AN ASSESSMENT
OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT
TO THE GOAL OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Universal primary education is the goal of many developing countries. It is a high priority in the educational planning of Colombia. The law in Colombia states that five years of 'educación primaria' is free and compulsory. Since 1955, Colombia has investigated the problems and legislated reforms to make this law an actual fact. In Latin America, reform laws and planning studies very often remain just that: the implementation of the reforms is delayed or forgotten in the maze of planning boards and government offices. This thesis examines the reforms passed by the Colombian government in the period 1955 to 1965, and assesses their implementation in public primary education. The problems that were encountered in the attempts to achieve the goal of universal primary education are studied, and the effects of the continued emphasis on the expansion of primary education are discussed in the conclusion.

The information for the study was derived primarily from secondary sources, as the original Ministry of Education reports were not available. The Colombian government and United Nations statistics were used to make conclusions about the 1965 situation of primary education. The most recent comprehensive statistics were from the 1965 census. A general view of Colombia was gained from a short stay (one month) in 1970, and, a discussion with a Colombian, who visited Canada in 1972, helped to give some insight into the country's educational problems.
Universal primary education was still an ideal in Colombia in 1965. Many of the reforms, because of governmental bureaucracy and the economic situation were only partially implemented. There was a percentage increase in enrollment statistics and the government demonstrated its commitment to the goal by increasing the educational budget. Generally, the targets set by the government were too optimistic; the ideals expressed in political statements were far from reality.

The thesis concludes that there are two options for the educational planners of Colombia: the first, to continue to aim for the goal of universal primary education, devoting a large percentage of the budget to the primary sector, with little hope of achieving this goal in the immediate future, and the second, to distribute the money available throughout the education system to enable a greater segment of the population to obtain secondary education and thus increase the middle class, but, at the same time, accepting the fact that a proportion of the population would remain illiterate.
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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Man states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Elementary and fundamental education shall be free and compulsory and there shall be equal access on the basis of merit to higher education.1

Universal primary education is an important goal of many developing countries in the world today. Education is seen as the panacea of many of the world's ills. Developing countries emphasize education as a key to social and economic development.

Colombia has set universal primary education as a top priority in its educational planning and appears to be aware of the importance of education in the economic progress of the country and the development of the people. The Minister of Education in 1963 expressed the government's attitude towards education; "Todos nosotros vemos claramente como en la base misma del progreso económico está la educación, y como su mejoramiento y amplitud son bases necesarias del desarrollo, que a su vez es la garantía segura de la política libre de los pueblos". (We all see clearly how education is the very basis of economic progress, and how its improvement and extension are the necessary foundations of development, and at the same time is the safe guarantee of the free politics of the people.)
The law in Colombia states that five years of primary education is free and compulsory. The government has passed a number of reforms and programs to make this law an actual fact. This thesis will study the reforms passed in the period 1955 to 1965, the extent to which these reforms have been implemented, the obstacles to universal primary education and finally, the last chapter will discuss the desirability and the motivation in striving for such a goal.

The period 1955 to 1965 was chosen for study as this was a time in Colombia when many reforms were passed and planning studies were instituted to increase primary enrollment and to improve the quality of primary education. Many Latin American countries have difficulty getting beyond the stage of planning studies and government legislation. The purpose of this thesis is to assess the implementation of the educational reforms in the public primary sector in Colombia and to discuss the difficulties in aiming for this goal.

The most recent comprehensive statistics available on education in Colombia were from the 1965 census. The situation after 1965 is mentioned in some areas only to reinforce conclusions about the 1965 educational system. The sources for the study, apart from the statistics, are generally secondary because of the difficulty the author experienced in trying to obtain Ministry of Education reports. Impartial observers
tend to give a more accurate picture of the situation than government reports. The incompleteness of governmental statistics made it difficult to draw valid conclusions, but deductions were made with the help of other sources. The tables include all the available data on the problem and the graphs in the appendix help to show the general trends.

The term primary education used in this thesis comes from the Spanish term, 'educación primaria', which is used in Colombia to define the compulsory five years of elementary schooling. The thesis deals with the situation of the public primary schools as in Colombia only fifteen percent of the primary schools are private and the national government has no direct control over them. A literate is defined as a person with some schooling, no matter how little; this tends to inflate the literacy percentage. The comparison between urban and rural areas inflates the urban population because of the definition used by the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE) (National Administrative Department of Statistics) in Colombia; any 'municipio' (municipal district) with a population over 1500 is classed as urban. The enrollment in primary schools is compared to both the seven to fourteen year old population and the seven to eleven year old population because of the late starting age in many areas. Any quotations in Spanish are followed by a free translation by the author.
Universal primary education is an accepted fact in the industrialized countries of the world, yet in Colombia, it is a long way from reality. In a 1958 study by a French mission headed by Joseph Lebret, which analyzed factors retarding educational development, it was estimated that "Colombia necesitaría algo más de dos siglos para alcanzar la posición obtenida por los Estados Unidos o Francia." (Colombia would need about more than two centuries to reach the position obtained by the United States or France), if the speed of literacy progress were not accelerated.

Universal primary education is possible only if there are sufficient classroom places for the school-age population and if this population desires to attend school. The population growth and economic situation naturally affect the country's ability to provide the schoolrooms. In order to ensure attendance once the schools are available, the quality of the education offered must be good. The teachers must be sufficiently well-trained to interest students in learning and the curriculum must be relevant so that the child and/or his parents can see the benefits of school attendance. Furthermore, when countries such as Colombia concentrate on universal primary education, the other levels receive less financial support and are
not expanded at the same rate. Therefore, the people, not only the government, must see primary education as an end in itself; otherwise frustration will inevitably result among groups who are unable to continue on to secondary education.

The Colombian government has expressed its support of the goal of universal primary education and has emphasized the improvement of rural primary education as part of this goal. Since 1927, the law has stated that primary education is free and compulsory in Colombia. Article 41 of the revised Colombian Constitution of 1945 sets forth the basic principles of education: "Freedom of instruction is guaranteed. Primary education shall be gratuitous in state schools, and shall be obligatory to the extent that the law requires." In 1962, the Colombian government signed the UNESCO agreement at a conference in Santiago which included among its points the goal of universal primary education by 1970 (later changed to 1975).

By 1965, Colombia was far from reaching the goal of universal primary education. Fifty-six percent of the seven to fourteen year old population and sixty-four percent of the seven to eleven year old group were registered in primary school. There was still a significant discrepancy between the availability and the quality of primary education in rural schools and urban schools. There was an increase in enrollment in the first few years of primary school, but because of the shortage of complete
five year schools in the rural areas, the enrollment in the fifth grade constituted only five percent of the corresponding age group population. Universal primary education was more of an ideal than a reality in the rural areas of Colombia.

Chapter I gives the background for Colombia; Chapter II outlines the laws and reforms passed by the Colombian government in the period 1955 to 1965, designed to achieve the goal of universal primary education; Chapter III assesses the implementation of these reforms; Chapter IV examines the obstacles against achieving such a goal; and finally Chapter V concludes the thesis with a discussion of the desirability of Colombia aiming for this goal and the motivations behind it.
NOTES


CHAPTER I

COLOMBIA - BACKGROUND

POPULATION

The population of Colombia; in 1965 was eighteen million; by 1970, it was twenty-two million. It is predicted that, by 1980, Colombia will become the third most populous country in Latin America. The two factors regarding the population which have a direct relation to the educational situation are:

1) the rapid and increasing rate of demographic growth, which is 3.2% annually.

2) the rapid and increasing movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, which is 5.4% annually.

In 1951, only 38% of the total population lived in the urban areas, while in 1964, this figure had risen to 52.8%. While this percentage may be weighted on the urban areas because of the DANE definition of urban areas as centers with 1500 or more, by the late 1960's more than one-third of the population resided in twenty cities with a population in excess of 100,000. Because of this increasing migration, the cities of Colombia are experiencing severe problems with housing shortages, unemployment and lack of schools.

The rapid population growth is causing further diffi-
culties with greater numbers dependent on a smaller labour force. In 1964, more than 46% were under the age of fifteen and 56% were under the age of twenty. Consequently, there is an ever increasing school-age population which will add to the problems of educational planners in Colombia.

