2015), “Long-term Direct and Spillover Effects of Job Training: Experimental Evidence from Colombia”; Attanasio, O. et al. (2017), “Vocational training for disadvantaged youth in Colombia: A long-term follow-up”, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/app.20150554>.

Furthermore, Secretaries of Education and schools are free and encouraged to establish individual partnerships with tertiary institutions and the National Learning Service (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*, SENA).¹⁷ The SENA, an institution providing short vocational programmes and technical and technological programmes at tertiary level (ISCED level 5) has fulfilled a key role in the provision of vocational upper secondary education since the 1990s when such partnerships were set out in the General Education Law. The SENA is the largest provider of vocational courses, with a presence in nearly half of all schools offering upper secondary education (Econometría Consultores, 2013^[34]). The SENA also has an important role in rural and remote areas and in specific sectors such as agriculture and cattle raising, mining and informatics among others. The existence of such partnerships was clearly evident during the review visit with several

schools talking about their links or their plans to establish them. One rural school leader, for instance, told the team about plans to establish a programme in tourism together with the SENA. Another school leader provided examples of work with a local university in the area of information science.

Such partnerships, which are relatively rare among countries participating in the OECD School Resources Review, hold promises for both students and schools. They can provide orientation to students and enrich their upper secondary education, but also build the capacity of school staff. The SENA, for instance, provides staff with expertise in specific vocational fields, knowledge of the labour market and experience in entrepreneurship. An evaluation of partnerships between schools and tertiary institutions or the SENA suggests that partnerships have had a positive impact on basic competencies of rural students but not on students' entry into the labour market. The study however also identified some challenges, such as a high demand which is difficult to meet for the SENA, limited support by the Secretary of Education, and limited time and resources in schools (Econometría Consultores, 2013^[34]).

Recent changes to the length of compulsory education heighten the urgency of establishing effective partnerships, and of articulating upper secondary education with programmes offered by the SENA, which students could traditionally choose after lower secondary education.

The funding of private providers provides some flexibility in the provision of education and has ensured access for students in rural areas and conflict zones

All Secretaries of Education must guarantee access to free education for their students. When a secretary has difficulties to ensure provision, it can contract a private provider through 4 different mechanisms which are regulated by Decree 1851 of 2015 and described in Annex 3.A. In 2017, 6.6% of the total public enrolment of 81.3% was provided by such government-dependent private schools.

The public funding of private providers has been a very important solution to ensure access to school education in areas with a changing student population. Expanding urban areas, rural to urban migration and the displacement of people through the conflict have all posed challenges for the planning of local school networks. Prior to the creation of a dedicated fund to finance educational infrastructure (*Fondo de Financiamiento de la Infraestructura Educativa*, FFIE) within the Full-Day Schooling programme, Colombia did not have a national policy to expand the supply of public education infrastructure. The contracting of private providers has also played an important role to provide access to education in rural and remote areas affected by the conflict.

These agreements have furthermore gained increasing relevance as a mechanism to ensure the provision of education to special groups of students. Some Secretaries of Education have been advancing the national policy for the recognition of students' special educational needs and any type of disability (Decree 1421 of 2017) through contracts with private providers. Similar strategies have been pursued to ensure access to education for children and young people in conflict with the justice system within the framework of the Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System (*Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal para Adolescentes*, SRPA). Likewise, since 2016 the recognition of greater autonomy for indigenous communities has been implemented in various Secretaries of Education through agreements with churches and other religious entities (more on this below).

In recent years, the government has reduced its reliance on public-private partnerships for the provision of education, given the improved coverage of the public school network and reduction of the total school-age population as explained in Chapter 1 (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). In this context, many public schools have experienced a reduction of their regular enrolment, causing an excess of teaching staff. Therefore, the ministry has promoted the reduction of service contracts with private providers through Decree 1851 of 2015 and encouraged Secretaries of Education to provide education directly.

This trend can be observed in many large cities, such as Bogotá or Cali. Between 2010 and 2017, enrolments in publicly-funded private provision in urban areas declined by 48%. In rural areas, however, it has been more challenging to decrease reliance on private providers which is also linked to a lack of flexibility in the teacher labour market as analysed in Chapter 4. While enrolment in fully public provision in rural areas decreased by 8.9% between 2010 and 2016, enrolments in government-dependent private education increased slightly, by 2.4%. Latest enrolment data, however, indicate a changing trend. In 2017, 25.7% less students had to be enrolled in a school contracted by the Secretary of Education compared to 2016 (data provided by the ministry of education).¹⁸

School governance

There are established platforms for strong community participation in schools, and initiatives are being developed to encourage parental engagement

One of the most remarkable features of the Colombian education system is not only the promotion of stakeholder engagement at the national and territorial levels (e.g. through national and local education forums) but also community participation in school.

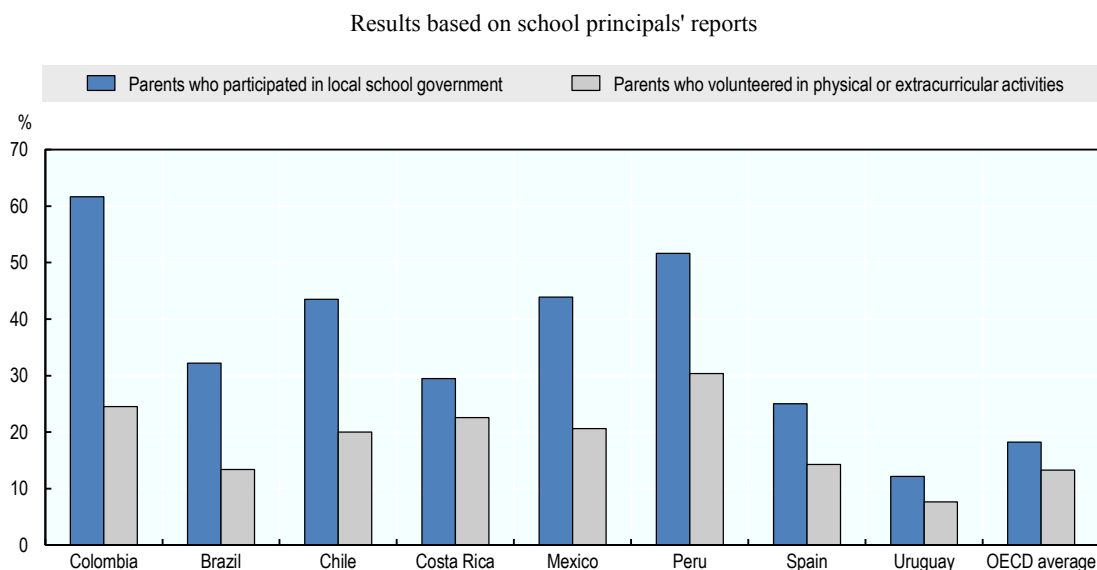
The General Education Law defines the school community as students, teachers, parents and guardians, alumni, school leaders and school managers, and they are expected to participate in the design and implementation of the school educational project, ensuring a shared vision among the members of the school community. Each school must have a directive council comprised of representatives of all of the above-mentioned groups plus a representative of the local productive sector. The key role of the directive council is clearly in evidence in principals' reports about decision-making for the OECD PISA 2015 (see Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2).

Besides this council, several other bodies within the school give students, parents and teachers the opportunity to participate directly in school management. In rural communities, *Juntas de Acción Comunal*, local civil society organisations, are also involved in school management, mainly providing a link between school and community to departments and municipalities. Compared to OECD and Latin American countries, data from PISA 2015 suggest relatively high participation of parents in school government in Colombia, as shown in Figure 3.3.

Out-of-school factors account for the vast majority of differences in educational achievement. Families are the first social unit in which children learn and develop as is also recognised in the General Education Law (Arts. 4 and 7). It is not surprising, then, that interactions with parents have consistently been shown to influence students' achievement, expectations, attitudes and psychological health. Parents are also key players in helping their children succeed at school and engaging parents in students' learning at school can play a crucial role for students' success (Kraft and Rogers, 2015_[35]; OECD, 2017_[36]). Close links between the school and the community in rural areas can

also help sustain rural schools and communities (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming^[3]; OECD, forthcoming^[20]).

Figure 3.3. Relationship of schools with parents and the community, PISA 2015



Source: OECD (2017), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume V): Collaborative Problem Solving*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264285521-en>, Table V.7.36.

Research for Colombia has shown that, within schools, parents are seen as key allies in students' education and school improvement processes (Martínez and Celis, 2016^[37]). Accordingly, several initiatives in Colombia have aimed to raise public awareness about the importance of education and the need for parents' to be involved in and committed with their children's education. The Education Excellence Day (*Día de la Excelencia Educativa* or *Día E*), for instance, is implemented every year in view of analysing the results of the school performance index ISCE and initiating a plan for improvement.

Another initiative is the creation of parents' schools (*Escuelas de Padres y Madres*), through Law 1404 of 2010. The aim of this programme, developed through a participatory methodology but not yet implemented, is to involve families and the whole education community in their children's education. To further improve this programme, the ministry has established contracts with the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) to help parents participate in school activities and *Red PaPaz* (the country's largest parents' organisation) to promote the creation of parent schools throughout the country. Parent schools should develop parental skills for supporting their children's learning. Both initiatives were scheduled to start operating in 2018 (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Despite these noteworthy initiatives, there still seems to be room to further develop strategies to promote parental involvement in children's education, bearing in mind that school enrolment still needs to increase (especially in pre-school and upper secondary education) and dropout rates are still high, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, various schools the review team visited reported organising workshops for parents, but also mentioned that it is difficult to get parents involved, due to work commitments and time constraints, for example, or the limited education of parents in rural areas.¹⁹

More generally, there is scope to ensure community participation in schools not only in theory but also in practice, including involvement of disadvantaged community members with less voice in rural and remote areas (Rivera Sepúlveda, 2016_[38]). This may point to the need for particular strategies for parental engagement in rural schools. Student representatives also reported that students' voice is not always heard in school decision-making, in the definition of the school handbook, for example. Creating a positive school climate and fighting school violence represent ongoing challenges as analysed below.

The organisation of teaching and learning

Flexible models provide pedagogical approaches to meet diverse needs, such as those of children and youth in rural areas, and students affected by the conflict

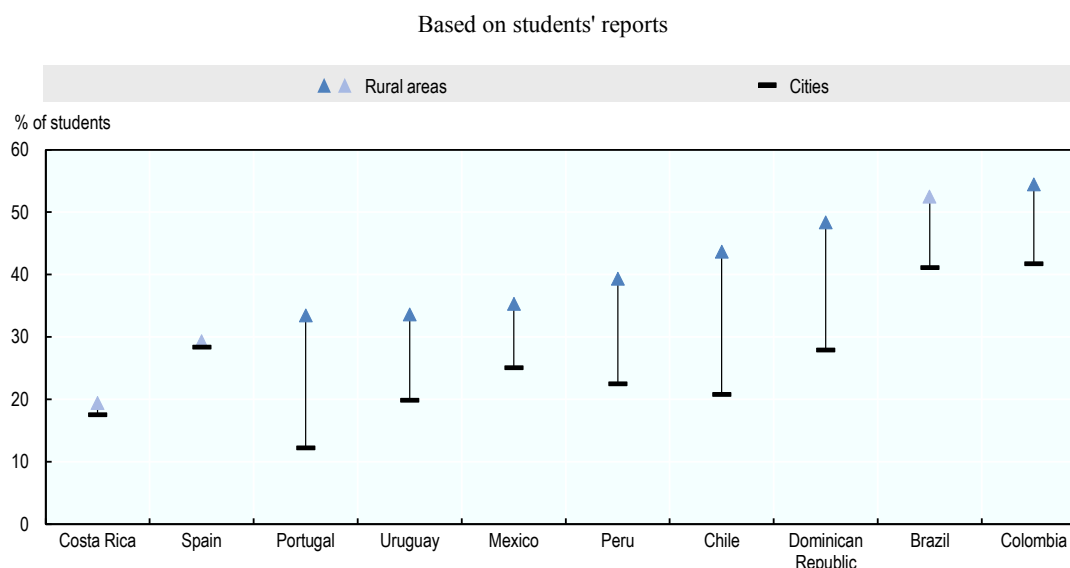
Colombia has a long history of designing and implementing flexible school models. While using different pedagogical approaches, most models share a common emphasis on engaging students with their local context and providing a more flexible schedule and learning environment than traditional schools, addressing the needs of a linguistically, culturally and geographically diverse country (OECD, 2016_[14]).

Flexible models have expanded access to education, especially for students in rural and remote areas or from disadvantaged groups, e.g. by providing options for youth who take on family responsibilities, such as domestic work or raising younger siblings (Montero and Uccelli, 2016_[39]). Based on Colombia's Quality of Life Survey (*Encuesta de Calidad de Vida*, ECV) for 2015, around 42% of young men in rural and urban areas not studying stated having to work as the main reason for leaving school; a similar share of young girls in rural areas stated domestic work (Pardo, 2017_[40]). The pressure to reconcile work and study also clearly emerges from data of the OECD PISA 2015 (see Figure 3.4).

Flexible models have also played an important role in the context of Colombia's conflict and the potential to do so for the construction of a post-conflict society, e.g. through accelerated learning for displaced students and second-chance programmes for former child combatants. The Peace Accords with the FARC entail the design of a Special Rural Education Plan (*Plan Especial de Educación Rural*, PEER) and a Peace Education Plan (*Plan de Educación para la Paz*) with the aim of closing the gaps between urban and rural population and reintegrating the demobilised population in the education system (see also Chapters 1 and 2).

In this context, FUCE PAZ, an organisation of former FARC members, has been designing a flexible model to provide education to demobilised groups in co-ordination with the ministry. While a number of factors are important for successfully reintegrating ex-combatants into society and preventing them from returning to illegal activities or armed groups, education seems to be valued by former guerrilla combatants and to aid them in following alternative life paths (Kaplan and Nussio, 2016_[41]).

Most of the existing flexible models were designed and began their implementation under the umbrella of the Rural Education Programme (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER), which included the implementation of flexible models adapted to the needs of the rural community (see also Chapter 1 for a description of the programme). The programme was crucial to heighten the system's attention to rural education. Rodríguez, Sánchez and Armenta (2010_[42]) evaluated the impact of the programme and found positive and significant effects on efficiency (dropout, pass and failure rates) and quality (achievement in standardised language assessment) in the schools where it was implemented.

Figure 3.4. Students who work for pay outside of school, PISA 2015

Notes: Rural areas refer to communities with fewer than 3 000 people, cities to communities with 100 000 or more people.

Statistically significant gaps between rural areas and cities are marked in a darker tone.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the share of 15-year-olds in rural areas working for pay outside of school.

Source: Adjusted from Echazarra, A. and T. Radinger (forthcoming), “The challenges and opportunities of delivering rural education: Evidence from PISA and TALIS”, *OECD Education Working Paper Series*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The authors concluded that the success of the programme greatly relied on its design which took into account the specific characteristics and situation of rural students in each municipality where it was implemented, responding to the needs of each community. Flexible models have also emerged out of local initiatives and inspired similar initiatives in other countries, such as the *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (Tutorial Learning System or SAT) developed by FUNDAEC from the 1970s onwards.

Not all flexible models, however, have been equally successful. The most well-known and effective model is without doubt *Escuela Nueva*, which provides basic education to rural and remote populations through multi-grade teaching. The programme emphasises teachers’ learning about multi-grade teaching as well as opportunities for professional interaction with teachers in other schools; the provision for students and teachers of instructional materials and textbooks that facilitate self-guided learning appropriate for multi-grade classes; the application of pedagogies that see students as active participants in the learning process; and the involvement of the school community in the management and organisation of schools.

McEwan (1998^[43]) found that New Schools are better endowed with inputs like textbooks and place greater emphasis on active learning than traditional rural schools, but that many New Schools have not implemented all the above-mentioned elements. Regarding their effectiveness, the author found positive and statistically significant effects on language and mathematics achievement in Year 3 and language in Year 5. In a later work,

Benveniste and McEwan (2000_[44]) sought to explain the great deal of variation in the adoption of new pedagogies in *Escuela Nueva*.

In this study, the authors found that the provision of training (as well as a range of formal qualifications and personal characteristics) only explains a very small portion of the variation in the adoption of new pedagogies. As they suggest, it is teacher motivation and commitment that might explain much of the remaining variation. Although the model has shown potential to foster positive learning outcomes, and the *Escuela Nueva* Foundation promotes the adequate implementation of the model, a review of the learning materials for implementation by the ministry of education (the model is implemented by different actors and organisations) found that many are outdated, not relevant for all students or conducive to developing complex problem-solving skills (OECD, 2016_[14]).

Flexible models have facilitated the rapid expansion of education, particularly in rural and remote areas, but there have been more general concerns about the quality they provide and the need for further complementary measures to address the needs of disadvantaged students (more on this below). A review of the main flexible models found that the capacity for implementation and the results these different models achieve vary greatly. The review proposed that models can be classified into two groups: those that have consolidated and scaled up over the past decades, and those that have been of a very limited scale and impact (Econometría Consultores and SEI, 2014_[45]).

The same study identified several problems with the institutional arrangements for the implementation of flexible school models: i) limited local capacity to identify the most suitable model and to effectively implement it; ii) weak local management evidenced in the proliferation of models and the difficulty of creating pathways between the flexible models and traditional schooling; and iii) teachers' poor preparation and lack of resources (Econometría Consultores and SEI, 2014_[45]).

Policies and initiatives are in place to provide an education that is sensitive to the needs of ethnic minorities, including indigenous students in rural areas

Colombia is a multicultural and multilingual country with a total of 102 different ethnic groups, 65 indigenous and 2 Afro-Colombian languages as well as the Romani language of the Rrom as described in Chapter 1. The government, in general, and education, in particular, have been sensitive to the needs of the country's ethnic groups as enshrined in the Constitution, developing a wide array of ethnic education models. Considering the concentration of indigenous peoples in rural areas, ethnic education is crucial for providing a high-quality education for all students in rural parts of the country.

Generally, ethnic communities must be consulted on all public policy issues that concern them, including education. And ethnic communities have considerable autonomy to organise their own schools and curriculum (e.g. through the development of their *Proyecto Educativo Comunitario*, PEC). Community organisations – the *Cabildos Indígenas* for indigenous groups and the *Consejos Comunitarios* for the Afro-Colombian population – have the potential to play an important role in this, while the ministry provides advice and support for the formulation, design and implementation of communities' own educational projects.

By 2017, a total of 106 projects had been enacted, both for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). In 2017, for instance, a particular model for the Afro-Colombian communities of the Pacific region had been recognised (*Modelo Etnoeducación para Comunidades Negras del Pacífico Colombiano*).

While ethnic education has not reached all communities, experienced heterogeneous implementation and been criticised for national or local authorities not always respecting the experience and knowledge of the different communities (Castillo, 2008_[46]), there are successful examples. Indigenous groups such as the Wayyu and the Arhuaco have a long history of developing their own pedagogical approaches and methods appropriate to their particular traditions, history, language and cosmology.

As representatives of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC) reported for the review team's preliminary meetings, the community has established more than 700 bilingual schools that respect their culture, values and traditions, such as recognising the role of the elders in the community and supporting intergenerational learning. The community has developed models for educating its own teachers through peer learning and collective education, engages in research on the learning processes of children from the community and has established language revitalisation and indigenous pedagogy programmes. The CRIC has also established an autonomous indigenous and intercultural university (*Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural*).

There is also some evidence that suggests that, when implemented appropriately, ethnic education can have a positive effect on students and communities. In a recent study, Palacios, Sánchez and Córdoba (2015_[47]) found that the education provided in schools following an ethnic education programme in the Pacific region can improve students' results in standardised assessments. Based on qualitative information, the authors suggest that pedagogical practices within the classroom provide students with formal and informal institutional support that boosts their self-esteem and improves their learning processes. Classroom practices in these schools were based on principles of interculturality, progression, autonomy and community participation.

Research on the impact of intercultural and bilingual education on the academic achievement of indigenous students in other contexts in Latin America with larger indigenous populations (such as Mexico and Peru) is not conclusive. Studies however similarly suggest that such programmes have the potential to contribute to reducing achievements gaps, if properly implemented (e.g. through adequate teacher preparation) (Hynsjö and Damon, 2016_[48]; Santibañez, 2016_[49]).

Beyond these models of ethnic education, the government has further responded to calls by ethnic communities for greater autonomy through the creation of ethnic groups' own intercultural education systems (*Sistemas Educativos Propios e Interculturales*) (MEN, 2014_[18]). Among these, the *Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio* (SEIP) is the most developed but has still not been approved. A similar system is expected in the future for Afro-Colombian populations. The design and implementation of any of these systems require constant stakeholder consultation with ethnic communities.

Despite these positive developments, there are some aspects that raise concerns and should be more carefully examined in the future. This includes the time and process required for developing ethnic groups' own intercultural systems, their relationship with the rest of the system, and financing and oversight. Lastly, Colombia has not yet developed a broader intercultural and multilingual approach to education which applies to all schools and not only to those serving ethnic communities in particular. In light of internal migration, intercultural education is increasingly relevant not only in rural but also urban areas (Cortina, 2017_[50]). While Afro-Colombian studies should be part of the curriculum of all schools, for example, it is unclear to what extent this has been

implemented across the system, particularly bearing in mind the general challenge for schools to develop and implement their own curricula as analysed below.

School self-evaluation and development are encouraged, and initiatives promote reflection about and the use of assessment results

While there are no external reviews of school processes, central guidelines encourage school improvement and development (e.g. *Guía para el mejoramiento institucional*). Every school is expected to evaluate itself on an annual basis with the school community, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement. During the review visit, the team could observe some school development and evaluation practices. Most of the schools visited mentioned the implementation of annual self-evaluation processes. Compared to various other countries in the region, self-evaluation seems to be more developed in Colombia as data from the OECD PISA 2015 suggest (OECD, 2016_[2]).²⁰

Nevertheless, the review team had some concerns about the quality of these processes. It was unclear to what extent they involved the whole community and different sites across a school cluster, including rural sites. It was also clear that most of schools' attention was devoted to improving students' performance in standardised assessments, and that not all schools will have the capacity to evaluate their processes (also see Table 3.6 below).

Standardised assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) are the cornerstone of Colombia's approach to school evaluation (see Table 3.5). They have played a key role in shifting the focus towards students' learning outcomes and are linked to strategies to promote the use of results in schools. As an OECD review of evaluation and assessment in education highlighted, information on where students stand in their learning and the progress they have made is key to designing strategies for the further improvement of teaching and learning in classrooms, schools and the system as a whole (OECD, 2013_[51]).

During the review visit, Colombian school principals, teachers and even students informed the team how they were focused on improving assessments results. School actors were keenly aware of the results of their school in standardised assessments, and how they compared to other schools in the region and the country. The introduction of the school performance index ISCE in 2015 has given further prominence to the assessments and made their results widely known to the school community.

The ministry of education and ICFES also encourage the use of assessment results for improvement, and there is some evidence that this is the case to some extent. The *Día E* has been officially incorporated into schools' academic calendar to review the school quality. Results from the ISCE, the *Pruebas Saber* and the school's self-evaluation often lead to the elaboration and implementation of school improvement plans. Assessment results are also taken into account during the five weeks of institutional development throughout the school year. Aware of the need to further disseminate the results of the evaluations and promote the use of results to shape processes, the ministry has implemented the *Siempre Día E* strategy providing additional support in the form of material and workshops. Also, the ICFES promotes the use of assessment results through written materials and training at the regional and school level throughout the country.

Moreover, given their increasing importance for Colombian education, the evaluation institute ICFES has refined the assessments to increase their reliability and allow comparisons over time. Nevertheless, there are some concerns raised by the research community both about validity and comparability and the effective use of results for policy-making (Molano, Rodríguez Gómez and Bayona, 2017_[52]).

Table 3.5. Student assessment in Colombia, PISA 2015

Percentage of students in schools where students are assessed using the following methods at least once a year:

	Mandatory standardised tests	Non-mandatory standardised tests	Teacher-developed tests
Colombia	74.8	82.9	62.8
Brazil	64.0	80.2	70.3
Chile	98.2	71.7	84.6
Costa Rica	24.8	16.9	54.2
Mexico	58.4	31.9	41.9
Peru	64.5	55.8	76.2
Spain	46.2	53.5	91.7
Uruguay	36.9	15.7	79.6
OECD average	76.2	68.0	65.5

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Tables II.4.20, II.4.21, II.4.22, II.4.24.

Challenges

School network

School clusters in practice create challenges for school management and potential inequalities, especially for students in small rural and remote sites

School clusters entail a series of advantages as previously explained in this chapter, but the way school clusters are organised and managed in practice requires further attention.

The criteria to define the number and size of sites per main school are not clear. As a report from Econometría (2013^[5]) shows, the number of sites per school varies greatly, with some schools having more than 20 sites, others only 1 or 2. In principle, Secretaries of Education would cluster schools based on geographical proximity, but there is no clear definition of geographical proximity (there is evidence that some rural sites are very far away from their main school) nor is there an established upper limit to the number of sites a school may have. This situation leads to extreme cases in which school principals, possibly located in the main site in an urban area, are not fully aware of all sites under their leadership (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Moreover, schools' human and financial resources are assigned based on the number of students, without taking into account the number of sites and the distance between them and the main school. For instance, the number of co-ordinators per school is determined by the number of students enrolled in the school without considering the number of sites. If a school has between 901 and 1 400 students, the Secretary of Education will appoint 2 co-ordinators (see Table 3.2). In one school, this number of students may be divided up among one main school plus two sites. In this case, the school principal and the two co-ordinators are able to split the job to ensure each site has the support of a school leader. In another school, the same number of students may be divided up in one main school plus five sites, which means that some of the sites would not have constant support from a school leader or may even have no support at all.

During the review visit, the team encountered some sites with a similar number of students as the main site but no school leader. Garcia et al. (2016^[21]) found that schools in

urban areas have on average a higher number of co-ordinators and counsellors per site compared to rural schools, while rural schools have on average a larger number of sites. This clearly represents a challenge for school leadership and management, and the provision of rural education.

Evidently, this situation constitutes a source of potential inequalities in the provision of education, particularly for students in rural and remote school sites. A school with several sites makes for principals overburdened with administrative work, reduces their time for pedagogical leadership and decreases the possibility for co-ordinators to visit all sites as often as desirable. It seems that some sites and their teachers and students – especially those in remote areas – are left without pedagogical support and advice on the quality of their teaching and learning environment. A large school cluster with many individual sites at great distances makes it difficult for school leaders to build a shared educational vision and project among sites and their staff and communities. Furthermore, large school clusters make it challenging to take advantage of potential benefits, e.g. professional learning among teachers or making the best use of staff by assigning teachers to work with students on different sites over the course of a school day.

The same applies to technical-pedagogical support from the Secretaries of Education, particularly those of departments responsible for the provision of education in a large geographical area, which may include many remote sites. Given the Secretaries' limited number of staff, the latter is more likely to focus its support on main school sites, leaving remote school sites unattended.

The planning of school networks and the organisation of transport and boarding arrangements is unclear, which are especially important in remote areas

In theory, governance arrangements facilitate the effective planning of school networks in Colombia. As experience from the OECD School Resources Review highlights, a clear division of responsibilities and leadership for the school network can facilitate efficient planning, reduce undesirable competition and increase the potential for co-operation among schools (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

In Colombia, Secretaries of Education are responsible for the planning of their school network from pre-school to upper secondary education, which can facilitate a flexible use of facilities. Departments can play a strong steering role for the network across their non-certified municipalities. A closer look at the public school network for the country as a whole provides indications of an ongoing adjustment of provision. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of main sites decreased by almost 30%, from 13 670 to 9 881. The number of sites remained largely stable, with a small increase from 43 860 to 44 033 sites according to data provided by the ministry of education. While further analysis is needed, these numbers may suggest a recent trend towards larger school clusters.

Overall, however, it is largely unclear how Secretaries of Education plan and adjust their school networks, including provision in rural and remote areas, and how they work together with the local communities and, in the case of departments, with their non-certified municipalities. It is also unclear to what extent the quality of education is considered. The pressure to clarify processes for the planning of school networks is likely to mount in the future, given the need to plan expanding networks for pre-school and upper secondary education and the effective implementation of full-day schooling (OECD, 2016_[14]). García et al. (2016_[21]), for instance, find a strong link between the presence of upper secondary education in rural areas and enrolments at this level.

School networks need to be planned alongside transport and boarding arrangements. In remote rural areas, adequate policies for transport and boarding are essential to guarantee students' access to school and transitions between sites and levels of education. As analysed in Chapter 2, resources for these services are, however, limited. Concerning student transport, technical guidelines provided by the ministry responsible for transport (*MinTransporte*) in collaboration with the ministry of education are reportedly difficult to comply with in rural areas given geographical diversity. At the same time, safety standards are essential to ensure students' health and well-being.

Transport criteria that fail to provide effective guidance can also make it difficult for Secretaries of Education to assess the cost and feasibility of plans to restructure their school network and anticipate problems that may arise from students' increasing distance to their schools (OECD, forthcoming_[20]). Adequate transport is crucial when school sites are closed, be it for low enrolment, a reorganisation of schools or natural disasters. Between 2014 and 2017, between 850 and 1 300 school sites across the country were closed per year according to ministry reports. The absence of effective school transport furthermore places a burden on families who lack the time or resources to bring their young children to school (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

Boarding schools in Colombia were created decades ago, mainly in rural areas affected by violence and poverty, to ensure students remain in education. Information listed in SIMAT, the country's information system for the enrolment of students in public schools, on the total number of boarding schools is unclear. However, the ministry of education estimates a total of 560 boarding schools in 29 Secretaries of Education belonging to 23 departments, with an enrolment of 36 060 full-time boarding school students, 15 852 part-time, and 91 853 external students.²¹ Most of these boarding schools are located in the Orinoco and Amazonas regions, with the departments of Caquetá, Casanare, Guaviare, Meta, Putumayo, Vaupés and Vichada, having more than 47 boarding schools each. Boarding schools have however been insufficiently regulated and often lack adequate infrastructure, staff and other services, such as sufficient meals (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Challenges remain to develop an education offer that is engaging to all students, also in rural areas, and supports their transition to the local labour market

While the aforementioned policies to strengthen demand for tertiary education and improve the pedagogical offer at upper secondary level point into the right direction, developing secondary education remains a crucial task for the years to come, including in rural and remote areas with particularly low enrolment at this level.

As García et al. (2016_[21]) claim, the competency standards that should be developed in upper secondary education are not clearly defined and programmes are extremely diverse and specific. The offer of general and vocational upper secondary programmes is not always pertinent to the needs of students in their context. The authors in fact found that young people aged 14-18 years reported a lack of interest in education as the main reason for not attending school. The difficulty to provide students in all regions of the country with an educational offer that matches their interests was also evident in the review team's visit. Partnerships with tertiary institutions and the National Learning Service (SENA) seemed to be sometimes driven by supply rather than an analysis of students' interests and the local labour market. Students in rural areas also have less choice, given that rural schools seem to specialise more and offer either a general or a vocational

programme (García et al., 2016_[21]). Another school with a different upper secondary specialisation may be too far for students to access.

Some strategies, such as *Ser Pilo Paga* mentioned above, but also the campaign Mobilising Demand in Tertiary Education (*Movilización de la Demanda*), which provides guidance on the labour market through a dedicated website, have the potential to raise student interest in staying in school and continuing to tertiary education (OECD, 2016_[14]). School counsellors (*docentes orientadores*) – whose role entails career guidance – can also play a key role within schools in motivating students to stay until the end of upper secondary education. They can inform students of the expected benefits of completing this level and help those interested in continuing their education in their transition to tertiary education. Despite their key role, however, there is a severe shortage of counsellors and staff seem to require further training (Acosta, García and Maldonado, 2016_[53]).²²

The perceived lack of perspectives and lower educational aspirations is a particular problem in rural areas, even in countries where rural students outperform their urban peers (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming_[3]). This is also the case in Colombia, as analysed in Chapter 1. While educational aspirations are relatively high in Colombia overall, 15-year-olds in rural areas were 42% less likely to expect to complete at least a university degree than their urban peers (OECD, 2017_[36]). According to Sanchez (2018_[1]), the system has failed to adapt to new realities and is not offering rural students an appropriate vocational upper secondary education for the current rurality. Developing vocational options requires adequate resources for equipment and materials as well as specialised teaching staff. This may be part of the reason why rural schools largely offer general programmes, and rarely both types of programmes as found by García et al. (2016_[21]).

Pedagogical Productive Projects (*Proyectos Pedagógicos Productivos*) have the potential to provide students with the opportunity to develop relevant skills, including entrepreneurial ones, that respond to their local context. But schools require greater capacity to provide their students with opportunities to develop such projects (López and Serrano, 2012_[54]). Upper secondary students must dedicate 80 hours of their education to a civic service. Rural students may dedicate this time to agricultural, ecological or similar projects for the benefit of their community. Teachers and school leaders may, however, also require further guidance to plan meaningful experiences for their students.

The limited presence of higher education institutions in rural areas is likely a further explanation for lower aspirations. Moreover, it can put schools in rural areas at a disadvantage, as compared to urban schools, in creating links with tertiary institutions (Econometría Consultores, 2013_[34]). Regional Higher Education Centres (*Centros Regionales de Educación Superior*, CERES), partnerships between tertiary institutions, public authorities and employers established since 2003, may provide some opportunities, but their further development has been unclear in recent years (OECD, 2016_[14]).

The quality assurance mechanisms for funding private providers raises concerns for quality, and a large independent private sector risks social segregation

The quality of publicly-funded private schools in Colombia is considered very variable. Evaluations regarding the impact of concession schools (*colegios en concesión*) – a model of public funding for private schools that has since been discontinued – differed with respect to the Secretaries of Education that implemented these partnerships. This

clearly highlights the need to replicate best practices for the provision of education through partnerships with private providers for the system as a whole.

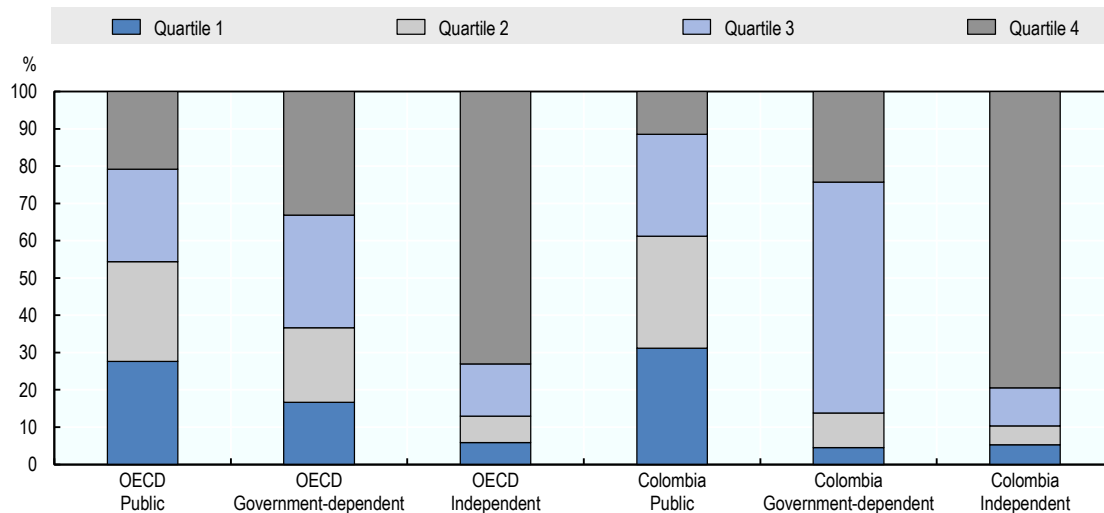
For example, an evaluation for public provision awarded in concession in Medellín (Barrientos and Rios Gallego, 2007_[55]) showed that students in these publicly-funded private schools obtained lower academic results and were more likely to repeat a year or drop out of school than their peers in public schools. Conversely, in Bogotá, publicly-funded private schools showed better results. An evaluation of the concessions programme launched in 1999 showed that this modality entailed a lower dropout rate and better results in standardised assessments (Barrera-Osorio, 2007_[56]).

