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# Education in Post-Conflict Colombia

Juliana Cabrera Pena  
juliana.cabrerapena@gmail.com

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# **Education in Post-Conflict Colombia**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by **Juliana Cabrera Peña**

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Adviser: **Dr. Christopher Loperena**

Academic Director: **Dr. Christopher Loperena**

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*Esta obra es dedicada a todos los colombianos que todavía seguimos  
soñando por una Colombia en paz*

## Introduction

Colombia, a nation located on an enviable territory, unmatched by the verbosity of its multifaceted terrain and biodiversity, haunted by its ideological passions, today gives itself a new chance to foster new livelihoods. Formed from the Bolivarian dream of an integrated Latin American, Colombia gained its independence from colonial rule as a promise of union, order and liberty. More than two-hundred years have passed since then and Colombia still clasps for ideological stability alongside a promise of peace. Currently, Colombia finds itself at a precarious and promising period in its history. The long and arduous journey to internal peace is now looking closer than ever and the Colombian government will have to make various changes in its internal dynamics, policies, and allowances in order to guarantee the longevity of peace within its territory. Public services which have been stunted by war and neoliberal ideologies will be the stabilizing factor in the post-conflict. Therefore, education needs to be a central focus of the Colombian government in order to guarantee the longevity of peace.

Peace has not been a quiet or manageable task for Colombia. Civil wars have come to define Colombian internal political dynamics, paying no mind to its long constitutional rule and democratic transfers of power. Thus, the state has had nine documented civil wars, in which political differences were the center of the battles. Most wars have been fought for governmental power in the capital city of Bogota in the name of conservative ideology on one side and liberal ideology on the other, giving no space for other political narratives to gain traction in government. While conservative ideology believed in keeping the power of the state in the capital city of Bogota, liberals believed that power should be more localized. Later conservatives would be associated with the upper class, wealthy types, and the liberals with the common people. All these juxtapositions stunted all aspects of society especially education. The

brutality of the violence created by these wars quickly spilled into the countryside exacerbated by the diverse terrain awarded to Colombia's geopolitical territory.

At present, war once again dominates the headlines. Colombia has been involved in a long running, complex, moral, ideological war between a mosaic of actors. This fifty-two-year war has been fought between insurgent groups, the most prominent being the FARC, paramilitary armies, and the Colombian government. The FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, were established alongside other communist movements in Latin America in the 1960s. With their Maoist Marxist guerilla mentality, they set out to free the Colombian people of oligarchies and return the land to its rightful owners, the *campesinos* (peasants), which encompassed a large array of indigenous and ethnic minorities. They utilized aggressive tactics ranging from landmine installment to involuntary recruitment of child soldiers to kidnapping and murder. They would later be accused of engaging in various international illicit acts, the likes of cocaine production and cocaine distribution and illegal arms trade. Thus, the international community placed them on terrorist lists, like the US Department of State Foreign Terrorist Organization List, and began to aid the Colombian government in their eradication. The FARC, depleted drastically by constant bombardment and the deaths of their major leaders, would agree to give up arms and usher peace a few years after aggressive military attacks began, aided heavily by the Unites States government.

In November 2012, representatives from the Colombian government and the FARC began peace talks in Havana, Cuba. The agreement to reach peace was met with overwhelming international support, with the United States and the United Nations as critical allies. In August 2016, a six-hundred-page agreement was reached. The Final Accords, the official name given to the peace agreement, addressed an array of topics relating to both sides, from restitution to

immunity to human rights. Human rights were the major focus of the written agreement, as it generally focused on addressing victims' and FARC members' rights post peace agreement. Current Colombian president, Juan Manuel Santos, requested a referendum vote to authorize the agreement in government, a move which was unnecessary by Colombian law. The referendum was narrowly negated on October 2, 2016, with 40% of the Colombian voters turning out to vote, 51% of the casted votes were placed on the negation side "No." Revision was consequently the next step. On November 30, 2016, a new agreement was reached with no referendum demanded, and peace officially began. The revision was mostly focused on restitution and immunity, there were no major alterations done to the human rights aspects of the original agreement. Today, what remains is a large and significant ideological divide in Colombia pitting highly personal socioeconomic realities and ideologies against one another, once again.

As official peace initiates its treacherous journey in Colombia, civil society will play a vital role to guarantee the longevity of peace. Education, as an integral part of civil society, will be fundamental to the creation of a war free Colombia. War has been able to disrupt most attempts to expand education to all corners of the nation, as various attempts by the Colombian government in Bogota, in conjunction with local authorities, have been slow to their desired outcomes. Neoliberal approaches towards education have been the primary tool of alleviation by the government, thus Colombia's educational potential has been stunted by the vast incongruities created through economic structural arrangements. In recent years, Colombian education has been mostly privatized or intertwined with private institutions. This has led private education to be the norm for the more affluent urban areas. In line with regional trends leaning toward the privatization of education, private enterprise and international non-profits will play a vital role in

the education initiatives unfolding in ex-FARC controlled areas. Thus, the private sector's degree of involvement needs to be tracked, calculated, and grasped.

The Colombian government must recognize education's stabilizing role in achieving sustainable peace, especially in ex-FARC zones. For education to have the lasting desired effect in Colombian peace, there needs to be a deep analysis of governmental strategies and policies for the development of vital information. Information which will aid the Colombian people, both government and civil society, to critically understand the value placed on a key aspect national stability. Therefore, this qualitative study employing document analysis and participant interviews seeks to investigate the Colombian government's post conflict education plan, in order to understand the role private-public relationships play in the expansion of education into areas exiting war. This investigation will be significant for the government and institutions specializing in post conflict initiatives as they will be able to understand the limitations of the involvement of the private sector in post-conflict education policy.

## **Literature Review**

As the examination of education during times of instability and transition continues to be studied, there are some major challenges for further consideration. The field is relatively in its infancy with a limited amount of cases to study. There have been case studies done for countries like Guatemala (Caumartin, 2005), but more work needs to be done. This gap is visible as more academics continue to map the trajectory of conflict and post-conflict and education's role within these transitions. The level of importance government's place on education in written documents, like Final Accords, and the rhetoric implemented during post conflict transitions is a major gap in this field. My study looks at the specific case of Colombia and the imminent peace shift. It investigates the level of importance the Colombian government is placing on education in

regions exiting conflict. Moreover, this investigation will act as a mode of critique and analysis of the effectiveness of Final Accords and transition.

Currently there exists three nodes around which most post conflict education research is centered. This section will address three axes around which this literature is centered: political-economic, ethnic-cultural, and emergency response. The largest camp focuses on the political-economic aspects of education in post conflict areas. Partnerships between the private and public sectors are a large and important portion of this camp. The second group focuses on ethnic and cultural aspects of education. The third, and much more specialized field, addresses the role of education in emergency response measures are continued into post conflict policy reforms.

Within the political-economy literature, there is a large and well-established body of research that sees the absence of education, or inadequate educational opportunities as directly related to economic indicators. Brown (2011) investigates the correlation between education policy and violent conflict. Brown finds that education does not directly affect violent conflict, but impacts other aspects of conflict, for example the average age militants take up arms and the creation of possible non-violent alternatives for youth. Others investigate the effects conflict has on education and relate it to the labor market (Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2012; Barrera & Ibanez, 2004). Rodriguez and Ibanez (2012) argue that armed conflict has a direct impact in the dropout rates of Colombian children between the ages of six and seventeen, forcing them to enter the labor market at a premature age. Furthermore, Barrera and Ibanez (2004) investigate the relationship between homicide rates and the investment in education by the household capital (the total amount of money the household makes a year), and national and local governments. Their findings indicate that a higher investment in education by the government in conjunction with household monetary investment in education lowers violent homicide rates significantly.

This camp sees war as the extreme show of violence, acknowledging that the lack of education causes violence which can transpire into war.

An important aspect and subsection of the political-economic focus is the study of development in relation to education. Moretti (2005) and Lochner (2004) focus on the effects of education spending on a developing nation and crime. Moretti (2005) argues that a reduction in violence and growth in wages is directly related to an increase in education spending and a reduction in crime, and while Lochner (2004) agrees with these findings, he also sees an increase in white-collar crimes with higher levels of educational attainment. Smith (2005) speaks to the many levels in which education can affect a country during or after conflict, ultimately finding that “investment in education systems from a conflict perspective” should be vital part of educational planning (pg. 373).

There is also an ongoing debate into the role of international private agencies and their educational agenda in relation to the national and local governments own national educational policies (Tomlison & Benefield, 2005). This debate is important to the political-economic analysis outlined previously and to this thesis. Complex partnerships are regularly formed between public entities and the private sector. Private-public partnerships (PPPs) and multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) are terms largely without precise definition (Draxter, 2016). In a very broad definition specific to educational partnerships, PPPs and MSPs are relationships which involve the private sector and public sector, “whether through privatization, contract for specific services, or philanthropy” (LaRocque and Lee, 2008). These partnerships involve an array of actors including governments, corporations and NGOs, all working in coalition towards development of the area in question. PPPs are formed when there is any involvement between the public and private actors, while MSPs are formed within a web of actors including for-profit,

not-for-profit, civil society, and multinational actors (Draxler, 2016). Regardless PPPs and MSPs are different from contracting initiatives, as partnerships create the objectives and solutions together, they share the risks and financing methods which drive the project forward (Grimsey and Lewis, 2004). PPPs are the main motors of financing in Colombian education today, as this thesis will explore in later chapters.

The second camp in the field of study is the ethnic-cultural perspective. Ethnic-cultural dimensions in the study of education and post conflict is prevalent and ever expanding. This is a growing field of research, but still a very new perspective. This field is significantly vital in the context of Colombia, as the war has taken place in rural indigenous and/or afro regions of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Bush and Salterelli (2000) report, in one of the most important pieces relating to ethnicity and education, that education can be used as a weapon of cultural repression, segregation and inequality. Works such as Barakat et al (2012), Smith & Vaux (2003) and Brown (2011) explore the measures in which education acts as a tool of inclusion or a weapon of execution in times of stability, saying that education does not cause instability but rather affects other dimensions of society, like imprisonment rates and socioeconomic gaps, making it vital. Others have built on this work to include the study of the relationship between education and ethnicity in post-conflict. Caumartin (2005) and Caumartin, Gray Molina, and Thorp (2008) explore the role of education as it reflects in ethnic and indigenous struggles in Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia, respectively. They explore the connection education has on the stability of the nation during transitional times, finding that education often times is used as a way to exclude indigenous peoples destabilizing certain regions of the state. Specific cases have been explored,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2005 and 2015 national census, indigenous and afro-Colombian populations are up to 60% -75% concentrated in rural costal or interior departments, like Choco, Vaupes, and Valle del Cauca. Those departments are major FARC controlled territories that are in the transitional stage from conflict to post conflict, as of the signing of the Peace Accords (DANE, 2015)

documenting the position of cultural and ethnic identity and how they fit in the larger political goals of a post conflict nation. Poppema (2009) considers the ethnic and racial discrepancies in quality of education after the peace accords in Guatemala. Quality of education and discrimination because of ethnicity or culture is an emerging field within the study of post-conflict transition and education. Colombia will be the perfect case study for such field, as above mentioned, the conflict took place in the secluded, rural landscapes dominated by indigenous and afro-Colombians. This thesis will not investigate the ethnic or cultural end of the conflict.

