

FLAWS OF THE COLOMBIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Thank you.

Abstract

Colombia, como muchos otros países, siempre ha luchado contra la pobreza, la corrupción, el desempleo, la discriminación, la adicción a las drogas y la desigualdad de clases. Esto se traduce directamente a sus fallas en la educación. Los rumbos que se pensaba que eran las causas de este desequilibrio eran el propio sistema educativo, el gobierno y / o las escuelas. Más tarde, se descubre que es una combinación de todas estas cosas. Gracias a fuentes externas corruptas, existe gente que se estaba beneficiando del dinero destinado a ir directamente a la educación y las escuelas. Después de entrevistar a una variedad de maestros de colegios públicos y privados, se observaron ciertos patrones con respecto al proceso y la calidad de la educación que los estudiantes de las áreas rurales pueden recibir en comparación con la educación que reciben los estudiantes de las escuelas privadas.

Se ha comprobado que todos estos factores afectan la educación que reciben los estudiantes; así que al solucionar estos problemas, los estudiantes de todo el país finalmente podrán ejercer la educación que se merecen.

Summary

Colombia, like many other countries, has always struggled with poverty, corruption, unemployment, discrimination, drug addiction and class inequality. This directly translates to its flaws in education. The bearings thought to be the causes of this imbalance were the educational system itself, the government, and/or the schools. It is later found out to be a combination of all these things. Thanks to corrupt outside sources, people were profiting off of money meant to go straight towards education and schools. After interviewing a variety of teachers from both public and private schools, certain patterns were seen regarding the process and quality of education students in rural areas may receive versus the education students from private schools receive.

All these factors are proven to affect the education students receive; so by fixing these problems, students from all around the country will finally be able to exercise an education they deserve.

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Introduction

The present investigation refers to the difficulties the Colombian government and Colombian schools have to better teach students. "A teaching structure is made up of a set of institutions and bodies that regulate, finance and provide services for the exercise of education according to policies, relationships, structures and measures dictated by the State of a country"(Pg. 1, significados.com). In the Colombian law number 115 about education, it states that "education is a process of permanent, personal, cultural and social formation that is based on an integral conception of the human person, their dignity, their rights and their duties"(1994, Colombian law 115).

This thesis's first direction was to see what the Colombian education system was doing wrong and correct its mistakes by taking other systems from schools and universities around the world. But after thorough research, it was clear that the educational system was doing nothing wrong, but was promoting a system very much appropriate to the standards of this investigation. So this led to a different kind of problem with a different approach; Why does the government promote a system that they don't back up?

4.6% GDP (Gross domestic product) has been invested into Colombia's education, yet only 0.5 % of this expenditure has gone towards rural areas. This leads to poorer education in these districts, therefore further dividing the stratum gap, unemployment cycles, violence and poverty. Not to mention the inadequate facilities, lack of internet connection, the location of the schools themselves and insufficient salaries for teachers. It's as if the country wants to divide its people, let the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Everyday, it gets harder and harder for someone of humble beginnings to make it out of poverty, and this problem begins with education.

The other direction of the thesis was to find a way for schools to be more productive and bearable for students. It is clear that the Colombian educational system has good intentions that are looked to be carried out. The problem starts with a lack of a motivating environment and student support can affect a student's mental health and further desire to learn. Why not see to it that students should be taught the way the system looks for? Students should leave school ready to live in the real world and with the abilities needed to pursue a career of their choice. They should look forward to going to school to learn things they enjoy that are equally important than any other subject being taught. And if all things are carried out accordingly, every student should be mentally healthy and satisfied with the fact that they will graduate school with the right tools to apply to universities and live a happy life.

Chapter 1

Objectives

1.1 General Objectives

Learn what changes must be made to the government and its schools in order to promote the standards of teaching established by the state.

1.2 Specific objectives:

1. To establish what the government and/or schools are doing to either correct or improve the learning process.
2. to measure teacher's thoughts on the existing problems in the school system through surveys.
3. To propose a solution to better the quality of education in Colombia.

Chapter 2

Statements

2.1 Problem Statement

I chose to make my investigative project about the flawed Colombian government/educational system, and how to fix it. This could be backed up by a number of reasons.

I could have been better prepared for my future. Over the past few years, ive been able to narrow down my interests and my strengths career-wise. I know not many people could do what I did, which is exactly why I believe that schools should help guide students into a career they are good at and that they enjoy.