Colombia has in place a relatively strong regulatory framework for all private schools, including those without public funding. The fees that can be charged in independent private schools, for instance, depend on annual self-evaluations and the school performance index ISCE (for further details, see Sánchez (2018_[1])). But the use and quality assurance of the public contracting of private providers seem to require further attention. A report by the ministry of finance for 2013 criticised excessive contracting due to information and management problems and an inefficient use of teaching staff and available resources (MinHacienda, 2015_[57]). Since then, new regulations have been put in place with Decree 1851 in 2015. The new regulations seem to have already achieved part of their goal of reducing the use of private providers, at least in urban areas. However, their long-term impact, including on the quality of provision, is still unclear.

A number of other challenges still raise concerns about the use of private providers. There is little information on how supervision works in practice and how quality standards are enforced (OECD, 2016_[14]). Regulations on minimum standards focus on outcomes (see Annex 3.A) but do not prescribe the monitoring of processes. As analysed below, the capacity of Secretaries of Education in general varies widely, also raising concerns about the quality assurance of publicly-funded private providers, particularly in regions with less capacity. This includes rural areas, where it has been more difficult to reduce the use of private contracts, although latest enrolment data indicate a large decrease in 2016-17.

It is furthermore relatively unclear how students are assigned to publicly-funded private schools in the event demand cannot be met – an important equity question – and the current databases make it difficult to monitor enrolments. The nature of contracts makes it difficult to offer transparency about costs. Secretaries of Education may, for example, provide public teachers or own the school building, which would not be accounted for in the contracting database (*Formato Único de Contratación*, FUC). Lastly, a large share of contracts only last one year, which poses challenges for providers to ensure a quality education and makes for a lack of continuity for students.

On the other hand, advantaged students are highly concentrated in the private school sector – particularly in independent private schools – while students of lower socio-economic background are over-represented in both public and government-dependent private schools. Based on data from the OECD PISA 2015, only 37% of 15-year-olds from the most advantaged quartile (as measured by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status) attended public schools, compared to 95% of students from the least advantaged quartile. By contrast, 59% of the most advantaged students attended independent private schools, compared to only 4% of the country's least advantaged quartile (see Figure 3.5) (OECD, 2016_[2]).

Figure 3.5. Type of institution by student socio-economic background, PISA 2015

Notes: Public schools are those managed by a public education authority, government agency, or governing board appointed by a government or elected by public franchise. Private schools refer to schools managed directly or indirectly by a non-government organisation, such as a church, trade union, business or other private institution. Depending on whether or not they receive funding from the government, private schools can be considered as government-independent (50% or more of their funding comes from private sources) or government-dependent (at least 50% of their funding comes from the government).

Since some principals of private schools did not answer to the question about funding, the percentage of students attending public schools may be overestimated.

Quartiles refer to schools' socio-economic profile based on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status.

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.4.10 Table II.4.11, Table II.4.12.

This high social concentration of students by type of institution does not mean that Colombia presents a high degree of social segregation among all of its schools. The segregation of 15-year-olds across schools, based on their parents' occupation, was below the OECD average. Overall, the level of segregation as measured by PISA was comparable with that of Uruguay, slightly lower than in Brazil and Mexico and significantly less pronounced than in Chile and Peru. As in many countries in the region, more than 20% of the between-school segregation is explained by differences in the social composition of private and public schools. Among the 66 countries with available data, Colombia has the sixth highest degree of segregation between public and private schools (OECD, 2017^[36]). In other words, although the general composition of schools is relatively diverse, private schools are highly homogeneous, especially with respect to more advantaged students.

Accumulated evidence at international level shows that this socio-economic segregation leads to an important gap in educational opportunities between schools and students since the socio-economic and cultural capital of families is a major factor in explaining school performance. These schools generally have better conditions of equipment and materials, and it is more attractive for teachers and school leaders to work in schools where children's learning is facilitated (Valenzuela, Bellei and Ríos, 2013^[58]). For Colombia, evidence from the OECD PISA 2015 shows no differences in the performance of public and government-dependent private schools, but a significantly higher performance of students in independent private schools. Most of this difference disappears when

controlling for students' and schools' socio-economic status, although a significant gap remains, which may be explained by private schools' ability to charge parental fees, among others (OECD, 2016_[2]).

Analyses of data from Colombia's school leaving examinations in Year 11 yield similar results. These analyses show that most of the performance gap between public and private schools disappears when controlling for socio-economic differences at the student and school level. The remaining private-school advantage only holds for schools that charge high monthly fees to families (Heras Recuero and Olaberria, 2018_[59]), and is reversed once schooling fees are taken into account (García et al., 2013_[60]).

School governance

Pedagogical leadership in schools needs to be significantly strengthened, also to make the most of school autonomy and to make school clusters work

School leadership is the second most important school-level factor (after classroom instruction) influencing student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004_[61]; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008_[62]) and often the foundation for sustainable school improvement (Bellei et al., 2016_[63]). One explanation for school leadership's significant effects on the quality of school organisation and student learning and development is probably that leadership serves as a catalyst for the potential capacities that already exist within schools (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008_[64]). Effective school leaders exercise pedagogical leadership, fulfilling their role as a supporter and developer of staff, planner of teaching and leader of educational work so as to ensure that the school operates as effectively as possible within the specified parameters (Augustine et al., 2009_[65]; Taipale, 2012_[66]). Such leadership is focused on influencing what happens inside classrooms and improving teaching and learning, with leaders being role models for colleagues (NCSL, 2007_[67]).

In Colombia, the fundamental role of school leaders within schools is acknowledged in most official guidelines and policy documents. For instance, the ministry's Manual of Functions, Requirements and Competencies for School Leaders and Teachers, promotes a broad and distributed vision of school leadership, which includes rural directors and co-ordinators as part of the school leadership team (MEN, 2016_[8]). Schools in Colombia also provide opportunities for teacher leadership and involvement in decision-making as analysed in Chapter 4. However, in practice, school principals in Colombia face limitations in being pedagogical leaders, mainly because they devote most of their time to administrative and financial aspects. Moreover, academic co-ordinators are also busy dealing with administrative aspects and the school climate. During the review visit, the team observed that co-ordinators typically devote a lot of time to resolve conflicts in schools, and to administrative tasks such as co-ordinating school meals.

School principals are not fulfilling their role as pedagogical leaders, which creates challenges for developing and managing teachers effectively in schools as analysed in depth in Chapter 4. They have limited opportunities to provide their teachers with formative feedback based on regular evaluations and classroom observations, particularly for those employed under the old statute. Furthermore, implementing annual mandatory performance evaluations for teachers – as required by the new teacher statute – has proven to be challenging for school leaders who do not seem to be giving much attention to preparing teachers for their evaluations and developing teachers' understanding of the process and criteria that are used. They also have a very limited influence on staff decisions (e.g. influencing the recruitment and dismissal of teachers, appointing their

leadership team, etc.) which limits their possibility to shape their school's pedagogical profile. Above all, school leaders do not seem equipped to develop a high-quality learning environment for students and collaborative practices within their schools – challenges which are even more pronounced in school clusters with distant sites in rural areas.

The country is thus facing a paradoxical situation with considerable autonomy for schools to determine their curriculum and pedagogical approaches, but very little attention to developing the leadership capacity of schools. The organisation of schools into school clusters also requires school leaders that manage the complexities of school clusters effectively as explained above (e.g. for creating learning communities and scheduling time for collaboration among their staff, including in rural sites). School capacity varies widely in Colombia but tends to be weakest in disadvantaged areas where students are in particular need of strong pedagogical leadership and high-quality teaching; a situation that may lead to inequalities in student learning and development (OECD, 2016_[14]).

There are several challenges in relation to developing the leadership skills of school principals and their team. First, in Colombia, there is no shared framework of excellent teaching and leadership. The existing competency profile provides only a very general description of the functions, knowledge requirements, leadership skills and minimum training and experience for school principals. The profile developed for the competency assessment required for promotion provides something closer to a school leadership framework but is not commonly accepted as a vision of good leadership.

Moreover, school leadership does not benefit from its own salary and career structure. During the review visit, it was noted that school principals may have lower salaries than some of the teachers in their schools (i.e. low relative salaries for the same working time). Furthermore, not all school principals are evaluated periodically – a practice that cannot only provide accountability but also help develop school leaders' pedagogical leadership (Radinger, 2014_[68]). As explained above and in Chapter 4, the teaching profession in Colombia is in transition between two statutes and only school leaders having assumed a leadership role since 2002 under the new statute are evaluated by their Secretary of Education. In particular, school leaders in the older statute who make up the largest share are not evaluated by their Secretary of Education.

Finally, there are limited specific opportunities for school leaders to develop their pedagogical leadership skills. The national Let's All Learn programme (*Programa Todos a Aprender*, PTA; for further information, see Chapter 4) has developed a project to train the school principals from the schools with the lowest performance in the country (Sanchez, 2018). This new initiative is based on previous projects with four different organisations for the implementation of training programmes for school leaders – the most well-known being the Transformative School Principals programme (*Rectores Líderes Transformadores*) (OECD, 2016_[14]).²³

Overall, more could be done to provide technical-pedagogical support to schools, including small school sites in rural and remote areas

The experience of the last three decades has shown that not all Secretaries of Education have the capacity and resources to effectively support schools and school leaders in the provision of education within their territory. While there are cases such as Bogotá, Manizales and Medellín that have benefitted from increased autonomy to both expand access and improve quality, as is also highlighted in Chapter 2, there are many others – especially those with substantial rural populations and those affected by the armed conflict – that lack the resources to manage their schools effectively (OECD, 2016_[14]).

The Secretaries of Education of departments are likely to face greater challenges in managing their schools, including many more rural and remote schools than those of large municipalities. For instance, during the review visit, the team travelled to the department of Chocó, where the ministry had (for a period of time) taken over the Secretary of Education given a lack of local capacity to provide education. Chocó is one of the country's poorest departments and constitutes an example of how decentralisation may contribute to deepening inequalities if certain conditions are not met.

The reality for many schools in Colombia is that they are largely left to their own devices in their efforts to provide quality education within their communities. The Secretaries of Education seem to provide schools with limited technical-pedagogical support to reflect on and improve their processes since they do not have the necessary human and financial resources to do so. Based on the information collected during the review visit, many Secretaries of Education (as well as the ministry of education) appear to have high turnover rates of staff and depend to a great extent on contractors that may not always be selected based on their competencies but rather for political or personal reasons (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Staff from Secretaries of Education seem to prioritise visiting schools that are closer to the Secretary's office (if any), abandoning those in remote areas given the distance and time required for travel. It was also unclear how staff work with different school sites within a school cluster. At the same time, and as previously explained in this chapter, school leaders do not seem equipped to develop an effective learning environment and collaborative practices within their schools, and also between the different sites within their school cluster. This may result in inequities in the quality of education between rural and urban areas and school sites.

The ministry seems aware of this complex and difficult situation and has been taking on a greater role to provide some direct support to schools. Most importantly through the *Programa Todos a Aprender*, the ministry has worked to improve teachers' practices within the classroom. However, it is clear that more needs to be done to support capacity development not only at the school level, but also at the territorial level. While there are some forms of horizontal collaboration between territorial entities, these could be strengthened, in particular between large certified municipalities and the department within which they are located as well as Secretaries of Education more broadly. The same holds true for local networks between school clusters. While there are some examples of school networks in Colombia, there is potential to make greater use of the power of collaboration.²⁴

The organisation of teaching and learning

There is a tension between the autonomy for schools to develop and implement their own curricula and central steering of learning goals and objectives

The curriculum is an important tool that specifies learning objectives and lays out the underlying values and culture that should shape teaching and learning. The curriculum is also a key reference for the development of learning resources such as textbooks and the assessment of students' learning outcomes (OECD, 2016_[14]). Countries take different approaches to how they design curricula and in the degree to which they set system-wide expectations to guide teaching and learning across schools. While it is common for OECD countries to have system-wide curriculum frameworks that set objectives for

student learning, the degree of prescription varies widely and the balance between autonomy and prescription often changes over time (OECD, 2013_[51]; Sinnema, 2016_[69]).

In Colombia, schools have considerable autonomy to define their own curriculum and study plan as part of their educational project, as long as they dedicate 80% of instruction time to fundamental subject areas. There is no nationally defined curriculum. Teachers are also typically very autonomous to make pedagogical decisions within their classroom and should implement school curricula through the development of lesson plans (*planes de aula*). Schools' curricular autonomy has been balanced with the use of central curricular and pedagogical guidelines and learning standards that should guarantee the development of students' core competencies as explained previously. However, the number of currently valid guidelines is vast: there are curriculum guidelines, basic competency standards, pedagogical guidelines and most recently, Basic Learning Rights (*Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje*, DBA). In 2017, the ministry's curriculum team counted at least 206 different documents. Among others, there are at least 10 curricular documents for mathematics, 7 for language, 8 for science, 4 for social sciences and 29 for civic education (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

This, of course, represents a challenge for schools to develop their own curricula in line with these standards, and for Secretaries of Education to provide them with support in this pursuit. It may also compromise teachers' ability and/or willingness to work to achieve the set learning standards in their classrooms, teach in line with the guidelines and develop related materials and assessments. During the review visit, various teachers mentioned making use of different standards and related materials, such as the box for *Día E*, and also showed awareness about new learning guidelines related to the DBA (*mallas de aprendizaje*). But various teachers also mentioned that guidelines were not entirely clear to them (e.g. the language was not clear and they did not know how different guidelines relate to each other). A further concern was raised: frequent updates or changes to guidelines, which sets disincentives for getting acquainted with new guidelines. Teachers also do not seem to receive sufficient training to familiarise themselves with new materials, which also holds true for the introduction of new curricular areas, such as peace education (*Cátedra de la Paz*) in 2014.

Colombia's school-based approach to the definition of curricula also has to be set within the general context of teachers' often weak capacity and concerns about teacher learning, as analysed in Chapter 4, and weak school leadership, as discussed above. Curriculum development is a complex endeavour. While a highly decentralised approach to curriculum development can encourage innovation, it comes at the risk of inequities in learning. Not all schools will have the capacity and support to design content, lesson plans and teaching to effectively enable the learning of their students (Sinnema, 2016_[69]). At the same time, the potential for school-based curriculum development to balance national consistency with local diversity – an essential condition in a diverse context like Colombia – and bring the curriculum to life in ways that engage students in a particular context is not realised if schools do not have the capacity for doing so. Indeed, during the review team's visit, teachers also mentioned the need to further contextualise content with regards to their particular situation, a task they do not necessarily feel prepared to assume and for which they do not receive (sufficient) support from their Secretaries of Education.

In practice, the extent of curriculum autonomy also depends on the educational context beyond the locus of decision-making or the degree of prescription in the curriculum itself. Other elements such as evaluation, available resources and professional learning all influence curriculum autonomy (Sinnema, 2016_[69]). In Colombia, other elements seem to

have turned into a “de facto” curriculum guiding the work of teachers within the classroom in the absence of concise, specific and well-designed learning standards. Such is the case of the Year 11 school leaving examination, but also for standardised assessments in earlier years. The Let’s All Learn programme has been helping teachers from participating schools in deciding what students should learn in the absence of a clear and coherent set of curricular guidelines or a national curriculum. The programme’s curriculum though also seems to be influenced by standardised assessments.

There are challenges for the introduction of full-day schooling (Jornada Única) that need to be carefully considered and addressed

The expansion of full-day schooling in Colombia has been one of the main initiatives of the government in office at the time of writing this report. Created in 2014, the Full-Day Schooling programme aims to strengthen basic competencies (mathematics, science and language) and reduce the exposure of vulnerable children to out-of-school risks such as crime, drugs and pregnancy. A longer school day may also be particularly beneficial for students with single parents, and address inequities with independent private schools. Traditionally, full-day schooling has been highly correlated with students’ socio-economic background, with advantaged students more likely to attend a full-day school (Bonilla, 2014_[70]).

In principle, the introduction of full-day schooling entails a series of advantages as discussed in Chapter 2. While it involves a significant investment to provide the required facilities and staff to provide space and time for instruction and other activities, full-day schooling provides more opportunities for teachers and students to cover the curriculum, repeat material and engage in hands-on activities. It is also an opportunity to improve school infrastructure and complementary services such as Colombia’s School Meal Programme (*Programa de Alimentación Escolar*, PAE).

Full-day schooling is furthermore likely an improvement over the organisation of learning in multiple shifts. The operation of multiple shifts allows for a highly efficient use of school facilities. In Colombia, 53 295 public and independent private school sites offered teaching to students in 65 237 shifts (DANE, 2018_[71]). However, this organisation of schools can also result in reduced teaching hours, a more stressful learning environment due to shorter breaks and more limited opportunities for remedial or enrichment classes (Bray, 2008_[72]). Evidence from Eastern Europe also shows that students attending afternoon shifts received slightly lower results, possibly due to students’ and teachers’ fatigue or the limited time left for after-school study (Lusher and Yassenov, 2016_[73]).

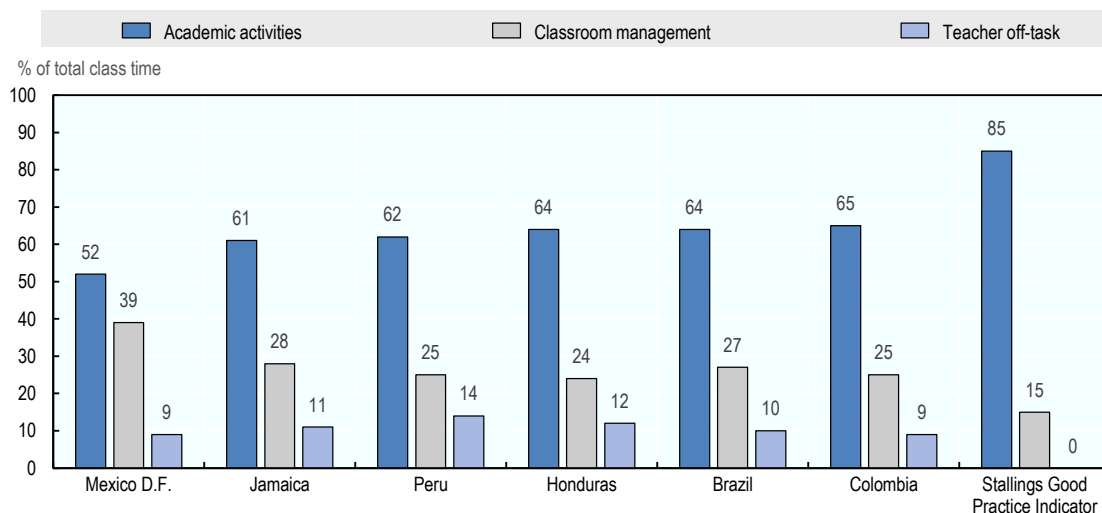
Research for Colombia shows that full-day schooling has the potential to generate important gains in terms of reduced year repetition and dropout rates (García, Fernández and Weiss, 2013_[74]) and increased learning outcomes (Bonilla, 2014_[70]; Hincapie, 2016_[75]). The impact of attending full-day schooling is greater for mathematics than language, and greater for Year 9 than for Year 5; largest effects are found among the poorest schools and those in rural areas (Hincapie, 2016_[75]). There is also evidence suggesting full-day schooling reduces teenage pregnancy in urban areas, and that more years attending a full-day school have an incremental effect on this reduction (Escobar, 2017_[76]).

Despite the potential benefits of full-day schooling, there are important caveats that require careful consideration. The experience of Chile’s implementation of full-day schooling shows that there is indeed a positive effect on students’ achievement in both mathematics and language and positive externalities, such as a reduction of crime and

teenage pregnancy and higher labour market participation among women. The example of Chile, however, also demonstrates that lengthening the school day is a very expensive initiative that will only yield returns if the extra time is used effectively (Bellei, 2009^[77]; Berthelon and Kruger, 2011^[78]). This is consistent with the general international evidence on learning time (Gromada and Shewbridge, 2016^[79]; Rivkin and Schiman, 2015^[80]). Precisely in relation to the latter, previous research has raised concerns about Colombian teachers' use of their time within the classroom.

A study of classroom practices in Latin America revealed that teachers in Colombia (and in the other six participating countries) fell far short of effective instructional time. According to the study, the average time on instruction across the national sample in Colombia is 65%, which is a full 20 percentage points below the benchmark for good practice (as seen in Figure 3.6). The authors estimate this is the equivalent of one less instruction day per week. Moreover, average classroom practice varies tremendously across schools in Colombia, and an even greater range exists between the best- and worst-performing teachers inside schools (Bruns and Luque, 2015^[81]).²⁵

Figure 3.6. Teachers' use of their time in class in selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean



Notes: The Stallings classroom observation system, also known as the Stallings classroom snapshot, is a questionnaire and protocol for timed observations that produce quantitative data about interactions of teachers and students in classrooms. Stallings observations generate data on: teachers' use of time; teachers' use of different learning activities; and teachers' ability to keep students engaged. The data presented in this figure are based on over 15 000 classrooms in more than 3 000 schools in seven different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2009 and 2013. Results for the Dominican Republic are not included as the sample was a pilot. The Stallings good practice benchmark on teachers' use of instructional time in the classroom is 85% of total class time used for instruction.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of proximity to this benchmark.

Values for Brazil are pooled data from Pernambuco and Minas Gerais.

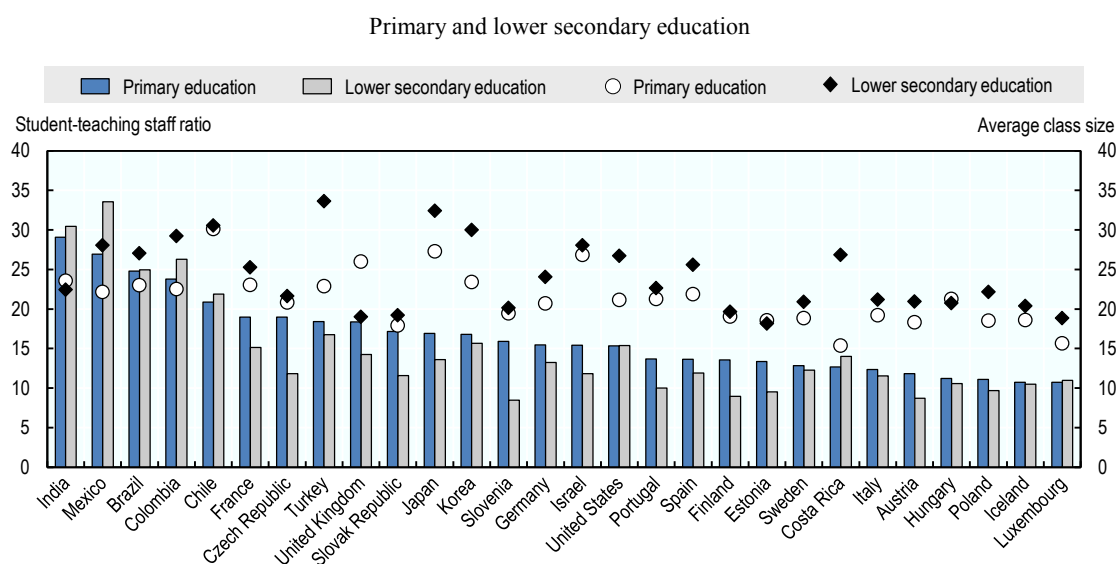
Source: Reproduced from Bruns, B. and J. Luque (2015), *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, Washington, DC.

Teachers in Colombia spend a large amount of time on classroom management. This may be explained by the fact that, on average, Colombia has a high student-teacher ratio in

primary and secondary education (see Figure 3.7). Of course, class sizes will differ across schools and school sites and be much smaller in many rural areas. Small rural schools, however, present their own challenges for classroom management and organisation. There are no official data on multi-grade teaching in Colombia, but, based on ministry estimates, there are about 27 000 small rural school sites relying on multi-grade teaching in basic education. As the data show, these sites are largely concentrated in departments. For instance, Bogotá only has about 30 multi-grade sites, compared to about 1 800 in the neighbouring department of Cundinamarca.

There are other factors making it difficult for teachers to spend time on effective instruction. In a case study of high and low performing schools in one department of Colombia, teachers identified a variety of factors that complicate their task of focussing on effective instruction, including a lack of classroom ventilation and high temperatures, student discipline, journey to school, interruptions by parents and other activities (Villegas Mendoza, 2017^[82]).

Figure 3.7. Ratio of student to teaching staff and average class size, 2015



Note: Data for France refer to public and government-dependent private institutions only. Data for Israel refer to public institutions only for upper secondary education and all secondary.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Table D2.1. and Table D2.2.

There are at least two further concerns about the implementation of a longer school day in Colombia. First, during the review visit, it did not seem to be clear at the school level how to use the extra time – a question which seems essential given the absence of a national curriculum and considerable curricular autonomy for schools as discussed above. Instruction time in Colombia is also very high already compared to other countries, yet largely resulting from a long school year. While some school principals mentioned that additional hours should be used to strengthen core skills (in mathematics and language), teachers and also some students mentioned that longer school days should not provide more of the same but the chance to practice sports and participate in cultural activities, looking for a more comprehensive education.

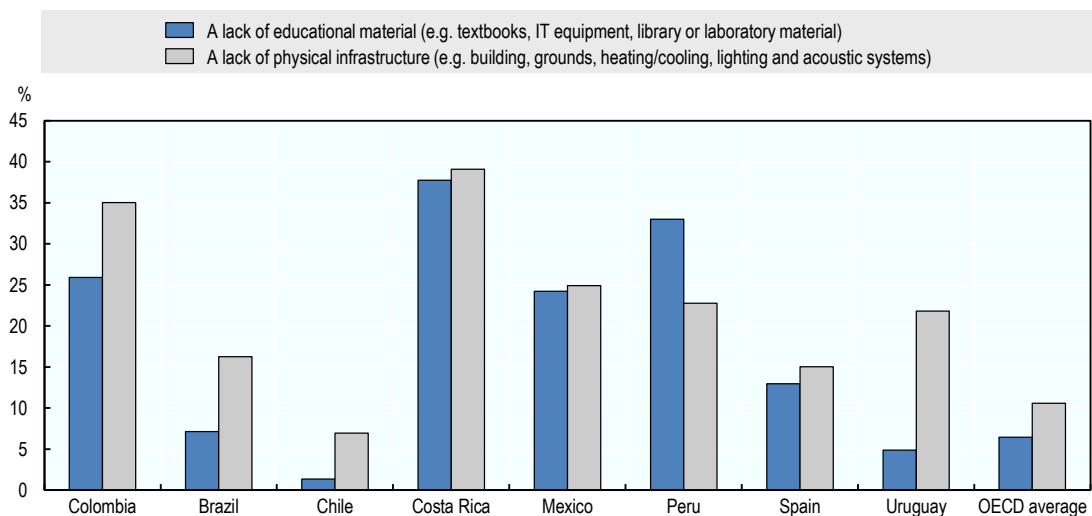
Second, the implementation of longer school days requires the effective management of teachers and their time in all school sites and adequate school leadership capacity, e.g. for scheduling teachers' time effectively. As teachers reported during the team's visit, the longer school day interfered with teachers' group activities such as learning circles (*círculos de aprendizaje*) and decreased time to exchange experiences and work alongside their peers. Teachers, who are believed to sometimes hold another job in addition to their teaching position, seem to be opposed to longer school days.

Schools and students lack sufficient pedagogical materials and textbooks, and schools and teachers may need more guidance for selecting materials

In Colombia, students and schools seem to face a severe shortage of educational materials and a lack of adequate infrastructure, also related to the distribution of funding analysed in Chapter 2. According to data from the OECD PISA 2015, 1 out of 4 15-year-olds attends a school in which a lack of educational materials hinders effective instruction as reported by school principals; 1 out of 3 goes to a school where the lack of physical infrastructure hinders instruction (see Figure 3.8). Principals' concerns about these limitations are considerably higher in Colombia when compared to the OECD average or other Latin American countries such as Brazil and Chile (OECD, 2016_[2]).

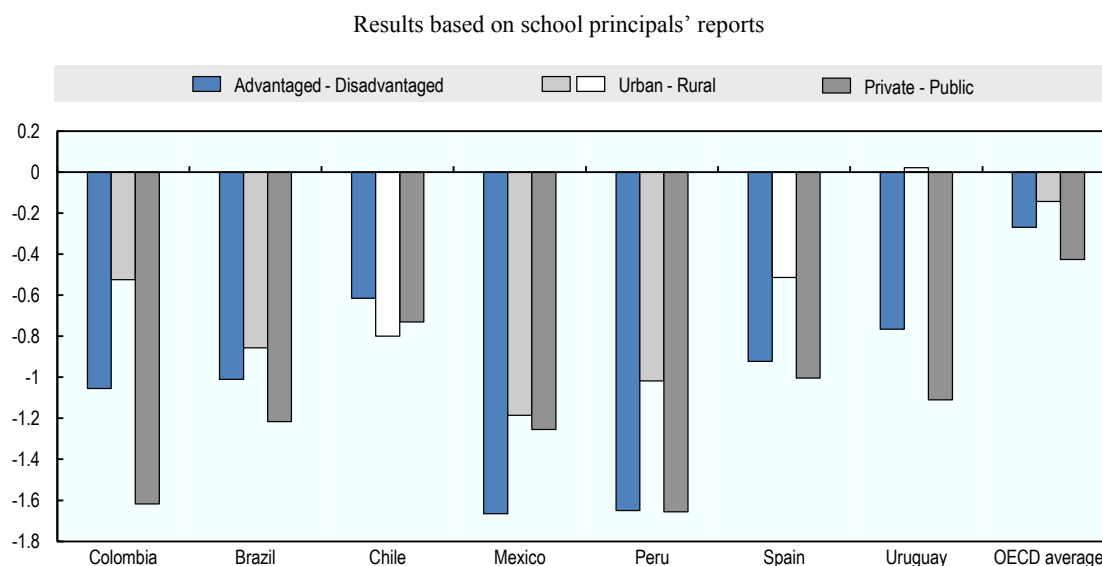
Figure 3.8. Lack of material resources, PISA 2015

Results based on school principals' reports



Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.1.

Looking at differences between schools within Colombia, concerns about a shortage of educational materials are greater in rural than in urban schools, and even more so when comparing advantaged with disadvantaged and public with private schools (independent and government-dependent) (see Figure 3.9) (OECD, 2016_[2]). This is of particular concern given indications that the availability of basic infrastructure and public services (water, electricity, sewage), didactic facilities (sport installations, labs, libraries) as well as the number of books in a school library and computers in the school have an effect on the achievement of primary education students in the region (Murillo and Román, 2011_[83]).

Figure 3.9. Shortage of material resources by school characteristics, PISA 2015

Notes: The figure shows the difference in the index of the shortage of material resources between different types of schools. The definition of advantaged and disadvantaged schools is based on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status. Rural schools refer to those in communities with fewer than 3 000 people, urban schools to those located in any city with more than 100 000 people. Public schools are those managed by a public education authority, government agency, or governing board appointed by a government or elected by public franchise. Private schools refer to schools managed directly or indirectly by a non-government organisation.

Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone.

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.2.

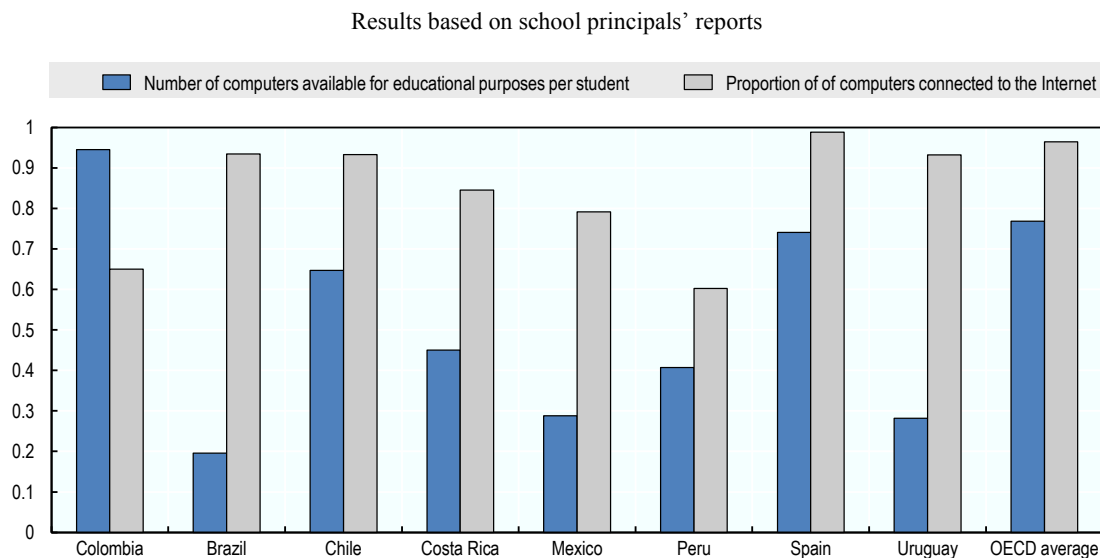
The lack of textbooks and other materials is related to the process of decentralising education. Once schools were given autonomy over curricular matters, schools also assumed responsibility for acquiring educational materials that suit their project and pedagogical approach using resources from their school budget. Nevertheless, schools typically do not have enough funds to buy materials, also resulting in costs for parents. The lack of a national textbook policy and curriculum may also lead to the use of inadequate or outdated materials, especially in rural areas (OECD, 2016_[14]; Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Recent initiatives have sought to steer the selection and use of textbooks through *Colombia Compra Eficiente*, a government entity with a virtual platform for schools or Secretaries of Education to buy textbooks aligned with curricular guidelines at a cheaper price thanks to aggregated demand. The ministry has also increasingly provided materials to schools as part of large-scale programmes such as Let's All Learn, but more work is needed to guarantee students' and teachers' access to good quality education materials.

In the past decades, Colombia has invested significantly in increasing students' and schools' access to ICT, most importantly with the *Computadores para Educar* programme. The programme not only provides schools with access to ICT but also teachers and school principals with training on how to incorporate digital learning into their pedagogical work. The programme seems to have achieved providing most schools and students with access to computers. According to data from the OECD PISA 2015, Colombia has the highest computer-student ratio (close to 1) among participating

countries, above the ratio of other Latin American countries participating in the study and also above the OECD average (see Figure 3.10). The international literature has established that using computers as a resource for teaching can amplify good teaching, enhance student motivation and, in some instances, academic performance, but that this crucially depends on the effective use of these resources as a complement for teachers' work and not as a substitute for it (Linden, 2008^[84]; OECD, 2015^[85]).

Figure 3.10. Computers at school, PISA 2015



Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.4.

Impact evaluations of Colombia's programme similarly suggest that it has the potential to positively influence students' outcomes: reducing drop-out rates, improving students' results in standardised assessments and increasing access to tertiary education (Rodríguez, Sánchez and Márquez Zuñiga, 2011^[86]), but that there are certain conditions that have to be met for these positive outcomes to be realised. The two most important requirements are time and teacher learning. It takes time for the programme to start showing results on students' outcomes and teachers have to be adequately trained in incorporating ICT resources into their pedagogical work (Barrera-Osorio and Linden, 2009^[87]). Teacher learning in Colombia is however relatively weak, as analysed in Chapter 4, raising some concerns about the cost-effectiveness of investments into ICT.

Access to the Internet is equally important, which could also facilitate new forms of distance learning to ensure a broad curricular offer in rural and remote areas in the long run (Sipple and Brent, 2015^[88]). Although Colombia has the highest computer-student ratio, the proportion of computers connected to the Internet (approximately 6 out of 10 computers are connected) is considerably lower than the OECD average where practically every computer has Internet access. There are also large differences between rural and urban areas in Colombia (OECD, 2016^[2]). Colombia's difficulties are related to challenges in co-ordination between authorities from different sectors for the provision of equipment, electricity and broadband access, and difficulties and costs for providing ICT in remote, rural areas due to geography. For instance, a school may have computers, but not sufficient electricity or connectivity (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Strategies for vulnerable students or those with special needs are limited, and inclusion policies have so far paid little attention to the needs of rural contexts

In the past decades, Colombia has considerably expanded access to education. However, there are still challenges ahead not only in raising overall enrolment rates and ensuring transitions, but also in reducing inequities for disadvantaged students, such as children from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural students, ethnic minorities, students affected by the conflict and children with special needs. The arrival of migrants and refugees from Venezuela raises additional challenges for schools for an unforeseeable future.

The General Education Law recognises the rights of vulnerable students, and flexible education models provide pedagogical strategies to address their learning needs as analysed above. The ministry together with Secretaries of Education have also implemented some strategies to ensure children and young people enrol and stay in schools, such as the initiative *Escuela Busca Niño* (OECD, 2016_[14]). Colombia's Institute of Family Welfare, the ICBF, provides additional programmes and strategies that target other risk factors such as child labour, teenage pregnancy and recruitment into armed groups. But there seems to be considerable scope for the ministry, Secretaries of Education and schools to develop further strategies to address disadvantage.

