

COUNTRY NOTE

Teacher career reforms in Colombia

Claudia Bionet Gomez Alzate



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Institute
for Educational Planning

Management of teachers

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About the project

Teacher career reforms are high on the agenda of many governments. A number of countries have reformed their teacher career structures over the past decades. Others have foreseen introducing changes in the near future. Yet, as countries launch into such reforms, it is important to make information available on the diversity of options and their implications.

The potential to learn from other countries, combined with the need to address this gap, prompted the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to launch a research programme on teacher career organization and management. It aims to provide policy-makers and governments with a variety of policy choices related to teacher careers, and to explore perceived effects on teacher motivation, attraction, and retention as well as implementation challenges that countries face in the reform process. This information is essential for countries wishing to adapt their teacher careers before they decide to opt into complex and resource-intensive reforms.

The following research questions guide the project:

- What options exist in terms of the organization and management of teacher careers? How are teacher careers structured and promotion modalities organized?
- What are the perceived effects of different career models on teacher motivation, attraction, and retention?
- What difficulties are countries experiencing with regard to the management of their teacher career scheme? What are the implications and implementation challenges of different teacher career models?

The project started in 2015 with ‘Exploring the impact of career models on teacher motivation’ (Crehan, 2016), an exploratory study that reviewed the available research literature in the field of teacher career organization and the psychology of motivation. It framed the typology of career models and evaluation modalities referred to in this research. Field research followed: participating countries were purposely selected from among different geographical zones and income levels and because their reforms sought to diversify teacher career structures and professional advancement opportunities available to teachers.

In 2016, country reports collected accurate descriptions of teacher career structures in Colombia, Ethiopia, Lithuania, Mexico, Peru, Scotland, South Africa, and Thailand as well as information related to the reform process. Researchers analysed laws and regulations, basic statistics, and existing research evidence in addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the organization and management of teacher careers.

In 2017, in-depth case studies in Ecuador, New York City, and the Western Cape in South Africa were conducted. Their purpose was to provide a more thorough analysis and to find out from teachers themselves their perspective on changes made to their career. The career models implemented in Ecuador, New York City, and the Western Cape were selected because of their promising approach combining career opportunities with new evaluation and salary policies. This research relied on qualitative interviews with teachers and leadership staff as well as quantitative data from teacher questionnaires to capture the diversity and complexity of teacher careers in these different countries.

The research looked into a variety of career structure design elements that can give insights into career reforms on managerial and administrative levels. The research findings highlight key aspects that policy-makers need to consider before embarking on teacher career reforms.

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Contents

List of figures and tables	6
List of abbreviations	7
1. Introduction	9
2. Contextual information	10
2.1 Teaching staff profiles	10
2.2 Key legislation and main actors	11
2.3 New entrants to the profession	13
3. Description of the teacher career structure and evaluation models used	15
3.1 Single salary schedule (under Decree 2277 of 1979)	15
3.2 Salary progression based on appraisal under Decree 1278 (2002)	15
3.3 Career ladder	18
3.4 Other incentives and rewards	19
4. Implementation of the reform	21
4.1 Administration and management	21
4.2 Financial aspects	22
4.3 Participation and communication	22
5. Perceived effects	24
5.1 Motivation and satisfaction	24
5.2 Attraction	24
5.3 Retention	24
Conclusion	26
Annex 1. Teacher salary system under Decree 2277 (1979)	27
Annex 2. Minimum requirements for teacher and school managerial positions	29
References	32
Regulations	33

List of figures and tables

Figure

Figure 1.	Important laws and decrees in the organization of the teaching career	12
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Tables

Table 1.	Salary progression: key differences between Decree 2277 and Decree 1278	11
Table 2.	Selection process to enter the teaching profession	14
Table 3.	Levels and sublevels in the salary spine established by Decree 1278 (2002), Article 21	15
Table 4.	Components and their related weight for the diagnostic and formative evaluation	17
Table 5.	Competences and their related weight for salary level progression until 2015	17
Table 6.	Teacher and manager competences assessed in performance evaluations	18
Table 7.	Entry selection process for teacher support leader and manager positions	19
Table 8.	Synthetical Education Quality Index	20

List of abbreviations

CNSC	Comisión Nacional del Servicio Civil (National Civil Service Commission)
CV	curriculum vitae
ENS	escuela normal superior (normal school, a teacher training institution)
ETC	entidades territoriales certificadas (certified territorial entities)
FECODE	Federación Colombiana de Educadores (Colombian Educators Federation)
ICFES	formerly, Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior (since 2009, used by Colombian Education Assessment Institute)
MEN	Ministerio de Educación Nacional (Ministry of National Education)

1. Introduction

The organization and management of teacher careers have been central to Colombia's strategy for education quality improvement.¹ Since the early 2000s, the country has experienced many education reforms that have significantly changed the teacher career structure in terms of procedures governing entry into the profession, salary increase modalities, and teacher evaluation.

A new career structure was adopted in 2002. All new entrants to the profession have since joined under that scheme. Thus, teachers belong to one of two career models, depending on when they joined the profession. The single salary schedule model, which grants periodical pay rises to teachers regardless of performance quality, applies to teachers who entered the profession before 2002. Under later regulations, requirements and evaluation modalities were developed to enable access to higher positions and salaries. Teachers who joined the profession after 2002 are subject to a salary progression model based on an annual performance evaluation and a competence evaluation. The teacher career structure also includes a career ladder: at the school level, teachers have access to support and managerial positions if they meet the requirements and pass an examination.²

Despite its promising design, the more recent career model has suffered implementation challenges. The Colombian experience therefore provides several key lessons for the organization and management of teacher career structures.

This study draws on an analysis of laws, decrees, regulations, and basic statistics gathered from the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN, Ministry of National Education), as well as semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the organization and management of teacher careers. The interviewees were: a representative of the Comisión Nacional del Servicio Civil (CNSC, National Civil Service Commission), which is responsible for administration of public services; heads of the MEN Human Resources and Basic and Secondary Education Quality units; and members of the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE, Colombian Educators Federation), the country's main teachers' union.

1. The fieldwork and preliminary research for this report took place over the course of 2015. Some updates were provided in 2018.
2. A bonus-pay model exists in certain schools under specific programmes.

2. Contextual information

2.1 Teaching staff profiles

In 2015, there were 160,521 teachers in primary education and 140,871 in secondary education.³ An increase in student population in recent years has seen a concurrent increase in teacher numbers. In primary and lower secondary education, there is no sign of an overall national teacher shortage, even if certain regions and subjects lack teachers. Nor do demographic trends indicate any future national teacher shortages. Nevertheless, ‘different population growth rates across regions, urbanization and progress towards peace are all likely to lead to significant internal migration, bringing the need for greater flexibility in the allocation of teachers’ (OECD, 2016).

