

## ***Possibilities and challenges in public policy for educational equity in Colombia from the Agenda 2030. «Todos Aprender» program<sup>1</sup>***

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**Abstract:** Equity is a priority for the development of education policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose intention is to contribute to the construction of fairer and more democratic societies in line with the 2030 Agenda. Tracing the path followed by national education policies, in terms of opportunities and challenges, has inspired this paper whose aim is to pinpoint the context and evolution of Colombia's 'Todos Aprender' program (PTA) from an equity perspective. Using a public policy analysis methodology based on documentary review and scientific credibility criteria, the analytical hypothesis is that PTA, without being a public policy, has become a *de facto* public policy with an impact on improving the quality of learning of preschool and elementary school students. According to the following questions of analysis: What has been the meaning and context of PTA's evolution? What actors have been involved in PTA during its years of implementation? What has been their role in terms of positions, interests, and tensions? PTA has attempted to provide institutional responses to the lack of quality and equity in education, with changing priorities depending on each political moment. Thus, PTA represents an adaptable reference with pedagogical power from public policy to promote preschool and elementary education in the face of the educational challenges of the 2030 Agenda, promoting actions in teacher training, educational innovation and research, and formative evaluation to promote successful learning for all.

**Keywords:** educational equity, education policy, 2030 Agenda, Colombia.

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## Equity in education as a public policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda

Educational equity has become a priority in Latin America and the Caribbean. This concern is connected to the Education for All Movement focused on providing quality basic education for all (UNESCO, 1990, 2003, 2013, 2017a, 2019, 2021, 2022), recognizing the diversity of each student. The political and social motivation behind this concern is based on the need to narrow the social and educational gaps that strongly question the aspirations of modern education policies to move towards fairer, more cohesive, and democratic societies; a pursuit aimed at improving the social well-being and quality of life of all citizens through education (Sánchez-Santamaría and Manzanares, 2017).

Among the intentions of today's education policies are the consolidation of universal elementary and secondary education, the expansion and improvement of early childhood care and education, the reduction of illiteracy, equal access to learning for young people and adults, the elimination of gender disparity and the improvement of quality education with measurable results (UNESCO, 2012), and in this sense, the right to education is assimilated as evidenced by Villatoro «universal and free access to quality education, with continuity and timely completion at primary and secondary level, and where school is a space for the full development of students» (2007, p. 9).

Concern for successful education is explained by the importance of international assessments of the education system (PISA). This type of assessment provides us with relevant information on the problems associated with academic performance in relation to the socio-economic gradient, understood as an indicator of equity. Empirical evidence informs that «successful education systems - i.e. those with above-average performance and below-average economic and social inequalities - provide all their students with similar learning opportunities, regardless of their socio-economic background» (OECD, 2011, p. 26).

According to Tedesco (2011), the processes of Globalization encourage us to take a stance on two essential pillars on which education should be based: on the one hand, the educational pillar of learning to learn, referring to the generation of knowledge based on a dynamic conception of learning and an active attitude on the part of the student. And on the other hand, the pillar of learning to live together. This is a real situation in our multicultural, dynamic, and complex societies, where the need to recognize this diversity is a moral imperative. This situation highlights the importance of equity-based education policies taking up the challenge of promoting successful lifelong learning for all against the backdrop of Human Rights, with the following aspects being central (Sánchez-Santamaría, 2021):

- Multicultural, democratic, and ecological citizenship in a globalized world.
- Capital professional for life in continuously changing contexts.
- Educational and social implications of digital transformation.
- Lifelong learning based on the promotion of critical thinking and emotional education.

In light of these challenges, several supranational organizations have highlighted the need to develop education policies to promote learning opportunities in a context

of quality, but above all through quality processes for all (UNESCO, 2017a), and in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, actions have been proposed through the Education Goals 21 program of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). The importance of learning to learn is emphasized, so that students are «ready to continue learning and manage their learning throughout their lives» (OEI, 2010, p. 13).

The 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) as a global action plan with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a new step in this direction. It aims to strengthen the common efforts of 193 countries around the world to protect the planet, promote human prosperity, and strengthen universal peace and access to justice. In doing so, it seeks to overcome the limitations of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The commitments represented by these goals, which take the form of 169 action targets, are organized according to the dimensions of sustainable development such as social development, economic growth, and environmental protection, from their interdependence and under the umbrella of «leaving no one behind». Of these 17 goals, and without forgetting their dependence, SDG 4 is directly related to education, through which the focus is on the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education that guarantees learning opportunities that can benefit everybody. This goal is directly interdependent with goals 1, poverty; 2, health; 3, gender equality; 10, inequality; 11, sustainable, safe, and inclusive cities; 12, responsible consumption; 13, climate change; and 16, peace and justice.

