




Education for the rural development. A critical analysis of the implementation process of the Escuela Nueva program in Colombia

Educación para el desarrollo rural. Análisis crítico del proceso de implementación del programa Escuela Nueva en Colombia

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35622/j.rie.2020.04.002>

Received 19/05/2020/ Accepted 21/09/2020 Published 05/10/2020

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

KEYWORDS

rural education,
escuela nueva, policy
borrowing, rural
development

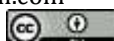
The article exposes the results of a critical analysis of the implementation process of the program Escuela Nueva in Colombia. It proposes a review at the policy borrowing process from an international perspective, as well as a description of the dynamics of implementation within the Colombian context. For such aim, an exhaustive analysis was performed by implementing a qualitative documentary review, using a typological sample selection of sources. The conclusions suggest the need to consider attendance and transition indicators as key elements for decision making regarding the continuity, diversification and improvement of the program, as well as the urgency of unifying the national goals in pursuit of a coordinated implementation of rural programs.

PALABRAS CLAVE

educación rural,
escuela nueva,
transferencia de
políticas, desarrollo
rural

El presente artículo expone los resultados de un análisis crítico de la implementación del programa educativo Escuela Nueva en Colombia. Dicho análisis propone una revisión de la transferencia de políticas desde el ámbito internacional, así como una descripción de las dinámicas de su implementación en el contexto colombiano. Para ello se realizó un análisis exhaustivo de documentación implementando una revisión documental de carácter cualitativo, a través de la selección tipológica de la muestra objeto de estudio. Los resultados sugieren la necesidad de considerar indicadores de asistencia y transición de estudiantes para la toma informada de decisiones sobre la continuidad, diversificación y mejora del programa, así como la necesidad de unificar la visión nacional para la implementación coordinada de programas rurales.

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1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Colombia is a country predominantly rural. By 2015, according to DANE², more than 80% of the national territory was rural (see Figure 1) and was only inhabited by approximately 24% of the population (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2016). This shows a high dispersion of the population that inhabits the rural territory and a high concentration of the population in urban areas. Additionally, out of 100% of people living in rural areas, 44% are categorized to be in multidimensional poverty (ibid.; McEwan & Benveniste, 2001).

The condition of the Colombian rural areas has been shaped by the changes in tariff policies that had place in the 90s and to the economic opening resulted of signing the FTA. That transformed the functioning of the international market by lowering prices at the international level in agricultural products, by reducing the income of agricultural workers, increasing rural unemployment rates and, finally, sharpening the poverty situation in the rural areas. Additionally, armed conflict and drug-trafficking produced high migration rates that were evident in the last National Agricultural Census carried out by DANE in 2014, which showed that in the rural areas 2 million fewer people were living comparing to those registered in 2005 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2001).

Besides being very discouraging for the country in economic terms, the previous facts indicate a food security problem since young people were the main migrants, reflecting a gap in the transfer of lands and crops to the new generations. Therefore, rural education in the country plays a key role to analyze and to promote the economic and social development of Colombia in that it has the potential of contributing to the engagement of the new generations towards their local contexts, to the leverage of rural development and to the development of the national economy.

Taking that into account, and since the program Escuela Nueva (EN) currently defines the rural primary education model promoted by the government at a national level, the objective of this essay is to analyze its implementation process from a historical perspective. For that purpose it will be presented 1) the birth of EN since its inception in Europe, 2) the development of the National Education System in Colombia (bringing up the elements that have led to the transfer of the EN program in Colombia in 1960), 3) ending with the history and the course of its implementation from a critical perspective based on various academic authors, official reports, national data and personal experiences product of a field work conducted in some rural areas of Colombia in 2016.

2. METHOD

The analysis was performed by implementing a qualitative documentary-bibliographic review. The selection of the sample was carried out typologically and conformed by approximately thirty different references characterized as follows:

² Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística Colombiano-*National Administrative Department of Statistics*.



Table 1. Characterization of the Sources

	Books and Handbooks	Academic Articles	Documentaries, Interviews and News	Reports
Government	33%			50%
Escuela Nueva Foundation	17%		83%	
Research Centres and Academic Institutions	33%	100%	17%	
International Organizations	17%			

Source: self-made.

