



Bridges between two nations: a comparative analysis of education in Colombia and Guatemala

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Summary

Objective: In a world in constant evolution, education is the fundamental pillar for the development of nations. This comparative study between Colombia and Guatemala explores in depth the educational situation of both countries, building bridges of knowledge that allow understanding their realities and envisioning a prosperous future. The main objective is to analyze and understand the educational realities of Colombia and Guatemala. It seeks to identify similarities, differences, strengths and challenges in the educational systems of both countries. As a result of the study, it is expected to generate recommendations and proposals that contribute to improve the quality and equity of education in both countries, promoting their social and economic development.

Originality/support: beyond a simple comparison, this analysis seeks to identify the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities faced by both education systems. The historical context, the policies and strategies implemented, the structure and functioning the systems, financing, quality of education, access to education and existing inequalities will be analyzed.

Method: this educational journey, based on a comparative approach, will provide an understanding of how education influences the progress, success and well-being of citizens, and how it contributes to building equitable, advanced and prosperous societies. Through the analysis of case , educational statistics and public policies, best practices and best practices will be identified.

challenges faced by education systems in different contexts, with the objective of extracting valuable lessons for improving the quality and equity of education in different regions.

Strategies/information gathering: the final objective is to obtain a comprehensive and enriching vision that will serve as a valuable tool decision-makers in education in both countries.

Conclusions: the results of this study will not only be useful for Colombia and Guatemala, but can also be extrapolated and applied in other contexts, to provide valuable knowledge and learning that will make it possible to improve the quality of and access to education at a global level. With this comparative analysis, bridges of knowledge are built that allow us to move towards a future where education is the key to sustainable and equitable development of all nations.

Key words: *Colombian educational system; Guatemalan educational system; Latin American perspectives on education.*

Bridges Between Two Nations: A Comparative Analysis of Education in Colombia and Guatemala

Abstract

Objective: In a rapidly evolving world, education is a fundamental pillar of national development. This comparative study between Colombia and



Guatemala delves deeply into the educational landscapes of both countries, building bridges of knowledge that enable an understanding of their realities and a vision of a prosperous future. The main objective is to analyze and comprehend the educational realities of Colombia and Guatemala. The study seeks to identify similarities, differences, strengths, and challenges within the educational systems of both nations. The study results are expected to be taken as recommendations and proposals to improve the quality and equity of education in the two countries, promoting their social and economic development.

Originality/Contribution: Beyond a mere comparison, this analysis aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities faced by both educational systems. We will examine the historical context, policies and strategies implemented, the systems' structure and functioning, financing, education quality, access to education, and existing inequities.

Method: This educational inquiry, grounded in a comparative approach, seeks to understand how education influences the progress, success, and well-being of citizens, and how it contributes to the construction of equitable, advanced, and prosperous societies. Through case study analysis, educational statistics, and public policy review, the study aims to identify the best practices and the challenges faced by educational systems in different contexts, intending to draw valuable lessons to improve the quality and equity of education across various regions.

Strategies/Data Collection: The ultimate aim is to obtain a comprehensive and enriching perspective that serves as a valuable tool for educational decision-makers in both countries.

Conclusions: The findings of this study will be useful not only for Colombia and Guatemala, but may also be extrapolated and applied in other contexts, providing valuable insights and lessons to improve the quality and access to education globally. This comparative analysis offers bridges of knowledge that allow us to move towards a future where education is the key to sustainable and equitable development for all nations.

Keywords: *Colombian education system; Guatemalan education system; Latin American perspectives on education.*

Pontes Entre Duas Nações: Uma Análise Comparativa da Educação na Colômbia e Guatemala

Resumo

Objective: In a rapidly evolving world, education is a fundamental pillar of national development. This comparative study between Colombia and Guatemala is based on the educational scenarios of both countries, building knowledge points that allow an understanding of their realities and a vision of a prosperous future. The main objective is to analyze and understand the educational realities of Colombia and Guatemala.



The study seeks to identify similarities, differences, strengths and challenges in the educational systems of both countries. It is hoped that the results of the study will be considered as recommendations and proposals to improve the quality and equity of education in both countries, promoting their social and economic development.

Originality/Contribution: Beyond a mere comparison, this analysis aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities faced by both education systems. We will examine the historical context, the policies and strategies implemented, the structure and functioning of the systems, financing, quality of education, access to education and existing inequalities.

Method: This educational research, based on a comparative approach, seeks to understand how education influences the progress, success and well-being of citizens, and how it contributes to the construction of equitable, advanced and prosperous societies. Through the analysis of case studies, educational statistics and review of public policies, the study aims to identify best practices and challenges faced by education systems in different contexts, with the intention of extracting valuable lessons to improve the quality and equity of education in different regions.

Strategies/Data Collection: The final objective is to obtain a comprehensive and enriching perspective that will serve as a valuable tool for educational decision makers in both countries.