In Colombia, civil servant or permanent teachers (*docentes en propiedad*) are regulated by two different career frameworks, the first under Decree 2277 of 1979 and the second under Decree 1278 of 2002,⁴ which concerns permanent teachers entering the profession since 2002. In 2017, 54 per cent of teachers were employed under Decree 1278 and 44 per cent under the old career framework (Radinger *et al.*, 2018)⁵. Although teachers under Decree 2277 can voluntarily move to the newer structure, few had done so at the time of the research (Bruns and Luque, 2014). In the long term, however, plans called for teachers under Decree 2277 to be phased into the new system.

In addition, there are provisional teachers (*docentes en provisionalidad*). Some occupy permanent vacancies not covered by the official recruitment process. Others fill temporary vacancies, replacing permanent teachers who are absent for a set period (e.g. on sick or maternity leave). The proportion of provisional teachers is higher in poorer and conflict-affected areas,⁶ which may be related to difficulties employing teachers in these demanding environments (OECD, 2016). In 2017, such teachers accounted for some 15 per cent of the teaching workforce in Colombia. Most are employed under the new career framework, while teachers belonging to the old framework are mainly permanent staff (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).

Despite the challenges of working conditions, the teaching profession still holds a certain appeal in Colombia. Applicant numbers for entry examinations are always higher than the number of vacancies. In the last 10 years, many applicants from other sectors have tried to enter the teaching profession. Some MEN officials who were interviewed said that entry into the profession represents an opportunity to improve one’s living conditions thanks to open-ended contracts, long vacation periods (eight weeks a year), numerous monetary incentives, and a special health system regime.⁷ One interviewee from the Sindicato de Educadores Unidos por Caldas (EDUCAL, Caldas Teacher Union), the Caldas department branch of FECODE, considers entry into the teaching profession a promise of ‘job security and decent work conditions for teachers with little or no work experience’.

Teacher compensation also contributes to the appeal of the profession. A permanent teacher’s salary is, on average, 10 per cent higher than the salary of other employees in

3. Interview with MEN human resources unit manager.

4. Private school teachers can be employed under Decree 2277, but not under the new career framework.

5. Educators of ethnic minorities (*etnoeducadores*) are employed under a separate framework (Decree 804 of 1995), which is not covered in this report. This accounts for the other 2 per cent.

6. These areas are those where outlaw groups are present. Remote and often hard to reach, they have seldom been visited by government or police representatives. In 2017, these positions were filled through special competitions under Decree-Law 882 and Decree 1578/2017.

7. The same health regime is provided to military, executive, legislative, and judicial officers.

the formal sector. However, teachers earn 7 per cent less, on average, than professionals with similar higher education qualifications (García et al., 2014).

Despite the relative attractiveness of the profession, it is a challenge for higher education institutions to train highly qualified teachers and for the education system to attract the best candidates to respond to education quality challenges. In fact, '[s]tudents who enrol in teacher education programmes tend to have the lowest results across all tertiary programmes in the university entrance examination' (OECD, 2016).

According to MEN data sourced from interviews, the attrition rate for permanent teachers is 3 per cent. Teachers who leave are often professionals trained in other fields (e.g. accountancy, medicine, psychology) who find better-paid jobs more in line with their training. Teachers not allocated to schools close to their hometowns are also more likely to leave.

2.2 Key legislation and main actors

Legislation

The 1991 Constitution and Law 115 of 1994 regulate the teaching career structure. As previously mentioned, there are two statutory regimes: under Decree 2277 (1979), for teachers hired before 2002, and Decree 1278 (2002), for teachers hired since then.

Decree 1278 introduced three concepts into the teacher career management system:

1. entry into the profession through mechanisms based on meritocracy (competence evaluation);
2. unrestricted access to the profession to any professional meeting the requirements, so as to preserve the constitutional right of equal participation in public service positions;
3. continuous evaluation of teachers' and managers' performance.

The salary scale regulated by the 1979 decree corresponds to a single salary schedule, whereas Decree 1278 introduced a salary scale based on evaluation. *Table 1* shows key differences between the two norms, which are explored fully in *Section 3*.

Table 1. Salary progression: key differences between Decree 2277 and Decree 1278

Aspects of the teacher career structure	Decree 2277 (1979)	Decree 1278 (2002)
Entry	The only requirement was a <i>diploma de bachiller pedagógico</i> (non-tertiary degree related to pedagogy) Candidates were often selected by political groups and appointed by the government	Candidates must pass a public competitive examination
Number of salary levels	14	Three, which depend on undergraduate and postgraduate academic qualifications, each with four remuneration levels. All are announced through a national call for candidates, which in theory is annual but in practice is biennial.
Aspects taken into account for salary progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years in service • Academic qualifications, usually of short duration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three years in service to initiate the process • Having passed two yearly performance evaluations and a standardized competence test (additional qualifications for a salary level increase are also required)
Salary calculation	Salary is determined in each level	Salary and salary progression are determined annually for each level

