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# **Including children with disabilities in Colombian Escuela Nueva schools**

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

Julia Hayes  
Lucy Cavendish College

Supervisor: Professor Nidhi Singal  
July 2021



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## **Abstract**

### **Including children with disabilities in Colombian Escuela Nueva schools**

**Julia Hayes**

Like many countries in the Global South, Colombia has committed itself to providing quality, inclusive education for children with disabilities. However, while there is general agreement on the principle of inclusive education as something to be pursued, its meaning and nature is contested. Furthermore, a growing body of literature has questioned the relevance and application of models of inclusive education that have been generated in countries of the Global North, and subsequently, exported to Southern contexts. Moreover, there is a notable absence of literature that engages with how to operationalise inclusive education in a way that acknowledges, and is responsive to, the differing realities and priorities of rural contexts in countries of the Global South.

Colombian educators have developed and implemented a successful child-centred model of rural education, called ‘Escuela Nueva’. As a learner-centred approach for multigrade classrooms, its design includes elements that could support the education of children with disabilities: children of different ages and abilities learn at their own pace, working in teams through the provision of self-instructional learner guides; participatory tools build class cohesion; and student committees contribute to decision-making in the school. In contrast to traditional models of teacher training in Colombia, teachers are trained using the same principles and materials as those that they will use in the classroom and learn how to facilitate, rather than direct, lessons. However, there is very little research that has explored teacher practice and children’s experiences in rural contexts, whilst none has examined both Escuela Nueva and disability. Consequently, my research aimed to explore how the school staff, parents and children of five rural Escuela Nueva schools in Colombia, understood and addressed the educational needs of children with disabilities. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, I conducted 46 interviews and 15 non-participant classroom observations across the five rural schools of Las Colinas, over a period of eight months. This included interviews with 11 school staff, 14 parents and five senior staff from Foundation Escuela Nueva. To seek the views of children, I

used a multi-method visual participatory approach with 53 children aged between 7 and 11 years, of whom, 26 were children with disabilities.

My findings suggest that, while Colombian legislation advocates for a biopsychosocial understanding of disability, all participants understood disability as an individual deficit, thus reflecting the medical model of disability. Consequently, the impact of intersecting factors, such as poverty and rural location, on parents' ability to support their child with a disability were often not recognised by teachers. Moreover, the bureaucratic disability diagnosis and support systems are designed for urban populations and do not recognise the challenges that rural parents face when trying to access them. Thus, multiple disconnects were observed between state systems, schools and parents.

Challenging deficit accounts of rural teacher practice, my research into how children's needs were addressed in EN classrooms revealed that the majority of teachers delivered high quality, inclusive teaching using the EN approach. Nevertheless, the findings problematised some elements of the EN model in terms of the extent to which they were able to support children with disabilities. My research revealed how the capacity of an EN teacher to deliver inclusive education is affected by a range of factors at multiple levels, of which the EN materials and tools are just one. Emphasising the role of context, teachers located in small, single-class schools had increased demands on their time, but less access to support from colleagues, than those in multi-class schools. Moreover, no teachers had received training on disability and the Escuela Nueva microcentre support structure for teacher practice had not been sustained. Consequently, I argue that, not only should state and school processes address the needs of the child, but also, the needs of those that are implementing them. Teachers require ongoing, situated, support that addresses not only support for their practice, but also, includes processes that build upon local strengths to address the disconnects and dilemmas that teachers and parents are facing within their context.

**Key words:** Escuela Nueva, disability, inclusive education, rural, Colombia, children's voice

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# Contents

Declaration of originality .....	i
Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Contents .....	iv
Tables and figures .....	x
Abbreviations .....	xiii

## **Chapter 1: Introduction.....1**

1.1. Rationale for choice of research topic .....	3
1.2. Focus on disability-inclusive education .....	3
1.3. Language and terminology .....	4
1.4. Structure of the thesis.....	4

## **Chapter 2: The education of children in rural Colombia: Insights from policy and data .....6**

Section 1: The legislative journey towards inclusive education.....	6
2.1. Establishing the right to education (1991-1994).....	6
2.1. Educational integration (1995-2008). ....	8
2.3. Inclusive education (2009-2020). ....	8
Section 2: The identification and education of children with disabilities .....	11
2.4. Defining disability in Colombia: Evolution of models and terminology. ....	11
2.4.1. Models of disability. ....	11
2.4.2 Terminology. ....	13
2.5. Identification of children with disabilities.....	13
2.5.1 Intersections that affect experiences of rural children with disabilities .....	15
2.6. Where are Colombian children with disabilities being educated? .....	17
Section 3: Teacher training and support .....	19
2.7. Initial teacher training .....	19
2.7.1. Teacher training on diversity and disability .....	19
2.8. Summary .....	20

## **Chapter 3: An introduction to the Escuela Nueva approach.....21**

3.1. The evolution of Escuela Nueva .....	21
3.2. Components of the Escuela Nueva approach .....	23
3.2.1 Curriculum delivery .....	23
3.2.2. Learning guide structure .....	24
3.2.3. Classroom organisation. ....	27
3.2.4. Participatory tools .....	28
3.3. Community .....	29
3.4. Training and administration .....	30
3.4.1. Teacher role and training.....	30
3.5. Research into Colombian Escuela Nueva outcomes. ....	31
3.6. Escuela Nueva: home grown model or a North-South-South export? .....	33
3.7. Disability and Escuela Nueva: an unexplored topic .....	34
3.8 Summary .....	35

## **Chapter 4: A review of the Latin American literature on disability and inclusive education .....36**

Section 1: Conceptualisation of models of inclusive education and disability.....	36
---	----

4.1. Conceptualisations of inclusive education .....	36
4.2. Conceptualisations of disability .....	39
Section 2: What practices do teachers adopt to respond to the educational needs of children with disabilities? .....	41
4.3. Teacher attitudes.....	41
4.4. Curriculum and teacher practice .....	42
4.5. Teaching children with disabilities in rural, multigrade schools .....	44
Section 3: Teacher support and training .....	46
Section 4: Latin American research: silences and being silenced .....	48
4.6. Lack of research on voices and experiences of children, parents and teachers .....	48
4.7. Latin American literature is silenced in the Southern debates.....	49
4.8. Research Questions .....	50
<b>Chapter 5: Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>52</b>
5.1. My guiding philosophical stance.....	52
5.2. Theoretical approaches.....	52
5.2.1. Critical disability theory .....	53
5.2.2. Decoloniality.....	53
5.2.3. Theoretical implications. ....	54
5.3. Case study research design .....	55
5.4. Sampling .....	56
5.4.1. Selection of schools.....	56
5.4.2. Selection of adults .....	57
5.4.3. Selection of children.....	58
5.5. Rationale for selecting qualitative data-gathering methods .....	59
5.5.1. Pilot of instruments .....	60
5.6. Methods used with Adults.....	61
5.6.1. Cultural immersion and building rapport. ....	61
5.6.2. Participant and non-participant classroom observations. ....	61
5.6.3. Interviews. ....	62
5.6.4. Using the Washington group questions to identify children with disabilities .....	63
5.6.5. Fieldnotes .....	65
5.7. Methods used with children.....	66
5.7.1. Employing a participatory design .....	66
5.7.2. Utilising a multi-method approach.....	67
5.7.3. Children's session outline.....	68
5.7.4. Informed consent and choice of methods .....	69
5.7.5. Photovoice .....	70
5.7.6. Drawing.....	70
5.7.7. 'Who helps when I am stuck' visual interview.....	73
5.7.8. Views on diversity and difference.....	75
5.8. Overview of fieldwork timeline.....	75
5.9. Translation.....	76
5.10. Ensuring trustworthiness of the research.....	78
5.11. Ethical considerations. ....	79
5.11.1. Negotiating access and informed consent.....	80
5.11.2. Reflexivity and positionality.....	81
5.12. Data Analysis.....	83
5.13. Using visual media to disseminate the research .....	85
5.14. Summary .....	86

<b>Chapter 6: A narrative sketch of the schools of Las Colinas .....</b>	<b>87</b>
6.1. La Ruana municipality .....	87
6.2. The people of Las Colinas .....	89
6.2.1 School staff .....	89
6.2.2. Family composition and employment. ....	90
6.2.3. Children with disabilities .....	92
6.3. Schools .....	92
6.3.1. Background to adoption of the EN model. ....	92
6.3.2 School location. ....	93
6.3.3. School facilities.....	94
6.4. A narrative sketch of the schools .....	94
6.4.1 School A .....	95
6.4.2. School B .....	96
6.4.3 School C .....	96
6.4.4. School D .....	97
6.4.5 School E .....	98
6.5. Summary .....	99
 <b>Chapter 7: Disability, diagnosis and disconnect .....</b>	<b>102</b>
Section 1: Understanding of disability .....	102
7.1 Participants' understanding of disability reflects the medical model .....	102
7.1.1. Disability as different to the norm.....	102
7.1.2. Disability as a physical condition. ....	103
7.1.3 Disability was related to a lack of, or different, abilities.....	103
7.2. Participants used terminology reflecting the medical model of disability. ....	104
7.2.1. Disability is permanent; SEN is temporary .....	105
7.2.2. Children with SEN are 'normal' .....	106
7.2.3. Not all teachers agreed. ....	106
Section 2: Understanding the difficulties of children in the schools of Las Colinas .....	107
7.3. Disability was not at the forefront of way in which children in the case schools were framed by the participants. ....	107
7.3.1. Teachers differentiated between children using personality and behaviour more than disability.....	107
7.3.2. Parents focused on a child's personality and behaviour. ....	108
7.3.3. Children focused on differences in skin tone.....	109
7.4. Teachers' perceptions of the reasons why children had difficulties in learning .....	111
7.4.1. Teachers identified a lack of support from home as the main reason for children not learning .....	112
7.4.2. Teachers did not always appear to take into account issues that impact upon families. ....	114
Section 3: The role of diagnosis and the PIAR in understanding a child's disability .....	119
7.5. A highly bureaucratic diagnosis system does not meet the needs of rural families .....	119
7.5.1. The system of diagnosis in Colombia is bureaucratic. ....	119
7.5.2. GPs fail to spot disability.....	120
7.5.3. There is a lack of appointments. ....	121
7.5.4. There are hidden costs of transport and unpaid time off work. ....	122
7.6. Bypassing the state system risks future costs. ....	122
7.7. Diagnosis: for whom does it make a difference?.....	123
7.7.1. The health-based diagnosis process does not link with schools.....	124
7.7.2. The diagnosis does not help the parents, teacher or child better understand a child's difficulties .....	124
7.8. The PIAR process was framed using the medical model of disability.....	126
7.9. For whom is the PIAR paperwork? .....	129

7.10. Summary .....	129
---------------------	-----

## **Chapter 8: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an Escuela Nueva classroom .....131**

### **Section 1: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities: teacher use of EN curriculum materials and participatory tools .....131**

#### 8.1 Teachers were broadly positive about the EN guides, but they were not the only curriculum materials teachers chose..... 131

#### 8.2 Teachers chose alternatives to guides, because they did not always meet the needs of all learners..... 133

##### 8.2.1 Guides did not meet the needs of non-readers. .... 133

##### 8.2.2. Guides were less useful for small grade or class groups. .... 134

#### 8.3 Implementation of participatory tools varied between schools and classrooms ..... 135

##### 8.3.1. Student Committees. .... 135

##### 8.3.2. Friendship letters..... 136

##### 8.3.3. Self-registration..... 137

##### 8.3.4. Suggestions and child commitments box. .... 138

##### 8.3.5. Community links..... 138

##### 8.3.6. Travelling journal..... 139

### **Section 2: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities: curriculum delivery .....140**

#### 8.4 High quality inclusive teaching relies upon teacher delivery as much as the materials used..... 140

##### 8.4.1. High quality example of guide use..... 141

##### 8.4.2. High quality example of child-centred learning (without guides). .... 143

##### 8.4.3. Low quality example with guides used as a dictation tool. .... 144

##### 8.4.4. Low quality example of teaching that was not sensitive to the child's needs..... 145

### **Section 3: Formative assessment, going at your own pace and flexible promotion .....146**

#### 8.5. Teachers had a holistic approach to assessment ..... 146

#### 8.6. Problematising flexible promotion and going at your own pace ..... 149

##### 8.6.1 Children with disabilities were more likely to have repeated at least one grade year when compared with their peers. .... 149

##### 8.6.2 Repeating the year supported inclusion but had implications for transition..... 150

##### 8.6.3 Parents and children viewed flexible promotion as a negative occurrence. .... 152

### **Section 4: Teacher strategies focused upon children with disabilities .....153**

#### 8.7. Practices used to support the learning of children with disabilities ..... 153

##### 8.7.1 Learning..... 153

##### 8.7.2 Emotional wellbeing and behaviour..... 155

##### 8.7.3. Not knowing what to do. .... 156

#### 8.8. Implementation of learning support varied across schools ..... 156

##### 8.8.1. The majority of teachers were positive about the learning support processes. .... 157

##### 8.8.2. The role of the learning support teacher role differed across schools, revealing some tensions. .... 157

#### 8.9. Summary ..... 159

## **Chapter 9: Factors that influence a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching for children with disabilities.....161**

### **Section 1: Individual factors .....161**

#### 9.1. Teachers conceptualised inclusive education as educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools..... 161

#### 9.2. Teachers attitudes towards inclusive education were mixed ..... 162

##### 9.2.1. Teachers thought inclusion was important for social reasons but negative or ambivalent about inclusive education for academic reasons..... 162

##### 9.2.2. Previous experiences of including children with disabilities appeared related

to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education .....	164
9.3. Teachers' preferred teaching style had some influence on their delivery of the EN approach ...	166
Section 2: School context .....	167
9.4. Multigrade classes support children's learning, but teachers find them difficult to manage .....	168
9.4.1. Teachers in single class schools find it hard to meet the needs of a wide age range. ....	168
9.4.2. Teachers in multi-class schools benefit from the opportunity to plan with others and share administration tasks.....	169
9.5. Adapting practice when your class size reduces is challenging. ....	170
Section 3: Teacher training and support .....	172
9.6. Participants thought teachers need practical training on inclusive education.....	172
9.7. Initial teacher training does not provide practical training on managing diversity .....	173
9.8. Teachers thought FEN training was positive, but the school-led training mechanisms had not been sustained .....	174
9.9. Supporting teacher practice involves more than training .....	176
9.10. Summary .....	177
<b>Chapter 10: Children's views upon their education in Escuela Nueva schools .....</b>	<b>179</b>
Section 1: Children's views of their own difficulties .....	179
Section 2: Children's views on what helped and did not help them learn .....	180
10.1 People helped children learn .....	181
10.1.1. Teachers helped children learn .....	182
10.1.2. Friends helped children learn .....	185
10.1.3. Parents helped children learn .....	188
10.2 The school context helped children learn .....	191
10.2.1. Teaching and learning materials helped children learn. ....	187
10.2.2. EN guides and participatory tools. ....	193
10.3. Natural environment .....	198
10.4. Religion .....	200
10.5. Children's photovoice action planning .....	201
Section 3: Children's experiences of learning support processes .....	205
10.6. Children's views of learning support processes.....	205
10.6.1. Doing differentiated work in class .....	205
10.6.2. Helping others.....	206
10.6.3. Discipline from the teacher. ....	207
10. 7. SEN support teacher not perceived as for children with difficulties.....	207
10.8. Managing the tension of going at your own pace while not wanting to repeat the year .....	208
Section 4: The hopes of children, and their parents, for their future .....	210
10.9. Children's hopes for their future.....	210
10.9.1. Hopes for Nairo's future.....	213
10.9.2. Hope for Gringa's future. ....	214
10.10. Summary of the findings chapters. ....	215
<b>Chapter 11: Discussion .....</b>	<b>216</b>
Section 1: Understanding disability .....	216
11.1. Disconnect between government policy and teachers' conceptualisation of disability .....	216
11.2. Meeting the needs of children and families: the importance of an intersectional understanding of disability .....	217
11.2.1. Disability and poverty in a rural context .....	218
11.2.2. Daughters, mothers and caring responsibilities .....	218
11.2.3. Race and skin tone .....	219
11.2.4. State systems do not attend to the intersections that impact on rural parents' capacity to support their child. ....	220



Section 2: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an EN classroom.....	222
11.3. The EN model and curriculum dilemmas of difference .....	222
11.3.1. Teachers' beliefs about disability and the unsuitability of EN guides for non-readers leads to them offering alternative work for children with disabilities. ....	223
11.3.2. Learning at your own pace has unintended negative consequences.....	223
Section 3: The views of rural children with disabilities .....	225
11.4. Children need support to understand their own strengths and difficulties .....	225
11.5. Accessing support in an EN classroom .....	226
11.5.1. Peer support is not a panacea. ....	226
11.5.2. Children need access to positive adult support when they make mistakes .....	226
11.6. Challenging the deficit accounts of rural spaces.....	227
Section 4: Building inclusive education within rural EN schools:	
situated support and local agency .....	227
11.7. Teachers require situated support that addresses the rural context .....	227
11.8. Working together and building agency .....	229
11.9 Summary .....	231
<b>Chapter 12: Conclusion</b> .....	232
12.1. Contributions of the study .....	232
12.1.1. Empirical contribution to knowledge on the way in which disability is understood in Colombia.....	233
12.1.3. Methodological contribution of using art-based methods in research .....	233
12.1.4. The value of incorporating Latin American perspectives into Southern debates.....	234
12.2. Policy Implications .....	234
12.2.1. National Policy.....	234
12.2.2. FEN .....	236
12.3. Limitations.....	237
12.4. Final reflections .....	238
<b>References</b> .....	239
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>270</b>
Appendix A: Census vs SIMAT disability data: An examination of the differences .....	270
Appendix B: Overview of teacher experience .....	271
Appendix C: Adult Interview schedules .....	273
Appendix D: Children's sessions plans .....	289
Appendix E: Washington Group Questionnaire (English and Spanish) .....	297
Appendix F: Observation schedule.....	311
Appendix G: Consent letters .....	316
Appendix H: Photovoice theme posters.....	319
Appendix I: Coding .....	322

## Tables & Figures

### Tables

Table 2.1. Summary of the Decree 1421 requirements on ETCs, schools and teachers .....	10
Table 3.1. A list of the learning guide topics for grades pre-school-7 .....	24
Table 5.1 Number of school staff, parents and FEN staff that participated in the research .....	57
Table 5.2 Number of children with and without disabilities who participated in the research .....	58
Table 5.3 Overview of the methods and their purpose in the research .....	59
Table 5.4 Summary of pilot activities and participants in the case study schools.....	60
Table 5.5 Number of days spent in each school using participant observation.....	62
Table 5.6 Interview question themes common to school staff and FEN interviews.....	63
Table 5.7 Overview of children's methods and their purpose in the research .....	68
Table 5.8 Overview of the ways in which I addressed the trustworthiness of my research.....	79
Table 6.1 Overview of school population and class composition .....	89
Table 6.2 The living arrangement in the family homes of children who took part in the research .....	91
Table 6.3 Glossary of the children.....	100
Table 7.1 Teachers' views on differences between disability and special educational needs.....	105
Table 7.2 Teachers' views on the reasons children with and without disabilities struggle to learn ...	111
Table 7.3 The number and names of children with an Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments .	126
Table 8.1 Frequency of guides use in each school .....	132
Table 8.2 Frequency of student committee activity in each school.....	135
Table 8.3 Frequency of friendship mail use in each school .....	136
Table 8.4 Frequency of self-registration use in each school .....	133
Table 8.5 Frequency and examples of community links made with the schools during 2017-18 .....	138
Table 8.6 Frequency of travelling journal use in each school.....	139
Table 8.7 Ratings of teaching quality given to individual teachers, using the adapted TEACH observation tool .....	141
Table 8.8 Number of children with and without identified difficulties who have repeated a school year.....	150
Table 9.1 Teachers views about inclusive education compared with their previous experience of teaching children with disabilities .....	162
Table 10.1 Overview of the photovoice themes that children thought helped their learning.....	181
Table 10.2 Overview of the photovoice themes that children thought did not help their learning.....	181
Table 10.3 Children's views on whether their peers helped them learn .....	187
Table 10.4 School D's photovoice action plan.....	204
Table 11 A comparison between teachers' views of parents and the views of parents and children.....	217

## Figures

Figure i Illustrated overview of the research.....	xiv
Figure 1 Map of Colombia.....	1
Figure 2.1 An overview of key Colombian legislation related to the education of children with disabilities .....	7
Figure 2.2 The ICF model of disability and functioning (WHO, 2001) .....	12
Figure 2.3 Category of disability of children attending school (aged 5-18 years) based upon SIMAT data (2019) .....	14
Figure 2.4 Functional difficulties experienced by Colombian children with disabilities, aged 5-19, based upon census data (2018) .....	15
Figure 2.5 Percentage of children with disabilities who attended school in 2019, based upon grade .....	18
Figure 3.1 Examples of evolving social studies guides: 1991, 2014, 2017 (left-right) .....	24
Figure 3.2 Structure of learning guide activities .....	25
Figure 3.3 Example of learning guide activities.....	26
Figure 3.4 Examples of EN classroom organisation.....	27
Figure 3.5 Photograph of friendship mail participatory tool.....	28
Figure 3.6 Examples of participatory tools which focus upon links with the community .....	30
Figure 3.7 An example of the teacher training learning guide that teachers work through during FEN training .....	32
Figure 5.1 Child functioning module question areas .....	64
Figure 5.2 An example of illustrated field notes following disclosure of physical punishment by a child.....	66
Figure 5.3 Introduction poster used in each school .....	69
Figure 5.4 Example of theme summary poster.....	72
Figure 5.5 Example of a child's drawing.....	73
Figure 5.6. Example of 'who helps when I am stuck' visual interview .....	75
Figure 5.7 Timeline of fieldwork and methods used .....	76
Figure 5.8 Example of my illustrated pattern coding regarding the interaction between a children with a disability (CWD), parents and teachers.....	84
Figure 6.1 Photographs of the mountains surrounding the schools of Las Colinas.....	87
Figure 6.2 Examples of children's homes.....	91
Figure 6.3 Teacher reports of the range of difficulties experienced by children with disabilities in case schools .....	92
Figure 6.4 Location of Las Colinas schools .....	95
Figure 6.5 School A and its surrounds.....	95

Figure 6.6 School B and its surrounds .....	96
Figure 6.7 School C and its surrounds .....	97
Figure 6.8 School D and its surrounds .....	98
Figure 6.9 School E and its surrounds .....	99
Figure 7 Illustration of Chapter 7: Disability Diagnosis and disconnect .....	101
Figure 8.1 Illustration of findings Chapter 8: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an Escuela Nueva Classroom.....	126
Figure 8.2 Example of a friendship letter sent to a School B teacher .....	137
Figure 8.3 Example of maths guide and child's notes .....	142
Figure 8.4 Photograph of a child's work booklet .....	144
Figure 8.5 Sentence ordering exercise completed by Lina (School A) with the Learning Support Teacher .....	157
Figure 9 An illustration of Chapter 9: Factors that influence a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching for children with disabilities.....	160
Figure 10.1 Illustration of Chapter 10: children's views upon their education in an Escuela Nueva school.....	181
Figure 10.2 Children's photos and comments about friends helping them to learn .....	185
Figure 10.3 Children's photovoice responses suggested children fighting did not help them learn .	187
Figure 10.4 Children's photos and descriptions of learning materials that helped children learn.....	191
Figure 10.5 Children's photos and descriptions of technology and its effect on learning .....	192
Figure 10.6 Children's photos and descriptions of how toys do and do not help them learn.....	193
Figure 10.7 A child's photo and comments about EN guides .....	194
Figure 10.8 Children's photos and descriptions of friendship mail participatory tool .....	196
Figure 10.9 Child's photograph of their school committee structure .....	197
Figure 10.11 Children's photos and descriptions of how the natural environment helps them learn .....	200
Figure 10.12 Children's photos and descriptions of how the natural environment does not them learn.....	200
Figure 10.13 Children's photos and descriptions of how religion helps them learn .....	201
Figure 10.14 Theme posters used for action planning .....	202
Figure 10.15 Photos of School D action planning session .....	203
Figure 10.16 Differentiated workbook used by Teacher 1 .....	206
Figure 10.17 Examples of children's drawings and comments about their hopes for their future ....	211
Figure 10.18 Linda's drawing of her future self as a doctor .....	212
Figure 10.19 Drawings of Nairo and Lobo's future hopes .....	213

## Abbreviations

DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística ( <i>National Directorate of Statistics</i> )
EFA	Education for All
EN	Escuela Nueva
ETC	Entidades Territoriales Certificadas ( <i>Certified Territorial Municipalities</i> )
FEN	Foundation Escuela Nueva
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICF	International Classification of Functioning
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MEN	Ministerio de Educación Nacional ( <i>National Ministry of Education</i> )
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIP	Progressive implementation plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organisation

**Figure i**  
Illustrated overview of the research





## Chapter 1: Introduction

Colombia is the fifth largest country in Latin America, with an estimated population of 48.1 million people (DANE<sup>1</sup>, 2018). Located in the northwest of South America, it covers a vast territory that extends from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast. Encompassing geography that includes jungle, mountains, desert and coastal regions, the Government is responsible for educating a linguistically, culturally and geographically diverse population, of whom, 22.9% live in rural areas (Ibid.). It is a middle-income country, the economy of which has seen above-average growth when compared with other Latin American countries (OECD, 2016). Having endured 50 years of conflict between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the peace accord of May 2016 (Colombian Government & FARC-EP, 2016) coincided with a series of positive actions to improve education in the country. These included a commitment in 2015 to provide inclusive education for all children by 2030 (Colombian Government, 2015), and a significant reform for the education of children with disabilities – Decree 1421 (Ministry of Education (MEN), 2017a) – which identified a range of support measures to facilitate their access to and progress in school.

However, while there is general agreement on the principle of inclusive education as something to be pursued, its meaning and nature is contested (Slee, 2008; Norwich, 2014). Furthermore, a growing body of literature has questioned the relevance and application of current models that have been generated in the North, and subsequently, exported to the South (Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou, 2011; Grech, 2013). Moreover, there is a notable absence of literature that engages with how to operationalise inclusive education in a way that acknowledges and is responsive to the differing realities and priorities of local contexts (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016; Kamenopoulou, 2018).

Within a Latin American context, research suggests that while teachers are broadly positive about the idea of inclusive education for children with disabilities, these attitudes are combined with scepticism about the extent to which this is possible (Castillo & Miranda, 2018; San Martin et al., 2021). Teachers have limited training and skills in relation to adapting the curriculum (Beltrán, Martínez & Vargas, 2015), and what is possible in a classroom is affected by the conditions in which they are working (Mellado et al., 2017; Poblete, López & Muñoz, 2019). Focusing upon the Colombian context, there has been a significant increase in education funding in the past 10 years, which has resulted in universal access for children aged 7-13 years (OECD, 2016). However,

**Figure 1**

*Map of Colombia*



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<sup>1</sup> Direccion Nacional de Estadística (DANE) *National Directorate of Statistics*

Colombia is ranked as one of the 10 most unequal countries in the world (OECD, 2016) and children's outcomes are greatly affected by the intersections between their wealth, gender and location. Rural areas are particularly disadvantaged, in which levels of multidimensional poverty were more than twice as high for rural Colombians in 2017, when compared with those in urban areas (Radinger et al., 2018). Moreover, Colombian families with the highest levels of multidimensional poverty contain a person with a disability (Pinilla, 2018). Delivering inclusive education in rural schools has context-specific challenges. Teachers struggle with managing the demands of multigrade classes and adapting curriculum materials that have been developed for urban, monograde schools (Bolaños, 2017). Furthermore, buildings are less accessible and teachers have fewer materials when compared with schools in urban settings (Duarte, Garguilo & Moreno, 2012).

With the aim of addressing the low learning outcomes of Colombian children living in poverty in rural areas (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016), the Escuela Nueva model was first developed by Colombian educators in the 1970s. Subsequently adopted in many rural areas, it currently accounts for 8% of all children enrolled in primary education in Colombia (OECD, 2016, p.136). Considered a 'pioneering reform' (McEwan, 2008, p. 465), it is considered a good example of 'what works' in rural, southern contexts by international organisations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank (Foundation Escuela Nueva (FEN), 2017). Children who access Escuela Nueva schools have better outcomes in terms of learning, self-esteem and social skills, when compared with similar children in other schools (Forero et al., 2006; Hammler, 2017). However, the research that exists has focused upon outcomes and levels of implementation, and while there is reference to diversity in terms of gender and socio-economic status, there has been none that refers to children with disabilities.

Descriptions of the model in the literature appear to suggest that it has elements that could support the education of children with disabilities: adopting a learner-centred approach within a multi-grade class, children of different ages and abilities learn at their own pace, through the provision of self-instructional learner guides; and children support each other's learning, working in teams and are involved in student committees that contribute to decision-making in the school. Addressing the concerns of rural multigrade teachers, children work through multigrade materials, while the role of the teacher is that of facilitator, who guides and assesses their progress. Furthermore, in contrast to traditional models of teacher training in Colombia (Kamenopoulou, 2018) teachers are trained using the same principles and materials as those that they will use in the classroom. Moreover, they come together to problem-solve in monthly meetings, as well accessing a virtual meeting space online (FEN, 2016). However, despite its promise, there has been very little research regarding teacher practices, and none that has explored how the model addresses the needs of children with disabilities.

My research comes at an interesting period in the evolution of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Colombia. The latest Decree 1421 (MEN, 2017a) aims to offer support to teachers, children with disabilities and their families through the provision of a learning support



teacher for schools, an individual planning process, and systems that promote teacher training and skills. Being such a recent reform, there has been little research on how this is implemented in rural areas or, specifically, Escuela Nueva schools. Consequently, my research provides a timely opportunity to explore how the needs of rural children with disabilities are understood and addressed within Colombian Escuela Nueva schools.

### **1.1. Rationale for choice of research topic**

As a UK-trained Educational Psychologist and international consultant, I have had experience of advising international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) based in a number of countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Colombia, Moldova) that were seeking to implement inclusive education. As a passionate advocate of inclusive education for children with disabilities in a mainstream setting and skilled in gaining children's perspectives using creative participatory methods, I have worked alongside NGO staff, families and children with disabilities in rural settings. However, when advising ministers with scarce resources to allocate, I increasingly began to question the applicability and sustainability of my own conceptualisation of 'good' inclusive education systems and practice in country contexts that were vastly different to each other and my own. Completing my MPhil on Education, Globalisation and International Development at Cambridge in 2017, I discovered literature that validated my concerns about the export of Northern models of inclusive education to countries of the Global South. During my subsequent research on the experiences of children with disabilities in mainstream Colombian state schools, it became apparent that the teachers who were most confident in educating children with disabilities were those who had had experience of multigrade teaching in rural Escuela Nueva schools. As a positive example of a homegrown model grounded in the contextual realities that rural Colombian teachers face, I was intrigued to know how it might include children with disabilities: could the concerns that Colombian teachers have about inclusive education be addressed within a model that Colombian educators had designed? With there being no research that gave an indication as whether this was the case, I was interested in exploring this question.

### **1.2 Focus on disability – inclusive education**

Inclusive education is often conceptualised as a broad term advocating the meeting of the needs of all learners. This broad definition acknowledges the intersecting aspects of diversity that can impact on a child's experience of teaching and learning, such as gender, wealth, location and disability (Mizunoya, Mitra & Yamasaki, 2018). While my research acknowledges and explores these intersections, the focus is primarily disability. Children with disabilities are most at risk of being left behind in education by 2030, having been identified as the most excluded of marginalised children (UNESCO, 2014). This is particularly the case in low- and middle-income countries, where 90% do not attend school (UNICEF, 2014). Furthermore, the conceptualisation of inclusive education

remains strongly linked with disability throughout Latin America (Marchesi, Blanco & Hernandez, 2014). Consequently, where I refer to inclusive education in the thesis, this signifies disability-inclusive education.

### **1.3 Language and terminology**

Drawing on the Brandt report (1980) terminology, I use the terms global North and South throughout this thesis. The use of these terms does not refer to binary, geographical locations, but rather, ‘as shorthand for a complex of inequalities’ (Meekosha & Soldatic, 2011, p.1383) between economically powerful countries in the North and those with less economic resources in the South. The disparate historical, economic, political and social contexts that exist in countries of the South are acknowledged and reflect a limitation of the terms. However, all share a legacy of colonialism and continuing economic, cultural and social inequities that result from globalisation, which is controlled and perpetuated by countries in the North (Santos, 2012).

Defining which countries constitute the idea of Latin America, and who determines this, is the subject of longstanding debate (e.g. see Mignolo, 2009; Gobat, 2013). Furthermore, as a region considered part of the Global South (Santos, 2012), it is often overlooked in research and debates that pertain to the South (Grech, 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2018; Guzmán & Gómez, 2019). I use the term Latin America to refer to Central and South America, and draw substantially upon literature published in the majority languages of Spanish and Portuguese (Marchesi, 2019).

I use person-first language to describe and denote disability (i.e. children with disabilities). Used in the majority of the Southern literature, including Colombian policies, it involves focusing upon the person as an individual, rather than their being defined by their disability. I define disability using the biopsychosocial model developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2001), which acknowledges the interrelationship between a child’s condition and the broader environment that intersects to create each individual experience of living with a disability.

### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

My thesis consists of 12 chapters, which are divided into four parts. Chapters 1-4 provide the background to my research. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the education of children with disabilities in Colombia. Chapter 3 contains an introduction to Escuela Nueva, and reviews the literature that has focused upon the model. Chapter 4 provides a review of the Latin American literature on disability and inclusive education. Part two (Chapters 5-6) provide the description of my qualitative methodology and the research site. Chapter 5 describes the methods used to explore the multiple-case study approach and Chapter 6 introduces the research context and the participating schools. Part three (Chapters 7-11) provides the findings and discussion. The findings begin with an exploration of participants’ understanding of disability and the systems that

support children with disabilities (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 examines the ways in which teachers addressed the needs of children with disabilities using the EN approach, whilst Chapter 9 explores the factors that influence a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching. Children are then given the opportunity to respond in a chapter dedicated to their views (Chapter 10). I conclude this section with a general discussion of the findings (Chapter 11). Bringing the thesis together, I finish with a conclusion, which outlines the contribution of my research and this is followed by the policy implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: The education of children with disabilities in Colombia: insights from policy and data**

Ensuring that all children receive a quality, inclusive education is a key goal in the Colombian Government's rural education plan (MEN, 2017b). Focusing upon the education of children with disabilities, this chapter summarises the Colombian journey towards inclusive education, and provides insight into the systems which aim to identify and support them. The chapter has three sections. Section 1 begins with an overview of the legislative journey towards inclusive education. Section 2 describes the model of disability and terminology adopted in Colombian legislation followed by an explanation of how children with disabilities are identified, the intersections that impact upon them and where they are educated. Section 3 outlines the routes to becoming a teacher, where it is revealed that they receive very little, if any, training on how to address diverse populations.

### **Section 1: The legislative journey towards inclusive education**

The evolution of education of children with disabilities builds upon a history of care by families and religious groups and, in the 1980s, special schooling (see Yarza, 2005 for overview). Most pertinent to this research, the recent progress of Colombian legislation and policy towards that of inclusive education can be categorised into three broad phases: establishing the right to education for children with disabilities (1991-95), the development of systems that promoted educational integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools (1996-2008) and a commitment to delivering inclusive education since 2009 (Manjarrés & Velez, 2020). Summarised with an overview of key legislation in Figure 2.1, the evolution of Colombia's laws is examined in detail in the following sections.

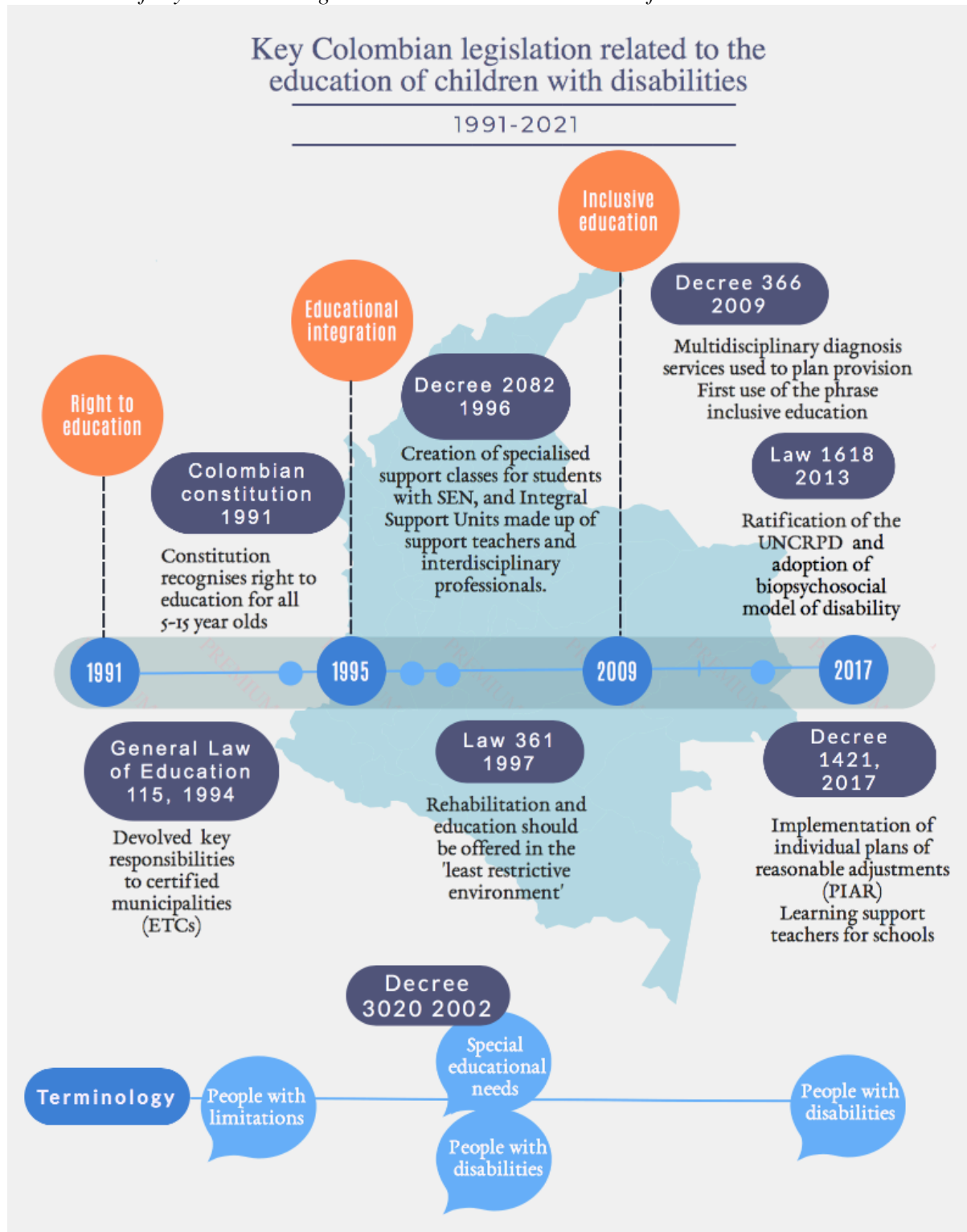
#### **2.1. Establishing the right to education (1991-1994)**

The first significant shift towards educating all children with disabilities followed the World Education Conference, held at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, in which nations agreed to address the basic learning needs of all children, and provide 'Education for All' (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990). Building upon this, the Colombian Constitution of 1991 formally recognised education as a fundamental right for all children between the ages of 5 and 15 (Colombian Congress, 1991). Given the diversity of regions throughout Colombia, the 1994 General Education Law 115 (Colombian Congress, 1994) subsequently operationalised the commitment to educate all through the devolving of key responsibilities for education to certified districts or municipalities (*Entidades Territoriales Certificadas* or ETCs). Secretary for Education departments were tasked with guaranteeing education services from pre-primary to secondary education, managing education personnel and educational funding, and supervision of private institutions. Roza, Rodriguez & Gonzalez (2015) argued that this period constituted the first acknowledgment of Colombia's asymmetries in resources and access, and response to the marginalisation of large sectors of its population. However, Correa et al. (2018) noted

that, while both pieces of legislation appeared inclusive and increased access to education, the way in which ETCs subsequently implemented the legislation, in fact, resulted in an increase in segregated schooling for children with disabilities, which is discussed next.

**Figure 2.1**

*An overview of key Colombian legislation related to the education of children with disabilities*



## **2.2. Educational integration (1995-2008)**

The period between 1995-2008 produced a series of laws and decrees aimed at operationalising and building upon the General Education Law of 1994. Committing to support a process of ‘social and educational integration’, Decree 2082 (MEN, 1996, p.2) was the first to require ETCs to ensure their schools were providing a flexible curriculum and evaluation system, along with the provision of support teachers for individual children, related to their disability. In 1997, Law 361 committed ETCs to ensure that children were educated within the ‘least restrictive environment’ (Colombian Congress, 1997, p. 4) – a phrase introduced by the US Congress in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (US Congress, 1975). With the aim of integrating children with disabilities into existing mainstream schools, Law 361 established the option of specialised support classrooms. However, Correa et al. (2018) argue that rather than promote the education of children with disabilities, the aforementioned legislation confirmed the perception that they required a form of expertise that could not be offered by mainstream teachers, thus leading to their being seen as the responsibility of a dedicated special needs teacher, rather than part of the regular school community. Law 361 also aimed to normalise rehabilitation services by regulating the mainly private institutions that offered education and rehabilitation services and extending their offer to children in mainstream. However, it is contended that this had the unintended consequence of segregating children into special rather than mainstream schooling (Blasco & Moreno, 2020). While the plan was to provide rehabilitation services in mainstream schools, the reality saw private institutions contracted by ETCs to provide their services. In doing so, they became more visible as a viable option, with more expertise and established programmes (e.g. rehabilitation, training) than mainstream schools, which resulted in more children being channelled towards special schools by the mainstream ones (Correa et al., 2018). Later legislation (Resolution 2565, MEN, 2003, p.5) acknowledged this trend and aimed to increase integration by also requiring special schools to ‘reorganize their offer’ to include social and academic integration for non-disabled children. However, Blasco & Moreno (2020) argue that there was no monitoring by the ETCs, and while institutions committed to becoming more mixed, in practice, changes in the special school population did not occur.

## **2.3. Inclusive education (2009-2020).**

The term inclusive education was first used in Law 1346 (Colombian Congress, 2009), in which the Colombian Government ratified the UN convention on the rights of person with disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations (UN), 2006). Article 24 of the convention committed the country to establish laws and systems which would support the inclusive education of all children. Acting upon this, the period was dominated by three significant pieces of legislation. The first of these, Decree 366 of 2009 (MEN, 2009), required ETCs to contract approved multi-disciplinary teams and providers to diagnose a child’s disability. Using diagnosis figures, local secretaries for education were required to

plan provision and contract support personnel. This included at least one pedagogical support person per educational establishment reporting between 10 and 50 students with cognitive impairment. The second major piece of legislation, Law 1618 of 2013 (Colombian Congress, 2013), re-defined disability using the biopsychosocial model - the model that acknowledges the interrelationship between a child's health condition and the environment. It also introduced the requirement for all agencies to identify barriers to learning using a rights-based approach to educating children with disabilities, and make reasonable adjustments to address them.

Providing the immediate context for my research, the most recent legislation, Decree 1421 (MEN, 2017a), is a significant milestone in Colombian legislation that mandates fundamental changes for the support of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Drawing upon the biopsychosocial model, the Decree establishes new requirements for provision and processes that directly affect the education of children with disabilities in all educational institutions, including state, private and contracted services. Outlined in detail in Table 2.1, the Decree is targeted at a range of levels in the system. These include the provision of learning support teachers and a new 'Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments'<sup>2</sup> (PIAR) for children. This is targeted at those who school staff identify as needing support and there is no longer a requirement for a medical diagnosis. Having identified a child's needs, teachers have been instructed to use flexible evaluation and to ensure children who repeat a year have a guaranteed place in school.

Decree 1421 appears to have the potential for transformation of the system towards one that draws upon a biopsychosocial approach, but as this is only recent there has been very little research on its effectiveness. The only published research was conducted by Díaz, Bravo & Sierra (2020), who sought to analyse the challenges and opportunities that schools face in the implementation of the Decree. They delivered three training sessions to 11 rural teachers, with a focus upon the implementation of Decree 1421. Through their analysis of schools' policies and teacher discussions, they explored teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education and the ways in which Decree 1421 had been implemented in schools. A key finding was that the presence of the Decree did not necessarily guarantee a change in teacher practice or better quality education for children and that its incorporation required time and processes that addressed the local context. This finding reflects a wider pattern in the inclusive education literature of Colombia, in which there has often been a gap between that of policy and practice (Pava, Ocampo & Rojas, 2011; Kamenopoulou, 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> Plan Individual de Ajustes Razonables

**Table 2.1***Summary of the Decree 1421 requirements on ETCs, schools and teachers*

<b>Implementation level</b>	<b>Decree 1421 requirements</b>
Entidades Territoriales Certificadas (ETCs)	<p>ETCs should submit a ‘progressive implementation plan’ (PIP) outlining short, medium and long-term goals which outline the current situation, plans and funding requirements to improve access to inclusive education for children with disabilities. These plans will be monitored by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>ETCs must prioritise teacher training within the PIP.</p> <p>ETCS are required to structure and monitor the education of children with disabilities to ensure that it is inclusive in all educational institutions – including private, public or externally contracted.</p> <p>Children should be enrolled at their nearest educational institution, in order to ensure that children are dispersed across all schools rather than being concentrated in a few.</p> <p>Clarifies concerns about Law 366 of 2009 by explicitly drawing upon a biopsychosocial understanding of disability and affirms that a child does not require a diagnosis to receive support.</p>
School	<p>Learning support teachers will be assigned across groups of schools to provide support for teachers in planning for the inclusive education of individual children.</p> <p>Schools are required to implement a new planning process called an Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments (PIAR), which is to be initiated in schools by the class teacher, in conjunction with a designated Learning Support teacher (<i>Docente de apoyo</i>), the family and other services involved with the child or family.</p> <p>The family is acknowledged as a key actor and a vital source of ideas for developing reasonable adjustments and supporting transition.</p>
Classroom	<p>Teachers are required to plan lessons that address the individuality and diversity of children in their class, based upon the principles of universal design for learning</p> <p>Teachers should use flexible assessment as a part of reasonable adjustments and establish their own criteria for school promotion. If a child fails the year, they must be guaranteed a promotion for the following one.</p>



## **Section 2: The identification and education of children with disabilities**

To understand who children with disabilities are, and where they are located, requires a common understanding of disability and measures that capture this across the country. This section begins by exploring how disability is conceptualised in the global literature, before considering the number of children with disabilities in Colombia, the intersections that affect their learning outcomes and finally, where they are being educated.

### **2.4. Defining disability in Colombia: The evolution of models and terminology**

A central theme in my research has been to explore how participants understand and define disability. To contextualise the findings, this sub-section describes three models of disability that have characterised the global debates and Colombian legislation, before exploring the evolution of terminology used.

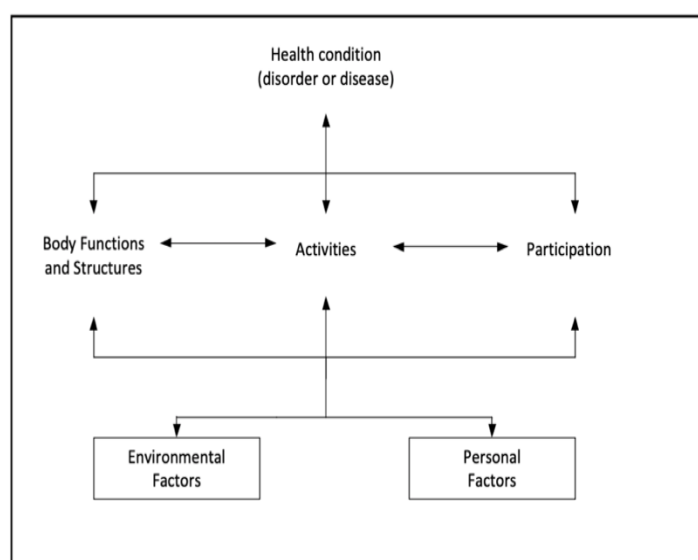
#### **2.4.1. Models of disability**

To understand how disability is conceptualised in Colombian legislation and the local culture requires an overview of different ways in which it has been framed at the global level. Common to many countries in Latin America, Colombia's legislation has reflected the global shifts from a model that understands disability as an individual deficit to one that recognises the interaction between their condition and the local environment (Pava, Ocampo & Rojas, 2011). Summarised here for clarity, the model that locates the 'problem' of disability within the individual is called the medical model and considers the cause to be physical, psychological and/or biological health conditions (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). With a focus on providing individual medical care from health or rehabilitation professionals, management of the disability is aimed at a cure, personal adjustment or behaviour change by the individual in response to it (Norwich & Lewis, 2007). However, this model has been criticised for its reductionist, overly medical approach, which constructs disability as a personal tragedy (Arnaiz, 2003; Ainscow, 2005). This perspective ignores the strengths of the person or the influence of the environment on the ways in which disability is experienced and understood (Echeita & Calderón, 2014). Focusing on the role of the environment, Oliver (1990), a UK-based disability activist, created the social model. This radically redefined disability as a socially created problem, determined by one's environment, rather than a characteristic of the individual. Making a fundamental distinction between impairment and disability, while it acknowledges that, physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological differences may cause impairments, the idea that these inevitably lead to disability is contested. Instead, under this lens, it is external oppressive societal structures that create barriers that are disabling (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2009). However, the most recent definition of disability adopted by Colombia (Colombian Congress, 2013), reflects that described in the UNCRPD (UN, 2006) and SDGs (UN, 2015): the biopsychosocial model, developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2001). This model combines aspects of

the medical and social models to acknowledge that a person's experience of disability is affected by the interrelationship between the individual and the environment around them (WHO, 2001). Reflected in the International Classification of Function and Disability (ICF) (WHO, 2001), it frames disability and functioning as a result of the interactions between health conditions and contextual factors (WHO, 2002). Contextual factors can be environmental (e.g. society's attitudes, environment) or personal (e.g. gender, race, age, fitness, education) (WHO, 2001, p. 17).

**Figure 2.2**

*The ICF model of disability and functioning (WHO, 2001)*



Illustrated in Figure 2.2 above, the ICF model focuses on a person's capacity to function through the identification of three interconnected areas. The first is body function and structures, which refers to impairments, such as a hearing difficulty or difficulty speaking, while the second, activity limitations, pertains to difficulties in performing activities (e.g. walking or eating). Finally, participation restrictions are problems with involvement in any area of life — for example, being refused access to an after-school club or inaccessible buildings (WHO, 2002). Moving away from the binary of disabled/non-disabled, Padilla (2010) describes how in this model disability is, instead, considered a continuum based upon difficulties encountered in any or all three areas of functioning.

Accordingly, the Colombian legislation now references the UNCRPD (2006) in its adoption of the biopsychosocial model:

Persons with and / or in the situation of disability: Those persons who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensorial deficiencies in the medium and long term, who, by interacting with various barriers, including attitudinal barriers, may impede their full and effective participation in society when in similar situations to others. (Colombian Congress, 2013, p. 1)

### **2.4.2 Terminology**

Terminology in legislation has also evolved since 1991. Between 1991-2001, Colombian legislation used the term ‘people with limitations’. This changed to ‘people with disabilities’ with Decree 3020 (MEN, 2002), in order to reflect Colombia’s ratification of the InterAmerican Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities (Organisation of the American States, 2001). Additionally, Decree 3020 introduced the term Special Educational Needs<sup>3</sup> (SEN), which regulated the introduction of support teachers in schools. While there is no explicit definition of SEN given in the legislation, the Government guidance (MEN, 2006a) seemed to suggest that a child’s special education needs referred to the extra support they required caused by their medically defined disability, as described below:

Each territorial entity will organize the educational offer for populations with special educational needs due to their condition of motor, emotional, cognitive (mental retardation, down syndrome), sensory (deafness, blindness, deaf blindness, low vision), autism, attention deficit, hyperactivity, exceptional capacities or talents. (MEN, 2006a, p.4)

However, Pérez et al. (2020) have criticised the Government legislation, noting that the use of terminology has been inconsistent. For example, the terms SEN and disability were subsequently replaced with the single term ‘person with disabilities’ in the landmark legislation that ratified the UNCRPD, Decree 366 (MEN, 2009). Despite this, four years later the term was again used in Law 1618 of 2013 (Colombian Congress, 2013). This anomaly was subsequently amended in the latest Decree 1421 (2017), in which there was a return to ‘person with disabilities’. Similarly, there is an explicit reference to SEN no longer being used on UNESCO’s Profiles Enhancing Education Review website page on Colombia (UNESCO, 2020a). Despite this recent clarity, Pérez et al. (2020) note that the mixed messages have led to different terms being used interchangeably in community parlance.

### **2.5. Identification of children with disabilities**

The most recent census conducted by the Census of the National Statistics Department estimated that 7.06% of the Colombian population have a disability, which includes 6.67% of the male and 7.45% of the female population (DANE, 2018). Using the same measures, the data suggests that 3% of all children (aged 0-18 years) have a disability, which includes 3.5% of children between the compulsory school ages of 5 and 15 years. There are two national sources of information from which the number

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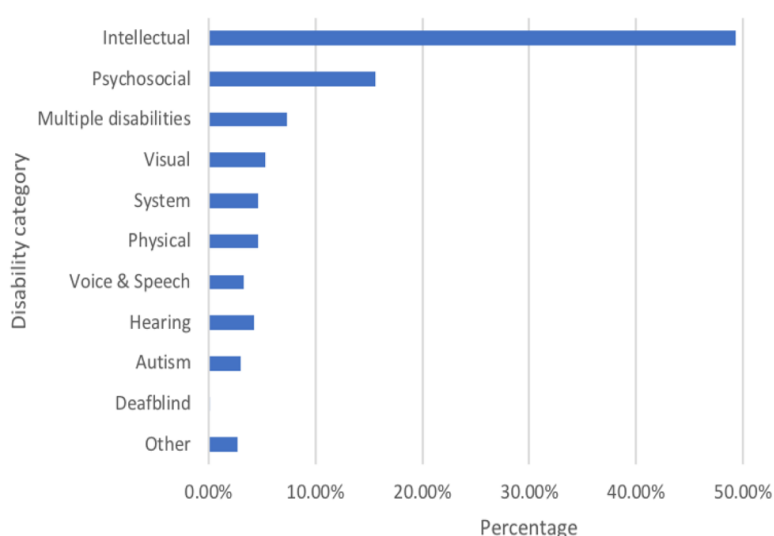
<sup>3</sup> Necesidades Educativas Especiales (NEE)

of children with disabilities can be ascertained<sup>4</sup>. The first is a general population household census, while the second, the school-based Integrated Matriculation System (SIMAT<sup>5</sup>), is a system for managing the enrolment of students in preschool, basic and secondary education. While acknowledging the difficulties in measuring disability prevalence in Colombia, the SIMAT data suggests that the matriculation of children with disabilities has risen year on year since 2010, when there were 107, 358 children to 194,901 in 2019 - a rise of 55%. However, the SIMAT figures identify that only 1.92% of children as having a disability, which is less than the 3.5% that the census suggests are of school age. The reasons for this disparity are likely to include the consideration that many children with disabilities are out of school (discussed in the next section, 2.6). In addition, a closer examination of the SIMAT and Census forms suggested to me that an additional factor could be that numbers are being underreported overall, as a result of the language used on the data capture forms (see Appendix A for further discussion).

Despite the complexities of capturing data, both methods do provide an insight into the nature of children's needs, albeit in differing ways. The SIMAT data asks schools to choose one category that best describes the child, whereas the latest census focused upon functional difficulties, meaning that children may feature in multiple categories. Using the 2019 SIMAT data, Figure 2.3 below illustrates that the largest category is that of intellectual disability: just under half of children (49.43%) have been assigned to that group. Psychosocial difficulties constitute 15.57%, while sensory difficulties (vision, hearing) are much less (5.29% and 4.2%).

**Figure 2.3**

*Category of disability of children attending school (aged 5-18 years) based upon SIMAT data (2019)*



*Note:* Researcher's calculation based upon Government SIMAT data, 2019

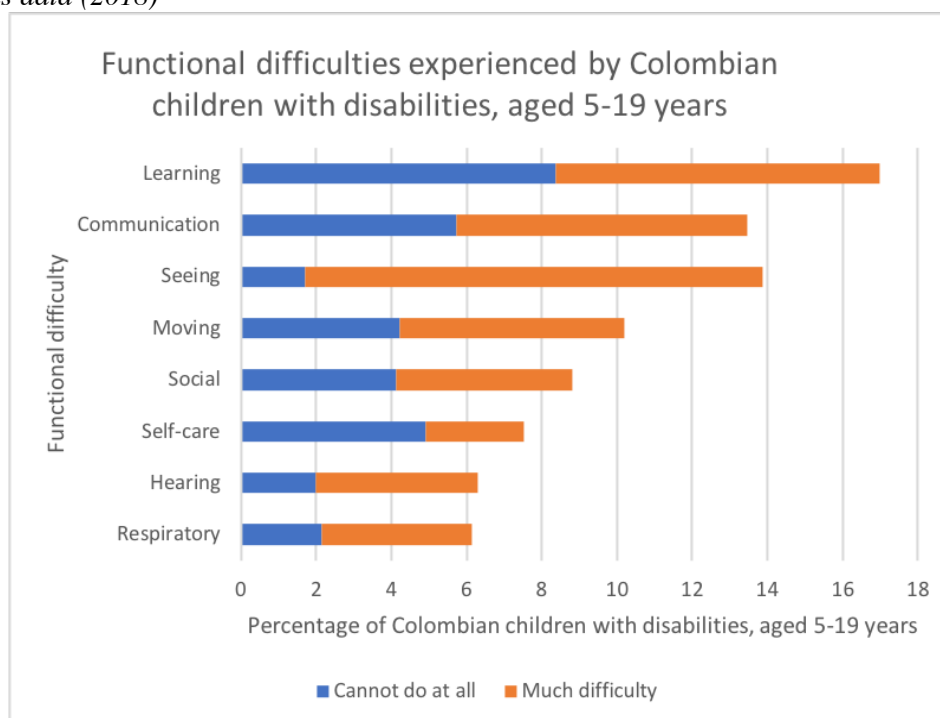
<sup>4</sup> A third source used to measure disability rates in Colombia is the Registry for the Location and Characterization of Persons with Disabilities (RLCPD), currently led by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MSPS). However, I was unable to source child-based data from this.

<sup>5</sup> El Sistema Integrado de Matrícula

In contrast, the census form draws upon the Washington Group questions, which allow parents to identify multiple difficulties that their child may be facing, graded upon a scale of difficulty (see Gómez-Londoño, 2018). Illustrated in Figure 2.4 below, the census responses suggest, similar to that of SIMAT data, that learning was the main difficulty that children identified with disabilities experienced. However, the percentage is much less than in the SIMAT data (17% in household data cf. SIMAT 49.43%). With the capacity to provide a more nuanced picture of the functional difficulties children experience, Figure 2.4 below illustrates that in addition to learning, communication and seeing are the main difficulties that affect children throughout Colombia.

**Figure 2.4.**

*Functional difficulties experienced by Colombian children with disabilities, aged 5-19, based upon census data (2018)*



*Note:* Researcher's calculation based upon census data on disability, 2018

### **2.5.1 Intersections that affect experiences of rural children with disabilities**

For my research, I adopted the biopsychosocial definition of disability, which acknowledges the interaction between a child's condition and their personal and environmental factors. Whilst focusing on rural children, it was important to acknowledge intersectional factors that affect the identification and experiences of children with disabilities. Comparisons of Colombian children's PISA outcomes have consistently demonstrated that children living in a rural location have significantly lower scores than those of their urban counterparts (Ramos, Duque & Nieto, 2020; Gómez, Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2021). The Government has attempted to address the rural gaps through provision of a

series of World-Bank funded Rural Education Programmes<sup>6</sup>, which were begun in 1999 and introduced the provision of flexible models of education, of which a central element was the Escuela Nueva approach (MEN, 2012, 2015c). Most recently, the peace accord promised a commitment to comprehensive rural reform, part of which formed a Special Rural Education Plan<sup>7</sup> (MEN, 2017a). However, while gaps between rural children and their urban peers have reduced, inequalities remain (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019).

Researchers who have explored why rural children have poorer academic outcomes than their urban counterparts have identified a number of factors. These include, among others, a combination of rural poverty, rural school infrastructure, the effects of the conflict and the intersection of race (Ramos, Duque & Nieto, 2016; Gómez, Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2021). Despite a decline in rural poverty in the past decade, multidimensional poverty was still more than twice as high for rural Colombians in 2017, when compared to those in urban areas, and remains particularly acute in remote areas (Radinger et al., 2018). Poverty is described as both a cause and consequence of disability (Groce et al., 2011; Mitra, Posarac & Vick, 2013), and Pinilla-Roncancio (2018) discovered that the levels of multidimensional poverty and deprivation in Colombia were higher for people with disabilities and their families compared with other groups. In addition to higher levels of poverty, rural communities were the most affected by the 50 years of conflict, resulting in high levels of internal displacement (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015). The slow progress of the promised peace reforms has led to social unrest and community leaders promoting a peaceful transition are increasingly at risk of assassination by paramilitaries (KROC institute, 2020). Given that this risk has extended to teachers in the past (Novelli, 2010; Vega & Bajaj, 2016), MEN (2017d) acknowledges that children who have been affected by the conflict continue to have the widest gaps in learning when compared with their peers. Compounding these inequalities, rural children learn in schools that have fewer resources when compared to their urban counterparts (Duarte, Garguilo & Moreno, 2011). Consequently, rural poor boys and girls have much lower outcomes than their urban equivalents. Moreover, there is a growing gap between boys and girls, with the former being less likely than the latter to complete primary school (97.4% girls cf. 92.84% boys, (UNESCO-UIS, 2015), which reflects a wider trend in underachievement of boys throughout Latin America (see Murphy-Graham et al., 2021).

A further factor that intersects with rural location and socio-economic status is that of race. Afro-Colombians and indigenous people represent 11% and 3% of the population, respectively (DANE, 2018), with the majority in poor rural areas (Barrera, 2014). Structural racism has received little attention and the experiences of many communities in Latin America have been historically erased

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<sup>6</sup> The World Bank funded Proyecto de Educación Rural (*PER*) ran from 1999-2008 and was followed by *PER II* (2008-2015). See Carranza (2019) for detailed overview.

<sup>7</sup> *Plan Especial de Educación Rural (PEER)*

through the nation-building concept of ‘mestizaje’<sup>8</sup> (*mixture*) (Wade, 2005; Moreno-Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016). However, within this concept there exists a ‘graduated scale of colour and prestige’ (Nascimento, 2007, p.17), where people with lighter skin are more likely to be wealthy and receive more education. Similarly, in Colombia, Wade (2005, 2017) noted that mestizaje in Colombia remains shaped by a clear racial hierarchy that marginalises indigenous and Afro-Colombians. Despite children with disabilities being identified by the SIMAT and Census systems, there is no data available on the outcomes of children with disabilities (MEN, 2017c), and neither is there analysis of how this intersects with other factors. Acknowledged as a gap in the data by DANE (2020), future censuses intend to adopt an intersectional approach to data analysis, which will include gender, disability, location, race and socio-economic status. The need for this, coupled with the research presented in this section, emphasises the importance of gaining rigorous, contextual data on children with disabilities that acknowledges the interaction of their condition with the context in which they live and are being educated. Having examined how disability is understood and how children are identified, the next sub-section examines where children are being educated.

## **2.6. Where are Colombian children with disabilities being educated?**

While the SIMAT data provides some insight into the number of children with disabilities being educated in state schools, data on the number of state-funded or private special schools, or how many children are attending them, does not appear to be available. This is consistent with the wider literature across Latin America, in which it is acknowledged that not only are there few statistics on children with disabilities in school systems in Colombia (Blasco and Moreno, 2020), but also, that it is not known how many special schools exist in the region (RREI 2018, 2019; FIADOWN 2019; Marchesi, 2019). While public special schools exist in Colombia, Piñeros (2010) noted that many ETCs have stopped funding public special schools and instead, contract private institutions to educate children. Orjuela (2015) reported that the institutions chosen by the ETCs are based upon cost, and there is very little monitoring of the quality of provision. Furthermore, the Government do not hold a register of all private entities that provide education (Correa & Castro, 2016), and while private mainstream schools are required to register children using SIMAT, private institutions offering special education are not. Consequently, MEN (2015b) estimate that 20% of children with disabilities receive private education, but they do not specify whether this is private mainstream, special or both.

A further group that remains invisible within the Colombian system are those children who are out of school. The latest data suggests that 4% of the richest children and 7% of the poorest children are out of school (UNESCO-UIS, 2018). While there are no concrete figures regarding which of these are children with disabilities, Correa & Castro (2016) estimated that around 125,000 children are excluded from school. However, a further question is whether these children have never

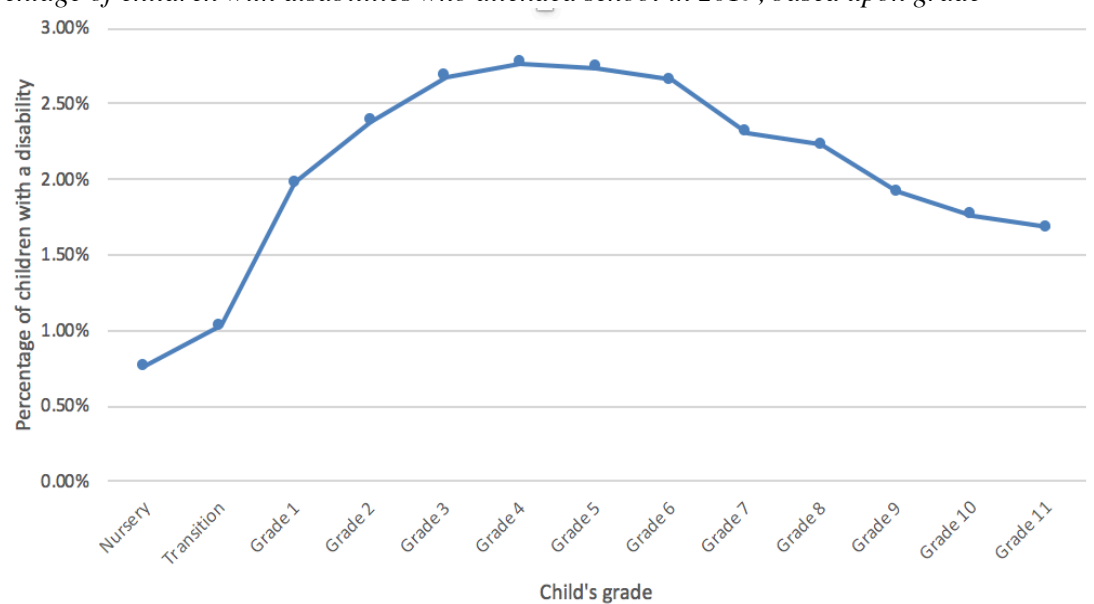
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<sup>8</sup> Pron. Mestee-ZA-hey

attended school or dropped out. A feature of the Colombian school system that may exacerbate out-of-school figures is that of grade repetition. Despite numerous changes in the legislation to address historically high levels of grade repetition<sup>9</sup> and subsequent drop out, repeating the year has a “favourable reputation” in Colombia (OECD, 2016, p. 185) based upon a cultural view that it brings accountability (e.g. see Correa et al., 2018). The latest figures suggest that approximately 16% of primary children and 27% of secondary children in Colombian schools are two years or more over the age that would be expected for their grade (Plan International & DANE, 2020). A combination of repetition and becoming overage for one’s grade has the potential to affect attainment and increase the risk of dropping out (Garcia-Villegas et al., 2013; Barrera, 2014). This is a particular concern for children with disabilities, according to the 2019 SIMAT figures: Figure 2.5 below illustrates that the proportion of children with disabilities reduces from a peak of 2.73% in the last grade of primary school (Grade 5). It then reduces year on year during secondary grades to only 1.68% by the final grade 11.

**Figure 2.5**

*Percentage of children with disabilities who attended school in 2019, based upon grade*



*Note:* Researcher’s calculation based upon SIMAT data 2019

Having summarised the legislation and data regarding the identification of children, the final section examines the state systems aimed at supporting teachers in educating children with disabilities.

<sup>9</sup> Decree 230 (MEN, 2002) established a maximum failure rate of 5% per school, for those who scored ‘insufficiently’ in three or more subjects and/or had an attendance rate less than 25%. Opposition from parents and teachers to the change led the Government to amend the law (Decree 1290, 2009) again allowing a child to repeat any grade based on performance across subjects, and teacher views on whether they had made sufficient progress.



### **Section 3: Teacher training and support**

An integral part of the implementation of inclusive education in Colombia has been the practice of teachers. This section describes the initial training processes, with it being argued that these have not prepared teachers for addressing the needs of diverse classrooms.

#### **2.7 Initial Teacher Training**

There are three main routes to become a teacher in Colombia:

- Completion of a complementary programme in education and pedagogy (Programa de Formación Complementaria) at a higher teaching school (*Escuela Normal Superior*);
- Completion of a first professional degree in education (*Licenciatura*) at a university;
- Side entry through completion of a postgraduate qualification or a programme in pedagogy.

Learning to teach through attending a higher teacher school (*Escuela Normal Superior*) was historically the main route to becoming a teacher. Referred to as ‘normales’, the teacher schools offer two years of post-secondary, non-tertiary teacher education. Typically located in smaller municipalities with a population of less than 100,000 (Garcia et al., 2013), students from normales can progress directly to the first semester of their post-secondary programme after completing an upper secondary education with a focus on pedagogy (*bachillerato pedagógico*). In addition to normales, the most common way of obtaining initial teacher education in Colombia is studying for a first professional degree at a university’s education faculty (Radinger et al., 2018). These are typically located in urban centres and large cities (Garcia et al., 2013) and allow graduates to teach at all levels of pre-school and school education depending on the emphasis of the degree programme. However, despite Government efforts to raise the status of teaching, professional degrees in education at the university level are among those with the lowest numbers of applicants, attracting students who are less likely to have performed well in the school leaving examinations (García et al., 2013; Barón et al., 2014).

##### **2.7.1. Teacher training on diversity and disability**

The quality of general initial teacher training offered by faculties of education is considered to vary considerably between institutions (Radinger et al., 2018) and a common concern raised by trained teachers is that there is a focus upon theory, with little opportunity for practice (Kamenopoulou, 2018). A key area in which initial teacher training packages are lacking is that of preparing teachers for working with the diverse populations and teaching contexts (Orjuela, 2015; Sánchez, 2018). One in three teachers teach in rural settings (Sánchez, 2018) and the Ministry for Education estimated that

around 39,000 teachers worked in a multi-grade setting in 2017 (MEN, 2017d). However, only a small group of programmes have a focus on specific issues, such as rural, disability or ethnic minority education (Manjarrés & Velez, 2020). With regard to disability, very few of the 443 general training programmes in education in Colombia comprehensively address inclusive education (Radinger et al., 2018). Furthermore, specialist courses on disability have been reduced since 2015<sup>10</sup> (Correa & Castro, 2016).

Support for teachers after they graduate is guided by Government-created national plans for teacher training, for from which secretaries of education are tasked with contextualising and developing a Territorial Training Plan for Teachers and School Leaders<sup>11</sup>. However, Radinger et al. (2018) noted that not all regions have the capacity and resources to develop effective strategies for their schools. Furthermore, resources for professional development are limited and few territorial entities can complement these resources with their own funds. This disadvantages poorer, rural regions, for whom delivering training to the most isolated teachers is complex.

## **2.8. Summary**

This section has described how Colombia has increased access to basic education for the vast majority of its children, including those with disabilities, but outcomes are poor and intersections impact greatly on a child's chances of succeeding or staying in school. Colombian policy has evolved and there is a commitment to include children with disabilities. However, training on diversity and disability is lacking, and most courses focus on theory, rather than offering teachers practice-based courses. Thus, Colombia faces an important challenge: How can the country make sure that all children benefit from their time in school? And how can it make sure that the school addresses the specific needs of children from very different backgrounds, so that wealth, gender, disability or location have less of an impact upon a child's learning outcomes? For its primary schools, Colombia seems to have found an answer in an innovative school model, Escuela Nueva, which is described in the next chapter.

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<sup>10</sup> There was a decrease of 31 programmes in special education approved by MEN, to 18 active programmes in 2015, of which, 11 are offered at public institutions of higher education and 7 by private institutions. Of the 18 total programmes, 14 are university programs, three are specialised, and one is a masters programme (Correa & Castro, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> *Plan Territorial de Formación para Docentes y Directivos docentes*

## Chapter 3: An introduction to Escuela Nueva

Escuela Nueva is a multigrade school reform, which was begun in the 1970s. It sought to transform the education of children living in rural areas of Colombia, through providing them with one that was tailored to their context. Developed by Colombian educators, its positive impact upon rural children's outcomes means it has been presented as a good example of 'what works' in rural, southern contexts by international organisations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank (Foundation Escuela Nueva (FEN), 2017). Now delivered through FEN, and part of the Colombian Government's national plan for flexible, rural education (MEN, 2017b), the model has subsequently been exported to 13 countries of the Global South<sup>12</sup>. This chapter provides an holistic overview of the model which includes a history of its development in Colombia, practical examples of the tools and a critical review of the literature that has explored its approach. With the aim of giving examples of learning materials that are grounded in the Colombian context, it includes photos of materials taken during the fieldwork and details given by FEN staff about the process by which tools are developed.

### 3.1. The evolution of Escuela Nueva

The Escuela Nueva approach built upon an existing 'Unitary school' model, which had been introduced into Colombia in 1962 as part of a Latin American pilot project by UNESCO (FEN, 2017). Targeting small single-teacher schools, the unitary school model was based upon children working autonomously through a series steps, delivered using learning cards. Oscar Mogollón, an experienced and creative teacher, became the director of the first unitary school and training centre for 150 school in Pamplona, Norte de Santander, before leading its expansion into three more regions (Mogollón & Solano, 2011). Drawing upon best practice from each region, the Colombian Ministry of Education sought to roll out the model across rural regions, and appointed Vicky Colbert to the role of National Director of the 'Escuela Unitaria'<sup>13</sup> Programme in 1976. A subsequent evaluation of the regions, conducted by Restrepo, Tamayo & Londoño (1976), provided both an overview of the systemic and practical barriers that affected rural schools, and the ways in which the Unitary school model addressed these. Barriers in rural schools included a transmission model of teaching that delivered a curriculum that bore little relevance to the lives of rural children. With few resources, isolated locations and poor teacher training, there was a high turnover of teachers, who would migrate back to urban centres. This resulted in poor outcomes and high levels of grade-repetition and drop-out (Colbert, 1987). Focusing on the suitability of the Unitary school model in this context, it identified practical and strategic difficulties, including the impractical, time-consuming task of copying and

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<sup>12</sup> These include Brazil, Chile (Escuelas de Calidad MECE Rural), Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, El Salvador (Aulas Alternativas); Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay (Escuela Mita Iru), Philippines, Vietnam and Uganda.