**TABLE I**

**POPULATION DIVISION BY AGE - 1964**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>4,249,623</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>2,578,407</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>2,795,289</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>1,715,625</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-64</td>
<td>5,621,303</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 &amp; more</td>
<td>524,261</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>17,484,508</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The class division in Colombia is typical of Latin America, with a small minority holding all the power and a large majority who have little influence in political decisions. The elite or upper class hold the government positions, generally are from established families, and constitute about 3 to 5
percent of the population. This group has managed to maintain the status quo while at the same time allowing sufficient change in order not to stifle development. The middle class, comprising professionals, technicians, all white-collar workers, and some labour union people are growing steadily and are estimated at 20% of the population. It is generally agreed that about seventy percent of the population is in the lower class, or working class. The children of the upper class attend private schools and their parents tend to regard public schools as charitable institutions. The urban middle class is becoming more vocal in pushing for educational reform while the lower class generally feel they have no power to exert in changing the system.

POLITICAL HISTORY

Colombia has had a reputation as one of the more politically stable, democratic Latin American republics. Since the early days of independence, Colombian politics have been dominated by two parties: the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Liberal Party was formed by a group of people seeking to create a political order which embodied economic liberty, a secular state, federalism and democracy. The Conservatives
grouped together to preserve the scholastic tradition of Spain and the stability of the colonial period. The Church was the persistent issue which continued to keep the parties in opposition, and helped to establish intense party loyalties among the masses. Over the years the various civil wars that erupted between the two groups tended to push party followers into homogeneous communities.

In the 1930's and 40's, the Liberals edged toward socialism while the Conservatives opposed this with all their power. Although the masses probably had little understanding of the ideological differences between the two parties, the peasants were quite willing to fight to demonstrate their party loyalty. The civil war, termed 'la violencia', which began in 1948 and ended in 1956 was a result of the clash between the two parties. In 1953, General Rojas Pinilla was asked by both the Liberals and Conservatives to restore order. Thousands of people had been killed and many others left homeless during this period. Rojas succeeded in reducing the level of violence but not in eliminating it.

In 1957, the Liberal and Conservative parties decided that they preferred an agreement between themselves rather than letting Rojas continue in power. The two parties agreed to share elections by alternating a Liberal and Conservative
president, and allowing each party no more than fifty percent of the seats in Congress. The coalition was to last until 1970, but was later extended to 1974. The format of the National Front, as the coalition was named, enabled the two parties to discourage further acts of partisan violence and still maintain their positions in society. However, policy innovation and the implementation of plans became more difficult.

The National Front eliminated one of the basic reasons for loyalty to a party: opposition to the other party. Besides the presidency and the Congress seats, administrative posts and ministries were also divided between the two parties so that a qualified Liberal would not be appointed if the vacancy called for a Conservative and vice-versa. Because the coalition destroyed the traditional party opposition and competition, opposing factions developed within the two parties, which further hindered policy formulation.

The first president of the National Front was a Liberal, Alberto Lleras Camargo, who ruled from 1958 to 1962. President Lleras Camargo introduced strong austerity measures to solve economic troubles. He cut imports, took steps to stabilize the peso and established a National Planning Department. He also started agrarian reform, but met with limited success in this area. In 1958, Colombia experienced the most favourable
balance of trade in twenty years.

Lleras was followed by a Conservative, Guillermo León Valencia, from 1962 to 1966. His attempts at land reform ran into opposition of the large landholders. The peso was devalued and new taxes were proposed. In 1964, the congressional elections only drew thirty percent of the electorate to vote, and the National Front only received twenty percent of the total. This further affected Valencia's effectiveness by reducing his supporters in Congress to a narrow majority. In 1965, because of economic difficulties, Valencia declared a state of siege and ruled by decree. He was able to introduce a number of austerity measures by enacting reforms by decree, and thereby improved the economic situation.

In 1966, another Liberal, Carlos Lleras Restrepo took over and attempted to carry out the economic programs of Lleras Camargo. Both parties in the National Front have made elaborate statements about improving the quality of life, stimulating economic development and moving ahead to a modern society, but few of these statements have been translated into effective programs. The National Front met with two basic obstacles;

1) the resources available to the government from taxes were among the lowest in the world. In 1967, Colombia's tax effort was rated forty-fifth out of fifty developing countries.
2) vested interests were able to block truly revolutionary programs because a two-thirds majority was required in Congress until 1968 when a constitutional revision changed it to a simple majority.

**ECONOMY**

Colombia's economy depends on one export, coffee, as a major source of revenue. Coffee represents ten percent of the total Gross National Product; seventy-four percent of Colombia's foreign exchange came from coffee exports in 1962. Colombia is the second largest producer-exporter of coffee in the world, holding about twelve percent of the world market. A change in one cent in the price of a pound of coffee on the world market means a gain or a loss of U.S. $8.5 million a year to Colombia. The price of coffee has fluctuated as much as fifteen cents in a single recent year with devastating effects on the Colombian economy. This excessive dependence on one product results in the need to import large quantities of goods and materials to sustain economic growth.

Fifty percent of all wage-earners in Colombia earn their living from agriculture, which contributed twenty-nine percent to the G.N.P. Coffee is farmed on many small farms as well as
the big plantations. Sixty percent of farmers own four percent of the land with three percent owning more than fifty percent of the land. However, fifty-six percent of the total area planted in coffee is worked by the individual owner.

The G.N.P. of Colombia in 1969 was U.S. $ 6.2 billion, the fifth highest in Latin America and its per capita income exceeded $300 for the first time. Inflation is an ever-present problem in Colombia: the cost of living rose 114% from 1961 to 1967. Colombia has profited from foreign aid. From 1946 to 1967, Colombia received the equivalent of U.S. $1.6 billion in foreign aid with U.S. participation being about fifty-nine percent of that. In 1969, Colombia ranked third among Latin American countries in total U.S. assistance.

This fluctuating economy naturally affects all public services, including education. The implementation of planned programs often depends on the economic situation of the country.

**HISTORY OF EDUCATION**

The history of education in Colombia reflects the dissen-sion between the two traditional parties. In the eighteenth century, the Conservatives defended the 'tradición sacra' of education, the church-position of classical education for the elite, while the Liberals propounded the 'tradición secular-
técnicas', which gave more emphasis to science and the ideals of democratic education. These two positions were in the forefront during the eighteenth century depending on which party was in power. In 1888, the Conservative government signed a Concordat with the Vatican, giving the church complete control over education in Colombia. This agreement lasted until the Liberal regime of 1934-38, when the government took over control of education, but in 1942, the government signed a second agreement with the Vatican. This established the Church's right to supervise religious instruction in the public schools and admitted the State's responsibility for instilling Christian morals.

In 1903, Law 39, the Organic Law on Public Education, established a system of national school inspection and set down the combined financial responsibility for education of the national, departmental and municipal governments. Law 56 of 1927 gave the first provisions for compulsory education. Parents or guardians were obliged to see that children receive a minimum education.

In the 1930's, the activities of Augustín Nieto Caballero, the national inspector of education under President Enrique Olaya Herrera (1930-34) provided a powerful stimulus to developments in education. He called for the introduction of modern teaching methods to replace rote learning and for emphasis
on practical subjects. Many of his suggestions have yet to be put into practice.

ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION

The administration of Colombian education has traditionally been centralized in the hands of the State. Article 41 of the revised Colombian constitution of 1945, after emphasizing that liberty of teaching is guaranteed, nevertheless goes on to say that "the State shall exercise the right of general inspection and care over all institutions of learning, public or private, in order to ensure the fulfilment of the social purposes of culture and the best intellectual, moral and physical development of the students."

The authority extends from the President to the Minister of Education, and from him by delegation to the Departments and the municipal districts. Approval of national plans, National Government takeover of schools, and budget allocations for education all depend upon decisions of the National Congress. The diagram on the next page shows the line of authority.
The Ministry of Education sets educational policy for all but executes policy only for a few national schools. The federal district of Bogotá and each of the twenty-two Departments has a Secretary of Education charged with carrying out all administrative details of education in his jurisdiction in accordance with standards established by the Ministry of National Education.

Since the administrative reform of 1960, the functions of the Ministry of Education are to:

1) devise plans and programs of study
2) establish operating conditions for schools
3) supervise and inspect schools directly
4) pay a large part of the salaries of primary teachers in Departments and municipal districts
5) pay the operating expenses of nationally administrated primary and secondary schools and universities
6) construct the majority of public school buildings
7) contribute to the cost of constructing educational establishments through community action
8) finance education in the National territories (intendencias and comisarías)
9) assist private institutions

The Departmental secretariats have the following responsibilities:

1) name teachers in Department schools
2) make up the difference between available National Government funds and current obligations
3) pay supervisory expenses
4) maintain public school plants
5) provide some of the materials needed for teaching.