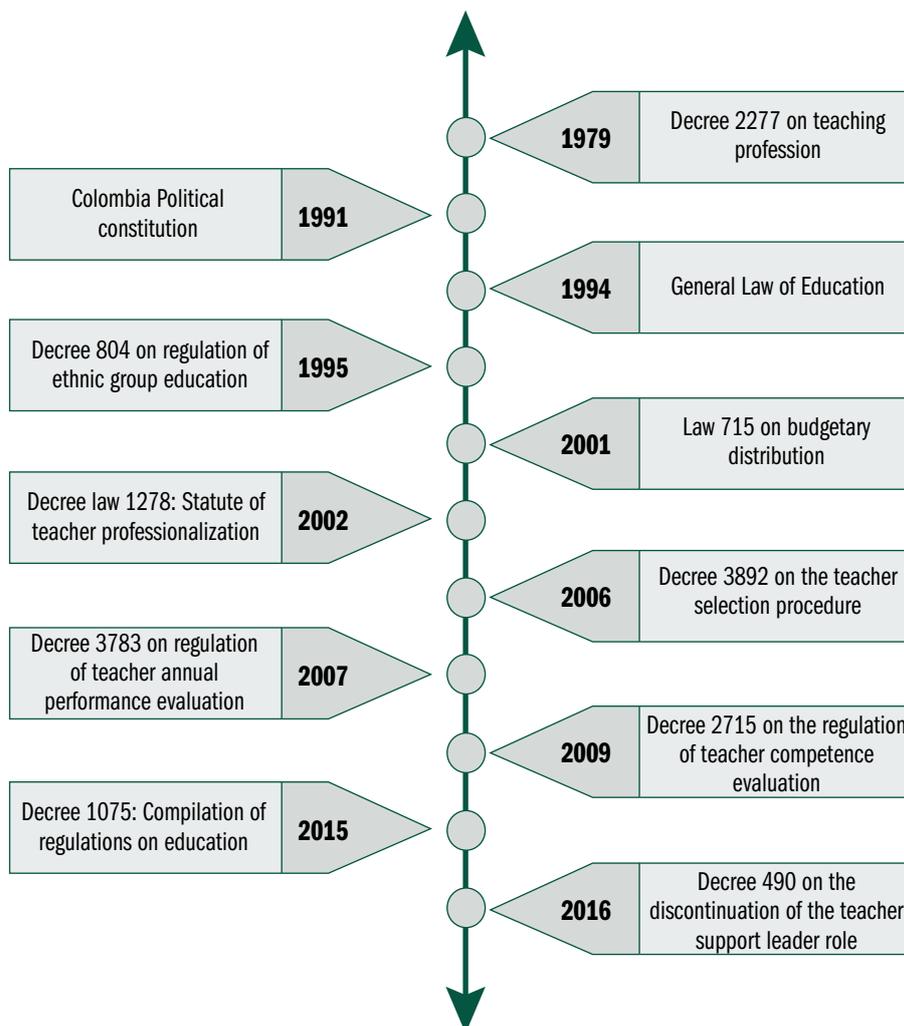
Source: Adapted from Estrada, Numpaque, and Lozada (2015: 10).

In 2015, the government and FECODE agreed on changes to be introduced to the teacher career structure (Resolution 15711 of 2015):

- A salary incentive for teachers under Decree 2277 (1979) who were at the top salary level (level 14).
- Replacement of the competence evaluation used for salary progression by a diagnostic and formative evaluation for teachers under Decree 1278.

Figure 1 is a timeline of important laws and decrees related to teacher career organization and management.

Figure 1. Important laws and decrees in the organization of the teaching career



Source: Compiled by author.

Actors involved

The following are the principal actors involved in the organization and management of teacher careers in Colombia:

- MEN designs teacher career policies and oversees their implementation through *entidades territoriales certificadas* (ETCs, certified territorial entities) at the local level. MEN also announces the evaluations for salary increments.
- The CNSC administers and monitors public servants' careers. It announces the public competitive examinations for entry into the teaching profession, in accordance with Law 909 of 2004, Article 11.

- The Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (Colombian Education Assessment Institute), previously Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior (ICFES, which it retains as its short-form name), is a key partner of MEN in implementing evaluations. It develops and administers teacher examinations.
- 95 ETCs – departments, districts, and municipalities – provide technical assistance to education institutions and design training for teachers under Decree 2277 (1979). They also oversee teachers’ annual performance evaluations under Decree 1278 (2002), which are carried out by their school principals. In addition, they report vacant positions, ensure that candidates fulfil necessary requirements, and help design plans for sectoral qualification policies.

2.3 New entrants to the profession

The reform of 2002 brought major changes to the requirements for and recruitment of permanent positions, with the aim of introducing a competitive, meritocratic, and transparent process.

Requirements for entry to the teaching profession

Decree 2277 (1979) required teachers to have degree in pedagogy. There was no mandatory entry examination. Teachers were often politically appointed, which compromised their suitability and hence the quality of education provided. Those who belonged to the dominant regional party could benefit from the distribution of vacancies. In rare cases, local entities would push back against this practice and appoint teachers according to local needs.

In contrast, Decree 1278 (2002) requires candidates to hold an education degree (*licenciatura*⁸) from a tertiary institution, or to have completed a complementary programme in education and pedagogy from an *escuela normal superior* (ENS, teacher-training school⁹). Primary education teachers are the only exception to this rule: they can be hired without holding a university degree (Figueroa *et al.*, 2018). Graduates in other disciplines can apply for subject-teacher positions in secondary education if they have completed an additional postgraduate qualification in pedagogy.

Candidates for permanent teaching positions must also take a competitive examination (*concurso de mérito*) based on a competence evaluation. Finally, candidates must undergo a probation period before securing a teaching position.

Competitive examination

The Constitution states that ‘the election of public servants attributed to public corporations must be preceded by a public announcement regulated by law’ (Article 126). In line with this, Decree 1278 (2002) established the public competitive examination necessary for entry to the public education service and outlined its phases. The examination is intended to guarantee that selected teachers possess the general and specific competences required by each position, taking into account their hierarchical level.

Local secretaries of education were in charge of teacher recruitment until 2006, when this became a centrally led process, carried out by the CNSC in coordination with MEN and the ICFES. The CNSC, an autonomous body, is responsible for ensuring a fair and transparent recruitment process. The ICFES provides the written tests; the CNSC announces, via an administrative act, the public examination¹⁰ and the process to be followed. Examinations are announced in each ETC with available vacancies. The examination is in three phases:

8. This degree allows the holder to teach all grades up to the end of upper secondary education.

9. An ENS qualification allows the holder to teach Grades 0 to 5.

10. This is in accordance with the Constitution, which states that ‘the election of public servants attributed to public corporations must be preceded by a public announcement regulated by the law’ (Article 126).

1. Candidates take a written multiple-choice test to assess basic competences regarding reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, subject-specific knowledge, or skills related to a specific vacancy. They also take a psycho-technical test to appraise their attitude, skills, motivation, and professional interests.
2. A background appraisal involving analysis of the candidate's curriculum vitae (CV) is carried out to ensure that previous work experience and academic qualifications correspond to the vacancy profile and regulations. All candidates' CVs are registered via a CNSC online platform, the *Sistema de apoyo para la igualdad, el mérito y la oportunidad* (Support System for Equality, Merit, and Opportunity).
3. Candidates are subject to group interviews so that evaluators can observe their reactions to simulated everyday situations in an education institution. Group participants and evaluators are chosen randomly.

All three evaluation phases are further analysed in Table 2.

Table 2. Selection process to enter the teaching profession

Phase	Type	Required minimum to pass	Weight attributed	Evaluators
Basic competences	Eliminatory and ranking	60/100 for teachers and support leaders	60%	ICFES
Psycho-technical test	Ranking	Not applicable	10%	ICFES
Background appraisal (verification of compliance with the minimum requirements for employment)	Ranking	Not applicable	25%	CNSC or delegate
Interview	Ranking	Not applicable	5%	CNSC or delegate

Source: CNSC (2012: 10).