Public policies in education must take up the challenge of promoting sustainable development as a sine qua non condition for a social, economic, and environmental future. Thus, these policies are called upon to be global and not sectorial or one-off, in the sense of comprehensive, given that the complex and interdependent nature of educational challenges, as well as their implications for the quality of life of the individual in relation to health, the economy, well-being and quality of life, coexistence, respect and equality, and the environment form an indissoluble part of any government policy action that seeks to promote successful lifelong learning for all. A good example of this is the Buenos Aires Declaration, in which the Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean assumed the commitments endorsed in the 2030 Agenda to give political content to the 4th SDG, which states the need to «ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities» (UNESCO, 2017b, p. 6). In the area of intentions, educational equity is an aspiration and a priority within public education policies in Latin American and Caribbean countries (Pascagaza, 2018), and in Colombia (Wasserman, 2020), which connects with the 4th SDG of the 2030 agenda. The different trends highlight a conception of equity that prioritizes different aspects of how education systems should be in relation to curriculum, teacher training, teaching methodologies, guidance, tutorial action, and assessment.

In Colombia's case, the 2030 Agenda has been taken up by the last two governments, although with different visions and proposals regarding policies to be implemented and their priorities, which have recently focused on promoting measures for educational coverage, access, and quality, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations and prioritizing public investment in education. This is due to a situation in which 3.0% of school-age children are out of school with a 95% graduation rate, reaching 14.9% and 72.0% in upper secondary. According to a recent UNESCO report (2022), Colombia has coordinated an education policy

focused on improving quality with a boost in local programs and services, and the promotion of citizenship skills to move towards the 4th SDG. To this end Colombia's Ministry of Education (MEN) is in the process of addressing the pending challenges in terms of inclusive, equitable and quality education, where PTA can play an important role (Morales-Javela and Sánchez-Santamaría, 2021).

In this context, the aim of this paper is to track the evolution of PTA in Colombia from the Educational Equity Approach (EEA). This study follows the hypothesis that PTA is a program to improve the quality of preschool and primary education that has become a public education policy in Colombia, at least during the periods under study in this paper. Hence, the research questions are: What is the meaning and context of PTA's evolution? What actors were involved with PTA during its years of implementation? What were their roles in terms of positions, interests, and tensions?

## Method

A desk-based research method has been carried out based on a critical literature review (McMillan and Schumacher, 2005). The purpose of this methodological approach is to draw on relevant documentary evidence to answer the questions of the study: what the position of governments in the formulation of educational policies for equity in the last decade in Colombia has been, and what implications and opportunities does this position have for promoting successful educational processes for all. This comprehensive and analytical qualitative approach (Mertens, 2005) was applied to a sample of 42 documentary sources. The following table 1 provides a methodological summary of the study, including the main elements integrated in the units of analysis and their definition, the topic of analysis, the collection technique and the sources consulted.

**Table 1.** Methodological note.

Observation units	Definition	Topic of observation	Observation technique	Sources
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Sampling	Documentary units: governmental and academic	International and Colombian political and social context.  Historical evolution of the public education policy in Colombia.	Ordinal scale of own creation  Documentary references are considered as sampling units.	Dialnet OECD UNESCO  Ministry of Education of Colombia  Specialized journals
In context	Part of the sample with relevant significance and which is analyzed separately.	Regulations  Publications  Research	Selected according to their presence/absence and relevance/non-relevance to the study on a scale of 1 to 5	
Registration	Part of the context that establishes unorganized divisions on the information generated around the topic	Focused review through keywords: public policy, educational equity, equal opportunity, Agenda 2030, inclusive education combined with the search criteria Colombia.	Synthesis of contributions	Selective and focused analysis to identify units of meaning relevant to the object of the study regarding the public policy of education from the perspective of equity in Colombia.

Source: own elaboration based on Chisvert (2014).

Four phases have been established for the development of the documentary analysis process: a) delimit the topic, identifying the primary sources referred to legislative texts, planning and/or institutional evaluation documents, publications or similar, b) trace possible secondary sources highly relevant to the intentions of the study, as well as to locate primary sources not known during the first phase, c) select and analyze the primary sources and, d) prepare a proposal of documents that meet the criteria of rigor established to carry out the descriptive and analytical approach pursued in this study.

The units of analysis were selected according to five criteria: suitability, timeliness, relevance, background and expertise of the researchers, and consultation of authorized voices. In this way, the textual unit has been considered as a central factor in the rigor of the documental analysis, elaborating a development of the content analysis of each of the identified and selected documental sources as a latent conceptual corpus from an intertextual perspective. For validity, we have considered the classic proposal on the

credibility criteria to be applied in qualitative descriptive studies by Guba and Lincoln (1982), but we have included the recommendations of Morse et al. (2002), motivated by the limitations identified by these authors about Guba and Lincoln (table 2).

