The role of history teaching in the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Colombia

An analysis of history teaching in public schools in Bogotá

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of history teaching in the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Colombia. For doing this, it sets out to explore whether and how\(^1\) the history of the armed conflict is being taught in secondary schools. Using a qualitative case study of four public schools in Bogotá, the study focuses on exploring perceptions, motivations, feelings, beliefs, and values of teachers and pupils regarding the teaching and learning about the history of the Colombian conflict. In addition, a documentary analysis of the school’s curricula is carried out. An analytical framework that combines the "enquiry based, multi-perspective approach" for history teaching (McCully 2012), and the conceptual framework for conflict transformation (Cunningham, 2014) with youth agency for conflict transformation is used for the analysis.

The findings showed that most of the teachers recognised that teaching about the history of the recent conflict should be oriented by an enquiry-based, multi-perspective approach as the tool for helping students to understand multiple causes, dynamics of transformation and actors involved in the armed conflict, as well as for promoting reconciliation and youth agency for conflict transformation.

However, several challenges still remain. Firstly, adequate teaching time is needed for teachers in order to address the complexity of teaching the history of the recent conflict; secondly, teachers require professional training for knowing how to deal with traumatized students’ experiences in the classroom, as well as for engaging them in the complex process of combining multiple sources of historical information (Clarke-Habibi, 2018; Guerra-Sua, 2019; McCully, 2012). Thirdly, even though it was acknowledged that the relevance of using "student-centred learning" in order to encourage students’ agency, how to put it into practice still remains a challenge.

Although the student’s understanding of the conflict history is rather limited, they showed their capacity for reflecting upon it, specifically that the consequences of the conflict represent a “breaking point” for conflict transformation. Most of them showed positive attitudes towards

\(^1\) Inspired by Paulson’s (2015) paper entitled “‘Whether and how?’ History education about recent and ongoing conflict: A review of research.
the possibility of “making the change”. Four alternatives were emphasised: i) political participation in the form of voting; ii) changing their own attitudes; iii) educating their relatives and friends about the conflict, and iv) political activism in the form of mobilization.

**Keywords:** history teaching, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, post-conflict, education, reconciliation, youth agency, enquiry based, multi-perceptive.
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Preface

During most of my life I had normalised the armed conflict, as did many people in Colombia. The media showed that people died almost every day, but for me, a middle-income class girl, raised in the capital of Colombia, these were common occurrences. I remember that I learned some issues related to the conflict at school. In social sciences subjects, I learned about the origins of warring guerrilla groups and about the phenomena of drug trafficking cartels in the '80s, issues that did not have any impact on my personal life. Thus I, as most of the people in my context, had normalised the idea that our country was a violent one, without almost any information about the causes or dynamics of the conflict.

During my years as a Bachelor student, I had the opportunity to take elective courses. I thought it would be interesting to learn about the conflict as I had an offer of many courses in other faculties with the university. I took a course called “the armed conflict, causes, and consequences”. That was the first time that I was able to see the faces behind the data, I heard victims’ testimonies, I read about the complexity of the conflict. I remember that in one session, when hearing for the first time about a massacre from the victims themselves (in a documentary) it reduced me to tears, most of the people in the classroom cried. I could not believe it, it almost seemed like a horror movie. Just that it was not. It was real life, people had really lived through that, in the same country that I was living in.

However, even though I had gotten more aware of the conflict, at least to their terrible consequences, I was not conscious about what I, as a student and future professional could do for changing that reality. Five years later when the peace process with the FARC guerrilla came out I felt hope for the first time regarding the conflict. I started to read about it and began to spread the word to my relatives, friends, and colleagues. I started to actively use social media in order to disseminate information related to the agreement.

Even though there was considerable opposition towards the agreement, and the negotiations between the government and the FARC were not easy, finally, the peace talks were successful and an agreement was reached by the parties. The agreement was signed officially in September 2016. I was so happy, I remember that I went to celebrate with friends in the main square in Bogotá. I saw in many people happiness and hope, I was so moved and could think about the possibility of a different country free of violence. However, the agreement still had to be approved by the people through a plebiscite one week later. I still remember that day, October
2nd. I was very surprised about the number of people who expressed their opposition to the agreement. I could not understand at that moment why people from the capital of Colombia, who -at least in my closed circle- had not been affected by the conflict, did not want the peace agreement, why even after many victims had publicly expressed their desires supporting the agreement, after some public acts of forgiveness between the guerrilla and the victims, still there were people who did not approve of it.

Despite it I felt hopeful. I went to vote with my family and then we waited. I was nervous, but I thought most of the people in the country would approve the agreement. I was wrong, the government was wrong. Not many people who supported the agreement imagined those results. We lost, the agreement was not approved by most of the country by a narrow margin. That was totally heart-breaking. We, myself and people who truly supported the agreement, were frustrated, angry, indignant and without hope. However, through a strength encouraged by social media, we decided to act. I and thousands of people marched demanding that the government kept the agreement. There were several marches everywhere, mostly promoted by university students. Every week, at least for one day we went out to the streets. After president Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace prize, he had the support for re-negotiating the agreement with the opposition parties. Later he submitted it to the Colombian Congress for their approval. The agreement was approved in December 2016, however, it left a deeply polarized country.

Still, I could not understand why there were that many people against the agreement. The answer could be education. In fact, the government did not set up an adequate pedagogy regarding the agreement, so most of the people did not know what it was about.

Usually, one could imagine that the higher the level of education, the better the society. But in this case, that may not true. In fact, in cities where the population has a higher level of education in contrast with rural areas, those well-educated people rejected the peace agreement, while the “not very well-educated people” from the rural areas mostly voted to approve it (in particular in most of the territories directly affected by the conflict). Thus, some people who did not have direct experiences with the conflict could not understand it, they could not know about the conflict, like me for most of my life.

Neither at school nor university we were taught about it. My experience at school had been more than ten years ago. However, within ten years everything could have changed. This became my biggest motivation for doing this research, to explore how the younger generations...
are being taught about the conflict. I think education is the way for keeping the hope alive that one day at least the future generations will be able to transform the legacy of the conflict and start to build peace.
"The girl and the chick". Mapiripán, Meta, Colombia, May 1998.