After having selected the references, the analysis process was developed through four steps:

- a. Systematization and Categorization: the bulk of the information was collected and grouped into the following categories of analysis:
 - i. *Historical Evolution of the Colombian Educational System*
 - ii. *International Organizations' role*
 - iii. *History and Development of Escuela Nueva (internationally)*
 - iv. *History and Development of Escuela Nueva in Colombia*
 - v. *Rural Education in Colombia*
 - vi. *General Context of Colombian education*
- b. Summarize: The categories of analysis were delimited by identifying similarities and contradictions between the collected data.
- c. Analysis: Once the similarities and differences between the data were identified, links and trends were found between the information, allowing to build a body of analysis about the implementation process of Escuela Nueva.
- d. Structure: Finally, an argumentative structure was made to present the results of the critical analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. The inception of Escuela Nueva in Europe

The construction of Escuela Nueva -*New School*- has not follow a linear path. It was foremost developed between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century (Narváez, 2006) as an alternative educative proposal against the traditional education system and pedagogies that had been ruling in Europe until the moment. Some studies, like the one addressed by Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia & Corpoeducación (2010), award the basis of its creation to the Spanish philosopher Giner de los Rios (1839-1915) with the implementation of the *Free Teaching Institution* in 1876 in Spain. While some other authors, such as Cuadros (2015),



argue that were due to the ideas and initiatives of the Swedish pedagogue Adolphe Ferrière (1879-1960).

However, both initiatives arose over the basis of a wide variety of academic theories and practical experimentations that were developed since the 17th century and that were conceived as alternative pedagogies. Among those, it is worth mentioning the postulates of John Locke (methodologies for children to be in contact with life), María Montessori (scientific pedagogy and stimulation of spontaneity), Ovide Decroly (learning by doing activities), John Dewey (learning by doing projects), Roger Cousinet (free work in groups), Geory Kerschensteiner (schools for preparing working citizens), Jean Piaget (modern genetic psychology), among others (Narváez, 2006).

Thus, the first Escuela Nueva schools appeared around 1880 in Spain (ibid) as *private* small schools that aimed to provide a personalized educative service to families in search of alternative pedagogies, and the first facilities were located in countryside houses. The initiative was quickly spread among some neighboring countries, such as France, Germany and England, that replicated it during the three following decades. The Escuela Nueva proposal gained so much recognition that in 1899 the International Office of New Schools was created, and later on, in 1925 the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneve was created for establishing the conditions that EN schools should have (ibid).

It is worth noticing that the development of EN occurred in parallel to the development of the first and second World War. In this sense, the pedagogical approaches adopted by the proposal were driven by a more humanistic perception of education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia & Corpoeducación, 2010), trying to recognize the human beings behind the system, and to give them tools to face the economic, demographic and social transformations, as well as the revolution of the rural structures, the shift of patriarchal family in a nuclear one, the fight for achieving freedom, equality and fraternity, and mostly, the desired to reshape the world (Narváez, 2006).

Taking that into account, by 1960 the principles settle by this initiative where:

- to operate opposite to the traditional system of education (Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019)
- to embed pedagogies of Active Schooling: learning by doing rather than to use the memory as the only source for learning (Narváez, 2006; Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019)
- to base the learning experience on individualism and personal interests of students, avoiding having a same and fix curriculum and content for all students (Benitez, 2009)
- to foster reasoning, creativity, autonomy and cooperation (Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019)
- to work in freedom and for freedom (Narváez, 2006)
- and to redefine the role of the teacher, reallocating the power of the learning process to the students (Benitez, 2009; Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019).



3.2. Development of the National Education System in Colombia: Since the conquest until 1960

Understanding the evolution of the Colombian Educative System will be key to comprehend the social, economic and international dynamics in which the Colombian government was immerse at the moment of embedding Escuela Nueva as one of its main National programs for rural education in 1960. For the purpose of such analysis, the history of the Educative System of Colombia before 1960 will be divided in three moments: Colonial period (XXVI century-1818), Independence (1819- 1892) and Settlement (1893-1960).

3.2.1. Colonial Period (XXVI century-1818)

This period evidences a very first association of education with the social elite, the religion and the legitimacy of Europe within the process of “progress” and “development”. The first steps of formal education in the country were addressed under the mandate of the Spanish Royal Crown. At the very beginning schools were established for the purpose of teaching the Spanish language and the catholic religion (OEI, 1993).

However, an important twist occurred during the XVII century, when the economic funds for education coming from the Spanish crown were abolished in 1650 and the formal education came into the hands of the bourgeoisie. After that, numerous Educative Centers and Institutions were created and ruled by Catholic Communities (such as the Jesuitas) and for the high society of Colombia (ibid).

3.2.2. Independence (1819-1892)

This period was characterized by strong governmental efforts to centralize the education in the country. It was firstly shaped by the Santander Reforms (1819-1841) that aimed to strengthen elementary education and teachers training (Cifuentes & Camargo, 2016) to set the official regulations for creating schools in the big cities (1921) (OEI, 1993), and to build prestigious Schools and Universities (Cifuentes & Camargo, 2016).

