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Positive vs Negative Reintegration: A Case Study of the Educational Program for Ex-combatants in Bogota, Colombia

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Glossary

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

ERP – Educational Reintegration Program

ACR – *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración* (Colombian Agency for Reintegration)

FARC – *Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

RCEP – Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding

LPT – Liberal Peace Theory

HCT – Human Capital Theory

RCT – Rational Choice Theory

MI – Methodological Individualism

CHCV – *Comision de Historia del Conflicto y sus Victimas* (Comission on the History of the conflict and its Victims)

PRT – *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Workers Party)

EPL – *Partido Popular de Liberacion* (Popular Liberation Party)

M-19 – *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (19th of April Movement)

ELN – *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (National Liberation Army)

COP – Colombian Pesos

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Testimonies from the Field

“The reintegration program has changed the lives of thousands of ex-combatants and their families and communities for the better. Thanks to it we can say today Colombia is a more peaceful society” (Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia, 2016).

“I wasted 9 years of my live in the jungle, with a rifle on my shoulder, waiting to kill or be killed any second. I joined the FARC because they offered me a salary; I had no source of income at the time. But I got tired of war.... The reintegration program has offered me the opportunity to rebuild my life” (Cristina, 2015. Ex-combatant FARC).

“In Colombia, unfortunately, illegal activities are the only way for many of the most vulnerable people to make a living. The reintegration program offers to those who joined armed groups because of necessity the chance to rebuild their lives within legality” (Joshua Mitrotti, 2015. Director of the Colombian Agency for Reintegration).

“The priority is that they produce, not that they reintegrate” (Official. Ministry of Education: Department of Inclusive Education).

“Here in Bogota the program works really well. But as soon as you go to smaller towns and villages you find infrastructure is collapsing, teachers are not well trained and students lack materials. This results in higher dropouts and relapse rates” (Teacher implementing the ERP)

“They give a couple of subsidies and they expect you to be happy and grateful about it. How am I supposed to maintain my family with it, it is not enough, and no one would give me a job because I’m an ex-combatant. This is why people leave the program” (Antonio, 2015. Ex-combatant FARC).

Introduction

Colombia, host to the last armed conflict of the western hemisphere, has suffered greatly from the consequences of violence in all of its spheres: social, political, cultural and economic. Unable to defeat guerrillas and paramilitary groups by military means, successive Colombian governments have implemented non-military strategies to advance towards the resolution of the conflict and the construction of sustainable peace in the country. One of such strategies has been the implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) policies, beginning in the 1990's. DDR can be understood as a process constituted by a set of policies and programs aimed at the demilitarization of armed groups and the reincorporation of its members into civilian life (Caramés & Fisas & Luz, 2009).

This research will focus on *Reintegration*, the last phase of the process, and more specifically, on the educational reintegration program (ERP) for guerrilla and paramilitary ex-combatants. From the outset, it is important to understand that ERP is just one of the components of the Reintegration phase. The Colombian agency for reintegration (ACR) identifies eight different components: (a) education (b) health (c) security (d) family (e) housing (f) citizenship (g) employment and (h) psychological (ACR, 2016).

As can be read from the testimonies gathered during the fieldwork, there are different perspectives, opinions and ideas (both positive and negative) regarding the aims of the ERP and its structure, content, practices, accomplishments, and shortcomings. These diverse perspectives come from an equally diverse range of actors, government officials, policy makers, teachers, ex-combatants, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, and receptor communities. However, even though there are disagreements on whether the program has delivered on its promises, and whether the content and structure are adequate, every respondent taking part in this study agreed on one thing: the ERP is the core element upon which the whole reintegration process is built. Education is seen as essential in facilitating ex-combatants transition from insurgents to citizens and preventing them from relapsing into violence, thereby contributing to a sustainable peace scenario for the country.

Research Problem

Long-standing warfare between the army, the guerrillas, and paramilitary groups have left deep scars on Colombia's social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. The conflict has caused, to date, more than 220.000 deaths since the 1960's (mostly civilians), and uncalculated disappearances and kidnappings. Around 25% of Colombia's annual budget goes to military spending thus leaving other key sectors underfunded (*e.g.*, healthcare, education and infrastructure). Furthermore, the armed conflict has been played out mostly in rural areas of the country, negatively affecting the livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

According to the Unified Victims Registry (URV, 2016), there are 7.902.807 registered victims of the conflict in the country. In a country with 48.494.092 people, this means 16,30% of the population has been directly affected by the conflict, 76% of which has been displaced by force placing Colombia as the second country in the world with the largest number of internally displaced people, Syria being the first (DANE, 2016). Those who have remained in their places of origin have learned to live with the absence of State institutions and basic services, and have been forced to follow the rules of the armed group dominating any specific area and making a livelihood out of the few available options, such as joining the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, cartels, the army, or growing and processing cocaine.

In spite of the problems attributable to the long-standing warfare, Colombia has consolidated its position as the fourth largest economy of Latin America. Unemployment, the child death rate, analphabetism, poverty and inequality have decreased steadily over the last 20 years. Likewise, economic growth, school enrollment, and service provision have increased continuously over the same period. What would Colombia look like, what could the country achieve if the armed conflict were to end?

The current Colombian government under the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos has been conducting peace negotiations since 2012 in Havana, Cuba with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the largest guerrilla force of the country. While impossible to predict what the future may bring if a peace agreement is reached, it will no doubt allow the State to allocate a larger percentage of the national budget to social welfare thereby expanding the provision of services and the presence of institutions in those regions from which they have been historically absent.

Nevertheless, this context of peaceful social relations, economic prosperity and strong institutions will not be achieved by simply signing a contract and shaking hands. Signing the peace agreement is just a first step towards that end. This beginning must be followed by the implementation of a diverse set of policies, programs and mechanisms to assure that all terms of the agreement are being applied and followed.

A critical policy in this process will be the reintegration of those members of guerrilla and paramilitary groups who were directly involved in violence. Even though governments, international institutions, scholars, NGO's, and civil society members alike recognize the importance of that transition, it is striking to see how little in-depth studies have been carried out on this subject, especially on the role of education therein.

If negotiations succeed, this would mean that major urban hubs of the country would receive an influx of thousands of ex-combatants. Most ex-combatants do not have the necessary educational credentials and/or skills for entrance into the labor market, nor do they own property or capital in order to make a living by themselves. Moreover, after years of living in the jungle, at the front lines of warfare, many lack basic social

skills necessary to relate to others, some may suffer from post-traumatic stress and may carry feelings of fear, anger, depression, and vengeance that make it difficult to make the transition to civil society, making them prone to re-recruitment, relapse into violence, and discrimination.

Relevance

Scientific

The topic under study in this research does not fall into a clearly defined academic field of inquiry; it is rather a point of convergence between peace and conflict studies, and the philosophy and sociology of education. Even though each stream of inquiry has a long history on its own, the study of education in relation to conflict and peace building is a recent development in academia (Smith, 2005).

Nevertheless, the work of scholars since the 1980's have merged these diverse fields into a new one, that of *Education and Conflict*, or *Education and Peace Building*. In recent decades, this new field has evolved as a result of the increasing scholarly criticism of the idea that education is inherently good. Critical scholars highlight the negative sides of education. While recognizing that education has the potential to foster the economic growth of a country, contribute to a critical and engaged citizenry, a healthy democracy, social mobility, peace building, and greater equality, they point out the ways in which education is as well instrumental in the perpetuation of repression, exclusion, and inequality. Rather often, education can be a source and a driver of conflict instead of a mean for peace building (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Smith, 2005; Davies, 2006).

Although those conducting research in this new field have made remarkable advances, important knowledge gaps remain in our understanding of the role of education in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. Research to date has been almost entirely directed to the study of education in emergency situations and post-conflict societies, and not so much to the role of education during conflict. Furthermore, studies focus mostly on education for children, teenagers, young adults, and the role of teachers. Far less attention is paid to formal education for adults, especially ex-combatants, and the inclusion of communities in the educational process.

Aware of these gaps in our knowledge, this study applies the 4R theoretical framework developed by the Research Consortium on Education and Peace-Building (RCEP) to the study of the Educational Reintegration Program (ERP) for adult ex-combatants in Colombia. Led by UNICEF and the universities of Amsterdam, Sussex and Ulster, the RCEP's 4R framework has been so far only applied to the study of national curricula in certain post-conflict societies (e.g. Lebanon, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Myanmar and Pakistan), and the "agency" of students and teachers in such contexts. The role of education in the reintegration of former combatants into civil

society in the context of ongoing conflicts is barely recognized in academic literature. Given the importance of education as an alternative means of conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation *vis-a-vis* military action, and punitive legal frameworks, this is a worrisome state of affairs. Consequently, there is a critical need for conducting further research on the matter. This study seeks to advance needed research in this field in a number of ways:

1. The 4R framework is applied to the study the Colombian case, offering the opportunity to expand our understanding regarding education's contribution to sustainable peace building in contexts of ***ongoing conflict***.
2. The study focuses on an under-researched subject (***the ERP***) and its relation to peace building. This means that emphasis is placed on a policy process, an academic curriculum, and pedagogical practices that fall within the formal educational system but that are inherently distinct from its mainstream content, form and proceedings.
3. Lastly, attention is placed on ***adult ex-combatants and policy makers*** rather than children, teenagers and teachers, which tend to be the focus of most research in the field of education and peace building.

Social

Already mentioned above are some of the negative effects that the armed conflict has had on the Colombian society and the region. The benefits of resolving the conflict and realizing peace in the country, just like its most devastating effects, are incalculable. Finding ways of building peace in the country that are sustainable and positive, is therefore of crucial importance. Education in general, and the ERP in particular, has the potential to contribute to that goal. Continually studying and evaluating the program in order to implement ongoing improvements must be then a crucial concern for policy, academic and civil society circles. This study offers new insights into the evolution of the program since the 1990's and its current status. Also, by determining the degree to which it delivers on its promise, it will unveil and discuss a number of aspects that need improvement, as well as propose solutions to implement those improvements.

Questions

The main, and guiding question of this study focus precisely on the degree to which the ERP contributes to sustainable peace building, given its purpose to reintegrate ex-combatants successfully into civilian life. The main research question is thus:

To what extent can the current educational program for ex-combatants contribute to their positive reintegration?

Sub-question 1: *Is the structure of the ERP redistributive?*

Sub-question 2: *How representative are the procedures and practices of the ERP?*

Sub-question 3: *To what extent do the content and practices of the ERP explicitly recognize the diversity of social and political affiliations of ex-combatants?*

Sub-question 4: *Are the outcomes of the ERP sufficiently reconciliatory?*

Outline

Subsequent chapters will be ordered as follows:

1. The *theoretical framework* will engage in a critique of the dominant theoretical and analytical perspectives in the field of education, peace building and conflict resolution. Arguments will be made to substantiate why the 4R framework is a better-suited analytical tool for the study of the educational programs in conflict-affected settings, concluding with remarks and changes in order to apply the framework to the study of the ERP in Colombia.
2. The *research context* chapter will consist of a brief but detailed account of the Colombian armed conflict, a description of the research location (Bogota), and the history of the ERP.
3. The *methodology chapter* will treat aspects of the research design for data collection and analysis: methods, population groups, subjects, sample sizes, and an ethical and methodological reflection.
4. The *analysis and discussion* chapter will be divided in four sub-chapters, one for every sub-question/dimension. Here the results of the content analysis and statistical tests will be discussed critically against our theoretical approach and other studies on the same topic.
5. Finally the *conclusions and recommendations* chapter will summarize the main findings of the study and its implications for theory, policy, and practice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical and analytical framework used in this study in order to conceptualize the relationship between education and peace building and analyze the gathered data receives the name of the 4R Framework. As stated above, the 4R framework has been developed by the RCEP, a collaboration by the universities of Amsterdam, Sussex, Ulster and UNICEF, geared towards conducting scientific research in the field of education and peace building.

The 4R framework was developed based on the work of Nancy Fraser (2005; 2008), Johan Galtung (1976; 1990), and John Paul Lederach (1995). Scholars working within the RCEP describe the 4R framework as a normative but not prescriptive model that establishes the broad components of a just and peaceful society and applies these to the educational sector (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, Smith, 2015. p. 3). Their aim is to better understand the relationship between education and conflict and education and peace by generating new insights for policy, academia, and practice. Their main guiding question being how can education contribute to the broad overarching goal of sustainable peace. Peace building is here understood as the set of broad transformations that must occur in conflict-affected societies in order to change and foster peaceful relations. These transformations, in line with Galtung's peace theory, must necessarily deal with the root causes of the conflict so that a positive peace scenario can be achieved (Galtung, 1976; 1990).

While not arguing that education can by itself bring about sustainable peace, I will argue based on the evidence and findings of this investigation, education does have an important contribution to make by transforming the injustices that gave rise to the conflict.

As scholars working in the field have pointed out, in order better to understand education's relation to conflict and peace building, we must conceive education in all its complexity (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Novelli & Smith, 2012; Verger, Novelli & Altinyelken, 2012; Novelli, 2011; Smith & Vaux, 2003) and realize "*that education policy, systems, and programs are embedded in complex local, national, and global political economies that both shape and are shaped by this relationship*" (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015. p. 8). In other words, we must grasp the cultural, political, and economic dynamics at all scales that have an influence upon the educational sector. Leaving these factors outside of educational analyses has been a common flaw in this field of academic inquiry, often the consequence of the theoretical lens used to study education in general, and educational programs for ex-combatants in particular.

The first part of the theoretical framework will expose the shortcomings of the dominant theory in the field of education and peace building that currently guides most of the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational initiatives. This theoretical approach is known as the '*Liberal Peace Theory*' (Richmond, 2009, 2011;

Heathershaw, 2008; Doyle, 2005; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015). It will be argued that the *security* and *market* imperatives upon which this theory rests does not provide a basis for either fully understanding the capacity of education to contribute to peace building or designing and implementing an educational policy that can make such a contribution.

The second part will explain in detail the foundations of the 4R theoretical framework, and will advance arguments to explain why this emerging approach is not only better suited to study educational policy in the contexts of conflict, but also it can better inform their design, implementation and evaluation.

Liberal Peace Theory

Under liberal peace theory (LPT), peace is understood as the byproduct of security, institutions, and the market. LPT supporters identify these three components as essential in order to achieve peace in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. The reasoning behind the theory is that security, understood as the mitigation, and eventually the absence of, direct physical violence, followed by the strengthening of governance institutions and the introduction of the liberal market economy are prerequisites for the achievement of stable and peaceful societal arrangements.

While certainly true that a secure environment, economic prosperity, and functional institutions are necessary conditions for peace building, prioritizing these over bottom-up grassroots initiatives and social welfare when designing and implementing policies, programs and reforms can have devastating effects for the purpose of peace building. As Richmond (2011) puts it, LPT suggests a peaceful society is that:

“. . . in which individual privileges denote freedom to act politically, economically and socially, within a liberal governance framework which constitutionally guarantees human rights. Yet, the governmental and institutional imbalance in the very highly specialized context of post-conflict states undermines this ethic of freedom, and often stifles local voices and their concerns about peace. Many of the subjects of recent state building experiments regard the liberal peace as an ideology that degrades into violence because its universal aspirations are not mirrored on the ground. This results in the re-securitization of the post-conflict liberal state whereby politics is deemed to start from security and institutions, rather than from individual agency, social justice, community and everyday life. Thus, the politics of the liberal peace are perceived to represent the maintenance of existing normative and political hierarchies at the local, national, and global levels”(p. 562).

As a consequence, the structural factors that served as causes and drivers of conflict are left unattended; likewise, investment in public welfare, health care, and education are relegated to a position of less importance. Regarding educational policy within the LPT more specifically, the role of education is reduced to that of strengthening the market economy, inculcating obedience, and ensuring compliance. As scholars

working in the field point out, there is too much emphasis placed on education's possible contribution to economic growth. The LPT ignores education's role in fostering social cohesion, reconciliation and tackling inequality. These are all pressing concerns in any conflict-affected or post-conflict society (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015).

Having emphasized the downside of using LPT for practice and research, I will now discuss in more detail the two ways that LPT has informed the design, implementation and evaluation of educational policy in contexts of conflict. These are, namely, the market and security imperatives.

The Market Imperative

As noted earlier, at the heart of LPT lays the assumption that a liberal market economy is crucial for peace building. In the field of education, this belief has taken the form of what is commonly known in academic and policy literature as *Human Capital Theory* (HCT). Under HCT, education is considered a key factor contributing to economic development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines human capital as the "productive wealth embodied in labor, skills and knowledge" (OECD, 2001). To the same effect, Tan (2014) argues that "*in essence, HCT suggests that education increases the productivity and earnings of individuals; therefore, education is an investment. In fact, this investment is not only crucial for individuals but it is also the key to the economic growth of a country*" (p. 412). Education is then understood in economic terms; its only purpose being that of increasing the value of individuals, thereby contributing to economic growth and peace-building (Tikly & Barrett, 2010; Lanzi, 2007).

The foundations of HCT can be found in the work of scholars of the Chicago School of Economics like Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker (Tan, 2014). This is relevant since in order to understand HCT we must first understand the foundations upon which it rests. These can be found in the guiding paradigms of the neoclassical school of economics, *Methodological Individualism* (MI) and *Rational Choice Theory* (RCT). MI is a doctrine that emphasizes the role of individual agency over structures. Since structures are conceived as the byproduct of multiple individual interactions, the study of social, cultural, economic, and political phenomena and institutions must always depart from the analysis of individual behavior (Arrow, 1994). RCT on the other hand, provides a model aimed at understanding and predicting individual behavior. Its most basic principle conceives the behavior of individuals to be the direct result of choices made based on utility maximization.

Together, these two notions give shape to what is known as the *Homo Economicus*, a self-serving individual that pursues his or her own narrowly and subjectively defined interests in the most optimal way (always!). This has been the portrait of individuals and their behavior that has informed most economic research throughout the 19th

and 20th centuries. Even though supporters of RCT recognize the influence of other factors in human behavior (*e.g.*, cultural context), these are nevertheless considered marginal externalities in contrast to the utility maximization imperative that informs every human action.

The consequences of conceiving human behavior in such a way has had profound effects on how we define social problems and design solutions for them, which is central for the argument advanced here since educational policy in the context of this investigation relies heavily on HCT, and therefore also on MI and RCT.

Even though dominant in educational policy circles until now, the tenets of HCT, very much like those of MI and RCT have not remained unchallenged. Wide criticism has been voiced from academics working the field of education and from external actors alike. As pointed out by Hanushek and Woßmann (2007), in practice HCT has resulted in quantity being more important than quality. Its narrow focus upon inputs and outputs leaves out questions about the quality and meaning of education, thereby feeding a discourse that depoliticizes issues of educational policy by dressing them up in economistic and technocratic jargon.

Since the 1970's, however, defenders of the human capital approach to education have increasingly expanded the scope of their approach in an attempt to cope with criticism. For example, Robertson (2007) notes that financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have changed their rhetoric regarding education to include issues of poverty alleviation, social welfare, gender inequality, and inclusion. In order to tackle the criticism, the proponents of HCT have certainly broadened the scope of their theory. However, in line with critical scholars such as Bowles and Gintis (1975), and Pratt and Hanson (1991), I will argue that these changes have not had a significant influence upon the essence of the theory, and its main downsides remain unabated. Including subjects in the curriculum about gender, democracy, and peaceful coexistence does little in practice when the ultimate aim remains that of increasing economic growth in the hope that this will translate into peaceful social relations and arrangements.

The weakness of this line of reasoning is correctly pointed out by Mario Novelli, Mieke Lopes Cardozo and Alan Smith (2015) in their review of empirical research on the often taken-for-granted correlation that is assumed to exist between economic growth (aided by education) and sustainable peace building. In their own words, *"just as trickle-down economics failed to reach many of the most vulnerable sections of populations in the 1980s during International Monetary Fund/World Bank-promoted structural adjustment policies, and acted as a catalyst to many conflicts, so it is not clear that 'trickle-down peace' is a sufficiently robust development model to address the most marginalized, and may itself contain the seeds of continuing insecurity"* (p. 5).

Furthermore, HCT fails to provide a framework for the evaluation of educational quality. Quality has been therefore reduced to cost-benefit and rates of return analyses based on input and output that fail to grasp the complexity of the processes

taking place and the outcomes they generate. According to Novelli (2016), the market imperative informed by HCT that guides educational policy in contexts of conflict (especially when it comes to those directly involved in violence) narrowly focuses on the skills and knowledge necessary for participation in the labor market. While not arguing that these two elements are not important, based on his research in conflict settings, Novelli correctly points out the insufficiency of the approach.¹ This insufficiency is mainly due to the fact that questions regarding the governance structure of educational systems, their funding sources, budget allocation, bureaucracy, and degree of bottom-up input are not addressed.

Turning to ERP's for ex-combatants more specifically, the dominance of the HCT has been pervasive. The guidelines provided by International Organizations (IO's) such as the WB, the IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the OECD, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and United Nations (UN) have become a blueprint for the design and implementation of educational programs for integration from Burundi to Colombia (Hill & Kumar, 2009; De Vries & Wiegink, 2011). All these organizations adhere to a single conceptualization of reintegration.

They define reintegration as the *“process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance”* (UNDP, 2005, p. 12). Furthermore the ILO asserts that *“reintegration means addressing the structural or “root” causes of inequality within post-conflict communities. Structural factors of inequality that may have significantly contributed towards violence, such as discrimination, structural poverty, or exploitative working conditions, have to be identified and addressed”* (ILO, 2014, p. 15).

At first glance the conception of reintegration held by these IO's appears to be quite nuanced and comprehensive. However, a closer look at official documents and case studies reveals that the human capital orientation of educational programs has negative impacts on the goal of reintegration and peace building. There is an inherent contradiction between the definition they attach to reintegration and the practices through which they want to achieve it. Quotes from official ILO reports on the guidelines for ERP's are illustrative in making my point:

“action is needed to enhance the employability of ex-combatants. In a tight labour market, ex-combatants are normally in a disadvantaged position to compete for job opportunities. Ex-combatants often lack education, employable skills, have poor literacy skills, and lack start-up capital” (ILO, 2014, p. 21).

¹ Professor Mario Novelli (2016). Presentation during the dissemination seminar of the Research Consortium on Education and Peace-building that took place in Amsterdam on the 21st of April 2016.

“options to improve employability of ex-combatants is to develop strategies for remedial education and employment-oriented training. This can include: formal (and non-formal) education, combining basic education with vocational skills training, apprenticeships, and small business training.” (ILO, 2014, p. 20).

Educational programs should *“prioritize the reconstruction, agriculture and fishing sectors for post-conflict recovery. Labour-intensive work is especially suitable for ex-combatants”* (ILO, 2014, p. 21).....*“quick results and employment”* (ILO, 2014, p, 22).

The goals that are stressed in the definition of reintegration fall apart when confronted with the practical guidelines they advocate. Allusions to peace building, reconciliation, community involvement, and addressing the root causes of conflict are suddenly absent. What becomes evident is the extreme focus on basic knowledge and skills necessary for performing low-skilled jobs in labor-intensive industries. As pointed out by scholars such as De Vries & Wiegink (2011), Theidon (2007), Rethmann (2010) Ginifer (2003), Muggah (2007), Kilroy (2009), and Mitchell (2011) that have conducted research in countries as diverse as Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Colombia, the current content and structure of ERP's does little to address the root causes of conflict. On the contrary, quite often after “reintegration” ex-combatants find themselves under the same conditions of poverty and exclusion that pushed them to take up arms in the first place.

A second negative impact that HCT has had in the design, implementation and evaluation of ERP's has to do with the overemphasis laid on the individual as the main cause and driver of conflict, and subsequently as the principal actor responsible for peace building processes. This has fostered an understanding of the ex-combatant as an individual that engaged in violence in the search for personal economic gain and power. While this might be certainly true in some cases, in practice, it has resulted in ERP's being based on a generalization of the ex-combatant as an individual in need of psychosocial intervention and skills to enter the labor market. In line with the work carried out by Dalton, Sickel and Weldon (2009), I will argue that violent conflict erupts out of discontent with societal structures and the social, economic, political and cultural inequalities and injustices they generate. That is not to say that individual actions and interests have not played a role, but rather to stress that societal arrangements are at least equally important.

ERP's provide ex-combatants with the necessary technical and practical skills to enter the labor market, loans in order to start productive projects, and psychosocial support and counseling, all of which are, of course, extremely important. However, they do not provide the necessary knowledge, tools and opportunities to understand and change the social arrangements that generated the conflict. Furthermore, ERP's are rarely constructed through a serious reform of the educational governance, financial and decision-making mechanisms. How can ERP's be conducive to peace building and reconciliation when a problem that is inherently related to societal structures is

treated as an individual pathology? Responsibility is placed entirely on the individual; a common characteristic of the HCT, MI and RCT as noted earlier.

In conclusion, even though HCT, and ERP's in particular, make some contributions to the role of education in peace-building, they excessively prioritize skills and training, startup capital, and psychosocial support over cultural, political, economic, and social issues. This negatively affects policy design since important aspects of conflict and peace building are ignored or not given the importance they should have. By the same token, this approach limits the possible contribution academic research can make to the understanding of the relation between education and peace building since scholars working from the HCT perspective tend to narrowly focus on economic input and output, thereby failing to address the way education influences and is influenced in turn by the above mentioned issues.