The girl is part of the group of displaced people from the small village of Puerto Alvira, Meta, after the torture and murder of 19 peasants by paramilitaries. The International Red Cross came to rescue the survivors of the massacre. They could not carry but a small bag of clothes. The girl approached and asked the official of the International Red Cross: "Do you let me take the chick? It's a gift." The man with tears in his eyes said: "take her".

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1 Introduction

History teaching in post-conflict and ongoing conflict

Education has an important role into ‘conflict transformation’ and ‘peacebuilding’ before, during and after conflicts (Smith and Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2010). In post-conflict societies, education can help promote conflict resolution and prevent violence, and can contribute to reconciliation by addressing the legacies of conflict (Smith, 2010). However, education can also be a “driver of conflict”, reproducing stereotypes, xenophobia, and nationalism, amongst others (Lopes-Cardoso, 2008; Smith, 2010; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

In societies affected by violent conflicts, education can help successive generations to understand the conflict that took place and contribute towards future peacebuilding (Novelli, Lopes & Smith, 2017; Smith, 2010). Within this process, history teaching about the conflict is decisive. It can help to “promote understandings of and lessons from the past, with a view to preventing future wars and advancing peace and reconciliation” (Bentrovato, Korostelina & Schulze, 2016, p.15).

Societies also have to learn to deal with the past because “histories of recent and ongoing conflicts are present in the educational experiences of young people, whether supported by the formal curriculum or not” (Paulson, 2015, p. 28). The way policymakers, school leaders, and teachers address these challenges is central to how post-conflict generations understand violence, “relate past conflict to their present lives, and orient themselves as citizens of a nation in transition” (Bellino, 2016, p. 74).

The way in which recent conflicts are approached and interpreted can influence the conflict transformation process, especially since history teaching can be susceptible to biased representations (Cole & Barsalou 2006), and since the past “involves memories of victimization, death, and destruction so widespread that a high percentage of the population is affected” (Cole & Barsalou, 2006, p. 2).

Whether history education can contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding depends on its engagement with the root causes, characteristics, persistency of conflict and its "reconfiguration in the present, and in students’ lived experiences” (Paulson, 2015, p. 28). Since schools are “social transmitters” of narratives about the past, teaching about conflict can
help make students understand that “war was not inevitable and that the future, too, can be shaped by individual and collective decisions to prevent violence and intervene when faced with conflict” (Bellino, 2016, p. 76; Cole & Barsalou 2006, p. 2). Therefore, history should be taught as constructed rather than given (Horner et al., 2015).

### 1.1.1 Limitations of history teaching about recent conflict

Several authors state that teaching about the past can create special challenges, especially because history is closely tied to the emotions “associated with national identity and collective belonging”. Thus, history teaching can trigger, maintain and exacerbate conflict instead of contributing to reconciliation processes (McCully, 2012, p. 148; Ramirez & Schulze, 2018).

Furthermore, in contexts of “unresolved historical controversies” divided and transitional societies could decide to exclude from the curricula the study of recent conflict and to adopt a “forward-looking approach” to “promote stability” (Psaltis et al., 2017; Cole & Barsalou 2006, p. 4; Bentrovato et al., 2016, p. 16), thus silencing the violent past. For example, when analysing the curricula and textbooks in various countries around the world Bentrovato et al. (2016) found “a tendency to either promote forgetfulness of these events through neglect or avoidance; or to present them in a selective and simplistic manner, omitting and minimizing uncomfortable truths” (p. 20).

Another limitation appears, for instance, when history teaching seeks to reinforce an official and single narrative. Therefore, as Maric (2016) claims, when history is used as a "channel of politics" to transmit a unique version of the past in post-conflict societies, it “not only fails to contribute to overcoming the legacy of the violent past but can potentially preserve or deepen tension and consequently contribute to new conflicts” (Maric, 2016, p. 90).

In other cases, even when schools decide to promote a “culture of peace” (based on human rights, multiculturalism, and diversity), this might be separated from the history of conflict. As Lerch (2016) suggests, the education system can be the “obvious avenue for elites seeking to overcome divisions and construct a cohesive national identity” (p. 33). Thus, in those cases education systems can lead to “potentially entrenching dangerous misunderstandings and misperceptions” (Bentrovato & Schulze, 2016, p. 16).
In addition, even if governments decide to reform education systems in order to teach a more comprehensive and inclusive history of recent conflict, the implementation of the new curriculum and/or pedagogical tools can face challenges as well. In this regard, Cole & Murphy (2009) acknowledge that when transmitting the history of recent violence and human rights abuses some teachers may not be committed to the new curriculum, or when they are committed students may challenge their authority when “narratives clash with what they learn at home and in their communities”. Moreover, in very divided societies, “both students and teachers may resist the new narratives, even dismissing them as “enemy” propaganda” (p.2).

**Colombia as a (post) conflict country**

Colombia has been facing an internal conflict for more than five decades, which has produced devastating consequences. According the Unit for Victims 262,197 people died between 1958 and 2018 of whom 215,005 were civilians and 46,813 fighters. Approximately 82% of those killed as a direct consequence of the conflict in Colombia were civilians. In addition, in 2016 Colombia hosted the highest number worldwide of internally displaced people (IDPs) with more than 7.2 million IDPs. Similarly, the Historical Memory Group GMH (2013) estimated that between 1985 and 2013, 25,007 people disappeared, 1,754 were victims of sexual violence, and 6,421 children and adolescents were recruited by armed groups. The number of people abducted between 1970 and 2010 was 27,023, and between 1982 and 2012, 10,189 were victims of anti-personnel mines (GMH, 2013 as cited in Arias, 2015).

The victims of the internal conflict in Colombia, mostly the civilian population, have suffered several forms of victimization such as forced displacement, assassinations and massacres, selective and forced disappearances, kidnappings, assassinations, terrorist attacks, forced recruitment of children and adolescents, land dispossession, extortion, torture, destruction of civilian property, anti-personnel mines and sexual crimes. According to Meier & Paez (2016)

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2 Arias (2016) suggests that one in three deaths was caused by the conflict.