Conclusions: The conclusions of this study will be useful not only for Colombia and Guatemala, but can also be extrapolated and applied in other contexts, providing valuable insights and lessons for improving the quality of and access to education globally. This comparative analysis offers points of knowledge that allow us to move towards a future where education is the key to sustainable and equitable development for all nations.

Palavras-chave: *Colombian educational system; Guatemalan educational system; Latin American perspectives on education.*

Introduction

Education in Colombia has come a long way since its colonial beginnings, marked by the exclusivity and dominance of the Catholic Church. At that time, access to knowledge was a privilege reserved for the social elite, leaving the vast majority of the population on the margins of educational opportunities. However, with the advent of independence in 1810, the hope arose to democratize education and make it accessible to all citizens. However, this yearning was hindered by the complex reality of the country, characterized by scarce resources and political instability. In spite of



of these challenges, efforts were undertaken to lay the foundations for a more inclusive and equitable education system.

The second half of the twentieth century marked a crucial milestone in the history of Colombian education. The implementation of educational reforms, such as Law 115 of 1994, represented a decisive step towards improving quality and equity in the educational system. These reforms introduced fundamental principles that sought to guarantee quality education accessible to all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic origin or geographic location. One of the most outstanding aspects of these reforms was the emphasis on the integral formation³ of students. An educational approach was promoted that went beyond the simple transmission of knowledge, focusing on the development of socioemotional skills, ethical values and the ability of students to develop as responsible citizens committed to their community⁴.

Despite the progress achieved, education in Colombia still faces considerable challenges. The gap between rural and urban areas remains significant, and the quality of education in some sectors is still deficient. However, the journey from colonial exclusivity to the pursuit of educational inclusion and equity is a cause for hope for the future of education in Colombia.

As in Colombia, education in Guatemala was initially under the control of the Catholic Church during colonial times. However, unlike its neighbor, Guatemalan education experienced prolonged stagnation for much of its history, largely due to recurrent political and social conflicts.

that plagued the country. This adverse context considerably hindered progress and 67 development of the Guatemalan educational system. It was not until the 1950s that a significant turn was made in Guatemalan education, with the implementation of major educational reforms. The National Education Law, enacted at that time, marked a turning point in the quest to improve access to and quality of education in the country. The central objective of this law was to guarantee the right to quality education for all Guatemalans, regardless of their socioeconomic origin or geographic location.

The reforms undertaken in the 1950s focused on strengthening basic education programs, recognizing their importance as a fundamental pillar for individual and social development. Technical and professional education was also promoted, identifying these modalities as key elements to boost the country's economic progress. In to guarantee educational inclusion, the reforms also implemented specific policies to address the needs of children and young people in vulnerable situations or with disabilities. These policies sought to ensure that all students had access quality and equitable education, regardless of their particular circumstances⁵. Despite the progress made in recent decades, education in Guatemala still faces a number of challenges.

3 Olga Lucía Zuluaga Garcés and others, *Historia de la educación en Bogotá*, Revista de Estudios Sociales No. 22, Alcaldía de Bogotá.

Mayor de Bogotá 2005): 147 - 150.

4 Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedagógico IDEP, *Historia de la educación en Bogotá* Bogotá: IDEP, 2012), 138.

5 Waleska Aldana Segura et al., *Revista IBEROAMERICANA de Educación*. Volume 91, no. 1, OEI, Madrid, (2023): 157.

considerable challenges. The educational gap between rural and urban areas remains significant, and the quality of education in some sectors is still deficient. However, the path from colonial stagnation to the educational reforms of the 1950s and subsequent efforts for educational inclusion and equity give reason for hope for the future of education in Guatemala⁶.

In summary, both Colombia and Guatemala have experienced significant transformations in their education systems throughout history. Although both countries faced particular challenges, important efforts have been made to improve the quality, equity and accessibility of education. These reforms represent a firm commitment to human and social development, and recognize the intrinsic value of education building more just and prosperous societies⁷.

Structure of the educational system

The education systems of Colombia and Guatemala share a similar structure, which divides their trajectory into three main levels: preschool, primary and secondary. However, they present significant differences in duration, compulsory nature and subdivisions.

In Colombia, preschool is optional and is offered to children between 3 and 5 years of age, seeking to stimulate their integral development. Basic primary and secondary education is compulsory and comprises nine grades, divided into primary (grades 1-5) and secondary (grades 6-9). Secondary education, which is not compulsory, comprises two grades (10 and 11) and prepares students for the following for higher education or the world of work⁸. It should be noted that normal schools offer a two-year complementary training program (PFC) grades 12 and 13), which allows students to graduate as preschool and elementary school teachers.

Guatemala's education system also comprises three levels: pre-school, primary and secondary education. Initial education encompasses both pre-primary and primary levels, providing educational attention to children from 3 to 5 years of age. Primary education, which is compulsory for all, consists of six grades and lays the foundation for subsequent learning. Secondary education, although optional, is highly recommended and is divided into two cycles: basic (grades 7-9) and diversified (grades 10-12), offering a wider range of academic and vocational options⁹.