The Security Imperative

The second premise upon which LPT rests that has had great influence on how ERP's are designed and implemented is the security imperative. Under LPT, security is *"widely recognized as a foundation on which long-term, sustainable development can be built, and the interdependence of security and development is reaffirmed routinely in global forums. It is clear that improvements in security can also lead to improvements in other dimensions of development, such as education and healthcare"* (Valters & Rabinowitz & Denney, 2014. p. 2).

In practice, however, the prioritization of security has resulted in a militarized understanding of peace building. Social welfare reform and spending are considered of second importance and can always be dealt with *'later'*. Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015) illustrate the detrimental impact that this militarized approach has had on the broader goal of sustainable peace building. Their research focuses on the educational systems, policies, and practices (of students and teachers) in conflict-affected contexts as diverse as Sierra Leone, Uganda, Myanmar, Lebanon and Nepal. Findings show that *"rather than security and development occurring symbiotically, it increasingly appears that security has not been followed by development, but rather there is 'an uneasy coexistence of security and misery'. Our research suggested that while security in post conflict situations is clearly important, it is not a sufficient condition to reach positive peace and to support the social transformations necessary to ensure that peace is sustained"* (p. 5).

The security imperative has influenced the design, implementation and study of ERP's in a number of ways. First of all, it has reduced the scope of topics and pedagogic practices that are treated and implemented in the classroom. Policy makers and practitioners fear that directly dealing with issues relating to the conflict itself, such as the causes and drivers of the conflict, the role that each combatant played in it, and their reasons for actively participating, will perpetuate violence or foster its renewal. Such topics are considered to be extremely sensitive and difficult. Hence they are

avoided or minimized. Novelli (2016) speaks of this approach as a worrying trend and one of the shortcomings of educational policy and programming in conflict-affected contexts. Novelli argues the contribution education can make to peace building is thereby diminished since it is reduced to handling broad topics of citizenship and conflict resolution while neglecting issues that lay at the core of the conflict in which the ex-combatants have participated. In his own words, the role of education is reduced to *“a bit of hugging and a bit of hand washing.”* Although not arguing that the topics of civic education and conflict resolution are unimportant, he stresses that alone they are insufficient.

A second way in which ERP's are influenced by the security imperative is the fact that, in many cases, education becomes an instrument of control and surveillance. Within DDR policies and programs, the ex-combatant is conceived as a latent security threat that must be contained and deactivated. As such, ERP's are a good way to keep track of them on a daily basis and keep a record of whether or not ex-combatants fall back into crime and violence.

According to De Vries and Wiegink (2011), Theidon (2007), and Rethmann (2010), when we limit ourselves to study the role of education by simply observing the degree to which it negatively correlates with violent activities, we are reducing the scope of our understanding by leaving important factors, and actors, outside of the analysis, as is the case with the narrowly-focused lens used by HCT.

I certainly agree that security matters and that a well-established educational program could help reduce the relapse of ex-combatants into violence. However, by taking security as our main guiding principle and the rate that ex-combatants relapse into violence as our main measure of success and failure we are neglecting political, economic, social and cultural issues that deserve equal attention. If ex-combatants do not relapse into violent or criminal acts, and if we know they are receiving guidance on conflict resolution and citizenship, both can be considered without a doubt as positive outcomes. However, education surely has more to offer than becoming an instrument of what is essentially a militarized understanding of peace-building.

Summarizing, LPT has become a guiding paradigm in the policy formulation, implementation and evaluation processes in contexts of conflict. Education, and ERP's in particular are strongly guided by the market and security imperatives that lay at the basis of LPT. This is detrimental to education's possible further contribution to peace building, mainly because it:

- Limits education to the provision of skills and knowledge necessary for the labor market, thereby failing to address issues within the governance, financial and decision-making structures of educational systems. This is closely related to the security imperative since such issues are as well considered too sensitive and dangerous to be treated in class.
- HCT's overemphasis on individuals (recall the discussion on MI and RCT) deviates attention from unjust societal arrangements that lay at the core of

most violent conflicts and places responsibility entirely on the individual. Conceiving armed insurgency is conceived almost entirely as a pathology of the individual in need of psychosocial treatment and counseling.

- Furthermore, reintegration seems to be equated with having a job in labor-intensive industries. Hence, the success or failure of ERP's is determined by whether or not ex-combatants can find a position in the labor market. While being able to make a livelihood by legal means is certainly important, such a conceptualization falls short when we look at the causes and drivers of most conflicts around the world.
- Education is co-opted and instrumentalized by a militaristic and narrow understanding of peace building, namely, that of the absence of direct violence, and the maintenance and strengthening of the *status-quo*.

I will now turn to explain the theoretical and analytical framework used in this investigation, emphasizing its origins and its components, and why I think it is a better alternative to LPT when it comes to the design, implementation and evaluation of ERP's.

The 4R Framework

As noted earlier in the introduction to this chapter, the 4R framework has been developed by the RCEP drawing on the *social justice theory* of the political philosopher Nancy Fraser and the *peace theory* of the sociologist and mathematician Johan Galtung. First, I will briefly explain how scholars working within the RCEP combined these theories to produce the framework. Secondly, I will elaborate a definition of reintegration taking the framework's dimensions as a point of departure. The third and final part will conceptualize the relationship between reintegration on the one hand, and educational policy, content, structure and practice on the other.

For the most part of the 20th century, the debate regarding social justice has been waged between those who understand social justice as the equitable distribution of wealth, and those that see social justice as the granting of cultural recognition. Nancy Fraser (1990, 2009) overcomes this dispute by showing that both understandings are correct, but only if taken together. While most theorists would adhere to an understanding of justice that would lean more towards either distribution or recognition, she brings both of them as separate but interrelated dimensions of social justice. For her "*justice is parity of participation*" (p.16), and she therefore argues we require "*social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life*" (p. 16).

Taking Fraser's definition of social justice as a starting point, we have already broadened the scope of what has been traditionally understood by 'justice'. If we understand social justice as "parity of participation in social life", we are not only considering issues of economic redistribution and cultural recognition, but we are

also addressing the problematic of political representation and participation. Thus, Fraser's theory takes the form of a three-dimensional approach to social justice: (a) a political dimension concerned with issues of representation and participation (b) a cultural dimension focusing on recognition and (c) an economic dimension that treats questions of redistribution.

Turning to the work of Johan Galtung (1969; 1971; 1990), we will now consider issues of conflict resolution and peace building. For Galtung, violent conflict can be resolved in different ways; however, regardless the means used, the end result can be categorized in two ways: a 'positive peace' or a 'negative peace' scenario. A positive peace scenario would be that in which the root causes of the conflict are effectively addressed. Conversely, a context in which resolution simply means the silencing of weapons while the root causes of the struggle remain untouched would be considered a negative peace scenario. For him, violent conflict is the result of pervasive structural, direct, and cultural types of violence: First, structural violence, as its name indicates, refers to the macro-societal structures that perpetuate discrimination, poverty, and exclusion; second, direct violence refers to the infliction of physical harm; third, cultural violence refers to the characteristics of any culture that allow and legitimize the use of direct and structural violence.

When theorizing about conflict resolution and peace building, Galtung (1969; 1971; 1990) identified two distinct dimensions of peace, namely, positive and negative peace. A negative peace scenario is characterized by the absence of direct violence, but where cultural and structural violence nonetheless remain. Positive peace, on the other hand, refers to a context where all types of violence have been eradicated. Furthermore, when considering the role of academics and policy makers in peace building, Galtung argues that research and practice "*should not merely deal with the narrow vision of ending or reducing violence at a direct or structural level but seek to understand conditions to prevent violence*" (Galtung, as cited in Grewal 2003, p. 5).

Throughout all of his work, Galtung has advocated positive peace as a higher ideal than negative peace, and has consistently criticized the latter since he considers it to be the dominant approach in peace building practice, one that serves mainly the interests of the powerful and the status quo. Regarding our previous discussion, I think it is relevant to establish the link between negative peace and LPT. As already explained, policies and practices informed by LPT tend to focus on the mitigation of direct violence instead of addressing issues of structural and cultural violence.

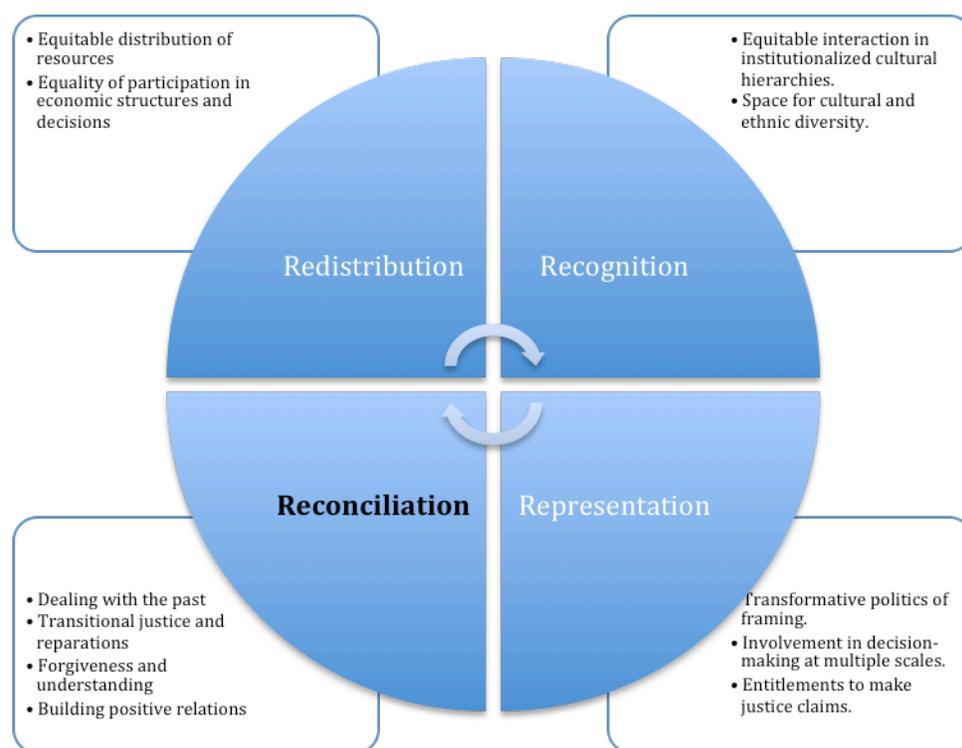
Finally, Galtung's theory also establishes that peace can only be achieved through peaceful means. Thus, top-down impositions will do little to achieve positive peace. What is needed, instead, is the nurturing of peaceful relations at the grassroots level. Professor Alan Smith (2016), one of the members of the RCEP (developers of the 4R framework), refers to such relations as the fostering of horizontal trust, i. e., trust within the members of a group and among different groups.² The RCEP, however,

² Opening speech by Professor Alan Smith at the dissemination seminar of the RCEP, on the 20th of April 2016.

adds the notion of vertical trust, which refers to the relation between citizens and governmental institutions. This process of building relationships of trust between individuals, groups, and institutions receives the name of *reconciliation*. Furthermore, the fourth R of the model refers to issues relating to understanding and forgiving events that occurred during conflict.

The 4R framework bridges these theories as to form a 4 dimensional model for the study of educational initiatives in conflict-affected contexts. Taking Fraser’s three dimensions of justice together with Galtung’s requirements for positive peace building the framework is composed of four different but interrelated dimensions.

Figure 1. The 4R Framework



Source: Novelli & Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015, p. 13

Having explained the foundations of the 4R framework, we now can elaborate how it was applied to study the ERP in Colombia.

Applying the 4R framework to the study of ERP

Recognizing that the 4R framework has not yet been applied to the study of ERP's or in the Colombian context, the model needs some adjustments. So far only applied to the study of educational programs, much of the 4R's framework potential remains untapped. It will be argued, the theoretical dimensions of the model can be applied to the analysis of conflicts themselves. Understanding how issues of social injustice have served as cause and drivers of conflicts will put us in a better position to analyze and comprehend educational programs in such contexts. Hence, allowing us to put forward better-informed recommendations for policy elaboration and reforms.

Our starting point lies in the fact that the different types of violence (***cultural, direct and structural***) are the consequence of social injustices (***misrecognition, misrepresentation and misdistribution***). Keeping Galtung's peace theory in mind, it makes sense to theorize about the ways in which the ERP, through the successful reintegration of ex-combatants, may or may not tackle the injustices that generate and perpetuate these different forms of violence. ***Reintegration*** is here defined as ***the processes of personal and societal transformation by which ex-combatants acquire the necessary material, cognitive and affective capabilities that will allow them to participate on equal footing in society.***

The definition of reintegration adopted here differs from the one used by most IO's and governments. This change at the theoretical-conceptual level serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it helps us move away from the economic connotation that the concept has acquired through practice. On the other hand, it is more aligned with the theories of justice and peace that are the basis of the 4R framework. Our point of departure is Fraser's distinction between ***'transformative strategies'*** and ***'affirmative strategies'***. Fraser (1995) defines affirmative strategies as measures that correct *"inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them"* (p. 82). By contrast, transformative measures are *"aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework. The nub of the contrast is end-state outcomes versus the processes that produce them"* (p. 82). If we take as our starting point the conception of violence as a consequence of injustice, then the transformation of unjust social arrangements is a better-suited strategy for conflict resolution and sustainable peace building than affirmative strategies where structural factors are not addressed. In fact, in line with the work of the RCEP, ***sustainable peace-building is here understood as the set of core transformations that must occur in society in order to eliminate injustice*** (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015, p. 2).

If we conceive the role of education in conflict-affected societies to be that of sustainable peace building, ERP's must then be rooted on transformative strategies geared towards the remediation of unjust social arrangements that impede equal participation and serve as causes and drivers of violence. Conceptually speaking then, Galtung's (1969; 1971; 1990) positive and negative peace distinction can be applied to categorize the processes and outcomes of ERP's. A ***negative reintegration*** would be

the result of an ERP whose rules, norms, content and practices are affirmative. Thus, an ERP that does not address the needs of ex-combatants and society in a comprehensive manner will leave ex-combatants in a state of re-marginalization since its only focus is to provide *quick results and employment* through training for labor-intensive sectors. It is also a deterministic program in that it essentializes the views and experiences of ex-combatants as criminals and mentally incapable. Both the market and security imperatives that guide programs informed by LPT are based on affirmative strategies. Ex-combatants are given certain status and benefits but the generative framework of injustices remains untouched. Moreover, applying Fraser's reasoning we can argue that both approaches fail to accomplish the goals of recognition, representation, and redistribution thereby resulting in the *negative reintegration* of ex-combatants.

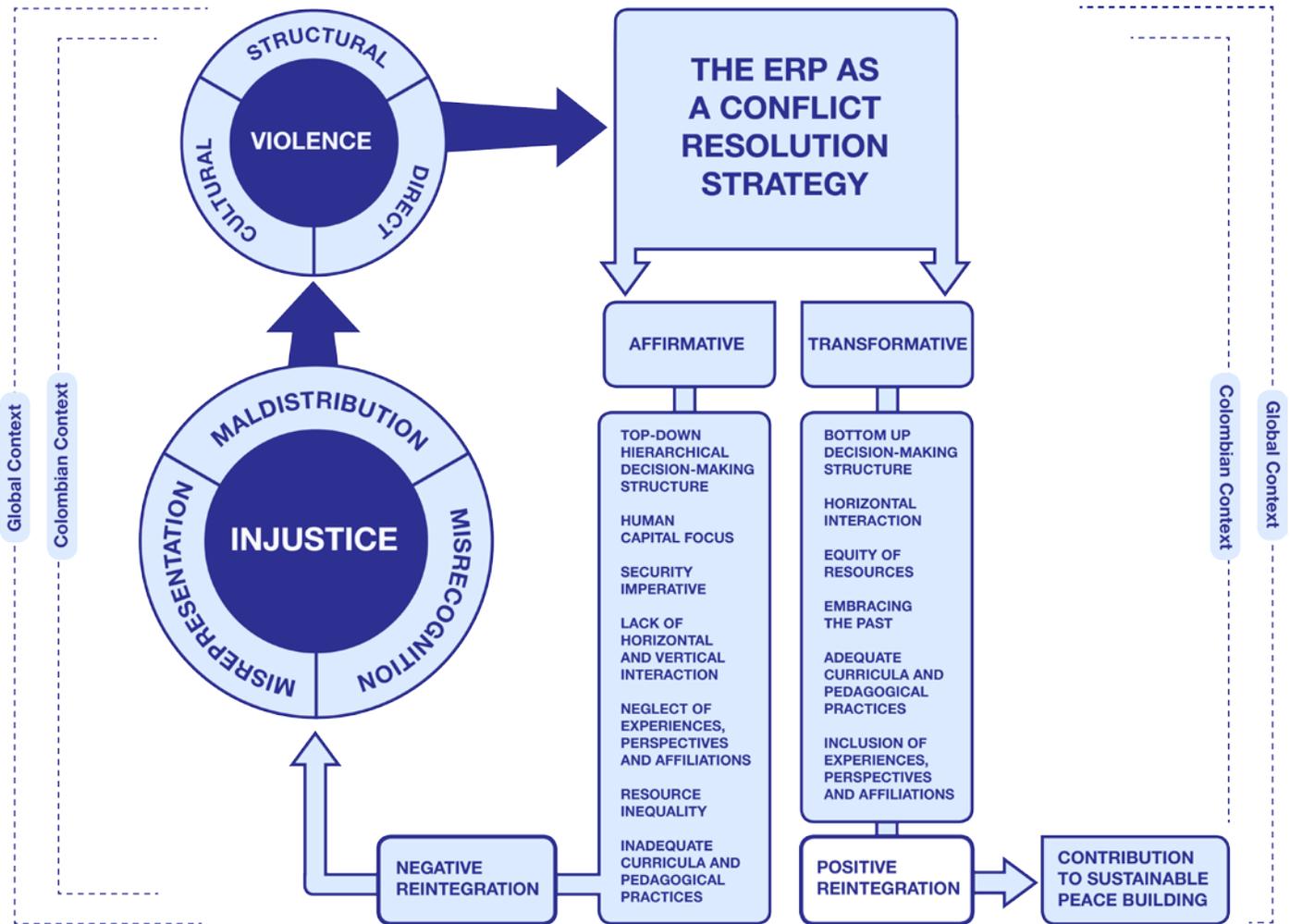
Conversely, ***positive reintegration*** is defined as a process (and result) through which all dimensions of social justice are served and accomplished. In practice, as pointed out by Keddie (2012), if we base our conceptualization on Fraser's work, educational programs should provide ex-combatants with the necessary capabilities to participate in social life on an equal footing by reintegrating them fully, not just partially. This means ERP's must include in their programming not only subjects that are directly related to the skills and knowledge necessary for the labor market, but also issues related to the conflict itself and the experiences of ex-combatants in it. The ERP must allow for the input and participation of ex-combatants in decision-making regarding the content, structure, and practices of the program. It must not only engage ex-combatants but also their families, teachers, and receptor communities in the process. [Figure 2](#) below illustrates the conceptual relationships so far discussed, and that form the core of this investigation.

The rationale for these choices at the theoretical level lies in the shortcomings of LPT and HCT (already explained) and those of the theories in the field of Peace and Conflict studies. Contending theories within the later attempt to explain the sources of conflict in different ways. Ted Gurr (1970) elaborated the theory of "grievance" arguing that conflicts were the result of the dissatisfaction of people with their living conditions (*e.g.*, poverty, exclusion). Another prominent theory is the "resource theory," which states that violent conflict results from disputes for economic and natural resources. Yet a different set of conflict theories treats violent conflict as a consequence of ideological, ethnic, religious, and racial discrepancies (Dalton, Sickel & Weldon, 2009).

If we made a quick survey of the variety of conflicts currently taking place in the world, we would certainly find a conflict that could fit well into any of the above-mentioned theories. This is precisely the problem: the different theories understand and explain conflicts from their particular perspective, and in doing so they reduce the causes and drivers of conflicts to the factors they deemed important, frame the possible solutions accordingly, and eventually fail to fully explain violence since they have been constrained from the beginning.

The 4R framework's starting point is precisely that of overcoming reductionist understandings of complex violent conflicts and the role of education before, during and after them. Problems of injustice cannot be reduced to issues of distribution or representation, but we must strive to capture the full picture by including all dimensions of justice and violence in our analyses. At the center of this investigation, then, was the task of grasping the nature of the Colombian conflict through a literature review in an effort to better understand the research context, the research subject, and the population under study. This was done prior to beginning my fieldwork, during the elaboration of the research proposal, and it was meant to provide more contextual knowledge about my research location. It proved to be useful during the process of information gathering and during the writing process. Hopefully, it will also help the reader to understand the choices made in this investigation regarding the research process, methodology, the theoretical framework, and ultimately, the findings.

Figure 2. Conceptual Scheme



Research Context

As stated in the theoretical framework, we seek to assess the ERP's contribution to the reintegration of ex-combatants and sustainable peace building based on the degree to which the program addresses the root causes of the conflict through education. It then becomes important to establish those causes and frame them into the 4R analytical framework guiding this study in order to structure the results of the analysis.

The Colombian Conflict

Determining the root causes of the Colombian internal armed conflict, its driving factors, and the exact point in time when it began are matters of never ending debate. Academics dedicated to the study of these issues provide different, often contending, accounts regarding the causes of the conflict, the time it began, and the forces that have perpetuated it for decades. In order to provide a brief but informative overview of the research context and the subject under study without simplistically summarizing the multiplicity of views and angles on these issues, I will draw on the work of the Commission on the History of the Conflict and its Victims (*'La Comisión de Historia del Conflicto y sus Víctimas'*, CHCV).

The CHCV was created in 2014 as part of the peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC. The CHCV was formed by twelve renowned academics chosen by consensus of the negotiators from each delegation and was given the task of elaborating a report dealing with (a) the origins and multiple causes of the conflict (b) the driving factors behind the conflict and (c) the consequences of the conflict on Colombian society.

The report was published on the 5th of February 2015 and has since then been a referent not only for the negotiators at the table, but also for external researchers, policy makers, NGO's, and civil society groups. The report consists of twelve independent essays (12 chapters), one per scholar. The result is doubtless one of the richest and most nuanced studies on the Colombian conflict available. Drawing on the report, I will attempt to highlight the most relevant historical events as well as the political, cultural, social, and economic factors that caused the conflict and have contributed to its perpetuation.

The determination of a clear-cut point in time as the beginning of the conflict is probably one of the most debated issues within the report. For María Emma Wills and Renán Vega (2015), the origins of the conflict are to be found in the 1800's during the formation of the republic after the wars of independence. According to them, the liberal and conservative parties that have dominated Colombian politics for most of the 19th and 20th centuries were formed before independence and became central actors in the creation of the republic. They argue that even though the separation from the Spanish crown and its colonial domination brought significant changes in social

arrangements, those in powerful positions nevertheless maintained the hierarchical, segregationist, and classist structures of power so characteristic of the colonial period.

Post-independence Colombia was formed out of multiple relatively autonomous regions having little market integration and a civil society at the margins, especially its poor rural communities. It was a state that did not have the fiscal, military, and institutional resources necessary to exercise properly its newly acquired state sovereignty (Pizarro, 2015). Economic, political, and social reform came about at a very slow and erratic tempo, moving back and forth by the winds of partisan hegemony. In this context, direct violence was recurrent since the liberal and conservative political parties exerted their influence through both the polls and warfare. Pizarro (2015) illustrates this point with the fact that during the 19th century there were eight civil wars at the national level and fourteen at the regional level. According to him, this explains the problems of political misrepresentation and exclusion that lay at heart of direct violence in Colombia, where the *ends* have become so sacred, that pursuing them through dubious *means* became legitimate.

A good example of this endless warfare is the 'the thousand day war' (La Guerra de los Mil Dias) that took place during 1899 to 1902. It started with a *coup d'état* perpetrated by the conservatives on the liberal government of the time. What followed was a civil war that lasted for three years, in which according to estimates around a hundred thousand people lost their lives. The war was waged between the national army (controlled by the conservatives) and the liberal guerrillas that were formed after the coup. The war ended with a peace treaty between the two parties, and the period that followed was one of relative peace, at least between the traditional adversaries (Vargas & Caruso, 2014; Pizarro & Valencia, 2009).

The war, however, left the country immersed in a deep social and economic crisis. The response of subsequent governments was to open the doors of the national economy to foreign investors. The arrival of multinationals and big corporations in the country characterized the first half of the 20th century and expanded the types of violence in the country. Up to that point, Colombia was still mainly a rural country; about 70% of the population lived in rural areas. Even though the presence of state national government was weak, rural communities were prosperous in the sense that they could live off the land without major threats other than those posed by the natural environment and local conflicts.

Big business, however, initiated a process of land-grabbing that left rural populations with very few options; they could either become salaried workers in plantations or migrate to urban areas to live in miserable conditions (DANE, 1978 cited in Giraldo, 2015). For Molano, Fajardo, Giraldo and Zúbiria (2015), the decisions made at the time regarding the economic model paved the way for another wave of violence in the country. Perhaps the best example of this violence are the horrendous events that took place on the 6th of December of 1928 in the town of Ciénaga, located on the Caribbean coast of the country. Workers of the United Fruit Company were on strike demanding better working conditions and higher salaries. The United States (US)

labeled the protesters as 'communists' and threatened the Colombian government with sending the US Marine Corps to Colombian soil if they did not take immediate measures to protect the company's interests. The conservative government's response was to send the army to dissolve the strike, a decision that resulted in numerous deaths.