Cities with a population over 100,000 have secretariats of education with a similar organization. Except in the large cities, municipal government has comparatively little responsibility for administering education. The educational responsibility of the municipal districts consists primarily of providing sites for new schools and then furnishing and maintaining them.

In the period under discussion, the Ministry of Education began to take over more of the financial responsibility for the schools and also began to exercise greater supervision over the departmental schools.
NOTES


CHAPTER II

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND REFORMS - 1955-1965

In order to fulfill the ideal of universal primary education, the Colombian government passed a number of laws and programs intended to reform the educational system. A large increase in student enrollment could only be achieved by an increase in the educational budget, programs to build more schools, laws to improve teachers' qualifications and curriculum standards, and administrative reforms to decrease bureaucratization and wastage.

Prior to 1955, there were only extravagant statements and meaningless decrees to back up the democratic ideal of free education for all. At the conference on Free and Compulsory Education in Lima, Peru in 1956, Colombia joined with other Latin American governments in recognizing the importance of educational planning as part of the overall development of a country. In 1961, the Alliance for Progress in its ten-year plan for economic growth set out the goals to be attained to make education a serviceable instrument of progress. The Colombian government at that time "aimed at providing schoolroom space for every child through the fifth grade by 1965." The greatest importance was placed on the extension of provision and the improvement of the standards of primary education, particularly in rural schools "which were to be brought up to the
same standard as the urban schools." The following programs were intended to achieve these goals.

**EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH**

Educational planners and researchers hastened to investigate the problem of primary education and to study possible solutions which would lead to an increase in enrollment and in quality. There was a great flurry of activity: planning boards were established, schools for experimentation were set up and lengthy accounts of the findings were submitted to the Ministry of Education.

In 1957, Decrees 206 and 23351 set up an Oficina de Planeacion to restructure certain aspects of educational policy. In response to various studies by this group, a five-year plan was prepared which called for:

1) the creation of pilot schools for experimentation
2) systematic training of school supervisors
3) organization of intensive courses for secondary school graduates who wanted to enter teaching
4) further training for teachers who lacked necessary diplomas
5) increase in the elementary education budget
6) change in the methods of financing
RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The schools for experimentation and the research and planning centers were quickly put into motion. Already in 1956, Decree 146 had established six pilot schools in Colombia with the aim of clarifying the objectives of primary education, of drawing up a program of work adapted to the development of the child and working out practical methods for the guidance of the teacher. The schools were set up in the cities of Bogotá, Barranquilla, Pasto, Bucaramanga, Cali and Medellín. All were reasonably well-equipped and staffed: the Bogota school with twenty-six members of staff for 878 pupils, and the others having a ratio of pupils to each member of staff ranging from 25 to 39.

In 1962, an Institute for Pedagogical Research was established in the Colombian National Pedagogical University in Bogota, which included in its tasks the analysis of teaching methods, the elaboration and evaluation of curricula and the production of school texts and visual aids, together with the publication of the results of its work in special bulletins and in a regular review.

There was a model training college set up in Pamplona as part of the UNESCO Project which developed out of the Regional Conference of Latin American States on Free and Compulsory Education held in Lima in 1956. The Instituto Superior de Educación Rural at Pamplona specialized in courses in co-operation,
community development and agricultural techniques, but it also directed its attention toward improving the rural primary school. It had annexed to it a special primary school which served as a laboratory for investigating and testing methods which could be used in village schools, especially in those operating with only a single teacher.

In 1964, the Ministry of Education launched a group of model single-teacher schools as a pilot project under the direct supervision of its experts, and thereafter attached a practice one-teacher school to all normal schools in order to give the trainees experience in this type of school. The purpose of the pilot schools was to pioneer methods for all rural schools, which would indicate the means of attaining universal literacy, the solution to the problem of teacher shortage, and the path to many associated advantages, such as the end of the rural transport problem, the disappearance of the disparity between rural and urban standards and the halting of the migration to the towns.

Another scheme designed to improve the standard of rural education was the núcleo escolar, which was defined as a system of rural schools in orbit around a suitably located central school. Two hundred of these had been established by 1963. The núcleo escolar set out to improve the nature and quality of rural education as part of the process of developing the whole community. A social, economic and cultural survey was made of the area and the school programs were organized around
the life of the region.

The Colombian government proved itself very efficient in setting up offices for planning and schools for experimentation. All the studies indicated a sincere desire on the part of the government to aim for universal primary education and at the same time to improve the standards of the rural schools.

**LAWS TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT**

The Colombian government passed a few laws specifically designed to increase and enforce primary enrollment.

In 1958, a temporary measure to increase enrollment among rural children was introduced. A two-year school, alternating boys and girls and giving a total of 94 days of instruction to each group, was established.

In 1963, Decree 1710 repeated the law requiring five years of free compulsory education and stated the purposes of elementary education:

- to contribute to the harmonious development of the child and the optimum structuring of his personality, with a Christian attitude toward life in a free and democratic tradition
- to provide the child with a sound basic education
- to inculcate habits of cleanliness, hygiene, and intelligent use of inner resources
- to prepare the child for a life of responsibility
and employment in accordance with his individual aptitudes and interests

- to encourage a sense of civic spirit, national identity and solidarity with all peoples of the world.

A new curriculum was developed which was intended to foster the above qualities in both rural and urban children.

**LAWS TO INCREASE FINANCES**

In order to increase enrollment and extend the provision of primary schools, the Colombian government increased the percentage of the national budget allotted to educational expenditures. The 1957 five-year plan stipulated that ten percent of the budget be used for public education. The previous figure had been four to six percent. From 1955 to 1963, an average of fifty percent of the educational expenditures was devoted to the primary sector. However, it is important to realize the comparative situation of the other levels of education in Colombia. In 1965, eighty-five percent of the primary enrollment was public; forty-two percent of the secondary enrollment was public; and, fifty-eight percent of the university enrollment was public. Therefore the national government had a greater financial responsibility in the primary sector than in the other levels of education, which received a large amount of support from private institutions.
PROGRAMS TO INCREASE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Much of the additional money in the school budget was directed towards school construction. In 1961, responsibility for school construction was assumed by the national government, whereas, previously, it had been a municipal responsibility. It was hoped that the national government would be above the political wrangling of the municipal governments and that school building would proceed without local favouritism.

The Alliance for Progress meeting in 1961 estimated that one of the principal reasons for low enrollment in primary education was the lack of classrooms. A plan was drawn up whereby the deficit would be eliminated by 1972, by providing 2800 classrooms a year between 1961 and 1964 and 3500 each year after 1965. The Colombian government laid out a building plan designed to reach this goal and school construction became a top priority, especially in the rural areas.

LAWS TO INCREASE TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND TO STANDARDIZE THE CURRICULUM

Reforms designed to increase the number of institutions and the enrollment figures necessitated a parallel increase in the number of teachers. At the same time, the government hoped to improve the qualifications of teachers, particularly in the rural
areas. A law passed in 1945 had nullified the appointment of unqualified teachers, but it had never been enforced. A program was set up in 1958 to give poorly qualified teachers in-service training. In 1960, a law was passed which allowed for the national government to take over the cost of teachers' salaries over a period of four years. This was aimed at eliminating departmental discrepancies and encouraging qualified teachers to go to rural areas by offering salary benefits.

A reform passed in 1963 standardized all normal education by establishing a six-year cycle with the prerequisite of five years' elementary schooling. The six years were divided into four years of secondary education with the final two of professional training.

Decree 1710 of 1963 reformed the elementary school curriculum. The course program attempted to provide thirty-three hours of classroom work per week for all five grades. The rural schools were to be brought in line with the urban schools by making a primary course of five years' duration from the age of 5 seven obligatory for both. The hours were to be divided among seven basic areas:

- Educación religiosa y moral: Religión e Historia Sagrada. (Religious and moral education: Religion and Holy History)

- Castellano: Lectura y escritura, vocabulario, composición oral y escrita, gramática. (Spanish: Reading and writ-
ing, vocabulary, oral and written composition, grammar:

- Matemáticas: Aritmética y Geometría intuitiva.

(Mathematics: Arithmetic and Intuitive Geometry)

- Estudios sociales: Historia, Geografía, Cívica, Urbanidad y Cooperativismo. (Social Studies: History, Geography, Civics, City and Community living, and Cooperation)

- Ciencias Naturales: Introducción a las Ciencias de la Naturaleza y sus Aplicaciones. (Natural Sciences: Introduction to the Natural Sciences and their Application)


- Educación física: gimnasia y juegos educativos.