I could have learned more. Schools hide students' potential from themselves. If every student is learning the exact same thing as the rest, students will never be given the chance to excel at something. Artists, athletes, scholars are all being dulled down to be just another sheep in the herd.

I could have better enjoyed school. Taking students' mental health into account, I feel that schools could have helped a lot more. Instead of pressuring students to learn things that they don't enjoy or things that won't be useful for them in the future, schools should teach the basics of every subject and enforce more important subjects to specific students individually, making the learning process more specialized in order to guarantee a more interesting and profound process.

2.2 Problem question:

What changes must be made in order to obtain better quality results in education according to the method of teaching in the law 115, article 29 in Colombia?

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

3.1 Background

Children beyond our borders (2017) states that “The only way to ensure a child’s future is through education. Education is the key to open all doors, to allow both individuals and societies as a whole to advance.” They made it one of their top priorities to help education systems in latin america, particularly in Colombia.

The Public school review (2012)

“Consider this list of 10 major challenges currently facing public schools, based on the perspective of many involved in the world of education today: Classroom Size, poverty, SAfamily factors, technology, bullying, student attitudes and behaviors, no child left behind, parent involvement.”

(10 major challenges facing public schools, Pg 1)

WENR describes the education in Colombia

“The OECD PISA study, a standardized test of secondary students in which Colombia has been partaking since 2006, reflects relatively poor learning outcomes in comparison to other nations. In the latest study, from 2018, Colombia ranked second to last among 37 OECD countries, behind Mexico and Chile.”

(Education in Colombia, Pg. 1)

3.2

1. Colombian law 115:

"ARTICLE 1. Object of the law. Education is a process of permanent, personal, cultural and social formation that is based on an integral conception of the human person, their dignity, their rights and their duties. "

From human rights, laws are born. A man named René Cassin was thought to be the mastermind of human rights before making them official with the UN in 1948. What is a human right? Human rights were adopted in 1948 when 56 members of the UN voted unanimously in favor of having a set established limited forms of representative government that would respect the freedom of individual citizens.

Why are human rights important in my investigation? The right to education is a fundamental human right. "Every individual, irrespective of race, gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or political preference, age or disability, is entitled to a free elementary education." (Norad.no)

The Norad investigation also states:

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not only state the right to access education, but also of the quality of education:

«... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among ... racial or religious groups. ...» (Article 26)

Therefore it is important to work both for increased access and quality."

The purpose of the law is to “establish standards, maintain order, resolve disputes, and protect liberties and rights”(Lumen, chpt 5). After reading all about Colombain law, specifically the law 115, many things were made clear to me. Each independent article has the purpose of explaining requirements that Colombia's government has in order to properly educate students and prepare them for their future, or so they state in article 1.

This Law establishes the general norms to regulate the public service of education that fulfills a social function according to the specific needs and interests of people, families and society. It is based on the principles of the political constitution on the right to education that everyone has, on the freedoms of teaching, learning, research and teaching itself, and on its public service nature.

The entire law 115 is divided into 11 titles/ parts (222 articles):

Title 1 - Preliminary provisions: Everything that has to do with the services, quality and goals the school system should have.

Title 2 - Structure of the educational service: In this title, the law refers to all the levels of education and each objective that they have. Both formal, and informal education is taken into account.

Title 3 - Modalities of educational attention to populations: The title 3 talks about student integration. How to integrate students (Under age/ adults) with different and specific capacities with teachers.

Title 4 - Organization for the provision of educational service: The educational development. This includes the planning of a curriculum and its regulations.

Title 5 - Of the learners: Everything that has to do with the students themselves. Formation and training and student benefits.

Title 6 - Of educators: Everything that has to do with the educators themselves. generalities, formation of the educators, career, “teaching ladder”, teaching directors and stimuli for teachers.

Title 7 - Of educational establishments: For the most part, this title talks about the definition and characteristics of educational establishments, and the school government’s role in all of it.

Title 8 - Direction, Administration, Inspection and surveillance: This title talks about the importance of national supervision, making sure all is in order. These articles supposedly assure that each individual school is visited to make sure everything is as it should be.

Title 9 - Financing of education: In this chapter, the law talks about its state financial resources, and how to earn, distribute and manage the money in general.