Concerning the ministry and Secretaries of Education, only limited attention seems to be paid to monitoring the outcomes of student groups at risk of low performance and dropping out and to setting targets or benchmarks to reduce the impact of students' background on their learning. For instance, while various valuable measures are available to target interventions at schools and students in a challenging context or with low performance, such as school's strata (*estrato*), a geographical classification according to a neighbourhood's socio-economic characteristics, or the school's performance index ISCE, it was unclear how these measures are being used. The goals stipulated in the last National Development Plan did not include any equity-related targets, objectives and monitoring that could steer objectives at the level of the Secretaries of Education.

Also, within schools, the available resources and strategies are lacking and there do not seem to be sufficient processes for monitoring students at risk nor is there a clear protocol establishing what to do once a student at risk is identified. This is likely a particular challenge for rural schools which may lack additional resources both in the school and their community. Class sizes and student-teacher ratios, on average, are very high at all levels of education compared to other countries and only comparable to a few countries in the region like Brazil and Mexico (OECD, 2017_[16]). While class sizes will be much smaller in small rural school sites as analysed above, schools with large classes make it difficult for teachers to individualise learning. This is a particular challenge given the serious shortage of support staff, such as counsellors, psychologists or social workers.

Data from the OECD PISA 2015 show that Colombian principals are in fact the third most concerned about the lack of assisting staff in their schools among all participating countries, and these concerns are even greater in disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2016_[2]). Colombia's post-conflict context is likely to exacerbate the need for support staff such as psychologists and social workers, to support teachers in their work and provide socio-emotional support for students within schools (Harker, Molano and Cristancho, 2017_[89]). Teachers lack sufficient preparation and opportunities to develop their competencies to address the wide range of learning needs of their students, as discussed in Chapter 4, and year repetition rates - a costly but often ineffective practice - remain very high (OECD, forthcoming_[20]; OECD, 2016_[14]). In fact, the failure of a recent attempt to decrease

repetition through a policy of automatic year promotion highlights the need for further strategies to support students at risk of low performance (Pinzón Hernández, 2018_[90]).

Moreover, school violence remains a considerable problem in Colombia (OECD, 2016_[2]), even though the national government and civil society have implemented interesting initiatives such as a national system for school coexistence and the Classrooms in Peace programme (Chaux et al., 2017_[91]).²⁶ Between 2012 and 2014, more than 60% of students in Year 5 declared having witnessed violence and around 20% identified themselves as an aggressor as part of the context questionnaire for standardised assessments in citizenship (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). School bullying and violence is a complex problem. Nevertheless, school counsellors (*orientadores*) whose primary role is to develop strategies that promote a positive school climate and peaceful coexistence inside and outside of school are in short supply and not adequately prepared.

Finally, equally important is the attention given to students with special educational needs within schools. Only 1% of students in upper secondary education have a disability, suggesting that many special needs students do not reach the end of compulsory education (García et al., 2016_[21]). Colombia has recently introduced legislation for the inclusion of special needs children. In accordance with Decree 1421 of 2017, every school must accept students with special needs and make reasonable pedagogical and organisational adjustments. This policy is in fact aligned with a growing body of research suggesting that students with special needs could be better served in mainstream schools with the assistance of specialists and that the exchange between students with and without special needs within the same learning environment entails benefits for both (OECD, forthcoming_[20]).

Many schools in Colombia, however, lack the infrastructure, trained teachers and specialists needed to create a truly inclusive learning environment. As Beltran Villamizar et al. (2015_[92]) indicate, laws are in place for children with special needs to enter schools, but the conditions to guarantee they stay in schools are not. According to these authors, the two most critical conditions are curricular adaptations that respond to and meet the requirements of students with special needs and an adequate physical environment.

Although some guidelines have been developed to better support children with special needs and despite the fact that the ministry allocates additional funding for schools to co-finance the cost of providing education to students with disabilities, there is no detailed plan for the implementation of inclusive education. Moreover, Secretaries of Education and schools often seem to be opposed to inclusion (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). The inclusion policy has furthermore failed to consider the needs of rural schools which will face greater difficulties in providing special needs students with an inclusive learning environment (e.g. due to a lack of other support services).

The concept of school evaluation is extremely narrow and risks having unintended side-effects on teaching and learning

It can be argued that a comprehensive vision of school evaluation entails at least three different approaches: i) school self-evaluation, conducted by members of the school to assess the effectiveness of structures and processes in place and the quality of student learning outcomes; ii) external school evaluation, conducted by an external body to assess the quality of structures and processes operating within a school and the quality of student learning outcomes, mainly as an accountability measure but also as an opportunity to give feedback for school development; and iii) the comparison of schools with different

performance measures, which aims to benchmark their performance in relation to other schools, regions or the national average (OECD, 2013_[51]).

In the past two decades, Colombia seems to have focused mainly on the third aspect, consolidating standardised assessments as the cornerstone of the country's school evaluation system. The *Pruebas Saber* have been fundamental in shifting the focus towards students' learning outcomes and have the potential to inform improvement process within both schools and the education system in general, as highlighted above, but there are challenges ahead regarding the development of a more comprehensive and balanced approach to school evaluation (OECD, 2016_[14]).

While education in Colombia pursues a broad set of learning goals and objectives for all-rounded student development as emphasised in the country's Constitution and General Education Law, standardised assessments focus efforts at all levels of the system on a narrow set of learning outcomes in the form of cognitive skills as measured by the *Pruebas Saber*. Such a strong focus on cognitive skills measured by standardised assessments may also detract attention from students' development of other competencies and non-cognitive skills, which contribute both to students' academic learning and broader development as well as the creation of productive, equitable and socially-cohesive societies (Heckman and Kautz, 2012_[93]; Levin, 2012_[94]) and are also valued by employers in Colombia (Ritterbusch et al., 2016_[95]).

While the results of the *Pruebas Saber* should predominantly be a valuable resource to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement, results seem to often take on the ultimate objective of teaching and learning itself. During the review visit, the team could observe that not only school leaders and teachers, but also students, are extremely aware of the assessments and the intensive preparation for them in order for their school to obtain good results both in the tests and the performance index ISCE. This is particularly the case for examinations in Year 11 which are used to rank schools by the public, but also seems to be the case for assessments in earlier years. Such is the importance of succeeding in the standardised examinations that students and their families, but also Secretaries of Education with sufficient resources, pay for taking mock tests that familiarise them with the examination and help them achieve better results, as was observed during the review visit.

This focus on a narrow set of skills has recently been reinforced by specific targets adopted as part of the country's National Development Plan to become the most educated country of the region by 2025 as measured by the OECD PISA assessments. This objective has been linked with individual school improvement goals, public accountability and financial incentives in the form of the performance index ISCE. While this promotes a common goal for improvement, it is not embedded within a broader vision for the Colombian school system and also puts an additional focus on performance in standardised assessments. As Table 3.6 demonstrates, schools already used assessments extensively to compare themselves even prior to setting ISCE targets.

There are also concerns about the design of the performance index which does not take schools' socio-economic context and value-added into account, which penalises disadvantaged schools doing well given challenging circumstances. Also, the efficiency element of the index related to the proportion of students passing a school year is an absolute measure that penalises schools already doing well but that cannot improve further. There is also a lack of transparency of the financial bonuses related to the index, both for schools and school leadership through a separate management indicator.

Table 3.6. Use of standardised assessments, PISA 2015

Percentage of students in schools whose principal reported that standardised tests are used to:

	Guide students' learning	Inform parents about their child's progress	Monitor the school's progress from year to year	Identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	Compare the school with other schools	Compare the school to district or national performance
Colombia	80.8	64.4	87.8	85.7	76.0	80.7
Brazil	80.3	68.8	86.5	93.3	66.1	84.2
Chile	82.3	73.0	87.5	82.2	52.1	59.7
Costa Rica	20.0	14.1	28.2	27.2	24.2	32.7
Mexico	79.2	66.6	88.7	75.3	80.7	87.3
Peru	69.4	58.2	71.3	71.9	54.7	62.2
Spain	37.7	37.9	41.5	46.4	38.4	46.7
Uruguay	35.1	28.3	34.8	39.1	21.1	23.5
OECD average	62.5	61.9	69.4	58.9	59.5	68.2

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.4.24.

One of the main risks with a focus on standardised assessments, the generation of rankings and the publication of results, is what the literature calls “teaching to the test”, which implies actions such as reducing the curriculum, concentrating on the assessed subject matters, focussing more efforts on the years that are tested, or modifying the internal student assessment instruments to resemble those used in standardised tests (Koretz, 2008^[96]; OECD, 2013^[51]). In this context, it is important to note that there appears to be also some lack of alignment in Colombia between the education system’s broad goals for student learning and relatively narrow measurements of learning. While citizenship or science are assessed periodically as part of the assessments in Years 3, 5 and 9, there seems to be scope to expand the breadth of subjects and methods to communicate a focus on broader competencies.

At present, external standardised assessments are also not being fully used to promote improvement processes within schools. Initiatives such as *Día E* where the school community gets together to analyse their school performance index ISCE are implemented in most schools throughout the country. Nevertheless, schools often lack the capacity to use their results in the assessment to foster improvement processes or to change pedagogical practices in the classroom. School self-evaluation and development planning are indeed encouraged as a regular practice in the Colombian school system. One of the main limitations of schools’ improvement plans – as observed during the review visit – however, is that they also seem to be predominantly focused on student learning outcomes, without giving the necessary attention to analysing school processes.

Once again, these challenges are also related to weak school leadership within schools, essentially focused on administrative and financial aspects and without sound capacity to provide teachers with guidance and support on how to transform results into adjustment or change of their pedagogical practices, as well as a lack of technical-pedagogical support from the Secretaries of Education.

Policy recommendations

School network

Encourage the review of school networks to ensure equitable access to high-quality teaching and learning and the effective management of school clusters, especially in rural areas

School clusters entail a series of potential benefits such as promoting smoother transitions between levels, reducing students' risk for school leaving and providing students in rural remote communities with access to more school resources. However, if not carefully planned and implemented, school clusters may lead to inequalities in the provision of education as previously explained.

Even though differences in local school networks are likely also explained by topography, the number of sites per school varies considerably at present with some schools having more than 20 sites while others only having 1 or 2. The central level should, therefore, encourage Secretaries of Education to play a more effective role for managing their school networks together with school communities as part of their coverage plans (*Plan de Cobertura*), a tool for managing educational provision. Departments should also be encouraged to collaborate with the certified municipalities located in their territory. The expansion of pre-primary and upper secondary education, the introduction of longer school days and internal migration and demographic changes, heighten the urgency of this task, but also provide an opportunity to rethink local school networks.

Reorganisation processes should not, in principle, entail closing sites with a very low number of students (since these sites are probably the ones that provide children in remote rural areas with access to education) but mostly aim to increase the number of main schools, thereby improving the operation of school clusters. The goal should be to establish school clusters with an adequate number of sites per main school that provide high-quality conditions for learning. During the review visit, the team observed school clusters with sites that were as large as the main school. Secretaries of Education could enhance such sites to become main school sites, so the total number of sites in the cluster can be divided between the two main schools (or more if necessary). Reducing the number of sites per cluster may also ease school principals' administrative work, increasing their time for pedagogical leadership (e.g. for observing teachers in classrooms, for establishing strong partnerships with parents and the community). Where the small size of school sites compromises the quality of education, Secretaries of Education could carefully consider the closure of such sites together with the school community, but only if transport or boarding arrangements allow (OECD, forthcoming^[20]).

Reorganisation efforts should, in general, consider the geographical distance as well as the ease of transport between the sites and the main school. Some of the potential benefits of having school clusters are only realised in as long as students (and teachers) from remote sites are able to reach the main school to have access to a library, sports facilities or computer lab, for instance. The number of sites per cluster and the distance between sites must also be taken into account for the appointment of co-ordinators, whereas only the number of students is currently considered. It is important to guarantee that all sites have regular access to a co-ordinator who can provide technical-pedagogical assistance to the teacher or teachers working in each site. Steps to improve school leadership as proposed below will be essential to take advantage of the benefits of school clusters

(e.g. allocating teachers across sites within the same school day, creating learning communities for teachers in small school sites, etc.).

Finally, the design of school networks also needs to carefully consider the planning of transport and boarding arrangements for students, but also teachers. Transport and boarding are essential in remote rural areas, to guarantee students' access to school and transition between sites and levels of education. Increasing the available funding to cover costs for transport and infrastructure investments and maintenance as discussed in Chapter 2 will be essential in providing Secretaries of Education with the necessary resources. Adequate transport arrangements are important as travel time impacts students' well-being and learning (e.g. by causing fatigue or difficulties to concentrate in class or reducing time spent with parents) and transitions to higher levels of education, especially for disadvantaged students and those expecting lower returns from education (OECD, forthcoming_[20]). A study on the effects of geographical constraints on upper secondary participation and completion in Norway found longer travel times to the nearest school to have a modest negative effect on the probability of graduation, for example (Falch, Lujala and Strøm, 2013_[97]).

Regulating boarding schools is equally important. The educational experience of boarders differs markedly from students living at home; they spend considerably more time in the school environment and among school staff, have different opportunities for growth and development and often follow highly regulated daily routines (Martin et al., 2014_[98]). Empirical research on boarding schools specifically addressing the needs of rural and remote areas is limited but, considering some students' reliance on their services to access secondary schools, it is important to establish standards and guidelines ensuring the quality of their provision, including pastoral and academic care, facilities and resources, the provision of extracurricular activities, staff training and qualifications, and boarding students' rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, it is necessary to improve the information systems on boarding schools, starting with a complete database of all the boarding schools currently operating in Colombia (at present, information on the total number of boarding schools is not clear in SIMAT).

Improve the regulation and quality assurance of contracted private schools, and develop multi-sector strategies to address the risk of segregation

Public-private partnerships will continue to be a strategic component for the provision of school education in Colombia, a challenging context with high rates of internal migration and displacement due to the country's conflict. But it is necessary to ensure that these alternatives are of quality. This becomes even more critical when recognising that these mechanisms are being increasingly used to provide education for indigenous students and students with different types of vulnerability, and that it has been more challenging to replace publicly-funded private providers in rural areas with public provision.

The effective quality assurance of contracted private schools will also depend on the general capacity and resources of Secretaries of Education. The creation of a national quality agency which takes on responsibility for evaluating school processes as proposed below, however, could also help ensure the quality of private providers for school places that cannot be provided in the public system due to capacity constraints. Strengthening regulations (e.g. on the assignment of students to contracted schools and the monitoring of school processes) and maintaining regulations that are already in place, is another area that the ministry should consider. The prohibition of tuition fees in contracted schools is important to avoid inequities, for instance (OECD, 2017_[7]).

Improving contract arrangements for private providers should be a further priority. It is essential that the terms of these agreements are able to be extended beyond one year, so that commitments for improvement, innovations and institutional learning can be included in the contracts. Longer contracts would allow private providers to ensure greater regularity, to plan for the medium term and to offer better conditions to the staff in charge of providing education. The contracting of private providers also has a potential for innovation and the ministry should contribute to replicating best practices.

Colombia should furthermore consider developing a multi-sector approach to address segregation between public and private schools, particularly those without public funding charging high fees. According to data provided by the ministry, enrolment in independent private schools has in fact been increasing in recent years, from a share of 14.2% of enrolment in 2010 to 17.0% in 2017,²⁷ and particularly so in primary education. Since the factors that contribute to segregation are context-dependent, the ministry (together with other relevant ministries and departments) should investigate them carefully before rigorously piloting and rolling out an appropriate combination of measures across policy domains including education, transport and housing. Initiatives aimed at narrowing the gap between high-performing and low-performing schools could be effective in raising the quality of the most disadvantaged schools while preventing the exodus of advantaged families from under-performing schools to the private sector.

School governance

Professionalise school leadership

School leadership requires a great deal of attention at all levels. In the past decades, Colombia has granted schools considerable curricular and pedagogical autonomy without investing sufficiently in building a strong teaching profession and even less so sufficient leadership capacity in schools that can make the most of their autonomy. Schools have the freedom to create their own pedagogical projects together with their community but need the leadership to guide this process. Key recommendations on the development of the teaching profession proposed in Chapter 4 around a new vision of teacher professionalism also depend significantly on greater pedagogical leadership, as does the effective running of school clusters which may include small rural remote sites.

The age profile of current school leaders (nearly 40% are between 55 and 64 years old) provides an opportunity to improve school leadership in Colombia with new principals that may enter the profession with different preparation, training and support. The following recommendations may contribute to making the school leadership profession more attractive overall. A central institution providing continuity and capacity for teacher learning as proposed in Chapter 4 could fulfil a similar role for school leadership and guide the development of a comprehensive school leadership strategy.

First, establishing a set of competency standards for school leaders that are commonly accepted would provide a clear reference point for the further development of school leaders. Competency profiles developed by civil society, such as the *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación* for its school leadership development programme or for the competency assessment to determine school leaders' progression in the salary scale provide a good basis but need to be communicated more clearly.

Furthermore, the development of a distinct career structure with its own salary scale that guarantees adequate levels of remuneration clearly higher than those of teachers –

reflecting school principals' level of responsibility – may also contribute to increasing the status of the profession (OECD, 2013^[51]; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008^[62]). Reflections around this should be embedded within reflections about the future of the teaching profession discussed in Chapter 4 given that new school leaders replacing retiring school leaders are being recruited under the new teacher statute with its approach to competence-based career progression.

It is also necessary to provide school leaders with opportunities to improve their skills to lead schools' pedagogical work. The Let's All Learn programme has been working in that direction but further work is still needed. The training of school leaders should focus on competencies in areas that ultimately improve teaching and learning, such as strategies for supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; goal setting, assessment and accountability; financial and human resource management; and system leadership (Augustine et al., 2009^[65]). As emerging research suggests, school leaders should also gain an understanding of how to create learning environments that combine a strong focus on academic achievement with caring support, safety and belonging for students to foster academic engagement (Louis, Murphy and Smylie, 2016^[99]).

Particularly in the Colombian context, it is fundamental that training helps school leaders to develop their skills for implementing self-evaluation and school improvement planning. At present, these school improvement processes are expected to be in place in schools but there are some concerns about schools' capacity to actually make the most of this process. Developing school leaders' knowledge and skills for the effective scheduling of their teachers' time should be another priority given plans to implement a full school day in all public schools. Other complementary measures such as reducing principals' administrative and financial workload through hiring more managerial staff and/or reducing the number of sites in the cluster, would also contribute to strengthening their pedagogical leadership by giving them more time to provide teachers with pedagogical support, including teachers in rural school sites.

Additionally, regardless of their statute, it would be desirable that all school leaders in Colombia have access to formative performance appraisal and ongoing support from their Secretaries of Education. This would be an opportunity to establish a shared educational vision, to set clear expectations for school principals' role, to provide them with formative feedback and ultimately to hold them accountable for their work. Receiving formative assessments themselves would probably improve school principals' skills to assess teachers and provide them with feedback. This of course, also implies that the Secretaries of Education need to receive further training on how to conduct such evaluations and provide their schools with adequate support (OECD, 2013^[51]).

The ministry, together with the National Civil Service Commission and ICFES, need to pay particular attention to the selection of new school leaders to make sure this is a competitive process that attracts highly qualified professionals. A potential measure to make the school leadership profession more competitive could be to limit the appointment as school principal to a certain number of years. This measure should, however, be closely monitored for impact on attractiveness so it does not lead to greater stress for an already challenging role.

Finally, the ministry and Secretaries of Education should draw on and further encourage one of the strengths of Colombia's schools – a distributed vision of school leadership and teacher leadership as discussed in Chapter 4. School principals not only work together with their co-ordinators but also school counsellors (e.g. in the design of school community strategies) and teachers (e.g. through the directive and academic councils).

Co-ordinators are currently appointed by the Secretary of Education but it may be interesting to explore the possibility of giving principals greater autonomy in appointing their own leadership team. In any case, the other members of the leadership team should also receive training to strengthen their skills for technical-pedagogical support.

Strengthen technical-pedagogical support and advice for schools leveraging the potential of networks, in particular for pedagogical staff in small rural schools

The capacity for Secretaries of Education to provide greater technical pedagogical support for schools in challenging contexts such as rural and remote or post-conflict areas will depend in large part on a more equitable distribution of financial resources as discussed in Chapter 2. Policies that are sustained in the long run – for instance in the framework of the country’s ten-year education plan or through efforts to re-establish education boards at all levels as proposed in Chapter 2 cannot be stressed enough to create a more supportive environment for schools. This also includes more sustainability and greater synergies between different initiatives at a local level, including civil society. Networks also have a strong potential to build capacity through peer learning, collaboration and resource sharing. They can promote the identification and dissemination of good practices that may contribute to improving teaching and learning more broadly across the school system.

At the school level, the ministry, as well as Secretaries of Education, should encourage more systematic networks, for small rural schools in particular but also more generally. In rural areas, higher teaching schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*), providing initial teacher education for pre-primary and primary levels, could take on a key role in building the capacity of other schools and in leading larger school networks. Both local practices in Colombia, as well as examples worldwide, can provide inspiration. Perhaps one of the most relevant examples for rural schools in Colombian is Chile’s rural micro-centres (*microcentros rurales*). New Zealand’s Learning and Change Networks also provide an example more broadly relevant for all schools (see Box 3.2).

Specifically, in the case of rural schools, implementing successful school networks requires first a deep understanding and reflection on the differences between rural schools, with the needs of remote sites in particular, which are more likely to experience challenges in providing the same educational opportunities as rural schools located in the urban periphery. Moreover, the ministry and Secretaries of Education need to pay attention to what many stakeholders interviewed during the review visit referred to as “the new rurality” (*la nueva ruralidad*) in the context of the peace process.

The success of networks in overcoming capacity and resource constraints resulting from their location and size depends on a number of factors. Distance and the time it takes to travel between school sites as well as a lack of a common understanding among the school communities for the need to collaborate can act as barriers. Trust and collaborative working relations between schools, clear goals, mutual benefits and actionable results emerging from working together, on the other hand, can facilitate successful collaboration among rural schools (Muijs, 2015_[100]).

Lastly, networks can also be implemented at the level of territorial entities which would build on strong capacity and innovation that exist in some Secretaries of Education (OECD, 2016_[14]). In this regard, the ministry, but also associations of departments and municipalities should play a stronger role in facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange across authorities.

Box 3.2. Networks for schools and teachers

Rural School Networks in Chile (*microcentros rurales*)

Since 1992, the Programme of Basic Rural Education (*Programa de Educación Básica Rural*) has provided technical-pedagogical support to small schools in rural areas. This initiative, which comprises a number of actions from adaptations of the curriculum to teacher professional development, has also established rural school networks (*microcentros rurales*) that provide a space for different multi-grade schools and their staff within the same area to come together and reflect about their work. School networks seek to address the particular needs of multi-grade schools and the challenges they face (e.g. cultural, social and ethnic diversity of students, teaching of students of different ages in the same classroom, personal and professional isolation of staff, weak links between schools and other institutions, including the Ministry of Education and providers). By law, school networks meet for two hours on a weekly basis in technical meetings to evaluate teaching and learning in schools, reflect about teachers' pedagogical work and necessary changes and innovative approaches to improve student outcomes, exchange pedagogical experiences, plan classroom teaching strategies and agree criteria for the development of school improvement plans. When necessary, school networks receive support from the technical-pedagogical advisory services of the Ministry of Education or independent advisory services. The co-ordinators of the individual rural school networks meet on an annual basis for two days to receive training, support and information on the ministry's initiatives and policies. While rural school networks face challenges to focus sufficiently on pedagogical strategies instead of administrative issues, they provide a promising platform for collaboration.

Source: Santiago, P. et al. (2017), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Chile*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264285637-en>.

New Zealand's Learning and Change Networks

New Zealand has initiated Learning and Change Networks to accelerate student achievement in Years 1 to 8 and to address equity issues through the power of collaboration. Networks involve schools, families, teachers, leaders, communities, professional providers and the education ministry. Learning and Change Networks address three big agenda items – schooling improvement, blended learning and digital technologies, and cultural responsiveness – holistically instead of creating projects that deal with those agendas separately. Design work on the strategy commenced in October 2011 and five pilot networks representing 55 schools were established. The strategy went live in October 2012 with 57 networks established involving 373 schools (approximately 15% of New Zealand schools), with an average of 6 to 7 schools per network. There is a particular focus on priority groups traditionally under-served by the system – Māori, Pasifika, those from lower socio-economic groups, and those with special educational needs – along with their families, teachers, school and community leaders. A central role is given to evaluation, generating learning evidence at school, network, regional and system levels and a strong connection to international experience and networks. Learning and Change Networks also recognise the importance of engaging learners, their parents, families and communities in powerful learning-focused partnerships.

Source: OECD (2015), *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264245914-en>.

The ministry could also play a stronger role in directly building the technical capacity of Secretaries of Education. In Denmark, for example, the ministry responsible for education has created a group of learning consultants that advise local authorities in their improvement efforts. Consultants come mostly from local authorities and schools and return to their job after a period of time advising others (for further details, see Nusche et al. (2016_[101])).

The organisation of teaching and learning

Initiate a long-term participatory process to develop a national curriculum framework and further support schools to develop their pedagogical projects

Schools' curricular autonomy in Colombia has been balanced with the use of central learning standards and curricular guidelines that should guarantee the development of students' core competencies. As explained previously, however, efforts to establish common learning goals over the last three decades have resulted in a vast number of learning standards and curricular guidelines. Also, in terms of content, teachers reported difficulties in understanding standards and guidelines and identifying clear learning goals. While some level of curricular autonomy provides room for teachers' professional judgements and innovations in the classroom, it is important that goals to be achieved by students are clear so that teachers can teach towards standards, assess learning against them and adapt their teaching (OECD, 2013_[51]).

During the review visit, the team learned that the ministry had initiated a review of existing curricular guidelines, clearly aware that there are too many of them and that is not clear how they relate to each other. These efforts to review the existing standards and guidelines in order to establish a more concise and clear version should be maintained and strengthened in the short term. At the same time, Colombia should consider the possibility of starting a longer process of developing a more comprehensive national curriculum framework (OECD, 2016_[14]).

The question of curriculum autonomy is not a normative but a contextual one. As such, other elements, including a country's accountability framework, students' achievement in terms of quality and equity, and the capacity of teachers and school leaders should be considered. Attention and dialogue about all factors that influence the curriculum would help make sure that a curriculum is suitable for a given context at a given time (Sinnema, 2016_[69]). Countries must find their own balance between local autonomy and central prescription. In the Colombian context, arguably, more weight should be given to greater prescription given strong accountability in the form of standardised assessments, inequities and low levels of student achievement and weak local capacity.

The elaboration of a national curriculum framework – which should be planned over a sufficient timeframe – should be a participatory process, involving broad consultation with several key stakeholders, particularly teachers. This would contribute to ensure ownership and ensure that the framework reflects the full range of knowledge, skills and values that all citizens deem to be important. In Scotland, a reform of the curriculum at the beginning of the new century was led by a board made up of local authority representatives, teacher and school leader associations, national authorities, parent representatives, and colleges and universities (OECD, 2015_[85]). In Ireland, a National Council for Curriculum and Assessment brings together representatives from education, industry, trade unions, parents and others, and provides advice on curriculum and assessment. While not responsible for implementing curriculum change, the council provides support materials and works with practitioners and teachers (OECD, 2013_[51]).

In Colombia, the national education board (JUNE) and its technical secretariat, which should be re-established as suggested above and in Chapter 2, would provide a starting point for discussing curriculum reform.

The process towards developing a common curriculum framework would provide an important opportunity to engage society in a broader reflection to create a shared vision of education in Colombia's post-conflict transition. In the Scottish example, the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence was the heart of a general reflection about the purpose of education and what it means to be a young Scot growing up in today's world. In Colombia, the country's geographical and cultural diversity could be one element of this framework, for instance. At the same time, a national curriculum framework would not mean that there would not be room for local adaptations. Sufficient room for local and school-based adaptation will remain essential for making the curricular framework more pertinent and relevant for school communities. The development of a national curriculum will need to safeguard the rights of ethnic minorities and could involve the development of a specific national curriculum for these students. In New Zealand, for example, the national curriculum includes a curriculum for English-medium and for Māori-medium instruction.

In order for schools to truly exercise some or full autonomy for curriculum development, Secretaries of Education must support teachers and school leaders in designing content, lesson plans and teaching to effectively enable learning; the greater the curricular autonomy, the more support is needed. Building schools' and teachers' capacity for curriculum development and implementation is essential as it has a great impact on students' learning and achievements, and the ways in which a school uses curriculum and assessment to engage and motivate its students. Teacher learning and support will remain crucial also if a national curriculum framework is developed to enable teachers to make sense of the new curriculum policy and to change their beliefs and practice.

Lastly, a more coherent curriculum framework – in addition to more resources as discussed in Chapter 2 – would support efforts to provide students and teachers with access to good quality educational materials, and support teachers in their use of pertinent, updated pedagogical materials. Initiatives such as *Compra Eficiente* should also be sustained and promoted. In rural and remote areas, ICT resources could be used to facilitate the coverage of the curriculum and a broad curricular offer, where connectivity allows and based on analysis of costs and benefits, ensuring sufficient teacher and school leader preparation to embed distance learning approaches in schools effectively. This will require further efforts to articulate responsibilities between ministries (MEN, MinTIC, MinMinas) and across levels of government, for instance, to ensure that not only municipalities but also schools within them have sufficient energy and connectivity.

Ensure schools are prepared for and supported in the implementation of full-day schooling, including small rural schools

More time does not automatically lead to more learning. It is crucial that the implementation of full-day schooling which entails a significant investment of resources includes specific provisions on the effective use of the additional time. The introduction of full-day schooling gives schools the opportunity to reflect about their curriculum and pedagogical practices, an opportunity that should be fully embraced by schools. Inevitably, such a change will take time and requires the support of Secretaries of Education.

Furthermore, the implementation plan of full-day schooling should also consider the teaching profession. It is essential to provide teachers with training that allows them to strengthen their teaching skills and pedagogical practices in order to effectively use the time in class and respond appropriately to the needs of their students. Greater school leadership that creates conditions in schools for peer learning has an important role to play in this (see Chapter 4 for further recommendations).

The success of Colombia's policy and investment in expanding learning time will depend on the extent to which the above-mentioned challenges (as well as those mentioned in Chapter 2 in relation to infrastructure and complementary services) are addressed and teachers have the working conditions and pedagogical skills to manage their classrooms and spend more time on effective instruction. Teachers should receive more preparation and support in effective classroom management, be it for large classes in main school sites or urban schools, or small multi-grade settings. Learning from effective peers within their school cluster could be one promising strategy. As classes may become smaller in the long run due to demographic changes, teacher resources should be targeted at those who are likely to benefit the most: disadvantaged students and students in pre-primary and primary education (OECD, 2017^[7]).

Previous research for Colombia has shown the potential of full-day schooling in improving the conditions of the poorest schools and those in rural areas (Hincapie, 2016^[75]). Research from Germany and Switzerland, however, points to the risks that more instruction time may actually exacerbate inequities as advantaged students may be better positioned to take advantage of additional learning time (Cattaneo, Oggenfuss and Wolter, 2017^[102]; Huebener, Kuger and Marcus, 2017^[103]). Based on research in Italy, Meroni and Abbiati (2016^[104]) suggest that more learning time may also affect girls and boys differently.

The government should, therefore, prioritise disadvantaged schools or schools with a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in an attempt to reduce equity gaps in education and monitor the effects of full-day schooling on different groups of students. The selection of schools offering a full school day must mainly take their economic and social vulnerability into account and must include pedagogical innovations specially designed for rural contexts. Moreover, to be successful, the implementation of full-day schooling must include the voice of parents and students (Sánchez, 2018^[11]).

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that more learning time can actually lead to fatigue and boredom among students and burnout among teachers (Patall, Cooper and Allen, 2010^[105]). Therefore, it seems necessary to monitor students' and teachers' levels of stress and fatigue.

Improve the provision of education to meet students' needs and interests, and provide them all with equal learning opportunities irrespective of background

Colombia has made tremendous improvements in the last two decades in expanding the coverage of compulsory education. Nevertheless, further work is needed to continue ensuring access to school and continuity for students who are considered to be particularly vulnerable.

Greater investments in high-quality early childhood education and care as discussed in Chapter 2, and a more equitable distribution of teachers as analysed in Chapter 4, will be essential to address existing inequities. For early childhood education and care, this also includes the effective articulation between different types of provision, particularly for

3-5 year-olds who can attend early childhood education or pre-school. Also, the organisation of the school system (e.g. through the development of data-tracking systems and early-warning indicators for students at risk of dropping out) and schools (e.g. through strong partnerships between schools and families) has a role to play in overcoming disadvantage (Dietrichson et al., 2017^[106]; OECD, forthcoming^[20]).

Flexible education models provide an important pedagogical strategy to address different learning needs. The freedom to develop and use flexible models has led to much innovation in education in Colombia, and the country should build on this tradition and strength in the future – potentially providing a model for other countries in areas like rural and post-conflict education. However, the ministry and Secretaries of Education need to maintain regular oversight over the use of flexible models to ensure and improve their quality. This could involve reducing the number of models currently recognised by the ministry to those that have proven to be effective. For those that will continue to exist, it seems necessary to further support teaching and learning processes as well as improve the pedagogical materials for teachers and students, some of which are outdated.

There are also flexible models in use that are not regulated or recognised by the ministry. Secretaries of Education need to play a stronger role in the regular review and quality assurance of these flexible models used within their schools, and support schools and teachers in implementing all models irrespective of their owner (e.g. through adequate preparation and training for teachers to bring pedagogical approaches to life in classrooms). The ministry could consider requirements for flexible models to undergo evaluation processes within a specified time to ensure their effectiveness.

Taking steps to improve the offer of upper secondary education and facilitating students' transitions to tertiary education or the labour market should be a priority in the coming years for the ministry and Secretaries of Education (in collaboration with other relevant actors like SENA, employers and universities), given that completion of this level will be compulsory for all young people by 2030. The ministry should develop additional steps for guidance counselling which should allocate counsellors to the most disadvantaged schools and could draw on insights from behavioural research (OECD, forthcoming^[20]).

In rural areas, in particular, education may not always be pertinent to the needs of students in their context, especially at the upper secondary level. Addressing the needs of young people in rural areas goes beyond education alone and also requires the creation of opportunities in rural areas, e.g. through access to markets, credit and technology. Education, however, needs to be connected with rural life and the productive realities of rural areas, such as improvements in the agricultural sector and the emergence of new sectors, if it is to motivate young people to remain in or move to rural areas (Echazarra and Radinger, forthcoming^[3]; Montero and Uccelli, 2016^[39]).

At the same time, schools, and particularly vocational programmes, can under some conditions play a role in maintaining and revitalising rural communities. Schools can integrate academic and vocational education in many ways, such as through collaborations with local businesses, job shadowing and school-to-work programmes. “Farm-to-school” programmes which develop purchasing relations between school meal operations and local producers, the cultivation of school gardens and farm field trips provide another example that schools can work in purposeful ways to contribute to the development of rural communities (Schafft, 2016^[107]).

The learning and development of children and young people from ethnic communities also require further attention. Although the education sector has been sensitive to the

needs of the country's ethnic groups, developing a wide array of ethnic education models and promoting the creation of ethnic groups' own intercultural education systems; there are still some aspects that raise concern and should be addressed.

First, the ministry and ethnic groups need to reflect about the processes for developing such systems and the mechanisms in place for their approval since the process is very long at present. Second, it seems necessary to develop a framework for developing such systems that clearly outlines the financing of and overseeing of these systems as well as their relationship with the rest of the education system, to avoid a potential fragmentation. Third, the ministry should consider mainstreaming intercultural education in all schools, not only in those serving ethnic communities or located in areas where ethnic communities are settled. For instance, indigenous communities' relationship to their land and the environment or relations between generations could inform environmental and citizenship education (UNESCO, 2016_[108]).