The events that took place that day came to be known as '*la masacre de las bananeras*', and they are considered to have spurred the largest labor movement in Colombia's history. The communist party was founded shortly after, in 1930, coinciding with a shift in power to the hands of the liberals. Even though founded upon the bases of international communism, the communist party ended up being swallowed by the liberal party. Nevertheless, this period of liberal rule saw important advances in the recognition of political, social and economic rights (Wills, 2015; Pécaut, 2015). These advances related to the property rights of small farmers over their land, the expansion of mass education, and voting and union rights. The reformist agenda was met with great opposition on the part of large landowners and businesses, however (both on the liberal and conservative sides).

In this environment of complete political and economic polarization, the return of the conservatives to power in 1946 revived once again blind sectarianism in both rural and urban areas. By 1948, there were already thousands of fatalities, but it was the murder of liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán (running for president in the 1949 election) that catalyzed a new wave of direct violence. Gaitán's murder resulted in a mass riot that is known in history books as '*el Bogotazo*'; it lasted for ten hours, and historical records estimate that in that short amount of time around five thousand people were killed. *El Bogotazo* is also considered the starting point of a ten-year period of civil war known as '*La Violencia*' (1948-1958) (Ugarriza & Craig, 2013).

During *La Violencia*, Colombia saw the reemergence of the liberal guerrillas of the 19th century, and, as they retreated to the countryside, the processes of mass displacement of the rural population and the land grabbing that followed paved the way to the contemporary conflict (Gutierrez, 2015; Duncan, 2015; Giraldo, 2015). *La Violencia* destabilized the property ownership arrangements of the time, halted production and commerce, and saw unprecedented violence across partisan affiliations. Around two hundred thousand people died in those ten years alone. This politico-ideological and economic confrontation was facilitated by extremely weak state institutions: on the one hand, the police and the military never really managed to become autonomous from partisan struggles, and these struggles were also replicated within these institutions; on the other hand, the resources at their disposal were very limited. As a result, the Colombian state was never able to monopolize effectively and legitimately the use of force.

La Violencia came to an end in 1958 when the leadership of the liberal and conservative parties agreed to cease hostilities and rebuild the bipartite power structure. The agreement is known as the Pact of Benidorm, since it was signed in this Spanish city. This agreement created the National Front ('*Frente Nacional*'), a coalition

between the two parties whose goal was to stabilize the country politically and economically. In practice, this meant that in the following sixteen years (1959 to 1974) the presidency, and every other position in the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government were to be held alternately by members of both parties (Borda & Guzman & Luna, 2005).

According to Gutierrez and Pecaut (2015), the National Front was the breaking point defining the armed conflict as we know it today. The arrangement between the two major parties certainly reduced the direct violence emerging from this rivalry. However, the structural violence upon which the National Front was based systematically discriminated and excluded any other political movements from access to political power. Poor urban and rural communities, as well as those that did not adhere to the ideology or the economic and political model that the coalition was implementing, were now even more excluded from participation, let alone having a say in decision-making.

This was the context in which left-wing guerrilla movements emerged. When the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro defeated the US backed regime of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, the ideology of communism spread rapidly and widely across the whole region; it found wide acceptance among those students, politicians, academics and citizens (especially those in rural areas) that had historically been excluded and discriminated against. The Cuban revolution sent the message that it was possible to gain power through direct violence, even when located a few miles from Miami.

The same day the Cuban rebels made their triumphant entrance into La Habana, numerous social movements went to the streets of Bogota to protest against the National Front's social and economic policies and its hermetic political structure. What came out of those protests is known as the '*Movimiento Obrero, Estudiantil y Campesino*' (MOEC). The MOEC is considered important because it was the first movement with the explicit commitment of replicating the Cuban revolution in Colombian soil.

The MOEC, together with the liberal guerrillas that were formed during the periods of partisan violence, were the foundation upon which the modern left wing guerrillas were built. Both the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the FARC originated in 1959 and declared war against the government in 1964. Emphasis is laid on these two guerrilla movements since they are the oldest and the ones that remain today, but there have been numerous other guerrilla movements throughout the years (e.g., EPL, M19, FUAR, MRL, PRT, Quintin Lame). The ELN and all the other guerrilla movements (with few exceptions) started to germinate in the 1950's; initially their composition and support was predominantly coming from urban areas and student and professional movements. Later, they moved to rural areas seeking support from the poor and excluded rural populations. On the other hand, FARC's origins can be found in the peasant movements and communist brigades of the 1950's; these were formed in order to protect the peasants' land from liberal and conservative large *terratenientes* and companies (both national and international).

The emergence of the guerrillas during the 1960's helped the liberal and conservative elites forming the National Front to overcome their historic rivalries. The appearance of a new enemy threatening the *status quo* that both parties so eagerly had defended helped to solidify their union at the level of government and its institutions. According to Zubiría (2015), the privileges given to both parties during the National Front converted the State into the representative of particular and gremial interests. Thanks to this 'peace' between both parties, the State and the army became much stronger, not the least because of the support given by the US to eliminate the '*communist plague*'.

Molano (2015) explains that the army's crusade against the guerrillas in the 1970's almost succeeded, but three major events prevented this from happening. First of all the US-backed *coup d'état* against the democratically elected Chilean president Salvador Allende in 1973 was interpreted by the continental left as a confirmation that attaining power through democratic channels was impossible since these were co-opted by the traditional parties. Second, later on in 1979 the victory of the guerrillas in Nicaragua would once again give high hopes to insurgents across the region that achieving political power through warfare was possible. This was especially the case in Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Lastly, a fact specific to the Colombian case is that during the 1980's guerrilla movements discovered that drug trafficking could provide an almost infinite source of economic resources, a key determining factor in explaining how they have survived so long.

The drug trafficking phenomenon was accompanied by the emergence of powerful drug cartels and paramilitary groups. The later emerged as big landowners in rural areas started to arm themselves in order to fight back against the guerrillas. The government not only turned a blind eye to the emergence of paramilitary groups, but even aided their operations as has been proved in recent court rulings since 2000 and the now acknowledged phenomenon of '*parapolitica*'.

Big companies, historically the target of constant attacks by guerrilla groups, also played a role in the formation and proliferation of these private armies. The coal industry is a good example. In a recent research report, the Dutch NGO PAX Christi International (2014) has provided proof of the links between coal multinationals and Colombian paramilitary groups. The report not only proves that multinationals hire these groups to secure their assets, but also to displace forcibly communities living in their areas of extraction so that they can buy their land for very low prices.

The use of drug trafficking, kidnapping and blackmailing to obtain resources for both guerrilla and paramilitary groups has further degraded the conflict to the point where the general population today sees them merely as criminals, a perception that, according to Pizarro and Valencia (2009), is justified. Both organizations try to frame their actions as the struggle for the greater good of society. The population they are supposedly protecting and fighting for, however, is the principal victim of the violence they perpetrate. The same is true of the army that historically has been the pawn of ruling economic and political elites in pursuit of their own interests, namely,

perpetuating themselves in positions of power, and slowly but surely monopolizing all the resources of the country.

Summarizing, even though it is impossible to provide a comprehensive and holistic account of the Colombian conflict and its characteristics in a few pages, I nevertheless think this brief account does give a broad picture of the actors and the determinants that have served as causes and drivers of the armed conflict. Academics studying the conflict often give more importance to some factors over others; for some, the main issue has been landownership, for others, income inequality, political exclusion or drug trafficking. Taking sides with any of the arguments in this debate, however, falls outside of the scope of this study. For the purpose of this investigation, it was rather more important to provide an overview of those causes and drivers, and frame them into the dimensions of injustice and types of violence discussed earlier in the theoretical framework.

The three dimensions of injustice (misrepresentation, misdistribution and misrecognition) are central to the Colombian conflict. As this historical summary shows, there have been long-standing disputes between those having different views concerning the diverse ways of conceiving society and the direction it should take. During the 19th century, the dispute was between the liberals and conservatives. Later on, as new ideologies entered the political arena (socialism and communism), conservatives and liberals found they were not that different after all and sided in order to fight left wing ideologues. All in all, at the heart of the conflict lies the dispute of antagonistic models of society, and conflicting political and economic interests. Throughout the history of the republic, all sides have tried to monopolize the State apparatus, discriminating and excluding others, often through the use of direct and structural violence (e.g. military coups and the National Front, respectively), up to the point that the use of violence has come to be seen as legitimate.

The distribution of wealth has also played a significant role in the promotion of cultural, direct, and structural violence. The agrarian reform that has been under discussion for two hundred years (since independence), and that should guaranty the rights of indigenous people and small farmers to their land has never materialized. Today, the percentage of the rural population that has 'legal' proof of land ownership is minimal. This facilitates the process of land grabbing by big corporations and large landowners that pushes communities out of their territories via 'legal' procedures or direct violence if necessary while governmental 'authorities' remain indifferent. Furthermore, even though advancements have been made in the provision of public services like healthcare and education, there is still a large number of Colombians without access to them, especially in rural areas. These deficiencies facilitate the recruitment of woman and men by armed groups of all sides.

Now we move on to discuss briefly the history of reintegration programs in Colombia.

The History of Reintegration policies in Colombia

From the previous section it is clear that different types of violence have been a recurrent phenomenon in Colombia. It is worth noting that peace agreements, negotiations, truces, and DDR programs have been just as common (Pizarro & Valencia, 2009). The first generation of reintegration programs started in the 1980's under the presidency of Belisario Betancourt (1982-1986).

Through Law 35 from the 19th of November 1982, a number of mechanisms were created to reincorporate ex-combatants into civilian life (Congreso de la Republica de Colombia, 1982). During that decade, however, none of these processes materialized since the negotiations with different guerrilla groups never came to a positive end.

The first reintegration programs were implemented by the following government under the presidency of Virgilio Barco (1986-1990). Peace agreements with The Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), The Popular Liberation Army (EPL), Quintín Lame, and the 19th of April Movement (M-19) were reached, and reintegration programs were implemented. The reintegration model then was based on three pillars: (a) the guarantee of political participation for the ex-combatants (b) the rehabilitation of population groups affected by the conflict and (c) the reconciliation of ex-combatants with their receptor communities (ACR, a2011).

Later on during the presidency of César Gaviria (1990-1994), the reintegration policy was further expanded (to accept individually demobilized ex-combatants as well; not only those from collective demobilizations) and institutionalized through the decree 2884 from 1991, and decree 1385 from 1994. Over the course of 1991, the above mentioned guerrilla groups demobilized, a process that culminated with the draft of the 1991 constitution that remains valid to this day (ACR, a2011).

The following administrations of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) and Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) saw major set backs in the implementation of the reintegration programs. This happened due to major scandals involving both governments regarding the influx of drug trafficking money into their campaigns and lobby networks and the failed peace negotiations with the FARC and the ELN (Méndez & Rivas, 2008).

Up to this point, the role of education in the reintegration programs was extremely limited. As noted earlier, with the exception of the FARC, all other guerrilla groups were formed by highly educated students, professors, politicians, and professionals. Some of them were previous members of the liberal guerrillas that fought against the conservative governments during the 19th and 20th centuries, and others that took up arms after the Cuban revolution. Hence, the focus of the reintegration programs was on guaranteeing the political participation of their members rather than offering educational opportunities. Moreover none of these processes generated the intended outcomes. Only a very few members of these guerrilla groups managed to enter the political arena and have success (*e.g.*, Gustavo Petro, member of the M-19, became a

senator for many years and mayor of Bogota between 2012 and 2016). On the other hand, many were targeted and murdered by paramilitary groups and drug cartels in complicity with State forces (e.g., the massacre of the Patriotic Union political party members).

During the two consecutive terms in office of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), the current reintegration policy and the role of education in it started to take shape. The most relevant aspects of Uribe's approach to reintegration were first, that the policy was immersed in the broader security and military campaign of his government (*'seguridad democratica'* as it was called) against the guerrillas; and second, that the scope of the policy was expanded to include the members of paramilitary groups (Pardo, 2007). Through the Law 782 of 2002, decree 128 of 2002, decree 200 of 2003, and Law 975 of 2005, the requirements of access to the program were specified, as well as the benefits to be acquired by the ex-combatants (ACR, 2016). In addition to this, the design and implementation of the reintegration policy came under the shared responsibility of the ministries of Defense and Interior. Under the previous governments it was the sole responsibility of the presidency.

The reintegration processes that took place during that period of time were the target of multiple criticisms. These were:

- The lack of foresight in assessing needs from the authorities responsible for the program meant in practice that the number of beneficiaries overwhelmed the institutions in charge of the implementation. The capacity of financial resources and the bureaucracy could not keep pace in implementing reintegration measures. (Mendez & Rivas, 2008).
- The differential status given to individual and collective demobilization created tensions as the benefits they received were substantially different. Individual demobilizations were taken care of by the Defense Ministry while the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace treated collective demobilizations. Individuals who demobilized collectively received an economic subsidy of 358.000 Colombian pesos (COP) a month for 18 months, while ex-combatants that demobilized individually received 895.99 a month for a 24-month period. In the same vein, individuals who demobilized collectively received a 2 million COP subsidy as start up capital for productive projects; their individually demobilized counterparts received 8 million COP (ACR, a2011).
- The provision of education was not part of the reintegration policy³
- Even though designed at the national level by the already mentioned ministries, the responsibility for the implementation, and thus for the success or failure of the program, fell on the backs of regional and local authorities. These were not satisfied with the arrangement first of all because they did not have the financial resources and expertise to implement; second because they thought that it was not their duty to implement reintegration (ACR, a2011).

³ Interview with an ACR official, 9th of December 2015.

In 2006, given the problems the reintegration policy was facing, significant changes were made. These changes were based on the then recently elaborated UN *'Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards'* and the input of the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) (ACR, 2015). Decree 3043 from 2006 created the *'Alta Consejería para la Rentergración Social y Economica de Personas y Grupos Alzados en Armas'*, later renamed the *'Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración'* (ACR). This new governmental body was, and remains, the institution in charge of the design, implementation and evaluation of reintegration policy. It operates with its own budget and is solely accountable to the presidency.

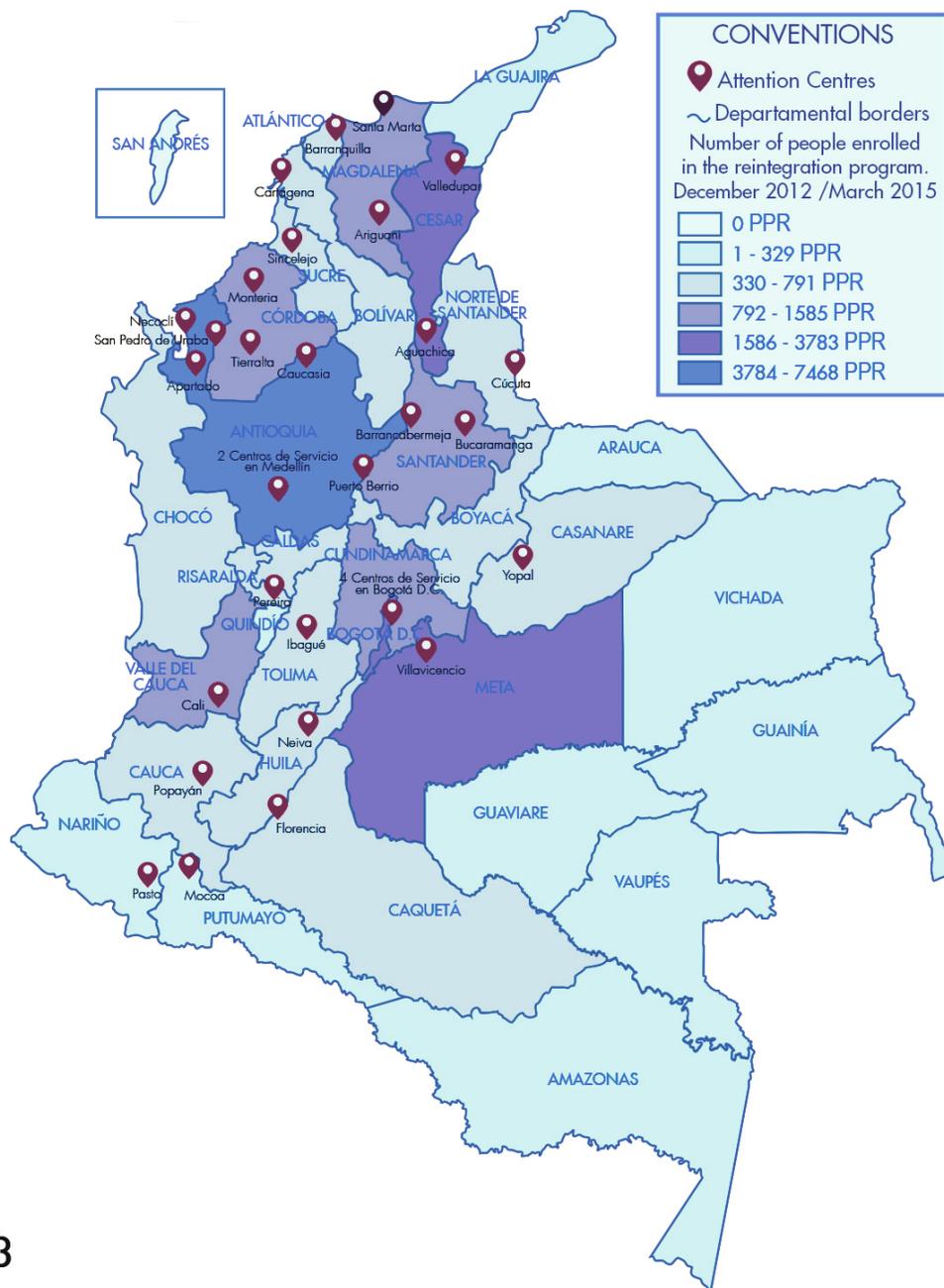
Under the new model, reintegration was understood to include not only the provision of economic subsidies, and marginal encounters with receptor communities, but was thought to be the integration of *"all the necessary components to live peacefully and with dignity."* ⁴ The new model is meant to include eight broad components: (a) healthcare (b) housing (c) education (d) employment (e) family (f) community (g) security and (h) psychological. [Figure 3](#) below illustrates the places in the country where the ERP is being implemented and the number of ex-combatants currently enrolled.

⁴ Interview with an ACR Official, 9th of December 2015.

Figure 3. ACR service centers

Number of people
in the process per department:

AMAZONAS	6
ANTIOQUIA	4.136
ARAUCA	87
ARCHIP. SAN ANDRÉS	1
ATLÁNTICO	440
BOGOTÁ D.C.	2.300
BOLÍVAR	629
BOYACÁ	372
CALDAS	218
CAQUETÁ	562
CASANARE	370
CAUCA	358
CESAR	1.648
CHOCÓ	261
CÓRDOBA	1.041
CUNDINAMARCA	820
GUAINÍA	24
GUAVIARE	73
HUILA	609
LA GUAJIRA	221
MAGDALENA	919
META	1.261
NARIÑO	208
NORTE DE SANTANDER	494
PUTUMAYO	217
QUINDIO	198
RISARALDA	417
SANTANDER	1.035
SUCRE	290
TOLIMA	558
VALLE DEL CAUCA	1.183
VAUPÉS	26
VICHADA	18
Total population in the process:	21.003



Source: ACR fact sheet (2015)

The Local Context

Together with Medellin, Bogota has been the biggest urban receptor of the ex-combatant population. With almost eight million people (ten million counting the metropolitan area), ex-combatants perceive it as a more secure space to reintegrate since its size provides a degree of anonymity impossible to achieve in the countryside. This was important for security reasons since individually demobilized ex-combatants have often been victims of targeted killings by their previous armed groups, who consider them traitors. Moreover, the capital offers more opportunities to find jobs and housing.

As noted earlier, the top-down manner in which reintegration policy was designed and implemented since the beginning of the Uribe administration (2002) meant that local authorities had little knowledge and power over a national policy that was being implemented in their territories (Rivas & Méndez, 2008). The central government ignored municipal authorities with respect to many practical aspects of the policy. By 2005, 60% of all individual demobilized ex-combatants were living in the capital, of which only 7% were born in Bogota. Local authorities had little or no knowledge of where these individuals were living and what they were doing. At the time the reintegration program was managed by the Defense and Interior ministries, funds came from the national budget and were distributed through the *'Program for reincorporation into civilian life'* (PVRC). Not until problems emerged did local authorities become aware of the presence of this huge number of demobilized ex-combatants in their cities.

For example, the first stage of reintegration after the ministry of defense had granted certificates to beneficiaries was to locate ex-combatants and their families to houses and buildings around the city. This housing policy (named *'Hogares de Paz'*) was meant to be a temporary solution until ex-combatants got 'on their feet' and would then receive their economic subsidies and a permanent housing solution. However, the way in which the reintegration program operated created multiple problems for ex-combatants, their families, and the communities where they were residing. The management of the *'Hogares de paz'* was given to private contractors, who were paid by the central government to provide shelter, food, and clothing to ex-combatants and their families. In practice, this led to overcrowded houses, and low quality of food and services. Furthermore, even though meant to be a temporary solution, delays in the provision of permanent housing, education, jobs, and economic subsidies ultimately lead to public protests by ex-combatants resulting in confrontations with the police and the communities where they were living (Amat, 2005; Nullvalue, 2005a, 2005b).

Consequently, local authorities under the leadership of Bogota's mayor at the time Jaime Garzón (2004-2007) decided to launch their own program *'Programa de Atención al Proceso de Desmovilización y Reintegración en Bogotá'* (PAPDRB). This program was accompanied by a wave of criticisms against the central government and the ways in which it was implementing the policy. First, there was general confusion regarding the division of responsibilities among national, regional and local

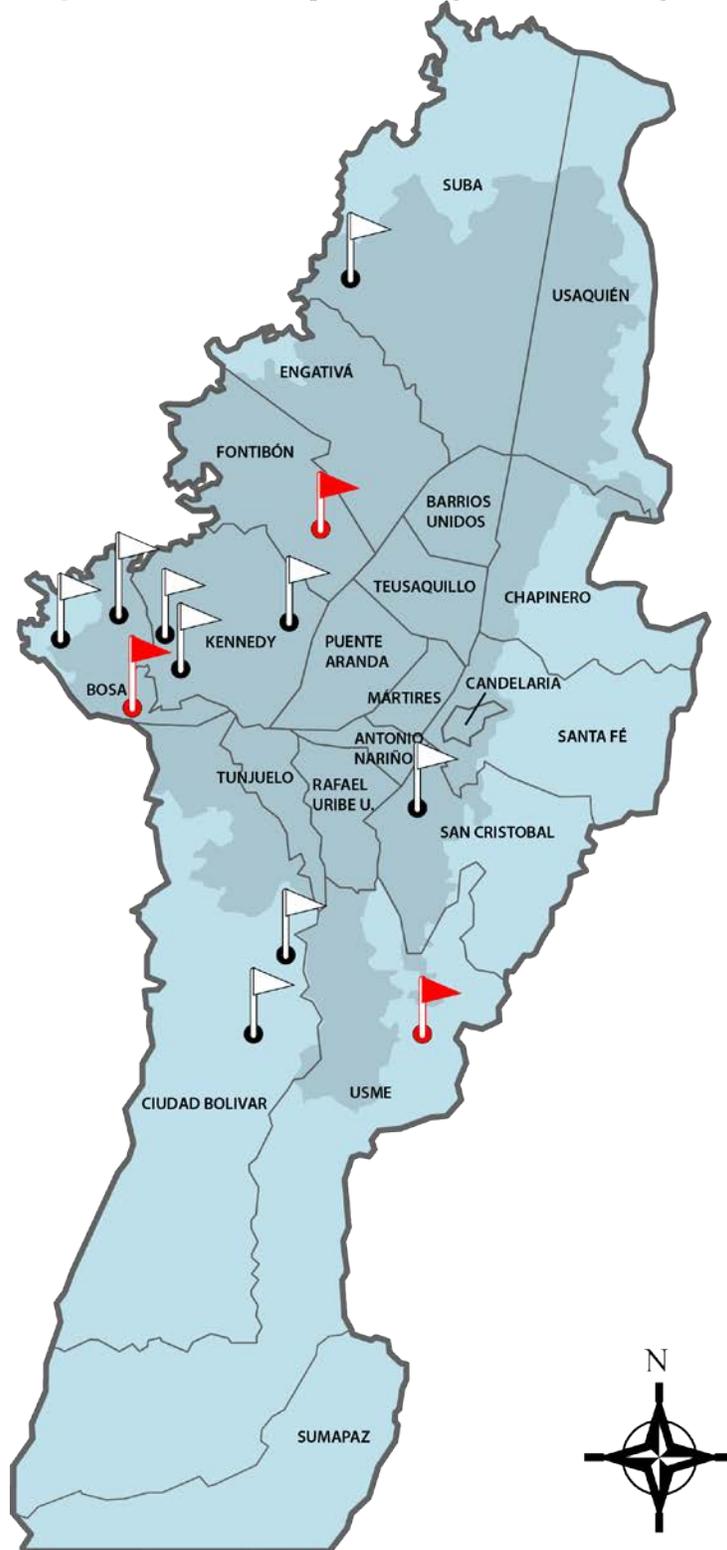
authorities and institutions. This resulted often in delays, improvisation, neglected issues, and superposition of functions. Second, the housing policy became a source of confrontations at the community level. The policy was more an instrument of vigilance and control rather than a mechanism designed to-reintegrate ex-combatants and their families into civil society. Third, since economic subsidies, job provision, education, and healthcare services were delayed or not provided at all, beneficiaries often found themselves in situations of despair. Fourth, all these factors together created an environment of discrimination and exclusion of the ex-combatant population and their families (Bello, 2010).