This is a cumulative, norm-referenced evaluation, as points gained in each phase are combined, according to their percentage weight, to determine the final score, which ranks the applicant on a list of eligible candidates. The top-ranking candidates are given priority to select their preferred position in the ETC they applied to. This is done through a public audience to ensure transparency. Lists of eligible candidates are valid for two years. The CNSC has established a mechanism by which hearings are held, with jobs provisioned at the local level in the first hearing, followed by the department level and then the national level.

Probation period and induction programme

Successful applicants then undergo a probation period of at least four months, during which their work performance is evaluated. Teachers hired since 2015 benefit from a three-stage induction programme. The first stage is an eight-hour training session on teacher support, empowerment, and professionalization. In the second stage, local authorities orient teachers on institutional culture and expectations, and help address their needs. The third and final stage pairs new teachers with mentors at their schools to help them adapt to their role in the classroom (Figuroa *et al.*, 2018). The probation period culminates in an evaluation by the school principal, who rates probationers as outstanding, satisfactory, or not satisfactory.¹¹ A candidate must be graded at least satisfactory to become a permanent teacher with full benefits. Between 2010 and 2013, about one in six teachers failed their probation period (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).

11. In accordance with Law 715 of 2001 (Article 10).

3. Description of the teacher career structure and evaluation models used

3.1 Single salary schedule (under Decree 2277 of 1979)

The salary spine under Decree 2277 (1979) is defined by an agreement between the government and the teachers' unions and is officialized by the Department of Public Administration. It consists of 14 levels (see Annex 1). For a teacher to move to a higher salary level, two aspects are considered:

1. years of teaching experience;
2. additional academic qualifications as well as teacher training (e.g. short-duration training offered by ECTs).

Many Decree 2277 teachers are concentrated at the highest salary levels (OECD, 2016).

3.2 Salary progression based on appraisal under Decree 1278 (2002)

Not only did Decree 1278 (2002) introduce salary progression based on appraisal, but it also placed standardized teacher examinations at the heart of the teacher career progression.

The salary spine consists of three levels, with four sublevels in each (see Table 3). ENS graduates are in Level 1. Holders of a bachelor of education degree or professionals with a different bachelor's degree (supplemented by a pedagogy programme) are in Level 2. Teachers who hold a master's degree or PhD related to their tasks at schools or similar education areas are in Level 3. In other words, the levels are associated with academic qualifications as opposed to additional responsibilities. This system applies not only to teachers, including teacher support leaders (*docentes líderes de apoyo*) and school counsellors (*docentes orientadores*), but also to school managers, such as principals (*rectores*), principals in rural areas (*directores rurales*), and coordinators (*coordinadores*).

When entering a new level, a teacher is situated in sublevel A. For instance, a beginner teacher with academic qualifications equivalent to the ENS degree will be in Level 1 and Sublevel A, denominated as 1A. A teacher with a bachelor of education or a professional with another bachelor's degree will be in Level 2A. Teachers can move up a salary increment if they complement their level with a specialization (2AE, E for *especialización*), a master's degree (2AM, M for master's), or a PhD (2AD, D for PhD).

Table 3. Levels and sublevels in the salary spine established by Decree 1278 (2002), Article 21

LEVEL	REQUIREMENTS	SUBLEVEL
1	ENS	A B C D
2	Bachelor of education or bachelor's degree in another discipline with a specialization in education	A B C D
3	Bachelor of education or bachelor's degree in another discipline; option of postgraduate qualifications (master's degree or PhD)	A B C D

Salary increments are subject to negotiation between the government and unions. Each fiscal year, the Public Service Administrative Department issues salary decrees for each regime. Opportunities for salary progression depend on both the availability of government-provided financial resources and local education secretaries' decision to open a call for applications.

Between 2008 and 2010, the salary spine established in 2002 was adjusted to deal with the low initial salaries and the absence of incentives at the beginning of the career. The new structure raised the starting salary by about 26 per cent and the maximum salary by 127 per cent. Teachers who participate successfully in evaluations can reach the maximum salary faster (OECD, 2016).

When teachers move to another salary sublevel (e.g. from A to B), they receive a 24 to 29 per cent increase. When they get an ascension (e.g. from 1A to 2A), they receive a 26 per cent salary increase. Progression from 2A to 3A is associated with a 67 per cent salary increase. An ascension from 3AM to 3AD represents a 30 per cent salary rise.

To move to a higher sublevel (e.g. from B to D), a teacher must pass a competence evaluation, have passed the two latest regular performance evaluations, and have at least three years of service.

Passing a competence evaluation (evaluación de competencias)

Only teachers interested in progressing up the pay scale are required to take the competence evaluation, which covers three types of competences:

1. Behavioural: 'personal characteristics that favour the performance of the teaching and educational leadership functions'.
2. Pedagogical: 'a set of teachers or school managers' knowledge and skills to formulate, develop, and evaluate teaching and learning processes in schools'.
3. Disciplinary: 'a set of knowledge and skills related to the specific teacher or school manager functions' (MEN, 2012: 11).

Until 2015, a written public national examination consisting of 100 multiple-choice questions was used to evaluate specific and general competences. The questions were designed to assess problem-solving skills and the test had to be completed in four hours. The test was standardized, prepared by experts from faculties of education or educational research institutes hired by MEN. The specific questions and their difficulty depended on the position of the applicant (teacher, school manager, or teacher counsellor), the level of education they worked in (pre-primary, primary, or secondary), the subject(s) they were specialized in (mathematics, philosophy, etc.), and whether they were moving to a higher level or sublevel.

Discontent among teachers about the standardized examination triggered a strike in 2015. Changes were introduced following negotiations with FECODE, leading to the adoption of a diagnostic and formative evaluation from 2016. Its main goal is to evaluate teachers' competences in context and put greater focus on classroom practice. This evaluation is largely based on evaluation of a classroom video reviewed by a national and a regional peer evaluator. Those in school managerial positions also need to provide a video, preferably of a teachers' meeting. In addition to video observation, other evaluation instruments include a self-evaluation, results of the two latest annual performance evaluations, or a student survey (Table 4). The evaluation instruments and related weight vary slightly depending on the teacher's position and level of education at which they teach.

Table 4. Components and their related weight for the diagnostic and formative evaluation

For teachers of the last grade in primary education and above	
Components evaluated	Weight (%)
Video observation	80
Self-evaluation	10
Performance evaluation	5
Student survey	5
For teachers of pre-primary and first three years of primary	
Video observation	80
Self-evaluation	12.5
Performance evaluation	7.5

Source: ICFES (2015).