In 1867 the National Direction of Public Instruction from Colombia received advisory from the German Pedagogical Mission (OEI, 1993). As a result, it was placed the basis for the National Reform of 1886-1892, where the State established the not-compulsory and free elementary education, dividing the instructions in elementary, secondary and professional, and defining the distribution of the National budget allocated to education. By doing so the State gave a new role to departments and local municipalities (Cifuentes & Camargo, 2016), giving them the responsibilities of financing teachers and managing the infrastructure, while the State would define the policies and guidelines that schools would need to follow (OEI, 1993).

These processes make it visible the strong influence that the international, and specially the European advises have had within the governmental decisions and the establishment of national normative. It also shows how the school autonomy was placed at the bottom down of the power chain, mediated by the municipality and departmental management, that in turn depended on guidelines and regulations at the national level, legitimized by international bodies.

3.2.3. Settlement (1893-1960)

This period was defined by introducing the participation of a set of new international bodies that were key in the process of structuring the national educative system. It started with the Plan Zerda that aimed to unify the school system throughout the country (Cifuentes & Camargo, 2016). Thus, the government made a clear distinction between rural and urban elementary school, and technical and traditional secondary education (OEI, 1993). In 1930 elementary education as mandatory was stipulated and by 1941 the first agricultural vocational schools of Colombia were created. In 1947 was launched the Permanent Superior Council of Education whose main function was to be the UNESCO commission in the Country (ibid), and after that the Ministry of National Education was restructured and settled in 1950.

In accordance with the commitment made at the IX General Conference of the United Nations and given the increasement of budget allocated for education, in 1957 a great investment was made to expand the offer of elementary education (Cifuentes & Camargo, 2016). Thus, this decade finished with a coverage of about 40% of the school-age population, of which 66% were located in the big cities (OEI, 1993).

3.3. Escuela Nueva in Colombia: The implementation process

Implementing Escuela Nueva in Colombia was a process that responded to the context previously mentioned. It was a complex and gradual one that has been developed for more than four decades (Psacharopoulos et al., 1996; Usma, 2009).

3.3.1. The 60s: expansion and coverage of Colombian schools

By 1960 Colombia had an annual population growth of 2% and a 7% increase in school enrollment in relation to the previous decade (OEI, 1993). With that in mind, and with the strengthening of the national budget for education, the Government settled a new agenda for education where the main goals were to promote the development of infrastructure of schools and to eradicate illiteracy (ibid.; Havens, 1965). Achieving such goals presupposed a significant expansion in offer and coverage of schools throughout all the country, especially in the rural and marginal areas, for which a plan was needed.

In 1961 the XXIV Geneva International Conference was held in Switzerland, leaving as a result a statement addressed to the Ministers of Education of all the countries around the globe. On it was strongly recommended the “single-teacher” schools as the key for expanding the coverage of education to the rural areas and for reaching the least advantage population (Borreguero, 1961). The advice took Spain as a case of success with the implementation of Escuelas Nuevas in every town with at least 500 inhabitants. Furthermore, it was suggested the jointed participation of UNESCO in the implementation process of such schools (ibid).

This declaration was immediately taken into consideration by the National Government of Colombia, who launched the same year a pilot project of Escuela Nueva in the city of Pamplona, Norte de Santander, in collaboration with UNESCO and ISER (Supreme Institute of Rural Education). Shortly after, about one-hundred new EN schools had been opened in the department



of Norte de Santander, success that encouraged the Government to expand the model to the whole country (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia & Corpoeducación, 2010).

3.3.2. The 70s: Escuela Nueva and the Agrarian Reform

By this time Colombia was facing a period of severe social and economic transformation with the rising and strengthening of the Guerilla groups (illegal armed groups such as ELN and FARC) and the drug trafficking, which lead the Government to prioritize measures to centralize the power in the rural areas, to combat poverty and to promote de rural development. Thus, was launched an Agrarian Reform that for the first-time involved education as a formal component of the efforts for the rural development (Carrero & González, 2017).

Aligned with such purpose, following the advice of the XXIV Geneva International Conference and taking as reference and starting point the pilot held in Norte de Santander, in 1975 some academics and teachers, such as Vicky Colbert, Beryl Levinger and Oscar Mogollón (Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019), started to work in collaboration with the government in the quest of a proposal for implementing the pedagogical model of active education to rural schools based on the specific context of Colombia (Mapeal, 2008; McEwan, 1995).

