

**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE**

Report No.: PIDA5296

Project Name	Improving Upper Secondary and Transition to Tertiary Education Project (P145353)
Region	LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
Country	Colombia
Sector(s)	Secondary education (90%), Tertiary education (10%)
Theme(s)	Improving labor markets (10%), Education for the knowledge economy (90%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P145353
Borrower(s)	Ministry of Education
Implementing Agency	Ministry of Education
Environmental Category	C-Not Required
Date PID Prepared/Updated	26-Jun-2014
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Estimated Date of Board Approval	24-Sep-2014
Decision	

I. Project Context

Country Context

Colombia is one of the five largest economies in Latin America, home to a large and stable domestic market and a rich natural resources endowment. GDP growth reached 4% in 2013, similar to 2012. Despite strong macroeconomic performance, economic development remains unequally distributed consistent with the country's geographic diversity. The central region surrounding Bogotá is responsible for 73% of output with per capita income levels double or triple most other regions, the poorest being those closest to the Amazon rainforest and the Pacific coast. While poverty has gone down markedly in the past few years (42% in 2008 vs. 30.6% in 2013), income inequality remains high. The Gini index for 2013 was 0.53, one of the highest in the region.

In December 2010, the Santos administration launched the "Prosperity for All" National Development Plan, aiming to foster inclusive economic growth by prioritizing three objectives: promoting employment, decreasing poverty and improving security. Human capital development plays a key role within the government strategy, especially with regards to two of the three strategic areas defined: sustainable growth and competitiveness and equality of opportunities for social prosperity. To further raise human capital development and spur economic growth, Colombia must

continue to develop the education system at all levels, improving the quality of the programs and institutions and expanding access and coverage for all.

Sectoral and institutional Context

Education is considered a fundamental right (derecho fundamental) by the Constitution but it is only compulsory through the 9th grade. Upper secondary school – grades 10 and 11 – is not mandatory; the coverage rates in 2013 were 78.3 percent (gross) and 41.3 percent (net). The variance across regions is very large, with urban areas showing gross coverage rates above 80 percent while the rate in rural areas is 54.6 percent. One of the key challenges is the large number of students who drop out during the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education. In 2012, 24 percent of these students (420,400 students) did not attend upper secondary school. Finally, whereas the OECD and many LAC countries offer 12 years of school education, Colombia only offers 11 years, resulting in high school graduates as young as 16 years old, with one year less of school education than their regional peers.

Colombia's upper secondary level is perceived as lacking value and relevance for students. After graduating from lower secondary, at age 14, students must choose between an academic and a technical program. In 2013, close to 70% of students followed the academic track, while 30% chose the technical track. The outcomes for both tracks are unsatisfactory: students are taught knowledge and skills that are either largely disconnected from the labor market or insufficient for pursuing tertiary education. For those pursuing the academic track, the existing upper secondary curriculum, standards and guidelines are underutilized in schools. Instead, the traditional approach, fragmented and based on memorization, still predominates. Students pursuing the technical track receive training for jobs that are often obsolete. Of the students in the technical track, 80% are enrolled in programs taught by SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje or National Learning Service), a public institution overseen by the Ministry of Labor whose main focus is professional training, which offers vocational programs at pre-tertiary and tertiary levels. These programs tend to have high student dropout rates. The remaining 20% of students are taught by regular upper secondary teachers lacking the skills and knowledge to impart a technical curriculum. The mandatory community social service (Servicio Social Obligatorio) that all students must take part in is not aligned with the upper secondary curriculum and even less with the social problems in the school areas.

Additionally, socioeconomic factors are an important constraint for upper secondary enrollment and graduation. Data from the 2011 Quality of Life Survey shows that poor students complete, on average, 7.7 years of education. Middle class students, on the other hand, complete 11 years, almost 43% more. Recent research (Angulo and Gómez 2013, MEN and others) suggests that other key reasons for Colombian students to not enroll in secondary education are: (i) the need to find a job to supplement family income, and (ii) lack of funds or high cost of education. Empirical evidence from the region suggests that conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and other non-economic incentives could increase access and completion. An IDB study (Aguilar and Siza 2010) found an increase in secondary enrollment and graduation as a result of the Familias en Acción program, a CCT targeting socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. However, more needs to be done to increase coverage and improve cost-effectiveness.

Teachers in Colombia lack the training to fully utilize national standards and curricula, and improve student outcomes. A 2014 report by the Compartir Foundation found that in high performing

Colombian schools 56.3% of teachers used the national standards and guidelines to structure their classes, whereas this number dropped to just 31.9% for low-performing schools. This is partly due to the lack of opportunities for professional training. Colombia does not have a national in-service training program, and regional efforts are haphazard and uncoordinated. After graduating with education degrees and entering the teaching career, educators are often left to their own devices.