<sup>13</sup> Unitary School

implementing the learning cards, and the question of how to address the needs of children who dropped out at harvest time (Restrepo, Tamayo & Londoño, 1976). However, the evaluation also identified positive adaptations implemented by teachers and provinces. For example, to reduce teacher preparation time, one province had created and copied materials for teachers. In another, an American working for the Peace Corp - Beryl Levinger – created a team of teacher-trainers to introduce the Unitary model into the most isolated and poor areas of Colombia. Recognising the importance of peer support between isolated teachers, she supported them in co-creating additional materials and sharing their ideas on what worked in their context. With evidence to suggest these strategies resulted in better outcomes for children and teachers, this began a process of ensuring that the Escuela Nueva model addressed the contextual realities of Colombia.

Vicky Colbert subsequently created a steering group that included Beryl Levinger, Oscar Mogollón and a group of experienced, rural, Colombian teachers to find solutions for the issues raised in the evaluation. Building upon the principles of the ‘new school’ progressive education movement, which had been introduced into Colombia’s elite schools in 1915 by Agustín Nieto Caballero (see Narvaéz, 2006; FEN, 2017; Hernández-Silva, 2020), the team drew upon the associated theory and approaches of Montessori, Vygotsky, Decroly and Dewey<sup>14</sup> to develop the approach they named ‘Escuela Nueva’ (*New School*) (FEN, 2017). As explored further in Section 3.2 below, building upon the ideas of these pedagogues resulted in new operational strategies to deal with issues of grade and age diversity, different paces of learning and rural living conditions. Furthermore, with a focus on delivering the model at scale, each adaptation aimed to be technically, politically and financially feasible in the Colombian context (Colbert & Arboledo, 2016). The model was subsequently expanded to 8,000 schools during the 1980s, before being formally adopted by the Ministry of Education in 1989 as part of their strategy to improve rural access to education. By 1992, it had further expanded to 20,000 rural schools out of a possible 34,000. However, expansion to the remaining 14,000 rural schools was affected by a nationwide decentralisation policy in 1987 (see Becerra, 2012). This led to the restructuring of teacher training in municipalities and insufficient funding, subsequently resulting in a decrease in EN training support for teachers and hence, their capacity to deliver the model (Colbert, 2013, Suárez, Pilar & Parra, 2015). Aware that the success of the model required strong leadership and attention to detail in its implementation and quality control, Vicky Colbert established Fundación Escuela Nueva in 1987 (Colbert, 1987).

Working within a highly decentralised system, the Foundation describes itself as a social enterprise<sup>15</sup> that receives funding via differing partnerships and projects with regional municipalities and private-public partnerships (e.g. in 2019 these included Colombian companies Eco-Petrol and

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<sup>14</sup> While researchers have referred to EN drawing upon the works of Paulo Freire (e.g. see Azaola, 2016), personal interview and email correspondence with Director Vicky Colbert confirm they do not position their model with reference to his work.

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Vicky Colbert, Sep 2019.

Totto). It currently works with schools that educate 780,000 children in 73 departments and accounts for 8% of all Colombian students enrolled in primary education (OECD, 2016, p.136). Furthermore, it continues to support the work of the Ministry of Education and has remained one of the main flexible models of education<sup>16</sup> advocated in the national rural education plan (MEN, 2018). In the past five years, FEN have adapted the model for two further populations: urban schools and displaced and out of school populations<sup>17</sup>. To differentiate between the different versions they have named the original model 'Escuela Nueva Activa'. My research focuses upon the Escuela Nueva Activa version, for which I use the term Escuela Nueva (EN) based upon its frequent use in the academic and grey literature.

### **3.2. Components of the Escuela Nueva approach**

The Escuela Nueva approach encompasses a number of components that work together as a system. These include curriculum, school and community, teacher training and administration (FEN, 2017). This section provides details of how these components are operationalised and implemented in an EN classroom.

#### **3.2.1 Curriculum delivery**

A core way of delivering the curriculum content is through textbooks, known as learning guides. Colombia does not have a formal national curriculum (OECD, 2016) and the general education law of 1994 gives schools autonomy over their curriculum, providing schools with the flexibility to adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of the country's diverse populations and contexts. The Ministry for Education has, however, issued curriculum guidelines (MEN, 1998) and basic competence standards (MEN, 2006c) which aim to support the development of compulsory and core subjects. Accordingly, the Escuela Nueva guides cover a range of subject areas (see Table 3.1) and guide activities are created by subject specialists in conjunction with a team of teachers, who are required to have recent, or current, teaching experience in rural classrooms.

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<sup>16</sup> Twenty-three flexible models exist, including those that focus upon different ethnic groups and marginalised groups who are at risk of being out of education. Of these, the most widespread model is EN (OECD, 2016).

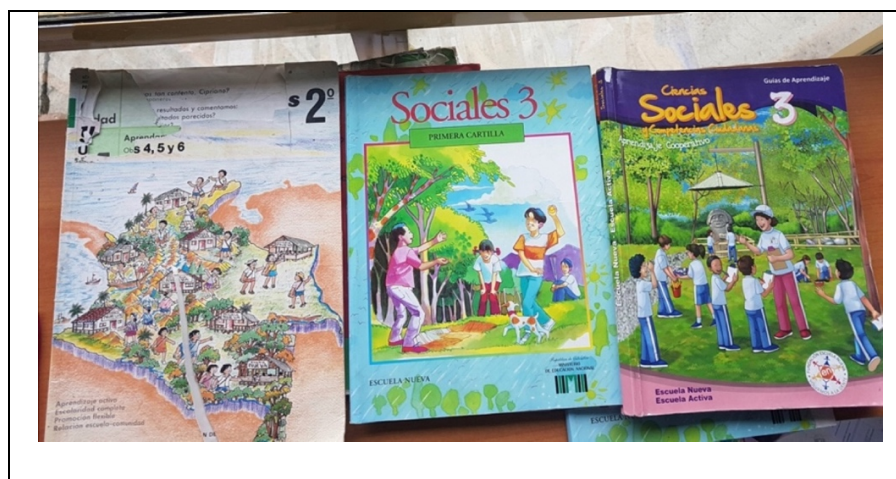
<sup>17</sup> Alternative versions include a) Escuela Nueva Activa Urbana, which is tailored to urban populations and b) Círculos de Aprendizaje (Escuela Nueva Learning Circles), which supports children who do not access formal schooling and provides learning with a focus upon socio-emotional skills.

**Table 3.1***A list of the learning guide topics for grades pre-school-7*

Grade	Subject
Pre-school	Play-based projects
Transition	Preparatory maths Preparatory language
1-7	Maths Spanish Natural sciences Social studies Ethics & human values Technology Entrepreneurship & finance

*Note:* Listed from FEN (2015b)

Illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, iterations in content and style have reflected the changes in Government policy, curriculum guidelines and individual requests from municipalities. For example, in 2015, MEN introduced the national ‘derechos básicas de aprendizaje’ [basic rights of learning] in maths and Spanish (MEN, 2015a), which identified the expected knowledge and performance level from children in grades 1-11. To reflect this, EN maths and spanish learning guides created since 2015 begin with a table which supports teachers to cross reference children’s progress. They have also increasingly attended to issues of diversity at the request of their funders. For example, the FEN curriculum manager described how one region with a high percentage of children with Afro-Colombian heritage requested, and funded, an extra chapter on Afro-Colombian history. Similarly, the most recent guides reflect the customs of different indigenous groups and include images of children using wheelchairs.

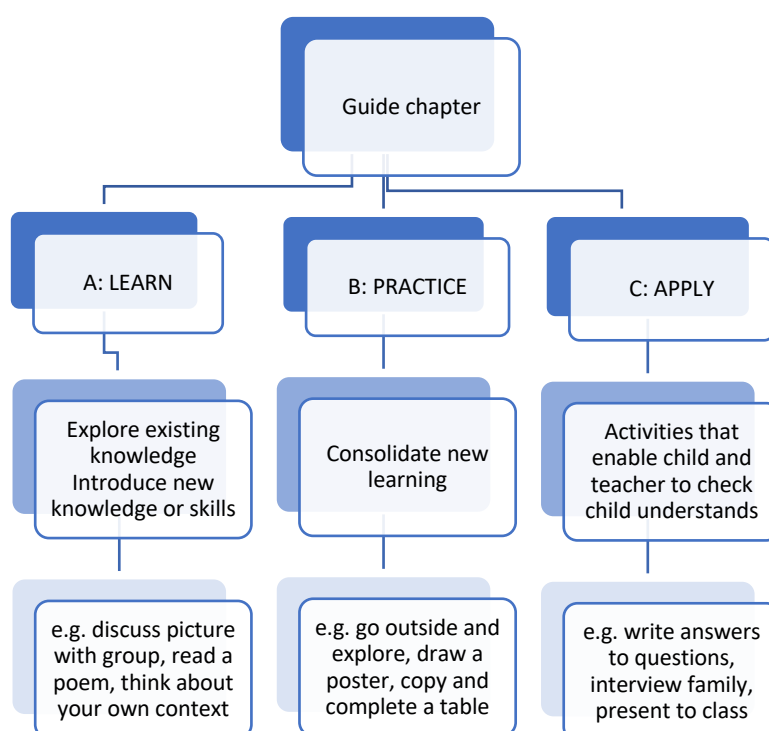
**Figure 3.1***Examples of evolving social studies guides: 1991, 2014, 2017 (left-right)**Note:* Guide examples sourced from FEN archives

### 3.2.2. Learning guide structure

Each guide aims to provide learning for a year and is split into four sections (called Units), which mirror the four semesters of the academic year. Each Unit has a series of chapters, through which children progress. As illustrated in Figure 3.2 below, new skills or ideas are delivered through a common structure of three subsections, based upon the ideas of learn, practise and apply. Having introduced a topic, practice activities consolidate the new learning, while activities that apply the learning in the school or home involve those that enable the child and teacher to check whether the former has understood. Figure 3.3 provides an illustration of an activity taken from a social studies guide.

**Figure 3.2**

*Structure of learning guide activities*

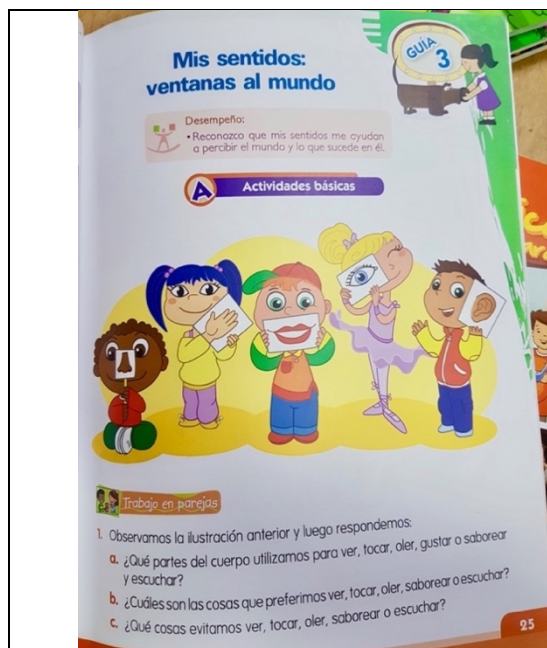


Positioned by FEN as a learner-centred education model (FEN, 2017), two related core principles within the approach are that children should learn at their own pace and there should be flexible promotion between grades. Aiming to address the needs of rural families, who may require children to help at home, children who stop attending for different periods return to school and begin from where they last left. Thus, the focus is upon children learning and understanding the content thoroughly before they are expected to move to the next topic.

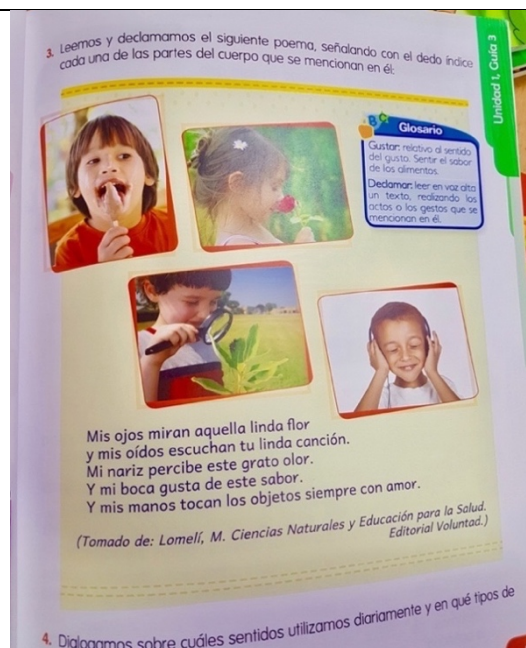


**Figure 3.3**

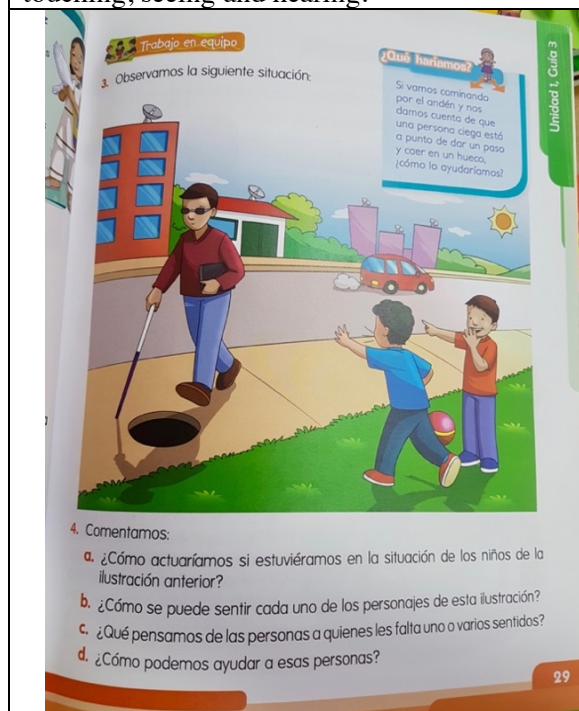
*Example of learning guide activities*



**Learn:** Children are asked to discuss in pairs their senses and what they like and dislike eating, touching, seeing and hearing.



**Learn:** Children are asked to read the poem out loud, as a group, and point to the parts of the body it refers to.



**Learn:** Children are asked to discuss how they would act if they saw other children teasing a person 'who lacks certain senses'.



**Practice:** Children are asked to work in a team and try and replicate not being able to see or hear, in pairs. They are then asked to try and communicate.

*Note:* Photos taken from the FEN (2015a) social studies learner guide



### 3.2.3. Classroom organisation.

While many multi-grade classes are formed of necessity in rural areas, due to the low numbers of children (Little, 2006; Taole, 2014), the EN model adopts this approach by choice (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016). Informed by Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theories of learning, learning is understood to be a social process, whereby working collaboratively with others can enable students to travel through what he termed the 'zone of proximal development' (p.12), which is the gap between what the student can achieve alone and what they can achieve through problem-solving in collaboration with more capable peers. Consequently, peer learning is a central feature of the model, and activities ask children to work in their grade-based teams. To support this form of working, the traditional Colombian classroom formation of rows is replaced by movable furniture, which is formed into a hexagon to accommodate pair or group-work. With the aim of promoting autonomy and curiosity in children, teachers create dedicated learning corners that display the resources for each topic, and are encouraged to include local materials and resources from the community. In addition to accessing resources autonomously, children are also asked to sign themselves in using the self-registration board. Furthermore, on adopting the Escuela Nueva model, each school is equipped with a small library of books to encourage reading.

**Figure 3.4**

*Examples of EN classroom organisation*



Fig. 3.4 cont.



Learning corners with accessible materials



Classroom furniture organisation

Note: Photos taken in research school classrooms

### 3.2.4. Participatory tools

Children's participation is a central feature of the model. Drawing upon the American philosopher and education thinker John Dewey (1916), who linked learner centred education with the development of democratic ideas and skills within learners, there is an annual student committee election. Children vote for senior roles (president, vice president) and contribute to democratic decision-making through various student committees (e.g. environment, good order, wellbeing). The model includes a strong focus upon values and learning to live together peacefully (*convivencia*). Supporting this, classrooms have interactive displays, including a values board, a suggestions box and a friendship mail board, where children can send each other positive messages or drawings

#### Figure 3.5

Photograph of friendship mail participatory tool



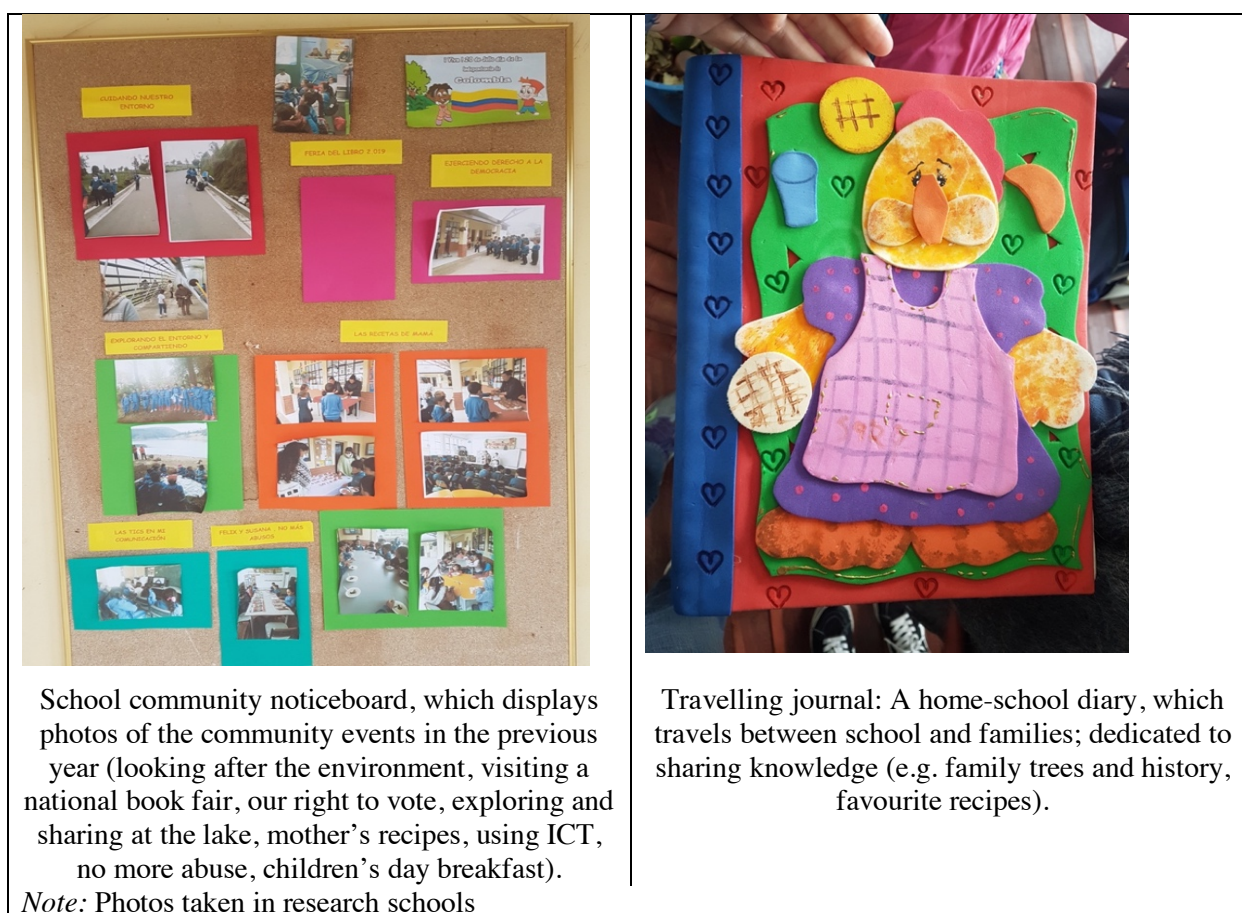
Note: Photo taken in research school classrooms

### 3.3. Community

Given the diversity of populations that exist in Colombia, another aspect of the EN system is to involve the local community. With purposeful attention to community relations and a strong appreciation for the local culture, parents and the wider community are actively involved in the school life, with local culture and knowledge being integrated into the curriculum. As illustrated in Figure 3.5, this includes children participating in events in the community, on behalf of the community (e.g. litter picking) as well as parents running events in schools. Furthermore, children have a whole-class home-school book called a ‘travelling journal’. In this, families share their stories and other aspects of culture, which have been chosen by the children as topics of interest. This enables parents who are unable to visit the school to have the opportunity to share their knowledge and context with the school and wider community.

**Figure 3.6**

*Examples of participatory tools that focus on links with the community*



### 3.4. Training and administration

In order to make the EN model politically and technically feasible in such a decentralised education system, FEN was aware of the need to engage and support the municipality and school leaders (Colbert & Arboledo, 2016). FEN (2017) identified three major phases for the implementation of the

Escuela Nueva programme. It begins with the awareness phase, in which meetings are held for policymakers to discuss the model, its purpose and success. They also have the opportunity to visit Escuela Nueva demonstration schools, which are schools that have been designated a local example of good practice by FEN. The second phase is the design and pilot phase (12-18 months), which includes workshops with planners, trainers, teachers of existing demonstration schools and teachers from the adopting schools. The third, is the implementation and gradual expansion phase, which includes a series of three in-service teacher trainer sessions, as described in the next section.

### **3.4.1. Teacher role and training**

A fundamental aspect of EN is that the role of a teacher is that of a guide and facilitator, rather than someone who is imparting pre-prepared knowledge to the children. However, this can present a challenge for teachers who have been trained using mainly theoretical models (Kamenopoulou, 2018). Aiming to address this issue, the in-service training involves active, participatory workshops, in which teachers work through their own learner guide in small teams. This gives them personal experience of that which they will subsequently deliver to children (see example in Figure 3.7 below). The training is divided into three courses of between 2.5 and 5 days conducted throughout the first school year. The first session is an induction that addresses the EN aims and methodology, the organisation of the building and classroom, developing the learning corners, establishing a student council, and basic methods of group work. The second workshop takes place two or three months later and focuses on using learning guides as well as managing a multigrade class through implementing flexible promotion. The final workshop is on teaching reading and writing and the use of the school library, as well as a final review. Training continues through follow-up problem-solving workshops called ‘microcentres’. Located in demonstration schools, teachers are free to exchange ideas, doubts, and questions with other teachers and for the first year, with a FEN advisor, in an informal, non-hierarchical setting. Furthermore, FEN provides an online forum through which teachers can share resources, raise questions and access materials.

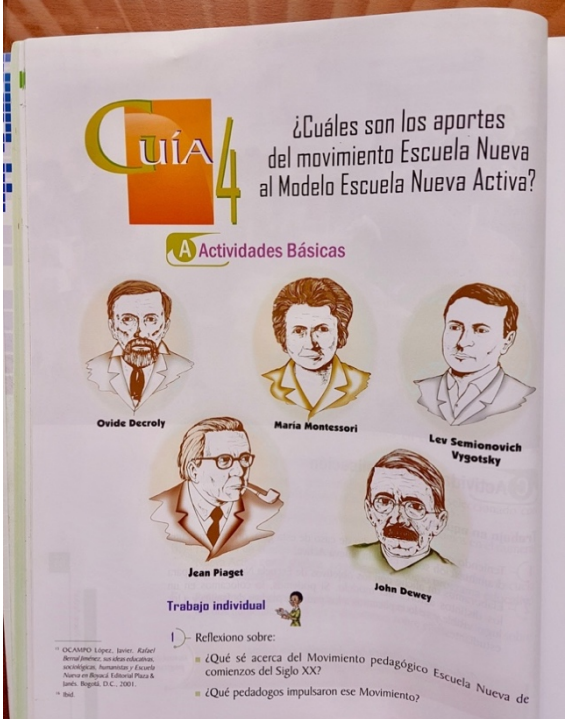


**Figure 3.7**

*An example of the teacher training learning guide that teachers work through during FEN training*

**Chapter 4: Who are the contributors of the EN movement to the Escuela Nueva active model?**

**A. Basic activities**



**Individual work**

1. I reflect upon:

- What do I know about the pedagogical movement of EN at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- Which pedagogues promoted this movement?

**Trabajo en pareja**

2) Comparto mis reflexiones con mi compañero.

3) Leemos y analizamos el siguiente texto:

El Movimiento Escuela Nueva tiene sus orígenes en el Siglo XIX, se desarrolló a lo largo del Siglo XX y continúa enriqueciéndose con nuevas experiencias, ideas y prácticas, en lo que va corrido del Siglo XXI. El lenguaje que vamos a utilizar no corresponde con exactitud, al de los escritos originales de los iniciadores de este Movimiento. En consecuencia, al referirnos a algunas de sus ideas centrales, vamos a utilizar un lenguaje educativo contemporáneo, que de ninguna manera lesiona el significado de las ideas originalmente expresadas.

**Practice activities: work in a pair**

2) Share my reflections with my partner

3) Together, read and analyse this text

“estudiante”, que ofrece una formación que reconoce las características individuales de éste y utiliza nuevos métodos como el aprendizaje activo<sup>15</sup>.

**Trabajo en equipo**

4) Discutimos sobre cuáles fueron los principales aportes del Movimiento Escuela Nueva a la educación y cuáles de ellos los retomó el Modelo Escuela Nueva Activa de Colombia.

Escribimos nuestras conclusiones en nuestros cuadernos.

5) Leemos con atención el siguiente estudio de caso:

Andrea, una educadora nueva

Andrea ya había iniciado su trabajo...

**Work in a team**

4) Discuss who were the main contributors to the EN movement and write our conclusions in our notebooks

5) Read the following case study carefully (story of Andrea, a new teacher...)

*Note: FEN (2013)*

### 3.5. Research on Colombian Escuela Nueva outcomes

Research on the learning outcomes and measures of self-esteem of children in EN schools have consistently demonstrated that EN children outperform children who attend non-EN schools (Rojas & Castillo, 1988; Psacharopoulos, Rojas & Velez, 1993; McEwan, 1998; Hincapié, 2015; Hammler, 2017). Furthermore, research focusing on peaceful interaction concluded that EN methods had a significant, positive impact on the peaceful social interaction of children, and an influence of the school on parent participation in the local community (Forero et al., 2006). Drawing upon

quantitative data, in 1987, the earliest research involved using a dataset collected from 168 EN and 60 traditional schools, to compare student achievement in maths, Spanish, civic behaviour, self-esteem, and creativity. Using this dataset, Rojas & Castillo (1988) concluded that EN schools had significantly higher test scores than traditional ones in civic behaviour, social self-concept, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade maths as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade language. These results were subsequently replicated by Psacharopoulos, Rojas & Velez (1993), who also controlled for child and family characteristics as well as school inputs. However, McEwan (2008) warned that these results should not be accepted uncritically. He argued that research that used non-EN schools as a comparison assumes that the two are pedagogically distinct. Instead, qualitative and quantitative observation data has suggested that many teachers' practices in EN schools resemble those of traditional rural schools, whilst some 'traditional' teachers in non-EN schools independently adopt similar multigrade practices (Benveniste & McEwan 2000; Forero et al., 2006).

Addressing this, a mixed methods PhD by Hammler (2017) compared the learning outcomes on children from EN- and non-EN schools across Colombia, using the outcomes of the national test<sup>18</sup> results of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade children from 2013. Having found that EN children outperformed their non-EN peers, she focused upon one region to examine the levels of implementation using observation and interviews. Countering the findings of McEwan (2008), she discovered that EN schools implemented a larger share of the model's elements than conventional ones. However, within the EN schools there was great variation in the level of implementation, with scores on an implementation scale of 100 ranging from just 22.5 to 83.8. Despite this, while controlling for socioeconomic status (SES), rural/urban location and level of model implementation, she found a positive effect in the EN schools that was comparable to the difference of one socioeconomic level. Furthermore, the model appeared to decrease the achievement gaps between gender in those schools.

A further criticism first raised by McEwan (2008) was that of selection bias. Questioning the external validity of the model, he suggested that the schools that first adopted the model were enthusiastic volunteers, which may positively skew the outcomes for children. Similarly, more recent research by Hincapié (2015) argued that research has typically been conducted in regions where the model is most established. Addressing both of these concerns, Hincapié (Ibid.) controlled not only for the location and type of school, but also, the number of years the school had implemented the model. Her results also suggested that children in rural areas outperformed their peers in non-EN schools at Grade 5, but that there was less of an impact in urban areas. This evidence would suggest that McEwan's concern regarding initial set-up bias is unfounded and that the model continues to have a positive impact on the learning of primary-aged, rural children, regardless of whether they are in a region in which the model is well established or where it is a recent innovation.

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<sup>18</sup> Pruebas Saber in 2013

### **3.6. Escuela Nueva: home grown model or a North-South-South export?**

Described as ‘travelling idea and policy’ by Schweisfurth (2013, p. 1), learner centred education models (LCE), such as Escuela Nueva, have been promoted as a pedagogical ideal for the reform of teaching by international and multilateral aid organisations, including the OECD, the World Bank and UNICEF (Cerqua et al., 2014). Most visibly, this approach to learning was promoted as part of the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990, Article 4), which stated that ‘active and participatory [instructional] approaches are particularly valuable in assuring learning acquisition and allowing learners to reach their fullest potential’. Citing Escuela Nueva as a successful example of South-South policy transfer (OECD, 2016), the model has been adopted by 13 countries in the Global South. Literature that has evaluated the impact within the first few years of roll out suggest that the model was successfully adopted in Nicaragua and Guatemala (Baesa, Chesterfield & Ramos, 2002; Kline et al., 2002) and children’s learning outcomes in Vietnam have been positive (Parandakar et al., 2018). In contrast, there are also examples that have been less positive, such as the experience of Uganda, where a successful pilot was not successful when rolled out at scale, in part because the materials and teacher support systems were not replicated over time (Mulkeen & Higgins, 2009). Despite LCE models being promoted as a ‘panacea’ (Sriprakash, 2010, p. 297) for addressing educational progress in countries of the Global South, critical theorists have problematised the enthusiasm with which donor agencies promote these models and its application in countries of the Global South (Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008; Vavrus, 2009). Questioning its effectiveness, Schweisfurth’s (2011) review of 72 case studies of application of learner centred education in Southern contexts, argued that ‘...the history of the implementation of LCE in different contexts is riddled with stories of failures grand and small’ (p.425). Furthermore, increasingly nuanced findings from research in countries of the Global North suggest that progress using LCE approaches is uneven depending upon socio-economic status, gender and the subject being taught (Spiro & De Schryver, 2017; Power et al., 2019). Critical theorists who draw upon World Systems theory argue that the global convergence on the idea of LCE represents not an expansion of what works, but ‘power rather than progress’ (Altinyelken, 2012, p.204). They argue that powerful bilateral organisations (e.g. USAID) and international organisations (World Bank and UNICEF) have had a central role in the global uptake of LCE models (Verger, Altinyelken & Novelli, 2018). Furthermore, they contend that it is often justified owing to its capacity to promote democratic behaviours and prepare children for future employment, thus leading Tabulawa (2003, p.70) to assert that it represents a process of what he describes as ‘westernization’; that is, promoting ideas which derive from Northern contexts, but doing so in ways that are ‘disguised as quality and effective teaching’.

Applying this theory to the adoption of Escuela Nueva in Vietnam, Le (2018a, 2018b, 2020) critiqued the role of agencies such as UNICEF, USAID and the World Bank, which have been key to its promotion and rollout. He argued that as a low-cost, LCE-based educational intervention at the

primary level, the model aligns with Northern values and with the World Bank's main objectives of reducing costs in countries of the South. Consequently, he challenged the idea of EN as Southern model, arguing that it could 'more accurately (be) described as a North-South- South policy transfer rather than an equal cooperation and partnership between developing countries' (Le, 2018a, p.15).

An exploration of the literature that has explored the roll-out of the model to other countries reveals that it has, indeed, been supported by international agencies (e.g. USAID, World Bank) (e.g. see Mulkeen & Higgins, 2009). Moreover, as a social enterprise that receives funding from Colombian municipalities as well as national and international organisations, Fundación Escuela Nueva does, of course, have an interest in retaining its positive reputation and highlighting how the model can retain relevance with changing educational trends. However, Colbert & Arboledo's (2016) article outlines how the model's success has relied upon much more than funding and affirmation from international agencies. Instead, Colbert & Arboledo (Ibid.) describe four lessons that have been key to its successful implementation in the Colombian context<sup>19</sup>. These include positioning teachers as key actors of change – a strategy that was evident from the inception of the model, at which time teachers constituted part of the original national development team. Furthermore, priority has been given to making the model 'easily replicable in the existing conditions' (p. 408) and it has evolved in response to the needs of different regions. Hence, while I agree the model is an LCE model which reflects the interests of global agencies, Le's (2018a, 2018b, 2020) characterisation of EN overlooks the active, ongoing role that Colombians themselves have played in its success, whilst also ignoring the research that emphasises the role of local actors and context. Instead, it can be considered as an example where local, contextual knowledge has contributed to finding solutions to complex problems with which many of those in Southern contexts are grappling.

### **3.7. Disability and Escuela Nueva: an unexplored topic**

Vicky Colbert's motivation for developing the EN model began with a determination to address the inequality of access to education for rural Colombian children (FEN, 2017). Acknowledging the intersections of poverty and location, the model design introduced the idea of learning at one's own pace to accommodate children who need to miss schooling or enter late, due to the demands of the agricultural calendar (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016). Furthermore, it provided learning materials aimed at building upon children's existing knowledge and providing activities that valued rural settings.

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<sup>19</sup> 1) Teachers and students need to be the key actors of the change; (2) the proposed improvements have to be easily replicable within existing conditions; (3) the attitudinal change of teachers is positively affected as a result of demonstrating that the model was feasible, a good fit for its beneficiaries and that they could do it; and (4) a systemic approach is necessary to impact simultaneously on the critical factors of success (Colbert & Arboledo, 2016, p. 408)



Consequently, with regards to the diversity of learners within the EN research, there has been consideration of SES, gender and location. However, while the existing EN-focused research has highlighted children's positive learning outcomes, there are notable gaps in the literature. The first is that there are few accounts of children and teachers experiences of learning in EN classrooms (Suárez, Pilar & Parra, 2015). Where the views of both have been sought (Benveniste and McEwan 2000; Forero et al., 2006), in most cases large-scale survey methods have been utilised, which limits the nuance one can capture of the classroom experience. Two pieces of research that involved the utilisation of qualitative methods, were that of Hammler (2017), who used semi-structured interviews with a smaller sample of teachers, and Suárez, Pilar & Moreno (2015), who interviewed three teachers. However, both focused their questions on adherence to the implementation of the model, thus leaving a gap in terms of capturing the perspectives of teachers or children and thereby providing rich accounts of pedagogical processes and the classroom experience. Most pertinent to this study, is that there has been no prior research exploring disability in terms of the way in which the needs of children with disabilities are addressed in the classroom. Given the model's attention to meeting the diversity of needs, ages and stages of learning, and its focus upon building peer relationships and community, I am interested in contributing to the wider EN literature by exploring how EN addresses the needs of rural children with disabilities.

### **3.8. Summary**

In this chapter, the development and structure of the Escuela Nueva approach and the ways in which it has been adapted for the Colombian context have been described. Furthermore, it has been noted that children who access EN schools have consistently outperformed their peers in non-EN schools. Having identified a gap in the research on disability and Escuela Nueva, the next chapter provides a context for my study by critically reviewing the Latin American literature on disability and inclusive education.

## **Chapter 4: A review of the Latin American literature on disability and inclusive education**

Central to my research is the importance of context for the development of inclusive education. This literature review draws primarily upon the Spanish- and Portuguese-language literature that has researched disability and inclusive education in Latin America<sup>20</sup>. Summarising the main debates in the literature, Section 1 explores how inclusive education and disability are conceptualised, noting that ideas of inclusive education are dominated by models which emanate from Northern contexts such as the UK and Spain. Section 2 examines how teachers address the needs of children with disabilities in schools, and the lack of research in rural contexts. Section 3 considers teacher training and support. Finally, Section 4 highlights the silences in the literature, while also arguing that Latin American research is itself silenced in the field of inclusive education.

### **Section 1: Conceptualisation of models of inclusive education and disability**

This section outlines the differing ways in which inclusive education and disability are understood in Latin America, whilst also describing the ways in which Northern theories dominate the framing for both.

#### **4.1. Conceptualisations of inclusive education**

When describing the historical debates on disability and inclusive education in Latin America, the majority of the research frames their evolution based upon the influence of global agreements. Describing education for children with disabilities as a human right, scholars build upon the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All Conference (UNESCO, 1990), which led to an increase in access to education for many children throughout Latin America (Radinger et al., 2018). The global introduction of the term ‘inclusive education’ began with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), which advocated that governments ‘adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise’ (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix). The World Education Forum in Dakar (UNESCO, 2000) broadened the definition of inclusion to include multiple marginalised groups before disability was again foregrounded within the education debates, with the

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<sup>20</sup>Search terms for majority Spanish/Portuguese language databases (SCIELO, Latindex & Redalyc): educación inclusiva (*inclusive education*) OR inclusion escolar (*school inclusion*) OR inclusion educativa (*educational inclusion*), discapacidad (*disability*) OR NEE (*SEN*), niños OR niñas (*children/boys or girls*), educación (*education*)

Search terms for majority English-language databases (ERIC, British Index, WoS, ORE): disability, education, inclusive education, Latin America, Colombia

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006). Subsequently, the World Education Forum's Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015a) underpinned the education targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), in which SDG 4 requires governments to develop inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including children with disabilities. These global agreements have profoundly impacted on the evolution of legislation and national policies of countries throughout Latin America (Murillo<sup>21</sup> & Duk, 2018; Iglesias & Martin, 2020), as evidenced by research, which has mapped the evolution their national legislation and policy with the influence of the agreements (e.g. in Brazil, De Souza et al., 2018; in Mexico, Cruz-Orozco, 2019; in Chile, Manghi et al., 2020). However, while there is general agreement on the principle of inclusive education as something to be pursued (Cedillo et al., 2013; Tamayo, Rebolledo & Saldaña, 2017), the literature presents a gap between the conceptualisation to which it aspires, and how this is subsequently enacted in policy and practice.

When defining inclusive education, the vast majority of articles draw upon the language and ideas described by Mel Ainscow – a Northern scholar based in the UK – and Gerard Echeita – a Spanish academic who has co-authored Spanish-language papers with Ainscow (Echeita et al., 2004; Echeita & Ainscow, 2011). Ainscow's introduction to the Spanish-speaking literature followed the Spanish translation of Booth & Ainscow's (2002) training package 'Index for Inclusion' by UNESCO. Subsequently promoted throughout Latin America by UNESCO, the Index features frequently in the academic literature as both a guide and research tool (e.g. see Marulanda et al., 2013; Velasquez et al., 2016; Soto, 2020; Castillo & Carvajal, 2020). It has also informed national policies of various Latin American countries, including Colombia, where it was adopted as part of the Ministry for Education's policy (MEN, 2006b). Subsequent articles written in, or translated into, Spanish (e.g. Ainscow, 2001; Ainscow 2005; Echeita & Ainscow, 2011) broadly define inclusive education as the transformation of a school system, in which mainstream schools transform their culture, policies and practices to respond to a diversity of needs.

Having framed inclusive education using the models of Ainscow and Echeita, the literature typically adopts a deficit-lens on the progress and performance of Latin American systems and teaching practice; reporting how it has been unable to achieve the required transformation. Criticising their respective governments for following global agreements without regard for local conditions, researchers in different countries have outlined the ways in which this has led to fragmented practice that is not coherent across their national systems (in Brazil, Ibáñez, 2019; in Mexico, Dainez & Naranjo, 2015; in Chile, Manghi et al., 2020). A further gap identified between the global framing of inclusive education and policy and practice in Latin America is to whom it refers. The World Education Forum in Dakar (UNESCO, 2000) broadened the definition of inclusion to include multiple

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<sup>21</sup> Latin American authors typically have two surnames – the first which is derived from their father and the second from their mother. Reflecting the bibliographic record in the literature, I have used the first surname for the majority of Latin American authors, other than those from Chile and Brazil who use the second.

marginalised groups. However, researchers acknowledge that inclusive education remains commonly associated with disability throughout Latin America (Infante, 2010; Marchesi, Blanco & Hernandez, 2014; Bidegain & Antola, 2017). And consequently, Cedillo et al. (2013, p.1) question the capacity of countries in Latin America to achieve Ainscow's 'radical position' on inclusive education. They, instead, argue for a more 'moderate' approach to inclusion in Southern contexts, which 'admits the coexistence of integration and inclusion', where the latter is seen as a process of change that supports a quality education for children, whilst also allowing for individual support, both in and out of the classroom.

However, having adopted this deficit lens, there is a notable silence from Latin American authors in response to the dominance of Ainscow and Echeita's work in the literature and the lack of leading Latin American voices. Neither is there literature which problematises the application of inclusive education models deriving from discourse, theoretical understanding and progress in countries such as the UK and Spain. Instead, Herrera et al. (2018) described how Latin America 'joined the inclusive movement with a certain lag' (p. 123), while Cedillo et al. (2013) position their solution as adopting a more 'moderate' model, but in doing so, retain the 'radical' inclusion stance as the goal and standard to which Latin America should aspire. European and South Asian critical scholars who have researched in Latin America and other contexts of the South have challenged the application of models developed in Northern contexts to countries of the South based upon an assumption of 'universality of applicability' (Kalyanpur, 2020, p. 296). Where universalisms are posited, they are typically driven by Eurocentric knowledge production and realities found in Northern contexts, which, as Grech (2011, p.88) argues, typically result in exported models of education 'from the West to the rest'. Furthermore, this exportation makes the assumption that models can seamlessly be transported to countries in the South, while ignoring the local context, culture, economy, history, community and relationships of power in these contexts (Ibáñez, 2019; Kamenopoulou, 2020). However, Kalyanpur (2020) argues that the perception that countries in the Global South are somehow failing, when compared with nations in the North, is mistaken for a number of reasons. She contends that a "temporal gap" occurs between the development of a concept in the North and its subsequent emergence in the South, by which time the development may have fallen out of favour (Kalyanpur, 2020, p. 295). A Colombian example of this is described by Manjarrés & Velez (2020), who point out that the country spent 10 years establishing special schools, only for there to be a shift towards specialised classrooms by the time they were established. Kalyanpur (2020, p. 297) argues that this temporal gap overlooks the fact that the Global South is pressured into meeting education goals within much shorter timescales than those in the North, while already being disadvantaged by 'colonial resource-depletion'. Countering this dynamic, there is a body of scholars working in the field of inclusive education, who have challenged the deficit-lens that permeates much of the discourse about the South, constructing it as "backward" (Rao, 2015, p. 19), in

which there is a focus upon what is not happening, while often ignoring the enabling factors that already exist in the country (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Arguing for an understanding of inclusive education that is more relevant for Southern contexts, Kamenopoulou (2020) advocates culturally sensitive research, which challenges the dominance of Northern models of inclusive education. Drawing upon this critique, my research is focused on a model that has positive outcomes for children, was developed by local and national leaders in education and was specifically designed to meet the local conditions.

#### **4.2. Conceptualisations of disability**

When conceptualising disability, Latin American research refers to the global shift in national policies from models that characterise it as an individual deficit to the adoption of the biopsychosocial model (WHO, 2001). Despite this, the research suggests that the medical model continues to be highly influential in Latin America. For example, a review of the earlier literature on disability in Colombia between 2005-2012 by Cruz-Velandia et al. (2017) noted that the research was characterised by the medical model approach, which was attributed to the background disciplines of the authors, who were health professionals, such as occupational therapists or physiotherapists. However, findings from a variety of countries report that this model also dominates teachers' understanding of disability (in Chile, Muñoz, Cruz & Assaél, 2016; in Mexico, Naranjo, 2019; in Colombia, Gutiérrez & Martínez, 2020). Similarly, the legacy of educational systems that have historically evolved from special education means that a medical diagnosis is prevalent in most national systems. An example is the Chilean system, which requires children to be diagnosed with either 'permanent' (e.g. sensory, autism) or 'temporary' disabilities (e.g. areas of specific difficulty, such as reading, writing or maths) to receive extra support (Cedillo, Contreras & Abadie, 2015).

A consequence of conceptualising disability using the medical model, is that it ignores the ways in which intersectionalities of race, gender, class, poverty, and sexuality intersect with disability and the ways in which this can contribute to the social exclusion of children and their families (Gesser & Martins, 2019; Huiracocha et al., 2017a). As a broadly collectivist culture, Latin Americans place great emphasis on relying upon individuals working as a group to meet the needs of the whole family (Grech, 2011). Consequently, as Grech (2015, p.7) argues regarding rural families living in poverty in Guatemala, the disability of one family member extends beyond the individual, 'transforming these units into what are best described as 'disabled families'. Interviews with Mexican parents by Santana (2019) suggested that they felt having a child with a disability had a positive effect of uniting their family, with responsibilities being shared across all members. However, there is a larger body of research that reports how parents find looking after a child with a disability challenging, and that much of the caring falls upon mothers, which leaves them exhausted (in Colombia, Jaramillo, Moreno & Rodriguez, 2016; Pava, 2020). Furthermore, the intersection of poverty shapes parents' experiences and the support they can access. For example, Huiracocha et al.'s (2015, 2017b)

interviews with parents demonstrated that families in Ecuador were caught in a cycle of poverty in which they are impacted upon by poor nutrition, housing and sanitation as well as a lack of access to medical care. Exacerbating this cycle are the hidden extra costs that addressing disability involves. These include both direct costs, such as increased costs for transport and medical appointments, accompanied by indirect costs, such as parents needing to take time off work to support a child or attend appointments, or forgoing employment opportunities to care for a child or relative (Grech, 2019). Providing evidence for these assertions, Pinilla (2018) compared the results from the global multidimensional poverty index with census results of families in five Latin American countries (including Colombia), discovering that the levels of multidimensional poverty and deprivations were higher for people with disabilities and their families compared with other groups. However, despite the barriers that many parents face, the research consistently demonstrates that parents from a range of socio-economic and learning backgrounds emphasise the benefits of education for children with disabilities (Pava, 2020) and education is valued as something that offers the promise of a better life (in Paraguay, Carolan-Silva, 2011; in Nicaragua, Westgard and Alnasser, 2014; in Ecuador, Huiracocha et al., 2017b).

Challenging the idea that disability can be reduced to universal models, such as the ICF, there has been a recent increase in Latin American researchers advocating the decolonisation of disability studies across the continent (Díaz, 2012; Rojas Campos, 2015; Pino & Tiseyra, 2019; Yarza et al., 2020). They aim to challenge what is referred to as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ research (Pino & Tiseyra, 2019, p. 5), by drawing upon the idea of decoloniality. Developed by Latin American theorists, decolonial studies claim that power was first structured through colonialism and later by the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), in which Eurocentric thinking and action was considered the accepted canon from which to build knowledge and constructions of difference (Mignolo, 2009). Researchers in this field problematise what they hold to be Eurocentric notions of inclusive education and disability. For example, Carlos Skliar is an Argentinian philosopher, who questions the idea of inclusive education as a field, curriculum or process and instead, proposes a ‘pedagogy of difference’ (Skliar, 2005). In this, he defines inclusive education as the ethical responsibility of a teacher to recognise and support children to become wholly themselves and accepted for who they are, rather than schooled into ways that fit with wider society. However, his influence in the literature is limited to critical Brazilian research and that which focuses upon decoloniality (e.g. see Nunes, Saia & Tavares, 2015; Yarza, 2020). With regards to disability, UK-based researcher Groce (1999, p.3) argues that the models outlined above do not account for the fact that the concept is ‘fluid and interwoven into the local cultural belief system’. For example, Ijalba (2015) describes how Hispanic mothers of autistic children in the USA understand their child’s disability through both a biological and a cultural lens, leading to them believing their child’s disability is a biological difference, which was/is the result of an external, non-biological force, such as *mal de ojo* (*evil eye*) or *sustos* (*fright*). Advocating

decolonial research that explores indigenous understanding of disability, Yarza (2020) draws upon stories, artefacts and the ancestral languages of two indigenous groups in Colombia to explore the way in which disability and difference is understood. Arguing against the homogenisation of indigenous conceptualisations, she explored how two different groups had weaved the notions of difference into their stories, introducing the spiritual connection between the earth, community and beyond. While the decolonised research on disability in Latin America represents a small but evolving field (Pino-Moran & Tiseyra, 2019) it brings forth the importance for researchers not to make assumptions about how disability is understood. Furthermore, one needs to explore methodologies that allow voices that are typically neglected to be expressed in ways that participants find comfortable.

Having explored the debates regarding the ways in which disability and inclusive education are conceptualised in the Latin American literature, the next section moves on to the practice that one might see in schools.

## **Section 2: What practices do teachers adopt to respond to the educational needs of children with disabilities?**

This section examines teachers attitudes towards disability and inclusive education before arguing that teacher's views are, in part, influenced by the conditions in which they are teaching. Focusing on rural contexts, it reveals the lack of research that addresses disability.

### **4.3. Teacher attitudes**

Teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education are vital to the success of an inclusive classroom (Oliveira, 2011; Bialka, 2017). However, consistent with findings across the world (UNESCO, 2020b), the Latin American literature suggests that while teachers are broadly positive about the idea of inclusive education for children with disabilities, these attitudes are combined with scepticism about the extent to which this is possible (Castillo & Carvajal, 2018; Poblete, López & Muñoz, 2019; San Martin et al, 2020). For example, quantitative surveys of teachers' views in Costa Rica, Chile and Brazil have suggested that, while they were broadly supportive of inclusive education for social reasons, they queried its academic value for both those with and without disabilities (Henriquez, Azcárraga & Cópola 2012; Martins, Abreu & Rozek, 2020). Research that has explored the factors that may influence teachers' attitudes and levels of confidence suggest previous positive or negative experience is a predictor of teacher attitudes towards inclusive education (in Brazil, Oliveira et al., 2011; in Chile, Granada, Pomes & Sanhueza, 2013). Furthermore, the category and severity of a child's disability affects the extent to which a teacher believes they can be included (in Colombia, Padilla et al., 2012; in Mexico, Naranjo, 2019). Research using in-depth interviews and observations presents a more nuanced picture of attitudes linked to practice. It suggests that, while teachers are keen to find ways of meeting the needs of all learners in their communities, their ambivalence stems

from concern that the conditions in which they are teaching are not accounted for (in Colombia and Chile, Orjuela, 2015; in Mexico, Cruz-Ortiz et al., 2016). Consequently, the following sections focus upon the conditions in which teachers teach and the ways in which this impacts upon their capacity to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

#### **4.4. Curriculum and teacher practice**

Acedo (2011) contends that an inclusive curriculum that accommodates all learners' needs must have the capacity to embrace a range of learning styles; emphasise the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills; and be structured around varying levels of entry skills, to enable progress in ways that allow all learners to experience success. However, UNESCO's (2020c) review of inclusive education throughout Latin America and the Caribbean noted that children are often expected to progress at an unrealistic pace, making it difficult to follow the curriculum, which results in lower cumulative learning. Quantitative survey research on teacher pedagogy in Chile and Mexico suggests that teachers are aware of the importance of adapting activities to meet the needs of children with disabilities (Granada, Pomes & Sanhueza, 2013; San Martin et al., 2020; Anatolievna, 2020). Accordingly, case studies of the practice of individual teachers reveal that there are teachers who adapt work in ways that are attentive to the needs and interests of the child (in Mexico and Brazil, Dainez & Naranjo, 2015; in Chile, Jara & Jara, 2018). However, the majority of the research has found that teachers have limited guidance and skill in relation to adapting the curriculum, (in Colombia, Beltrán, Martínez & Vargas, 2015, Velasquez, Quiceno & Tamayo, 2016; in Chile, Muñoz, Cruz & Assaél, 2016, San Martin et al., 2020). While research which has used surveys suggests teachers attitudes reflect a lack of interest and motivation in doing so (Anatolievna, 2020; San Martin et al, 2020), qualitative research suggests teachers feel ill-equipped, given the conditions in which they are working. They report having few resources, limited time and knowledge on how to adapt the materials that they do have (Velasquez, Quiceno & Tamayo, 2016; Mellado et al., 2017; Poblete, López & Muñoz, 2019). Supporting the notion that adapting the curriculum is challenging, the research of San Martin et al. (2017) noted that, when Chilean special school teachers were required to shift from a parallel special school curriculum to one that reflected the national curriculum in 2015, even they struggled to adapt their existing practice, despite having the skills to explain things simply and deliver materials based upon the interests of the child.

A further concern raised in some of the literature is that of assessment. Research that has focused upon the assessment of children with disabilities in Latin America advocates formative assessment that recognises the range of strengths and achievements of a child (Arcidiácono & Barrera, 2018). However, Jara and Jara (2018) reported that teachers are less likely to use formative assessment in national systems that require summative forms. Colombia is an example of a country that uses summative assessment to assess a child's annual progress. Children who do not achieve the



required learning by the end of the year do not pass and have to repeat. However, while the consequences of repeating a year have some short-term benefits, research has consistently elicited that these dissipate and have substantial negative outcomes for children in the longer-term future. Children who repeat risk becoming overage and have higher rates of future school dropout as well as lower levels of employment (Ikeda & Garcia, 2014; Pérez, Hidalgo & Zurita, 2014).

A further concern raised by some teachers is that, while they want to provide work adapted to a child's level of learning, they also fear that giving them work that is different to that of others may make them feel stressed and isolated (Martins, Abreu & Rozek, 2020). Raising similar concerns, in an attempt to meet the curriculum needs of children with disabilities in mainstream schools of Brazil, there has been an increase in specialised resource classrooms (García, 2013; Vieira et al., 2020). Accommodations such as these risk segregating and stigmatising children and have led to concerns about putting children with disabilities at an increased risk of being bullied by peers (Villalobos et al., 2017; Martins, Abreu & Rozek, 2020). Providing a useful framework for understanding these tensions, an American economist Martha Minow (1985) described the 'dilemmas of difference' (p.158) that are inherent when choosing either to treat children with learning needs that may differ from their peers, as if they were the no different from others, or acknowledging that a child differs from others, in order to address their needs. Applying this to the field of education, UK-based Norwich (2013) noted that there are three main dilemmas: the identification dilemma (whether to identify a child as having a disability), the location dilemma (where children learn and with whom) and the curriculum dilemma (whether to offer children with disabilities the same or a different curriculum to others). When addressing the needs of children with a disability, the recognition of difference has the potential to be either 'enabling or stigmatising' (Norwich, 2014, p. 502): recognising a child's difficulties may lead to them receiving a curriculum that caters for their individual needs. For example, the provision of the right assistive devices (eyeglasses, hearing aids, mobility aids) and adapted materials (Braille textbooks, large print materials) enable children to access what is ordinarily available to all. However, teaching in ways that highlight the differences at the same time risks their being stigmatised by others or limiting the expectations of what they can achieve (Mostert, 2016). Adopting Norwich's dilemmas as a theoretical framework in a Chilean context, Muñoz, Cruz & Assaél (2015) described how teachers' choices were further constrained by the system in which they found themselves: in Chile there is a requirement for a diagnosis that can result in a teacher to providing individual support, but engaging the child in this, either in or out of the classroom, risks causing stigma. Furthermore, acknowledging that this presents teachers with difficult decisions to make, Norwich (2013) notes that there 'are not final solutions to dilemmas' (p. 159), as each choice has the potential for negative as well as positive consequences. Hence, their resolution will depend upon the importance they ascribe to different values, while the trade-offs they make will affect the experiences of children.

#### **4.5. Teaching children with disabilities in rural, multigrade schools**

Rural schools represent at least 30% of all educational institutions in Latin America (UNESCO, 2020b). Despite figures such as these, as aforementioned, rural education research in Latin America is lacking and, most pertinent to this study, the research literature on educating children with disabilities in Latin America is dominated by studies that focus upon urban contexts (Domingo & Boix, 2015; Tamayo, Rebolledo & Saldaña, 2017; Grech, 2017). The need for research exploring rural education practice has been highlighted by Bolaños & Rodriguez (2016), who criticise the application of national policy that fails to recognise the specific challenges and strengths of rural contexts. Small, rural schools differ from those in urban settings, both in the way in which they are required to organise their classes and the teaching conditions that affect what teachers can offer their students (Little, 2006; Domingo & Boix, 2015; Bolaños, 2017). Firstly, a common approach to classroom organisation used in many countries with large rural populations, such as Australia, Canada and many other countries, is the use of multigrade classes (Little, 2006; Berry, 2006; Domingo & Boix, 2015), which involves teaching students of different ages, grades, and abilities in the same group (Cornish, 2010). This contrasts with ‘mono-grade’ teaching, in which students within the same grade are assumed to be more similar in terms of age and ability (Little, 2008). UNESCO (2015b) advocates multigrade teaching as an important and appropriate way to help countries to reach their internationally mandated Education For All targets. However, research suggests that teachers often find it challenging to manage a multigrade class, describing how not only do they lack resources, but also, that the textbooks and learning materials that they do have are typically designed for monograde teaching (Bolaños, 2017; Domingo & Boix, 2015). A lack of materials creates extra time demands on lesson preparation, and makes classroom management more complex (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000; Bolaños, 2017). Secondly, the relative social and geographical isolation of many rural schools impacts upon teachers working conditions, with costly transport or, in some cases, long travel distances, which thus require teachers to live at the school (Balarin, 2016; Carranza-Franco et al., 2019).

Teaching conditions are frequently poor, and in a review of school provision across the Latin American region, Duarte, Gargiulo & Moreno (2012) discovered that 21% of schools do not have access to drinking water; 40% suffer from a lack of drainage; 53% do not have a telephone line; in 32% the number of bathrooms is insufficient; and 11% have no access to electricity. This is exacerbated in rural areas, where teachers have described the challenges of delivering inclusive education in non-accessible buildings, with fewer materials when compared with their experiences in urban settings (Dainez & Naranjo, 2015). Their social isolation is made worse by a lack of communication, such as a phone or internet connectivity, which also reduces their access to online teaching materials, training or support from services located in urban areas (Balarin & Benavides, 2010; Molina & Mesa, 2016). Consequently, recruitment and retention are an issue common to many

countries in Latin America (Bertoni et al., 2020), with gaps often being filled through assigning new teachers to the posts (Vaillant, 2011; OECD, 2016).

Research that examines how the factors outlined above might impact upon a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive education in a rural setting is limited to a just a handful of studies. The research that exists was conducted by Chilean academics, who studied the response of schools to the national 'Programa de Integración Escolar' (*School Integration Programme, or SIP*) that was introduced in 2009. Established as a way to ensure funding for a child's inclusion in school, each school applies through an improvement project, where infrastructure can be financed, as well as specialists being assigned to work with children with special educational needs. Research conducted by Tamayo, Rebolledo & Saldaña (2017) examined the responses of rural school learning coordinators to a quantitative survey, which implemented the SIP process. When describing a child's learning in class, 93.4% of learning coordinators said that students with disabilities were always or almost always able to participate in schoolwork without restrictions with the rest of their peers. The figure for the urban sector was lower, at 71.0%. However, despite the funding that comes with the SIP programme, the research also noted that both urban and rural schools reported low availability of materials to support the diversity of students with disabilities and nearly 45% lacked accommodation for students with mobility impairments, despite the legal obligation to provide such modifications. More nuanced, qualitative accounts of teacher practice in rural contexts support a growing body of literature in which it is argued that rural, multigrade schools have the potential to address diversity, based upon their design (e.g. see Boix, 2011). Domingo & Boix (2015) described how Spanish rural teachers' daily experience of a heterogeneous group means they are experienced in adapting the curriculum. They also have the opportunity to build close relationships with children over time, while the heterogeneity of the classroom fosters tolerance and systems of peer support. Furthermore, Colombian researchers Martinez, Orrego & Palancia (2018) hold that small rural community schools are the only option for all local children, meaning those with disabilities are automatically included as part of the community. While the rural research is extremely limited, it includes positive examples of inclusive rural multigrade practice. For example, Nuñez et al. (2020) conducted an ethnography of six Chilean rural schools that contained children with disabilities, who were funded by the SIP. They described a positive example in which a child who had previously struggled to behave in a large class in an urban school, subsequently thrived with the smaller class size in which he received more individual attention. His teacher rejected the pathologising of the child as the 'SIP child', whose needs should be met elsewhere, as had been suggested in the child's previous urban school. Instead, her priority was to keep the child in the class, noting that, as the only teacher in the single-class school, there was no-one else to address the needs of the child, unless it was a day when SIP learning support staff were to visit. Similarly, teachers in Vega's (2020) case study of 14 Chilean rural multigrade schools found positive examples, where the teacher made time to attend to the individual

needs of children with disabilities, once they had set tasks for the rest of the class. While these three studies provide positive examples of practice, they are few and reflect the very particular policy context of Chile. This highlights that there is not yet a body of research examining rural inclusive education across Latin America, to which I hope to contribute. Having explained that teachers' ambivalence about the extent to which inclusive education is possible is affected by the conditions in which they are teaching, the next section examines the support that they need to do so.

### **Section 3: Teacher support and training**

Research that has sought teachers' views and observed their practice consistently reports that they feel ill equipped to meet the needs of children with disabilities, and request more training to do so (Vaillant, 2011; Mendonça & Silva, 2015; Martinez, Orrego & Palancia, 2018). Moreover, teachers from a range of countries in Latin America report having little or no training on how to address the needs of diverse needs of children (García-Villegas et al., 2013; Alfaro & Fernández, 2020). Furthermore, the training teachers do receive has been criticised for focusing on theory rather than practice (Jimenez & Montecino, 2015; Kamenopoulou, 2018; San Martin et al., 2020), meaning there is little impact upon practice in the classroom (Serrato & Garcia, 2014). Concerns such as these have led to a body of research that has raised the debates regarding the content of existing initial teacher training (ITT) and reported the outcomes for universities that have attempted to develop inclusive education training within their courses. A key debate is the approach to course content, which Herrera et al. (2018) grouped into three broad categories. The first is that focusing on disability categories, diagnosis and assessment, while the second has a broader view of inclusion to encompass a broad definition of diversity, and teaches teachers skills to respond to diverse needs within their class. The third category reflects that of 'inclusive pedagogy', referencing Florian and Linklater (2010, p. 370), which involves 'extending what is ordinarily available as part of the routine of classroom life as a way of responding to differences between learners rather than specifically individualizing for some'. In practice, this involves the teacher providing a range of task options that are available to everybody in the class to choose, rather than a set of differentiated ones only for some (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Using these categories to group the approaches described in the research literature, the most common adopted in Latin American universities is the first category: teacher training content which focuses upon disability, diagnosis and assessment (Andrade et al., 2015; San Martin et al., 2020). The majority of the research critiques this approach, with Brazilian researchers adopting a critical stance in which they argue that this perpetuates a hegemonic othering of people with disabilities, leading to their ongoing exclusion from education and wider society (Mendonça & Silva, 2015). Consequently, researchers who have explored and evaluated alternative, inclusive ITT examples advocate strongly for the adoption of the second category: teacher training which delivers a broad understanding of diversity, includes practical training and has a significant focus upon self-

reflection, in order to challenge attitudes and increase confidence (Jimenez & Montecino, 2015; Velasquez et al., 2016; Herrera et al., 2018; Marchesi & Hernandez, 2019). Returning to Herrera et al.'s (2018) course in Ecuador, they, like the other courses, chose to focus upon diversity in its broadest sense and giving teachers practical skills in adapting work, formative assessment as well as self-reflection. Furthermore, acknowledging knowledge production grounded in local culture, they have educated teachers upon interculturality and 'Buen Vivir' (*good living*) – an Andean approach focusing on providing the conditions for people to live in harmony with each other and nature (e.g. see Gudynas, 2011; Chaves et al., 2018). However, while this is one of small number of universities that have engaged deeply with ways in which to support teachers (e.g. see examples in Velázquez et al., 2016; Gesser & Martins, 2019), researchers note that this is not common.

A further area of teacher support is raised in both the teacher training and teacher practice literature is that of working together with others. Questionnaires and interviews reveal that teachers commonly advocate systems that provide multidisciplinary support and in-school learning support, which they perceive to have expertise they lack (Oliveira & Leite, 2011). However, research from countries that have adopted policies requiring professionals to work together suggests that, while this is a potential source of support, it also has the potential to highlight tensions that bringing a perceived expert on disability into a school creates. Regarding which, in Brazil and Chile, children with identified individual plans are frequently educated in ways that remove them from their regular class (Valadao & Mendes, 2018; San Martin et al., 2020). In Colombia, the guidance from MEN (2017a) suggests this is not an expectation. However, an anthology written by support teachers in Colombia shared their common experience that mainstream teachers often saw the role of the support teacher as relieving them of responsibility for a child, rather than enabling them to learn ways of including the pupil in learning (Forero & Rojas, 2018). Consequently, researchers have argued that employing learning support teachers in this way risks, not only reducing teachers' feeling of responsibility for educating the child, but also, reaffirming their lack of confidence in their own capacity to meet the child's needs (San Martin et al., 2020; Manghi & Valdés, 2020). Where teachers had learning support in-class, a lack of clarity on the role of the learning support teacher or joint planning led to disputes between staff (Muñoz, Cruz & Assaél, 2015; Céspedes et al., 2020; Sagredo, Bizarría & Carenza, 2020). Consequently, researchers advocate that initial teacher training should include training on co-teaching and working with external agencies (Flores, García & Romero, 2014; Dávila & Zambrano, 2016; Valadao & Mendes, 2018).

Thus far in the literature review, it has been argued that ideas of inclusive education are dominated by models emanating from Northern contexts, and that there is a need for research and support mechanisms that address the contextual realities that teachers, children with disabilities and their families face. The next section examines the silences within the Latin American research, while

also noting that Latin American research is, itself, silenced in the broader field of inclusive education in Southern contexts.

#### **Section 4: Latin American research: silences and being silenced**

Before discussing the silences in the Latin American literature regarding disability and inclusive education, it is important to contextualise these within the broader literature field of the Global South. Howgego, Miles, and Myer's (2014) review of evidence on teacher education, classroom practice and teaching children with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries, confirmed that research neglects low and middle-income country contexts (Srivastava, de Boer & Pijl, 2015; Bakhshi, Babulal & Trani, 2018), leading to Howgego, Miles & Myers (2014, p. 3) describing the evidence base as "both scattered and scarce". Similarly, reviewing the contribution of Spanish- and Portuguese-language research to the field of inclusive education between 1994 and 2019, Iglesias & Martín (2020) reported that it is a small field in which 64.1% of the literature comes from Spain, while the Latin American literature that does exist is dominated by that regarding Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia. Within this limited field of literature there are a number of silences. Described next, these include research in rural education contexts and the contribution of Latin American literature to the global debates about inclusive education.

##### **4.6. Lack of research on voices and experiences of children, parents and teachers**

It is recognised at a global level that there is a paucity of research examining rural education contexts and that where they are studied this tends to reflect a deficit-lens (Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah, 2006; Corbett, 2016; Reagan et al., 2019). This includes a lack of research investigating the experiences and practice of rural Latin American teachers and families with regard to disability and inclusive education (Grech, 2019). Furthermore, there remains a gap in knowledge pertaining to the views of Latin American children with disabilities on their experiences of education and learning (Azaola, 2014; Kamenopoulou, 2018) - and none on the experiences of rural children. As a limited field in the Global South, there are only around 25 articles that represent the voices of children with disabilities from different countries and continents. Of these, four are Latin American. The first explored Colombian children's conceptions of care in mainstream classrooms, in which Figueroa (2011) led focus groups with five children with disabilities and 13 of their non-disabled peers. She discovered that non-disabled children characterised disability as an illness and that both those with disabilities and without saw disability as resulting in not being able to perform at the same level as others. The second, conducted by Eguiguren-Istuanay & Wood (2020), focused upon the views of five Chilean children with autism, and, commensurate with the global research (in Zimbabwe, Musengi & Chireshe, 2012; in Uganda, Bannink, Idro & Hove, 2016) referred to the importance children ascribed to having friends. The third article explored bullying of Chilean children accessing a SIP programme. Similar to the wider children's voice literature on bullying (e.g. see Jenkin et al., 2017; Brydges &

Mkandawire, 2016), Villalobos et al.'s (2017) analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that children accessing the SIP were more likely to have been bullied when compared with their non-disabled peers. The fourth, conducted by Albornoz, Silva & López (2020), used visual narrative techniques, including photovoice and puppets, to explore urban Chilean children's experiences of participation and learning. Combining the views of children with and without disabilities, they described the importance of supportive teachers who offered engaging classes with clear explanations. However, regarding those with disabilities, there is no Latin American literature that has explored children's experiences of teacher and peer support – a key element of the Escuela Nueva model, and one that dominates the children's voice literature in other Southern contexts (e.g. see Mahbub, 2008; Gregorius, 2016; Singal et al., 2015). With such little research, of which the majority has focused upon the views of urban children, my study is focused on rural contexts and the experiences of teachers, children with disabilities and their families.

#### **4.7. Latin American literature is silenced in the Southern debates**

A further silence for Latin American literature overall is its lack of visibility in the English-language global field that addresses education in low- and middle-income countries (Grech, 2017). Furthermore, this literature review has revealed a strong reliance on theories and conceptualisations that emanate from Northern contexts – a trend that is common in the field of education in Latin American research (Gibert, 2017). With the aim of challenging the dominance of Northern research, and bring together Latin American research, the SCIELO<sup>22</sup> database was developed in 1997 by the Brazilian research foundation FAPESP (*Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa de São Paulo*) in collaboration with the Latin American and Caribbean Information Center in health sciences. It sought provide a platform that collated and evaluated, initially Brazilian, research (Gibert, 2017). This open-access platform has now extended to scientific publications across Latin America and, in 2013, was included in the WoS database (Guzmán & Gómez, 2019). However, while databases such as these promote Latin American research for those with an interest in the region, a central factor that continues to affect the visibility of Latin American research is its language of publication. Given that English is the dominant language of international research, research published in Spanish and Portuguese is immediately less visible, and its potential contribution to the wider debates is often missed (Marginson & Ordorika, 2011; Meneghini, 2012). Furthermore, the dominance of the Northern-led databases, quality criteria and increasing pressure to establish an international presence has forced Latin American academics negotiate their visibility in the North and South (Meneghini, 2012). This includes publishing in non-mainstream regional journals in Spanish or Portuguese, while also striving to publish in English in the mainstream Northern journals (Ordorika, 2015). However, in order to be accepted for publication in Northern journals, Guzmán & Gómez (2019) argue that Latin

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<sup>22</sup> Scientific Electronic Library Online <http://socialsciences.scielo.org>

American scholars need to reference and incorporate Northern debates. This poses a dilemma, as conducting research that is commensurate with agendas of the North may 'require a stance in which less value is accorded to knowledge produced in Latin America' (Ibid., p.130), and therefore, potentially less beneficial for areas of concern in Latin America. Consequently, it is not only the language of publication that renders the research invisible, but also that the criteria and interests of the Northern publishing platforms potentially stifle knowledge production that challenges hegemonic ways of thinking.

With implications for research on inclusive education, the paucity of literature which addresses rural education in Latin American contexts highlight the need for studies that give a platform to neglected voices, such as those of rural children, their teachers and their parents. Furthermore, the ways in which disability is understood, and inclusive education is addressed within a rural context needs deep exploration. However, while Kalyanpur (2020) argues for decolonising research, she also acknowledges that with such longstanding Western intellectual traditions, to reject completely Northern inclusive education models as a frame of reference would be unrealistic. Regarding which, Latin American decolonial theorists have argued not for a dismissal of all Northern knowledge production, but rather, 'an ecology of knowledges' (Santos, 2012, p. 18) in which the flow of knowledge production is bi-directional. To create knowledge that is culturally and contextually responsive requires indigenous knowledge to be recognised and valued as something that could more appropriately inform the evolving global agenda in addition to national policy and practice. Drawing upon these debates, I aim to produce research that provides a nuanced account of the teacher practice and children's views in ways that not only recognise the challenges to be found in rural contexts, but also, build upon the strengths that already exist. In sum, I seek to create research that 'is appreciative of the realities in the South rather than anchored in deficit account' (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016, p. 213).

#### **4.8. Research Questions**

This literature review has identified the key debates within the Latin American literature that have revealed the differing ways in which disability and inclusive education are understood, whilst also foregrounding the contextual realities of living and teaching in rural contexts. The deficit lens that is often applied to Latin American practice has been identified, while in Chapter 2 it was argued that the Escuela Nueva approach is a positive example of teacher practice grounded in the reality of rural contexts of Colombia. With no prior research that has explored how the EN model addresses the needs of children with disabilities, nor gained the perspectives of the children themselves, my research endeavour is aimed at addressing this gap. As a model that places emphasis on adapting the curriculum depending upon local priorities, there is a need for rigorous research that can draw out a



nuanced account that uncovers the realities of delivering education for children with disabilities in local contexts. Consequently, this study seeks to address the following questions.

### **How do stakeholders in Colombian Escuela Nueva schools, understand and address the educational needs of children with disabilities?**

For the purposes of this study, stakeholders include:

- Foundation Escuela Nueva (FEN) staff;
- School staff (headteacher, class teachers, support teachers);
- Children with disabilities and their parents/carers.

The sub-questions that this research addresses include:

- How do FEN staff understand disability and the potential of the Escuela Nueva model to address the needs of children with disabilities?
- How do the headteacher, teachers and parents understand the learning needs and potential of children with disabilities?
- What practices do teachers adopt to respond to the educational needs of children with disabilities?
- How do children with disabilities experience education in Escuela Nueva schools?

## **Chapter 5: Research methodology**

There is no neutral or apolitical research (Mohanty, 1988; Tuck & Yang, 2014) and Clegg and Slife (2009, p.24) argue that ‘every research activity is an exercise in research ethics; every research question is a moral dilemma ... every research decision is an instantiation of values’. As such, I had an ethical responsibility to ensure that each of these choices was based upon a deep reflection upon how participants were affected, involved and represented. In this chapter, I describe how a constructivist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of decoloniality and critical disability theory informed my case study approach. I then describe the multiple data collection methods used, and the ethical choices that informed them. The chapter finishes with a summary of my data analysis and dissemination methods.

### **5.1. My guiding philosophical stance**

As the focus of my research, the ontology of what disability is, the nature of its existence and how we come to know this, informs every subsequent methodological decision. Positivist research that draws on a realist approach would favour discourse that focuses on the biological, and considers disability as an objective, medicalised phenomena. In contrast, my interpretivist research was guided by a relativist ontological assumption that there are multiple realities, which are constructed through people’s lived experiences and their interactions with others (Creswell, 2018). Accordingly, my research draws upon the social constructivist epistemological approach in which ‘meaning is not discovered, but constructed’ in the course of our (subjective) interactions with the world and with others (Crotty, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, the views of adults and children regarding how Escuela Nueva schools understand disability, and address the educational needs of children with disabilities, are not considered objectively fixed and discoverable, but rather, as constructions that are generated through interactions with others and their social context. Thus, while I aimed to explore these through the choice of appropriate data gathering methods, my focus was less on the extent to which meanings and interpretations describe an objective reality (as in objectivism) or with subjective feelings and a largely inaccessible inner reality (in subjectivism), but rather, on how such meanings and interpretations come to be socially constructed.