3 In 2016 Colombia had more IDPs than Afghanistan, Nigeria and South Sudan combined and surpassing Syria by a wide margin. (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre- IDMC, 2018)

4 Nowadays, the number of IDPs has decreased slightly to 5.7 million.

5 According to the data collected by the Historical Memory Group and the Victims Unit database, state agents have been especially responsible for selective killings, torture, extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances. The guerrillas, in turn, have been responsible, above all, for the use of anti-personnel mines and unconventional explosive devices, attacks against civil and public goods, forced displacement, kidnapping, extortion, illegal
the Colombian “conflict became marked by the frontal and systematic attack of all armed groups against civilians, mainly rural civilians” (p. 96).

The data “does not fully tell what really happened” due to the "anonymity, invisibility and the impossibility of recognizing all its victims” that characterized the dynamics and legacy of the war (CNMH, 2013, p. 19). According to CNMH (2013), actors’ testimonies illustrate a war characterized by a display of brutality on the part of armed actors on the civilian population. As a consequence, describing the Colombian armed conflict “is neither an easy nor an unambiguous endeavour” (Meier & Paez, 2016, p. 92) due to the fact that in Colombia, the conflict does not have a distinctive form of violence.

Besides this, the Colombian conflict has deep historical roots and had several transformations making it impossible to generalize it with one simple explanation. According to the CNMH (2013) the long trajectory of the conflict and the transformations of its actors as well as the social and institutional transformations, restrict attempts to develop “a mono-causal explanation that reduces the continuity of the violence or its solution to the single action of the perpetrators or to an exercise of moral condemnation” (CNMH, 2013, p.16).

However, in attempting to reach alternative solutions to the conflict several peace processes were carried out throughout the history of Colombia. The last peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the largest rebel group FARC-EP guerrillas in September 2016.

According to (Diaz, 2018), this agreement “has generated new prospects for peace in Colombia, opening up the possibility of redressing the harms inflicted on the population” (p. 1). In fact, according to the International Center for Transitional Justice (2018) the peace negotiations "positioned the rights of the conflict’s victims to accountability, truth and reparation and therefore to the political life of the country”.

Moreover, Transitional Justice processes are particularly important in a post-accord context. This includes the establishment of truth commissions and legal tribunals, and Education can help construct new historical narratives (Cole & Barsalau, 2006, p. 2). In the Colombian case, the establishment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), a separate tribunal established to prosecute the conflict’s worst abuses, and the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, recruitment and environmental damage. Finally, paramilitary groups have a huge responsibility for crimes such as targeted killings, threats, massacres, forced displacement and land dispossession, torture and sexual crimes.
Coexistence and Non-Repetition (Truth Commission), can contribute to peace consolidation (The International Center for Transitional Justice, 2019). The historical narratives taught in school partly determines “the roles they and those who control the schools play in promoting conflict or social reconstruction”. History education is therefore an integral part of transitional justice and social reconstruction (Cole & Barsalau, 2006, p. 2).

However, the fact that the agreement was not approved by a small majority of the population in Colombia, evidences the high level of polarization and scepticism among the population” (Rocha, 2018, p. 46). In addition, Riomalo (2017) suggests that the population “seemed uneasy about the idea of granting prosecutorial and political concessions to the FARC guerrilla in exchange for its demobilization” (p. 83). In this context, the role of education is fundamental. It can help to address the legacies of the conflict and to promote reconciliation within the society.

**Aim of the study and Research Questions**

The main purpose of this research is to explore whether and how the teaching of the history of the Colombian armed conflict contributes to the conflict transformation process and therefore to peacebuilding.

The overall objective of the study is to explore the role of history teaching in the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Colombia.

In order to do so, the following specific research questions guide the research:

- How is the history of the armed Colombian conflict taught in public schools in Bogotá?
- What are teacher and student perceptions of the armed conflict?
- How does the curriculum contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding?

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6 This is inspired by Paulson’s (2015) paper entitled “‘Whether and how?’ History education about recent and ongoing conflict: A review of research. (Remember to delete later in the findings chapter).
Structure of the thesis

Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 presents in detail the Colombian context, starting with the Colombian armed conflict, causes, transformation, and consequences. Later, a general explanation about the Colombian education system is provided; and finally, a literature review about the history teaching of the conflict in Colombia is presented. In Chapter 3 the theoretical framework used for the analysis of the data is explained in four sections: in the first one, the enquiry based, multi-perspective history teaching model of McCully (2012) is presented, in the second section the main categories of the curriculum for conflict transformation of Cunningham (2014) are introduced. In the third section, the integration of the two previous frameworks is presented and finally, concepts of conflict transformation and youth agency are introduced. Next, Chapter 4 introduces the research methodology, research design, and methods, as well as relevant stages during the data collection process such as sampling and fieldwork. A description of the data analysis and the ethical considerations are mentioned in the last part of the chapter. The main findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 5 through the lens of the theoretical framework explained in chapter 3 and the categories generated from the data analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions of the study as a sum up of the main findings as well as the main challenges identified, recommendations for schools and policymakers and the limitations of the study. A personal reflection concludes this chapter.
2 Research Context: Colombia

The Armed Conflict

The nature of the Colombian conflict is complex with deep historical roots and several transformations. It is a long-term conflict and whether it originated from La Violencia\(^7\) (or before), from the emergence of the Cuban post-revolution guerrillas or from the 80s of the last century, the armed confrontation in Colombia is one of the oldest in the world; it involved several actors, mainly the State, guerrilla groups with different political-strategic orientation, and paramilitary bands. Moreover, the Colombian conflict was a terrible one since the civilian population has been the most affected in the confrontation (Pécault, 2015, p. 41; Pizarro, 2015, p. 45). According to the Unit for Victims\(^8\), more than 8 million people have been direct victims of the conflict (more than 16% of the total population of the country).