Finally, resources and support for students with special educational need to be improved. At present, there is a normative framework for the inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream schools, but a clear plan for the implementation of inclusive education is still required. The ministry has to develop such plans in the short term, specifying the number of support staff and assistants needed for the inclusion of students with special needs and their training needs, infrastructure requirements and the standardised protocols for diagnosing students with special educational needs. High-quality processes to identify special needs are not only important to avoid labelling students and to ensure that they receive the pedagogical support they require, but also to avoid rising costs as special needs students have a higher weighting in the current per-student funding allocation (see Chapter 2). Moreover, the implementation plan must provide guidelines to support inclusive education in small rural schools where this is likely to be more challenging and costly (e.g. for the creation of resources centres for inclusion in particular schools that provide support for others).

Develop a more comprehensive approach to school evaluation and further promote school improvement processes

Colombia needs to embrace a more comprehensive vision of school evaluation including i) standardised assessments of students' learning outcomes; ii) school self-evaluation; and iii) external evaluation of school processes.

In relation to the first approach, standardised assessments – which provide valuable information about student learning and can inform teaching – greatly influence schools' decisions and in practice often define what students should learn in Colombia. Assessments in Colombia fulfil a strong public accountability function which has recently been reinforced through the setting of performance goals for individual schools. As is well established, high-stakes testing can potentially have negative effects for teaching and learning, such as teachers giving more emphasis on tested subjects and reducing their emphasis on important subjects that are not part of the mandated testing programme (OECD, 2013_[51]; Stecher and Hamilton, 2002_[109]).

The strong role of standardised assessments in Colombian schools is also linked to the absence of a coherent curriculum framework and a clear set of learning standards or progressions as discussed. Establishing a more concise set of learning goals and standards (as through the development of a common curriculum framework) and building teachers' understanding of them so they have a clearer sense of what they should be aiming for in

relation to students' learning would help reduce the potential undesired effects of standardised assessment (Stecher and Hamilton, 2002_[109]).

The ministry (and ICFES) should moreover consider expanding “what counts” in their accountability systems to include more than just the core areas (Stecher and Hamilton, 2002_[109]), given that the aims of primary and secondary education clearly go beyond the acquisition of verbal and numerical skills. The *Pruebas Saber* for Years 5 and 9 consider citizenship and science on a changing basis, but additional sample-based assessments could be introduced for other subject areas and learning objectives. To avoid overburdening schools and the system, this would need to be designed carefully, for instance, by varying subjects and competencies over time, and year levels assessed. In general, authorities should clarify the purposes of individual assessments to encourage their appropriate use.

Regarding the second approach, Colombia needs to further develop and support structured school self-evaluation processes. At present, the ministry requires schools to conduct school self-evaluation every year, based on the results to develop an improvement plan; but the main limitation of these plans is that they seem to be exclusively focused on student learning outcomes, without analysing and improving school processes. The recommendation, therefore, is to strengthen Secretaries of Education's capacity to provide school leaders with sound technical pedagogical support, so they can in turn fully exercise their pedagogical leadership within their schools, providing teachers with guidance and support on how to transform results into adjustment or change of their pedagogical practices. School self-evaluation should not be seen as an accountability mechanism, but as an opportunity to improve (OECD, 2013_[51]).

Colombia needs to develop whole school evaluation processes, emphasising the formative aspect of evaluation and the need to promote school actors' engagement in reflecting about their educational practices and how to improve them. While there are some departments and municipalities that have a small body of school supervisors, the country would greatly benefit from the creation of a national quality agency responsible for evaluating school-level processes which could provide guidance on fundamental internal processes such as staff evaluation, school self-evaluation and curriculum development and implementation. Such an agency can collect valuable qualitative information on schools - including direct observation of classroom practice - and use that information to provide teachers and school leaders with feedback on how to improve teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning (OECD, 2013_[51]). Chile, for instance, introduced an agency in 2011 that fulfils this role, the Agency for Quality Education (see Santiago et al. (2017_[110]) for further information).

Lastly, more effective use should be made of the valuable data available at all levels, from the ministry in order to design relevant policy, Secretaries of Education in order to target resources and support, and schools in order to adapt teaching to students' learning. School leadership, teachers and the school communities should receive further support and training to analyse and use assessment data and results from evaluations to foster change and improvement processes. This should include building teachers' (and students') ability to develop their own approaches to assessing learning (OECD, 2013_[51]). Assessments could also be reviewed so they provide teachers and students with timely and useful feedback to improve learning and instruction. As a matter of fact, further developing the other two approaches to school evaluation – self-evaluation and external evaluation of school processes – may also contribute to strengthening schools' capacity to promote improvement processes.

Notes

¹ According to international classifications, private schools refer to schools managed directly or indirectly by a non-government organisation, such as a church, trade union, business or other private institution. Depending on whether or not they receive funding from the government, private schools can be considered government-independent (50% or more of their funding comes from private sources) or government-dependent (at least 50% of their funding comes from the government).

² Regulations specify that priority is given to students that are already enrolled in a school, after which new students can be assigned. For new students, the priority is given in the following order: students with special needs or gifted students; students entering Year 0; victims of the conflict or vulnerable students; students with siblings attending the same school; students who have left the system and want to return; students in social rehabilitation, and all others that had signed up during the process; and lastly, students who had not registered but need to be enrolled.

³ These enrolments include students in pre-primary to upper secondary education. In Colombia, government-dependent private provision is counted as part of public enrolment. When taking government-dependent and independent private provision together, 24.0% of students in pre-school and school education were enrolled in some form of private provision in 2017.

⁴ The General Education Law (Law 115) of 1994 established that schools that only offer some levels of education must establish agreements with other establishments with a similar or complementary educational project to guarantee continuity of education for their students. The law also established the possibility for schools to form associations, including between public and private schools, to provide a more efficient service. According to the law, the central government should encourage and incentivise such associations.

⁵ In the department of Nariño, the departmental and municipal secretaries of Nariño and Ipiales have 1.1 and 1.3 sites per rural school respectively, while in the department of La Guajira, the education authorities of the certified municipalities of Uribe and Maicao, have 15 and 11.2 sites per rural school. Looking at urban schools, the certified municipality of Tuluá holds the highest number of sites, with five on average. The vast number of urban schools has between two and three sites.

⁶ In 2017, there were 6 301 principals, 12 253 co-ordinators, 1 497 rural directors, and 804 other school leaders. Other school leaders include education supervisors (*supervisores de educación*) and core leaders (*directores de núcleo*). These roles do not exist in all certified territorial entities.

⁷ Cycles comprise Years 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9 and 10-11.

⁸ In the department of Vichada, for example, there is a distinct calendar for rural schools which covers four weeks of instruction on selected Saturdays and which has different school holiday arrangements.

⁹ For primary and lower secondary education, the fundamental and mandatory areas include: 1. Natural sciences and environmental education; 2. Social sciences, history, geography, political constitution and democracy; 3. Artistic Education; 4. Ethical education and human values; 5. Physical education, recreation and sports; 6. Religious education; 7. Humanities, Spanish and foreign languages; 8. Mathematics; and 9. Technology and computing. For upper secondary education, the fundamental and mandatory areas of knowledge are the same as in primary and lower secondary, but at a more advanced level in addition to economics, political science, and philosophy.

¹⁰ Data on student enrolments in flexible education models and ethnic education as well as the share of special needs and gifted students are based on enrolments in compulsory education, from

the transition year to the end of upper secondary education, in public and government-dependent private/contracted provision. The data on flexible education models exclude ethnic education.

¹¹ For instance, language and mathematics textbooks were distributed as part of the Let's All Learn programme (*Programa Todos a Aprender*, PTA); a literary collection (*Colección Semilla*) was distributed as part of the National Reading and Writing Plan (*Plan Nacional de Lectura y Escritura*, PNLE); and educational materials for rural schools including books for students and teaching guidelines for teachers, were distributed as part of the Rural Education Programme (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER).

¹² In 2016, the programme received 55% less budget than originally planned for 2015-18. In 2017, the reduction amounted to 84%.

¹³ The ICFES is also responsible for the administration of the state examinations for tertiary education (*Saber Pro* and *Saber TyT*) and co-ordinates Colombia's participation in international assessments such as the OECD PISA and the assessments carried out by the UNESCO Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE).

¹⁴ *Supérate con el Saber* is a national competition which rewards schools with the highest participation in the assessment and gives financial incentives to individual students.

¹⁵ These data on enrolments in upper secondary education include public and government-dependent private/contracted provision.

¹⁶ The increase in the probability for youth in the first cohort to access higher education was 31.8 percentage points, while the increase for young people in the second cohort was 25.8 percentage points. In addition, the effect on access to quality tertiary education as indicated by the accreditation of institutions was 46.1 percentage points and 41.2 percentage points respectively.

¹⁷ The ministry of education has developed a Strategy for the Articulation Between Upper Secondary and Tertiary Education (*Estrategia de Articulación de la Educación Media con la Educación Superior y la Formación para el Trabajo*) and a Programme for Strengthening Technical and Technological Education (*Programa de Fortalecimiento de la Educación Técnica y Tecnológica*), for example.

¹⁸ These data include enrolments in compulsory education from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education.

¹⁹ As Colombia's integrated household survey (*Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares*, GEIH) for 2016 highlights, adults in urban areas have an average of 3.6 years more education than adults in rural areas, and illiteracy is more than twice as high in rural areas than the national average (Sánchez, 2018).

²⁰ In Colombia, all 15-year-olds were in a school whose principal reported that school internal evaluations are in place, compared to 93% on average across OECD countries, 94% in Chile, 92% in Peru, 90% in Costa Rica, 88% in Spain, and 86% in Mexico. In Portugal, 100% of principals also reported school evaluations. School principals in Colombia reported to predominantly take action to improve student achievement (87%) and the quality of teaching and learning (84%), but less so for developing teachers (62%) or educating staff (53%).

²¹ The boarding school enrolment is classified as: *internos* (full-time boarding school students) for students who live most of the academic year in school, *semi-internos* (part-time boarding school students), for students staying in the school longer hours, similar to a full school day, and *externos* (external), for students who go to school only during school hours.

²² García et al. (2016), using administrative data, found that only 11.6% of school sites offering upper secondary education have a counsellor and the shortage is observed equally in schools offering academic or vocational programmes.

²³ Implemented by the Foundation of Businesses for Education (*Fundación Empresarios por la Educación*), the programme started back in 2010 with the aim of encouraging the development of leadership skills in public schools. The programme targets the whole leadership team (school principals and co-ordinators) to provide them with the information and tools to successfully perform their pedagogical, management, administrative and community responsibilities; as well as with technical support to implement the school transformation plan. With the support of local governments, the programme has grown progressively in scale and now operates in five municipalities (Bogotá, Itagui, Manizales, Medellín and Cali) and three departments (Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Atlántico) (OECD, 2016_[14]).

²⁴ During the review visit, for instance, the team learned about some forms of school networks within certain certified territorial entities, such as Tolima and Quindío, and the ministry of education has been creating networks through the project *Colegios Líderes por la Excelencia - Aliados 10* with the support of two other organisations.

²⁵ Schools in the top quintile of the performance distribution (of time use) average 82% while schools in the bottom quintile average 49%. For schools in the lowest quintile, the average of the time spent teaching by the single best teacher in each school is 78% while the average for the worst teacher in each school is 18%.

²⁶ Through Law 1620 of 2013, the national government has created a National System for School Coexistence, Human Rights Education, Sex Education, and the Prevention and Mitigation of School Violence (*Sistema Nacional de Convivencia Escolar y formación para los derechos humanos, la educación para la sexualidad y la prevención y mitigación de la violencia escolar*). This system aims to form active and tolerant citizens and to address the challenges of a post-conflict society. The system has created committees at the national, territorial (one for each certified territorial entity) and school level, and these are formed by a wide array of stakeholders. Within schools, coexistence committees are responsible for resolving conflicts and promoting a peaceful coexistence, whilst ensuring all the necessary requirements for students' integral attention are in place.

²⁷ These data include only compulsory education from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education.

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Annex 3.A. The public funding of private providers

In case of limited capacity or some other form of limitation, Secretaries of Education can provide education by contracting private providers as regulated by Decree 1851 of 2015.

Contracts to offer the educational service (*contratos de prestación del servicio educativo*): The Secretary of Education hires the owner of a private school for a single year from a regulated bank of providers. The provider is responsible for providing all teachers and school staff. It also must ensure the provision of all components of the educational basket (*canasta educativa*). This is the main modality used in the country, representing 58.5% of all contracts with private providers in 2017.

Contract via tender (*contratos para la administración del servicio educativo*): Through a selection process, the provider can manage one or more public schools. The Secretary of Education provides financial resources per student, some complementary elements, and ensures enrolment, but the private entity (natural or legal person) ensures the remaining elements. The contract is for a period of between 2 to 12 years.

Contracts with churches and other religious entities (*contratos con iglesias o confesiones religiosas*): These contracts are for one year. The Secretary of Education can provide the infrastructure and other components of the educational basket. Religious entities can take responsibility for infrastructure, teachers, and other requirements.

Contracts via demand subsidy (*contratos mediante subsidios a la demanda*): Certified municipalities with more than 300 000 inhabitants can contract private entities through one-year contracts to provide education to students previously served by the first type of contract. Only 4% of the contracts are of this modality (Sánchez, 2018_[11]). In Bogotá, for example, the *Programa de Ampliación de Cobertura de la Educación Secundaria*, (PACES) developed in the 1990s delivered vouchers to 125 000 high-performing vulnerable students to access private schools. In an impact evaluation, Bettinger et al. (2010_[111]) concluded that the participating students achieved a better performance in standardised assessments, higher school completion and lower repetition rates.

Providers need to meet minimum standards specific to each type of contract which are monitored by the Secretary of Education contracting the provider. For the **first type of contract**, the private school must have achieved results in the last standardised assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) that are higher than the 35th percentile in language and mathematics among schools within the same certified territorial entity. Similar rules apply to the **third and fourth type of contracts**, but the comparison group are the 30th and 40th percentiles of schools respectively. For the **second type of contract**, the private provider must prove experience in providing education, but is fully autonomous in managing and organising education in line with its educational project and the provisions set out in the contract. The Secretary of Education should supervise the maintenance and use of the school infrastructure and materials as well as the quality of education. The school performance indicator (ISCE) should provide a reference point in this process.

Chapter 4. The development of the teaching profession in Colombia

This chapter describes i) the main characteristics of the teaching profession; ii) the employment framework; and iii) initial education and ongoing teacher learning in Colombia. The teacher employment framework was reformed in 2002 while leaving the first framework in place for teachers recruited before 2002. The chapter covers both teacher statutes and the pending challenges in implementing the new statute successfully. While the statutes also regulate the employment of school leaders, school leadership is analysed in depth in Chapter 3. The chapter analyses strengths and challenges with a particular focus on the preparation and support for teachers to work with a range of learners, and the equitable and efficient recruitment of teachers, including to rural areas. Finally, it makes recommendations, highlighting the benefits of a more comprehensive vision of teacher professionalism built on collective capacities in schools.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Context and features

Main characteristics of the teaching profession

Colombia has reformed the employment framework of public school teachers in 2002, while leaving the country's first framework introduced in 1979 in place. As a result, employment is regulated by two main teacher statutes: Decree Law 2277 of 1979 and Decree Law 1278 of 2002 (referred to as Statutes 2277 and 1278 throughout the chapter). These laws provide the general framework which is implemented through some collective bargaining between the government and the country's largest teacher union (*Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación*, FECODE).¹ The main changes between statutes relate to entry requirements, recruitment, salaries and evaluation. Teachers from the old statute are free to change their employment status and join the new statute. Educators of ethnic minorities (*etnoeducadores*) are employed under a separate framework based on Decree 804 of 1995 which regulates ethnic education.

Table 4.1. Main employment characteristics of public school teachers in Colombia, 2017

Pre-primary to upper secondary education				
Employment framework	Statute 1278 (2002)	Statute 2277 (1979)	Decree 804	Total
In numbers	168 332	134 944	6 610	309 886
In percentages	54	44	2	
Contract status	Permanent staff	Permanent vacancy	Temporary vacancy	
In numbers	247 664	46 243	12 211	
In percentages	80	15	4	

Note: Data on contract status include teachers of all statutes. Data on permanent staff include teachers in probationary period. Teachers in a permanent vacancy fill a staff position which could not be filled through the official recruitment process (merit contest). Teachers in a temporary vacancy replace a permanent teacher that is only temporarily away. There are also temporary teachers (*planta temporal*) not reflected in this table, typically teachers taking part in an education initiative or programme.

Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of data in Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Table 4.2. Main demographic characteristics of public school teachers in Colombia, 2017

Pre-primary to upper secondary education					
Age (%)		Gender (%)		Geographical location (%)	
18-41	50 and older	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
31	38	66	44	64	34

Note: Data include teachers of all statutes. Data on age include both teachers and school leaders. All other data include teachers only.

Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of data in Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

As of 2017, there were 309 886 public school teachers teaching pre-school to upper secondary education (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2). Slightly more than half of all public school teachers hold their teaching position under the new Statute 1278 and it is estimated that it will take approximately 14 to 15 years until all teachers are employed under this employment framework, that is by 2032/33. About one in three public teachers work in

rural areas which reflects the relatively high number of teachers required to provide education in less densely populated parts of the country. Given the concentration of indigenous students in rural areas, most of Colombia's 6 610 educators of ethnic minorities work in a rural school (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Teaching in Colombia is a predominantly female profession, but less so than in many other countries. As in many other countries, however, the share of female teachers decreases in higher levels of school education (see Table 4.3). Women are also less likely to assume school leadership roles, representing 44% of all school leaders. Colombian teachers are relatively old. Overall, 31% of public school teachers were aged between 18 and 41 years in 2017, and almost 40% of teachers were 50 years or older (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). While the age groups and years available for comparison are not exactly the same, in Brazil and Chile, for example, 49% and 54% of teachers respectively were 39 years or younger, and 19% and 28% were older than 50 years in 2015 (OECD, 2017_[2]).

Table 4.3. Share (%) of female teachers, 2015

	ISCED 0	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3
Colombia	96	77	53	45
Brazil	95	89	69	60
Chile	99	81	68	56
Mexico	94	68	53	47
OECD average	97	83	69	59

Note: Teachers include staff in both public and private institutions.

Source: OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>, Table D5.2.

There were 120 488 teachers in independent private schools in 2016 which provide education to about 1 in 5 students in Colombia.² Almost 40% of these teachers have more than 4 years of tertiary education and 38% teach at the primary level, which is the case for 46% of public school teachers. Private school teachers can be employed under the old statute (2277) but not under the new one (1278). They must have a professional degree in education or another field related to the subject they are teaching.

In case public education cannot be provided directly through a public school (e.g. due to limited staff or infrastructure), the Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities³ – departments, districts and municipalities – can contract and fund private providers. Teachers in these government-dependent private schools can either be provided by the Secretaries of Education or by the private provider depending on the type of contract. All teachers in these government-dependent private schools must fulfil the requirements for public teachers in terms of qualifications and experience (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). For an in-depth discussion of private education, see Chapter 3.

Becoming a qualified teacher

Initial teacher education

There are three main routes to become a teacher in Colombia:

- Completion of a first professional degree in education (*licenciatura*) at a tertiary institution (ISCED 2011 level 6).⁴

- Completion of a complementary programme in education and pedagogy (*Programa de Formación Complementaria*, PFC) at a higher teaching school (*Escuela Normal Superior*, ENS) (ISCED 2011 level 4).
- Side entry through completion of a postgraduate qualification (ISCED 7-8) or a programme in pedagogy (*Programa de Pedagogía para Profesionales no Licenciados*) (also see Sánchez (2018_[1]) and MEN (2013_[3])).⁵

Professional degrees in education

The most common way of obtaining an initial teacher education is studying for a first professional degree at a university's education faculty or a university institution/technological school. A first professional degree in education requires four to five years of study and allows graduates to teach at all levels of pre-school and school education depending on the emphasis of the degree programme. Students can choose between public and private institutions and between different modes of study (full-time attendance, part-time attendance and distance-learning programmes).

Based on the principle of autonomy for tertiary institutions, education faculties are free to define their curricula and plans of study but need to comply with general requirements of Colombia's quality assurance system for tertiary education (*Sistema Nacional de Acreditación*, SNA). There are two types of quality assurance processes:

1. All institutions, as well as individual programmes, are subject to an evaluation by the National Inter-sectorial Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance (*Comisión Nacional para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior*, CONACES). This evaluation authorises programmes to become part of the register of qualified programmes (*registro calificado*). Evaluation is based on quality criteria for curriculum profiles, basic and professional competencies, mobility, teaching staff and pedagogical practice set by the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio Nacional de Educación*, MEN, hereafter ministry/ministry of education).
2. The second type of high-quality accreditation (*Acreditación de alta calidad*) granted by the National Accreditation Council (*Consejo Nacional de Acreditación*, CNA) is voluntary. Based on a peer evaluation by members of the academic and research community according to specified quality criteria, it functions as a process to encourage continuous self-evaluation, self-regulation and improvement of institutions and programmes (OECD, 2016_[4]).

Higher teaching schools

As in other countries in Latin America, higher teaching schools have traditionally played an important role for teacher education in Colombia (Ávalos, 2008_[5]). Emerging out of the tradition of normal schools (*escuelas normales*), the first of which was founded in Colombia in 1822, higher teaching schools today offer two years of post-secondary non-tertiary teacher education (*Programa de Formación Complementaria*, PFC) in addition to all other levels of school education. A teaching certificate from a higher teaching school allows graduates to teach in pre-primary and primary education as "normalists" (*normalistas*). Students from a higher teaching school can progress directly to the first semester of their post-secondary programme after completing upper secondary education with a focus on pedagogy (*bachillerato pedagógico*). Other students can enter a higher teaching school by completing five instead of four semesters.

Higher teaching schools are under the administration of the Secretary of Education of their certified territorial entity. They are autonomous in designing and developing the curriculum and study programme for their complementary programme, but it needs to be authorised by the ministry on the basis of a regular quality assurance process by CONACES, the national quality assurance body for tertiary education.

In 2018, there were 137 higher teaching schools, 129 of which were public and 8 private; 12 443 students were enrolled in initial teacher education at a higher teaching school in 2017. With the fulfilment of additional quality requirements, higher teaching schools can offer their complementary programme through distance education. In 2015, three higher teaching schools offered this option (MEN and ASONEN, 2015_[6]).

Side entry through a postgraduate qualification in education or a programme in pedagogy for professionals in other areas

Graduates with tertiary degrees in other disciplines can follow alternative routes into teaching, mainly as a subject teacher in secondary education (*docente de área de conocimiento en educación básica secundaria y media*). A university graduate with a degree in mathematics can, for example, become a mathematics teacher. Graduates from other disciplines can either take a specialisation,⁶ master's degree or PhD related to education (ISCED levels 7-8), or start teaching and follow a pedagogical programme offered at a tertiary institution. These pedagogy programmes need to comply with central guidelines and requirements for curriculum, length and mode of study.

Recruitment process

Permanent teaching positions

For most teachers, entry into the teaching profession is governed by the new teacher statute (1278) and its successive modifications, in particular, Decree 915 adopted in 2016. These regulations also apply to school leadership roles, although with some changes. For instance, while candidates for teaching do not need any experience, candidates interested in school leadership must have acquired a minimum number of years of teaching experience. School leadership is analysed in depth in Chapter 3.

The recruitment process of teachers into permanent staff positions (*professor de planta/nombramiento en propiedad*) is based on a merit contest (*concurso de mérito*). The merit contest was organised for the first time in 2004 and has been administered since 2006 by the National Civil Service Commission (*Comisión Nacional del Servicio Civil*, CNSC) with involvement from the ministry of education and the Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (*Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación*, ICFES). Prior recruitments were organised by individual Secretaries of Education.

As already stated, no previous experience is required for teachers to access the merit contest while the minimum qualifications required depend on the type of teacher. To apply, pre-school and primary teachers need to hold a tertiary degree in education/pedagogy (*licenciatura*) or have completed a higher teaching school (ENS). Subject teachers (*docentes de áreas de conocimiento*) need a tertiary degree in education or a tertiary degree in a relevant knowledge area other than education combined with a relevant postgraduate qualification or a programme in pedagogy as explained above.

Merit contests are called separately for each certified territorial entity (department, district or certified municipality) and specify the vacancies available within that territory.

The overall number of teaching positions in a certified territorial entity depends largely on staff plans approved by the ministry in line with technical relations for the ratio of students to teachers and teachers per group of students. These staff plans also determine financial resources for teachers allocated through Colombia's system for sharing revenues across levels of governance (*Sistema General de Participaciones*, SGP). Secretaries of Education can hire additional teachers with their own resources, but this is the exception.⁷

Secretaries of Education and schools are responsible for reporting the number of vacancies available in their territory to the ministry based on student enrolments – broken down by education level, area and type of school. Candidates must choose the one education authority they wish to apply for in that merit contest. Teachers are then employed by the Secretary of Education of their certified territorial entity where they make up a substantial part of public employment. In 2012, teachers and education staff constituted 29.1% of public employment at the regional level (OECD, 2013_[7]).⁸

Successful candidates select their preferred position in the Secretary of Education they applied to through a public audience (*audiencia pública*), based on their ranking in the recruitment process. Lists of eligible candidates are valid for two years. Once all successful candidates have chosen their preferred vacancy or decided not to choose any position, the National Civil Service Commission creates two lists of teachers eligible for permanent positions, one by department and one for the country as a whole. Successful candidates then start their probationary period. Probationary periods last until the end of the ongoing school year, but for a minimum of four months, and entail an evaluation by the school principal at the end of the school year (*Evaluación de período de prueba*).

Temporary teaching positions

Teachers who fail to pass the merit contest can be employed as provisional or contract teachers (*provisionales/nombramiento provisional*) to i) fill a permanent staff position which could not be filled through the merit context (“temporary position in a permanent vacancy”/*provisional en una vacante definitiva*); or ii) replace a permanent teacher who is only temporarily absent, for instance on extended sick leave or on probation in another school (“temporary position in a temporary vacancy”/*provisional en una vacante temporal*) (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2). All these provisional positions which are paid with resources distributed through the country's revenue sharing system (*Sistema General de Participaciones*) are part of the approved staff plans for Secretaries of Education.

Since 2016, Secretaries of Education need to fill temporary positions in a permanent vacancy through a Pool of Excellence (*Banco de la Excelencia*). Temporary teachers in a temporary vacancy can be filled on a discretionary basis. The financial compensation of provisional teachers is the same as that of teachers in permanent staff positions in the respective statute and thus depends on their level of qualification. Unlike permanent teachers, teachers under this type of contract however cannot progress up the salary scale or take part in the related competency assessment for promotion as explained below.

In addition to these two types of provisional or contract teachers, there are also temporary teachers (*planta temporal*) who replace teachers in particular situations, such as teachers working as tutors in the programme Let's All Learn (*Programa Todos a Aprender*, PTA).

Educators of ethnic minorities (etnoeducadores)

There are three types of educators in Colombia for different ethnic minorities: Raizal, Afro-Colombian and indigenous. In 2017, students from ethnic minorities represented

10.8% of enrolments in compulsory education (820 337 students). About half of these students were from Afro-Colombian communities, the other half from indigenous peoples (51.7% and 48.3% respectively) (data provided by the ministry of education).⁹ As stipulated in Decree 804 which regulates ethnic education, educators for these minorities should be recruited in negotiation between the ethnic communities and the responsible Secretary of Education giving preference to members of the local community.

The decree on ethnic education also sets some objectives for the preparation of educators of these groups, which should be specified through guidelines provided by the ministry. According to the decree, the education of educators of ethnic minorities should i) generate and instil the different skills that enable educators to strengthen the global life projects of the ethnic communities; ii) identify, design and undertake research on tools for the respect and development of the identity of ethnic communities; iii) identify and develop adequate pedagogical forms through educational practice; iv) strengthen the knowledge and use of vernacular languages; and v) establish criteria and instruments for the construction and evaluation of educational projects.

Educators in communities with their own linguistic tradition need to be bilingual. Tertiary institutions and higher teaching schools with a mission to teach members of ethnic communities should offer specific training in ethnic education according to accreditation criteria defined by the Higher Education Council (*Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior*, CESU) and the ministry, while territorial teacher education committees (*Comités Territoriales de Formación de Docentes*, CTFD) should organise specific training for educators of ethnic minorities to update their skills and engage in research. In practice, however, these orientations have typically not been put into practice as reported by the ministry. This may change with the creation of ethnic minorities' own intercultural education systems.¹⁰ Chapter 3 provides an in-depth analysis of ethnic education.

Progressing and developing in the profession

Compensation and promotion

Under the old teacher statute (2277), the salary scale is composed of a single scale of 14 grades (see Annex 4.A). Qualifications and service time are the main factors defining the salaries and career progression. For instance, a teacher with a professional degree needs at least 21 years of experience to achieve the highest grade. Participation in professional development facilitates quicker progression in the salary scale, and is required for advancing to some salary grades. For educators of ethnic minorities, qualifications alone define the salary on a scale of four grades.

The salary scale for teachers under the new statute (1278) is composed of 3 grades (1-3) and 4 steps within each grade (A, B, C, D). The salary of these teachers is also defined by their qualifications but the level of seniority is of secondary importance – teachers can only apply for promotion in grade (*ascenso*) or step (*reubicación*) if they have held a permanent position for at least three years after completion of the probationary period, and, in the case of a promotion, two years after their progression in the salary scale.

To obtain a promotion, teachers under the new statute need to have their competencies assessed through an evaluation of competencies (*Evaluación de competencias*). The possibility of promotion depends on the Secretary of Education's decision to open a call for voluntary applications of teachers. All promotions depend on the availability of sufficient budgetary resources provided through the central government. As stipulated in the statute and the single regulatory decree for education (Decree 1075 of 2015),¹¹ the

number of possible promotions is determined ahead of the evaluations and factored into the evaluation process. Evaluations should be organised on an annual basis and are carried out by the educational evaluation institute ICFES on a national level.

The evaluation was initially based on a written test. Following a strike and negotiations with the largest teacher union in 2015, the competency evaluation has been subject to changes and revisions. Initially, a different evaluation process was organised in 2015 to provide teachers who had not passed the evaluation in 2010 to 2014 with a second chance – on average, only 20% of teachers applying for promotion succeeded in previous years according to data provided by the ministry. This new form of evaluation – the Diagnostic and Formative Evaluation (*Evaluación de Carácter Diagnóstico Formativo*, ECDF) – was subsequently adopted as a process for the evaluation of teachers' competencies for promotion. It was carried out a second time in 2016-17 (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. The Diagnostic and Formative Evaluation (*Evaluación de Carácter Diagnóstico Formativo*)

The competency assessment required for promotion focuses on teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills. It is largely based on the evaluation of a classroom video as well as a survey of the school community, a self-evaluation and the results of the two previous performance evaluations carried out by the school leader. The video is reviewed by a regional and a national peer evaluator and accounts for 80% of the evaluation result. The other instruments are weighted to different degrees for teachers from the transition year (a compulsory year of pre-school) to Year 5 (that is primary education) and teachers from Years 6 to 11 (that is secondary education). The school community survey only applies to teachers in secondary education. Teachers need to achieve more than 80% overall to be promoted to the next grade or step.

Teachers not succeeding in the evaluation can take a recommended professional development course in a faculty of education within an accredited university to still be promoted on passing this course. While this option was available to all teachers taking part in the evaluation organised in 2015 who had not succeeded in their evaluation in the previous years, the number of places in such courses has been capped since. The number of places for professional development in the case of teachers who participated in the second round of the evaluation is equivalent to 12% of all teachers applying for promotion. Places are open to those teachers closest to the threshold of passing the evaluation. Central and territorial education authorities cover at least 70% of the cost of training.

Source: ICFES (2016), *Informe Nacional 2016: Evaluación de Carácter Diagnóstico Formativa (ECDF)* [National Report 2016: Diagnostic Formative Evaluation], Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación [Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation], Bogotá, DC.

Salaries increase with higher qualifications for all teachers, and teachers can also progress to a higher salary grade through the completion of additional qualifications. A teacher with a first teaching qualification from a higher teaching school (ENS), for example, can move up through completion of a university degree in both the old and the new salary scale. However, salaries for higher qualifications increase especially under the new statute, which includes specific salary steps for postgraduate qualifications within the second salary grade and a separate grade for master's or PhD degrees. Promotion for teachers under the new statute, however, always requires passing the competency assessment (ECDF). Teachers can also develop their career by taking on a school

leadership position, which brings salary bonuses depending on the leadership role and size of the school (see Chapter 3).

In addition to the base salary, some teachers can receive additional benefits. For instance, teachers with low salaries are eligible for transport and food allowances. Teachers in remote areas can be compensated with higher salaries, additional time to participate in professional development activities and free plane tickets.

The salaries of Colombian teachers compare favourably to the labour market overall, as Gaviria and Umaña (2002^[8]) already found for teachers in public education in the late 1990s and Hernani-Limarino (2005^[9]) for the year 2000. Taking levels of education, experience and place of residence into account, teachers with permanent employment in a public school earn, on average, 10% more than other workers in formal employment (García et al., 2014^[10]). Teacher salaries are considerably higher than the minimum wage which is set at a very high level and reached 96% of the median wage in 2013 (OECD, 2016^[11]). For instance, teachers employed under the new statute with no experience and minimum qualifications earn 2.5 times the minimum wage (see Figure 4.1).

As Saavedra et al. (2017^[12]) find, public teachers in Colombia earn a substantial labour market premium early on in their careers, which is however partly explained by teachers holding additional jobs in the formal sector. Of course, the choice of the comparison group influences relative wages (Morduchowicz, 2009^[13]). When comparing Colombian teachers to other professionals with a university qualification, they earned on average 7% less in 2011 (García et al., 2014^[10]), an earnings gap which exists in most education systems (OECD, 2017^[14]).

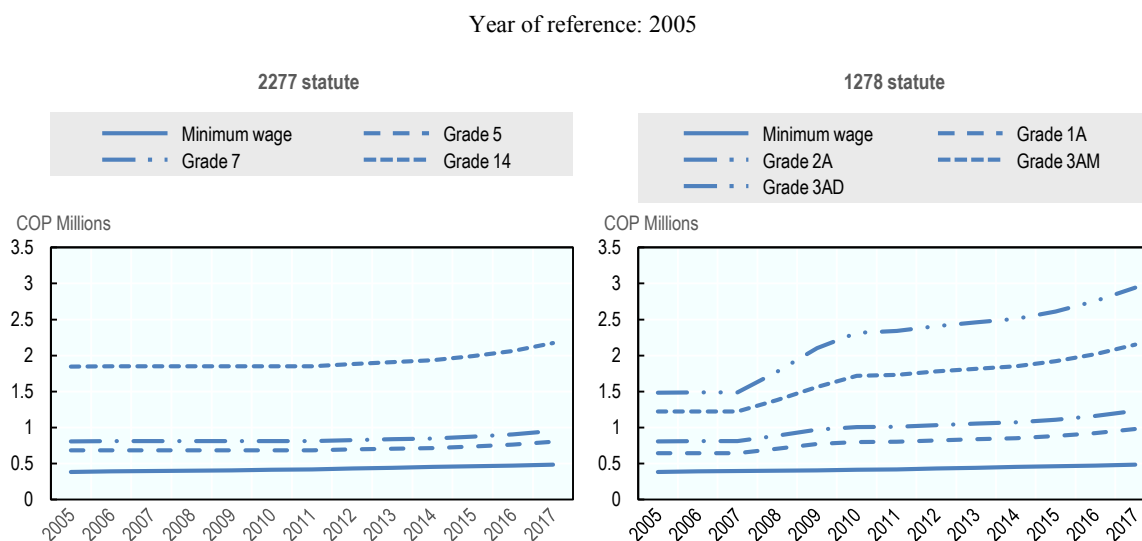
Salaries are defined by decree each year and increase at the same rate as for other public servants. In the coming years, teachers' salaries will likely increase given the strong bargaining power of the largest teacher union and pay increases agreed upon in negotiations with the ministry following a teacher strike in 2017 (Sánchez, 2018^[1]).

Teacher evaluation

While the General Education Law suggests the evaluation of teachers as a process to ensure a high-quality standard of teaching, teachers recruited under the old statute (2277) are not evaluated on a mandatory basis. Teachers that form part of the new statute (1278) are evaluated regularly by their school leaders. School leaders belonging to the new statute themselves are evaluated by their Secretary of Education as analysed in Chapter 3.

In this mandatory annual performance evaluation (*Evaluación anual de desempeño de docentes y directivos docentes*) school leaders evaluate whether teachers have fulfilled their functions and responsibilities on the basis of national specifications (Decree 3782 of 2007) and guidelines (*Guía No. 31: Guía Metodológico Evaluación Anual de Desempeño Laboral*). The evaluation guidelines were being revised at the time of drafting this report.