The third camp of this field is the emergency model. More than political-economic or ethnic-cultural, the emergency model sees education during a time of conflict as a pragmatic project. The emergency model also sees a continuation of the characteristics of emergency response after the disaster, conflict, or instability has ended. The case of Colombia is specific to this camp as Colombia is now exiting a conflict which has left zones in a complete debacle state. Davies (2005) and Smith and Vaux (2003) explore the relationship between emergency disaster relief and equality. Both investigate the role of education in a disaster or conflict relief in relation to economic investment finding that during disaster relief initiatives, education is one of the last to receive economic investment. Others have focused on the importance of education in developing a nation or region after conflict or an emergency (Bush & Salterelli, 2000; Karpinska et al,2007; Pigozzi, 1999; Sinclair, 2002; Smith, 2005). They have concluded that rather than examining education as a human right and an indispensable necessity, as the UN and the Colombian government have recognized (most notably in the Final Accords for peace with the FARC), education is viewed as a relief activity (Pigozzi, 1999). Education is framed as a pragmatic and stabilizing solution to post conflict, but there is not much thought into the logistics of continuation or the desires of the community. Thus, in such case, assuming emergencies and

conflicts disrupt the basic right to education, there should always be educational planning for emergencies where education is restored in the first phase of rebuild (Sinclair, 2002).

From emergency frame emerges terms relevant to the role of education in time of conflict and instability. Kagawa (2005) speaks of the term “emergency education,” critiquing the narrow economic development aspirations of the international emergency regime. “Emergency education,” as Kagawa, explains was the first of its kind, as it began to be used in the 1990s. It would later transition into other relevant terms such as, “education in emergencies,” “education and conflict,” and “education and instability” (Davies, 2004; Karpinska et al, 2007; Sinclair, 2002; Tomlinson & Benfield, 2005). This original camp largely assumes that education in times of instability is good and is the priority of effected communities (Sinclair, 2002). Later, the terms under “education in time of emergency” were united into a term, Barakat et al (2012) documents as “fragility.” The term “fragility” evolves from the notion that education in the time of emergencies is extended because of the nation-state’s fragile condition, and since it is assumed that education is permissive affecting other dimensions of the nation, the states will continue to be fragile. Terms such as “fragile situations” and “states affected by fragility,” have become the way to characterize these situations, with “fragility” as the ubiquitous concept (Buckland, 2011; Davies, 2011; Kirk, 2007).

Education in a post-conflict society is a concept that has been theorized by many. It has been previously grouped with other response and development tactics, such as healthcare and violence reduction. The study of education in post conflict transitional areas, nevertheless, is a relatively new study. Research conducted into the field of peace education has been a major growing field. Peace education has been defined as “educational policy, planning, pedagogy, and practice that can provide learners with skills and values to work towards comprehensive peace”

(Brantmeier & Bajaj, 2013, pg.139). Human rights in this growing camp are a major focus as international institutions like UN and UNCESCO have made education part of peace planning (Reardon, 1988). The field is new, but more research is emerging as conflict zones make the transition into peace, expanding the analysis of the role of education and how education is expanded into these areas. Post conflict education in Colombia will draw from all the camps mentioned and will be part of the continuation of knowledge and the theorization of education.

## **Methodology**

For the exploration of Colombian peace building through education, this thesis will explore the methods in which the government plans to expand its educational policy into ex-FARC controlled regions. Research on this topic was conducted in two forms. First, I accessed government documents, including the Final Accords and educational policy documents. The second source of data included interviews with individuals involved with education and peace building, this includes officials of the ministry of education and contracted NGO employees. The interviews provide qualitative data on the implementation of education policy in the post-conflict period.

Governmental documents are the basis of my research—documents such as the Colombian government’s federal policy on education and their exact plan on the expansion of national educational policy to ex- FARC transitional areas. This includes the national government decennial educational plan, PNDE 2016-2026. Moreover, current journalistic articles and international reports on the subject were utilized to overview the process, the limitations, and the actual implementation of written policy. I also analyzed documents relating to the role of education in Colombia’s post-conflict and transitional period.

The second form of research is interviews. The interviews serve as a critical analytical point into the actual implementation of education and to the level of importance given to it. Four open-ended interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately 30 minutes, either via phone or Skype, with officials working at the Ministry of Education in Bogota, Colombia, as well as people working for NGOs, and teachers. The conversation was noted and transcribed into a password protected computer.

All questions asked are related to the education policy of Colombia and the extension of said education to ex-FARC regions. I asked about where and how Colombia's education policy will be extended into transitional regions, and what was the level of importance given to education during the peace talks. I mainly focused on the different ways the privatization of education had been folded into the post conflict governmental agenda. Furthermore, there was a section concerned with ethnicity and race in relation to national educational policy, as it is clear regions exiting conflict are often predominantly Afro-Colombian or indigenous regions of the country. I asked if the government considered race and ethnicity as part of the peace agreements and/or if it included in current policy regarding education. The main focus of the interviews remained in the general understanding of the surgent state of affairs in Colombia regarding the extension of education, diving deeper into public-private partnerships formed post conflict.

### **Map of Thesis**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter centers on the historical background of the current war and the actors involved. The second chapter examines education policy in Colombia, prior to peace and after peace was reached. The third chapter analyzes the data collected and relates it to the expansion of public-private relationships. Lastly, the fourth chapter is a conclusory chapter summarizing the main findings.

Chapter one focuses on the specific historical events that have lead Colombia to the place it is now. In this chapter, the complex history of Colombia is examined as a method to understand the current issues and limitations Colombia is facing in a post war era. This chapter utilizes first source documents, like official governmental papers, articles, and academic sources. This chapter first looks at the inception of all major actors, both the current government structure and the FARC. Then, it looks at the two entities historical interactions, leading up to the peace negotiations. Public-private relationships are first introduced in this chapter and explained through their historical neo-liberal inception in Colombia.

Chapter two investigates official Colombian education policies in areas affected by armed conflict. It examines the educational policies prior and after peace is reached by looking at education records, the Final Accords and supporting documents, archives, academic sources and newspaper articles. Chapter two studies the historical and current official state of policy, tracking public-private relationships by looking specifically at these relationships in the education system. The impact of public-private relationships in education are investigated on a historical context as their relationship is explained in relation to regional and national trends.

Chapter three presents the data collected. In this chapter, the interviews I have conducted, the Final Accords, qualitative data, and first source documents are presented and related to the relationship of private institutions within education. The data is examined by demonstrating the impact private institutions have had in the expansion of education and how they have been involved during the peace building period. This chapter concludes with an overall analysis of the impact public-private relationships will continue to have on education in the protracted conflict years.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion. A summary of the main findings of this thesis are presented, with private-public relationships as the focal point. This chapter ends with a brief look into the future, noting the challenges ahead for the Colombian education system and the precarious stability of peace today.

## Chapter 1: Historical Background

Colombia is a nation of immense and turbulent historical features. Formed from the dreams and desires of a just and powerful state, Colombia would develop into a nation characterized by perpetual conflict. Civil wars have come to define the dynamics of government. In the novel “Love in the Time of Cholera,” the brilliant Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez recounts the state of perpetual war his homeland has lived in as “nine civil wars...which well counted could have been one: always the same one” (1985, pg. 120). Colombia, thus, has lived through nine civil wars, continuous internal disagreement, illicit cartels, and steady insurgency. The narrative of political opposition has been at the epicenter of the struggle, with insurgency groups, notably the guerrilla group Las FARC, and other illegal entities holding a consistent level of vehemence in the core dynamics of Colombia.

History is an important vehicle to understand the current situation of a country in transition. Therefore, this chapter will explore the context of Colombian peace. First it will define the major political actors, detailing their importance in the governmental system. Then, it will give a brief and important description of the events that led to the formation of the guerrilla insurgent groups at the center of the peace agreements today, the FARC. From there on, there will be a discussion of the involvement of the United States in the eradication of such groups and what the direct impact of their militaristic involvement has been. Consequently, the drug cartel involvement in the political reality of Colombia is explored. Lastly, this chapter explores recent foreign involvement in the form of neoliberal structural reforms in Colombia.

The political system of Colombia is one that prides itself in stability. According to Banks and Alvarez, “Colombia’s 1886 Constitution was, after that of the United States, the oldest

uninterrupted constitution in the Americas...” which transpired into “mostly civil and elected governments and a commitment to constitutional republicanism,” something rarely seen in the Americas (Banks & Alvarez, 1991, pg. 40). A new constitution was drafted in 1991 in hopes of making the rule of law the primary principle of the nation (Banks & Alvarez, 1991).

Nevertheless, Colombia has maintained its two-party system, where Conservatives stand on one side of the issues and the Liberals stand on the opposite side, a tension I will explore later on in this chapter. Peeler argues that this long bipartisan system still holds true today because the parties “early moved beyond being mere elite factions by using traditional authority relationships, clientelist exchanges and ideological appeals to develop durable bases of mass support” (1976). This bipartisan system has defined the political logic of the Colombian government from its inauguration.

Thus, Colombian political parties have been constant and legitimate, as there have only been two political forms that have survived the passage of time. Hector Galindo-Silva describes, “the Colombian party system is one of the oldest and most institutionalized in Latin America... dominated by the Liberal and Conservative parties, which maintained the duopoly of power at all levels of government for more than a century” (2015, pg. 204). Formed directly following independence, conservative and liberal ideologies have been at opposite sides of critical issues, following regional trends of political party distinction across Latin America. The conservative party began first as individuals who wanted to remain in the domain of the Spanish crown. Later it wanted to centralize the power of the nation in the capital city. More recently, conservative ideology identifies itself with lower taxation, strong militaristic presence, the upper class (oligarchy) and desired greater relationship with foreign institutions. On the other hand, liberal ideology began as people wanting independence from Spanish colonial rule. They would

transition into wanting limited power for the central government and localizing the national power into much smaller regions, decentralization. Liberals, later, began to identify themselves with the labor movement, the working class, less military presence and limited foreign intervention.