6 Waleska Aldana and Marcelo Caplan, "STEAM experience in Latin America as an innovative education methodology," in I Gordon Institute Symposium, 2019.

7 Blanca Aurora Pita Torres, "Políticas públicas y gestión educativa: entre la formulación y la implementación de las políticas educativas", *Civilizar* 20, n.º 39 (2020): 139-52. <https://doi.org/10.22518/jour.ccsch/2020.2a09>

8 Decree 1177 of 2016, whereby the General Education System is established and other provisions are issued.

9 Ministry of Education of Guatemala (2015). *National Education Law. Legislative Decree Number 12-91*. Guatemala City: Tipografía Nacional. The aforementioned decree establishes the foundations and fundamental principles for the Guatemalan education system. This law seeks to guarantee the right to education for all citizens, promoting inclusive, equitable and education.



At the middle school stage, Colombian and Guatemalan students¹⁰ embark on a crucial journey towards preparation for the challenges and opportunities of adult life. In Colombia, this stage covers two grades (10 and 11) and represents the culmination of compulsory education. During this period, students delve deeper into specific areas of interest, develop indispensable skills for their personal and professional future, and prepare for higher education or entry into the world of work. In Guatemala, secondary education, although not compulsory, is considered highly recommended due to its formative value. It is divided into two cycles: basic (grades 7 to 9) and diversified (grades 10 to 12).

The basic cycle consolidates the foundations of knowledge acquired in primary education and prepares students for the academic and vocational options of the diversified cycle. In this last cycle, students have the freedom to explore areas of greater interest, strengthening their knowledge and skills for their professional future. In both countries, secondary education plays a fundamental role in preparing young people for the challenges of the 21st century. Through comprehensive and personalized education, it seeks to foster critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and communication skills, essential elements for success in personal and professional life.

Educational policies

Colombia and Guatemala have undertaken significant efforts in education, focusing on promoting inclusion and quality education for all their citizens. In Colombia, the General Law on Education has been the cornerstone of the pursuit of educational equity. This law guarantees the access and permanence of all students, children and young people in the school system, regardless of their socioeconomic origin or geographic location. In addition, the decentralization of educational management has enabled educational institutions make pedagogical and administrative decisions in accordance with the specific needs of their context, which has contributed to improving school infrastructure, teacher training and the availability of teaching resources.

In Guatemala, educational policies have focused on strengthening the quality of education through various initiatives. The National Education 2021-2032 has been implemented, which establishes a strategic framework for the development of the Guatemalan education system. This program seeks to guarantee equal opportunities for all students, emphasizing teacher education and training, the construction of new schools with modern infrastructure and the provision of quality teaching resources¹¹. In both countries, education has been recognized as a key driver of social and economic progress. The efforts made in Colombia and Guatemala demonstrate their commitment to building a more equitable and prosperous future for all their citizens through quality education and inclusion for all.

10 Jayson Andrey Bernate, "Los sistemas educativos iberoamericanos: revisión documental", *Revista Educare*, 25, n.º 2 (2021): 394. <https://doi.org/10.46498/reduipb.v25i2.1488>

11 Valdivieso, Karina et al, "Inclusive education in Latin America: trajectories of a segmented education". *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 28, no. 5 (2022): 18-35.



Colombia and Guatemala have recognized education as the foundation for the development of their nations. They have understood that investing in education is investing in the future of their citizens, forming competent individuals, committed to their community and prepared to face the challenges of today's world¹². In this sense, both countries have made significant efforts to improve the quality and equity of access to education. Scholarship and financial support programs have been implemented for low-income students, allowing children and young people from all socioeconomic strata the opportunity to reach their full potential. In addition, literacy programs have been created for adults, providing them with the necessary tools to fully integrate into . Links between educational institutions and the productive sector have also been strengthened, ensuring that students acquire relevant skills for the world of work and can contribute to the economic development of their countries¹³. These strategies have proven to be effective in reducing the educational gap between urban and rural areas by expanding educational opportunities for all citizens.

Education financing

In Colombia and Guatemala¹⁴, education is a key element for individual and collective development. The financing of this education sector is a shared responsibility between the state and families. Colombia¹⁵ has experienced a significant increase in the budget allocated to education in recent years, which represents a significant increase in the number of children and adolescents in the country. This increase has led to progress in educational coverage, school infrastructure and quality of education.

In Guatemala¹⁶, the responsibility for financing education falls mainly on the State, although other entities such as NGOs and international cooperation also participate. Despite the efforts , funding is still insufficient to guarantee quality education for all students, particularly in rural and low-income areas¹⁷. Both Colombia and Guatemala face the common challenge of improving the allocation of educational resources and expanding access to quality education for all students. This implies implementing strategies that promote equity in the distribution of resources, strengthen investment in educational infrastructure and technology, and improve teacher training and welfare.