(Physical education: gymnastics and educational games).^6

This reform was intended to end "the social injustice of imparting a reduced education to those who are born and live in the rural areas and a preferential education to those of the city and urban districts."^7

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

In order to facilitate the enactment of the many reforms, the government reorganized the administrative setup of the Ministry
of Education. In 1956, the Office of Planning, Coordination and Evaluation was added to the Ministry of Education to coordinate various levels of the system and to organize the testing of new curriculum. Decree 1637 of 1960 reorganized the Ministry of Education making it responsible for all business relating to the development, regulation and inspection of education. It was felt that the Ministry had previously had too little supervision over the Departments and the Departments had abused their authority in failing to supervise governmental reforms adequately.

Prior to 1960, most of the key positions in the Ministry had customarily been filled by political appointments. In 1960, the national government decided to appoint all personnel except the Minister and the Secretary-General, based on Civil Service regulations.

Law 111 of 1960 made the national government responsible for the payment of salaries of all public elementary school teachers as this had previously been a heavy burden on the departmental budgets. The government was to gradually assume this responsibility until December 31, 1964.
NOTES

1 Pat M. Holt, Colombia Today -- and Tomorrow, New York; Praeger, 1964, p.152.


5 Gale, Education and Development in Latin America, p.34.


7 A. Eugene Havens, Education in Rural Colombia, Research paper, University of Wisconsin, Land Tenure Center, 1965, p.189.
CHAPTER III

ASSESSMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS

Legislating reforms and setting up planning boards is the first step in changing the educational system. However, without the implementation of laws, the research studies and reform programs accomplish nothing. Latin American governments are infamous for their ability to create extensive planning organizations and to lay out comprehensive reforms without following through with the actual implementation.

Communication between the national government and the departmental secretariats was poor. The departmental governments were responsible for supervision of reforms, yet the proclamations very often were passed down through a number of officials and the departments felt little need or responsibility for putting them into practice. The departmental primary school inspectors were given short courses on each of the educational reforms whose implementation they were expected to verify. However, they were not given any systematic training as had been promised in the 1957 five-year plan, and most inspectors received no specific training for the job.

Many elaborate reform programs do not proceed past the planning stage in Latin America because of governmental bureaucracy. "Occurre, con mucha frecuencia, que el estado no opera en lo nacional, sino en lo formal, o bien entorpeciendo la vía
concreta de las sanas realizaciones por la interposición de fórmulas huecas o papeleos estériles." (It happens, very often, that the state does not operate on the national level, but on a formal one, or, in other words, by obstructing the constructive path of correct fulfilment by the interposition of hollow formulas or futile paper shuffling.)

The following chapter analyzes the extent to which the reforms legislated by the government have been put into effect.

PILOT SCHOOLS

The five-year plan of 1957 (see page 22) was followed through in some areas, but it was never put into effect systematically because of "la insuficiente coordinación del Plan con los programas de desarrollo económico y social del país y la falta de articulación entre la Oficina de Planeamiento y las Secretarías Departamentales de Educación." (the insufficient coordination of the Plan with the programs of social and economic development of the country and the lack of articulation between the Planning Office and the Departmental Secretariats of Education.) The pilot schools, which involved less than one percent of the elementary school population, were working under ideal conditions. An eminent Ecuadorian editor has complained that Latin America has difficulty getting beyond the 'sample' stage; the model schools have little influence on the system.
INCREASE IN EDUCATION EXPENDITURES

After the 1957 plebiscite which set aside ten percent of the national budget to education, the financial contribution of the national government increased until the figure was 18.4% in 1964. However, there are conflicting statistics on the actual percentage of the budget that was devoted to education. The following table shows the variation in statistics.

TABLE II
EXPENSES ON EDUCATION AS PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL EXPENDITURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DANE (^7)</th>
<th>MIN. OF ED. (^8)</th>
<th>UNESCO (^9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>data</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>available</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statistical discrepancy is a good example of the lack of communication between government ministries. The Department of Statistics quotes one figure while the Ministry of Education quotes another; UNESCO has derived still another. UNESCO also
gives the educational expenditures as a percentage of the Gross National Product (G.N.P.). From 1.1% of the G.N.P. in 1950, the educational budget increased to 2.8% in 1963, and decreased again to 2.3% in 1966.

The percentage of money allotted to primary education also reveals two sets of figures.

TABLE III
PRIMARY EDUCATION EXPENSES AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MINISTRY OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>UNESCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the capital expenses alone, during the period 1955-63, sixty percent went to the primary sector. The Ministry of Education stated that, of the investment budget, 48% in 1961, 76% in 1963 and 57% in 1965 was spent on primary education. (See Table IV). Table IV shows the division of educational expenditures by level or type of education. The general trend appears to be that the government spent almost half of the total educational budget on primary education with more than half of the investment expenses going to primary education. To what extent has this additional money been put to effective use?
### TABLE IV

**GENERAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES**

(Inflation Correction to the 1958 Value of the Peso)

Expressed in Millions of Pesos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1965</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total national expenses</td>
<td>2,449.3</td>
<td>2,058.1</td>
<td>2,482.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total educational expenses</td>
<td>242.6</td>
<td>275.9</td>
<td>334.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General administration</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and literacy education</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>100.9</td>
<td>119.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal education</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural extension</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships and meals</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers to departments</td>
<td>100.4</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>122.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total operating expenses</td>
<td>191.7</td>
<td>239.5</td>
<td>301.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Investments</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses of investment</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INCREASE IN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

School construction has been a top priority in educational expenditures. In 1964, forty percent of the money for primary education was spent on school construction. However, in spite of the emphasis put on school building, the goal to build 2800 classrooms a year between 1961 and 1965, for a total of 11,200 classrooms, was not achieved. "Por múltiples limitaciones no fue posible cumplir el cometido fijado en aquel plan." (Because of many limitations it was not possible to fulfill the commitment set in that plan.)

The increase in the cost of imported materials as a result of the devaluation of the peso in 1962 and again in 1964 and the failure of external aid offered by the Alliance for Progress to reach the expected level were some of the difficulties which made it impossible to reach the targets set. In 1963, only 1,521 classrooms were completed with a further 661 still under construction. There were 304,000 more students registered in 1963 than in 1961 with only an additional 60,840 places (taking the average number of students in each class to be forty). Therefore, there were 243,160 students who had to be fitted into existing classrooms. Table V shows the increase in the number of public primary schools in the period 1951 to 1965. The emphasis on construction of rural schools can be seen clearly on Graph 5. Naturally there are a greater number of primary schools in the
rural areas because of the preponderance of one room buildings.

TABLE V
NUMBER OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>12.022</td>
<td>3.440</td>
<td>8.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>11.596</td>
<td>2.993</td>
<td>8.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>12.530</td>
<td>3.036</td>
<td>9.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>13.171</td>
<td>3.094</td>
<td>10.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>14.349</td>
<td>3.419</td>
<td>10.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>14.571</td>
<td>3.538</td>
<td>11.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>15.545</td>
<td>3.684</td>
<td>11.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>16.217</td>
<td>3.733</td>
<td>12.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>17.136</td>
<td>3.964</td>
<td>13.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>18.128</td>
<td>4.027</td>
<td>13.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>19.485</td>
<td>4.479</td>
<td>15.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>20.214</td>
<td>4.485</td>
<td>15.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>21.113</td>
<td>4.882</td>
<td>16.231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1964, the complete five-year school was still a rare entity in the rural areas. According to DANE statistics in 1964, only 4% of rural primary schools had the full five grades, while 60% of the urban primary schools were complete.
It has been estimated that in the years from 1964-73, it would be necessary to construct 57,715 classrooms in order to compensate for the initial deficit, the increasing population and the replacement of classrooms in disrepair. Data based on the school census of 1968 show a deficit of 98,631 classrooms for both primary and secondary. The Minister of Education, Octavio Arizmendi Posada announced the creation of 2,000 classrooms for 1969. The difference here between ideal and reality appears to be widening every year.

**IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS**

From 1951 to 1966, the number of primary teachers increased 212% and from 1961 to 1965 there was an increase of 30.3%. This increase improved the student-teacher ratio somewhat; for all public and private primary schools the ratio improved from 40:1 in 1951 to 36:1 in 1965. (See table VI) Table VII shows the student-teacher ratio for urban and rural public schools. The urban situation was the same in 1963 as in 1954, while the rural ratio showed a decided improvement, from 44:1 in 1954 to 39:1 in 1963. Since only 56% of the total age group were in fact registered in school and there were 63,250 teachers in the country (in 1965), something in the vicinity of fifty thousand additional teachers would be required to make universal primary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STUDENTS (in thousands)</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>CALCULATED STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>21,713</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>22,690</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>25,208</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>28,939</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>32,197</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>33,874</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>35,327</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1,493</td>
<td>38,061</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>40,175</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td>44,910</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,792</td>
<td>48,529</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1,949</td>
<td>52,751</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>2,096</td>
<td>57,814</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>2,215</td>
<td>62,158</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>2,274</td>
<td>63,250</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>STUDENTS (Urban)</td>
<td>TEACHERS</td>
<td>RATIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>485,785</td>
<td>11,466</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>529,544</td>
<td>12,674</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>578,016</td>
<td>13,426</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>622,934</td>
<td>14,477</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>692,226</td>
<td>15,677</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>736,912</td>
<td>16,688</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>799,034</td>
<td>18,545</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>864,573</td>
<td>20,234</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>960,950</td>
<td>22,782</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,018,774</td>
<td>24,406</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
education possible, without consideration of the natural increase in population.

The Ministry of Education was concerned not only with the teacher shortage but also with teachers' qualifications. It was hoped that the compulsory six-year normal schools would improve the standards. However, in 1966, approximately forty percent of the primary teachers employed in public schools did not meet the Ministry's hiring standards. Table VIII and graph 6 show the improvement in teachers' qualifications from 1961 to 1965. Teachers with a degree include those who graduated from a secondary school, either general, technical or normal and those who graduated from a university. Teachers without a degree include those who attended secondary school but did not graduate. In relation to the total number of teachers, in 1961, 44.9% of the teachers had a degree, while in 1965, 54.3% had one. In 1961, 12.3% had only primary education themselves, compared to 8.1% in 1965.

The qualification of teachers in the rural schools was considerably lower than their urban counterparts in 1965. In the primary rural schools, 19% of the teachers had primary education only while 34% had a degree from secondary school or a university. (See table IX.)
TABLE VIII
EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF PRIMARY TEACHERS: 1961-1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL TEACHERS</th>
<th>WITH A DEGREE</th>
<th>WITHOUT A DEGREE</th>
<th>WITH PRIMARY ONLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>48,529</td>
<td>21,814 (44.9%)</td>
<td>20,734 (42.8%)</td>
<td>5,981 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>52,751</td>
<td>24,186 (45.8%)</td>
<td>23,263 (44.2%)</td>
<td>5,302 (10.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>57,814</td>
<td>28,317 (49.0%)</td>
<td>24,471 (42.3%)</td>
<td>5,026 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>62,158</td>
<td>31,559 (50.7%)</td>
<td>24,416 (39.4%)</td>
<td>6,183 (9.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>63,250</td>
<td>34,326 (54.3%)</td>
<td>23,801 (37.6%)</td>
<td>5,123 (8.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE IX
EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF PRIMARY TEACHERS, 1965
URBAN-RURAL COMPARISON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFICATIONS</th>
<th>TOTAL (Public and Private)</th>
<th>URBAN PUBLIC</th>
<th>RURAL PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL No. of Teachers</td>
<td>63,250</td>
<td>28,258</td>
<td>21,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Primary Education</td>
<td>5,123</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>4,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Second. Educ.</td>
<td>With Diploma 8,355</td>
<td>2,965</td>
<td>1,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without Diploma 15,180</td>
<td>6,231</td>
<td>5,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal School</td>
<td>With Diploma 24,301</td>
<td>14,815</td>
<td>5,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without Diploma 7,356</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>3,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>With Diploma 1,670</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without Diploma 1,265</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reason for the poor qualifications was not the lack of graduates from normal schools but the poor incentives given by the government for graduate teachers to enter their profession. In 1965, only 1600 of 5,000 normal school graduates entered teaching. Statistics show that there were 4,514 more primary teachers in 1966 than in 1965. Therefore, there were almost 3,000 teachers who entered the profession who came from somewhere other than the normal school. Also, there were 3400 graduates who chose not to enter the profession. According to one writer on educational reform, qualified teachers were not hired for the following reasons:

- economic reasons - not enough money in state budgets and unqualified individuals could be hired at a below scale rate, thus saving the state money. Although the national government passed a law in 1960 (See page 28) taking over the payment of elementary teachers' salaries, the transition stage was to last four years, so that the state was responsible up to 1964.

- political reasons - teaching posts were frequently given to the party faithful, as the departments were directly responsible for teacher placement.

- lack of comfort and prestige - qualified teachers did not want to teach in rural areas.

In-service training, as part of the 1957 five-year plan had been instituted in some departments, but the national
government did not give any salary incentives and generally did little to encourage teachers to improve their qualifications. The normal schools were to have been standardized with a six-year course but, in 1966, many normal schools were still operating on a four-year program.

Although the date of 1964 had been set for the national government to pay all primary teachers' salaries and it was expected that this would equalize salaries throughout the country, in 1967 there was still a great discrepancy between departments. The 'escalafón' is the official register which identifies and rewards teachers in accordance with their level of formal preparation and years of experience and the level on the 'escalafón' determines the rate of pay. The following tables show the range of salaries and qualifications of teachers in three departments, Antioquia, a wealthy area paying high salaries and employing better qualified teachers, and Nariño and Tolima, poor, rural departments paying the lowest with poorly qualified teachers.

**TABLE X**

**COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' SALARIES IN TWO DEPARTMENTS: 1965**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL (Escalafón)</th>
<th>ANTIOQUIA</th>
<th>NARINO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not eligible</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By 1966, as can be seen in the above tables, the education in rural areas was still being discriminated against with poorly qualified teachers and below average salaries. The national government had failed to enforce the hiring of qualified teachers.

Because of budgetary deficiencies, the government was also lax in paying teachers' salaries. In 1962, teachers' salaries were suspended in October, and in 1964 they were suspended for rural teachers because of lack of funds. The teachers resorted to a strike before the national government was able to pay the salaries. These incidences are indicative of the generally low status of teachers. Teachers traditionally have not formed a cohesive group in Colombia and therefore have found it difficult in presenting their demands as a united front.

STANDARDIZATION OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum reform of 1963 (See page 28) was intended to standardize the curriculum throughout the country, and guarantee the same number of hours of instruction to all students. This
was merely a paper curriculum. In 1965, more than 50% of the rural schools were being operated on an alternated basis, with only ninety-eight days of instruction. Eight percent of the primary teachers (19% of rural teachers) in 1965 only had primary education (See table IX). These teachers would undoubtedly have great difficulty in teaching 'geometría intuitiva' or 'composición escrita'.

Further, among the general aims of primary education was a "Christian attitude toward life in a free and democratic tradition" and preparation for a life of responsibility. (See page 25) Yet in many of the textbooks still in use in 1965, certain concepts were being taught which contradicted these ideals. A few quotes from the texts are:

El hombre vale más por su alma que por sus cualidades temporales. (Man's soul is worth more than his temporal qualities.)

La autoridad viene de Dios; no puede residir en el pueblo, puesto que éste no posee ningún derecho de autoridad ni natural, ni adquirido. La autoridad del pueblo es débil, puesto que donde piensan muchos a la vez no piensa nadie. (Authority comes from God; it cannot reside with the people as the people possess no right of authority, neither natural nor acquired. The authority of the people is weak, since where many think at one time, no one thinks.)

Texts such as the above do not create an awareness in the child of his responsibility towards himself and his country nor do they inspire the "intelligent use of inner resources." (See page 25)
Without well qualified teachers and an adequate number of hours of instruction, the 1963 curriculum could never be put into effect. The plans on paper aimed for something vague and idealistic; the reality of the present teachers' qualifications and the available facilities prevented these plans from being put into practice.

INCREASE IN ENROLLMENT - URBAN-RURAL COMPARISON

The statistics on enrollment show that the government has managed to increase the percentage of school-age population enrolled in primary school. In 1951, 39% of the seven to fourteen year old population were enrolled in primary; in 1965, 56% were enrolled. The age group of seven to fourteen years is used as this is the age spread in the five years of primary education. Twenty-five percent of primary school students are between the age of eleven and fourteen. This is a result of the late starting age of an average of nine years and four months. The seven to eleven year old enrollment in this period increased from 44% in 1951 to 64% in 1965. (See table XII and graphs 1 & 2).