Nevertheless, this seemingly stable system would force nine wars upon the nation, the latter of which would usher in the current insurgency. In a series of events called *La Violencia* (dates), Colombia would usher in the FARC, drug cartels, and the other terrorist insurgency groups still alive today. Thus, the last war between the Liberals and Conservatives reached its climax in 1948 when the populist liberal presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, was shot and killed in Bogota (Banks & Alvarez, 1991). Gaitan modernized the liberal party, appealing towards the large labor mass and turning his back against the traditional oligarchy. His assassination lead to a two-week period of total decimation and annihilation in the capital city, period called the *Bogotazo* (Banks & Alvarez, 1991). Not soon after and as swiftly as the viciousness started in Bogota, the violence spilled into the countryside, where the vast and diverse geographical vicissitudes of the Colombian landscape prolonged the political strife, a period in time simply named *La Violencia* (Banks & Alvarez, 1991).

*La Violencia* continued for a few years, mobilizing and escalating not only the political differences between neighbors, but igniting a land rights dispute between the land owners and the peasants. *La Violencia* formally ended with the National Front (*Frente Nacional*) treaty a little more than ten years after Gaitan's assassination, leaving behind thousands of dead and exacerbated political differences. With the National Front, the bipartisan system was legitimized and institutionalized as the liberals and conservatives agreed to share the power changing the majority lead every four years. Nevertheless, alongside other Latin American revolutionary

movements of the 1960s, Marxist Maoist guerrilla, Liberation Theology, Left ideology insurgent groups, amongst others, arose from the debacle left behind by *La Violencia*.

Today, Colombia is engaged in a complex ideological war between a mosaic of actors. The largest and most pervasive insurgent group being the FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*. Las FARC, with the use of Marxist Maoist guerrilla tactics and inspired by the Cuban Revolution, set out to drive out the oligarchy from the land and create an egalitarian society by any means necessary (Lee, 2012). They utilized aggressive tactics ranging from landmine instalment to involuntary recruitment of child soldiers to kidnapping and murder. They would later be accused of engaging in various international illicit acts like cocaine production and cocaine distribution and illegal arms trade, this would make them noticeable to the international arena. Other insurgent and guerrilla groups, like the ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*) and paramilitary armies, would engage in similar criminal acts following the lead the FARC (UNRIC, 2016). These secondary groups would be formed from range of ideologies, from Liberation Theology (ELN) to counter government militaristic force (Tate, 2001). Present day, the wars between insurgent groups, the most noteworthy being between Las FARC and the Colombian government, was dragged on for 52 years, displacing, killing, mutilating, marginalizing millions of faultless Colombian citizens.

The United States has been involved in the fight against guerrilla groups, becoming one of Colombia's best allies against insurgency. In their bid to rid the world, and their territory, of cocaine and terrorism, the United States government aided Colombia in the extermination of cocaine production in Colombian soil. They called this plot, Plan Colombia 2000 (Hylton, 2010). So, began an aggressive counter terrorist strategic mission to destroy narco-paramilitary groups, those insurgent military groups who involved themselves with cocaine production and

distribution, largest of which was the FARC. The US government provided intelligence and weapons, refraining from placing actual troops on the ground. The Colombian military would see a massive influx of weapons and military technology, hence began a fixation to bomb, spray, and kill all coca plants and the people growing anything in presumed insurgent territory. Such aggressive persecution of the guerrilla did complete its intended goal, deplete the guerrilla, but its ramifications would be costly. During this time, Colombia would see an exacerbation of violence in agrarian territory, with the rebels becoming more vicious and the government responding with bullets and bombs (Dube & Naidu, 2015).

As a direct result, rural Colombian began to be forcefully displaced at alarming rates. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) is a critical issue facing Colombia today. The FARC, along with the complexity of the conflict, the many actors, and the aggressive military persecution of terrorist, have been the direct cause of present-day displacement in Colombia. As of 2014, Colombia has an estimated 5.7 million people internally displaced by conflict and violence, ranked second in the world, outranked only by Syria (Goldberg, 2014). Other estimate this number closer to 6.3 million as of 2015, representing “almost one-sixth of the estimated 40.8 million IDPs worldwide and 85% of the 7.4 million in the Western Hemisphere” (Ramirez et al, 2016). Unlike refugees, who seek refuge in foreign lands, the internally displaced “have not crossed a border to find safety...unlike refugees, they are on the run at home” (UNHCR, 2017). The displaced in Colombia, thus, live in their own territory, but forced to leave their home. The IDPs are people caught between the conflict, ranging from indigenous peasants and communities, to Afro-Colombian coastal communities, to rural people striped of their safety. They leave their region in search of safety and economic opportunities, in more prosperous

sections of the nation. What they find instead is a normalization of their tragedy, labeling of their experience as victims, and a prolonged state of othering (Oslender, 2016).

As it can be seen, the political realities of the Colombian state are quite different from the assumed stability a bipartisan democratic system and long-standing constitution assume to show. The bipartisan political structure has seen other parties arise and significantly change some elections. Some of the most notable include *Aliancia Democratica M-19*, who infamously formed a political institution after forcefully taking control of the Palace of Justice in 1985, killing 12 magistracies and rocking the Colombian political system, with known help from Pablo Escobar and other drug cartel leaders (Woody, 2015). The M-19 in coalition with “several of the country’s main guerilla groups” became a legitimate political party, branding themselves as the “the new political alternative” with Marxist ideology as their tool (Boudon, 2001). They did not have the success they anticipated and dismantled a few years later, nevertheless, their powerful presence in the congressional and presidential elections was enough to signal them as a viable third party alternative. The second most recent example of third party influence exists in the Uribist party (or Centro Democratico). Uribismo is the political party formed during and after President Alvaro Uribe Velez presidency. It has been called a political populist phenomenon with the strong government platform and militaristic crackdown on guerilla groups having lasting influences in the current political stadium (Rey, 2015).

It is important to note that one of the most vicious and pervasive forms of political and social realities facing the historical accounts of Colombia, is the involvement of drug cartels and the systematic corruption within government subsequently. The drug cartels emerged in the 1970s from a growing global demand of cocaine (Pardo, 2000). They formed as consolidated groups of drug traffickers (narcotraffickers) protecting their interest, with the Cali and the

Medellin cartels being the most powerful and Pablo Escobar as the face of it all. The government, already involved in a continuous war with guerilla groups, found themselves at crossroads as active spectators in the cartels' pecuniary power. As Rafael Pardo comments, "the booming cocaine industry also deformed Colombia's morals...the judicial system and other government institutions crumbled before narco-traffickers determined to carve out a sphere for their illicit businesses through violence and corruption" (2000). Corruption climbed all the way to the top of the ladder in magnificent scale, reaching congress and other top officials regardless of their party affiliation (Baviskar, 1996). The violence, that is so well documented in Colombian history, was exponentially exacerbated by the government's deficiency of power. Under president Cesar Gaviria in the early 1990s, the justice department threatened to extradite any narco-trafficker caught alive to the United States (Pardo, 2000). Fear and terror spread to every corner of Colombia as the now extraditable drug lords engaged in terror attacks (narcoterrorism), placing bombs, kidnapping, killing, and maiming countless Colombians. "The illegal nature of narcotics-related activities... together with their enormous profit potential, resulted in a spiral of violence as the drug cartels entered into conflict with a state already weakened by non-acceptance of the guerilla to recognize it as the legitimate representative of the Colombian people," Siddhartha Baviskar precisely summarizes (1996).

The internal struggles have partially or momentarily sequestered the Colombian capitalist economy. However, the national Colombian economy, regardless of internal discrepancies, has had success in the last few years. The economy has grown due to what Mauricio Solaun and Fernando Cepeda argue, "the Colombian political system has been characterized by a duality..." as the two-party political system has "been relatively stable with the ruling elites maintaining power" (1973). The economy has been largely dominated by agricultural products, like coffee,

flowers, bananas, and sugar (Rojas, 1985). However, like much of Latin America and developing nations, Colombia has borrowed from global Washington Consensus institutions, the likes of the IMF and the World Bank, during their most vulnerable points when private investors were not willing to invest in the country. “Internal political turmoil, economic instability and lack of promising projects prevented national and foreign investors from bringing money into the economy,” as Fernando Rojas points to in his work “The IMF and the adjustment of the Colombian Economy to Recession” (1985). Colombia began to borrow under president Cesar Gaviria in the late 1980s, plan named “la apertura economica” (Usma, 2009). Neoliberal reforms during the 1980s and 1990s required the Colombian government to limit public spending, and lower tariffs and national tax, all which would have long lasting effects on society, most notably in education. The impact on education will be explored in the next chapter. These policies are widely known to have underdeveloped parts of the Colombian economy and civil society that are until now seeing some stimulation from private investments after the political air found some tranquility (Rojas, 1985). To put it on a regional scale, the percentage of people living under the poverty scale in Latin America was “40% in 2002 according to the latest report by the *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo- BID*” (Usma, 2009).

The current economic reality of Colombia is tangled with free market treaties. Under Alvaro Uribe’s eight years of conservative presidency, utilizing the close relationship Colombia enjoys with the United States, Colombia negotiated various free trade agreements with the global north as within the region. Free trade agreements with the United States, Canada and the European Union were all guaranteed under Uribe (Perez, 2010). A unilateral free trade agreement with the United States called U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) was signed in 2006, to some public controversy (Ahumanda, 2007). Regionally, Colombia is part

of The Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) which includes Peru and Ecuador (Ahumanda, 2007). It is noteworthy to highlight, the United States was the connecting point in AFTA, and without AFTA Peru and Colombia would not have signed a trade agreement with the US (Ahumanda, 2007). These free trade agreements guarantee a market for Colombian products, which as stated previously are mostly agricultural, and vice versa. Numerous critiques of such global rivalry and human rights abuses are a common place now that the Colombian market is in full competition with the global system. Consuelo Ahumada critiques “the CTPA...will deeply affect the Colombian productive sector and thus, the working and living conditions throughout the country” (2007). She goes on to say, “this agreement represents the deepening of the neoliberal agenda adopted by the Colombian governments... these policies had a negative impact on the social and working conditions in Colombia and elsewhere in the region” (2007).

Presently, as previously mentioned, Colombia has had a strong constitution with a professed rule of law. However, its desire to keep up with the progressive trends of the developed world, its laws and economic structure, is a specific characteristic of the Colombian government. Colombia has been creating policies that are often more progressive than what the relatively conservative populous are comfortable with, most recent example was legalization of same-sex marriage.<sup>2</sup> This progressive stance has been the pathway into which peace was reached with insurgency group. While before, under previous administrations like the one of Alvaro Uribe, insurgency was met with persistent and strong militarist retaliation, Colombia has made new attempts at diplomacy. The Final Accords, implemented on the latter end of 2016, signify

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<sup>2</sup> Legalized in 2015 but met with significant civil discontent due to strong Catholic and Cristian believes that dominate society. Discontent over same sex-marriage has been extended into adoption. Currently, congress is debating whether to allow parents of the same sex or single parents to adopt children, creating a nationwide argument over if the moralistic values of the nation allows for such adoption. Preliminary votes have the law banning same-sex adoption being narrowly negated. Nevertheless, similar arguments professed about same-sex marriage is being spoken about this issue.

new times for the Colombian people. With an agreement reached in dialog between the Colombian government and the FARC, Colombia begins a journey long awaited by millions of it citizens, the path towards peace. Time will tell if the Colombian narrative will change its course towards a path of peace or revert back towards its very pervasive and violent history.