As a result, opportunities from successful transition from upper-secondary to tertiary education are highly unequal. Although tertiary level gross coverage rate in 2013 was in line with similar income countries (45.5 percent) those students from low-income face severe difficulties that force most of them to drop out, mainly during the first 2 semesters of studies. The main reason is due to an inadequate acquisition of fundamental skills that would allow for success in post-secondary school and to a lack of articulation between upper secondary and tertiary education that makes the transition intellectually and socially difficult for students. Secondly, without a solid secondary education base, graduates do not have access to scholarships, student loans, or competitive skills to enter high quality institutions. Moreover, students do not receive adequate career guidance while in secondary school that would give them the tools to make informed decisions about their post-secondary education strategy. Finally, without career orientation, and lagging behind in basic competences, students often choose poor-quality institutions and programs because of their low entry requirements.

The governance, capacity and resources of the education system are imbalanced across regions. According to Colombian law, the National Ministry of Education (MEN) is in charge of defining the general policy guidelines, curricula and standards for the education system. Since 2001 the provision of the service has been decentralized and is the responsibility of the 94 certified territorial sub-national authorities. While MEN can propose general guidelines, curricula and standards, it does not have the power to impose them on the territorial entities. The way to ensure compliance is by aligning the national learning assessment tests (SABER) with the MEN's core standards, taken by all upper secondary graduates in all departments. In terms of financing, the national government finances recurrent expenditures (mostly salaries, but also compensation to schools implementing a new law that guarantees free tuition to students at all education levels, and investments to improve quality education) through a per capita transfer to local governments (Sistema General de Participación -SGP). Territorial entities are responsible for financing capital expenditures. This devolution of power, while allows tailoring of education to regional and local needs, has resulted in a highly unequal playing field, in which a few sub-national entities have strong capacity, ample resources and relatively sound policies and many others, notably the poorer territorial entities, are unable to successfully administer the system and maintain minimum standards. There is no school accreditation system, thus limiting the ability to identify well-performing schools and provide support to poorly performing schools. Additionally, school management remains sub-par, with most schools having boards with weak capacity and lacking guidelines and structures for quality improvement, good school management practices, and accountability.

The Government recently developed an Upper Secondary Education Modernization Strategy. The Strategy encompasses and further develops the vision and goals outlined in the National Decennial Education Plan (PNDE), the "Colombia Vision: 2019", and the National Development Plan (PND 2010). The Strategy's objective is to increase opportunities for all young people, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural background, to complete upper secondary school with the core skills and competences required to succeed in tertiary education and lifelong learning, and participate in the labor market, as a way of increasing the competitiveness of the economy and building social

cohesion and peace. In order to achieve this, the strategy includes plans to: (i) improve the pertinence of upper secondary education by transforming its structure, pedagogical strategy and assessments; (ii) increase access to, retention in and completion of upper secondary school through support programs, (iii) strengthen decentralization through regional institution capacity building.

The strategy would entail the revision of the current system, based on early tracking and disconnected academic and technical programs, to a new structure focusing on competences. Evidence from Poland's education reform suggests that delaying tracking could improve both equity and student outcomes, whereas the case of Finland highlights the importance of teaching a strong, core curriculum to all students alike. In both cases, implementing a model based on competences is considered key. The revised upper secondary structure would include: (i) a curriculum based on core competences (language, math, citizenship, social and natural sciences) - today the curriculum is only content-based; (ii) socio-emotional competences (team work, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, autonomy, decision making, among others); and (iii) the development of exploratory areas. These last two are not currently part of the education curriculum in upper secondary schools. It would also include a reformed community social services program that is well connected with the school context, the local community problems, and the opportunity to develop and implement both core and socio-emotional competences. The students' professional counseling and guidance system will be part of the schools' Proyecto Educativo Institucional (Education Institutional Project, or School Improvement Plan - SIP) and will be developed in agreement with the tertiary education institutions and the economic sectors in the regions. A review of technical training at all levels (upper and tertiary education) will be carried out by the Ministry of Education in parallel and consistently with the upper secondary transformation; this includes the possibility that revised technical and/or professional training be offered as part of the exploratory areas. Enhancing teacher-training programs for current and aspiring educators, and a strategy for strengthening the schools in Colombia will be designed and implemented.

The strategy would also include a reform of the teacher training system, a revision of student assessments (SABER 11), and a proposal to extend the number of school years to 12. The revised in-service teacher training system will be based on the successful experience of the Todos a Aprender program (It's Time for Everybody to Learn), and the Rural Education Project. The quality evaluation system (SABER 11) will also be reformed to align them with the new curricular structure and competencies. Additionally, the Government is assessing the technical and financial implications of restructuring the education cycle in the medium term to more closely follow international standards, notably adding one year to the cycle (from 11 to 12 years) and expanding the length of the school day.

Lately, MEN has been carrying out an extensive consultation process on the proposed strategy, which has included 94 regional discussion forums, one for each certified territorial entity. In October 2013, the Minister of Education presented the results of this consultation in a national forum, with the intention of reaching a final consensus on the strategy. By August 2014, MEN expects to have the final strategy proposal and the action plan to start its implementation.

By supporting MEN, this Project would respond to a demand from the Government to assist in the improvement of quality, access, graduation and equity of its upper secondary and transition to tertiary education system. This Project would provide continuity to previous Bank support. The Bank has been supporting MEN since 2000, first through Rural Education APL I (P05078) and

since 2009 through Rural Education APL II (P082908) and Antioquia Upper Secondary Education Project (P052608). Moreover, several knowledge activities on basic education have been carried out since 2008, such as, among others, Education Quality Programmatic Advisory Knowledge Services II (P106634) and Enhancing Governance, Transparency and Accountability in Education (P125541).