The Colombian government made a commitment to the goal of universal primary education and emphasized the necessity of concentrating on the rural areas. There had been a percentage increase in enrollment in the rural areas, but it must be remembered that many of these students attended only for two or three years, for various reasons which will be mentioned in
# TABLE XII

ENROLLMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE) AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SCHOOL AGE POPULATION (7-14)</th>
<th>SCHOOL AGE POPULATION (7-11)</th>
<th>TOTAL ENROLLMENT (7-14)</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT % (7-11)</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2.253</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>38.83</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2.352</td>
<td>1.555</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>39.24</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>2.455</td>
<td>1.623</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>43.70</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2.563</td>
<td>1.694</td>
<td>1.125</td>
<td>43.89</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2.675</td>
<td>1.768</td>
<td>1.236</td>
<td>46.20</td>
<td>957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2.792</td>
<td>1.845</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>46.99</td>
<td>1.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2.914</td>
<td>1.925</td>
<td>1.381</td>
<td>47.39</td>
<td>1.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3.040</td>
<td>2.008</td>
<td>1.493</td>
<td>49.11</td>
<td>1.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>3.171</td>
<td>2.094</td>
<td>1.569</td>
<td>49.47</td>
<td>1.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>3.308</td>
<td>2.184</td>
<td>1.690</td>
<td>51.08</td>
<td>1.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3.450</td>
<td>2.278</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>51.94</td>
<td>1.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>3.752</td>
<td>2.477</td>
<td>2.096</td>
<td>55.86</td>
<td>1.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>3.906</td>
<td>2.582</td>
<td>2.215</td>
<td>56.70</td>
<td>1.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>4.081</td>
<td>2.689</td>
<td>2.274</td>
<td>55.72</td>
<td>1.714</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the next chapter. Graph 4 shows the improvement in literacy in the seven to fifteen year population in urban and rural areas. However, since anyone in Colombia who has attended some formal schooling is classed as a literate, it may not give the true picture. (U.N. defines a literate as someone with at least four years of schooling.) Unfortunately, there are no statistics available of the seven to fifteen year old population in urban and rural areas before 1964, so a comparison of the percentage of urban-rural enrollment over this period is impossible. The following table and graph 4 are derived from the UNESCO statistics of the urban-rural division of the total population in 1951 and 1964. It was assumed that this percentage could be applied to the seven to fifteen year age group. Thirty-eight percent lived in urban areas in 1951, and fifty-three percent lived in these areas in 1965. This percentage was applied to the number of seven to fifteen year olds in the total population in 1951 and 1964, thus enabling a comparison to be made between the urban-rural illiterates over this period.

The children in this group who are classed as literate were attending school or would have attended some school. Thirty-six percent of the seven to fifteen year old population were illiterate in 1951; twenty-four percent were illiterate in 1964. Of the same age group in the rural areas, sixty-nine percent in
1951 and fifty-six percent in 1964 were illiterate. The percentage of literates increased in the rural areas but by 1964, over half of this age group were still classed as illiterate.

TABLE XIII

URBAN/RURAL COMPARISON OF ILLITERATES, AGED 7-15: 1951 and 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL POPULATION (7-15)</td>
<td>2,252,358</td>
<td>3,905,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLITERATES</td>
<td>1,272,613</td>
<td>1,526,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(56.5%)</td>
<td>(39.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL URBAN</td>
<td>855,912</td>
<td>2,062,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN ILLITERATES</td>
<td>308,533</td>
<td>496,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36%)</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RURAL</td>
<td>1,396,446</td>
<td>1,843,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL ILLITERATES</td>
<td>964,080</td>
<td>1,029,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(69%)</td>
<td>(56%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the percentages have decreased, in all cases the number of illiterates in this age group has increased.

The following table shows the urban/rural enrollment in public primary schools from 1951 to 1965. In graph 3 the sharp rise in urban enrollment can be seen; this can partly be attributed to the increased population in the cities.
## TABLE XIV

**URBAN AND RURAL ENROLLMENT**

**IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>796.953</td>
<td>382.871</td>
<td>414.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>845.767</td>
<td>418.768</td>
<td>426.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>923.208</td>
<td>458.534</td>
<td>464.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>977.258</td>
<td>485.785</td>
<td>491.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1.053.062</td>
<td>529.544</td>
<td>523.518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1.113.758</td>
<td>578.016</td>
<td>535.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1.168.268</td>
<td>622.934</td>
<td>545.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1.267.825</td>
<td>692.226</td>
<td>575.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1.330.887</td>
<td>736.912</td>
<td>593.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1.432.223</td>
<td>799.034</td>
<td>633.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1.523.254</td>
<td>864.573</td>
<td>658.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1.669.531</td>
<td>960.950</td>
<td>708.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1.786.556</td>
<td>1.018.774</td>
<td>767.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1.900.056</td>
<td>1.102.249</td>
<td>797.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1.955.987</td>
<td>1.160.023</td>
<td>795.964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 7 gives the only statistics available on urban/rural enrollment compared to the population. The situation in 1964 showed the tremendous deficiency in the rural schooling; although the first two years show a high enrollment, the shortage of complete five year rural schools results in the decreased enrollment in the last three years. The 1958 'temporary measure' (See page 225) which established the two year alternating rural schools was in 1963 still servicing 53% of all rural primary children. From a first grade enrollment in rural schools of over 100% and a second grade enrollment of 81%, the enrollment percentage declined to 26% in the third grade, 9% in the fourth and 5% in the fifth. There was a larger enrollment in the first grade (and second grade in urban sector) than the corresponding age group population because of the late starting age of primary school students. There were a large number enrolled in the first year who were over seven.

In its statements on aims and priorities of primary education, the government had placed great emphasis on the improvement of the rural situation. The rural child, in 1964, was still severely disadvantaged and had very little opportunity of completing primary education.
NOTES


4 Gale, Education and Development in Latin America, p.39.


13 Gale, Education and Development in Latin America, p.34.


17 Alvarado, *Análisis de la Educación en Colombia*, p.70.


20 Ibid., p.69.


26 Hanson, *Educational Reform*, p.40.


28 Ibid., p.276.

29 Ibid., p.277.


32 Alvarado, *Análisis de la Educación*, p. 68.

33 U.N., *Statistical Yearbook*, 1969, p. 142, and

34 Alvarado, *Análisis de la Educación*, p. 69.
CHAPTER IV

OBSTACLES TO UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

According to UNESCO there are three important dimensions to universal primary education:

1) universal provision
2) universal enrollment
3) universal retention

The Colombian government has concentrated on the first in its educational planning. The major area of concern has been provision of school buildings and teachers. However, a classroom space for each child is not sufficient. The fact that there is a place for every child and a teacher for each classroom does not ensure the child's attendance in school. Universal enrollment can be achieved only through providing adequate incentives for education and making the population aware of the benefits of education. Universal retention means that the child will remain in school for a long enough period to ensure retention of basic literacy. It has been estimated that at least four years are required for the achievement of minimum literacy.
PROBLEMS OF DROPOUTS

In an anthropological study of a small village in northern Colombia, Aritama, 45% of all adults had attended school, yet only 25% were classed as literate. This wastage is a serious problem for educational planners.

The Minister of Education calculated that nearly one half the costs of public primary education in 1968 were incurred for students who failed to complete the primary cycle. In 1965, only 22.7% of the students who had registered in 1961 completed the cycle. In the urban schools, 43.8% of the children who had registered in the first grade in 1960 were still attending in 1964 and only 3.0% of the children registered in rural areas were still attending. (It must be remembered that about half the rural schools were still only operating on a two year basis).

Several studies have been conducted to determine the reasons for the high rate of school dropouts. The 1963 DANE statistics show the following:

TABLE XV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URBAN REASONS FOR DROPOUT</th>
<th>NO. OF RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Por cambio de domicilio (change of residence)</td>
<td>57,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por poco interés de los padres (little parental interest)</td>
<td>31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por enfermedad (illness)</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por trabajos domésticos (work at home)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por distancia (distance to school)</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por trabajos agrícolas (farm work)</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otras causas (other reasons)</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RURAL REASONS FOR DROPOUT | NO. OF RESPONSES
--- | ---
Por cambio de domicilio | 46,000
Por poco interés de los padres | 36,000
Por enfermedad | 20,000
Por trabajos agrícolas | 15,000
Por distancia | 12,000
Por trabajos domésticos | 10,000
Otras causas | 16,000

The change of residence appears to be the most important reason. The migration of peasants from rural areas to towns and from towns to cities tends to terminate the child's schooling. Furthermore, the late starting age (an average of 9 years and 4 months) makes it difficult for a student to reach the fifth year of elementary school when he could be earning a living for his family well before that time.