The evaluations used before and after 2015 are both *cumulative*: the three groups of competences are weighted differently (Table 5), with the total of the scores constituting the final result. Teachers have to achieve at least 80 out of 100 to move to a higher level or sublevel.

Furthermore, this evaluation is criterion-referenced, meaning it is mandatory for MEN to increase the salary of all teachers who meet the minimum requirements. The budget is established for these increments each year and the ETCs determine how much they need to request from MEN.

The ICFES is responsible for this evaluation and selects teachers with similar competences to evaluate candidates' videos as well as the planning and classroom practices.

Teachers who fail the appraisal can take a professional development course at an accredited university and be promoted upon completing it successfully, though the number of places in the courses is limited (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).

Table 5. Competences and their related weight for salary level progression until 2015

Moving to a higher level (1 to 3)		Moving to a higher sublevel (A to D)	
Competences	Weight (%)	Competences	Weight (%)
Behavioural	30	Behavioural	30
Pedagogical	30	Pedagogical	40
Disciplinary	40	Disciplinary	30

Source: MEN (2012: 9).

Passing the two latest annual performance evaluations

Teachers and school leaders are subject to an annual performance evaluation (*evaluación anual de desempeño laboral*). A candidate must have passed the two latest evaluations to be eligible for a salary increase. Performance evaluations aim to assess teachers and school leaders' functional and behavioural competences (see Table 6).

Teachers are appraised using two types of evidence gathered in a portfolio throughout the academic year:

1. certification documentation (e.g. individual annual work plan, professional development programmes undertaken, student exam results);
2. feedback from school community members (e.g. student and parent surveys, interviews, self-evaluation tools).

Teachers are evaluated by their school leaders, who in turn are evaluated by regional supervisors. Evaluators can choose the tools they deem most appropriate in accordance with national guidelines.¹² Functional competences have four components (managerial, academic, administrative, and community-based) and account for 70 per cent of the final evaluation score, with behavioural competences making up the remaining 30 per cent. Evaluation is therefore cumulative. There are three levels of performance, depending on the score: outstanding (90 to 100), satisfactory (60 to 89), and unsatisfactory (1 to 59). The evaluation should serve a basis for developing a professional development plan. If it is unsatisfactory for two consecutive years, the teacher can be dismissed after a follow-up process. Teachers who want to challenge the objectiveness of their evaluation can ask for a repeat of the evaluation with a different evaluator.

Table 6. Teacher and manager competences assessed in performance evaluations

Functional competences		
Component	Teacher competences	Management competences
Management	Applies only to teachers in managerial positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management planning and organization • Execution
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum content mastery • Academic planning and organization • Pedagogy and didactics • Learning evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogy and didactics • Innovation and academic guidance
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of resources • Monitoring of processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration of resources • Management of human resources
Community-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional communication • Institutional interaction • Interactions with the community and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional communication • Interactions with the community and environment
Behavioural competences		
Leadership, interpersonal relationships and communication skills, teamwork, negotiation and mediation, social and institutional commitments, sense of initiative, goal orientation.		

Source: MEN (2018).

Completing three years of service

To move up the salary scale, teachers must have spent at least three years in service after completion of the probation period. They must remain at their entry level for three years, after which those interested in applying for a promotion can undergo the evaluation whenever it is offered, usually once a year.

3.3 Career ladder

In May 2016, a resolution published by MEN defined the teaching, support, and managerial positions available at the school level (Resolution 09317):

1. **School principals** (*rectores* or *directores rurales*) are responsible for schools' technical, pedagogical, administrative, and financial management. They are in charge of building relationships with the school community (parents, graduates, strategic actors, etc.) and developing the institutional educational project (*proyecto educativo institucional*).

12. MEN, 2008 (Guía No. 31: Guía Metodológico Evaluación Anual de Desempeño Laboral).

2. **Coordinators** (*coordinadores*) assist and collaborate with school principals in their academic functions as well as in the school's pedagogical activities. They also contribute to functions related to student discipline.
3. **Teacher support leaders** (*docentes líderes de apoyo*) used to oversee the development of pedagogical projects and other support activities related to students' development and orientation. They were expected to use instructional materials, flexible pedagogical models, and pedagogical spaces, such as libraries, to strengthen students' skills in subjects ranging from mathematics to communications. The position was later abolished (see below).
4. **School counsellors** (*docentes orientadores*) are in charge of the diagnosis, planning, execution, and evaluation of activities related to student orientation and development.

The requirements for each position depend on academic qualifications and professional experience (see Annex 2).

The selection process for these positions is organized in the same way as that for teachers. Candidates undergo a competitive examination based on a written test on basic competences, a psycho-technical exam, an oral interview based on a case study, and a background appraisal based on their CV (Table 7). A list of eligible candidates (based on their scores) is then prepared. After a probation period, successful candidates are appointed to the positions concerned.

Table 7. Entry selection process for teacher support leader and manager positions

Phase	Type	Required score to pass	Weight attributed (%)		Evaluators
			Teacher support leaders	Managers (<i>directivos docentes</i>)	
Basic competences	Eliminatory and ranking in the list	60/100 for teachers and teacher support leaders, 70/100 for managers	60	55	ICFES
Psycho-technical test	Ranking in the list	Not applicable	10	15	ICFES
Background appraisal	Ranking in the list	Not applicable	20	20	CNSC or delegate
Interview	Ranking in the list	Not applicable	10	10	CNSC or delegate

Source: Adapted from CNSC (2016).

Some of these positions, such as teacher support leader, were new. The largest teacher union, FECODE, strongly opposed their introduction, for several reasons, one being a perceived lack of clarity on what the teacher support leader role entailed in schools, raising questions about pedagogical autonomy and equality among peers. The introduction of this role was also seen as supporting implementation of other measures that the union opposed, such as longer school days and bonuses through the Synthetical Education Quality Index (see Section 3.4) (Niño, 2014). As a result, the teacher support position was discontinued in 2017 (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).

3.4 Other incentives and rewards

The annual salary decree sets additional monetary incentives for teachers and school leaders, linking them to factors such as getting a certified degree within a career ladder level, length of service, overtime, compliance with quality indicators, and transport and food assistance for overtime. All these bonuses except the first also apply to teachers under the 1979 decree.