In the following sections, I consider how this overarching choice of constructivist epistemology relates to theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and research methods.

### **5.2. Theoretical approaches**

Providing a philosophical context for the process, my research is grounded within two theoretical approaches: critical disability theory and decoloniality. Summarised below, I outline the ways in which these have informed my research.

### **5.2.1. Critical disability theory**

Drawing on postcolonial, queer and feminist theories, critical disability theory (CDT) rejects static, essentialist ways of considering disability, questioning the social construction of binary categories that sort people into either 'impaired' or 'unimpaired' (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Feely 2016). Arguing that biological labels create an unnecessary divide between people with and without disabilities (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2010), it recognises the importance of intersectional aspects of identity (Crenshaw 1991; Erevelles, 2011), acknowledging the exclusion associated with the intersection of the multiple identities by which people might define others, such as class, gender and race, among others (Watson, 2012; Goodley, 2013). As a critical theory, it questions the assumption that a world based upon non-disabled norms is inevitable (Goodley, 2013) and advocates for emancipatory research, which both exposes and transforms the barriers that impact on the lived experiences of people with disabilities. However, critical disability studies are largely dominated by researchers writing in, and from, countries in the Global North (Goodley et al., 2019). Consequently, Meekosha (2011, p.669) argues that for critical disability studies to be inclusive of people with disabilities in Southern contexts, it needs to address the centrality of colonialism, which brings me to my second theoretical influence: decoloniality.

### **5.2.2. Decoloniality**

Developed by Latin American scholars, the intellectual movement of decoloniality holds that formerly colonised nations are affected by an ongoing 'coloniality of power' (Quijano, 2000, p.171), which continues to define relations between former colonising powers and the rest of the world (Mendoza, 2016). This includes the dominance of Eurocentric thinking as the accepted canon from which to build knowledge and constructions of difference (Mignolo, 2009). Drawing upon critical theories of modernity and South Asian subaltern studies (Escobar, 2007), decoloniality also has many synergies with the ideas of postcolonialism, which was an influential theory for me during my MPhil research. Said's seminal postcolonialist text 'Orientalism' (1978) criticises the process of what Spivak (1985) defined as 'othering' (p. 244): the process whereby colonial powers create 'others' based on homogenising narratives and discourse that reflect the perspectives and assumptions of the colonising power, and subsequently, use this to legitimise the colonising actions of the 'civilised' and 'human' North to develop the 'savage' and 'inhuman' rest of the world (Tikly, 2004; Said, 1978). However, as I became immersed in the Latin American literature, I realised that while there were synergies, there were also problems applying postcolonialism in a Latin American context. Coronil (2015) notes that Latin American texts and its Iberian history of colonisation are silenced within the postcolonialist literature. Moreover, founding scholars of what has become known as the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (MCD) project have argued that the European invention and conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth century acted as a precursor to the later invention and

colonisation of the Orient as well as the period of enlightenment upon which postcolonialism is premised (Mignolo, 2011).

A central assertion of the MCD project is to argue that the colonality constitutes, rather than derives from, modernity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Criticising a Eurocentric lack of engagement with epistemologies that derive from Southern contexts, Santos (2016) argues that where universalisms are posited, they are typically driven by knowledge production and realities found in Northern contexts. He proposes a concept of ‘abyssal thinking’ (Ibid., p. 118) through which value is ascribed to knowledge produced in (mainly) Northern contexts, while that produced in Southern contexts represents the other side of the abyssal line and is rendered invisible. As a form of intellectual colonialism this ‘epistemicide, the murder of knowledge’ (Ibid, p. 92), determines what type of knowledge is considered valuable while, at the same time, marginalising knowledge produced in Southern contexts. Arguing that colonality/modernity has obscured the specificities of race and place, Mignolo & Walsh (2018, p.10) describe decoloniality as the intention to de-link from the ‘colonial matrix of power’, and instead, ‘advance other ways of being, thinking, knowing, theorizing, analysing, feeling, acting, and living for us all’. The MCD group has been criticised by the Bolivian activist researcher Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) for espousing decoloniality, while being located in elite Northern universities, separating it from its indigenous, activist roots. Acknowledging this critique and honouring the work of activists, my research does not claim to be decolonial. However, the next section describes how both decoloniality and CDT informed my thinking and research process.

### **5.2.3. Theoretical implications**

While I do not claim to have conducted decolonial research, the learning and insight I gained from both decoloniality and CDT has been fundamental in choosing three key aims of my research: challenging the deficit discourse that results in the application of Northern models of inclusive education, emphasis upon an intersectional understanding of disability and decentring knowledge production through the use of participatory methods, which platform the voices of participants.

#### ***Challenging deficit discourse***

Applying the ideas of decoloniality to the ways in which inclusive education is conceptualised and implemented in the Global South articulates what I was seeing in the world of consultancy: a deficit lens view of countries in the Global South and the assumption that Northern models of inclusive education could (and should) be applied in Southern contexts, with little consideration of local strengths and challenges. Scholars who have challenged the deficit-lens that permeates much of the discourse about the South argue that when reference is made to disability, the lives of people with disabilities are constructed as ‘backward, victims of society, neglected or hidden away’ (Singal and Muthukrishna, 2014, p. 2). Having worked with families that challenge those assumptions, I

questioned the focus on only what is not happening (Rao, 2015). Furthermore, presenting Eurocentric ideas as universal allows for the legitimisation of discourses that argue for the emancipation of people with disabilities in the South, delivered by the ‘enlightened’ work of Northern agencies (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014, p. 294). However, this exportation assumes that models can seamlessly be transported to countries in the South, while ignoring the local context, culture, economy, history, community and relationships of power in Southern contexts (Penn, 2011; Singal & Muthukrishna, 2016). Challenging the deficit discourse lay at the heart of my choice to focus upon a successful, home-grown Latin American example of good practice, delivered at scale: Escuela Nueva.

### ***Emphasis upon an intersectional understanding of disability***

Combining CDT with a biopsychosocial understanding of disability led me to develop a research approach which aimed to recognise the intersection between disability and other factors (e.g. poverty, race, gender) which impact upon children with disabilities and their families (Crenshaw 1991; Erevelles, 2011).

### ***Emancipatory methods that privilege the voice of participants***

A decolonial approach aims to explore non-Eurocentric forms of knowing and being in the world. As an emancipatory approach, it seeks to hear the different wisdom and experiences of those who have been on the borders of colonial modernity: those who are least heard. Drawing upon both decoloniality and critical disability theory, my research challenges traditional forms of knowledge production through utilising equitable, participatory approaches that seek to understand local understandings of disability and privileges the voices of children with disabilities. Having clarified the broader philosophical and theoretical approach that frames my research, the next section presents the research design and selection of participants.

Drawing upon critical disability theory and decoloniality, it was important to me to employ a research plan of action that would enable me to gain a rich, nuanced account of the ways in which the Escuela Nueva model addresses the needs of children with disabilities. Having considered various alternatives, I decided that the most appropriate approach for my purposes was a case study design. Cresswell (2018) defines case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time. This involves detailed, in depth, data collection involving multiple sources of information, resulting in a case description and case-based themes. As the ‘preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed (Yin, 2012, p. 142), case studies aim to capture the complexity of real-life situations (Stake, 1995), providing holistic rich, thick descriptive data. Researchers commonly use what Stake (1995) refers to as ‘a palette of methods’ (p. xxii), which themselves are shaped by the by context and emergent data. The flexibility this offered particularly appealed to me, allowing me to adapt my

methods to suit the needs of individual children with disabilities within my study. However, as a methodology that is deliberately flexible, Tight (2010) questions whether case study research is merely a ‘convenient label for our research’ when we ‘can’t think of anything better’ in an attempt to give it some added respectability’ (p. 337). In response, in this chapter, I explain how the study aims, epistemological framework, methods, and reported findings are consistent with a rigorous qualitative case study approach (Hyett, Kenney & Dickson-Swift, 2015).

Case studies come in several different forms, including instrumental studies, where the focus is illuminating a particular issue, rather than the cases as such. In my study, the management of children with disabilities in EN schools was the issue. Using a multiple case study design (Stake, 1995), I explored the bounded system of five primary schools, which worked together as a cluster, under one Director. With each school considered a separate case, I was able to draw a single set of cross-case conclusions (Yin, 2012) which focused upon the broader phenomenon of educating children with diverse learning needs. This next section describes the case and sampling, before explaining the methods used with adults and children.

## **5.4. Sampling**

This section outlines the reasoning that underpinned my selection of adults, parents and children for the research.

### **5.4.1. Selection of Schools**

Gaining permission for my research in the field began with email contact with the FEN research co-ordinator, who asked for a short summary of my research proposal in July 2018. Having discussed the proposal via Skype, we decided that the schools of Las Colinas were the best sample based on my research questions, being chosen for the following reasons.

- Best example of EN model practice in a secure area

The majority of rural EN schools are located in areas which have been categorised as ‘all but essential travel’ (amber) areas, based upon UK Foreign Office advice. Choosing schools in areas considered minimal risk resulted in three different options across the country. Of these, the FEN research co-ordinator identified two potential groups of schools, which she considered had the best examples of good practice in implementation of the model. This was important, because it would enable me to understand whether good practice extended to children with disabilities, while also challenging the deficit lens that is often used to characterise teaching in Colombian schools.

- Highest rates of identified disability

Of the two options, Las Colinas had higher numbers of identified children with disabilities and a learning support teacher with whom I could liaise. As such, it was chosen as the best site for the research.

- High levels of child achievement in primary grades

The five primary schools had historically had high levels of achievement on Grade 5 national tests. This suggested that the schools were, indeed, examples of good practice of the model.

#### 5.4.2. Selection of adults

*School staff:* A total of 11 staff participated in the research. Recruitment of participants began with the Director, who agreed that I could conduct research in the schools of Las Colinas. Following a cross-school whole staff meeting, all eight class teachers and the two support teachers (learning support and family support worker) also agreed to participate. The number from each school is reflected in Table 5.1.

*Parents:* Class teachers recruited a total of 14 parents to participate in the research, having shared my letter with all parents in their schools (see Table 5.1). The parents represented 16 children, nine of whom had a disability. Six parents were able to meet me in a 1:1 setting, and five of these had a child, or children with a disability. Towards the end of my fieldwork Schools C and D convened parent group meetings for a new project set up by the local health provider. Through attending these, I was able to hear the stories of, and interview, a further eight parents, of whom three had a child with a disability.

*FEN staff:* Following my fieldwork in schools, the FEN research co-ordinator arranged for me to interview five senior staff. Having outlined the key areas I wanted to explore, the co-ordinator chose the staff that could best address the questions I wanted to raise. This included the director, the head of curriculum development, head of training, operations manager and the teacher trainer who trained my case schools.

**Table 5.1**

*Number of school staff, parents and FEN staff that participated in the research*

Role	School Total	A	B	C	D	E	Non-school based
School staff	11	2	3	1	1	1	Director
	8 teachers						Learning support teacher
							Family support worker
Parents	14	2	4	3	3	2	
FEN staff	5						

*Experts in the field:* While not part of my main data collection, I consulted with a six experts in the field of inclusive education in Colombia, to understand the historical and political context. This included the Director of the Downs Syndrome association of Colombia (Asdown), who is a member of Latin American and national steering inclusive education groups. She helped me gain access to the regional and national leaders of inclusive education in the Ministry for Education, a leading university course convenor and a specialist lawyer in inclusive education, at the end of my fieldwork. They were keen for me to share my initial findings, which resulted in conversations about the political context and the challenges for implementing inclusive education in Colombia.

### 5.4.3. Selection of children

In order to contextualise the experiences of children with disabilities with the views of their classmates, I conducted individual and groupwork with all children over the age of seven. Children of that age were more able to understand and accommodate my Spanish and errors, and, most importantly, I was more able to understand them. Table 5.2 outlines that of the 101 children in schools, 53 participated in the research. Of these, teacher responses to the Washington group questions suggested 26 had disabilities (see subsection 5.6.4 for more details).

**Table 5.2**

*Number of children with and without disabilities who participated in the research*

School	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Total No. of Children	26	46	9	16	4	101
Total No. of children with disabilities	6	10	4	5	4	29
No. of children with disabilities who participated	3	9	5	5	4	26
No. of children with no disability who participated	8	10	4	5		27

Having provided an overview of who participated in the research, the next section explains the process I used to determine which methods would be most suitable with both adults and children.

### 5.5. Rationale for selecting qualitative data-gathering methods

With the aim of gaining rich, nuanced, accounts of the ways in which the needs of children with disabilities are addressed in Escuela Nueva schools, I chose to employ qualitative data-gathering methods for my study. Research employing quantitative methods, such as large-scale surveys (De



Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011) has been important for gaining a better understanding of the prevalence rates of disability in Southern contexts (e.g. Trani & Bakhshi, 2008) and exploring the attitudes of teachers towards teaching children with disabilities (e.g. in Colombia, Muñoz, López & Assaél, 2016). Similarly, it is theoretically possible to use a case study approach using quantitative methods, such as surveys and censuses. However, while using a survey approach results in high levels of confidence regarding the generalisability of findings to a given population, there is a trade-off with the opportunity to gain detail and a nuanced understanding of people's views (Hammersley, 2003). Furthermore, my constructivist approach views individuals' worldviews as both socially-constructed and changeable over time. On this theoretical basis, the range of qualitative data-gathering methods I utilised are summarised in Table 5.3, along with their purpose in the research.

**Table 5.3**

*Overview of the methods and their purpose in the research*

Method	Research method objective	Participants' understanding of diversity and disability	In-depth understanding of support systems	In-depth understanding of school and class contexts	Insight into teacher practice
Observation	Classroom observations		✓	✓	✓
	Field notes		✓	✓	✓
Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participatory activities	Diversity photo sorting activity	✓		✓	
	Photovoice	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Drawing		✓	✓	✓
	'When I'm stuck'				
	visual interview		✓	✓	✓

What follows is a summary of the pilot that helped me trial and choose these methods; providing me with the opportunity to ensure the instruments were fit for purpose.

### **5.5.1. Pilot of instruments**

To ensure my methods, instruments and data analysis techniques were suitable for my research aims, I conducted a pilot in Colombia in August 2018. I visited one Escuela Nueva school, in order to observe the classroom and pilot adult interviews, and one non-Escuela Nueva school to pilot the

method's to be applied to children. Spending two days in an EN school enabled me to observe classroom practice, and conduct four interviews with adults, including the headteacher, class teacher, FEN teacher trainer and a parent (see Table 5.4, below). Concerned about the ethics of researching with EN children who were unfamiliar with me, I sought the views of six children in a non-EN school, who already knew and trusted me, having participated in my MPhil research on their experiences of mainstream schooling in 2017. Access to the EN school was gained via the local teacher trainer, and of the three possible sites, the chosen school best reflected the sampling choices made for my main fieldwork research site: highest number of children with diagnosed disabilities, a rural, multigrade classroom and the teacher was considered an excellent practitioner of the model by FEN regional staff.

**Table 5.4**  
*Summary of pilot activities and participants in site schools*

	Classroom Observation	Interviews	Photovoice <i>age, disability</i>	Video <i>age, disability</i>	Drawing <i>age, disability</i>
Escuela Nueva school	1 session	Headteacher Teacher FEN Teacher trainer Parent			
Non Escuela Nueva school			2 children <i>11, learning</i> <i>12, no disability</i>	3 children <i>10, speech</i> <i>11, learning</i> <i>12, no disability</i>	1 child <i>12, no</i> <i>disability</i>

The pilot led to my amending the adult interviews (order of questions, reduced number of questions, splitting class teacher interviews into three shorter sections) and adapting the observation schedule to reflect an EN classroom better. Finding that children's data from photovoice and drawing yielded the richest conversations, I removed video as a method choice. Furthermore, I learnt that children needed at least one session in camera training and changed the way in which I sought their consent (discussed in children's methods below).

## **5.6 Methods used with Adults**

My choice of methods used with adults included interviews and observation, with reflections captured in fieldnotes. The reasoning is explained below.

### **5.6.1. Cultural immersion and building rapport**

With the aim of conducting research that privileged the voices and experiences of Colombians, I was keen to immerse myself in the language and culture. I spent my fieldwork living with a Colombian family who I had known for 10 years, through my previous work in the country. Living with them gave me a deep understanding of the importance of family and building relationships in a collectivist

culture, and this fundamentally shaped the way in which I approached the research. Thus, while it took 2.5 hours and three buses to reach the schools, the third bus, that travelled into the hills, afforded me time to build relationships with my translator, members of the local community and other occasional visitors to the schools, such as local Secretary for Education staff. This added to my knowledge of the culture and concerns in the local area. Similarly, before scheduling interviews with staff, I prioritised time for talking in class and breaktimes with adults and children, getting to know them and attempting to gain acceptance (Tickle, 2017), thereby allowing the novelty of having a white, western, stranger in the school to lessen over time. What follows is a description of the research methods used with adults, and the reasoning for their choice. Their integrity derives from not only the body of literature that informed how I might develop the techniques in a technical sense, but also, the informal relationship building that happened in the moments and spaces before and after these methods were utilised.

### **5.6.2. Participant and non-participant classroom observations**

With no prior in-depth observations of how EN teachers address the learning needs of children with disabilities, my research was aimed at observing, in detail, the ways in which teachers addressed this in their daily practice. Structured observation methods, such as the Stallings instrument (Stallings, Knight & Markham, 2014), have been useful for identifying differences in average time on task across schools in Colombia (Bruns & Luque, 2015). However, its focus on gaining comparable data at scale means the nuance of the context is not captured. I chose to use two types of observation: participant and non-participant, at different stages in the research.

During my first three calendar weeks with each school I utilised participant observation, during which time I used fieldnotes to record what I observed and the information I learned (see section 5.6.5). Using participant observation had multiple benefits. The first is that it enabled me to build a rapport with teachers and children as I immersed myself in the context and learnt the routines of each school. Without a translator at this stage<sup>23</sup>, children and teachers, at first, patiently explained what they were doing and why, which allowed me to explore causal explanations and norms that underpinned the observable behaviours of children and their teachers (White & Drew, 2011). It also helped position myself as different to a teacher with the children, and in some cases, a potential work and playmate. Table 5.5 illustrates that in the larger schools A and B, which had more regular transport links, I was able to visit them twice a week and spent six days using participant observation across all classes. In schools C-E, to whom transport was limited, I used participant observation for three days with their single class.

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<sup>23</sup> Section 5.9 describes the difficulties I had finding an appropriate translator at the start of fieldwork

**Table 5.5***Number of days spent in each school using participant observation*

School	A	B	C	D	E
No. of days using participant observation	6	6	3	3	3

I subsequently conducted 15 non-participant observations, using a pre-defined observation schedule (see Appendix F) with the aim of comparing teacher practice and children's experiences across different sites. Building upon research conducted by the TEACH project that explored teacher behaviour in classrooms in Pakistan (Rose et al., 2018), which included children with disabilities, I used an adapted version of the researchers' child and teacher observation schedule. While most observations happened as planned with the teacher, in School D the teacher spent some of her time out of the classroom preparing work for the children and hence, I was only able to observe her teach once.

### **5.6.3. Interviews**

Interviews are a 'uniquely powerful and sensitive method' (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 126), which I utilised to explore the views of 11 school staff (eight class teachers, two support workers, one director), 14 parents and five FEN staff. My preferred option for the structure of the formal interviews was semi-structured. Offering more flexibility than a structured interview, it enabled me to tailor the agenda to the person and provided the participants with the opportunity to introduce new topics and perspectives (Creswell, 2018). Drawing upon the literature, interview schedules for each category of adults contained broad themes common to all (see Table 5.6 below) as well as those that were specific to their particular role (see Appendix C). Teacher interviews were split into three short schedules aimed at reducing the time load on a teacher on the three separate days in which I conducted each interview. The questions were funnelled, beginning with those that were broad and less contentious and then, moving on to more sensitive topics, such as disability and views on Government plans (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

**Table 5.6***Interview question themes common to school staff and FEN interviews*

School staff interviews	FEN interviews
Understanding and effectiveness of Escuela Nueva model and processes	Escuela Nueva history and processes in their area of expertise
Perceptions of children's ability to learn	Successes and challenges of implementation of their EN area of expertise
Perceptions of disability and education for children with disabilities	Perceptions of disability and how EN addresses this
Existing strengths and challenges in their role	Views on support needed for effective inclusion of children with disabilities
Views on support available (for adults and children)	

While my aim was to reduce the power differences between myself and the participants, Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) note that it is impossible for an interview to be an open and free space in which our relationships are equal. I waited a few weeks before conducting the interviews, instead, focusing upon building rapport with the teachers and letting them choose a suitable date. I addressed potential concerns by beginning the interview with an explanation of the purpose of my research, their voluntary participation and entitlement to withdraw. All adults gave me permission to audio record the interview to enable me to check my understanding. Two participants asked me to stop recording when they expressed negative views and we subsequently agreed how I might summarise this for my research. Additionally, I had prepared post-observation questions to reduce the teachers' potential anxiety or implied negative judgement, if I had a query about what I had seen. Guided by Brown and McIntyre (1993) these were focused on specific observed events, aimed to be positive and sought understanding from the teacher's point of view. These were used to check my understanding after six of the observations, including three where the quality had been rated as 'low' (see Chapter 8, Table 8.7) and three where I wanted to explore the use of a strategy for a child with a disability.

#### **5.6.4. Using the Washington group questions to identify children with disabilities**

While the Las Colinas schools had the highest number of children with identified disabilities out of two possible regional options (see Subsection 5.4.1), this number was still relatively low. My initial visit with the headteacher revealed that teachers had concerns about seven of the 101 children, of whom just one had a formal diagnosis of disability. I had already anticipated low reported numbers, given the large body of research that suggests disability is underreported in Southern contexts, and even more so in rural areas, where there is less access to diagnostic services (Moreno-Angarita, 2010; Harrison et al., 2020). To ensure I included all children with disabilities in the focus of my study, I wanted to use a tool that identified children's difficulties in ways that were not stigmatising and acknowledged the interrelationship between their condition and environment. Research from multiple

countries suggests that, had I asked adults whether individual children had a disability, this would have resulted in underreporting due to differences in how disability is understood, issues of stigma and other cultural factors (Mont, 2007; Cappa, Petrowski & Nejelsani, 2015). In response to this common global issue, the Washington group on Disability Studies (WG), was commissioned by the UN to improve the quality and comparability of disability measures (Mont, 2007). Drawing on the ICF model, a set of questions have been developed that avoid an exclusive focus on impairments, or medical diagnosis, and instead, focuses upon the difficulties children have in carrying out basic activities (see UNICEF, 2015). Listed in Figure 5.1, the focus areas provide a comprehensive understanding of children’s functioning, based upon the responses of adults, including either their parents or teachers (Sprunt et al., 2017).

**Figure 5.1**  
*Child functioning module (CFM) question areas*

Seeing	Controlling behaviour
Hearing	Concentration
Walking	Routine
Speaking	Friendships
Self-care	Worry
Learning	Sad/depressed
Remembering	Attendance

With graded responses of ‘no difficulty, some difficulty, a lot of difficulty or cannot do at all’, for the majority of questions, using this questionnaire allowed me to understand not only what difficulties children faced, but also, to what extent these impacted on them. Moreover, the questions begin with the phrase ‘compared with children of the same age...’, ensuring that it reflected the child’s cohort. Thus, this tool offered a non-stigmatising way of identifying the children who most struggled in school.

Increasingly used in global disability research, the questions are considered the most reliable, internationally comparable tool that exists for identifying children with disabilities in Southern contexts (Sprunt et al., 2017; Malik et al., 2020). The graded responses allow a researcher to identify the proportion of children who have mild difficulties (at least ‘some difficulty’ on one or more domain of functioning), moderate levels of difficulty (at least one domain with ‘a lot of difficulty’) or those with severe difficulties (at least one domain with ‘cannot do at all’) (Loeb et al., 2017). Using these responses, researchers are recommended to report disability data using the cut-off of at least one response of ‘a lot of difficulty’ (Mont, 2007). Using the questions with teachers for each child in their class (101 children in total) enabled me to identify a group of learners with moderate difficulties, to whom I refer as ‘children with disabilities’ for the purposes of my research. It is important to note that the questions do not provide a diagnostic label, nor do they address the underlying causes for a child’s difficulties (Singal & Sabates, 2019). However, Florian & Spratt (2010) note that classifying

children is not a neutral process, and risks unintended negative effects. For example, using the tool with teachers risked highlighting the difficulties of individual children, and co-creating a deficit account of the child. Furthermore, in a critical analysis of the WG questions, Dovig (2021) argued that the questions reduce the complexity of the disability experience to a limited number of dimensions, with little regard for intersections such as poverty, race, location etc. Addressing this concern, Quigley et al. (2018) argue that the questions are not designed to be used in isolation, and instead should be used as just one tool that contributes to a broader picture of a population. For the purposes of my research, I agree that discussion about individual children who had more complex difficulties (both during the WG questions and subsequent interviews) had the potential for myself and the teacher to co-create a view of a child which identified them as different to their peers. I would also argue that while responding to the WG questions may be the first time a teacher has verbalised their views upon the functional difficulties of a child, it also reflects their pre-existing opinion. However, I mitigated the concerns discussed above using a number of strategies. I avoided highlighting individual children by not volunteering a collated list of the children's WG questions results with class teachers, and was not asked for one. Additionally, involving all children over the age of 7 during activities meant those with disabilities did not stand out. Thus, using the questions provided me a way to identify those who were experiencing the most difficulties in the schools, when compared with their peers. More importantly, this was complemented with a rich picture of the local environment, school context and the intersections that impacted upon the experiences of the children and their families. Cognitive testing of UNICEF's Spanish translation of the WG questions (UNICEF, 2016) in Mexico suggested that the questions did not perform equally well when compared with the results in Spain (see Schoua-Glusberg & Villar, 2014). Knowing that Mexican and Colombian Spanish are also not identical, I decided to follow a series of steps identified by WG (2017) to create a Colombian translation. Prior to leaving for Colombia, I asked two fluent UK-based Colombians, with knowledge of education and development, to translate the questions separately, and subsequently, to comment on each other's translations. With many similarities in their translation, differences were mainly due to a literal vs colloquial choice of words. The final adjudication was completed by a Professor of Inclusive Education in Colombia (see Appendix E).

#### **5.6.5. Fieldnotes**

In addition to formal non-participant observations, I recorded ideas, thoughts and participant observations in daily field notes, typically scribbled on the two hour journey home, or when children and teachers were occupied. The fieldnote entries provide detailed descriptions of what was "said, done and observed during a research event" (Pillow, 2010, p. 276), with a focus upon capturing the context in which interactions occurred. Delamont (2016) described the need to write these up into a legible, expanded version, which captured not only rich descriptions of the context, but also provide a

space for critical reflection. As such, my fieldnotes also provided a space for my thoughts, emotions, early analysis, and questions (Berger, 2015), which were written in a legible form at the end of each day. Inspired by illustrated fieldnotes from Taussig (2011), I combined the writing up with drawings (see Figure 5.2 below), which helped me to process the events of the week and the feelings they had provoked.

**Figure 5.2**

An example of illustrated field notes following disclosure of physical punishment by a child



Having outlined the methods used with adults, the methods utilised for children are now described.

## 5.7. Methods used with children

The increasing role of children in research has resulted in a proliferation of techniques considered more child-friendly than those used in traditional research (Coad & Evans, 2008). Thus, while interviews continue to be a popular method for data gathering, researchers have also begun to incorporate visual participatory methods into their work with children, arguing that these increase children's scope for action and demonstrate their competences (Fernqvist, 2010), giving children more time to think and build their ideas (Angell, Alexander and Hunt, 2015). This section explores my reasoning for using a participatory design, before explaining how the sessions were conducted with children, and the rationale for the choices they were given.

### 5.7.1. Employing a participatory design

A central aim of my research was to involve children by privileging the voices of those with disabilities, as a form of what Tuhiwai-Smith (1999, p.234) refers to as 'writing back': re-introducing minority perspectives into research production in order to change the 'colonizing, medicalising and pathologising tendencies' of research which is expert led. Nind (2014) uses the umbrella term 'inclusive research' (p.2) to describe approaches aimed at challenging the production of knowledge



that sees participants as passive within the research process, to one where research is conducted ‘with, by or sometimes for those [being researched] ... and in contrast to research on them’ (Ibid., p. 12). Drawing on childhood studies literature, this includes children, who are considered competent social actors with the capacity to shape their own lives, the lives of those around them, and the societies in which they live (Percy-Smith, 2011). However, within the broader field of disability, Oliver (1992) argued that the main beneficiaries of disability research are typically the researchers themselves. Regarding to what extent participants participate in the research, critical disability theorists contend that it should be emancipatory, giving voice to, and changing, the experience of disabling barriers (Feely, 2016).

However, the notion of child participation has been critiqued for being a concept that derives from white, middle-class Northern norms and one dominated by the UNCRC framework (Stoecklin, 2013). Furthermore, Singal (2010, p.422) argues that there are ‘inherent limitations’ in approaches that focus on emancipation or transformation, when applying them to Southern contexts. Seeking children’s views privileges individual rights over a collectivist conceptualisation, which potentially has less relevance in societies that are more collective and family-based (Kalyanpur, 2011). Questioning whether an emancipatory approach was culturally relevant or appropriate in my research, the literature review revealed that there has been an increasing amount of participatory research that reflects the diversity of life experiences of children, including those with disabilities, in the Global South (e.g. see Brydges & Mkandwaire, 2016; Gregorious, 2016). Moreover, I was reassured by the existing EN child participation structures, including decision-making, evaluation in the classroom and termly committee meetings that include children’s action-planning. However, I was aware that the notion that participatory research empowers children has been problematised (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008), with the suggestion that an unreflexive use of methods underestimates the role of power dimensions (Horgan, 2017). Gatekeeping protections, such as ethics committees and adult permission to engage is well meaning and protects vulnerable children (Wickenden and Kembhavi-Tam, 2014). They can also be used as a means to control the process and outcomes, based upon adult agendas and design (Stoecklin, 2013). Similarly, researchers have questioned whether adults are truly prepared to listen to children who do not conform, or deliver messages that adults find hard to hear (e.g. see Thomson, 2007; Cremin, Mason & Busher, 2011). Consequently, it was important to frame children’s feedback within the existing culturally appropriate structures, while at the same time enabling them to have the space to be negative, through preparing adults for the fact that they might say things that were difficult to hear.

### **5.7.2. Utilising a multi-method approach**

Researchers using visual participatory methods have utilised a range of media with children, such as video (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012), photography (Kembhavi & Wirz, 2009) and drawings (Singh

& Ghai, 2009; Eldén, 2013). Furthermore, a number of researchers have used a multi-method approach in their research with children with disabilities (Wickenden & Elphick, 2016; Jenkin et al., 2017), which facilitates their communicating important messages about their lives in ways that do not rely solely on talk. Multi-method participatory approaches allow the researcher to engage children, responding to their interests and strengths (Clark, 2011) and can deliver a better balance of power between the researcher and child (Langevang, 2007). I used a multimethod approach that offered activities that reduced the demands on verbal fluency (photovoice, drawing), in addition to the offer of a basic interview – which I called ‘chat with Julia’. However, it is important to note that when working with children or adults with disabilities, adapting the tasks or environment does not mean I consider them less competent (e.g. see Thomson, 2007); rather that I believe individuals have different strengths and interests and it is incumbent upon all researchers to consider these to ensure that activities are accessible for all.

### 5.7.3. Children’s session outline

Having described children’s role in the research process, what follows is an outline of the session plans and the application of the methods used. Table 5.7 provides an overview of the sessions delivered, and a summary of their purpose in the research.

**Table 5.7**

*Overview of children’s methods and their purpose in the research*

School Week		Research Objective	Children’s understanding of diversity and disability	In-depth understanding of school and class contexts	Insight into learning and friendships
		Method			
1	Introduction	Warm up Consent Ground rules Child chooses methods Diversity photos	✓		✓
2-3	Drawing option			✓	✓
2-5	Photovoice option	Camera training Individual photos Individual interviews Group theme session Action planning	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
5	<i>Additional instrument:</i> ‘Who helps when I’m stuck’ option	Individual visual interview		✓	✓
6-7	Dissemination		✓	✓	✓

#### 5.7.4. Informed consent and choice of methods

On my initial visit, I introduced myself to the children using a pre-prepared visual poster (see Fig. 5.3 below) to explain my reason for being in the schools, with an outline of the activities I was offering and the importance of consent and confidentiality. Children then had all day to add their names to a large method menu poster, opting to do any combination of photovoice, drawing or individual interview, with an additional column for their suggestions for other methods. I subsequently spent that day building a rapport with them, playing with them at breaktimes and answering any questions about the activities I had described. While it is likely that the children's choices were influenced by their peers, as the process continued, I was reassured that children felt free to opt in or out, noting that choices often changed once they saw concrete examples of the method in practice. Consequently, I feel that using a menu choice was more powerful in terms of what it signified, beyond its practical application: it demonstrated that children had control over which, if any, activity they chose to participate in.

**Figure 5.3**

*Introduction poster used in each school*

Translation: Do you want to participate?

Your opinions      You are the experts!

What are we going to do?

Take photos, draw, something else

Chat with Julia YOU DECIDE!

Into a big document      Presentation by children?

3 important things

1. Confidential      2. Voluntary

3. Recording is for Julia only

Children had the option to participate in three visual participatory methods, which are explored in detail next: photovoice, drawing, and a later addition to the methods, a visual interview on who helped when they children became stuck.

#### **5.7.5. Photovoice**

Created by Wang and Burris (1997) and drawing on feminist theory, photovoice has become an established technique within visual methodology research (Boxall and Ralph 2009; Ottmann and Crosbie, 2013). Consistent with decoloniality, it assumes that participants are experts about the issues in their local context and should be involved in the production of knowledge about their setting (Wang & Burris, 1997; Bisung et al., 2015). The process begins with an identification of the topic or question of focus, before participants use cameras to take photographs on that theme. The meanings of their photographs are then discussed and noted in an open-ended interview with the researcher. This exploration of meaning and critical dialogue continues at a group level, when participants work together as a group to discuss the images (Wang and Burris 1997; Lal, Jaras & Suto, 2012) and identify how they might effect change as a group. The past decade has seen an increase in its use with adults and children with disabilities (e.g. Lal, Jaras & Suto, 2012; Ford et al., 2017), which includes research in the Global South (Joanou, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016). The method created a slower, more critical space in which myself, the translator and the child could reflect not only on why the child took the photo in that moment, but also, the meaning s/he attached to the images (Pink, 2013; Liebenberg, 2018). Moreover, it supported children whose verbal communication is more complicated because of their age, disability (Cowie and Khoo, 2017). However, while some advocates of creative visual approaches argue that they generate greater authenticity in the accounts produced when working with children and young people (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), Cremin, Mason and Busher (2011) contend that visual images need to be understood not simply as authentic representations of self, but rather, as a product of the task set and how it was framed. Thus, it was important that children's photographs were not viewed as entry points into pictures of some fixed, local reality and instead, served as sites for a co-constructed conversation (McLaughlin & Coleman-Fountain, 2019).

#### ***Photovoice stages***

The photovoice process involved a number of stages (see Appendix D for full description), which included:

- Camera training
- Children taking photos of what did and did not help them learn
- Individual interviews about their photos
- Children working together as a team to group photos into themes
- Group deciding whether they wanted to show people and/or make plans to make things better.

The way in which each stage was delivered is described below:

a) *Camera training*

As an essential part of the process (Kellet, 2011), a session of camera training taught the children the basics of taking and reviewing photos, before they left in pairs to take pictures of the things they liked and did not like in their school. A follow-up review of their photos provided an opportunity to give further coaching on how to manage the camera and gain some initial insight into their views.

b) *Main activity: What helps/does not help you learn*

The main photovoice task was framed using the questions ‘What helps you learn? What does not help you learn?’. Children found it easy to capture images of things that helped them learn, but struggled to photograph things that did not help their learning. Ascertaining that the children were struggling to capture abstract themes (e.g. noisy classroom), I added the idea that the things that don’t help us learn might be not only objects, but also, places, situations or other people to the task introduction. However, while some embraced this idea (e.g. staging mock fights) others – including children who I perceived were unhappy at school - still struggled.

c) *Individual interview on photos*

Having printed two copies of children’s photos (one for the child and one for the research), each child met with myself and the translator to explore the meaning behind their photos. For each photo, we began with an open statement: ‘tell me about this photo’ (Aldridge, 2012), before using prompts, such as, ‘Does it help/not help? How does it help/not help?’.

d) *Identifying themes*

During theming sessions I returned children’s annotated photos to each of them and asked them to spread out all individual photos onto a group table, before grouping them into things that had helped and things that had not helped. Having emphasised that it was normal to have different views, the children were then left to put the photos into ‘groups that are similar - things that this group have said help them to learn and things that do not’.

e) *Dissemination*

The most disappointing aspect of using photovoice in my research was the dissemination plans, which did not come to fruition in the way I had hoped. Liebenberg (2018) notes that photovoice will not create social change by itself, and there is criticism of researchers who use it as a ‘quick and easy replacement’ for long-term, ethnographic engagement in fieldwork (Gubrium and Harper, 2013, p. 73). Drawing upon critical disability theory, my aim was, therefore, that not only would the initial steps platform children’s voices, but would also lead to child-designed meaningful dissemination of

the findings, from which I could explore the ways in which they informed change (Latz, 2017). However, the dissemination plans were severely curtailed by a change in transport arrangements in the second school term. While local buses had a limited timetable for going into the hills, there were almost no return buses in the afternoon. Following the summer holidays in June, my permission to return using the teacher bus was removed due to a political decision only to allow contracted teaching staff on board. Not only did this impact on the visits to the two new schools (Schools C and D), but also, all my plans for co-creating dissemination strategies with Schools A, B and E. Having been unable to find sustainable, safe alternatives for travel, I reflected on how I could still ensure that children had the chance to have their say, but using fewer sessions. Collating children's existing themes and photos I created a poster for each school (see example in Figure 5.4 below), which served as a basis to discuss with children who they might to share it with and whether they wanted to create action plans on the issues they had identified. However, this was not ideal, given that my own lens will have influenced images that were intentionally or unintentionally promoted within the posters (Brushwood, Rose & Granger, 2013).

**Figure 5.4**

*Example of theme summary poster*

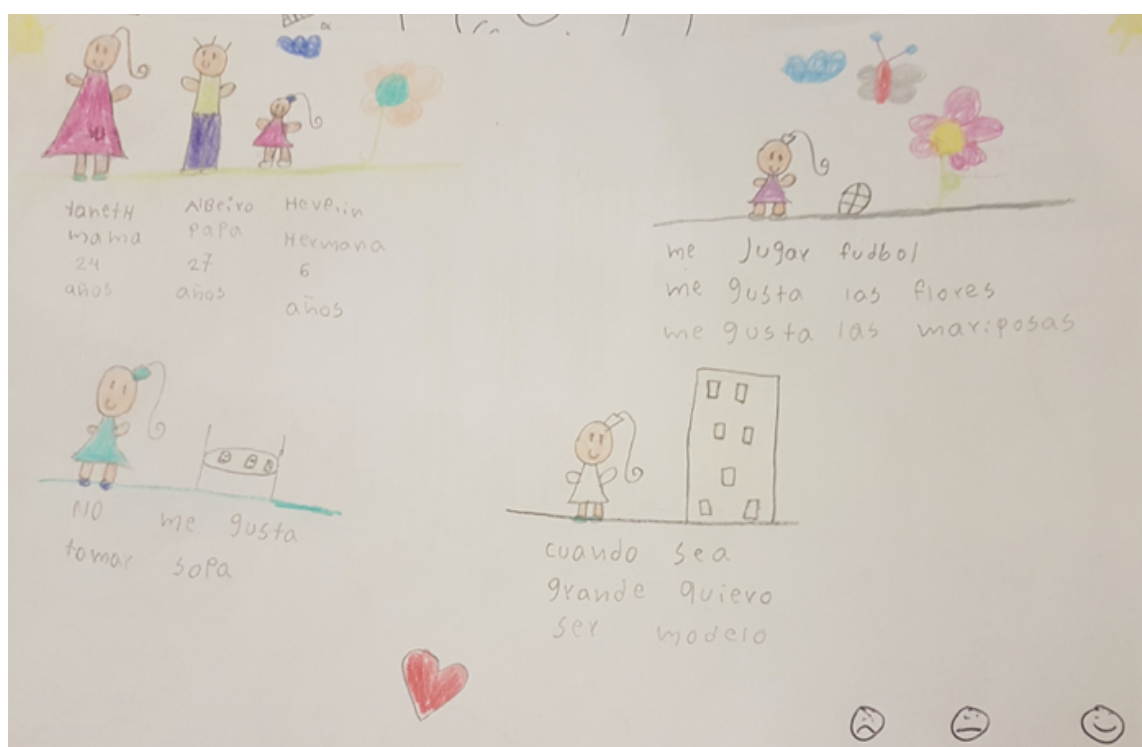


### 5.7.6. Drawing

As a medium that exists in the majority of cultures, using drawing in research with children is a common method (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Eldén, 2013) and has been used to explore a number of themes with children with disabilities in the Global South (in India, Singh & Ghai, 2009; in Vietnam, Nguyen et al., 2016). As illustrated in Figure 5.5, I asked children to draw three things: something about their family, what they most liked or did not like about school, what they wanted to be when they grew up and finally, anything else they thought was very important to them. Connors and Stalker (2007) argue that drawing is particularly effective for children with learning difficulties, as it focuses on the context of specific, concrete, drawn events, rather than a more generalised conversation, delivered at their own pace. I chose the method knowing that drawing is a common tool used in Colombian schools. However, Punch (2002) contends that not all children enjoy drawing, and it might not suit children with physical or visual impairments. I offered drawing as one option of three to all of the children. Reflecting recent shifts in the analysis of drawings, rather than analysing the drawing content for meaning (e.g. see Leitch, 2008), I coded what the child said about their drawing (Angell, Alexander and Hunt, 2015). Similar to the analysis of photographs, the pictures provided a means to enable a conversation.

**Figure 5.5**

*Example of a child's drawing*





### **5.7.7. ‘Who helps when I am stuck’ visual interview**

Through analysis during fieldwork, it became apparent that while I had an overview of children’s likes, dislikes, future hopes, insight into their social relationships and what they felt helped them learn, I had very little understanding about how they experienced addressing the moments when they found work difficult. Consequently, to explore children’s experiences of being stuck, and who they thought helped them in those moments, I created a visual framework that explored three aspects:

- In which topic they were most likely to have experienced being stuck<sup>24</sup>?
- Who would they talk to (if at all) if they were stuck?
- How did their peers, teacher and parents typically react when they were stuck?

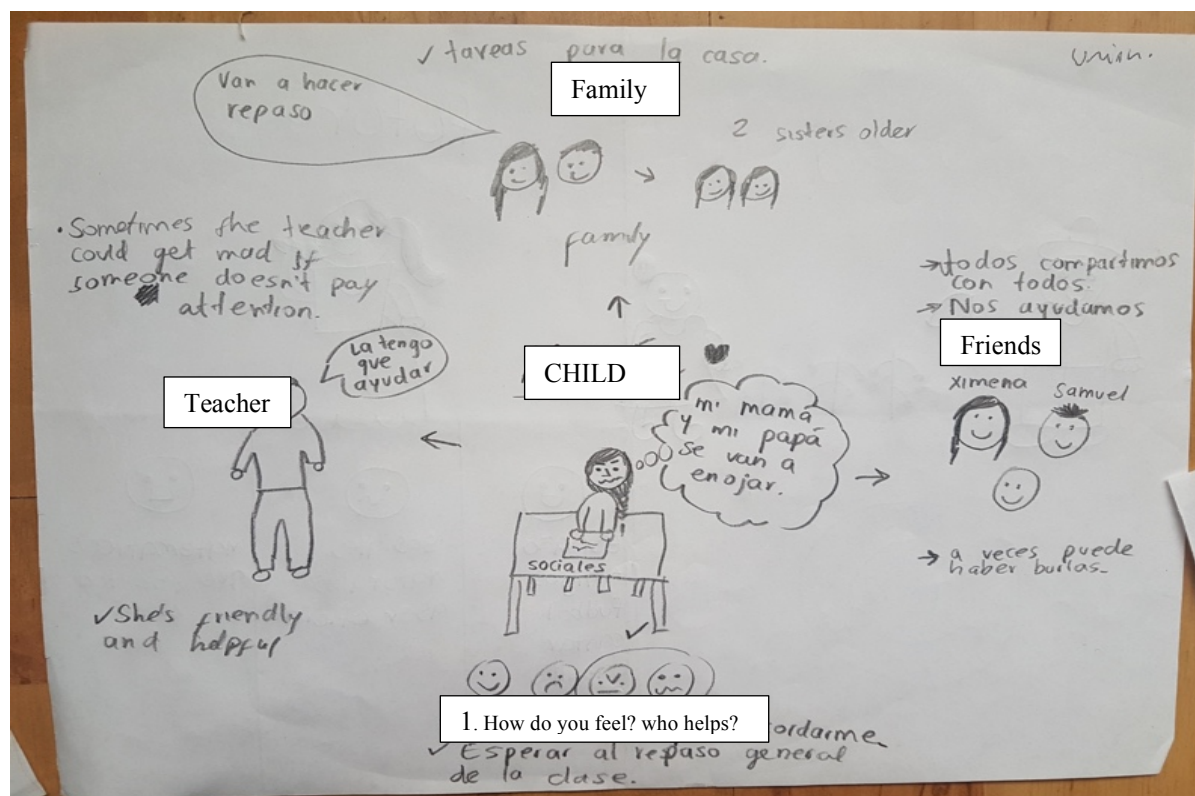
Conscious that not all children find it easy to express their emotions, Figure 5.6 illustrates how I drew an emotions picture face chart for them to point to. Having gained their consent to take part, some children chose to draw in faces, some drew people and some preferred to point to an emotion and have me or the translator draw. As the most adult-structured of all the activities, I was concerned that I was moving away from a participatory, child-led approach, but on reflection it enabled some children to express their views in a way that they had not previously. For example, one child who had found it extremely hard to explore what did not help his learning through photovoice, subsequently revealed that he frequently struggled in class, but would never tell anyone (including his parents) about this, because he felt ashamed, and that he felt worried about this much of the time. This was much more consistent with what I observed in class and enabled us to have a conversation about how he might seek help in ways that were not shameful for him.

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<sup>24</sup> The translator translated this as ‘te dificulta algo’. A literal translation is ‘something difficulties you’



**Figure 5.6**  
Example of 'who helps when I am stuck' interview



### 5.7.8. Views on diversity and difference

The ways in which children understood and spoke about diversity were explored through a group activity in which the group was given photos of children that represented different aspects of diversity (race, gender, disability, socio-economic status), and asked to put the photos together in groups that were the same. The way in which the children discussed the photos and the iterations of the categorisations led to a rich discussion on how they understood different aspects of diversity (see Appendix F)

### 5.8. Overview of fieldwork timeline

Figure 5.7 below outlines the planned timeline for their implementation in each school. My main fieldwork was preceded by a visit to Colombia in August 2018, during which time I met with the research co-ordinator of FEN and the Director of the Las Colinas schools, who confirmed my permission to conduct research with them. I also piloted my methods. I returned to Colombia to begin the main fieldwork in February 2019. The fieldwork lasted a total of eight months and was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved meetings to plan my timetable with FEN, the school director and teachers. During my first meeting with the teachers, I gained their informed consent to participate in the research and began the process of planning my timetable with schools. Combining teachers' preferences for my days in school and the limited local bus timetable, I began with schools A-C

before the school holidays, and finished with Schools D-E after them. Finally, I was able to present my initial findings to both the teachers, FEN and the local Secretary for Education inclusive education team, before returning to the UK.

**Figure 5.7**

*Timeline of fieldwork and methods used*

Month	August 2018	Feb 2019	March-May 2019	June 2019	July-August 2019	September 2019
<b>Schools</b>	Pilot of methods  First meeting with Director of case study schools	Gain informed consent of teachers  Fieldwork timetable planning with school director and teachers  Introductory school visits	<b>Schools A-C</b>  Observations Field notes Semi-structured interviews Participatory activities with children	<i>School holidays</i>	<b>Schools D-E</b>  Observations Field notes Semi-structured interviews Participatory activities with children	<b>All schools</b>  Presentation of findings to teachers
		Transcription of interviews, observations and fieldnotes				
<b>FEN</b>	Initial meeting to discuss research proposal	Research timetable planning with research co-ordinator				Literature review Interviews Presentation of findings

Having explained the methods used with both adults and children, the next section outlines my use of translation before describing how I aimed to ensure the research findings could be considered trustworthy.

## 5.9. Translation

Collecting data in one language and presenting the findings in another involves researchers taking translation-related decisions that also have an impact on the validity of the research and its reporting (Birbili, 2000). Conscious that the translator's identity and experience shape their translation services (Squires, 2008), I wanted someone who could 'represent the values and belief systems of the researched' (Robinson-Pant, 2017, p. 64). Bringing my first candidate to the initial teacher meeting it quickly became clear to me that while he may have been suitable at a technical level, conversations about his attitude to children and authoritative manner with teachers meant I did not feel that he would be a good 'fit'. With few translators prepared to travel the 2-3 hour commute, it was a further

six weeks before I found someone suitable: a 19 year old female student with a good command of English, who was excellent at engaging children and became a role-model to some children by the end of our time in the schools. Discussion with her helped me to understand her positionality better and while she was an ‘insider’ in that she came from Colombia, she was educated in an urban school and not in the local community. This risked her knowledge of the culture of the participants reflecting local perceptions of rural workers, and thus influencing the translations given, as well as reflecting local power relations between their respective groups (Shimpuku and Norr, 2012). However, her mother and uncle were not only rural schoolteachers, but had taught, and taken her to, schools that were much more isolated areas than the case schools. Hence, she had positive views about rural education, an insight into the challenges of multigrade and was not disconcerted by the location. As an untrained translator with no experience of working with children with disabilities, it was important to offer training before we began working together in the schools (Baird, 2011; Wolf, 2017). Drawing on the example of Singal (2007), we explored her attitudes towards disability and discussed how these, her reactions and facial expressions may influence what was shared. We discussed current and outdated words for disability in both English and Spanish (Baird, 2011) and I asked her to translate accordingly. Finally, we discussed issues of confidentiality and she signed a confidentiality statement. Paid for her time and travel, she enjoyed the work so much that she subsequently decided to return to FE college and complete her studies, which would enable her to consider a career in teaching or translation.

The delay in finding an appropriate translator had an impact on my research in two ways: first, it meant I could not have as in-depth discussion with children to challenge and redesign what I was offering, and second, I made a key decision not to use her routinely in teacher interviews. Negotiating meaning between people of differing positionality and understanding of culture, is complex (Wolf, 2017) and after six weeks alone with the teachers I decided that I did not want to alter the dynamic or balance that I had achieved. To support myself, I had already translated, and pre-tested key questions and probes for the interview, to gain extended descriptions and narratives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). However, I have less flexibility in my Spanish to bring a person subtly back to the question, if it appears they have diverged into another topic. Moreover, I am not always sure if they have diverged, or perhaps I have misunderstood. I mitigated this risk through audio recording each interview and seeking advice where I was unsure.

The final aspect of translation is how my experiences and interviews were converted into text. While my observations were mainly written in English, phrases and interactions between a teacher or child with a child with disabilities were recorded in Spanish. Similarly, transcriptions were completed in Spanish mainly by myself, due to cost. While the most practical solution I could find, I am aware that this potentially had an impact upon the extent to which one can claim that what I heard is what they intended, as it is not only what someone says that communicates meaning, but *how* they say it

(Robinson-Pant & Wolf, 2017). To mitigate this I sought the help of professional translators when I could not understand specific sections, or people had appeared to misunderstand me.

With the aim of avoiding the ‘ethical minefield’ (Wolf, 2017, p. 91) of misrepresenting the meaning of my participants, I present their quotes using literal translation where possible. Making the speech more palatable for the English audience goes against the decolonial approach that I espouse: I wanted Colombians to be at the centre of the knowledge production. I translated the quotes as literally as possible and for words where there was not a direct translation, I adopted a translation style of ‘conceptual equivalence’ (Birbili, 2000), and added footnotes.

### **5.10. Ensuring trustworthiness of the research**

One of the challenges of working with qualitative data, in particular, that derived from visual approaches, is establishing whether it is rigorous, valid and reliable (Creswell, 2018). However, the positivist research measures of validity, reliability and neutrality do not reflect the epistemological position of constructivist research, which considers knowledge to be socially constructed, rather than something objectively measurable. Creating measures that better reflect qualitative research, Lincoln & Guba (1985) replaced the term rigour with the parallel concept of trustworthiness. Within this they argue that validity is better served by the notion of how credible the findings are, and that, rather than reliability one should focus upon the dependability of the research instruments and tools. A further question regarding qualitative case studies, is the extent to which one can generalise from the findings (Tight, 2010). Addressing these in turn, Table 5.8 outlines the measures I took to address the trustworthiness of my research.

The credibility of my research was addressed through spending a prolonged time in Colombia, using multiple methods aimed at generating rich descriptions that ‘map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.112). Piloting instruments that were audited by experts in the field addressed their dependability. Finally, with regards to transferability, Stake (1995) argues that ‘the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization’ (p. 8). With no other available research on the inclusion of children in EN schools that use the approach consistently, it is likely that my study will provide the basis for future research on this topic. Bassey (2003) argues that it is possible for a researcher or practitioner to read an in-depth study and make a ‘best estimate of trustworthiness’ (p. 44) based upon its ‘relatability’ (p. 45) to the study context. Accordingly, Chapter 6 has provided a comprehensive overview of the case context, enabling future readers to make a judgment as to whether my findings are transferable to another context.

**Table 5.8***Overview of the ways in which I addressed the trustworthiness of my research*

Measure of quality	Key question	Methodological implementation
Credibility	How believable or convincing are the findings of the research?	Use of multiple methods Prolonged time in the field Searched for negative instances that contradicted emerging themes (Seale 2005,) e.g. views on EN and tools and children's experiences of school support Member checking during interviews, group feedback and post-transcription Local legal expert reviewed Colombian chapter content
Dependability	How far can the instruments and procedures used be trusted to produce credible findings?	Instruments were audited by my supervisor pre-pilot Pilot testing and subsequent amending of instruments in Colombia Translation of Washington Group and interview questions completed in conjunction with English speaking Colombians Instruments were adapted to suit context and needs of children in the field
Transferability	To what extent can the findings be transferred to other settings or groups?	Findings are site-specific, and purpose was not to generalise Aim instead to generate rich, thick descriptions Reader may use 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 2000) based upon similarity of my cases to future research contexts

Having considered the ethical implications of each stage of the research methodology thus far, a final section is dedicated to the broader ethical implications that frame the research process and practice.

### **5.11. Ethical considerations**

As a white, middle class, professional woman from a privileged institution in a Northern country, my positionality and identity make ethical considerations a fundamental of the research process. Without addressing the relations of power/knowledge my research risks reproducing the same ones that I sought to challenge (Spivak, 1985). To address this, my first action was to identify a methodological framework, design and methods that were aimed at minimising the negative effects of power on the participants and privileging their views. The second action, outlined in the sections below, was to address issues such as ethical codes and my positionality in order to produce a critical understanding of myself in relation to the research process (Cannella & Lincoln 2011) as well as to inform the reading of my findings and conclusion.

### **5.11.1. Negotiating access and informed consent**

Given that I am based in a British institution, I have to conform with the British Ethical Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2018), which outline a wide range of ethical considerations, including a number of responsibilities towards participants (e.g. working with vulnerable young people, openness and disclosure, ensuring they understand their right to withdraw). However, researchers working in Southern contexts argue that applying an ethical review process institutionalised in Western universities to research conducted in Southern contexts is inadequate (McMahon & Milligan, 2021). Countering the idea that ethics can claim to be ‘universal’, Tikly & Bond (2013) contends that Western ethical codes not only risk silencing indigenous approaches to ethics, but also, exclude the ways in which power is enacted in a number of ways, including defining research questions, ownership of data and who does and does not benefit from the publishing and dissemination of the research findings. Furthermore, when working in the field the underlying values and required processes within guidelines may conflict with local norms (Qureshi, 2010), leading Simons & Usher (2000, p. 235) to advocate for ‘situated ethics’. These encompass the local and involve continuous negotiation with the research participants and community leaders in each individual research project. By so doing the community has the final say on what is and is not acceptable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Consequently, the way in which I negotiated access to the schools and participants as well as ensuring that all were giving informed consent needed careful consideration of the culture in which I was conducting research.

Gaining permission for my research in the field began with email contact with the FEN research co-ordinator, who asked for a short summary of my research proposal in July 2018. Having discussed the proposal via Skype, she agreed for me to conduct my research, helped me to choose the case study schools, and facilitated my contact with both the pilot EN school and the Director of the case study schools. During my pilot I began the process of gaining access to the schools through meeting with FEN, who approached the director of the schools on my behalf. As the gatekeeper, he was keen to meet me in person during the pilot visit and asked me to come to his office, based in School A. During our meeting he informed me that his verbal permission was all that was required to be allowed to conduct the research in the schools, and that he was happy for me to do so, starting in the new school year (February 2019). However, on arrival in the country in the February, I was aware that teachers may have differing views and felt it was important for me to take a dialogic approach to ethics, which starts ‘with a conversation, rather than an ethics application’ (White and Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 284). To seek the voluntary, informed consent of the teachers, I attended a staff group meeting, outlined my research ideas and gave them a letter that requested their participation. As a group, the teachers told me they preferred to use WhatsApp to indicate their acceptance, and all subsequently messaged their agreement to participate, whilst also giving me their signed permission when I visited the school. On my introductory visit to the school, I spent time building a rapport with

the teachers and children and at breaktime discussed how each school wanted to seek parental permission. All schools said that signed parent permission was common, and so, I used a parent letter (see Appendix G). Interviews with FEN staff were agreed via the FEN research co-ordinator, and to ensure their consent was one that was informed, we revisited the voluntary nature of their participation at the start of their interview. Permission to use the content of my conversations with the University course convenor and Ministry for Education officials was sought following my presentation of findings.

Seeking informed consent from children brings distinctive ethical challenges, in that I needed to ensure that children, including those with disabilities, understood their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time. During my pilot, I created a large visual, picture based, poster explanation of consent for children (similar to the poster in Figure 5.3, subsection 5.7.4) and mirrored this with a smaller A4 version to sign. However, signing meant very little to the children, and I reflected that I was merely trying to replicate the adult processes. So, during my fieldwork, I not only began with the consent poster, but also, regularly checked whether they wanted to carry on, reminding them that withdrawing would have no consequence. Similarly, I was vigilant as to whether a child was giving assent, on an ongoing basis, based upon their body language and non-verbal responses (Cocks, 2007). Following the BERA guidelines, data has been kept confidential, and observations do not refer to the names of individuals. Children chose their own pseudonyms and permission to audio record data was requested in each activity, before being destroyed post-transcription. Only one child said he did not want to be recorded, which I honoured. Finally, my translator signed a confidentiality agreement prior to working with me.

### **5.11.2. Reflexivity and positionality**

A commonly advocated process for researchers to gain a critical understanding is the use of reflexivity, which involves asking themselves questions such as ‘how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis?’ (Pillow, 2003, p.176). As a new person entering a community of schools, I was a visible ‘outsider’ as a tall, white Western woman with imperfect Spanish, and, for the majority of children, the first time they had ever met a European. Moreover, less visible factors, such as my age, academic status, lack of disability and personal and professional experience all shaped and influenced insider/outsider perspectives of the research process and my relationships with the participants (McNess, Arthur & Crossley, 2016, p. 34). However, researchers have questioned the binary notion of being either an insider or an outsider, and the assertion that sharing characteristics with a given group is necessary or sufficient to be able to know the experience of that group (Merton, 1972). For example, Srivastava (2006) notes that the multiplicity of identities that both researcher and participants possess open up a different space, creating shared positionalities with participants through the use of ‘currencies’ (Ibid. p.210), which

can mediate the exchanges with participants. However, when undertaking my MPhil research I questioned whether the questions regarding reflexivity are sufficient to create genuine ethical research, and to what extent it changes the power dynamics either during individual interactions with others, or at a broader, structural level. Pillow (2003) criticises the use of reflexivity as a standalone, methodological tool, arguing that it is not ‘neutral’ and can be used to obscure power relations in research. Consequently, Sriprakash & Mukhopadhyay (2015) advocate a ‘second-order engagement with reflexivity’ in which researchers should consider ‘...how particular “truths” about educational development are produced through empirical studies’ (p. 232) and to be aware of the disciplinary norms and discursive practices of their fields, which are themselves politically mediated. Regarding which, I am aware that I am informed by Northern models of inclusive education and influenced by international models of disability, including the ICF. Furthermore, I come with pre-conceived ideas about what practical strategies ‘work’ to include children with disabilities in a British classroom setting. Similarly, the use of the TEACH observation tool brings a particular lens on how to record observations and make judgements about the quality of a lesson. I aimed to mitigate this by using multi-methods which aimed to gain rich description of context, asked for multiple views and checked out my assumptions during interviews and post-observation feedback. However, as a field which is so immersed within discourse and practice promoted in Northern contexts, I am aware that I cannot escape bringing a lens which will reflect some of that Northern bias.

Furthermore, I did not want my research to perpetuate the idea that solutions to creating a quality, inclusive education for all in the Colombian context can best be provided by an outside expert from a colonising country. Hence, it was important that I found ways to position myself such that I did not convey that narrative. Consequently, while FEN knew my professional background, I decided not to position myself as psychologist or international consultant when conducting research in Las Colinas schools, following concerns that this might lead to the perception of my being a Northern white expert who knows best – the very notion my research was aimed at countering. Moreover, in Colombia the label ‘psychologist’ denotes a medical expert who works in a clinic with individual children, conducting psychometric tests as part of a diagnosis process, and providing broad recommendations (similar to a clinical psychologist in the UK). In contrast, as a schools-based educational psychologist, I was not involved in testing or diagnosis of children and rather, focused upon practical problem-solving at the classroom and school-systems level. As such, I explored the nearest cultural equivalent which might explain my background, while not positioning me as an expert. I was aware that following initial teacher training, Colombian teachers have the opportunity to complete an extra year of ‘specialisation’ in a given topic (e.g. maths, Spanish). So, when speaking with teachers and parents, I described myself as a teacher with an interest in EN, who had specialised in psychology. Being alert to how I was positioned in conversations it quickly became apparent that I was seen as a UK-based teacher of a similar age and experience to the teachers themselves. Indeed,



this experience was the first time in 20 years where there was no defined expectation that I would provide ideas for supporting children, or even give an indication that I had an opinion. Consequently, on the teacher bus home I would often sit between different teachers who would discuss the children with disabilities with the SEN support teacher. Listening in, it felt both strange and liberating to be rendered invisible in a conversation that I would normally be part of. Furthermore, not being included was reassuring to me, as it indicated that the staff never saw me as an expert from whom they might seek an opinion, rather I was an interested bystander.

## **5.12. Data Analysis**

My research involved different types of data derived from various methods of data collection and multiple respondents. As such, the data analysis involves integrating different types of data into a cohesive account (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). The process began with transcribing the audio recordings of all child and adult interviews and sessions in Spanish and copies of the latter transcriptions were sent to each adult to check they were happy for me to include the data<sup>25</sup>. Thematic coding was used to analyse the data, based upon an inductive approach (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The commitment in photovoice research to try empower voices caused me to analyse the photos solely based on the children's own verbal descriptions from their interviews (Wang et al., 2004), and this same principle was applied to descriptions of their drawings, 'when I'm stuck' visual images and photo-sorting discussions. Using the coding program Atlas.ti ensured I was able to link these descriptions with specific sections of the images and drawings. Observation data (including both non-participant observation schedules and participant observation fieldnotes) was thematically coded alongside the interview transcripts. Fieldnote data which focused upon my reflections and questions were largely my opinion, meaning that they were used as a reference to assist in the analysis process, but not included in the coding.

Using the method described by Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014) the analysis process involved the iterative development of themes through two cycles of coding. During the first cycle, I employed inductive, open coding, where I looked for recurring patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013) and used words aimed at capturing the essence of what a participant had said (Saldaña, 2014). Initially, I identified codes specific to teachers and FEN staff (22 codes), children (16 codes) and parents (15 codes). The codes were broad and descriptive (e.g. teacher strategies, parents describe disability), which supported me in segmenting the data into mutually exclusive categories (see Appendix I for list). The second cycle of coding was focused on finding patterns across and within the existing codes, in order to identify 'an emergent theme, configuration or explanation' (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 86). As someone who best makes sense of information by presenting

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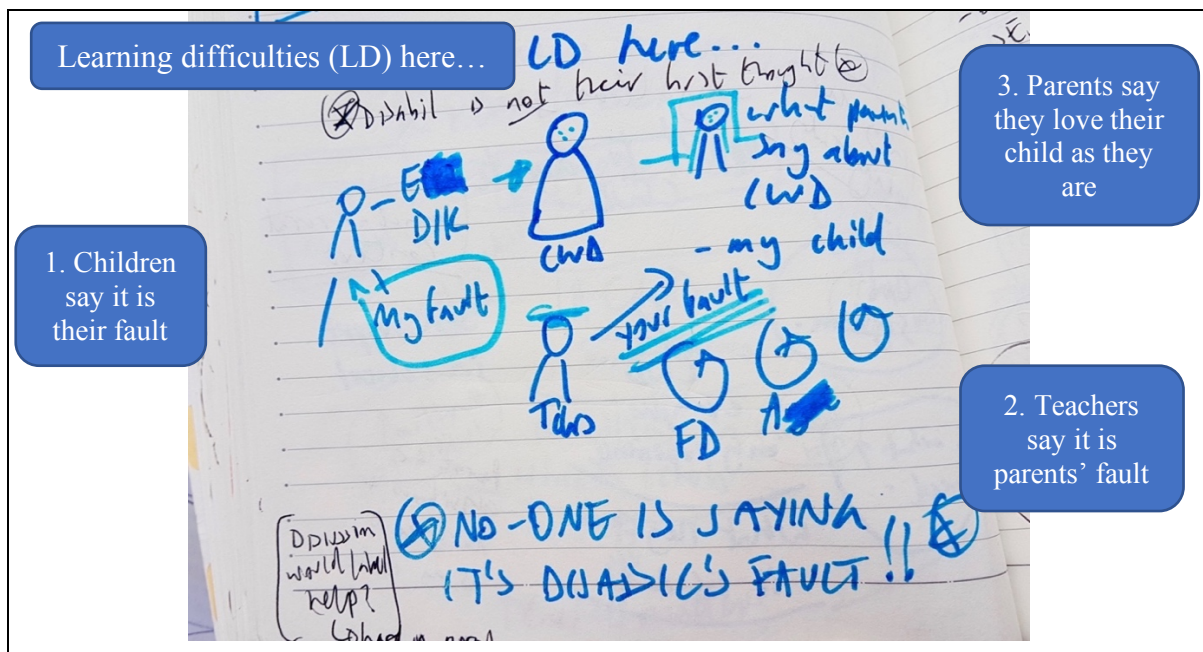
<sup>25</sup> Only one teacher replied with some changes, correcting my spelling and adding explanatory notes to ensure I had understood her meaning correctly.

it visually, I did not want a lack of skills in Atlas.ti to limit my capacity to reflect upon the data (Woods, Macklin & Lewis, 2016). During the second cycle, I made sense of the coded data through drawing a series of evolving images to explore the relationships between the main themes, and the patterns within them. I subsequently translated the new insights back into Atlas.ti by recoding the relevant quotes and relationships between them. This iterative process resulted in all quotes being located within 9 main themes and 41 mutually exclusive codes (see Appendix D).

For example, the illustration in Figure 5.8 below captures my mapping of the different ways in which teachers, children and parents assigned causes for a child's difficulty in learning. In this picture, I was trying to map out the reasons that were assigned to why a child with a disability was finding it hard to learn. This included drawing and summarising the responses of both the teachers, parents and the children themselves. While the arrows betray the blame assigned by individuals, the illustration captures the moment I noticed that 'no-one is saying it is disability's fault'. This important moment led to two significant lines of enquiry: focusing on the disconnect between parents and teachers, and access to the diagnosis system.

**Figure 5.8**

*Example of my illustrated pattern coding regarding the interaction between a child with a disability (CWD), parents and teachers*



A criticism of coding is the possibility that its subjective nature means I could have foregrounded aspects of data that were of particular interest to myself, thus potentially distorting the information to support my theoretical perspective. However, this critique relies on a positivist attitude to data, based upon the assumption that it expresses an objective truth which risks being distorted by subjective researchers. My constructivist perspective suggests that meanings arise in an emergent manner through the interaction between researchers and data (Creswell, 2018). From this perspective, it is to

be expected that a particular researcher's analysis of data will foreground certain aspects rather than others. However, in a final check I compared the codes with the original interviews to ensure I had not fragmented the data, and that it continued to reflect what had been said (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

### **5.13 Using visual media to disseminate research**

Central to my research process has been the use of visual media. Providing an accessible summary of key messages, researchers have disseminated their research using graphic novels (Sousanis, 2015), cartoons (Mendonca, 2016, 2018), animations (Rose & Flynn, 2017) and illustrations (Hunt, 2020). However, with damaging examples of imagery being used to classify and 'other' on the topics of race and disability (Ortega, 2013; Walton & Dixon, 2020), it was important to consider the ongoing ethical implications of its use (Robinson-Pant & Singal, 2019). Similarly, the BERA ethical guidelines (2018) emphasise the importance of anonymity when conducting fieldwork within a small, close-knit community (paragraph 41) and in the context of some visual methodologies and participatory methods (paragraph 42). Pink (2006) advocates for researchers to make informed decisions in collaboration with participants and in consideration of the contexts in which images will subsequently be viewed and interpreted. I addressed this by asking parents for permission to take pictures of the children in the consent letter (see Appendix G). I also included asking permission within the photovoice training with children: children gave their own consent to take part in the research and were given specific instructions regarding making pictures of faces, stressing the fact that they need to ask permission from another peer before making a picture of their face (see Appendix D, section 2). Following the research, I gained additional permission from parents and children to use specific photos in my thesis and presentations, explaining that these were likely to be seen by people who wanted to learn about Escuela Nueva, including University students and academics, FEN staff, teachers and perhaps officials who want to improve rural education in their country. This involved sending the photos to teachers on WhatsApp, who subsequently asked the parents and children. Through this process, one child's photo of themselves and a friend pulling a funny face was removed. Following BERA (2018) guidelines, data has been stored in secure premises, on a password protected laptop and encrypted databank, using children's chosen pseudonyms, with schools and staff referred to using letters and numbers rather than names. Data will be removed from the laptop and stored on an encrypted databank for 5 years after final thesis completion, and used by me only, for the purposes of article publication.

for 5 years after final thesis completion, and used by me for the purposes of article publication.

Finally, I wanted to ensure that the research was disseminated in both English and Spanish. Following the fieldwork, I won a competition to work with an animator to create a 1-minute video

that summarised the views of teachers in both languages<sup>26</sup>. While I was unable to collaborate face to face with teachers within the process, we discussed ideas and shared draft images via WhatsApp as the project developed. Welcomed by teachers and FEN, they subsequently shared the final animation with the Las Colinas community and their networks.

#### **5.14. Summary**

This chapter concludes Part 2 of my thesis, after having described how my qualitative research involved adopting a case study design. The methods and processes I undertook in order to pursue research that I could be confident was ethical and trustworthy have been explained. What follows in Part 3 comprises four empirical chapters presenting my findings. In turn, they focus upon understanding of disability, teacher practice, the impact of context and finally, children's views.

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<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the process and links to both the English and Spanish versions see the Lucy Cavendish College announcement here <https://www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/news/lucy-phd-julia-hayes-wins-cambridge-creative-partnership-competition>.

## Chapter 6: A narrative sketch of the schools of Las Colinas

To conclude part 1 of this thesis, this chapter describes the municipality of La Ruana before providing an insight into the lives of the people and EN schools in the catchment area of Las Colinas<sup>27</sup>.

### 6.1. La Ruana municipality

My research focused upon the five primary schools, which together, provide education for children living in the rural catchment area of Las Colinas, La Ruana. As the second largest rural municipality in the district, its location provides a corridor between a major city and a large protected national park. Passing through the urban hub and its suburbs, one sees the legacy of rapid expansion and population growth, and the area is grappling with many social problems associated with poverty. However, within 40 minutes of leaving the main urban transport hub one is transported to the town that gives the province its name. Illustrated in the photos of Figure 6.1 below, the area holds a long history of agricultural trade and is famed for providing drinking water and potatoes for the locality and major city, as well as milk, trout and fresh cheese. Founded in 1650, the small town has a Spanish-style church and one main street with a series of small, one-unit shops which range from restaurants to a hardware stall. Passing through the small town, the journey to the schools begins with an ascent into the surrounding mountains, winding past protected forests, freshwater reservoirs and fields full of livestock or crops. As an area that is split into 17 neighbourhoods (*veredas*), my research was based in the four most isolated, which border the national park.

**Figure 6.1**

*Photographs of the mountains surrounding the schools of Las Colinas*



<sup>27</sup> Both names are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of participants. Las Colinas (Pron. Las Col-EE-nas) means ‘the hills’. La Ruana (La Ru-A-na) is the name for the thick, sheep’s-wool poncho that is worn by family members throughout the region.



*Fig. 5.1 cont.*



Child wearing a ruana – a sheep's wool poncho worn throughout the area



Fields of potato crops are one of the main forms of agricultural production



Harvested potatoes ready for collection

## 6.2. The people of Las Colinas

To understand the nature of the five case schools of Las Colinas, this section provides an overview of the people who were within the boundaries of my case study. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the school population and class composition, after which, I describe the people and the schools in more detail.

**Table 6.1**  
*Overview of school population and class composition*

School	A	B	C	D	E	Total
No of class teachers	2	3	1	1	1	8
Class composition <i>n per class</i>	Infant 16 Junior 10	pre-school 18 infant 12 junior 16	Multigrade 9	Multigrade 16	Multigrade 4	
Total No. of Children	26	46	9	16	4	101
No. of Children with disabilities <sup>28</sup>	6	10	4	5	4	29
Additional staff	Director Learning Support teacher Family Support worker Peripatetic PE and music teachers 1 X school cook and security guard per school					

### 6.2.1 School staff

School staff included the director, eight class teachers and support staff. What follows is an overview of their roles and experience.

#### *School Director*

The five schools of Las Colinas are led by a male director, who has an administrative role, which involves him overseeing the schools and acting as a liaison person with the local education department. Prior to this role, he was a licensed teacher who taught information technology to children and adults.