**Table 2.** Validity strategy of the literature analysis.

Validity strategy	Criteria	Application
Credibility of the results answers the question of whether the information what and how it has been obtained is valid to create scientific knowledge on the topic of the study.	Textual saturation or redundancy	A collection of documentary evidence has been identified by means of appropriate sampling with the intention of capturing all the information on the object of study  The subsequent analysis has allowed us to have saturated information, so that it does not provide new elements that would allow us to know and understand more about what is being studied
	Applicability or transferability	We used a collection of documentary evidence that was traced, and for this purpose we established an identification and description of the characteristics of the observation units: recording and retrieval mechanisms, faithful and contextualized transcriptions, to be able to situate the context in which they have been produced or who (stakeholder) has produced them  This allows any researcher assuming similar conditions to reach similar explanations of the topic of study, if the same perspective is assumed
	Neutrality or confirmability	The detailed description of the methodological process followed shows the level of attention paid to the influence of interests, procedures, or subjective intentions on the study
	Dependence or consistency	It has been carried out to minimize the difficulties of applicability or transferability, by indicating the questions associated with the topic of study and if the information obtained, through the treatment and interpretation and contrast, is done from the idea of an integrated corpus
	Contribution to the solution of the problem	This study has not only aimed to generate knowledge to better understand the position of the different governments in the formulation of public policies on educational equity and the implications and opportunities of these stances to promote successful educational processes for all, but has also attempted to organize a little explored game field, but above all, to trace the continuities and discontinuities of the texts in their contexts to advance in understanding but above all to create conditions for transformation as planned and intentional change around educational equity from the public policy in Colombia

**Source:** own elaboration based on Lincoln and Guba (1982) and, Morse et al. (2002).

At the end, we highlight three limitations that every researcher should draw on to be able to situate the scope and transferability of the results of this study. Far from being a weakness of the study, they are elements that inform of the difficulties faced by this type of qualitative approaches, largely due to the complex, dynamic and ideological nature of the topic of study (Yin, 2018): a) insufficient detail: the normative

documents have not been elaborated around the logic of a research. This suggests that the information provided by these documentary references can be insufficient to answer the research questions with the necessary richness, b) low retrievability: there may be documents not located or located but not accessible for very different reasons, and c) biased selectivity: the accessible or available documents may only be those that align with the ideological orientations of the governments in power.

## Results

### **‘Todos a Aprender’ Program: contextual keys for policy analysis**

Educational reforms undertaken by the MEN, to increase coverage of the education system in the middle of the last century, did not overcome the problem of access neither achieved the desired levels of quality (Ramírez & Téllez, 2006; UNESCO, 2022). At the beginning of the 21st century: «National statistics showed a considerable percentage of the school-age population outside the educational system and a marked inequity in the possibilities of access and permanence. Quality was deficient and its deterioration was increasingly observed in primary and secondary education» (León, 2012, p. 72). This way, policies in elementary education were promoted aimed at increasing educational coverage, as well as teacher-student ratio, promoting contracting with private schools and encouraging demand-side subsidies. Quality was based mainly on universalization standards, teacher, and institutional evaluations (León, 2012). At the beginning of 2010, with a change of government, education, and especially the improvement of the quality of education, became one of the fundamental purposes at the national level (DNP 2010, p. 107). Through its sectoral policy on education, the government set out to «turn the quality of education into a national goal» (DNP, 2010, p. 9)

To meet these goals, Colombia’s national government’s quality policy established five programs to improve quality education, one of which was PTA. With this program, the government intended to «improve learning conditions in schools, focusing its actions on improving students’ basic competencies» (MEN, 2011, p. 30), in addition to addressing the educational inequalities between public and private, rural, and urban areas shown by national learning assessment tests within the education system.

In 2009, the country’s standardized tests, SABER grade 5, in language and mathematics, showed that most of the country’s students presented an insufficient and minimum performance level, and that these results got worse in public city schools as well as in rural public schools. Therefore, the tests not only allowed observing results related to students’ learning, but also made it possible to see the inequity in education, in the country. Colombia’s national government designed the program based on the low educational quality shown by the results of student performance in national and international tests, and on the recommendations presented by *McKensey Consulting* to the Ministry of Education to improve its educational system.

### *Implementation periods and their changes.*

PTA has been implemented during the country’s last three presidential administration without being a state policy (2011-2014, 2014-2018, 2018-22). Each

government has included the program as a strategic line in its National Development Plan and education policy. While each program administration or new government has made changes in its implementation, the original elements of its design are largely preserved. During the implementation of PTA, its goals and scope have presented certain changes with each transition of government, but the most significant changes are presented in its goals (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Goals and scope.