That search led them to appropriate the principles of the European Escuela Nueva described above, but adding certain changes that was supposed to make it adaptable to the Colombian context and that would lead them to register with copyright on the specific Escuela Nueva model implemented in the country. They claim that their biggest innovation on the model was to put together personal education and cooperative learning. However, I would argue that the modification that reformed the initial model the most was the creation of fixed booklets that responded to the National Curriculum. That took away the responsibility of the teachers to prepare specific material for each class, at the time that unified the content that was taught.

3.3.3. The 80s: Funding and Diffusion of EN model

Due to the periodic changes of presidency and the instability of the funds received from the Government, the previously mentioned authors of the specific Escuela Nueva model for Colombia created a foundation called Fundación Escuela Nueva Volvamos a la Gente (FEN) -*New School Foundation, Coming back to the People*. The State delegated them the implementation and tracking of Escuela Nueva schools throughout the country, and they began operating -to this day- mixing public and private funds.

Thus, FEN was prioritized within the national budget for the rural education, through which was possible to buy the educative booklets and school equipment, to foster teacher training and to improve the infrastructure and furniture of the rural schools (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia & Corpoeducación, 2010). Likewise, with the cooperation of UNICEF, was developed a new version of the learning primers used in the schools of the Pacific region of Colombia (Rivera, 2015).

As a result, the coverage of education increased significantly during this decade, achieving a rate of 90% of enrollment in elementary education of kids between 6 and 11 years old (OEI,



1993). Nevertheless, the levels of drop-out did not improve, so that only 62% of the students finished elementary school in urban areas, and 20% in the rural ones (ibid).

In a national scale, the Government held numerous initiatives of decentralization, reason why the private education began to gain relevance in number as well as recognition for its quality (ibid). According to Alzate & Quinceno, 2014 Cano & Quinceno (2014), this process of decentralization was driven by the goal of making education massive, whereby the Government opened public tendering so the private sector could have part on the national objectives. Also, the National Ministry of Education used funds from a loan with the World Bank in the context of a program called Universalization, as well as funds from DRI (Integrated Rural Development Program) and BIRF (Educational Development Plan for Rural Areas of Small Municipalities and Urban-marginal Schools) (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia & Corpoeducación, 2010).

3.3.4. Since the 90s and so on: the development of EN in Colombia

Authors like Cifuentes & Camargo (2016) argue that with the 90s began an era of educational reformism in Colombia whose magnitude is comparable to that of the 20th century. On one hand, was a period where the armed conflict was intensified escalating to the climax of the internal war, causing massive displacements of the peasant population, and hence, the abandonment of productive activities, or their bonding with the armed groups (Perfetti, 2003). On the other hand, a new Political Constitution was established in 1991 that settled a new set of criteria, distribution of resources, guidelines and regulations for the education in the Country (ibid.; Beltrán et al., 2015; Gómez, 1994; Silva, 2014).

Hence, in the search of funds that support the development of the National Economy, the Colombian Government included the participation of private and/or international organizations within the development of their agenda for the rural education (Hammier, 2017). It is worth mentioning that the singularity of each actor and its different goals for supporting the initiatives in Colombia, defined the way and focus of their intervention (Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2019). According to Ordoñez & Rodríguez (2018), within these actors it is possible to highlight the World Bank, that aimed to eradicate extreme poverty and to promote prosperity for the countryside (Patrinos, 1990); BID (Interamerican Bank for Development), whose purpose was to support economic growth and de social development; CEPAL (Economical Commission for LATAM) that targeted the state decentralization through the promotion of competitiveness and that fostered links between education and productivity; and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) that promoted an agenda for equality and the increasement of schooling rates in the country (Schiefelbein, 2017).

Nevertheless, those actors not only contributed to the financing of rural education in Colombia, but also to the input of ideas that addressed the implementation of new programs or re-shaped the existing ones (Rodríguez et al., 2018). As a result, in the 90s there was a significant diversification of initiatives supported by the Colombian Government that -in essence- were addressed by different visions and objectives.



Furthermore, in 1996 the Government conducted a national consultation funded by the World Bank about the educative needs of the rural communities that lead to the implementation of “Proyecto de Educación para el sector Rural (PER) -*Educative Project for the Rural areas*- (Perfetti, 2003). Within this, the Government decided to keep the pedagogical model of Escuela Nueva foster by FEN as the National compulsory and free public program for *elementary* school in the most remote rural areas of the country, and included a transitional process in which once finished elementary school the students were to be reallocated to public-traditional schools that usually are located in the municipal-capital so they would be able to attend middle and high school there. It is worth noticing that generally those secondary-public schools have also elementary schooling that functions independently from the EN pedagogical model.