#### *Class teachers*

All eight class teachers were female and their ages ranged from those in their 30s to those in their 60s. The three oldest teachers (School A infant class, School D and E) left school at 16 to do a two year 'normalista' course on pedagogy, whereas the younger ones more recent to teaching had attended

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 5, Subsection 5.6.4 for a description of how these children were identified.

universities to do their initial training. The early years class teacher in School B was a former psychologist at a special school who had transferred into teaching through gaining a postgraduate qualification in pedagogy<sup>29</sup>. Full details of their age and previous experiences can be found in Appendix B. All but one class teacher had received Escuela Nueva training three years ago, while School D's teacher had arrived after the training and received it separately. All the teachers lived in urban homes located closer to the major city, between 1.5-3 hours from the school. Teachers 7 and 8 lived onsite during the week and returned home at the weekends.

### ***Support staff***

While Decree 1421 (2017) was in the early stages of being implemented, the schools had a learning support teacher and family support worker to be shared across the five schools. The former had recently been appointed, having previously worked as a special school class teacher working with children with moderate-severe disabilities. Discussion with her suggested that she saw her role as supporting inclusion of children with learning difficulties, and her tasks included the following:

- Supporting the admission of the child
- Evaluating their current learning strengths and difficulties
- Working with teachers to plan support
- Providing activities for teachers
- Working with children individually, in groups and whole class
- Organising and running 'Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustment' (PIAR<sup>30</sup>) target setting process

Working alongside the learning support teacher was an 'orientador'. Translated literally this means adviser, but for the purposes of clarity I use the term family support worker. Her role was to focus on the emotional health and wellbeing of children and to address concerns with particular families. The previous experience of both support staff was based in urban settings.

### **6.2.2. Family composition and employment**

Of the children that reported their family composition (35 households), the majority of households (21) contained just parents and siblings. Three children were an only child, and the rest had between one and five siblings, with a median of two children (representing 15 households). As illustrated in Table 6.2 below, nine children lived in multi-generation households, which contained, in addition to parents and siblings, grandparents (six households), uncles and aunts and cousins (five households), and a mix of all of these (three households).

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<sup>29</sup> Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) described how the Government created a 'side entry' into teaching through provision of postgraduate qualifications for professionals in other careers

<sup>30</sup> Plan Individual de Ajustes Razonables (PIAR)



**Table 6.2***The living arrangement in family homes of children who took part in the research*

	Parents & Siblings		Parents, grandparents and siblings		Parents, uncles/aunts, cousins and siblings		Parents, grandparents, uncles/aunts, siblings	
Child with a disability (CWD) or non-disabled (ND)	CWD	ND	CWD	ND	CWD	ND	CWD	ND
No. of families	10	11	0	6	3	2	2	1

All but one child said their fathers were agricultural workers, with the majority farming potatoes. The majority of children described their mothers as housewives, with many adding that this included helping their fathers with the task of milking and fetching water for families that had livestock to care for. Three children said their mothers cooked food for local workers and the mother of one child was a school cook. The one father who did not work in agriculture was the school security guard/janitor.

A school trip to children's homes demonstrated a range of house sizes and facilities. Some parents had lived in the family house for many years, and the whole family lived in houses of up to four bedrooms, whereas others were 'arrendatorios' – working tenants who were provided with accommodation (sometimes rent free, sometimes at a cost) – with houses that were often smaller and more functional. As illustrated in Figure 6.2, houses were made of red breeze blocks with tin rooves, and the majority had either a log fire or gas-bottle fed stove, or sometimes both. Living in this rural area, interviews with parents portrayed a life of hard work for both mothers and fathers. All parents woke up between 3-4am and completed milking before returning to wake their children at 5am, prepare breakfast and bring them down to school for 7am.

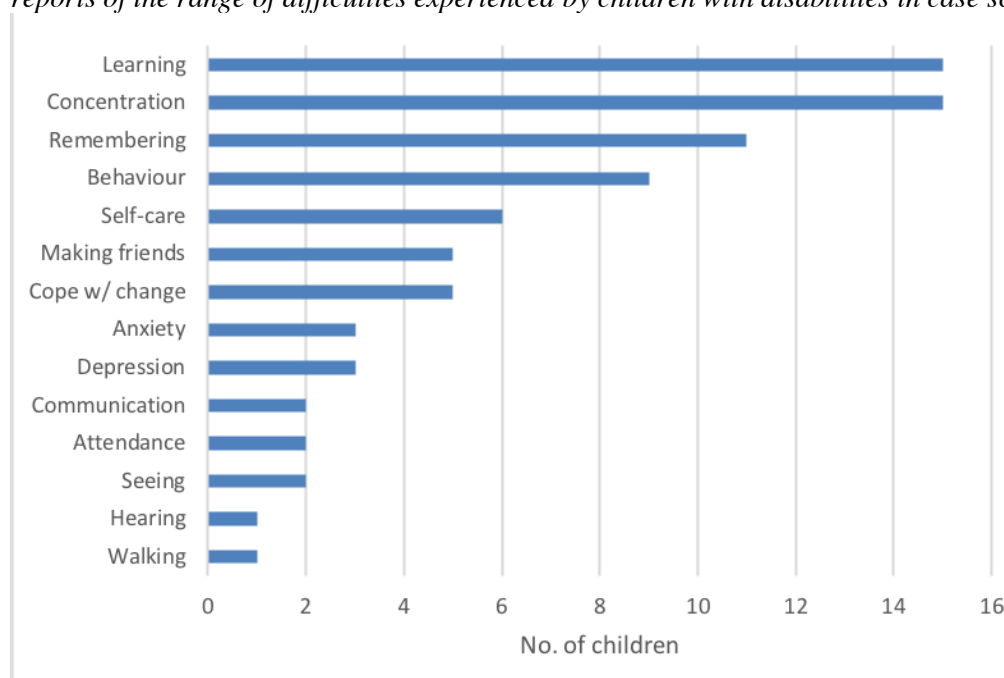
**Figure 6.2***Examples of children's homes*

### 6.2.3. Children with disabilities

My research methodology (Chapter 5, Subsection 5.6.4) described how I used the Washington group questions with teachers to identify the functional difficulties of the 29 children to whom I refer as ‘children with disabilities’. Figure 6.3 illustrates that this was mainly related to aspects of their learning (15), concentration (15) and remembering (11). Behaviour was identified as an issue for nine of the 29, followed by the difficulties of self-care (six), coping with change and making friends (five). Seeing was a difficulty for three children, which included one whose glasses needed updating. Physical disabilities included one child with difficulties walking and another with hearing, while anxiety and depression was an issue for three children.

**Figure 6.3**

*Teacher reports of the range of difficulties experienced by children with disabilities in case schools*



*Note:* Figures based on teacher responses to Child Functioning Module of the Washington group questions

## 6.3. Schools

Having described the area and people in my case study, this section provides an overview of the schools’ history and location. It finishes with a narrative sketch of each school

### 6.3.1. Background to adoption of the EN model

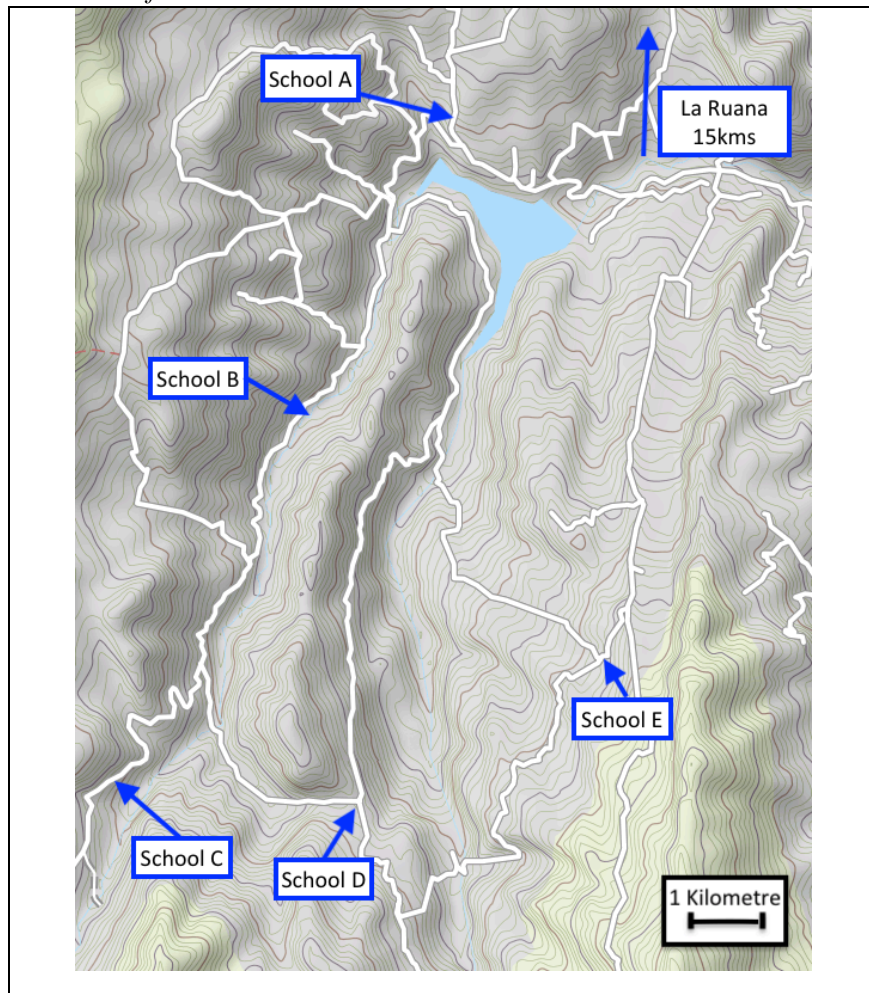
The case schools adopted Escuela Nueva as a model in 2016, at the suggestion of the director, who had been impressed with the model many years before, when working in a rural area. As it was not the main flexible model promoted by the local district, he approached Escuela Nueva directly to consider ways in which their schools might adopt it. Foundation Escuela Nueva wanted a group of schools near to a major city, which could be used to show visitors the model, and at that time the

schools won some funding for top exam results in the district. Thus, both parties capitalised on this moment: the director purchased the guides using the funds, whilst the Foundation agreed to deliver training and offer one year's support for training and practice. School B chose to become the demonstration school for the group. While FEN and the director remain in touch, the schools are no longer formally supported by the former in terms of staff support or provision of materials etc.

### 6.3.2 School location

The schools were located in a 10km square mountainous section. As shown in Figure 6.4, ascending from La Ruana, access to the schools came from a long, paved road into the mountains, from which unpaved roads ran. The first two multi-class schools, A and B, were located lower down in the hills, next to the paved road and within an hour and a quarter of La Ruana. In contrast, Schools C-E were single-class, full multigrade schools, with one teacher and much more isolated, situated between 1hr 45 and 2 hours from La Ruana.

**Figure 6.4**  
*Location of Las Colinas schools*



### **6.3.3. School facilities**

All schools were single story and made of brick. Each school had at least two classrooms, a basic kitchen and a concreted playground area. While supply was sporadic, each had electricity, running water and open Wi-Fi. In common with all schools in the wider district, each had outdoor play equipment, a cook and a security guard. Being Escuela Nueva schools, they also had a library area, toys for breaktimes, and resources for maths, Spanish and art. Schools A-C started at 7am and finished at 12.30pm, while Schools D and E taught from 7am-3pm and as aforementioned, the teachers stayed over during the week.

### **6.4. A narrative sketch of the schools**

As a multi-site case study, it is important to understand not only the things that the schools had in common – such as the pedagogical model adopted – but also, the details that help distinguish between them. Examining each in turn, the narrative accounts provide descriptions of the location, size and culture of the schools.

#### **6.4.1 School A**

School A was the second-largest school, with two classes: infant and junior. Located closest to the town of La Ruana, it had an office for the director, a computer room, an extra classroom for community activities and a bedroom for teachers who chose to stay. With strong relationships with the local community, the two experienced teachers had taught at the school for many years and swapped key stage every four years. Conversation with a member of the local secretariat for education revealed that the infant teacher, Teacher 1, was considered an excellent practitioner, and she was chosen to trial new early years materials during my time there. The school was located up a short, paved hill, away from the main road and situated next to a small shop. Used as a community centre at the weekends, it was also a site for community awareness raising events run by the municipality. Photos of the environment are displayed in Figure 6.5.



**Figure 6.5**

*School A and its surrounds*



#### **6.4.2. School B**

School B had the largest population, split into three classes: nursery/transition, infant and junior. Located alongside the main road and opposite a shop, the infant and junior teachers asked to be the demonstration school for Las Colinas, which meant it was committed to using the participatory tools, materials and structure and prepared to host training sessions and external visitors who wanted to see the model in practice. With relatively small classrooms, despite its class sizes, it had a large library/group work room and computer room that were used as break-out rooms. It also had a room next to the playground in which children had their daily snack on a rolling rota. Of all the schools, the three teachers had the highest levels of qualification. Each had a masters, and the infant teacher had been a former headteacher of a small private school. The infant and junior teachers were best friends and had joined the school together nine years before, having decided they would share the costs of driving to the school. The early years teacher had recently entered teaching as a former psychologist who had worked in a special school. Illustrated in Figure 6.6, it was lively, creative school which was notable for being a busy space in which children were used to learning across key stages and school spaces in their vertically grouped student committee teams.



**Figure 6.6**  
*School B and its surrounds*



Cross key-stage activities



Active school committee



School trip to a local reservoir

### 6.4.3 School C

School C was located the furthest away from La Ruana – 25kms – but set directly next to the main paved road, meaning it was accessible for local transport. At an altitude of 3,375 metres it was frequently cloud-covered, cold and suffered regular disruption to its water supply. The single-teacher multigrade school had just nine children, whose ages ranged from 5-11. However, like the other schools it had two main classrooms, a computer and library/playroom, a kitchen and dining area. It was notable that of the nine children only three were female and there were just 1-2 children per grade. However, the class had the feel of a small family, in part, because the class contained siblings and cousins.

**Figure 6.7**  
*School C and its surrounds*



#### **6.4.4. School D**

While School D was a single, multigrade class, it had a relatively large size of 16 children – of whom 8 were Grades 1-2. Like the other schools, it had two large classrooms, a large library/playroom, a teacher bedroom and a small kitchen. It was built next a community centre used for a monthly church service. Located 17 kilometres from La Ruana, to reach the school one needed to walk 3km along a sandy road, which passed through a valley and up a mountain. The class teacher was very religious and the children spent their first hour each morning praying together. Despite its relative isolation, the teacher was very keen to access services and information and she arranged meetings for children with disabilities while I was there. Due to its distant location, the teacher chose to teach from 7am-3pm and lived onsite during the week.



**Figure 6.8.**  
*School D and its surrounds*



Large mural on the side of the community centre hall

Learning corners and resources

Religion played a large part at school

#### **6.4.5 School E**

School E was an extremely isolated school, located at an altitude of 3,400 metres in the mountains, with just one local bus a week. The previous two years had seen a sharp decrease in class size, from 16 children to five in two years. This represented just two families, after the local landowner chose to hire single men from a poorer region of Colombia, to cut costs. It had two large classrooms, a separate library/computer room and a kitchen. As the oldest and most experienced teacher, Teacher 8 had been there for 23 of her 34 years as a teacher. She had lived there during the week for most of this time, wore a ruana and had taught generations of parents. The school had religious icons throughout, including a community-created shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Frequently cloud-covered, raining or windy, the school was cold and very quiet due to the lack of children.



**Figure 6.9**  
*School E and its surrounds*



A rare cloud-free day illustrates the high altitude and social isolation



Large classroom for a small class of five



Religious icons in the classroom

## 6.5. Summary

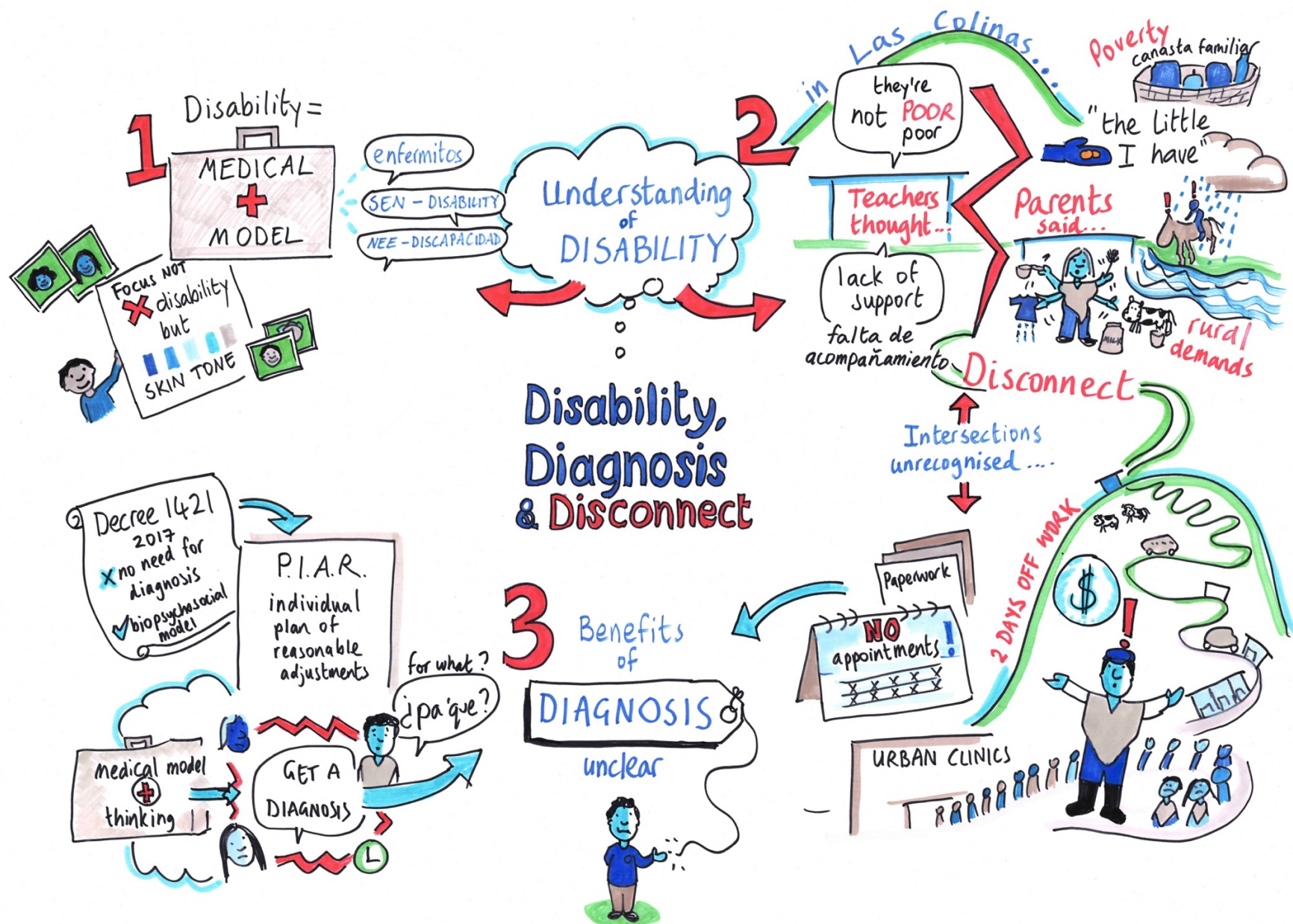
This chapter has provided an overview of the schools of Las Colinas, illustrating its rural location and some of the differences and similarities between the schools. It concludes Part 1, which has provided an overview of the Colombian education of children with disabilities and introduction to Escuela Nueva, before contextualising the research through a review of the Latin American literature. In the next chapter – Part 2 – my research methodology for the study is discussed in detail.

**Table 6.3**  
*Glossary of children*

Child's name	Gender	Age	Grade	Functional difficulties	School
Alex	M	10	4	Learning, remembering, concentrating	C
Ariana	F	8	2	Learning, remembering, concentrating	A
Adan	M	6	1	Learning, remembering, concentrating, behaviour, making friends	A
Baile	F	6	1	Physical, learning, remembering concentrating	B
Batman	M	9	4	Concentrating, behaviour, making friends	B
Berto	M	11	5	Concentrating	C
Burbuja	F	7	3	Behaviour, depression	B
Carlos	M	5	T	Learning, concentrating	A
Cielo	F	8	2	Learning, remembering, self-care, making friends, anxiety	B
Dulce	F	7		Learning, remembering, concentrating, behaviour, anxiety	A
Falcao	M	7	3	Concentrating	E
Florecita	F	11	5	Self-care, learning, behaviour, attendance	D
Gato	M	11	4	Learning, remembering	B
Gringa	F	7	1	Learning, remembering, concentrating, making friends, self-care, physical	D
Heidy	F	5		Hearing, communication, learning	B
Ironman	M	11	4	Self-care	B
Juancho	M	9	4	Concentrating, accepting change, controlling behaviour, making friends	B
Juanito	M	6	1	Accepting change, controlling behaviour	C
Katerine	F	7	1	Self-care, attendance	D
Lina	F	9		Learning, remembering, concentrating	A
Linda	F	7	2	Learning, remembering	B
Lobo	M	7	3	Concentrating	
Luna	F	9	2	Accepting change, making friends, anxiety, depression	C
Malefica	F	7	2	Learning, controlling behaviour, depression,	B
Nairo	M	10	4	Learning, remembering, concentrating	E
Princesa	F	8	3	Concentrating	E
Sonrisa	F	10	5	Seeing with glasses	D
Ternurita	F	5	T	Learning, speaking, making friends	D
Yolanda	F	6		Hearing, speaking, learning	A

**Figure 7**

*Illustration of Chapter 7: Disability, diagnosis and disconnect*





## **Chapter 7: Disability, diagnosis and disconnect**

Drawing on critical disability theory, a key aim of my research was to understand not only local understandings of disability, but also, to explore how participants applied this informally within their local context, and more formally, when children gained a diagnosis. The chapter is presented in three sections. Section 1 outlines participants' understanding of disability as a concept, before Section 2 explores how they perceive the disability and difficulties of case school children. Section 3 problematises the role of diagnosis and the PIAR process in understanding and addressing a child's disability

### **Section 1: Understanding of disability**

This section explores the ways in which the school staff, parents and children understood disability, and the terms they used to describe it. Providing insights into how disability and special educational needs are framed, these suggest that, while participant groups used different terminology, the medical model underpinned their understanding of disability as a concept.

#### **7.1 Participants' understanding of disability reflects the medical model**

Consistent with the medical model of disability, teachers, parents and children described disability with reference to three intersecting concepts, which are further explored below.

- Children with disabilities are different to the norm
- Disability as a physical condition (e.g. sensory, motor)
- Related to a lack of, or different, abilities

##### **7.1.1. Disability as different to the norm**

Both teachers and children made reference to children with disabilities as being different to the norm. This included six of the eight teachers, who responded to my question on how they defined disability with examples such as the following:

**Julia:** How would you define disability?

**Teacher 1:** Whether a child can do what other children of the same age can do.

**Teacher 6:** It's like a special circumstance that maybe makes their way of acting, or process of learning, or their way of relating to others different.

The use of norm-referenced intelligence tests to define disability was made explicit during an interview with the learning support teacher, who drew a statistical bell curve to illustrate her explanation, and split them into four quartiles:

We sent Nairo (School E) for a referral and he is on the borderline... those who are intelligent are *here* on the curve (*points to top 3 quartiles of bell curve*), and those who are at this stage (*points to first quartile*) are on the borderline. At this point (*points to line between first and second quartile*) you are 80, but if you are at 79 you have a disability.

Similarly, children described children with disabilities as different to them, using words and phrases such as ‘special’ and ‘not normal like us’:

**Julia:** And when you say children are special, what is that?

**Child 1, School B<sup>31</sup>:** It is when the genes or the mother and father come together and they end up like that – they are not normal like us, rather that they are special.

### **7.1.2. Disability as a physical condition**

Seven out of the eight teachers described disability as a physical condition that could affect either the intellectual or physical ability of a child. In contrast, children referred only to physical or sensory disabilities, and did not appear to associate the word with intellectual disability.

**Julia:** What does children being special mean?

**Child 2:** Like they are born and they only have one arm.

**Child 1:** Or their Mother smokes and then they affect the shape of their body and they get born like...

**Child 2:** With illnesses

**Child 1:** Without noses; they have big hands.

### **7.1.3 Disability was related to a lack of, or different, abilities**

Disability was framed by teachers and parents with reference to ‘ability’, especially by teachers, six out of eight of whom referred to children having a lack of, or different abilities. Five defined disability as a lack of ability, which included the following examples:

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<sup>31</sup> I have chosen not to name children here as this is a response on a sensitive subject that does not need to refer to a specific child

**Teacher 8:** Health is the opposite of illness and so, disability is like the opposite of abilities, in all ways ..., so you could say the opposite of, erm, the lack of ability.

**Teacher 4:** It's the impossibility of doing something physical or mental in order to perform an activity.

However, teachers also recognised that children with disabilities have strengths and abilities that should be acknowledged:

**Teacher 8:** Sometimes, people think that disability takes some things away from them, but then it gives them other positive things.

**Teacher 2:** Ariana and Lina have abilities in art, in speech, for example, if you read them a story, they are good, but in writing, analysis mathematical – they have difficulties, but not disability.

I chose not ask parents to explain how they understood the word disability, given that a direct question on a sensitive topic might feel intimidating. However, when listening to the way in which they described their child's difficulty, it was framed in terms of the things their children could not do (four out of six parents). Examples included:

**Mother of Yolanda** (*girl with a hearing difficulty, School A*): 'She doesn't hear well'

**Father of Nairo** (*boy diagnosed with cognitive difficulty, School E*): 'He has a little bit of a problem of learning ... writing difficults him ...'

## **7.2. Participants used terminology reflecting the medical model of disability**

The terminology used differed between the participant groups, but, again, reflected a deficit-based medical model understanding of disability, which located the disability within the body. Children across all schools referred to people with disabilities having an 'illness' [*enfermedad*] and people with disabilities as 'the ill' [*enfermitos*] in addition to 'special'. Terms used by school and health staff reflected their sector of work: visiting health workers referred to disability using current medical terms, such as 'retardo mental'<sup>32</sup>, whereas teachers reflected the terminology used in government

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<sup>32</sup> Discussion with the Director of the Downs Syndrome Association of Colombia (ASDOWN) suggested this is a medical diagnostic term, which, despite the similarity of words used, is not equivalent to the term 'mental retardation' in English. She argued that it does not hold the negative connotations of the English translation and that a more equivalent translation is 'learning difficulties'.

education decrees. Consequently, teachers made a distinction between two groups: children with a disability and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)<sup>33</sup>. Their understanding of the differences between these two are summarised in Table 7.1, before being examined in more detail.

**Table 7.1**

*Teachers' views on differences between disability and special educational needs*

Disability	Special Educational Needs (SEN)
Physical	
Permanent and unchangeable	Temporary, can be overcome with extra support
Different to the norm in terms of cognitive, sensory, social, mental (health)	'Normal' with differences in specific learning processes
Examples given	
physical, motor, hearing, vision, cognitive, Downs syndrome, social, autism	academic, reading, writing, comprehension, dyslexia, dysgraphia

### 7.2.1. Disability is permanent; SEN is temporary

Interviews with four teachers (two class teachers and two support teachers) revealed that while disability was understood as something permanent, SEN was considered a temporary condition, which could be overcome.

**Julia:** And is SEN different or the same as disability?

**Teacher 7:** I always associate disability more to do with something corporal, while for children with SEN it means you simply have to work with children using exercises, and you help them to make this condition better ... but disability? One has to learn to live with it, they have to learn to adapt to it, because it's not going to disappear.

Furthermore, SEN were seen as limited to specific processes. Regarding which, having described disability as a physical condition, I asked Teacher 4 if she considered children with SEN to be the same or different to children with disabilities and she replied:

<sup>33</sup> Necesidades Educativas Especiales, NEE

Different because they have no physical problems, and mentally they are all fine, but they have difficulties in certain processes. With SEN, it means you simply have to work with children using exercises, and you help them improve their condition.

### **7.2.2. Children with SEN are ‘normal’**

As mentioned above, teachers suggested that children with disabilities were different to the ‘norm’. In contrast, two teachers argued that children with while SEN were different in some aspects of their development, but they were still ‘normal’.

**Teacher 4:** For me (children with SEN) are normal, they have something in their learning that makes them learn slower than others.

**Teacher 7:** His vocabulary was so slow, but he was so fluent in his speech and he understood – so I say (children with SEN) are very normal despite having this condition, which delays their development a little.

### **7.2.3. Not all teachers agree.**

While the above represent themes in the data, as one might expect, there were teachers with different views. For example, one teacher thought that, while SEN were temporary, they were also physical:

**Teacher 8:** SEN is practically associated with the academic, the pedagogical, including the cognitive, and sometimes neurological. They are all included there, in SEN.

Additionally, one class teacher, a former psychologist, suggested that disability and SEN were interchangeable words and merely reflected a trend of changing terms for the same condition.

The findings thus far suggested that while participants used different terminology, all constructed disability as deficit-based and located within the body. Whether this same thinking was applied to children with disabilities in each school is explored in the next section.



## **Section 2: Understanding the difficulties of children in the schools of Las Colinas**

Having identified the ways in which the participants understood disability at a conceptual level, I wanted to explore if, and how, they applied the same understanding to the children with disabilities in the case schools. To place their views in context, in this section, I first explore how teachers, children and families conceptualised differences between children in school, and the evidence suggests that disability was not, in fact, at the forefront of the ways in which participants differentiated between children. Secondly, it is revealed that teachers believed the main reason for children not learning was a lack of support from home, but did not always take into account the issues families were facing. I finish the section by questioning the positive benefits of diagnosis for children and families in this context.

### **7.3. Disability was not at the forefront of way in which children in the case schools were framed by the participants**

While the focus of my research was disability, it was important for me, first, to establish how participants perceived differences between children in the local context. When asked to talk about differences between children, none of the participant groups focused on disability. Instead, teachers and parents focused upon personality or behaviour, while children focused mainly on physical traits, with a particular emphasis on skin tone. Examples from teachers, parents and children are given below.

#### **7.3.1. Teachers differentiated between children using personality and behaviour more than disability**

When seeking to explore what intersectional aspects of difference were most salient to teachers, I asked them to describe how children were different in their class. Six out of the eight teachers focused on children's behaviour, personalities or preferences, rather than referring to learning or disability:

**Julia:** How are the children different?

**Teacher 8:** Well they are quite similar. All are very respectful, likable, loving, emotional, and receptive to the feedback you give them, or whatever I teach them or give them – they are receptive.

**Teacher 7:** Their personalities are different. There are some that are more open, sociable, given to be with people, and very spiritual – I like this a lot because you must at least have respect for supreme being over yourself. They learn easily.

**Teacher 4:** Many of them do not have families that support them. Sky, she lost a year and got better, Bonbom – sometimes her behaviour. Juancho is a fighter ... he fights with everyone, authority he finds hard, but he's not like that anymore

Just two of the eight teachers referred to differences in learning ability, including their pace of learning and another to disability:

**Julia:** How are the children different in your class?

**Teacher 8:** In the learning process, we have Nairo, who has a cognitive problem and I have two siblings who are very clever – Falcao and Princesa – they are very intelligent but they get easily distracted, because of that they don't do their exercises on time. They need to concentrate.

Interestingly, other intersectional aspects, such as gender differences, were also not mentioned, and only one teacher referred to age, even though the wide range of ages in a single class, from 5-11 in Schools C-E, was a distinctive feature of the multigrade schools.

### **7.3.2. Parents focused on a child's personality and behaviour**

Similar to the teachers, when parents were asked to describe their children, they focused on the children's personality and behaviour, despite knowing that the reason I was there was because I was interested in children with difficulties in learning. For example, Juancho and Gato, two brothers in the junior class of School B, were in the same school grade, as a consequence of Gato – the older brother – repeating the previous year. Despite this, when comparing them the mother did not refer to differences in their learning ability, even though learning was the topic I raised:

**Julia:** How do the boys compare in the process of learning – are they different in how they learn?

**Mother:** Juancho is livelier, Gato is more focused, whereas if Juancho decides he is not doing something you can't make him do anything. So, no, they are the same, both arrive and they both care, and if they don't understand one helps the other; they are the same.

**Julia:** So, the reason for the difference in their achievements is because of (previous house move, mid-year) or is it more about personality?

**Mother:** Gato doesn't like to do what he has been told, so if he is of bad humour he won't do it. But he is more reserved, quieter. whereas Juancho? well, if he doesn't like someone he is very angry– he is of bad humour – he shouts and complains

Additionally, the mother of Yolanda, a 6-year-old child with hearing difficulty in School A, first described her daughters in terms of their behaviour before mentioning the child's hearing difficulty:

**Julia:** And how are your daughters different?

**Mother:** (older sister) Is very noble, too much, and Yolanda is very naughty. She doesn't take notice and she is very hyperactive, but she also says, 'Oh Mummy, you are so unfriendly' (*mother and I laugh*) and with her I have a problem, because she doesn't hear well.

### **7.3.3. Children focused on differences in skin tone**

A surprising finding was that the most consistent intersection of difference that children identified was skin tone. Having been presented with pictures of male and female children with various disabilities, different socio-economic backgrounds and race, they were asked to sort the photos into groups that were similar. Each of the six groups typically had a long discussion on how to categorise the photos, trying different permutations before coming to a consensus. In all sessions, children focused on grouping photos by the skin tone of the children in the photo at some point during their discussions. The consensus in three groups was based solely on skin colour, while all other groups discussed using skin colour as the principle way to categorise the pictures in the initial stages. Despite my choice of photos representing a variety of differences, only two groups used disability or poverty as a category of difference (School D and the junior children in School B), and no children grouped the pictures by gender. Furthermore, children identified similarities I had not anticipated, such as photos in which children were and were not smiling (younger children in School B). Thus, disability was not a key aspect of the way in which they described difference within this task.

During the group photo sorting task and my conversations with children, it quickly became apparent that their knowledge and experience of disability was very limited. Very few had heard the word, and despite reporting that they had seen people with disabilities in the nearest big city, most did not know anyone with a disability. In contrast to disability, skin colour was a topic on which children had clearly articulated opinions – positive or negative. In all groups there were examples of children laughing about race, be it laughing at the picture of the Afro-Colombian girl and boy or comparing the skin colour of the photos to children they knew.

**Child 1<sup>34</sup>:** Some blacks live in Chocó (*coastal region of Colombia*) and they don't have food or water.

**Julia:** But around here there aren't any people like that?

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<sup>34</sup> I have chosen not to name children here as this is a response on a sensitive subject, which does not need to refer to a specific child

**Child 2:** Hardly any

**Child 1:** Sometimes there are

**Julia:** Yes?

**Child 3:** Yes, him! (*points to boy in room with same ethnic group but darker skin than others. All children laugh, including boy*)

Furthermore, when comparing photos of the Afro-Colombian children and those with the lightest skin colour, two children described how those with lighter skin were more beautiful and had better future prospects due to wealth:

**Julia:** And the lives of children who have lighter skin, are you saying their lives will be different to these (*points to Afro-Colombian*) children?

**Girl:** Yes, they (*points to children with lighter skin*) are beautiful, because they are whiter.

**Boy:** They will have nice houses with a hot shower.

It was notable that in Schools A, B and D, children were more aware of not making racist comments than those in Schools C and E, referring to children who were laughing as having a 'lack of respect'. Equally, they explained that while people with a darker skin colour may be teased, it was important that they were seen as the same.

**7-year-old girl, School B:** While the skin is different, what they have in common is a good heart and the person because of their family.

**10-year-old boy, School B:** They are 'morenitos'<sup>35</sup> and I don't want to annoy, but people say they wash themselves with mud. So here my friend is morenito (*points to friend of same ethnicity but darker skin*), but I am *not* saying that he washes with mud. He's my friend and it doesn't matter to me if he was born, he was born...

**9-year-old boy:** White

**10-year-old boy:** ... or black, equally he is my friend – he is a child.

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<sup>35</sup> <sup>2</sup> *Morenito/a* comes from *moreno/a*, which refers to a dark-skinned male (o) or female (a) and the ending – *ito/ita* is its diminutive. This is a way of indicating that the word is being said in an approachable, friendly way, which indicates softness and/or tenderness (Moreno-Figueroa, 2012).

Thus, it appeared that a child's skin tone was a more salient way of differentiating between children in these schools, whereas disability, or differences in learning ability, was not something that was part of their experience.

The discussion of differences with each participant group suggested that, while disability was mentioned as one aspect of difference by some parents and teachers, the topic did not reflect a primary concern of theirs. However, this is not to say that teachers and parents were not concerned about a child not learning. The next section reveals how teachers were indeed concerned, but did not necessarily frame a child's needs in terms of disability. Rather, they focused on the lack of support from parents.

#### **7.4. Teachers' perceptions of the reasons why children had difficulties in learning**

Having asked teachers why they thought some children could learn more than others, I coded their responses and the causes they ascribed to individual children who they identified as finding it hard to learn. Their responses highlighted 32 children who found it hard to learn, of whom 29 were those I have described as children with disabilities, based upon the WG questions. The coding revealed teachers identified three broad categories of causes for children finding it hard to learn: lack of support from home, learning disability and the child's personality. Table 7.2 below illustrates how teachers considered home as the sole reason for children not learning in the majority of cases, whereas they assigned the cause as being a disability much less. The implications of this are explored further below.

**Table 7.2**

*Teachers' views on the reasons children with and without disabilities struggle to learn*

Reasons given for not learning:	Lack of home support	Disability	Child's personality	Lack of home support + disability	Lack of home support + child's personality
Children identified by WG survey (n 29)	17	2	3	5	2
Children not identified by the WG (n 3)	1		2		

Where teachers described disability alone, they referred to specific, visible impairments, such as seeing or hearing, as the issue that accounted for a child's difficulties. For example, the teacher of

Yolanda, a 6 year old girl in the infant class of School A, recounted the issues the child had in understanding instructions:

Yolanda is in nursery and her hearing problem has made it difficult for me. I don't know how to communicate with her ... I worry, because I don't want her to be behind in things, because it seems to me that she is bright, and it is only that for her problem I can't communicate with her and her understand.

Where teachers blamed the child's personality alone, it was typically poor behaviour that was being described, and the child was seen as reason for this. One could argue that this was just another description of disability, but in the coded quotes teachers made it clear that they did not perceive the behaviour difficulties as a disability or SEN. For example, Teacher 7 described a boy in in School C as follows:

Juanito is six, in first grade, but does he learn? Huh! It depends on his attitude. He doesn't want to do things, he says 'I don't want to'. So, yesterday he was too lazy to dance, to write; pure laziness, pure laziness. I don't think he has a problem with his learning or has SEN or something like that. It's more his behaviour.

However, the next subsection reveals that the most frequent reason given by teachers for a child having learning difficulties was the influence of home.

#### **7.4.1. Teachers identified a lack of support from home as the main reason for children not learning**

Teachers identified the home situation as the main reason for children not learning. This included identifying a lack of support from home as the sole reason for 17/29 of those with disabilities. With there being a culture that places family at the centre, teachers emphasised the importance of family, and the impact of a '*falta de acompañamiento*' (*lack of support*), citing examples of neglect of the child, family discord, not supporting with their homework and parental illiteracy. For example:

**Teacher 2:** The only thing I would know is that a person with a disability, the most important? the family is the central point of support... they might have problems with communication, maths and things, or something here that is a notorious problem, is the lack of support of the family, or due to the same level of learning that the parents have, which is low.

**Julia:** Why do you think some can learn more than others?

**Teacher 4:** Because of their family situation, problems in their home. They arrive tired or can't concentrate, lose time, look around. It makes them a little lazy.

A striking finding was that, where individual parents were named, the blame for this was mainly directed towards the mothers rather than the fathers, with reference to (but not challenging) traditional gender roles in a machista society. For example, one teacher was very critical of a mother who had daughters who she suggested were neglected, based upon their personal appearance and dirty textbooks:

**Teacher 2:** The girls are smiling, beautiful. The biggest difficulty they have is lack of support – well, their mother more than the father. It's our culture that the father, for example, in the rural areas, that the father supports them economically, he is very hardworking, but the mother no, beginning with personal hygiene.

However, the same teacher was more sympathetic towards families more generally:

**Teacher 2:** They, sometimes, err, at least, here it passes that a failing is the lack of support from families, for their homework, but neither is it the fault of the family, who have their work and their problems, who arrive late home and they can't dedicate time to a child who has homework and things like that.

Teachers described incidences in which their attempts to discuss their concerns with parents resulted in conflict. Teacher 7 told me:

Yes, what happens... the weak link in the chain are the parents, the parents. It's a lack of support. We say that children reflect the failings in their home, but this the parents don't accept. This is part of our culture that parents don't see themselves in this. Maybe there are some (that do), but the parents tend to blame the school.

For example, one school found a mother difficult to work with. They felt she was highly critical of the child, making him insecure, and had challenged her on this. In response the mother had said the cause was the school, and that her son was unhappy, because he did not like the teacher. To address this possibility they brought in the psychologist to work with the child, and the family support worker to speak with the mother. The family support teacher had a very forthright way of addressing parents

and aimed to tackle the issue. When reporting a conversation, she explained that she had suggested to the mother that she was to blame:

I said to her, that he loves the teacher, how she teaches, this is what he is looking for. But if you see that your child is not OK and it's not the college that you wanted, then try to be aware of what your role is ... this is a symptom of what is happening in *your* home, and with *your* husband. You have to manage *you* – your decision. *You* decided to have your children with him.

The family support worker recounted how the mother responded angrily to this, but that eventually she revealed that she was having difficulty with her partner and felt unsupported.

At first, she was angry and I had to calm her down ... because she has tried to organise her house, because she doesn't have support. Well when she talked, like, then she became the other and told me (her partner) is deteriorating and I said now I understand.

This example illustrated to me that, despite showing some understanding, teachers did not always seem aware, or sympathetic to the issues that parents themselves described facing, to which this section now turns.

#### **7.4.2. Teachers did not always appear to take into account issues that impact upon families**

While teachers criticised parents for a lack of support, interviews with parents and children suggested that families and parents were grappling with issues that were not acknowledged, or sometimes dismissed by teachers

##### ***Families have money concerns***

In a country with high levels of inequality, perceptions of what constitutes being poor is contextualised by large numbers of people living in extreme poverty. Consequently, interviews with teachers revealed that they did not consider the families to be '*poor poor*'.

**Teacher 3:** They are not *poor poor*, because the majority have possibilities or work, but *poverty poverty*? here we don't seem to have it.

**Teacher 8:** *Poor poor*? No. However, the Government are giving families a basket of food [*canasta familiar*]. The family of Nairo are the only ones who receive it. Each month they



receive vegetables, eggs, tuna, grains - not money. What is this for? This is so the children receive good food ... the parents don't have a job beyond milking, so (the Government) look at what they have. The family have work, but no property, not cows, not even their own house ... they are workers, they are milkers, employees.

**Teacher 4:** Some are poorer than others. The family of Juancho and Gato, the mother is young, they are poorer, they are in a little difficulty sometimes, but not deep poverty.

**Julia:** Do they receive the canasta familiar?

**Teacher 4:** Yes, various families do, but I'm not sure who they are.

While families did not live in extreme poverty, interviews with parents suggested six of the 12 that I interviewed were frequently worried about money. The majority of parents worked as tenant farm workers [*arrendatarios*], who are given the responsibility of sowing, growing and harvesting potatoes crops, while being paid the minimum wage of approximately £50 per month, if they work full time (which not all did). Families live in the house that comes with the land, and should the farm owner sell to another, or find cheaper workers, the tenants do not have any land rights. As one teacher explained, this made life uncertain for some families near to her school:

What happens here in this area is we have population floating because of what? because they are not farm owners, but farm workers – they are farm tenants ... for example there are three children here and they have been renting three years, and because the farm ownership has seen changes round here, they were scared that they would be moved out – and they are moving them out.

Accordingly, conversations with parents suggested they did have money worries. These included concern about finding enough money for food and husbands controlling the money.

**Mother (School D):** There are times when our resources don't spread to much, but what we have (the child) will eat. He watches TV, he plays with cars and dolls that I had from my childhood – we have kept everything ... we don't have internet – no signal. We are a little humble, so... you hardly work to be able to eat – the little that I have feeds my children

Furthermore, buying food from small shops in the hills meant that food was often more expensive, and parents were having to balance this with the extra cost of travelling to the nearest town and buying in bulk.

**Mother (School C):** In my case, we have money to get the big packet of rice, because here it's hard to get things to make your money last. If you buy a small amount up here, it's double the price. I go down every two weeks, although my father in law goes twice a week so sometimes he buys things for me there, like vegetables. Here it's complicated to get hold of food.

Another mother identified her main stressor as money. During a meeting with health providers she explained how her husband was paid every two weeks, but that she could not guarantee how much she would receive from this, for the family. This had put considerable strain on their relationship:

**Mother (School D):** What really stresses me is looking after my girls. It kills me. My work doesn't stress me. I ask my husband, that he milks, that he pays me something at least - I try to arrange it with him, to say can you help me? Because I feel like a slave, so let's do something, make an arrangement to share this work.

**Health visitor:** And does he help? Because many fathers don't! There are many around here...

**Mother:** Yes, he is very comprehensive. But when the fortnight is finished, and he is paid, and I say I need to know how much I can have to work in this, we need to work together – even 10% of what you have. It's working together - we have to work together. His father, these days we don't agree, so it's me that looks after the family – and the father, no. I am like a bitter widow (*laughs*), so is the saying. But this is how it is.

This same issue was also raised by one child with identified difficulties with reading and controlling her behaviour, whose father spent the money for her school materials on alcohol:

**Girl (7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties<sup>36</sup>):** My Father goes down to town to buy me a pencil, but sometimes he doesn't buy it.

**Julia:** Why is that?

**Girl:** Sometimes because he doesn't have the money, and I don't do (my homework).

**Julia:** So you said sometimes he can't buy them for a reason – is it because the shop is closed? Or another reason?

**Girl:** Because he sometimes drinks a lot, and goes up to La Ruana and he drinks, and carries on drinking and carries on until we have no money

### ***Parents find combining rural life and caring responsibilities challenging***

Interviews with parents illustrated the tough demands of rural work alongside managing caring responsibilities for children, parents and, for two families, people with a disability. Women and men

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<sup>36</sup> I have chosen not to name children here as this is a response on a sensitive subject

share a long day of work (up at 4.30am to milk cows, which needs to be done twice a day; long hours of housework, animal care or potato crop management, bed at 11pm). The majority of mothers I interviewed worked in addition to housework and caring for older parents. All but two that I interviewed either worked on the farms doing milking, or made and sold meals for local workers. They described this as common and for one mother, a life she had had since she was young:

The truth for me, I'm working on the farm all day and then the night until 10-11 every night to finish my housework and I accept that. I also have my mother to look after, but when I was a child, what I did? I am used to hard work. I have always been used to washing, doing it myself, being independent. I had to do it myself, because we lived in very hard circumstances, and that was hard, right? But I got used to it and I was washing and mending imported clothes, but I did it and so I want to teach my children that – to be independent.

A further demand on families was the need to care for children, or young adults, with a disability. The father of Gringa, an 8-year-old girl with complex learning difficulties in School D, described his difficulty in ensuring that not only was she cared for, but also her three siblings, all of whom had learning difficulties:

**Father:** We can't leave the girls there alone. Yes, they are big, but they are children. They don't work. The oldest girl she can pour milk.

**Health worker:** They all have a disability?

**Father:** All three and the others can't do anything. The middle one, she helps her mother and gets Gringa ready.

### ***Machismo and domestic violence***

A final aspect of life of which teachers were aware, but felt helpless to change, was challenging the machismo that is prevalent in the culture, and cases of domestic violence. I asked a support teacher, who had been in the schools just one month what had struck her about the area:

What stands out, most stands out, is the machismo of the fathers. And the issue that the children say their fathers hit their mothers, and that they won't let her study, and that the father made the mother cook.

Another family that struggled to meet the needs of all their children with disabilities was one in which a girl had disclosed sexual abuse by an extended family member. An interview with the family support teacher revealed that her expectation was that the mother – rather than the father - should

address the situation. However, in addition to caring for the girl and an older sibling, the mother was caring for her severely disabled younger sibling and was required to leave the home for three nights every week to attend appointments in the nearest city. Despite this, the expectation was still on the mother:

So, I said this to the mother – we have a sixth sense and if something is happening to my daughter, we have to look. And it's with the mother whether it is good or the bad. It's the mother who knows what is happening in her house, knows where the socks are kept and where the shoes are, in the closet, because I have to be responsible for this, which is my home, and even if I am working or not working, I carry on being the mother, and have to be aware of what is happening ... but many mothers aren't like this.

In contrast, a teacher in a different school recounted an example of domestic violence, and how she had supported a mother to address it:

A woman arrived and had two black eyes and I saw her and said oh your eyes are so sad, why? And she said to me (my husband) hit me, where is it that we should go? Then I was like my god! but I told her – go to the authorities and she went.

She noted that working in small communities potentially puts a teacher at risk, when they are trying to address domestic issues:

It's hard and the teacher is potentially at risk. I was at another school; the man was hitting the kids and they were quiet and distracted. I told her you must go to the specialist and he said, 'I'm going to kill that old woman (teacher)' and the girl arrived crying, but he preferred to leave, and he went, but she went with him and the two girls ... one suffers with them.

Adding to my understanding of this apparent gap in understanding between some teachers and parents, a relevant theme came from interviews with two of the FEN staff members, who volunteered what they thought makes a 'real' EN teacher. They made a distinction between being 'real EN teacher, with the soul of a campesino<sup>37</sup>', who lived in the community, as opposed to teachers who drove to the countryside to teach, but lived in the city and had the 'heart of a city person'. At the time, I challenged this, arguing that while all teachers had a city home, Teachers 7 and 8 showed great commitment and lived onsite during the week in very basic, cold, conditions. Furthermore, Teacher 8

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<sup>37</sup> The term *campesino* is often translated as 'peasant'. It is used to describe indigenous families who work on farms and have done so for many generations.

had taught at the school for 25 years, wore a local ruana poncho, and had taught the parents of the children currently in school. However, this section does raise a question about the disconnect between some teachers and parents.

It has been revealed that disability was not at the forefront of how participants perceived children's differences. Furthermore, there was a disconnect between teachers and parents regarding the intersections that impacted upon parents' capacity to support their children. The next section examines the way in which processes aimed at addressing disability directly were understood and experienced in the local context.

### **Section 3: The role of diagnosis and the PIAR in understanding a child's disability**

A key aspect of ensuring the needs of children with disabilities are being met is to know what those needs are. This section begins by exploring the low levels of disability diagnosis in the schools. I draw upon the stories of parents and schools attempts to gain a diagnosis to reveal that low rates of diagnosis result from the complexity of navigating a bureaucratic system, which does not meet the needs of rural families. Furthermore, the benefits of diagnosis were not clear. Examining the PIAR process, I argue that, while it aims to take into account family and school circumstances, the process was being framed using the medical model with a focus upon diagnosis.

#### **7.5. The diagnosis system does not meet the needs of rural families**

The diagnosis rate within the school population was very low: just one of the 101 children had received a formal diagnosis of a cognitive disability (Nairo, a 10-year-old in School E), and a further three were part way through the process: Yolanda in School A and Ternurita and Gringa in School D. However, school staff noted that this did not reflect the actual level of disability in schools. The learning support teacher told me 'we have children who aren't diagnosed, even though there is something, something', whilst discussions between the headteacher and the head of the secondary school indicated a similar problem. My research findings suggest that, while the schools had targeted personnel for children with disabilities, there were a number of systemic barriers, which impacted upon the ability of rural families and schools to gain a diagnosis.

##### **7.5.1. The system of diagnosis in Colombia is bureaucratic**

Following the privatisation of the Colombian healthcare system in 1993, the poorest strata of the population have received subsidised healthcare (Rodriguez, 2014), which is paid for using a pre-paid Government health card. However, my research revealed that the system is highly bureaucratic and does not meet the needs of rural families. The nearest accessible clinic for families was a monthly

surgery led by a general practitioner at the local secondary school (20 mins -1 hour away from schools). To seek a diagnosis, the subsidised system requires parents to jump through a number of bureaucratic hoops. It begins with the requirement for a GP to issue a referral in order to make an appointment with a specialist, which must be authorised in the local town. Gaining authorisation involves two visits: one to pay, a day in advance, using an electronic payment card as proof of their eligibility and the second, to pick up the authorised permission. Once completed, parents then wait for a telephone call to give them a date to see the specialist. The inefficacy of this process was a source of frustration to both the learning support teachers and parents alike.

**Learning support teacher:** The GP needs to refer to a specialist, but this has to be in (the city) and the referral has to be authorized, but the authorisation doesn't come automatically. You have to go and ask, then they leave you to return another day, and then you have wait for them to ask you to come back for the authorisation; they call you.

**Julia:** And the authorisation is for what, to go to a specialist?

**Learning support teacher:** Yes. Honestly? I feel this process is inefficient. It's a waste of time, because they are accessing health, which is a right, they need to authorise something which is a right. I think that they should take out the order right there, let it be done already – go to a psychologist, go! But well, it's all bureaucracy; it's the protocol.

This was made more frustrating by each step presenting further barriers to diagnosis, which are described next.

### **7.5.2. GPs fail to spot disability**

One of the initial barriers within the diagnosis process is that the GPs do not necessarily have the experience to recognise children's difficulties. For example, the teacher from School D had encountered this with two students: Ternurita and Gringa. In the case of Gringa, an 8-year-old with significant learning difficulties, doctors had not recognised her difficulties over repeated appointments:

**Teacher 7:** When (Gringa) arrived she couldn't speak, and so I had her close and trusting, with me ... And so she began to speak clearly, and so the mother told me that she took her to a doctor and the doctor said that she was totally normal, that she had good teachers and there was nothing wrong. And so we told the mother to go to a specialist, like, neuro paediatrics, to determine this - because the GP said she was fine ... and of course the specialists here who know – the learning support teacher - they determined that Gringa had a special condition, and started the process.

In the same class, 5-year-old Ternurita did not speak at all at school, but was gregarious and spoke freely at home. The teacher recounted limited, second-hand information she had from the doctor, which addressed the possible earlier impact of having a tongue injury on her ability to speak, rather than addressing the difference in communication behaviour between home and school:

Ternurita doesn't have a diagnosis, none at all, the only thing we know only from the family support worker, she fell and cut her tongue completely. The doctor said it would affect her language, but I think this is another issue altogether, that she doesn't speak well.

### **7.5.3. There is a lack of appointments**

All three parents with whom I spoke who had tried to navigate the diagnosis system noted that there was a lack of appointments, thus delaying the process. For example, the mother of Yolanda had received a referral for her daughter's hearing difficulties and had had it authorised in February. Having achieved this, she had been waiting for months for the hearing test appointments to become available:

**Mother of Yolanda:** The next time they are doing the test to work out what to do (about her hearing), and they gave me a number that I should call and I was calling and calling and they said there is no agenda, and then in May, I called and called and they said no appointments in May, and then in June they said you have to wait. So I waited and when I called about June they said there is no agenda until the 22<sup>nd</sup> - imagine!

**Julia:** No, how terrible!

**Mother:** And the girl is growing up with this! Even tomorrow my (older) daughter is going to go there directly and see if it works better in person, because calling isn't getting us anywhere ... this is the problem with (state system) and lack of appointments, I called to say we need this urgently, but (state system provider) said there are people who are more serious

Furthermore, not only were there few appointments at any level of the system, but also, as is common in Colombia, there were no appointment times – rather appointment windows, and as such whoever arrives first is served first. The system of 'first in, first served' is a particular barrier for those who must travel down from the hills, with queues starting at 5.30am in the urban section of La Ruana. With no set times, attending the appointment window does not guarantee one will be served that day. During a PIAR school meeting to review Gringa's progress, I witnessed the following exchange between her father, the learning support teacher and the visiting health professional:

**Father of Gringa:** I think it was a month ago. Yes, they said I had to do all the papers I say let's do it, but sometimes I arrive and they say come back tomorrow. Or they say, 'yes here's an appointment' and you get there and they say, 'no – come tomorrow'.

**Health psychologist:** If you go and tell them they will listen to you?

**Father:** Have you ever been there and tried that? I've done it. I arrive in the room 'please do me a favour, please help me' I say! I haven't got money for this and I arrive and then they say the IT system isn't working today and my health ID card doesn't work. How many times have I done this?

#### **7.5.4. There are hidden costs of transport and unpaid time off work**

Additional costs for parents of a child with disability were considerable, when it came to the diagnosis process. Living in a rural area meant most parents lived between 1.5 and three hours from the urban centres where the specialist clinics are located. With most parents reliant on limited local bus travel, the costs of multiple buses and unpaid time off work while they travelled, made accessing appointments challenging and costly.

**Father of Gringa:** They make you go from one place to another down there. I asked, 'can you help me out here?' They said 'no. You have to be there from 5am-8am' and it's one hour to get down and one and a quarter back. Here you can't go for more than one day. My boss won't pay out for that, they will pay me nothing. I earn 5,000 pesos (£1.25) for the milk, and the cost to get down is 8,000 (£2.00).

**Julia:** Where is the clinic?

**Mother of Yolanda:** It is in (the city, 2.5 hours away). We have to get the ruta bus, which is 9,000 pesos until La Ruana (town) and then 2,000 for the urban buses to (urban hub), and we have to go together. It can be that you arrive and then they turn you away at the door. We went and Yolanda was crying, and waiting, and we were asking and asking shouting, because we can't afford to keep going and coming back.

#### **7.6. Bypassing the state system risks future costs**

In seeking to overcome the lack of appointments and convoluted process, Nairo's family had turned turn to a private provider and gained a diagnosis, following a wait of over a year. Arranged by the ex-learning support teacher this had seemed like a success at the time: there were fewer appointments, which meant it was technically cheaper, and the family had circumvented the delays. However, going private meant that the follow up appointments and therapies would also have a charge, leading to the parents not attending:



**Mother:** We got the diagnosis in second grade, they told us that we should take him to therapies, but we didn't manage it – we didn't have money.

**Julia:** But why did it cost money?

**Mother:** (The learning support teacher) got us the appointment privately for the diagnosis, and this cost 50,000 pesos (£12).

**Julia:** And the therapies?

**Mother:** Well, they said we would have to pay, and with these and the transport? this is not possible.

Thus, parents faced a highly bureaucratic system and complicated set of processes which did not acknowledge or address their rural context. Furthermore, this caused stress for both parents and teachers. Building upon this, the next subsection outlines how these findings led me to question the purpose of diagnosis in the setting.

### **7.7. Diagnosis: for whom does it make a difference?**

Having identified the time and energy both parents and the school had invested in trying to gain a diagnosis for each child, by the end of my time in schools I began to question the relevance of a diagnosis for the families, and whose needs were served by having one. Examining the experiences of four parents revealed that the benefits that a diagnosis might bring were very different, according to the need that the child had. For example, Yolanda's Mother was keen to gain a diagnosis for her hearing difficulties, in the hope it might lead to hearing aids, if the parents could find a charitable body that would pay. In contrast, pressure was being put onto Gringa's father to gain a diagnosis, while he could see no benefit in this:

**Julia:** If it comes out well, all the appointments and we have a diagnosis – does that change what happens?

**Father of Gringa:** No, it changes nothing!

**Learning support teacher:** For education, yes, because she is in the system, and belongs where there is inclusion, but in terms of what we do here? No, she will have the same support; the dynamic is the same. It's more for the protocols of the Secretary for Education

**Julia:** But the parents don't get any more support?

**Father:** No, we are not given anything. So I do all this for what?

My questions regarding the benefit of diagnosis also extended to the one child who had one: Nairo (School E). He was first identified as being behind the learning level of his peers when he was 7-

years-old. At this stage, his teacher asked the learning support teacher to become involved and work with the parents. Reflecting the frustrations of other parents, there were numerous difficulties in accessing an appointment with the local doctor before they gained permission to see a specialist. However, after eight months of no specialist appointments being available the parents were encouraged by the previous learning support teacher to bypass the state system, and agreed to pay for a private assessment, which resulted in a multi-agency assessment. Based upon the results of the WISC (Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children) psychological test, Nairo was described as having an IQ of 75. The report suggested that he was on the ‘cognitive development and functioning borderline with regards to what is expected for his age and schooling’, and confirming that he had a ‘cognitive difficulty’ [*déficit cognitivo*]. However, the impact of the diagnosis appeared to be quite limited in practice for the following reasons.

#### **7.7.1. The health-based diagnosis process does not link with schools**

In all of the conversations around diagnosis, and accessing the process, it was notable that this was positioned as a medical process external to schools, into which school staff had no input. Recommendations from Nairo’s diagnosis report included weekly appointments for rehabilitation therapies (occupational therapy, speech therapy), while for the parents, it suggested they were positive with him, that they provide a place in the home that was free of distractions and gave him snacks as rewards for finishing his homework. For the school, it recommended they give him simple texts to read and games to promote his reading skills. Moreover, he should be exposed to visual and physical means of learning and be given extra time to complete tasks. A final recommendation suggested he return for an updated assessment in a year’s time. With regard to communication between the school staff and city psychologist, there was no expectation that they would be in contact, according to the school staff. Thus, it was an isolated one-off process, rather than something that had brought people together or guided practice in school or the home.

#### **7.7.2. The diagnosis does not help the parents, teacher or child better understand a child’s difficulties**

Interviews with the teacher, parents and Nairo suggested that the diagnosis itself was largely irrelevant in terms of how they understood him. The day I requested to see the 2-year-old assessment document, the teacher said it was the first time she had seen it. She described Nairo as having a ‘mental laziness’ and suggested that it was a result of the parents lack of education and attention towards him:

**Julia:** And how are his parents? Do they help him?

**Teacher 8:** No, it's because of the studies that they have had. For example, the father was with me until only to the end of Second Grade. The mother studied until Sixth Grade, I think, but despite this until then they hadn't put much attention on him, either of them.

Nairo's parents told me that they had considered the diagnosis appointment as a positive event, in that it led to him talking to his parents more about his struggles at school at that time, but the diagnosis itself was no longer considered relevant to them or himself.

**Julia:** When he received his diagnosis, how did you feel?

**Mother of Nairo:** Well, they said to give them more care, more attention, and help them.

**Father of Nairo:** Before that we didn't know.

**Mother:** Nairo was quieter, he said nothing. The teacher would tell him off, but he wouldn't tell us. But after the appointment, if there were any difficulties, he would tell us.

**Julia:** Does he know he has a diagnosis?

**Mother:** For him it doesn't mean anything. He knows that to go to the psychologist was a support, a help, because with us he changed, he would tell us what was happening after that.

**Julia:** And what did the psychologist do that made it better?

**Mother:** There was one, but I can't remember what it was.

Neither did Nairo's younger brother, Lobo, consider his brother as one who struggled with learning – rather, he saw his older brother as smarter than him, based on his age:

**Julia:** And who finds homework easier?

**Lobo:** My brother...because he learns quicker than me...he is 10.

What most struck me was that Nairo himself did not consider the diagnosis a reason for why he found learning difficult. He did not know why he found it hard to learn and blamed himself for not paying attention.

**Nairo:** When a thing difficults me I feel desperate, like I will never understand and I won't be able to go out for break.

**Julia:** and what difficults you? (*I meant which subject*)

**Nairo:** It is that I don't pay attention to the things. I've always been like this, I don't know why.

**Julia:** So do you think that it is your own fault that this happens?

**Nairo:** Yes

Thus, while the diagnosis had been helpful in improving the relationships between Nairo and his parents around the time of its happening, it had no discernible effect on how they, or he, understood his difficulties. This finding, along with the experiences of other parents, raised questions regarding the suitability of the systems for rural parents and the benefit of diagnosis in this setting. This issue provides an interesting context for the implementation of Decree 1421 and the PIAR - a process that does not require a diagnosis. Explored next, it had the potential to take a more holistic approach to children's needs.

### 7.8. The PIAR process was framed using the medical model of disability

A relatively recent innovation that resulted from Decree 1421 is for children with SEN and disabilities to have an 'Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments' (PIAR). In an attempt to move away from the medical model, the PIAR does not require a diagnosis to establish a support plan for children. It aims to bring together the family and agencies to create targets for the child, along with strategies to support her/him in class and at home. The learning support teacher explained its aim was to record the learning strategies used, ensuring that when they transition to another school the information is ready for the next teacher:

The idea of the PIAR if there is a child in the locality, this goes with the child. It will arrive at the next school and carry on being delivered, because what happened to us previously was that I, as educator, was very independent in how I taught, but then they went to the next school and they did something different, done in a different way, and so each time they moved it was as if before, starting again – so through this we have had the opportunity to systematise it a little, for everyone at district level to speak the same language and focus upon, project the child, adapt their work at the cognitive level. This is basically the role.

Seven children were in receipt of a PIAR, as depicted in Table 7.3 below:

**Table 7.3**

*The number and names of children with an Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments (PIAR)*

School	A	B	C	D	E
No. of children with a PIAR	3	1		2	1
Name of child with PIAR (area of concern)	Dulce learning  Ariana Lina learning	Heidy querying autism		Gringa learning  Ternurita communication	Nairo learning

When I asked her how she chose the children, she described speaking with each teacher to identify those who they had concerns about, and then, undertaking an evaluation to identify areas of need before giving suggestions for their practice. She gave me the example of Gringa:

From the start, we came up with a plan in which we gave ideas to the teacher to work with the girl. It's where we meet, come up with ideas and have a plan: the teacher will do XYZ. Or recommendations, we make a commitment and sign things, like advice on how to work, do it like this. So, I use these to ask how she is doing with this, this and this.

I had the opportunity to observe PIAR meetings for the three children with the most complex needs: Gringa and Ternurita in School D, and Nairo in School E. The meetings brought together the learning support teacher, parents and, sometimes, outside agencies, to plan how they might support the child. However, despite the fact that the PIAR process aims to move away from a medical model, it was notable that both the paperwork and discourse focused upon deficit accounts of the child. Moreover, it was being used as a vehicle to access medical diagnosis services. As described above, Gringa's father was weary of navigating a system after three previous attempts with his older children and could not see any benefit in gaining a diagnosis. Despite this, there was repeated pressure on him during the PIAR meeting to overcome the systemic barriers that he faced. For example, during the meeting he had to defend the efforts he had been making:

**Learning support teacher:** You've got to manage this.

**Father:** I do manage it – how many times have they told me there is no appointment? I have to sacrifice [*use*] a horse to get there, have no lunch, got to milk and I finish at 8am then I get there and they say 'no'. What can I say? You must attend to me?

**Learning support teacher:** Yes, (*sighs*) it *is* complicated.

Similarly, during the meeting I observed, Nairo's parents were told that they should re-initiate their diagnosis process to ensure he accessed recommended therapies, even though they had explained that they could neither afford this nor travel to the major city to receive this on a weekly basis.

In contrast, one benefit that I observed during the months of fieldwork was that the PIAR process and prospect of a possible diagnosis did result in better communication and relationships between a teacher and a parent, over time. Ternurita, a 5-year-old girl in School D, had a complex communication difficulty, in that at school she would not speak, and was extremely passive. The class teacher reported her concerns, noting that she moved incredibly slowly, 'as if in a trance'. My observations of her confirmed this, with the child sitting quietly at her table, not engaging with others,

sitting passively until the teacher encouraged her to pick up her pencil. Once the teacher left, she placed it down again, slowly, and stared into space. The possibility of autism had been raised by staff, but the teacher felt that one could not know this until there had been a cognitive test. She initially focused upon the cause as being a lack of discipline in the home:

In my opinion, it's poor child development<sup>38</sup>. I haven't been to the home, but I'm told they let her do whatever she likes. They are not strict, and so in the house she can do what she wants. She might have a cognitive problem, but this can only be known by a test ... it could also be the lack of a father – this has a big influence. What happens in the house she is very spoiled, over protected.

However, during my time at the school the class teacher recounted a meeting with the parent that had completely transformed her view. She had met with the parent to explain that the child was not engaging with any task, and sought the parent's view on what Ternurita liked to do at home.

And I thought well what can we do, how, because the child does nothing for me – she does nothing – I put exercises, easy, but she does absolutely nothing, and so the mum said to me, well teacher, of the things you give her she really enjoys sticking, she likes sticking stickers, but here (Ternurita) still did nothing. But I left her homework for the house, and she did it there

The disparity between what the child completed at home and school led the teacher to meet with the parent again. To the teacher's surprise Ternurita's mother described the child as a chatty, active girl at home. The teacher told me:

And I said I'm so sorry, this makes me so embarrassed, but I am in the dark about what your child is doing - could you do videos of what she does in the house? And when she showed me, well, it was completely - I was there with my mouth open - it's hard to believe it's the same child.

Showing me the video, I observed that Ternurita was speaking, laughing, playing with her dolls and running in and out of the room. This led both to decide to seek further support and a possible diagnosis for her. While there was no diagnosis during my time in fieldwork, I noticed that the process of parents and the teacher sharing their reflections had led to a different understanding of the situation and possible causes, and that their focus on gaining a diagnosis for the child provided a way for 'blame' to be removed from each party, with the hope of finding an answer that made sense of a

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<sup>38</sup> Pautas de crianza

confusing situation. Having explored the PIAR process, the final component was that of paperwork. Explored next, it also raises questions regarding who benefits from the process.

### **7.9. For whom is the PIAR paperwork?**

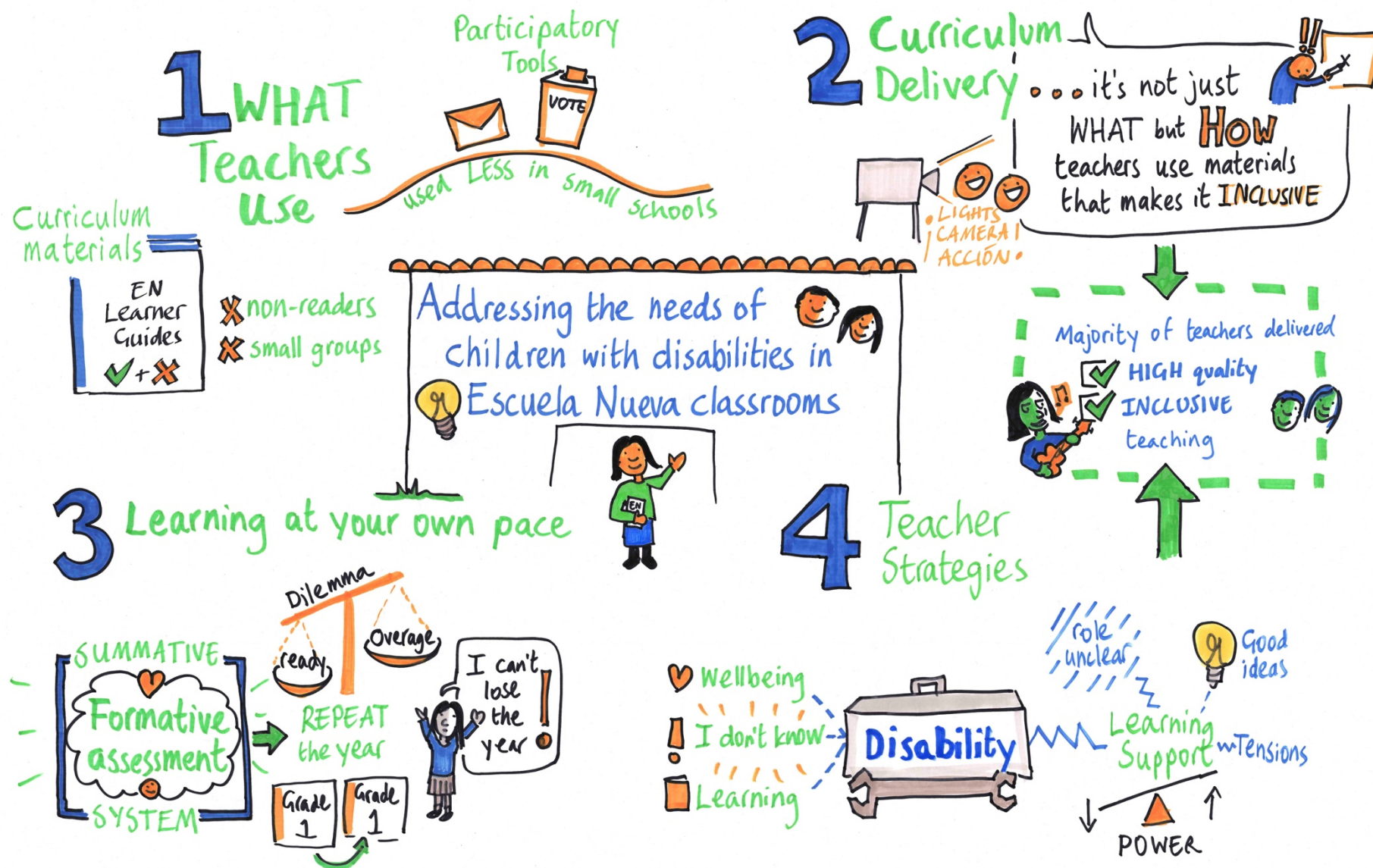
A further finding was that the PIAR paperwork appeared to be used as a monitoring record and process used for accountability, rather than a working record of support for a child. Firstly, the PIAR paperwork was recorded and held by the learning support teacher. While this is one of her tasks, it was notable that teachers neither knew where the files were nor had easy access. Furthermore, the PIAR paperwork regarding two children was critical of their teachers, in which their negative attitudes were added to the 'barriers to learning' section. This led me to wonder if the teachers had seen this and also suggested that the paperwork fulfilled an accountability function. However, for whom this was not clear.

### **7.10. Summary**

In this chapter, it has been explained that participants understood disability framed by a medical model and that there was limited recognition of the intersections that impact on the ability of parents to care for their child. Where the systems of PIAR and diagnosis were being utilised, the experiences of parents suggested that the state services are based upon an urban model, which does not meet the needs of rural parents. Furthermore, it was not clear whose needs were served by gaining a diagnosis. Finally, I have contended that, despite the aim of the PIAR process to take a holistic view of children's needs, the processes and paperwork reflected deficit accounts and meetings were focused upon ensuring children had access to medical experts.

Figure 8.1

Illustration of findings Chapter 8: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an Escuela Nueva Classroom





## **Chapter 8: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an Escuela Nueva classroom**

Having concluded in the literature review that there is a need for nuanced accounts of teacher practice when educating children with disabilities, this chapter describes how teachers implemented the Escuela Nueva model for the children. The chapter is split into four sections, with Section 1 outlining what elements of the Escuela Nueva model teachers implemented, noting that this varied across and within schools. Section 2 describes how teachers delivered the curriculum and it is argued that it is not just what teachers deliver, but the way in which they do so that is key for the inclusion of children with disabilities. Section 3 explores the use of formative assessment and the implications of going at the child's pace. Finally, Section 4 identifies disability-specific strategies that the teachers used, including the utilisation of the learning support teacher.

### **Section 1: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities: teacher use of EN curriculum materials and participatory tools**

A cornerstone of the EN approach has been to provide teachers with pre-prepared, child-centred, participatory curriculum materials. These include learning guides and additional participatory learning tools that promote positive relationships amongst the school community. This section investigates which materials and tools teachers were using, and their reasoning for doing so.