Title 10 - Special rules for education provided by individuals: This title talks about some prerequisite exceptions to teaching such as private teachers or schools, bilingual and religious schools just to name a few.

Title 11 - Various provisions: Finally, this last title talks about certain rights a student has facing special provisions and Transitory provisions and validity.

It can be said that each title and article all join in on a desired system that was created for the good of the students and their futures. There isn't an article that went against my thesis on a perfect education. every title and its purpose was completely fair. The law successfully establishes the general norms to regulate the public service of education that fulfills a social function according to the specific needs and interests of people, families and society.

3.3

2. The duty of the Government and its schools:

Laws are created in order to obey them. As said before, they establish standards, maintain order, resolve disputes and protect liberties and rights. The purpose of this thesis was to find a more adequate way of educating students and better prepare them for their future. This was obviously not an easy task as the country, the law and its schools have certain standards.

After basing a new education system on numerous different education systems around the world and on many different universities, a system that would meet the needs of students, universities and the country itself was made.

Poverty is a major factor which contributes to Colombia's flawed school system. With this, a handful of other problems such as; family factors, overflowing classrooms and technology, are made. But this isn't the only thing from detaining proper education from helpless students. Bullying, parent involvement, students attitudes and behaviors, and not taking students strengths and weaknesses into account all play roles in the wellbeing of students' futures.

After consulting the Colombian law on education (115), It was made clear that the country's government urges schools to follow certain guidelines for all students' well being. It was then when I realized that the school system was not at fault, but the government and its schools. Who was at fault, the schools or the government?

Clearly, the government has the right idea. My propositions on how the school system should change are very similar if not exact.

The main aspect I was seeking to change was that of students being able to choose their classes based on interests and capacities. This would help solve numerous problems.

The same could be said about the schools. Although schools actually profit directly from students, it doesn't mean that they don't want the best for their students. Now, the problem lies elsewhere. Referring to the law 115 title number 8; direction, administration, inspection and surveillance.

“Congressional competence. It is up to the Congress of the Republic to dictate the general norms and to indicate in them the objectives and criteria to which the National Government must adhere to regulate education as a public service with a social function, in accordance with articles 150, numerals 19 and 23, and 365 of the Political Constitution.”

(Law 115, title 8, article 146 - Competencia del congreso)

In conclusion, it is up to the government to urge schools to follow the guidelines established in the law. If nothing is done, schools will keep teaching the way they always have and we as a country will keep making the same mistakes. All undergraduates can leave school so much more prepared for their career and their life, it is up to the law itself to push schools in the right path.

3.4

3. The truth behind “economic crisis”

My first thoughts were that the government is to blame for poor organization that later means that schools do not have the resources to function, especially in schools in rural areas (economic problem) and when they graduate, they greatly limit the possibilities of leaving and advancing and the cycle continues generating a greater difference between people and

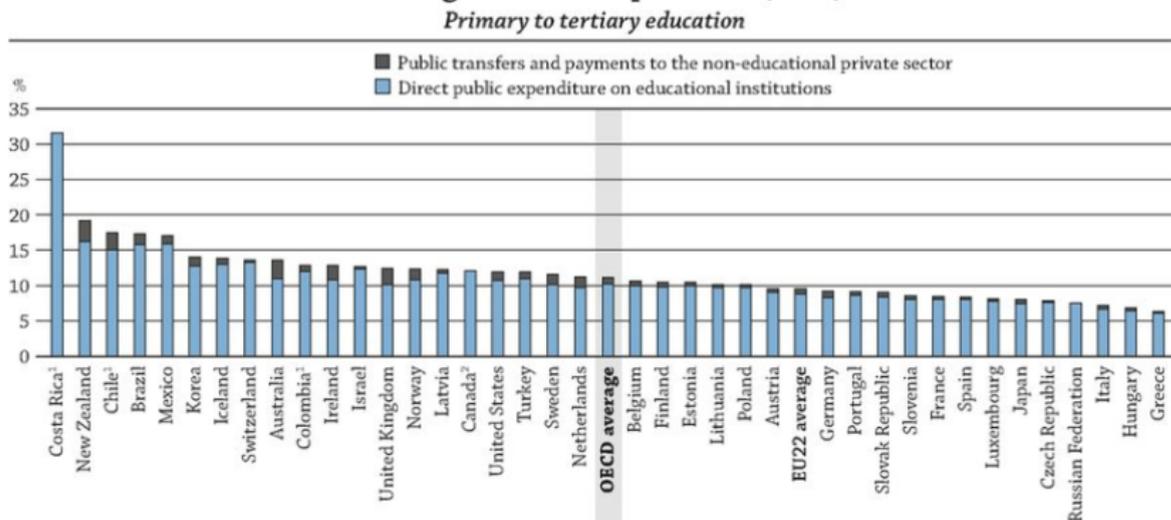
less ability to acquire goods. The government must reorganize the distribution of resources so that there is an improvement in education.

