

PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID) CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC2614

Project Name	Improving Access & Quality of Upper Secondary Education (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-Nov-2013
Date PID Approved/ Disclosed	19-Nov-2013, 26-Nov-2013
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	
Estimated Date of Board Approval	10-Jul-2014
Concept Review Decision	Track II - The review did authorize the preparation to continue

I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Colombia is the fourth largest economy in Latin America, home to a large and stable domestic market and a rich natural resources endowment. GDP growth is expected to reach 4.1 percent in 2013, compared to 4.0 percent in 2012. However, despite its strong macroeconomic performance, economic development in Colombia remains unequally distributed, in a pattern that mirrors the country's geographic diversity. The central region surrounding Bogotá is responsible for 73% of total output and enjoys per capita income levels that double or triple those of most other regions, the poorest being those closest to the Pacific and the southern parts of the country.

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

Colombia's upper secondary level is perceived as lacking value and relevance for students, and faces critical challenges in terms of access, equity and quality. 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 2011 were 75.5 percent (gross) and 44.8 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 basic secondary to upper secondary education. In 2008 there were approximately 650,000 students in the 9th grade, while the number of students in 10th grade in 2009 was 10 percent lower. In 2011, 24 percent of students aged 15 and 16 (432,302 students) did not attend secondary school. Instead, approximately 25 percent of them were attending technical training programs offered by the National Training System (SENA). Retention for students already in upper secondary school is yet another challenge, with 4.5 percent of students in grades 10 and 11 dropping out or failing their grade. Finally, and no less important, whereas the OECD and many LAC countries offer 12 years of school education, Colombia only offer 11 years, resulting in high school graduates who are as young as 16 years old, with one year less of school education than their regional peers.

Transition from upper-secondary to tertiary education is very low. Tertiary level gross coverage rate in 2011 was 43 percent. These trends are partly 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. Government studies provide additional evidence of at least three reasons for low rates of transition to higher education. First, 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. Second, without career orientation, students tend to choose among a few well-known institutions rather than taking advantage of lesser-known but, perhaps, more accessible institutions and programs. Third, without the solid secondary education base, they do not have access to scholarships, student loans, or competitive skills to enter high quality institutions.

Tertiary school dropout rates are close to 45 percent per cohort. Even when students from poor families gain entry to a higher education institution, they face severe difficulties that often lead to dropout. First, they are faced with an academic environment with different rules, norms and cultures than what they are accustomed to managing. Second, they do not have the academic foundation to meet the rigor of a tertiary education. Among graduates from public schools who took the national learning assessment tests (SABER 11) in 2011 – a performance exam given to students at the end of secondary school that is used for entry to higher education institution – only 2.6 percent were in the two top levels for math and only 0.7 percent were in the top two levels for language. Third, the financial costs of higher education, both tuition and other costs associated with studying in a distant city, can be prohibitive.

The quality and relevance of upper secondary education in Colombia are low. At age 14, students

must choose between an academic and a technical program, a model in which students are either taught knowledge and skills that are largely disconnected from the labor market or receive technical training for jobs that are often obsolete. For those choosing the technical option, general cognitive skills are not taught as part of the curriculum, and even less so for the 80 percent of students who pursue this track via SENA. The other 20 percent receive technical training from upper secondary teachers already on staff. For those pursuing the academic track, the existing upper secondary model (standards, curriculum guidelines and competences) is underutilized in the teaching - learning process. Instead, the traditional approach, fragmented and based on memorization, still predominates. Neither track promotes the development of skills that are the hallmarks of an effective upper secondary education, such as solid generic cognitive competences, critical thinking, interpersonal social-skills, and practical experimentation.

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 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 these norms on the territorial entities. The only way to ensure their compliance is to align SABER with the MEN's norms. 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 allowing for a 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 lacking incentive structures for quality improvement, good school management practices and accountability.