Additionally, it was also launched a series of programs and initiatives that were supposed to run in parallel to EN, such as “Plan La Apertura Educativa” (1990-1994), “Plan El Salto Educativo y Cultural” (1994-1998) and “Plan para Construir la Paz”. And, as if it was not enough, PER promoted other rural educative models aside of EN, such as Learning Acceleration Model for the three last grades of elementary school, and Telesecondary and Post-primary education for middle and high school.

3.4. Discussion: a critical glance to the implementation process

Although PER promoted the increase in coverage of education, its implementation evidences severe gaps:

3.4.1. Inequality

First of all, the transition between elementary and secondary school resulted to be deeply problematic in the practice. On one hand, usually the students that initially decide to attend EN live in the very remote areas of the villages, meaning that it takes for them several minutes or even hours to walk to the public schools that are commonly located in the downtown of the municipalities. On the other, the pedagogical model of EN and the public secondary schools is considerably different, making it difficult for EN students to adapt academically and socially.

This not just embodies inequality, but also produces high levels of drop-out among EN students. For instance, according to Perfetti (2003), of every 100 students that enroll in primary school in rural areas, only 35 finish this cycle, only 16 go to secondary school and only 7 complete the full cycle of basic education. It is not surprising then that by 2014 only 2,1% of the entire rural population held a professional degree (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2016), and by 2016 just 1% of the national enrollment in universities came from rural inhabitants (Rodríguez et al., 2018). Besides, the transition rate from elementary to secondary school was of 47% in rural areas, while of 108% in the urban ones (Cuadros, 2015).

3.4.2. Diversification

Another important issue to highlight is regarding the changes that have been done in Colombia to the initial model of EN with the purpose of it to fit within the local context. It is worth noticing that the changes have not been structural ones based on processes of accountability, but

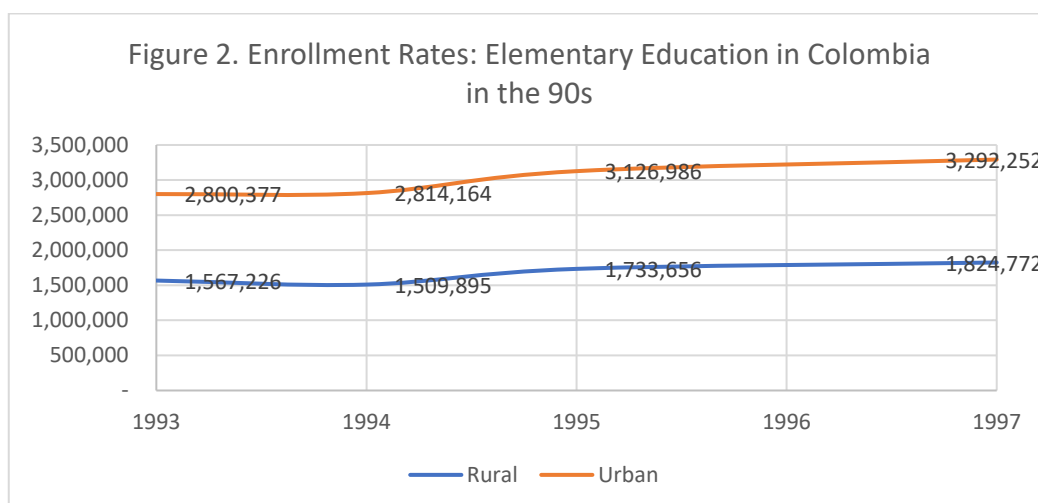
instead it has been decided to use the diversification of the program as the mechanism par-excellence to promote its improvement. For instance, the booklet used by the teachers in the Pacific areas of Colombia has been subject of slight changes compared with the ones used in the Center of the country, and although structurally the schools continue to be the same, are called with different “last names” that give a sense of inclusion and diversification, but that do not tackle the drop-out and attendance problems.

Either way, most of the branches of the program have been based on embracing UNESCO advise of prioritizing -at least in theory- the development of competencies rather than the transmission of content (Rincón, 2010). But the efforts for implementing this approach has led the Government not just to diversify Escuela Nueva, but also to start up a set of flexible pedagogical models in parallel, such as Servicio de Educación Rural (SER) and Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial (SAT) (Flórez, 2016). So even though the programs have potential in themselves, its implementation has been characterized by a strong disarticulation with what had been done previously and among the new ones, given the fact that the Government has not had a unified vision that focuses-on the objectives and interests of all the actors involved.