The truth is; the government controls the country's economy, distributing it in a functional way where everyone gets a fair share. The GDP (Gross domestic product) figure in the second quarter of 2020 was 52,504 million euros, placing Colombia as the 31st economy in the quarterly GDP ranking of the 50 countries ever published (mineducacion.gov.co). A steady growth of GDP is crucial for the growth of a country's economy since an increase in it reflects an increase in economic activity. If economic activity picks up, it means that unemployment tends to decline and income per capita increases.

What is Colombia's budget in its education? Colombia went from having a budget of 38.5 billion (Colombian Pesos) in 2018 to 44.1 billion CP in 2020, this being the highest in its history. This means a growth of 6.41% compared to 2019 and a real growth of 11% compared to 2018. This once again places education as the sector with the largest budget compared to the total budget.

Figure 1.

Figure C4.2. Composition of total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (2015)



1. Year of reference 2016.

2. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total public expenditure on primary to tertiary education as a percentage of total government expenditure.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2018), Table C4.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-36-en>).

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933804603>

Colombia has experienced a historic economic boom over the last decade. Just over 16% of Colombia's GDP goes toward education; Colombia is the 10th country to spend money on education percentage wise right after Australia. The economy of Colombia is the fourth largest in Latin America as measured by gross domestic product.

“Colombia spends more on education than most developed countries, to okay results. Despite boosts in test scores, academic performance is well below average. Education in Colombia is accessible, but disparities in region and income result in a system that favors wealthy urbanites.”

(Colombia Reports,

Education)

This is the cause of a new problem. Why is it shown that Colombia spends so much of its budget on a failing school system?

Chapter 4

Methodological framework

After thorough investigation, my conclusion, thanks to the process of discarding, is that it must be the school's themselves at fault for not properly educating their students. To prove my finalmost theory, another question of investigation must be made: How do schools spend the money given to them?

Víctor Gómez Cusnir says:

“As long as money continues to be wasted and the corrupt continue to spoil public university budgets and further steal through school feeding programs, instead of seeking for the benefit of children, we will continue to see marches and continued deterioration of our country. Whoever assaults education is damaging society and, therefore, should have an exemplary punishment.”

(La república)

Colombia spends approximately 15% of their money on education, this making it one of the highest percentages in the world. So where does the money go? The present investigation is a qualitative kind, where everything established, is obtained by research and questioning.

The present investigation is a qualitative / selective kind. This means, the gathering of information is based on investigations and questioning.

An inquiry with a total of 11 questions will be sent to both teachers from a public and private school in Bogota, Colombia. With these questions, I will be able to gather enough information to form a conclusion about the differences that exist between public and private schools in the country and how they directly affect students.

Inquiry questions:

-¿Es usted profesor?

-¿Labora en una institución educativa de carácter público o privado?

- ¿Cuántos estudiantes hay por salón? (aproximado)

-¿Considera que el barrio donde está ubicada la Institución Educativa afecta el rendimiento del estudiante? ¿Por qué?

-¿Considera que el contexto familiar del estudiante incide en su desempeño académico? ¿Por qué?

-¿Considera que su remuneración salarial corresponde a sus estudios y funciones asignadas en la Institución Educativa?

-¿De qué manera puede influir la remuneración salarial con el desempeño de un docente?

-¿Por qué razón decidió ser profesor? (ejemplos: para que les vaya bien en el ICFES / para que los estudiantes aprendan sobre cultura general / Porque Le gusta dar clases)

-Colombia es de los países que más presupuesto asigna a la educación. ¿Por qué cree que seguimos obteniendo bajos resultados en las pruebas estandarizadas internacionales?