12 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), *Colombia: Education and Employment Strategy 2020-2024*. (Washington, D.C.: IDB, 2018).

13 World Bank, *Guatemala: National Education Strategy 2016-2020* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2017).

14 ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2018*. 2018. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/44395-panorama-social-america-latina-2018>.

15 Colombian Ministry of National Education, *Informe de resultados 2019-2020* Bogotá: MEN, 2020). <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/micrositios-institucionales/Subdireccion-de-Gestion-Financiera/Estados-financieros/>

16 Ministry of Education of Guatemala, *Plan Estratégico de Educación 2020-2024*, Mineduc, 2021. https://infopublica.mineduc.gov.gt/mineduc/images/b/bc/DIPLAN_INCIS05_2021_VERSION3_PLAN ESTRATEGICO_INSTITUCIONAL_INSTIUTIONAL.pdf.

17 UNICEF. *The State of Guatemala's Children 2022*. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/country-regional-divisional-annual-reports-2022/Guatemala>

In order to achieve quality education for all¹⁸ it is essential to promote sustainable inclusion in the education sector. This implies not only increasing the allocation of resources, but also ensuring their efficient and transparent use. The active participation of the educational community, civil society and the private sector is equally crucial to strengthen educational financing and achieve the sustainable development goals for education¹⁹.

Quality of education

Education in Colombia and Guatemala is essential for the individual and collective development of their societies. Both countries have recognized the importance of this sector and have implemented various educational strategies and policies to improve the quality of education at all levels²⁰. Colombia has placed great emphasis on continuous teacher training, implementing evaluation programs to monitor educational results and establishing a national system for evaluating the quality of education²¹; this system seeks to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in the educational system, as proposed by UNESCO²². Guatemala has focused its efforts on strengthening education in rural areas and improving the quality of teacher training²³. To this end, teacher training and professional development programs have been implemented, as well as the creation of educational centers of excellence.

Although both countries have made significant progress, they still face challenges in terms of educational quality, such as lack of resources, unequal access and the gap (71) between urban and rural areas²⁴. However, its commitment to the improvement of education is evident in the implementation of policies and programs that promote quality education for all students⁽²⁵⁾ These strategies include investment in educational infrastructure, updating curricula to adapt them to new technologies, and the development of new technologies and programs that promote quality education for all.

18 World Bank, *Financing Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2020). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/03/22/america-latina-y-el-caribe-reit-was-your-commitment-to-strengthening-and-recovering-basic-learning>.

19 Camila María Bortot and Elisángela Alvez da Silva Scaff, "Organismos internacionales y gobernanza regional: una *policy transfer* para la educación de la infancia en países de América Latina y el Caribe", *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 1, no. 83 (2020): 34.

20 UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report on Education 2016: education and skills for the 21st century*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382498>

21 Ministry of National Education of Colombia, *Informe de resultados 2019-2020*. <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/>

22 UNESCO. *UNESCO guidelines for inclusion in education*. 2019.

23 Ministry of Education of Guatemala, *Plan Estratégico de Educación 2020-2024*. http://infopublica.mineduc.gob.gt/mineduc/images/4/40/DIPLAN_INCIS05_2022_VERSION1_PLAN ESTRATEGICO_INSTITUCIONAL_PEI.pdf

24 ECLAC. *Inequalities in education in Latin America: an obstacle to development*. 2021. <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/36835-education-inequality-america-latin-america>.

25 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), *Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and Opportunities for the Twenty-first Century* (Washington, D.C.: IDB, 2020). <https://www.iadb.org/es>

and the demands of the labor market, the promotion of gender equity in education and the improvement of teacher training⁽²⁶⁾.

The participation of parents and the community in educational decision-making has been strengthened, as has collaboration with international organizations to obtain technical and financial support²⁷. All of this has been carried out with the objective of guaranteeing a quality education that prepares students to face the challenges of the 21st century as set forth by UNESCO. In this sense, the inclusion of digital education in the classroom and the strengthening of bilingual education have been promoted.

Access to education

In both Colombia and Guatemala, regional disparities mark the educational reality. Rural areas and indigenous communities face disproportionate obstacles to accessing education. In Colombia, geographic barriers, lack of adequate infrastructure and limited educational offerings in remote areas exclude thousands of children and youth from their right to education. Similarly, in Guatemala, urban areas concentrate the greatest availability of educational centers and resources, rural areas suffer from shortages of infrastructure, teachers and transportation difficulties²⁸.

From another perspective, poverty becomes an additional obstacle to access to education in both countries. Families with limited resources cannot afford basic expenses such as books, uniforms or transportation, forcing them to prioritize other needs such as food and housing. This situation perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty by restricting development opportunities and social mobility. On the other hand, in Guatemala²⁹ indigenous populations, which represent a significant part of the country, are facing additional challenges due to discrimination and marginalization. These cultural and social barriers hinder their access to education and further limit their possibilities for personal and professional development.