Since 2014, an incentive programme has given teachers the opportunity to pursue a government-funded master's degree. Priority goes to those working in schools associated with the programmes *Todos a Aprender*¹³ and *Jornada Única*.¹⁴ Some local entities also offer teachers scholarships to pursue a master's degree in order to support and improve education quality.

In 2015, a bonus system was introduced through the Synthetical Education Quality Index (*Índice Sintético de Calidad Educativa*). This multidimensional index aims to measure the performance of primary to upper secondary schools participating in the two programmes mentioned above, taking into account progress, performance, school environment, and efficiency (see Table 8). Staff at schools that meet or exceed two norms, Annual Minimum Improvement (*Mínimo de Mejoramiento Annual*) and the Excellence Goal (*Meta de Excelencia*), are granted a financial bonus. In 2016, the bonus corresponded to 50 per cent of a month's salary (OECD, 2016).

Table 8. Synthetical Education Quality Index

Component	Weight (%)	Criterion
Progress	40	Progress on the national examinations since the previous year
Performance	40	Students' average score on mathematics and language assessments
School environment	10	Assessment of the conditions of learning in the classroom
Efficiency	10	Proportion of students who have completed the school year

Source: Radinger et al. (2018).

Another national programme, *Ser Pilo Paga*, is an effort to attract the best secondary school graduates to work towards a bachelor's degree in education. It awards scholarships to the students who obtain the highest results on the standardized national examination, Prueba Saber 11. Scholarships are granted on the condition that the students enrol in high quality universities with renowned education faculties. The students will also benefit from English courses, international exchange programmes, digital devices to facilitate learning, opportunities to pursue a master's degree in Colombia or elsewhere, and an internship abroad.

13. *Todos a Aprender* (Let's All Learn) is the leading initiative to improve promotion to the next salary sublevel and primary school teachers' skills working in schools that do not meet the minimum performance standards in language and mathematics on ICFES tests. It builds on the legacy of the Rural Education Programme (Programa de Educación Rural), which aimed to raise teaching skills through in-service training methods, defined pedagogical content strategies, and a well-sequenced teaching process. Between 2010 and 2014, *Todos a Aprender* reached 2.3 million primary students and more than 90,000 teachers, and supported 4,303 schools in 833 municipalities. A hundred trainers provided pedagogical and didactic strategies to 3,000 teacher-tutors, using a peer-training model. Language and mathematics teachers were offered direct support to improve their classroom practices and student performance on the national examination in year five (OECD, 2016).

14. The Single Day programme reflects a government strategy to increase student enrolment rates and teaching hours (by two hours per day) through incentives such as free school meals, improved facilities, and additional teachers.

4. Implementation of the reform

4.1 Administration and management

The teacher career structure faces several issues, especially regarding the coexistence of the new and old regulations and the implementation of large-scale, systematized evaluation procedures.

- **The coexistence of two career frameworks raises an issue of inequality among teachers:** In 2017, just under half of permanent teachers were still employed under the old framework. While all new teachers are incorporated into the 2002 framework, it remains voluntary for teachers belonging to that of 1979. MEN representatives say the 2002 structure provides ‘similar salaries to those of teachers of the old scheme’ and ‘better work conditions’, yet it has been challenging to convince the 95 ETCs and teacher unions of the new system’s benefits. Three-quarters of teachers under the old framework are at the highest salary level, while many teachers under the new statute are still at the first step of the salary scale. Salary progression for these teachers is more challenging to obtain than in the old system, as requirements are set and opportunities depend on available financial resources. Notably, the proportion of teachers working in rural areas who belong to the new regime is higher. The two categories of teachers are subject to different evaluation policies: those in the new framework have to complete regular mandatory performance evaluations, unlike those in the old framework. Such differences can affect school climates negatively and undermine collegiality (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).
- **The recruitment process is hampered by operational challenges:** A key strength of the teacher career reform was the introduction of clear requirements and meritocratic processes to enter the profession. The entry examination for permanent positions proved to be highly competitive, e.g. in 2016 only 9 per cent of candidates succeeded. While the CNSC ensures transparency in the recruitment process, its involvement also entails long delays in the assignment of teachers to schools. The availability of permanent positions, moreover, depends on the ETCs’ decisions, resulting in sporadic public competitions in some areas and the use of temporary contracts. In the medium and long term, these challenges could reduce candidates’ willingness to go through the recruitment process (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).
- **Required evaluation scores for a salary increase seem too high:** Few teachers succeed in the evaluation required for a salary increase and thus stay at the same salary level or sublevel for six or more years. On average, only 10 per cent of those evaluated achieve the minimum required score (80 out of 100). Some teachers with a master’s degree or PhD are still at the 2A salary level because they have not passed the evaluation. A FECODE representative confirmed this:

Teachers feel insecure because they are not able to pass the evaluation for the level increase [2 to 3]; having a degree is therefore useless, as the salary increase is subject to passing the evaluation. There are many teachers under the new decree who have not passed any of the evaluations for the level increase since its introduction.

This might explain why the number of teachers deciding to apply for a salary increase is limited. As noted by Bruns and Luque (2014: 257), ‘teachers have been reluctant to pursue available incentives because of the perceived difficulty of the test, which to some extent defeats the purpose of offering a new path’. One high-ranking official in the MEN Human Resources Unit noted that ‘in 2014–2015, 14 per cent of all teachers under Decree 1278 (2002) participated in the public examination to move to a higher

grade or level'. In other words, a staggering 86 per cent did not even attempt to get a pay rise.

- **School principals often lack rigour when conducting teachers' annual performance assessments:** Relying exclusively on school principals' evaluations for annual performance assessments proved to be problematic. Principals tend to give all teachers high scores, perhaps to avoid internal conflicts, and some even delegate the task to other personnel (Bruns and Luque, 2014). Furthermore, the evaluations often do not lead to good-quality feedback or training opportunities to help teachers improve their work, and have only limited influence on external appraisals (OECD, 2016).
- **School principals' selection overlooks leadership and managerial skills:** Principals' difficulty carrying out annual performance evaluations effectively is related to weak pedagogical leadership in Colombian schools. The entry examination for school principal favours knowledge of regulations over leadership and managerial skills. In addition, territorial Secretariats of Education do not require principals to take professional development courses that would help them improve their practice; hence, audits have shown that multiple processes do not meet the norm (OECD, 2016).

4.2 Financial aspects

MEN recognizes that a weakness of the reform is the high incentive for teachers to improve their postgraduate qualifications, which could have significant financial implications in the long term. Holders of master's degrees and PhDs earn around 60 per cent and 100 per cent more, respectively, than a teacher with a lower degree.