-¿Considera que la educación en Colombia aporta al desarrollo profesional y al proyecto de vida de sus estudiantes?

-Propón una corta solución para que a todos los futuros estudiantes salgan preparados para la universidad y / o para trabajar:

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

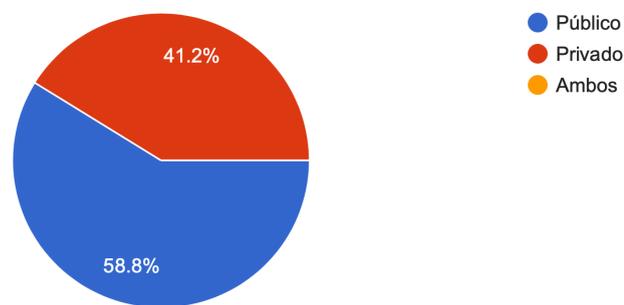
The following research shows the result of the inquiry sent to various teachers from both public and private institutions.

Public vs Private Institutions

Figure 2

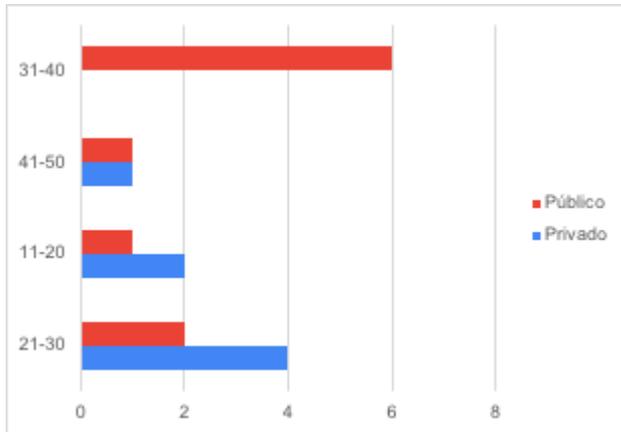
1. ¿Labora en una institución educativa de carácter público o privado?

17 responses



Out of the 17 total responses, approximately 60% (10 teachers) were reported to work at a public institution. While approximately 40 % (7 teachers) were shown to work at a private institution. The purpose of this investigation is to gather and analyze the data from both public and private institution workers in order to see if they have the same point of view on certain principles that make the school system in Colombia flawed.

Figure 3
“¿Cuántos estudiantes hay por salón?”



In the figure above, an average of students per classroom in both public and private schools are shown. It is important to gather every little piece of information in order to come up with a solid and reliable conclusion.

After the inquiry, a clear pattern shows that private schools tend to have less students per classroom, while public schools tend to have more. This graph may suggest that public schools are forced to fill their classrooms, potentially sacrificing a decent learning experience. It may be difficult to teach in such an environment being that it is more difficult to control larger classrooms, students may find themselves easily distracted amongst other peers, amongst other reasons.

Figure 4

“¿Considera que el barrio donde está ubicada la Institución Educativa afecta el rendimiento del estudiante?”