## **Chapter 2: Educational Review**

Education in Colombia has gone through various challenges and fluctuations. As its historical past may show, Colombia has experienced a slow progression into national cohesion. The dismemberment of their national cohesion over the course of many decades due to violence, war, foreign intervention, and neoliberal reforms, have left serious gaps in the social system of the nation. The gaps today can be most notably seen in education, as it is one of the most critical aspects of society, most specifically in the rural areas in Colombia where conflict has been a pervasive reality. Alongside conflict, structural reforms in the name of neoliberalism impacted access to education in rural zones, largely effected by war, in a significant manner. Thus, Colombian education has been stunted and substantially maldistributed due to the limitations placed on central government by continuous interruption of policy and the implementation of foreign intervention in the form of neoliberal reforms.

This chapter will be broken down into three sections. First it will discuss how the education system in Colombia is structured. Second, it will analyze important education policies prior to the Final Accords. The third section will examine rural education policy specifically, paying close attention to the exact challenges and limitations rural communities, located in conflict zones, faced prior to the Final Accords. This final section will discuss how neoliberal reforms worked in tandem with the conflict to reduce access to education in rural areas.

### **Education System in Colombia**

Education system in Colombia guarantees free and compulsory education to all children between six and 15 (Immerstein, 2015). The structure is similar to that of the United States. Primary education begins at age six and last five years (Immerstein, 2015). Thereafter, secondary

education is broken into two levels, lower secondary and upper secondary. Lower secondary lasts four years with most students beginning at the age of 11 (Immerstein, 2015). In upper secondary school, students chose a track of study, for example technical, business, or pedagogical (Immerstein, 2015). Upper secondary can be completed within two years, in which time, if the student chooses to continue their education, they can do so by entering a university. University entrance is based on a state exam, the ICFES.

Higher education in Colombia is extensive and more privatized than the US (Immerstein, 2015). Universities are concentrated in large urban cities, thus if a student from a rural area wants to further their education they will have to move to a much larger city in Colombia. Tuition rates, in both private and public higher education institutions, are proportional to the socioeconomic background of the student, meaning that each student is classified under different tuition categories and will be charged based on their household's income. Nevertheless, tuition is more affordable at a public institution. This proportional difference is seen not only at the university level but is true on all levels of private education in Colombia, as there is no standard pricing but evaluated based on income.

The Colombian education system is highly diversified. The quality of public education varies according to location and the socioeconomic status of the institution itself (Immerstein, 2015). Thus, there are vast discrepancies in education, most notably when looking at rural and urban inconsistencies in quality education. In public schools, teachers routinely go on strike because of lack or inadequate pay. Students, on the other hand, violently protest the vast discrepancy in the public education system across Colombia. This causes high dropout rates in poorer zones specially in the cities. Low levels of literacy have also been reported, predominantly in the conflict zones. Neglect has been the principal issue in Colombian education

due to the decentralization of education and disproportional education spending (Duenas, 2013; Immerstein, 2015; Usma, 2009). The disarray and unorganized character of public school system is evident nationwide. Responding to low levels of educational adequacy, the private school system is abundant and preferred across Colombia regardless of socioeconomic status (Duenas, 2013; Usma 2009). Private schools proliferate and transcend the public education system all across the nation, and due to the extensive data collected in large urban areas it can be most clearly seen in larger cities like Medellin and Bogota.

As noted in the historical background, with neoliberal structural changes there is a push for the privatization of social agencies. In Colombia, private schools are the norm with the state as a far secondary option (Immerstein, 2015). What can be noted from Colombia's education model is its duality

in which a public sector provides primary and secondary education of low quality while at least some of the private institutions offer something better. Since education is rightly seen as a privileged means of access to the modern sector of the economy, any family with even a remote possibility of paying private school fees chooses to do so, in the hope of better quality (Duenas, 2013, pg. 217)

In 2015, the total percentage of students in Colombia enrolled in private primary education was 19.8%, in comparison to the worldwide average of 17.5% (UNESCO, 2015). Higher education is the most privatized out of all levels of education, with Bogota housing a total of seven public universities compared to 31 private (UNESCO, 2015). Private schools are most often visible in large urban centers where the demand for quality education is persistent as the population of Colombia is concentrated in urban centers. Rural areas, in contrast, don't have a strong demand, thus the state, in particular, expanded different programs often in conjunction with private entities, schools, universities, and NGOs. A deeper analysis of rural education will be conducted later in this chapter.

The Colombian Ministry of Education has attempted to change the vicissitudes of education, launching varied initiatives and reforms in education (Immerstein, 2015). There was been some success, but as Fernando Rojas claims, the IMF policies underdeveloped parts of the society that are until now seeing some stimulation from an influx of private investments (1985). This notion is most visible in the educational system of the county. Neoliberal policies infiltrated and transformed education in Colombia immeasurably. Decentralization has been the major force in the discrepancy of education in the public vs private sectors, most effecting the rural regions. Therefore, an exploration into how the system started and transformed is necessary in order to understand its lasting effects of the rural conflict zones.

### **Educational Policies Prior to the Final Accords**

Educational policy in Colombia has endured various challenges and changes. The management of public education was left at first to the Catholic Church and later to conservative government structures under the nation's first and longest running constitution (1886-1991). Under this constitution and managed by Conservative majority "elementary education was free but not compulsory," regulated by the Catholic Church and left to their prerogative (Duenas, 2013, pg. 21) Thus, education, until a reform in 1930s, was geared towards "providing the lower social classes a schooling minimum based on catechism and memory and those belonging to the elite group attended well-equipped and higher quality school although compared to international standards the quality was below those of industrialized countries" (Popper, 2000, pg. 10). Although, in 1927 a reform to the constitution guaranteed elementary education to all citizens, education remained centered around the Church and home life (Duenas, 2013). During this time education saw its first wave of decentralization as education spending was divided into three levels: national, department, and municipal (Duenas, 2013). As expected, the rural areas of the

nation had a smaller budget than their urban counterparts, thus the discrepancy in education funding forced rural areas to implement three years of obligatory elementary school enrolment comparable to the urban six years of enrollment (Duenas, 2013). As Ximena Duenas summarizes, “this allowed rural schools to have less financial obligations, (and) less infrastructure requirements” (2013, pg. 22).

Viewing the marked challenges presented by the constitution, with direction from a Liberal controlled government, *educacion popular* reforms (1934-1946) (Herrera, 1993) changed some aspects of the education model, specially eroding the catechism structure of the past. Focusing on the nation as a whole, without distinction between rural and urban areas, on paper, *Educacion popular* reforms not only saw that children should be in good physical condition to attend school, but school infrastructure should be upgraded, better salaries for teachers, and strict catholic teachings were replaced with more liberal agenda (Duenas, 2013; Herrera, 1993). They guaranteed this by increasing the national educational spending to 10% of the GDP (Herrera, 1993). Thus, overall, educational spending increased from 2.5% to a total of 8% (Herrera, 1993). Nevertheless, most of the cost of education and the decision on how to spend the funds were ultimately left to the departments and the municipalities (Herrera, 1993).

Decentralization came to describe the next few decades. The central Colombian government moved towards a neoliberal structure of their government in the hopes to make Colombia the optimal candidate for private investment and international loans. In this period, the central government would transfer some of its power to the smaller municipalities and providences across the nation, making only blanket policies in the capital city and leaving the implementation of which to the small regional governments. This ultimately left the rural municipalities with the task of implementing and funding the grand policies. Ultimately, what

remained was a clear divide between rural and urban. As previously seen, rural schools had small budgets making them almost incapable of retaining students as they had less school days and no connection to rural life (Duenas, 2013; Herrera, 1993). Later in this chapter, a specific policy (*Escuela Nueva*) during this time period will be analyzed in the context of decentralization, international actors, and the growing gap of rural and urban during this time period.

With the introduction of a new Constitution in 1991, education and most public service sectors saw a decentralized push, during Cesar Gavira's presidency (Usma, 2009; Duenas, 2013). This decentralization opened the Colombian market by lowering tariffs, entering free trade agreements, and most importantly to education, privatizing public entities. Thus, public services began to be controlled by private companies, leading public education to be limited and private education to be the norm across the nation, especially in the urban centers, something seen across Latin America. The new constitution talked about the way families should be peculiarly responsible for education, Article 67 defines "education as compulsory for children between five and fifteen years of age and its free unless parents are able to pay" (Duenas, 2013, pg. 42).

The Constitution of 1991 requests the Ministry of Education to present national educational plan every 10 years to be implemented across the country. The first national educational began implantation n 1994. Thus in 1994, the government introduced the National Education Law (Usma, 2009). The National Education Law granted autonomy to the school systems of each city to redesign their own curricula in favor of their necessities and their own needs (Usma, 2009). Following the neoliberal agenda, the new Education Law left policy to smaller branches of government, limiting the power of the central government and the Ministry of Education, as they only thing that they were required to do was to ensure national standards were met through standardized testing. This classic neoliberal move was viewed as a proper step

for the economy to flourish and the decentralization of the state in the privatization of public services to be complete in the education sector, similarly to other policy reforms across Latin America. Teachers were critical of the Education Law as it “professional discretion [was] hindered by their problematic working conditions, lack of time, and enforcement of national standardized test” (Usma, 2009, pg. 22). Teachers were underpaid and overworked with multiple classes making it difficult for students to advance grades (Duenas, 2013).