Period	Goals	Scope
2011-2014*	To improve learning conditions in targeted schools and, thus, the level of basic competencies (language and mathematics) of students enrolled in them from preschool to fifth grade.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3,000 schools supported</li> <li>2. 2,300,000 students benefited</li> <li>3. 70,000 educators trained and mentorship, including classroom teachers and school administrators.</li> </ol>
2014-2018**	To improve learning of students from preschool to fifth grade in language and mathematics, in the lowest performing schools, according to SABER tests and, by improving classroom practices of their teachers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4,387 schools supported</li> <li>2. 2,268,313 students benefited</li> <li>3. 84,616 educators trained and mentorship, including classroom teachers and school administrators.</li> <li>4. 8,000,000 textbooks delivered</li> </ol>
2018-2022***	To contribute to the improvement of the abilities of the students of elementary school in the areas of Language and Mathematics and to the integral development of the boys and girls who are studying in transition grade (first and unique preschool grade). To this end, the Program focuses on strengthening the pedagogical practices of teachers and the pedagogical leadership of teaching directors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4,500 schools supported</li> <li>2. 1.705.989 students benefited</li> <li>3. 83.300 educators trained and mentorship</li> <li>4. 8.000.000 textbooks delivered</li> </ol>

\*MEN (2011). \*\*MEN (2015a). \*\*\*MEN (2021a) and MEN (2021b)

In 2011, PTA (MEN, 2011) was structured based on a systemic vision made up of five components and a specific teacher training and mentorship strategy to achieve its goals. Most of these constituent elements of the program are maintained today, although some were modified, and others were eliminated. The most important elements of the strategy and their validity are presented below:

- Systemic Vision of the Program. The purpose of improving learning meant the intervention of different aspects related to students' performance. They seemed to be fundamental for the improvement of educational quality (MEN, 2011).

- Five Program Components. These corresponded to the determinants of student performance that should be intervened to improve their learning. *Pedagogical component* sought to make the country's curricular standards available to teachers and to provide tools for learning assessment. *Educational management component* focused on promoting monitoring and strengthening of academic educational processes at schools. *Basic conditions component* focused on improving basic conditions for schools functioning. Specifically, it was proposed to intervene in three basic conditions: that they could go easily to school, either by proximity or through access to school transportation; that they had schools and classrooms with the necessary supplies and infrastructure for teaching and learning; and that they could remain at schools and improve their learning capacity, for which food and nutrition strategies were implemented. *Situated training component* was aimed at strengthening teaching practice focused on didactic and disciplinary knowledge. Situated training consisted of training and mentorship teachers at classrooms and schools by a tutor led by Ministry professionals (trainers). *Support component* consisted of a national dissemination in media and mobilization to seek commitment and a positive attitude of society towards educational quality (MEN, 2011).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education decided to redesign the program and changed its strategy as it related to its original systemic vision. The changes arose from an impact evaluation conducted on the program in 2014 by a private university. From the original strategy, its main axis and the actions of the situated training and pedagogical component were retained; the latter was merged with the former. The basic conditions, educational management and support components were eliminated. According to the government's Education Policy (MEN, 2015, p, 23), the changes sought that program activities at schools would focus 100% on student learning, the protocols design that guide, training, and mentorship and, the program's route would be centralized by MEN and, the contents of formative evaluation of learning as well as classroom management were included to the main axes of the training.

- Training and mentorship Strategy. The original design of PTA included a cascade or top-down training and mentorship strategy in which experts, education specialists and in-service teachers participated. Tutors trained teachers at schools. This strategy is still in place, although the experts were eliminated, and the current design is carried out by Ministry professionals.

By 2022, the program's strategy is centralized by MEN and implemented in 87 territorial entities of the country under the leadership of Ministry professionals together with a group of tutors from different regions of Colombia. The aim to strengthening teacher practices is realized through situated training and mentorship. Training is around the following thematic areas: language, mathematics, formative assessment, situated mentorship strategies for tutors and management of learning environments. Situated mentorship is developed at classrooms and through three phases: lesson-planning, peer observation and reflection (MEN, 2021b).

### *Secretariats of Education and their relation to the PTA*

A special focus refers to Secretariats of Education associated to the country's certified territorial entities, which can be departmental, district or municipal. They are responsible for the quality and coverage of education in their territory, among other functions (Law 115 of 1994). PTA is led by MEN in coordination with the previously named certified territorial entities. Within the program's structure, this body is mainly responsible for issuing decrees for the adoption of the teacher tutoring staff; selecting and linking tutors to the program; assigning them to schools targeted by the program; participating in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the program based on actions that seek to improve the development of PTA at schools; and appointing an official to lead the program in the territorial entity (MEN, 2015).