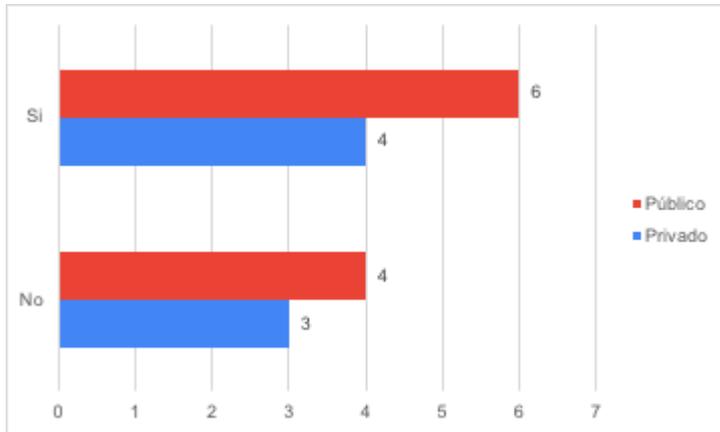


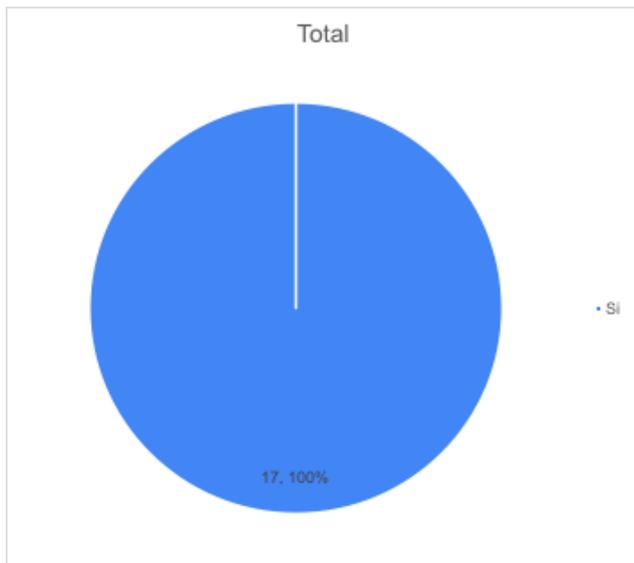
Figure 4 shows teachers opinions on the question “Does the location of where students live affect their efficiency in school?”

Percentage-wise, both are almost identical. Almost the same results are shown per capita on whether the location of where a student lives may affect their performance in school.

A majority in both public and private school teachers agree that the area in which the student lives, affects their performance in and during school. This may be because the area in which people live, directly translates to the income of peoples families. Families with less income tend to live in more rural areas, whereas families with higher income, tend to live closer to the city or in an all around better and safer environment.

Figure 5

“¿Considera que el contexto familiar del estudiante incide en su desempeño académico? ¿Por qué?”



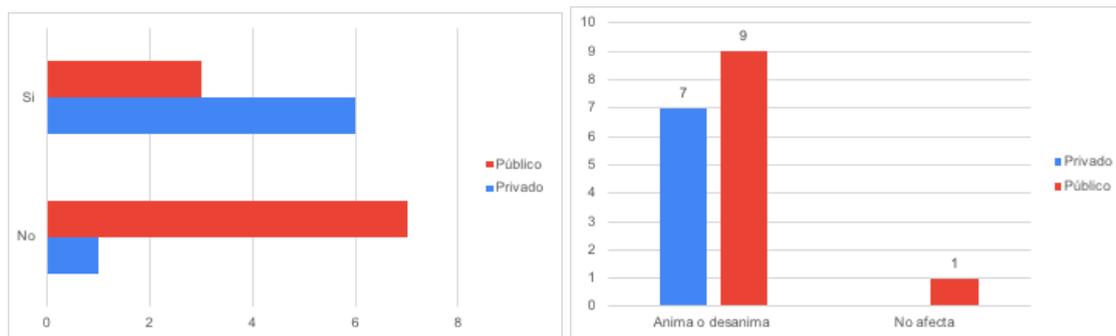
The following graph refers to the question; “Does the family in which a student lives with affect their performance in school.

Every teacher of both public and private schools answered yes to this question, arguing that families are of the most important aspects of the development of not only a student, but a human being. Toxic households produce dysfunctional students, while caring and supportive households tend to produce functioning members of society.

Figure 6 / 7

“¿Considera que su remuneración salarial corresponde a sus estudios y funciones asignadas en la Institución Educativa?”

“¿De qué manera puede influir la remuneración salarial con el desempeño de un docente?”



The figure above shows the answers of teachers who are asked about their salaries and whether or not they affect a teachers performance.

A pattern is shown clearly. In the first graph, public school teachers say they deserve a larger salary whereas most private school teachers are shown to be satisfied with what they earn.

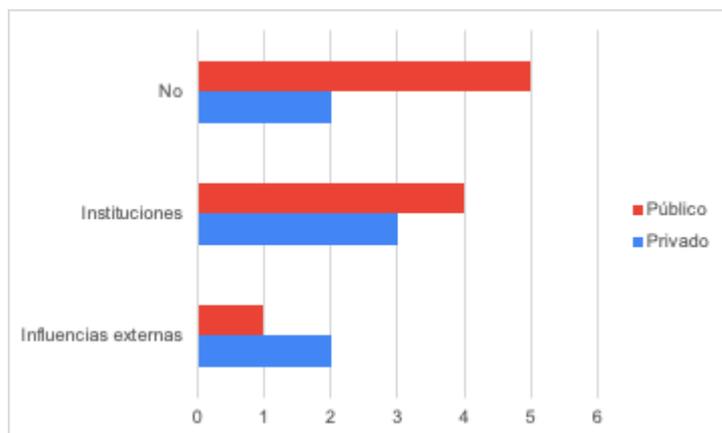
This question helps reflect one of the most important parts of this thesis. Public school teachers are in charge of a larger population of students in the country. They have an equally difficult job to do as private school teachers, and they are earning less.