Based on these guidelines and specifications, the evaluation should assess teachers' performance in eight functional competencies across three domains (academic, administrative and community responsibilities) and seven behavioural competencies. While teachers are evaluated in all functional competencies, they select the three most relevant behavioural competencies that need to be further developed. Functional competencies account for 70% of the evaluation result, behavioural competencies for the remaining 30%. As part of their evaluation, teachers should gather evidence in the form of a portfolio. Evidence can, for example, include student and parent questionnaires, diaries, self-evaluations and protocols of classroom observations.

Figure 4.1. Trend in statutory teacher salaries for selected salary grades and steps, 2005-17

Notes: Salaries adjusted for inflation. Data on teacher salaries include bonuses for the years 2014 (applied as of 1 June), 2015 (1%), 2016 (2%) and 2017 (2%). In Statute 2277, Grade 5 refers to entry with a “normalist” teaching qualification, Grade 7 to entry with a professional tertiary degree in education, and Grade 14 to the highest salary grade. In Statute 1278, Grade 1, step A, refers to entry with a “normalist” teaching qualification; Grade 2, step A, to entry with a professional tertiary degree in education or a tertiary degree in another discipline; Grade 3, step AM to entry with a master’s; and Grade 3, step AD to entry with a PhD degree.

Source: Authors’ elaboration, data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEN).

At the end of the school year, the school leader and the individual teacher meet for a performance evaluation meeting and teachers are rated in 1 of 3 levels of performance depending on a quantitative score: outstanding performance for a score between 90 and 100; satisfactory performance for a score between 60 and 89; and unsatisfactory performance for a score between 1 and 59.

On the basis of the evaluation, the school leader and teacher should design actions and improvement strategies in the form of a personal and professional development plan (*Plan de Desarrollo Personal y Profesional*). The evaluation also has high stakes for teachers. In the case of an unsatisfactory rating for two consecutive years, a teacher can be dismissed from service. The average of the two last evaluations is taken into account in the competency assessment for promotion described above (MEN, 2008_[15]).

Professional development

The ministry is responsible for formulating policies, plans and programmes for teachers’ professional development on the basis of National Development Plans. The Secretaries of Education are responsible for contextualising national policies. They develop a Territorial Training Plan for Teachers and School Leaders (*Plan Territorial de Formación para Docentes y Directivos docentes*, PTFD) that forms part of the territorial entity’s sectoral development plan for education (*Plan sectorial de desarrollo educativo*). Central guidelines provide a framework for the development of these plans (MEN, 2011_[16]) and the ministry provides technical assistance if requested by Secretaries of Education.

All Secretaries of Education establish a territorial teacher education committee (*Comité Territorial de Formación de Docentes*, CTFD)¹² which provides them with support in the development, monitoring and evaluation of their territorial education plan and specific programmes and actions for teacher education. In this function, the teacher education committees should, among others, help identify the development needs of schools and their staff, define criteria and regulations for the offer of professional development and support and manage the selection, approval and evaluation of education programmes.

Workload and use of teachers' time

The working time for teachers under the old and new statutes (2277 and 1278) is conceived on the basis of a workload system, i.e. regulations stipulate the total number of working hours and define the range of tasks teachers are expected to perform beyond teaching itself. Teachers work 40 hours per week, spending at least 6 of their 8-hour working day at school following the schedule set by their school principal. When school principals assign more than 30 hours a week at school, teachers receive compensation for overtime up to a maximum of 10 hours a week. Guidance counsellors (*orientadores*) and co-ordinators (*coordinadores*), that is middle leaders, are required to spend eight hours per day within the school (as are school principals).¹³ The working year comprises 40 weeks of academic work with students, 5 weeks of institutional development and 7 weeks of vacations.

Teachers have an academic assignment that defines their contact time with students: 20 hours a week for pre-school and 25 hours a week for primary education, which is equal to students' classroom time at the respective levels. Teachers in secondary education have an assignment of 22 teaching hours a week, less than the 30 hours of students' classroom time. The remaining working hours need to be spent on complementary curriculum activities (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).¹⁴ On a weekly basis, teachers' academic assignment leaves about 15 hours for non-teaching tasks in primary and 18 hours in secondary education, that is between 37.5% and 45% of time in the week.

From a comparative perspective, teachers' total statutory working time over the school year is around the average across OECD countries with available data for the OECD publication *Education at a Glance* (Colombia: 1 600 hours, OECD average: 1 634 hours, in lower secondary education). It is also lower than in various other countries, including Chile and Switzerland, the countries with the highest number of working hours (OECD, 2017_[14]). Taking teachers' participation in five weeks of institutional development per year into account, total annual statutory working time, however, increases to 1 800 hours per year. Data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 suggest that teachers in Colombia are more likely to work full-time than in other countries, making Colombia an exception in the region (see Table 4.4) (OECD, 2016_[17]).

Compared to other countries, teachers in Colombia have a relatively large teaching load. Primary teachers, for instance, are required to teach at least 1 000 hours annually, only behind Chile, Costa Rica and Switzerland among countries with available data. They also teach 40 weeks per year, above most OECD countries except Australia, Germany, Japan and Mexico, as well as Brazil and Costa Rica in the region (OECD, 2017_[14]).

As in most education systems, teachers' overall working time is more favourable than for the average employee in Colombia. Based on household survey data for 2011 (*Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares*, GEIH), teachers work on average about 35 hours a week, compared to a worker in formal employment who works about 50 hours a week.

Teachers' working time is also more favourable than the working time for other professionals with a difference of about 12 hours a week (García et al., 2014_[10]).

Table 4.4. Share (%) of teachers working part-time, PISA 2015

Based on school principals' reports

Uruguay	84
Mexico	51
Brazil	49
Costa Rica	37
Peru	23
Chile	21
Colombia	4
OECD average	21

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.9.

Strengths

Colombia has taken considerable steps towards the professionalisation of teaching

There is a solid evidence base indicating that teachers matter – likely more than anything else in children's lives outside their families – in improving opportunities for students. Teachers' effects on academic achievement are substantial (Hattie, 2009_[18]), and recent research suggests that teachers' impact on social and behavioural outcomes is often comparable or even larger than effects on academic achievement (Jackson, 2012_[19]; Jennings and DiPrete, 2010_[20]). Studies from Colombia equally suggest that the quality of teachers contributes to student learning outcomes (Bonilla and Galvis, 2012_[21]; Brutti and Sanchez, 2017_[22]; García et al., 2014_[10]).

Recognising this profound impact and supporting a strong teaching profession is therefore essential but policies must be implemented in ways that are sensitive to specific contexts. As recent OECD reports on teachers highlight, there is no single way for countries to promote teacher professionalism – rather there are different approaches and models that make sense in different contexts (OECD, 2016_[23]; OECD, 2018_[24]).

Colombia has taken significant steps to create a professional teaching workforce with the reform of the teacher statute in 2002. As analysed in depth in the following, the new statute and subsequent regulations have introduced a fair and transparent teacher selection process, raised entrance requirements, made the salary structure more attractive, made entry into subject teaching more open and flexible and introduced teacher evaluations. As judged by a comparative report on teachers in Latin America, Colombia's reform "remains one of the most comprehensive and ambitious efforts in the region to improve teachers quality through higher standards, performance evaluation and professional development", even though "the impressive design has been undercut by ineffective implementation" as the report also notes (Bruns and Luque, 2015_[25]). A similar picture emerges in a report by the Commission for Quality Education for All (2016_[26]).

While more time and research are needed to fully evaluate the effects of the reform, first evaluations indicate that teachers in the same age group under the new statute hold higher

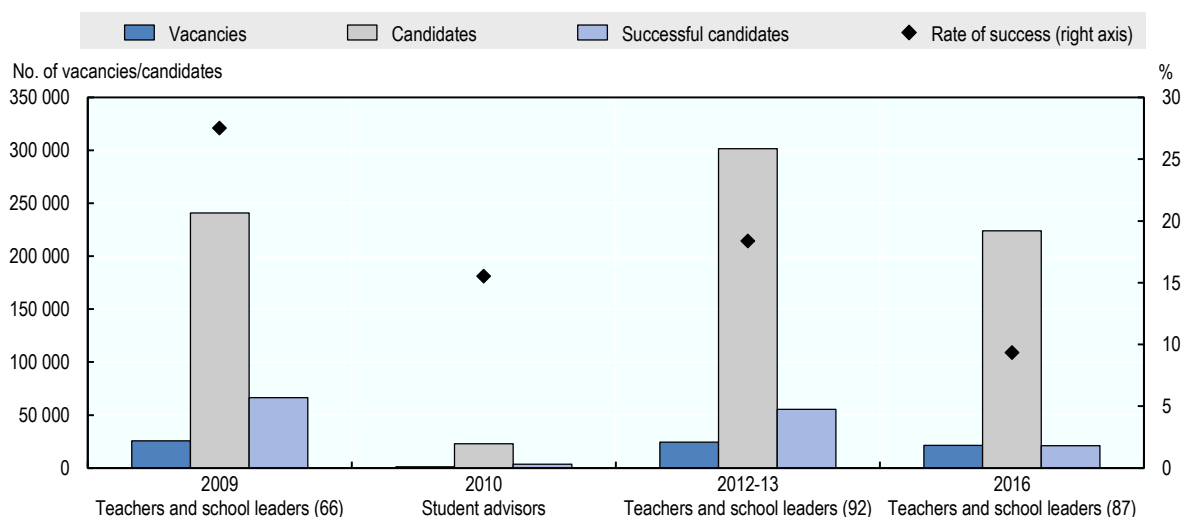
levels of education than their peers in the old statute (Ome, 2013_[27]). A higher share of new statute teachers in a school is also related to positive student learning outcomes as measured by national standardised assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) and reduced school dropout rates (Brutti and Sanchez, 2017_[22]; Ome, 2013_[27]).¹⁵

Transparent and fair recruitment process ensuring a minimum standard for beginning teachers in permanent staff positions

The new teacher statute (1278) introduced a competitive, fair and transparent recruitment process for all candidates wishing to be hired for a permanent teaching (and school leadership) position in a public school. This process constitutes an important step towards the professionalisation of teaching. As Finan, Olken and Pande (2015_[28]) highlight for the public administration in general, the selection and screening for the recruitment of public officials have important implications for the quality of service delivery, the quality of the hired candidates and the type of applicant.

Since 2006, the recruitment process has been administered centrally by the National Civil Service Commission in collaboration with the ministry of education and ICFES, the institute responsible for educational evaluation. The process is based on a score system and entails a written knowledge and competency examination, a psychometric test, a check of credentials and an interview. The process is highly competitive and selective – approximately 9% of applicants passed the process in 2016 (Figure 4.2). Involvement of the National Civil Service Commission, an independent and autonomous public body at the highest level of the Colombian state with the mission of safeguarding the principle of merit and equality in the civil service, is a strong guarantee for a fair recruitment process. It leaves little room for patronage and creates trust in the recruitment process, although there are challenges in the implementation of the process as analysed below (OECD, 2013_[7]).

Figure 4.2. Participation in national teacher recruitment process



Note: In parentheses the number of certified territorial entities that offered vacancies in that merit contest.

Source: Authors' elaboration from data in Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

The centrally organised recruitment process is a significant improvement compared to the previous recruitment of teachers (and school leaders) by Secretaries of Education which was often subject to political influence and clientelism (Duarte, 2003_[29]). The possibility of a teacher test to identify better teachers is most likely limited (Cruz-Aguayo, Ibararán and Schady, 2017_[30]), but a standardised process is still an improvement over discretionary recruitment decisions (Estrada, 2017_[31]).

Research suggests that it is difficult to identify effective teachers at the point of hiring and that recruitment should, therefore, be based on a broad set of information and entail an opportunity for both new teachers and their employer to assess whether teaching is the right career for them (OECD, 2005_[32]; Staiger and Rockoff, 2010_[33]). The requirement for the completion of a demanding probationary period thus constitutes another positive element of teacher recruitment. Between 2010 and 2013, approximately 1 in 6 teachers failed their probation (Sánchez, 2018_[1]), even though this has been changing in recent years. Between 2014 and 2016, almost all new teachers passed their probationary period (MEN, 2018_[34]). This suggests that stronger pedagogical leadership is required to ensure the continuous implementation of a rigorous evaluation process at the end of probation. Mandatory regular evaluations for newly hired teachers provide a further opportunity for addressing performance concerns and for providing formative feedback (OECD, 2013_[35]), although there are also concerns about the quality of this process as described below.

Higher entrance requirements and a more attractive salary structure with the potential to raise the status of the profession

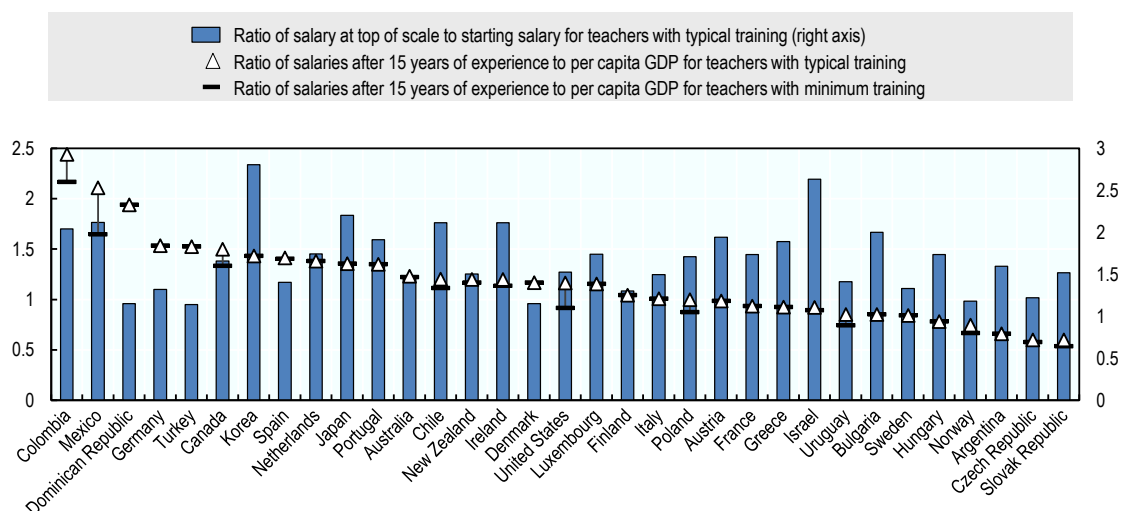
The new teacher statute also raised qualifications requirements and introduced a more competitive salary structure. Both of these steps have the potential to make the profession more attractive and to raise its status (Ome, 2013_[27]). Under the old statute (2227), it was possible to go into teaching on completion of upper secondary education. Under the new statute (1278), a degree from a higher teaching school (ENS) is the minimum qualification required. Initial teacher education in Colombia is, furthermore, relatively fluid and teachers from these programmes often continue their education at higher level.

Compared to the salary structure under the old statute, the salary structure for the new statute provides the possibility for teachers from higher teaching schools to reach salary levels twice as high as before. Teachers with university degrees can reach the highest salary step more quickly (Brutti and Sanchez, 2017_[22]). The new salary structure is also attractive when set in an international context. As data from the OECD publication *Education at a Glance* show, the salary structure for teachers recruited under the new statute has the second steepest salary scale among countries with available data: teachers at the top of the salary scale with the highest qualifications earn more than three times as much as teachers with initial starting salaries and minimum qualifications. Teachers with minimum qualifications at the top of the salary scale still earn twice as much as teachers with initial starting salaries, more than the OECD average for all levels of school education. Theoretically, teachers can reach the top of the scale within 9 years compared to 25 years on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2017_[14]).

While statutory salaries for a lower secondary teacher at the bottom of the salary scale are considerably lower than on average across the OECD (55%), earnings at the top of the salary scale with maximum qualifications are only 14% lower (authors' calculations based on OECD (2017_[14])). Relative to countries' national income, statutory teacher salaries are the highest among the 47 education systems with available data that participated in the OECD PISA 2015 (see Figure 4.3) (OECD, 2016_[17]).¹⁶

Figure 4.3. Teachers' salaries, 2014

Lower secondary teachers in general programmes



Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.54.

Also compared to other professionals with tertiary degrees, the new salary structure appears attractive (Ome, 2013_[27]) and builds on otherwise favourable salaries compared to the Colombian labour market overall as well as significant increases in statutory salaries over time as analysed above (see Figure 4.1). Relative earnings for teachers compare very well internationally as well. Statutory salaries for teachers with 15 years of experience and typical qualifications are about 1.5 times as high as salaries for similarly educated workers at all levels of education. On average across OECD countries, lower secondary teachers can expect to earn 9% less than workers with tertiary education (OECD, 2017_[14]).¹⁷

However, while the salary scale for teachers of the new statute is, in theory, relatively favourable compared to teachers of the old statute and similarly qualified workers, and considering national income, teachers' actual progression in the salary scale has been relatively hard to obtain in practice and passing the required evaluation has been difficult.

Equal regulations and status for teachers of different levels of school education and pre-school education

Both the old and new teacher statutes place teachers of different levels of school education, as well as pre-school and school teachers, under the same regulations. This not only makes for some flexibility in allocating teachers to different levels of education in response to demographic developments (OECD, 2005_[32]), it also avoids too rigid links between the structure of school systems and teacher education and employment (Ávalos, 2008_[5]). It also puts teachers of different levels on an equal footing, including teachers in pre-primary and primary education, even though there are concerns about the lower status of staff in early childhood education and care managed by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, ICBF*) (OECD, 2016_[4]).¹⁸

An equal professional status for teachers teaching different levels of education through the same qualification requirements and salary levels can play an important role in

attracting and retaining high-quality staff. It can thus support quality provision in earlier stages of the education system which can lay a strong foundation for later learning and has been shown to have particular benefits for disadvantaged students. It can facilitate co-operation between staff of different sectors and thus help ease children's transition, for example from pre-primary to primary education (OECD, 2017_[36]). In the long run, it has the potential of creating a strong sense of professional community among all teachers.

An alternative entry route into teaching bringing flexibility and possibly new talent into the profession

The new teacher statute (1278) has created the possibility for side entry into the profession. Individuals with degrees from other disciplines can apply for subject teacher positions in secondary education provided they complete a programme in pedagogy at a tertiary institution. In addition, individuals with a background other than education have the possibility of entering teaching after completing a relevant post-graduate qualification. According to reports by the National Civil Service Commission, 33% of applicants for a permanent position in the 2016 merit contest applied with a degree other than an undergraduate qualification in education, but side entrants made up 47% of successful applicants (data provided by the ministry). In 2017, around 10% of teachers employed under the new statute (1278) held a professional degree in discipline other than education as their last qualification (authors' calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[1])).¹⁹

Such alternative routes into teaching provide additional flexibility in responding to increasing student numbers or to a teacher shortage in specific subjects. They arguably broaden the range of backgrounds and experiences in schools and provide access to teaching for individuals at different stages of their lives (OECD, 2005_[32]). At the same time, alternative pathways raise questions as to whether teachers recruited via such pathways are as effective as conventionally prepared teachers and whether teachers from alternative pathways then remain in teaching (Little and Bartlett, 2010_[37]).

Conclusions about the effects of different pathways into teaching are difficult to draw, also given the variety of alternative pathways. Studies from the United States suggest that teachers from both traditional teacher education and alternative pathways can be effective in the classroom, but that some teachers from both programmes may not have the competencies and preparation to fulfil their role effectively (Henry et al., 2014_[38]; Redding and Smith, 2016_[39]). Substantial research for Colombia is not yet available, but some have raised concerns about the level of preparation for classroom practice, pedagogy and didactics of teachers completing pedagogy programmes in parallel to their job in schools. Caution has also been raised about the risk of side entrants leaving the teaching profession more than traditional teachers (Durán Sandoval, Acosta Zambrano and Espinel Montaña, 2014_[40]; Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]).

Towards a culture of teacher evaluation in schools

The new teacher statute (1278) has introduced a comprehensive and systematic approach to teacher evaluation that has the potential of supporting the continuous learning of teachers. In addition to evaluation for entry into the profession, the new statute requires regular performance evaluations within schools and on a voluntary basis for promotion.

Evaluación Anual de Desempeño Laboral: If well designed and implemented, school internal evaluations can be a key lever to put the focus on the quality of teaching and learning in schools (OECD, 2013_[35]). While there is still substantial room to improve teacher evaluation and make the best use of the process, regular evaluations have the

potential to establish a strong culture of professional feedback, learning and improvement in Colombian schools – an important development in a context where teachers enjoy a large degree of pedagogical autonomy as discussed below.

In the schools visited by the review team, there was evidence of an emerging culture of teacher evaluation. While in some schools the principal took responsibility for engaging in performance discussions and establishing development plans on the basis of the evaluation, in other schools this depended on the school site that the teacher was working in – in Colombia, public schools are organised in clusters of multiple sites. In these cases, the school principal and middle leadership, such as the responsible co-ordinators, took responsibility for evaluating their respective teachers. Various teachers and school leaders to whom the review team spoke made reference to the central guidelines for teacher evaluation. In some schools, evaluations of teachers under the new statute had in fact resulted in evaluations for all teachers, including those under the old statute.

Evaluación de Carácter Diagnóstico Formativa: Effective teacher evaluations can also be a tool to recognise and reward high-quality teaching and to manage teachers' career advancement (OECD, 2013_[35]). Colombia has a second evaluation process in place for this purpose with the external assessment of teachers' competencies for promotion. While there are some challenges for implementation as for school internal evaluations, this process provides a basis for acknowledging good teaching and creates an indirect link between teachers' performance and compensation. Such an indirect link is preferable to direct links through student assessment results which have produced mixed results and can have perverse effects, such as a narrowing of the curriculum (OECD, 2013_[35]).

More time is needed to fully evaluate the changes introduced to the design of this evaluation process in 2015, particularly since negotiations about the process between the largest teacher union and the ministry were ongoing at the time of writing. Compared to the old process, the new evaluation process, however, entails two positive features.

Whereas the original evaluation was based on a written assessment, the new process entails peer evaluations (one national, one regional) realised through the use of a classroom video. While teachers interviewed during the review visit raised concerns about the reliability of the use of this tool and the weight given to it, the classroom video as one evaluation instrument puts the focus on classroom practice. The involvement of peer evaluators who can apply and are trained for this role is also a promising approach to build capacity (OECD, 2013_[35]). The use of video technology is an innovative approach, also considering the limited amount of resources required for the use of this technology.

In addition, the new process provides an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses and to feed into teacher learning, in particular for those teachers who have a second chance at promotion following completion of a related professional development course.

The ministry has supported teacher development with multidimensional and targeted initiatives that have the potential to create a culture of peer learning in schools and have had a considerable impact in rural schools

While the organisation and management of professional development is largely the responsibility of the Secretaries of Education, the ministry of education has developed and implemented national initiatives to strengthen the quality of education through its budget for investment projects, notably the Let's All Learn programme (*Programa Todos a Aprender*, PTA) and the Rural Education Programme (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER) but also other initiatives like Classrooms Without Borders (*Aulas sin fronteras*) or

Pioneers (*Pioneros*) (for more information about the latter two, see Sánchez (2018_[1])). The government's National Development Plan for 2014-18 explicitly recognised the importance of high-quality teaching and the need to foster teaching excellence as one element of the plan's strategy for education (DNP, 2015_[42]).

Considering the difficulty to reform initial teacher education, in general as well as in Colombia, and the concerns about the different levels of capacity and resources for Secretaries of Education to develop, implement and monitor professional development, these central initiatives meet an important need in the system. Central initiatives seem to have been well received by regional and local authorities, schools and individual teachers as was also evident during the review team's interviews with different stakeholders. They have been well-targeted, improved teaching and learning in schools and contributed to closing achievement gaps between rural and urban areas. Evaluations have facilitated adjustments to the design and implementation of the initiatives and learning about successful practices (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).²⁰

The Let's All Learn programme

The Let's All Learn programme follows a multidimensional approach to improve student learning in the core subjects language and mathematics with a cascade teacher education model at the heart of the programme (see Box 4.2).

Tutors provide situated professional development to teachers within participating schools, working both with individual teachers and with groups of teachers. The programme thus puts the focus on classroom practice within particular contexts and has the potential to improve teachers' competencies. For one, it has the potential to develop the competencies of teachers taking part as tutors. While there is a trade-off in as far as the programme takes effective teachers out of their classrooms to coach others, tutors may develop additional competencies and experiences they can bring back to their own school afterwards. Tutors, furthermore, undergo training for their role and learn through their mentoring activity. More importantly, accompanied teachers develop their skills through both individual feedback from their tutor and through peer learning within study groups.

In doing so, the Let's All Learn programme pursues a multidimensional approach that combines professional development with other elements such as curricular materials and student assessment tools. Such approaches to teacher learning that are built around the interaction between and among teachers, students and content have been shown to enable teachers to envision what new practices might look like and how to transfer these ideas into their classroom (Gallagher, Arshan and Woodworth, 2017_[43]).

Multidimensional takes on teacher learning also seem relevant in the Colombian context where schools and teachers have a large degree of pedagogical autonomy, e.g. to choose educational materials. Since the programme works around the activities of tutors within individual schools, it facilitates adaptation the implementation of the programme to the constraints of specific local contexts and schools' and teachers' needs to foster student learning and development (see Díaz (2016_[44]) for a case study).

The Let's All Learn programme also has the potential to contribute to changing the culture of schools. While the success of coaching depends on trusting school cultures and teachers' willingness to open themselves to criticism (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018_[45]), the work of tutors within classrooms and groups of teachers itself can create greater openness of classrooms and foster mutual learning among teachers around their students'

learning needs. Reportedly, teachers in many Colombian schools have shown openness to receiving their tutor within their classrooms (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Box 4.2. Let's All Learn (*Programa Todos a Aprender*)

Let's All Learn is a large-scale programme initiated by the ministry in 2011 and implemented since 2012 as part of the government's National Development Plans for 2010-14 and 2014-18. The PTA has been funded through the ministry's budget for investment programmes and received almost half of the budget of the ministry's quality directorate for school and pre-school education in 2017, about COP 130 billion.²¹ The programme targets primary education (Years 0 to 5) and follows a multidimensional approach to improve student learning in language and mathematics. This includes pedagogical components related to the curriculum and educational materials, situated professional development, school management and community involvement.

The programme's main objective is to build teachers' skills and competencies and to improve their practices in the classroom through a cascade teacher education model. Tutors are selected from across the country and prepared for and supported in their role by trainers holding a master's or PhD degree. Tutors then provide situated professional development to teachers within participating schools. They work directly as peers with individual teachers in the classroom, observe teachers' practices and provide feedback on pedagogical and didactic strategies. They work with groups of teachers and organise peer learning activities and discussions around pedagogical topics within schools. In addition, tutors are expected to support other activities and pedagogical processes and provide support for the development and implementation of student assessments, the use of curricular guidelines, the selection and use of materials and textbooks, and the development of the *Día E*, a day in the school calendar to discuss school development within the school, for example.

By 2017, the programme had employed 97 trainers and trained 4 100 tutors. Tutors had worked with 109 357 teachers in 13 455 sites of 4 476 public schools in 885 municipalities in all of the 32 departments. Between 2012 and 2017, the participation of public schools in the programme grew by 88% and the number of participating teachers more than doubled. The programme prioritises schools with low achievements as measured by the standardised student assessments for Years 3 and 5 (*Pruebas Saber 3* and 5). Schools achieving their improvement objective in standardised assessments and high results in their Synthetic Education Quality Index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*, ISCE), a school performance measure explained below and in Chapter 3, end their participation in the programme, thus making resources available for support to other schools.

While the programme was not designed as a strategy targeting rural schools in particular, it has had a particular impact on schools in rural and remote areas in departments like Amazonas, Chocó, Guainía, Guaviare, La Guajira, Vaupés and Vichada. Sixty-five percent of participating schools were classified as rural, compared to 30% which were classified as urban schools.

Sources: Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>; OECD (2016), *Education in Colombia*, Reviews of National Policies for Education, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264250604-en>.

Rural Education Programme

The Let's All Learn programme builds on the successful experience of the Programme of Rural Education (*Programa de Educación Rural*, PER) implemented between 2002 and 2015 (also see Chapter 1 for a full description of the programme). Like the Let's All Learn programme, the Rural Education Programme pursued a multidimensional approach that included the use of flexible pedagogical models and teaching materials designed for

rural schools, teacher education and development, and capacity building of participating Secretaries of Education.

Between 2013 and 2015, the programme complemented the Let's All Learn programme with the implementation of school-based professional development (*Desarrollo Profesional Situado*). Teams of experts provided support, technical-pedagogical advice and didactic materials and guides to rural school sites to support teacher learning in those schools. It included on-site visits and workshops, virtual coaching and the creation of study groups (*círculos de estudio*) (Colombia Aprende, 2018_[46]).

Teachers are relatively satisfied and have a considerable degree of autonomy and voice in schools and in the development of their profession

The Colombian school system can build on relatively high levels of overall satisfaction among teachers, a large degree of pedagogical and curricular autonomy for teachers and schools, possibilities for teacher involvement in school decision-making, as well as a say for teachers in the development of their profession and education overall – aspects which can be considered essential aspects of a professional teaching body (OECD, 2016_[23]).

Teachers' satisfaction with their profession and their schools

Colombian teachers are generally satisfied with both their profession and their school which can help teachers contribute to a positive school climate and to support their students' learning. As research suggests, teachers' satisfaction is associated with lower absenteeism, stress, and turnover and with the use of innovative instructional practices in classrooms. It is also related to teacher efficacy, that is their attitudes and beliefs about their ability to teach and make a difference through their teaching (Mostafa and Pál, 2018_[47]; OECD, 2014_[48]), even though one has to recognise that teachers' job satisfaction and student learning do not always go hand in hand (Michaelowa, 2002_[49]).

According to surveys, Colombian teachers are satisfied with the career choices they have made. The teacher questionnaire administered for the OECD PISA 2015 reveals that a great majority (86%) of Colombian teachers agreed that the advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages, and a large majority of them reported that their goal was to become a teacher when they completed upper secondary education. Only a small proportion of Colombian teachers (7%) regretted their choice of career. Colombian teachers are, in fact, more satisfied with their profession than those in the other 17 school systems that distributed the PISA teacher questionnaire, except for the Dominican Republic. In Brazil, for instance, only 55% of teachers agreed that the advantages of being a teacher outweigh the disadvantages, and in Chile, 13% of teachers regretted their choice of career (Mostafa and Pál, 2018_[47]).

Colombian teachers are also extremely satisfied with their schools. As many as 95% of teachers stated that they enjoy working at their schools, 6 percentage points above the average of the 18 education systems that distributed the PISA teacher questionnaire (Mostafa and Pál, 2018_[47]). These results are consistent with those in other international surveys, such as the UNESCO TERCE, which shows Colombian teachers being the second most satisfied with their job across the region (UNESCO, 2016_[50]).

Teachers' say in school governance and involvement in decision-making for pedagogical and curricular matters within their school

As analysed in Chapter 3, schools in Colombia have considerable freedom in making pedagogical and curricular decisions as well as established platforms for participation in school governance. Teachers have a prominent role in school decision-making through their participation in the school's directive and academic councils (*consejo directivo* and *consejo académico*). The school calendar further promotes teachers' participation in school development through five weeks of institutional development in the school year.

Also, the conception of teachers' working time provides a strong basis for involving teachers in school life and decision-making. Defined on a workload system rather than by their number of required teaching hours alone, the definition of working time recognises the variety of tasks teachers fulfil in schools today (OECD, 2005_[32]), such as participation in school management, but also parental engagement. Teachers are furthermore required to spend a comparatively large share of their statutory working time at school – the fourth largest after Chile, the United States and Sweden when compared to OECD countries (OECD, 2017_[14]). This provides a strong basis for school leaders to manage their teachers effectively, facilitate collaborative practice, and involve teachers in school governance.

While the level of teacher involvement in practice differs between schools, schools have the means of involving teachers and for creating a shared pedagogical vision. Data from the OECD PISA 2015 provide some indications for teachers' levels of involvement in schools: 78% of students were in a school whose principal reported that they provide staff with opportunities to participate in school decision making at least once a month, about six percentage points more than on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2016_[17]). As school visits also suggest, teachers are typically very autonomous in making pedagogical decisions within their classroom, which can allow them to exercise their professional judgment to respond to the complexity of classroom teaching and learning.

However, possibilities for teacher participation have to be put into the context of weak pedagogical leadership as analysed in Chapter 3 and concerns about teachers' learning explored below. Teachers interviewed during the review visit suggested that curricular autonomy had not yet translated into a greater sense of empowerment. Teachers often resorted to central curricular guidelines and standards, and textbooks and assessment tools provided through specific initiatives, such as the *Programa Todos a Aprender*.

Findings from the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 in fact highlight that autonomy for teachers defined as teacher involvement in school-based decision-making is not sufficient. While teacher autonomy has a small positive correlation with teachers' satisfaction with their profession and their work environment, it can actually make teachers feel less capable in their ability to do their job. Teachers thus need adequate support to make use of and build their collective capacity to use their autonomy, get involved in school decision-making and feel empowered (OECD, 2016_[23]) – which, in turn, can foster a vision of teaching as a true profession and help build teachers' commitment to teaching and their school (Pearson and Moomaw, 2005_[51]).

These findings are mirrored in recent research which similarly suggests that combining teacher leadership, that is involvement in school decisions, and teacher accountability can help improve student learning (Ingersoll, Sirinides and Dougherty, 2017_[52]).

Teachers' voice in the development of their profession and education policy

Teachers not only play an essential role in individual schools and classrooms but through unions and professional bodies, such as teacher councils, also shape the operation of school systems and the formulation and implementation of education policy.

One line of literature on teacher unions and education policy conceives of unions as contributing to policy development and implementation, as well as facilitating information flows. This view also highlights the role of unions in facilitating professional learning and promoting a positive professional identity (Bascia, 2005^[53]; OECD, 2015^[54]). Scholarship from Latin America highlights unions' potential and history of playing a proactive rather than a reactive role through teacher development and policy advocacy, including for some of their countries' most vulnerable citizens who are served by public education (Gindin and Finger, 2013^[55]). A second line of literature tends to see unions as special interest groups pursuing a self-interested agenda, blocking education reform and undermining reform implementation when members' benefits or working conditions are threatened (Bruns and Luque, 2015^[25]; Moe, 2015^[56]).

Even though the relationship between education authorities and teacher unions in Colombia has often been fraught with difficulty, Colombia's largest teacher union (FECODE) has played a prominent role in the development of the profession and in improving working conditions over time. As in other countries in Latin America, the union was fundamental in establishing binding work conditions, salaries and other benefits through the introduction of a first teacher statute in 1979. This arguably improved teachers' status and working conditions. Considering the country's long-standing armed conflict, the union has also played an important role in denouncing violence against teachers and advocating for the transfer of threatened teachers.

The union has in addition played a positive role in education policy more broadly, for instance with the formation of a social movement initiating a reflection about the role, nature and status of teaching (*Movimiento Pedagógico*) in the 1980s, as an advocate for democratic participation in education policy with the formulation of a new Constitution and General Education Law in the 1990s, and as a promotor of children's right to a free education, including three years of early childhood education and care (Correa Noriega, 2013^[57]; López, 2008^[58]). More recently, FECODE has informed reforms, as was the case with the introduction of changes to teacher evaluation, advocacy for strengthening participatory structures in education through the reactivation of education councils (*juntas de educación*) and participation in discussions of a reform of school funding.

Challenges***A sustained and shared effort to advance further in the professionalisation of teaching is needed, built on effective involvement of the profession***

Colombia has taken important steps to professionalise teaching over the last two decades, as just described. As is explored in the following sub-sections, challenges remain, however, in developing a high-quality profession that supports the learning and development of all students – something that also fundamentally requires stronger school leadership (see Chapter 3). Promising changes that have already been initiated still need to be implemented successfully or sustained over time, and there is significant scope to reflect about and develop other aspects of professionalism while building on key strengths such as teachers' involvement in schools and high levels of teacher satisfaction.