Soon, other major cities of the country showed symptoms of this non-conformity as well, a situation that eventually led to a complete reform of reintegration policy. As noted earlier, the reintegration policy became the responsibility of a new institution, the '*Alta Consejería para la Rentegración*', later named '*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*' (ACR). Even though designed at the national level, local authorities were given the freedom to allocate the budget and adapt the policy to their particular local needs. The reduced influence of the ministries of defense and internal affairs translated into less focus on security, vigilance and control, and a greater emphasis on the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants, their families within their receptor communities.

Regarding the ERP more specifically, the model designed by the ACR has been given to the municipality of Bogota for implementation. Currently, thousands of ex-combatants are completing primary and secondary education, or vocational, technical and technological education. The reintegration process is no longer limited to 18 months (for collective demobilizations) or 24 months (for individual demobilizations). It is now conceived as an open-ended process that lasts 6 years on average and that includes a broader set of components (outlined earlier).

There are currently twelve schools in Bogota implementing the ERP. [Figure 4](#) below shows their location in the city. Schools marked in red are ones I had access to. The specifics of the ERP in Bogota are the subject of this investigation. Hence, they will be dealt with in the analysis chapter. The intention here was to make clear that Bogota's authorities have played an important role in the reform and improvement of the policy at both the national and local level, and that some characteristics of the ERP are unique to Bogota.

Figure 4. Schools implementing the ERP in Bogota



Research Design

This chapter will describe the methodological foundations of the study, explaining in detail the choice of methods for data gathering and data analysis. The first and second parts will treat the methodological choices made for data gathering and analysis. The third part presents the limitations of the study, discussing the methodological shortcomings and problems encountered during fieldwork and afterwards. Lastly, the fourth part consists of an ethical reflection regarding the whole research process and experience.

Methodology

Text box 1. Research Questions

Sub-question 1: *Is the structure of the ERP redistributive?*

Sub-question 2: *How representative are the procedures and practices of the ERP?*

Sub-question 3: *To what extent do the content and practices of the ERP explicitly recognize the diversity of social and political affiliations of ex-combatants?*

Sub-question 4: *Are the outcomes of the ERP sufficiently reconciliatory?*

Keeping the research questions in mind (see text box 1), we must recall that the purpose of this research is to establish how is the ERP contributing (or not) to the reintegration of ex-combatants (and in which ways). The ERP is one of the components of the broader reintegration policy. As such, the research design has been elaborated drawing on the theoretical and methodological insights of the policy analysis field. Leroy and Nelissen (2000) distinguish five different aspects that one must analyze in order to gain insight into a policy's workings and outcomes:

- *Policy rationale:* refers to the definitions, assumptions, and perspectives regarding the problem the policy is intended to address, and the ways in which these are related to the objectives and means.
- *Policy process:* refers to the ways in which the policy has been developed. What and who has had an influence on the creation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reform of the policy.
- *Policy organization:* refers to the institutions and the normativity upon which the policy is based.
- *Policy effects:* refers to intended and unintended consequences of the policy
- *Policy context:* refers to the ways in which the policy influences, and is influenced in turn by the economic, political, social, and cultural contexts where it is implemented.

Thus, the research design must be one suitable for assessing how the ERP's rationale, process, organization, context and effects score on each of the four dimensions

deriving from the theoretical framework, namely, redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation.

The research design has been built on a sequential manner, mixing methods for the purpose of complementarity and triangulation. Triangulation is here understood as the use of multiple sources of information in order to increase the validity of the study (Guion, 2002). As Torrance (2012. p. 113) points out, *“no single method is likely to afford a comprehensive account of the phenomenon under investigation, thus two or more methods are employed to bring to bear different intellectual tools on the task at hand.”* This holds true for data collection, the assumption being that information stemming from different methods can provide a fuller picture of the phenomena under study, since each method can account for missing or overlooked information by the others, thereby bypassing biases inherent to each method and increasing the confidence and credibility of empirical results and findings (Axinn & Pearce, 2012).

For the data analysis phase, however, the purpose of mixing methods is geared more towards complementarity, here understood as the process by which we seek *“elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method”* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004. p.22).

The methods to be employed have been chosen in a pragmatic fashion. Following Morgan (2007), quantitative and qualitative methods are to be used based on the necessities that exist regarding the research questions. Pragmatism has come to be seen as the applied philosophical foundation of mixed methods research since it offers a sound way to transcend the metaphysical, axiomatic, methodological, and epistemological divide that exists between quantitative and qualitative research. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004. p. 17) put it, pragmatism *“offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt; and it offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that can help researchers better answer many of their research questions”* without being limited or restrained by irrational and unproductive dualisms.

Under pragmatism, then, methods are not chosen based on ontological and epistemological positions, but rather by taking the research question at hand as the principal *‘line of action’*. This does not mean methods were chosen arbitrarily, but rather based on the characteristics of the research context, the necessities posed by the research questions, and the work of fellow researchers working in the field of educational policy analysis, peace-education, peace-building and conflict resolution.

Having explained the “meta” foundations of the research design, we now move on to discuss the choice of methods for data collection and analysis.

Data Collection

After having discussed in detail the research context and the subject of this study (the ERP), we now move to the research design employed to gather and analyze the necessary data in order to answer the main research question.

The purpose of this research is to describe and understand the content, structure and practices of the ERP, and to determine the extent to which the program contributes to the positive integration of ex-combatants. It can, therefore, be considered as contextual research for evaluative purposes (Richie, 2003). Following Runhaar, Dieperink and Driessen (2006) among other scholars working in the policy analysis field, in order to establish the policy's content, process, organization, effects, and context, thereby providing an answer to our inquiry, we must *reconstruct the policy theory* behind the ERP through the analysis of the normativity upon which is based, its content, and practices. Moreover it is necessary to *assess its impact* by taking a close look to the generated outcomes. Lastly, we are required to delve into the *perspectives of the actors and stakeholders* involved in order to understand the power dynamics that take place through the everyday practices and workings of the ERP.

The initial phase of data collection started before leaving for the field with an exhaustive literature review on the state of the ERP and the situation of the research location. The outcome of that literature served as input for the research proposal and the first two chapters of this thesis. The purpose was not only to get acquainted with the research location and the subject of the study, but also to identify key actors, stakeholders, institutions, and organizations involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the ERP; moreover, it was also intended to identify which documents were potential sources of valuable information.

The second phase of data collection started once I arrived in the field, and consisted of conducting interviews and focus groups with a diverse group of actors and gathering relevant documents and information. Following Ritchie (2003), the use of interviews is validated on the basis that our interest is to gain insight into the personal opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of our subjects.

Likewise, applying focus groups as a research method offered possibilities other methods could not. They offered the unique opportunity to conduct a group interview/discussion thereby allowing us to see how people talk about a topic in the presence of others, and how ideas are shaped and molded through interaction. Ultimately, it creates a situation where all participants learn from each other, a dialectical interaction rather than a one-way extraction of information (McCullough, 2011). Similarly, the collection of documents was guided by the needs of the research questions and in order to understand the policy's content, process and organization.

Respondents

Table 1 brings together the diverse range of actors that were interviewed and participated in the focus groups. In total, 38 semi-structured interviews and 4 focus groups were carried out. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over structured and unstructured types since they allow for a guided, yet flexible, approach to interviewing. A set of topics and questions served as guide, but the order of these would vary depending on the direction the interview was heading, allowing for the inclusion of new topics and questions as the conversation progressed. In this way, interviewees had the liberty to elaborate on certain topics and issues they thought to be more relevant.

As a consultant for the ministry of education (during the research period), I had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with government officials on a daily basis; informal hallway-talks and work meetings proved to be valuable sources of information since the very beginning of the research. These discussions could not be recorded. My detailed notes of these encounters were the only way to keep a record. Therefore, the “Duration” cell in Table 1 below indicates “not applicable” for the duration of informal talks.

Table 1. Respondents

Actor	Method	Number	Duration
ACR Officials	Interviews	3	2 hours
	Focus groups	1	3 hours
Ministry of Education Officials	Interviews	13	1.5 hours
	Informal talks	Numerous from the 1 st of September 2015 until the 15 th of December 2015	Not Applicable
	Work meetings		
Ex-combatants	Interviews	19	1.5 hours
Teachers	Interviews	3	1.5 hours
NGO's	Focus groups	1	2 hours
Receptor Community Members	Focus group	1	3 hours
Academics	Focus group	1	1.5 hours

Documents

Table 2 below provides a brief outline and description of the documents to be analyzed.

Table 2. Documents

Type	Name	Description	Access
Laws	Law 115 from 1994 Law 119 from 1994 Law 489 from 1998 Law 715 from 2001 Law 749 from 2002	Normativity behind the ERP.	Available online: See references
Resolutions	166 from 2003 5360 from 2006 2533 from 2005		Available online: See references
Decrees	1528 from 2002 249 from 2004 4904 from 2009		Available online: See references
ACR Internal Documents	1.Philosophical and sociological foundations of the ERP 2. Institutional synergies 3.Teacher's training Handbook	1. Metaphysical, empirical and practical foundations of the ERP. 2. Detailed description of the institutions and organisms that are involved in the ERP. 3.Training manual that is provided to teachers who work with ex-combatants	Obtained from an ACR official.
Audit	Auditoría de la Contraloría general de la nación	The "Contraloría" is the official organism in charge of monitoring and evaluating every governmental institution and policy where public money is being utilized. In 2014 they published an evaluative report that focused on the ACR and the reintegration policy.	Available online: See references

Data Analysis

As stated above, for the data analysis phase, methods have been mixed for the sake of complementarity. Each method can only provide a certain amount, and quite specific, type of information. For this reason, multiple methods can help in forming a bigger and more accurate picture of the subject under study.

For the most part, the data collected (apart from the data set) is qualitative in nature: in the form of text and recorded audio. This creates the necessity to employ a method that allows the researcher to make valid inferences to answer the research question from what is mainly, literary and oral content. Following Ritchie, Nicholls and Ormston (2013), content analysis (CA) is the best suited method for getting insight into implicit meanings and assumptions through the analysis of substantive literary content. CA is not a uniform method, however. There exist various types, each type with its own rules of coding, assessment criteria, procedures, and objectives.

Since we are dealing with a diverse spectrum of data stemming from distinct sources, it makes sense to employ the types of CA that are appropriate for these. This study draws on three different types of CA, namely, directed, summative, and latent. Each approach is subsequently explained.

Directed Content Analysis

According to Shannon and Hsieh (2005), the main characteristic of directed CA is that categories, codes, variables, and the relation among them is determined in an *a priori* fashion. This identification is informed by theory and previous research done on the same topic and/or issues. The coding scheme is thus a product of deductive category application (Mayring, 2000). The strength of directed CA is that it can support, expand, and refine the theory that informs the study.

However, as some scholars point out, relying on theory has certain limitations *“in that researchers approach the data with an informed but, nonetheless, strong bias. Hence, researchers might be more likely to find evidence that is supportive rather than non-supportive of a theory. Second, in answering the probe questions, some participants might get cues to answer in a certain way or agree with the questions to please researchers. Third, an overemphasis on the theory can blind researchers to contextual aspects of the phenomenon”* (Shannon & Hsieh, 2005. p. 1283).

Summative Content Analysis

The basis of summative CA lays in the exploration of manifest content through the quantification of certain words or content (Kondracki & Wellman & Amundson, 2002; Shannon & Hsieh, 2005). The method, however, goes beyond mere quantification and attempts to understand the contextual use of words. Thus, summative CA takes on characteristics of both qualitative CA and quantitative CA. It starts with the frequency

count of certain words and content, and then proceeds to the interpretation of that content, searching for the underlying meaning of the text. This second and last step in summative CA is most commonly known in academic literature as *Latent CA* (Babbie, 1992; Catanzaro, 1988; Morse & Field, 1995).

Mixed Content Analysis

The CA approach used in study will be denominated mixed CA, since it incorporates the attributes of the quantitative and qualitative approaches of CA discussed above. This decision has been consciously made in order to avoid some of the shortcomings that are inherent to each approach. Quantitative CA is considered as a good method for counting manifest content but is often criticized for its failure to grasp syntactical and semantic information implicit in text (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2010; Weber, 1990). Qualitative CA, on the other hand, is geared towards the elucidation of latent content embedded in text. As pointed out by Weber (1990), combining these different approaches makes the process of data analysis and the findings deriving from it more robust and reliable.

Another argument in favor of the combination (in line with pragmatism) is that it offers a way to overcome the unfruitful dichotomy between deduction (associated with quantitative CA) and induction (associated with qualitative CA). Following Patton (2002) there is no reason why qualitative CA should give up on deductive reasoning (the same holds true for quantitative CA and induction). In fact, they argue that qualitative CA can benefit greatly from categories and codes derived from theory, especially in the early stages of data analysis. These can be then modified or expanded if the researcher sees the necessity to do so once he/she has a better understanding of the data under analysis.

An additional matter found frequently at the center of the debate between qualitative CA and quantitative CA concerns the selection of texts to be analyzed. Purists of the quantitative approach argue that this must be done through randomized sampling. Under the more pragmatic paradigm, and thus of the mixed CA method here applied, the selection of texts was done based on the information necessities posed by the research questions and the practical matters of accessibility encountered during fieldwork (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2010).

Having explained the approach to CA used for the analysis, I now will discuss in detail the way in which I constructed the coding scheme, from its theoretical foundations to the practical procedure of coding.

Coding Scheme

The initial coding categories derive from the 4R theoretical framework already discussed and explained. These are the categories of *redistribution*, *recognition*, *representation* and *reconciliation*. These four broad categories are further refined elaborating on the work of Leroy and Nelissen (2000) and their distinction between

the different aspects one must analyze in order to evaluate policy: the *policy content, process, organization, context, and effects*. Subsequently, drawing on the work of the Research Consortium on Education and Peace-Building (2015) a list of indicators and codes for each of the 4R dimensions and the five aspects of policy analysis has been developed. [Table 3](#) illustrates this clearly.

Every text and recorded audio file (from interviews and focus groups) was imported into the qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti. In line with the mixed CA approach adopted, the first step of the analysis was a word count and word crunch for every code. A closer reading followed this in order to understand the context in which the words were being utilized. Thus, a second round of coding took place, this time going beyond mere word counting to a more latent CA where the embedded meaning of each word and its context was brought up in relation to its correspondent policy aspect, sub-question, and theoretical dimension.

While the CA process started with a deductive approach drawing the codes from the theoretical framework, new codes and indicators emerged during the actual coding procedure - a necessity created by the data itself, since the initial codes were not able to capture certain aspects (a more inductive approach). Once the texts were coded, I had a measure and/or answer for every indicator, which allowed me to assess whether the ERP's structure, workings, and outcomes would lean more towards a positive or towards a negative integration (as outlined in the theoretical framework), thereby providing an answer to the sub-questions and ultimately to the main guiding question of this whole research.

Table 3. Coding scheme

Dimension	Related Sub-Question	Policy Aspect	Indicators	Words	Codes
Redistribution Red_	Is the structure of the ERP redistributive?	Policy Rationale Rat_ Policy Organization Org_	What is the legal foundation of the ERP? How are the problem and the objectives defined and related to means and instruments? How are resources allocated? Who manages these resources? Which institutions and actors are in charge?	-Coordinación - Responsabilidad -Monitoreo - Implementación -evaluación -tareas - presupuesto - Instrumentos - Programas - Instituciones - Organismos -Sinergias - colaboración -división	Red_Rat_DefProblem_(+)/(-) Red_Rat_Means_(+)/(-) Red_Rat_Objectives_(+)/(-) Red_Rat_PedagoFoundations_(+)/(-) Red_Rat_PhilosoFoundations_(+)/(-) Red_Org_Budget_(+)/(-) Red_Org_Institutions_(+)/(-) Red_Org_Normativity_(+)/(-)
Recognition Recg_	To what extent do the content and practices of the ERP explicitly recognize the diversity of social and political affiliations of ex-combatants?	Policy Context Cont_	Is the academic curriculum sensitive to social and political affiliations and diversity? Are the experiences of warfare of ex-combatants treated in classroom? What are the pedagogical practices and in-class dynamics?	-Educación ciudadana - Educación cívica - Historia -Conflicto - Resolución de conflictos -Proyecto de vida - Construcción de paz - Educación para el, trabajo, vocacional, técnica, tecnológica, profesional - Alfabetización - Afiliación política/militar, FARC, AUC, ELN -Laboral - Trabajo	Recg_Cont_CivicEdu_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_ConflictRe_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_HistoriaConfl_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_MilitaryAfili_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_PeaceEdu_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_PoliticalAfili_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_ProyectoVida_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_TechnicalEdu_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_TechnologicalEdu_(+)/(-) Recg_Cont_VocationalEdu_(+)/(-)
Representation Rep_	How representative are the procedures and practices of the ERP?	Policy Process Pro_	How open is the ERP's decision-making structure throughout the policy process? Is there room for participation and input from ex-combatants, teachers and communities?	Cooperación -Inclusión -Participación -Toma de decisiones -Opciones curriculares - Administración Satisfacción ex-combatientes/comunidades/ profesores	Rep_Pro_PolicyElaboration_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_PolicyImplementation_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_PolicyEvaluation_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_PedagogicPractices_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_Participation_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_Ex-combsInput_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_DesicionMaking_(+)/(-) Rep_Pro_CurricularOptions_(+)/(-)
Reconciliation Recon_	Are the outcomes of the ERP sufficiently reconciliatory?	Policy Effects Effs_	Does the ERP address the root causes of the conflict (economic, political, social and cultural)? Does it aid vertical and horizontal trust? Are the outcomes reinforcing integration or further segregation?	-Trabajo/laboral - Reincidencia -salud - Familia -Vivienda - Discriminación - Exclusión -Estigma - Conflictos -Quejas - Deserción	Recon_Effs_EduAttainment_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_Employment_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_ERPSatisfaction_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_Exclusion_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_Relapse_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_Acceptance_(+)/(-) Recon_Effs_Discrimination_(+)/(-)

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The second method of choice for the analysis of data is statistical analysis, making use of the statistical computer program Stata 13. While on field work, I had the opportunity to access the official database from the ministry of education and the ACR, which contain information regarding ex-combatants' educational attainment, what academic programs they chose, and how far have they progressed on the educational ladder (vocational, technical, technological, or professional). Moreover, this database contains information on ex-combatants' criminal records post-demobilization, employment status, housing, healthcare, and satisfaction levels with regard to the program. All this information is valuable in order to answer our main research question, since it relates to all the sub-questions and policy aspects of interest. Furthermore, it served the purpose of triangulation for data analysis and complementarity for data gathering.

Having explained the methodology to be employed for the data analysis, and before moving onto the analysis it is important to touch briefly upon limitations of this investigation.

Methodological Reflection and Limitations

As stated earlier, qualitative and quantitative methods were mixed in a sequential manner for the purpose of complementarity and triangulation. It must be stressed that quantitative data sources are secondary to qualitative ones, and are going to be used in order to triangulate the results obtained through the CA of interviews, focus groups and documents. This means the study, even though carried out with a mixed methods design was mainly qualitative, and therefore judging it based on the standards used in the natural and exact sciences will do little justice to it. For example, the sample size is in no way statistically significant, however, it does offer much more in depth information than any common quantitative study would allow (Geertz, 1973; Bryman, 2008).

Emphasis was placed on the ERP, specific groups of people, in a particular context (Bogota and three schools). Reliability, replication and validity are therefore not the proper assessment criteria.

The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which the ERP is delivering on its promise. Understanding the content and structure of the program was importance, and that is why the first stage of the research process was that of gathering official texts in which we find the laws, norms and regulations guiding the program, and the pedagogic content of these. Subsequently, it was about gaining insight into the views and perceptions of the program designers, implementers, evaluators, participants; interviews and focus groups were carried out.

Lastly, the information gathered through the above-mentioned methods was contrasted with a data set containing information about the ex-combatants educational path and attainment, satisfactions levels, and drop out and relapse rates in order to triangulate results and to complement the data.

In this sense Guba (1985), and Guba and Lincoln (1994) alternative categories for the assessment of qualitative research might better suited to evaluate such study. These are *Trustworthiness* and *Authenticity*. Authenticity has left outside since it is solely a task of the reader.

Trustworthiness is divided in four criteria, *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. Credibility deals with the issue of whether the researcher has accurately depicted the accounts of reality of the subjects under study, and whether or not his own account does justice to those different accounts. During fieldwork, at the end of every interview or focus group there would be a round of *respondent validation* in which I as a researcher would summarize the main points I got out of them and ask for the respondent's approval. Eventually, once the research is completed, it will be sent to many of those who took part in it, since many asked.

The second criterion is that of transferability. Transferability deals with the issue of whether the research findings are generalizable, but instead of laying emphasis on the statistical significance of the sample, focus is laid on how well elaborated is the thick description of the subject under study. On this line, while the data collected, and the findings that came out of it cannot be generalized to other contexts based on its statistical relevance, it does provide a body of knowledge that can be accessed by other researchers or policy makers as a data base for further research, policy making, and its possible transferability to other milieux.

Dependability, the third criterion, is considered parallel to reliability and offers an alternative check the consistency of the measures and indicators in qualitative research. As Bryman (2008) puts it, dependability is about keeping all the collected data, clearly organized and accessible so that readers can audit it. Following the dependability criterion then, all the phases of the research have been clearly described, and the collected data is available to the reader in the annexes section.

Lastly, we have confirmability, which is about acknowledging that while the researcher is never completely objective, he/she has never the less acted in good faith, and has not allowed personal views and values to greatly affect the research. This is a task mainly directed to the reader, in its role as auditor, but in order facilitate the auditing process we now turn the ethical reflection chapter, where the values, views, and opinions of the author are put forward.

Ethical Reflection

Bryman (2008), based on the work of Diener and Crandall (1978) identifies 4 key areas for ethical reflection regarding scientific research. 'Prejudices' has been added as fifth area, as it turn out to be an important aspect during the whole research process. Those areas will used here as guide in order to reflect on the ethical issues that confronted this study.

Prejudices

Probably the single most important ethical consideration to be dealt with thoroughly here is the fact that I was born a raised in Barranquilla (Colombia). Being myself Colombian adds a lot of value judgment to the issues I was expected to study in a neutral and objective manner. As a Colombian citizen I have personal perceptions, opinions and views regarding the social, political, economic and security situation of the country; notions that undoubtedly shaped the way in which the research proposal was built; the theoretical approach, the methodology, the methods, and most important, the attitude with which I entered the field.

I have been long critical of the neoliberal agenda of the Colombian government, an agenda that has materialized in concrete policies and actions that lie (in my opinion) at the heart of the internal armed conflict. With this in mind I tend to look at government policies with skepticism and even suspicion. The reintegration policy is no exception. The months previous to entering the field were a period of preparation in which a lot of background research was carried out; literature reviews about the topic, the country, the actors involved, and the theoretical approaches and methods available.

My suspicion and skepticism regarding the policy grew as I found a great body of academic literature that is very critical of the ERP. Some scholars considered it to be yet another tactic by a neoliberal government to suppress insurgent's claims to social, economic and political change. I entered the field with these ideas in mind, only to soon realize how ignorant I was about so many aspects regarding the program, and the actors and institutions involved. I was not completely wrong about my assumptions, but some of them were certainly not accurate. At that point I had to reflect about myself, on how my opinions and perceptions were affecting my research.

Inflicting harm to participants

Ex-combatants and their families' identities are managed with extreme caution. Guerrillas and paramilitaries consider those who have left armed groups as traitors, and there have been several cases of targeted killings perpetrated by both in retaliation. It is therefore of great importance to keep identities confidential, since

disclosing them could cause harm to certain individuals. For this reason the data set that will be used as secondary data has been anonymized and the interviews will be presented with aliases.

Informed consent

Before every interview and focus group I would always make sure to inform respondents about who I was, and what I was doing. However, I did have to play around the issue of how to gain access to the subjects of my interest, and how to obtain the information I was looking for. During the field research I was two things at the same time, a university student conducting research for my thesis, and a consultant for the ministry of education carrying out research on the same issue. Depending on the actor I was about to approach I soon figured out choosing between the 'student' and the 'consultant' would result very often in different outcomes, even though "*we were both*" researching the same issue, with the exact same methodology. Being a student or a government consultant would open or close doors depending on the respondent. Therefore, I started to identify myself as one or the other depending on the situation. In short, informed consent was always taken care of, but my identity as a researcher would vary between the consultant and the student for practical reasons.

Deception

Bryman (2008), describes deception as the situation where the researchers present their work as something other than what it really is. Reflecting back, I think the study did not involve deception of any kind. It is true I would consciously decide to present myself either as a student or as a consultant for practical reasons, but the aim of the study and its methodology were always the same, and explained *a priori* to every respondent.

Analysis & Discussion

Using the 4R framework (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, Smith, 2015) as an analytical tool, each element of gathered data will be critically discussed and compared with the dimensions of the model. Accordingly, this chapter has been divided into four parts, one for each theoretical dimension and sub-question, and several sub-parts relating to the various policy aspects under study and their respective codes. The dimensions are presented here separately to provide a clear structure for the chapter. However, it is important to bear in mind that the 4R framework is an organic model and that all dimensions are closely related to each other. A policy like the ERP, which is intended to reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian life, must necessarily deal with the various forms of violence and injustice that have caused and perpetuated the conflict. Addressing them only partially will diminish ERP's capacity to reintegrate ex-combatants and contribute positively to peace-building. Thus, each chapter will focus on the content, structure, practices, and perspectives relevant to each dimension while at the same time emphasizing the relations between them and the ways in which addressing or neglecting one necessarily reinforces or diminishes others.