The National Education Law opened the doors for private entities to enter the education market. Decentralization left each city with the responsibility to manage its own education system, thus major municipalities and cities voluntarily took part in a voucher system aimed at expanding education to the poorest in their territory by subsidizing private school education (King et al, 1999). Launched in 1991, vouchers were primarily designed as a means to give poor students the chance of a better education. Tackling the growing dropout rate is important as in Medellin, a city of less than 3 million people, 13,000 children dropped out of school in 2005, due to a multitude of reasons but displacement due to the conflict, violence in their neighborhood, and lack of opportunities cited as most pertinent (Bernal, 2006; Usma, 2009). Municipalities would cover 20 percent of the cost of the vouchers issued in an area and the national government gave the remaining 80 percent (King et al, 1999). Vouchers covered tuition for students in sixth through eleventh grade, as students in secondary school were more likely to drop out of school. It was assumed that public schools were overcrowded and private schools had excess capacity (King et al, 1999). The voucher system began in larger cities, but quickly spread nationwide. By 1995, at the height of enrollment, it had “217 participating municipalities in 27 of the country’s 30 departments,” with the government awarding “90,000 vouchers to students in 1,800 private schools” (King et al, 1999, pg. 468). Most of the vouchers were concentrated in the urban areas,

with Bogota taking 13 percent even though rural areas benefited from the program greatly (King et al, 1999, pg. 470). Vouchers did not mean all private schools were affordable to poor families, nonetheless. Most vouchers were awarded to low cost schools with low performing average. Rural areas had a marked challenge with the voucher system as they lacked the infrastructure, the schools, and the support from local governments to subsidize private school education.

From the voucher system, a new model of education arose in order to combat the prevalent issues in the education system and the shortcomings of the voucher system--charter schools. Promoted by the World Bank, Concession Schools (*Colegios en Concesión*) began in 1999 as the Colombian charter schools following the public-private partnerships trend (Edwards et al, 2017). Concession Schools (CEC) were “intended to provide education that is high quality, privately-managed, and publicly-funded to poor students” (Edwards et al, 2017, pg. 4). CECs were different from the voucher program specifically because it pulled poor students from across the city into renovated centers in another more affluent section of the city. Thus, these schools had specific requirements. CECs have newly constructed infrastructures in order to serve the population it is serving. In Bogota alone, a total of 25 CEC schools were created between 1999 to 2003 (Edwards et al, 2017). CECs are able to “hire teachers on -month renewable contracts from a non-unionized pool of applicants,” following the neoliberal agenda of weakening labor regimes (Edwards et al, 2017, pg. 10). CECs are founded by the government, in a lesser rate than vouchers (Edwards et al, 2017). Students must come from the lowest socioeconomic standing and be able to demonstrate a clear necessity by proving lack of schools in their area and the household financial situation. Finally, the CECs are largely left alone apart from standardized test results conducted by the national government. In regard to Bogota, during 2005-2011 “CECs

enrolled between 3.7 and 4% of all students” in the city, with 79% in primary schools (Secretaria de Educación, 2013; Edwards et al, 2017, pg. 11). CECs in Bogota are divided into nine private institutions who run the schools. Their involvement can be explained as “private entities funded by two percent of the payroll of private companies and public institutions” (Villa & Duarte, 2005, Edwards et al, 2013, pg. 4). Hence, CECs are specific to metropolitan cities as they need the capital influx of private entities. This CEC model is now being considered as one of the methods to combat the gap in rural education in the post war era, nevertheless it needs more support from the local and federal governments as budgets are small in post conflict areas, the rural areas.

The decentralized model of education still holds true today, visible in the *Visión 2019 Educación: Propuesta para desicusion* (2006). Created by the Ministry of Education, *Visión 2019* was designed as goals for the education system in Colombia to be completed by the year 2019. It involved a mosaic of influences on all levels of education in order to grasp at the actual necessitates of the country. They spoke about educational expansion and student enrollment as methods of strengthening education (Usma, 2009). Nevertheless, such discussions were met with “constitutional drafts or national regulations to reduce public spending in education, regulate in favor of private education including charter/leased schools with the economic support of public monies” (Lowden, 2004; Usma, 2009, pg. 22). Charter schools would rise as the planed solutions in the major cities across the nation.

As charter schools have become prevalent in major urban areas, a different reality is unfolding in the rural regions of Colombia. As previously mentioned, the expansion of education in Colombia is one that can be characterized by maldistribution. Rural areas in Colombia have different challenges than those in the metropolises, including lack of private investment and

conflict. Conflict has been a pervasive fact in the rural areas in Colombia, therefore, naturally, education has been underdeveloped due to the constant struggle. Conflict has reduced “the average education of students...by one year of the national average” (Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2009, pg. 26). Children older than 11 in rural zones are most likely to drop out and enter the labor market than their counterparts in other areas of the nation (Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2009). Municipalities’ dropout rate has not been able to be controlled due in part to the decentralization of education as stated prior and the constant violence associated with persistent war. Now that education rest in the hands of the local governments, municipalities and other local governments are unable to adequately divide their funds in order to guarantee school quality and student retention because they see other priorities, like infrastructure, as more important than education.

Displacement is another issue facing the rural areas. By 2003, there were 11,000 children forcefully recruited and sent into combat in the rural areas where conflict is centered (Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2009). According to Human Rights Watch, there is a high level of pressure to drop out of school to join a guerilla or paramilitary organization (2003). Thus, families and young adults are likely to be displaced from conflict areas and move to the prominent urban sprawl. Internally Displaced People (IDPs) face a multitude of challenges while the people left behind are drained out of human capital. IDPs most often migrate to cities, Bogota being the largest city in Colombia houses about 270,000 registered IDPs, this number however is presumed to be much higher due to discrepancies in IDP registration (IDMC, 2015). Displaced people living in Bogota are poor, with 95% of IDPs living in poverty and 75% in extreme poverty (IDMC, 2015). IDPs tend to get incorporated into the periphery of the urban sprawl, living in the mostly poor slums of Bogota. It has been shown that it will take an IDP a long time to access humanitarian aid, due to “long procedures and red tape being the norm” thus “it can take up to two years

between displacement and receipt of the first humanitarian aid in the city” (Albuja & Ceballos, 2010, pg. 15). Therefore, within the city, education for the IDPs is tackled in the same manner as the others with low socioeconomic standing. On the other hand, the people left behind face different challenges. After people leave the rural area they are less likely to want to come back, leaving a huge gap in the educational system, as rural areas are drained of capable teachers and administrators. IDPs unwillingness to return to their land is evident as only 12 percent of female heads of house hold in Bogota want to return to their rural area (Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2009). Displacement is one of the largest challenges facing education, specifically for rural areas as “the possibility of obtaining a primary education degree without abandoning their environment is very valuable...it enables the possibility of enrollment in secondary education” and the total continuation of individual education (Duenas, 2013, pg. 32). Moreover, displacement takes capable people away from the development and stabilization of the rural zones.

### **Rural Education**

When talking specifically about rural education in Colombia, a few things are important to note. War alongside policies of decentralization have made education in these areas clearly different than the rest of the country. As mentioned, educational initiatives are broad and general, without specific targets. Educational initiatives have not been successful in these areas due partially because of the war and significantly because of neoliberal reforms. There is a lack of communication from the center of the nation to the periphery and different budget sizes makes education vastly different from one location to another. Rural education is most often characterized by self-determination and independence. Thus, rural education is varied and resourceful.

*Escuela Nueva* (EN) initiative is a perfect example of rural self-determination. The EN school model was based on “active learning and multi-grade teaching, self-instruction, interactive handbooks and advancement based on both student and teacher evaluation process” (Breazeale, 2010, pg. 26). EN model was a direct response of the high number of students and teachers fleeing the rural conflict zones. It began in the late 1960s in rural zones mostly plagued with war and marginalization, piloted by their own self-determination. The EN model was geared specifically for real needs, generally focusing on agriculture rather than urban ideals as students and teachers, alike, were given “self-guided, instructional handbooks that permitted them to go at their own pace” where even illiterate students could teach themselves (Breazeale, 2010, pg 27; Kline, 2002). This model was flexible, personalized, specialized, thus teacher and administrations over a generation were trained on this type of school model. The World Bank would finance parts of the EN, which increased the number of students in rural areas by 45.6% between 1988-1996 (Breazeale, 2010). The *Escuela Nueva* teaching model would be later implemented nationwide when the central government adopted its techniques for their national educational plans in the mid to late 1980s. Critiques of such assertion were quick as it was perceived by some to be counterintuitive and rather than self-determining, it became a regulation by the central government counter to the flexible, personalized and specialized tactic the EN model originally set out to be (Breazeale, 2010; Duenas, 2013; Kline, 2002; Espinoza & Patti, 2007). Furthermore, there was no mention of ethnic and racial priorities, so important to rural regions.

More recently, the EN model is not as widely utilized as more standardized platforms have come to the centerfold. Therefore, in an effort to directly combat the pervasiveness of war in the rural areas, the Ministry of Education has attempted other projects in rural areas.

Autonomy and citizen engagement are at the main core of the new initiatives, with each region having the ultimate decision on what programs are best suited. One initiative started in 2003, *Aulas en Paz*, placed civic engagement and social development at the same level as other curriculum (Breazeale, 2010). *Aulas en Paz*, and other citizen engagement programs are done in the hopes of educating students on all levels of society and fostering a new generation outside of war, they aim “to develop compassion, conflict resolution skills, collaborative decision-making, social responsibility, respect for the differences, and rights of all groups and identities by encouraging students to practice such skills and behaviors in simulated and real-life situations” (Breazeale, 2010, pg. 30; Chaux, 2009). The programs had some initial success, as the retention rate of students increased, and positive behavior was observed on higher scales than before, although this could also be attested to the diminishing armed conflict as the FARC was rapidly dwindling and began peace talks with the Colombian government (Breazeale, 2013).

Critics of citizen engagement initiatives not only point to the timeliness of the successes in comparison to larger forces in peace building, but like the EN model, see the national government as overreaching and unable to carry out the goals such program set. Once brought into the national expansion, such programs have become more rigid and less community based (Breazeale, 2013). Teachers are inadequately trained in these initiatives and the quality of education is vastly different from region to region (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000). There has also been a discussion into the overall support of such program, not only from the Colombian government but the international arena. As previously mentioned, some investments have come from monetary founds like the World Bank, who support parts of educational initiatives, nevertheless they do not invest in all aspects, like teacher training for example, leaving the whole initiative as a prototype (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000; Breazeale, 2013). Furthermore, the focus

for the international arena, until recently, has been the eradication of the guerrillas in militaristic fashion, most notably the United States, not in rural peace building or the education of war effected citizens (Breazeale, 2013). International capital intervention has been limited in these areas, leaving the Colombian government with very limited venues into which to carry out the reforms demanded by the neoliberal agenda exacerbated by conflict. Ultimately, most often what can be seen from national initiatives is a large idea without correct oversight, proper training, adequate and fair distribution of funds, and deep desire to see these plans for long periods of time.<sup>3</sup>

The education system in Colombia has travelled through a variety of strategies, some which have seen success and others which further interrupted the dissemination of education across the nation. Neoliberal educational reforms mentioned above, the likes of the voucher system and charter schools, were never introduced to conflict areas. This can be the singular direct cause of conflict interrupting the influx of private capital investment, nevertheless the true cause is the federal government's disembodiment and particular concentration with the development of profitable urban areas as directed and encouraged by foreign neoliberal structural reforms. Overall, neglect of rural conflict zones is the major characteristic of education prior to the Peace Accords.