The cost of undertaking postgraduate studies (which are required to move to Level 3) is higher than in neighbouring countries, however. And teachers under the 2002 regulation cannot achieve a salary increment by taking short courses, as teachers under the 1979 decree could do. The implication is that teachers need sufficient personal financial resources to fund higher education, as well as succeed in the evaluation leading to a higher salary. While a few teachers may benefit from scholarship programmes for postgraduate studies, they are not available to all. Thus, even when teachers manage to achieve a salary increase, it can take some 10 years to pay off the investment in additional qualifications. Moreover, given the scarcity of tertiary institutions outside urban areas, teachers working in rural areas may be especially disadvantaged by the recognition awarded to postgraduate qualifications.

4.3 Participation and communication

A FECODE member said teacher unions' participation in the design and implementation of the current teacher career policy was limited. MEN designed the career structure with help from universities that lacked extensive knowledge of primary and secondary educational contexts. Norms were adopted in the form of a legally binding decree in 2002, allowing no relevant discussions and analysis with union actors. This led to resistance from teachers under Decree 2277 (1979), especially after the first list of candidates entering the profession through the competitive examination was published: that examination resulted in dismissal of contract teachers who participated but did not pass.

In 2015, teachers organized a national strike to express their general disagreement with the strict quantitative methods employed for teacher evaluation, which they deem qualitative in essence. According to a FECODE member, the strike was a reaction to 'low working conditions and extremely rigid evaluation frameworks that did not compensate or encourage teachers' work inside the classrooms'. Teachers under Decree 1278 (2002) demanded greater flexibility in the evaluations for a salary increase, modification of the

competence evaluation mechanism, and re-examination of evaluation tools and weighting mechanisms used for interviews and the CV-based background appraisal.¹⁵

After the strike, notable changes were made to the evaluation for salary increments (Resolution 1571, 2015). An agreement was reached to engage teacher unions in decisions about the new evaluation mechanisms. The first call for candidates was directed exclusively at teachers who had been unable to reach a higher level or sublevel since the decree took effect. In addition, a round table was established where teacher unions negotiated with MEN. Efforts to keep improving dialogue between unions and the government appear key to overcoming the challenges in the career reform process:

Today we are trying to discuss with the FECODE the modifications and agreements that are essential for the process. (Government representative)

The Ministry of Education should continue cooperating with us because only through dialogue and discussions can we understand and make them understand the necessities of teachers that we represent as well as weaknesses and strengths of the current teacher career structure. (FECODE representative)

15. Strikers' demands also related to the healthcare regime, a general salary increase, additional payments, and retirement age, among other issues.

5. Perceived effects

5.1 Motivation and satisfaction

Teachers consider job stability and opportunities for salary progression to be the most motivating aspects of the career structure. Higher salaries for teachers under Decree 1278 (2002), along with the benefits of the special health regime (which, although imperfect, keeps teachers from having to make conventional supplemental payments), also positively influence teacher motivation. Some teachers are motivated by the opportunity for postgraduate studies and other academic activities as well.

However, a weakness of the current teacher career structure is that appraisal procedures are not uniform for all teachers, even if all execute the same tasks, since teachers under Decree 2277 of 1979 are not evaluated. The resulting sense of inequality for teachers under the later decree negatively affects their motivation.

Teacher dissatisfaction stems from the fact that many of those who apply for the salary increase evaluation do not obtain the minimum required score despite multiple attempts. As a result, few teachers choose to undergo the evaluation, reflecting general disengagement with this process. Despite the adoption of the Diagnostic and Formative Evaluation in 2016, which replaced previous written competence evaluations, success rates remain low and teachers interviewed still cited a lack of motivation.

5.2 Attraction

The stricter entry requirements and more attractive salary structure introduced by the 2002 reform raised the appeal of the teaching profession. The career framework requires teachers to hold at least an ENS degree, while completion of upper secondary education previously sufficed. As a result, teachers working in the new framework are, on average, better educated than teachers of the same age under the old decree (Ome, 2012). Teachers also have an incentive to pursue higher qualifications to reach the highest levels of the salary scale. The existence of scholarship programmes that fully fund a master's degree is considered a positive influence for teacher attraction.

The head of the MEN Human Resources Unit reported that between 2010 and 2015 the number of candidates for the last public examination of the year gradually grew to reach more than 200,000 individuals vying for 40,000 vacancies, showing the attractiveness of the profession. As noted in *Section 2.1*, many candidates with backgrounds in fields other than education participate in the examinations. While the opportunity for such candidates to enter the teaching profession provides greater potential for coping with teacher shortages in specific subjects, research is needed to evaluate whether they have adequate pedagogical skills (Radinger *et al.*, 2018).

Even if teachers under Decree 1278 (2002) receive higher salaries than those under Decree 2277 (1979), their pay remains lower than in other professions requiring similar qualifications (see *Section 2.1*). The FECODE member interviewed said this reduced the appeal of the profession: 'Teachers are obliged to study to obtain a promotion or to receive a salary increment even if their salaries are so low that they cannot even pay for those studies. The salary is considerably lower than in other professions with similar characteristics.'

5.3 Retention

Data from the MEN Planning Unit indicate that teachers holding degrees related to education account for 97 per cent of the teacher workforce, and they tend to stay in

the profession until retirement. Interviewees reported that job stability contributes to teacher retention.

Teacher attrition in Colombia is very low. Most teachers who leave are those who were employed on short-term contracts. In addition, ETCs often employ teachers from other professions (e.g. accountants to teach mathematics, doctors to teach natural sciences) who may leave after a few months or weeks because they find jobs which are more suited to their qualifications and often associated with higher pay and better living conditions.

Conclusion

The 2002 teacher career reform was an important step towards the recognition and professionalization of teaching in Colombia. It was an ambitious reform, introducing stricter requirements and a systematic approach to teacher evaluation. One of its main strengths is the competitive entry examination, which has improved transparency and trust in the selection process as well as the calibre of professionals being recruited.

Despite promising changes, however, the reform has faced design and implementation challenges. A notable issue is related to the transition from the old to the new career framework. Colombian teachers are regulated by two different decrees, which involve differentiated treatment and pay for teachers doing the same tasks.

The rigid teacher evaluation framework, based on standardized competence examinations, has been strongly contested by teachers for not reflecting the reality in the classroom. New evaluation instruments introduced in 2016 aimed to address this issue, though it is too early to evaluate their effect. In addition, multiple issues have been observed with regard to annual performance evaluations conducted by school principals, such as lack of objectivity and weak leadership skills. Given the importance of evaluation in the teacher career structure, it would be beneficial to make the best use of the process and provide teachers with constructive feedback to improve their practice.