Students living in rural areas are prone to receive mediocre education because of the underpayment of teachers in said areas, completing the cycle where the poor stay poor while the rich remain rich.

However, it is shown that almost all answers of both public and private schools agree that the salary of a teacher directly affects their performance.

Figure 8

“Colombia es de los países que más presupuesto asigna a la educación. ¿Por qué cree que seguimos obteniendo bajos resultados en las pruebas estandarizadas internacionales?”



The following figure refers to the common question, what is this country doing wrong with its education, if Colombia is in the top 10 countries who most invest in education?

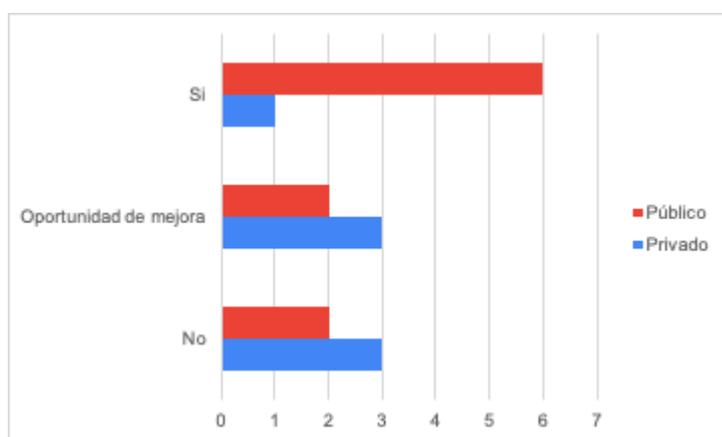
This question was clear to be a tad problematic being that almost half of the people who answered, believed that there was no way Colombia could invest so much money into

education. This was concerning because it became clear that money is being lost, and it isn't going directly to the schools.

Meanwhile, the teachers who did answer the question were divided into two answers that were often repeated. Most of those who answered the question, came to a conclusion that it is the schools themselves that aren't using the money correctly the way it should be used. While a mere 3 people believe that there exist outside causes that influence the loss of money that should be going to the schools.

Figure 9

“¿Considera que la educación en Colombia aporta al desarrollo profesional y al proyecto de vida de sus estudiantes?”



In figure 9, a graph showing teachers opinions on whether or not what students see in school will help them in any way being a professional career or their day to day lives.

An interesting pattern shows that most public school teachers do believe that what students learn in class will help them in their future, while most private school teachers agree that there is space for improvement or that what students see in school will not help them whatsoever in their future.

Figure 10

“¿Por qué razón decidió ser profesor?”

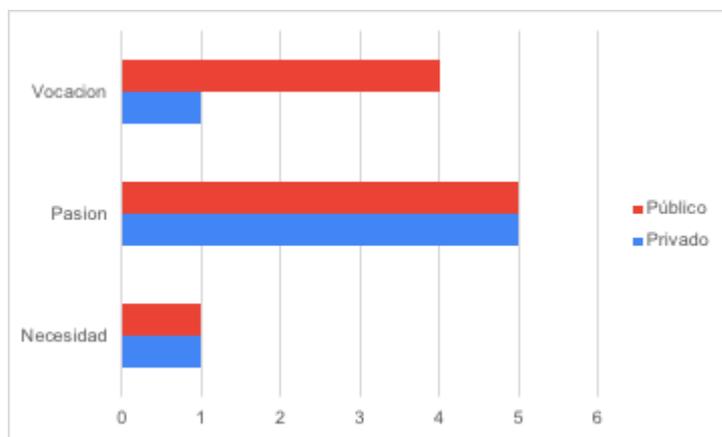


Figure 10 shows the answers of public and private school teachers regarding the question of; Why did you become a teacher?