Among the 'otras causas' are reasons which are directly related to the school:

1) a curriculum which does not adapt itself to the needs of the children
2) emphasis upon rigid scholastic requirements which minimize individual differences
3) poor teaching methods and poorly prepared teachers
4) lack of personal and vocational counseling
5) lack of alternatives to the school's formal program.

These are areas where the government reforms have failed to make any impact. There will continue to be a large number of dropouts as long as students do not consider the curriculum relevant to their needs and there are not enough well-trained teachers to stimulate interest in the subject matter.
UNQUALIFIED TEACHERS AND AN IRRELEVANT CURRICULUM

Poorly trained teachers and an ill-suited curriculum are often reasons for a student's withdrawal. In reforms designed to standardize the normal schools the government has attempted to upgrade the qualifications of teachers yet it has failed to furnish adequate incentives to encourage graduates to enter teaching. Normal schools form part of the secondary rather than the higher sector of the educational system. Many students attend them merely to obtain a secondary education with little intention of becoming a teacher.

Colombia is extremely well-endowed with normal schools, but they are extremely unevenly distributed. In 1968, the Department of Antioquia had fifty-six, while neighbouring Atlantico had only six. The result is that some areas remain chronically short while others are unable to absorb all the new recruits. With uneven distribution and divided responsibility there are marked differences in size, some colleges having quite inadequate resources of staff and equipment to be effective. The variation in salaries (See page 45) in the country does not encourage graduates from one area to move to a poorer one.

There is little prestige involved in becoming a primary teacher, who is "little more in the eyes of the arrogant than that of a domestic servant in some places." The primary
schools have traditionally been the preserve of women teachers; in 1963, eighty percent of primary teachers were women. This fact itself, in a traditionally male-oriented society such as Latin America, demonstrates the low prestige of the profession. In the study on Aritama (referred to on p.58), it was found that boys generally disliked female authority, and that when a male teacher was appointed at one time, the enrollment of boys rose sharply.

The standardized curriculum of the Ministry of Education (See page 28) does not allow for the individual needs of students in different areas. "The primary curriculum tends to be designed for children who are somewhat above average in learning capacity and it tends to be regarded as merely the beginning of a long course of schooling that is predominantly academic or bookish in nature, emphasizing the instrumental skills that will facilitate the beginning of secondary school subjects."

If a curriculum change is desired, teachers must see the value of it or else there is no guarantee that it will be taught. The Aritama study discovered that the teachers selected from the official curriculum "only those subjects which tend to affirm local values." Hardly any teacher in Aritama used the government textbooks, preferring to employ for teaching purposes their own "copybooks". The method of teaching consisted
of rote memorization of these copybooks which were handed down from one teacher to another. The Aritama teachers only had primary education themselves, like so many of the rural teachers (See table IX). Legislation for curriculum reform and standardization of teacher training is pointless unless there is enforcement of the hiring standards.

PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Universal enrollment can be attained only if people see education as a necessary part of their life and are willing to work towards changing the system. What is the people's view of education and to what extent are the people willing to work towards the goal of universal primary education in Colombia?

One writer on educational planning has said that primary education in rural areas implies "an emergence of political leadership responsive to rural wants and anxious to secure rural support and a certain degree of political and economic organization of the rural people themselves." In Colombia, the people are not organized into such a group. They have a tendency to look to the government for initiative and do not see themselves as being capable of instituting change or
reforming the system in any way. "For the most part, the members of the lower class appear normally to accept their role with little demand for participation in decision-making or with little desire or sense of efficacy in affecting the political process." There is a need for an effective 'grass roots' organization to serve as a nucleus for indigenous educational reforms. The average Colombian does not consider active participation in national development; the government is a remote entity which passes decrees from on high.

Education has traditionally been considered a preserve of the upper class in Colombia and consequently, most people view education as a vehicle of social mobility. When the peasant in rural Colombia sees his children attending a few years of school without realizing any material benefits he cannot see the value of education. Some of the migrants to towns perceive education as the only way their children can 'adelantarse' (get ahead) in the class structure. A conversation with a Colombian who had migrated to Bogota during 'la violencia' and had only two years of schooling himself, revealed this reverence for education. However, primary education was not sufficient and he was willing to devote his savings to send at least one child to secondary school. However general this attitude may be, it is certainly typical of the growing awareness among the
The belief that education is a means to move out of the lower class is undoubtedly a valid one. However, this view of education tends to make people see primary education as a path to secondary education and frustration is the inevitable result if secondary education is not available. In 1964, there were 165,500 students enrolled in fifth year (only 20% of the students who had started the cycle in 1960), and in 1965, there were only 70,000 places available in the first year of secondary education. Therefore more than half of the graduating primary students were unable to find a place in secondary school.

On the one hand, there is the general indifference of the rural population towards education; very often they consider the curriculum irrelevant and schooling merely a waste of their children's time. On the other hand, in the cities with their rapidly increasing populations, there is a growing awareness of the need for education to learn skills for the urban jobs. This second group does not want only a few years to obtain literacy but a training in a skill that will be needed in the job market. This group will become increasingly frustrated if they are provided with a primary education and are thwarted in their attempts to go on to secondary education.
FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Although the Colombian government increased its expenditures on education, the national budget cannot supply an unlimited amount of money. In 1965, the national government contributed the largest percentage (57.4%) with departments second (38.9%) and municipalities the smallest amount (3.7%) to the education budget. The contribution of the municipalities is minor. It is difficult in Colombia to muster local resources in support of school and other public projects. Large landowners have usually supported national prohibitions which prevent people in local administrative districts (municipios) from levying any significant tax on land or real estate. The wealthy landowners generally send their children to private schools and therefore have little interest in supporting public education.

The variation in the expenditures of different departments perpetuates the situation of the disadvantaged rural school. In 1965, Atlántico spent 43% of its total budget on education, while Cauca with a comparable school-age population spent only 17.3%.

The money spent on education is of course dependent on the money available to the government. When the economy suffers, all public services suffer. In 1965, the government was faced with a serious deficit. The equivalent of some U.S. $64 million
in foreign loans promised in 1964 had been withheld. The government enacted a number of austerity measures which improved the situation a little and by the end of the year the United States and other international lending agencies agreed to make the loan. The drop in the price of coffee had been the main culprit for the deficit. In times like these, the rapid growth in population does not wait for the economic picture to brighten, and public services such as education tend to suffer.
NOTES

2Ibid., p.79.
5Alberto Alvarado and Eduardo Carrasquilla, Análisis de la Educación en Colombia, Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1969, p.27.
7Ibid., p.290.
10Ibid., p.45.
12Reichel-Dolmatoff, The People of Aritama, p.119.
14Reichel-Dolmatoff, The People of Aritama, p.121.

17 Renner, Education in Colombia, p.86.

18 Alvarado, Análisis de la Educación en Colombia, p.31.

19 Renner, Education in Colombia, p.75.

20 Ibid., p.68.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: IDEALISM VS. REALITY

A pesar de las dificultades que todavía se le presentan al desenvolvimiento de los planes educacionistas, es evidente que la Escuela Primaria colombiana ha experimentado un notable desarrollo en todas sus áreas.

(In spite of the difficulties which are still presented to the development of the education plans, it is evident that the Colombian primary school has experienced a notable development in every area.)

The above statement was made by the Minister of Education in 1962. By 1965, it was evident that this success was a limited one. The programs of the period 1955 to 1965 had been only partially implemented. The Colombian government had been striving for too much in too short a time. Realistic goals must be set if the targets are to be reached and not fall short of the planners' aspirations. The gap between ideal and reality can be seen in every area of education reform.

The Colombian government attempted to implement the legislative reforms passed from 1955 to 1965, but failed to achieve the established objectives. The model schools proved successful in their limited capacity, but the ideas and methods that are used in these schools should have some influence on the rest of the schools. If the innovations used in model schools are not carried over into the general society, research such as this has no value.
The government committed itself to universal primary education by channeling a good percentage of its national budget towards this goal. Much of the money went towards increased school construction. It was in this area that the government made the greatest statistical improvement in rural education. The number of rural schools almost doubled, but many of these new schools did not include the full five years. The aims that the government set in its school building program were too optimistic. Because of the poor economic situation, the government was forced to set more realistic targets.