3.4.3. Accountability

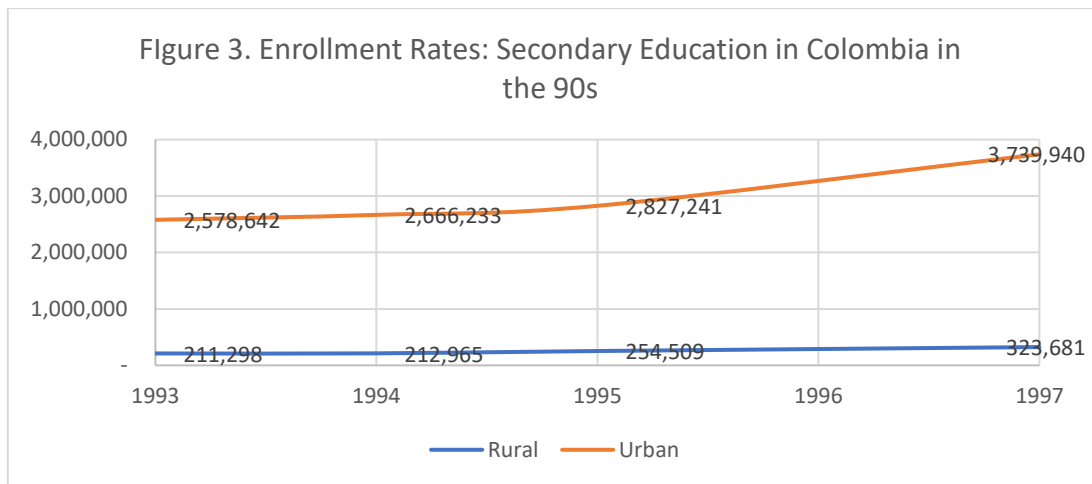
The program EN is well positioned among the general imaginary of the Colombian people and has been prioritized among the Governmental agenda for the education in the rural areas. This reputation has been mainly based on the legitimacy that the program carries as a consequence of being an alternative-pedagogical proposal that comes from Europe, and given some indicators that resulted after its impact evaluation in the 90’s.

Among those indicators the ones that usually are more highlighted by the Colombian Government and by FEN are the *enrollment rate* (see Figures 2 and 3), that increased considerably since the beginning of the program and that reached an increase of 37% at the end of the 90’s (Perfetti, 2003); and the *repetition rate* (see Figure 4), that is often used to talk about the quality of the program and went from 10,8% in 1993 to 4,5% in 2000.

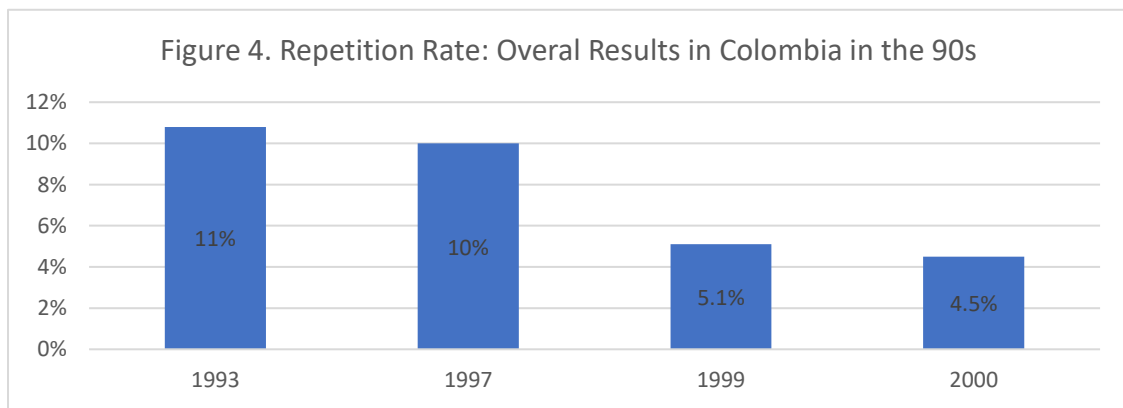


Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia-MEN (2016).