Pizarro (2015) states that there is not one “historic truth” or one “official history” about the origin of the conflict but some of the causes identified have been related with land inequality, weak institutional capacity, income inequality, the coexistence between democracy and weapons, as well as the absence of state institutions in several remote regions. Although it is necessary to understand the context of the causes there is no consensus between scholars and historians about them. Some authors consider that it is necessary to study the remote past to elucidate the recent conflict (Vega, 2015 as cited in Pizarro, 2015), while others state that whether the recent violence has connections with the past, actors and dynamics were influenced by isolated historical moments, such as land conflicts in the 20’s, the political violence era in the 50’s (La Violencia), or just after the National Front\(^9\) agreement (Gutierrez, 2015; Duncan,

\(\text{\textsuperscript{7}}\)At the end of the ‘40s, Colombia ended up in a new period of violence\(^7\), known as “La Violencia” (the violence) which besides than a bipartisan-political civil war, trigger a confrontation in rural areas which brought as a consequence different types of violence (political, but also agrarian conflicts produced by access to land). (Pizarro, E., 2015). “La Violencia” would end 10 years later with the National Front agreement.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{8}}\)Colombian Institution created in January 2012, which aims at approaching the State and the victims through an efficient coordination and transforming actions looking to promote the effective participation of victims in their reparation process.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{9}}\)Agreement established between 1958 and 1974 by the main political parties Liberal and Conservative in which each party rotated political power intercalating in each presidential term. The main purpose was to end the decade of political violence, known as La Violencia (the violence).
Pizarro (2015) suggests that in general historians identify three different phases in the history of Colombia that are relevant to understand the origins and evolutions of the conflict. The first one began in 1946 with a new era of political violence unleashed in some regions; a second phase, the era of “La Violencia” (after the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948), characterized mostly by political confrontations; and the contemporary period of violence (1964-65 until today) which has itself two different phases: a germinal stage (1964-1980) in which, as in all Latin America, emerged guerrilla groups as a consequence of various revolutionary projects of social change; and a second phase (1980-2014) which would be characterized by a slow strengthening of the guerrillas groups of FARC, ELN and EPL, the emergence of "second generation" guerrillas, the expansion of drug trafficking and the origin of paramilitary groups.

All in all, Meier & Paez (2016) identify four main parties involved in the conflict, “whose exact boundaries are often hard to distinguish”:

- The Colombian state and its executive power (armed Forces and police);
- the largest rebel group Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC-EP) and minor Marxist guerrilla groups such as ELN, EPL, and M-19;
- the United Self-Defense of Colombia (AUC), right-wing “self-defense” paramilitary groups against the FARC;
- and lately the Bacrim (bandas criminales), criminal groups involved in drug-trafficking, illegal metal mining and other “ordinary” and heavy crimes, sometimes recruiting ex-members of the above groups. (p. 95)

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10 Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was a young liberal politician supported by the most deprived people in society.

11 The initial phase of the armed conflict in Colombia was characterized very low intensity conflict the confrontation between the “first generation guerrillas” and the Military Forces. During this phase guerrilla groups were weakened (Pizarro, 2015).

12 With exception of the FARC, the rest of the groups had an urban origin.
2.1.1 Causes

As I stated before, several causes have been related to the origin of the armed conflict in Colombia. Pizarro (2015) identifies two types of causes: structural or “objective causes” such as income inequality, land inequality, institutional weakness, political persecution, the criminalization of peasants which could generate "availability" in some social sectors to enter the armed groups, and "subjective causes" such as the political theories that justify the use of violence to achieve social progress (or to prevent it), the influence of revolutionary examples (the case of Cuba and Nicaragua), the support of armed violence by right or left-wing urban intellectuals, the characterization of the democratic system, etc. In this way, the author suggests that mono-causal approaches are not very robust in explaining complex social phenomena, such as in the case of political violence. Thus, “it was a combination of factors and actors with different strategies and interests, in a given conjuncture, which would favour this new emergence of multiple violence” (Pizarro, 2015, p. 54).

The multi-causal approach to the conflict could help to understand for instance why other countries that could have a similar socio-economic or political context to Colombia did not experience a long-term armed conflict\textsuperscript{13}, or why despite the war has happened mostly in the rural areas\textsuperscript{14} (characterized by a land inequality and poverty) peasantry does not constitute a homogenous social class (Pecaut, 2015) and it is necessary to consider the regional diversity and its features.

2.1.2 Transformation of the conflict

As it was stated, several actors have been involved in the conflict, mainly the State, leftist guerrilla groups, and paramilitary bands. The latter were started as self-defence groups to protect themselves from the violent acts perpetrated by the guerrillas, but over time they would become crucial actors in the duration, intensity, and consequences of the internal conflict. However, at the end of 1980s other actors appeared in the field of battle such as drug

\textsuperscript{13} In this regard, Duncan (2015) states that although Colombia is an extremely unequal country, inequality does not necessarily cause insubordination or violent insubordination.

\textsuperscript{14} The vast majority of members were recruited from the most depressed sectors of the rural population. Here it is interesting to notice that the recruitment base of all the armed groups (guerrillas, paramilitaries and even the regular army) are very similar in their social and racial composition, even if they come from different regions (Pizarro, 2015).
traffickers\textsuperscript{15} and their close relations with paramilitary groups. With all of these actors converging in the same scenario, it is unsurprising that the nature of the conflict was transformed. Pecaut (2015) considers that the most important factor in the transformation was drug trafficking, whose resources strengthened guerrilla movements, organized crime groups and paramilitaries groups (Pizarro, 2015).

Restrepo, et al. (2009) have identified the period extending from 1996 to 2002 as “the escalation of violence”, given the increase in the intensity of the conflict and the frequency of combats and attacks. According to these researchers, the recrudescence of violence in Colombia during those years can be explained by the unification of the majority of paramilitary groups, the implementation of a strategy of terror against civilians, and the modernization and strengthening of Colombia’s military forces.

Along the same lines, Duncan (2015) suggests that drug trafficking expansion could have determined the course of contemporary armed conflict in Colombia, especially in three aspects: It influenced the war strategies of both guerrillas and paramilitaries bands, it produced disruptions in the regional economies (for example, in the agricultural or livestock production due to the kidnapping and the extortion of landowners and entrepreneurs), and it established ties with national and regional elites who got autonomy from the central political power due to the accumulation of economic resources.