MEN and DNP recently developed an Upper Secondary Education Modernization Strategy. The Strategy implements the general guidelines outlined in the Education National Development Plan (PNDE), The Colombia Vision: 2019 document, 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 skills, competences and values required to continue on to tertiary education, 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 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. With regards to the transformation of the structure, it would mean moving away from the current model (disconnected academic and technical programs) to a new model focusing on three fundamental competences: generic (socio-emotional), academic (language, math, and social and natural sciences) and exploratory (professional areas). Additional specific technical and/or vocational training, would be provided outside of upper secondary school hours, namely as after school/weekend programs; enhancing teacher-training programs for current

and aspiring educators. The quality assurance and evaluation systems (SABER 11) will also be reformed to align them with the new curricular model 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. Currently, MEN is carrying out an extensive consultation process on the proposed strategy, which includes 94 discussion forums, one for each certified territorial entity. In October 2013, President Santos and the Minister of Education will present the results of this consultation in a national forum, with the intention of reaching a final consensus on the strategy. By the end of 2013, MEN expect to have the final strategy proposal and the action plan to start its implementation.

Relationship to CAS

The World Bank Group's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for 2012-16 (Report No. 60620-CO) presented to the Board on June 12, 2011 builds on the lessons of the previous CPS and is focused on three themes that are closely aligned with the Government's National Development Plan and reflect areas of sustained Bank engagement: (a) expanding opportunities for social prosperity; (b) sustainable growth with enhanced climate change resilience; and (c) inclusive growth with enhanced productivity. The proposed Project would contribute to results in the first area, and support the stated CPS objectives of equalizing access across income groups and regions, improving performance and increasing coverage for all levels of education.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)

The Project Development Objective is to support the Government in designing and implementing a new upper secondary education model based on modern competencies, increasing upper secondary enrollment and graduation, and promoting the transition to tertiary education in an equitable way, while strengthening the capacity of the targeted territorial entities and their respective upper secondary schools.

Key Results (From PCN)

Progress towards meeting these development objectives would be measured by a number of process, output and impact indicators, which would be further identified during Project preparation. Expected impact indicators are shown below:

1. Enrollment and Equity: Reduce gaps in enrollment and graduation rates between the targeted territorial entities and the wealthiest departments (tbd).
2. Transition: Increase the transition rate from upper secondary to tertiary education for targeted territorial entities.
3. New upper secondary model: Adopt a new upper secondary model based on three groups of competences (generic, academic and exploratory), and revise the learning achievement test (SABER 11) to test for the new competences.
4. Institutional capacity: Implement subnational plans for the improvement of upper secondary education and transition to tertiary education in 80% of targeted territorial entities.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

The total Project amount is US\$120 million, of which US\$100 million would be financed by the

Bank and US\$20 million by the Government. The Project would be designed using a results-based approach with disbursements linked to agreed indicators. The Project would be implemented at both the national and subnational level. The MEN would be responsible for national level guidelines, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation processes. The subnational territorial entities would be responsible for adapting national guidelines to the regional context and implementing the region-specific plans. Of the 94 certified territorial entities, a sub-set would be included in Project implementation. They would be selected based on educational needs, institutional capacity and political will. The Project would aim for a mix of low and middle developed territorial entities to provide lessons for an eventual roll-out of the model. The Project would achieve its development objective through implementation of three components:

Component 1. Designing a new model for upper secondary education, and programs to improve enrolment, retention, and equitable transition to higher education: (Total: US\$7 million, estimated). The objective of this Component is to design, based on the new competences: (i) a new upper secondary model, (ii) improved teaching methods, (iii) a new school evaluation and accreditation system, (iv) a revised learning achievement test (SABER 11), and (v) programs and frameworks for increased retention and a smoother transition from upper secondary to tertiary education.

A. Subcomponent 1.1: New upper secondary model based on fundamental competences: Curriculum for upper secondary that increases relevance and value for students by focusing on three fundamental competence groups: generic, academic and exploratory. Develop improved teacher-training programs for both current and aspiring teachers design a new school accreditation system; and revise the (SABER 11), based on the revised competences.