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<sup>3</sup> Another aspect often forgotten about lies in the ethnic and racial differences rural areas present. The unfortunate reality is that, not until very recently has race and ethnicity come to the larger discussion table, being understudied. Thus, there is little or very limited data regarding specific requirements of the war and post war racial and ethnic narrative not only in education but in post conflict Colombia. This paragraph serves to acknowledge the limitations of educational research in Colombia, specifically in areas exiting conflict, and a proposal for future research. The war and postwar racial ethnic education narrative in Colombia has yet to be explored and lacks substantial impotence in previous educational initiatives. There needs to be further research and further data into these two important parts of the affected rural areas of Colombia.

## **Chapter 3: Data Analysis**

As the last chapter has shown, Colombia's educational policy is highly decentralized and committed to the autonomy of the local governments. Nevertheless, the national government in the form of the Ministry of Education has implemented policies that have set national standards and guidelines that effect the entire public education system. Presently, as a new post conflict period begins in Colombia, educational policy needs to be studied in order to understand how peace is to be incorporated in to society and maintained as well as how the Colombian government plans to expand education into regions previously under rebel control. This chapter analyses the educational policies that have emerged from the peace process and subsequent legislation pertaining to education policy.

The Colombian Ministry of Education, as an entity of the state, is committed to the peace-building process. The efforts set forth by the Ministry of Education in this post conflict arena have been slow and vague, nevertheless. For that reason, the implementation of such policy has yet to be seen in a nation awaiting governmental leadership in the conservation of peace. Currently, an educational infrastructure restructure has been the most visible strategy implemented by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, this chapter will analyze the few governmental documents available to the general public and conclude its analysis on the educational infrastructure focus. This will be done in order to prove the relationship between public-private partnerships in education and the pervasive neoliberal agenda in Colombia. As the construction of peace is imperative to the Colombian government, public-private relationships are being utilized in the peace building effort in Colombia's education system to fund the policies designed by the Ministry of Education. These close relationships between private institutions and public government entities in the education realm demonstrate the prolongation

of neoliberal ideas even after peace has been negotiated, a subject which this chapter will further elaborate on.

This chapter will be divided into two sections of analysis. First it will look into government documents. This includes the Final Accords, official government strategies and documents, available data, and accessible transcripts of the negotiation tables where the Accords were written and locally discussed. The second section will be focused on interview data I have gathered.

### **Government Documents**

The first section will begin by addressing the official peace accords, the Final Accords. The Final Accords was the culmination of arduous dialogs over the course of many years, resulting in a document which is over three-hundred-pages long. The Final Accords speak of a multitude of interests and topics, seemingly not leaving any important societal topic untouched. While the revisions mostly focused on the pecuniary ends of the accords, from the beginning there was a heavy emphasis on human rights and the extension of such human rights to the ex-militants and especially the victims of the perpetual war. Education, recognized in Colombia as a human right and a classical driver of development, was mentioned several times, and specified. The Colombian government believes better education will bring about a more skilled workforce. In this way, education has been linked to development, and it is an important part of the Final Accords. Rural education was given its own category and the expectations of the state was briefly outlined. In point 1.3.2.2, the national government commits itself to implement special plans for rural education in former FARC controlled lands (Final Accords, 2016). Therefore, the national government will implement “flexible models” that can be adapted to the needs of the region (Final Accords, 2016, p. 26). They also commit themselves to the betterment of the rural

educational infrastructure. The most important commitment the national government makes is the guarantee of free compulsory primary and secondary education to all, as well as opening scholarships to the adults who want to expand their education (Final Accords, 2016, p. 27). In the Final Accords there was a lot of mention of productivity and advancement, thus in the education sector technology was a big topic. It was agreed that people would be trained in technology, specifically in agricultural technology, by opening venues like more spots in universities and other specialized institutions (Final Accords, 2016, p. 27). Ex-FARC members will be trained in “productive labor,” centered around technology in hopes to demilitarize the areas and form new avenues for revenue (Final Accords, 2016, p.47). As it can be viewed the verbiage is broad and nonspecific, thus there are no real implementation tasks that neither the FACR nor the national government can deliberately carry out and check on each other. The single task in relation to education that the national government and the FARC commit themselves to carry out is in the diffusion of the peace agreement. In this they specify the creation of an educational program which will diffuse (or disseminate) the peace accords within the educational system, both public and private education, on all levels, a plan which will be explored next (Final Accords, 2016, p.47).

Another important document that has been critical in post-conflict education and a direct response to the Final Accord’s stipulations is by coincidence the Colombian decennial educational plan, *Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación 2016 – 2026* (PNDE). Under the constitution of 1994, all ministries of government are required to come up with a ten-year plan and make it accessible to the public. The Ministry of Education has had two plans since releasing their third decennial plan on the heels of the Final Accords. The previous decennial plans are dissected at the introduction of the current one, listing several initiatives that began and were

carried out during in the past. The Ministry of Education states that the gap between urban and rural retention rates have been shrinking due to their push for free compulsory education, the creation of regional offices, the enlargement of higher education quotas and scholarships, school nutrition plans, transportation services, and new school textbooks (PNDE, 2017). Furthermore, they claim to have gone “neighborhood by neighborhood, house by house” looking for children and young adults to enroll in classes “specially in more secluded municipalities.” Thus, for the year 2015, the coverage of tenth and eleventh grades was 47% in the urban and 29% in the rural (PNDE, 2017, p. 21).<sup>4</sup> These efforts have increased the average scores in national standardized tests and given more opportunities for students to enter higher education institutions. The Ministry of Education, nevertheless, acknowledges their biggest problem comes in the form of higher education, as none of the previous plans have been able to diminish the large and significant gaps. Of the 896 accredited institutions, 55% private and 45% public, only 41 are marked as high quality, 53% private and 47% public (PNDE, 2017, p. 22). The gaps between public and private education and rural vs urban are significantly exacerbated and illuminated in the realm of higher education, nevertheless still significant in the lower levels.

The Ministry, thus, sees one key aspect in all major issues, relevance. Relevance as they write:

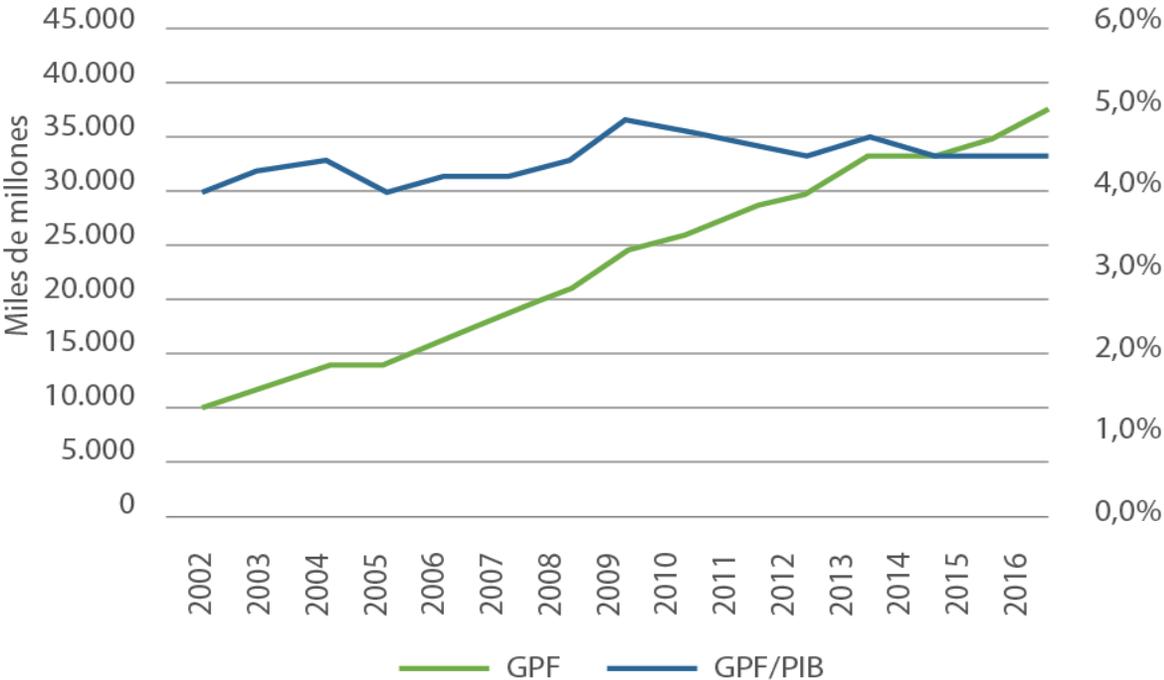
Is understood as the congruence between the national educational project with social needs and diversity of students and their environment. In this sense, the country's efforts, during the last years, have focused on the improvement of the practices in the classroom and the strengthening of the curriculum in educational establishments, thus generating inclusive models at different levels of education (PNDE, 2017, p 23)

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<sup>4</sup> Data on previous years or the data used by PNDE 2006-2016, is not accessible by the public at this time via the internet.

Relevance has been the major force behind all the previous plans. They hope that by understanding the needs of the nation and its people, the government will be able to tackle the significant gaps the country’s education system faces. Therefore, the Ministry hopes to make education a priority, not only for the people but for the Colombian government. According to the Ministry of Education, the allocation of educational founding by the national government “has been a priority,” as total founding has grown from \$26.6 billion in 2010 to \$38.7 billion in 2016, 4.5% of GDP (see Graph 1) (PNDE, 2017, p. 25). -The growth in funding and the focus on relevance have set up structures into which implement the new PNDE.

**Graph 1:** Public Spending in Education 2002-2016



**Source:** PNDE 2016-2026; Bank of the Republic- Ministry of Finance and Public Credit-Ministry of National Education

The *PNDE 2016-2026* was created with significant citizenship involvement, incorporating “135 discussion tables” where about “6,500 members of diverse communities”

participated, and a “total of 1.1 million Colombians from 96% of all municipalities” were invoked in the construction of the plan (PNDE, 2017, p. 31). Participation was divided into three committees, who will also oversee the implementation and regulation of the plan. Managing Committee, Regional Support Committee, and Academic Committee. The Managing Committee oversaw the construction of the plan and will direct the implementation (PNDE, 2017, p. 28). The Regional Support Committee will promote regional participation and national goals (PNDE, 2017, p. 30). The Academic Committee is in charge of the standardization and regulation of academic affairs (PNDE, 2017, p. 31). All committees reported and will report to the Ministry of Education for yearly check ins. Because of overwhelming national involvement and the division of labor, PNDE 2016-2026 has been validated by the Organization of American States (OAS) and UNESCO (PNDE, 2017).