Redistribution

This first part will deal with the dimension of redistribution thereby providing an answer to the first sub-question: *Is the structure of the ERP redistributive?* As defined earlier, the redistribution dimension is concerned with the macro structure of the policy and the degree to which it does (or does not) address vertical and horizontal inequalities related to educational input, resources, and outcomes. A first step in order to establish whether the ERP's structure is redistributive is to focus on the first two policy aspects identified by Leroy and Nelissen (2000): *i.e.*, policy rationale and organization.

Policy rationale defines the problem that a particular policy is meant to address and relates that definition to the policy and its objectives and the means and instruments for its achievement. Organization on the other hand, refers to the normativity that regulates and guides the policy, and the institutions and actors that are involved throughout the policy process.

In 2005, in what is considered a historic shift in discourse, the Ministry of Education recognized ex-combatants as a vulnerable population group through resolution 2533. Other population groups included in this category are indigenous peoples, afro-Colombians and physically and mentally handicapped. The Colombian government by statute grants '*vulnerable group*' status to population sectors that are considered to be historical victims of exclusion and discrimination. As a consequence, all levels of government and its institutions are obliged to take steps to ensure that these groups overcome the conditions presumed to contribute to their vulnerability. Thus, the ERP is reborn in 2005 as a mechanism to guarantee the constitutional right to education to a population group that previously has been discriminated against and excluded from

educational opportunities due to political, economic, social and cultural inequalities (ACR, a2011, p. 31).

The 'philosophical and sociological foundations' (PSF) of the ERP is an internal document of the ACR (2011) that I received from one of the ACR officials (and former ELN combatant) with whom I worked closely during my stay in Bogota. The document contains relevant information regarding the necessary elements needed to understand the *rationale* and the *organization* of the policy, or as Runhaar, Dieperink and Driessen (2006) put it, to reconstruct the policy theory.

In the PSF we find explicit reference to the main objectives of the ERP. Of central relevance is the statement that the objective of the ERP is that of "*developing the capacity of ex-combatants to participate in economic, social, political, cultural, and community life*" (ACR, a2011, p. 12). This statement is relevant given the definition of reintegration here adopted. That definition specifically conceives that a successful and positive reintegration will be a transformative process enabling ex-combatants to participate on equal footing in all spheres of society.

The structure of the ERP, the mechanism through which this objective is to be achieved, as described in the context chapter, consists of six academic cycles (five years in total) that compress the eleven years of regular mandatory schooling in Colombia. The program is based on the sociological premise that equality of opportunity to educational access will result in social mobility and social equity, thereby addressing the structural violence to which this specific population group has been subjected and that has been a contributing cause to the armed conflict in the country (ACR, a2011).

When analyzing public policies, it is common to encounter a mismatch between the general objectives and the implementing legislation designed to achieve those objectives. The CA of the normativity that regulates the ERP, however, shows that these are closely aligned with the problem definition, objective, and the sociological basis so far discussed. The normativity consists of several laws, decrees and resolutions. These are not thoroughly presented here due to space constraints, but a detailed description of them can be found in [Appendix C](#). Instead, we will focus on the most relevant aspects in relation to the redistribution dimension.

The CA shows that the status of ex-combatants as a vulnerable population group has been recognized by law. This categorization is common to all legislation that deals with the ERP and the ex-combatant population. This recognition makes it mandatory for the State, and every municipality where there exists the need and/or demand for the ERP, to provide both the necessary financial resources and the spaces and facilities where the ERP can be implemented. The normativity also specifies the specific roles that governmental institutions at all levels must fulfill in the elaboration, implementation, and evaluation phases of the ERP's policy process. These will be dealt with in the recognition and representation sub-chapters; a detailed description of the role of each institution can also be found in [Appendix D](#). Emphasis here will be placed

on the resource allocation structure of the ERP, focusing on the degree to which it does (or does not) guarantee the right to education of the ex-combatant population, and under what conditions. Here we can begin to observe the divergence that exists between the discourse, rhetoric, and the normativity on the one hand, and the practice on the other.

Public education in Colombia is funded through the ‘General System of Participation’ (*Sistema General de Participaciones, SGP*). The SGP is one of the mechanisms through which tax money collected by the state is distributed to departments and municipalities (MEN, 2015a). The exact amount of resources to be transferred to each of these levels depends on the population living in the jurisdiction whose rights to education and healthcare must be guaranteed. The SGP is governed by specific allocation rules, so regardless of the total amount transferred, municipalities and departments must always allocate the specified percentage to each service. [Table 4](#) illustrates this distribution.

Table 4. SGP distribution

Sector	Percentage (%)
Education	58.5
Healthcare	24.5
Free investment	11.6
Water and Sanitation	5.4

Source: Vergara (2015)

By law, most of the SGP must be allocated to education (almost 60%), however, this allocation represents only the contribution of the central government to its lower levels. Departments and municipalities must then allocate from their own resources whatever additional amounts are necessary to provide services to all their population. This has created a problem of inequality across the country. Since some municipalities have more solid economies, they are able to allocate more resources to the education sector, thereby compensating for the deficit.

Of the money municipalities receive via the SGP, 89% is spent on teacher’s salaries.⁵ Few resources remain for the improvement of infrastructure and pedagogic materials. Furthermore, as [figure 5](#) illustrates, there exist significant differences in the level of reliance of the education sector on the SGP resources across departments and municipalities. The figure shows the composition of the educational budget of the 32 departments of Colombia, and its three major municipalities (Bogota, Medellin and Cali).⁶

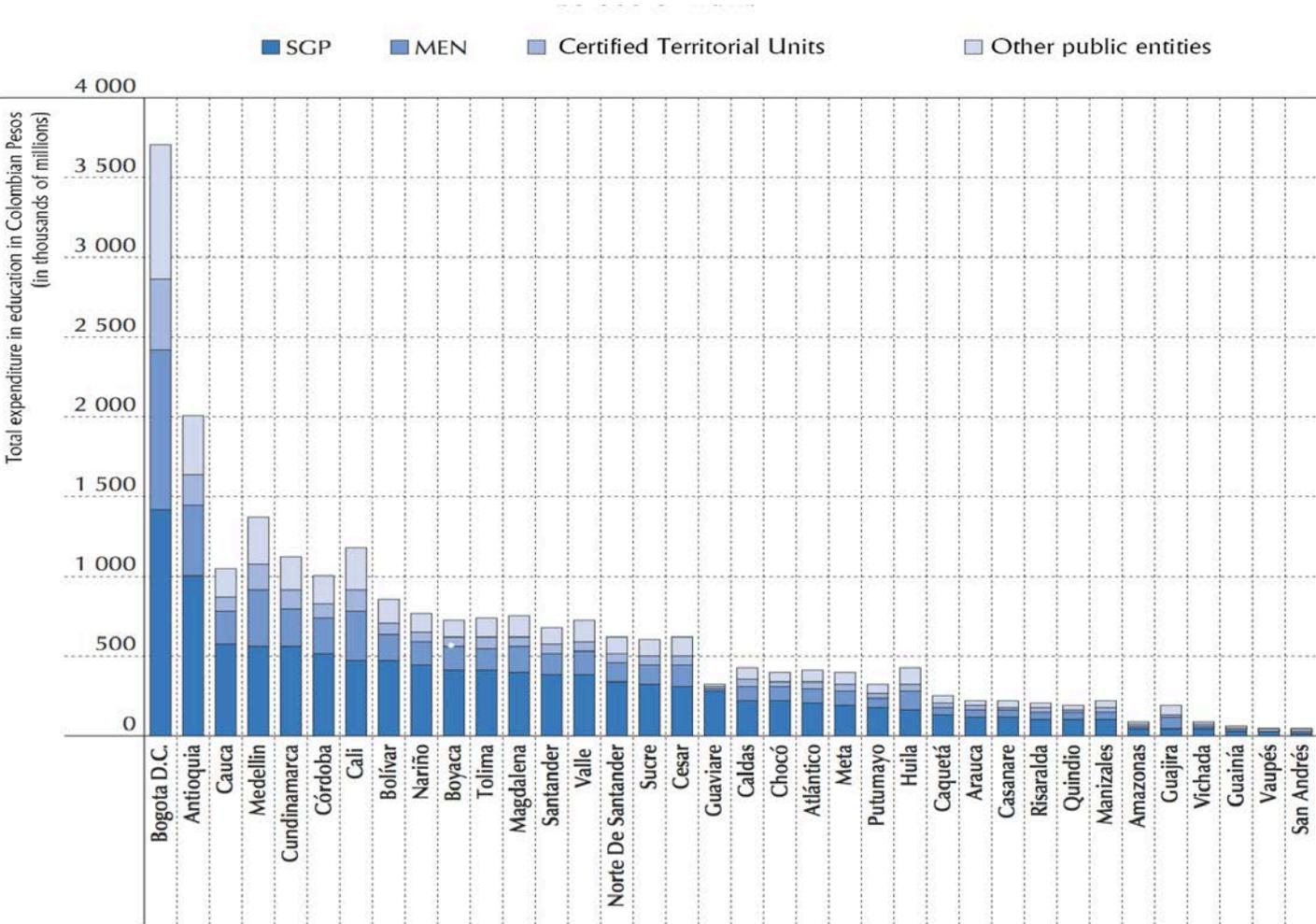
The big cities of the country are less dependent on the resources of the SGP for financing the education sector. While SGP resources represent less than 50% of the

⁵ Interview with a MEN official. Finance Department. 15th of September 2015.
⁶ The Colombian territory is divided into five regions: Caribbean, Pacific, Andean, Orinoco and Amazon. Regions are divided into departments. There are 32 departments in total. Departments are divided into municipalities. There are 1.100 municipalities.

total budget for education in Bogota, Medellin and Cali, we see how the SGP accounts for more than 60% of the budget in most departments. Some of them rely completely on central government transfers for the provision of education.

This situation has a direct impact on the resources available for the implementation of the ERP. The resources that municipalities have at their disposal for the reintegration program stem partly from the SGP (that covers teachers' salaries). It is the responsibility of the ACR to cover the rest by means of direct transfers to municipalities and schools. Such transfers are governed by the same principle; the amount being determined by the number of students and teachers taking part in the ERP.

Figure 5. Education sector financing



Source: OECD (2016, p. 53)

In practice, however, there are municipalities (*e.g.*, Bogota) that not only have more financial resources to support the ERP, but are also more politically committed to properly implementing and improving the program. This is something that came to the fore repeatedly during my discussions with government officials, NGOs, and academics.

An ACR official expressed in an interview: “The biggest obstacles to a proper implementation of the model are the lack of financial resources and the lack of commitment on the part of local governments with the reintegration process” (15/10/2015).

In a focus group (20/10/2015) with NGO representatives, several of the participants expressed similar views:

- Resources are essential for providing study materials, guaranteeing a proper learning infrastructure, and training teachers. But honestly, in the end it comes down to whether those who make the decisions are sufficiently involved with the ERPs process. I have been to small cities where municipalities and schools can only dream with having the resources at the disposal of cities like Bogota or Medellin. But they are nevertheless committed to reintegration program and it works better there than in many of the schools of Medellin, Bogota, or Cali. (NGO Researcher)
- A good school director makes a world of a difference. Here in Bogota we have schools where the ERP is a complete success, and yet, in those same neighborhoods there are schools where the program is falling apart; where students and teachers are not satisfied. And that has a lot to do with the attitudes of the school directors towards the program. (NGO Director)
- Take a look to what is happening in Bucaramanga and in Nariño. Bucaramanga as a city, and the schools within its jurisdiction have more resources than those in Nariño. However, authorities in Bucaramanga are not as committed, and as a result the outcomes of the program in both cities are heading in opposite directions despite one having significantly more resources than the other. (NGO Researcher)
- I agree in that political will is important, but don't underestimate the lack of resources as an important factor. It is not the same to implement the ERP in a proper school with good learning materials and well trained teachers than doing it like it often happens in La Guajira, under a straw hut, 40 degrees Celsius, and with bad teachers. (NGO Director)

As can be seen from the views expressed above, these participants place political will at the same level as financial resources when it comes to the determinants of a successful implementation of the ERP. NGOs are relevant actors since they often work in coordination with schools around the country in the implementation of the ERP,

thereby aiding the process through the organization of non-formal educational activities.

A second problem stemming from the resource allocation structure of the ERP is corruption. As noted earlier in the context chapter (See [Appendixes C and D](#)), educational institutions must report back to municipal authorities, the MEN, and the ACR, information relating to the number of students and teachers taking part in the ERP. The MEN and the ACR then proceed to transfer the money. When asked about the obstacles facing the implementation and improvement of the ERP, all interviewees from the MEN and ACR agreed on that fact that the schools being selected by municipal authorities and the information reporting mechanism had facilitated the rise of corrupt networks.

One official from the Alphabetization Department at the MEN, expressed in an interview (9/11/2015) and several work meetings:

Many municipal authorities choose schools based on client relations rather than on schools merit and capabilities of implementing the program. In addition to this, many schools and local authorities tend to inflate the numbers of students and teachers in order to receive more resources. We call these the ghost students. This illegal behavior is facilitated by the decentralized structure upon which the program's funding and implementation instruments are based.

Another official from the Attention to Vulnerable Population Department, further elaborated this point explaining how the decentralized structure of the allocation model permitted municipalities to bring in private contractors to implement the ERP. The interests of those contractors have more to do with generating profit. In an interview (10/15/2015) he expressed his discomfort:

We at the ministry have little influence on who will actually implement the model. This decision falls in the hands of municipalities. It does not happen everywhere, but especially in small municipalities officials have close ties with the directors of both public and private schools. The ministry has a stronger monitoring mechanism for public schools. Private schools on the other hand have more liberty to manage their own finances. So the officials of municipalities that want to cheat the system often choose private schools in order to implement the ERP, since the control mechanisms over them are significantly weaker.

There are no studies or internal reports estimating the amount of resources that are lost due to these practices. However, for a policy that has suffered from scarce resources from the beginning, every cent is essential.

There is yet a third problem related to the resource allocation structure. When I started questioning why the MEN and ACR had not taken steps to ensure a proper distribution of resources, even though aware of the problems of inequality across the country regarding ERP financing, officials pointed to the growing tensions that the

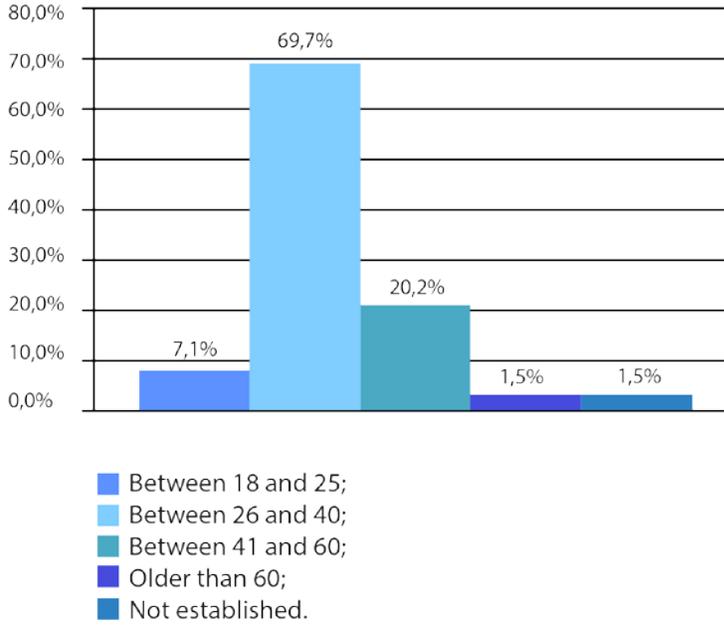
whole reintegration policy is generating in the country, especially among other vulnerable population groups. During the focus group with NGO representatives, the comments of one of the NGO directors present are illustrative of this problem:

There are growing tensions in the country regarding the benefits ex-combatants are receiving. Many of the vulnerable population groups we work with feel as if ex-combatants are being rewarded for the crimes they committed. There are millions of people in this country that have been victims of exclusion and discrimination, millions that live in poverty, millions that do not have access to education and healthcare, and yet, they did not make the decision to take up the arms. Why are those who did getting the benefits? That is a question we get very often, and I think is a valid one.

According MEN officials, such perceptions and feelings are held by a considerable number of Colombians. This makes it very difficult to secure even more resources for the implementation of the ERP and the reintegration policy in general, resources that could help close the gap that exists among municipalities. It is ultimately a political decision. The current government has a vested interest in improving the reintegration policy since it will play a key role in the reintegration of FARC ex-combatants, if the negotiations come to a good end. However, continuing to prioritize the ex-combatants over other vulnerable population groups is not without political costs. The popularity of the president is at an all time low, and the current negotiations with the guerrillas, and the “benefits” ex-combatants are receiving are two of the main causes.

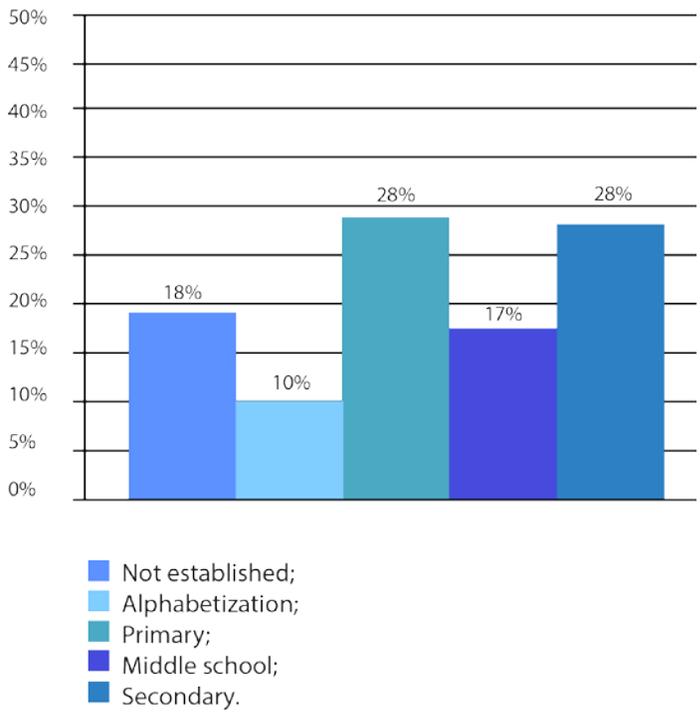
The ACR and MEN officials and ACR and MEN internal evaluation reports recognize that there are certain aspects of the ERP that need improvement. Overall, however, they praise the policy as a success, and do so based on the following arguments (ACR, 2015; Contraloria, 2014). First, they argue that the ERP was created in the 1990’s as a response to the demands of ex-combatants, who required access to education as a condition of giving up arms and joining the DDR program. A survey carried out by the ACR showed educational access has always been near the ‘*top of the wish list*’ of demobilized individuals, preceded only by employment, housing, and healthcare (ACR, a2011, p. 25). Demands for education are undoubtedly closely related to the need to find employment; both ex-combatants and the ACR identify low levels of educational attainment amongst ex-combatants as an important obstacle to achieving successful reintegration. [Figures 6 and 7](#) below illustrate this point.

Figure 6. Age at entry



Source: Elaborated using the ACR 2015 database

Figure 7. Educational level at entry



Source: Elaborated using the ACR 2015 database

As the figures show, almost 90% of those who enter the ERP are older than 26. 72% of the total did not finish high school, and those who did often do not have a certificate to prove it and/or finished such a long time ago they have forgotten all the acquired knowledge.⁷

Officials often compare this initial picture with the results that have been achieved so far. Since 75% of the ex-combatants who entered the ERP were functionally illiterate, the fact that a majority of them have now completed primary and secondary education is an achievement that speaks for itself. Equally significant is the fact that 76% of those enrolled in the ERP or who have completed it, remain in legality. This means that only 24% have relapsed into criminal activities. To put this finding into perspective, the relapse rate of the prison population is 70%. Furthermore, the annual cost per ex-combatant of the whole reintegration program (including all eight components, not just education) is almost three times less than the annual cost of sustaining a person in prison. The reintegration of an ex-combatant costs five million Colombian pesos (COP) a year, while maintaining a person in prison costs fourteen million COP.

Lastly, 73.3% of those who are enrolled or have completed the program have jobs. Sixty percent of that total work in the informal sector; only forty percent have formal jobs. One of the ACR's legal advisers expressed in an interview (10/11/2015):

We are aware the situation is not ideal. Working in informality means not having access to healthcare, or building up a pension for retirement. However, the 60% - 40% divide is pretty much a mirror reflection of the Colombian economy, meaning is not a situation particular to the ex-combatant population. Guaranteeing formal jobs for all ex-combatants is not within our hands.

Is the structure of the ERP redistributive?

If the ERP is meant to help ex-combatants overcome their condition of vulnerability by "developing the capacity of ex-combatants to participate in economic, social, political, cultural, and community life" (ACR, 2011, p. 12), the program should be one of the mechanisms that removes the forms of structural violence that prevented them from exercising their right to education, thereby contributing to the process of reintegration and sustainable peace building.

As outlined in the previous section, the ERP has made some remarkable achievements, but what do these outcomes tell us about the educational quality of the ERP? Not much. If anything, we know that the ERPs' quality, just like the available resources for its implementation, and the political commitment of authorities in order to implement it properly, is highly diverse throughout the country. Even though based on noble commitments at the level of rhetoric, discourse, and normativity, in practice, the problems of resource inequality, corruption, lack of political will in some

⁷ Interview with an ACR official working at the Pedagogic Design Department.

municipalities and schools, and the growing tensions that the allocation model is generating among vulnerable population groups pose serious questions about the capacity of the current ERP to transform the generative framework of injustices related to the education sector that were partly a cause of the conflict.

At best, the ERP is redistributive in cities like Bogota, where besides the resources provided by the MEN and the ACR, local authorities have allocated part of their own budgets to the implementation and improvement of the ERP, thereby compensating for the resource deficit. This was necessary in order to train teachers, cover their salaries, and provide learning materials. In the rest of the country the picture is less positive. Even though the ERP is intended to be implemented in the same manner throughout the country, guided by the same principles, objectives, and normativity, the decentralized allocation model has facilitated a situation and practices that go against the goal of a positive reintegration (*e.g.*, inequality of resources and corruption).

Furthermore, there are no official channels for participation by teachers and students to have an influence upon the allocation model. The current structure of the ERP affirms the traditional top-down model of decision-making that lies at the heart of the conflict. This goes against the bottom-up principle of Galtung's peace-building theory, one of the core foundations of the 4R framework. In subsequent sub-chapters, we will see how the lack of participation channels from below in decision-making is replicated in the *Representation* and *Recognition* dimensions. Ex-combatants and teachers have little or no say regarding their academic curriculum and, even though recognized as active and political agents by the discourse, in practice are mere passive receptors.

In relation to the dimension of *Reconciliation*, and even though unequal throughout the country, the ex-combatant population remains the group that receives in general terms the most benefits of all the vulnerable population groups. This is creating tensions that make the construction of horizontal trust difficult. By the same token, the top-down decision-making structure of the allocation model is obstructing the creation of vertical trust. Ex-combatants feel powerless since they have no influence over the decisions that directly affect them. This sentiment is stronger among ex-combatants that joined armed groups for ideological reasons. This is an important finding and it will be dealt with thoroughly in the following sub-chapters.

'*Political will*', has been identified as an important factor in solving these issues and making the structure of the ERP truly redistributive. As the above quotes show, the commitment of local authorities to secure resources for the ERP's implementation is crucial. Moreover, there is a need for the central government to provide attention to other vulnerable population groups in order to alleviate horizontal tensions, and, at the same time, to create channels of participation so that ex-combatants and teachers can influence the allocation model.

In addition to this, and by way of conclusion, it is necessary to move beyond educational access, employment, and non-relapse into violence as the only indicators

of the ERPs success. These are more related to the market and security imperatives of the LPT, and while important, they are insufficient. First, access tells us about quantity not quality. Second, employment tells us about occupation, but 60% working in informality without secure benefits does not fit the positive reintegration definition. Third, that the non-relapse percentage is high, is a relevant achievement, however, it tell us very little about the actual life conditions of the ex-combatant population.

Representation

This second part will deal with the second dimension and sub-question: ***How representative are the procedures and practices of the ERP?*** In order to answer this question, we will draw on Leroy and Nelissen's (2000) notion of policy process, which, as noted earlier, refers to the mechanisms through which the policy has been developed, implemented, and evaluated. Emphasis is placed on the decision-making processes in each of these stages, and the degree to which ex-combatants and teachers have an influence on them. The degree of participation and influence is what determines whether the ERPs policy process is representative or not. (Novelli, Lopez Cardoso, Smith, 2015) Consequently, this chapter has been divided in three parts, elaboration, implementation and evaluation.

Policy Elaboration

The current structure and content of the ERP was elaborated through a cooperation contract between the MEN, the ACR, NUFFIC and the SENA that started in 2008. As noted earlier, this took place during the administration of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010). Even though the educational component became more relevant than in previous years, it was still framed in the security policy of Uribe's administration (*'seguridad democratica'*) and designed in isolation from ex-combatants and teacher's input, at least through official channels. To date, there is no official mechanism through which ex-combatants, teachers, or communities can influence the process of policy formulation and reform. Since the 1990's, the ERP's content and structure has always been devised at the higher levels of government and then delegated to regions and municipalities for implementation (ACR, 2011)⁸.