Such a renewed vision of professionalism is not only needed to further improve teaching and learning but also to further raise the status of the profession. Better working conditions, more diverse career development opportunities and collaborative ways of working could help make teaching a more attractive career choice for highly qualified candidates. The reform of the teacher statute in 2002 is an initial step towards the recognition of the teaching profession, and civil society has contributed to changing the status of the profession with interesting initiatives such as the *Premio Compartir* (Vaillant and Rossel, 2012_[59]).²² Also the ministry of education has put in place interesting initiatives, such as *Ser Pilo Paga Profe* to raise the attractiveness of teaching for high-performing students finishing their secondary education.²³

But professional degrees in education at the university level are among those with the lowest numbers of applicants, attracting students who are less likely to have performed well in the school leaving examinations (*Prueba Saber 11*) (Bonilla and Barón, 2014_[60]; García et al., 2014_[10]). A career in teaching represents possibilities for social mobility but does not always attract the candidates best equipped for teaching (Duarte, forthcoming_[61]).

Difficult relations between the government and FECODE have made the implementation of past reforms challenging, and frequent teacher strikes have hampered the education of children and young people. The implementation of significant changes brought about by the new teacher statute, in particular, has been challenging considering limited effective stakeholder involvement at the time of putting the statute in place, something which is considered essential for the effective governance of education (Burns and Köster, 2016_[62]). There is therefore significant scope to keep improving the dialogue between the government and the largest (and potentially other regionally and locally operating) unions as recommended below (López, 2008_[58]).

There are various teacher competency descriptions and profiles that have not yet become a shared framework to develop the profession based on validated practice

The Colombian school system counts with a substantial degree of decentralisation and autonomy in the management of education, such as the organisation of teachers' professional development by Secretaries of Education and schools, the development of educational projects in schools by the school community and teachers, and the design of initial teacher education programmes by faculties of education. However, despite this range of actors and their significant autonomy, there is no common and shared vision of good teaching in the form of coherent teaching standards. While some argue that teaching standards can narrow teaching practice and autonomy, standards can guide teacher development, improve the standing of teaching in the broader community and provide a framework for developing teacher identity, provided they are well-designed and used appropriately (Adoniou and Gallagher, 2017_[63]; Darling-Hammond, 2017_[64]).

In Colombia, there are a number of laws, decrees and resolutions that describe teacher competencies (e.g. the manual of functions for teachers, quality characteristics for initial teacher education programmes, and guidelines for school internal teacher evaluations). But these descriptions of teachers' competencies are not detailed enough and do not define the full range of competencies of excellent teachers (OECD, 2016_[4]). The teacher profile developed for the competency assessment required for promotion (ECDF) most likely comes closest to a broad framework of good teaching. However, it is not yet widely recognised as a reference within the profession and has not become the basis for the development of teacher policies. As Duque et al. (2014_[65]) highlight, Colombia needs to

advance in teachers' acceptance of a set of good practices to become a true profession. These standards need to be validated and adjusted over time with changing social demands and new knowledge. There are, furthermore concerns that teachers in particular contexts, such as rural teachers, lack a clear profile in Colombia (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Not all teachers receive formative feedback from their school leaders and regular teacher evaluations are more challenging in school clusters with many rural sites

The new teacher statute (1278) has introduced an annual mandatory performance evaluation for teachers recruited since 2002, but implementation has proven to be challenging. This was also evident in qualitative case studies of four high and low performing schools (García et al., 2014_[10]). As analysed in Chapter 3, pedagogical leadership in schools is weak, thus making it difficult to implement school internal evaluations effectively. In the last six years, between 50% and 65% of teachers were given the highest performance rating, which illustrates these challenges (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). There does not seem to be much attention to preparing teachers for their evaluations and developing teachers' understanding of the processes and criteria that are used. Besides, the requirement for evaluation for new teachers was introduced against the opposition of the union FECODE, thus also complicating the implementation of the process. Teacher evaluation will only work if teachers make it work (OECD, 2013_[35]).

Teaching is at the core of a teacher's professional responsibilities and the observation of teaching should be part of a robust system of evaluation and feedback (OECD, 2013_[35]). However, while the review team noted that teachers employed under the new statute were appraised by school leaders, practices of classroom observation varied considerably between schools and teachers. School principals' reports as part of the OECD PISA 2015 also suggest that classroom observations are not an established practice in all schools (OECD, 2016_[17]) (see Figure 4.6 further below). The organisation of schools into clusters with multiple sites can furthermore create challenges for the effective organisation of evaluations in rural school sites which are sometimes left without much support.

Importantly, the teacher evaluation process introduced with the new teacher statute needs to resolve tensions between its developmental and accountability functions. Teacher evaluation seems to be often perceived as an accountability tool, something which is also stressed in the related regulations (Decree 3782). In some schools, evaluations resulted in personal and professional development plans for teachers, but evaluations did not always seem to provide useful feedback for teachers on how to improve their practice and thus build a culture of professional inquiry. School leaders also seemed to make very limited use of the knowledge gathered through teacher evaluations for the development of the school as a whole (OECD, 2013_[35]).

Since mandatory teacher evaluations only apply to permanent teachers recruited under the new statute, evaluation and feedback practices for teachers under the old statute (2277), as well as provisional teachers who are more likely to work in rural areas, vary even more. While school visits showed that some schools had established teacher evaluation processes for all teachers regardless of their status, this was not the case in other schools.

The implementation of the new salary structure has been difficult, is likely to have unintended effects and does not provide opportunities for professional growth

The salary structure of the new statute (1278) introduced a skills- and competency-based approach to compensation in an attempt to better recognise effective teachers, provide incentives for teachers to perform well and retain high-quality teachers in the profession.

The evidence base on these types of compensation is still inconclusive and the effects on teachers and students depend on the context as well as design and implementation. Also, the costs of such schemes as well as other factors that determine incentives for teachers, such as working conditions, job security and the status of the profession, need to be taken into account (OECD, 2005_[32]; OECD, 2009_[66]; OECD, 2013_[35]).

One important concern about individual incentives is their possible negative effect on teacher collaboration by introducing competition between teachers (Murnane and Cohen, 1986_[67]). Approaches that combine individual with group incentives may thus be a more promising alternative (OECD, 2009_[66]), even though group-based bonuses have not always shown positive effects (Jackson, Rockoff and Staiger, 2014_[68]). Colombian schools benefit from such a school-based performance bonus tied to a school performance index, the Synthetic Education Quality Index (ISCE).²⁴ But there is no evidence of its impact, and the review team had concerns about its design as discussed in Chapter 3.

Further concerns of competency-based pay relate to the complexity of teaching, the variety of education outcomes valued by society and the role of feedback to improve teaching and learning (Jackson, Rockoff and Staiger, 2014_[68]). Some competency-based compensation schemes rely on student test scores and thus encourage teacher gaming and “teaching to the test” or fail to give teachers information on weaknesses to improve (OECD, 2013_[35]). It is therefore positive that the new system of salary progression and promotion in Colombia is based on multiple instruments since the revision of the related competency assessment in 2015. This process avoids direct links with student performance and is linked to feedback and development opportunities for teachers.

However, the new system of compensation and promotion is unlikely to have the intended positive effects on teachers and students. For incentives to have an impact, they have to be perceived to be both attainable and significant enough to change behaviour (OECD, 2009_[66]). Successful reforms of teacher pay, furthermore, require adequate fiscal capacity, political will and support from teachers (Firestone, 1994_[69]). In Colombia, the new system of compensation has not been fully accepted by teachers, as changes to the system in 2015 following pressure by the main union, ongoing negotiations between the union and the ministry at the time of writing, and interviews of the review team with teachers highlight. The system of evaluation on the basis of a single video was very often considered neither fair nor reflective of actual teacher competency (OECD, 2016_[4]).

Criticism of the competency evaluation also stems from the difficulty of obtaining promotion. The barrier to applying and passing the evaluation as initially conceived was very high. Between 2011 and 2014, around one in five permanent teachers applying for promotion succeeded in the respective year. As a result, in 2016, 6% of teachers of the new statute (1278) held a master’s or PhD degree but were not employed in the respective grade of the salary scale (authors’ calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[1])). However, the process has been changing and 71% of teachers passed the evaluation organised in 2016 for teachers who had been unsuccessful in previous evaluations (data provided by the ministry).

Like the traditional single salary scale (Statute 2277), the new salary structure also fails to provide systematic opportunities for teachers to lead and grow professionally while remaining in the classroom. The main route for teachers to take on leadership responsibilities is still to move to a school leadership role (director, rural director or co-ordinator) or into education administration (e.g. within a Secretary of Education). For instance, many of the administrators interviewed during the review visit were teachers. These roles may, however, also mean that skilled teachers leave the classroom. Attempts

to introduce additional roles for teachers, such as teacher support leaders (*docente lider de apoyo*) to contribute to school development were met with strong opposition by the country's largest teacher union and discontinued after only two years in 2017.

The new salary structure entails a risk of considerable financial costs for the system in the long run through large bonuses for postgraduate qualifications

Postgraduate qualifications are a fundamental element of Colombia's system of teacher education and the new salary structure provides an incentive for teachers to complete higher level qualifications either prior to assuming a teaching role or during their career.

Whereas the completion of a postgraduate degree is only taken into account for promotion to the final grade in the old statute, the new statute provides a large salary bonus for graduates from master's and PhD programmes in the third salary grade (more than 60% higher for master's over a professional degree and about double for PhDs on entry in Step A) and to a lesser extent to graduates from specialisations in the second salary grade (8% on entry) (see Annex 4.A).

The ministry and Secretaries of Education also support teachers in the pursuit of further study, for example through the ministry's *Fondo de Formación Posgradual para Docentes y Directivos Docentes en Servicio del Sector Oficial* (MEN, 2013_[3]). Recently, the ministry has developed an innovative scholarship programme that takes teachers' working contexts into account, the *Becas para la Excelencia Docente* programme. Participating teachers work in groups within their school and develop and implement a school improvement project centred on classroom practice (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). This programme and its school-based aspect were referred to positively by some teachers, including in rural schools, during the review visit.

While the greater recognition of postgraduate qualifications and financial support for completion of higher level study may contribute to raising the social status of the profession (OECD, 2005_[32]; OECD, 2016_[4]), they may not necessarily improve the quality of teaching and learning. In the United States, for example, such financial incentives have been a considerable factor in an increasing share of teachers' with a master's qualification (Larsen, 2010_[70]), while evidence for the impact of higher qualifications on student learning is inconclusive (Jackson, Rockoff and Staiger, 2014_[68]; Monk, 1994_[71]; OECD, 2009_[66]).

Similar trends seem to be evident in Colombia. As in other countries in Latin America, a considerable share of teachers reported participating in a qualification programme for the OECD PISA 2015. More than half of science teachers reported having completed a qualification programme in the past twelve months (Mostafa and Pál, 2018_[47]). Based on national data, 29% of teachers employed under the new statute (1278) held a postgraduate qualification in 2016 (authors' calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[1])). Research undertaken in Colombia, however, also suggests mixed effects of teachers' levels of qualifications (Bonilla and Galvis, 2012_[21]).²⁵ Large bonuses for postgraduate qualifications may furthermore put rural teachers at a disadvantage who may have greater difficulty in gaining such qualifications given a lack of tertiary institutions in rural areas.

Promotion through completion of a postgraduate qualification requires passing the related competency assessment, and the possibility for promotion depends on sufficient central budgetary resources, both of which may help maintain costs. Making promotions dependent on available resources is a reasonable approach given resource constraints, the potential cost pressures of automatic step increases (Odden and Picus, 2011_[72]) and an

already high share of teacher salaries of total education expenditure (see Chapter 2). However, the competency assessment has been subject to considerable debate and modifications and was subject to further negotiations at the time of writing. Furthermore, since 2014, following negotiations with the teacher union, teachers in the second salary grade with postgraduate qualifications who have not passed the competency assessment, also benefit from higher salaries (15% for master's and 30% for PhD in Step A compared to teachers with a professional degree but no postgraduate qualification).

Teachers benefit from different working conditions and employment frameworks which can have negative effects on the working climate in schools

The introduction of a new teacher statute has left the old statute in place and thus created different employment frameworks for teachers performing the same responsibilities and tasks – with potential negative effect on schools' working climates and collegiality.

Teachers of the new and old statutes differ in two important aspects. First, teachers of the old statute are not evaluated regularly on a mandatory basis and second, they benefit from a single salary scale which treats them equitably on the basis of seniority and education and provides a predictable career progression. Almost 3 in 4 teachers belonging to this statute have, in fact, already reached the highest salary step (74% in 2016) (calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[11])) (see Annex 4.A). This probably explains, among others, teachers' relatively high levels of satisfaction with their compensation. According to the UNESCO TERCE, Colombian teachers are the most satisfied with their salaries in the region, only after Guatemalan teachers (UNESCO, 2016_[50]).

This, however, compares to a relatively high concentration of teachers employed under the new statute in the first step (Step A) of their respective salary scale (89% in Grade 1 and 59% each in Grades 2 and 3) (authors' calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[11])). Even among teachers within the new statute, teachers with the same qualifications can receive different levels of compensation depending on their achievement in the competency assessment required for promotion (see Annex 4.A). Looking at the distribution of teachers of different statutes by geography also reveals a divide between urban and rural areas, with teachers from the new statute making up the largest part of teachers in rural areas (61% of rural teachers in 2017) (Sánchez, 2018_[11]).

The reasons for teachers not coming to work can be related to a range of factors from the individual teacher and their school to the community and the wider school system (Guerrero et al., 2013_[73]). It is therefore difficult to draw conclusions on the impact of working conditions on teacher absenteeism in general and teachers of different statutes in particular. In general, however, teacher absenteeism seems to be a challenge in Colombia. According to data from the OECD PISA 2015, school principals view teacher absenteeism as hindering learning more than in many other countries: 4.9% of 15-year-olds were in a school whose principal reported that teacher absenteeism hindered learning a lot or to some extent, compared to 1.3% on OECD average (OECD, 2016_[17]).

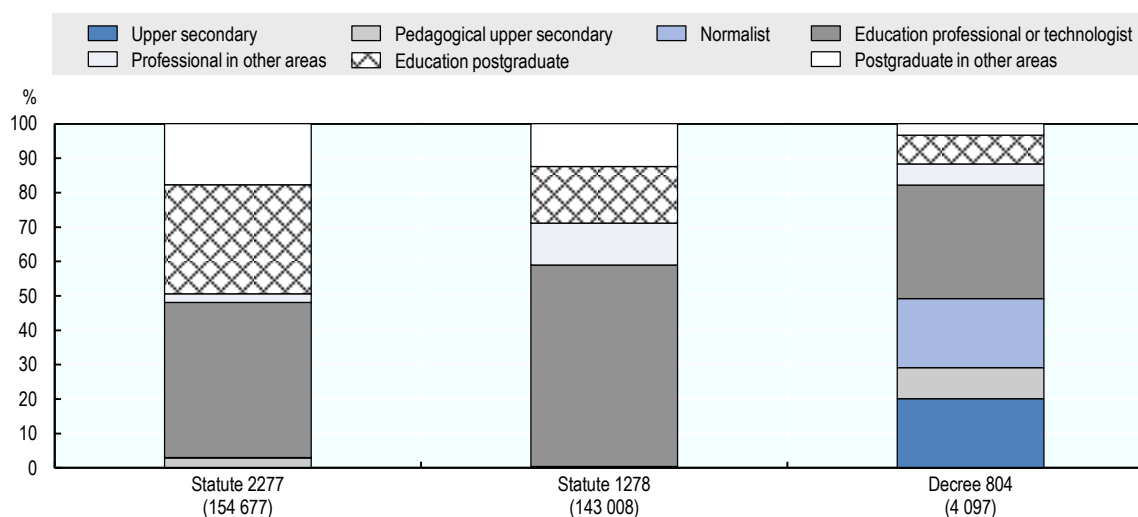
Teacher education and development does not sufficiently prepare teachers for and support them in their work and does not sufficiently reflect rural contexts

Professional learning for teachers throughout their career is essential to create a highly skilled profession that effectively promotes student learning and development (OECD, 2005_[32]; OECD, 2016_[23]).

Data from international surveys show that teachers in Colombia are relatively highly qualified. According to data from the UNESCO TERCE, more than eight in ten Colombian teachers have a post-secondary degree, above the Latin American average, and only behind Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay (UNESCO, 2016_[50]). Data from the OECD PISA 2015 also reveal that, in the schools attended by 15-year-olds, 82% of science teachers in Colombia have a university degree with a major in science, above the OECD average (74%) and countries in the region, such as Chile (75%), Brazil (33%), Peru (21%) and Uruguay (6%) (OECD, 2016_[17]).

National data confirm the relatively high levels of qualification of Colombian teachers. In 2016, almost all teachers of Statutes 1278 and 2277 had acquired a professional or postgraduate degree, and more than 3 in 4 of these had done so in education (authors' calculations based on Sánchez (2018_[1])) (see Figure 4.4). But while teachers are generally well qualified, there are concerns that teacher education does not adequately prepare and support teachers for their work with students in the classroom and with the school community as analysed in detail in the following.

Figure 4.4. Teachers' level of qualifications, 2016



Note: The total number of teachers under each statute is indicated in parentheses.

Source: Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

There are concerns about the quality of teacher education at faculties of education, including the geographical concentration of high-quality programmes

Colombia has a long tradition of considerable autonomy for public and private tertiary education combined with quality assurance (OECD, 2016_[4]; OECD/IBRD/The World Bank, 2013_[74]). Within this context, faculties of education have a considerable degree of autonomy to define their teacher education programmes (*licenciaturas*). The main mechanism to monitor the quality of initial teacher education is the requirement to be listed in the register of qualified programmes (*registro calificado*) introduced in 1998, without which a programme cannot be offered.

Accreditation is a powerful means to stimulate improvement from within institutions, influence the quality of teacher education in line with evidence and best practices about effective teacher learning, establish a common set of expectations regarding teacher knowledge and skills and shape public perceptions of the quality of teacher education (Ávalos, 2008_[5]). However, the basic registration process in Colombia is generally considered to lack rigour and the standards required are considered to be quite low (OECD, 2016_[4]; OECD/IBRD/The World Bank, 2013_[74]), thus also raising concerns about the quality assurance and standards of universities' teacher education programmes.

A second process to certify a programme's high quality (*Acreditación de alta calidad*) is voluntary for institutions. This accreditation process is considered to be of high quality following clear and well-enforced standards (OECD, 2016_[4]; OECD/IBRD/The World Bank, 2013_[74]). However, only a small share of programmes and institutions, in general, as well as in education have sought or achieved this type of accreditation. In 2015, only 78 out of 352, that is less than 1 in 4 first-level degree programmes in education, had been accredited (CNA, 2017_[75]).

The quality of initial teacher education offered by faculties of education is thus considered to vary considerably between institutions. Also, admission requirements are considered to be relatively low (García et al., 2014_[10]; Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]; Sánchez, 2018_[11]). The poor quality of some programmes, together with students' poor preparation in school education, may also be one factor related to the high dropout rates from teacher education: in 2009, only 52% of teacher students completed their programme (Castaño et al., 2009_[76]).

As tertiary programmes in general, high-quality programmes are furthermore distributed unequally between different regions of the country, and in places such as Antioquia, Bogotá and Boyacá. This adds to concerns about the quality of new teachers in some areas of the country, such as the departments Chocó, La Guajira, Magdalena, Putumayo and Sucre (CESU, 2014_[77]; García et al., 2014_[10]), although one has to bear the important role of higher teaching schools for teacher education in rural areas in mind.

Reform of initial teacher education has been difficult and the effective preparation of new teachers depends on capacity and resources to improve quality

In recognition of the importance of preparing future teachers well for their career, the ministry of education has implemented changes to the quality assurance and accreditation requirements as part of the National Development Plan for 2014 to 2018.

As a first element, the related legislation introduced the requirement for all education degree programmes to undergo the process of high-quality accreditation to remain in the register of qualified programmes.²⁶ The process, however, was criticised by some as giving institutions little time to adjust their programmes to the accreditation requirements. Criteria were deemed as being too demanding in some areas, such as the requirement to raise teachers' competency in English. Programmes that do not reach the required standards need to be discontinued, which furthermore raised concerns about the overall provision of initial teacher education, particularly in some parts of the country with weaker tertiary institutions (Atehortúa Cruz, 2017_[78]).

As a second element, the related legislation envisaged more specific regulations for the content and method of programmes, such as degree titles and teacher practica, as the basis for being listed in the register of qualified programmes (Sánchez, 2018_[11]). A first resolution introduced in 2016 (*Resolución No 02041*) was, however, met with strong

resistance from faculties of education (see for example ASCOFADE (2015_[79])). Only one year later, it was replaced with a new resolution (*Resolución No 18583*) which changed some minor criteria, such as the areas teachers can focus their practical experience on and the point at which students should engage in their practicum.

As in various other contexts, initial teacher education in Colombia entails a tension between theory and practice (Flores, 2017_[80]). While higher teaching schools (ENS) have stronger links to practice, but challenges concerning theory and research, tertiary programmes and institutions tend to often have little contact with schools. As a result, beginning teachers from faculties of education often lack strong pedagogical methods and skills (OECD, 2016_[4]). Colombian schools typically also don't provide systematic mentoring and induction for beginning teachers which could help teachers adjust to the practical challenges of classroom teaching and keep new teachers in the profession (Guarino, Santibañez and Daley, 2006_[81]; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011_[82]).

Even if the new accreditation requirements entail a lower number of credits for practical experience, they thus still constitute an important step to embedding practice more strongly alongside subject matter and pedagogical theory. This is considered essential to prepare future teachers for the dynamics of classroom teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2017_[64]; OECD, 2018_[24]). But the effect of the new criteria will necessarily take time and depend on the ability of and resources for faculties of education to create well-integrated forms of preparation that combine practical experience with theory and research while increasing in complexity, and to build effective partnerships with schools and their staff.

As Ronfeldt and Reininger (2012_[83]), for instance, found, it is not the length of pedagogical practice, but the quality (e.g. in terms of collaboration between student and mentor teachers) that influences teachers' feelings of preparedness and efficacy. Both steps to improve the quality of initial teacher education at faculties of education therefore need to be put into the context of concerns about the limited resources available to improve programme quality and develop a strong research base, including for institutions that could take on a leadership role in teacher education such as the National Pedagogical University (*Universidad Pedagógica Nacional*) (Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]). Such resource constraints are a particular concern for tertiary institutions and thus initial teacher education in peripheral and rural areas, which face challenges to finance quality improvements, improve quality of staff and attract more and better-qualified academics (OECD, 2016_[4]; OECD/IBRD/The World Bank, 2013_[74]).

The low socio-economic background of students in teacher education programmes, concerns about the quality of school education and the skills of teacher students, and the need for teacher students to often seek employment while studying constitute additional challenges for faculties of education to prepare students well for their teaching career (Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]; Louzano and Moriconi, 2015_[84]). Improving teacher education quality and integrating theory and practice is even more pronounced in the many distance and part-time programmes (Louzano and Moriconi, 2015_[84]). According to the UNESCO TERCE, the majority of teachers surveyed in Colombia had actually completed their education through such a programme (UNESCO, 2016_[50]).

Teacher learning is not sufficiently targeted at the diverse learning needs of students, such as multi-grade or ethnically diverse classrooms

Teacher learning should recognise that student learning needs always reflect a teacher learning need. In Colombia, students are very diverse – from students in rural and urban areas, ethnic minorities, and special needs students to students affected by the armed conflict (also see Chapters 1 and 3).

Teachers require particular pedagogical knowledge and strategies to work with these different groups of children and youth. To only mention a few of the particular skills that are required of teachers, teaching in rural schools, for example, requires the ability to teach children of different ages in the same classroom through multi-grade teaching, particularly in primary education. Based on ministry estimates, about 39 000 teachers worked in a multi-grade setting in 2017. Multi-grade teachers need to teach several grade-specific programmes in a range of subject areas in the same amount of time available to the single-grade teacher to teach one year level (McEwan, 2008^[85]). This requires the use of particular teaching methods, the organisation of space and time and the use of specific learning materials (Peñafla and Boix Tomàs, 2015^[86]).

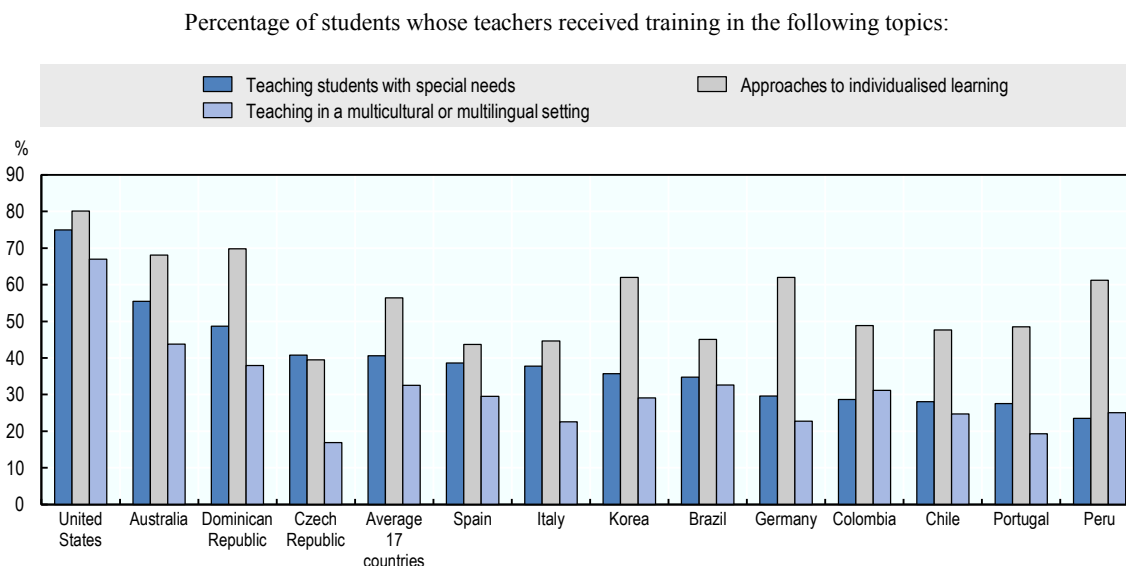
Effective educational interventions for indigenous students, only one of Colombia's ethnic minorities, require teachers having an appreciation of the cultures and knowledge valued by indigenous peoples and ability to take into consideration the historical, economic, political and cultural factors that give rise to discrimination against indigenous peoples. In light of internal migration, this is increasingly relevant not only in rural but also in urban areas (Cortina, 2017^[87]), as is also evidenced by initiatives of the Secretary of Education of Bogotá to further develop models for ethnic education.

Colombia's long-standing armed conflict and the related violence require strategies for teachers and school to mitigate the effects of students who may have been exposed to chronic violence and the resulting stress (Harker, Molano and Cristancho, 2017^[88]). Teachers and schools thus need to be equipped to connect with students, support their engagement in school, deal with conflict and promote social and emotional learning.

Teacher education in Colombia, however, does not sufficiently prepare teachers for working with this diversity of students (Sánchez, 2018^[11]). Initial teacher education is not sufficiently diverse and contextualised for different cycles and disciplinary areas, groups of students and regions of the country. Only a small share of programmes has a focus on particular issues like rural, special needs or ethnic minority education (MEN, 2013^[3]) and the quality of programmes may be a concern. Programmes on ethnic education, for example, were the least likely to gain a high-quality accreditation which is now required to keep operating (24 out of 33 programmes did not meet the required standards) (CNA, 2017^[75]).

Initial teacher education cannot prepare teachers for all of the contexts they will face throughout their career, but they do need to give them the competency to assess and act on their students' learning and well-being and work those students with greatest learning difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 2017^[64]). Concerns about the varying quality of initial teacher education raise concerns if programmes effectively fulfil this task. Similarly, there are concerns about the offer and quality of professional development as analysed in the following paragraphs. Data from the OECD PISA 2015 illustrate that teacher development in Colombia requires greater attention to special needs education and individualised learning, for example (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Topics included in teacher education or training programmes, or other professional qualifications, PISA 2015



Notes: Countries are ranked in descending order of teaching students with special needs.

The figure presents data for a selection of countries that distributed the PISA teacher questionnaire.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on OECD (2015), PISA 2015 Database, <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2015database> (accessed on 15 March 2018).

Territorial authorities may lack the capacity and resources to develop, implement and monitor effective professional development, including for rural teachers

While the ministry has assumed an important role in the development of teachers' skills and competencies with initiatives like the Let's All Learn and Rural Education programmes, Secretaries of Education hold primary responsibility for co-ordinating and managing teachers' professional development in Colombia.

However, not all Secretaries of Education have the capacity and resources to develop effective strategies for their schools. Resources for professional development available through fiscal transfers (*Sistema General de Participaciones*) are limited and few territorial entities can complement these resources with their own funds. In the case of departments which tend to provide education to rural students, some resources that could be spent on teacher learning go to their non-certified municipalities, requiring effective co-ordination.

Secretaries of Education and territorial teacher education committees are also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision but may lack the capacity to select adequate providers and formats and to identify weaknesses in provision, thus making sure that time and money for professional development are used effectively. Essential feedback loops between professional development and teachers and schools may be lost, and teachers may take part in professional development that is of poor quality.

International surveys provide a comparative perspective on professional development in Colombia (see Table 4.5). These data suggest that Colombian teachers are less likely to participate in professional development than peers in other countries. For the UNESCO TERCE, Colombian teachers were among the region's least likely to report having participated in professional development (UNESCO, 2016_[50]). Furthermore, data from

the OECD PISA 2015 suggest important differences between teachers in urban and rural areas, with rural teachers being significantly less likely to participate in professional development than their urban peers (18 percentage point difference, the second highest among participating countries) (OECD, 2016_[17]).

Table 4.5. Teachers' participation (%) in professional development, UNESCO TERCE

	Year 3	Year 6
Highest reported participation		
Peru	59	46
Argentina	56	44
Dominican Republic	38	47
Lowest reported participation		
Colombia	7	17
Guatemala	10	10
Nicaragua	9	4

Note: Teachers were asked about their participation in a professional development course related to their subject in the past two years. The table represents the 6 countries with the highest and lowest rates of reported participation among the 16 participating education systems.

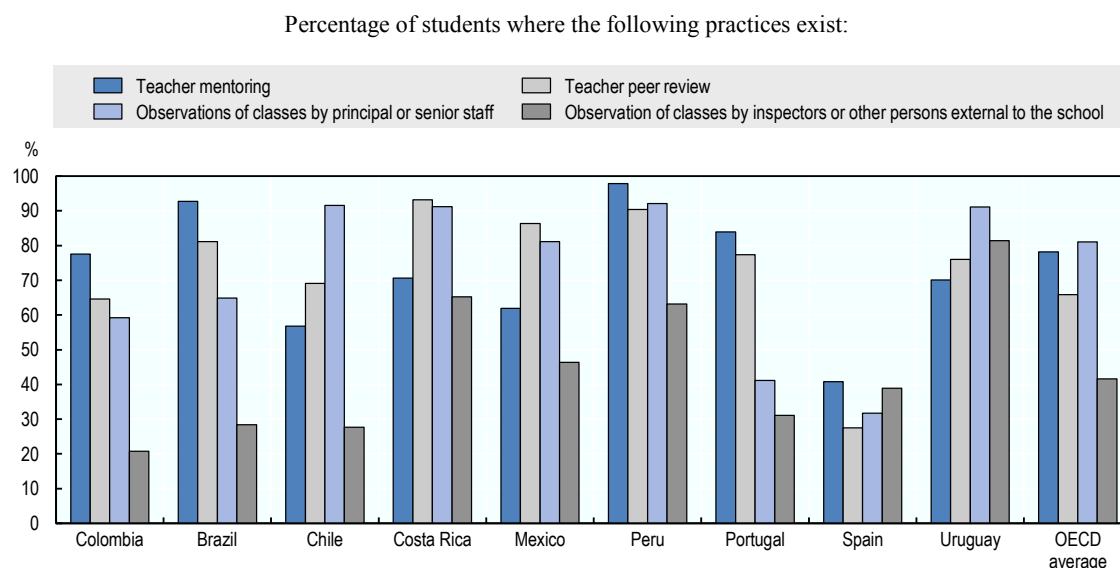
Source: UNESCO (2016), *Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (TERCE) Informe de Resultados Factores Asociados [Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study, Report of Results Associated Factors]*, UNESCO OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, Santiago, Chile.

School-based professional development and peer learning and collaboration need to be further developed, including for teachers in small rural schools

Teacher learning is not an event, but a complex and dynamic process that is critically related to the context in which a teacher is working. There are many ways for creating teacher learning. School-based activities that are integrated into daily practice and involve co-learning among teachers emerge as particularly powerful forms of learning. Change then becomes an ongoing and collective responsibility rather than an individual one (Ávalos, 2011_[89]; Opfer and Pedder, 2011_[90]). In the OECD PISA 2015, professional collaboration among teachers in a school is the only professional development activity positively related to student performance in science after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile (OECD, 2016_[17]). Collaborative school cultures also show one of the strongest associations with teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction in the OECD TALIS 2013 (OECD, 2016_[23]).

Although the Let's All Learn programme has made an important beginning in changing school cultures, the review team gained the impression that school-based teacher development and peer learning can still be further developed in Colombia (also see Figure 4.6). Teacher development does not seem to be a common part of school self-evaluation and improvement planning, and pedagogical leadership in schools which could lead to such learning is relatively weak. The remote location of some school sites within a cluster creates a particular challenge to facilitate peer learning for rural teachers.

Based on contextual data from standardised assessments (*Pruebas Saber*) for Years 3, 5 and 9, only 1 in 4 students was in a school where the majority of teachers perceived high levels of peer collaboration (Gutiérrez, 2015_[91]). Data from the OECD PISA 2015 suggest that in-house professional development is less developed than in other countries and that the extent to which teachers' development is geared towards school needs varies widely (OECD, 2016_[17]).

Figure 4.6. Monitoring teacher practices and teacher mentoring, PISA 2015

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.4.39.

Sufficient time is an important precondition for peer collaboration and learning within schools. Teachers in Colombia have a high annual teaching load by international standards as described above, but it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions in the absence of data on teachers' actual working time. Differences in reporting also make it difficult to compare data on the share of teaching time across countries. But there is some uncertainty about the time available for teachers to collaborate in their everyday work, which should be subject to further research.

On a weekly basis, teachers have between 15 and 18 hours available for non-teaching tasks depending on the level they are teaching. At the same time, teachers' job profile entails a wide range of tasks, including general administrative work and school management. Teachers interviewed during the review visit reported that they faced challenges in managing their time effectively, that they found it difficult to find time to work together and that the expansion of full-day schooling (*Jornada Única*) had put an additional burden on them – a major policy promoted in recent years is the increase of learning time in the school day as analysed in previous chapters. Additional time for pedagogical activities seems often to be provided through overtime.

The monitoring and steering of the teacher labour market is challenging, and there are inefficiencies and inequities in teacher recruitment and allocation

The monitoring of the teacher labour market and the steering of entry into initial teacher education seem limited in a challenging context of fluctuating demand

Colombia faces challenges in managing an adequate supply for teachers with specific competencies at different levels of the system. The total enrolment of students has been decreasing in line with demographic trends, and particularly so in primary education as described in Chapter 1. At the same time, coverage is not yet universal and Colombia has

committed itself to extending pre-primary education, to making upper secondary education compulsory and to expanding learning time in schools (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

While demographic trends suggest a lower number of required teachers, increasing coverage in all levels of education requires additional teachers, particularly considering that class sizes and student-teacher ratios are still high and likely to remain so (Bruns and Luque, 2015_[25]). At the same time, enrolment trends and therefore the number of required teachers differ between rural and urban areas, and this is likely to be exacerbated by internal migration in the context of Colombia's armed conflict and ongoing peace process (OECD, 2016_[4]). While enrolment in lower and upper secondary education has been decreasing in urban areas, it has been increasing in rural areas (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

The prognosis and forecasting of the demand for and supply of teachers at different levels and across the country over time, however, seem to be limited. There does not seem to be sufficient regular analysis on whether entry into initial teacher education is sufficiently geared to the evolving needs of the system. As a result, there is no systematic knowledge that could inform strategies of teacher education institutions and the ministry to adequately steer the number and profile of students entering initial teacher education and respond to shortages that seem to exist already in specific subjects like mathematics and science (Bruns and Luque, 2015_[25]; OECD, 2016_[4]). Such knowledge would be essential to inform students' decisions to enrol in specific programmes, also considering Colombia's growing enrolment in upper secondary education which brings an additional pool of potential candidates for initial teacher education.