#### **8.1 Teachers were broadly positive about the EN guides, but they were not the only curriculum materials teachers chose**

A central feature of curriculum delivery within an EN classroom involves children working through activities provided in learning guides, in their grade teams. Accordingly, three quarters (6/8) of the teachers were positive about the learning guides and used them regularly as part of their curriculum delivery. Teachers described how the guide activities were interesting (two teachers), the pictures engaging (two teachers), and that they had helped develop children's reading skills, including their ability to comprehend instructions and learn autonomously (three teachers). All but one pre-school teacher (School B) had the core subject guides in their classroom (maths, language, natural sciences, social studies) and the majority of classes made regular use of them.

**Julia:** What do the children use in the class?

**Teacher 2:** Above all, permanently, EN guides I use. Sometimes the Government maths one, I use to reinforce things in the home, but normally, regularly, we use EN guides.

**Julia:** And you use all of the subjects?

**Teacher 2:** Yes, I use them, all the areas seem really great [*chévere*] to me.

**Julia:** And the children use this as a group?

**Teacher 2:** Yes, because they are working in a team.

**Julia:** And which guides do you use?

**Teacher 2:** Maths and Spanish, and also natural science, and social studies more or less – we have also started technology – it’s fun, good experiments, they are very useful.

However, despite the EN approach advocating for guides as the main vehicle for curriculum delivery, Table 8.1 illustrates that, in practice, the level of implementation varied. Only three teachers described working through the guides methodically, as advocated by EN (Teachers 2, 7 and 8), while one early years teacher did not use them at all (Teacher 3 in School B). The remaining four teachers reported that, while they used the guides at least weekly, they did not use them ‘al pie de la letra’ [*to the (foot of the) letter*]. Rather, that the guides added to, or complemented, other teaching materials and methods they used.

**Table 8.1**

*Frequency of guide use in each school*

School	A			B		C	D	E
Class type	Infant	Junior	Pre-school	infant	Junior	Multigrade		
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Frequency of guide use	daily <i>Grade 2 only</i>	daily	no	weekly	weekly	weekly	daily	daily

Teachers described their reasoning:

**Teacher 4:** I don’t like to follow the guide to the foot of the letter. I take what I think is important for the child, because also I think there are lots of activities and not all are relevant. I choose the relevant, the little, the necessary. I take lots of activities and take what I consider is right for the children.

**Teacher 6:** The guides complement them, so I am not saying no to the guide, but I don’t follow it to the foot of the letter. So, for example at the moment we are doing fractions, but mainly and before all, I do an explanation at the board and I put my own explanations and materials, so my way is to see if they have understood it. When they I feel like they understand it and they are making their own way, then I say, ‘OK, take out the guide and do everything EN say’.

With differing use of guides, emphasis on their completion within a year also varied. For example, School B - the demonstration school - did not hold to children needing to finish the guide activities within a given year, whereas Teacher 2, in School A and Teacher 7 in School D, did work through the guides and used children's progress as an evaluation measure. Teacher 5 in School B told me:

I don't want them to pass the guide and not have understood it. I find that I never finish a guide, because we do lots of other activities, not just the guide. So it's happened that we have never done it, but that's because we do lots of other activities and they don't finish.

## **8.2 Teachers choose alternatives to guides because they did not always meet the needs of all learners**

When exploring why some teachers did not use guides as the principal form of curriculum delivery, interviews with teachers revealed that their use of guides varied according to the needs of the children and the extent to which they felt the guides and its activities were relevant to the needs of the class. Use of guides was reduced, if children were non-readers or, if the grade group or class size was small.

### **8.2.1 Guides did not meet the needs of non-readers**

Important for the education of children of disabilities, teachers felt that the guides did not meet the needs of non-readers. For example, three teachers, whose class contained nursery, transition and non-readers in their class, raised the issue that guides only worked, if the children could read independently. Teacher 1, an infant class teacher in School A, addressed this by not using guides with the children until she had taught them to read using her own creative methods (flash cards, songs, writing and repeating), and presented the guides as a praise-worthy achievement for her children in first grade. However, this still left children with disabilities in that grade visibly different to the rest:

This week we started with the EN guides for first grade, for which they need to be able to read and of the six or seven children that are reading well, they understand what it tells them to do, but these two? (*points to names of the children with disabilities*) no. These two are at the stage of decoding and I teach them every day.

For children who were struggling to learn to read, she had chosen a different workbook provided by the Secretary of Education, which focused on the initial reading skills of phonological awareness. This offering went at a slower pace and supported the learning of phonics:

**Julia:** And these are better than EN guides?

**Teacher 1:** Yes, for the little ones and the ones who have difficulties with reading, (the Secretary of Education guides) go more slowly in the process, on the vowels. It starts the process, gives stories, pretty, and brings every letter individually, so they can read words.

**Julia:** And EN doesn't do this?

**Teacher 1:** No, FEN assumes that the children can read or that they have already learned in Transition.

### **8.2.2. Guides were less useful for small grade or class groups**

In the schools with smaller class sizes, such as School C and E, seating children in grade groups meant there was only 1-2 children in each grade. As a consequence, children were unable to access the basic or practice activities that ask them to work in pairs or a larger group. Teacher 6 from School C explained the difficulties this presented:

The books are not designed for our school, with these characteristics. If you see the guides it says 'work with your partner', and I have just one in that grade, what can we do? And sometimes the model says ... make groups of 10 people – I have 9 children in total, so I don't see the importance or the guides

She had tried to address the group number issue by taking all children out together, but found this a struggle within the multigrade context:

Say (the activity) is for second grade, but you have a child in transition (5-year-old) and grade 1 (6-year-old) do it in this way, but there aren't so many things that make that possible. So, for me it's hard to separate out one group from another is very complicated – because I take some out and then the others see me playing with the others and they want to come out and join in, but they can't, well, it makes the activity a total disaster. So, I have to try and find a way to marry these activities, and there are only some in which you are able to do that – so I prefer not to.

The suggestion that the main vehicle for curriculum delivery – the learning guides – were not suitable for non-readers or those who struggle with reading presents an important challenge to the notion that the model is inclusive for all children with disabilities. I raised this during an interview with the FEN curriculum coordinator and he acknowledged that the EN materials for pre-schoolers were limited, in part, because few rural schools admit pre-school children, and educating pre-schoolers reflects a relatively recent Government effort to expand education into the early years. With regard to older non-readers or small grade groups, FEN staff suggested the team approach, in which members of the

grade group read for their peers as this supports non-readers. However, as I will argue in Section 2, teacher's implementation of guide use did not always reflect the team approach that EN advocates. Hence, the way in which EN tools are delivered is key.

### 8.3 Implementation of participatory tools varied between schools and classrooms

In addition to the curriculum guides, Escuela Nueva also promotes the use of a number of participatory tools that are aimed at fostering child leadership skills and positive social relationships. Knowing from the literature that implementation of the various aspects of the Escuela Nueva tends to vary in practice, I explored how frequently they were used and how they were deployed for each school. While the majority of schools had most of the participatory tools in place, the frequency of use varied within and between them. Comparing the differing frequency and way in which tools were implemented it became clear that the larger schools, A and B, used them more regularly than the smaller schools, C-E and that making the tools an integral part of the classroom culture was fundamental to their use.

#### 8.3.1. Student Committees

Student committees aim to teach children the skills of democracy and leadership, acting as a process that engages children in their local community. While all schools had an elected committee and could name the President and other functions, Table 8.2 illustrates that it was the larger schools A and B that had the most active committees.

**Table 8.2**

*Frequency of student committee activity in each school*

School	A	B	C	D	E
Frequency	twice a term	weekly	termly	termly	annually

School B was the demonstration school and also the one that most integrated the committees into the running of the school and delivery of educational projects. The school president and deputy – two Grade 5 children – regularly presided over school community events, such as interviewing children who had requested songs for the weekly Friday breaktime 'school radio' or leading the rendition of the national anthem during events. The junior children chose the focus of the committee groups and every child in the school chose which committee group they wanted to join. The focus of committee groups was decided upon by children and reflected a range of interests (e.g. 'the explorer committee' and the 'arts and plasticine committee'). Led by an older child, the mixed-class groups sometimes worked on their specific area of interest or, on other occasions, were used as a way of organising

multi-age groups for school-wide projects. School A was organised differently: only the junior children worked in committee groups, and they were more focused on taking part in community events, rather than leading in-school activities on a regular basis. School B used committees to build the school community through regular activities, whereas School A was focused on using it as a tool to create outside links with the wider community. In comparison, the committees in smaller multi-grade schools (Schools C-E) were less active than those of the larger ones. They took part in elections and some activities; however, the teachers reported that organising activities was typically adult, rather than child led, meaning it became another activity to add to their busy list. Consequently, rather than being a vehicle for class democracy and decision-making, children's roles were more of a title of responsibility.

### 8.3.2. Friendships letters

Friendship letters were regarded as a positive tool by all teachers, but Table 8.3 illustrates that, again, the frequency of their use depended on the extent to which teachers made them part of their planning.

**Table 8.3**

*Frequency of friendship mail use in each school*

School	A		B			C	D	E
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Frequency	no	termly	no	weekly	weekly	annually	annually	annually

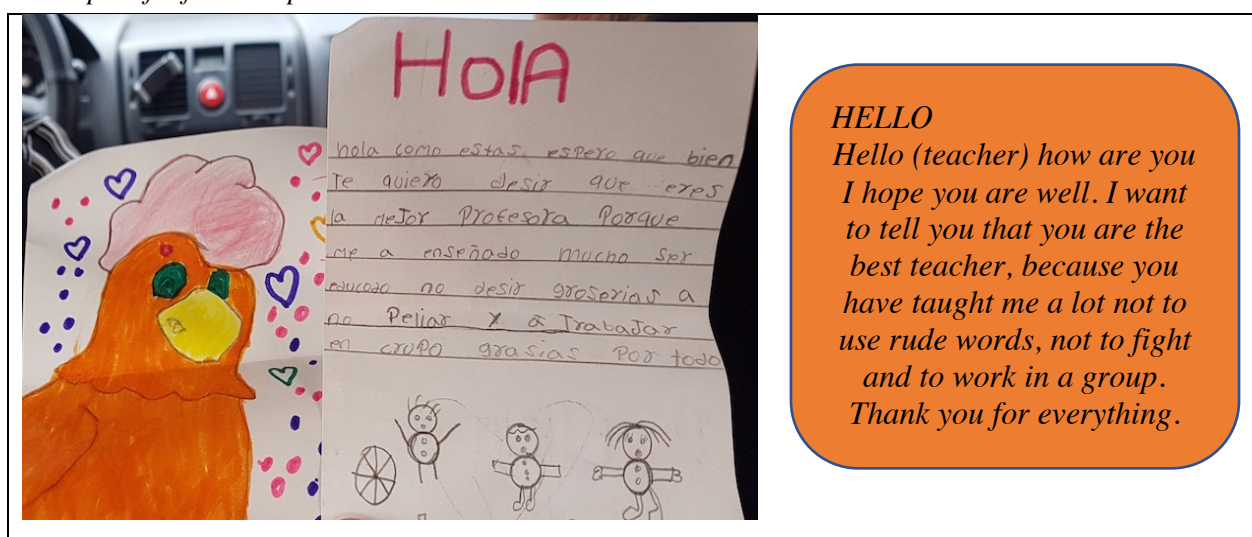
School B made letters a weekly event, where the children had a week to write one, and then, they were shared out on Fridays. Teacher 5 explained that this helped promote a positive atmosphere and supported children's writing skills:

The children like it and when they receive a letter we are excited. They say when they want to do it, although sometimes I say we are going to write letters, or a poem or a song, and try to write it for a little note.

She showed me an example of a letter that she had received from a child, as illustrated in Figure 8.2 below:

**Figure 8.2**

*Example of a friendship letter sent to a School B teacher*



The remaining schools let children choose when they wrote a letter and the instruction was clear that it should always be something positive.

**Teacher 2:** Another important thing is the friendship letterbox, when they share their messages.

**Julia:** And how does that work, do they do it very week? Every month?

**Teacher 2:** Whenever they want...what is always the case is that they share something of respect, messages that help the children. Not messages that make others feel bad, only that make them feel good.

An additional factor in the use of the friendship letters was that they were less used in the classes with the youngest children who could not yet write. For example, the early years class in School B and the infant class in School A had not made a friendship letter section.

### 8.3.3. Self-registration

An aspect of EN that teachers said they valued was that of child autonomy (6/8 teachers).

Accordingly, the self-registration tool was the most frequently used tool and part of the routine of most classrooms.

**Table 8.4**

*Frequency of self-registration use in each school*

School	A		B			C	D	E
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7
Frequency of use	no	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	no	daily

Table 8.4 shows how Teachers 1 and 7 were the only ones not to have a registration board. When I explored reasons for not having one, Teacher 1 thought her children were too young and had prioritised making a travelling journal during the EN training. While children's autonomy was a priority of Teacher 7 in School D, she had attended training at a different time to the rest of the teachers, and when I mentioned it to her, she was not able to recall learning about it.

### 8.3.4. Suggestions and child commitment boxes

The least used of all tools were the suggestions and commitment boxes. The schools had not used either in the past year, and I found a commitment from a child who had left over a year ago in one box.

### 8.3.5. Community links

A fundamental pillar of the Escuela Nueva system is to involve the community, engaging the parents in the life of the school and coordinating events with the student committee. I observed a variety of events in Schools A- C, including some that were run by parents (e.g. making food for children) as well as those run for them (e.g. outside provider ran a sports day while the parents made food).

**Table 8.5**

*Frequency and examples of community links made with the schools during 2017-18*

School	A	B	C	D	E
Frequency of community events	monthly	monthly	termly	termly	annually
Examples of Community events held (2018-19)	Family sports day  Parent dessert-making session  National children's day snack making	Parent-requested workshops and events e.g. pampering session, future planning, film-morning  School mural painting  Pyjama day	Community vegetable swap and shop  Health provider advice sessions	Family litter picking and classification  Community planting and harvesting day	Family litter picking

Table 8.5 illustrates that School B was the most involved with the local community, which implemented the most creative, participatory lessons and homework tasks. Consequently, I was surprised when one of the parents commented that the current teachers, who had been there nine years, were not as close to the parents as the previous ones. When I explored this further with the



parents, they said that the previous teachers had lived on site or close by, and so they saw them more regularly and could chat informally. Adding to this was the impact of access to the school. For example, of the smaller full multigrade schools (Schools C- E), School C had the most events. Being closer to the road, it was easier for parents to reach it and leave again, whereas arriving at School D or E for an event meant parents would have to commit to the whole morning – something that was a challenge for those who needed to undertake daily rural tasks, such as attending to animals or crops. Furthermore, with so few children, School E represented just two families. EN recognised this concern when designing the model and for this reason created the travelling notebook, as described next.

### 8.3.6. Travelling journal

The travelling journal is a book that travels between home and school, with the aim of fostering understanding of a child's community and home setting.

**Table 8.6**

*Frequency of travelling journal use in each school*

School	A		B			C	D	E
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Frequency	weekly	weekly	no	weekly	weekly	no	no	no

Table 8.6 shows that it was only used in Schools A and B. In School B, Teachers 4 and 5 had children create a decorated booklet, that asked them questions about their family and life, which they completed as part of their weekly homework. In contrast, School A teachers had a class book that went home to a different family each week, within which the family wrote about themselves and documented their family recipes. Teacher 1 described their work:

Yes, when I had the older children, we didn't call it the travelling notebook, but rather, the travelling backpack. Why? So that the parents could look at and choose recipes. We sent them a book to see if they were interested in making any of the dishes ... the parents wrote their own recipes. We put the recipes into a book, which was beautiful, and sold them for 1,000 pesos [£0.25].

This section has revealed that teachers' implementation of the EN curriculum and participatory tools varied owing to each adapting the curriculum according to the needs of the class. Furthermore, the participatory tools were used more consistently in the larger Schools A and B, and less so in Schools

C-E. To gain a nuanced account of their use, the next section focuses on how teachers delivered their lessons.

## **Section 2: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities: curriculum delivery**

Having explored what materials and tools teachers were using, this section focuses upon how they were delivering the curriculum. I draw upon observations and interviews with teachers and children, revealing that, while the materials were important, meeting the needs of children with disabilities was not only about whether EN materials were used, but also, *how* they were deployed.

### **8.4 High quality inclusive teaching relies upon teacher delivery as much as the materials used**

As explained in the methodology chapter, I had the opportunity to observe the majority of class teachers twice and rated the teaching quality in three areas: teacher sensitivity, positive relations as well as affect and student engagement. Table 8.7 illustrates that the majority of lessons observed had high levels of positive affect towards students (11/15 lessons) and teacher sensitivity (9/15 lessons), whereas student engagement was at a medium level in the majority of classes (9/15). Regarding individual teachers, the majority (6/9) were rated as 'high' in their sensitivity, consistently noticed student's difficulties or lack of understanding and provided either individualised support or made attempts to accommodate that child. The sensitivity of two of the teachers (Teachers 2 and 6) varied in terms of how they treated children on different days. However, each was committed to the progress of every child, and clearly cared about them all. Positive, warm relationships were a strength of the schools with examples observed for eight out of the nine teachers. While levels of engagement were more variable, three of the four classes that were graded as having medium engagement owing to the disengagement of pre-school children.

**Table 8.7**

*Ratings of teaching quality given to individual teachers, using the adapted TEACH observation tool*

School	A		B			C	D	E
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No of observations	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Teacher sensitivity and responsiveness to learning needs	high	1 medium 1 low	high	high	high	1 medium 1 high	medium	low
Positive relations and affect	high	1 high 1 medium	High	high	high	high	medium	low
Student engagement	medium	high	Medium	high	high	1 medium 1 high	medium	medium

To illustrate the variation in choices and their impact on children with disabilities, in the next subsections four different observations are analysed: two of which were assessed as being high quality and two low. Reflecting the literature that questions the binary of child-centred vs traditional teaching, it is important to note that all teachers, at some point in the day, led a whole class input of some form, and EN materials were used in some, but not others. So, within the high and low graded pairs of observations I have included one example in which EN guides were used, and one in which they were not.

#### **8.4.1. High quality example of guide use**

The first example is one in which the class teacher was implementing the model as advocated by the EN training, using EN guides as the main form of curriculum delivery. During a maths lesson in the junior class of School A, I observed children from Grade 3, which included a girl identified as having difficulties in reading, Lina, working together as a team when learning about perimeter and diameter. The children read through the instructions together, before accessing the required materials from the ‘rincón de matemáticas’ [*maths corner*] themselves.

**Girl 1:** It says, ‘bring resources from the corner, coins, lids, jars...’.

**Girl 2:** Round things – let’s find round things. (*stands up and goes to maths corner, collects jar and coins*)

**Lina:** The tin cans, get the tin cans. (*follows girl 2, collects two cans*)

**Girl 2:** And the measuring tape – I can find it.

Using objects, measuring tapes and a compass, the children read the guide information to each other and shared the materials. During the 50 minute lesson the teacher came over to check they understood four times – twice as she was circulating around the class and twice at the request of the children. For example:

**Girl 1:** Teacher, look at what we are doing?

**Girl 2:** I measured the can.

**Teacher:** Well done, and what is this called? (*runs finger around edge of can*)

**Girl 2:** Circumference, teacher,

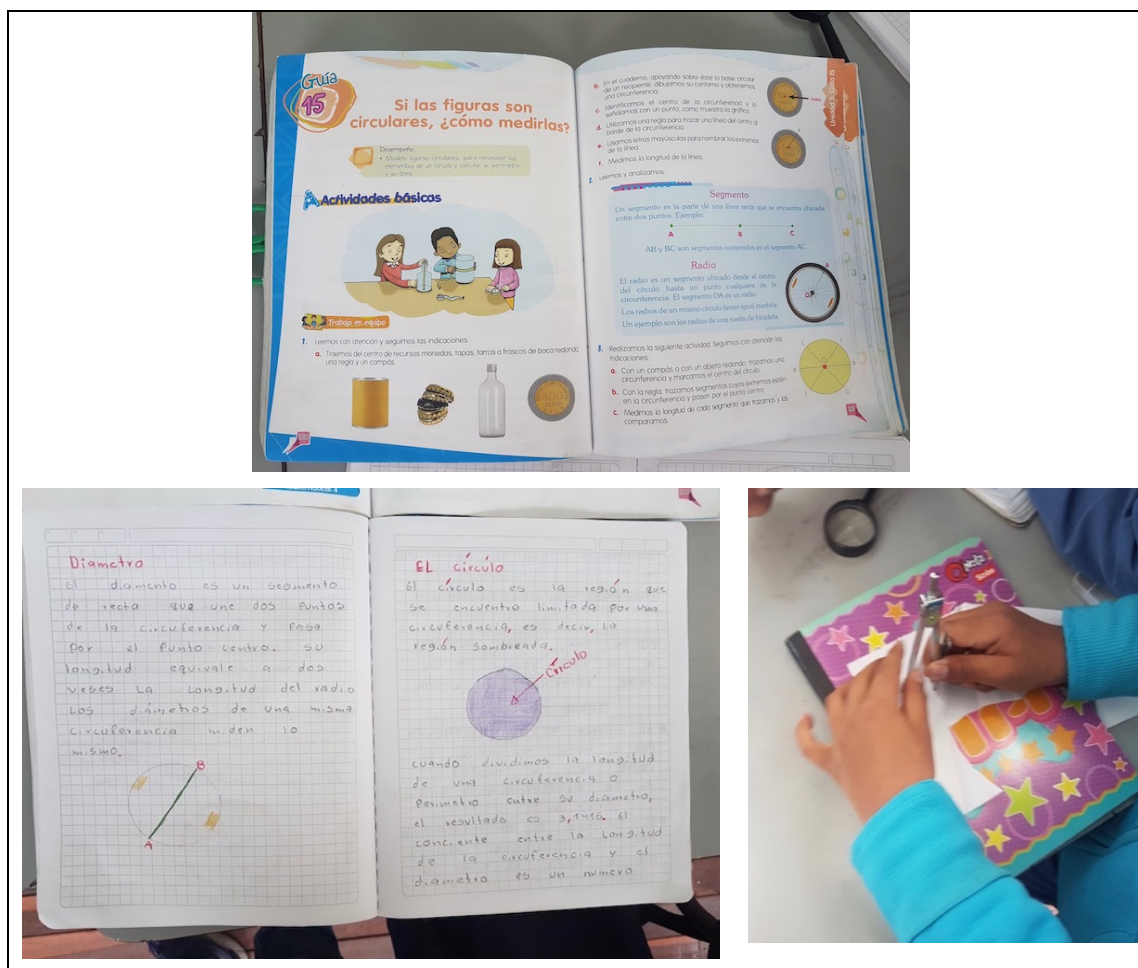
**Teacher:** Yes! Good. Lina, do you like this topic? Do you understand it? (*teacher strokes Lina's hair*)

**Lina:** Yes, teacher

Towards the end of the session they recorded their findings in their notebooks, before copying the key information into their notebooks (see Fig 8.3 photos below).

**Figure 8.3**

*Example of maths guide and child's notes*



A further example is from the demonstration School B. In this lesson, teachers were not using the EN guides. However, the lesson was a high quality example of child-led participatory learning, which reflected the principles of EN.

#### **8.4.2. High quality example of child-centred learning (without guides)**

The second example is one in which the underpinning values and principles of EN – child-centred participatory learning in which a child has autonomy and works as a team – were applied throughout.

##### *Context*

School B had identified that some children had poor reading and writing skills, yet were highly skilled story tellers with interesting family stories. Children were keen to access IT, but lived in households where only 10% of families had smart phones. Consequently, they set up a joint infant-junior class project with the aim of boosting the children's confidence in leadership, speaking and teamwork, using their interest in IT to do so. Having sourced tablets from a Government project, they had worked in their cross-grade committee groups to create stop motion story videos before I arrived in Colombia. During the year, I saw them develop the project further, focusing upon 'the sweet taste of home' [*el dulce sabor de mi hogar*]. This included class visits to each other's homes, sharing of community recipes and creating a community newsreel. The following excerpt is from an observation in which the teacher was introducing the creation of a newsreel.

##### *Class observation, School B, juniors*

The class teacher began with a whole class input which outlined the newsreel activity. The teacher had already listed different slots on the board (e.g. headlines, summary of main stories, interviews) and asked the children to get into pairs and decide which slot they preferred. My observation focuses on two brothers, each of whom had been identified by the WG as having difficulties: Juancho and Gato.

**Teacher:** So, who is interested in this section? (*points to section on interviewing*)

**Juancho and Gato:** Us, teacher, us! Please...

**Teacher:** Juancho and Gato, yes.

**Juancho & Gato:** Yes! *boys smile at each other, finding it hard to sit still*

*All children assigned to groups and children told to finish their booklet covers before they can start*

**Teacher:** Juancho and Gato, such hard workers – finish your (booklet) covers and you can go.

*Five minutes later Juancho and Gato have finished their covers and run up to the teacher's desk*

**Boys:** Teacher, teacher, can we go?

**Teacher:** What did you do here my love? (*points to mis-formed letter on cover*)...OK, so have a go and come back, I'll accept your best efforts.

*Boys finish, then run past me with a tablet, into an empty class, excitedly discussing an interview they will do.*

*Boys discuss what they will say.*

**Gato:** I will interview you.

**Juancho:** And my turn?

**Gato:** You interview me later.

**Juancho:** OK, push record, push record!

**Gato:** Lights, camera, ACTION!

**Figure 8.4**

*Photograph of a child's work booklet*



With both of these high quality examples, I am demonstrating that there are different ways in which the EN has been implemented. In the first (section 8.4.1), the teacher used the model ‘to the letter’ – using EN materials in a way that enabled children to work autonomously, whereas in the second (section 8.4.2), I am suggesting that while the EN materials were not being used, the same principles of EN practice: child-centred learning enabling children to work autonomously in teams – were thoroughly applied. In contrast, the following two examples reflected practice that appear to be contrary to the principles of the EN approach. The first example saw the teacher use the EN guide materials as a tool for dictation, whilst the second, which began with a whole class introduction, was insensitive to the needs of a child with disabilities.

### **8.4.3. Low quality example with guides used as a dictation tool**

Two observations of the same teacher revealed that, while she was using the EN guides, the way in which she used them was the very method of teaching that the model aims to counter and replace: as a dictation tool. The observations took place in the smallest school (School E), which contained only five children. They were placed at desks according to their grades, in keeping with EN practice. However, with so few children this resulted in one table of two children, and a further three sitting at their own table in a large room that could accommodate 20. During both observations, the class teacher brought two individual children to her table. During both formal observations they were working on separate topics. Neither child could see their EN guide, as she put one of them on a chair

to her left and another in front of her. The class was silent apart from the teacher dictating, and correcting mistakes the children made.

**Class teacher:** (*dictating to boy at desk*) OK, write 'Theme 6: Capital letters [*Mayúscalas*] and full stops'.

**To girl at desk:** (Name)! I have already told you, this word should not be here (*teacher rubs word out*) that you shouldn't do this (*teacher looks at boy's work*).

**To boy at desk:** (Name)! You already know how to write faster than this – mayuscala, mayuscala is with a y– I didn't say *Mahuscala* – it is with a y. (*teacher rubs out h in his book*)

She subsequently spent each 45 minute lesson dictating in the same way: dictate to the boy, dictate to the girl, correct one, dictate to the other etc. Each child in the class had been identified as having difficulties with learning via the WG questions, and while one could argue they were receiving personalised tuition, the way in which it was delivered did not demonstrate positive affect or sensitivity to their needs.

To contextualise the teacher's practice, the following chapter describes the environmental factors that explain why the teacher had reverted to this style of teaching (Chapter 9, Section 9.4), despite having embraced the model with enthusiasm during the initial year of its implementation. This example illustrates the fact that providing child-centred curriculum materials does not guarantee these will be delivered in a child-centred way. Rather, they highlight the importance of the teacher and their capacity to enact lessons in a way that reflects the principles.

#### **8.4.4. Low quality example of teaching that was not sensitive to the child's needs**

My last example is one where Teacher 2 – the teacher who had successfully used guides to teach the children diameter and perimeter above – was teaching another maths lesson, but this time leading from the board, prior to using EN guides. My previous observation of her demonstrated that when using the guides she was sensitive to their needs and showed positive affect. However, the observation of her whole class input suggested that teachers may not always apply the child-centred principles that they have learned.

My observation focused upon two sisters - Ariana and Lina - both of whom had difficulties with learning and remembering. The younger sister, Ariana, was eager to please, but extremely shy with adults and, sometimes, other children. During a maths class, Teacher 2 was teaching the whole class how to read and write numbers in the thousands. She had written numerals on the board and was choosing individuals to read the numbers out loud. She asked the Ariana, who was sat at the back of the class, to read what was on the board. The interaction went as follows:

**Class teacher:** Ariana, read this out for the class. (*number is 7,600*)

**Ariana:** 6...

**Class teacher:** It's not 6, what is this number? (*points to 7*)

**Ariana:** 7, 7... (*face flushes*)

*Five second silence in class, child's sister called out the answer.*

**Lina:** Seven thousand six hundred

**Class teacher:** That's right, thank you Lina. OK, Ariana come here and write the number on the board, in words.

I observed Ariana walk slowly up to the board and stare at the number, with a face that looked apprehensive. As she began to write the teacher left the room for a few minutes to check her phone. The other children waited mostly in silence, with just two boys having a conversation. Ariana should have written 'siete' [*seven*], but instead wrote 'sete'. The class teacher returned, saw what she had written and asked the class:

**Class teacher:** Is that right? (*to the class*)

**Whole class:** No teacher!

**Class teacher:** Lina, come up and write it for your sister.

*(Lina writes it, Ariana returns to desk, sits with her head down, sucks index and middle fingers)*

Drawing on these low quality examples, I am not arguing that a teacher should never deviate from the use of EN guides – there were numerous successful, child-centred examples, such as the 'dulce sabor de mi hogar' project described above. However, providing a conclusion for this section: these low quality examples suggest that while the model may support children where it is used as per the training, it is not only the use of the tools, but the way in which the fundamental principles of the model are applied to all learning activities that is important.

### **Section 3: Formative assessment, going at your own pace and flexible promotion**

In the literature review, it was evidenced that allowing children with disabilities to go at their own pace, formative assessment and flexible promotion have the potential to support their inclusion (see p.45). This section describes how teachers were keen to take a holistic view of children's progress and allow them to go at their own pace. However, it also problematises flexible promotion, noting



that not only does it create tensions for teachers regarding children's transitions, but also, for parents and children, who consider this a negative occurrence.

### **8.5. Teachers had a holistic approach to assessment**

Reflecting the values and training of EN, the majority of teachers (6/8) emphasised the need to adopt a holistic assessment of children that valued the child themselves, one that prioritised their values and personality over an assessment of their knowledge. Regarding which, the class teachers in School A shared similar views:

**Teacher 1:** A teacher, of course, wants to see what a child has in their notebook – very beautiful – but they have to know what the child has here (*points to head*) and what they have here (*points to heart*), so yes, you have to strengthen everything.

**Teacher 2:** I speak to them, write, we use different forms of evaluation ... But while it's important to know these things, overall, it's more important how they are like as a person. They might have lots of knowledge, but you need to know how they are like as a child, if they are happy, if they feel bad, without this all the learning is worth nothing ... what has more value? The child or the knowledge they have?

Furthermore, a benefit of having a multigrade model was that it enabled teachers to gain a full picture of a child's strengths and difficulties. Teacher 4 noted that this helped them monitor progress over time:

We have them various years, so we are taking them through a process, and because we know them so well, we know how much they have advanced.

Focusing on formative methods of assessment, teachers described using a range of tools, such as asking children questions (Teachers 4 and 5), monitoring their progress in guides (Teacher 2) as well as written and speaking tasks (Teacher 2 and 7). Teacher 2 explained how she used guides:

Some go faster than others, and so first off, in the guide, there are different levels - and so, first, I look in which guide to go, and then I know what guide they are on? In which evaluating which subject they are in and who is advancing and who is more behind.

All teachers reported that they evaluated children with disabilities in the same way as all children: allowing them to go at their own pace, taking a holistic approach, and in one case, revising the child's targets in their PIAR plan.

**Teacher 4:** It is very important that they go at their own pace, so we are evaluating constantly, but it isn't a rigid evaluation. Like these days, like some schools that use it as a punishment – here we are evaluating constantly – for example, in the round, is the child participating? Are they motivated? How is their motor control? Constantly watching their progress, seeing how they are doing with others, and making improvement plan, because EN lets us do that

While their evaluation practice strongly reflected the EN values, only one used the EN 'progress control' form. Teachers, instead, had their own individual method of recording their evaluations (e.g. notes in their workbooks, content-based test results, questioning during teaching or holding the information in their heads). They were also required by the state to submit an annual report that gives children a grade between 1 and 5 for each subject, where 5 is 'superior' and 1 is 'insufficient'. This grade reflected the mean of their quarterly scores given at the end of each of the semester. Teachers told me that they were reluctant to give children a number and preferred rather to write an end of year report or feed this back to parents verbally. For example, Teacher 8 described herself as an '*enemiga de notas*' (*enemy of grades*), and outlined the tensions that having to provide a school report based upon scores presented her with:

I use grades because it is a requirement of the Ministry of Education, but I don't use grades myself; I'm an enemy of grades. A child can't be located by 3 or 4 ... I never tell them - you've got to explain this with reasons. Why? Instead, I evaluate them in a written form, things that they find hard and things they could do to improve, so that they can improve ... So, managing grades, no, but only so I can do a report for others ... (the director) demands in the report that you give a number, but I never speak to parents or children about this. How would one speak to a child about this?

The end-of-year grades were subsequently entered directly onto the Secretary for Education website, and unfortunately for my research, were not retained by teachers or the headteacher. I realised this too late, the result being that the majority of teachers had submitted their figures and no longer had a copy. The only hard copy was given to parents, meaning this information was lost to schools, or an individual file, once it was handed out. Disappointing as this was, it confirmed the views that annual report scores, such as these, were viewed by teachers and the headteacher as an external bureaucratic requirement, rather than something useful to inform the teacher's practice for the following year.

Intimately linked with the notion of children going at their own pace within the assessment process, is whether the teacher considers that the child's progress is sufficient for her/him to move on to the next grade. The implications of flexible promotion from one grade to the next is explored in more detail next.

## **8.6. Problematising flexible promotion and going at your own pace**

An important consequence of a child's results on their annual performance and attendance during a school year, is whether the learning progress of each child is deemed sufficient to manage the level of work in the next grade. EN promotes the notion of 'flexible promotion', in which a child is supported to go at their own pace and not moving on to a new guide, or new grade, until they have fully understood the concepts or materials being taught. My assumption was that flexible promotion would favour children with disabilities, supporting them to go at their own pace and learning with mixed age peers. However, as explained next, the findings suggest that children with disabilities more likely to have to repeat a year, which created tensions for all involved. Whilst teachers thought it was a positive way of addressing children's needs, they were concerned children would become overage. Furthermore, the vast majority of children and parents viewed repeating the year as a negative occurrence.

### **8.6.1 Children with disabilities were more likely to have repeated at least one grade year when compared with their peers**

Translated literally as 'losing the year' [*perder el al año*], interviews with the class teachers and children indicate that children with disabilities were more likely to have repeated at least one grade when compared with their peers. In total, 15 of the 101 children had repeated at least one year at some point during their education. As illustrated in Table 8.8, 10 of these had identified difficulties and five did not. Exploring the reasons with teachers and children, the majority repeated due to reasons linked with their learning (7/10 children with disabilities). In contrast, three out of the five non-disabled children had repeated for reasons such as moving schools mid-year, meaning they could not graduate the grade, and two had what teachers described as 'temporary problems' around their learning.

**Table 8.8***Number of children with and without identified difficulties who have repeated a school year*

	Children with disabilities	Children with no identified disability
No. of children who had repeated one year	8	5
No. of children who had repeated two years	2	
Totals	10	5

**8.6.2 Repeating the year supported inclusion but had implications for transition**

Interviews with teachers and my observations suggested that repeating the year was meeting the needs of some of the children with disabilities. Teachers pointed out that, not only did it ensure that children were receiving work that reflected their current level of learning, but also, that those who were in a full multigrade class meant children could work alongside their younger peers, who were up to two years younger than them. An example of this was Gringa, the 7-year-old, who had three older siblings with significant learning difficulties, for whom the school was seeking a diagnosis. She repeated her nursery year twice, before moving into transition and then Grade 1. At seven years old she was still learning her letter sounds and how to form letters. She sat with a group of children aged 6-7 years, who were in Grade 1, and, in addition to working with them as team, had individual exercises that helped her to practise her writing and number skills. Her teacher described the school's efforts to address her needs:

It was my decision, because to pass a child to the following grade damages the child, if there is no way they are going to achieve what their peers can ... because if she isn't able to keep up with the others, then she won't achieve being a pair with them ... She never learned to read, only her name, while the rest of them in nursery learnt to write theirs, her no. So, I put her name on the table and repeated it. I said 'What does it say here? Gringa', write it three times, and now write your G. And so, she stays with Grade 1 - they work together and now, at least, she will copy.

My observations of Gringa suggest that she benefited from having other children who could read the instructions and help her. As the oldest child, I observed her tell others what she wanted them to do, smile and laugh at their jokes, and play with mixed ages at breaktime.

For children in the larger schools in which there were fewer grades per class, repeating the year could have had the consequence of delaying their transition into a new classroom and learning alongside older children. This had happened to Sky, a 10-year-old in School B. She had had a

moderate speech difficulty but no current difficulty with her learning. She repeated her Grade 2 year, during which the teacher felt she lacked confidence and would benefit from revisiting the concepts being taught. Both the teacher and the child thought this had helped, and she was now a confident learner who would speak up for herself. Talking with them both they explained:

**Teacher 5:** Sky? ... she didn't believe in herself or have self-confidence, but once she became confident, felt good and believed in herself she caught on fine, is that not right Sky?

**Sky:** Yes, teacher

Exploring the disadvantages of repeating the year with teachers, they described the tension of balancing the needs of the child, while being aware that decisions to repeat a year early in a child's education could affect later transitions. Not allowing a child to pass to the next grade until the child has achieved the grade targets potentially results in overage children, who are at increased risk of dropping out, whereas promoting a child into a class risks them being given work at a level they cannot achieve. Facing a similar dilemma, Teacher 5 discussed her decision to place Gato in Grade 3 when he arrived back from a year in a different area:

In reality, Gato should have been in Grade 1, but because of his age he was too old to go back so much, and so I put him in Grade 3, and (his younger brother) Juancho in Grade 2. The next year it was better to have him repeat 3rd, and repeating has really helped him ... there is lots that he doesn't understand, but because of his age we can't leave him behind, and it would give him much shame if I put him in a grade below Juancho.

Furthermore, being based within a national system increasingly focused on the performance of children in comparison with international standards, a child will, ultimately, have to face Government tests at some point, including Grade 5 SABER national tests that mark the end of primary school. This presents a dilemma for teachers, as they have to balance ensuring a child is 'ready' for Grade 5 SABER tests, yet not leave it so late that they become much older than their classmates. In discussion with the learning support teacher, she explained how this affects children with disabilities:

**Learning support teacher:** Here the system and policies demand that, yes, the child *must* pass, and achieve their targets ... in fifth grade they leave and it's traditional, (secondary school teachers) will say he was badly prepared and probably won't stay in school ... This happens with the regular kids, so imagine what it's like for children with disabilities.

Despite this external pressure of national performance, it was clear that teachers did not, in fact, feel this impacted on their practice. One teacher noted:

We don't have that level of (external) control here – if it was all about getting the standards that the Government demands, it would be hideous.

Thus, consistent with the EN model their focus was on the needs of the child before the national requirements of the state. However, it was clear that, while teachers were keen to value the child in a holistic way and allow them to go at their own pace, this was coupled with the tension of ensuring that the child did not become so overage that they stood out or felt that they had failed.

### **8.6.3 Parents and children viewed flexible promotion as a negative occurrence**

Despite the idea of flexible promotion being presented by EN as something that is positive and inclusive for all, children (including those who had and had not repeated) and parents saw it as a mainly negative occurrence; something to be avoided and used as a threat by parents and teachers to try and motivate children. While the impact on children will be explored further in the chapter on children views, examples of their reaction to the idea of repeating a year illustrate the negativity towards the idea in a powerful way:

**Dulce** (7-year-old girl with learning, behaviour and anxiety difficulties, School A): The teacher helps me a lot, because she knows that I have to pass and that I cannot lose the year, and that I have to go to the next classroom (junior class).

**Julia:** And what happens if you lose the year?

**Dulce:** My Mum would hit me.

**Julia:** Actually hit you or say she was going to hit you?

**Dulce:** Yes, it's because she doesn't want me to lose the year.

**Mauricio** (11-year-old boy, School C): Losing the year would be a bad thing to say to your parents. When my achievement is good, they are happy, and if it is bad, well then they are sad, but it's not like they get angry and say something like 'you will lose the year!'.

Teachers perceived repeating the year as a useful strategy, but it was seen as a last resort and received as bad news by parents. For example, Teacher 7 described the situation of Katerine and Florecita – two sisters who had a low attendance level.

**Julia:** And if (Florecita) gets to the end of the year and she's really behind because of the time lost – not because of her learning ability – what happens? Does she pass?

**Teacher 7:** Well in this case, she is not going to because she has not achieved any of the goals - not those goals that the guide gives - rather the curriculum standards, of the wider curriculum. In this period alone she has 38 fails; 38 no shows. When children have 20% of fails, they don't pass.

This was a source of dispute and frustration with the father, who did not think attendance should affect their education:

But obviously the parents hope that they pass, because, in their parents' way of thinking, they say that their children are super intelligent. So they don't need to come every day, that they already know everything in this, but the girls are very behind, very behind, in all the guides and subjects, while the others have come on much more.

Subsequently, Katerine and Florecita did not pass the year, along with three others, including their classmate Gringa and two children from the infant class of School B: Cielo and Linda.

## **Section 4: Teacher strategies focused upon children with disabilities**

In addition to the pedagogical approach and tools that make up an Escuela Nueva approach, this section describes the strategies teachers used that were specific to children with disabilities.

Beginning with practices that support the learning of children with disabilities, this is followed by examination of the differing ways in which schools utilised the learning support teacher and PIAR process.

### **8.7. Practices used to support the learning of children with disabilities**

Teachers were asked to describe what practices they employed to address the needs of diverse learners, and individual children who had already been identified by them as having difficulties. They described those focused on addressing children's learning and their emotional wellbeing.

#### **8.7.1 Learning**

Teachers outlined a range of ways in which they supported children's learning, including peer support and differentiated materials.

### ***Encourage peer support***

All teachers gave examples of using a child's peers to support their learning, where possible. Five of the eight class teachers were emphatic about not separating a child from others, before explaining that they would, however, give them different activities to do, while sat in a group setting.

**Teacher 2:** In Escuela Nueva each child has their guide and the teacher is aware that they have various grades and that each child is going at their own pace. However, for me, I prefer that children work in groups – not that they should be working alone and rather they should be working with their friends and supporting each other.

**Teacher 7:** I try to do the majority of didactic activities with the group, and not make them feel isolated from the group. However, I do some activities specially for them, so that they feel like they can achieve and improve in the subjects that they find hard – so yes, I do separate activities for them.

Actively using peers to support the learning of others was mentioned by four of the teachers, including Teacher 1, who taught Yolanda, a 6-year-old girl with significant hearing loss:

**Teacher 1:** I explain to the class, I tell them that she has these problems. I say to her partner, 'tell her what I explained' and her partner explains it to her, because she understands what her partner says to her.

### ***Tailor input to the child's level***

All but one teacher gave examples of activities that they had sought out to tailor to the learning level of the child (e.g. using a guide from the grade below, using Government booklets which had more practice examples than EN, giving extra homework). Of those who engaged in this practice, two mentioned the need to ensure that children were achieving, with one saying:

I know which is best to give for what course, and the capacity in which they can achieve or feel less able than the others, so I won't give them anything that they can't do.

Teachers whose classes included children aged 5-7 years old also referred to using play-based learning (e.g. using an abacus to teach colours and numbers, using plasticine to create letters, 'walking' a letter shape in the classroom). However, the extent to which this can be achieved in a multi-grade class was a concern of all of the full multigrade teachers, and discussed in depth in the next chapter, Chapter 9, which focuses upon capturing the context.



### 8.7.2 Emotional wellbeing and behaviour

When referring to managing poor behaviour of children, an interesting finding was that, rather than using punishment and rewards, the majority of teachers (6/8) reported focusing on rebuilding relationships with the individuals concerned. Citing the need for ‘patience’, Teacher 5 explained how she had managed to build a relationship with Juancho over two years:

**Teacher 5:** Juancho is a fighter, he was unbearable, fought with everyone, he finds authority so hard, he’s not like that anymore and even less with me, but this was difficult.

**Julia:** How did you manage to address this?

**Teacher 5:** I was strict and loving, it’s a combination of love and discipline.

Teacher 3, who taught an early years class, helped children to understand their own behaviour better and noted that she deliberately used diminutive language (put -ito/ita at the end of a word) - something that Spanish speakers use to lessen the force of what they are saying. While it does not translate directly, an example she gave was:

You had a little fight/squabble [*peleadito*] and you must be very gentle [*suavecito*] with your hands when you are playing your little friends [*compañeritos*].

Thus, consistent with the positive affect that I observed in classrooms, there was much more focus on positive support rather than discipline that sought to remove privileges.

#### *Confidence building and advice*

Teachers described taking a child to the side and speaking with them one-to-one, in order to remind them of the rules, and give them advice on future conduct. For example, Teacher 8 told me that she aimed to improve a child’s self-esteem:

I wanted to show (Nairo) he could do things and get him involved. I told him, ‘you are intelligent, what do you think you are missing that means you think you are not intelligent?’.

The extent to which a teacher was able to support the emotional needs of a child depended on their style. Reflecting a ‘no nonsense’ forthright style, which I found to be common, Teacher 6 had found supporting a boy who frequently cried a challenge:

I said to him, Papi, you have to be *strong*! You can’t keep crying for such insignificant things. One must cry when unfortunately someone goes to heaven or someone who doesn’t care, but

you don't have to cry for these things. See others? They get angry, they laugh, all these things, and you cry because they look at you?

Thus, teachers were employing a number of different measures to address the needs of individuals.

### **8.7.3. Not knowing what to do**

Another feature of this category was that of not knowing what to do, with teachers feeling helpless and overwhelmed. The instances given related to three children, each of whom were identified by the WG questions. For example, Teacher 6 spent the academic year struggling to address the needs and behaviour of Luna – a new child who had disclosed abuse, and often refused to engage in work at school by not speaking:

At this moment, I feel very lost with Luna. I've had timid children but not like her, so, sometimes I don't know how to treat her. If I am very relaxed or lax, she takes advantage and does nothing and if I am hard with her, she still doesn't do it.

Similarly, Teacher 7 described her initial thoughts when Ternurita, the child who was passive at school but active home, first arrived in school:

When she arrived, I was thinking 'how can I work with this child?'. I thought maybe she was autistic, what do I do? What do I say? What do I say?

Both children were very challenging to get to engage and required a high level of sensitivity and time to motivate them to take part in any task. Finding ways to support these particular girls required answers that a single teacher could not discover alone. Rather, they needed the support of the child's parents and external help, which brings me to the final category of practice – the use of the in-house learning support processes and parents.

## **8.8. Implementation of learning support varied across schools**

Interviews with teachers, the learning support teacher and observations suggested that learning support systems were quite fluid and varied between schools. Furthermore, they elicited that negotiating the role in schools sometimes created subtle tensions between the teachers and learning support teacher.

### 8.8.1. The majority of teachers were positive about the learning support processes

Interviews with teachers and the learning support teacher revealed that the PIAR process of sitting down with the SEN teacher and discussing potential activities was helpful for some teachers:

**Teacher 8:** Thanks be to God we have support in our learning support teacher and family support worker. and with Nairo they helped a lot. (Previous family support worker) talked to the parents and said ‘you have to take him to the doctor’ and they went ... this is a great help. (Learning support teacher) is a great professional, she has lot of capacity and ideas to help with the children.

**Teacher 2:** She gives me activities which they can do – good activities, reading comprehensions – she helps children with difficulties.

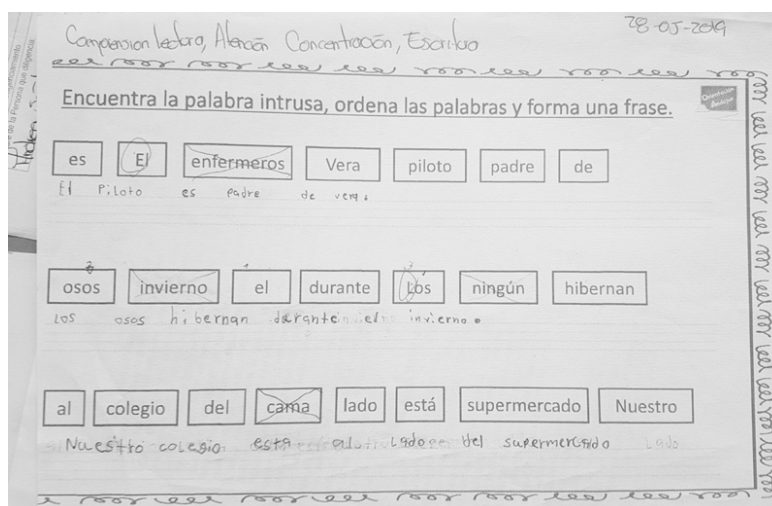
**Teacher 6:** Since the family support worker came, speaking with Luna, the learning support teacher at least, she is very warm with the children...it’s not that I’m not warm, but it costs me work and I try to give everyone the same.

### 8.8.2. The role of the learning support teacher role differed across schools, revealing some tensions

It was a challenge to gain a clear picture of the day-to-day role of the learning support teacher, as her role varied between schools. Her work in Schools A, C and D included teacher advice and work with individual children. Delivering reinforcement of their basic reading, writing and maths skills, her files for the children contained worksheets completed by children (see Figure 8.5 below) and she told me she also used games.

**Figure 8.5**

*Sentence ordering exercise completed by Lina (School A) with the learning support teacher*



However, the individuals she worked with were not necessarily those with the poorest skills overall, but rather, those who the teacher thought might need extra support at that moment in time. In contrast, her role in Schools B and E included teacher advice and running whole-class sessions, which were focused on the skills of group problem solving and concentration. Asking her about her role she explained that while her role meant she oversaw the PIAR process, what she did varied depending on the school in which she worked:

**Learning support teacher:** You have to remember I might only see them one time a week, four times a month, and that won't fix all – because if I have a meeting of (learning support teachers), meeting with a parent, or training, that is one day less, so you have to remember that the hands-on work of inclusion, because the role of the SEN teacher is one of guidance, and support for the teacher in the class – based upon inclusion and having the child in the class.

**Julia:** And so you don't work individually?

**Learning support teacher:** I might have to take them out to do individual work, that is my work, but in the rural setting it doesn't work like this, so sometimes I do groups.

With regards to the PIAR process, six children had established individual PIAR plans<sup>39</sup> with specific targets. However, analysis of the paperwork revealed that the presence of targets did not guarantee that all teachers were adapting their practice as planned. In four out of the six cases (Dulce, Ariana, Lina, Nairo), analysis of the PIAR paperwork submitted by the learning support teacher revealed that the teacher was following the guidance, and plans had been amended in light of the child's progress. The recommendations focused on targets related to numeracy and literacy, and naming body parts. However, for two of the six children (Heidy and Gringa) their teachers were not implementing the suggested individual activities for the first two semesters of the year. In the case of Gringa, this was because the teacher thought that the child did not need this, as she was already accessing appropriate work at a younger level through the multigrade setting. In the case of Heidy, follow up meetings indicated that the teacher was not applying the strategies. For both children, this problem was eventually resolved, when the learning support teacher offered extra 1:1 for each child.

A further issue that I became aware of over my time in schools was that there were subtle tensions in negotiating the role of the learning support teacher in some schools. Combining data from my conversations with the Learning Support teachers and five class teachers, along with analysis of paperwork, revealed differences in power at different stages in the process of addressing children's

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<sup>39</sup> PIAR plans were established for seven children: Dulce, Ariana and Lina in School A; Heidy in School B; Gringa in School D; and Nairo in School E. Also, in School D, Ternurita's was started in my last three months of fieldwork, meaning I did not see the completed paperwork.

needs. On the one hand, teachers had the power to decide how the learning support teacher worked with their children. For example, one school told the learning support teacher that she should not do any individual work with children, and instead, was asked to take a whole class and work on broader skills of problem solving for all children. I explored why this was the case with the class teachers, and was told it was due to not feeling there was enough time on offer:

(Learning Support Teacher) doesn't come constantly, so the support is not significant. So I don't trust, or I don't hope that they will help me or find me solutions and instead, I do it myself, I do extra sessions. Of course, when they come and give extra then great, then I welcome that and I do what we can, but as it isn't constant, I can't rely much on that.

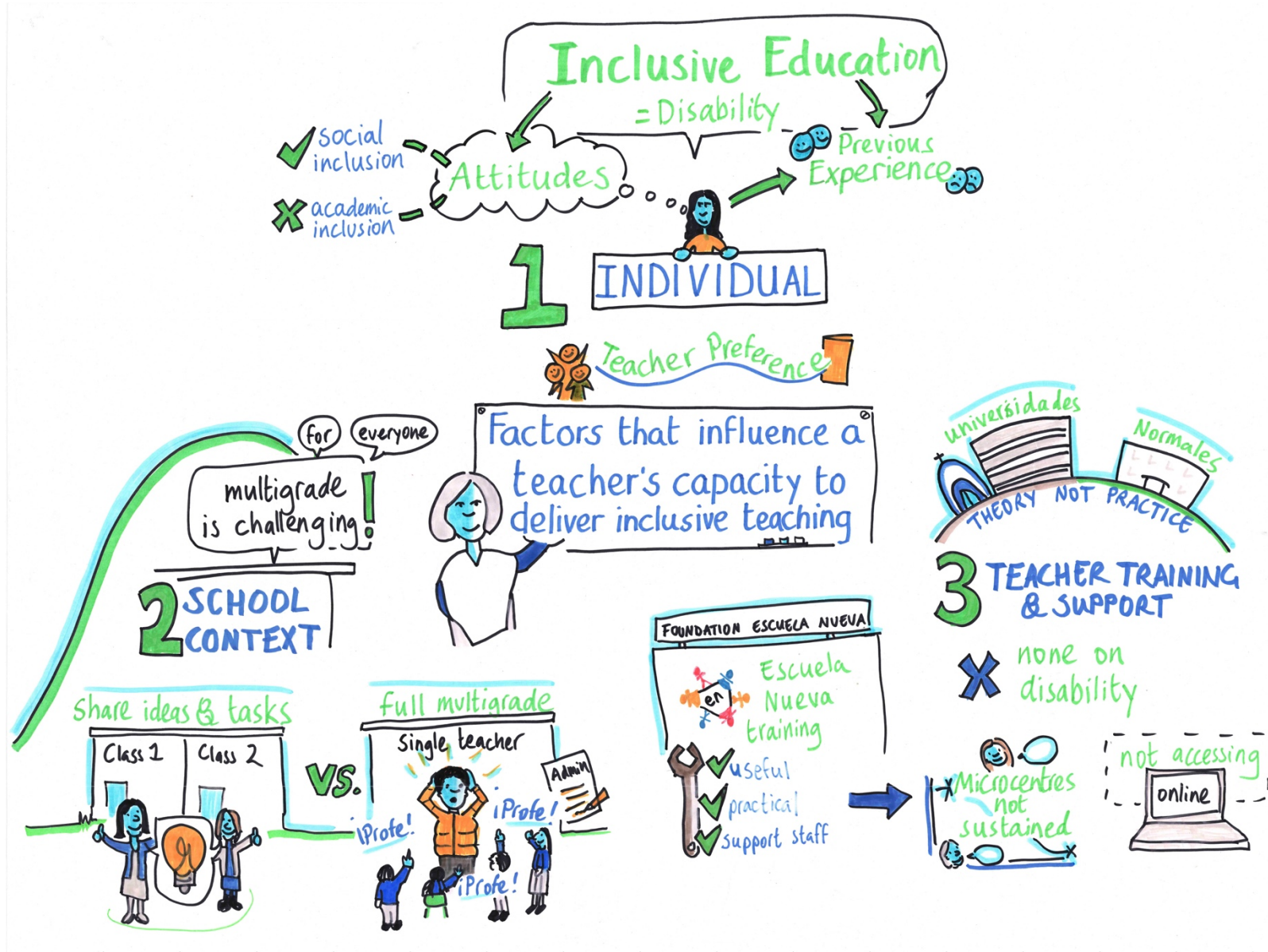
On the other hand, as explained in Chapter 6, the learning support teacher was also monitoring teacher practice with individual children, with the role of highlighting what was helping, and hindering a child's progress. As stated previously, she used the paperwork to describe the attitudes of teachers as a barrier to access. Hence, while the PIAR system of monitoring and regular meetings had helped to highlight what was and was not happening, it also revealed that there were tensions in the negotiations between the learning support teacher and classroom teachers regarding how best to support a child.

## **8.9. Summary**

This chapter has illustrated the fact that, while the Escuela Nueva model supported teachers in delivering teaching that was child-centred and participatory, the question of whether it was inclusive of children with disabilities depended very much on how the teacher implemented the model. This includes the choices they made about which materials to use, and their practice and approach when not using the materials. Furthermore, while their use of assessment was holistic, the chapter problematises the strategy of repeating the year. It has been concluded by describing the different ways in which the learning support teacher was employed, it being revealed that the negotiation of the role sometimes involved subtle tensions. Having explored what teachers delivered and how they did so, the next chapter provides evidence of how the capacity of the individual teachers to deliver inclusive learning was further affected by the context in which they taught.

**Figure 9**

An illustration of Chapter 9: Factors that influence a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching for children with disabilities



## **Chapter 9: Factors that influence a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching for children with disabilities**

In the previous chapter, it was suggested that, while the Escuela Nueva model has supported teachers in delivering teaching that is child-centred and participatory, how inclusive it is depends upon the teacher's practice and approach. In considering who was most able to deliver teaching that most reflected the EN teaching and learning ideal, it would be easy to contend that this differed due to the willingness of individual teachers to comply with the model. However, my analysis indicates that there is a much more nuanced story. In this chapter, it is argued that there was a range of factors that impacted upon a teacher's capacity to deliver teaching that was inclusive. Grouping these into three levels, in Section 1 I assert that individual factors, such as attitudes to inclusion, previous experience and preferred teaching style, did play a role. However, providing a broader perspective, in Section 2, I explain how factors at the school level influenced what was possible, while in Section 3 I provide evidence that the national and local training and support structures did not provide practical support for managing disability and diversity.

### **Section 1: Individual factors**

While acknowledging that there are a multiplicity of factors that could potentially affect individuals' views and practice, this section focuses on those that my interpretation of the coded data highlighted. It describes how teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were mixed, and that these were influenced by their previous experience of teaching children with disabilities. It finishes by acknowledging that teacher's preferred teaching style also had a bearing on the extent to which they implemented the EN model.

#### **9.1. Teachers conceptualised inclusive education as educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools**

When describing inclusive education, teachers referred to children with disabilities being placed in mainstream schools.

**Teacher 8:** I think right now we are in a time of inclusion, when the special children are in regular classes.

**Teacher 6:** I don't know if I have a wrong idea about what inclusion is. I see the government think it's put them all in the same class, and right, good, we will all live in the same society, the same world and we have to learn about difference.

## 9.2. Teachers attitudes towards inclusive education were mixed

The interviews with teachers revealed that their views towards the idea of inclusive education for children with disabilities were mixed. The findings presented in detail below, suggest that teachers were positive about inclusive education for social reasons, but less so for academic ones. Comparing this with their previous experience of teaching children with disabilities, positive experiences of inclusive education were associated with positive views on it, whereas those with no, or negative, experience were more likely to be negative. However, despite this, I found that teachers were, in fact, making positive efforts to ensure children with disabilities came to their local school.

### 9.2.1. Teachers thought inclusion was important for social reasons but negative or ambivalent about inclusive education for academic reasons

Summarised in Table 9.1, teachers' interview responses reveal that the majority (6/8) were positive about the idea of inclusive education for social reasons, but only two were convinced about its merits for academic ones.

**Table 9.1**

*Teachers' views about inclusive education compared with their previous experience of teaching children with disabilities*

Teacher	Positive about inclusive education		Previous experience of teaching children with disabilities	
	<i>for social reasons</i>	<i>for academic reasons</i>	<i>yes/no</i>	<i>Positive or negative experience</i>
1	✓	✓	yes	positive
4	✓	✓	yes	positive
5	✓	X	yes	negative
8	✓	X	no	n/a
6	✓	X	no	n/a
3	✓	Only if training	yes	positive in special school
2	X	X	no	n/a
7	Ambivalent		no	n/a

*Note:* Based upon the researcher's interview analysis



Positive social benefits of inclusive education included increasing acceptance, tolerance and helping children to learn about difference:

**Teacher 8:** (Children with disabilities) arrive and fine, that's good because they make relationships with other children, and those children make relationships and help them to grow, help them in their process.

**Teacher 4:** If they are in a world where there is no world apart from them, they don't learn how to live together. It's reinforces the *convivencia* - that children learn to tolerate who are different to them; respect the differences. For me, I don't think it's good for them to be put in a place where there are only children like them, no.

However, views were more negative when considering academic inclusion. Five of the eight teachers cited concerns about the achievement of the child with a disability, the impact upon the learning of others, and the impact upon the teacher:

**Teacher 5:** For the socialisation it is very good – everyone learns to accept everyone – but the conditions where children start to shout, or something like that, it seems to me that it is difficult to accept this as a teacher or know what to do in this moment.

**Teacher 6:** Well I do think they need to socialise. It's as good for them as others good that both meet, but there are things in which they should study separately – yes, for example, they need a flexible curriculum ... in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, you have to know a great number of things that a child with a disability, sadly, cannot learn, and so maybe the children with disability have an ability in which they can be taught – that is not on the curriculum, like being good with their hands, but this isn't done for all. For the teacher, they shouldn't do all of it, this must be a thing thought out and special for them.

Most teachers felt that children with disabilities would need different activities, which would put pressure on their ability to educate the non-disabled children:

**Teacher 5:** It would seem to be to be very difficult to manage children with disabilities, because you need experts in the topic and knowledgeable in how to manage them, because you can't attend to children, well, with conditions that are normal, as well as one with disability.

**Julia:** And if there had been a child with Downs syndrome at this school...what would you do, would they need to be here or in a different school?

**Teacher 8:** As I see they are normal, they are very intelligent, but they need other activities.

Recognising the dilemmas that balancing the social and academic presents, Teacher 7 was neither for or against inclusive education, instead she described herself as ambivalent:

**Julia:** And so what do you think in general, that it is better that special children are in regular classes or special schools?

**Teacher 7:** I don't know, it's because, in the special schools you have all of the teachers prepared for this, *but (pause)* also, the exclusion – you don't want them to be excluded, neither the child or the parents, so this isn't good. So, I feel ambivalent.

This ambivalence was reflected in the views of another teacher who questioned the application of what she saw as a foreign idea of inclusive education and its application in Colombia, without considering what would be required to apply it in practice:

We do this all the time here in this country. Ooh, let's put in a law, so amazing, but they don't think or study about the repercussions of this law, how it will be, 'let's do it! – put children with disabilities in. Let's do it like they do it in Europe, or it'll work like in USA', and that's how it will work, even though the characteristics of Europe are different, the US are different, that here we are different, even to the point of the rural is different to the urban in Colombia. So, it can't be the excuse to put these things in place, because it works in another country.

Thus, while no teacher was fully against inclusive education and they saw the social benefit, most had concerns about putting it into practice to help children achieve academically.

### **9.2.2. Previous experiences of including children with disabilities appeared related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education**

I was interested in how teachers' attitudes towards inclusion compared with their previous experience of teaching children whom they considered had a disability. Interview findings suggest that previous positive experiences of including children with disabilities led to more positive views, while no, or a negative, experience led to teachers being more circumspect. For example, the two teachers who were favourable towards inclusion for both social and academic reasons (Teachers 1 and 3) had had positive experiences of educating children with disabilities in the past (including children with autism and learning difficulties).

**Teacher 4:** I was in fifth grade and had a girl with Downs Syndrome and a child with autism. The child with Downs Syndrome, it was as if she was in Grade 1, so I gave her activities of first grade – numbers, letters. With the autistic child, he had a little bit more ability, we taught him the same, but at that time I had a speech therapist. It was different, the process was much more rich and we saw advances.

**Julia:** and have you taught children with disabilities in this school?

**Teacher 1:** *severe* severe? Yes, we had a girl, two, they were sisters ... and the little one was so hard, so hard, and in the end I noticed she could sing rancheras<sup>40</sup> ... so when I went and looked for the words to the rancheras, but the words that I could find were different to what she was singing, so I recorded her singing and wrote down what she had been singing. I said 'if I am copying you can be reading' ... and she followed it with her finger how she managed to read! A lovely experience.

Their views contrasted with the six remaining teachers. Of these, one had previously had a negative experience of including children, whereas the remainder, who had no reported experience of teaching children with disabilities to draw upon, anticipated that doing so would be negative. The teacher who had had the negative experience told me:

**Teacher 5:** (The Government) talk about inclusion, and only once did I try to teach a child with disability – one who was slow, one with autism – many years ago. But it seemed very difficult when one isn't prepared and neither are the other children; their learning pace is very different.

Those with no previous experience of teaching children with disabilities suggested that this was fortunate and something that would be a great challenge for them, if they had to do so:

**Teacher 5:** But fortunately, in this context, I say fortunately, in this corner of La Ruana we have not seen children with difficulties with disability ... thanks be to God, disability, no

**Teacher 6:** I, luckily, have never had a child with a disability in my class.

Thus, it was not only teacher's attitudes, but also, their experience that informed whether they thought inclusive education was a positive idea.

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<sup>40</sup> Rancheras are Mexican mariachi band music

### **9.3. Teachers' preferred teaching style had some influence on their delivery of the EN approach**

The previous chapter emphasised whether the Escuela Nueva approach was inclusive of children with disabilities depended very much on how the teacher implemented the model. The interviews with teachers revealed their preferred teaching style and motivation had a bearing on the adoption and practice of the EN model. Regarding which, those in the demonstration School B consistently delivered child-centred participatory lessons that reflected their prior commitment to delivering creative, child-centred learning, based upon projects, before EN was adopted:

**Teacher 5:** Here we started the model in 2016, but before with (Teacher 4) and someone else we used something very similar.

**Julia:** Was it a model?

**Teacher 5:** No, more that we loved for children to work in groups. We never put children in lines of desks in class, and we almost always worked through projects...so, it was very similar to EN and since then, we haven't had to change much how we do things

**Julia:** And so what was similar?

**Teacher 5:** It was our form of working. We liked bringing the children together, all of the children meeting, and work out a project for all of us, working with them.

Thus, the model already reflected their preferred style of teaching, and adopting EN had added to their practice, through regular use of the guides and participatory tools (e.g. student committee, friendship letters). In contrast, Teacher 6 regularly chose to use guides as reinforcement materials in her classes, but told me that at that same time she felt restricted by their use. She explained that what she most enjoyed was the freedom to create her own creative lessons in subjects not covered by EN, such as English:

See what I feel most comfortable about? English, and EN don't have guides for this and so I am free! ... The children hear like to sing in English and use it, and I feel good because no one is telling me what to do with this. With EN I don't feel this.

Thus, there *was* an element of individual teacher preference that determined to what extent they implemented the Escuela Nueva approach, as suggested in the FEN training. However, my research also identified wider contextual factors that impacted on not only the teachers' capacity to implement the EN model, but also, their ability to educate children with disabilities. Exploring these wider contextual factors, in the next section, the evidences shows that even between schools there were contextual differences that affected a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive teaching.

## Section 2: School context

The introduction to the schools of Las Colinas in Chapter 4 described the differences between them, noting that schools C-E were smaller and contained full multigrade classes, while Schools A-B had classes that were limited to no more than three grades. This section emphasises the difficulty that teaching a full multigrade class presents, both in terms of capacity to educate as well as the isolation of being the only teacher.

### 9.4. Multigrade classes support children's learning, but teachers find them difficult to manage

As discussed in Chapter 2, Escuela Nueva promotes the use of multigrade classes - classes in which there are children of multiple ages and grades. As a process aimed at promoting learning between age groups, there was evidence of the benefits of learning in a multigrade setting. Four teachers (from Schools A, B and D) identified benefits of teaching multigrade classes. Three (Teacher 4, 6 and 7) noted that older children and younger children helped each other to learn and that it exposed younger children to ideas that they would not otherwise have been taught at that age. Teacher 6 told me:

It is good sometimes because the older children practise their knowledge, because I am teaching the little ones what the older ones already heard, and the little ones sometimes answer when I am asking the older children.

Moreover, having smaller class sizes was identified as something that was a particular benefit for children with disabilities, ensuring teachers could attend to their individual needs:

**Teacher 8:** For example, right now, but for someone with five children in class, someone with so few children ... you realise the deficiencies<sup>41</sup> they have, you must do more, much more work with them.

**Teacher 4:** Small schools don't present as many problems as large schools ... and because there are only a few I can know their individual needs and get the best out of each

However, early in my fieldwork, an interview with the learning support teacher described the difficulties that were subsequently confirmed through my data analysis:

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<sup>41</sup> This is a literal translation of the word '*deficiencias*'. In Colombia this does not have such negative connotations as the word 'deficiencies' does in English. Alternative translations could be shortcomings or impairments.

You must remember it's different for Schools A and B. There are many teachers and they have just two or three grades in a class. It makes it easier to plan and group them by age or ability, whereas if you look at Schools C, D and E, there they have one teacher for seven grades. There is a limitation on the strategies they can use or implement. It changes the dynamic of the group and what you can do.

The data revealed two themes that made delivering child-centred, participatory learning and support for children with disabilities more challenging in full multigrade schools, which were as follows.

#### **9.4.1. Teachers in single class schools found it hard to meet the needs of a wide age range of abilities and ages**

Teachers with a full multigrade class identified a constant tension between trying to address the needs of all age groups, concerned that focusing upon one group – such as younger children - meant that others – the older children - lost out, or vice versa. Teacher 7, who had a class of 18, with ages ranging from 6-11 told me:

For me, it's really hard, being with all the grades and subjects, and honestly for me, as a professional, there are times when I am leaving the older children or the young ones, because you can't multiply the time, because I felt like (the older ones) were being robbed, because they have a lot of needs. The little ones were robbing nearly all of my time, so I brought out a huge number of guides, games, all those things, but then, at any minute the younger ones cried 'teacher teacher!' and then the older ones lost time. And it worries me when the older ones lose time from me, because they need to be well prepared for secondary and the SABER tests.

Moreover, teachers found managing so many grades and subjects resulted in their situation becoming extremely stressful:

**Teacher 6:** Here it is difficult to concentrate, because I am talking about several topics at the same time, with the (5-year-old) I am saying colour this in, but with (6-year-old boy), ah this is the number six. There are times that an older child finishes what they have done, and now what do I do? And I say, 'Argh! please help me with the little ones!'. Sometimes I can make room for topics, so the class works, but sometimes, no.

**Teacher 8:** I have seven grades, so I have so many subjects. So it's very complicated and they ask me on this side from Grade 3: 'teacher, what should I do here?' And then this one

other here in 4th: ‘teacher what should I do?’. Five children with five different things to ask about different themes, each from different grades

Furthermore, a recurring challenge raised by the teachers with full multigrade classes was how to address the needs of pre-schoolers (children of reception age, 5 years old). While this was possible in the classes dedicated solely to early years children in Schools 1 and 2, the full multigrade teachers felt guilty that they could not provide play-based learning. Teacher 8 who had five children, aged 5-11 years explained:

What you should know about multigrade? The thing is children lose some opportunities. For example the little girl (5-year-old), she is all about playing, rounds, and I can’t do it. If I played with her, with the others so much older? imagine that! So, you should have play-based activities to integrate the little one, but many times I can’t do this.

This also impacted on the extent to which teachers felt able to implement the EN participatory tools, with the finding that the smaller multigrade schools were less likely to use them, even though they had already made them and had them visible in the classroom. Teacher 6 in School C noted that she did not have time to manage all of the tools in addition to her teaching. She explained:

In EN they have so many things, but I don’t have time to do it. Let’s do the friendship letters, a large amount of things which I’m sure work, but for me they don’t. In (School B) they have three teachers so they have time, but I don’t have time for this – it costs me much more work.

#### **9.4.2. Teachers in multi-class schools benefited from the opportunity to plan with others and share administration tasks**

Having more than one teacher and multiple classes had the wider benefit of providing extra capacity to support each other to plan creative whole-school teaching and to share administration tasks. For example, in School B, I observed children learning in cross-key stage school committee groups, in which the three teachers each ran a learning station for the children to visit. Similarly, in School A, the teachers arranged a special celebration for National Children’s day during which the children from both classes played games together before sitting together to share a special breakfast of porridge, raisins and cinnamon, paid for by the teachers. Teachers reported that these plans resulted from shared conversations teachers had had at breaktimes – incidental idea-sharing that single teachers do not have.

A further challenge for teachers in smaller schools is that they were responsible for not only the teaching activity, but also, the administration of the building and services. Consequently, my observations of lessons in small, full multigrade schools included frequent interruptions by visitors and requests for information, such as signing for children's daily food delivery, directing maintenance workers to areas that needed action (e.g. frequent power and water outages in School C and D) or setting up meeting rooms for health visitors. Being the only teacher meant that much of the responsibility for managing these tasks was theirs alone. In contrast, the larger schools had more staff available. Thus, delivering creative lessons was not just a matter of individual motivation, it was also about the conditions that supported the teachers in having both the energy and capacity to do so.

### **9.5. Adapting practice when your class size reduces is challenging**

As I have already commented throughout the findings chapters, the observation of teacher practice in School E highlighted the difficulty that some teachers have in adapting the model to the changing context of rural life. As already explained, Teacher 8 had taught at the school for 25 years. Committed to the area and the local culture, she lived at the school in the week and had continued to teach even while the area was a red zone, during the Government's conflict with the FARC. She had seen class size numbers go up and down, and when the model was first introduced, she had 16 children in her class. At that time, she told me, she was enthusiastic and used the tools:

When we started with 16 children. It was important because they began the committee – we had a president, committees, it was all great.

Her initial enthusiasm was confirmed by the teacher trainer from FEN, who told me that while the teacher had struggled to hand over control to the children, she had done so:

In School E, the teacher tried to start it up, but she still found it hard to change and to relinquish her role as a strong teacher – she tried so hard, even though she was signed up, she is a teacher who is older and to break paradigms of teaching at that age is hard – but she has tried to do so, and the little that she has subscribed to she has done well, but it cost her a lot.

However Teacher 8 described the sudden change in context, in which increasing reliance on outside workers had reduced her class size from 16 to just five, within two years:

There is a boss who is buying the farms and bringing people from Caúca (*southwestern coastal region with high levels of poverty*). They don't bring children, just men who work and send money to their families for their needs in Caúca. The boss told us that in Caúca they are less



conflictive, they cost less and they don't mind simple food...now the children come from just two families, and there are not many.