The emphasis on rural education was also obvious in the teacher increase. The rural student:teacher ratio decreased from 44:1 in 1954 to 39:1 in 1963. In both school construction and teacher supply, the government was carrying out its promise to improve rural schooling. However, in 1964, teachers' qualifications were still very poor in the rural schools. Nineteen percent had only primary education compared to the national average of eight percent. The government failed to enforce the hiring standards. They did not attempt to encourage better qualified teachers to move to the rural areas by offering salary benefits. In 1965, the rule of teacher placement was still one of political influence. Those teachers who knew the right people found the best jobs, no matter what their qualifications.
The number of rural school buildings increased but the rural child in many areas was still attending only half-time because of the alternated schools established in 1958. This measure undoubtedly increased the enrollment percentage. The figures fail to mention what percentage of those enrolled were only receiving half an education. Few rural children were attending the full five years because of the high dropout rate and the shortage of five year schools. Universal primary education was still a myth in the rural areas of Colombia.

The government did effect limited changes in the educational situation, but there were also other obstacles which the government had failed to consider in its plans to supply education to all. In 1965, only 23% of the primary students completed the cycle. The reasons for this high dropout rate are mentioned in Chapter IV. The government will need to make serious efforts to find a solution to this problem. If better qualified teachers are truly desired, the government will have to construct normal schools in the poorer departments and supply scholarships to encourage rural students to enter teaching. Although the economic situation of the country affects the amount of money in the national budget, the government must legislate an increase in local taxes so that the municipal governments can take over a greater share of the financial responsibility. The municipal governments are dominated by wealthy landowners who have traditionally dis-
couraged any increase in local taxes; there have been attempts to pass bills in the federal government legislating an increase in local taxes but they have failed to pass in Congress, again because of landowner lobbies.

The government has established sufficient objectives yet it has made slow progress in its goal to achieve universal primary education. A question that should be asked at this point is whether continued efforts to achieve this goal will bring about a desired result.

SITUATION SINCE 1965

Reforms and governmental statements since 1965 demonstrate the continuing importance the government places on the achievement of universal primary education. The administrative reform in 1968, designed to give greater supervisory control of education expenditures to the national government, and the Emergency Plan of 1967, designed to improve educational conditions, are examples of the emphasis on this sector. The effectiveness of these reforms cannot be judged until later statistics are available.

The Conservative Party has stated in its platform that "el problema fundamental de la mayoría de los países subdesarrollados, no es la pobreza de los recursos naturales, sino el
subdesarrollo de sus recursos humanos, por tanto la primera tarea de estos países es la formación del capital humano." (The fundamental problem of the majority of the underdeveloped countries is not the poverty of the natural resources but the underdevelopment of its human resources, therefore the first task of these countries is the formation of human capital.) The Emergency Plan of 1967 stated that "one of the points of the National Front is to place education on levels within reach of the people, and it is therefore the duty of the government to bring about permanent improvement in the quality of education and to increase the educational system's contribution to the national welfare. Since 1965, the government has continued to make broad statements and to legislate reforms designed to make universal primary education a reality in Colombia.

ALTERNATIVES TO UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA

Education is a major concern in many developing countries. The United Nations considers a basic education to be the democratic right of all. The Colombian government has repeated innumerable times its position on universal primary education. Does the emphasis on universal primary education mean that other areas will suffer and what are the consequences of Colombia's concentrating a majority of its education expenses on the primary sector?
There are contrasting views on whether universal primary education is a practical goal. According to some experts, secondary education should have the largest claim of the educational budget, even up to forty percent, in order to meet the needs of trained manpower. Another writer on education says that primary education is not enough; a population with some education wants more. Others continue to support the democratic ideal of education for all. "When the compulsory primary school has ended all illiteracy and solved the problems pertaining to illiteracy it will be time to extend education upwards to create secondary and higher education." "There are two reasons for continuing to strive for universal primary education in Colombia: 1) the migration of peasants to towns for urban employment requires that they have at least basic literacy. 2) primary education helps in the political and social integration of the people by establishing common values and a sense of nationality." The last two opinions are certainly valid reasons for aiming for universal primary education. At what cost will universal primary education be achieved in Colombia at whatever date in the future that may be?

The Colombian government has traditionally been monopolized by a closed elite. In the view of this governing elite, primary education is an admirable goal which will demonstrate the democratic foundations of Colombia. It is also a good program at election time. The question for Colombian politicians is whether
through the backing of a popular program, such as universal primary education, they may be creating frustration amongst those people who have a few years of schooling and are unable to continue. Emphasis on purely primary education will result in less money available for the secondary level.

Table IV on page 36 gives the percentage of educational expenditures in the various sectors for 1961, 1963 and 1965. Educational expenses in the primary level increased in this period. The operating expenses in the secondary level decreased from 10.4% to 8.2%, in the normal schools from 6.7% to 3.6%, in higher education from 1.5% to 1.3%, while the investment expenses for all secondary education decreased from 43% to 30%. It is inevitable that the other levels of education will receive a smaller amount of the educational budget when the government is concentrating on the improvement of primary education.

In aiming for universal primary education and giving less attention to the secondary and higher levels, the Colombian government is creating a class of people who will have a few years of education and will not have the opportunity to go on to the next level. The middle class in a country like Colombia are usually those who have secondary education; an increasing middle class is essential to the further economic and political development of the country. Without adequate secondary education facilities, the middle class will not increase. On the other hand,
an increasing middle class would undoubtedly challenge the political power of the Colombian elite.

Amongst the urban working classes who have received some of the benefits of the government’s emphasis on primary education, there is evidence that they may not be satisfied with only a few years of schooling. In the 1970 election, the people expressed their dissatisfaction with the policies of the National Front government. For the first time in Colombian history, the traditional parties almost lost their position in a democratic election. General Rojas Pinilla and his populist movement, Alianza Nacional Popular won 39.2% of the votes with the Conservative candidate of the National Front winning 40.6%. ANAPO has derived its strength from the disaffected lower classes who have substituted the traditional Liberal-Conservative split with the division between the haves and the have-nots. Rojas was considered by many to be "the candidate of the poor who would change their conditions and educate their children." It is interesting to note that Rojas did well where literacy was higher, and the Conservative vote was highest in the less-developed areas where literacy was low.

Perhaps the supporters of Rojas Pinilla who desire more education for their children may be the ones who will cut off a segment of the population from any education at all.

There are two alternatives open to Colombia. The first is to continue aiming for the democratic goal of universal primary
education and concentrating its resources in this sector. This may create frustration amongst those groups who are cut off from the higher levels of education. Because of the rapidly increasing urban populations, job training is essential. The urban masses may demand more than the government's nominal provision of a few years of schooling.

The other alternative for the government is to abandon a proportion of the school-age population to ignorance, which would undoubtedly affect the rural population the greatest, and distribute the educational budget through all levels. Without an adequate basic education, however, peasants moving into the cities will find it difficult to cope with the urban way of life. On the other hand, it would strengthen the urban middle class who at present are vocal in pushing for educational reform and may result in an improved quality of education through better qualified teachers and a greater public awareness. However, this second alternative is not so popular as a democratic political platform. The Colombian government will have to decide to what extent other levels of education should be sacrificed to continue the emphasis on universal primary education, what effect this may have on the development of the country, and whether the democratic ideal is a realistic goal in the immediate future.


10. Ibid., p. 52.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Colombia. Departamento Administrativo de Estadística. Anuario General de Estadística. Bogotá, 1958-


APPENDIX

(Graph 2)

Population 7-11 years of age

Enrollment 7-11 years of age

(in thousands)
Comparison of Total, Urban, and Rural Enrollment in Public Primary Schools of 7-14 Year Olds (in Thousands): 1951-1965
(in thousands) COMPARISON OF ILLITERATES, AGED 7-15 IN THE TOTAL POPULATION, URBAN POPULATION AND RURAL POPULATION OF RESPECTIVE AGE GROUP: 1951 - 1964

Graph 4

Total Population (7-15 years of age)

1951

1964

Urban

Rural

Population (7-15 years of age)

Urban

Rural

69%

36%

56.5%

56%

24%

39.1%
NUMBER OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN COLOMBIA: TOTAL, URBAN AND RURAL
1951 - 1965
QUALIFICATIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, 1961-1965

Graph

Teachers with a Degree

Teachers with no Degree

Teachers with primary education only

PRIMARY EDUCATION
Urban-Rural Enrollment 1964

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SCHOOL YEAR: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th
NOTES

1Albert Alvarado and Eduardo Carrasquilla, Análisis de la Educación en Colombia, Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1969, p.68.

2Ibid.

3Ibid., p.69.


5Alvarado, Análisis de la Educación en Colombia, p.70.

6Ibid.