But the relationship between politicians and armed groups became more complex due to many regional leaders beginning to establish alliances with armed actors, either to allow them to carry out political activities in a given region or to persecute and even to assassinate their political opponents (Wills, 2015; Pizarro, 2015).

In addition, other means of resources were implemented for the armed groups such as kidnapping -mainly for the guerrillas-, extortion, black markets (gold, emeralds, fuel) among others. These resources generated an opportunity for the exponential growth of guerrilla and paramilitary groups. For instance, the FARC guerrilla went from a thousand men in arms in 1982 to around 18,000 in 2002, and the paramilitary groups mobilized around 32,000 in 2005.

\textsuperscript{15} The drug cartels produced profound changes in the structure of Colombian society by exerting a profound influence on politics through a combination of threats, corruption and violence, which opened a prominent place in local governments and even at the national level. (Pizarro, 2015).
(Pizarro, 2015). Furthermore, the exponential growth of kidnapping and extortion had a close relationship with the formation of paramilitaries as a reaction of the victims (Duncan, 2015).

The institutional weakness also contributed to the worsening of the conflict (Gutierrez et al., 2007). In this sense, the Colombian state was unable to guarantee public order, the provision of services (health, education, infrastructure) and security in its territory, especially in remote and rural areas. However, this has also had some relation with regional diversity and geographical complexity of Colombia which favours the persistence of illegal armed groups and makes the provision of public goods more expensive, such as defense and security by the State (Olson, n.d. as cited in Pizarro, 2015).

Finally, the violence itself generated a vicious circle where the persistence and dynamic of violent acts generates deep impacts (for instance, deterioration of socio-economic conditions of the population and weakening of institutional capacity) that perpetuates the conflict (Pizarro, 2015). In other words, violence generates new conditions for more and more violence.\(^\text{16}\)

### 2.1.3 Consequences

Undoubtedly the main victim of the internal conflict in Colombia is its civilian population who have suffered several forms of victimization such as displacement, assassinations and massacres, land dispossession, kidnapping, extortion, illegal recruitment of children and adolescents, torture, targeted assassinations, threats, sexual crimes, forced disappearance, and anti-personnel mines\(^\text{17}\). According to the Unit for Victims 262,197 people died between 1958 and 2018\(^\text{18}\) of which 215,005 were civilians and 46,813 fighters. Thus, the 82% people killed as a direct consequence

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\(^{16}\) Duncan (2015), for instance shows that kidnapping and extortion widespread by the guerrillas could be one of the main triggers of paramilitary groups origin. Pizarro (2015) also points out that violence specially affected young people in rural and urban areas, who lived in deprive areas without social and economic networks. This context turned them into the main basis for the recruitment of all illegal armed groups. Finally, Pécaut (2015) states that there are few social and racial differences in the basic combatants of the main armed actors (armed forces, guerrillas and paramilitaries).

\(^{17}\) According to the data collected by the Historical Memory Group and the Victims Unit database, state agents have been especially responsible for selective killings, torture, extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances. The guerrillas, in turn, have been responsible, above all, for the use of anti-personnel mines and unconventional explosive devices, attacks against civil and public goods, forced displacement, kidnapping, extortion, illegal recruitment and environmental damage. Finally, paramilitary groups have an enormous responsibility in crimes such as targeted killings, threats, massacres, forced displacement and land dispossession, torture and sexual crimes.

\(^{18}\) Arias (2016) suggests that one in three deaths was caused by the conflict.
of the conflict in Colombia were civilians. In addition, in 2016 Colombia hosted the highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) worldwide with more than 7.2 million IDPs. Similarly, the Historical Memory Group (2013) estimates that between 1985 and 2013 25,007 people disappeared, there were 1,754 victims of sexual violence, and 6,421 children and adolescents recruited by armed groups. The number of people abducted between 1970 and 2010 was 27.023, and between 1982 and 2012, 10.189 were victims of anti-personnel mines (GMH, 2013 as cited in Arias, 2015).

Victims also suffered physical and emotional damage and in some cases, they were re-victimised due to the minimization of suffering caused by the responsible armed groups themselves and by the own society (Wills, 2015 as cited in Pizarro, 2015). Other consequences are related with the impoverishment of affected families, especially displacement households. Ibáñez & Velez (2008) calculate that “economic costs of displacement are, on average, 37% of the net present value of aggregated rural consumption. Moreover, poorer families experience larger welfare losses. In fact, some households present welfare losses above 80% of the net present value of aggregated rural consumption” (p. 672). Other effects of violence on the aggregate level are related with economic growth and institutional distrust in the political system.

However, in attempting to reach alternative solutions to the conflict several peace processes were carried out throughout the history of Colombia. In the 1990s several Colombian governments made deals with five guerrilla forces (M19, Revolutionary Workers Party-PRT, Popular Liberation Army –EPL and the Quintín Lame Armed Movement-MAQL, the Socialist Renovation Current-CRS) (International Crisis Group, 2014, p. 3). Later in 2006 some 30,000 alleged members of the right-wing United Self-defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) militia agreed to cease their activities; and a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the largest rebel group FARC-EP guerrillas in September 2016.

According to Firchow (2014), the last peace processes led to a series of laws to help the transition into post-conflict. These addressed, amongst others, reparations to the victims. Moreover, the peace agreement between the FARC-EP and the Government of Colombia “has

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19 In 2016 Colombia had more IDPs than in Afghanistan, Nigeria and South Sudan combined and surpassing Syria by a wide margin (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre- IDMC, 2017)

20 In 2018 the number of IDPs has decreased slightly to 5.7 million (IDMC, 2019)
generated new prospects for peace in Colombia, opening up the possibility of redressing the harms inflicted on the population (Diaz, 2018, p. 1).