An important point is that the career structure does not create enough incentives for teachers to move forward in their career. Evaluation standards seem too high, which demotivates teachers and discourages them from applying to move up to a higher salary increment.

Moreover, the main path for teachers willing to take on additional responsibilities is still to apply for managerial positions. FECODE strongly opposed the introduction of new roles, resulting in the elimination of the new teacher support leader position. Given the recurring resistance to several aspects of the reform, working closely with teachers' unions would seem to be crucial to facilitate successful implementation of the career structure and help build trust among stakeholders.

Annex 1. Teacher salary system under Decree 2277 (1979)

Grade	Required academic qualifications	Training	Experience
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education or a post-graduate degree in education Authorship of a scientific, pedagogical, or technical work 		3 years at Level 13
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education 	Course	3 years at Level 12
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education Bachelor's degree in another discipline 	Course	4 years at Level 11 Idem
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education Bachelor's degree in another discipline Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 10 Idem 4 years at Level 10
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education Bachelor's degree in another discipline Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 9 Idem Idem 4 years at Level 9
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education Bachelor's degree in another discipline Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 8 4 years at Level 8 3 years at Level 8 Idem
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of education Bachelor's degree in another discipline Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 7 Idem 4 years at Level 7 3 years at Level 7 4 years at Level 7 3 years at Level 7

Grade	Required academic qualifications	Training	Experience
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of education • Bachelor's degree in another discipline • Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) • Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 6 Idem 4 years at Level 6 3 years at Level 6 4 years at Level 6
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in another discipline • Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) • Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course Course	Entry course in education 3 years at Level 5 Idem Idem Idem
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education technologist (<i>Tecnólogo en educación</i>) • Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) 	Course	 4 years at Level 4 3 years at Level 4
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education expert (<i>Técnico o experto en educación</i>) • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course	 3 years at Level 3 3 years at Level 3
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course	3 years at Level 2 3 years at Level 2
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education specialist (<i>Perito o experto en educación</i>) • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 	Course	2 years at Level 1
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-tertiary degree in pedagogy (<i>Bachiller pedagógico</i>) 		

Annex 2. Minimum requirements for teacher and school managerial positions

Position	Minimum academic requirements	Experience
School principal	Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>)	Six years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Six years of experience in one of the school's management positions. 2. Four years of experience in one of the school's management positions and two years of experience in another position. 3. Five years in a full-time teacher position (any level) in a private or public institution and one year in one of the school's management positions.
	Bachelor's degree in another discipline: Administration, economy, mathematics, statistics (or related fields), industrial engineering (or related fields), administrative engineering (or related fields)	Six years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Six years in one of the school's management positions. 2. Four years of experience in one of the school's management positions and two years of experience in another position with administrative functions. 3. Five years in a full-time teacher position (any level) in a public or private institution and one year in one of the school's management positions.
School principal in a rural area	Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>)/ Non-tertiary education (graduate of ENS)	Four years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four years of experience in one of the school's management positions. 2. Three years of experience as a teacher and one year of experience in another position.
	Bachelor's degree in another discipline: Administration, economy, mathematics, statistics (or related fields), industrial engineering (or related fields), administrative engineering (or related fields)	Four years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four years of experience in one of the school's management positions. 2. Three years as a full-time teacher and one year of experience in another position with administrative functions.

Position	Minimum academic requirements	Experience
Coordinator	Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>)	Five years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five years in one of the school's management positions (Law 115 of 1994 or Decree-Law 1278 of 2002) or in a full-time teaching position (any level) in a public or private institution. 2. Four years as a teacher or in one of the school's full-time management positions (any level) in a public or private institution, plus one year of experience in another position with staff management responsibilities, financial functions, or planning of education for private or public institutions (any level).
	Bachelor's degree in another discipline: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administration 2. Accounting 3. Economy 4. Mathematics, statistics, and related fields 5. Industrial engineering and related fields 6. Administrative engineering and related fields 7. Anthropology and liberal arts 8. Sociology, social work, and related fields. 9. Philosophy, theology, and related fields 10. Psychology 11. Modern languages, literature, linguistics, and related fields 	Five years of professional experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five years in one of the school's management positions (Law 115 of 1994 or Decree-Law 1278 of 2002) or in a full-time teacher position (any level) in a public or private institution. 2. Four years as a teacher or in one of the school's full-time management positions (any level) in a public or private institution, and one year of experience in another position with staff management responsibilities, financial functions, or planning of education for private or public institutions (any level).

Position	Minimum academic requirements	Experience
Teacher support leader (Docente líder de apoyo)	<p>Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in mathematics, social sciences and history, geography, humanities and philosophy, sociology, political science, political studies, social work, fine arts 2. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in arts and folklore 3. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in arts, folklore, and culture 4. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in plastic arts 5. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in artistic education 6. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in aesthetic education 7. Music 8. Physical education 9. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in modern languages 10. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in Spanish and literature <p>In all areas of support, a post-graduate degree is necessary (at least a specialization)</p>	<p>Two years of professional experience:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two years as a teacher (any level) in a public or private institution. 2. Two years as the school manager (Law 115 of 1994 or Decree-Law 1278 of 2002) in a public or private institution.
School counsellor (Docente orientador)	<p>Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>): Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in any area of knowledge.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in psychology and pedagogy. 2. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in psycho-pedagogy (single or with an emphasis) 3. Degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) in educational social pedagogy (<i>pedagogía reeducativa</i>) 4. Degree in any area with a post-graduate degree (at least a specialization degree) in psychology (single or with an emphasis), social work, psycho-social therapies, family development 	No experience required
Teacher	Bachelor of education (<i>licenciados</i>) or other field related to those convened (Resolution 09317 of 2016) (pp. 39-66).	No experience required

Source: Adapted from Resolution 09317 of May 2016.

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Teacher career reforms in Colombia

Seeking to improve its educational quality, Colombia adopted a new teacher career structure in 2002. This reform shifted away from the old single-salary schedule model towards one of career progression based on performance and competence evaluations. One of its main strengths is the competitive entry examination, which has improved transparency and trust in the selection process as well as the calibre of professionals being recruited. Though a promising design, the reform has struggled owing to the continued coexistence of the old system for previously employed teachers, along with several other implementation issues.

This country note was conducted within the framework of an international research project on teacher careers implemented by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). It explores Colombia's teacher career reforms through detailed analysis and comparison to old policies. Further, the note explores the frustration some teachers initially felt with the reform due to perceived difficulties in career progression, which led to changes in the evaluation system in 2016.

About the author

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