Weak regulatory frameworks for faculties of education make it difficult to monitor and steer the potential supply of teachers from initial teacher education. This can lead to more or fewer teachers than are needed, to having few teachers in scarce fields such as mathematics and science and too many in already saturated areas (Ávalos, 2008_[5]). Different types of public and private institutions offer a large number of programmes (García et al., 2014_[10]; Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]). In 2015, tertiary institutions offered 509 programmes across the country and the number of different degree titles has traditionally also been very high, even though the new quality assurance requirements bring greater clarity. Under the new regulations, programmes have to be offered in 47 denominations in 9 subject areas (Sánchez, 2018_[1]).

Initial teacher education provided by faculties of education in rural areas or opportunities for practical placements in rural schools is limited

Initial teacher education institutions are highly unevenly distributed across the country, limiting the supply of teachers in areas that are experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers. Some parts of the country have a high concentration of different institutions, while rural and remote regions do not count any type of initial teacher education, be it a university education faculty or a higher teaching school (ENS) (MEN, 2013_[3]). The institutions that do exist may not have sufficient incentives to improve their quality given limited alternatives for students.

More than 85% of universities offering education degrees are in municipalities with more than 100 000 inhabitants (García et al., 2014_[10]). There are a number of distance or part-time programmes that can provide initial education in remote and border areas, such as departments of Arauca, Casanare and Putumayo, but there are concerns whether or not they provide a quality education (Jurado Valencia, 2016_[41]). In the high-quality accreditation process, only 5 out of 21 distance programmes were accredited as being of high quality in 2017 (CNA, 2017_[75]). The new basic quality assurance requirements

introduced additional quality criteria for distance learning (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). At the time of drafting this report, however, it was too recent to evaluate these new criteria in terms of their impact on offer and quality of provision.

Teacher education programmes at faculties of education also do not typically seem to provide teacher students with the opportunity to gain experience in rural areas. Practical experience would be important to allow teacher students to gain a realistic understanding of what it is like to live and teach in a rural community, and thus positively influence student teachers' attitudes towards working in rural areas and help attract and retain teachers to rural schools (CESE, 2013_[92]; Yarrow et al., 1999_[93]).

Higher teaching schools play a crucial role in supplying teachers for rural areas but face challenges in operation due to governance and funding arrangements

“Grow your own” strategies can play an essential role in meeting the demand for teachers in rural and remote areas (Sipple and Brent, 2015_[94]). Research, furthermore, suggests that teacher labour markets have an important regional dimension (Jaramillo, 2012_[95]; Reininger, 2012_[96]) and that women who make up a large share of teacher are more likely to prefer working close to home and in their community (Engel and Cannata, 2015_[97]).

In Colombia, higher teaching schools (ENS) fulfil an important role in supplying teachers for pre-primary and primary education in rural areas. About 9 in 10 higher teaching schools are located in municipalities with less than 100 000 inhabitants. As was evident during the review team's visit to Colombia, higher teaching schools may also take on a leading role in rural education on their own initiative, for example organising practical experiences for their students in rural and remote areas.

As in other countries in the region, initiatives have sought to maintain and improve the quality of higher teaching schools (Ávalos, 2008_[5]). Building on previous quality assurance processes in 1997-98, 2002 and 2010, the Single Regulatory Decree of Education (Decree 1075 of 2015) lays out quality conditions related to academic, pedagogical and organisational aspects of teacher education in higher teaching schools which should be assessed through the ministry and CONACES, the national quality assurance body for tertiary education (MEN and ASONEN, 2015_[6]). Higher teaching schools are also required to form partnerships with higher education institutions, which can bridge some of the potential gaps to theory and research and facilitate the progression of “normalists” to tertiary-level professional degrees in education (MEN and ASONEN, 2015_[6]). Initiatives such as the Rural Education Programme have entailed measures to strengthen the quality of higher teaching schools.

The quality of teacher education in higher teaching schools is considered to be relatively high as results in the country's school performance indicator, the Synthetic Education Quality Index (ISCE) suggest (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). “Normalists” also perform relatively well in the assessment of graduates from technical and technological tertiary programmes (*Saber TyT*), particularly in reading and writing, but less so in quantitative reasoning and civics (ICFES, 2016_[98]).

Nevertheless, higher teaching schools face challenges in their operation and enrolments have been decreasing, particularly in private higher teaching schools. Between 2010 and 2016, overall enrolment in the complementary programmes of public and private higher teaching schools decreased by 6%, and even more so in rural areas (-13%). Enrolment in public higher teaching schools has been less pronounced with an overall decrease of 1.8% (Sánchez, 2018_[1]). “Normalists” have been less successful in the national merit contests,

for reasons which are unclear. While 8% of candidates in the contest for 2016 had a “normalist” degree, they only represented 2% of successful applicants (data provided by the ministry).

While a consultative process on the normative status of higher teaching schools was ongoing at the time of drafting this report, the governance and funding arrangements for higher teaching schools created challenges. Teachers allocated to higher teaching schools have the same profile and status as teachers for all other levels of education and have the same workload arrangements which can make it difficult to engage in research and reflective practice. Secretaries of Education are responsible for the oversight and management of higher teaching schools but may not have the capacity for providing effective technical pedagogical support and for creating high-quality teacher education programmes. They may also rely on national quality assurance mechanisms rather than implementing their own processes. National quality assurance, on the other hand, is not articulated and has been criticised for not focussing sufficiently on processes.

Lastly, higher teaching schools receive resources as all other schools based on the criteria set out in the fiscal transfer mechanism (*Sistema General de Participaciones*) without taking the particular role of higher teaching schools into account (MEN and ASONEN, 2015_[6]). For students, universal free education does not extend to teacher education in higher teaching schools and there is no financial support to begin and complete a teacher education programme at a higher teaching school.

There are operational challenges for teacher recruitment and rigidities in the teacher labour market, resulting in an overly large share of provisional teachers

Flexible working arrangements in the public sector can bring benefits to both employees and the government (OECD, 2013_[7]). Of particular importance in Colombian education is reaching an adequate balance between teachers in permanent positions (*profesores de planta*), on the one hand, and temporary or contract teachers (*provisionales*) and private contractors (*matricula oficial contradata*), which are discussed in depth in Chapter 3, on the other. While teachers in permanent positions should assure a certain degree of teaching quality and stability, provisional teachers and publicly-funded private providers bring the indispensable flexibility to adapt to changes in student enrolment. Such flexibility seems particularly pertinent in Colombia considering the long-standing conflict, the difficulty to recruit teachers in particular areas and high levels of internal migration.

In Colombia, however, a relatively large share of teachers are employed as provisional teachers (OECD, 2016_[4]) which essentially seems to be related to more than unexpected changes in student enrolment and are likely related to strict control on the growth of staff costs in the public sector going back to the fiscal crisis in the late 1990s (OECD, 2013_[7]). In 2017, 15% of all teachers did not have a permanent position according to data provided by the ministry. The relatively large share of provisional teachers is also related to the current recruitment processes of permanent teachers. This is also evident from the fact that more than 1 in 4 teachers from the new statute (1278) are employed under a temporary contract in a vacancy that could not be filled through this process whereas teachers from the old statute are essentially all employed as permanent staff (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Contract status (%) by statute and geographical location, 2017

	Employment framework			Geographical location		
	Statute 2277	Statute 1278	Decree 804	Urban	Rural	Total
Permanent staff	99.6	64.4	72.8	84.4	71.4	80
Permanent vacancy	0.4	26.2	24.6	10.2	23.9	15
Temporary vacancy	0	7.1	2.6	2.6	3.1	4

Note: Data on permanent staff include teachers in a probationary period. Teachers in a permanent vacancy fill a position which could not be filled through the merit contest with permanent staff. Teachers in a temporary vacancy replace a staff teacher that is only temporarily away. There are also temporary teachers (*planta temporal*) not reflected in this table, typically teachers taking part in an education initiative or programme.

Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of data in Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Recruitment processes can be lengthy as described by teachers during the review team's visit. The merit contest opened in 2012 took about 3 years from the publication of vacancies to the assignment of teachers to schools. While central recruitments could, in theory, be organised on an annual basis, they have been scheduled only intermittently in practice. In some regions of the country, permanent positions may be opened even more sporadically since Secretaries of Education are responsible for reporting the number of their vacancies to the ministry and some may not have the resources or willingness to do so. While candidates could apply for permanent positions in 92 out of the 95 certified territorial entities in the merit contest for 2013, this was only possible in 66 entities in the preceding contest in 2009 (Brutti and Sanchez, 2017_[22]). As for recruitment in the public sector in general, the involvement of the National Civil Service Commission in the day-to-day management of the selection process creates operational challenges for filling permanent teaching positions within a reasonable time (OECD, 2013_[7]).

The lengthy and sporadic recruitment process may have negative effects on the pool of applicants. Highly qualified applicants may choose to seek and take up employment elsewhere rather than wait for the organisation of the selection process and the publication of results. While no information on applicants' profiles is available, overall, about 40% of graduates from education programmes decided not to take part in the selection process between 2007 and 2009 (Saavedra et al., 2017_[12]).

Rigidities in the teacher labour market further contribute to the proliferation of provisional teaching positions to provide teaching where a position could not be filled due to a lack of interested candidates that have passed the central recruitment. The reassignment of teachers in permanent staff positions within territorial entities to reflect changes in enrolment, for example between urban and rural areas, is often difficult and Secretaries of Education may resort to the contracting of provisional teachers or private providers instead. In 2016, 3.5% of all teachers were transferred by their Secretary of Education among their schools, out of a total of 4.0% of teacher transfers. Rates of internal transfer differ between certified territorial entities, from less than 2% in entities such as Bolívar, Floridablanca and Valle del Cauca, to between 8% and 10% in Guainía, Vaupés and Yumbo, and 14% in Duitama (data provided by the ministry, which include both teachers and school leaders). The reasons for these transfers and the extent to which they are linked to strategic human resource management are nevertheless unclear.

The teacher labour market also seems to be segmented between different territorial entities. An administrative agreement between Secretaries of Education is needed to

transfer teachers between different authorities and authorities may not want to lose teacher resources to another territorial entity (MinHacienda, 2015_[99]). In 2016, only 0.3% of all teachers were transferred between territorial entities (data provided by the ministry). These rigidities may affect in particular departments which are responsible for the provision of education in rural and remote areas but which cannot make use of teachers from certified municipalities located within their territory.

The use of provisional teachers with temporary contracts has implications for the school system overall, individual teachers as well as students. As a review of the use of contract teachers in developing countries concludes, contract teachers can improve access to education and ensure provision, strengthen accountability, and save costs in the short run. Studies suggest that students studying with contract teachers perform at par with and in some studies even better than students studying with regular teachers (Chudgar, Chandra and Razzaque, 2014_[100]).

This also holds true in the Colombian context. As provisional teachers cannot progress up the salary scale, reliance on these types of contracts helps save costs and keeps long-term financial commitments in check. At the same time, the requirement to hire provisional teachers to fill permanent vacancies in the short run from a Pool of Excellence (*Banco de Excelencia*) guarantees that they fulfil minimum requirements. Research by Brutti and Sanchez (2017_[22]) suggests that provisional teachers still have a greater impact on students' learning outcomes compared to teachers from the old statute (2277), but less so than permanent teachers who have passed the central recruitment process (1278).

However, as the review of contract teaching also suggests, the use of contract teachers may not be sustainable in the long run and may have a negative impact on teacher morale and the professional status of teaching as well as equity as analysed in the following point (Chudgar, Chandra and Razzaque, 2014_[100]). Provisional teachers in Colombia also do not benefit from many opportunities for professional development, for instance.

There are inequities in teacher allocation between rural and urban areas and advantaged and disadvantaged schools

Good teachers can make a big difference for student learning and development, but in Colombia, highly-skilled teachers do not necessarily work in the most challenging geographical areas and schools. As a result, disadvantaged and struggling students in Colombia are not given the same educational opportunities as their best-performing peers.

National research provides evidence for inequities in the distribution of both the number and the profiles of teachers working in different regions of the country (Bonet, 2006_[101]; Galvis and Bonilla, 2014_[102]; García et al., 2014_[10]). While student-teacher ratios overall are large, there are important differences between regions. There are also differences in the distribution of teachers with different levels of qualifications, experience and results in the merit contest as García et al. (2014_[10]), for instance, have found.

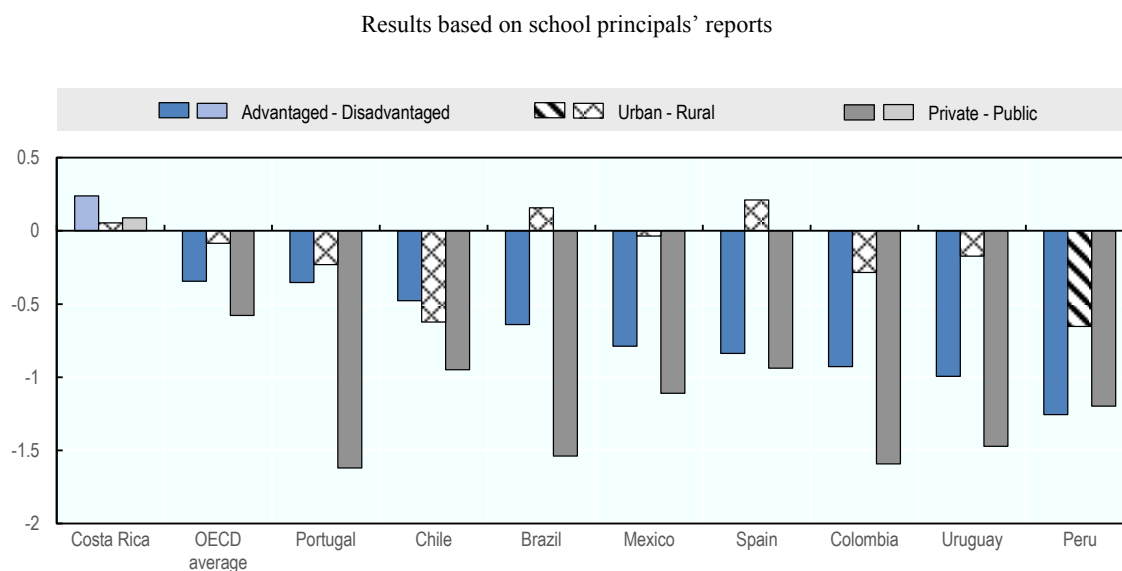
While the Andean region has a clear advantage in terms of the level of qualification and performance in the central recruitment process, the Amazonas, Caribbean and Pacific regions have relatively less qualified teachers in terms of the level of education, and the Amazonas has those teachers with the lowest scores in the merit contest, on average. Analysing differences in teacher allocation between different municipalities reveals that municipalities with a higher poverty rate, with a higher number of terrorist attacks or a higher share of displaced population have less qualified teachers as measured by different

criteria (García et al., 2014_[10]). Research also suggests that a violent context is related to higher teacher turnover (Haugan, 2016_[103]).

Data from the OECD PISA 2015 show that inequities in the distribution of teachers do not only exist at a regional level but also between schools. Principals in disadvantaged schools are considerably more concerned about their education staff than their peers in advantaged schools (Figure 4.7).

Inequities in the distribution of teachers are likely related to a number of factors, including the attractiveness of teaching in rural, remote and post-conflict areas as well as challenging working conditions in disadvantaged schools. But they are also related to Colombia's system of teacher recruitment and salary structure. While a central teacher allocation system has, in theory, the potential to steer a more equitable distribution of teachers and avoid some of the potential inequalities associated with school-based teacher hiring (Han, 2018_[104]), teacher recruitment in Colombia is essentially based on guaranteeing teachers' rights rather than on meeting student needs.

Figure 4.7. Shortage of education staff by school characteristics, PISA 2015



Notes: The figure shows the difference in the index of the shortage of education staff between different types of schools. The definition of advantaged and disadvantaged schools is based on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status. Rural schools refer to those in communities with fewer than 3 000 people, urban schools to those located in any city with more than 100 000 people. Public schools are those managed by a public education authority, government agency, or governing board appointed by a government or elected by public franchise. Private schools refer to schools managed directly or indirectly by a non-government organisation

Countries are ranked in ascending order of differences between advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

Significant differences are marked in a darker tone.

Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>, Table II.6.15.

The allocation of teachers for both statutes is based on teachers' preferences depending on their seniority (Statute 2277) or ranking in the central recruitment (Statute 1278). As the available data suggest, more experienced or qualified teachers generally prefer to avoid working in disadvantaged contexts. This was also evident during the review team

visit in which teachers often reported that teaching in a rural school was only a stepping stone towards teaching in another context. Many teachers however also recognised the benefits of working in a rural area, such as possibly closer ties with families and the community and possibly greater safety than in challenging urban contexts.

The recruitment process does not sufficiently reflect the needs of particular contexts. As a result, teaching positions in disadvantaged contexts cannot always be filled with permanent teachers – local teachers do not succeed in the merit contest and nationally eligible candidates are unwilling to fill these vacancies (see Table 4.6). For example, in the sparsely populated departments of Guainía, Vaupés or Vichada, between 40% and 50% of teachers were employed on a temporary contract to fill a permanent staff position, and some positions have been vacant for more than 10 years. This compares with 18 out of a total of 28 125 teachers in the capital Bogotá (data provided by the ministry). Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers in rural areas are often hired late in the school year, only teach for a reduced schedule or leave the school before the end of the year (Sánchez, 2018_[11]), resulting in lost learning time for students (Papay and Kraft, 2016_[105]).

More lenient merit contests are being organised for 170 municipalities that have been most affected by the armed conflict within the framework of the peace process and its Development Programmes with a Territorial Focus (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*, PDET)²⁷ as explained in Chapter 1. These contests give more weight to experience acquired in the region and may help in filling some of the vacancies and providing better levels of compensation for teachers working in these challenging areas.

But they do not offer a structural solution and address the large inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers between regions, rural and urban areas, and schools. The salary structure for teachers under both statutes provides insufficient incentives for highly-skilled teachers to choose challenging schools. Students' characteristics, such as the proportion of disadvantaged and underachieving students, are rarely factored into teachers' salary. While teachers in remote areas receive some financial and fringe benefits, such as a salary bonus, these are not sufficient to serve as a financial incentive to work in rural and remote schools (García et al., 2014_[10]).

Research from the United States provides evidence that also the allocation of teachers within schools should be considered to make the best use of teachers' profiles and competencies in response to students' needs. School principals are responsible for providing an educational offer with limited resources, time and teaching staff, but may need to assign teachers to teach out of their fields without taking into account the impact this will have on teaching and learning (Ingersoll, 2005_[106]). Politics within schools may also result in an inequitable distribution of teachers within schools, with more experienced teachers successfully lobbying for teaching less challenging classrooms (Grissom, Kalogrides and Loeb, 2015_[107]).

While there is no evidence for such practices in Colombia, school principals are responsible for assigning teachers within their school and between sites within their school cluster. School leadership, however, is relatively weak, thus raising concerns if school leaders are adequately prepared to make equitable decisions for the allocation of teachers within their school and between different school sites, including those in more rural and remote areas (more on this in Chapter 3).

Policy recommendations

Further promote the development of a new vision of teacher professionalism built on effective engagement and consensus with stakeholders

Colombia has established a strong focus on excellence in the teaching profession for a considerable time. Building on the introduction of a new teacher statute (1278), recent governments have made particular efforts to improve teacher learning and development. Overall, past reforms have mainly focussed on the individual teacher and paid less attention to the organisational and institutional conditions, structures and processes required for effective teaching and learning.

The quality of individual teachers is critical, but so is the environment in which teachers work (OECD, 2017_[108]; OECD, 2018_[24]). A more comprehensive model of teacher professionalism needs to consider the ways in which teaching and learning are embedded in complex systems and community contexts (Johnson, Kraft and Papay, 2012_[109]; Little and Bartlett, 2010_[37]; Oakes, 1989_[110]), and the ways in which teachers work together to support student learning (OECD, 2016_[23]).

As research on school improvement and effectiveness from Chile highlights, sustainable school improvement is a complex and multidimensional process that requires time. The qualitative multiple case studies suggest that, besides other factors such as the community and policy context, a professional culture built around a sense of collective responsibility among teachers for their students' education, common expectations among teachers for both students' learning and teachers' performance, and teacher collaboration and peer learning, are essential for school improvement (Bellei et al., 2014_[111]). Similarly, a longitudinal mixed-method study of school reform in Chicago in the United States highlights that classroom learning depends in large measure on how the school as a social context supports teaching and sustains student engagement (Bryk et al., 2010_[112]).

Initiatives such as the *Programa Todos a Aprender* have laid the foundations for a collaborative school culture and other existing elements, such as a substantial teacher autonomy and involvement in school development, the regular teacher evaluations and the organisation of schools into school clusters, have the potential to further develop strong collective professional cultures. The review team recommends keeping this momentum of past initiatives and making further strides in developing a strong professional approach to teaching based on a conception of collective capacity and the recognition of the contextual and complex nature of teaching and learning. This also requires considerable efforts in strengthening school leadership as analysed in Chapter 3.

At the same time, many of the past initiatives have faced challenges in implementation. While some initiatives have been hampered by resistance to change or a lack of capacity, others have been difficult to implement due to a lack of resources. Future efforts and policies should be underpinned by the effective engagement of all relevant stakeholders early on, including the country's largest teachers' union (and other unions at local and regional levels), school leaders and teacher educators, and be informed by evidence and research in education (see Box 4.3). The views and experience of effective teachers and school leaders should be central to the development of their profession. Effective consultation would not only facilitate implementation and help build trust between actors but could also contribute to greater continuity in teacher policy (Burns and Köster, 2016_[62]). Changes in practice take time. In Colombia, however, policies have often had to be changed following difficulties in implementation and criticism from stakeholders.

Box 4.3. Lessons on stakeholder engagement, open dialogue and capacity building

As an OECD project on Governing Complex Education Systems highlighted (Burns and Köster, 2016_[62]), capacity building, open dialogue and stakeholder involvement are key principles of effective governance. Effective stakeholder involvement creates and sustains trust and facilitates the implementation of education policy. In contrast, a lack of stakeholder involvement can result in weak dialogue, ownership and co-operation, and a breakdown in trust.

Effective reform thus entails clear communication, consensus building among the various stakeholders, and the possibility of prioritising competing claims on time and resources. In order to build consensus, it is important that all stakeholders see proposed education policies within the broader policy framework and strategy. Individuals and groups are more likely to accept changes that are not necessarily in their own best interests if they understand the rationale for these changes and can see the role they should play within the broad education strategy. There is therefore much scope for authorities to facilitate successful policy implementation by improving communication on the long-term vision of what is to be accomplished as the rationale for proposed reform packages.

In this context, a priority should be the involvement of a broad set of stakeholders in consultation processes, focus groups, negotiations or other forums to voice concerns, based on an understanding that discussions and consultations require time. This should go alongside the involvement of practitioners such as school leaders and teachers in the design, management and analysis of education policies.

In Chile, for example, negotiations between the government and the *Colegio de Profesores*, the country's main teacher union, facilitated the passage and implementation of teacher evaluations and incentives schemes as did the technical, proactive policy-making nature of the union. While the teacher union maintained a traditional labour orientation in the first few years following return to democracy, it has since taken on a broader policy orientation and become actively involved in designing proposals for individual teacher evaluations and incentives since the late 1990s. The government has been willing to include the union in the design of these schemes. For instance, the creation of a tripartite technical committee that included the union and central and local education authorities helped to come to a consensus on policies (Gindin and Finger, 2013_[55]).

Sources: Burns, T. and F. Köster (2016), "Modern governance challenges in education", <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264255364-3-en>; Gindin, J. and L. Finger (2013), *Promoting Education Quality: The Role of Teachers' Unions in Latin America*, Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/4, Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All, UNESCO, Paris.

National councils or education boards can steer and develop matters relating to teacher professionalism as well as other matters affecting teachers and their work in schools and classrooms, such as the curriculum and assessment (Menter and McLaughlin, 2015_[113]). In Colombia, the General Education Law envisages such education councils at different levels of governance (JUNE, JUDE, JUME). As recommended in Chapter 2 to ensure greater continuity in education, these boards should be re-established and also play a role in shaping discussion around teacher professionalism.

At the same time, the teaching profession itself and the unions need to engage in constructive dialogue around the development of the profession while placing students at the centre of the education system. The largest union has been an important voice in education policy in the past and should be central in future efforts to raise teaching quality. Policies should, furthermore, be developed on the basis of adequate forecasting of resource implications and feasibility – the implementation of education initiatives often has implications for the workload of school agents and may require additional resources.

To put the necessary conditions in place for schools to become learning organisations and to create a strong profession, the following options should be considered for discussion.

Promote a common understanding of effective teaching practice with the profession on the basis of existing profiles and regulations

A national teacher profile, vision or standards of practice can provide the basis for the further development of a strong vision of teacher professionalism and communicate expectations regarding teacher practice that are at the heart of this vision (e.g. collaboration and teamwork in schools, mentoring and peer feedback and observation, reflective practice, etc.). Considering teachers' considerable degree of professional autonomy for pedagogical and curricular decisions in Colombia, a commonly accepted teacher profile would establish a foundation for teachers to explore their practice in relation to students' learning objectives and for schools to develop strategies to improve teacher practice. As teachers are expected to fulfil increasing and more diverse responsibilities, such a framework would also help establish a common understanding of what teachers' role entails in different areas, including rural areas.

In Colombia, a number of competency descriptions exist already. In particular, the teacher profile that provides the basis for the new competency assessment (ECDF) developed by the evaluation institute ICFES and education researchers provides a strong foundation for establishing a profile that is more widely shared and accepted by different stakeholders (MEN and ICFES, 2015_[114]). The key part will be to establish a framework that is more commonly shared and accepted throughout the system and used for teacher development overall – from initial teacher education, recruitment and probation, to professional development, performance evaluation and career progression (OECD, 2005_[32]; OECD, 2013_[35]). A profile should, for instance, guide the different authorities responsible for developing these aspects of the profession, such as Secretaries of Education, territorial teacher education committees and schools in developing their professional development strategies, and facilitate the implementation of recent reforms, such as changes to initial teacher education or teacher evaluation within schools.

Facilitate the effective implementation of school-based teacher evaluation and strengthen its developmental function, also for rural teachers in small sites

School-based teacher evaluation for teachers employed under the new statute (1278) provides an important opportunity for critical feedback on teachers' practice, but the potential of formative evaluation in schools is often not realised due to a lack of capacity in schools to carry out evaluations, develop related improvement plans for individual teachers and inform school's development planning.

Both school leaders (principals, rural directors and co-ordinators) and teachers should have the opportunities to develop competencies for evaluation, and this should be

reflected in initial teacher education programmes as well as professional development strategies developed by Secretaries of Education and territorial teacher education committees. As analysed in Chapter 3, pedagogical leadership in schools, in particular, needs to be strengthened to implement school-based teacher evaluation and develop school-wide approaches to evaluation.

Secretaries of Education can play a key role in validating school processes for developmental teacher evaluation and in providing feedback on school leaders' practices (e.g. as part of their evaluations of school leaders). This would help ensure that teacher evaluations are more consistent across schools. The extent to which school-internal teacher evaluation processes can be implemented for all teachers in a school will also depend on the effective organisation of school clusters and sites that enable school leaders to work effectively with all teachers in their school.

The school-based teacher evaluation is often perceived as mainly serving an accountability function. Instead, the ministry should communicate more clearly that the main purpose of this evaluation process is the continuous improvement of teaching practices in schools. While teacher evaluations are an important opportunity to address underperformance, the primary goal should be to provide critical feedback for improvement and to inform teachers' professional development and school improvement planning (Hallinger, Heck and Murphy, 2014_[115]; OECD, 2013_[35]; OECD, 2018_[24]).

The promotion of peer observation and feedback can be very powerful in strengthening the formative role of evaluation. A stronger focus on the developmental nature of evaluation could make evaluation more acceptable to teachers employed under the old statute (2277) who typically do not take part in evaluation and who could also benefit from regular feedback on their work.

Create opportunities for teachers to take on other tasks and leadership roles

While reform of the teacher career and salary structure will be difficult politically and require strong leadership, consensus building and stakeholder involvement, Colombia should consider the development of a differentiated career structure that allows for vertical and horizontal progression in the medium to long-term. The development of a new career structure could also be an opportunity to establish one single teacher statute for the profession as a whole. In the short term, Colombia should make renewed efforts to introduce new roles for teachers to take on leadership and development responsibilities within their school, such as the teacher leader positions that were abolished in 2017.

As can be argued, a more diverse career structure would have the potential to professionalise teaching and support a new organisation of schools without necessarily making schools more hierarchical. It could also help make teaching more attractive to and satisfying for motivated and skilled individuals, and retain effective teachers in the profession (OECD, 2005_[32]; OECD, 2013_[35]). Chile provides an example for a designated career structure. Since 2017, teachers in Chile also benefit from the possibility of progressing in their career in five stages. While the first three stages are mandatory, the last two are optional. The final mandatory stage gives teachers the opportunity to access functions such as mentor teacher or team leader, among others. Teachers in the two optional stages have preferential access to roles of pedagogical leadership and guidance (Santiago et al., 2017_[116]).

Consider trade-offs in teacher policies, gather evidence about teachers' use of their time and use resources for teacher remuneration more strategically

Countries face important trade-offs in the number of teachers they employ, how teachers are used in schools and classrooms and how they are remunerated, all of which affects teachers' working conditions and the attractiveness of the profession, and ultimately student learning. Countries may, for instance, raise teachers' salaries to attract good candidates but this might limit the number of teachers the system can afford. Or countries may hire more teachers at the expense of teachers' salary levels to keep classes small. For a given student-teacher ratio, there is also a trade-off in average class size and teachers' class contact time. Teachers may, for example, spend more time in face-to-face teaching and thereby reduce the average class size or have more time for preparation, but teach larger classes (OECD, 2005^[32]).

Resource constraints inevitably require trade-offs in Colombia's teacher policies. Considering that levels of teacher compensation overall compare relatively favourably with the labour market and have been increasing significantly over time, more priority could be placed on improving teachers' working conditions. Given the difficulty of drawing final conclusions about teachers' actual workload and distribution of time during the school year on a weekly and daily basis, the ministry should first establish a solid knowledge base about teachers' use of their time. This is gaining further relevance in light of the introduction of full-day schooling. The OECD TALIS 2018 will provide some insights from an international perspective but commissioning national research would provide important insights and evidence.

A high share of contact time with students can make it challenging for school leaders and schools to develop collaborative learning cultures and to make time for peer collaboration in teacher schedules – practices which should be at the heart of a renewed vision for teacher professionalism. In Colombia, sufficient time is also important considering school and teacher autonomy to develop pedagogical and curricular approaches, for example, to develop educational materials with colleagues and to implement other elements of teacher development, such as school-based evaluations and mentoring.

In any case, teachers should be supported to use their time well. The requirement for teachers to spend a relatively large share of their time at school provides a good basis for using non-teaching time for other professional tasks and responsibilities. But school leadership needs to be strengthened considerably to manage teachers' time effectively (see Chapter 3). The ministry and Secretaries of Education should also reflect about the mix of pedagogical staff at school in recognition that other types of staff may carry out some responsibilities more effectively, possibly at a lower cost.

Further spending on teacher remuneration should take into account the existence of different types of teachers and clearly focus on improving the working conditions of teachers recruited under the new statute (1278), who are also more likely to work in rural areas. While teachers of the old statute continue to progress automatically in their single salary scale and a large share benefits already from the highest salary grade, the promotion of teachers of the new statute (1278) is more challenging to achieve and also depends on sufficient budgetary resources. Taking the budgetary resources that are available into account for determining the number of possible promotions is an important element to control spending on teachers' salaries. Given the challenges of implementing performance-based promotions and the risk of potential negative effects, however, the competency assessment should be subject to ongoing evaluation and improvement in consultation with the profession.

The ministry should also monitor the attractiveness of compensation in the teaching career compared to the public sector more broadly as well as the private sector (e.g. through benchmarking and compensation studies) and use pay projections as a basis for longer-term compensation policies.

Strengthen teacher learning to ensure all teachers have the competencies to meet diverse student needs, including of rural children and young people

Facilitate the implementation of initial teacher education reform and smooth new teachers' transition into schools through systematic induction processes

Recent changes to the quality assurance of initial teacher education offered by faculties of education hold the promise to address some of the known weaknesses in initial teacher education in Colombia. Changes to quality assurance were, however, not without controversy. The initial changes to regulations for programmes to be admitted to the register of qualified programmes had to be revised to take effect. The second part of the reform – the requirement for programmes to undergo the process of high-quality accreditation – was similarly subject to criticism and concerns about the provision of initial teacher education.

Recent reform efforts thus reveal unresolved tensions between autonomy and regulation and control of initial teacher education. They also reveal a lack of certainty and stability which would be needed to implement changes, generate improvements and monitor results (Ávalos, 2008^[5]). These challenges highlight the need for effective implementation and for evaluation and follow up on both reforms. The national quality assurance body for tertiary education, CONACES, could take on a leading role in this, but other stakeholders, including the association of education faculties (ASCOFADE), and the education research community should also be involved.

Institutions should have stability and continuity to adjust to new requirements and should be supported in creating the desired changes in teacher education. This requires adequate attention on the side of the ministry to provide institutions with the conditions to develop adequate personnel and organisational structures, such as an adequate supply of qualified staff and management structures, and adequate funding for basic educational research. Also, schools and student teachers should have guidance and support, from their Secretary of Education and faculties of education, for example, to develop meaningful practical experiences in school. Brazil's Government Grant Programme for Initial Teacher Education (PIBID) provides an example for ways to strengthen partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools (Marcondes, Finholdt Angelo Leite and Karl Ramos, 2017^[117]).

Induction processes can play a role in smoothing the transition of beginning teachers into the system. Induction can support new teachers in their probationary period and help retain effective teachers at the beginning of their career in the profession. Colombia can build on pilot experiences implemented in the past years in a small number of territorial entities in developing more systematic approaches to induction which could be organised locally. Secretaries of Education and territorial teacher education committees, for example, could support schools in developing school-based induction processes. For this to happen, school leaders would need to learn about effective strategies to create time for expert teachers to work with new teachers, including those allocated to rural school sites, observe them while teaching and provide feedback, or co-plan and co-teach lessons.

Pay more attention to the preparation of side-entrants and the quality of postgraduate qualifications

The possibility for individuals to become a part of the teaching profession at different points of their lives and careers is a strength of the profession, but processes need to be in place to ensure that side-entrants transition successfully into teaching.

This requires adequate quality assurance processes for programmes in pedagogy for these teachers as well as monitoring processes of teacher turnover and attrition on the part of the ministry. Programmes for side entrants should recognise the complexity of teaching as demanding intellectual work involving specialised knowledge and skills, and form professionals who do not just implement scripted teaching strategies but have technical expertise and are able to adapt their teaching in the classroom to the varied needs of their students based on their discretion and judgment (Zeichner, 2014^[118]). Schools, Secretaries of Education and territorial teacher education committees have a role to play in developing adequate local strategies to support new teachers coming from other professions.

Considering the possibility for side entry through the completion of postgraduate qualifications and strong incentives and financial support for teachers, particularly those under the new statute (1278), to take part in postgraduate education, the ministry should also pay adequate attention to the quality of these programmes. Programmes should be subject to rigid quality assurance procedures, such as the process for high-quality accreditation, and the benefits of postgraduate qualifications should be closely followed and evaluated in terms of student learning to ensure that resources in terms of time and money are used effectively. The *Becas para la Excelencia Docente* programme is an innovative initiative but should be subject to rigorous impact evaluation on teachers' practices, school cultures and student achievement.

Ensure teachers are prepared for and supported in working with a wide range of learners, such as rural students, special needs students and victims of the conflict

Classrooms are inevitably diverse places and each class presents its own possibilities, resources and challenges. No single method will be able to reach all students. Teachers should thus have opportunities to develop the ability to use multiple methods and routes to achieve learning and development goals that have proven to be effective. Different actors are responsible for ensuring that teachers are well prepared and supported to work with a wide range of learners and for enabling teachers to connect subject matter with the knowledge, perspective and needs of diverse learners. This goes from faculties of education and higher teaching schools in the design of their initial education programmes to Secretaries of Education, territorial teacher education committees and schools in the design of opportunities for ongoing professional learning.

The ministry should provide leadership and support for building the conception that teacher learning which includes strategies and tools for students with the greatest needs may be beneficial for all learners. For instance, skills such as curriculum planning and reflection, classroom practice, effective classroom management and the use of a variety of teaching strategies that are appropriate for a particular context not only facilitate teachers' work in multi-grade classrooms but are relevant for all teachers (Mulryan-Kyne, 2007^[119]). To give another example, teacher learning about the development of social and emotional skills of children and young people, such as motivation, self-regulation,

curiosity and perseverance, would not only benefit teachers working with students affected by violence, but rather all teachers (Jones and Kahn, 2017_[120]).