Tensions in the relationship between the education secretariats and the program occurs mainly for three reasons. On the one hand, since they oversee selecting and appointing the program's tutors, they have the power to hire people they want without any control over the fulfilment of the profile required to be a tutor in the program or a meritocratic process monitored by the state (See Circular 45, 2019). This fact opens the possibility of the intervention of political and economic interests in the appointment of tutors, which could affect the suitability or performance expected for the position. On the other hand, the availability of PTA leader's time, within his or her functions in the secretariat, to attend to the needs of the program has an impact on the monitoring of its implementation in the territorial entity. The more time, the greater the possibility of monitoring. Finally, the affinity or lack of affinity between regional political interests and those of the national government have an impact on the importance given to the program within the actions of the education secretariat and the local government. The greater the affinity or shared interests, the greater the relevance and support for the program.

### *Public expenditure in the PTA*

The main source of funding for education in the country's territorial entities corresponds to the participation for education in the General System of Participation (Legislative Act 1 of 2001- GSP). Allocation and distribution are made primarily according to number of students served in the education system and is established by the nation through fixed criteria. Participation includes resources for service provision, cancellations for pension funds, and resources for quality official enrolment and free education. The latter are the only ones that are directly transferred to schools under fixed allocation criteria; the rest are managed by education secretariats of each certified territorial entity (MEN, 2017, 28-54).

PTA funding comes from the GSP and MEN's investment budget, specifically from investment made through the Vice-Ministry of Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education. While for the 2016 term the MEN (2017, p. 165), in its Management Report to Colombia's Congress, indicated that its investment budget was concentrated in four high-impact projects, among which was PTA, in its 2018 - 2019 management report (MEN, 2019, p. 63) it indicated that investment budget for the Vice-Ministry was distributed in 10 strategies, among which are the current quality program related to PTA. During the first two governments' implementation of the program, from 2011 to 2018 (approx.) about 1.5 billion pesos were invested.

Thus, between 2010 and 2018, the period in which PTA was designed, and implementation began, public spending on education as a percentage of GDP declined. In 2010 the value was 4.8% and in 2018 it fell to 4.5%. This expenditure decreased mainly because of the country's economic downturn due to the fall in oil prices (OECD, 2016, p. 80). Public spending on education as a percentage of total government spending has remained at around 16% since 2010. In 2014, Colombia's public spending as a percentage of GDP, compared to the spending of OECD member countries, was lower; while the nation spent 3.9% of its GDP, other countries spent 4.4%. Compared to other countries in the region, by 2015, total public spending on education only exceeded that of Chile and was lower than that of Argentina and Mexico. Similarly, the country's total public expenditure is lower than the average for Latin American and Caribbean countries, which corresponds to 5% of GDP as a percentage, but higher than Ecuador and Peru, and like Chile (OECD, 2016, p. 80).

Spending by educational level for primary education, the level at which PTA is mainly implemented, as a percentage of public spending on education, registered a drop: in 2010 spending was 35.9% and in 2015 it was 32.7%. All this in a context where the country's private expenditure, which corresponds to 40% of total education expenditure, is historically high, compared to the average total private expenditure of OECD member countries, which is 15% (OECD, 2016, p. 80).

### *Peace process and PTA in Colombia*

Six years after signing the peace agreement to end the armed conflict with FARC, the country's largest and oldest guerrilla group, Colombian society is not experiencing the stable and lasting peace that was agreed upon. Although the 2016 peace agreement has changed the lives of many people, the promised major social, economic, political, and educational transformations have not yet been achieved. According to the UN (2022), progress has been made in terms of ceasefire, laying down arms, reincorporation of ex-combatants into civil society, mechanisms for truth, justice and reparation for victims, design of development programs with a territorial approach (PDET) and political participation, among others. However, the solution to the problem of illicit drugs, some aspects of political participation such as the security and protection of ex-combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders, and comprehensive rural reform are still pending. The latter includes the creation of a Special Rural Education Plan. Notwithstanding these challenges to peace, Colombians are making the transition to a culture of peace to leave behind decades of conflict, structural violence by the state, and the nation's current inequality and inequity. Colombia is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America (Urrutia and Robles, 2021).

One of the paths to peace will surely be through education that contributes to closing gaps, as has been the purpose of PTA. The forementioned program began to be implemented at the national level at the same time as the announcement of the start of negotiations with the FARC in 2012, and moved through the negotiations, the signing of the agreement and now moves around the post-conflict period. Although there was no concrete indication from the national government to develop pedagogical actions in line with the peace agreement in the implementation of PTA,

additional training actions in citizenship skills have been developed and between 2018 and 2022 the aim was to focus on the largest number of schools in the municipalities prioritized for the implementation of PDETs: a proposed mechanism for the development of the agreement in the most affected regions by the conflict, poverty, absence of the state and illicit crops (ART, 2022). In total, around 1,400 institutions were supported until 2022 in 165 PDET municipalities out of a total of 170 in the country, and 74% of the targeted educational centers were rural (PTA, 2022).