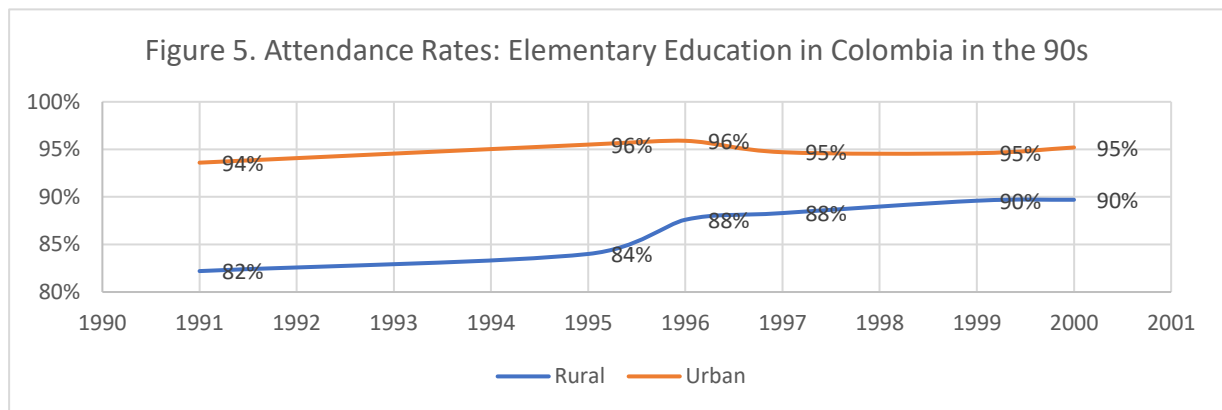


Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Cuadros (2015).

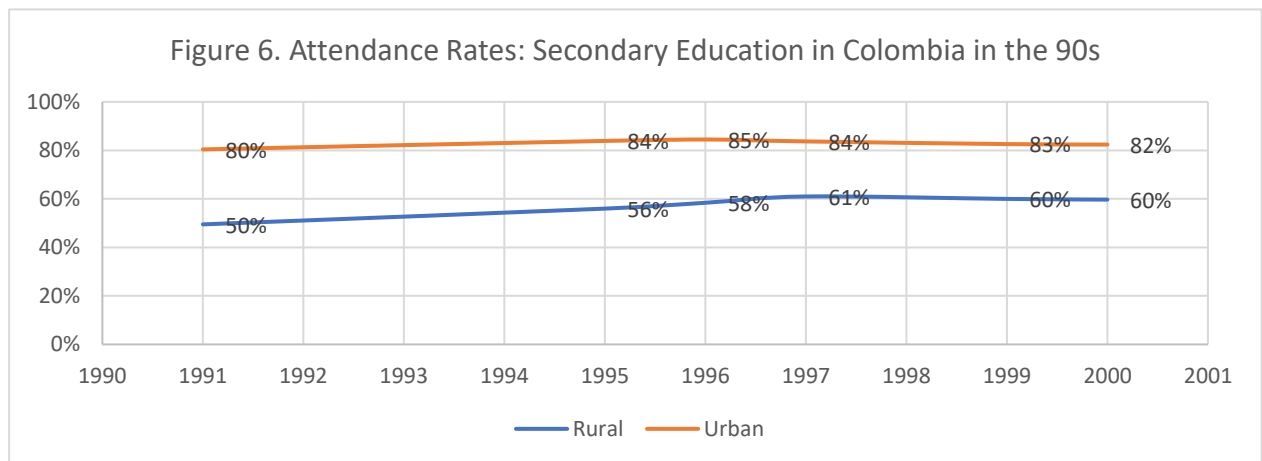


Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Cuadros, (2015).

Apparently, both have been the greatest achievements of the program, but when relying solely on them other indicators that are crucial to understand the efficiency of it has been left aside. For instance, the optimal performance of EN would be questioned if we look closer at the *attendance rates* (see Figure 5 and 6), that from 1990 to 2000 evidence a slight increase of 5,7% in elementary school and a fluctuating down decrease for secondary schooling in the rural areas (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2016); or -even more concerning- if we consider the *drop-out rates* (see Figure 7) that fluctuated up reaching a value of 8% for elementary and 12% for secondary school in the 90's. Even so more if we compare the proclaimed enrollment rates at the international level, we will find that during the same frame of time that Colombia achieved an increase between 36-45%, the international average increase was of 84% (Torres, 2017).



Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia- MEN (2016).



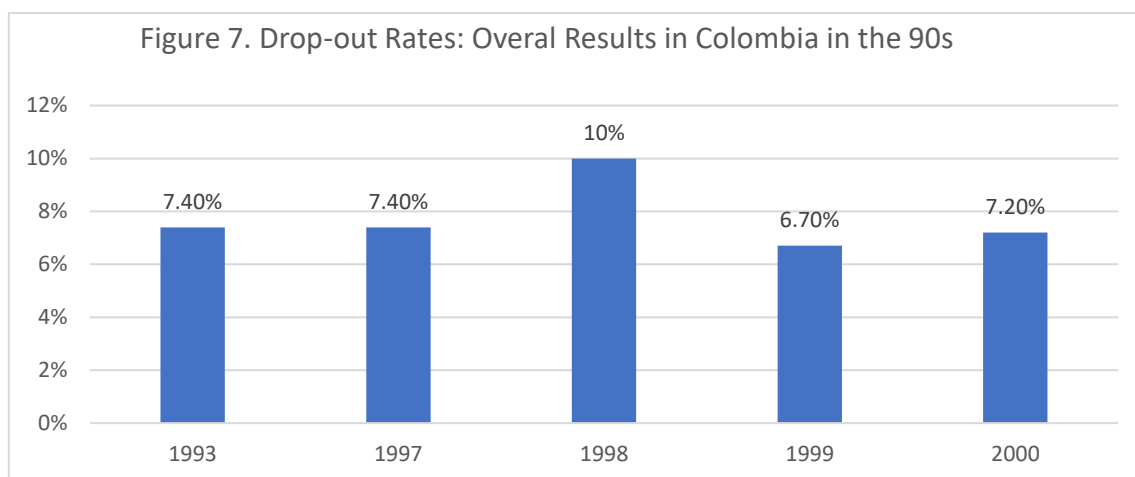
Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia- MEN (2016).