PNDE 2016-2026 takes into consideration the agreements reached in the accords and begins the process of implementation. While it follows similar patterns as its predecessors, this recent PNDE speaks directly to the formation of peace through the strengthening of established structures. Nevertheless, it recognizes that to carry Colombia’s education into the international arena, as it hopes to do, the Ministry of Education must transform Colombian society and build its technological practice (PNDE, 2017). The document, as it stands, gives an optimistic view into the future, acknowledging the challenges that arise from the complete expansion of quality education. The language is very broad, having no specific methods in which to carry out the plan. PNDE 2016-2017 outlines ten Strategic Challenges and their points of interest that the Ministry hopes to combat over the course of the ten years. Some deal specifically with the quality and curriculum of the system, while others present a new view into the post conflict Colombia. Decentralization alongside an increment in quality assessments are a major theme in

PDNE, as the majority of Strategic Challenges listed present forms of decentralization and a creation of quality evaluations as a form of verifying change.

The most significant acknowledged Strategic Challenges in relation to the level of priority given to education lies in the eighth and ninth Strategic Challenge. The eighth Strategic Challenge speaks directly to the gap in rural and urban education, as it is written “give priority to the development of rural population through education” (PNDE, 2017, p. 56). This challenge is large and takes into account a variety of topics in relation to rural education. The Ministry, overall, wishes to deepen rural knowledge, advance technology, develop efficient models of public goods, work alongside all sectors of society, guarantee infrastructure, and create flexible models of education (PNDE, 2017, p. 58-29). The ninth Strategic Challenge reads, “the importance granted by the State to education will be measured by the participation of educational spending in GDP and government spending, at all administrative levels” (PNDE, 2017, p. 60). In summary, the Ministry states:

The Management Committee must create and guide an Observatory Commission, with the participation of universities, every two years analyze to follow up the amount of public resources allocated to education, its timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency in spending. The same Commission must present an annual report on the evolution in the fulfillment of the purposes and goals of the 10-year plan. At least once a year, they must promote a national seminar under citizen control over achievements education, its progress, and its improvements in terms of coverage and quality (PNDE, 2017, p. 61).

In order to accomplish their task, the Ministry of Education sets forth a series of points that, in their opinion, will make education a center point in order to surpass the ninth Structural Challenge. They want to focus the destination of funds, prioritize resources directed at the gaps, design a line of funding for the Peace Accords, make education a priority of the state, and most importantly decentralize (PNDE, 2017, p. 61-62). These points are paradoxical and directly undermine one another, as neo-liberalization asks central government to be smaller, leaving

education out of the hands of national government. The ninth Structural Challenge is primarily focused on the political aspect of funding, hoping to make education a central focus of the Colombian government in the process.

While both the Final Accords and the PNDE 2016-2026 set a progressive structure, there are several key limitations. Both documents use tones and arguments which are grand and progressive in nature, however they lack an implementation section. The documents speak of how Colombia should aspire to be, focused on education and life after peace, nevertheless they prolong neoliberal ideas of decentralization and minimal regulation. For example, PNDE 2016-2026 comments on funding and rural education centered around decentralization accompanied by higher quality assessments, but they do not comment on how this juxtaposing neoliberal view will be implemented. The two documents are limited in the way they could effectively change the status quo, the significant gaps in education, this is evident as they lack the actual ways the ideas will be implemented in to national, regional, local, policy and capital.

## **Interviews**

Moving on to the second section, neoliberal ideas of decentralization and minimal regulations have been at the center of not only Colombian educational policy, as the previous chapters have centered on, but were overwhelmingly present in the interviews I conducted with three people in various levels of education in Colombia. Within all interviews three topics arose as their most significant perception of Colombia's post conflict education initiative. First, each pointed to the major infrastructure upscale the Ministry of Education has been engrossed in for the last few years. Second, pecuniary funding was a major focal point for all interviews. Third, and last, the overall access to governmental plans was heavily criticized.

The attention to infrastructure has been employed by governments around the world as the physical representation of change and policy. Now that Colombia enters a new era, the government, in order to show the rapid change and growth of Colombian society, has set forth a task to build and renew school buildings across the nation. Thus, making infrastructure the face of post conflict educational policies. One interviewee stated, “infrastructure is the easiest to measure” while referring to the new policies the Ministry of Education was making public. The same interviewee, an educational non-profit administrator, also commented that as of late 2017 the only significant change and visible characteristic of the Ministry of Education’s post-conflict plan was infrastructure, as it was the center of both Minister Gina Parody’s (minister during the negotiations of peace) and current minister Yaneth Giha Tovar’s administrations. So, according to the Ministry, in the last two years the Ministry of Education has built and adapted more than “1,817 classrooms, 103 laboratories, and 320 sanitary spaces” (Ministerio de Educacion, 2018). The major focus of Gina Parody’s time in office, and continued under Yaneth Giha Tovar, was the national plan to build and reconstruct school buildings across Colombia, a plan named *Colegio 10*.

When lunched in 2014, *Colegio 10* began as the solution to the governmentally identified deficit in education, classrooms and complementary spaces. According to Gina Parody, the biggest problem facing Colombia’s education, not only in the post-conflict but in all areas, is the deficit of physical spaces for education (Ministry of Education, 2015, p 4). This new infrastructure is proposed to foster and focus on human relationships, providing space for “open dialog where adults and children can create peace” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 117). Therefore, infrastructure is presented as the physical form of the creation of peace, because it gives the people new spaces where humanity can transform itself into a peaceful society and

generates curriculum focused on peace, this comes from previous encampment programs like *Aulas en Paz* mentioned in the last chapter. Thus, the public also equates the longevity of stable peace with new physical spaces of educational infrastructure. Therefore, Colegio 10 set an ambitious goal to build “30,000 new classrooms in 1,500 educational centers” across Colombia with progressive architectural design before August 2018 (Valenzuela, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2015, p 4). Interestingly, building new educational infrastructure became the beacon of the national government, going as far as equating the push for new schools and proper educational centers to the post-WWII rebuilt of Germany (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 123). Nevertheless, Colegio 10 has been plagued with controversy, a topic I will discuss later in this chapter.

To identify the locations and schools that will be part of the Colegio 10 initiative, the ministry delegated data collection to different agencies across the nation. The data would be gathered in a system called, CIER (Censo de Infraestructura Educativa Regional), developed by the Inter-American Development Bank and consulted by the Chamber of Commerce of Barranquilla- Colombia. CIER was defined as the “method to collect, systemize, and effectively and efficiently manage educational infrastructure” (CIER, 2013, p. 4). All information is collected on a specialized computer system that relies on the internet to store and disperse information throughout the national territory. When looking at CIER closely, there is limited governmental involvement in the collection of infrastructural data and specified information, like the locations of schools and regions in necessity. These topics are insignificant in comparison to convoluted technological jargon. Thus, there is very limited information into how the data was and is being collected, who specifically funds the collection, and how remote parts of the nation will be able to collaborate with the system.

Significant questions have been voiced regarding Colegio 10 and the Ministry of Education's focus on infrastructure. Ex Minister Gina Parody was forced out of office while heavily bombarded with criticism regarding her very short time as Minister. Parody came into office personally appointed by president Santos in his second term in office, in hopes to create a cabinet ready to push for peace across all sectors of Colombia. Parody resigned after the plebiscite vote for peace was nationally rejected in October 2016, as a sign of defeat (El Espectador, Oct.4, 2016). Her time was marked by corruption accusations, her lack of qualifications and general unpreparedness for her role.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, her legacy, Colegio 10, remained a policy of the Ministry long after her resignation. Parody, while in office, secured infrastructure as the Ministry of Education's only solid plan for post-conflict Colombia, selling a very ambitious plan to rebuild the nation one classroom at a time via Colegio 10 (Ministry of Education, 2015). After her resignation, Colombia remained without a Minister of Education for sixty-one days during the most critical point of peace, while the Final Accords were in revision. Yaneth Giha Tovar, now the appointed Minister of Education, came from a financial background and lacks the qualifications just as Gina Parody. Regardless, Giha Tovar's time in office has been quiet and conservative in comparison. Her administration, nonetheless, has focused greatly on the infrastructure process. When interviewing a dignitary of the Ministry of Education, the subject of both Ministers and infrastructure was raised, which the dignitary was quick to cut short by clarifying that "Gina prepared and Yaneth implemented" as they are "from two different times and do things in their own way."

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<sup>5</sup> Gina Parody was criticized for having no previous experience in the education sector. Parody was educated in economics and financing, only appointed to be Minister after she was unable to be elected into office. Parody was perceived by the public as more preoccupied with the Final Accords and the plebiscite vote, than with the education system. At one-point Parody took a month-long absence from her role in order to campaign for the "Yes" campaign.

Nevertheless, Colegio 10 has been expanded and continued under Giha Tovar's time in office. Public-private partnerships have been sold as the solution to the issue of national funding and have been nationally sponsored. Giha Tovar's ministry, nonetheless, will be unable to complete the national goal of building and repairing 30,000 classrooms by August 2018. As previously stated, currently the Ministry has officially accomplished 1,817 classrooms, 103 laboratories, and 320 sanitary spaces (Ministry of Education, 2018). *Pacifista*, a VICE Network online publication, claims that they were able to view an unpublished governmental document that places the total current number of new classrooms at 10,909 (*Pacifista*, Feb 5, 2018). Most importantly, from the municipalities identified as the most impacted by war, which consequently are the poorest in the nation, only 344 new classrooms have been built or a total of 29 new schools (*Pacifista*, Feb, 5, 2018). The deficit in those regions has been identified to be 14,548 classrooms by CIER and other consensuses (CIER, 2013). This rural gap is a significant discrepancy which the Ministry has yet to address in policy or in investment.

Today, the ministry has yet to recognize it will not be able to meet the infrastructural goal, if the data presented is correct. While, CIER predicted that the total estimated cost of investment in construction is \$132,032,630 (CIER, 2013). According to the National Development Plan 2014-2018 (PND), the national government takes charge of 70% of the total cost and the local governments are mandated to manage the remaining 30% (PND 2014-2018, 2014). This estimate is well beyond the capacity of national and local governments. Thus, with the problem of CIER's estimate and the current total number of infrastructure completed, Yaneth Giha Tovar has commented on why the Colegio 10 project has not been successful, placing the blame on financing, most specifically on local government's financing. Based on the 70/30 financing initiative, 30% of the financing has to come from the municipality and local

governments, therefore Tovar has commented that the construction of infrastructure depends on the good measure of said governments in charge of co-financing the construction (El Espectador, Nov 4, 2017). Hence, according to Tovar, only 344 classrooms out of the total 10,909 classrooms have been built in municipalities most effected by war due to their mishandling of funds, ultimately placing the blame on the poorest regions and the victims of conflict.