At the same time, the ministry should ensure an adequate offer of specialised degree programmes to ensure an adequate supply of specialised teachers in areas such as ethnic education and special needs education. These teachers could act as mentors and build the capacity of other teachers in the system. Faculties of education could be encouraged to develop particular research profiles, such as rural education and social and emotional learning, offer programmes and provide evidence on pedagogical strategies in these areas.

Strengthen teachers' professional development by connecting effective school-based teacher learning with external supports and develop models of teacher learning for teachers working in rural and remote areas

Opportunities for teachers to keep learning and build their knowledge and skill to teach to high standards throughout their career and in line with their acquired expertise and experience need to be strengthened. Schools should play a more prominent role in providing such opportunities that ultimately support student learning and well-being.

As Duque et al. (2014_[65]) suggest, professional learning should be based on latest research on the discipline and teaching practice, adequate educational materials and assessment tools and pedagogical leadership. Initiatives, such as the Let's All Learn programme, which recognise that school is where teaching and learning takes place and where the problems of practice become apparent, need to be sustained. They should also inspire initiatives at other levels of school education to establish job-embedded forms of teacher learning in Colombian schools. Considering the risk that the effects of teacher coaching may fade over time (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018_[45]) or that teacher coaching may benefit some teachers more than others (Albornoz et al., 2017_[121]), these programmes should be subject to further evaluations to inform adjustments in the future.

However, more needs to be done to develop schools as learning organisations (Banerjee et al., 2017_[122]; Kools and Stoll, 2016_[123]; Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008_[124]). Investments in stronger leadership in schools, as analysed in Chapter 3, and sufficient attention to teachers' working conditions, such as teacher assignment, time, space, materials and access to colleagues, as discussed above, would all help strengthen school-based professional learning (Little, 2006_[125]). School principals in Colombia are crucial in scheduling and creating time for staff to collaborate and in cultivating a professional community within their school across different school sites.

External professional development also has an important role to play in teacher learning and in providing teachers with new knowledge about subject content, teaching and learning, as well as externally developed tools and materials. Ideally, high-quality external training and professional communities within schools intersect and reinforce each other (Little, 2006_[125]). Secretaries of Education and territorial teacher education committees need to have the resources and capacity to ensure training is of high quality, well-connected to school-based development and available to all teachers, including those working in more remote school sites. They need to make sure that professional development does not only meet teachers but school and student needs.

Adequate monitoring and control of the quality of providers and their offer is a further area that needs to be strengthened. The ministry could establish research-based quality criteria for the content (e.g. focus on content knowledge and student thinking, learning and assessment) and methodology (e.g. collective participation, active learning, sustained

duration) of teacher development courses. Central leadership on teacher learning should be strengthened. The creation of a central institution on teacher learning and development, such as Chile's Centre for Pedagogical Training, Experimentation and Research (*Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas*, CPEIP), could support a central role for teacher learning on a long-term basis. Information from the country's formative diagnostic teacher evaluation (ECDF) can provide useful information for ensuring an offer that relates to teachers' learning needs, while surveys of teachers could provide information about quality.

Colombia should also strengthen efforts to provide rural and remote teachers with opportunities to improve their practice, reflecting the different needs of rural and remote schools. This could entail a number of elements:

- School leaders should be equipped to build learning communities within their school that involve teachers from all school sites. The ministry and/or Secretaries of Education should put in place more systematic opportunities or incentives for different schools to work together, tackle similar challenges and learn from each other (also see Chapter 3); external professional development can, for example, be organised for teachers from multiple schools.
- Higher teaching schools have the potential to contribute to teacher learning in rural areas more widely and should be encouraged and enabled to do so.
- Distance learning and technology-based models of teacher development have proven effective in certain contexts when combined with follow-up and opportunities for in-person support and meetings (Sipple and Brent, 2015_[94]).

Ensure that the provision of teachers meets the needs of the system as well as students and that the allocation of teachers is both equitable and efficient

Improve the monitoring of the supply and demand for teachers

While the Ministry of National Education stands out in the Colombian public sector together with the Ministry of Defence in strategic workforce planning (OECD, 2013_[7]), the ministry should improve the monitoring of teacher supply and demand. This should include a regular analysis of the profile of the current teaching profession and teachers' subject-specific education and qualifications, as well as the employment of temporary teachers in different territorial entities and at a national level. Monitoring should pay adequate attention to potential implications of other factors that influence the demand and supply of teachers and the wider context of higher education and the labour market. Collecting data about teacher attrition, including for different types of teachers, at different stages of their career and for different types of schools, including rural schools, would facilitate monitoring the supply and demand for teachers with different profiles.

Secretaries of Education should be involved in the monitoring of the teacher labour market, e.g. by providing information about their teachers' qualifications gained throughout their career and employment of temporary teachers. Initial teacher education institutions should also be involved, for example through their member associations (ASCOFADE and ASONEN) and respond to identified needs, for example by gearing admission to teacher education programmes and by adjusting the offer of programmes. Territorial teacher education committees provide particularly useful platforms to provide knowledge about the competency needs of the system and in monitoring teacher labour markets at a local level. Such knowledge should be available to and be used by the

ministry to inform planning as well as candidates interested in a career in teaching, informing their decision to enrol in initial teacher education (e.g. through platforms like *Buscando Carrera*). Within schools, this could inform the work of guidance counsellors in providing information to high-performing students about a career in teaching.

Ensure an adequate provision of initial teacher education in all parts of the country, including rural areas

Teacher labour markets have an important local dimension. An adequate supply of high-quality options for initial teacher education in all regions of the country, including rural areas, will be essential for ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers in these areas. The ministry should take steps to strengthen the provision and quality of initial teacher education. As analysed above, the ministry has made efforts to improve the quality of programmes through more rigid quality assurance, including of distance learning options. These should be monitored and evaluated in terms of impact for the provision of high-quality education in different parts of the country. Necessarily, it will take time to establish an adequate supply of high-quality programmes and prepare students leaving school with the competencies to excel in initial teacher education.

Higher teaching schools fulfil an important function in providing teacher education in more rural parts of the country. This is also evident from the experience of other countries in the region, such as Peru, where the potential closure of higher teaching schools threatened the provision of teachers for rural and indigenous students (Bruns and Luque, 2015_[25]). It is therefore important that higher teaching schools benefit from adequate funding and governance arrangements to offer high-quality teacher education to their students and favourable conditions for their staff, e.g. to engage in action research and collaborate with faculties of education. An adequate school climate and environment in higher teaching schools is likely to influence students' interest and persistence in pursuing a career in teaching. Secretaries of Education should be encouraged to provide adequate pedagogical and technical support to their higher teaching schools and also have the capacity and resources to do so.

Initial teacher education at faculties of education and higher teaching schools should prepare their students to work with a wide range of learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and in rural communities, not only through theoretical courses but also through practical opportunities. A practicum in a rural or remote community, for example, can provide teacher students with more accurate information about teaching and living in a rural or remote community and influence their attitudes towards working and remaining in a rural or remote school. Considering that practical placements require adequate organisational, financial and social support for students to participate, e.g. to find and pay for housing and transportation, compensate for loss of income from part-time work and to deal with disruptions to family life, shorter visits or field trips to rural schools provide an alternative for teacher students who are not able to spend long periods of time away from family and work commitments (CESE, 2013_[92]).

Make the recruitment of permanent teachers more efficient and equitable, also to ensure adequate working conditions in rural schools

The OECD's public governance review of Colombia carried out in 2013 (OECD, 2013_[7]) commended Colombia for its efforts to establish a culture of integrity and performance and for its clear commitment to transparency and openness in the management of the public service. But it also highlighted serious challenges in managing the growth,

allocation and cost of the public-sector workforce and the operational challenges of the government's merit-based recruitment system. This also applies to the effective recruitment of teachers into permanent staff positions.

While the merit contest has established a transparent and fair recruitment process, filling positions within a reasonable time is a considerable challenge. The long recruitment cycle may deter high-quality applicants and has led to an overuse of temporary teachers, concentrated in particular geographical areas of the country, although other factors are also at work, including budgetary restrictions, greater flexibility in managing temporary teachers and the lack of willing teachers to work in challenging contexts. As a result, the system has contributed to different types of employment for staff performing the same work, and teachers in the most challenging schools, including rural areas, are most likely to be employed with less favourable employment conditions.

The ministry's goal should be to maintain reasonable numbers of temporary teachers and reduce the number of temporary teachers in disadvantaged areas. This should entail regularising temporary teachers who often bring useful skills and experiences, e.g. by providing them with financial and logistical support to gain further education to meet the requirements to become a permanent teacher or by appointing them to a staff position after a certain period of time and positive evaluations by their school leader.

Steps to reduce rigidities in the teacher labour market by facilitating transfers across certified territorial entities and by monitoring the efficient allocation of permanent teaching staff within them would also help reduce the use of temporary employment. Together with the National Civil Service Commission, the ministry should make sure the merit contests better reflect the needs of particular contexts. The recruitment of teachers would also benefit from a wider reform of public sector employment, e.g. with the National Civil Service Commission focussing more on strategic oversight (OECD, 2013^[7]).

While there is limited evidence on what motivates effective teachers to work and remain in challenging settings, a number of studies consistently find that both financial and non-financial factors are important (Rice, 2010^[126]). General quality of life and issues such as personal security certainly matter and long-term improvements in disadvantaged areas will help attract and retain effective teachers. The ministry and Secretaries of Education, however, can help to make teaching in disadvantaged schools more attractive by shaping the working conditions and professional opportunities in these schools, e.g. by providing external support, opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, accommodation in remote locations, support for transportation, etc. The collection of data on and analysis of teachers' needs in rural areas would provide a useful basis for defining related strategies. Initiatives should reflect the challenges of different contexts, such as the difficulties of working in a remote rather than a rural school close to an urban area.

Stronger financial incentives, for example in the form of higher salary allowances which have been shown to be effective in attracting teachers to rural schools, even if less so for remote schools, could also be put in place (Dal Bó, Finan and Rossi, 2013^[127]; Pugatch and Schroeder, 2014^[128]). A study of the financial attractiveness of teaching positions in rural areas compared to urban areas and other job profiles in rural areas should provide the basis for determining such financial incentives. Teachers' salary allowances should be monitored over time so they are no longer provided once teachers change schools or the context of a school changes (Urquiola and Vegas, 2005^[129]).

Notes

¹ There are also teacher unions at sub-national levels, such as the *Asociación Distrital de Educadores* (ADE) of Bogotá, the *Sindicato de Maestros del Tolima* (SIMATOL) of Tolima, and the *Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación Quindío* (SUTEQ) of Quindío.

² Private schools refer to schools managed directly or indirectly by a non-government organisation. Private schools can be classified as government-dependent or independent private depending on whether or not they receive funding from the government (50% or more from private sources). These enrolment figures here refer to independent private schools only.

³ In Colombia, decentralisation in education has been managed by a process of certification of departments (the regional level) and districts and municipalities (the local level). All departments and large municipalities are certified to provide pre-school and school education and referred to as certified territorial entities. Education in municipalities that have not been certified (referred to as non-certified municipalities) is under the responsibility of the respective department and its Secretary of Education.

⁴ Tertiary degrees with a specialisation in education in Colombia are referred to as *licenciaturas*. This is different to some other countries in Latin America where this qualification describes all tertiary degrees regardless of specialisation.

⁵ There also used to be short-cycle tertiary programmes in education at technical and technological institutions (ISCED level 5). These qualifications are not sufficient to enter the teaching profession under the new statute (1278) and the share of teachers with these qualifications is very low.

⁶ Specialisations (*Especializaciones*) are 1-year programmes between a bachelor's and a master's qualification.

⁷ According to ministry data, 98% of all public school teachers are paid with resources provided through the General System of Transfers; 95% of teachers paid with resources from territorial entities' own resources are employed by only two Secretaries of Education, Bogotá and Medellín. Only 29 out of the 95 certified territorial entities employ teachers with their own resources and sometimes only 1 teacher.

⁸ The regional level here includes departments and municipalities, superintendencies, public establishments and industrial or commercial companies of the state.

⁹ These data refer to enrolments in compulsory education from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education in public and government-dependent private provision.

¹⁰ A process has been underway to provide ethnic minorities with greater autonomy through the creation of their own intercultural education systems (*Sistemas Educativos Propios e Interculturales*). Among these, the Individual Indigenous Educational System (*Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio*, SEIP) is the most advanced. Through this system, administrative, pedagogical and organisational responsibility will be transferred to the indigenous territories, which will function similarly to the certified territorial entities.

¹¹ School education in Colombia is mainly regulated by the Constitution of 1991 and the General Education Law of 1994 (Law 115), as well as the Single Regulatory Decree of Education (Decree 1075) of 2015 and Law 715 of 2001. While Decree 1075 combines all education decrees enacted before as well as after 2015, Law 715 regulates the system of fiscal transfers across levels of governance which also distributes financial resources for education.

¹² Territorial teacher education committees are under the leadership of the Secretaries of Education and include representatives of higher teaching schools (ENS), faculties of education, education research centres, and, if relevant, representatives of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

¹³ Co-ordinators fulfil functions within the school leadership team. Guidance counsellors develop, among others, strategies that promote a positive school climate and peaceful coexistence. For more information on both roles, see Chapter 3.

¹⁴ This includes tasks and responsibilities such as the preparation of the academic assignment; evaluation, planning, discipline and training of students; teacher meetings; group and student guidance; community collaboration, primarily with parents; and cultural and sport activities as part of the school's institutional project (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*, PEI).

¹⁵ Brutti and Sanchez (2017_[22]) find positive and significant, although not very large impact on student learning in Year 11. Ome (2013_[27]) finds positive and significant effects on test scores for Year 9, but unstable effects in Year 5 and no effects in Year 11. He also finds a reduction in student dropout, but also an increase in students transferring to another school.

¹⁶ Teachers' statutory salaries expressed as a ratio of GDP per capita have a number of limitations that need to be acknowledged. Statutory salaries do not represent actual salaries which also include other benefits such as annual leave and pensions, and the reference point, GDP per capita, does not reflect compensation levels in comparable occupations (OECD, 2005_[32]).

¹⁷ Relative wages compare statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience and typical qualification, relative to earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8).

¹⁸ As described in Chapter 1, there are two types of early childhood education provision in Colombia: pre-primary education managed by Secretaries of Education; and early childhood education managed by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare and its providers.

¹⁹ These data need to be interpreted with caution. They do not provide a full picture of side entry into the profession. For example, they do not include side-entrants with postgraduate qualifications in education with other first-level professional degrees.

²⁰ Based on an evaluation carried out by Universidad de los Andes, the share of students with satisfactory and advanced levels of achievement in mathematics and language in the *Pruebas Saber* for Years 3 and 5 increased between 2015 and 2016. In all participating schools, the percentage of students with minimum and insufficient levels of achievement decreased and more so than in schools not participating in the programme.

²¹ Numbers are expressed in short scale throughout the report.

²² The *Premio Compartir* award has the goal to reward outstanding teachers in Colombia, promote greater social prestige and recognition of the teaching profession, and support the professionalisation of teaching. The award was first implemented in 1998 and is based on a selection process which includes visits by referees to get to know first-hand the projects that are presented for the award. Teachers from public and private schools from across the country may apply for the award.

²³ The programme supported 1 000 students, 884 of which to study any professional degree, followed by a postgraduate qualification in education; 116 to study 2 degree programmes at the same time, including one in education.

²⁴ Since 2015, the ministry of education and the educational evaluation institute ICFES calculate a Synthetic Education Quality Index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*, ISCE) – a multidimensional index of school performance for primary to upper secondary education. The index is calculated individually for each level of education and ranges from 1 to 10. It measures the performance of schools and certified territorial entities, but also the system as a whole.

²⁵ While higher qualifications have a small positive effect on student learning overall, the effect is much smaller in public schools and differs between mathematics and language.

²⁶ The requirement applies to programmes that had been offered for at least four years and needed to be completed within two years until June 2017. Institutions in municipalities most affected by the armed conflict, however, have more time for successful accreditation. Between January and May 2017, 172 out of 274 programmes underwent the process, with an overall passing rate of 44%. Programmes offered at public institutions were more likely to be successful than programmes at private institutions (53% vs. 26%) (CNA, 2017^[75]).

²⁷ The peace agreement entails the implementation of a comprehensive rural reform. This reform does not only promote the economic recovery of the countryside through land access and use, but also the development of national plans to improve public services and infrastructure, including education. In the zones most affected by the conflict, these national plans will be implemented and funded through Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach (PDET).

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Annex 4.A. Teacher salary scales

Annex Table 4.A.1. Salary scales for Statute 2277, 2017

Grade	Monthly wage (COP)	Percentage of teachers
1	1 034 911	0.5
2	1 072 754	0.3
3	1 138 396	0.0
4	1 183 337	0.6
5	1 257 973	0.1
6	1 330 678	0.6
7	1 489 190	0.4
8	1 635 782	2.1
9	1 812 106	0.5
10	1 984 123	1.5
11	2 265 591	1.4
12	2 691 054	4.7
13	2 983 219	13.5
14	2 297 579	73.9

Note: The percentage of teachers refers to 2016.

Source: Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Annex Table 4.A.2. Salary scales for Statute 1278, 2017

Qualification	Grade	Step	Monthly wage (COP)		Percentage of teachers	
"Normalist" or education technologist	1	A	1 405 442		10.7	
		B	1 791 454		1.1	
		C	2 309 434		0.2	
		D	2 862 951		0.0	
Education graduate or professional in another career	2	Without specialisation		With specialisation		
		A	1 768 850	1 922 618	60.8	
		B	2 311 221	2 456 434	12.1	
		C	2 699 475	3 043 201	3.4	
		D	3 225 871	3 601 424	0.7	
		Master's degree		PhD		
		A	2 034 176	2 299 504	2.7	
		B	2 657 905	3 004 590	2.2	
	Education graduate or professional in another career with a master's or a PhD	3	Master's degree		PhD	
			A	2 960 470	3 927 294	2.9
			B	2 505 312	4 610 155	1.1
			C	4 335 213	5 821 445	0.6
		D	5 023 226	6 682 827	0.3	

Note: The percentage of teachers refers to all teachers in a salary step and grade regardless of particular qualifications in 2016. For example, 60.8% of teachers were in Grade 2, step A holding a specialisation or no specialisation.

Source: Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Annex Table 4.A.3. Salary scales for Decree 804, 2017

Qualification	Monthly wage (COP)
School graduate or other training	1 183 375
"Normalist" or education technologist	1 405 442
Education graduate or professional in another career	1 768 850
Education graduate or professional in another career with postgraduate studies	1 922 618

Source: Sánchez, J. (2018), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for Colombia*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm>.

Annex A. The OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools

The **OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools** (also referred to as the “School Resources Review”) is designed to respond to the strong interest in the effective and equitable use of school resources evident at national and international levels. It provides analysis and policy advice on how to govern, distribute and manage resources so that they contribute to achieving countries’ educational objectives. School resources are understood in a broad way, including financial resources (e.g. monetary transfers, school funding mechanisms), human resources (e.g. distribution of teachers, school leaders, education administrators), physical resources (e.g. organisation of buildings and places, school networks and clusters), and other resources (e.g. learning and teaching time).

Eighteen education systems are actively engaged in the review. These cover a wide range of economic and social contexts, and among them they illustrate quite different approaches to the use of resources in school systems. This allows a comparative perspective on key policy issues. Participating countries prepare a detailed background report, following a standard set of guidelines. Some of the participating countries have also opted for a detailed review, undertaken by a team consisting of members of the OECD Secretariat and external experts. Insofar, the participating countries are (in bold those that have opted for an individual review): **Austria**, **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, Belgium (French Community), **Chile**, **Colombia**, the **Czech Republic**, **Denmark**, **Estonia**, Iceland, **Kazakhstan**, **Lithuania**, Luxembourg, **Portugal**, the **Slovak Republic**, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and **Uruguay**.

Thematic comparative reports synthesise the project’s major findings on school resource policies. These reports bring together evidence from research and country practice to explore policy options for governments to consider. The first thematic report, *The Funding of School Education: Connecting Resources and Learning* published in 2017 systematically analyses school funding policies. The second thematic report, *Responsive School Systems: Connecting Facilities, Sectors and Pathways for Student Success* will be published in autumn 2018.

The project is overseen by the Group of National Experts on School Resources, which was established as a subsidiary body of the OECD Education Policy Committee in order to guide the methods, timing and principles of the review.

More details are available from the website dedicated to the review:

www.oecd.org/education/schoolresourcesreview.htm.

Annex B. Composition of the review team

Alfonso Echazarra, a Spanish national, is an analyst in the OECD Directorate of Education and Skills where he currently works in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). He graduated in Political Science and Administration from the Complutense University of Madrid and obtained a master's degree in Social Sciences from Carlos III University and a PhD in Social Statistics from the University of Manchester. In 2012 he was awarded “la Caixa” Prize in Social Sciences for his book *Crime in the Neighborhoods: Perceptions and Reactions*. As an OECD policy analyst, he has written, co-ordinated or collaborated on the following reports: *PISA 2015 Results: Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, *Ten Questions for Mathematics Teachers*, *How Teachers Teach and Students Learn*, *Low-performing students: Why They Fall Behind and How to Help Them Succeed*.

Gabriela Guerrero, a Peruvian national, has a PhD in Educational Sciences from the KU Leuven in Belgium and a master's degree in Development Studies with a major in Public Policy from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands. She has a bachelor's degree in Educational Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Currently, Gabriela is a Senior Researcher at GRADE (*Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo*) in Lima, working in the areas of education and learning; poverty and equality; and methodologies for research and evaluation of policy and programmes. Her research interests are early childhood development, educational transitions, intercultural bilingual education and school effectiveness. She is also lecturer in the Cognition, Learning and Development Master Programme housed in the Department of Psychology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

Thomas Radinger, a German citizen, is an analyst with the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills and has been working with the OECD School Resources Review since February 2015. During this time, he has co-authored the project's first thematic report on *The Funding of School Education: Connecting Resources and Learning* (2017) and the country review reports for Austria, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Uruguay. Previously, Thomas contributed to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes and the development of the *Education GPS*, an online platform to disseminate OECD data and research to a broader public. Thomas earned his B.A. in History from University College London (UCL) and an M.Phil. in Education from the University of Cambridge. He co-ordinated the School Resources Review of Colombia and acted as Rapporteur for the team.

Juan Pablo Valenzuela, from Chile, is associate researcher of the Center for Advanced Research in Education (CIAE) and the Economics Department, both at the University of Chile. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. His main research areas are economics of education and social inequality. He has

published extensively about quality and equity in Chilean education. Some of his most recent co-authored publications include “Evaluation and accountability in large-scale educational system in Chile and its effects on student’s performance in urban schools” in the *2nd International Handbook of Urban Education* (2017), and “Structural reform and equity in Chilean schools” in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education* (2017). His last book, *Lo aprendí en la escuela: ¿Cómo se logran procesos de mejoramiento escolar?*, was published in 2014.

Annex C. Visit programme

The review visit to Colombia was designed by the OECD in collaboration with the Colombian national co-ordinator. It was also informed by preliminary meetings between the OECD Secretariat and different national authorities and stakeholders in October 2017. These preliminary meetings involved conversations with the Ministry of National Education (MEN), the National Planning Department (DNP), the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (MinHacienda), the Territorial Renewal Agency (ART), the Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (ICFES), the National Learning Service (SENA), the Federation of Colombian Municipalities (FCM), the Office of the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General (PGN), the National Work and Concertation Commission on Education for the Indigenous People (CONTCEPI), Red PaPaz (the country's largest parent organisation), and the National Association of Secondary Students (ANDES). The planning of the main visit was also informed by conversations with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank. Some meetings during the main review visit could not be held as planned, such as with the Federation of Colombian Workers in Education (FECODE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR).

Tuesday, 5 December 2017, Bogotá, DC	
09:00 – 09:30	National co-ordinators
09:30 – 10:00	Adviser to the Minister of National Education
10:00 – 11:15	Leadership of the Vice-Ministry for Pre-school, Basic and Upper Secondary Education (MEN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate for Coverage and Equity • Directorate for Quality in Pre-school and School Education • Directorate for Early Childhood
11:15 – 12:15	Advisory Office for Planning and Finance (OAPF) (MEN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group for data and statistics • Group for allocation of resources
12:15 – 13:00	Team for development of Special Rural Education Plan (PEER) (MEN)
14:00 – 15:00	Sub-directorate for Access and Sub-directorate for Permanence (Directorate for Coverage and Equity, MEN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-Day Schooling (<i>Jornada Única</i>) • Educational Infrastructure Fund (FFIE) • School Meal Programme (PAE) • Vulnerable Populations
15:00 – 16:15	Sub-directorate for Quality Frameworks and Evaluation and Sub-directorate for Strengthening Proficiencies (Directorate for Quality in Pre-school and School Education, MEN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricular guidelines • Flexible School Models (MEF) • Pre-service and In-service teacher education • Let's All Learn Programme (PTA)
16:30 – 17:30	Colombian Institute for Educational Evaluation (ICFES)

Wednesday, 6 December 2017, Bogotá, DC	
08:30 – 11:00	School visit 1: <i>Colegio Rafael Bernal Jiménez</i>, Bogotá, DC (Urban School, Two Sites, Academic programme) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership • Teachers
11:30 – 12:15	Department of Social Prosperity (DPS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional Cash Transfers (<i>Más Familias en Acción</i>)
14:15 – 15:30	Meeting about General System of Transfers (<i>Sistema General de Participaciones, SGP</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group for Territorial Finance, National Planning Department (DNP) • Sub-directorate for Investment for Social Development and the General Administration of the State, National Planning Department (DNP) • Directorate of Fiscal Support to the Territorial Entities, Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (MinHacienda) • Directorate for Strengthening Territorial Management of the Ministry of National Education (MEN)
15:30 – 16:15	Meeting about General System of Royalties (<i>Sistema General de Regalías, SGR</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate for Oversight of Royalties, National Planning Department (DNP)
16:15 – 17:00	Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR)
17:00 – 17:45	Meeting 1: Territorial Renewal Agency (ART) Meeting 2: Colombian Foundation of Ex Combatants and Promoters of Peace (FUCE PAZ)
Thursday, 7 December 2017, Armenia and Calarcá, Quindío	
08:00 – 10:00	School visit 2: <i>Colegio Baudilio Montoya</i>, Calarcá (Rural School, 6 Sites, Academic/Technical programmes with specialisation in agriculture) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership • Teachers • Students • Parents, incl. <i>Junta de Acción Comunal</i>
10:20 – 13:00	School visit 3: <i>Colegio Santa Teresa de Jesús</i>, Armenia (Urban School, 3 Sites, Academic/Technical programmes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership • Teachers • Students • Parents
13:00 – 14:00	Working lunch with Secretary of Education of the certified municipality of Armenia
15:00 – 16:00	Secretary of Education of the department of Quindío
16:00 – 16:45	Sub-Secretary of Education, Recreation and Sports of the non-certified municipality of Calarcá
Saturday, 9 December 2017, Bogotá, DC: First Review Team Meeting	
Sunday, 10 December 2017, Quibdó: Second Review Team Meeting	
Monday, 11 December 2017, Quibdó and Tutunendo, Chocó	
08:45 – 12:15	School visit 4: <i>Escuela Normal Superior de Quibdó</i>, Quibdó (Urban School, 6 Sites, Academic/Technical programmes with specialisation in pedagogy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership • Teachers • Students • Parents
13:00 – 16:30	School visit 5: <i>Institución Educativa Técnico Agropecuaria Cristo Rey</i>, Tutunendo (Rural School, 6 Sites, Technical programme with specialisation in agriculture) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leadership • Teachers • Students • Parents, incl. <i>Junta de Acción Comunal, Consejo Comunitario</i> and <i>Lider Comunitario</i>

Tuesday, 12 December 2017, Quibdó, Chocó	
09:30 – 11:30	Secretary of Education of the certified municipality of Quibdó
14:00 – 16:30	Secretary of Education of the department of Chocó (under administration by the MEN)
16:30 – 17:15	Representatives of the church (education provision for indigenous peoples)
Wednesday, 13 December 2017, Bogotá, DC	
08:30 – 09:15	Meeting 1: Delegated Prosecutor for Youth and Childhood, Office of the Ombudsman and Prosecutor General (PGN) Meeting 2: Sub-directorate for Education, National Planning Department (DNP)
09:15 – 10:00	Federation of Colombian Municipalities (FCM) , incl. representative of certified municipality of Soacha
10:00 – 10:45	National Federation of Departments (FND)
10:45 – 11:45	Secretary of Education of the capital district of Bogotá Secretary of Education of the department of Cundinamarca
11:45 – 12:45	Meeting 1: National Association of Secondary Students (ANDES) Meeting 2: Parent organisation (Red PaPaz)
12:45 – 14:00	Working lunch with representatives of international co-operation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Council • <i>Corpoeducación</i> • Embassy of Canada • Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI)
14:00 – 15:30	Research Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juan Carlos Chalá, <i>Fundación Escuela Nueva</i> • María Figueroa, <i>Universidad Externado</i> • Sandra García, <i>Universidad de los Andes</i> • Luisa Pizano, <i>Alianza Educativa</i> • Javier Serrano, Expert in rural education
15:30 – 16:15	Preliminary Impressions of the Review Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National co-ordinators • Representatives of technical areas of the Ministry of National Education
16:15 – 17:00	Foundations and non-government organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fundación Compartir</i> • <i>Fundación Empresarios por la Educación</i> • <i>Fundación Fé y Alegría</i> • <i>Fundación Luker</i>

Glossary of terms

<i>Canasta educativa</i>	The technical criteria (“educational basket”) which define the resources and components required to provide education. It includes, amongst others, human resources, pedagogical materials, transport and meals, and is made up of a basic and a complementary basket.
<i>Comité Territorial de Formación Docente (CTFD)</i>	Bodies established in territories to support the Secretaries of Education of the certified territorial entities in the development, monitoring and evaluation of their territorial teacher education plan.
<i>Contracted private provision of education</i>	In case of limited capacity in terms of staff or infrastructure or some other limitation, certified territorial entities can provide education through various forms of partnerships with private providers regulated by Decree 1851 of 2015.
<i>Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje (DBA)</i>	Building on previous curricular guidelines and standards, the Basic Learning Rights define the learning framework for each level and subject area and provide information about the competencies that children should acquire.
<i>Evaluación de Carácter Diagnóstico Formativo (ECDF)</i>	Voluntary competency assessment for teachers of the new teacher statute adopted in 2002 for promotion to a higher grade or step in the salary scale.
<i>Día de la Excelencia Educativa (Día E)</i>	A day in the school calendar dedicated to analysing school performance and quality and to initiating an improvement plan.
<i>Entidades Territoriales Certificadas (ETC)</i>	Refers to sub-national entities (departmental, district, and municipal) that are certified to provide education within their territory through their Secretary of Education. Municipalities that are not certified are referred to as “non-certified municipalities”; provision in these municipalities is managed by departments.
<i>Escuela Normal Superior (ENS)</i>	Higher teaching schools offering all levels of compulsory education, with a specialisation in pedagogy in secondary education, as well as initial teacher education for pre-primary and primary education through a complementary programme.
<i>Estrategia De Cero a Siempre</i>	Colombia’s multi-sectoral policy for comprehensive early childhood development, encompassing health, nutrition, protection and early childhood education in different forms of provision.
<i>Etnoeducación</i>	Policy for the provision of education to ethnic minorities with the purpose of respecting and maintaining ethnic language, culture and values, regulated by Decree 804 of 1995.
<i>Fondo de Servicios Educativos (FSE)</i>	Schools’ financial accounts receiving resources from the General System of Transfers. The use of funds has to be approved by the school’s directive council, be related with the school’s educational project, and be in line with regulations.
<i>Formato Único Territorial (FUT)</i>	The Single Territorial Format consolidates financial, economic and social information of the territorial entities at the central level for the purpose of monitoring, evaluation and control.
<i>Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa (ISCE)</i>	A multidimensional index of school performance. The index is calculated individually for each level of education, takes into account four components and ranges from 1 to 10. It is used to measure the performance of schools, certified territorial entities, and the system as a whole.
<i>Jornada Única</i>	Refers to a full school day compared to traditional double-shift schooling (<i>doble jornada</i>) and the programme to implement a longer school day in public education.
<i>Juntas de Educación (JUNE, JUDE, JUME)</i>	The National Education Board (JUNE) should act as an advisory body to the ministry of education, while the departmental, district and municipal education boards (JUDE and JUME) should advise, monitor and approve policies and curricular frameworks. The different boards have stopped functioning, but there are plans to re-establish them.
<i>Mallas de Aprendizaje</i>	Pedagogical and didactic tools to help teachers implement the Basic Learning Rights (DBA).
<i>Modelos Educativos Flexibles (MEF)</i>	Pedagogical models designed to address different student needs, from rural and adult education to peace education, among others, by adapting curricula and pedagogy to the context in which they are implemented.

<i>Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (PDET)</i>	An important element within the framework of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC. These Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach focus efforts within the framework of a comprehensive rural reform programme on the zones most affected by the conflict and poverty.
<i>Plan Especial de Educación Rural (PEER)</i>	The peace agreement between the government and the FARC entails the development of national plans to improve public services and infrastructure in rural areas as part of a comprehensive rural reform programme. For education, this includes actions in the form of a Special Rural Education Plan.
<i>Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND)</i>	Designed at the national level and approved by Congress, the National Development Plan guides budget and policy decisions and provides a basis for evaluating the achievement of set goals and objectives. Territorial development plans are developed by departments and municipalities.
<i>Proyecto Educativo Institucional (PEI)</i>	The school's educational project, establishing the school goals and objectives, the human and material resources required to achieve those goals, the pedagogical strategy and study plan, the school community handbook and the school's governing bodies. Required for all schools to function.
<i>Programa de Alimentación Escolar (PAE)</i>	The School Meal Programme provides a food supplement to children and adolescents throughout the country to provide them with macro- and micronutrients, and to contribute to retaining them in school education.
<i>Programa de Educación Rural (PER)</i>	A prominent initiative to improve education in rural areas, involving a first (2001-06, PER I) and a second phase (2008-15, PER II) and funded through World Bank loans.
<i>Programa Todos a Aprender (PTA)</i>	A multidimensional programme designed and implemented by the ministry of education to improve student learning in language and mathematic. Targets schools with low performance through a cascade teacher training model.
<i>Pruebas Saber</i>	Standardised assessment implemented by the educational evaluation institute (ICFES). Assessments are administered periodically in Years 3, 5 and 9 for a sample of students. The examination in Year 11 carries high stakes for individual students and determines access to tertiary education.
<i>Plan Territorial de Formación Docente (PTFD)</i>	Strategy of certified territorial entities and their Secretaries of Education for teachers' professional development.
Rural Mission	A strategy for rural development, developed by the National Planning Department, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, targeting economic, social and environmental dimensions.
School cluster	Describes the organisation of public schools into a main school site typically offering all levels of education, including higher levels, and a number of smaller sites offering only some levels. The main site is referred to as educational institution and the other sites as educational centres.
<i>Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio (SEIP)</i>	A process to provide ethnic minorities with greater autonomy through the creation of their own intercultural education systems. Among these, the Individual Indigenous Educational System (SEIP) is the most advanced.
<i>Ser Pilo Paga</i>	A scholarship programme for tertiary education for the best students from the most disadvantaged households.
<i>Sistema General de Participaciones (SGP)</i>	System for sharing revenues between the central government and sub-national governments. The transfers include resources destined to finance the provision of school education.
<i>Sistema General de Regalías (SGR)</i>	System for sharing royalties from the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, especially oil, between sub-national entities.
<i>Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal para Adolescentes (SRPA)</i>	System that governs the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed by adolescents 14 to 18 years of age. Provides the framework for the provision of education for youth in conflict with the law, regulated by Decree 2383 of 2015.
SISBEN	An information system designed to target social protection to families in need.
Teacher Statutes 1278 and 2277	Statute 2277 provides the employment framework for all public school teachers recruited until 2002; Statute 1278 provides the employment framework for all public school teachers recruited since 2002. The main changes relate to entry requirements, recruitment, salaries and evaluation. Educators of ethnic minorities are employed under Decree 804.

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