My observation of Teacher 8 (detailed in Chapter 7) revealed how she was struggling to implement the model within the new context of fewer children, and had instead, adopted the teaching style that she used prior to the implementation of the model: dictation and learning by copying. She suggested that motivation (she was not clear whose) had lessened once the class size diminished:

**Julia:** Overall, then, it seems to be you think the model works well with more children, but with less children it doesn't work as well?

**Teacher 8:** Yes, it worked, because in the past years a teacher arrived from FEN and explained to me some activities and I did them. But since the children left, there is not the same level of enthusiasm, and for example, this year the children are very passive.

When I raised the issue of managing very small class sizes with FEN, they acknowledged that they had encountered it before in other contexts. With only a single child, or perhaps pair, in individual year groups FEN suggested that a teacher bring together the group and seek common activities, adapting the use of guide activities to the group. However, this requires flexibility, skills and motivation that is not necessarily within the capacity of all teachers – and particularly so when the small school setting does not allow a teacher to discuss it with others. Thus, while a teacher's motivation affected the extent to which they adopted the model, the context in which they found themselves teaching also transpired to be a very important influence on their practice. Given this, and the wealth of literature that suggests it is an issue common to many countries with rural contexts, one might assume that with a high number of rural, multigrade schools throughout Colombia, the systems that train and support teachers would address this from the start of their professional training. However, the next section, Section 3, illustrates that this is not the case.

### **Section 3: Teacher training and support**

In addition to individual and school-based factors, this section reveals how teachers had not received practical training on how to manage disability or diversity in the classroom, despite a unanimous view from teachers and education leaders that they required training in order to address the needs of children with disabilities. I conclude by noting that FEN and teachers agreed that enabling teachers to support children with disabilities needs not only training, but also, appropriate materials and personnel.

#### **9.6. Participants thought teachers needed practical training on inclusive education**

A unanimous consensus of all school staff, FEN staff and the Secretary of Education leaders, was the necessity for teacher training on how to address the needs of children with disabilities.

**Teacher 7:** Well, us teachers, those who are not special teachers, we must have training to know how to manage these cases, so we don't damage the child. I think that if you are going to put children with these needs in regular classes, you should train the teachers in regular classes.

**Teacher 3:** If they give the teacher really good training, the teacher can accept the children for inclusion, because truly there is a lot of need for training, and the teacher goes to university, but they don't learn exactly that what they need to manage a child like that, and this can mean the child... this can mean the child can go backwards and it can do them damage.

**Julia:** What more would you suggest we need to help teachers educate children with different difficulties?

**FEN staff member:** Well, obviously they need training. The child that has these characteristics and, they should integrate them, integrate them into the school, but also certain times have individual activities, because a child with a disability is a problem for the other children and the teacher.

However, despite the unanimity regarding the need for training, teachers had not received any, which is discussed next.

### **9.7. Initial teacher training does not provide practical training on managing diversity**

Despite the prevalence of both children with disabilities and multigrade schools in Colombia, interviews with teachers, university lecturers in education and leaders from the Secretary for Education revealed that teacher training courses did not prepare teachers for teaching in either context. Four of the teachers explained that the university focuses much more on theory than on practice, and even when they were in schools (their 6<sup>th</sup> out of 9 semesters) there was no training or experience of being in a multigrade setting:

**Teacher 6:** The universities, they focus on theory about pedagogy, but just theory. Oh, like, what is constructivism, but I didn't know or have any idea that a multigrade school like this even existed.

**Headteacher:** Here with a teacher training college they are not prepared to manage multigrade, or how to manage a child with a disability. The universities give them lots of theory but not practice.

Furthermore, no teacher recalled ever being taught about disability in their initial teacher training course. In response, teachers in the case schools felt that they had learned how to address diversity through experience, and their own efforts.

**Julia:** I notice that you have creative lessons and help children with difficulties. How did you learn to do what you do?

**Teacher 4:** Because of experience, I learned to do what is needed.

**Teacher 7:** I am not licensed in pre-school, all I have done is due to my own efforts. I have to look for books for pre-school, including buying books, which are very expensive.

Given the consensus across the bodies that had the potential to offer the training on disability, I was interested in what was preventing this. A presentation of my findings to a SEN specialist course convenor at a large state-funded university based in Bogotá led to a conversation where she suggested that while some public and private universities offer an optional module on disability, it requires trainee teachers to opt into it, and this is typically chosen only by those who want a career in special education. Disability training is not, therefore, part of the regular teacher training courses, including the non-SEN courses offered in her university:

**Julia:** Do the other (non-SEN) university teaching courses include a module or session on disability?

**Course convenor:** No, here in Colombia it is not obligatory, so they don't do it. Some might ask me to talk to their students, but this depends on our relationship (between lecturers). This does not happen every year.

Moreover, following my presentation of findings to the Secretary for Education leaders, they noted that without a legal framework or norm given by the Ministry of Education, universities and teacher training colleges are unlikely to add in training on disability:

This country? We move for the legal norms – if it is not the requirement because of a norm, it won't happen.

A further complicating issue within the Colombian system is the role of the different types of teacher training institution. As already explained, there are two types of teacher training institution: the *normales* (teacher training colleges that are typically regional and closer to rural schools), and universities (state and private, located in large urban centres). While the Government has aimed to promote the university-based courses to educate teachers, many are trained in *normales*. FEN leaders raised the concern that increasing the role of the universities meant there was less emphasis upon skilling up local people, who would understand local issues, with fewer opportunity for addressing diverse, multigrade schools:

The (university) faculties of education took over and that's terrible – because they are so pure theory, they don't know *anything* about what is happening in the country. The *normales* are the ones in the towns and they understand something ... and each time (the Government) wants (teachers) in faculties of education.

Furthermore, in such a decentralised system, the Secretary of Education leaders told me that to control the quality or content of what was offered in different training institutions would be extremely difficult. For example, the levels of Government control vary between different types of universities (e.g. public vs private, national vs regional) and supervision of *normales* courses is left to the relevant regional authority.

**9.8. Teachers thought FEN training was positive, but the school-led training mechanisms had not been sustained**

Having discovered that there were no national structures of support in initial teacher training, I was interested in whether teachers had accessed to any further support at the local level. All teachers had received the 3-day initial training from FEN, a session on reading and writing and a year of follow-up visits from a dedicated teacher trainer to support its implementation. The follow-up visits included observations and supporting the staff in termly 'microcentre' staff support groups, in which they were encouraged to discuss how they were implementing the model and share strategies.

The majority of teachers (7/8) were very positive about the EN training and support. They thought the training delivery was good and liked the fact that it had been practical.

**Teacher 8:** They were very practical, all about the practice, with us as students and the teacher teaching us, all about the practical so that we would know how to teach the children. (The trainer) is a very good teacher.

**Teacher 1:** The training was very special, we went to the building to do the training and they looked after us very well, like kings with food and everything! We were well looked after and the training was very good. What helped me the most was (the trainer), she seems like a very knowledgeable... capable. Since the headteacher put us with them, they have helped us very much.

Addressing multigrade is a fundamental part of the training, in that the materials and teaching are designed for multigrade classes. FEN said that there was not, however, any specific mention of disability – other than to encourage teachers to address diversity within the class as a whole. Supporting this idea, one teacher felt that the model addressed the needs of children with SEN as much as non-disabled children:

**Julia:** But they didn't address SEN?

**Teacher 4:** No, it was a good training for how to manage little children, in reading and writing. But the same instruments that they use in EN are also the same strategies that are really good for disability too.

Despite the support from FEN being comprehensive and supporting staff to learn how to run within-staff microcentre training, it would seem that this had stopped once the FEN trainer left. One teacher told me:

The microcentres, we only did them for FEN. We did something like five with them in the past three years. They are done by (FEN trainer). Now we have staff meetings.

Similarly, when I asked the headteacher about training staff together, he made a distinction between general staff meetings and microcentres, with it appearing as if the former had been prioritised. The focus of staff meetings topics tended to be reactive, driven by priorities of the Secretary for Education and the agenda given by the Head teacher:

**Julia:** So, for the staff meetings who decides the agenda?

**Head teacher:** We – the directors and the Secretary for Education – decide between us what is important and what is urgent and what we can leave aside. So, if it's project X – 7th of September, but is it urgent? On the other hand, there was a push for having training on earthquakes, so they called me the week before and they have to push it in. So it changes. You start with various projects of environment, health, banks offering services to teachers

This appeared to be at odds with the headteacher's initial enthusiasm for the model, having actively sought out FEN and asked to adopt the model at a time when it was not the approach being recommended by the previous municipality administration. However, I found that the role of director did not appear to include practical support or monitoring for teachers. When I raised the issue of monitoring and day-to-day support for teachers, he told me that in larger schools there would be a 'middle manager' who might address these issues. However, he said that such small schools meant there was no budget for this role, and that parents would let him know, if there was a problem. Furthermore, his role was mainly to work with the central administrators of education, acting as a conduit between them and the schools.

### **9.9. Supporting teacher practice involves more than training**

An additional finding that I have taken away from this research is that it is not only offering training that participants thought was required to support teacher practice. FEN staff highlighted the need for not only training, but also, materials and ongoing support to help teachers adapt their learning in their own context.

**Director of FEN:** Training without the materials won't work, materials without training won't work.

**FEN teacher trainer:** The biggest issue is the support for teachers. You have to maintain the support and not leave them on their own.

Similarly, two teachers suggested inclusion required more support from qualified others. Teacher 4 such wanted support from a multi-agency team of specialists (based on her previous experience in a

school with this provision), while Teacher 7 wanted support for individual children in class. Teachers explained:

**Teacher 4:** I do what I can, here, but I feel like I'm not helping, because I don't have a different point of view on how to address their difficulties. I do what I can achieve but it's very complicated.

**Teacher 7:** The children need lots of time. If I have a child like this, with all of the other children, and then that child? I wish there were people exclusively for them.

### **9.10. Summary**

The previous chapter (Chapter 8) revealed that implementation of the EN model and teacher practice varied across schools, with it being argued that it was not what a teacher delivered, but rather, how, that was of particular importance. In response, in this chapter, it has been contended that, while individual factors played a role in how a teacher met the needs of children with disabilities, there were broader factors that influenced their capacity to do so. The role of context and the complexity of being a single teacher catering for a full multigrade class have been discussed. Furthermore, it has been explained that the teachers received little or no training in managing diversity and that there is no national system that could equip them with the skills they need. To complete the picture of how children's needs were understood and addressed, the next – and final – findings chapter analyses the views of the children themselves.

**Figure 10.1**

Illustration of Chapter 10: children's views on their education in an Escuela Nueva school





## Chapter 10: Children's views on their education in Escuela Nueva schools

The literature review (Chapter 4) identified a gap in terms of research that has explored the views of rural children. With the aim of privileging the views of children within this research, what follows is a chapter in which they share their experiences of learning in an EN classroom and their hopes for their future. While it focuses on children with disabilities, their views are contextualised with those of their non-disabled peers. Section 1 explores children's views of their own difficulties followed by Section 2 examining what children thought did and did not help them to learn along with their action plans to address issues that they prioritised. Section 3 describes children's views on the learning support processes they receive in school, whilst Section 4 finishes with the hopes of children and their families for their future.

### Section 1: Children's views of their own difficulties

The findings chapters thus far have outlined that, while children had various difficulties, disability was not a topic with which they were familiar. Accordingly, of the 10 that referred to having difficulties in their learning none of the children described themselves as having a disability - including the child with a disability diagnosis (Nairo, School E). They did, however, describe their difficulties with reference to a lack of certain skills and the majority (7/10) saw themselves as responsible for this. An example is Malefica, a child in School B with learning and behaviour difficulties, who described herself as one of the poorest readers in the class:

**Malefica** (7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties, School B): There are children like me, like Cielo, we don't know how to read, and we find it hard.

**Julia:** So why is it some children can read and others can't?

**Malefica:** It's because we don't understand the words for the letters, so it's hard to read.

**Julia:** And how do you feel when you find it hard to read?

**Malefica:** I feel OK, because it's joyful to read and write.

**Julia:** And when it doesn't go well...

**Malefica:** Well, you get sad because you don't know how to read or write.

This reflected a pattern that I noticed, where children frequently blamed themselves for their difficulties, giving examples of their own lack of skill or effort:

**Ironman** (9-year-old boy with self-care difficulties, School B): I wasn't very much a companionable person, I was solitary, and neither on the other hand did I do my homework.

**Nairo** (*10-year-old boy with diagnosed learning difficulties, School E*): It is that I don't pay attention to the things. I've always been like this, I don't know why.

**Julia**: So, do you think that it is your own fault that this happens?

**Nairo**: Yes

In contrast, the most positive example of a child's self-esteem with regard to their learning difficulties was that of Gato, an 11-year-old boy with difficulties in his reading and writing. As a result of slow progress, Gato had repeated two years of schooling. Consequently, he was in the same grade as his younger brother, Juancho. However, rather than considering himself less able than his brother, he was both aware that he learned differently to others and positive about this:

**Julia**: And how do you feel about having Juancho in the same grade as you?

**Gato** (*11-year-old boy with learning difficulties, School B*): I like the company, he is my best friend, even though we fight sometimes.

**Julia**: Does he learn in the same way as you?

**Gato**: We learn differently, like, erm, we do things differently, but we learn at the same level.

Furthermore, during the same conversation he went on to display his love for reading, despite his reading level being at a much lower level than his peers, and him working on guides that were for the grade below. Thus, despite his difficulties he appeared to be thriving.

Having explored the way in which children understand their difficulties, the next section examines what they thought did, and did not, support their learning.

## **Section 2: Children's views on what helped and did not help them learn**

While not all children with a disability referred to their difficulties, I was able to gain a comprehensive picture of what they felt did, and did not, support their learning through combining the photovoice and 'when I'm stuck' tool data. Through photovoice, children identified various themes on what helped, which I have grouped into five meta-themes, as outlined in Table 10.1. These included: people, the school context (including school materials and environment), the natural environment, religion and single issues specific to their school.

**Table 10.1***Overview of the photovoice themes that children thought helped their learning*

Meta-themes	People		School context		Natural environment	Religion	Single issues
	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Teaching &amp; learning materials</i>	<i>School environment</i>			
School							
A	✓	✓	✓		✓		
B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Day trip projects
C	✓		✓				Transport
D	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
E	✓		✓	✓		✓	

As discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 5, section 5.7.5) and illustrated in Table 10.2 below, children found it very hard to identify, or photograph, things that did not help their learning. However, the themes below describe the issues that could be captured by photographs.

**Table 10.2***Overview of the photovoice themes that children thought did not help their learning*

Theme	Fighting	Technology	Toys and playing	Nature
School				
A	✓	✓		
B	✓	✓	✓	✓
C				✓
D	✓		✓	
E		✓	✓	

Using these first four meta-themes of ‘what helps’ to structure this section, I will explore children’s views on both what did and what did not help them learn, based upon a combination of all child data. Furthermore, the views of children with disabilities are contextualised through representing the views of those without identified difficulties.

### 10.1 People helped children learn

Combining the photovoice and ‘who helps when I’m stuck’ individual interview data, I was able to understand how all children reacted to feeling stuck with their work better and how their teachers, friends and parents did, or did not, help them to learn. Children reported that all three groups helped them learn, but provided nuanced accounts, which suggests that their experiences differed between schools and whether the child had a disability.

### **10.1.1. Teachers helped children learn**

An area of consensus in the photovoice themes across schools was that teachers helped children learn. Similarly, when asked if, and how, teachers helped them when they were stuck, the vast majority of children from all schools, both with and without disabilities, gave positive responses, with only one child in School E saying they did not help them learn.

**Julia:** And does the teacher help you?

**Berto** (*11-year-old boy with learning difficulty, School C*): Yes

**Julia:** What happens if you ask for help?

**Berto:** Yes, she always help me, she leaves me homework and helps me in the classroom. There is always someone to help me.

**Cybor** (*10-yr-old boy, School B*): (My teacher) would be happy to help me, and when I'm doing divisions and show her and she tells me if it is good or if it is bad.

However, the findings also suggest that children's experiences differed according to which school they attended, which is discussed next.

#### ***Children's experiences of help from the teacher differed across and within schools***

When describing how teachers helped them, nuanced accounts suggested that children's experiences of receiving help were affected by the culture in the classroom, the teacher's style of response and children's personal feelings regarding revealing mistakes.

- *School A children had a culture of asking friends before they asked the teacher*

The responses of four of the nine School A children suggested that there was a culture of children asking their peers for help, before they asked the teacher. Three (including Lina, a child with difficulties in learning) said they would ask the teacher for help, but only after having asked their friends. Their reasons included that the teacher would be busy with others, or, in the case of Lina, that she wanted her to teacher to see her work only when she had 'done well'.

**Kira** (*9-year-old girl, School A*): Well in these moments, I don't really ask the teacher. I would start with asking my friends, and maybe the teacher later.

**Julia:** And why is this?

**Kira:** Because I have more confidence in my friends, and I am with them all the time, whereas the teacher is with the rest of the class...in my 4<sup>th</sup> grade group I am really good at multiplications, but the others are better at divisions, so we work it out between ourselves.

**Julia:** And if you are stuck do you tell the teacher?

**Lina** (9-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School A): No, hardly ever. Sometimes (another child) helps me and looks at my work to see if it is good or not.

**Julia:** But does the teacher help if you need it?

**Lina:** Yes

**Julia:** So it is you prefer to ask your friends?

**Lina:** Yes, because sometimes, I want the teacher to see that I have done well.

**Julia:** So you don't want her to see if you find something is hard?

**Lina:** No

Providing evidence for the positive role peers can play within an EN classroom, this suggests that the older children in School A had worked out their individual strengths and used them for the good of their grade group community.

- *Some teachers responded with anger or frustration when helping children*

The majority of children said that their teachers offered help in a positive way, which included examples in Schools D and E. However, half of the School D children I interviewed described the teacher as helpful, but at the same time 'getting cross' (e.g. four children; two with disabilities). Similarly, in School E three of the four children said their teacher would help them, but that she became angry or frustrated with them if they did not understand<sup>42</sup>:

**Julia:** And when you tell your teacher you are stuck, does she react in a certain way?

**School D boy:** She gets angry, but she helps us.

**Julia:** So when you find it hard, what would the teacher say when you tell her? ... would she be happy, sad, confused?

**School E boy** (child with learning difficulties): Confused

**Julia:** And what would she say?

**Boy:** Like, What happened? Why didn't you come up here and join the queue?

**Julia:** When she says that is she angry, or happy?

**Boy:** Sometimes she gets annoyed because I don't learn it.

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<sup>42</sup> I have chosen to protect the identity of children where they are being critical of their teacher or school, as I have aimed to minimise risks of harm and do not think it is necessary information to develop the narrative.

Triangulating these responses with observation data, the responses of children in School E echo the observations I reported in Chapter 7: making mistakes resulted in children being chided by the teacher. In contrast, in School D, I observed her help children in a supportive manner. However, at other times she lost patience, if they asked her to repeat instructions, or sought her out when she was engaged with an administrative task (e.g. liaising with adults, looking for materials on the computer).

- *Two children were ashamed of their mistakes becoming known*

Two children with disabilities – Ariana (School B) and Falcao (School E) – stood out as individuals who were very ashamed about not being able to do their work. Both actively sought to not tell the teacher that they were struggling. For Falcao, this shame extended to all potential avenues of support, including his friends and family.

**Julia:** And how would the teacher react if you were stuck?

**Ariana** (8-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School A): She would help me

**Julia:** Do you ever tell the teacher?

**Ariana:** No, but she knows so she helps me.

**Julia:** And why would prefer not to say?

**Ariana:** Because I feel ashamed.

**Julia:** When you are struggling, what do you tell the teacher? Do you tell her?

**Falcao** (7-year-old boy with concentration difficulties, School E): I don't tell her, because I feel ashamed.

**Translator:** If you did tell her, what would her reaction be?

**Falcao:** She would put herself annoyed.

**Julia:** So has she got cross with others, if they tell the teacher they can't do something?

**Falcao:** When we do things in the wrong way, then she gets cross.

The reported experiences of these two triangulated with my previously reported observations, given in Chapter 8 (section 8.4.4): I witnessed Ariana struggle when she was called to the board to write a number that she could not name, and Falcao looking very stressed when he was chosen to sit next the teacher and given a 45 minute dictation, which he could not do without errors.

Reflecting on the above, it appears that, while most children disliked feeling stuck, the majority felt that teachers were there to help them. However, there were instances where this was not the case. Given that children with disabilities are more likely to misunderstand instructions and make mistakes, it is likely to be harder for them, if they are educated in a school where making a mistake is poorly

tolerated. However, similar to the discussions raised in the Chapter 7, the issues that children raised were not linked to the EN model per se, but rather, to the teacher's approach when addressing their moments of difficulty. Reflecting the conclusions made in earlier chapters, this emphasises the importance of the teacher and both how they implement the model and address children's needs when they are struggling.

### 10.1.2. Friends helped children learn

Figure 10.2 below illustrates that friendships were important to children, and that the majority of children (36/40) who took part in the 'when I'm stuck' interview said they received help from their peers. However, nuanced accounts from photovoice and the being stuck exercise suggest that those with disabilities had more mixed experiences of receiving help than those of their non-disabled peers.

**Figure 10.2**

*Children's photos and comments about friends helping them to learn*

	
<p>My friends help me because they have big hearts and we do not fight (<i>Raven, 7-year-old girl, School B</i>)</p>	
 <p>He is my best friend and he always helps me when something is difficult for me (<i>Katerine, 7-year-old girl with a self-care difficulty and low attendance, School D</i>)</p>	 <p>We children help each other in class, and she is my best friend (<i>Daniel, 8-year-old boy, School A</i>)</p>

Within the group of 36 children who said that their friends did help them, just under a third (10, of whom 7 were children with disabilities) said that, while their friends usually helped them, there were times when this was not the case. Examples included the following:

**Batman** (9-year-old boy with learning and social difficulties, School B): Some help and some make fun of you, if you can't do things.

**Julia:** And does it happen often that they tease?

**Batman:** Yes, sometimes, but not always.

**Julia:** And who do they tease the most?

**Batman:** They think they can do it better, maybe out of my friends (the oldest boys) they think they can do it better.

**Julia:** Here, do children help you?

**Gringa** (8-year old-with learning, social, self-care and physical difficulties, School D): They annoy me, I say leave me alone.

**Julia:** Do they ever help you?

**Gringa:** Yes, sometimes they help me and sometimes they annoy me.

In contrast, for Ariana (School A) and Falcao (School E), their shame around making mistakes, as mentioned in the section above on receiving help from teacher, also extended to their peers. That is, neither wanted others to know that they were struggling. Falcao told me:

**Julia:** What do the other children say when you are stuck, or they don't know either?

**Falcao** (7-yr-old boy with concentration difficulties, School E): They don't know...I don't tell them, I tell no-one.

The variation in responses prompted me to examine the differences between children with and without disabilities in if, and how, they were helped by their peers. Summarised in Table 10.3 below, it suggested that while the majority of children received help from their peers. It was notable that children without disabilities were more likely to report only positive experiences of receiving help from their peers, whereas those with disabilities had more mixed experiences. Reasons given are summarised in the table, and included teasing on occasions, but also, that other children did not necessarily have the time required to attend to a child who was struggling, when they had to complete their own work. Problematising the notion of peer support being a positive thing at all times, children's responses challenge the assumption that by placing peers together on a table and asking them to work together necessarily results in positive peer learning.



**Table 10.3***Children's views on whether their peers helped them learn*

Child's response	Children help me	Children sometimes help		Children don't help		
		Some help, some tease	Some help, some don't have time	I am ashamed	Children tease	Children don't help
Non-disabled children n = 21	18	2	1			
Children with disabilities n = 19	8	5	2	2	1	1
Totals	26	7	3	2	1	1

***Fighting with friends did not help children learn***

Building on the sometimes mixed experiences of gaining help from their peers, when asked what did not help children to learn, the theme of them fighting or annoying each other was identified by three schools (Schools A, B and D). Examples of children's responses are given below in Figure 10.3.

However, children reported that, despite having staged physical fights in their pictures (particularly in School B), they rarely had physical fights. Thus, my overall impression, based upon children's conversations and observation, is that while children did have squabbles, very rarely did this become physical or spill over into the classroom. Moreover, with such a small community within each school disputes were noted and resolved quickly.

**Figure 10.3***Children's photovoice responses implied fighting did not help them learn*

It doesn't help when we fight over food at breaktime (*Chico, 9-year-old boy, School B*)

*Fig. 10.3 cont.*



If we fight this world will end up full of fighters and shouters, and we don't want this  
(Bonbom, 11-year-old girl, School D)



It's annoying when people keeping tapping me to get my attention and I want to be left in peace  
(Cristiano, 10-year-old boy, School D)

### 10.1.3. Parents helped children learn

While parents did not feature as a theme in the photovoice research, the important role they played for children became apparent through their responses to the being stuck exercise. Despite teachers reporting that parents did not support their children – particularly those with difficulties - the vast majority of children (36/40) responded with an unequivocal, 'yes', when asked how parents reacted to a child being stuck. Of the many positive examples of parental support given by children, both with and without disabilities, these included:

**Julia:** And who could you ask, your parents, your friends, your teacher?

**Ariana** (8-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School B): My mum, she helps me, she takes my hand to helps me write better.

**Julia:** Is there a lot of homework?

**Linda** (7-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School B): Yes, too much.

**Julia:** And does anyone help you?

**Linda:** My brothers, Gato and Juancho, my mum, and sometimes my dad and sometimes I do it by myself, but mainly my mum helps.

#### *A child's home circumstances impacted on parents' ability to support children's homework.*

In Chapter 7, teachers asserted that children with disabilities suffered for a lack of support from home (Section 7.4.1). Providing some evidence for this, the four children who said that their parents did not help them were all children with disabilities. When I explored this with children they provided powerful accounts of the barriers that prevented parents from supporting them in their homework

tasks. As explained below, these included children and parents not understanding the homework, parental illiteracy and the effects of poverty.

### ***Not understanding homework task***

During observations I noted that homework tasks were often dictated to children or copied off the board. This was a struggle for some of the children who found writing difficult. Subsequently, some children reported that when they returned home, they did not understand what they had to do:

**Cielo** (7-year-old girl with learning and social difficulties, School B): I find homework hard to do.

**Julia:** When was the last time you didn't do it?

**Cielo:** It was a few weeks ago...I didn't know what I had to do and my parents didn't know how to do the homework.

### ***Parental illiteracy***

Another aspect that affected a parent's capacity to support their child's homework was the learning level of the former. Two children with disabilities said that their parents could not help them with their homework, because they themselves could not read.

**Julia:** So, who helps you in the house when you have homework?

**Cielo** (7-year-old girl with learning and social difficulties, School B): My family. Sometimes my mum doesn't know how, so then my dad helps. He knows everything and my mum doesn't know so much.

**Batman** (11-year-old boy with learning and social difficulties, School B): I have to ask for help – like my mum and dad, but they didn't have study, so I have to ask a friend.

**Julia:** So your Mum and Dad can't read?

**Batman:** No

### ***Poverty***

Building on the data presented about the impact of poverty and violence in families, the stories of two girls with disabilities suggested these have consequences for children's learning. Both girls said they had a lack of pencils in their homes. When I explored this further with Girl 1, she disclosed that this resulted from her father's drinking (reported in Chapter 7, section 7.4.2, p.116). While she told us the teacher knew this and had given her pencils in the past, a consequence of not doing one's homework on repeated occasions was that a letter was sent home. During a second, later interview she disclosed how the arrival of the letter resulted in further, physical punishment for her:

**Girl 1** (7-year-old girl with a disability<sup>43</sup>): The teacher tells me off if I can't do the homework, and when I try to do it and ask me questions, I forget.

**Julia:** And how does that make you feel?

**Girl 1:** I think that if I do it badly, then the teacher will send a letter home and then my mum will read it and get mad and hit me.

**Julia:** Hits you? (*girl nods*) And this happens often?

**Girl:** Yes

**Julia:** When was the last time?

**Girl 1:** Yesterday

**Julia:** What happened?

**Girl 1:** Because the teacher sent a note saying I hadn't done my homework, my mum hit me hard...

At this stage I asked the translator to take over my questions, using Spanish that was as sensitive as the English phrases I gave her.

**Translator:** Julia says she is so sorry that this has happened to you and asks have you told the teacher this?

**Girl 1:** Yes, she sent a note to say don't tell her off or hit her, but my mum still hits me.

**Translator:** A note?

**Girl 1:** Yes, but she hits me with the belt, and it hit my eye. (*points to mark near her eye*)

The girl went on to explain that her father was the one who defended her, but that he only arrived home late at night. We agreed that I would speak to the teacher again and talk about other ways in which we could help her know what to do for her homework. During the conversation with the teacher, it was revealed that she was aware of how difficult life was for the girl, and the ways in which she had tried to help her:

I love this child, and I fight for her. She is a survivor. Me, for example, I gave her colours, things, books, but you know how children lose things and within a week suddenly have no idea of where their things are ... it's complicated. We have had three years working with her. We involved children's services and they said they found nothing, and nothing has changed. The only other thing to do is report the parents again for negligence, but then they might take the girl and I'm not sure if that will make anything better. It is worse, if she were to be there.

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<sup>43</sup> I have chosen not to name children here as this is a response on a sensitive subject

This emphasises that where children face domestic difficulties in isolated areas, school are likely to be one of the main sources of support for them. Furthermore, it highlights the need to seek the views of children and their parents in order to find ways in which they might be supported.

## 10.2 The school context helped children learn

As already mentioned, the Escuela Nueva model advocates children having learning materials and access to resources and an environment that engages them in creative ways that promotes their development. This subsection presents the views of children on the learning materials they used, EN guides, participatory tools and the physical environment within the school.

### 10.2.1. Teaching and learning materials helped children learn

When taking pictures of what helped them learn, all children took pictures of teaching and learning materials in and outside of the classroom. Many took photos of reading, writing and drawing materials, technology and photos of creative project materials, such as musical instruments and paints. Figure 10.4 below provides some examples of their explanations for how these helped them learn:

**Figure 10.4**

*Children's photos and descriptions of learning materials that helped children learn*

	
<p>The materials help me learn because I can do work (Luna, 8-year-old girl with learning and emotional difficulties, School C)</p>	
	
<p>The posters help us learn English ... we helped the teacher make it (Gato, 11-year-old boy with learning difficulties, School B)</p>	<p>The guides help us learn things, like how to read and write (Ariana, 8-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School A)</p>



Fig.10.4 continued



Paints help us, we used the paints to learn about chickens  
(Sonrisa, 10-year-old girl with visual difficulty, School D)



Pens and pencils help us write  
(Malefica, 7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties, School B)

Figure 10.5 illustrates that children had mixed views about the helpfulness of technology. Having recently received learning tablets in school, children gave examples of times when it helped (e.g. that it helped their reading and for learning facts) and where they identified that it did not help (e.g. that it was distracting and stopped them from working).

**Figure 10.5**

*Children's photos and descriptions of technology and its effect on learning*



Technology sometimes helps me, but it also distracts me  
(Cocinera, 10-year-old girl, School A)



Technology helps us learn about things like maths, but I like to play games  
(Robin, 11-year-old boy, School B)

Across the schools, children also had mixed views about the role of toys and outdoor play equipment (see Figure 10.6). While children in Schools B and D described outdoor equipment as helping them learn to be healthy and strong, those in schools B, D and E also themed playing with toys as something that did not help their learning. When exploring this further, individual interviews revealed that children equated learning to formal tasks that are classroom based and playing with toys or playground equipment as a leisure activity, rather than a form of learning.

**Figure 10.6**

*Children's photos and descriptions of how toys do and do not help them learn*



Books help us learn, but when we play with toys we get distracted  
(Martina, 9-year-old girl, School D)



The bars help me stay strong and learn to be healthy  
(Jhon, 9-year-old boy, School B)



When we play, we are not studying, so it doesn't help us learn  
(Linda, 7-year-old girl with learning difficulty, School B)

### **10.2.2. EN guides and participatory tools**

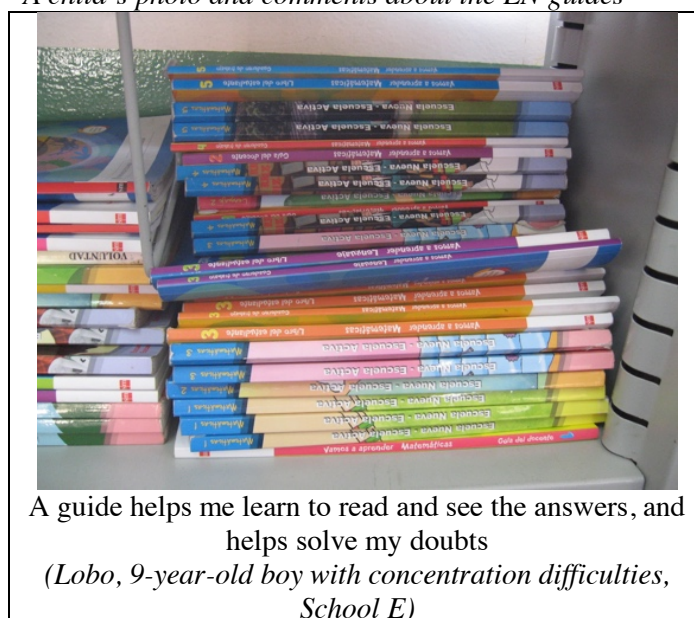
Throughout the fieldwork I explored children's views on the EN guides and participatory tools. The following subsection reveals that the guides were popular with most children, but some with disabilities found the content difficult. They also reveal that the children enjoyed using the participatory tools – in particular, the friendship letters. However, commensurate with the findings of Chapter 7 which focused on teacher implementation of the model, their use was, in part, dictated by the extent to which the teacher made this part of the school routine.

### ***EN guides were popular with most children***

As illustrated in Figure 10.7 below, the majority of children in Schools A (7/9), B (15/22), D (9/16) and E (3/4) were positive about the guides. Less used in School C, only four children out of the nine commented on the guides. Both children with and without disabilities were positive about them, describing both the topics and features that they liked, which included pictures. However, the next section describes how some children with reading difficulties were less positive about the guides.

**Figure 10.7**

*A child's photo and comments about the EN guides*



### ***Guides were less popular with some children with reading difficulties***

While some children with disabilities were positive about the guides, they were considered less useful by four of the children who struggled with reading. Providing some support for the views of the teachers regarding guide use with non-readers, two of the four children referred to them as having a lot of text. For example:

**Alex (10-year-old boy with learning difficulty, School C):** The guides don't help me because I find it hard to read. I don't like reading ... writing doesn't help me because I get really tired very quickly.

Two other children with disabilities preferred the interactive classes led by the teacher, rather than working through the guides, with one telling me:



**Julia:** How are the guides?

**Batman** (*11-year-old boy with learning and social difficulties, School B*): They are more or less [*so so*]

**Julia:** What do you like about them?

**Batman:** Well, they help us learn things.

**Julia:** And the things that make it more or less – the part you think isn't so good?

**Batman:** I don't like to read and sometimes the others annoy me. I prefer when the teacher helps us.

### ***Some children with disabilities disliked sharing guides***

While the EN model advocates children sharing guides between two or three to aid group learning, children had differing views on whether this was helpful. For example, Ironman, a boy with disabilities in School B, described sharing guides with few disputes, whereas Nairo in School E found this to be a source of conflict, which affected his learning:

**Julia:** You are in Grade 4, right? And you are the only one in your grade - does this make it hard to do the activities?

**Nairo** (*10-year-old boy with diagnosed learning difficulty, School E*): No, it's better, because when we are with others we fight over the guides.

**Julia:** Ah, and why is that?

**Nairo:** It's because we are using the same materials and we can't do things because there aren't enough guides.

**Translator:** When did that happen, when you were fighting, with whom?

**Nairo:** It happened in the year before last - in second grade - with (another boy). That was the year that I had to repeat. That's the only year I had to share.

This emphasises the fact that children with disabilities are not a homogenous group, and acts as a reminder that what suits one child may not suit another. Furthermore, if struggling to share is a characteristic of a child's disability then this presents a teacher with a dilemma: how to ensure that children develop the skills of managing conflict and sharing, while not putting the child in a situation that deteriorates so much that it affects their learning, and the learning of others.

### ***Children enjoyed using participatory tools***

Children took numerous photos of the participatory tools in their classrooms, and described the frequency with which they used them, as well as how they thought they helped them learn.

Supporting my earlier reported observations in Chapter 7, children used them most where the teachers integrated them into their weekly planning and teaching delivery.

### *Friendship letters*

The friendship letter tool was somewhat popular as an idea with children, having been photographed or mentioned by 11 across all schools (see Figure 10.8). They reported liking sending and receiving letters, and two children with social difficulties – Burbuja and Florecita - said that it helped them make friendships with others.

**Figure 10.8**

*Children's photos and descriptions of the friendship mail participatory tool*



Letters teach me to care for my friends  
(Raven, 7-year-old girl, School B)



Letters help us with our 'convivencia' [*living peacefully alongside others*]  
(Burbuja, 7-year-old girl with social and emotional difficulties, School B)



Sending (friendship mail) helps me make friends  
(Florecita, 11-year-old girl with self-care, learning & behaviour difficulties, School D)



Writing letters helps me learn how to write better  
(Falcao, 7-year-old boy with concentration difficulties, School E)

When asked how they decided when to use the friendship letters, it became apparent that children in Schools A, B and D were motivated by important days or teachers:

**Julia:** Who decides – when you want or the teacher says?

**Raven (7-year-old girl, School B):** Well, mostly it's to celebrate important days like birthdays, or when someone is sad, well, different things. We can do it when we want but also when the teacher tells us to.

Adding to my earlier reflection in Chapter 8 on teacher practice, these discussions with children affirmed the need for a teacher to be involved in inspiring the use of the tools and monitoring who received letters, to ensure that all were included in the sending and receiving.

#### *School committees*

Having already identified the extent to which committees were embedded into each school in different ways, children I spoke with reflected the differing ways in which the committee was used. For example, while they had all taken part in an election, and voted for their president and other roles, what it meant to be a leader within the committees varied, depending on the level of responsibility given.

**Figure 10.9**

*Child's photograph of the school committee structure*



Describing the way in which the committees did or did not contribute to decision-making, children in schools where they were more established (i.e. Schools A, B and, to a certain extent, D) described the committees as a vehicle for establishing activities that helped them care for the school and community. For example, Cristiano, a 10-year-old boy in School D told me:

When we work in our committee groups we can look after the younger ones, and we can do things together. I am on the environment committee and we planted lettuces with the adults to help us have food.

While all schools had a president, their level of practical responsibility varied between schools. The most active of these was School B. I discussed the roles of president and vice president – the two oldest children in school – who saw this as calming disputes between children and taking a leadership role where asked, e.g. leading school community events, such as the weekly radio show on Friday breaktimes and presentation day events. In contrast, being a president in Schools C and E was restricted to that of a title.

Having examined teaching and learning materials, including EN tools, this chapter now focuses on the other themes that children prioritised: rural life, community, and the people who supported them.

### 10.3. Natural environment

An important theme for children related to living in a rural community was caring for the natural environment. Children in schools A and B placed importance on looking after the natural environment, and their themes of ‘natural environment’ [*naturaleza*] included many pictures of the flora and fauna as well as the recycling bins and water tubs. Children in Schools C and D also took pictures of recycling bins, and School C took pictures of some planted flowers and polytunnel lettuce, but both schools themed these in their ‘school materials’ section. For ease of reading I have combined children’s comments in this section and given examples of their photos and views in Figure 10.11 below.

**Figure 10.11**

*Children’s photos and descriptions of how the natural environment helped them learn*





Figure 10.11 cont.



The tank gives us water to drink, and our families can take water when we run out  
(James, 10-year-old boy, School B)

Planting the lettuces with the community taught us about different types and gives us food  
(Cristiano, 10-year-old boy, School D)

Individual interviews and informal conversations about children's lives revealed that those in all the schools were very knowledgeable about rural crop growing and animal care, including sowing potatoes, milking cows and riding horses. Moreover, many children expressed how much they liked living in a rural place. For example, Katerine, who struggled to attend consistently, emphasised the central importance of the countryside for her:

**Katerine** (7-year-old girl with self-care difficulties and low attendance, School D): My dad is a farm worker, and my mum looks after trout and sowing for all of the farm.

**Julia:** And do you have to work with them?

**Katerine:** I help them. I can sow potatoes, clean clothes. I can do everything.

**Julia:** And in the future, what would you like to do? Would you want to stay where you live or...

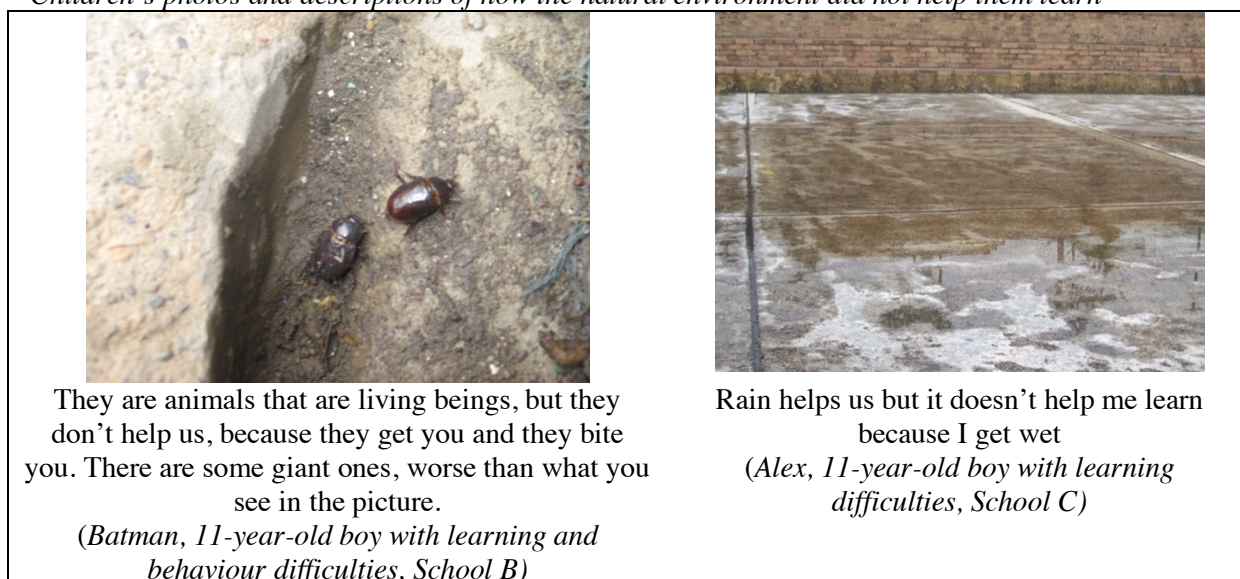
**Katerine:** Well, I don't know yet, but what I love... where I live I walk outside and I feel, I feel (*puts arms out wide, inhales and exhales deeply, smiles*) oh, my land! [*ai, mi tierra!*] There it is so peaceful and this is my favourite.

Furthermore, individual interviews with children highlighted the role of the school as a hub for the community in support of living in such a rural location, such as being a place that provided water when families had run out, and a site of community growing initiatives, such as a government funded polytunnel scheme provided for each school.

In addition to the aspects of nature that children considered positive, there were also some children who commented that the natural environment did not help them learn. As illustrated in Figure 10.12, they referred to the wet weather and biting insects.

**Figure 10.12**

*Children's photos and descriptions of how the natural environment did not help them learn*



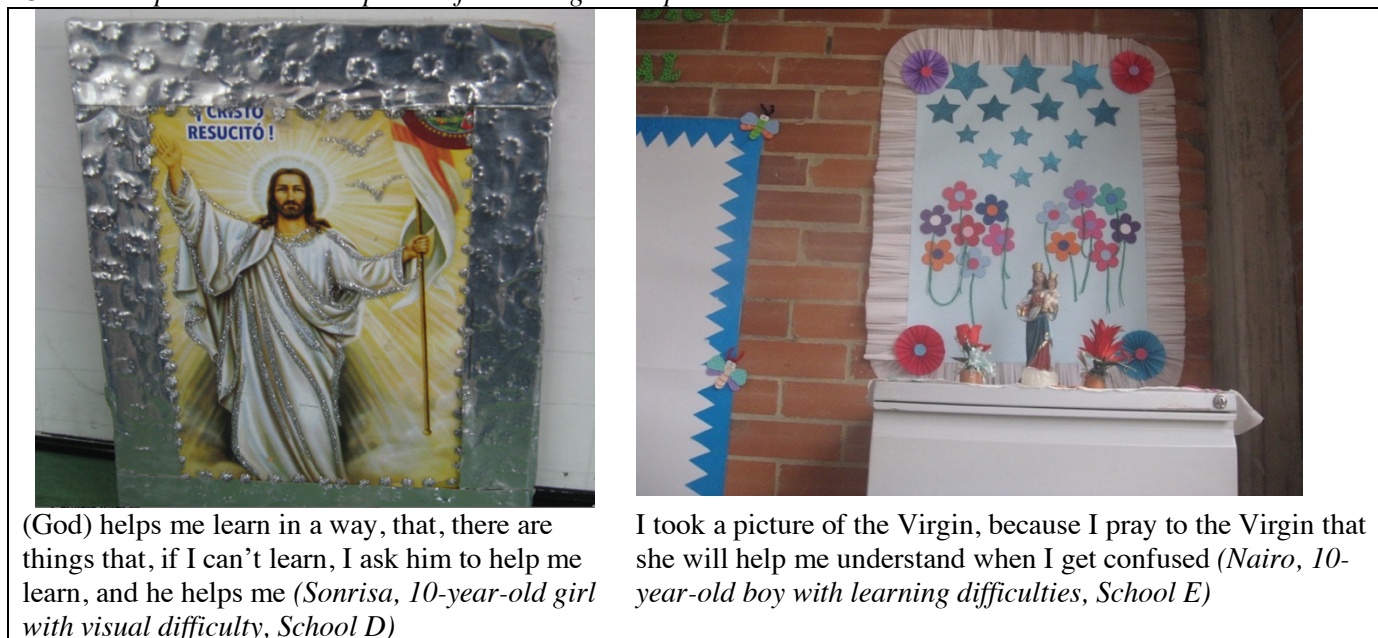
The focus on the natural environment, and its impact upon children's lives and access, emphasised for me the importance of accounting for local contexts when trying to apply any model of education.

#### 10.4. Religion

A feature of everyday community life that was a feature of the most isolated schools was that of religion. School D was used as a place of worship for the Catholic children once every month, and religion clearly played a large part in their lives. Both Schools D and E had religious icons inside and the latter had both a small shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe in the classroom and a larger one for the community outside. The teachers in these schools were themselves religious, and daily prayer was included in the school day, covering the first hour of School D's timetable. Accordingly, children in these two schools identified prayer to the Virgin or Jesus as something that helped them to learn, as depicted in Figure 10.13 below. Having topics such as this generated by the use of photovoice emphasised for me the importance of ensuring children have the opportunity to bring to the fore the issues that affect them. As a non-religious person, I would not have anticipated that they would prioritise religion as a source of help.

**Figure 10.13**

*Children's photos and descriptions of how religion helped them learn*



### **10.5. Children's photovoice action planning**

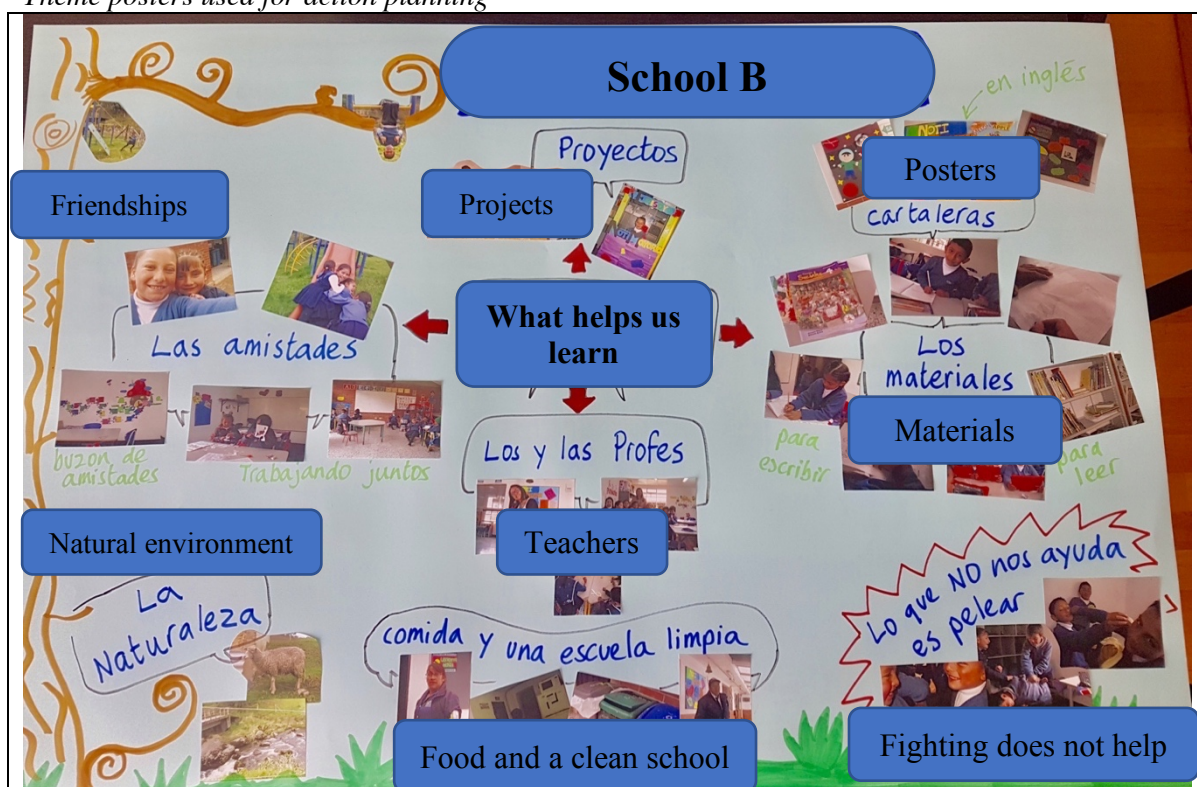
Having identified what did and did not help children learn, my original research plan included child-led analysis sessions, which would lead to child-led action plans for how they wanted to address or give feedback on our research together, and to whom. However, the unfortunate removal of my transport back from schools in my final three months seriously curtailed my opportunity to do so. This left me only one final day with schools A-D to plan. To counter the limited time available, I created a summary poster of the themes children had already identified, choosing the photos they had said they most liked (See Figure 10.14 for examples; full Spanish versions in Appendix H).

Unfortunately, on the limited days I had to work with the children, a combination of the time made available by staff and children's enthusiasm for planning meant I was only able to complete an action plan session for children in School D, and a smaller action planning group for three volunteers in School B.

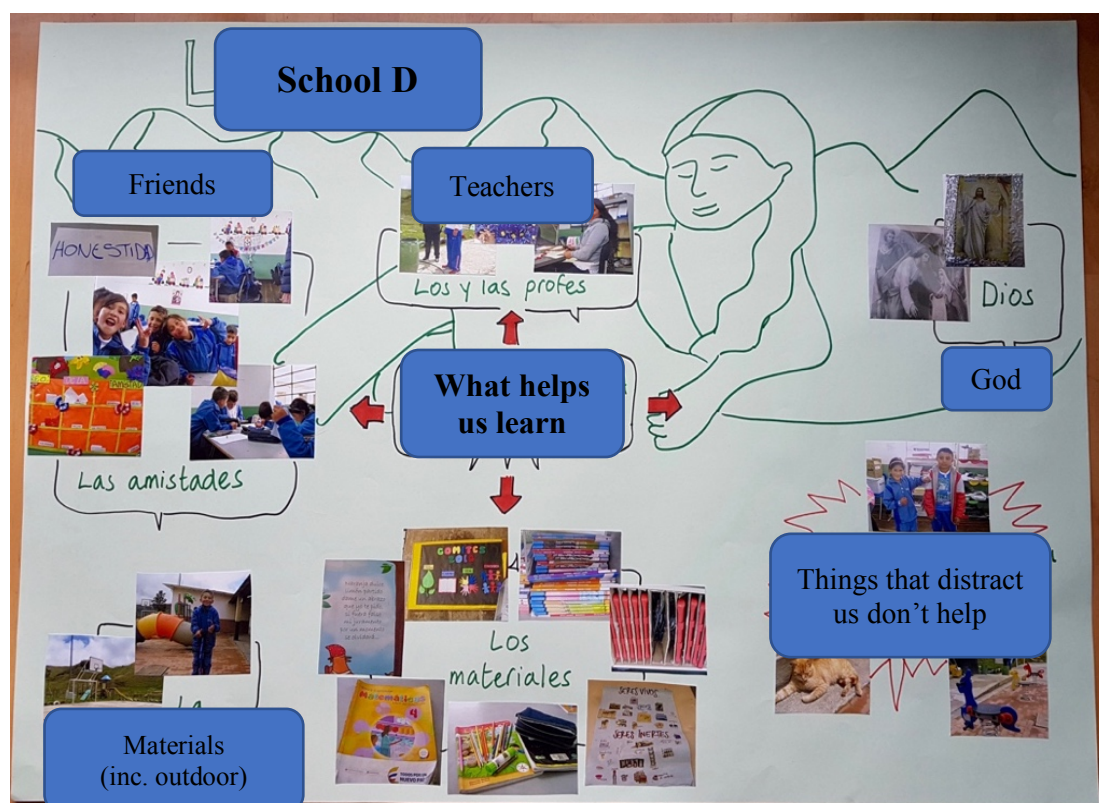


**Figure 10.14**

Theme posters used for action planning



School B poster



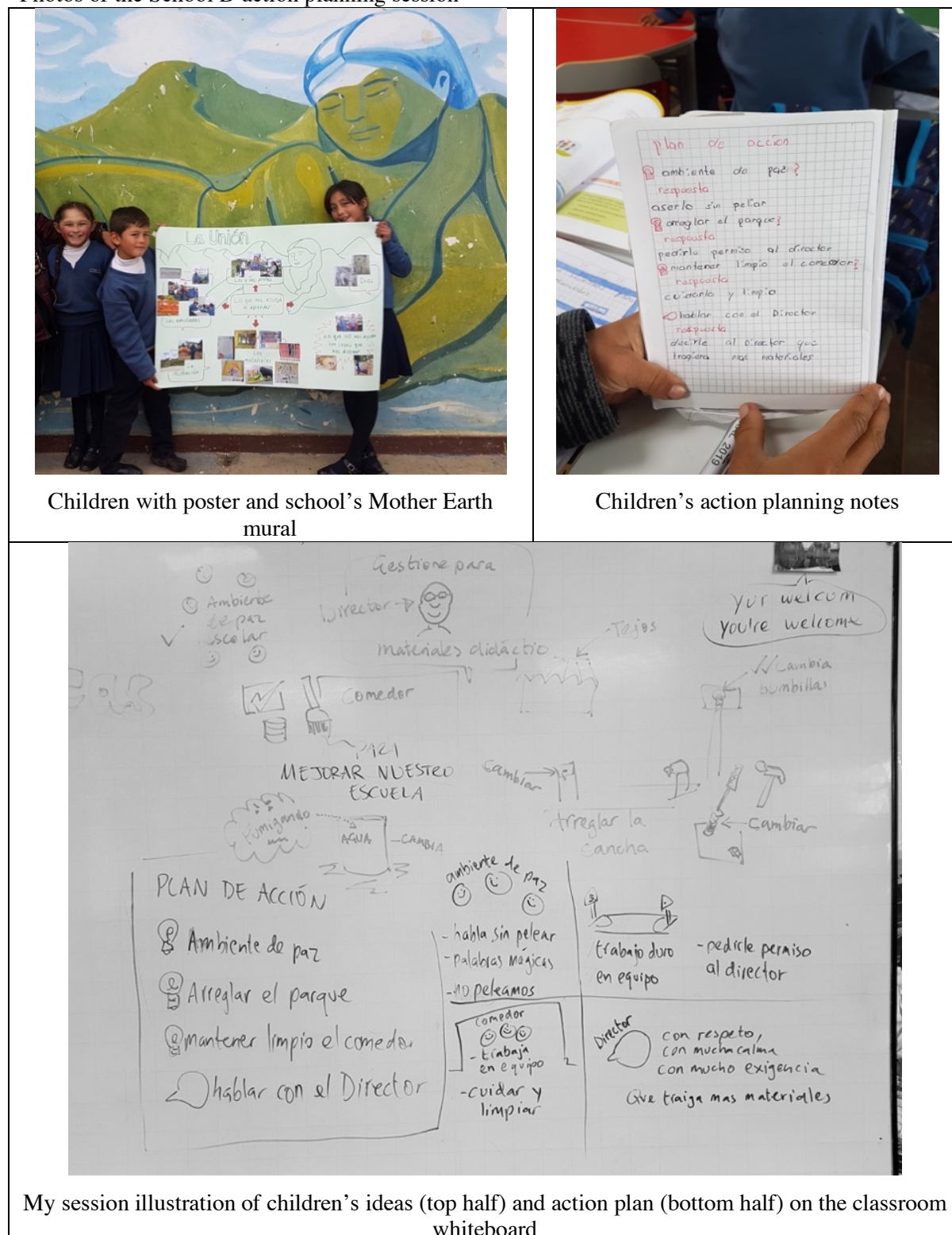
School D theme poster



In School D, I was given 1.5 hours with the children, meaning we could not only go through the poster together, but I could also facilitate a session in which they chose the themes that they were most interested in. As illustrated in Figure 10.15 below, we talked in groups about how they might make that even better, or change it, before I captured their thoughts on the school whiteboard

**Figure 10.15**

Photos of the School D action planning session



In terms of prioritising their themes for action, the children were most interested in those of friendships ('a peaceful environment') and the school environment, including learning materials, the eating area and the outdoor playground. Children planned the actions outlined in Table 10.4.

**Table 10.4**

*School D's photovoice action plan*

Children's concerns	Children's planned actions
Have a peaceful environment	Speak without fighting Use magic words Stop fights
Have more learning materials	With much respect and calm, ask the director
Lightbulbs broken in the playground lights	Ask permission to change them from the director School president to ask the director
Eating area is dirty	Work as a team to clean it

In School B, the time slot available to plan was also the children's tablet time, meaning only the extremely keen ones were interested. I had asked if any committee was interested in working with me, and some members of the environment committee - Juanchito, Gato and Sonrisa, all of whom were children with disabilities - chose to have a short time with me before they returned to their tablets. As a group they talked about establishing a whole school litter picking session, in which children brought the rubbish they found to the recycling bins, and they would then sort this into the appropriate bin. Following up with both schools through contact with the teachers, I was told that School D had an hour where they cleaned the dining area and some children had helped to clean the school kitchen. I was also told that the lights were replaced in the playground, but was not convinced that this came as a result of the children's work with me, as the playground was already being repaired when I was there. School B gave their plan to the teachers, and there was a litter-picking session during their Friday extended playtime, which involved the whole school. This was a positive outcome for the children, but I remain disappointed with the little that I feel the research 'gave back' to the community of children that it aimed to serve.

Section 2 has outlined children's views about who and what they thought supported or did not support them to learn. I found that children with disabilities valued learning materials and the participatory tools, and most - but not all - liked using the learning guides. The majority of children also reported that teachers, their parents and other children helped them learn, but that some with disabilities had more mixed experiences than those who did not.

Having explored children's experiences of learning in an EN classroom, the next section focuses upon how they perceived the learning support processes created to address their needs.

### **Section 3: Children's experiences of learning support processes**

Having identified what children thought helped and hindered their learning, there was also the opportunity to explore their views about the processes designed to support their learning. These include the learning support processes and flexible promotion.

#### **10.6. Children's views of the learning support processes**

Having explored how children understood their difficulties, I was also interested in their views about the support processes available in school. This included the ways in which teachers did, or did not, support children in class as well as their interaction with the learning support teacher. Conversations with 12 children with disabilities identified three main strategies that they recognised as supporting their learning. Triangulating with those reported by their teachers, they talked about differentiation, helping others and the discipline style of their teacher.

##### **10.6.1. Doing differentiated work in class**

Chapter 8 described how teachers were concerned that EN learning guides did not support non-readers, which led Teacher 1 to present them as a reward for those who had learned to read. Consequently, I observed Dulce, a 7-year-old girl in her class who had not yet learned to read, accessing alternative materials. As the only example of differentiated work I observed, Figure 10.16 illustrates the Government-provided booklet, in which she read basic instructions and created sentences below using cut out letters.

During my conversation with Dulce we talked about doing work that was different to others:

**Julia:** But normally can you do what the others do?

**Dulce** (7-year-old girl with learning, behaviour and anxiety difficulties, School A): No, hardly ever, Julia. Sometimes, I can do what others can do, but other times the teacher says, 'I have something else for you' and I am here doing that.

**Julia:** Ah, and do you like doing this?

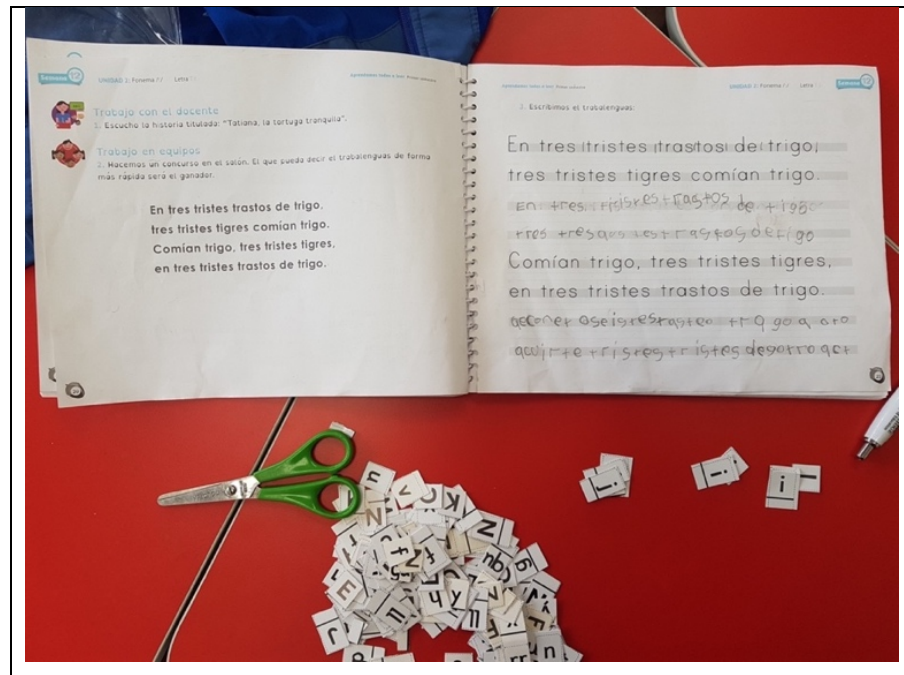
**Dulce:** Yes, she gives me lots of things.

**Julia:** And do you have to read this bit? (*I point to the instructions at top of page*)

**Dulce:** The teacher reads it for me so I know what to do. The teacher helps me a lot, because she knows that I have to leave, and that I cannot lose the year, and that I have to go to the next classroom.

**Figure 10.16**

*Differentiated workbook used by Teacher 1*



Drawing on a previous criticism of EN guides that they do not support non-readers, this also meant she was no longer working alongside her peers or gaining their support. As such, this example highlights the gap in the model for non-readers and emphasises the role of the teacher to address that gap.

### **10.6.2. Helping others**

Two children said that they enjoyed having the responsibility of helping others.

**Malefica** (7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties, School B): What do I like doing? I like studying, because the teacher helps us and the other children help me, and we can help teach the younger children so they can do things and this makes me happy.

**Nairo** (10-year-old boy with diagnosed learning difficulty, School E): I like this year best – I'm the oldest and I have the responsibility to help others.

In the case of Nairo, his comments triangulated with those of his teacher, who had seen his confidence grow as she gave him more responsibility, and my observations in which he was clearly adored by the youngest class member, as he found materials that she needed:

**Teacher 8:** Nairo, he is very timid, and was shy in previous years, but now he is the oldest and on his own, he takes part, he is more confident and is taking up the role, it's a motivation for him... the little one, he helps her, where Nairo is there you will find her, at his side.

### **10.6.3. Discipline from the teacher**

While I suggested in Chapter 7 on teacher practice that teachers rarely used consequences as a form of discipline, there were, of course, times when they reprimanded children. When discussing the fact that children fighting was not helpful for their learning, they were mainly very positive about the teachers and the ways in which they resolved disputes, as explained above in the section on fighting. Just two children referred to being told off by the teacher, and how that made them feel. Malefica in School B had been identified as having social difficulties with other children by the teacher, and she told me that she felt teachers were not always consistent.

**Malefica** (7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties, School B): Sometimes I don't like it when the teacher tells my friends off, she is lovely, but when she tells them off it makes me angry. So one time she told someone off for hitting another child, but not everyone - only some children.

Whereas Falcao, the boy in School E that I observed being strictly observed while copying dictated notes, said that he knew being told off motivated him, but that it did not necessarily help:

**Julia:** Is there anyone in class that helps you?

**Falcao** (7-yr-old boy with concentration difficulties, School E): The teacher

**Julia:** How does she help you?

**Falcao** Telling me off.

**Julia:** And does this help?

**Falcao** No

**Julia:** How could she help you?

**Falcao** Treating me well.

In addition to the support of the class teacher, in the next subsection, how children experienced the support of the learning support teacher is explored.

## **10. 7. SEN support teacher not perceived as for children with difficulties**

Chapter 7 revealed that the role of the learning support teacher had been negotiated differently in different schools: in some she focused on individual work, whereas in others she was only allowed to

work with groups. Consequently, discussion about the role of the learning support teacher with children with and without disabilities suggested that they did not know that her role was related to supporting those with specific difficulties.

**Julia:** Do you ever work with (learning support teacher) alone?

**Lina** (9-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School A): No, only in groups.

**Julia:** And have you worked with (learning support teacher)?

**Malefica** (7-year-old girl with learning and behaviour difficulties, School B): She doesn't really help unless we ask, but sometimes she helps us. She has explained how we need to try to read and write.

**Cristiano** (10-year-old boy, School D): (Learning support teacher) comes every Wednesday...sometimes we work with her individually and some in group.

**Julia:** And why are some individuals?

**Cristiano:** She gives them a drama or an exercise.

The only child who referred to individual work with the learning support teacher was not identified as having a difficulty according to the WG questions, but he told me that she gave him extra exercises for his weaker maths skills:

**Julia:** (SEN support teacher) she helps you too?

**William** (10-year-old boy, School C): Yes. We do great activities and sometimes we do individual activities and tomorrow she is coming, because she has a show for us to do.

**Julia:** And when you are working with her individually, what do you do?

**William:** We do maths exercises.

I believe that this triangulated with the wider finding that disability was not something children were aware of, and while they were aware that some found it harder to learn than others, there was no sense that children with disabilities were a separate, identifiable group or that they received 'special' support.

### **10.8. Managing the tension of going at your own pace while not wanting to repeat the year**

As discussed in the introduction to Escuela Nueva (Chapter 3), flexible promotion and a child going at their own pace are fundamental principles that underpin the approach. Low levels of attendance are acknowledged as a problem in rural areas, allowing children to leave for temporary periods (e.g. for harvest) and then return to the point in the guide where they left was a strategy for addressing this. Having already discovered that children, in general, perceived repeating the year as a negative thing

(Chapter 8, section 8.6.3), I also explored children's experience of going at their own pace and how they managed this while, at the same time, worrying about losing the year. This was illustrated in the case of two sisters in School D - Katherine and Florecita – who lived two hours from their school and whose attendance was poor. When the rains were high the children did not attend. The teacher had raised this with the parent (the father) repeatedly, and also with the children. She was clearly very frustrated by this and had concluded that the reason it kept happening was because the children were in control of the household and the father was too weak to stand up to them. She recounted the story:

I talked with the children and said, 'what is happening with you or in your case why don't you come?'. I asked and asked and finally she said because they were tired, so I concluded that the authority in their house is *them* – if they don't want to come they don't have to. The parents say because it's cold or the river is up, or the horse can't pass – they always have an excuse, but I have now confirmed that they have the authority and secondarily, that it's pure laziness of the girls. I said if you carry on like this, you won't pass the year.

However, interviews with the sisters revealed they were anxious about having to repeat a year and claimed that the rain made the river impossible for the horse or motorbike to pass. When discussing this, their concern was clear:

**Julia:** Do teachers help?

**Florecita** (*11-year-old girl with self-care, learning & behaviour difficulties and low attendance School D*): When I can't do it they say how can I not do it? but also how to do it.

**Julia:** So does the teacher tell you off?

**Florecita:** Sometimes, for example, that I can't do it and gain a better score And today the teacher said you don't come every day and they say we are losing the year - and I feel bad about that.

**Julia:** And how do you feel when your teacher says you might lose the year?

**Katherine** (*7-year-old girl with self-care difficulties and low attendance*): I feel anxious...but also the (often flooded) path is supporting us to arrive at the moment.

Despite the promotion of children going at their own pace as a way to resolve this, Katherine implied that her progress was disadvantaged on her return, because she worked on the guide page that the children were currently on, rather than returning to the last place she left the guide instruction:

**Julia:** When you come back and miss lessons, and then come back, do you start where you were or where they are now?

**Katerine:** Where they are now.

**Julia:** And there must be things that you missed?

**Katerine:** Yes, it's difficult.

**Julia:** If you could start where you left, which would you prefer?

**Katerine:** I would prefer that say we are in page 70, and then they pass 71, 72. I'd prefer to do it in order.

As noted in Chapter 7, despite trying to keep up, the children's poor attendance level meant that subsequent to my fieldwork, both girls did fail the year.

## **Section 4: The hopes of children, and their parents, for their future**

Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2010) argued that research that claims to 'give voice' to children with disabilities has often foregrounded the voices of their proxies, such as parents and professionals. In contrast, in this chapter, the aim has been to capture the views of children alone. However, when thinking about children's futures, Latin American culture places great emphasis on family and community and the future of a child is integrally linked with the hopes and fortunes of their family as much as the individual child (Grech, 2011). Therefore, to present children's hopes for their future without reference to the wider family hopes in which they live would be to detract from their stories and ignore the community-based culture that I aim to represent. Accordingly, I end the findings chapters with the hopes of the children and their families, for their future.

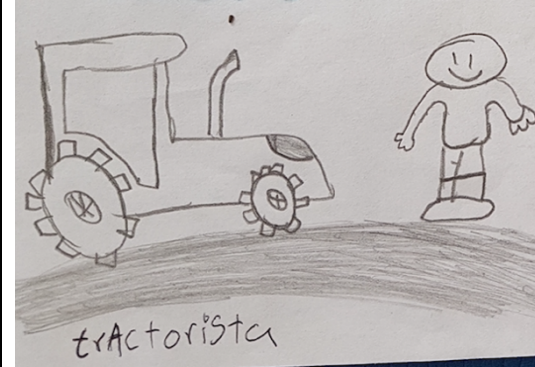


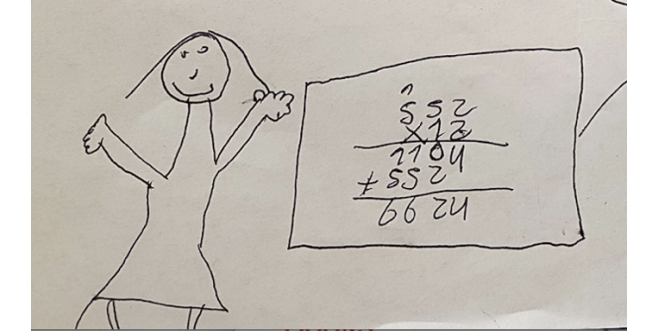
### **10.9. Children's hopes for their future**

When asked to draw or discuss hopes for their future, children were focused upon gaining employment in a variety of fields (see examples in Figure 10.17). Of the 34 who responded, nine had dreams of jobs related to the rural life. Five wanted to be vets (two boys, three girls; including two children with disabilities), two boys wanted to drive tractors, one boy wanted to be a horse trainer and another wanted to build houses in the local area. Eight children (seven girls, one boy; including six children with disabilities) wanted to be in the music or dance industry (e.g. singer, dancer, musician), while three wanted to be doctors (two girls, one boy). Seven children wanted a profession, including police/army (four boys; three children with disabilities), an engineer (one boy), pilot (one boy) and an international chef (one girl). The remaining five children (including two children with disabilities) wanted to be in sports, which included two boys and one girl, who wanted to be footballers. In keeping with national sports in which Colombians excel, one boy wanted to be a cyclist and one girl a professional roller-skater.



**Figure 10.17**

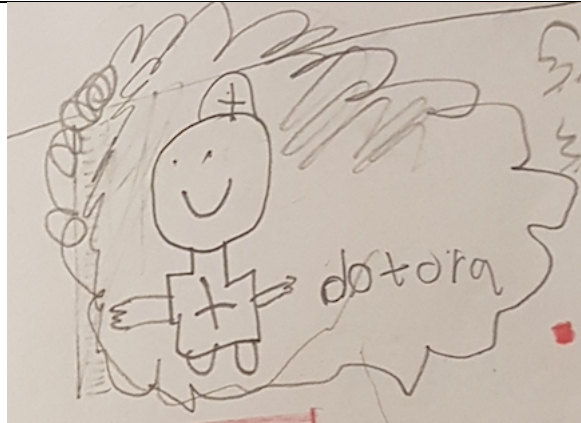
*Examples of children's drawings and comments about their hopes for their future*

	
<p>'I want to go to university and then become a tractor driver' (Josue, 10-year-old boy, School B)</p>	<p>'I want to be a vet so I can help animals' (Sky, 10-year-old girl, School B)</p>
	
<p>'I want to be a doctor or work in a beauty salon' (Johana, 9-year-old girl, School A)</p>	<p>'I want to be a teacher for little children. I like helping the little ones in school' (Lady, 9-year-old girl, School D)</p>

Interviews with parents afforded me the opportunity to combine children's hopes for their future with those of their parents. This revealed that families were keen for children to be equipped to choose their own future. Furthermore, they wanted their children to do better than they had, which was the case for both children with and without disabilities. For example, Gato, Juancho and their little sister Linda had dreams of future careers: Gato wanted to be a policeman, while Juancho wanted to be in the army, both based in the local area. Linda wanted to be a doctor and her illustration of this is shown below in Figure 10.18.

**Figure 10.18**

*Linda's drawing of her future self as a doctor*



‘When I am big, I will be a doctor who helps children who are sick’  
(Linda, 7-year-old girl with learning difficulties, School B)

The children’s mother also had hopes of each child going to university and moving into a career.

**Julia:** What are your hopes for your children?

**Mother of Gato, Juancho and Linda:** I want them to study. I always say study, they say they want to go to University and get a career.

Interviews with all parents revealed that all shared the desire for children to study, and to do better than they had.