Consequently, public-private partnerships for educational infrastructure has been offered as the solution proliferated by the Ministry of Education. According to the Ministry's official webpage, "public-private partnerships (PPP) for the education sector in Colombia include the participation of the private sector in the financing, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the country's educational infrastructure, and the provision of non-pedagogical services such as cleaning, monitoring and feeding" (Ministry of Education, 2018). PPPs are significantly desired on all levels of education, not just the construction of the infrastructure, but also on the secure image it presents to the post-conflict peace building efforts for the public of Colombia. In general, the PPPs demonstrate Colombia's possible economic growth and stability, as the private sector supports the government in the peace building. The PPPs help to paint a picture of a stable peace time Colombia.

There are two well-advertised PPPs in educational infrastructure. One between a national organization, the FDN (Financiera de Desarrollo Nacional/ National Development Finance) and the International Finance Corporation, a department of the World Bank. The second between a multinational accounting network, Deloitte, and the DNP (Departamento Nacional de Planeacion/ National Planning Department). The details of the alliances are not well-known yet but focus on the financing aspect of the projects. In theory, they focus on regions in need of financial support to build new infrastructure in order to complete the Ministry of Education

national education reform. It is not known if there are any other PPPs at this time, as these two partnerships are the only known to the general public. The PPPs presented are directed towards six major urban municipalities, not towards the nation as a whole or the regions impacted by the war. Furthermore, when speaking directly about the two acknowledged PPPs, it is not clear whether they are being utilized exclusively on infrastructure or on other levels of education.

Sensibly, funding for the major projects proposed by the Ministry of Education has been a major point of critique and concern across the country. PNDE 2016-2026 does not outline the actual budget and funding mechanisms that will be implemented while the nation transitions into post-conflict. When merely asked, “has education been a priority in the building of peace?” one of the people I interviewed responded with a clear negation, “simply, education is not a priority because the government doesn’t have the resources or won’t give to education.” The interviewee, who works for a major educational NGO in Colombia, goes on further to remark that the government utilizes foreign capital to continue educational plans, thus civil society institutions and organizations have to collaborate alongside foreign capital, to make up for the lack or subpar investment by the Colombian government. These collaborations often occur in the form of private universities teaming up with local government or coalitions of various NGOs both national and international. And as it has been pointed out earlier, the Ministry is utilizing public-private partnerships to close the financial gap, while the Colombian government has invested a larger portion of its GDP on education.

When talking to another interviewee, a dignitary in the Ministry of Education, the topic of funding was talked about in the same manner as other government documents talk about funding, quick and superficial. The interviewee, as a representative of the Ministry, said that there are alliances between universities, municipalities/local government, and companies with

the notion that education will bring about development as it will expand the labor force and educate them in up-to-date technological advances in their field. Therefore, these government sponsored alliances serve as the base of regional finance, where local people are able to further their education in regional specific land practices and join the labor market in a field unopen to conflict zones before peace. The Ministry provides these alliances with their name and very limited capital. These partnerships are a byproduct of the major PPPs mentioned in Colegio 10. As of late 2017, there were 18 formed alliances in higher education, according to the dignitary in the Ministry, Fundacion de Mujeres in the department of Cauca and an educational plan in the department of Norte de Santander where used as examples. Fundacion de Mujeres utilized actors such as the municipality of Cauca, a British company, and the national military, to proliferate specific ecotourism and technological training education via military radio channels. The other alliance in Norte de Santander, without a name, is composed of various entities like local government and foreign private companies, centered on the tourism industry and the farming of cacao. Both alliances, are hoping to educate the locals in the best land practices and train them specifically in tourism in order to expand each region's revenue source. The educational partnerships are specific to what the private entities desire and how they plan to develop the land. Nevertheless, the dignitary I spoke with stated that at the moment the Ministry was not at liberty to give further details on the alliances. When attempting to verify the alliances, I was unable to find any further information on either the Fundacion de Mujeres, the alliance in Norte de Santander, or the companies involved. Much like the Colegio 10, the general public is unable to confirm or view the deals made or verify their existence, making them behind closed doors deals. Meanwhile, Minister Giha Tovar and others in the Ministry of Education continue to blame the

slow movement of policy and infrastructure on the poorest, most war-torn, remote regions of the nation.

Vagueness and limited accessible information were persistent issues specified in the interviews. From the interviews I conducted, the most pronounced frustration with the peace building efforts has been the lack of public information. When interviewing a teacher from a private school in Medellin, the biggest issue she saw was how little the general population knew about not only the Peace Accords but the Ministry of Education's post-conflict policies and the methods which it planned to carry them out, even though the dissemination of the Final Accords is an explicit stipulation imposed on the Ministry of Education in the post conflict era, as previously mentioned. The educational NGO worker also sees the lack of public information as a major problem, commenting that the specific educational plan is not public, there is no financing, and the government cannot cover all the points in the Peace Accords. She has a point, PNDE 2016-2026 was supposed to be released to the public 2016 but was only released at the end of 2017. This could be blamed on the tumultuous transfers of power from former minister to current minister. Nevertheless, the delay was significant, leaving the general public with an unclear definition of the ministry's plan and their methods on providing education in a post conflict context.

Moreover, there is very limited information on the specific efforts the Ministry of Education is conducting in relation to its post conflict plan. This could be explained by the newness of peace and PNDE 2016-2026. Nevertheless, the only visible effort seen has been an educational infrastructure push, nothing yet on other significant points like the dissemination of the Final Accords, and very little on the expansion of education to the victims of the conflict. The subject of PPPs is very new and lacks accessible data. PPPs are presented as the solution to

public funding, nevertheless there is limited information on the locations, desired outcomes, and the scope of the parties involved. All this has left a general air of mistrust and has left many people wondering. The current state of education in Colombia is best summarized by “[the Ministers] haven’t noticed that education is not only infrastructure.”

## **Conclusion**

### **Findings**

This thesis investigated the relationship between peace, education and the private sector in Colombia. It expected to understand the discrepancies in educational policy in relation to the war and the intervention of neoliberal reforms. Therefore, what has been found lies in the remarkable relationship Colombia's education has with war and private investment.

Unsurprisingly, the post-conflict educational plan continues the neoliberal approach proliferated in the war years. The post-conflict educational plan, presently, lacks the capital, management, and time to be successful. Nevertheless, what can be seen is that the expansion of education to areas exiting armed conflict is following the same trends as previous policy. The lack of funding in the rural poor municipalities has opened the way for private investment in the form of public-private partnerships to drive federal policy forward, emphasized by physical representations of change, infrastructure. In a classic show of progress, infrastructure has been the central focus of the Ministry of Education in the postwar plan, due to what this thesis has explained, infrastructure is the easiest and fastest way to show citizens the governments' commitment to aiding the poor. However, if infrastructure is not backed by a strong comprehensive educational plan ready to be executed, one which includes teachers, students, and the affected communities' input into their quality formal education, what remains is an empty governmental building without true purpose.

Public-private partnerships are the main source of capital in these endeavors. The private sector, both national and internationally, are the drivers of public policy, as they decide which public plan to invest in. The federal government, thus, presents national educational policy and

encourages the poor municipalities and regions to partner with private institutions in order to carry out the national plans. Effectively, this is a direct cause of the decentralization and privatization reforms brought to Colombia under the neoliberal agenda. Areas exiting conflict are more likely to partner with the private sector, as their formal economy is in its infancy. Therefore, Colombia's post-conflict educational plan and its goals to extend education to regions of war follows the same neoliberal approaches of previous plans.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Research for this thesis relied on accessible government documents online, thus there was a gap in the time it took to disseminate official government policy for all citizens. In the case of PNDE 2016-2026, the Ministry of Education was unable to deliver the decennial plan on the required time, publishing it until this thesis was well into its research period. Moreover, once the information was available, not all parts were accessible by the public, for example the total details of how the PPPs will work in education. Although the Colombian government attempts to be as transparent as possible, there were still issues in the collection of data online, as there were parts which were only accessible in Bogota.

Another limitation presented to this thesis was the distance which the research was being conducted. As mentioned some information was only accessible in Bogota, however the research was primarily being conducted from San Francisco, California. This distance was also difficult when attempting to procure and retain interviews, as participants were asked to participate via the internet on a time difference.

The most significant limitation to this research is the fact that peace is a new subject in Colombia. The Peace Accords are new, and people are still understanding the parts that come

along with it. The government and the FARC are still in the transitional period, a period which has been difficult to navigate. Furthermore, this thesis has been written in a presidential election, as President Santos' term comes to an end and a new president is chosen. This has not only slowed down the share of information but has made citizens highly critical of all aspects of the Peace Accords, including the legitimacy and longevity of peace.

Due to the limitations of research, predominately in the scope of time, further research will be needed. There should be further investigation into the role PPPs play in the education plan of conflict zones and the precise details into which the municipalities plan to partner with the private sector. Moreover, as the incoming federal government begins, further research will be needed into how they will plan to continue the policies of its predecessor. Peace in Colombia is still in its infancy, thus further research will be required in order to understand the importance of education in the post-conflict era.

### **Closing Thoughts**

A nation designed out of the fervent desires of imposing leaders, Colombia stands today branded by the pervasive persistence of war within its territory. As history has been able to show, Colombia is a nation oppressed by the turbulence associated with constant violent eruption, a nation plagued by juxtapositions, a nation of war and development. Today, Colombia stands with an imperative new opportunity to foster a society of peace. After decades of war, peace was signed giving way for a redirection of desires, one centered around peace. As this work shows, the historic events, like La Violencia and the signing of a new constitution in 1991, which have traumatized Colombia, are ever more relevant as peace has not been a feasible task for this country. Furthermore, policies of decentralization and privatization have eroded the Colombian political system, as private institutions are at the center of political plans. Time will be the real

test in which to realize the longevity of peace for this nation who has yet to experience it. Thus, in order to create lasting powerful peace, education will be the central tool from which to foster a peaceful Colombia. Therefore, this thesis investigated the Colombian government's post conflict education plan, in order to understand the role private-public relationships play in the expansion of education into areas exiting war.

Today, with the signing of the Final Accords, Colombia finds a new opportunity for peace within its territory. The education of Colombian citizens should be a top priority for the federal government, as education has the power to support peace in all characteristics of the nation. However, as this thesis has demonstrated there are stark discrepancies within the current system of national education. Neoliberal reforms have usurped Colombia's educational potential, leading it to neglect its most venerable and deprived sections of the country already disadvantaged due to the prolonged and pervasive nature of violent conflict. These rural areas have been stunted by the maldistribution of neoliberal capital. As Colombia ventures into a new era, all aspects of society will need adjustment and considerable attention will have to be given to those mostly affected by conflict. Education has the power to proliferate and create a nation grounded on peace.

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