Despite government efforts to increase school enrollment, there is still a long way to go to ensure equitable access to education in Colombia and Guatemala. Comprehensive and collaborative action is required to address existing gaps through³⁰:

Adequate allocation of resources: invest in educational infrastructure, teaching materials and teacher training in vulnerable areas.

26 OECD, *Education at a glance 2020: indicators for OECD and partner countries*. 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/education/>

27 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), *Investing in Early Childhood: The Key to Development in Latin America*. (Washington, D.C.: IDB, 2023). <https://www.iadb.org/en>

28 ECLAC, *Inequalities in Education in Latin America*.

29 UNICEF, *Situación de la infancia en Guatemala 2022*.

30 Alexander Fernando Haro Sarango et al., "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), end of poverty: an analysis based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction," *Latam, Latin American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2023): 3190-3207.

Promotion of inclusive educational policies: to develop programs that promote inclusion and combat socioeconomic and cultural barriers that limit access to education.

Attention to the specific needs of indigenous populations: define strategies that promote their access to relevant education that respects their culture and identity.

Fight against poverty: execute economic support programs for low-income families to facilitate access to education for their children.

Preschool education

In both Colombia and Guatemala, preschool education is essential for the comprehensive development of , since it lays the foundations for a prosperous and equitable future. This analysis delves into the importance of this educational level in both countries, highlighting its objectives, coverage, challenges and efforts made to guarantee its access and quality. In Colombia, preschool education is aimed at children between 3 and 5 years of , focusing on their cognitive, socio-affective and motor development. The country has achieved broad coverage at this level, reaching approximately 95% of the child population at this stage. This achievement is attributed to the implementation of various programs and policies, such as continuous teacher training and the application of quality standards.

In Guatemala, preschool education also covers children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old, and seeks to provide them with a comprehensive education that enhances their skills and competencies. Without ⁷³ However, coverage at this level still presents a challenge, since only approximately 50% of preschool children have access to this type of education. Despite this, the government and civil society organizations have made significant efforts to increase coverage and improve the quality of preschool education in the country³¹. It is important to mention that both countries recognize the importance of investing in preschool education as the basis for a successful educational process and as a strategy to reduce social gaps and improve children's future opportunities.

Primary education

In Colombia, the primary education curriculum encompasses a wide range of knowledge areas, including mathematics, language, social and natural sciences, English and other relevant subjects. This holistic approach seeks to foster students' cognitive, socioemotional and creative development, preparing them to face the challenges of today's world. Guatemala, for its part, also applies a comprehensive curriculum in primary education, which includes basic subjects such as mathematics, language and science, together with the

31 Juan José Giraldo Huertas, Diana Carolina Sánchez Manzano and Mario Fernando Gutiérrez Romero, "Efectos en el desarrollo cognitivo de niños y niñas en condición de riesgo y pobreza multidimensional de dos intervenciones con cuidadores
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principales," *Revista Complutense de Educación* 4, n.º 1 (2023): 157-166.

development of essential competencies for life and coexistence. This approach seeks to form responsible citizens who are prepared to contribute positively to their communities³².

Despite the efforts made by both countries, challenges remain in terms of access to primary education, educational quality and equity. Particularly in rural areas and for vulnerable population groups, access to quality education continues to be a problem. However, Colombia, like Guatemala, has developed policies and programs to address these issues. Continuous teacher training, the promotion of educational inclusion and the active participation of civil society are some of the pillars of these efforts.

Secondary education

In Colombia, secondary education is divided into two cycles: junior high school (four years) and high school (two years). During this process, students acquire solid knowledge in various areas of knowledge, such as mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, language and humanities. In addition, strong emphasis is placed on the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and effective communication. In Guatemala, secondary education also consists of two cycles: basic (three years) and diversified (three years). The basic cycle seeks to consolidate a solid foundation of fundamental learning and the diversified cycle offers students the opportunity to specialize in areas of their interest, such as science, humanities, vocational-technical or teacher training. This curricular diversification allows young people to explore different areas of knowledge and develop specific skills that will be useful in their future careers.

Despite the progress made in both countries, secondary education in Colombia and Guatemala still faces challenges in terms of teaching quality, equity of access and the gap between urban and rural areas³³. Addressing these problems requires the implementation of comprehensive policies and strategies that promote quality secondary education for all students.

Well, establishing rigorous evaluation and monitoring mechanisms is essential to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the education system and make the necessary adjustments to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Secondary education must prepare young people for the world of work in the 21st century, equipping them with skills such as mastery of information and communication technologies, critical thinking, the ability to adapt to change, creativity and collaboration.

Higher education

32 Marlén Rátiva Velandia and José Rubens Lima-Jardilino, "Universitarización de la formación docente en la Escuela Normal colombiana," *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 24, no. 38 (2022): 13-35.