**Julia:** What are your future hopes for Alex?

**Mother of Alex (11-year-old boy with learning difficulties, School C):** That he goes well, that he advances, that he has work and isn’t digging up potatoes like his dad or his grandparents. Rather, that he has broader horizons, because here in the countryside there isn’t much, people here abandon the countryside ... people are getting rid of livestock, they don’t have as much sowing.

**Mother of Josue (11-year-old boy, School B):** I studied until 6<sup>th</sup> grade and then my parents wouldn’t let me study anymore, because I had to leave to help my mum cook for the workers. Because of this I say to the children ‘study’! They are not going to do the same (as me).

Moreover, all parents were adamant that their children should choose their future, and said that they would support them in their choices.

**Julia:** Do you think Juancho, Gato and Linda will study here? Work here?

**Mother of the siblings:** That's a thing they will know when they get to that time.

**Mother of Josue:** I would support him in everything. I don't want to say one thing and then he says another. If he says he wants to have a career in ICT, I will support him completely – we, whatever you want to do, we are here, standing with you to support you in everything, everything, everything.

However, a question I feel is key for my findings overall is to what extent what I have reported would be the case, if the children in schools had had much more complex needs. Illustrated in two final examples of families, there was a great contrast between the hopes of the one child with a diagnosis – Nairo – and those of the child who, I would argue, had the most complex needs – Gringa.

### 10.9.1. Hopes for Nairo's future

Nairo, who was the one child who had a diagnosis of a learning difficulty, told me that he hoped to be an animal vet in the future, while his younger brother Lobo, who did not have any disabilities, wanted to be a mariachi band singer. After drawing the pictures illustrated in Figure 10.19, they explained why:

**Figure 10.19**

*Drawings of Nairo and Lobo's future hopes*



**Nairo:** I am going to study so that I can be a vet and look after animals like cows and horses. I already know how to milk cows, because my auntie taught me



**Lobo:** I like to sing, and when I am older I want to be the singer in a mariachi band

Nairo's parents' hopes were for the boys to carry on studying, and to do better than they themselves had, given that Nairo's father left school at 12 years old, when he was in the third grade and his mother only attended until Grade 6. During the PIAR meeting, both parents described how they wanted Nairo to remain in school and study:

**Julia:** What are your hopes for your children?

**Mother:** That they carry on studying, The best they can do is study and that they be good people with the values that are right here. We want them to be the best they can be. I want them to be better than me.

**Father:** Yes, me too

**Mother:** For this we make the best efforts that they do better than us.

**Julia:** And what are your hopes for Nairo's future?

**Mother:** Give him as much study as possible, and if God is willing, the Virgin will help him to study.

**Learning support teacher:** But are you thinking secondary graduation? And maybe technical college?

**Mother:** Yes, in SENA technical college, if God wants this.

Furthermore, there did not appear to be a difference in their hopes or expectation for Nairo, who had a diagnosed disability, and his brother, who did not. Rather, they would wait to see what the children wanted to do:

**Julia:** Do you think there will be a difference in what Nairo or Nairo's brother can achieve?

**Mother:** Well, we have to wait.

**Father:** It depends on what they each want to do.

### **10.9.2. Hope for Gringa's future**

There was a notable contrast when comparing the future hopes for Gringa, who was identified by the learning support teacher as having the most complex needs in all of the schools. She struggled with the concept of a future and was unable to answer when I asked her what she wanted to be when she was older or an adult. Moreover, there was a difference in response from the father of Gringa, when compared with other parents. The father explained how Gringa and her three siblings, each of whom had more complex needs than her, had been left a plot of land, by their grandfather, meaning they would most likely to stay in the area. His greatest hope for all his children was that they might all manage the plot, and that to do so he hoped that the youngest girl would be the one who could manage a bank account:

If she studies, we have four-five cows, and I would like them to manage this. But more than this I don't know ... I'd like that they could manage money and have a bank account. I hope that Gringa can do this.

This led the class teacher to explore the capacity of Gringa's sisters to so do, which revealed the doubts the father had in their ability to cope in the future:

**Class teacher:** Do the children know how to manage money?

**Father of Gringa:** Teacher, they don't even know how to count, so even less can they manage money. I'd like them to be the same as me, have a bank account; know how to manage money.

**Class teacher:** But maybe Gringa will be able to?

**Father:** Well this is the hope! This is my hope for her.

While this is a sobering point to finish on, it is a reminder that children with disabilities are not a homogenous group, and that what individual children need will differ, according not only to their ability to learn, but also, their experiences of education, their context and the support of those around them.

#### **10.10. Summary of the findings chapters**

This chapter concludes the findings chapters. Chapter 7 revealed how the participants understood disability based upon the medical model, and that the intersections that impact on the capacity of families to care for their child were missed. In Chapter 8, it was found that the implementation of the model for children with disabilities varied between schools and classrooms, and that how a teacher delivered learning was as important as the materials they used. In Chapter 9, it was noted that a teacher's capacity to deliver inclusive learning was affected by a range of factors, including not only individual ones, but also, the school context and the training and support that surrounded their practice. Finally, in this chapter children described their own difficulties before generating themes of what helped and did not help them to learn. Having explored their experiences of learning support, the findings finished with their aspirations for the future. What follows is a discussion of the findings and their implications for how one might address the needs of children with a disability in an Escuela Nueva school.

## **Chapter 11: Discussion**

The aim of my research was to explore the ways in which stakeholders in the Escuela Nueva schools of Las Colinas, Colombia, understand and address the educational needs of children with disabilities. Drawing on the findings from this research, I discuss the main themes in four sections: Section 1 explores the ways in which disability was understood and it is argued that the intersectional aspects that impacted on the lives of rural children and families went unrecognised. Section 2 draws upon Norwich's (2013) conceptualisation of the curriculum dilemma of difference to explore teacher practice and problematises some of the assumptions I made about the EN model and its ability to address the needs of children with disabilities. Section 3 platforms the voices of children, their experiences of support and highlights the need to acknowledge the role of a rural context in their experiences and hopes for the future. Finally, in Section 4, it is contended that building inclusive education within rural EN schools requires support that addresses the contextual demands placed upon teachers, parents and children. It is concluded that communities, including teachers, require situated support that builds upon their agency and enables local stakeholders to work together effectively.

### **Section 1: Understanding disability**

In this section, it is argued that, while the Government advocates a biopsychosocial understanding of disability at a policy level, this is not commensurate with local understanding or practice in schools and state systems aimed at supporting families. Highlighting the importance of an intersectional understanding of disability, it is held that in order to meet the needs of rural children and families one needs a nuanced understanding of the pressures that impact on their capacity to meet the needs of their children.

#### **11.1. Disconnect between Government policy and teachers' conceptualisation of disability**

Beltran et al. (2015) explained how Colombian policy conceptualisations of disability and linguistic terminology used to define it have shifted over time, with the aim of reflecting global agreements and definitions of disability. As outlined in Chapter 2, this included a shift from the medical model in the 1990s to the adoption of the biopsychosocial one in 2013. However, my research adds to a body of Latin American research which suggests that the medical model continues to dominate teacher's understanding of disability (Naranjo, 2019; Gutiérrez & Martinez, 2020). Furthermore, similar to Kamenopoulou (2018) research with urban teachers in Colombia, inclusive education was associated with disability in my study. When describing children, they made a distinction between children with SEN and those with disabilities. Similar to the Chilean categorisation of 'permanent' vs 'temporary' disabilities (Cedillo, Contreras & Abadie, 2015), they considered disability to be something permanent and SEN temporary. Not only is this distinction not in the Colombian legislation, but also, the category of SEN is explicitly no longer used in policy and legislation. However, in Chapter 2,

when exploring terminology, it was revealed that the Colombian policy context in which teachers have been raised has been confusing. Pérez et al. (2020) noted that the Colombian legislation itself has been contradictory, on the one hand replacing SEN with ‘person with a disability’, only to then use the term SEN, again, in Law 1628 of 2013. Thus, there have been disconnects at multiple levels: between Government policy and teacher understanding, and between Government departments themselves. Beltran et al. (2015) argued that these disconnects happen when nations attempt to follow definitions of disability that are determined by external bodies, but move at a pace which is not commensurate with national or local understanding. These findings emphasise how essential it is to explore local understanding and terminology, and for those working in the field of disability to take these into consideration in their design and implementation of the work with local communities.

## **11.2. Meeting the needs of children and families: the importance of an intersectional understanding of disability**

My research findings have suggested that not only was there a disconnect in understanding of disability between the Government policy and teachers, but also, a further disconnect between both of these and the lived realities of rural parents. The biopsychosocial model of disability acknowledges the interaction between a child’s condition and the environmental and personal context that impacts on them. However, a comparison between the teachers’ comments about the causes of a child’s learning difficulty and the interview responses of children and their parents, revealed that teachers did not always appreciate the challenges parents were facing. Explored further in the following paragraphs, an overview of areas of disconnect are given in Table 11 below. While not true of all teachers, I felt that these areas of disconnect revealed that they did not always understand the intersections that impact on a parents capacity to support their child.

**Table 11**

*A comparison between teachers’ views of parents and the views of parents and children*

Teachers’ views of parents	Parents/children views
Families are not ‘poor poor’	Lack of money an issue for two-thirds of parents Children not having right equipment and unable to complete homework Parent unable to take time off work to engage in lengthy diagnosis process
Mothers are particularly to blame	Mothers under extra pressure: working all day, lack of money from husbands, caring responsibilities, rural living, some live with domestic violence
Parents don’t support and/or lack interest	Parents were very ambitious for children with disabilities Parents want their child with a disability to continue education Most children said parents helped them learn Good reasons for parents who were helping less: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children said parental education level means can’t always help</li> <li>• Poverty reduced access to study materials</li> </ul>

Extrapolating from the above table suggests that the two intersections that teachers did not appreciate were poverty and gender, which are explored next.

### **11.2.1. Disability and poverty in a rural context**

Similar to other research with Latin American parents who had a child with a disability (in Colombia, Cuadros, 2005; in Ecuador, Huiracocha et al., 2017a), two thirds of parents were grappling with the impact of poverty and access to wider support networks that resulted from living in a rural area. While some were receiving limited state support (the *Canasta familiar*), not all did, meaning they instead had to rely on their family or the community. In her ethnographic research with rural families of Colombia, Carranza-Franco et al. (2019) noted that families living in isolated rural areas have a culture of mutual support, and my research similarly revealed that, while most children lived with just their parents (Chapter 6, Subsection 6.2.2), they frequently referred to uncles, aunties and grandparents who lived nearby and were a key part of their lives and care. Thus, the aim here is not to portray families as victims without local support. However, commensurate with Grech's (2019) of 'disabled families' my findings did suggest that families face additional challenges as a result of trying to meet the needs of their children. For example, the research of Pinilla (2018) noted that direct costs, such as medical treatment, and indirect costs (e.g. informal care) increase the vulnerability of Latin American parents to becoming poor or chronically poor. Similarly, in my research parents outlined the extra costs that resulted from having a child with a disability, including travel to appointments and the cost of therapies once there. Moreover, the father of Gringa faced the complexity of taking two days off work in order to access one appointment, while juggling the demands of milking a herd of cows and risking losing the daily pay that the family needed to survive. This emphasises the importance of teachers being aware of both the support and challenges that families are facing, in order to better meet the needs of those with disabilities.

### **11.2.2. Daughters, mothers and caring responsibilities**

Children's gender was a notable absence in the interviews with teachers, and when describing children with disabilities there were no clear themes that characterised differing descriptions of a child's needs, or how they addressed them, based upon gender. In contrast, when giving examples of the lack of support from home, where individual parents were named, the blame for this was mainly directed towards the mothers rather than the fathers, with reference to (but not challenging) traditional gender roles. Research pertaining to other countries of the Global South has emphasised the role of women in enabling the educational success of children with disabilities (e.g. in India, Hammad & Singal, 2015). In a culture in which there is an underlying assumption that women are the caregivers, while the fathers are there to work and provide economic support (Huiracocha et al., 2017a), this has the potential to result in greater stress for mothers of children with a disability, when compared with



the father (Jaramillo, Moreno & Rodríguez, 2016). Regarding which, when the mother of Alex shared her concern about having a lack of support from her husband, the family support worker emphasised that the mother had chosen such a man, rather than showing empathy. In reporting the above, it is important to balance this with fact that some teachers were highly empathetic, leading Teacher 1 to note that ‘one suffers with them’ (see Chapter 7, section 7.4.2). Similarly, in not wanting to feed into the continued reproduction of stereotypical images of women as helpless victims in the Global South (Demmers 2014; Olivius 2016), it was clear that many of the mothers were strong women who part of happy households, in which they had choices (e.g. the mother of Josue who told me she chose not to work). Consistent with the EN model, there were numerous community events, which included those that focused on support for mothers, and activities were informed by them. However, even where mothers were acknowledged as strong and supportive, there remained an expectation that it was they who would be the ones that managed, despite the wide range of challenges they faced.

While the intersections of poverty and gender were highlighted through interviews with adults, they did not allude to a further intersection – that of race. Identified by children, this was central to their understanding of difference.

### **11.2.3. Race and skin tone**

The literature review contended that researchers need to ensure they explore the ways in which disability are understood, while acknowledging the intersectional aspects of difference are salient within a given context. For the children of Las Colinas, the concept of disability was unfamiliar and differences between children, such as their learning levels, were not central to how children differentiated between their peers. Instead, the most consistent intersection of difference that children identified was skin tone, on which they had clear, articulated opinions. While I described the broader debates regarding the role of *mestizaje* (*mixture*) in Latin American culture in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.1), a highly pertinent piece of research for my study is that of Telles (2014). He compared the responses of Latin Americans regarding their ethnoracial category (the label by which they described themselves, such as black, white, mestizo) and their self-identified skin colour tone on a chart of 10 colours, which ranged from very dark to very light skin colours. Consistent across all countries, including Colombia (see Telles & Steele, 2012) the research suggested that skin tone tends to be a better predictor of inequalities in education and wealth than the traditional ethnoracial categories: the lighter the skin, the more prosperous a person was, and had more years of education. Accordingly, ethnoracial categories were similarly ignored as children did not appear to differentiate between Afro-Colombian children and indigenous ones with darker skin. Moreover, they held that the lightest skin-coloured children in the photographs were more likely to be wealthy, with one child predicting ‘they will have nice houses with a hot shower’. Reflecting research that suggests Colombians consider

those with lighter skins to be more beautiful (Wade, Scorer & Aguil, 2019), a girl told me ‘(the *children with lighter skin*) are beautiful, because they are whiter’. Thus, in considering how to ensure children with disabilities are included by their peers in this context, it would be essential to recognise not only their learning needs, but also the issue of skin colour. This emphasises how an intersectional approach to disability is essential to ensure children’s individual needs are met in a given context.

In addition to teachers not always appreciating the intersections that impacted on a parent’s capacity to care for their child, a further level of disconnect was that between families and the health services tasked with diagnosing and supporting their child with a disability.

#### **11.2.4. State systems do not attend to the intersections that impact on rural parents’ capacity to support their child**

While the Government policies and laws purport to be informed by the biopsychosocial model of disability, where intersecting individual and environmental factors are taken into account, the state-funded health systems did not reflect this. The diagnosis and rehabilitation systems have been designed for, and located within, urban settings. In the context of acknowledged disparities and inequalities in access to diagnostic and rehabilitation service in Colombia (De Groote, De Paepe & Unger, 2005; Moreno-Angarita, 2010), access to services was more complex and costly for rural parents. Moreover, the health-based system of diagnosis relies on experienced doctors to acknowledge a child’s difficulties before referring them into the system. Consistent with previous research on the experiences of Colombian parents struggling to gain a diagnosis for their children (Magaña et al., 2019), school staff suggested there were at least two examples where a child’s difficulties were not recognised by doctors (i.e. Gringa, Ternurita). Thus, parents faced a number of barriers. Firstly, they were expected to adapt to urban services, rather than being offered something that is more tailored to their needs. Secondly, even where parents had negotiated the system, they could not necessarily rely on doctors to have enough experience to recognise a child’s difficulties. Acknowledging the stress that this causes parents raises more fundamental questions about the value of a diagnosis, which is discussed next.

#### **11.2.5 There is a need for clarity on the purpose of seeking a diagnosis**

A further consequence of teachers adopting the medical, rather than the biopsychosocial model of disability was that the PIAR meetings that I observed were focused upon gaining a medical diagnosis for children. However, the findings illustrated that even where parents had navigated the complex system to gain a formal diagnosis, this did not necessarily result in benefits to the child or family. For example, after the protracted efforts of Nairo’s parents and the school to gain a diagnosis for him, it had made little positive difference to his situation. It had not changed the teaching he received, his

parents were unable to access extra support and he blamed himself for his own lack of effort. This led me to question the value of a diagnosis, and who benefits from such efforts to gain one?

Riddick (2012) argued that the focus within debates regarding diagnosis and labelling has been on whether to label or not, rather than examining the quality of any labelling that takes place. She contended that, instead, one should think about the advantages and disadvantages of labelling an individual child at a given time, in a given context. In the context of this study, the benefits of Nairo's diagnosis were unclear. Furthermore, when I asked what advantage there would be for Gringa to have a medical diagnosis at her PIAR meeting, the learning support teacher agreed that it would not change what was offered to her and her father simply replied 'it adds nothing, nothing'. In contrast, a diagnosis for Heidy's hearing difficulties may afford her access to hearing aids, funded by an NGO. Thus, while I consider it important that all children have equal access to diagnostic services, the findings emphasised that there is very little value in focusing upon the need for a diagnosis without consideration from schools and families regarding how it might, or might not, benefit a child and family. Moreover, where it is deemed to have a beneficial purpose, it is important that the state services identify, acknowledge and address the intersections that impact on rural families.

This section has demonstrated that, when researching the topic of disability it is imperative that one gains a rich deep understanding of the ways in which this is understood, and the terminology used, in order to be confident that one has an informed insight into what it means to be disabled in the specific context. Highlighting the importance of an intersectional understanding of disability, I contend that in order to support the education of rural children, there needs to be a nuanced understanding of the pressures that impact on a family's capacity to meet the needs of their children. It is only then that schools, families and state services can engage in building support systems which will address the full range of a child's needs.

Having discussed how disability is understood, the ways in which their needs of children with disabilities were being met in the classroom is the subject of the next section.

## **Section 2: Addressing the needs of children with disabilities in an EN classroom**

The focus of Chapter 8 was to explore teachers' practice and how they addressed the needs of children with disabilities. This section will bring together the views of teachers, children and their parents to highlight some of the tensions and dilemmas that teachers faced when providing a curriculum to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Drawing upon Norwich's (2013) dilemma of difference model, I demonstrate that how teachers attempted to resolve this dilemma was affected by a combination of their beliefs about disability, their views on the suitability of EN materials, and the wider educational system in which they were working.

### **11.3. The EN model and curriculum dilemmas of difference**

Challenging the deficit accounts that dominate the research on teacher practice in Latin America, my study found that the teachers demonstrated high quality, inclusive teaching, in the majority of observations. Similar to some of the positive examples described in the literature review (e.g. Dainez & Naranjo, 2015) they were sensitive towards children and built upon a holistic understanding of their needs. Furthermore, building positive relationships with children was seen as key to managing their behaviour and helping them learn (Cruz-Vadillo, 2019). However, similar to much of the research on teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, there were mixed views about whether inclusive supported the academic progress of children (Castillo et al., 2018; San Martin et al., 2021). When making decisions about what to offer a child and how to deliver this, teachers were constantly balancing a range of tensions with regard to what was best for the child, and what was possible within the context. Providing a useful framework for understanding how a teacher addressed a child's learning needs and the tensions this brings, the literature review (Chapter 4, section 4.4) described how the US economist Martha Minow (1985) highlighted the 'dilemmas of difference' (p.158) that are inherent when attempting to meet the needs of children: choosing to treat children with learning difficulties as if they were the no different from others risks missing accommodations that might help them learn, while acknowledging that a child differs from others, in order to better meet their needs risks stigmatising them. Expanding upon these dilemmas, the literature review detailed how Norwich (2013) identified three which were key for educating children with disabilities: identification (whether to identify a child as having a disability), location (where children learn and with whom) and the curriculum dilemma (whether to offer children with disabilities the same or different curriculum to others). The dilemma of difference that was most prevalent in interviews with teachers, and most relevant for my findings was that of the curriculum. Challenging my assumptions about the ways in which the EN model could be considered inclusive by design, the application of this dilemma of difference to my findings highlights two aspects of the EN model that make inclusion of children with disabilities more complex: the use of guides and learning at a child's own pace.

### **11.3.1. Teachers' beliefs about disability and the unsuitability of EN guides for non-readers leads to them offering alternative work for children with disabilities**

In contrast to Florian and Black-Hawkin's (2011) inclusive pedagogy in which all children are offered a range of work they might access, teachers' beliefs that children with disabilities required a different curriculum was reflected in their practice. An additional reason for offering alternatives resulted from their concern about EN's focus on children learning through working through the guides: teachers did not always consider them suitable for children who could not yet read. As a legitimate concern, Milligan et al. (2018) noted that the inability to access textbooks independently limits their benefit. However, in positioning being literate as an essential skill for accessing learning in an EN classroom, the focus of concern becomes the individual deficit of the child. Consequently, the remediating strategy was to focus on providing additional, extra activities targeted at teaching a child to read. In response, I suggest that this has two important implications for inclusive education of children within an EN classroom: the first is that in focusing solely on not being able to read, there is a risk of missing the inclusion of those children who struggle to read, but who would be capable of accessing the material, if it was adapted in ways that did not rely on a child's ability to decode text. However, none of the participants referred to adapting either the EN materials or the ways in which children could record their learning. The second is that teachers' concerns about the activities not being suitable challenged my assumption that the child-centred, team-based participatory nature of the EN curriculum means that children of all ages and abilities would be able to access the tasks given. I had assumed that this team-based curriculum delivery would remove the dilemma of difference, because the structure of the tasks meant all children could access them, with each contributing based upon their area of strength. However, in practice, teachers thought that the EN curriculum tasks and team-based constructivist approach to learning were not sufficient to address the needs of individuals within those teams. As such, the approach still requires significant teacher input to ensure that the needs of children with disabilities are being met, and did not provide ready solutions for the curriculum dilemmas teachers faced.

### **11.3.2. Learning at your own pace has unintended negative consequences**

EN's focus on a child learning at their own pace and carrying out formative assessment sounds inherently inclusive and child-centred. My research provided many examples of teachers, who were committed to recognising the whole child in their assessment of their progress – focusing on what was 'in the heart as much as the head' (Teacher 1). However, the findings also described the tension between this aspect of the EN approach and being located in a wider state system that uses summative assessment, as it requires children to be deemed 'ready' to pass the year and move into the next grade. My research findings revealed a number of unintended consequences that result from learning at one's pace. Firstly, children who struggle to keep up with grade-peers lose the benefit of EN peer supported

activities as their grade peers progress faster than them. However, a more significant consequence of falling behind within the Colombian system is that children who are substantially behind their peers typically do not pass the year. Thus, while trying to include children by allowing them to learn at their own pace, the gap between them and their peers grows, with the consequence that children with disabilities gradually become excluded from their grade-peers over time. The findings illustrated the different ways in which teachers aimed to resolve this curriculum dilemma. For example, Gato's teacher articulated how Gato was overage and in Grade 4 - the same grade as his younger brother, Juancho. She felt that Gato was working at a Grade 3 level, but did not want him to feel embarrassed by keeping him back in a lower grade than his younger brother. Choosing to give him Grade 3 work while sitting in a Grade 4 group helped her to resolve this tension, but it did mean others knew he was learning at a lower level. Despite this, she had worked hard to ensure his self-esteem was high, which was evident from his own views (Chapter 10, Section 1). However, evidence from the majority of children and families suggested that to repeat a year was potentially stigmatising. Exploring children's views revealed that both they and their parents perceived repeating the year as a negative life event, and that while EN may advocate learning at your own pace, this does not concur with the wider messages they received from their parents or the pressure to pass the year. Thus, despite EN advocating children learning at their own pace in EN schools, children have, instead, absorbed the normative-based message that it is more important that they keep up with others and be 'good enough' to pass with them into the next grade.

The examples given above emphasise Norwich's (2013) reflection that when teachers are managing the tensions that result from differentiating input for a child, there are no easy solutions. Furthermore, these dilemmas exist in EN schools, despite efforts by FEN to design a curriculum that supports a child to learn in creative ways and to go at their own pace.

Having focused mainly upon the views of adults, this chapter now turns to the views of children and the implications for the EN model, and inclusive education within it.

### **Section 3: The views of rural children with disabilities**

As a neglected voice in Southern contexts, including Latin American ones, the views of rural children with disabilities are rarely platformed, and those attending Escuela Nueva schools have never been heard in the literature. This section explores such children's experiences of EN education before describing their outcomes when seeking to access support within an EN classroom.

#### **11.4. Children need support to understand their own strengths and difficulties**

The research findings indicate that, while children with disabilities did not identify as having a disability or special educational needs per se, some recognised that they had difficulties with their learning when compared with their peers. Furthermore, children often blamed themselves for not being attentive or having kept up with their homework and some expressed how they were embarrassed to reveal they had made mistakes. Thus, while children did not use the term 'disability' to describe their difficulties, they did position their difference in learning as an individual deficit. However, when exploring how children understood their difficulties, it became apparent that the SEN systems in place, such as the medicalised diagnosis system, the PIAR and support from the learning support teacher, were not key contributors to their understanding. Regarding which, it emerged that having a diagnosis in the case of Nairo was not something he referred to, and his parents were adamant that, while he remembered going to the doctors, the diagnosis had had very little bearing on his life. Furthermore, children who were being supported by the learning support teacher saw her as someone who supported many children individually and in groups, rather than her supporting a specific cohort who had difficulties in learning. Thus, the labels and framing of disability and SEN, as described by teachers, were not key to the way in which children with disabilities perceived their difficulties. Instead, the aspect of the system which most highlighted a child's individual difficulties with learning was the requirement to pass the year. Failing to do so was a visible marker for their peers, families and the child themselves, that the child's learning progress differed from others. The example of Dulce (Chapter 8, section 8.6.3) illustrated how children experiences reflected the concerns of their teachers, who were grappling with Norwich's (2013) curriculum dilemma: on the one hand Dulce was conscious of appearing different to her peers through doing differentiated work, while on the other she was anxious to learn this skill in order to avoid having to repeat the year. Both these outcomes had the potential to be stigmatising for her. The very real anxieties that children shared about repeating the year highlights the importance of ensuring they have a way of understanding their capacities that emphasise not only the areas in which they struggle, but also their areas of strength. Furthermore, faced with a summative system that means some might fail the year, the way in which teachers address this should aim to reassure children that, regardless of external requirements to pass the year, children's best efforts are all that the teachers requires.

### **11.5. Accessing support in an EN classroom**

While the EN model aims to provide support for children through team activities, peer support and adult facilitation, my research findings have revealed that children had mixed experiences of help from their peers, and teachers had different approaches to supporting a child who had made mistakes.

#### **11.5.1. Peer support is not a panacea**

Building on the work of Vygotsky, the EN model aims to scaffold a child's learning through offering activities that acknowledge what they already know, and support them in deepening their thinking. Part of the learning process will involve children reaching the limits of what they know, making mistakes and needing to access help from others - including their peers. Consistent with the literature on children's views from other countries (Bannink, Idro & Hove, 2016; Jenkin et al., 2017), friendships and connection with peers and adults was of central importance to the children. Those in some classrooms found this a regular source of support – in particular the junior class of School A in which children preferred to consult with their peers before addressing the teacher. However, despite its intuitive appeal for creating a classroom culture of support, children's responses overall suggested that adults should not assume that peer support is necessarily consistent or positive. Moreover, children with disabilities had more difficulty accessing help than their peers – a finding that echoes much of the children's voice literature (Gregorius, 2016; Brydges & Mkandawire, 2016). While half of the children with disabilities said their peers helped them when they were stuck, the remaining half reported examples of teasing, others being too busy to help, or just being too embarrassed to ask for help (e.g. Ariana and Falcao). Their negative experiences were not so extreme as to constitute regular emotional and physical bullying that has been described in other children's voice research (e.g. see Brydges & Mkandawire, 2016). However, my findings suggest that, while working in a team has the potential to be inclusive and foster positive relationships, it should not be considered a panacea for addressing the needs of children with disabilities.

#### **11.5.2. Children need access to positive adult support when they make mistakes**

In addition to mixed experiences of receiving help from their peers, children's experiences of receiving help from teachers varied. The vast majority, both with and without disabilities, had only positive experience of teacher support. They knew their teachers would help them in class, if required and they trusted them to resolve disputes, for the most part. However, some children in Schools D and E reported that their teachers were sometimes angry, if they asked for help. As explained in the findings, I observed that in School D the teacher was strict and sometimes impatient, if children sought her out when she was busy, whereas in School E mistakes were picked up throughout the individual dictation-based lessons. For children with disabilities to succeed in education they need access to positive support when required, delivered in classrooms where making a mistake is an



accepted part of learning, and does not feed into their concerns about being at fault for not learning as quickly as others (Ofiesh & Mather, 2013) Building upon the need for situated support for teachers in the previous section, this emphasises the consequences for children when teachers lack support to manage the contextual demands of their classroom.

#### **11.6. Challenging the deficit accounts of rural spaces**

Supporting Reagan's (2019) call for recognition of the positive aspects of living in rural places, Gallay et al. (2016) advocates education that supports children living in rural areas to gain a sense of ownership and responsibility for rural spaces, in ways that challenge the deficit discourse. Accordingly, EN aims to immerse children in their local environment at both curriculum and systems levels. My photovoice research reflected this in children's love for the rural environment and the importance of caring for it. However, the extent to which rural life featured in their aspirations for their future varied. Similar to other research with parents (Huiracocha et al., 2017b), those in my study wanted children to do better than they themselves had. While children's future dreams were consistent with research that suggests that some hope to leave rural life and work in cities (in Chile, Oyarzún, 2020; in Colombia, Carranza-Franco et al., 2019), nine of the children specifically mentioned jobs in agriculture, while others mentioned jobs that they had seen in the local area – such as working at the local army base or for the local police. I was profoundly struck by Katherine's love for her rural setting as she breathed out the words, '*ai, mi tierra*' (oh, my land), and that for her to live in the rural setting would be something she actively chose. Gaining their views emphasised that not only is context important for shaping children's experiences of disability, but that recognising the value of rural spaces for children is an essential feature of planning for their future.

### **Section 4: Building inclusive education within rural EN schools: situated support and local agency**

In this section, it will be argued that building inclusive education within rural EN schools requires support that addresses the contextual demands placed upon teachers, parents and children. It is concluded that communities, including teachers, require situated support that allows for build upon their agency and enabling local stakeholders to work together effectively.

#### **11.7. Teachers require situated support that addresses the rural context**

When school, FEN and Secretary for Education staff were asked what support they thought teachers needed in order successfully to meet the needs of children with disabilities, all referred to the need for teacher training. High quality training for teachers is considered essential to develop inclusive practice in education (Education Commission, 2019; Florian, 2019) and there is evidence from across the globe to suggest pre-service training can address teachers' attitudes and confidence levels in

managing children with disabilities (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011; Ahmmed, Sharma & Deppeler, 2012). Despite this and consistent with the survey responses of education professionals in many countries (UNESCO, 2020b), including Colombia (García-Villegas et al., 2013; Kamenopoulou, 2018), teachers said that they had not received training on how to address disability or diversity in their classrooms in their pre-service training or since that time. However, my research illustrated that teacher practice was not just a matter of individual skills. Instead, what was possible in a given classroom was influenced by factors present at multiple levels of influence within the wider context. Hence, I question a merely technicist response to supporting teachers in meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

Singal & Muthukrishna (2016) observe that when supporting teachers in addressing the needs of children with disabilities, there needs to be a greater appreciation of the situational constraints that affect teacher practice. Challenging my assumption that multigrade classrooms might, by design, be inclusive to children with disabilities, the research findings suggested the benefits were mixed. On the one hand, multigrade classes were found to have some positive benefits for children with disabilities. Consistent with other research into small, rural multigrade schools (e.g. see Domingo & Boix, 2015), these included social and academic benefits. Children had an established peer support group that changed very little from one year to the next, and individuals, such as Gringa, were accessing materials that were at their level alongside peers who were also learning at the same level. On the other hand, adding the large body of research on multigrade teaching from around the globe (e.g. Little, 2006; Pridmore, 2007; Casaña & Elvio, 2011; Taole, 2014; Reagan et al., 2019), including Escuela Nueva classrooms (Hammler, 2017), rather than equipping teachers to manage diversity with ease, those in the smaller multigrade schools (C-E) reported struggling to manage the many competing demands this generates. Furthermore, scholars who have critiqued the implementation of LCE models in Southern contexts emphasise that teachers are often doing their best within the context of challenging circumstances (Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah, 2006). In my research, Teacher 8 spent the majority of the observed lessons dictating the learning guide content. An exploration of why, revealed that a changing class context (decreased group size from 16 to five children in two years) and being located in an extremely isolated school in which she lived during the week made seeking support or observing alternative practice very difficult. Combining the factors that impact on teacher practice suggest that to support teachers to deliver inclusive education in this context would require much more than technical upskilling on disability for teachers. It requires situated support that addresses the contextual dilemmas and disconnects that teachers are facing within their context. Next, I argue that situated support needs to include supporting people to work together in ways that build upon strengths that exist in a rural context.

### **11.8. Working together and building agency**

When considering what situated support might look like in this particular rural context, positive action by the local education secretariat in response to Decree 1421 included the provision of a learning support and family support worker, who were locally based. As one of the growing examples of countries in the South adopting a system of itinerant teachers (e.g. in Kenya, Uganda, Lynch et al, 2011; Ethiopia, Franck & Joshi, 2017; Chile, Céspedes et al., 2020), this had the potential to provide situated responses to the needs of teachers and children alike. However, similar to research in both Colombia and other Latin American countries (Muñoz, Cruz & Assaél, 2015; Kamenopoulou, 2018; Céspedes et al., 2020) the negotiation of the role of the learning support teacher in some schools revealed some tensions. For example, teachers acted upon her advice in some schools, while in others it was not acted upon, or she was not given access to individual children. Furthermore, there was a tension within her role, which on the one hand offered support for teachers, while on the other involved paperwork that was sometimes critical of them, and appeared to hold a monitoring purpose for external authorities. Identifying the disconnect between adults at the school level added to the broader picture of disconnects I had identified between parents, schools and state systems (discussed in Section 1 of this chapter). Consequently, supporting the delivery of inclusive education in this context requires more than the provision of learning support personnel. To work effectively, there was the need for a bridge that addressed the relational gaps between the people involved; one that helped them to understand their respective constraints, needs and capacities better.

Criticising the deficit lens, which is often applied to rural education and communities, Balfour, Mitchell & Moletsane (2008) note that research on rurality across the globe tends to focus on ‘space, isolation, community and poverty’ (p. 101), whilst paying less attention to the rural people themselves and their lived everyday experiences. By focusing on the everyday experience of teachers, my findings have challenged negative depictions of rural teacher practice. Equally, they revealed that the context did affect the capacity of a teacher to deliver inclusive education. However, this is not to say the rural context is, in itself, a problem. Corbett (2016) argues that there should, instead, be emphasis upon finding creative approaches to rural pedagogy that builds upon the strengths of the context, including supporting teachers to develop relationships with the surrounding community, by drawing upon cultural resources. Regarding which, in the absence of easy access to state services, rural families of children with disabilities are familiar with needing to find ways to support each other and to capitalise upon the resources that they *do* have: the people grounded in the context (Tamayo, Rebolledo & Saldaña, 2017; Grech, 2019). Building upon these local strengths has the potential to provide locally-based solutions for the inclusive education of children with disabilities.

To address inclusive education in such isolated areas requires conversations that move away from a deficit driven perspective and instead, placing emphasis on building on community strengths

in ways that empower local actors and give them agency (Singal, Lynch and Johannsen, 2018). The PIAR provides a potential platform for enabling people to understand each other better and find solutions for meeting the needs of children. Widely used in Northern contexts, individual target planning processes, such as these, have been used to a limited extent in countries of the South (WHO, 2011), with varying degrees of success in supporting learning in a range of settings (Howgego, Miles & Myers, 2014). The example of Ternurita demonstrated that the relationship between the teacher and parent improved over time, with regular informal and formal meetings and finally, when the teacher saw the video of her behaviour at home. However, research from the UK and USA has also demonstrated that bringing parents, teachers and professionals together in meetings to plan for an individual child has its drawbacks (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014; MacLeod et al., 2017). Often stressful for parents, this involves the negotiation of complex power dynamics that risk focusing upon disability as a deficit (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008). Magaña et al. (2019) explain that negotiating power imbalances and agreeing solutions is made more complex in a Latin American culture, where '*respeto*' (respect) is a cultural norm, which emphasises the need for people to respect those in power. Accordingly, parents of children with disabilities are encouraged to accept the views of professionals regarding their child's disability diagnosis and the treatment proposed. Similarly, the meetings I observed reflected a medical model lens that focused less on the context surrounding the child, and more on seeking a diagnosis in order to identify what was 'wrong' with them. This included tense conversations in which pressure was put upon Gringa and Nairo's parents to conform to urban-centric systems that did not suit them. Given the focus on conforming with the requirements of external, diagnostic processes, the content of the PIAR meetings and paperwork often reflected, rather than addressed, the disconnects that existed at multiple levels of the system. In doing so, the potential for PIAR meetings to build local agency, and act as a bridge between the people who understand the child and context, was missed.

The description of the EN model in Chapter 3 revealed that the model is predicated upon building agency for teachers, parents and children alike: the community is integral to the development of curriculum context and delivery, children's voices are put at the heart of decision making, and teachers are supposed to access monthly micro-centres that bring them together to discuss issues of practice and for problem solving. As established processes that are key to the Escuela Nueva approach, their application to the processes of addressing disability could make them a potential vehicle for building better relationships between stakeholders. However, it was notable that while the community were involved in school events, parents had little agency in PIAR meetings. Similarly, children were involved to a certain extent in decision-making in schools, but their voices were absent in PIAR meetings or decision-making about their learning needs. Finally, teachers were no longer supported by micro-centre meetings, leaving staff in smaller schools isolated and unable to discuss how they might address the curriculum dilemmas they faced. In conclusion, to support the delivery of

inclusive education, there is a need for support, and forums, which would enable different stakeholders to work together and gain a better understanding of the constraints, needs and capacities of each person. Applying existing EN tools and processes to disability (such as microcentre training for teachers, involving the community and children in decision-making processes) potentially provide stakeholders with agency and a forum from which the group can seek solutions that address their context.

### **11.9. Summary**

This chapter has drawn together the findings to discuss a number of threads that have been central to this thesis: disability and its intersections; the interaction between teacher practice, the EN model and the rural context and children's experiences of learning in rural EN schools. It has been concluded that building inclusive education within rural EN schools requires support that addresses the contextual demands placed upon teachers, parents and children. The next, and final chapter, is the conclusion, which presents the contributions of my research and their implications for policy and further enquiry.

## **Chapter 12: Conclusion**

This thesis was begun by describing an absence of literature that engages with how to operationalise inclusive education in a way that acknowledges and is responsive to, the differing realities and priorities of rural contexts in countries of the Global South. Having identified a successful Southern example of rural practice in the Escuela Nueva approach, which appeared to be inclusive by design, I was interested to know how this addressed the needs of children with disabilities. The literature review identified that there has been very little research that has explored teacher practice and children's experiences in rural contexts, with none having examined both Escuela Nueva and disability. Consequently, my qualitative case study research on five rural schools was aimed at understanding how stakeholders, including Foundation Escuela Nueva staff as well as the school staff, parents and children of Las Colinas Escuela Nueva schools in Colombia, perceived and addressed the educational needs of children with disabilities. Providing a response to this question, the following sections outline the methodological and empirical contribution the findings make to the field of disability and education, before describing their implications for national and FEN policy. Subsequently, after describing the limitations of this study, I conclude with final reflections.

### **12.1. Contributions of the study**

In this section the three key contributions of my research are presented. These include an empirical contribution to knowledge regarding disability and its combination with EN along with a methodological contribution to arts-based research. Finally, it has emphasised the value of incorporating Latin American literature and perspectives into Southern debates.

#### **12.1.1. Empirical contribution to knowledge on the way in which disability is understood in Colombia**

My findings have revealed that, while Colombian legislation advocates a biopsychosocial understanding of disability, all participants understood disability as an individual deficit, thus reflecting the medical model. Consequently, the impact of intersecting factors, such as poverty and location, on parents' ability to support their child with a disability were often not recognised by teachers. Similarly, the bureaucratic, disability diagnosis and support systems are designed for urban populations and do not recognise the challenges that rural parents face when trying to access them. Hence, multiple disconnects were observed between state systems, teachers and parents. This highlighted the need for a bridge between these different groups to enable them to work together to support children with a disability more effectively.

### **12.1.2. Empirical contribution to knowledge on the EN approach and the way in which it addresses needs of children with disabilities**

The empirical findings have contributed both to the field of rural LCE teacher practice and how the needs of children with disabilities are addressed in EN schools. Challenging deficit accounts of teachers' use of LCE approaches in Southern contexts, my research has provided rich descriptions of high quality, inclusive teaching, that uses the EN approach. In addition, nuanced accounts of teacher practice and children's experiences problematised elements of the EN model and to what extent they support children with disabilities. Challenging the literature that has linked multigrade teaching and inclusive education, neither the EN materials nor the multigrade classroom experience or support of peers met the needs of all children with disabilities. My research uncovered how the capacity of an EN teacher to deliver inclusive education is affected by a range of factors at multiple levels, of which the EN materials and tools represent only one. Emphasising the role of context, it emerged that teachers located in small, single-class schools had increased demands on their time, but less access to support from colleagues than those in multi-class schools. Moreover, no teachers had received training on disability and the EN micro-centre support structure for teacher practice had not been sustained. Consequently, I have argued that a merely technicist response to delivering inclusive education needs to be challenged, with an emphasis on the importance of ongoing, situated support packages that address the context in which education is being delivered.

### **12.1.3. Methodological contribution to use of art-based methods in research**

My research has demonstrated the value of using visual illustration in making the research process more inclusive. Illustrations helped children to understand consent and express their views while they also helped me to reflect upon my data and communicate the findings to others. Contributing to the range of methods that explore the views of children, my 'who helps when I am stuck' visual interview template provides future researchers with a way to seek the views of children who find it hard to express their experiences of support. Furthermore, visual illustrations have facilitated the dissemination of research findings in ways that give back to the participants. Creating the animation resulted in not only teacher's views being shared widely in their community and social media, but it also provided FEN with another medium for provoking discussions with teachers in their training and presentations. Similarly, the illustrations used throughout this thesis will be used to disseminate the research findings and to encourage other researchers to think creatively about ways in which to share knowledge. Inclusive research should promote the idea that it is not the responsibility of the audience to understand the key messages of our research. Rather, it is our responsibility, as researchers, to communicate in ways that make them accessible for different audiences.

#### **12.1.4. The value of incorporating Latin American perspectives into Southern debates**

The literature review described how the Latin American literature published in majority languages of Spanish and Portuguese is largely absent in the debates exploring disability in Southern contexts. Consequently, the literature review made a scholarly contribution through providing a critical review of the Latin American literature and debates, placing these in conversation with the global literature on the education of children with disabilities in the Global South. Building upon international recognition of the success of the Escuela Nueva model, my research has revealed the valuable contribution that findings from Latin America have for the broader debates on LCE in rural contexts of the South. Furthermore, my research has contributed to the literature focused on educating rural Latin American children with disabilities. Finally, this study has contributed to the literature that gives a platform children's voices, demonstrating that children with disabilities are capable of expressing their views and participating in research when given the opportunity in ways that support them to do so.

### **12.2. Policy Implications**

With implications for both national policy and FEN, my research findings suggest that, while initial training for teachers is important, they need ongoing, situated support, that addresses the contexts in which they find themselves. The following subsections begin with the implications of this for national policy makers, followed by those for FEN.

#### **12.2.1. National Policy**

##### ***Initial teacher training***

The research findings have emphasised the importance of context for teachers' delivery of inclusive education. It is essential that teachers are trained and equipped to address the diversity of contexts and learners that exists in the country. My empirical evidence suggests that in order to support the development of positive attitudes and practices for educating rural children with disabilities, teachers need practical, positive experiences of addressing diversity in their initial teacher training. This practical learning experience would benefit from the inclusion of skills for teaching multigrade classrooms alongside how to adapt teaching for the diverse needs of children, including those with disabilities. Furthermore, helping teachers understand disability and its intersection with poverty, location and gender among others, would not only reflect the national policies of Colombia, but also support the relationship building with local communities in which teachers may be located.

Having problematised the reliance on Northern models of knowledge production in the literature review, positive Southern examples of innovative university courses on disability and teaching, which have acknowledged and built upon Latin American ways of knowing and being, such as Buen Vivir (e.g. see Herrera et al., 2018), were discussed. Given that my findings emphasise the



relevance of context, seeking South-South sharing opportunities such as these can provide teachers with training and methods designed to address Southern contexts and the inequalities that Colombia aims to address. Furthermore, the FEN training methods provide another positive Southern example of how to give teachers hands-on experience of methods that they themselves can utilise in class. However, to ensure that all trainee teachers receive practical experience and skills such as this, would require, according to my interviews with the leads for inclusive education in the Ministry for Education, norms that make training on diversity and disability obligatory, rather than relying on the goodwill and practice of individual institutions that train teachers.

### ***Enacting Decree 1421 in rural contexts***

The research findings contribute insight into the ways in which the new Decree (1421, MEN, 2017) has been operationalised in rural schools. Building upon the need for situated support, two key areas with implications for policy have been identified: the role of diagnosis and finding ways to work together in rural spaces, using methods that build upon local strengths.

- ***The role of diagnosis***

In the challenging context of accessing urban diagnostic services, my research findings have led to me question the value of a diagnosis for children, noting that it did not make a difference to the way in which a child was taught in school, or understood by their family. Given that the Government policy makes explicit that there is no need for a diagnosis to gain support, the PIAR provides an opportunity to rethink the systems of diagnosis and generate clarity regarding its role. Drawing upon the literature surrounding diagnosis, I have concurred with Riddick's (2012) view that there should be clarity about the purpose of diagnosis and that this should only be a priority where it is considered beneficial to the child, their family or their education. Where it is deemed to have a beneficial purpose, it is important that the state services identify, acknowledge and address the intersections that impact on rural families. Based upon the context in which my research was conducted, supportive structures could include either providing localised services that better meet their needs, or compensation for the extra costs that accessing urban services incurs.

- ***Working together in rural spaces***

My research findings have challenged the idea that rural contexts are a problem to be solved and instead, elicited that a strength of rural communities is that they are familiar with drawing upon local resources to solve problems. However, the evidence demonstrated that the PIAR process often reflected, rather than resolved, the disconnects between the people involved. Furthermore, these tensions were exacerbated by the disability diagnosis and support systems designed for urban centres, which did not recognise the demands upon rural families. My empirical evidence highlighted that, in

addition to effective teacher training and learning support personnel, there was, therefore, the need for processes that address the relational gaps between the people involved. This has implications for the involvement of learning support teachers and the PIAR planning processes, which are described below.

*Promote better communication and collaboration between the learning support and class teacher*

My research findings have demonstrated that the provision of the learning support teacher broadly welcomed by school staff. However, both my empirical evidence and the research literature (Forero & Rojas, 2018) suggest that negotiating their role can cause tensions between staff. Further clarity regarding the role of the learning support teacher would support a common understanding of how they will work together, and where the responsibilities of each lie. Providing practical training on communication and collaboration for both parties would better enable them to seek solutions effectively as a team, based upon the strengths and needs of their specific context.

*Applying the EN approach to PIAR problem-solving*

My evidence has indicated that to support the inclusive education of children in schools, people need a planning process that enables them to move away from deficit-driven conversations and to instead recognise and draw upon the strengths of the community. To do so requires processes that empower local actors by giving them agency to find local solutions. It was notable that schools had the capacity to employ processes that promote agency, based upon their utilisation of EN tools which do so. However, this was not replicated in the PIAR process. Given that the Government advocate for rural schools to adopt flexible models, such as Escuela Nueva, supporting FEN and schools to apply the EN tools that provide stakeholders with agency to that of disability potentially provides a relationship building process, from which local groups can seek solutions that address their context.

### **12.2.2. FEN**

My research evidence has uncovered the positive ways in which the EN model and its training method support teachers in delivering high quality teaching for children with and without disabilities.

However, it also challenges FEN to consider how their training and materials might better equip teachers to manage the diversity of needs in EN classrooms, including those with disabilities. Firstly, my findings suggest teachers need extra support on how to juggle the diverse demands of multigrade classrooms, and the skills to adapt the materials and class delivery for changing group sizes.

Furthermore, they indicate that teachers need adapted materials for non-readers that can provide children with more opportunities to practice, and to do so in ways that do not negate the support of their peers. However, even when children had materials that were at their level of learning, the

evidence from teacher interviews revealed that curriculum dilemmas of difference can create a tension for teachers that is not easy to resolve. Hence, teachers would benefit from the support of others in finding local solutions for disability-related concerns. Chapter 3 illustrated that the EN model has had a history of building upon teacher's good practice and local solutions. Furthermore, it has already established processes for teacher support, including training, micro-centres and online support forums. Applying these same processes to the topic of disability and managing diverse classrooms has the potential to create a rich source of creative solutions and problem-solving, from which both FEN and other rural teachers could benefit. My research has provided empirical evidence that supports FEN to seek project funding to explore how they might build upon their existing model and approach to address the issues raised in this research.

### **12.3. Limitations**

In this section, I discuss two limitations that open up avenues for further research, and a third that identifies a broader gap in the literature. The first limitation was the extent to which I could adopt an emancipatory approach. This was caused by two factors: the delay in finding the translator and not being able to access the schools towards the end of my fieldwork. These unfortunate circumstances reduced my capacity to involve children in the research design at the beginning and to subsequently co-create action plans and disseminate the findings to their audiences of choice. While I found ways to mitigate the limited opportunities for action planning at the end, it meant that the children had little opportunity to take real ownership of the way they communicated their views or put forward possible solutions to the challenges they faced. However, this taught me a valuable lesson on the challenges of accessing remote, rural areas and insight into why there is so little on children's voices in rural areas. Most importantly, for future research it emphasised the importance of thinking creatively and planning in extra time to ensure that the voices of rural children are heard.

The second limitation is that my findings reflect the practice in rural schools that were relatively close to urban hubs. Moreover, the needs of the children with disabilities were classed as moderate, rather than severe. Had the research been in a more remote area and the needs of children been much more complex, I consider it likely that the findings would have been very different. It could be that the issues discussed in my research would be more complex, or it could be that in such remote areas the teachers and community are more accustomed to finding opportunities to work together in ways that draw upon local solutions. Research conducted in a greater variety of contexts and with differing types of disability would help illuminate this.

Finally, my research has identified a clear gap in both the national and Escuela Nueva outcomes data: the progress of children with disabilities. It would be extremely valuable for future research to compare the outcomes of children with and without disabilities in both Escuela Nueva and paired non-Escuela Nueva rural schools. Disaggregated data capturing the functional difficulties of

children, along with other intersecting factors, would assist FEN and the national Government in understanding how the model supports children, and the ways in which intersections affect their outcomes.

#### **12.4. Final reflections**

While this research was aimed at contributing to knowledge on educating children with disabilities in Southern contexts, it also reflects a personal journey in my own understanding of my role within this. I re-entered academia, motivated by a concern about the ethics, or wisdom, of consultants like me being considered the ‘experts’ on implementing inclusive education in contexts and cultures that are vastly different to their own. Consequently, discovering a longstanding body of literature that problematised my former role was both validating and challenging. Furthermore, despite assuming I was familiar with inclusive education in the Colombian context after eight previous visits, my fieldwork taught me the value of prolonged engagement in a country. It transformed my understanding of the culture, the practicalities of delivering inclusive education in rural contexts, and it demonstrated the importance of ongoing, situated support for teachers. Revealing this multi-layered complexity emphasised to me that parachuting ‘experts’ into a country to evaluate provision can never do justice to the complexity of the challenges that people face. Furthermore, it risks perpetuating solutions that may cause unintended harm. While my future is yet unclear, I know that it will involve ongoing work with communities, based upon the priorities that they identify.

Finally, my research endeavour has demonstrated that not only should inclusive education address the needs of the child, but also, the needs of those who are implementing it. For inclusive education to evolve in ways that reflect the local conditions, leaders, teachers and parents need ongoing, situated support, that addresses their context. Moreover, in platforming the voices of the real experts – the people who live and work there – I have revealed the need for processes that support people in building upon their local strengths and seeking solutions that are grounded in community ways of knowing and thinking.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Census vs SIMAT disability data: An examination of the differences**

Chapter 2 (section 2.3) noted that there the SIMAT figures identify that only 1.92% of children have a disability, which is less than the 3.5% that the census suggests are of school age. Examining possible reasons for this disparity, my first consideration was that the difference reflects the large numbers of children are out of school. While Section 2.3.1., which examines intersecting factors, suggests this may be partially true, a closer examination of the SIMAT and Census forms suggest that an additional factor could be that numbers are being underreported overall. Mont (2007) established the importance of language when answering questions about disability, noting that census questionnaires that begin with a screening question ‘do you have a disability’ typically yield only a 1% ‘yes’ response. Similarly, the SIMAT forms begins with a screening question, requiring an initial yes/no answer to the question ‘are there any children with physical limitations or cognitive disability in the institution?’<sup>44</sup> (DANE, 2019b). In contrast, the Census has avoided a screening question, and focuses upon the functional difficulties of people in the household – something that typically leads to a higher data capture of disability (Mont, 2007). However, it uses the phrase ‘Now I am going to ask you about *permanent limitations* that exist to achieve activities...’ (DANE, 2019a). The use of this term ignores previous research, commissioned by DANE, into the impact of the phrase ‘permanent limitations’ in Colombia. In this Beltran (2008) discovered that using the phrase ‘permanent difficulties’ rather than ‘limitations’ on a household survey yielded a higher response rate. Furthermore, the census adds an extra sentence that frames the questions: ‘given their physical and mental condition, can the person...’ may also affect the results in ways that have not yet been tested. Thus, it is likely that both methods underestimate the rate of disability.

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<sup>44</sup> En esta jornada existen alumnos con limitaciones físicas o discapacidad cognitiva? Si / No

## Appendix B: Overview of teacher experience

Table X: Overview of teacher's age, qualification and teaching experience

School	Teacher	Age	No. years teaching (n current school)	Teacher training	Previous experience
A	1	55-65	39 (21)	Normales teacher training Licenciatura accounting Licenciatura Spanish	Accountant Teacher in multigrade school
	2	45-55	32 (14)	Licenciatura pedagogy and ecological studies,	Teacher
B	3	35-45	18 (9)	Licenciatura Masters in education and pedagogy	Taught adult literacy when 16 yrs old Co-Director of urban school for 16 years
	4	35-45	?? (9)	Licenciatura in English teaching Masters in English Language teaching	Teacher
	5	45-55	6 (2)	Licenciatura in Psychology Govt course in Pedagogy Masters in Educational Governance and Evaluation	Psychologist in special school
C	6	35-45	(9)	Licenciatura Spanish and English	Childcare Nursing Teacher in a private-partnership school

D	7	55-65	15 (7)	Normales teacher training Licenciatura in higher education	Marketing and HR Missionary nurse Urban Secondary school teacher Teacher in rural multigrade
E	8	55-65	34 (23)	Normales teacher training Licenciatura in maths	Teacher in religious college
	SEN support teacher	25-35	6 (1)	Licenciatura in education, with specialism in special education	Teacher in a special school
	Head Teacher	45-55	18 (9)	Licenciatura	ICT teacher Night school teacher ICT in teacher training college

## Appendix C: Adult Interview Schedules

What follows are the interview schedules used with School staff, Parents and FEN staff. All interviews began with an introduction to me and my research, a reminder of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time and a request to audio-record the interview so that I could translate and transcribe it at a later stage.

As a semi-structured interview, the first question in each theme box was asked of the majority of participants, while the use of the other questions in same box was more flexible. The structured appearance of the questions reflect a strategy I used to support myself when interviewing in Spanish: to reduce the need to translate in the moment, I had tested, and translated, a range of possible follow-up questions in the pilot. Having all options pre-translated enabled me to go with the flow of interview conversation, and weave in, or adapt, pre-translated questions where appropriate.

### School-based Staff

#### Class Teacher

Class Teacher Interview 1		
Theme	Question and <i>follow up</i>	Spanish translation
<b>Teacher background and motivation</b>	How long have you been teaching in an EN school? and before that? <i>Probe: Previous experience, where trained</i>  How and why did you become a teacher?  What do you most enjoy about being a teacher?  What you don't enjoy about being a teacher?	Hace cuánto enseña en una escuela EN? ¿Y antes de eso?  ¿Por qué y cómo se volvió profesor?  ¿Qué es lo que más/menos disfruta de ser profesor?  ¿Qué es lo que no disfruta de ser profesor?
<b>Understanding of model</b>  T's understanding of main characteristics of model  Differences between EN and regular schools  Teacher's understanding of progress and assessment	How are the EN classes and schools different from regular schools? <i>Probe: T role, T practice, training/support, assessment, resources, parent/community links, environment resources, Training, environment, teacher role</i>  I understand that a child learns at their own pace in this model. How do you know when a child is making progress? <i>Prompts: Everyday feedback? Tests of any kind? Questioning?</i>	¿Cuál distintas son las clases y escuelas EN y las escuelas tradicionales? <i>Función del profesor, práctica del profesor, capacitación/soporte, evaluación, recursos, vínculos con los padres/la comunidad, recursos del entorno, capacitación, entorno, función docente.</i>  Entiendo que un niño aprende a su propio ritmo con este modelo. ¿Cómo sabe si un niño está progresando? <i>¿Retroalimentación diaria? ¿Pruebas de alguna clase? ¿Preguntas?</i>
<b>Perceptions of children's ability to learn</b>	Among the children in your classroom, how are they different? <i>Probes: background, ability, what else?</i>	Entre los niños en tu clase, cómo son diferentes? <i>?: Investigue: trasfondo</i>

<p>T's perception of child diversity and differences in learning</p> <p>Teachers perception of who is easy to teach</p>	<p>What do you think are the reasons that children learn or do not learn well in their class?</p> <p>How do you address these difficulties?</p>	<p>¿Cuáles piensa que son las razones por las cuales los niños aprenden o no aprenden bien en sus clases?</p> <p>¿Cómo procura afrontar estas dificultades?</p> <p><i>Investigue: Disposición de asientos, tutoría con pares, tiempo extra, atención extra, currículo</i></p>
<p><b>Perceptions of disability</b></p> <p>Perception of disability</p> <p>T's understanding of identifying disability</p> <p>T's strategies for addressing disability in class</p>	<p>What is it that you understand by the term disability?</p> <p>And the term 'Special Educational Needs'?</p> <p><i>Probe: ways in which they are same or differ</i></p> <p>How do include children with disability or SEN in your class?</p> <p><i>Can you give me an example?</i></p> <p>Which children in your class are at a greater risk of dropping out? What strategies have you adopted to address this concern, if any?</p>	<p>¿Qué entiendes por la palabra discapacidad?</p> <p>¿Y Necesidades Educativas Especiales?</p> <p>¿Cómo incluye a niños con discapacidad en su clase mientras enseña?</p> <p><i>¿Puede describir un ejemplo de cómo hace esto?</i></p> <p>¿Qué niños en su clase están en alto riesgo de desertar?</p>
<p><b>Request permission for follow up</b></p>	<p>Thanks for your time. Going to have this interview transcribed and translated. May I get back to you if I have questions when I go over the interview?</p>	

Class teacher Interview 2		
Theme	Question and <i>follow up</i>	Spanish translation
<p><b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b></p>	<p>In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>Probe: PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i></p> <p>Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?</p>	<p>En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo?</p> <p>¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?</p>
<p><b>Support for teacher</b></p> <p>Forms of support T receives</p>	<p>If you are struggling to teach a child, in what ways do you get support? <i>Probe: school or FEN? HT? Special</i></p>	<p>Si se le dificulta enseñarle a un niño, ¿de qué forma recibe apoyo?</p>



Prior training	<i>schools/other providers, Informal: other Teachers, family?</i>	
Perceptions of FEN support	<p>Have you ever received training for developing your teaching to help children who find it difficult to learn? If so, please give a specific example. <i>Prompts: reflections on pre-service training, in-service training (pre-EN and post EN), FEN?</i></p> <p>FEN support: How often do you attend the microcentre groups? In what ways are they helpful/not helpful?</p> <p>How often do you use the online forum? In what ways is it helpful/not helpful?</p>	<p>¿Ha recibido alguna oportunidad de desarrollar su profesión para ayudar a niños que tengan dificultades de aprendizaje? ¿Capacitación previa al servicio, capacitación en el servicio, FEN, Las Colinas?</p> <p>Apoyo de FEN ¿Con qué frecuencia asiste a los grupos de microcentro? ¿De qué formas son o no útiles? Con qué frecuencia usa el foro en línea? ¿De qué formas es o no útil?</p>
<b>Views on special and mainstream</b>	Some teachers believe that it is not possible to teach children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms and that they should be taught in special schools. Based on your experiences what do you think about this- do you agree/disagree and why?	Algunos profesores creen que no es posible enseñar a niños con discapacidad en aulas de clase regulares y que deben ser educados en escuelas especiales. Con base en su experiencia, ¿qué cree al respecto? ¿Está o no de acuerdo? ¿Por qué?
<b>Support for teacher re: managing diversity</b>	<p>What else would you suggest you need to help you manage the diverse range of learners in your class?</p> <p>What else would you suggest you need to help you teach children with disabilities?</p>	<p>¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?</p> <p>¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para niños con discapacidades?</p>
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no te pregunté?

Post Observation Qs for teacher	
Question	Spanish
What do you think went well during that lesson? Is there anything you would do differently?	¿Qué cree que funcionó durante esa lección? ¿Hay algo que haría de forma distinta?
<p><i>Depending on circumstances, aim to clarify, further explore/expand on what I have just seen. Possible Qs include:</i></p> <p><b>Diversity:</b> I noticed that (child) struggled with (task/interaction) when I saw (concrete example). Is that common? Can you tell me more about that?</p>	<p><b>Diversidad:</b> Me di cuenta de que (a un/a niño/a) se le dificulta (una tarea/interacción). ¿Es eso común? ¿Puede decirme más sobre esto?</p>

<p><b>Explore T strategies:</b> I noticed that you (helped X child using X strategy) when (child did something), could you tell me more about what made you decide to do that?</p> <p><b>Evaluative:</b> Have you seen (child) progress over time? In what ways? What helps you know that?</p> <p><b>If I witness something which I find challenging:</b> I noticed that when (child) did (act) it seemed like that was quite challenging to manage. What are your thoughts on that? (is that what happens often?)</p>	<p><b>Estrategias:</b> Percibí que usted (ayudó a un/a niño/a). ¿Podría decirme más sobre qué lo llevó a hacer esto?</p> <p><b>Evaluativo:</b> ¿Ha visto progreso (en el/la niño/a) en el tiempo? ¿De qué formas? ¿Qué le ayuda a saberlo?</p> <p>Percibí que cuando el/la niño/a hizo eso pareció difícil de manejar. ¿Qué piensa de ello? (¿Sucedo esto con frecuencia?)</p>
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## Director of Las Colinas schools

Director's interview questions		
<b>School history and structures</b>	<p>How long have you been a Head teacher in an EN school? And before that? <i>Probe Previous experience: teaching? EN or non N?</i></p> <p>School history <i>Follow up: What motivated you to choose this school?</i></p> <p>Can you tell me about how the schools adopted EN approach? <i>Probes: Transition journey, changes in school/tchrs, changes in community attitude/involvement</i></p> <p>How is the school linked with the municipality re: support, funding etc? Subject to same policies, same legislation re: disability, same levels of support?</p>	<p>¿Hace cuánto ha sido rector en esa escuela? ¿Y antes de eso?</p> <p>¿Me puede explicar cómo ha adoptado el modelo de EN? ¿Y antes de eso?: cambios en la escuela, actitudes de docentes, comunidad?</p> <p>La gente de EN me dijo que tuviste mucho interés en el modelo, me puedes contar más de esta decisión y porque? (va a trasladarse??)</p>
<b>Role</b>	<p>Can you tell me more about your role in the schools? <i>Probe: weekly tasks, semester, annual, monitoring</i></p> <p>How does being the Director of EN schools differ from that of being a traditional Director? <i>Probe: multigrade, expectations, links with parents</i></p> <p>What would you say are the main challenges of your role?</p> <p>How do you receive support for these? <i>Probe: informal, formal, networks</i></p>	<p>Me puede contar más sobre tu papel con las escuelas? <i>que debes hacer cada semana, cada semestre, cada año, Monitoreando</i></p> <p>¿De qué formas ser un rector para EN difiere de ser un rector en una escuela tradicional? <i>Investigue: multigrados, expectativas de HT/municipalidad, enlaces con los padres</i></p> <p>Cómo líder de las escuelas, cuáles son los desafíos principales de su papel? ¿de qué forma recibe apoyo? <i>Investigue: Informal, formal, redes</i></p>
<b>Monitoring and progress</b>	<p>How are you kept informed about the progress of the children?</p>	<p>¿Cómo se mantiene informado sobre el progreso de los niños?</p>

	<p><i>Everyday feedback? Tests of any kind?</i> <i>Regular feedback from staff? SABER test?</i></p> <p>Are there differences between the schools in terms of children's progress?</p> <p>Are there differences in the practice of the teachers? <i>Example? How do you know this?</i></p>	<p>Se nota diferencias entre las escuelas en el progreso de los niños en cada escuela?</p> <p>Y la práctica de los docentes? <i>Ejemplos? Cómo sabe esto?</i></p>
<p><b>School and Teacher support</b></p> <p>Forms of support school receives</p> <p>Perceptions of FEN and community support</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about the learning Support and Family support roles? Your view on their support for teachers?</p> <p>What are the training priorities for teachers this year?</p> <p>Who decides this? <i>teacher feedback, Secretariat priorities</i></p> <p>If your staff are struggling to teach a child, in what ways can access support? <i>Probe: school or FEN? Special schools/other providers, Informal: other Teachers, family?</i></p> <p>How do FEN support the schools? In what ways are still in contact with them? <i>Example? Can you describe an example for me? What happened?</i></p>	<p>Me puede explicar más sobre la docente de apoyo y orientador? <i>Que hace cada uno? Quien las contrató?</i></p> <p>Cuál son los prioridades para las jornadas pedagogicos este año? Y el año anterior?</p> <p>Cómo deciden esto? (retoralimentacion de profes? Proiridades de la secreataria? Por la practica?)</p> <p>Con que frecuencia asisten su personal a los grupos microcenters?</p> <p>Individuos se puede acesar capacitación? Cómo se acesan y como sabes?</p> <p>Apoyo de FEN? Cómo se acesa y quien pide por eso?</p>
<p><b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b></p>	<p>What is it that you understand by the term disability, and SEN?</p> <p>In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>Probe: PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i></p> <p>Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?</p> <p>Some head teachers believe that it is not possible to teach children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms and that they should be taught in special schools. Based on your</p>	<p>Que entienden por la palabra discapacidad, y NEE?</p> <p>En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo? ¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?</p> <p>Algunos Directores creen que no es posible enseñar a niños con discapacidad en <u>aulas</u> de clase convencionales y que deben ser educados en escuelas especiales. Con base</p>

	experiences what do you think about this- do you agree/disagree and why?	en su experiencia, ¿qué cree al respecto? ¿Está o no de acuerdo? ¿Por qué?
<b>Views on support required for children with disabilities</b>	What else would you suggest you need to help you manage the diverse range of learners in your school?  What else would you suggest you need for children with disabilities?	¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?  ¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para niños con discapacidades?
<b>Strengths of school within its context</b>	What are you are most proud of in this school? <i>Probes: people, environment, community</i>  Is there anything you would want to be even better?	¿Qué lo hace estar más orgulloso con respecto a la escuela?  ¿Hay algo en lo que le gustaría mejorar aún más?
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no le pregunté?

## Learning and family support workers

### Learning Support Teacher (LST)

Learning Support Teacher (LST)		
Theme	Question and follow up	Spanish translation
<b>Teacher background and motivation</b>	How long have you been a LST in an EN school? and before that? <i>Probe: Previous experience, where trained</i>  How and why did you become a LST?  What do you most enjoy about being a LST?  What you don't enjoy about being a LST?	Hace cuánto ha sido Docente de apoyo (DA) en una escuela EN? ¿Y antes de eso?  ¿Por qué y cómo se volvió DA?  ¿Qué es lo que más/menos disfruta de ser DA?  ¿Qué es lo que no disfruta de ser DA?
<b>Understanding of model</b>	Can you explain to me what your role is here?	Me puedes explicar cómo es tu papel?
Role description	In what ways does being an EN LST differ from being a teacher in a regular school?	¿De qué formas ser un DA en una escuela EN difiere de ser un profesor en una escuela tradicional?
Differences between EN and regular schools	<i>Investigue: multigrados, expectativas de HT/municipalidad, liaison with parents</i> <i>Probe: multigrade, expectations from HT/municipality, liaison with parents</i>	<i>Investigue: ¿Retroalimentación del profe? ¿Pruebas de alguna clase? ¿PIAR?</i>
progress and assessment	I understand that a child learns at their own pace in this model. How do you know when a child is making progress? <i>Prompts: teacher feedback? Tests of any kind? PIAR?</i>	Entiendo que un niño aprende a su propio ritmo con este modelo. ¿Cómo sabe si un niño está progresando?

<b>Perceptions of disability</b>  Perception of disability  T's understanding of identifying disability  T's strategies for addressing disability in class	What is it that you understand by the term disability?  And the term 'Special Educational Needs'? <i>Probe: ways in which they are same or differ</i>  Who are the children on your list and how are they referred to you?  What do you think are the reasons that children learn or do not learn well in their class?	¿Qué entiendes por la palabra discapacidad?  ¿Y Necesidades Educativas Especiales?  ¿Quiénes son los niños y niñas con quien trabajas? Cuál es el proceso de llegar a su lista?  ¿Cuáles piensa que son las razones por las cuales los niños aprenden o no aprenden bien en sus clases?
<b>Teacher support and PIAR</b>	Can you tell me more about how the PIAR process works here?  What have been the successes and challenges of supporting the schools and teachers of Las Colinas?  What do you think children need to success in schools here in Las Colinas?	¿Me puedes explicar el proceso del PIAR?  ¿éxitos y desafíos?  ¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices, y discapacidad en las escuelas de las Colinas?
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no te pregunté?

## Family Support Worker

Family Support Worker (FSW)		
Theme	Question and <i>follow up</i>	Spanish translation
<b>Teacher background and motivation</b>         	How long have you been a LST in an EN school? and before that? <i>Probe: Previous experience, where trained</i>  How and why did you become a LST?  What do you most enjoy about being a LST?  What you don't enjoy about being a LST?	Hace cuánto ha sido Orientadora en una escuela EN? ¿Y antes de eso?  ¿Por qué y cómo se volvió Orientadora?  ¿Qué es lo que más/menos disfruta de ser Orientadora?  ¿Qué es lo que no disfruta de ser Orientadora?
<b>Understanding of model</b>  Role description	Can you explain to me what your role is here?  In what ways does being an EN LST differ from being a teacher in a regular school?	Me puedes explicar cómo es tu papel?  ¿De qué formas ser un Orientadora en una escuela EN difiere de ser un profesor en una escuela tradicional? <i>Investigue: multigrados, expectativas de HT/municipalidad, enlaces con los padres</i>

Differences between EN and regular schools  progress and assessment	<i>Probe: multigrade, expectations from HT/municipality, liaison with parents</i>  How do you know when a family is making progress?	¿Cómo sabe si una familia está progresando? ?
<b>Perceptions of disability</b>  Perception of disability  T's understanding of identifying disability  T's strategies for addressing disability in class	What is it that you understand by the term disability?  And the term 'Special Educational Needs'? <i>Probe: ways in which they are same or differ</i>  Who are the children on your list and how are they referred to you?  What do you think are the reasons that children learn or do not learn well in their class?	¿Qué entiendes por la palabra discapacidad?  ¿Y Necesidades Educativas Especiales?    ¿Quiénes son los niños y niñas con quien trabajas? Cuál es el proceso de llegar a su lista?  ¿Cuáles piensa que son las razones por las cuales los niños aprenden o no aprenden bien en sus clases?
<b>Teacher support and PIAR</b>	What have been the successes and challenges of supporting the schools and teachers of Las Colinas?  What do you think children need to success in schools here in Las Colinas?	¿Me puedes explicar los éxitos y desafíos de trabajar y apoyar a las familias aquí en Las Colinas?  ¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices, y discapacidad en las escuelas de las Colinas?
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no te pregunté?