## The role of the State and stakeholders and their implications for the PTA

The analysis of the relevant stakeholders in education policy, as well as their roles in this process of participation in the design, implementation and evaluation is essential to situate the playing field from an equity perspective (Ball, Maguire, Braun, and Hoskins 2011). In this sense, the design, implementation, and evaluation of the PTA has combined the participation of different actors from the country's public and private sectors, in addition to some actors at the international level. The analysis of the documentation allows us to establish an interpretative framework, elaborated ad hoc, on the stakeholders and their function, the role played, and the interests, positions or tensions within the PTA, and the impact on the role it has played (table 4).

**Table 4.** Stakeholders in the PTA

Name	Function	Main Role	Main Interests, Positions or Tensions	Impact
Ministry of Education of Colombia	Government Institution	Design, formulate, implement, and assess program.	Position: directs the program based on the development plans of each government and its interests.	Final
	Decision maker	Finance the program. Its financing can come from the ministry's investment budget, General System of Participations, and international bank loans.	Interest: disseminate and implement national competency standards and the ministry's quality policies.	
	Designer	Manage the program. Each ministry administration chooses its program administrator. They are outsources.	Tension: program administrator and implementers in relation to management and pedagogical priorities.	
	Implementer	Lead the design, pedagogical and administrative management of the program in the targeted regions of the country, through a staff of professionals specialized in education, (trainers), most of whom are called specifically for this program.		

Name	Function	Main Role	Main Interests, Positions or Tensions	Impact
Secretariats of Education	Local government institutions	Convene and manage the staff of tutors who implement the program in each institution and follow up the implementation of the program in the institutions.	Interest: dependence on local government plans and political priorities.  Tension: difficulties associated with monitoring the program and its tutors.  Tension: profile of tutors	Discretionary
	Performers			
School administrators	Public staff	Support the implementation of PTA in their institutions.  Evaluate the performance of tutors on an annual basis.	Interest: many school administrators are interested in the support that the tutor of their institution can provide to the school in relation to the activities of PTA and others that they assign to them at the academic level.  Position: the support of school administrators to the program, depends mainly on their role as pedagogical leaders in their institution. Most of the school administrator mainly assume administrative functions. Academic coordinators are usually in charge of academic management and pedagogical leading.  Position: many academic coordinators are very supportive of the implementation of the program and consider it a key resource in the improvement of the educational quality of the institutions.  Tension: at times, monitoring and follow-up of the program and tutors presents different execution rhythms.  Tension: they are interested in school leadership training from the program. This training stopped during the third administration for most of them.	Dominant
	Performers			

Name	Function	Main Role	Main Interests, Positions or Tensions	Impact
Tutors	Public staff	<p>Implement the program in the institutions in accordance with the Ministry of Education guidelines and their own professional experience.</p> <p>They can come from the public or private sector before becoming tutors of the program.</p>	<p>Interest: the main interest for many tutors is to have an impact on the curricular transformation of the institution and on the pedagogical practices of the teachers they mentorship.</p> <p>Tension: the quality of the implementation of the program depends on their academic training and willingness to appropriate the pedagogical guidelines proposed by the program and combine them to the institutional context.</p> <p>Tension: the quality of the tutors' performance depends a lot on the follow-up by professionals from the Ministry, the Secretariat of Education of the region and school administrators.</p> <p>Tension: they are asked to mentorship certain number of teachers and develop certain training sessions but sometimes they do not get any support from school administrators to schedule them.</p>	Final
	Performer			
Teachers	Public staff	<p>Receive training and support to their teaching practice provided by the program through the tutoring staff.</p> <p>Participate in professional learning communities at their institution to reflect about educational affairs, write pedagogical and curricular documents such as lessons plans or systematizations of experiences and, share pedagogical experiences among them and sometimes with other institutions.</p>	<p>Interest: to improve their pedagogical practice through the support of the program, get some help from the tutor of the school and receive training to know how to use books that the program provides to students.</p> <p>Tension: the participation of teachers in the activities of the program is voluntary, but the school targeting is not.</p> <p>Tension: their participation in the program is often related to the pedagogical leadership of the institution's school administrator and their association with unions.</p> <p>Tension: time to develop program activities is not usually schedule during school hours. If teachers want to participate in the activities of the program, they must stay after work. At some institutions, school administrator declares day off for students, so that tutors can develop the program activities during school hours.</p> <p>Tension: some teachers do not approve or support the use of national competency standards.</p> <p>Tension: some tutors need extra payment to visit some schools, but the management team did not authorize those payment during a period of the third presidential administration.</p>	Final
	Beneficiaries			