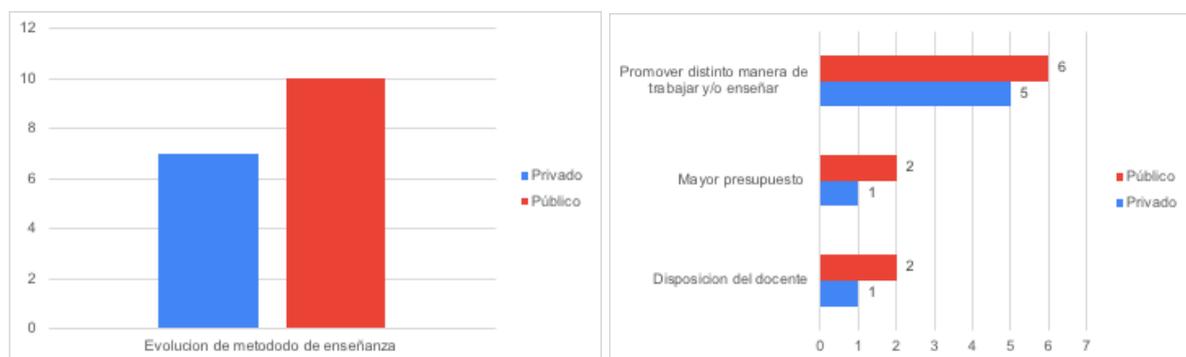
Depending on the answer, one can assume how good of a teacher people may be. Most teachers had the same answer; “Because teaching is their passion”. This normally translates to good teachers that put effort into their job.

A large percentage of public school teachers said it was their “calling”. These people believed that teaching was the job that best suited them. This isn't necessarily a negative answer, it just isn't something they put as much effort in as other teachers.

Because both a teacher from a public school and a teacher from a private school both answered; “Because of necessity”, no conclusions can be made regarding this aspect of the question.

Figure 11 / Figure 12

“Propón una corta solución para que a todos los futuros estudiantes salgan preparados para la universidad y / o para trabajar:”



Figures 11 and 12 show the answers of public and private school teachers being asked to propose a solution to better the education in the country.

The first graph shows the agreement of all teachers believing that the educational system must evolve in the way it teaches its students.

After thoroughly reading each answer, a pattern of solutions being proposed was created. The graph divides the three different answers that were common throughout all the responses.

Most answers leaned toward a more engaged way of teaching. More than half of the answers proposed methods of learning more suited for the 21st century.

While the other proposals suggested that schools should have a larger income of money, and that teachers should become more involved in their jobs, not teaching the same things over and over; instead, have a more dynamic way of teaching.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to learn what changes must be made to the government and its schools in order to promote the standards of teaching established by the state in Colombia.

After thorough investigation and questioning, what was once thought to be the main problem, later turned out to be false. Originally, it was thought that the educational system in Colombia was the aspect that needed to be changed in order for students to fully take advantage of and succeed in learning in order for a better future. The next “suspect” of the cause of a flawed education in Colombia was the government. It was thought that the country was not investing enough money in order for the entire population to receive the education they deserved. After consulting the “OECD” (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos), we learned that Colombia was ranked 10th in the world regarding money put towards education. The only option left was the schools themselves. What were the schools doing with the money the government gave them? After interviewing teachers from both public and private schools, it turns out that most of the money was being lost due to corruption and outside sources, profiting off education money.

The question that stands is: What solution is there to better the quality of education in Colombia? There are various steps that must be made in order for the problem to be permanently fixed. Starting off with the easiest step; evolve the way in which schools teach. Effort should be put into a school system more adequately fit for the future generations of the 21st century. This refers to creating more dynamic and creative ways of teaching. This will encourage students to enjoy learning and will increase the percentage of students graduating highschool. Finally, this will give teachers a more suitable environment for teaching. The

other part of the problem involves capital. Instead of money going through third parties, the government should be urged to provide schools with the capital they deserve. The 40% of capital will be directly provided to public schools in rural areas, this way, everyone receives the same level of education, thus increasing the results in the national standardized tests such as the “ICFEs”. This will lead to increased chances of acceptance in universities by students of rural areas.

It isn't too late to make a change for the better. A good education is the solution to Colombia's most grave problems; corruption, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, drug addiction and class inequality.

It is up to the people of Colombia to urge it's government to make the changes that clearly need to be done.

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