## Parents

### Parents Interview

Parents Interview		
Theme	Question and follow up	Spanish translation
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduce self and research Confidentiality and right to withdraw, audio recording permission	
<b>Family Context and child's education history</b>	I'd love to know more about your family - Who is in your family?  Have you always lived in this area?  Tell me about your child <i>Probes: enjoy, good at, words you'd use to describe him/her</i>	Me gustaría saber más sobre su familia, su historia aquí en la Ruana ¿Me puede contar quien hay en su familia ?  Siempre ha vivido aquí en La Ruana?  Dime un poco sobre su hijo/a <i>Investigue: que le gusta, en que es bueno, palabras para describirlo</i>

	<p>History of child and sibling's schooling: What age did your child start school? <i>probe: How many schools attended? How long been in this school?</i></p> <p>Did you choose current school?</p> <p>What's going well? Not going well? <i>Probe: differences in experience of different siblings?</i></p> <p>Did you have the opportunity to go to school when you were a child? <i>where, positive or neg experience, what grade</i></p>	<p>Cual es la historia de su educación? Cuando entro? Cuantos escuelas ha asistido?</p> <p>Porque escogió este escuela?</p> <p>Cual son los éxitos y desafíos?</p> <p>Tenía la oportunidad a asistir una escuela cuando era niño/a? <i>positivos o negativos? Hasta cuál grado?</i></p>
	<p><b>For parent of child with a disability:</b> I understand (child) has difficulty with (XX), is that right? Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p><i>probe story: who noticed and when, what might have caused this, doctors involved?</i></p> <p>Do your family, or the child receive extra support for this? <i>Probe: diagnosis and certificate, therapies, financial support, equipment</i></p> <p>How does your child understand their own disability/difference: how have they learned this?</p> <p>And the community/family? <i>attitudes of community, how parent describes child's difficulty, support</i></p>	<p>Entiendo que (nombre) se dificulta a aprender algunas cosas – así es? Me puede explicar más? <i>quién y cuando, porque, medicos?</i></p> <p>Recibe apoyo Uds. por esto? De que forma?</p> <p>Su hija/hijo sabe algo de esto? Que dice?</p> <p>Y la comunidad? <i>actitudes de la comunidad, que dice, apoyo, que dice Ud.</i></p>
<b>Home life</b>	<p>What would be the daily routine for you and your family?</p> <p>And at the weekends? <i>routine, work/leisure, religious activities. Do all of your children go?</i></p>	<p>Cómo es la rutina diaria para Ud.?</p> <p>Y los fines de semana?</p> <p>Que hace su hijo/a por los fines de semana? <i>rutina, aseo, iglesia, todos se van</i></p>
<b>Views on support parents receive and what need</b>	<p>What would help you to feel more supported re: your child's education, in community?</p>	<p>Cómo sentirías ¿mas apoyado por la educación de su hijo/a? y de la comunidad?</p>

<b>Hopes/aspirations for child</b>	What are your hopes for your child's future? <i>employment, where live, marriage</i>	Cuál son su esperanzas por el futuro de su hijo/a? <i>empleo, donde vive, casarse</i>
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## FEN Staff

### FEN Training manager

FEN Training manager		
Theme	Question and <i>follow up</i>	Spanish translation
<b>Escuela Nueva history and structures</b>  EN history	<p>How long have you been a leader in FEN? And before that? <i>Probe Previous experience: teaching? EN or non EN?</i> <i>Follow up: What motivated you to choose this role?</i></p> <p>What is the structure of the organisation, and who do you currently manage? <i>Follow up: How many staff in HQ, structure across country</i></p> <p>What are the range of ages and experience of your staff? <i>Probes: teaching experience, level of education, live locally?, all EN trained?</i></p> <p>How are they recruited? <i>Follow up: do FEN support this process?</i></p>	<p>Cuanto tiempo ha sido un coordinadora de formación en FEN?</p> <p>Cual es la estructura de la organización en formación? Donde se queda?</p> <p>Cúal son los rangos de edades, grupos etnias y experiencia de su equipo?</p> <p>Que hace cada uno? Quien las contrató?</p>
<b>Design and implementation of training</b>	<p>Could you explain the structure of the training for me? <i>how many days, contents, monitoring and support for teachers</i></p> <p>How many municipalities receive the training each week? How is this financed?</p> <p>How has the training changed in the past 10 years? <i>focus, contents, state policy</i></p> <p>What are the current priorities for training development?</p> <p>What have been the successes and challenges of implementing it?</p>	<p>Me puede explicar el proceso/estructura de la capacitación? <i>Investigue: Cuantos días, contenido, monitoreo y apoyo a la práctica de los docentes</i></p> <p>Cuantos municipalidades/Escuelas reciban capacitación y apoyo cada año? Cómo finanza esto?</p> <p>Cómo ha cambiado la capacitación en las últimas 10 años? <i>Investigue: enfoque, contenido, por política del estado</i></p> <p>Cuál son los prioridades actualmente de FEN en el desarrollo de la formación?</p> <p>Cual son los éxitos y desafíos en implementarlo?</p>



<b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b>	<p>What is it that you understand by the term disability?</p> <p>In what ways do FEN support schools to address the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities? <i>Probe: specific policy, learning guide development</i></p> <p>In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>Probe: PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i></p> <p>Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?</p>	<p>¿Qué entiende por la palabra discapacidad??</p> <p>En que formas FEN se les apoyan a las escuelas y docentes para educar a los niños con necesidades diversas, incluyendo los niños con discapacidad?</p> <p>En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo? ¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?</p>
<b>Views on support needed for effective inclusion</b>	<p>What else would you suggest is needed for EN schools to be able to include children with disabilities? <i>Probe: teachers, training, FEN resources, Govt support</i></p>	<p>¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita las escuelas y docentes para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?</p> <p>¿Qué más sugeriría que puede hacer FEN para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en las escuelas?</p>
<b>Questions</b>	<p>Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?</p>	<p>¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no le pregunté?</p>

### FEN Curriculum Director

FEN Curriculum Director		
Theme	Question and follow up	Spanish
<b>History and background</b>	<p>How long have you been curriculum coordinator at FEN?</p> <p>What is the structure of curriculum development? <i>team, external consultants?</i></p> <p>What are the range of ages and experience of your staff? <i>Probes: teaching experience, level of education, live locally?, all EN trained?</i></p> <p>How are they recruited? <i>Follow up: do FEN support this process?</i></p>	<p>Cuanto tiempo ha sido un coordinador de currículo en FEN?</p> <p>Cual es la estructura de la organización en el desarrollo del currículo? <i>equipo? Asesoras external?</i></p> <p>Cúal son los rangos de edades, grupos etnias y experiencia de su equipo?</p> <p>Quien (y como) las contrató?</p>

<p><b>Guide design and contents</b></p>	<p>Can you explain the history and process of developing guide content? <i>Probe: with advice from whom? Time taken to develop each guide?</i></p> <p>Colombia is very diverse – ethnic groups, geography - how do you develop the guides to reflect the great diversity that exists?</p> <p>How have the guides changed in the last 15 years? <i>focus, contexts, state policy, notable change in 2014</i></p> <p>What kind of feedback do you receive and how does it inform the changes?</p> <p>How are the changes financed? <i>Probe: state support, NGOs, municipalities?</i></p>	<p>Me puede explicar el proceso/historia del desarrollo de los contenidos de las guías? (con cual consejo y de quien, tiempo para desarrollar cada guía)</p> <p>Colombia tiene gran diversidad: grupos étnicos, geografía - cómo se maneja los contenidos para reflejar la diversidad de existe?</p> <p>Cómo han cambiado las guías en las últimas 15 años? <i>enfoque, contenido, por política del estado, el cambio en 2014</i></p> <p>Reciben algún forma de retroalimentación para informar los cambios? De quien?</p> <p>Cómo finanza los cambios? <i>apoyo del estado? ONGs? Municipalidades?</i></p>
<p><b>Pre-school children and those who cannot read</b></p>	<p>How was the development of the pre-school and transition guides – same or different to other guides?</p> <p>There are many children who do not know how to read – how do the learning guides support the needs if these children?</p> <p>What is your view regarding the need to repeat the year</p>	<p>Cómo era el proceso de desarrollar las guías y actividades que hay para el Jardín/pre-escolar? Lo mismo proceso o fue distinto? <i>Investigue: equipo, cuando empezó</i></p> <p>Hay muchas niñ@s que no saben leer: que piensa que puede/debe hacer los maestros sobre esto? Cómo apoyan este proceso FEN?</p> <p>Cuál es su opinión sobre repitiendo el año?</p>
<p><b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b></p>	<p>What is it that you understand by the term disability?</p> <p>In what ways do FEN support schools to address the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities? <i>Probe: specific policy, learning guide development</i></p> <p>In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>Probe: PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i></p> <p>Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?</p>	<p>¿Qué entiende por la palabra discapacidad??</p> <p>En que formas FEN se les apoyan a las escuelas y docentes para educar a los niños con necesidades diversas, incluyendo los niños con discapacidad?</p> <p>En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo?</p> <p>¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?</p>

<b>Views on support needed for effective inclusion</b>	<p>What else would you suggest is needed for EN schools to be able to include children with disabilities? <i>Probe: teachers, training, FEN resources, Govt support</i></p> <p>What more do you think FEN could do to support teachers to manage the diverse learning needs of children in their class?</p>	<p>¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita las escuelas y docentes para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?</p> <p>¿Qué más sugeriría que puede hacer FEN para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en las escuelas?</p>
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no le pregunté?

### FEN Teacher trainer

FEN Teacher trainer		
Theme	Question and follow up	Spanish
<b>Background and history</b>	<p>How long have you been an EN Teacher trainer? What has been your previous experience and motivation that brought you to this role? <i>Probe: Previous experience, where trained, EN/non-EN teaching experience, urban or rural, motivation</i></p> <p>Can you tell me about your role, and what you did in Las Colinas? <i>training, observing practice, supporting who and when</i></p>	<p>Cuanto tiempo ha sido un coordinador de currículo en FEN? (y antes de esto?) Cual ha sido tu viaje y motivación? <i>Investigue: Experiencia, capacitación, motivación, urban/rural</i></p> <p>Me puede contarmás sobre su papel en Las Colinas? Que haces con las escuelas y docentes? <i>capacitación, mirando la practica, apoyando a quien y cuando</i></p>
<b>Perceptions of effectiveness of training</b>	<p>What is the structure of the training you offer? <i>frequency, annual cycles, number of schools covered, microcentre</i></p> <p>What are common concerns that teachers raise during training sessions? <i>How do you address these?</i></p> <p>Among the teachers in your case schools, do you see differences in the amount to which they follow the EN model? <i>Examples, why do you think this is?</i></p> <p>Do you think that you in general, teachers are able to address the learning needs of all children equally?: <i>disability, SES, gender, ethnicity</i></p>	<p>Me puede explicar el proceso/estructura de la capacitación? <i>cuantos días, contenido, monitoreo y apoyo a la práctica de los docentes</i></p> <p>Cuál son las preocupaciones comunes que tiene los profes? Han cambiado en las últimas años? <i>Cual es tu consejo?</i></p> <p>Entre los escuelas, y profes, en las Escuelas con quien trabaja, se nota diferencias entre su practica y logros? <i>cuanto se usa el modelo, logros, actitudes, comunidad</i></p> <p>¿Crees que, por lo general, los docentes son capaz de afrontar las necesidades de aprendizaje de todos los niños por igual? <i>discapacidad, SES, género, etnia</i></p>
<b>Specific issues raised during fieldwork</b>	What do you suggest for teachers who have children that can't read?	¿Que sugieres para los docentes que tiene niños que no pueden leer?

	<p>What do you suggest for teachers that only have one child in each grade?</p> <p>What strategies would you recommend to educate children from nursery to 5th grade in one class?</p>	<p>¿Que sugieres para los docentes que tiene sólo unos niños en cada grado?</p> <p>¿Cuál son herramientas buenas para educar a niños de Jardín hasta grado 5?</p>
<b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b>	<p>What is it that you understand by the term disability and SEN?</p> <p>In what ways do FEN support schools to address the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities? <i>Probe: specific policy, learning guide development</i></p> <p>In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i></p> <p>Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?</p> <p>Can you tell me a bit more about what FEN training and materials do to address diversity and disability? <i>Examples?</i></p>	<p>¿Qué entiende por la palabra discapacidad, y NEE?</p> <p>En que formas FEN se les apoyan a las escuelas y docentes para educar a los niños con necesidades diversas, incluyendo los niños con discapacidad?</p> <p>En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo? ¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?</p> <p>¿Podría decirnos más sobre cómo la capacitación y las materiales maneja la diversidad y discapacidad</p>
<b>Views on support needed for effective inclusion</b>	<p>What else would you suggest is needed for EN schools to be able to include children with disabilities? <i>Probe: teachers, training, FEN resources, Govt support</i></p> <p>What more do you think FEN could do to support teachers to manage the diverse learning needs of children in their class?</p>	<p>¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita las escuelas y docentes para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?</p> <p>¿Qué más sugeriría que puede hacer FEN para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en las escuelas?</p>
<b>Questions</b>	<p>Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?</p>	<p>¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no le pregunté?</p>

## FEN Project Co-ordinator

FEN Project Co-ordinator		
Theme	Question and follow up	Spanish
<b>Escuela Nueva</b>  EN history  Recruitment and training	How long have you been the Project coordinator? And before that?  Can you describe the structure of the organisation and how your role fits with this?	Cuanto tiempo ha sido un coordinador de proyectos en FEN? Y antes de esto?  Cual es la estructura de la organización – trabaja Ud en equipo, o Ud solo? Cuál es su papel?
<b>FEN structure and project development</b>	Can you describe for me how the projects work? <i>how gain, begin and implement projects?</i>  How have they developed in the last 10 years? <i>finance, priorities of secretary of education</i>  What are the current priorities in the development of projects?  What have been the successes and challenges of implementing projects?  Can you tell me how you began, developed and maintain the Project in Las Colinas of La Ruana?	Que tipo de proyectos hay FEN, y cómo funciona? <i>proceso/estructura de ganar y implementar proyectos; finanzas?</i>  Cómo ha cambiado los proyectos en las últimas 10 años? <i>Investigue: enfoque, forma, contenido, por política del estado</i>  Cuál son los prioridades actualmente de FEN en el desarrollo de las proyectos por el futuro?  Cuál son los éxitos y desafíos en implementarlo?  Me puede explicar cómo ganó, desarrolló y mantiene el proyecto de las Colinas en La Ruana?
<b>Views on education of children with disabilities</b>	What is it that you understand by the term disability and SEN?  In what ways do FEN support schools to address the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities? <i>specific policy, learning guide development</i>  In recent years, the government has been talking about different ways to support the education of children with disabilities in government schools. What do you know about any such efforts? <i>Probe: PIAR target setting process, Municipality support through support teachers, SIMAT</i>  Could you tell us more about these efforts and how they are affecting your work? Do agree or disagree with these efforts and Why?	¿Qué entiende por la palabra discapacidad, y NEE?  En que formas FEN se les apoyan a las escuelas y docentes para educar a los niños con necesidades diversas, incluyendo los niños con discapacidad?  En años recientes, el gobierno ha hablado sobre distintas maneras de apoyar la educación de niños con discapacidades en las escuelas públicas. ¿Qué sabe usted acerca de dichos esfuerzos?  ¿Podría decirnos más acerca de estos esfuerzos y cómo afectan su trabajo? ¿Está o no de acuerdo con estos esfuerzos y por qué opina así?

	Can you tell me a bit more about what FEN training and materials do to address diversity and disability? <i>Examples?</i>	¿Podría decirnos más sobre cómo la capacitación y los materiales manejan la diversidad y discapacidad
<b>Views on support needed for effective inclusion</b>	What else would you suggest is needed for EN schools to be able to include children with disabilities? <i>teachers, training, FEN resources, Govt support</i>  What more do you think FEN could do to support teachers to manage the diverse learning needs of children in their class?	¿Qué más sugeriría que necesita las escuelas y docentes para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en su clase?  ¿Qué más sugeriría que puede hacer FEN para ayudar a manejar los distintos tipos de aprendices en las escuelas?
<b>Questions</b>	Do you have any questions or things you think I should know but didn't ask about?	¿Tienes algunas preguntas para mí, o cosas que son importantes de que no le pregunté?

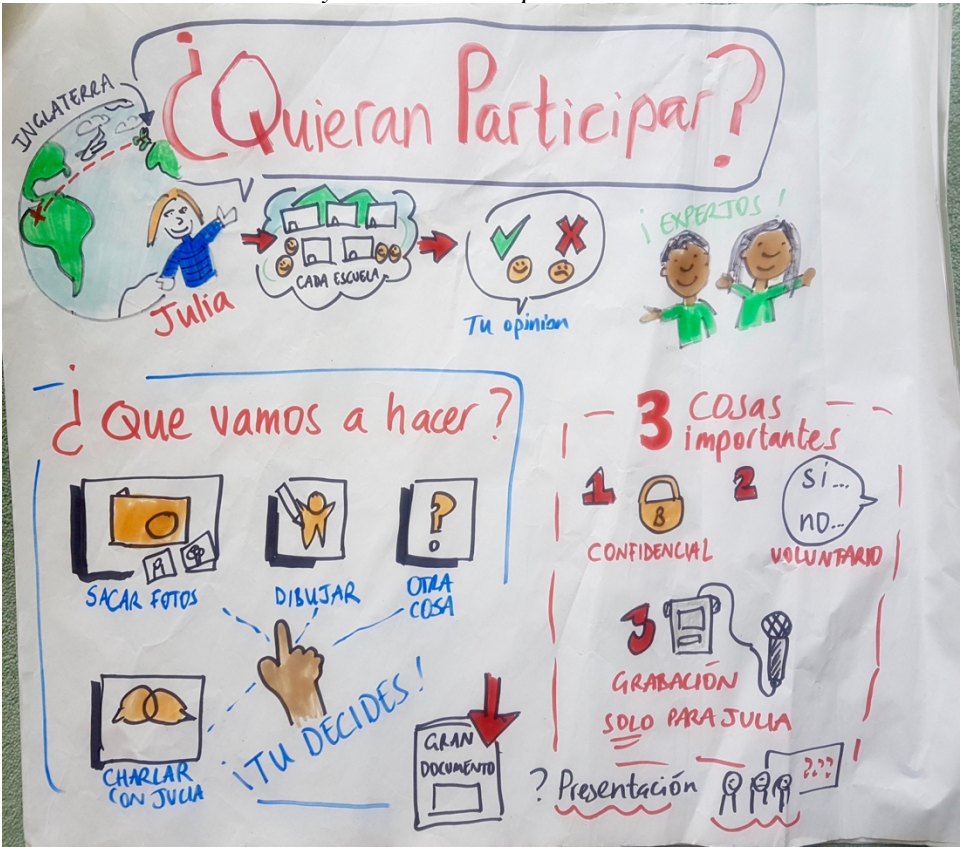
#### Director of FEN

	<b>Vicky Colbert, Director of FEN</b> <i>(Interview conducted mainly in English)</i>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key questions</b>
<b>Vision for FEN and children accessing EN schools</b>	What is your vision for the children who access EN schools in rural Colombian schools?  What do you think is required to support the achievement of this vision in rural schools of Colombia?  What role do you think FEN and Government should play in the achievement of this vision?
<b>Colombian policy and its impact upon model implementation</b>	What influence have Colombian political events had on the implementation of your decision making as an organisation? (e.g. conflict, current issues re: assassination of community leaders)  How do you navigate the changes in political leadership and policy in Colombia, while retaining your vision?  Do you think that FEN are mainly influencing or responding to Colombian policy making and implementation? (or both?)
<b>Escuela Nueva and disability</b>	Recent Government legislation has placed more focus upon children with disabilities being supported to be in regular schools. What are your views on these efforts and how have they affected the work of EN?
<b>International influence</b>	How have international trends in education influenced the development of the model over the years? (e.g child centred learning, Freire, quality inclusive education, PISA)

## Appendix D: Children's Session Plans

### Children's Group sessions

#### 1. Introduction

	Group Session 1: Introduction
<p><b>Introduction to activities and consent</b></p> <p><i>Materials:</i> Poster to explain activities and consent</p>	<p><b>Talk through poster</b></p> <p>You know that I have come all the way from England, and I want to know how your school helps all children to learn, and make friends. I've found out some things from the adults, but I want to talk to the real experts. Who do you think they might be? I think children are the experts: you know what it is like to be in class, you know what helps you learn here and what makes it difficult.</p> <p>I asked (your teacher) who might want to be part of a special group in this school, doing some fun activities, and she said you. I'm here to find out if you want to participate.</p> <p><i>Do you want to take part?</i></p>  <p><i>What are we going to do?</i> <i>You decide!</i></p> <p><i>3 important things</i> <i>confidential, voluntary, recording</i></p> <p><b>Visual menu of research methods:</b> Photovoice, drawing, other, chat with Julia explain each one</p> <p>There are BUT, there are 3 very important things you must know</p>

	<p><b>1. VOLUNTARY</b> You only have to take part if you want to take part. No-one has to stay, if they don't want to, and if you don't want to take part you won't be in trouble.</p> <p><b>2. CONFIDENTIAL</b> I am going to put together all of the things children said into one big story, so adults know how all of the schools help children, or what they could do better. No-one will know who said what thing, unless you decide you want them to know.</p> <p><b>3. RECORDING</b> You know my Spanish isn't perfect, so I want to record what we say so that I can listen again later and make sure I understand. But only me and people putting it into English will hear it – not your teacher, nor your parents – and then I will delete it.</p> <p>After we do the activities, we can think about if you want to tell people about what you have done, and what you think. You might even have ideas for what they could do to help you. Is that something you might want to do? We will talk about that some more when we get to the end of our time together.</p> <p>After we finish and I go back to England, I am going to put together everything that all of the children in all the schools say. I have to write a big book for my university, and people will read it and understand how children round here feel.</p>
<p><b>Choosing methods</b></p> <p><i>Explore children's views on preferred research questions and methods</i></p>	<p>Now is the time for you think whether you want to do these activities, and which ones you might want to do. You can do 1, 2, 3 or 4 or none. Remember <b>YOU ARE THE EXPERT AND YOU DECIDE</b></p> <p>Children work in grade groups to discuss alternatives and what they might want to do</p> <p>Children sign up on list in lesson and/or at breaktime</p> <p>Reminder: you do not have to take part and you choose what you want to do. <b>YOU ARE THE EXPERTS AND YOU DECIDE</b></p>

## 2. Photovoice option

	Photovoice training and activity
<p><b>Group Session 2</b></p> <p><b>Photovoice introduction and practice: ethics and mechanics of photovoice</b></p> <p><i>Explore children's experience of access to</i></p>	<p>1. Revisit consent poster, reminder of rules</p> <p>2. Warm-up games</p> <p><b>3. Photovoice Introduction</b> Intro: Reminder that children are the experts on the school and what helps them learn and make friends.</p> <p>a) Experience of photos Find out their experience of photographs, where see them? What machine takes those photos? Who do they know that takes photos?</p> <p><b>4. Photovoice practice: taking photos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanics of process</li> </ul> <p>Show them digital camera and disposable Describe parts</p>

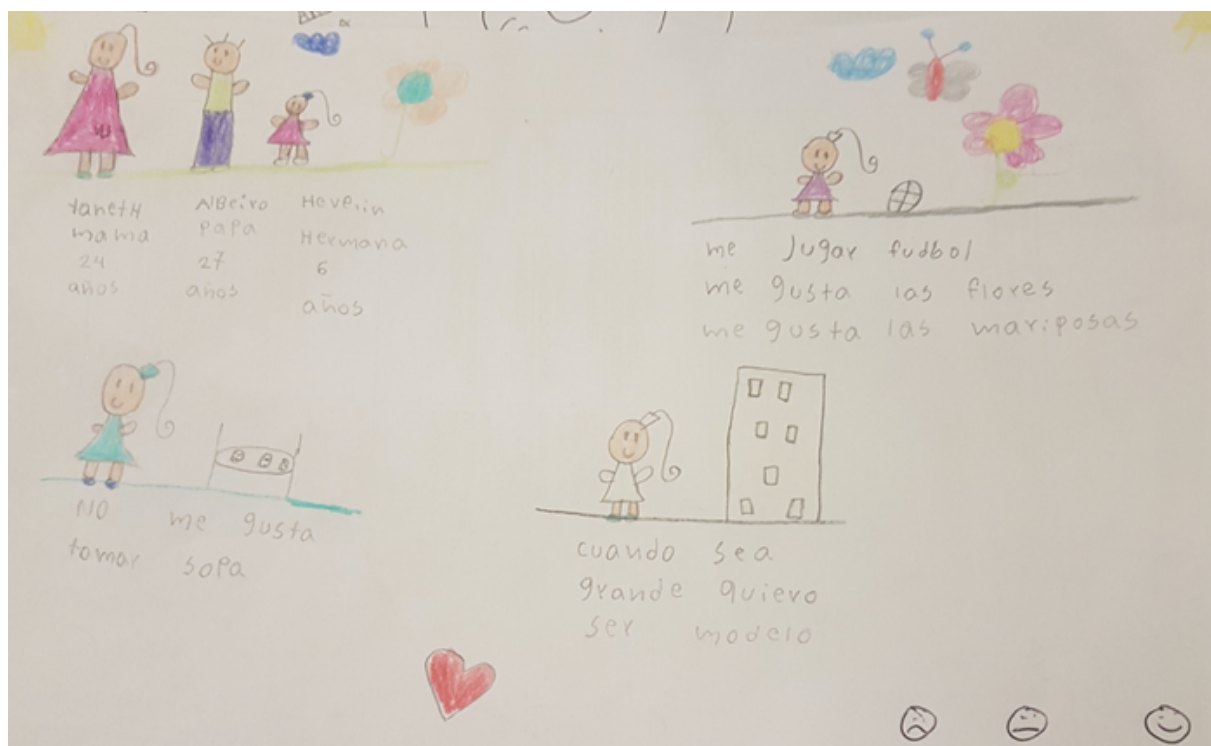


<p><i>photos and cameras</i></p> <p><i>Practice taking photos as practical learning opportunity re: mechanics and ethics of photography</i></p>	<p>Today we will practice on the digital camera so we can talk about how to take photos later today.</p> <p>Children choose to be alone or in pairs, asked to take pic of 2 things that they like about school, 2 things they wish could be better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics of process</li> </ul> <p><b>RULES FOR TAKING PHOTOS OF FACES</b></p> <p>Role play two ways of taking photos: with permission, without permission: how does it make subject feel?</p> <p>People: If taking picture of a person, or their things, you <b>MUST</b> ask them if it's OK to take a photo first. If they say no, find something else.</p> <p><i>In pairs practice asking someone</i></p> <p>Now choose if you want to go in a group or on your own and take pictures of things you like and things you don't like in school</p> <p>Can take up to 8 photos, total</p> <p>Once finished, give camera to next person on list</p>
	<p><b>Photovoice learning and task setting</b></p>
<p><b>Reflect on photo-taking practice</b></p> <p><i>Reflect on ethics and mechanics of process</i></p>	<p><b>Warm up game</b></p> <p><b>Review</b></p> <p>Show children print out of their likes/dislikes photos</p> <p>Give each child a print out of their photos</p> <p>Check permission to show other children, each child puts their on table, children circulate to see objects.</p> <p>Each child says something about one of their photos</p> <p>What this photo means, why I took it</p> <p>How did people react to having photo taken?</p> <p>Look at the photos they decided not to keep:</p> <p>What made you decide not to keep that one?</p> <p>Learning point: What have you learned about taking photos? E.g. keep finger away from finder, hold it still, sun on back etc</p> <p><b>Task Setting</b></p> <p>The next photos we are taking are about <b>HELPS YOU LEARN</b> and <b>DOES NOT HELP YOU LEARN</b> in school. It can be an object, a space, a person or an action.</p> <p>Establish order (names out of a hat or other method decided by children). bring camera back to me when you are finished and I will give it to the next person.</p> <p>Check understanding before the children leave.</p>

	Photovoice Individual Interview
<b>Review own photos and create personal captions</b>	<p>Printed photos given to children</p> <p>Child sees photos first, Sort into 2 piles: help me learn, make it hard for me to learn. Child can choose to exclude photos from discussion.</p> <p><b>Contextualise:</b> For each photo: tell me about this photo, where was it taken, why was it taken and what does it mean to you,</p> <p>Write caption for each (me, translator or child)</p> <p>Probe for stories/examples of what helps and has not helped child learn in school</p> <p><b>Select:</b> Which of these photos would you like to share with the other children?</p>
<b>Group discussion to theme photos</b>	<p>Warm up and reminder of ground rules: everyone's work should be valued</p> <p><b>Observe all photos</b> Put all what helps photos on one table, what makes it hard on other. Q for group: What strikes you? Questions you have for each other?</p> <p><b>Tell stories of key photos</b> Each child chooses one of their help and doesn't help photos, sit in circle and explain what you took, where and why.</p> <p><b>Identify main themes</b> <b>Put all photos on 2 large boards: one helps, one makes it difficult</b> What topics are similar? how might you group these photos?</p> <p>What does this tell us about what helps and what could be better here?</p> <p>Write captions for themes</p> <p><b>Group discussion:</b> <b>Who might you want to share this information with, to see how they could help?</b> <b>How will we plan this?</b></p>

### 3. Drawing option

Drawing activity option
<p><b>1. Introduction</b> Remind them about confidentiality, right to withdraw, you are the experts and you decide</p> <p>Drawings about our family, what helps us learn and what we hope for our future</p> <p><b>2. Mapping out sections</b> 4 pictures: my family, my future, my likes/dislikes at school and anything else you want to tell me that you think is important. We are going to fold our paper once and then twice, so we have 4 squares.</p>



### 3. Drawing activity (30 mins)

So we have these 4 names for the section – but you can draw whatever you want in each of these, whatever you think is important.

What do you want to draw about your family? Your future? What you like and don't like at school?

### 4. Drawing discussion

If child chooses to share drawing: tell me about this picture – what did you draw here? And what makes that important to you?

## 4. 'Who helps when I am stuck' visual interview option

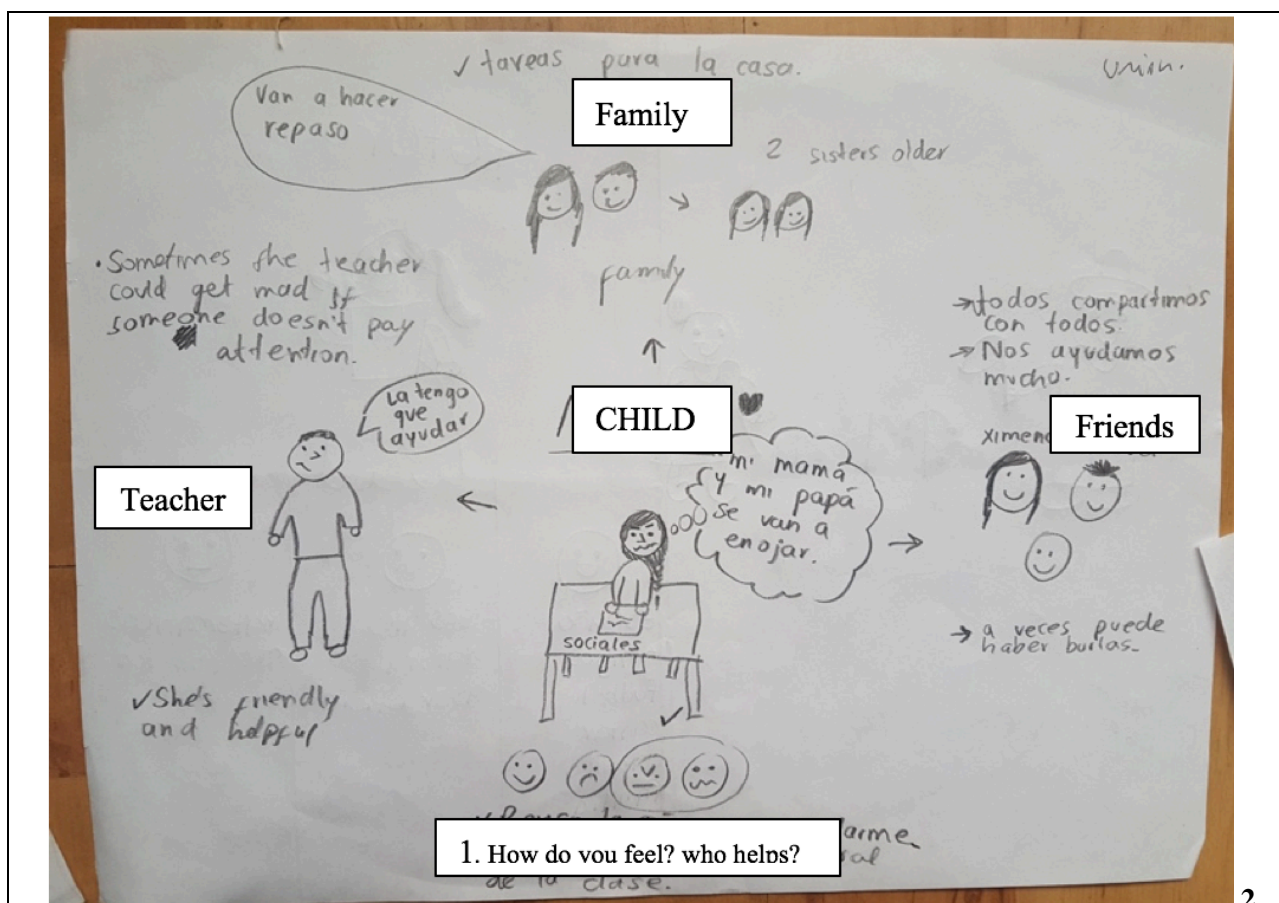
### Who helps when I am stuck

#### 1. Introduction

Remind them about confidentiality, right to withdraw, you are the experts and you decide

We are going to talk about who helps you when you find something difficult at school – when you are stuck – does that ever happen to you?

I thought we could draw you at your desk – do you want to draw yourself or shall I draw you?



## 2. Being stuck: which topic

Which subject do you find most difficult?

When you are stuck, what are you thinking in your head?

Here we have some faces – can you point to the one which one best tells us how you feel when you are stuck?



?

Happy, sad, angry, confused, something else

## 3. Who helps?

Now we are going to think about who helps you if you are stuck – who helps you? (wait to see who they identify and begin with them)

How about your friends? Do they help when you are stuck?

Can you tell me more about that? (*what they say, how they do/don't help*)

How about your teacher? Does she help when you are stuck?

Can you tell me more about that? (*what they say, how they do/don't help*)

Follow up: *Is it OK to tell her you are stuck?*






How about your family? Do they help when you are stuck?

Can you tell me more about that? (*what they say, how they do/don't help*)

## Finish:

Is there anything else you think these people could do to help you when you are stuck?

## 5. Diversity photo option

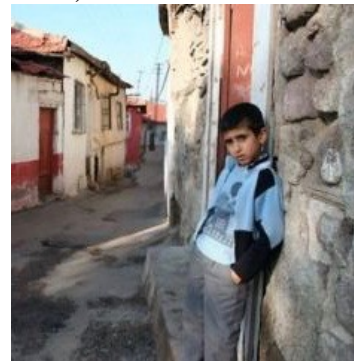
	Diversity photo activity
	<p>Here I have some photos of Colombian children, and I want you to have a look at all of them and then, in your group, put photos of those that you think are similar, that go together. you can decide how you do it and there are NO RIGHT ANSWERS.</p> <p>3 X girls with disabilities</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 20px 0;">  </div> <p>The girl using a wheelchair was added after the first school did not refer to disability at all. Concerned that this absence reflected my choice of pictures I thought this would be a clearer indication of disability.</p> <p>2 X boys with disabilities</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>



2 children with high socio-economic status (female/male)



2 children with low socio-economic status (female/male)



2 X Afro-Colombian children (female/male)



What made you put those together?

Do these similarities/differences make a difference to friendships? Learning?

## Appendix E: Washington Group Questions (English and Colombian Spanish)

This section includes three versions of the WG question. The first is the English version, which is followed by the Colombian version I created. The third presents the pre-testing comments from the two Colombian translators.

### English

<b>I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT DIFFICULTIES  <i>CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS</i> MAY HAVE. WE ARE GOING TO GO THROUGH            EACH CHILD IN TURN            CHILD FUNCTIONING (AGE 5-17)</b>		
<b>NAME OF CHILD:</b>  <b>M OR F:</b>  <b>DOB:</b>  <b>ETHNICITY:</b>	Years in current school:	
<b>CF1.</b> I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT DIFFICULTIES <i>CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS</i> MAY HAVE.  DOES ( <i>name</i> ) WEAR GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES?	Yes ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF3
<b>CF2.</b> WHEN WEARING HIS/HER GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES, DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty..... 1 Some difficulty..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	1⇒CF4 2⇒CF4 3⇒CF4 4⇒CF4
<b>CF3.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty..... 1 Some difficulty..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF4.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) USE A HEARING AID?	Yes ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF6
<b>CF5.</b> WHEN USING HIS/HER HEARING AID, DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY HEARING SOUNDS LIKE PEOPLES' VOICES OR MUSIC?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty..... 1 Some difficulty..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	1⇒CF7 2⇒CF7 3⇒CF7 4⇒CF7
<b>CF6.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY HEARING SOUNDS LIKE PEOPLES' VOICES OR MUSIC?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty..... 1 Some difficulty..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF7.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) USE ANY EQUIPMENT OR RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FOR WALKING?	Yes ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF12

<p><b>CF8.</b> WITHOUT HIS/HER EQUIPMENT OR ASSISTANCE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 100 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 1 FOOTBALL FIELD. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF10 4⇒CF10</p>
<p><b>CF9.</b> WITHOUT HIS/HER EQUIPMENT OR ASSISTANCE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 500 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 5 FOOTBALL FIELDS. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4</p>	
<p><b>CF10.</b> WITH HIS/HER EQUIPMENT OR ASSISTANCE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 100 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 1 FOOTBALL FIELD. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>No difficulty.....1 Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF14 4⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF11.</b> WITH HIS/HER EQUIPMENT OR ASSISTANCE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 500 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 5 FOOTBALL FIELDS. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>No difficulty.....1 Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4</p>	<p>1⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF12.</b> COMPARED WITH CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 100 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 1 FOOTBALL FIELD. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>No difficulty.....1 Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF14 4⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF13.</b> COMPARED WITH CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE, DOES (<i>name</i>) HAVE DIFFICULTY WALKING 500 YARDS/METERS ON LEVEL GROUND? THAT WOULD BE ABOUT THE LENGTH OF 5 FOOTBALL FIELDS. [OR INSERT COUNTRY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE].</p> <p>WOULD YOU SAY (<i>name</i>) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?</p>	<p>No difficulty.....1 Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3</p>	



	Cannot do at all .....4	
<b>CF14.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH SELF-CARE SUCH AS FEEDING OR DRESSING HIM/HERSELF?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF15.</b> WHEN ( <i>name</i> ) SPEAKS, DOES HE/SHE HAVE DIFFICULTY BEING UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE INSIDE OF THEIR MAIN CLASSROOM?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	AS ADAPTED BY SPRUNT & MARELLA 2018
<b>CF16.</b> WHEN ( <i>name</i> ) SPEAKS, DOES HE/SHE HAVE DIFFICULTY BEING UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THEIR MAIN CLASSROOM?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF17.</b> COMPARED WITH CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE, DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY LEARNING THINGS?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF18.</b> COMPARED WITH CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE, DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY REMEMBERING THINGS?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF19.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING ON AN ACTIVITY THAT HE/SHE ENJOYS DOING?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF20.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING CHANGES IN HIS/HER ROUTINE?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3 Cannot do at all ..... 4	
<b>CF21.</b> COMPARED WITH CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE, DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY CONTROLLING HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR?	No difficulty ..... 1 Some difficulty ..... 2 A lot of difficulty ..... 3	

WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	Cannot do at all .....4	
<b>CF22.</b> DOES ( <i>name</i> ) HAVE DIFFICULTY MAKING FRIENDS?  WOULD YOU SAY ( <i>name</i> ) HAS: NO DIFFICULTY, SOME DIFFICULTY, A LOT OF DIFFICULTY OR CANNOT DO AT ALL?	No difficulty.....1 Some difficulty.....2 A lot of difficulty .....3 Cannot do at all .....4	
<b>CF23.</b> HOW OFTEN DOES ( <i>name</i> ) SEEM VERY ANXIOUS, NERVOUS OR WORRIED?  WOULD YOU SAY: DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR NEVER?	Daily .....1 Weekly .....2 Monthly .....3 A few times a year.....4 Never .....5	
<b>CF24.</b> HOW OFTEN DOES ( <i>name</i> ) SEEM VERY SAD OR DEPRESSED?  WOULD YOU SAY: DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR NEVER?	Daily .....1 Weekly .....2 Monthly .....3 A few times a year.....4 Never .....5	
<b>SA6.</b> DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, HAS ( <i>name</i> ) ATTENDED SCHOOL REGULARLY, SPORADICALLY, OR HARDLY EVER?	1 Regularly 2 Sporadically 3 Hardly ever	

Cut out and have as visual aid when reading out:  
CF2-22

No difficulty
Some difficulty
A lot of difficulty
Cannot do at all

CF23-24

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
A few times a year
Never

## Colombian Spanish Translation

<b>NOMBRE DEL ESTUDIANTE:</b>  <b>SEXO (M O F):</b>  <b>FECHA DE NACIMIENTO:</b>  <b>GRUPO ÉTNICO</b>			Número de años en este colegio:	
<b>CF1. ME GUSTARÍA HACERTE ALGUNAS PREGUNTAS SOBRE DIFICULTADES QUE TUS ESTUDIANTES PUEDAN TENER</b>  ¿(NOMBRE) USA GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO?	Sí ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF3		
<b>CF2. ¿CUANDO (NOMBRE) ESTÁ USANDO SUS GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO, EL/ELLA TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</b>  <b>T2:: ¿CUÁNDO UTILIZA SUS GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO, PRESENTA (NOMBRE) DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	1⇒CF4 2⇒CF4 3⇒CF4 4⇒CF4		
<b>CF3. ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4			
<b>CF4. ¿(NOMBRE) USA UN AUDÍFONO?</b>	Sí ..... 1 No  <i>Irrelevant as no funding for hearing aids</i>	2⇒CF6		
<b>CF5. ¿CUANDO (NOMBRE) ESTÁ USANDO SU(S) AUDÍFONO(S), TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA OIR SONIDOS COMO LA VOZ DE OTRAS PERSONAS OIR MÚSICA</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	1⇒CF7 2⇒CF7 3⇒CF7 4⇒CF7		
<b>CF6. ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA OIR SONIDOS COMO LA VOZ DE OTRAS PERSONAS O MUSICA</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4			
<b>CF7. ¿(NOMBRE) USA ALGÚN APOYO O RECIBE AYUDA PARA CAMINAR?</b>	Yes ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF12		

<p><b>CF8.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS T1:EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CAMPO DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3  No puede hacerlo .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF10  4⇒CF10</p>
<p><b>CF9.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 CAMPOS DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3  No puede hacerlo .....4</p>	
<p><b>CF10.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CANCHA DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>No difference between translations</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad .....1  Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3  No puede hacerlo .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF14  4⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF11.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 CANCHAS DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>No difference between translations</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad .....1  Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3  No puede hacerlo .....4</p>	<p>1⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF12.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CAMPO DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad .....1  Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3  No puede hacerlo .....4</p>	<p>3⇒CF14  4⇒CF14</p>
<p><b>CF13.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 CANCHAS DE FÚTBOL</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad .....1  Un poco de Dificultad .....2  Mucha Dificultad .....3</p>	

	No puede hacerlo .....4	
<b>CF14.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD PARA EL: PARA EL CUIDADO PERSONAL POR EJEMPLO PARA COMER O VESTIRSE?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF15.</b> T1: CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA ¿TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTAD PARA HACERSE ENTENDER POR LAS PERSONAS DENTRO DEL SALÓN PRINCIPAL DE CLASE?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF16.</b> CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA, ¿TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTAD PARA HACERSE ENTENDER POR LAS PERSONAS FUERA DEL SALÓN PRINCIPAL DE CLASE?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF17.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD? PARA APRENDER COSAS?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF18.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD PARA RECORDAR COSAS?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF19.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CONCENTRÁNDOSE EN UNA ACTIVIDAD QUE LE GUSTA HACER? CONCENTRARSE EN LAS ACTIVIDADES QUE LE GUSTAN?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF20.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD ACEPTANDO PARA ACEPTAR CAMBIOS EN SU RUTINA?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	

<b>CF21. COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CONTROLANDO SU COMPORTAMIENTO??</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF22. ¿ (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD PARA HACER AMISTADES?</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF23. ¿ CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA (NOMBRE) SE MUESTRA ANSIOSO/A, NERVIOSO/A O PREOCUPADO/A?</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE: DIARIAMENTE, SEMANALMENTE, MENSUALMENTE, ALGUNAS VECES AL AÑO O NUNCA?	Diariamente ..... 1 Semanalmente ..... 2 Mensualmente ..... 3 Algunas veces al año ..... 4 Nunca ..... 5	
<b>CF24. ¿ CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA (NOMBRE) SE PONE TRISTE O DEPRIMIDO/A?</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE: DIARIAMENTE, SEMANALMENTE, MENSUALMENTE, ALGUNAS VECES AL AÑO O NUNCA?	Diariamente ..... 1 Semanalmente ..... 2 Mensualmente ..... 3 Algunas veces al año ..... 4 Nunca ..... 5	
<b>SA6. EN ESTE AÑO ESCOLAR ¿ (NOMBRE) HA VENIDO A CLASES REGULARMENTE, DE VEZ EN CUANDO, O CASI NUNCA?</b>	1 Regularmente 2 De vez en cuando 3 Casi nunca	

## Translation Pilot

Translator 1 suggestions

Translator 2 suggestions

Translation Notes

<b>I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT DIFFICULTIES CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS MAY HAVE. WE ARE GOING TO GO THROUGH EACH CHILD IN TURN</b> <b>CHILD FUNCTIONING (AGE 5-17)</b>		
<b>NOMBRE DEL ESTUDIANTE:</b>  <b>SEXO (M O F):</b>  <b>FECHA DE NACIMIENTO:</b>  <b>GRUPO ÉTNICO</b>	Número de años en este colegio:	
<b>CF1. ME GUSTARÍA HACERTE ALGUNAS PREGUNTAS SOBRE DIFICULTADES QUE TUS ESTUDIANTES PUEDAN TENER</b>  ¿(NOMBRE) USA GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO?	Sí ..... 1 No..... 2	2⇒CF3

<p><b>CF2.</b> ¿CUANDO (NOMBRE) ESTÁ USANDO SUS GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO, EL/ELLA TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</p> <p><b>T2::</b> ¿CUÁNDO UTILIZA SUS GAFAS O LENTES DE CONTACTO, PRESENTA (NOMBRE) DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad.....</p> <p><b>T1:</b> Un poco de Dificultad <b>T2:</b> Alguna dificultad</p> <p>Mucha Dificultad ..... 3</p> <p><b>T1:</b> No puede hacerlo <b>T2:</b> No lo puede hacer del todo</p> <p><i>Teacher and Uni Professor preferred T1 translation, saying 'alguna dificultad sounded like 'some kind of difficulty' rather than some difficulty</i></p>	<p>1⇒CF4 2⇒CF4 3⇒CF4 4⇒CF4</p>
<p><b>CF3.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE <b>T2: ALGUNA</b> DIFICULTADES PARA VER?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	
<p><b>CF4.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) USA UN AUDÍFONO? <b>T2:</b> ALGUNA AYUDA PARA OÍR</p>	<p>Sí ..... 1 No</p> <p><i>Irrelevant as no funding for hearing aids</i></p>	<p><b>2⇒CF6</b></p>
<p><b>CF5.</b> ¿CUANDO (NOMBRE) ESTÁ USANDO SU(S) AUDÍFONO(S), TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA OIR SONIDOS COMO LA VOZ DE OTRAS PERSONAS <b>T1: U OIR MÚSICA?</b> <b>T2: o MUSICA</b></p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>T1, teacher and professor preferred T2: o música, because it flows better</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	<p>1⇒CF7 2⇒CF7 3⇒CF7 4⇒CF7</p>
<p><b>CF6.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTADES PARA OIR SONIDOS COMO LA VOZ DE OTRAS PERSONAS <b>O MUSICA</b></p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	
<p><b>CF7.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) USA ALGÚN APOYO O RECIBE AYUDA PARA CAMINAR?</p>	<p>Yes ..... 1 No..... 2</p>	<p><b>2⇒CF12</b></p>
<p><b>CF8.</b> ¿<b>T1: SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, T2: SIN ESTE EQUIPO O ASISTENCIA</b> (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS <b>T1: EN LO PLANO?</b> <b>T2: SOBRE EL SUELO</b> ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CANCHA DE FÚTBOL <b>ESTO EQUIVALE A LA DISTANCIA DE UN CAMPO DE FÚTBOL</b></p>	<p><i>Teacher and profesor preferred T1 'on the flat' – T2 too literal: on the floor</i></p> <p>Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	<p>3⇒CF10 4⇒CF10</p>

¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?		
<b>CF9.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE <b>ALGUNA</b> DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 <b>T1: CANCHAS DE FÚTBOL</b> T2: <b>CAMPOS DE FÚTBOL</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>Teacher and profesor said T1 is more colloquial, but both are OK.</i>  Un poco de Dificultad .....2 Mucha Dificultad .....3 No puede hacerlo .....4	
<b>CF10.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CANCHA DE FÚTBOL  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>No difference between translations</i>  Ninguna Dificultad .....1 Un poco de Dificultad .....2 Mucha Dificultad .....3 No puede hacerlo .....4	3⇒CF14 4⇒CF14
<b>CF11.</b> ¿SIN EL APOYO O AYUDA, (NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 CANCHAS DE FÚTBOL  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>No difference between translations</i>  Ninguna Dificultad .....1 Un poco de Dificultad .....2 Mucha Dificultad .....3 No puede hacerlo .....4	1⇒CF14
<b>CF12.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 100 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE UNA CANCHA DE FÚTBOL <b>SOBRE EL SUELO? ESTO EQUIVALE A LA DISTANCIA DE UN CAMPO DE FÚTBOL</b>  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>Teacher and profesor said T1 is more colloquial, but both are OK</i>  Ninguna Dificultad .....1 Un poco de Dificultad .....2 Mucha Dificultad .....3 No puede hacerlo .....4	3⇒CF14 4⇒CF14
<b>CF13.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CAMINANDO 500 METROS EN LO PLANO? ESO ES MÁS O MENOS EL LARGO DE 5 CANCHAS DE FÚTBOL  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	Ninguna Dificultad .....1 Un poco de Dificultad .....2 Mucha Dificultad .....3 No puede hacerlo .....4	
<b>CF14.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD PARA EL <b>T1: AUTO-CUIDADO</b> , T2: <b>PARA EL CUIDADO</b>		



<p><b>PERSONAL</b> POR EJEMPLO PARA COMER O VESTIRSE?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>T1 preferred T2s, said it was clearer what it meant</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	
<p><b>CF15.</b> T1: CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA ¿ES DIFÍCIL QUE SUS COMPAÑEROS DE CLASE LE ENTIENDAN? CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA, ¿TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTAD PARA HACERSE ENTENDER POR LAS PERSONAS DENTRO DEL SALÓN PRINCIPAL DE CLASE?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>Teacher and profesor said they understood, but that there is no direct equivalent in Colombian Spanish to say 'understood by others'</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	<p>AS ADAPTED BY SPRUNT &amp; MARELLA 2018</p>
<p><b>CF16.</b> CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA ¿ES DIFÍCIL PARA COMPAÑEROS DE OTROS CURSOS ENTENDERLE? CUANDO (NOMBRE) HABLA, ¿TIENE ALGUNA DIFICULTAD PARA HACERSE ENTENDER POR LAS PERSONAS FUERA DEL SALÓN PRINCIPAL DE CLASE?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	<p>AS ADAPTED BY SPRUNT &amp; MARELLA 2018</p>
<p><b>CF17.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD APRENDIENDO COSAS? PARA APRENDER COSAS?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>Teacher and profesor said they are idéntical in meaning</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	
<p><b>CF18.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD RECORDANDO COSAS? PARA RECORDAR COSAS?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>Identical translation by both</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	
<p><b>CF19.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CONCENTRÁNDOSE EN UNA ACTIVIDAD QUE LE GUSTA HACER? CONCENTRARSE EN UNA ACTIVIDAD QUE DISFRUTA HACER? CONCENTRARSE EN LAS ACTIVIDADES QUE LE GUSTAN?</p> <p>¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?</p>	<p><i>Teacher and profesor said they are idéntical in meaning</i></p> <p>Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4</p>	

<b>CF20.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD ACEPTANDO PARA ACEPTAR CAMBIOS EN SU RUTINA?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>Identical translation by both</i>  Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF21.</b> COMPARADO CON OTROS NIÑOS DE LA MISMA EDAD, ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD CONTROLANDO SU COMPORTAMIENTO? EN CONTROLAR SU COMPORTAMIENTO?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>Teacher and profesor said they are idéntical in meaning</i>  Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF22.</b> ¿(NOMBRE) TIENE DIFICULTAD PARA HACER AMISTADES? AMIGOS  ¿DIRÍAS QUE (NOMBRE) TIENE: NINGUNA DIFICULTAD, UN POCO DE DIFICULTAD, MUCHA DIFICULTAD O NO PUEDE HACERLO?	<i>Teacher and profesor said they are idéntical in meaning</i>  Ninguna Dificultad ..... 1 Un poco de Dificultad ..... 2 Mucha Dificultad ..... 3 No puede hacerlo ..... 4	
<b>CF23.</b> ¿CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA (NOMBRE) SE PONE SE MUESTRA ANSIOSO/A, NERVIOSO/A O PREOCUPADO/A?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE: DIARIAMENTE, SEMANALMENTE, MENSUALMENTE, ALGUNAS VECES AL AÑO O NUNCA?	<i>Teacher and profesor preferred se muestra ('does it show', rather than 'becomes' anxious)</i>  Diariamente ..... 1 Semanalmente ..... 2 Mensualmente ..... 3 Algunas veces al año ..... 4 Nunca ..... 5	
<b>CF24.</b> ¿CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA (NOMBRE) SE PONE TRISTE O DEPRIMIDO/A?  ¿DIRÍAS QUE: DIARIAMENTE, SEMANALMENTE, MENSUALMENTE, ALGUNAS VECES AL AÑO O NUNCA?	Diariamente ..... 1 Semanalmente ..... 2 Mensualmente ..... 3 Algunas veces al año ..... 4 Nunca ..... 5	
<b>SA6.</b> EN ESTE AÑO ESCOLAR ¿(NOMBRE) HA VENIDO A CLASES REGULARMENTE, DE VEZ EN CUANDO, O CASI NUNCA?	1 Regularmente 2 De vez en cuando 3 Casi nunca	

Cut out and have as visual aid when reading out:  
CF2-22

Ninguna Dificultad
Un poco de Dificultad
Mucha Dificultad
No puede hacerlo

CF23-24

Diariamente
Semanalmente
Mensualmente
Algunas veces al año
Nunca

## Appendix F: Observation Schedule

Observation Schedule: Escuela Nueva version		
Date of observation		
----- Day	----- Month	----- Year
School:	Adults in class:	

Class: multi-grade (which classes).....

Teacher name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic / Subject being taught:

Start time of class: \_\_\_\_\_ End time of class:

Number of children in class at the start of lesson: \_\_\_\_\_ At the end of lesson:

### SECTION I: PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION AND CHECKLIST

**What needs to be drawn:** position of the blackboard; teacher desk; children's seating position using the key; windows, doors, if applicable: in or outside a room, where classes are sitting in a multi-grade setting

<p><b>Key:</b>          B= Boy          G=Girl          BD= boys with disabilities          GD= girls with disabilities          T= Teacher</p>	
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# 1. Checklist of classroom facilities

**Tick as appropriate**

	Yes	No	Some	Accessible for all?
Dustbin				
Working fan				
Working lights				
Clean floors				
Desk and chairs in reasonable condition				
Children wearing uniforms				
<b>EN Learning guides: what year? What levels? (Grades 1-5)</b>				
Maths				
Science				
Spanish				
Social sciences				
Ethics and values				
Other (e.g. finance, environment, peace-building)				
<b>Participatory tools</b>				
School council elements				
Self-administered attendance register				
Suggestions box				
Values notebook				
Commitments box				
Travel diary				
Friendship mail pockets/display				
<b>Learning corners (list materials)</b>				
Maths				
Natural Science				
Social science				
Language				
other				

SECTION II: CHRONOLOGY OF LESSON AND QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS		
Quality of interactions	Narrative description	Chronology of events that happened during the lesson (including non-teaching activities) Can be noted as bullet points
<p><b>Teacher sensitivity and responsiveness to learning needs:</b></p> <p>Pay attention to and describe any evidence of whether the teacher shows awareness of and/or is responsive to students who are struggling with the learning, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Noticing students' difficulties or lack of understanding</li> <li>- Providing individualised support.</li> <li>- Making attempts or accommodations to include all children, such as explaining visual material to a child with a visual impairment</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note whether these attempts are routinely targeted at girls/boys /child with disabilities, and/or any specific child</i></p>	<p>1. when noting the chronology of events number them (as indicated in the right hand column) and then when making narrative descriptions here, please make sure that you insert the appropriate number.</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>
<p><b>Lack of sensitivity and responsiveness:</b></p> <p>Pay attention to and describe any evidence of the teacher failing to notice or ignoring student's needs or</p>		

struggles, e.g., - Yelling; Sarcastic voice/ statements; Humiliation; Physical punishment - Presenting materials or activities which some students cannot engage with (e.g., due to disability) - Ignoring some children and/or their lack of engagement <i>Please note whether these attempts are          routinely targeted at girls/boys /child          with disabilities , and/or any specific          child</i>		
<b>Additional Comments</b>		
<b>SECTION III: NATURE OF ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES</b>		
<p><b>Prominent activity/activities during the lesson and describe anything that was uncommon/unusual</b>  <i>(e.g., lecturing, Q&amp;A, whole class teaching, small group work, teacher helping individual students)</i></p> <p><b>What were the childrens' levels of understanding during these activities.</b></p> <p><b>Did any of these activities visibly exclude any children from participating? Please give concrete examples.</b></p> <p><b>Resources used (circle) by the teacher during the teaching</b></p> <p> <i>Textbooks</i>                      <i>Blackboard</i>                      <i>Wall charts</i>                      <i>Supplementary books</i>                      <i>Other, what?</i>  <hr/> </p>		

**How was this resource used.....**

**Resources used (circle) by the children during the teaching**

*Textbooks*

*Blackboard*

*Wall charts*

*Learning corners*

*Other, what?*

**Did all children have access to these materials? (E.g., each having a book, all children being able to see the blackboard) and if not, where any alternative arrangements made to include all children? Please give concrete examples.**

**The dominant language of instruction observed.....**

Name the additional languages used ...by the teacher.....by the students

#### SECTION IV: OVERALL QUALITY OF LESSON

This sheet needs to be filled at the end of the lesson after the observation has been completed. Both observers need to discuss this and come to a single decision.

Quality of interactions	Low	Middle	High	Explain your decision with concrete examples. Also note any exceptions that were noted during the observation.
	**Circle one option on each row**			



<b>Teacher sensitivity and responsiveness to learning needs:</b> E.g., - Noticing students' difficulties or lack of understanding - Providing individualised support - Making attempts or accommodations to include all children (lack of this would be seen as: Presenting materials or activities which some children cannot engage with (e.g., due to a disability) - Ignoring some children and/or their lack of engagement)	The teacher fails to show awareness and/or respond to students who need extra support.	The teacher is sometimes responsive to students who need extra support.	The teacher is consistently responsive to students who need extra support.	
<b>Positive relationships and affect:</b> E.g., - Smiling - Laughter - Enthusiasm (lack of this would be seen in: Yelling - Sarcastic voice/ statements - Humiliation - Physical punishment)	There are few, if any, indications that the teacher and students enjoy warm, supportive relationships with one another.	There are some indications that the teacher and students enjoy warm, supportive relationships with one another.	There are many indications that the teacher and students enjoy warm, supportive relationships with one another.	
<b>Student engagement during the lesson</b> E.g., - attentive to teacher -carrying out teacher instructions -responding to questions, raising hands etc	There are few instances, if any, of students being attentive and engaged with the teaching	There are some indications that students were engaged and attentive to the teaching	There are many indications that students were paying attention and actively engaging with the teaching	

## Appendix G: Consent letters

- Head Teacher
- Teacher
- Parent

### *Head Teacher*

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Julia Hayes and I am a former teacher and Educational Psychologist who has returned to University to study for a PhD. I am extremely interested in exploring how Escuela Nueva schools manage children with diverse learning needs, with a focus on children with disabilities. My hope is to work with the teachers and classrooms that contain children with a disability, and explore how the model supports them. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you, and your teachers to achieve this.

In the class where there is a child with a disability, aged 7-12 years, I plan to observe the class, conduct interviews with school staff and, with permission from the parents and children, run a creative project with a small group of children, including the child with a disability. The project will involve drawing and taking photos of the things that support their learning, as well as things that they think could be better. At the end they will create a collage of their images.

### PILOT

*I would like to stay with your school for 3 weeks, and I would be more than happy to present a summary of the findings to you and the involved teachers. I would also be able to offer some recommendations, if you felt this was something you might find helpful.*

*If possible, I would like to come and work with just one class, and be in your school for 3 weeks.*

### FIELDWORK

*I would like to work with all of the schools which have children with a disability aged between 7-12 years in the school. My plan is to begin conducting research with the first school in February 2019. I would then stay at each school for 4 weeks, and expect to finish my research in September 2019.*

*I am aware that you have hosted researchers in the past, and that it can feel like they arrive, do their research, and then the school does not benefit. I am keen to ensure that the schools benefit from my time there. Following the research, I would be more than happy to present a summary of the findings to you. I want to support the teachers in this topic, and would like to present the findings to them at a microcenter group, and run a training session in which we find some solutions to the challenges they face.*

As a former teacher I am well aware of the challenges of working with a multi-grade class, and meeting the needs of children with disabilities. As such, it is important to note that I am not coming to evaluate the teachers, or your school, and certainly not to criticise their practice. Nobody finds this topic easy. I am interested, however, in whether the Escuela Nueva model offers some solutions to some of the problems that non-Escuela Nueva schools face.

I hope that we can work together on this, and support the future education of children with disabilities in Escuela Nueva schools.

Many thanks for your time,  
Julia Hayes

### ***Teacher***

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Julia Hayes and I am a British teacher with a specialism in psychology who has returned to University to study for a PhD. I am extremely interested in exploring how Escuela Nueva schools manage children with diverse learning needs, with a focus on children with disabilities. My hope is to work with the teachers and children in classrooms that contain children with a disability, and explore how the model supports them. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you to achieve this.

As a former teacher I am well aware of the challenges of working with a multi-grade class, and meeting the needs of children with disabilities. As such, it is important to note that I am not coming to evaluate the teachers, or your school, and certainly not to criticise their practice. Nobody finds this topic easy. I am interested, however, in whether the Escuela Nueva model offers some solutions to some of the problems that non-Escuela Nueva schools face.

I'll be working in all schools, and my hope is to come and visit your class for 2 days a week, for 4 weeks. With permission from you, the parents and children, I would like to run a creative project which will involve drawing and taking photos of the things that support their learning, as well as things that they think could be better. At the end they will create a collage of their images and might want to share this with others.

What would this mean for you? I would love to be in your class, get to know the children and find out more from you about the things you enjoy, as well as the things you find challenging in your role. I would love to talk to you about your children at the start of our time together, and then half way though, and at the end. Each of these conversations would take about an hour, and I would want to work out a convenient time for you. Everything you say will be confidential, and only once I have put together everything all teachers have told me, and checked back with each one of you, will I present my findings to managers, like the Head teacher and FEN.

I hope that we can work together on this, and support the future education of children with disabilities in Escuela Nueva schools.

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can contact me, in Spanish, at [jh2061@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jh2061@cam.ac.uk), or speak to XXX at Foundation Escuela Nueva (email), or discuss it with the Director.

Many thanks for your time,  
Julia Hayes

### **Parents Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Julia Hayes, and I am a student from England in Europe, with a background in teaching and child psychology. I have worked in Colombia many times and care very much about the education of Colombian children.

I would like to study the perspectives of children about their experiences of education, for my studies at the University of Cambridge, UK. I hope to find out what helps children to learn and feel like they belong in their school.

I am asking for your agreement to have your child participate in this study.

**What will happen in this study and what will my child be asked to do?**

If you agree for your child to participate, he or she will have the opportunity to take photos, draw and do activities with a small group of their classmates. Your child might also be invited to work with me individually, and we will talk some more about their experiences.

**Will your information be kept confidential?**

The information your child provides will be kept confidential. I will be speaking to lots of children from different schools and will put together all of their information to create general themes. This means no-one will be able to identify the school or individuals.

The name of your child will not appear in my report, presentations or journal article.

I will audio record responses so that I can translate what each child said into English after the session, but this will be safely stored during my time in Colombia, and destroyed at the end of the study. I would like to take photos of the children participating in the activities, so I can teach others how to use the drawing methods with children.

**Can your child stop participating in the study, if they choose?**

If at any time during the study, your child wants to stop participating, for any reason, they may do so. The children will be asked to give their own consent to take part, and I will make sure they know they have the right to say 'no thanks' or stop taking part. No-one will treat your child any differently if they choose not to take part.

**How will my child benefit from taking part?**

Your child will have a chance to have their say about their education, and their school experiences. They might want to speak about difficult times at school (for example in their friendships or learning). If a child becomes, or looks, upset, I will stop the activity and reassure them that we can change the subject or finish.

Once they are part of the group, I would welcome the opportunity to meet you in person, and talk some more about your views on their education – but only if you decide you would like to do this.

I look forward to having your consent for your child to take part and can't wait to meet them in person.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Hayes

Questions to answer:

I know my child does not have to participate and can stop at any time	Sí	No
I will allow my child to be photographed during activities	Sí	No
I will allow my child to be audio-recorded during the activity	Sí	No

As parent or legal guardian, I authorize \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to take part in the research study described in this form.

Child's date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

## Appendix H: Theme posters

### School A



### School B

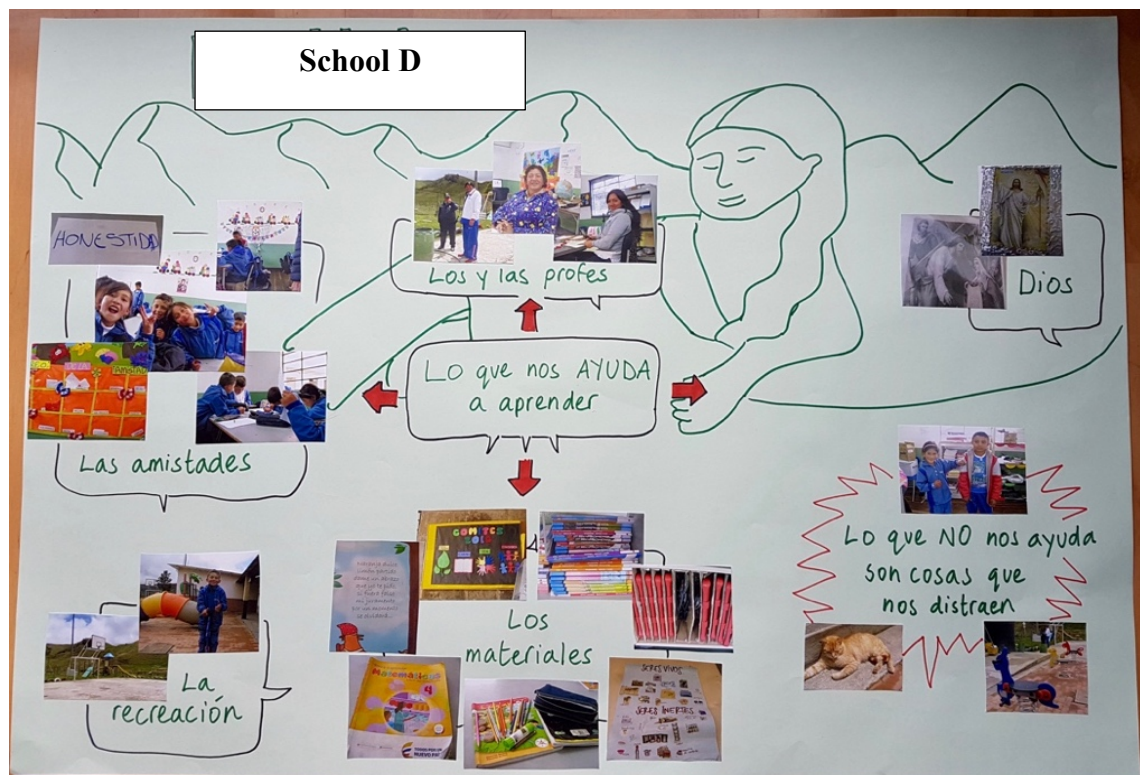




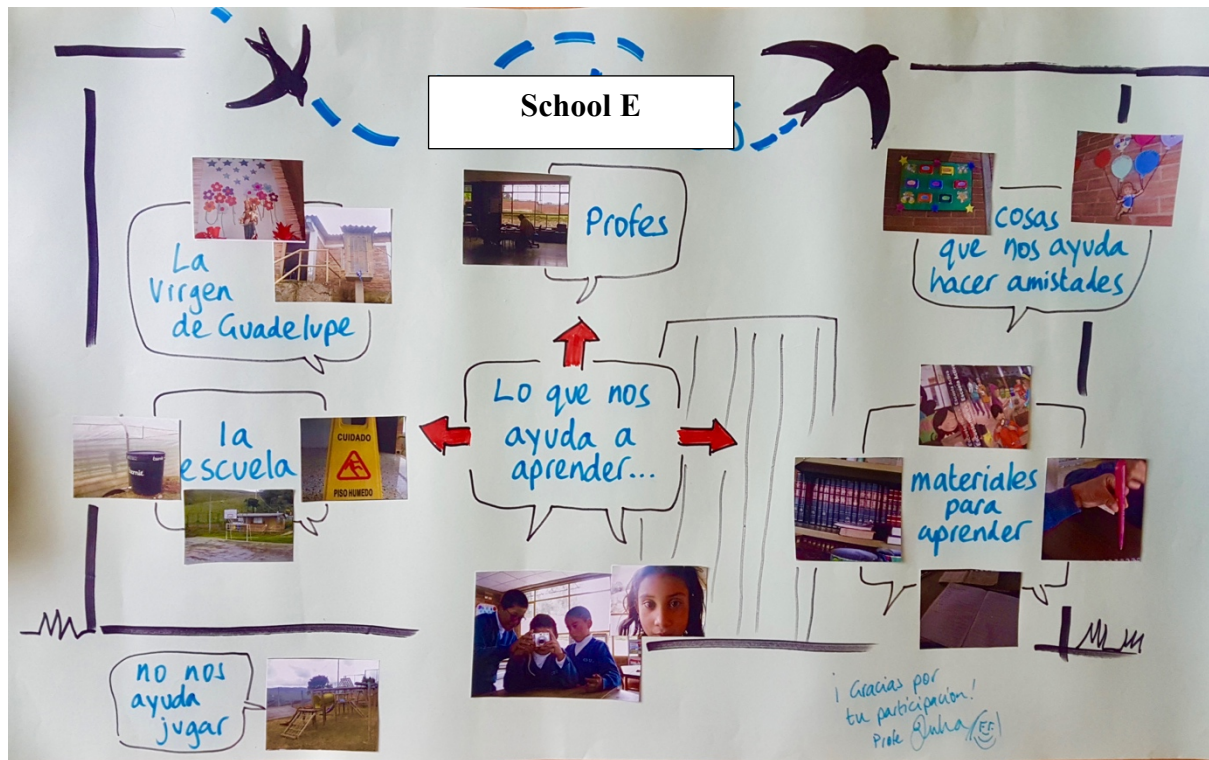
## School C



## School D



## School E



## Appendix I: Coding

### Theme and coding lists

#### a) Initial codes

School staff and FEN	Children	Parents
Curriculum	Child when stuck	Parent children costs
Differences between children	Child experience repeating the year	Parent describing disability
Disability understanding	Child experience SEN support	Parent education level
Disability experience	Child family and context	Parent gives child and family history
Reasons for educating children with disability	Child family conflict violence	Parent hopes for child future
Escuela Nueva model	Child future hopes	Parent parenting skills
Evaluation	Child homework views	Parent supports child
FEN role	Child learning experience	Parent views on schools
FEN training	Child view of difficulties: self & others	Parent views repeating year
Inclusive education views	Child view on teacher strategies	Parent work/daily routine
Training received	Child What helps learn	Parents and poverty
Job motivation	Child What doesn't help learn	Parents experience of diagnosis
	Children views on EN tools	Parent views of EN
Suggestions: what need to include children	Child action planning	Parent support needed
Parents supporting learning	Family composition	Parent other
Prior work experience	Child other	
Not learning child reasons		
Support planning		
Teacher planning		
Teacher parent interactions		
Teacher strategies		
Teacher other		
FEN other		

### Final themes and codes

These themes and codes were generated through the second round of coding.

Main Theme	Main codes	Sub codes
Disability	Disability model	
	Disability vs SEN	Permanent vs Temporary Different to norm Difference not disability
	Diagnosis	Diagnosis system struggles Diagnosis impact
	Inclusive education+/-	Social Academic
Intersections	Poverty	Not poor poor Parent extra costs



	Gender	Work/Daily routine experiences+- Gendered expectations Family conflict/violence
	Skin tone	
	Rural living +-	
SEN systems	Decree 1421	PIAR in practice+- Working together+- PIAR paperwork
	Learning support teacher role	Role definition differences In school +- At home+-
	School-family relationship	Falta de acompañamiento Supportive relationships Conflict school-family
	Link with health+-	
	Practicalities for parents+-	
EN model	EN tools+-	Guides, friendship letters, learning corners, school council, travelling journal, suggestions box
	EN tool use	Examples Frequency
	EN evaluation	Formative/normative
	Going at own pace	
	Training from FEN+-	Face to face Microcentres
	EN & disability	
	EN teacher role+-	
	EN managing multigrade	
	EN history	FEN history of model Schools' history
Teacher practice	Teaching experience disability +- Strategies	Behaviour/social Wellbeing Academic Support staff
	Training	Training from institution Training learn by experience Training_no disability training
	Support from others	
	Teacher monitoring	
Dilemmas	Repeating the year	
	Not knowing what to do	
Helps child learn	Teachers +- Parents/family+-	Parents Family
	Children+-	Friends Fighting
	Teaching learning materials	
	Environment+-	
	Religion	
	Stuck feelings	

Children's future	Parents hopes	Parents_do better than us Parents_child w dis vs no dis
	Child hopes	
What need to better include	Training	
	Resources	
	Personnel	

Below is an example of the way in which I used Atlas.ti to code the data for adults and children.

### Example of adult data coding

This example is taken from an interview with a teacher. The interview was conducted in Spanish before being transcribed into English. I then coded the English text.

21.15

They paint is as 'ooh, this model revolutionised the world of education' but, yes, there are some things like this, but they have told me look at how you can have do 2 topics and 5 grades, be lively with the youngsters, and you can work with your phone keep it live, well Yes in one class the next day – but once you are there that's where starts the difficulty. But if the little I learned about this – in the process of I learned because, as I told you, I arrived and I had no idea of this, I was very scared, didn't know what to do, didn't know how to manage the children.

If there had have been someone who said for a full year in this case do that, in that case do that, then but there wasn't anything. So I got to know them, also they had a good time with the previous teacher – the older ones, so the time until I knew them,, until they had confidence in me, well what happened either [redacted] is a bit extreme, I tried a few months and still don't know, but it has happened a few times when a new child U think 'what will I do?' ooh!! It's about knowing how to manage this with EN for example I thought I knew this. but no. because when I returned maybe in others

The screenshot displays the Atlas.ti interface with a transcript on the left and a list of codes on the right. The transcript text is as follows:

5:91 21.15 They paint is as 'ooh, this mo...  
 5:113 e next day -...  
 5:128 If there had have been someone  
 5:94 It's ab

The codes applied to the transcript are:

- EN managing multigrade (green box)
- Training "learn by experience" (pink box)
- Training "learn by experience" (pink box)
- EN tools (pink box)
- EN tools\_guides (white box)
- Training from EN (pink box)
- Practices Address Wellbeing (yellow box)
- Support r (blue box)

### Example of child data coding

This example illustrates how I used Atlas.ti to code the relevant section of the drawn visual interview template, and linked it with what children had said during their interview.

Child's name

37:1 Help parent or nonschool adult

37:2 Child view of diffculties: self a...

37:3 Help friends

37:4 Help teacher

37:5 illustrates 38:5 STUCK Englis...

37:6 illustrates 38:6 Do others hel...

37:7 illustrates 38:7 And teh teach...

38:7 And teh te...ut first I talk to the...

And teh teacher, does she help?  
Ah, yes, sometimes I would tell her as well, but first I talk to the girls in 4th grade

And what does the teacher do? Is she corss? Serious?  
She explains things and how to get better, she doesn;t get cross

Go to Quotation