In fact, according to the International Center for Transitional Justice (2019) the peace negotiations "positioned the rights of the conflict’s victims to accountability, truth and reparation and therefore to the political life of the country". In addition, it represents "Colombia’s most holistic, wide-ranging effort to address the root causes of conflict and fulfill victims’ rights". During the negotiation, six points were agreed upon: agrarian reform, political participation, illicit drugs, victims, ending the conflict, and implementation of the peace accord. The final agreement also includes a Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Recurrence formed by: Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), a separate tribunal established to prosecute the conflict’s worst abuses, and the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repitition (Truth Commission), can contribute to peace consolidation (The International Center for Transitional Justice, 2019).

Nevertheless, the agreement was not approved by a small majority of the population in Colombia. After the final agreement with the FARC guerrilla, President Juan Manuel Santos submitted it for popular approval through a plebiscite. Unexpectedly, people rejected the peace accord by a narrow margin (50.2% against, 49.8% in favour). According to Rocha (2018), these results “are evidence of the high level of polarization and scepticism among the population” (p. 46).

**Education System in Colombia**

Education is a civic right in Colombia\(^\text{21}\) and it is mandatory and free\(^\text{22}\) between 5 and 15 years of age. The education system is organized in four levels: early childhood education which includes services for children from birth until 6 years old; basic education which includes five years of primary or elementary education (grades 1-5), four years of lower or basic secondary

\(^{21}\) Colombian National Constitution, Art.67.

\(^{22}\) Since 2012, public education has been free of charge from the transition year to the end of upper secondary education, although indirect costs such as learning materials and transport remain. Additionally, other policies and programmes such as conditional cash transfers, scholarships for tertiary study, flexible school models, ethnic education, boarding schools and school meals have all contributed to reaching vulnerable groups.
education (grades 6-9), and 2 years of upper secondary education (grades 10 and 11) (OECD, 2018).

After completion of the last level (upper secondary education), students obtain a certificate and should do a national exam\(^23\) (*Prueba Saber*) to access to higher education. However, higher education institutions (HEIs) have autonomy over their admission criteria and could introduce additional entry requirements. There are four main types of HEIs: universities (representing 28\% of all institutions), university institutions (representing 42\% of all institutions), technological institutions (representing 18\% of all institutions), and professional technical institutions (representing 13\% of all institutions). In addition, the National Training Service-SENA (acronym in Spanish) provides 58\% of the technical and technological programmes at the tertiary level (OECD, 2018).

Education is provided by public and private schools. Parents and students have freedom to select the public or private school of their choice. According to OECD (2018), the Colombian school system has more than 9.3 million students of which 81.3\% are enrolled in the public system and 18.7\% are enrolled in private schools\(^24\). Moreover, students of high socio-economic status are highly concentrated in the private schools while students of lower socio-economic background are over-represented in both. Here it is interesting to analyse the effect of socioeconomic status on academic achievement. For instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 shows that most of the differences in the performance of public and private schools in Colombia are explained by students’ and schools’ socio-economic status (OECD, 2016 as cited in OECD, 2018).

### 2.1.4 Education management

In Colombia, public education is decentralized which means that Secretaries of Education of the department, district, or certified municipality are responsible for providing education, for planning the school network and for opening and closing schools within their territory. The Ministry of National Education “certified” the education management capacity of local governments. To be certified, local education secretariats have to provide evidence of their education development strategic plans and of their restructured institutions and demonstrate

\(^{23}\) It is also used as a tool to evaluate the quality of schools.

\(^{24}\) Additionally, enrolment in independent private schools is much higher than in many other countries (19\% of 15-year-olds compared to 4\% on average across the OECD) (OECD, 2016 as cited in OECD, 2018).
efficiency and institutional effectiveness (Reyes, 2000; Law 60 of 1993). After that, Secretariats of Education can receive and manage national financial transfers for education which are spent mostly on teachers’ salaries, infrastructure projects, and schools (IADB, 2000; OECD, 2018).

2.1.5 School autonomy

The Law 115 of 1994 (General Education Law) allows schools to manage curriculum and academic matters themselves (Melo, 2012), which means that in Colombia there is no national curriculum. Thus, schools have autonomy to define their own curriculum. However, the Law 115 also establishes that schools have to allocate 80% of instruction time to fundamental subject areas\(^{25}\). Likewise, teachers are also autonomous to make pedagogical decisions within their classroom even when they should implement school curricula (OECD, 2018). In this regard, based on data from the OECD PISA 2015, the OECD (2018) suggests that teachers make most of the pedagogical and curricular decisions and that “education authorities have fewer responsibilities over the curriculum (choosing textbooks, deciding which courses are offered and determining course content) than in most countries participating in PISA 2015” (p. 155).

\(^{25}\) General Education Law defines 9 fundamental areas: natural sciences and environmental education, social sciences, history, geography, political constitutions and democracy, artistic education, ethics, sports, religion, humanities, literature and foreign languages.
However, the Ministry of Education has developed a series of standards and guidelines to help schools to design their curricula, specifying what students must learn in the compulsory areas of languages, mathematics, sciences and citizenship education for different levels of education (Rocha, 2018). Additionally, they provide criteria to assess students and define learning frameworks for level and subject area. Currently, there are three types of guidelines: curriculum guidelines (*lineamientos curriculares*), basic competency standards (*estándares básicos de competencia, EBC*), and the most recent guidelines, Basic Learning Rights (*Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje, DBAs*). Correspondingly, the ministry has developed pedagogical and didactic tools to help teachers with the implementation of the standards (OECD, 2018).

In addition, the national standardized test (*Prueba Saber*), which measures the quality of schools, is based on these standards. Thus, even in the absence of an official curriculum, these standards provide guidance regarding the issues to be addressed by teachers in the classroom and the abilities that their students should acquire (Rocha, 2018).

There are, however, limitations for schools, teachers and local authorities to follow those guidelines, starting with the large number of guidelines. According to OECD (2018) there were at least 206 different curricular documents in 2017 of which at least 10 documents are for mathematics, 7 for language, 8 for science, 4 for social sciences and 29 for civic education (Sánchez, 2018 as cited in OECD, 2018).
Teaching about the history of the conflict in Colombia

General Education Law establishes as one of the specific objectives of secondary education: “the scientific study of national and world history aiming to understand society development and the study of social sciences with the purpose of analysing the current conditions of social reality [emphasis added]” (art. 22, numeral h). Even though, as Rodriguez & Sánchez (2009) state, by 2009 there was no policy for teaching about recent history or memory of the Colombian armed conflict, neither as a curricular topic nor as an object of pedagogical work.