33 Jayson Bernate, "Los sistemas educativos iberoamericanos: revisión documental".

Colombia has an extensive network of public and private higher education institutions offering a wide range of academic programs in various areas of knowledge. This diversity allows students to choose from a wide range of options to suit their interests and career aspirations. Guatemala has also experienced remarkable growth in higher education. Although access still presents challenges³⁴ for some sectors of the population, scholarship and financial support programs have been developed to facilitate the entry of low-income students.

The Ministry of National Education in Colombia and the educational authorities in Guatemala are responsible for guaranteeing the quality of higher education through the accreditation of programs and universities. This rigorous process ensures that standards of excellence in teaching, research and university extension are met. Both countries have recognized the importance of equity in access to higher education. Specific policies and programs have been implemented to increase the participation of historically excluded groups, such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia, and vulnerable population groups in Guatemala.

Continuous improvement of educational quality is a priority in both countries. Significant efforts have been made to strengthen teacher training, scientific research and links with the productive sector. In addition, academic programs are designed to meet the needs of the labor market and the challenges of today's world.

Technical and vocational education

Technical and vocational education (TVE) in Colombia and Guatemala prepares young people for the world of work, providing them with the specific skills and knowledge that will enable them to meet the challenges and demands of today's market. This type of education plays a crucial role in the social and economic development of both countries, as it contributes to the formation of highly trained and competitive professionals who drive the growth and well-being of their societies. In Colombia, VTE is provided in public and private institutions, which offer a wide range of training programs linked to key productive sectors such as agriculture, industry, services and information and communication technologies (ICTs). In addition, the articulation between VTE and higher education is promoted to enable students to continue their studies and obtain university degrees that provide them with greater opportunities for professional development.

Guatemala has oriented VTE mainly toward job training in areas such as construction, hospitality and tourism, medicine and health sciences³⁵. However, the need has been recognized to expand educational offerings in this area and to improve the quality of education.

34 Eliana Lucy Gómez Llano, "Intellectual capital in higher education institutions and organizational performance. Una revisión teórica desde 2018 al 2022," *Ciencia Latina: Revista Científica Multidisciplinar* 6, no. 6 (2022): 2159-2183. <https://ciencialatina.org/index.php/cienciala/article/view/3672>

35 Alejandra Mishell Castillo Girón, "Investigación: análisis de las fortalezas y áreas de oportunidad de los talleres laborales del Instituto Neurológico de Guatemala. Substantive proposal: labor opportunities for students of the Neurological Institute of Guatemala with strengthened labor training processes", (Master's Thesis), Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 2023, 69.



The quality of existing programs to ensure that students acquire the competencies and skills needed to perform efficiently in the national and international labor market. Both Colombia and Guatemala face common challenges in terms of access and quality of VET. Strengthening articulation with the productive sector is essential to develop curricula in line with the needs and demands of the labor market. In addition, educational content must be constantly updated to reflect the technological and economic advances of the global environment.

It is essential to invest in improving the infrastructure and technological equipment of VTE institutions, as well as in the continuing education and professional development of teachers. This will make it possible to create a conducive learning environment and ensure that students receive a quality education in line with the demands of today's world. Policies and programs that promote equity and inclusion in VTE should be implemented, guaranteeing access to all students, regardless of their socio-economic origin, gender or geographic location. This will make it possible to take full advantage of the human potential of both countries and contribute to the reduction of social inequalities.

Educational curriculum

The educational curriculum of the Colombian and Guatemalan educational systems, as it defines the contents, objectives and competencies that students must acquire at each educational level. This detailed and systematic approach seeks to guarantee a quality education.

76 quality that promotes the integral development of students, preparing them to face the challenges of today's world.

In Colombia, the educational curriculum³⁶ is based on the competency-based approach, which means that it focuses on the development of skills and knowledge that students will be able to apply in different life situations. This curriculum is structured in six main areas: language, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, English and art education. Each area has its own objectives and content, carefully designed to adapt to the specific needs and contexts of the country. In this way, students are expected to acquire a solid foundation in all areas of knowledge, equipping them with the necessary tools for their personal and professional development. In Guatemala, the educational curriculum is divided into three levels: initial education, basic education and diversified education. Each level has its own set of areas of study, covering various aspects of knowledge. These areas include language and communication, mathematics, social sciences, science and technology, as well as physical and artistic education. This holistic approach seeks to offer students a complete education that encompasses academic as well as physical and creative aspects, fostering the integral development of individuals.

Despite their differences in structure and approach, Colombia and Guatemala share the primary objective of promoting a comprehensive education for students through their educational curricula. This diversity responds to the cultural and social particularities of each country.