Name	Function	Main Role	Main Interests, Positions or Tensions	Impact
Students	Subjects of right	Participate in the teaching practices that the program supports. They also received textbooks from the program.  Take standardized tests in grades 3 and 5.	Interest: improving quality of education and setting they get involved in to improve their own life options.  Position: the program analyzes results of standardized tests to know the learning needs of the students and plan its strategies based on this analysis.	Final
	Beneficiaries			
Unions	Unions		Interest: defend teachers rights.  Tension: some unions reject the program.	Discretional
Private university	Private higher education institution	It has been involved on different occasions in the design and evaluation of the program through inter-institutional agreements.  On behalf of the Ministry, it has carried out two impact evaluations of the program.  Participated in the redesign of the program based on the recommendations provided in the evaluations carried out by themselves.	Interest: contribute to and influence the development of the program.  Position: ally of the Ministry's directors and program administrator, on occasions.  Tension: there have been differences between university professionals and Ministry professionals due to the results of the evaluations carried out and their methodologies and results and, some suggested decisions.	Discretional
Private institutions	In general, they participate in the implementation of certain actions of the program.  One of them is a private institution in association with a private university and some private schools in the city.  One of them has been participating in the program since its formulation.	One of them designed and implemented a differentiated program route.	Interest: different agreements with the Ministry of Education  Interest: to contribute and to influence the country's educational policies.  Interest: they have been assigned contracts to implement actions within the program.  Position: some directors and partners of this institutions have been directors, advisors or administrator to the Ministry and the program.  Tension: in relation to one of them, a justification to implement a differentiated program route, apart from PTA's main route, was not found. The implementation of this program did not show any additional improvement at targeted school.	Discretional
				Discretional

Name	Function	Main Role	Main Interests, Positions or Tensions	Impact
World Bank Inter-American Development Bank OECD	International organizations		<p>Position: they finance setting in Latin American countries to influence the design and implementation of their educational policies. In some academic documents it is recorded that the World Bank was an important stakeholder in the creation of the program.</p> <p>Position: IDB has been related to the program and has directly influenced guidelines for diagnostic tests in language and mathematics, and materials for teaching reading and writing in early education (preschool and 1st grade).</p> <p>Position: OECD has conducted field visits to the program and has made policy recommendations for its implementation.</p>	Discretionary

## Conclusions and future research opportunities

This paper traced the evolution of PTA and analyzed the involvement of the main actors in the development of PTA. For this purpose, four categories of context analysis have been used that are essential for an equity approach: implementation periods, Secretariats of Education, education expenditure, and the peace process. The essential actors involved in the PTA implementation process were then identified, establishing their roles and functions, as well as the tensions and contributions within PTA. The result is that PTA is a *de facto* a public education policy, although not *de jure*, and that its actions to improve learning, training and mentorship are clearly elements of process equity.

On the implementation of PTA. The three periods of implementation have been marked by changes, some of them of a political nature, and others, most of them, linked to resources and participating institutions. These changes have focused on the systemic vision of PTA aimed at improving the quality of education, where the pedagogical, management, basic conditions for the functioning of institutions, training and mentorship components of PTA have sought to improve student learning. These components were modified following the 2015 impact evaluation. Training and mentorship strategy also played a prominent role within PTA, with a top-down strategy, where MEN professionals play an essential role.

On the Secretariats of Education. Their prominent role in the implementation of PTA highlights the importance of administrative and political coordination processes. Difficulties in such coordination have been highlighted, in some cases they have been addressed with shared commitment and inter-institutional collaboration, in others not. Colombia increased spending on education through the Political Constitution and its regulatory laws, especially through the creation of the General System of Participations. However, this has not been enough. Improving the quality of education in the country requires large investments in the sector, and it is a fact that less is invested than most countries in the region and the OECD average, and

there is no significant improvement in the quality of the education system according to PISA results. Moreover, MEN's budget for investment and for improving the quality of education is limited considering the different levels of the system, the number of programs and the number of students it impacts. For example, PTA only benefits about 69% of elementary school enrolment. Similarly, delivery of resources to territorial entities has not been fully decentralized and this limits their possibilities to improve the quality of education. In addition, resources are not distributed equitably and territorial entities with higher levels of development, usually urban, which have more resources and larger enrolments, receive more allocations, while rural entities, with fewer students and fewer resources, receive less. While spending has increased, demands have increased even more, and this has not been compensated. Spending has lost momentum as it has been affected by the country's current fiscal crisis caused by its economic downturn.