B. Subcomponent 1.2: Programs for retention and transition: Design mechanisms to ease transition between grades (from 9th to 10th and from 10th to 11th), from upper secondary to tertiary education. It will also fund the implementation of a system to help first-year tertiary education students navigate their new learning environments.

C. Subcomponent 1.3: Public policy building and management: Support for the design of public policies (norms, laws, processes) to implement the Upper Secondary Modernization Strategy and financing of relevant research.

- Key outcomes for this Component would be:
 - i. A revised upper secondary model based on three fundamental competence groups: generic, academic and exploratory.
 - ii. An updated learning achievement test (SABER 11) based on revised competences.
 - iii. Improved teacher-training programs for both current and aspiring teachers, based on revised model and competences.
 - iv. A new school accreditation system.
 - v. New mechanisms for upper secondary retention and transition from secondary to tertiary education.

Component 2: Implementing a new model for upper secondary education, and programs to improve enrollment, retention, and equitable transition to higher education. (Total: US\$86 million, estimated). Component 2 will promote the design and implementation, through Subsidiary Agreements (SAs), of results-based programs to increase upper secondary enrolment and graduation, and improve transition to higher education in targeted territorial entities.

- Key outcomes for this Component would be:

- Territorial entities have implemented the new upper secondary model based on fundamental competences.
- Territorial entities have implemented the new incentive program for retention and transition to tertiary education.
- Territorial entities have implemented student mentoring models.

Component 3. Strengthening institutional capacity, management, monitoring and evaluation strategy of the Project (Total: 7 million): The objectives of this Component are: (i) to strengthen the institutional capacity of targeted subnational entities and schools to improve education outcomes; (ii) to plan and implement the Project, together with overall progress monitoring; and (iii) to design and develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the Project.

A. Subcomponent 3.1: Strengthening subnational territorial entities, school management and tertiary education institutions: Training programs and education policy planning to enhance the capacity of regional secretariats of education, school management practices, and tertiary education capacity.

B. Subcomponent 3.2: Project management, monitoring and impact evaluation. Support for overall Project coordination, supervision, and evaluation by: (i) strengthening the capacity of MEN to provide technical assistance to the territorial entities supporting the achievement of Project DLIs; (ii) strengthening the capacity of the Project Coordination Team to comply with its responsibilities for managing the Project; (iii) carrying out project-related studies and audits; and (iv) designing and implementing a Project-related monitoring and evaluation plan.

- Key outcomes for this Component would be:

- Territorial entities have implemented their institutional capacity strengthening plans.
- An impact evaluation has been designed and carried out.

Components 1 and 2 would be implemented through disbursement linked to measurable results, referred to as Disbursement-linked Indicators (DLIs). A set of DLIs will be established for these Components of the Project, which will be related to specific disbursement amounts. Once DLIs target are met, disbursements will be made against eligible expenditures (Eligible Expenditure Program, EEP) belonging to the Government's budget, which are those related to Project's activities in terms of purpose and type of expenditure. In principle, comprehensive EEPs have been identified: for Component 1 the budgetary line "Education Quality Improvement Program" and for Component 2, the budgetary line "National Transfers to the Territorial Entities". Components 1 and 3 will be implemented by MEN whereas Component 2 will be largely implemented by the targeted sub-national territorial entities, which would be selected based on their needs and education outcomes and results, with disadvantaged entities being prioritized. Since the completion of some activities of Component 1 will be a necessary pre-requisite to implement Component 2, the specific targets of DLIs for Component 2 will be agreed in the context of the SA at the beginning of year 2 of the Project. Component 3 is largely TA to be managed by the Ministry of Education and would thus follow traditional disbursement methods.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
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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	

V. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	120.00	Total Bank Financing:	100.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
Financing Source			Amount
Borrower			20.00
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development			100.00
Total			120.00

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