This does not mean their voices have gone completely unheard. Pressure from below has certainly had an impact on the ERP's reforms. Continuous demands and complaints from teachers, students, communities and municipalities have played an important role in some of the most significant reforms of the ERP. In several meetings I had with ACR officials (between 15/09/2015 – 15/12/2015), they explained to me how the demands of these groups had pushed forward the reform that changed the

⁸ Focus group (20/10/2015) with representatives of four NGO

ERP's time lapse from twenty-four months to a maximum of seven years⁹. During an interview one of the officials (and former ex-combatant) expressed:

Back in 2003 the reintegration program was little more than another strategy of the military to debilitate the guerrillas. Even though the government said so, in reality education, healthcare and housing were never part of the deal. Back then the program was still in the hands of the defense ministry. All we got was a pardon for our 'crimes' and a subsidy in cash. Delays were so long for the rest of the benefits...it was not until we started to mobilize and protest that changes started to occur.

In the same way, the demands from schools and teachers led to the creation of training materials for teachers who were implementing the model. Moreover, a considerable improvement was achieved in the available options of tertiary education when the SENA was brought in as permanent partner in the implementation of the ERP. Legally recognizing ex-combatants as a vulnerable population group was another big step towards securing resources for the ERP, and the other components of the reintegration policy.

However, in two different focus groups, one with professors of the National University (NU), and another with NGO representatives, a different explanation for these reforms was put forward.¹⁰ While recognizing that pressure from below played a role, these groups of academics and practitioners maintained that it was not until the publication of the UN's Integrated DDR standards (IDDRS) in 2005 that significant changes started to occur. The IDDRS defined reintegration as an open-ended process and education was identified as an important part of it. The MEN and the ACR have for a long time used economic resources from foreign donors to help finance the ERP, and other educational programs for vulnerable population groups. Thus, for these groups, the significant reforms undertaken by the ERP have been a strategic move in order to secure financial resources and international recognition, rather than a positive response to the claims of teachers and students.

This was corroborated in interviews and work meetings with various MEN officials. The budget for the educational sector has always been under pressure, especially the part of it that is allocated to vulnerable population groups. A large portion of the budget is spent tending to students following the regular educational pathway and little is left for other necessities. Furthermore, historically tending to vulnerable groups has not been a priority of the Colombian Government. As one MEN official puts it, when referring to the ERP:

The priority is that they produce, not that they reintegrate. Even so, ex-combatants receive a lot more than other vulnerable groups. This year we have one thousand two hundred physically and mentally handicapped students, and

⁹ Interview with an ACR (10/11/2015), working at the pedagogic design department.

¹⁰ Focus group with academics (26/10/2015).

the budget will only allow tending to fourteen of them! My team and I spend a lot of time looking for donors nationally and internationally in order to cover the deficit. The ministry has other priorities at the moment.¹¹

An ACR official further elaborated on this point:

Of course, our complaints were not the only reason why the program was reformed. The political and economic strategizing of those in power has always moved public policy, especially in Colombia. If it was solely driven by technical knowledge and the will of the people, we would have spared ourselves from many of the problems we have. Nevertheless, I believe the pressure we exercised at the time was an important factor in expanding the components of the reintegration program, its time, and securing more resources. All together, eventually lead to the creation of the ACR.

Summarizing, the process of policy elaboration, just like the decisions related to the allocation model (as explained in the previous section) is at odds with the bases of the 4R framework. The framework emphasizes the importance of bottom up participatory input at the different stages of the policy process. While not advocating for complete control, there should be space for students, teachers, and communities to express their desires and have an impact on decision-making. The procedures through which the ERP has, and continues to be elaborated lack this participatory component. The ERP has been conceived at higher levels of government, in cooperation with international organizations like the UN and NUFFIC, and then delegated to municipalities and schools for implementation.

It is clear that pressures from below did have an impact on the ERPs reform. Why, however, did the government seek the input of international organizations instead of bringing stakeholders into the elaboration process? The claims of ex-combatants were heard, but their input was rejected. The answer to this question came quite straight forward out of the interviews and focus groups and is well summarized by Alberto (30), a low rank ex-combatant from the FARC:

In Colombia we have that terrible habit of thinking everything that comes from abroad is better. Every time the people complain about something... they hear us out... and then they call their 'expert' friends to come and solve the problem. They never ask us how to solve it or what we want. Those above us know better, and they have the money.¹²

¹¹ Interview with MEN official (25/09/2015).

¹² Interview with Alberto (4/11/2015).

Policy Implementation

As mentioned above, the ERP designed by the ACR, the SENA, the MEN and NUFFIC is given to schools and municipalities for implementation. School directors and teachers are given a manual (which will be analyzed in the following sub-chapter) to study that will, in theory, prepare them for the ERP's implementation.

Besides the methodological shortcomings of the evaluation process, and related issues of resource and quality inequity and corruption inherent in the decentralized approach to implementation, one more positive aspect of the ERP is the freedom municipalities, schools, and teachers have in order to adapt the ERP to their local contexts and circumstances. This aspect is often highlighted in the normativity and the content of the ERP, as well as in the official internal documents of the ACR, and its officials (ACR, a2011, b2011, 2014, 2015).

Necessary adjustments must be made to the ERP's content and structure and they should reflect classroom composition and the preferences of the students. In-class practices should take into account student's backgrounds, the different armed groups to which they belonged, their reasons for entry, their age, sex, cultural identity, and political affiliations. Due to the budget constraints and the lack of commitment of most educational institutions, however, a very standardized, 'blue print' version of the ERP is being implemented country-wide instead¹³.

Some schools in Bogota, Medellin, and other large cities are exceptions to the standardized model. As noted earlier, in addition to the financial resources received from the MEN and ACR, large cities allocate a part of their own resources to the ERP. Furthermore, the private sector has become more involved in these cities, providing another source of resources. Thus, schools in these cities have a greater capacity to implement and adapt the ERP to local circumstances based on the input of teachers and school directives. In Bogota for example, local authorities have created training courses for teachers implementing the ERP. Activities providing for greater communication between members of receptor communities and ex-combatants have also provided greater understanding and support of the ERP. For example, members of receptor communities are more frequently invited to schools in order to interact with ex-combatants and the community service that ex-combatants must carry out in their neighborhoods have also provided more interface with the community providing greater community understanding and support for the program.

At the tertiary level, quality and adaptation are more uniform because the offered courses of vocational, technical, and technological education are deeply engrained in the local socio-economic context. In large cities like Bogota and Medellin the offer is skewed towards services, while in smaller cities and in the countryside it is more focused on the agroindustry. Furthermore, the SENA creates courses or facilitates the entry of ex-combatants into the courses of their choice (ACR, 2015).

¹³ Work meetings with ACR officials (01/09/2015 – 15/12/2015).

Regarding the actual implementation, however, it would not be accurate to say that ex-combatants have any significant decision-making power over the way the ERP is put into practice. Other than being able to choose among a number of curricular options and courses, ex-combatants have no say on the pedagogical methodology and materials that are used, and the choice of schools, teachers, and schedules. While true that teacher's wishes have a better chance of having an impact, this is highly dependent on the municipality, and the school directors. The three teachers I interviewed work at three different schools in Bogota. Even though all three followed the general guidelines provided by the ACR and the MEN, throughout the years each school (and teacher) had developed its own approach to the ERP's implementation.¹⁴

One teacher explained his approach on the following manner:

I have learned students learn better when they feel they have ownership over the program and what happens in the classroom. I like to depart from what they already know, and move onto what they want and need to know. In that way I can adjust the curriculum for their needs, so that they feel that what we do in class is relevant for their future.¹⁵

The other two teachers expressed similar views. This might have to do with the fact that the three of them, even though working at different locations, work for the same school. This school that has a long tradition of working with vulnerable population groups, particularly ex-combatants.¹⁶

Another teacher stated:

Something that is not part of the academic curriculum are the integration activities with receptor communities. These are not easy to organize because of the time constraints of the program. There is a lot to do in a short period of time. But involving the community in the educational process is vital for ex-combatants to remain motivated and to prevent conflicts in the community. We try to organize such activities frequently with the help of NGOs and civil society organizations, but it is not always easy.¹⁷

The actual content and practices of the program will be discussed in the next sub-chapter. But it is important to note here that, once again, the political will on the part of schools and teachers to give a voice to ex-combatants and the power to influence the implementation process is an important determinant of positive reintegration since it creates vertical and horizontal trust, both essential for reconciliation. The lack of both often results in the implementation of rigid versions of the ERP, that do not

¹⁴ Interview with ACR officials (2015)

¹⁵ Interview with Gabriel, teacher implementing the ERP.

¹⁶ Interview with Alejandro, teacher implementing the ERP.

¹⁷ Interview with Ignacio, teacher implementing the ERP.

allow for an appropriation of the implementation process by ex-combatants, affirming top-down hierarchical practices that are detrimental to the objective of the policy.

It must be stressed, however, that only three teachers took part in this investigation. The previous conclusion is derived mostly from information gathered through interviews and work meetings with ACR officials. A bigger sample of the ‘teachers’ population group, across a wider geographical area would have been ideal in order to grasp the different ways in which teachers conceive the ERP and put it into practice; a good focus for future research.

Policy Evaluation

The way in which the ERP is evaluated is not an efficient tool for monitoring quality and improving the program. In terms of representation, the situation is equally worrying. The perceptions and evaluations of teachers and ex-combatants rarely reach higher levels of the organizational ladder. Hence, they have very little impact on the policy evaluation process. It became clear through the CA of the normativity and the ACR documents that the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers are not part of the measures used to evaluate the performance of the ERP. [Table 5](#) below summarizes the aspects of the ERP that are taken into account in its evaluation.

Table 5. Evaluation criteria

Evaluation Indicators ERP
• Efficiency in the use of financial resources: relation between the number of students and teachers versus the amounts spent.
• Timely report of information from schools and the SENA to the SIGER
• Number of graduated students
• Number of cycles successfully completed
• Degree of private sector involvement and contribution
• Percentage of students employed after graduation
• Percentage of relapse into violence
• Number of drop outs

Source: self elaborated (ACR, a2011; ACR, b2011; ACR, 2013; ACR, 2014)

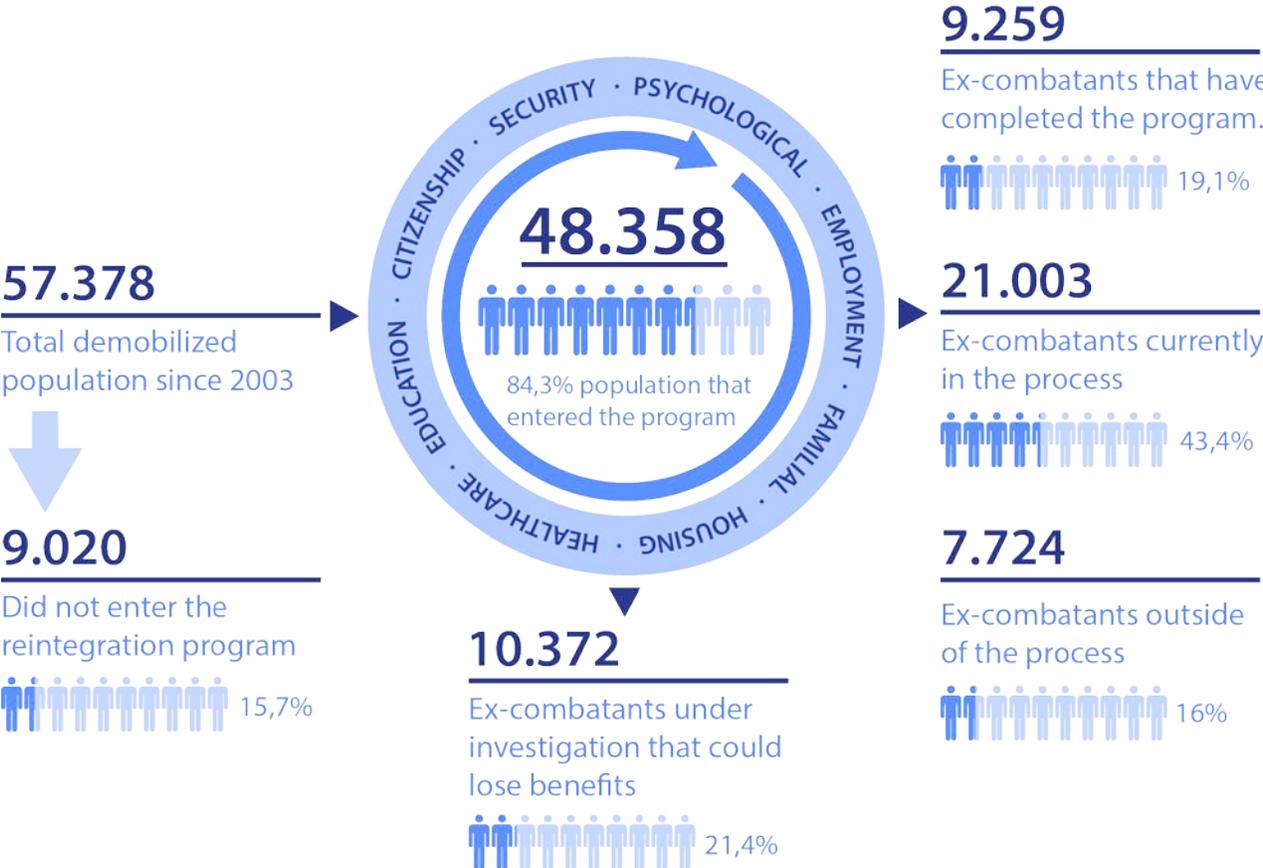
The above-presented indicators are indeed all relevant for a quality assessment of the ERP. The failure to include feedback of students and teachers, and their perceptions and attitudes towards the program, however, seriously limits the legitimacy of the evaluations and the possibilities for program improvement.

Policy makers and government officials argue that satisfaction surveys are carried out periodically, and that these are taken into account for policy reform and implementation. ACR officials explained to me during a work meeting (10/12/2015) that satisfaction levels regarding the ERP had always been high, and therefore evaluations tend to focus more on resource management rather than the attitudes of teachers and students.

I made use of the ACR 2015 database, and studies carried out by the 'Fundación Ideas para la Paz' (FIP) (2014), and the consultancy agency 'Econometria' (2014) in order to triangulate the results of the interviews I obtained from the CA. The results are remarkably similar to those expressed by both officials. First, Figure 8 shows the global numbers and statistics of the demobilized population.

Both studies carried out in 2014 and the ACR 2015 database focused on the ex-combatant population that was in the process at the time (43.4% of those who entered the ERP). Figures 9 and 10 below show the satisfaction levels of beneficiaries regarding the ERP.

Figure 8. Global numbers



Source: Adapted from 'Hoja de Datos', ACR, 2015

Figure 9. Satisfaction levels regarding teachers and ACR officials

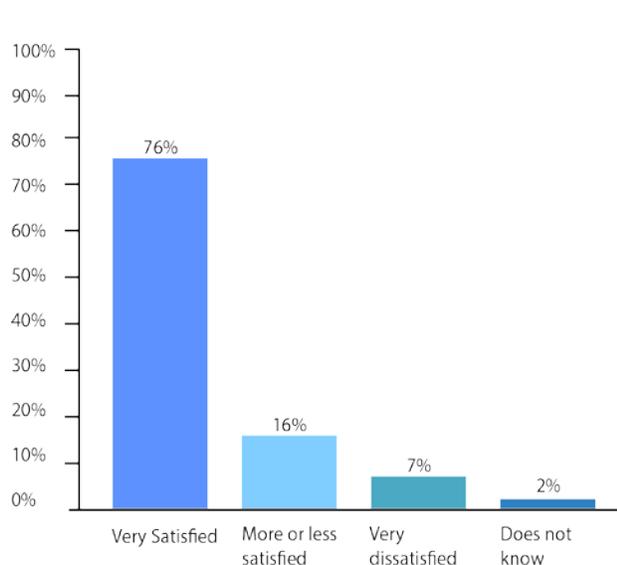
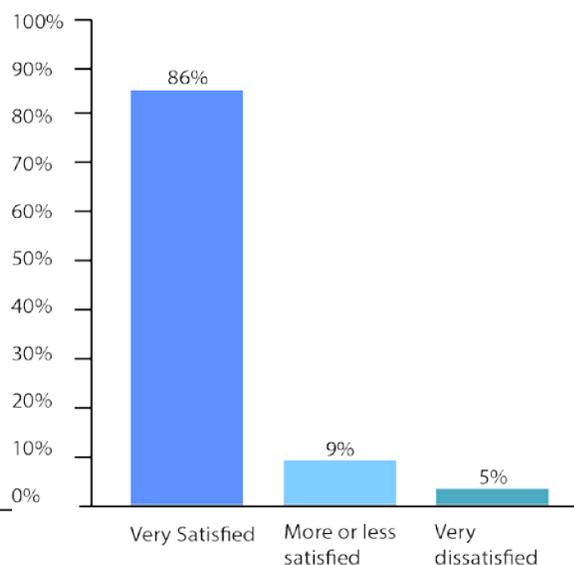


Figure 10. Satisfaction levels regarding the content and structure



Source: Elaborated with ACR 2015 database

As the figures show, satisfaction levels are high regarding both the content and structure of the ERP and the quality of the teachers implementing it. Furthermore, figures 11 and 12 show other positive aspects of the ERP highlighted in the survey.

Figure 11. Quality of life perceptions

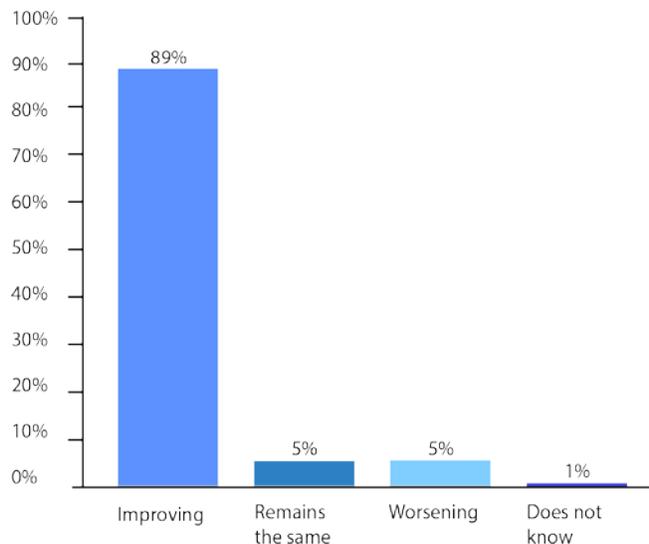
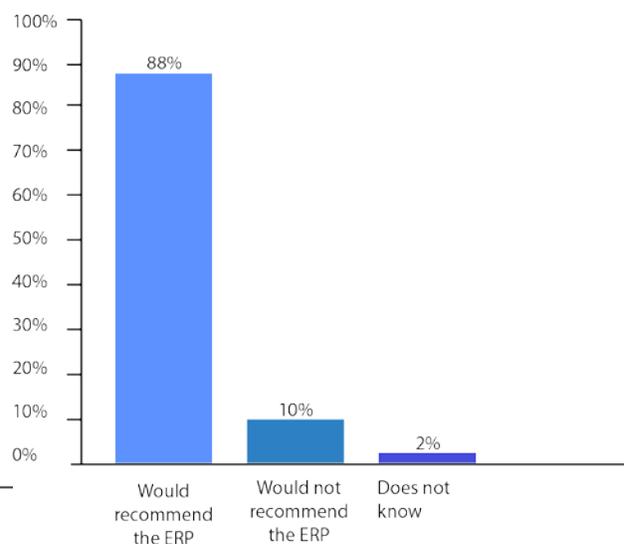


Figure 12. Percentage of ex-combatants that would recommend the ERP.



Source: Elaborated with ACR 2015 database

As noted earlier, with this data officials from the ACR, the MEN, and local municipalities tend to approve, justify, and even celebrate the ERP's content and structure and their roles in its design, implementation and evaluation processes. However, when looking closer at the data and the results from the CA of the interviews, critical aspects come to the fore that are commonly overlooked by general descriptive statistics.

While true that most beneficiaries are positive about the ERP, we must recall that the surveys were only carried out with those who entered the ERP, and were enrolled at the time, less than 50% of all the demobilized individuals. This means satisfaction surveys do not include the responses of those who demobilized but never entered the reintegration program (15.7% of the total who demobilized), those who dropped out (16% of the total who entered the ERP) and those who were under investigation and would possibly lose their benefits (21.4 % of the total who entered the ERP). Leaving aside those who never took part in the ERP, the fact is the views and perceptions of 31.7% of those who entered the ERP were being taken into account in satisfaction surveys. Why did they quit? Was it the curriculum? Was it the teachers? Was it the schedule? Was it the school? Was it for other reasons? We do not know. Since the focus of this investigation was on the ex-combatants that are currently following the program those outside of the ERP did not take part in it. This is an interesting matter that requires further research.

In addition, the views of a significant amount of those who did take part in the surveys are being neglected. A 76% approval from teachers and ACR officials implementing the program is an impressive result as is the 86% approval for the content and structure of the ERP. Also impressive is the fact that almost 90% of ex-combatants think that their quality of life is improving thanks to the ERP, and that they would recommend the program to other ex-combatants. However, what about the 24% who are not so positive about the performance of teachers and officials, and the 14% who are not satisfied with the content of the program, and the 10% that do not feel that their quality of life is improving.

Through interviews and focus groups with the diverse range of actors already mentioned, I learned, as mentioned before, that those who entered the guerrillas or the paramilitary because of ideological convictions are usually more critical of the ERP. They consider it a method of cooptation and do not believe in the government's commitment to reintegration and peace-building¹⁸. These include the individuals that decided not to take part in the ERP, or dropped out before completing the program.¹⁹ Reflecting on the testimonies of this dissatisfied group of participants, one finds a strong connection to Fraser's affirmative-transformative distinction. Dissatisfaction stems from the feeling that in reality nothing has changed. In their eyes, the injustices of the corrupt political and economic systems, and the elites that dominate them,

¹⁸ Interviews with Gabriel, Julian and Esteban. Former members of the FARC

¹⁹ Interview with a Legal Adviser at the ACR.

remain in place and are stronger than ever. In their minds, the whole reintegration policy merely affirms these injustices, rather than being a mechanism to transform them.

The number of interviews I carried out is in no way representative of the entire ex-combatant population, and therefore drawing general inferences from them would be flawed. However, the results from the CA resembled closely those of the quantitative analyses carried out by the ACR, the FIP, and *'Econometria'*. Of the 19 ex-combatants I interviewed, 16 were overtly positive about the ERP or did not have any serious complaints about it. Three of them were openly dissatisfied with the program. Dissatisfaction stemmed, on the one hand, from feeling discriminated against by teachers and fellow students. On the other hand, they believed that the curricular content of the program did not offer the necessary tools and knowledge in order to transform and deal with those societal issues that pushed them into taking up arms in the first place.

Dissatisfied ex-combatants are a minority because the majority of armed groups members did not join on account of ideological convictions. Estimates from the ACR, the National Department for Statistics (DANE), the National University, and the Andes University coincide in concluding that around 50% of all illegal armed group members were recruited by force in their teenage years (COALICO, 2013; ACR, 2015; DANE, 2015).²⁰ Another significant portion of them joined because illegal armed groups offered them a way of making a livelihood; for many youth living in poor conditions, insurgency became a means of escaping poverty. Furthermore, desires for vengeance are also a common reason for joining the guerrillas, the army or the paramilitaries. All those who joined for these various types of reasons (the majority) tend to be more positive towards the program, and this is well reflected in the statistics.

Nevertheless, the fact that there are no official channels for ex-combatants, teachers and communities to influence the evaluation process is counterproductive. The criticism stemming from dissatisfied beneficiaries could be a valuable input for improvement, but is being ignored since they represent a relatively small portion of the total amount of ex-combatants enrolled in the ERP.

How representative are the procedures and practices of the ERP?

The answer to our second sub-question is “not very.” The fact that there are no official channels through which communities and ex-combatants can influence the stages of policy elaboration, implementation and evaluation seriously goes against the understanding of representation here adopted.

²⁰ The data regarding ex-combatants reasons for entering armed groups was obtained in interviews with ACR officials and ex-combatants.

The discourse and the normativity of the ERP purposely define ex-combatants as participants, not as beneficiaries. This discursive change came about with the creation of the ACR in 2006. The idea behind it was to make clear that ex-combatants are the owners of their reintegration process; as political and social agents they take responsibility for the success or failure of their reintegration (ACR, 2011). However, as we have seen, when it comes to practice, the participation of ex-combatants is reduced to that of making choices from the available options in the educational system, and in some cases being able to demand a particular course. Rather they have been assigned the role of passive receivers, and not that of politically active and engaged participants. How can they be defined as 'participants' and the 'responsible' ones for the outcomes of the program when they are systematically excluded from taking part in the decisions that really matter (*e.g.*, the resource allocation model, curricular contents, pedagogical strategies, evaluation procedures)? As shown, there are schools where this participation does happen, but this has more to do with the particularities of each school and teacher, rather than with the ERP's policy process.