School social demands are focused on achieving evaluation requirements of the education system, imposing a type of curriculum through skills and competences and national tests (to measure quality of education) that must be taught where the reality of political violence has not had a place (Rodriguez & Sánchez, 2009; Arias, 2016). Despite of this, teaching and understanding of the reality of conflict have been possible due to private institution initiatives or personal efforts of engaged teachers. However, teachers are often criminalized by the state or by private armies, accusing them of supporting subversives or terrorists, which represents an immense risk to them (Arias, 2016; Herrera & Díaz, 2012).

Escobar (2017) analyses, furthermore, guidelines and standards of the Ministry of Education in the last years. The author finds that curriculum guidelines (lineamientos curriculares) in social sciences and political constitution and democracy mention some aspects of recent history, such as promotion of rights and peace building, as well as knowledge about political and social organizations, emphasizing “the interest of training of citizens to overcome the periods of violence that afflicted the country” (MEN, 1998 as cited in Escobar, 2017). Likewise, basic competency standards (estándares básicos de competencia) in social sciences establish specific topics for ninth, tenth and eleventh grades such as political events of the mid-twentieth century (like National Front), crisis of bipartisanship, guerrilla movements in Colombia, forced displacement of populations, critical analysis of the conflicts in the country, human rights and recognition of suffering for groups or nations involved in violent confrontations (MEN, 2004).

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26 For instance, on February of 2019, Representative Edward Rodriguez, a member of the Democratic Centre party (far-right Colombian political party which opposed the peace process), presented a law project to ban teachers from “indoctrinate in political ideologies”. According to the project’s description, “the purpose is to establish some behavioural prohibitions, addressed to teachers and managers of educational institutions, in order to preserve the legal order, fundamental rights, human values and ethics”. Because of the project cause huge controversy, apparently, the project would be withdrawn.
But still, it does not mean that the content is extensive and reliable. In contrast, as Guerra-Sua (2019) suggests “tenth and eleventh grades history content, within the social studies curriculum, offer such a selective viewpoint regarding actors and events surrounding recent history events, such as the armed conflict” (p. 176). For instance, according to the guidelines of the ministry, students should learn about the role of guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug traffickers but not about the role of the national army. Thus, “this selective viewpoint represents a missed learning opportunity for students to question the structural causes that have threatened democracy and peace in Colombia” (Guerra-Sua, 2019, p. 176). Additionally, official guidelines do not include the study of Colombian recent violent history from grades 6-9th, which means that most young students at secondary level are not learning about the issues of their country’s recent history (Toro, 2015 as cited in Guerra-Sua, 2019).

Along the same lines, Rocha (2018) shows that the Colombian armed conflict as a subject of study has no place in any of the first four learning cycles which “means that students aged approximately from 7 to 15 neither hear of, nor reflect on, the armed conflict in the classroom at all” (p. 53). When the topic appears in the curriculum, within the last learning cycle (tenth and eleventh grades), “students must learn topics centred around 30 competencies which include topics like historical world events of the 20th century, the struggles of ethnic groups within Colombia and Latin America, dictatorships within Latin America, economic theories, globalization”, amongst others. In summary, “only 4 of the 30 competencies established in the Standards are related to the armed conflict in Colombia” (p. 53).

Despite of this, Law 1448 of 2011 (Law of Victims) established that the Ministry of National Education should promote “a human rights-based, differential, territorial and restitutive approach”, develop programs and projects that “promote the restitution”, and encourage the development of citizenship, scientific and social competences in the country’s children and adolescents towards reconciliation and guarantees of non-repetition for violation of their integrity or human rights (art. 145). Furthermore, in the article 149 Law of Victims stipulated that the Colombian state should adopt, as guarantees of non-repetition, “the creation of a social pedagogy [emphasis added] that promotes the reconciliation regarding the facts occurred in historical truth”.
Afterwards, the Ministry of Education created the ‘Cátedra de Paz’ (Peace Course), due to the recent peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla. It was established by the Law 1732, with the objective of “guarantying the creation and strengthening of a peace culture”. It was also established as a mandatory character in all public and private schools and universities. In 2015, the Decree 1038 established that the Peace course “should contribute to learning and dialogue with the following topics: peace culture, sustainable development; peace education”. It also determined that the schools could implement the peace course inside of one of the basic subjects: social sciences, history, geography, political science and democracy, natural sciences and environmental education, ethics and values education.

Moreover, the peace course should develop at least two of the following topics: justice and human rights, sustainable use of natural resources, protection of the nation's cultural and natural riches, peaceful resolution of conflicts, prevention of bullying, diversity and plurality, political participation, historical memory [emphasis added], moral dilemmas, social impact projects, history of national and international peace agreements, as well as life projects and risk prevention.

The Ministry ordered schools and universities to teach skills for peace. That was an important attempt by the government to start setting the ground for Peace Education in the formal sector. Nevertheless, at that time, the Ministry did not offer clear guidelines to structure the curriculum, and it caused that most schools delegated the responsibility of designing and implementing the Peace Course onto the social science teachers. Despite that the Decree was determined that the schools had to implement the peace course before the end of the 2015. It wasn’t until 2016 that the Ministry of Education designed a pedagogical handbook with practical examples to guide the schools in the implementation of the course at the different levels (preschool, basic and secondary). Besides that, it wasn’t until 2017 that the ministry gave to the schools of Colombia the handbook with the general guidelines for the implementation of the peace course for preschool, basic and media levels.