About the peace process. A decade after the beginning of its implementation, PTA's situated mentorship has been consolidated as a training and mentorship strategy for teachers that, on the one hand, puts into practice educational policies and pedagogical strategies promoted by the country's Ministry of Education, while at the same time harmonizing these policies with teachers' pedagogical knowledge and students' ways of learning in the country's different territories, through the dialogue of knowledge and the learning communities of teachers and tutors. In this way, the principle of loyalty proposed by the program (MEN, 2015b) and the need to address the needs and differences of the territory, specific to the diversity of the country and relevant to the context of conflict and post-conflict, is fulfilled.

The different influential stakeholders of PTA draw a political scenario of interests, stances, and tensions. This systematization of their functions, roles and influence was pending and now, with its limitations, allows us to have an analytical proposal to advance in a deeper understanding, based on their discourses and actions within PTA. In this sense, it opens the possibilities for study aimed at analyzing whether the existence of a political arena in which diverse authors coexist with their positions, interests and tensions is allowing for a change in the style of governance in the design and implementation of education policy (Ball, 2011; Ruan Sánchez and Cordero Arroyo, 2021). This is relevant for the analysis of education policy from the perspective of equity, as it allows us to construct the scenario of relationships, the role and contribution of the different stakeholders as discursive communities and political advocacy networks that legitimize priorities of the PTA discourses (Ball, 2008; 2011).

It can establish that the political priorities in relation to the 2030 Agenda (DNP, 2021) and the political framework of Colombian education from an equity perspective can consolidate ongoing and pending processes such as (Wasserman, 2020; MEN, 2020; 2021):

- The right to education and its concretization in the creation of education systems for all.
- Access to and supply of educational services, where priority is given to free and compulsory schooling.

- The elimination of social, political, cultural, and economic barriers, paying special attention to discriminatory factors.
- Improving the quality of education systems, focusing on improving processes.
- Social recognition and dignity of the teaching profession.
- The promotion and recognition of cultural and sexual diversity. Diverse students studying together learn more, learn better and learn to live together.
- Schools do little to explain social mobility, but they can be a laboratory to promote learning that is the driving force for change and social transformation.
- The promotion of formative assessment of students' formal learning.

The possibilities and challenges of education policy in Colombia should be oriented towards promoting contexts, processes and pedagogical resources geared towards the successful learning of all in school (Morales-Javela and Sánchez-Santamaría, 2021,). This also implies being aware that many of the things that students already learn are learned outside of school, and that schools must take advantage of this learning by guaranteeing learning opportunities so that each student can aspire to be whatever he or she wants to be. The promotion of educational equity must address political and educational work to make visible the existence and influence of systemic barriers and physical barriers (López, Operti and Tamez Vargas, 2017), but placing value on the professional capital of teachers (Sánchez-Santamaría, 2021).

All the above makes no sense without paying attention to the little things, situations, and actions within the context of PTA, where the real drivers of system change are found in relation to the aspirations of Colombian education policy in relation to the 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2019; 2022). The top-down approach generates resistance, rejection and, being imposed, does not educate, does not allow learning to be free, to live with dignity and to contribute to a fairer and more democratic society. If this is not the case, it limits the infinite capacities of every person, in this case, of the students to grow by learning, being happy and taking on the challenge and the effort required to learn to live, to learn to live together and to learn to be, to be part of and have a voice and act in the challenges of intercultural societies, while been aware of being sustainable and promoting a culture of equity for all.

The political and social challenge of a successful education within PTA can also be to enhance the presence, voice, and participation of those who so far do not have it and are not visible (Marina Sáenz, 2021). An equity perspective, from an international key, suggests that the most equitable education systems are those that address these outstanding issues linked to the cultural and environmental dimension; two of the most important challenges for today's education policies and those that seek to promote equity and fairness from the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015). In this sense, the pre-service and in-service training of teachers is a central issue. Institutional and civil society efforts are innumerable, and much progress is being made, but perhaps it is time to think about the role and updating of teachers in the interests of a complex, dynamic and diverse society that trains citizens committed to a better society for all. In this sense, publications on PTA are already beginning to

emerge, trying to promote the development of social and emotional competences, promote tutorials (Reyes Ramírez, 2021), learn about the experience of participating students (Marina Sáenz, 2020) or impact evaluations (Díaz, Barreira and Pinheiro, 2015; Díaz, 2016) or teacher professional development (Raubenheimer, Rosenzvit, Ospina and Kim, 2020), which configures a future scenario for understanding the role that PTA is playing in Colombian educational policy from the perspective of equity (MEN, 2021a).

To sum up, public education policies should be committed to a successful education for all, aware that the tension between fairness and excellence in education is a result of the different ideological conceptions of the meaning and function of education systems (Sánchez-Santamaría and Manzanares, 2017).

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