36 Alex Mauricio Díaz, Diana Berrocal Contreras and Sergio Pereira Hernández, "Comunidades de aprendizaje docente para mejoramiento de competencias investigativas y planeación curricular", *Enunciación*, 29, n.º 1

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(2024): 21.

and economic conditions of each country, and reflects their commitment to adapting education to the specific needs of their population. The importance of the educational curriculum as the foundation of the Colombian and Guatemalan educational systems is undeniable. Both countries recognize the need for continuous updating and development of their curricula to ensure that they respond to the demands of an ever-changing world. This commitment is reflected in the constant revision and updating of content, objectives and teaching methodologies in order to offer students a quality education that prepares them to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Teacher training

Teacher training is perhaps the main pillar for guaranteeing quality education in Colombia and Guatemala. Both countries have recognized the importance of having highly trained education professionals who are motivated and committed to their students' learning. In this sense, several policies and programs have been implemented to strengthen the initial and continuous training of teachers, with the objective of improving the quality of teaching and learning at all educational levels.

In Colombia, the National Teacher Training Plan has been instrumental in strengthening teachers' competencies. This comprehensive program provides tools to implement innovative methodologies, effectively evaluate learning and create environments conducive to the comprehensive development of students³⁷. In addition, it promotes the

continuing education through various modalities: work education programs 77 and human development, such as diploma courses and short courses; and postgraduate programs, such as specializations, master's degrees and doctorates, all of which are part of an individual's educational trajectory. These options allow teachers to deepen their knowledge, specialize in specific areas and keep up to date with the latest pedagogical and didactic trends.

In Guatemala, the National Teacher Training Program has become a benchmark in the search for quality education. This program focuses on providing teachers with cutting-edge pedagogical tools, developing their leadership and educational management skills, and promoting the use of information and communication technologies in the classroom. An innovative aspect of the program is the use of online training, which allows teachers to access courses and educational resources virtually. This broadens their access to innovative educational tools and allows them to keep up with the latest trends in teaching and learning.

Colombia and Guatemala recognize the importance of ensuring equity in access to education. In this sense, specific training and support programs have been implemented for teachers working in rural areas and marginalized communities. These programs seek to strengthen the competencies of teachers in these areas.

37 Yaneth Cucunubá Tabaco, Nohora Elisabeth Alfonso Bernal and Carmen Helena Cepeda Araque, "ICT in the

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multi-grade classroom. Una experiencia de formación de profesores," *Revista Boletín Redipe* 9, n.º 8 (2020): 188.

areas and provide them with the necessary tools to respond to the specific educational needs of their students.

Educational inclusion

On the issue of educational inclusion, both countries share the responsibility of guaranteeing access and participation of all students in the educational system, regardless of their social, economic or disability status. Achieving inclusive education involves not only opening the doors of schools to all students, but also creating equitable and accessible learning where everyone can develop their full potential.

Colombia has made notable efforts in terms of educational inclusion, through the implementation of public policies that seek to address the needs of minority groups, such as children displaced by the armed conflict. Specific programs and strategies have been developed to support students with disabilities, guaranteeing their access to education and providing them with the necessary tools for learning³⁸. In Guatemala, educational inclusion has also received priority attention. The Intercultural Bilingual Education Program has been fundamental to meet the educational needs of indigenous students, preserving their cultural identity and promoting their integral development. In addition, the National Special Education Program has been implemented to provide specialized attention to students with disabilities, ensuring their access to quality education.

Despite progress, both Colombia and Guatemala still face challenges to achieve full and effective educational inclusion. Continued strengthening of inclusion policies and programs is required, as well as an improvement in the infrastructure and resources available in educational institutions. It is essential to eliminate attitudinal and discriminatory barriers that still persist in some sectors of society, and to promote a culture of respect and appreciation of diversity. Educational inclusion is not only a fundamental right for all students, but also a driver of social development for both countries. By guaranteeing quality education for all, it contributes to the reduction of inequalities, the strengthening of the social fabric and sustainable economic growth.

Bilingual education

Bilingual education³⁹ is an issue of great relevance in Colombia and Guatemala, where both countries share the objective of strengthening the learning of two or more languages in their educational systems. This pedagogical approach seeks not only to improve

38 Laura Hernández Izquierdo and Álvaro Marchesi, "Teachers' attitudes towards educational inclusion in Colombia, Guatemala and Spain," *Science and Education* 5, no. 1 (2021):10.

39 Martha Vergara Fregoso, "From indigenous education to intercultural education in Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala. Debates, reflections and challenges", *Utopia and Latin American Praxis*, 26, n.º 95, (2021): 18.



The program also promotes interculturality, respect for diversity and preparation for a globalized world.

Colombia has embarked on an ambitious path to strengthen bilingual education through the National Bilingualism Plan. The main objective of this comprehensive plan is to improve the English communication skills of students at all levels of education. Various strategies have been implemented, including teacher training, curriculum updating and the creation of high quality educational materials. Despite the efforts and progress made, some major challenges remain. Bilingual teacher training continues to be an area that requires greater attention, and the lack of financial and material resources hinders the adequate implementation of the bilingual approach in some regions of the country.

In Guatemala, intercultural bilingual education (IBE) is especially relevant, focusing on the development of the mother tongue along with Spanish. The National Intercultural Bilingual Education Program (PRONEBI) has been essential in this regard, as it has guaranteed equitable access to quality bilingual education for students from diverse ethnic groups. Despite notable progress, EBI in Guatemala still faces challenges such as limited coverage in some rural areas, the need to strengthen teacher training in this area and the adaptation of educational resources to the specific needs of each indigenous community.