Regarding this information, the Government and FEN claim the necessity of strengthening the budget and the efforts destined to secondary education in the rural areas. Nevertheless, it is worth questioning if this would actually tackle the problem, or if this issue also responds to a system of elementary rural education that is not entirely efficient, and a gap between the bridge that connect the transition to secondary education.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the information presented here, it is possible to highlight the need of taking into consideration the results of the entire set of indicators of the program throughout the time. In the case of EN in Colombia its results have been mainly used to legitimize and promote the program, rather than to rethink and plan structural changes that optimize its implementation. As a consequence, after the 90s the results stopped showing a significant improvement -with the exception of the number of schools that reached 25.313 in 2010 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional



Source: Own elaboration with data extracted from Cuadros, (2015).

de Colombia & Corpoeducación, 2010)-, which somehow have made the Government and FEN to use its initial success as its main source of legitimacy, and to underestimate the relevance of indicators such as attendance and transition, that evidence inefficiency.

That lead us to question 1) if the indicators related to the number of schools running and the enrollment rates are enough to analyze the efficiency of an educative program; 2) what does the attendance and transition rates tell us about the effectiveness and relevance of a program; and 3) if repetition indicators account for the quality of the education provided. These facts bring to light the need of re-think the indicators that have measured the quality, relevance and effectiveness of education, and the urgency of building a new set of indicators that account for a deep understanding of the quality of education.

Besides, it is noticeable the lack of a unified vision for the implementation of the program or its diversification. This evidences that the dynamics of the Colombian Government have been oscillating between the centralization and the decentralization of its power, which has made them



to maintain the control through the regulation of the content of the schools, but also to grant its autonomy to different international actors and private entities in the search of funds. This has generated a series of power relations, in which it has been necessary to negotiate the vision of the State with the interests of such actors.

Regarding the transformation made in Colombia to the Escuela Nueva program coming from Europe, it is worth recalling that it was initially designed as a private model that belonged to the elite and that in its initial design was not intended for rural communities, much less for social contexts as diverse as the Colombian one. Nevertheless, as EN promised to deal with problems faced in the rural context of Colombia, such as the displacement of inhabitants of the most remote rural areas of the Country, it was considered as a pertinent option that embodied alternative pedagogical strategies. However, when implemented in Colombia structural adjustments were made that transformed the essence of the initially proposed pedagogical model. Among these can be highlighted the disarticulation with secondary education, and the implementation of a fixed curriculum, contradicting the basic principle of decentralizing the power of the teachers to pass it to the students, but instead, the Colombian model has reallocated the power to the educative and fixed primers.

As a consequence of this, and taking also into account the field work that I did in the rural areas of Colombia in 2018, it is visible that in the practice the students are not being empowered as the initial model suggests, and that the booklets urges them to replicate the traditional teaching model based on memory and homework, removing students from an active school experience at the extend that the initial propose suggested. Thus, despite the fact that the groups are smaller, their process of empowerment and engagement with their local contexts is not as effective as they claim to be in theory. Finally, another consequence of reallocating the power to the fixed primers is the underestimation of the role of teachers, indirectly suggesting the lack of need for teachers to be trained, which in turn is very conflictive as teachers receive professional education on the traditional model, but they are expected to facilitate learning spaces based on alternative pedagogies.

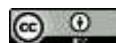
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Conflicto de intereses / Competing interests:

La autora declara que no incurre en conflictos de intereses.

Rol de los autores / Authors Roles:

No aplica.

Fuentes de financiamiento / Funding:

La autora declara que no recibió un fondo específico para esta investigación.

Aspectos éticos / legales; Ethics / legals:

La autora declara no haber incurrido en aspectos antiéticos, ni haber omitido aspectos legales en la realización de la investigación.