II. Proposed Development Objectives

The Project Development Objective is to support the Government in designing and implementing an updated upper secondary education structure in order to increase enrollment and graduation in eligible upper secondary schools, and to increase the number of graduates from these schools that enter tertiary education.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Upper secondary structure design

Comments (optional)

Component Name

Upper secondary structure implementation

Comments (optional)

Component Name

Capacity building, monitoring, and evaluation.

Comments (optional)

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	135.00	Total Bank Financing:	100.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
Borrower			35.00
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development			100.00
Total			135.00

V. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

MEN would be the responsible agency. Institutional arrangements have been designed to promote mechanisms that facilitate implementation, effective accountability, sufficient technical supervision, and adequate monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, institutional arrangements aim at leveraging existing structures within the national and subnational government entities responsible for education, and to include upper secondary schools and tertiary education institutions. While implementation arrangements require a certain degree of complexity, the Project would count on a

Project Technical Team (PTT) within the International Projects Unit (IPU) at MEN responsible for Project management, and an Operational Manual (OM) detailing Project implementation arrangements.

The Project institutional structure would be organized as follows: (i) a Project Steering Committee (PSC) would be the highest decision-making body, providing the technical guidelines and overall monitoring and evaluation; (ii) a Project Implementation Team (PIT) within the International Projects Unit (IPU) at MEN, responsible for Project general management, coordination, supervision, monitoring and evaluation; (iii) FINDETER, under the IPU, responsible for fiduciary and contracting processes required under component 2; (iv) the Participant Departmental Departments (26 departments, 10 of them with customized intervention for ethnic groups), responsible for the development and implementation of FAs/PDPs (component 2) ; (v) the Department Implementation Teams (DITs) within the Departmental Secretariats of Education (DSE), responsible for the implementation of PDPs (component 2) in coordination with PITs, FINDETER, upper secondary schools) and Tertiary Education Institutions; (vi) Upper Secondary Schools responsible to implement their corresponded activities under Component 2: school strengthening plans, SIPs, Access and Retention Plans; (vii) Tertiary Education Institutions: responsible to implement their corresponded activities under Component 2; (viii) Department Steering Committee (DSC). Follow up implementation progress, coordinate actions, and solve any problems that may hinder the achievement of FAs / PDPs in the framework of Component 2.

For the implementation of components 1 and 3, MEN will enter into framework cooperation agreements with selected Colombian universities with demonstrated expertise in specialized education areas. The participating universities will provide inter alia technical assistance in design of curricula, educational materials, teaching training strategies, school management based on TEI experience, implementation of a strategy for strengthening of schools centers. It would also support capacity building and Project evaluation.

For the implementation of component 2, FINDETER would carry out financial and administrative management duties in participating Departments. The execution of PDPs under component 2 would be shared: (i) the fiduciary and contract management would be carried out by FINDETER in coordination with IPU, PIT and DITs (ii) the technical execution responsibility would be decentralized and managed by the DITs, pursuant to the criteria and guidelines set in the FAs and the Operational Manual. In this framework, MEN, through the IPU, PIT, and the corresponding units would conduct the training for DITs, provide technical assistance in the monitoring and evaluation, and submit biannual progress reports on the execution of the Project to the Bank.

Results Monitoring and Evaluation

MEN and each of the participating departments would be responsible for monitoring and evaluation, with input from each of the units implementing the Project. MEN, through IPU, would be responsible for providing technical and financial reports to the Bank based on the data collected at the municipal and school levels. The monitoring system would be implemented in each participating department and its schools, with the full participation of principals and teachers.

The monitoring and evaluation system would rely mainly on existing MEN data sources. In addition, key data required to monitor implementation, including indicators under Component 2, will be collected from departments. The monitoring and evaluation system will assess if the

financed interventions are: (i) implemented as expected (process monitoring); (ii) achieving the desired results (internal validity); and (iii) if the Project interventions can be expanded or replicated at other levels in the education system (external validity). In particular, at least two impact evaluations are planned. First, a regression discontinuity approach would analyze key outcomes in selected departments by comparing eligible with not eligible schools, selected with objective criteria. A second evaluation will analyze the impact of training on teachers practices, based on classrooms observations.

Sustainability

Project sustainability relies on five key factors: (i) MEN's proven institutional capacity; (ii) implementation within the existing MEN and departmental structures, procedures, and responsibilities; (iii) ongoing decentralized responsibilities prescribed in Law 715; (iv) widespread consensus among actors involved on the activities to be implemented, based on consultations with departments, municipalities, and other stakeholders (parents, unions, economic sectors, private schools, ethnic groups and NGOs); and (v) addressing lessons learned during implementation of Phase I and II of the Rural Education Project as well as the Antioquia Upper Secondary Education Project.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01		x
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x
Pest Management OP 4.09		x
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		x
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	x	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		x
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x

Comments (optional)

VII. Contact point

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