In summary, Colombia, like Guatemala, is at a crucial stage the development of bilingual education. Despite the challenges they still face, both countries are at a crucial stage in the development of bilingual education.

countries have demonstrated a significant commitment to this educational approach through

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The implementation of innovative programs and efforts to overcome existing barriers. As these efforts continue and the remaining obstacles are overcome, it is expected that bilingual education in Colombia and Guatemala will continue to advance, providing new generations with the linguistic and cultural tools necessary to succeed in an increasingly diverse and globalized world.

Rural education

Rural education in Colombia and Guatemala faces a series of structural challenges that significantly impact the quality of teaching and access to education. These obstacles, present in various rural regions of both countries, require urgent and concerted action to guarantee the right to quality education for all students, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status.

Persistent challenges that hinder progress:

Geographic dispersion and access limitations: The high geographic dispersion of rural areas makes access to educational institutions difficult, significantly restricting learning opportunities for students. The availability of quality educational resources is also limited by this situation.



Poor infrastructure: The lack of adequate infrastructure -such as modern, well-equipped classrooms and reliable connections to technology- directly affects the quality of learning in rural areas. This generates a significant educational gap with urban areas.

Shortage of trained teachers: The shortage of highly trained teachers in rural areas is a worrisome problem that negatively influences the quality of education offered in these areas. The lack of incentives and professional development opportunities for teachers in these regions aggravates the situation.

Cultural and linguistic barriers: Cultural and linguistic differences between rural and urban communities can create additional barriers to access to quality education. The lack of educational materials in indigenous languages and the lack of understanding of the specific cultural needs of rural students are factors that must be addressed.

The imperative need for a comprehensive approach:

Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the specific needs of rural areas and ensures quality education for all students. The following actions are essential:

Implementation of differentiated policies and programs: it is necessary to design and implement educational policies and programs that take into consideration the specific realities and needs of rural areas. This includes investment in infrastructure specialized teacher training and the development of didactic resources appropriate to the rural context.

Educational inclusion programs: the active promotion of educational equity through inclusion programs is essential to ensure that no student is left behind. This implies eliminating access barriers, addressing cultural diversity and taking support measures for students with special educational needs.

Joint commitment of governments and society: overcoming the challenges in rural education requires the commitment and collaboration of various actors, including governments, educational institutions, teachers, families and communities. A collective and sustained effort is indispensable to achieve the goal of quality education for all rural students.

Rural education⁴⁰ in Colombia and Guatemala is an urgent challenge for the integral development of both countries. Only through concerted action and a constant commitment to educational quality will it be possible to overcome existing obstacles and ensure that all students, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status, have access to an education that will enable them to reach their full potential and contribute to the progress of their communities.

40 Fabiola Cabra Torres et al. *Educating in rural territories: school, conflict and training* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2023), 1966.



Conclusion

Future outlook for education in Colombia and Guatemala: a path to excellence and equity

Education in Colombia and Guatemala is at a crucial juncture, with an urgent need to address challenges and seize opportunities to ensure quality education for all students. In this context, the following perspectives are presented as pillars for the educational development of both countries:

1. Strengthening the quality of education:

Promotion of excellent teacher training: implement continuous training and specialization programs for teachers to ensure that they are updated in innovative methodologies and relevant content.

Constant updating of educational curricula: periodically review and update curricula to adapt them to the needs of today's world, including cross-cutting competencies and skills for the 21st century.

Effective implementation of educational technologies: integrating ICTs into the teaching and learning process in such a way as to provide students with access to digital tools and educational resources.

2. Educational inclusion:

Ensuring access to education for vulnerable groups: determining strategies to remove barriers to access and participation for groups such as students from rural areas, indigenous populations, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

Encourage bilingual education: promote the learning of two or more languages in the educational system, valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity of both countries.

3. Civil society participation:

Strengthen the participation of the educational community: actively involve parents, families and community members in decision-making and evaluation of the educational system.

Promote transparency and : ensure transparency educational management and promote accountability mechanisms to guarantee the proper use of public resources.

4. International cooperation:

Exchange of best practices: establish collaboration mechanisms with other countries to share successful educational experiences.

Financial and technical support: seek international cooperation to obtain funding and technical assistance for the development of innovative educational projects.

Outlook:



The future prospects for education in Colombia and Guatemala are based on a comprehensive approach that seeks to:

Significantly improve the quality of education.

Promote the inclusion of all students, regardless of their social, environmental and psychological conditions.

Strengthen the active participation of all actors involved in the educational field. To take advantage of the potential of international cooperation.

Only through a collective and sustained commitment on the part of governments, educational institutions, teachers, families, communities and society in general, will it be possible to achieve these objectives and build a more prosperous and equitable educational future for all children and young people in both countries.

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