Furthermore, the satisfaction surveys that are periodically conducted and that, according to officials, have an impact on the policy process do not include the attitudes and perceptions of a significant part of the ex-combatant population. The criticism from dissatisfied beneficiaries could be valuable in finding ways to adjust and improve the program; this possibility is being excluded due to the decision-making structure at various stages in the policy process. Once again, we see how political will from below (schools and teachers) is a relevant factor in ensuring representation (in this case by enabling ex-combatants to take real ownership over the ERP). On the other hand, however, we see again the divergence that exists between the discourse and the normativity of the ERP and its actual practices. These practices affirm the problematic of misrepresentation, one of the main causes and drivers of the armed conflict and one of the main obstacles in the construction of vertical trust, an essential component for reconciliation.

Recognition

The recognition dimension deals with the curricular content of the ERP, in-class practices and dynamics, and the perspectives of students and teachers regarding them. This sub-chapter will provide an answer to the third sub-question: ***To what extent do the content and practices of the ERP explicitly recognize the diversity of social and political affiliations of ex-combatants?*** The 4R framework has so far been developed for, and applied in, contexts where armed conflicts rooted in issues related to ethnicity, religion, and culture. Logically, the framework stresses the need to study the degree to which the curricular contents and in-class practices deal properly with these issues. As explained in the context chapter, however, the Colombian conflict is rather rooted in issues of socio-economic inequalities, political exclusion, and poor policy concerning land property rights.

For these reasons, it was necessary to adapt the recognition dimension (conceptually speaking) for its application to the ERP and the Colombian context, which can be considered a step forward in the refinement and advancement of the framework itself, specially when thinking of its future application in similar contexts. Instead of focusing on issues of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language, the dimension of recognition here is rather concerned with the ways in which the curriculum and in-class practices deal with the history of the conflict, ex-combatants social, military and political affiliations, experiences, and the roles they played in the conflict. Thus, this chapter will elaborate on what Leroy and Nelissen (2000) define as the policy context, referring to the ways in which the policy influences and, in turn, is influenced by the economic, social, and political environment.

Curricular Content and In-class practices

The documents here analyzed are the academic curriculum that comprises the six cycles of the ERP, and that are directly related to the aspects mentioned above. These are the *social science, ethics and human values, and political constitution and democracy* courses. In addition to these, the training handbook for teachers (*Documento de Formación Docente*) has also been included. This document is the one provided to teachers, and is meant to prepare them for the implementation of the ERP.

The curricular content of these three courses crosscuts all levels of primary and secondary education in Colombia, and they are composed of academic disciplines like history, geography, philosophy and economics. The broad objectives of these courses are:

- To provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to comprehend the local, national and international realities (past and present) so that they are able to participate and transform them (MEN, 2016).
- Make students aware of their rights and duties as citizens of a constitutional democracy (MEN, 2016).

Given the emphasis placed on participation and transformation and the necessity to understand the past and the present, one would expect the history of the Colombian conflict and its participants to be of central importance. The roles that ex-combatants themselves played and their reasons for participating are especially important. However, as the results of the CA show, this is not the case. The frequency table for all the words and codes that compose the recognition code family can be found in [Appendix E](#).

The concepts, participants, content, and actions to which each of the words and codes refer are generally approached and explained in general terms and relatively few of the occurrences relate explicitly to the Colombian conflict. For example, twenty four of the total occurrences of 'conflict', a word related to the codes of *history of the conflict*

and *conflict resolution* have to do with cognitive conflicts, *i.e.*, with the obstacles that exist for the acquisition and improvement of cognitive capabilities. Another thirty-one occurrences are more related to the different forms of societal conflict that exist and the causes and consequences of these.²¹ We do find mention to the Colombian conflict, particularly on the curricular guidelines for the last two years of secondary education. The guidelines emphasize the importance of studying the causes and drivers of the Colombian armed conflict. However, these are only 10 of the 82 occurrences for 'conflict'.

The occurrences for the rest of the codes and words follow a similar trend, more aligned with what was described earlier in the theoretical framework as peace education. The curriculum focuses in fostering values of peaceful coexistence, respect for authority and institutions, human rights and citizen rights, and conflict resolution strategies that are not based on forms of violence. As all three teachers explained to me, the reason for this is that the ERP works with the same curriculum applied in regular primary and secondary education. The following quotes are illustrative in this respect:

- We work with the same textbooks that are used in class with children and teen-agers. It is our task to adapt the content for it to be relevant for an adult student. They know many things already. Every initiating course starts with a survey in order to get a grasp of what they know and what they don't. Then I can decide which topics I should emphasize. Topics related to peaceful conflict resolution and citizen rights and duties are always included. These are especially relevant for this population group. They must learn violence is not the way.²²
- It is also important to adapt the in-class activities, assignments, and homework. When you follow the same pedagogical strategy that is used with children and teen-agers, it is common to see a lack of interest by the students because these practices are not appropriate for an adult. Adult students see them as childish, making it difficult for them to remain committed since they don't see the relationship of what is being discussed in class and their daily life and struggles²³.

In the same manner the words related to each code were put through a frequency test, followed by a more latent CA for the teachers' ERP training manual. The results can be found in [Appendix F](#). The teachers' training manual is more balanced; while addressing general conceptions of conflict, conflict resolution and negotiation it also puts emphasis on the necessity to deal in the classroom with the Colombian armed conflict. [Table 6](#) below summarizes the aspects of the conflict that make part of every cycle of the ERP.

²¹ Curricular guidelines. See references

²² Interview with Gabriel, teacher implementing the ERP.

²³ Interview with Alejandro, teacher implementing the ERP.

Table 6. Curricular objectives related to the conflict per cycle

Cycle	Topics
1	The student recognizes, understands and applies adequate social behavioral norms
2	The student is able to distinguish between the different political and administrative models that have been implemented in Colombia throughout the years in order to understand the current divisions of power.
3	The student understand and acknowledges the postulates that legitimize the existence of the Colombian democratic state apparatus
4	The student analyzes the diverse forms through which Colombian society has organized itself during the XX century (social movements, students' movements, unions) in order to participate in political sphere and draws meaningful comparisons with the present.
5	The student is able to identify the key causes and drivers of the Colombian armed conflict.
6	The student understands and acknowledges how the International Humanitarian Law helps protect people in contexts of armed conflict like that of Colombia.

Source: Documento de Formación Docente (ACR, 2011, p. 163)

The first three cycles of the ERP are concerned with the general topics of peace education: behavioral norms and values, conflict resolution strategies based on dialogue and negotiation, citizens' rights and duties, and the institutional organization of the State apparatus and democracy. This is well reflected in the frequency of the respective codes (Recg_Cont_PeaceEdu & Recg_Cont_CivicEdu), where references to citizenship dominate the document (e.g., *cultura ciudadana*, *cidadania*, *derechos ciudadanos*).

During cycles four to six, more emphasis is placed on the Colombian conflict, its causes and drivers, and the instruments available to mitigate and resolve it. However, as the word distribution table shows ([Appendix E](#)), there is no mention of ex-combatants' past as militant members of armed groups.

The results of the CA show the curricular content and guidelines of the ERP lean more towards the standardized approach to peace education discussed earlier. Recalling the 4R framework, one would expect the roles of ex-combatants during the conflict and their experiences would be more central in the ERP curriculum, for both students and teachers. In addition to this neglect, a lot of emphasis is placed on the so called 'life project' (LP) (See [Appendixes A and B](#) for a detailed description of the curricular contents and possible career options related to each cycle). The LP starts during cycle one and goes until cycle six, and is primarily concerned, as its name suggests, with the plans ex-combatants have for their lives beyond the ERP.

The ERP recognizes three types of LP: Affective, Productive, and Citizen. Affective LP is concerned with the bonds that ex-combatants must build with family, friends, receptor communities, and society in general. In practice, as the documents show, this means celebrating in the classroom birthdays, holidays, and organizing activities with the community at the school. Citizen LP refers to ex-combatants future plans as citizens, in other words, how they can make use of their newly acquired status as members of civil society. For example, for those who want to become politically active, the ERP is supposed to aid them through the construction of their Citizen LP in acquiring the knowledge and skills they need in order to succeed. Lastly, the Productive LP is concerned with ex-combatant's future economic life, and emphasis is placed on the available options at their disposal regarding tertiary education and the labor market (ACR, 2011).

All together, the curricular contents and guidelines used in the ERP seem to be balanced in the inclusion of both the general topics and activities common to peace education and a more specific treatment of the Colombian conflict. However, the curriculum for students does not include ex-combatant's past experiences of warfare and insurgency nor are they recognized as political participants. In the handbook for teachers we do find explicit instructions that command teachers to engage with such topics, however, in practice this rarely happens (ACR, 2011). This is an important pitfall. The excessive emphasis on citizenship, democracy, and state institution seems to be more aligned with the LPT earlier discussed. Instead of questioning the societal structures (political, economic, and social) that generated the conflict, and/or other reasons that pushed them into taking up the arms, attention is placed on strengthening these structures, an affirmative strategy that goes against the 'transformative rhetoric' upon which the normativity that regulates the program is based.

When talking with ex-combatants and teachers, I wanted to know in detail how exactly they approached the Colombian conflict in the classroom. Unfortunately, since the academic year was already over in the schools, I was not able to attend and observe a class myself. Nevertheless, to my surprise, I learned through the interviews that the ERP as implemented today pays very little attention to the conflict and it neglects completely the experiences and roles that ex-combatants played in it. Furthermore, it became clear through interviews with teachers and ex-combatants that in practice the productive LP takes precedence over the other two.

Below you will read some of the statements from the three teachers I interviewed (17/11/2015) which are illustrative in this respect. As stated earlier, all three teach the ERP at three different schools in Bogota.

Gabriel expressed: "talking about the conflict is not going to help them finding a job". This phrase illustrates one of the reasons why this is happening. Despite all the noble language we find in the official documents of the ACR and the MEN, and in the curriculum itself, the productive LP is more important than the other two. Job related

skills and knowledge receive more attention, not only from teachers, but also from ex-combatants themselves. One of the ex-combatants from the FARC said:

The reintegration program will not last forever. It will end soon, and the only thing that will remain with me is my diplomas and what I learned. With that I can find a job. I can look after myself. I do not come here to talk about the war, I am done with that. I come here to learn.

Other ex-combatants positive about the program expressed similar views.

Ignacio, another teacher stated:

They are here to learn, and I am here to teach. I do not need to know about their pasts in order to do that. In fact, I do not want to know which ones of them members of armed groups. Other students might feel uncomfortable and it has led to problems in the past.

I consider this to be one of main reasons why the past activities and experiences of ex-combatants in the conflict are not being dealt with in the classroom, even though required by the training handbook for teachers. As noted earlier, in practice, classes include both ex-combatants and other adults enrolled in primary and secondary education as well. This second group of adults falls under a different program, and the funding for them comes from different sources. In practice, however, they share the classroom with ex-combatants, and usually they are not even aware of it. As Ignacio's quote shows, not even the teacher wants to know who is, and who is not, an ex-combatant in order to avoid differential treatment. This differential treatment is what the teacher referred to as 'past problems'. As another ex-combatant explained:

As soon as they know you used to be from the guerrillas they treat you differently, they look at you differently. Not so much the teachers, but others in the class. I used to receive classes at a different school. When our classmates found out we used to be part of the FARC, they did not want to work with us anymore, some of them even quit because of that.

Thus, an additional factor standing in the way of dealing with the diversity of political affiliations and military experiences through in-classroom practices is the overriding problem of discrimination and stigmatization against the ex-combatant population. This discrimination and exclusion is widespread in all spheres of the Colombian society. Understandably, it is present, and affects the classroom dynamics of the ERP as well. An ACR official corroborated this when she expressed:

The mixed classroom approach that brings ex-combatants and other adults together has given rise to these types of issues in the past when schools and teachers straight forward from the beginning, let everyone know there ex-combatants in the classroom. The solution has been to avoid saying it.

Then she pointed out to yet another obstacle:

It is as well a problem of practicality. In Bogota, there is huge demand for both the ERP and other educational programs for adults. Given the resources at our disposal in terms of money and time this is so far the best option we have.

Alejandro, one of the teachers, further elaborated on this when he expressed said:

We do talk about the conflict except from a general historical perspective. We do discuss the causes and drivers of the conflict, but not the experiences of ex-combatants in it. You must realize we are compressing eleven years of full time schooling into five years, with only two or three classes, of three to six hours per week. There is no time to get into details. Besides, if they have issues regarding their past experiences they can discuss it with the psychologist. That is part of the program and they go there every week.

The comment of this teacher reflects the fact that the political, social and military affiliations of ex-combatants are not at the center of the ERP. Instead, these are pushed towards the psychosocial component of the reintegration policy, or to extra-curricular activities that are organized by NGOs and communities in the school.

Together, these are the main reasons, all interrelated, that explain why ex-combatant's roles in the conflict and their motivations for doing so are not at the center of the ERP. First, there seems to be a hidden curriculum in place. Giroux and Penna (2012, p. 21) describe the hidden curriculum as the *"covert pattern of socialization that prepares students to function in the existing workplace and in other social/political spheres."* This conclusion is also derived from the interview with one MEN official that was quoted saying "the priority is that they produce, not that they reintegrate." Some MEN and ACR officials, just like Alberto and other dissatisfied ex-combatants are very critical of the curriculum and in-class practices of the ERP. They perceive the implementation practices as not being sufficiently concerned with the reintegration and reconciliation objectives of the policy, but rather with the market and security imperatives of the LPT, more aligned with the guidelines of IOs that promote intensive labor as a quick alternative solution especially suited for ex-combatants.

This hidden curriculum is also evident when we see the overemphasis that is placed on inculcating obedience to institutions and authority (see [Appendixes E and F](#) for the CA results). While most ex-combatants do not seem to have a problem with this, those who are more politically active and that joined the guerrillas because of ideological convictions do have a harsh criticism against the ERP. One of such ex-combatants expressed (15/12/2015):

It makes us feel like we are wrong and sick. Most people joined armed groups because that's what their life circumstances brought them to: poverty, exclusion, and abandonment. The government's response is to say that there

are millions of other poor people that did not join the armed groups, and based on that, categorizes ex-combatants as mentally incapable of living in peace and in need of therapy. The only thing they teach you here is to accept our defeat, learn that we are wrong, respect 'authority', and get a shitty job.

To what extent do the content and practices of the ERP explicitly recognize the diversity of social and political affiliations of ex-combatants?

The ERP's rhetoric does explicitly recognize the necessity to deal with the past of ex-combatants in relation to the armed conflict, the history of the conflict itself, and the views and experiences of ex-combatants as political and social agents. However, as we have seen, in practice, this is rarely the case. The fears of teachers and students of being discriminated and excluded is one of the main reasons. Another important variable here is that most of the teachers and students perceive that the school and the classroom is the place where they go to learn useful things for their future, often related to finding a job and the labor market. Talking about the past and their roles in the conflict is not why they are there. They are perfectly comfortable talking about the conflict in history class, but that remains a detached way of studying the topic for people who experienced it firsthand. Furthermore, the fact that the ERP is within the standard academic curriculum used in the country for children and teenagers translates to the result that it is not a comfortable fit to engage deeply and critically with the conflict, the reasons why they joined, why they left, and how they perceive their new role as citizens. Emphasis is placed on standard peace education, conflict resolution, negotiation, and respect for authority and institutions.

The views of those who ideologically motivated to join the armed groups are, however, different. As the last quote above shows, for this group of ex-combatants the fact that their experiences and the injustices that generated the conflict are not at the center of the ERP's content and practices is considered outrageous. This is closely related to the findings of the representation sub-chapter. The discourse of the reintegration policy frames ex-combatants as participants and owners of their own processes; however, in practice, the content is given to them, and the methodology is determined by others.

Schools and teachers who take the ERP seriously compensate for this shortcoming in the classroom by (as noted earlier) opening up the school as a space to facilitate the interface between ex-combatants, victims, and communities. Here, the role of NGOs (especially the ones mentioned in the redistribution sub-chapter) becomes important. They facilitate bridging the gap among these groups, so essential for fostering relationships of horizontal trust and reconciliation. However, for this to occur, teachers and schools must be willing to engage. Ultimately, it comes down once again to the political will of these to find ways in order to do what is needed. The schools I visited and the teachers to whom I spoke were certainly very involved. This might have to do with the fact that my gatekeepers were ACR officials. As such, they had an interest in letting me observe only the best of the program, the schools where it was

being properly implemented and the best teachers in each of them. My sample is certainly biased in that sense.

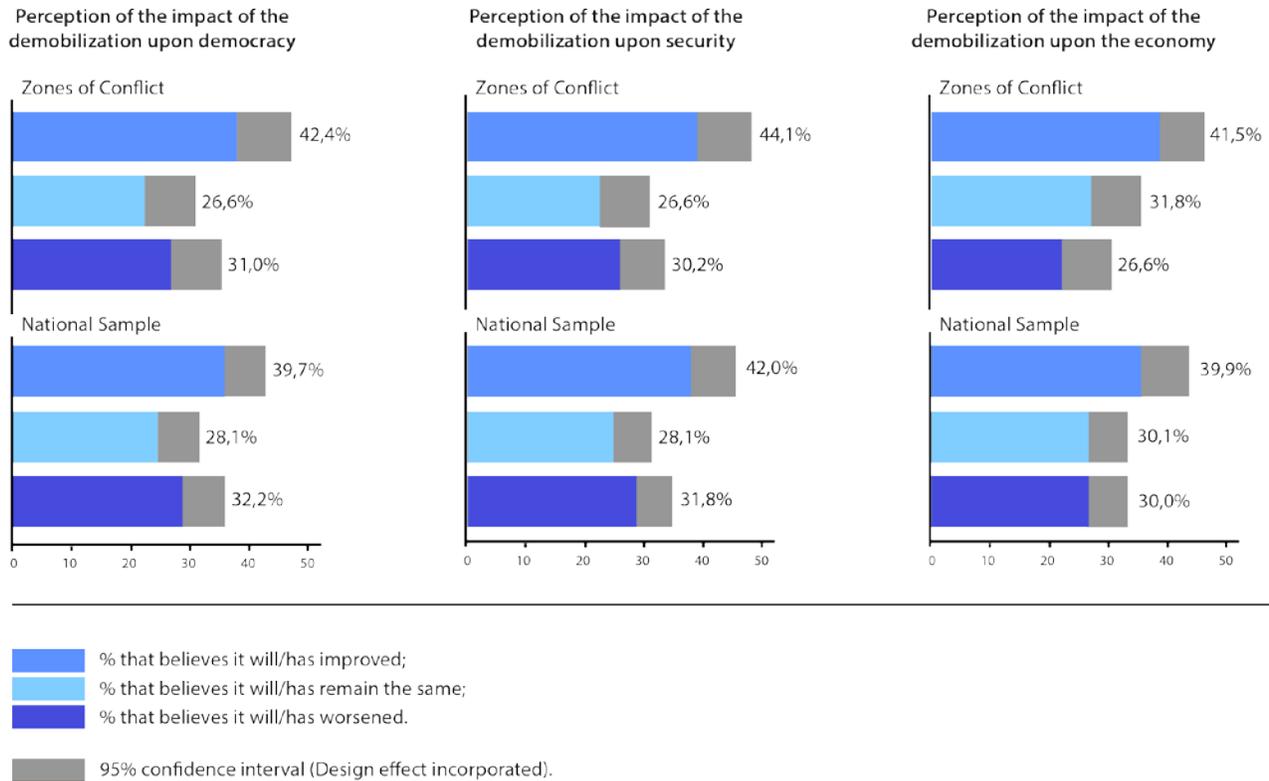
Nonetheless, the ACR officials, some of whom are ex-combatants themselves and had witnessed first hand the evolution of the ERP, were always honest about the bigger picture, and never tried to present those three schools as being representative of all the others. In fact, thanks to their input and openness, I can conclude with confidence that the ERP does not recognize ex-combatants political, social, and military affiliations and experiences at the level of in-class practices. Despite the explicit statements we find in the academic curriculum and the handbook for teachers (reflecting the normativity), most of the schools in the country apply a standardized ERP geared towards quick results and employment, implicitly concealing a hidden curriculum that is at odds with the objectives of a positive reintegration, thereby affirming the injustice of exclusionary politics that lies at the heart of direct violence in Colombia. The CA of the academic curriculum, the teachers training manual, and the interviews with these two groups show once again the disconnection between the content and the rhetoric of the ERP on the one hand, and the actual way it is being put into practice on the other.

Reconciliation

This final sub-chapter will deal with the dimension of reconciliation, and thus with the fourth sub-question: ***Are the outcomes of the ERP sufficiently reconciliatory?*** When thinking about reconciliation in relation to the ERP, as stated in the theoretical framework, we must reflect on the ways in which the outcomes of the program have helped in building vertical and horizontal trust (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015). Thus, emphasis is placed on the degree to which the policy effects have improved the relations between individuals, groups, and institutions at the school, community, and national levels.

Different sources of data have been used in order to answer the question: the ACR 2015 data base, survey data collected by Vanderbilt University, and the results from the CA of the interviews and the focus groups. [Figure 13](#) below shows the results of a large scale survey carried out by Vanderbilt University under its Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). As can be seen from the results, a considerable number of Colombians (41.5% to 44.1%) think that the demobilization and reintegration processes have had, and will continue to have, a positive impact on the country's democracy, security, and economy, while 26.6% to 31.8% think it has had no impact whatsoever. A minority of 30% believes it has been detrimental to the above-mentioned societal aspects.

Figure 13. Impacts of the reintegration policy

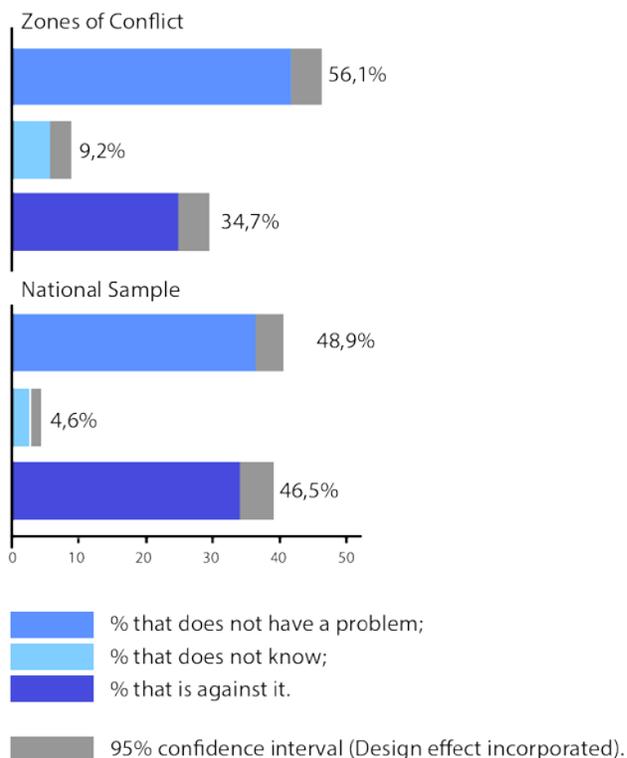


Source: Adapted from LAPOP 2015

When asked about their positions regarding a hypothetical scenario an ex-combatant will become their neighbor, Colombians show mixed attitudes, as the results in [figure 14](#) demonstrates. An interesting finding points out to the fact that people living in the areas most affected by the conflict are slightly more receptive to the idea of having an ex-combatant as a neighbor. At the national level, however, the results show an almost even result, with around 50% of the population being in favor and 50% against. Even though the levels of acceptance are not incredibly high, it is worth noting that ten years ago a 50% favorable attitude towards having an ex-combatant as a neighbor was unthinkable.

Figure 14. Ex-combatant as a neighbor

Having an ex-combatant as a neighbor

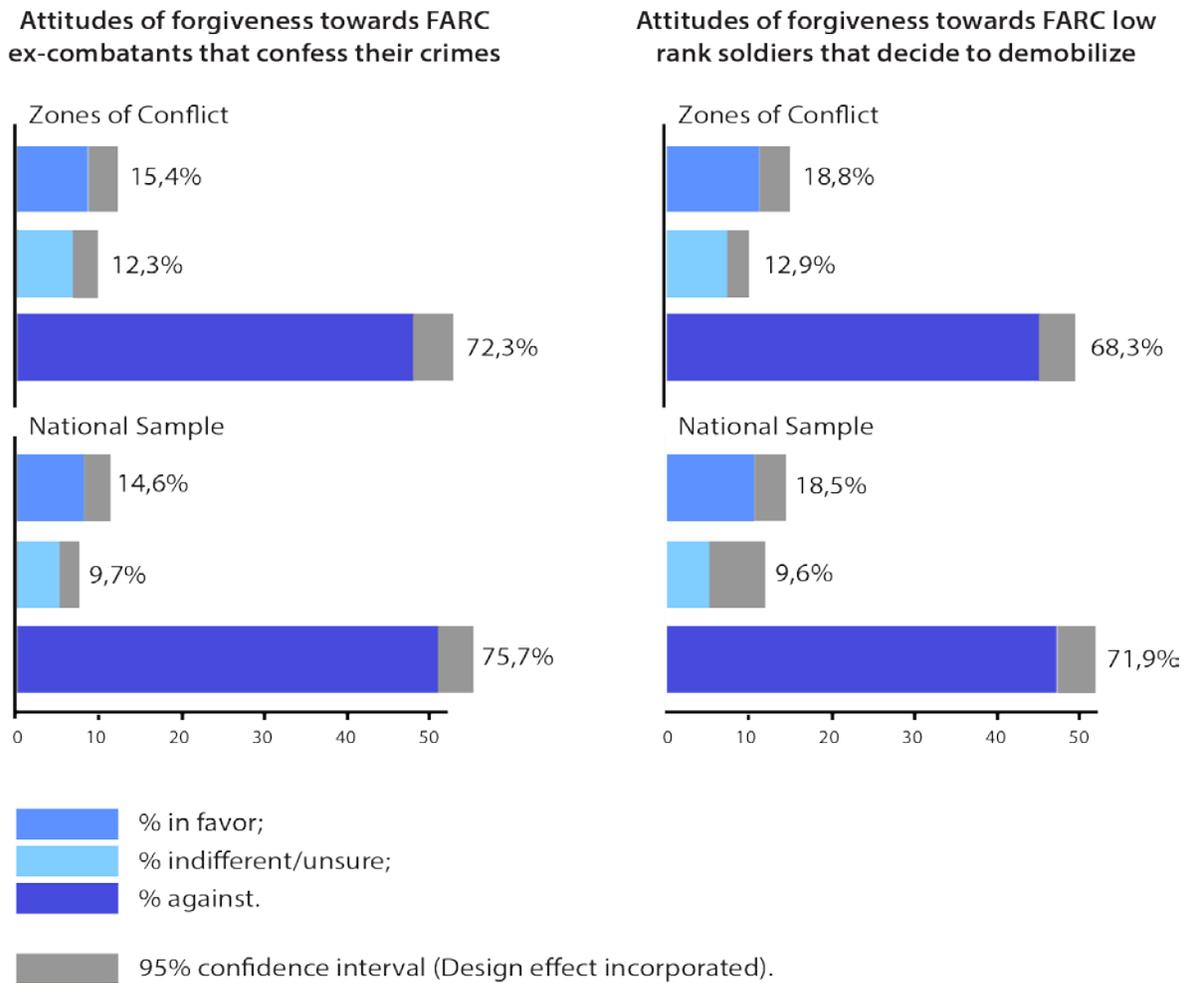


The attitudes of the Colombian population towards the reintegration policy and demobilized individuals have become increasingly positive since the 1990's. However, while being positive about the program is certainly an important first step towards reconciliation, it is still poor measure of reconciliation, especially when you consider that 30% of the population still thinks the reintegration of ex-combatants will not bring any positive impacts to the democracy, the economy, and the security of the country.

Source: Adapted from LAPOP 2015

The survey included as well a set of questions directly related to the dimension of reconciliation. Respondents asked about their willingness to forgive ex-combatants. Figure 15 below show the results. When explicitly asked about forgiveness, results show Colombians are not ready or willing to let go of the past. Interestingly, in the same way as in the previous figures we see how attitudes in the most affected areas are slightly more positive than in the national sample. Nevertheless, around 70% of the Colombian population openly declares itself incapable or unwilling to forgive ex-combatants. Another 10% is indifferent. The results appear to be quite contradictory. On the one hand, we have a significant part of the population that recognizes the contribution that the reintegration policy does to the country; on the other hand however, we see how another equally significant part still holds to fear, hatred, and mistrust.

Figure 15. Attitudes of forgiveness



Source: Adapted from LAPOP 2015

Furthermore, a survey conducted by University of the Andes (2015) focused on the perception of the population towards the possibility of ex-combatants participating in politics. The specific question required respondents to answer whether they are in favor, against, or indifferent to the possibility of an ex-combatant running for office, be it the congress, the senate, or local councils. Results showed around 70% of the Colombian population is against any scenario that entails the political participation of ex-combatants, be it forming a political party, running for office, or even assuming a role of leadership at the community level.

The data stemming from the survey reflects very well the current political landscape of Colombia. Since 2012, when the government started negotiations with the FARC, the Colombian population has become extremely polarized on the issue of the peace

agreement and the reintegration of ex-combatants. A significant number of Colombians sees military defeat as the only viable option to end the conflict and is completely against the benefits that are given to ex-combatants that enter the reintegration program.

The reason why this information is presented at the start of the chapter is because I want to contrast the findings of my research against this data. During my visits to receptor communities and schools, and the focus groups and interviews I conducted with community leaders, teachers, and students, I did not observe or experience the unwillingness to forgive that the survey results show. Quite the contrary, from day one I encountered open communities that are very active in the process of reintegration. As one of the community leaders said: "We were very scared at first, we did not know what to expect. But once we got to know them, we understood they just needed help and an opportunity."

In the various interviews I conducted with ACR officials and ex-combatants, discrimination and stigmatization was always identified as the biggest obstacles to reintegration. The communities where the ERP is properly implemented are usually brought into the process through the community service component of the curriculum, and the activities that are organized by schools, where victims, ex-combatants, and receptor communities come together in order to talk about the conflict and their experiences. As noted in the previous sub-chapter, however, this level of involvement is not uniform across the city, let alone the country. The school directors and teachers I had contact with have made continuous efforts for years in order to build a bridge between the members of the receptor communities with the ex-combatant population, thus opening up the school as a space for communication, thereby fostering the horizontal trust that is required for reconciliation.

There have not been any official or independent surveys conducted specifically on the attitudes and perceptions of receptor communities towards ex-combatants. All we have is national surveys. Based on my fieldwork, however, I would argue that acceptance levels are much higher in these communities than the rest of the country. A lot of it has to do, I think, with the space that has been given in the ERP for the interaction between ex-combatants and the communities in which they reside.

The schools I visited happen to be very open in this respect; they organize activities with community members on a regular basis as a way to compensate for what is not being dealt with in class. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the pasts of ex-combatants as insurgents and their political views are not a subject of discussion in the classroom. By these activities, schools try to comply with the guidelines provided by the ACR and the MEN through other means. In such activities, it is common to see ex-combatants sharing their experiences of warfare, how they were recruited, how and why they left, and their views and plans for the future. Community members and victims actively participate as well.

An important limitation of this study lies precisely in the fact that the involvement of receptor communities and victim groups in the ERP stayed in the margins. This had to

do with issues of time and access. As with the case of teachers, future research could profit greatly from focusing on the activities, perceptions and attitudes of communities within the ERP and towards it.

Are the outcomes of the ERP sufficiently reconciliatory?

Regarding this sub-question, I think the outcomes are reconciliatory in so far the families and receptor communities are included in the process and the school becomes a place where not only academic knowledge relevant for the labor market is provided, but actors can also interact and share their views and experiences of war. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. As stated earlier, my gatekeeper at the ACR brought me to schools and communities with very positive experiences, so my impressions might be biased. However, she was honest in admitting that such positive results were dependent on the initiative of students, communities, and schools. In many cases the various actors involved in the ERP are not as equally committed, and this circumstance diminishes the reconciliatory outcomes of the program.

Furthermore, as we have seen in the findings from previous sub-chapters, there are various factors, related to each of the dimensions that stand in the way of reconciliation. The resource allocation model and the benefits of the programs in general are generating tensions in the Colombian population. This tension is particularly strong with respect to members of other vulnerable population groups, who perceive that the benefits of the reintegration policy are a reward for the crimes committed by ex-combatants. This is well reflected by the results of the surveys carried out by the Vanderbilt, and the Andes Universities.

In relation to the representation dimension, the lack of official channels for ex-combatants to have an influence upon the policy process from elaboration to evaluation significantly diminishes the capacity of the ERP to foster vertical trust from the part of the ex-combatants towards State institutions. This is especially true for those ex-combatants that joined armed groups because of ideological convictions. Recalling the context chapter, the problem of exclusion (misrepresentation) at the political, economic, and social levels has been one of the historical causes of the conflict. The ERP, as the mechanism for reintegration and peace building, therefore be based on transforming that top-down hierarchical decision-making model that lies at the heart of the conflict. In practice, we see how the lack of participation channels reinforces and affirms this model instead. The general picture (leaving aside the few successful cases) is that the reintegration process for many ex-combatants too often means going back to the same conditions of marginalization that pushed them into taking up arms.

The same holds true for the recognition dimension. Even though the discourse of the policy, the rhetoric of government officials, and the normativity of ERP conceive ex-

combatants as political agents, in practice the exercise of that agency is being denied since in-class practices revolve around the market imperative of LPT and a superficial approach to peace education where the experiences and perceptions of ex-combatants are not placed at the center. This reinforces exclusionary practices that are detrimental to the construction of the vertical and horizontal trust that are essential for reconciliation and building a more socially just society.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To what extent can the current educational program for ex-combatants contribute to their positive reintegration?

The focus of this research, its theoretical lens, methodology, and findings offer important insights into the extent of the contribution that education can make to achieve sustainable peace building through the reintegration process of ex-combatants. Adopting the 4R framework as a theoretical lens and analytical tool allowed me to overcome the narrow understanding of reintegration often used by governments and IOs working in the DDR policy field. This narrow conception of reintegration limits the understanding of a successful reintegration to high rates of employment and low rates of relapse into violence. The outcomes of the ERP and the reintegration policy as a whole in Colombia are remarkable in this respect. The employment and relapse into violence rates of those who completed the ERP are 90% and 30% respectively (Contraloría, 2014; ACR, 2015). However, while important, these two indicators alone allow little insight into the actual content, structure, practices, and the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the policy process and its outcomes.

The four dimensional framework developed by the RCEP (2015), in combination with the policy analysis categories developed by Leroy and Nilssen (2000) provided a better suited approach to the study of the ERP at both the theoretical and practical levels. The point of departure was a broader, and more inclusive understanding of what reintegration means. A positive reintegration was here defined as the processes of personal and societal transformation by which ex-combatants acquire the necessary material, cognitive, and affective capabilities that will allow them to participate on equal footing in society.

Not being limited by narrow indicators, the approach allowed greater insight into previously unexplored aspects of the ERP: the normativity of the program, its sociological, philosophical, and pedagogical foundations, the perspectives of a broad set of stakeholders involved the policy process, the academic curriculum, and the in-class practices and dynamics. The results from the analysis reveal that there is a remarkable difference between the government's discourse and rhetoric regarding the ERP program and the normativity that regulates it and the actual practices and processes through which the ERP is being implemented. This holds true for all the dimensions of the framework. While the rhetoric, discourse, and normativity fall in line with the definition of a positive reintegration here adopted, the practices fall short of that objective, and in some cases these are a direct obstacle to a positive reintegration.

Future research should further refine the framework for its application in contexts such as the Colombian situation (ongoing conflict) by making the theory more detailed and context sensitive and the methodology more robust, thereby addressing

any shortcomings of this investigation. As stated in the limitations sub-chapter, the sample size of the respondents is not representative of the entire ex-combatant, teacher, school, and receptor community populations, making it hard to draw generalizations, even for the Colombian context alone. Furthermore, the coding scheme used to analyze the interviews and documents became problematic when confronted with the canons of content analysis methodology. Because the 4R framework is an organic model, the inherent relationships among its dimensions at both the theoretical and practical levels made it difficult to create mutually exclusive and exhaustive codes and categories. Moreover, the validity of the method rests upon the idea of a well-elaborated coding manual that would ideally allow multiple coders to code the same text in the exact same way, thus making the results reliable and replicable. The fact that I was the only coder, together with the problem of overlapping codes and categories, diminishes the strength of the results.

Nevertheless, the findings of this investigation, and the lessons we can draw from them are relevant in order to fill the knowledge gaps that remain in this new field of academic inquiry. This holds true specifically for the schools, teachers, and communities I had access to, which as stated before, apply certain good practices that are the exception rather than the rule. The political will of local authorities, school directors, and teachers has proven to be essential in addressing issues related to redistribution, securing financial resources, and overseeing the activities of every institution and participant involved in order to prevent corruption. Likewise, issues of representation could be properly addressed when there is the will to do so by granting ex-combatants a voice and a vote when it comes to decision-making throughout the policy process. Moreover, regarding the recognition dimension, the will of teachers and directors to deal critically with the history of the Colombian conflict, the specific reasons ex-combatants had for joining armed groups, and their experiences and perspectives is essential in properly addressing issues of misrecognition. As we have seen however, this rarely happens in the classroom. Some schools try to make up for this shortcoming by organizing integration activities with communities and victim's groups in and outside the classroom. In relation to reconciliation, channels of participation allowing ex-combatants to influence decision-making throughout the policy process will generate positive relations of vertical trust because ex-combatants will feel that their voices are being heard by authorities and this will have a positive impact on the program. Positive relations of horizontal trust on the other hand are generated when directors and teachers provide the time and space within the school to allow for interaction between ex-combatants, fellow classmates, victims, and community members.

If the ERP followed this trend uniformly throughout the country, we could talk about a positive reintegration. However, as the analysis showed, this political will can only be found in very specific schools and municipalities (e.g., Bogota, and the three schools I had access to). The mismatch that exists between the normativity, the discourse, and rhetoric on the one hand and the actual practices on the other have resulted in an asymmetrical pattern of practices, perspectives, and outcomes. In order to make the ERP more redistributive as a policy, steps should be taken to modify the rules of the

allocation model so that municipalities are obliged by law to allocate resources for the ERP's implementation. A possible solution to the problem of clientelism and corruption could be to prevent private contractors from implementing the model. If implementation rested solely in the hands of public schools, which are under direct oversight of central governmental authorities, such bad practices would be more difficult to carry out. This matter requires further investigation however; a valuable focus for future research. Furthermore, such changes should be accompanied by a commitment from the government to provide equal attention to other vulnerable population groups, in order to avoid tensions and future conflicts that stay in the way of horizontal trust building.

Regarding representation, a policy intended to reintegrate ex-combatants should allow them to have a direct influence on decision-making throughout the policy process, thereby giving them *de facto* ownership of the ERP. The ACR, MEN, and municipal authorities, together with schools directors and teachers, should realize that the easy way is not always the best way. Neglecting to deal with ex-combatants' experiences, and roles in the conflict through every day, in-class practices is in direct opposition to the understanding of representation, recognition, and reconciliation. Dialogue and debate over sensitive issues that lie at the heart of the conflict are the basis from which transformative strategies arise and socially-just arrangements are constructed. Lastly, in relation to reconciliation, it is necessary to recreate at a national level the initiatives that are taking place in certain schools and communities, where interaction between groups is fostered by opening the school as a space for dialogue and debate. The contrast that exists between the levels of acceptance of the ex-combatant population in receptor communities and the population in general is telling. This contrast reflects primarily the lack of interaction between ex-combatants and the general public; and the lack of knowledge by the latter about reintegration policy. The ways in which positive relations have been built at the receptor community level can provide valuable knowledge as to how to build bridges between the general public and ex-combatants, thereby fostering reconciliation, and ultimately, a sustainable peace scenario.

As has been shown, both academia and public policy are in need of well-informed research that grasps the complexity of social conflicts and is not constrained by reductionist understandings and theories like the LPT. This investigation proves that the 4R framework is not only applicable to the study of curricula and teacher's agencies in contexts of post-conflict, but it is also a valuable analytical tool for the study of educational policies in contexts of ongoing conflict, as it also focuses on policy makers, civil society, government officials, and academics.

Today, 24th of June 2016, as I write the final words of this thesis, many in Colombia celebrate the agreement reached between the government and the FARC. Last night, the negotiators from both sides announced a permanent bilateral cease-fire, and an agreement as to where and how the FARC are to disarm and demobilize. The reintegration will start after these first two stages are completed, in approximately six to nine months. Estimates indicate the reintegration policy will need to accommodate

about twenty thousand new ex-combatants from the FARC, about a hundred percent increase since there are currently around twenty thousand ex-combatants in the process. Contrary to what analysts had attested since 2012 when the negotiations started (and what I myself believed), the reintegration of the FARC will not take place as happened with the thirty thousand paramilitary that demobilized in 2003. That demobilization occurred primarily in the large cities of the country. The FARC demobilization and reintegration will occur in the rural areas where the FARC have lived and waged war for the last fifty years. These areas are where the reintegration policy, and thus the ERP, have been weakest, where the inequality of resources is greatest, where teachers are poorly trained, and where schools have very precarious capabilities of infrastructure and 'know how' when it comes to the reintegration of ex-combatants.

This new scenario presents both a great challenge and a window of opportunity for the State to enter these areas of the country that historically have been marginalized, impoverished, and affected by the conflict, and thereby bring to its inhabitants the benefits of the rapid and steady political, social, and economic developments that other parts of the country have experienced and benefitted from over the past 10 years. However, if not handled correctly, the result could be the continuation and worsening of the armed conflict. In order not to relapse into the latter, the positive reintegration of the ex-combatants will be key and the role of education essential.

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Appendix A

Curricular contents for ERP per cycle

Educational level	Especial integrated cycles	Duration	Subjects	Title
Primary	1 (1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd grades)	40 weeks	-Alphabetization (Basic numeracy and literacy skills) Natural Sciences - Social Sciences (History, Geography, Political Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship) -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -‘Life Project’	Primary Education Certificate
	2 (4 th and 5 th grades)	40 weeks	-Natural Sciences - Social Sciences (History, Geography, Political Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship) -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -‘Life Project’	
Secondary	3 (6 th and 7 th grade)	40 weeks	-Natural Sciences - Social Sciences (History, Geography, Political Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship) -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -‘Life Project’	Secondary Education Certificate
	4 (8 th and 9 th grade s)	40 weeks	-Natural Sciences - Social Sciences (History, Geography, Political Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship) -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -Community Service	
	5 (10 th grade)	22 weeks	-Natural Sciences - Political and Economic Sciences -Philosophy -Technology and Informatics -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -Economic Project	
	6 (11 th grade)	22 weeks	-Natural Sciences - Political and Economic Sciences -Philosophy -Technology and Informatics -Mathematics -Spanish language and Literature -English -Economic Project	
Total	5 years			

Appendix B

Early exits and tertiary educational options

Early Exit	Possible at end of cycle	Career type in tertiary education	Duration	Career Examples
1	2	Vocational Training	6 months/880 hours	-Heavy machinery operator -Electrician -Bartender -Call center worker -Bakery
2	4	Technical	12 months	-Aquaculture -Physical trainer -Administrative assistant
3	6	Technological/Professional	24 months	-Analysis and development of information systems -Marketing -Logistics -Multimedia production

Source: Adapted from (ACR, b2011, p. 22).

Appendix C

Normativity that regulates the ERP

Type	Name	Content
Laws	Law 115 from 1994	The ' <i>Ley General de Educación</i> ' from 1994 is the legal basis of all educational policies in Colombia. It established the structure of the educational sector, the different modalities of service provision, resource allocation and the rules of design, implementation and evaluation for all the actors and institutions involved in education.
	Law 119 from 1994	Established in detail the functions of the SENA as the national institution in charge of providing vocational, technical and technological education. These educational programs must be in line with the demands of the target population and the socio-economic context in which their carried out.
	Law 489 from 1998	Refined the principles of <i>coordination</i> and <i>decentralization</i> that are at the core of educational policy in Colombia. Based on coordination the law established the roles of each institution and actor involved in educational policy and the synergies between them.
		Based on decentralization responsibilities and tasks were moved from the central level to the regional, and local levels.
	Law 715 from 2001	Defines the rules and procedures for the allocation of financial resources to the ERP. Economic resources are to be allocated through the 'Sistema general de Participaciones' (SGP) to municipalities.
	749 from 2002	Further refined the rules and rights of ex-combatants to access vocational, technical and technological education; and the requirements educational institutions providing the service have to fulfill.
	3011 from 1996	Established for the first time the right of the adult population to access formal primary and secondary education through flexible educational programs that would lead to an official diploma.
Decrees	1528 from 2002	Modified the rules of the SGP budget allocation system to include adults into the beneficiaries, so that municipalities with scarce financial resources could serve the demand in their territories.
	249 from 2004	Established the rules and guidelines for the inclusion of the private sector as providers and implementers of the ERP.
	249 from 2004	Guarantees the entrance of ex-combatants into institutions of technical and technological education.

Resolutions	4904 from 2009	Vocational training that previous to this date was on the hands of the private sector in the form of informal education and did not offer official certificates was brought to be part of the official educational system.
	166 from 2003	Regulates the exchange of information between the institutions involved in the implementation of the ERP.
	2533 from 2005	Officially recognizes ex-combatants as a vulnerable population group, thereby making it mandatory for every municipality to facilitate their entrance into educational institutions.
	5360 from 2006	Establishes procedures for quality evaluation and capacity projection of the ERP, delegating these to the municipalities and educational institutions themselves.

Source: Self elaborated

Appendix D

Institutions/Actors roles according to the normativity

Institution/Actor	Functions/Responsibilities
MEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee the necessary financial resources through the allocation of the SGP for municipalities implementing the ERP. • Providing extra resources to municipalities who can prove the ones they have are not sufficient • Offer support and counseling to municipalities regarding the practical matters of the ERP's implementation. Such as pedagogic practices and didactic materials. • Facilitate the official accreditation of all the academic cycles that compose the ERP.
ACR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the implementation of the ERP across the country • Offer counseling to municipalities and educational institutions regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ERP. • Select the municipalities that will have to implement the ERP based on the demand there exist in their territories. • Provide resources to municipalities who do not have what is necessary for its implementation. • Select and distribute across educational institutions the individual ex-combatants that are to take part in the ERP. • Promote the inclusion of the private sector in the implementation of the ERP. • Management of the reintegration database '<i>Sistema Integrado de Gestión para la Reintegración</i>' (SIGER).
Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the ERP as the ACR and the MEN have designed it. • Adapt the ERP model to the local context and conditions if necessary. • Make explicit mention of the municipalities commitment to the reintegration process in official documents. • Designate a local operator for the ERP • Select the schools that will implement the ERP based on their previous experiences with ex-combatants and other vulnerable population groups and their administrative and infrastructure capacity. • Carry out in conjunction with educational institutions periodic evaluations of the ERP's performance. • Select the teachers that will implement the model and the payment method. • Report information to be included in the SIGER accurately and on time to the ACR and the MEN. • Include teachers and school directives in the process of adaptation of the ERP and its evaluation.
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an institutional plan on how the school will implement the ERP, maintaining its core methodological and pedagogical practices and strategies. • Report information to be included in the SIGER accurately and on time to the municipal authorities. • Actively search and promote the necessary institutional synergies with institutions of higher education and the private sector in order to facilitate ex-combatant's transition from secondary to tertiary education and the labor market. • Facilitate the use of institutional resources for the implementation of the model. • Carry out auto evaluations of the ERP's performance. • Responsible for the capacitation of teachers on the implementation of the model. • Certify every cycle ex-combatants complete.
SENA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the entrance of ex-combatants to the institution in order to follow the courses on vocational, technical and technological education they wish to take part on. • Designate a person within the institution in charge of overseeing the progress of the ex-combatant students. • Work closely with municipalities and schools in order to adapt and improve the ERP to local conditions. • Report information to be included in the SIGER accurately and on time to the ACR and the MEN. • Inform and train teachers and directives on the demands posed by this particular population group. <p>□ • The role of teachers in ERP is conceived in the normativity and the official documents from the MEN and the ACR as that of being the <i>de facto</i> implementers of the program. They are the bridge between ex-combatants, their families, receptor communities and the educational authorities. Given that together with schools they are the closest to ex-</p>

Teachers	combatant's social, political and economic realities teachers are commanded the task not only of implementing the ERP in the classroom but also to adapted to the particularities of the context where they work.
Families & Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role of families and communities in the ERP is based on the recognition that in previous experiences of reintegration the lack of involvement of these two groups in the educational process was the cause of multiple problems (mistrust, discrimination, violence) at the community level. By conceiving the school as a space for peace-building families and communities are expected to actively participate in the educational process. Schools and teachers are in turn expected to facilitate the participation of these groups.

Appendix E

Word distribution in the academic curriculum for students

Dimension	Codes	Words	Frequency total	Distribution per Document			
				Social Science	Political Constitution and Democracy	Ethics and Human Values	and
Recognition	Recg_Cont_CulturalDifferences_(+)/(-)	Conflicto	82	32	9	41	
		Armado	7	5	0	2	
		Guerrillas	1	0	0	1	
	Recg_Cont_CivicEdu_(+)/(-)	Paramilitares	1	0	0	1	
		Militares	1	1	0	0	
	Recg_Cont_ConflictRe_(+)/(-)	Ejercito	0	0	0	0	
		Victimas	0	0	0	0	
		Desplazados	2	0	1	1	
	Recg_Cont_HistoriaConfl_(+)/(-)	Reclutamiento	0	0	0	0	
		Secuestro	0	0	0	0	
	Recg_Cont_MilitaryAfili_(+)/(-)	Narcotráfico	0	0	0	0	
		Resolución	15	8	4	3	
	Recg_Cont_PeaceEdu_(+)/(-)	Paz (pacifi...)	44	9	23	12	
Cívico		0	0	0	0		
Ciudada...		181	41	86	54		
Recg_Cont_ProyectoVida_(+)/(-)	Proyecto de vida	12	1	0	11		

Appendix F

Word distribution in teachers training document

Dimension	Codes	Words	Frequency total
Recognition	Recg_Cont_CulturalDifferences_(+)/(-)	Conflicto	91
		Armado	18
		Guerrillas	0
	Recg_Cont_CivicEdu_(+)/(-)	Paramilitares	0
		Militares	0
	Recg_Cont_ConflictRe_(+)/(-)	Ejercito	0
		Victimas	0
		Desplaza...	10
	Recg_Cont_HistoriaConfl_(+)/(-)	Reclutamiento	0
		Secuestro	0
	Recg_Cont_MilitaryAfili_(+)/(-)	Narcotráfico	0
		Resolución	38
	Recg_Cont_PeaceEdu_(+)/(-)	Paz	39
Cívico		0	
Recg_Cont_PoliticalAfili_(+)/(-)	Ciudada...	166	
	Proyecto de vida	82	