Another aspect to consider is the history of conflict content in textbooks. Since Colombia has no national curriculum, official textbooks do not exist. Commercial publishing private companies produce and distribute school textbooks but as they have to compete for market share, their main strategy has been to design textbooks which follow official curricular guidelines by the National Ministry of Education (Padilla & Bermúdez, 2016).
Rodriguez & Sánchez (2009) suggest that publishing companies have adopted a structure of competences, achievements and indicators which will be evaluated through standardized tests, based on government requirements. According to the authors, that structure describes aspects related to the armed conflict in the perspective of developing the skills that are required for educational assessment, rather than for understanding their social reality and act in it. Correspondingly, Padilla & Bermúdez (2016) mention that since the school textbooks’ structure, style, and approach is strongly guided by official guidelines, with the expectation to cover a great deal of contents in a limited space, the armed conflict ends up being one of the various topics that textbooks have to address.

Padilla & Bermúdez (2016) analyse three 9th grade history textbooks. The authors state that “school textbooks in Colombia offer a constricted and general synthesis of the national history; and they have not been written bearing in mind questions about the conflict, violence and peace” (p. 191). Moreover, they concluded that the “strictly chronological structure and the “presidentially-oriented” thematic approach27 in the narrative of school textbooks “do not favour a critical understanding of the conflict, nor a de-legitimation of violence” (pp. 211). Finally, they point out that textbooks’ narrative:

“favours the State’s perspective, hindering an understanding of the perspectives, goals and interests held by different actors involved in the conflict”; does not show a multi-cause perspective of “factors that explain the conflict’s origin and transformation, thus making the understanding of its prolongation and degradation more difficult; and marginalizes the victims’ experience and voice, making it harder to understand the magnitude of the emotional, physical, social, cultural and economic damages endured by the civilian population” (Padilla & Bermúdez, 2016, p. 211).

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27 For the authors, “the narrative’s structure is not linked to a problematization of the armed conflict and the use of violence”, thus the textbook’s do not allow “to generate an explicit reflection on these issues, rather to offer an account of outstanding events in the country’s recent history from the State’s official perspective” (Padilla & Bermúdez, 2016, p. 200).
3 Analytical Framework

In order to explore how the history teaching about the recent conflict in Colombia is approached and its contribution to conflict transformation process, findings from the fieldwork in public schools in Bogotá are interpreted through an analytical framework constructed by combining three approaches: the "enquiry based, multi-perspective history teaching" of Alan McCully (2012), the conceptual framework developed by Jeremy Cunningham (2014), and the concepts of youth agency as a catalyst of conflict transformation. These are displayed in Figure 3.1 and further elaborated in the following sections.

Figure 3.1 Analytical Framework

Enquiry based, multi-perspective history teaching

McCully (2012) states that enquiry based multiperspective history teaching can have a positive impact on youth’s thinking and may also contribute to the reconciliatory process in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In this approach, students can develop a set of skills that allows them to elaborate “their own understandings” from the “examination of primary and secondary evidence and the study of multiple perspectives” (p. 156).

This multi-perspective approach “applies to interpretations of the past” in the present, or “perspectives in the past” meaning “how actors at the time perceived events as they unfolded”, which also requires understanding “why people at the time, depending on their standpoint, may have perceived events in very different ways” (McCully, 2012, p. 149). Moreover, this approach has greater potential in helping to understand the relationship between social, cultural and political contexts of individuals and their attitudes towards past events (e.g. deeply held community positions) (McCully, 2012, p. 156). In contrast, as discussed earlier, history
teaching can also transfer an uncritical truth, which does not promote an enquiry-based
approach drawn on “certain preconceived, one-sided narratives” even if this single narrative is
based on “a degree of consensus” within society (McCully, 2012, p. 149; Maric, 2016, p. 90).

In the same way, Duthie & Ramirez-Barat (2018) claim that the teaching of violent past should
go beyond “the simplistic victim-perpetrator binary” view; instead, history teaching must
acknowledge the complexity of the past where the focus should “not only be on those whose
rights were violated but also on explanations as to why and how the conflict emerged and how
different groups within a society can be led to engage in violence” (p. 25). Similarly, Gellman
(2016) suggests that shared or multipleperspectives on history education can lead one to
“rehumanize the Other”, a person or group of people “in the role of enemy or stranger”, and
therefore to rebuild social trust”, and thus encouraging young people “to deconstruct single
truths and negative images of the Other and to critically confront and navigate divergent
21).

An enquiry based, multi-perspective approach can also teach the next generation of children
and youth “about the impact of conflict when it gets out of control”, which in turn can incentivise them to manage their own conflicts if they are taught the adequate skills (e.g.
conflict resolution) (Gellman, 2016). In addition, other authors have insisted that this approach
represents “a critical methodology that draws on a variety of primary sources and a multitude
of experiences and interpretations” and might empower students to participate in society as
informed and active citizens by, for instance, holding the government to account (Bentrovato
et al., 2016; Gellman, 2016).

Furthermore, this approach requires a student-centred pedagogy which encourages “dialogue
and discussion” where the teachers’ role is to be facilitator of “a constructive dialogue about
conflictual issues” (Guerra-Sua, 2019, p. 179), and to help students “to better elaborate and
contextualize their own beliefs and challenge any personal assumptions”. This, in turn, demands
stable schools and safe classroom environments “as a unique space in which children and young
people can reflect on and discuss the past critically and without fear” (Duthie & Ramirez-Barat,
2018, p. 25).

Specifically, McCully (2012) explains the strengths of the multi-perspective approach through
four interrelated areas: 1) critical analysis; 2) discursive and constructivist process; 3)
empathetic understanding, or caring; and 4) democratic values. Most of these are embedded in Cunningham’s framework (2014) and form part of the framework of analysis for this study. The concepts will be explained in detail later.

**Curriculum for conflict transformation**

Cunningham (2014) develops a conceptual framework to “express the relationship between school curriculum and conflict transformation” (p. 183) through the study of the main curricular approaches applied in post-conflict settings: peace education, human rights education, and citizenship education (Cunningham, 2014). The author finds that “none of these approaches incorporates history, and memory of the recent past”. Thus, he decides to establish a framework to incorporate the teaching of recent history, as well as to mend deficiencies identified in those approaches. In this regard, for instance, Paulson & Bellino (2017) affirm that peace education is often oriented towards a forward-looking approach “promising future peace that is not grounded in an understanding of the past and its legacies in the present” (p. 357).

Cunningham’s conceptual framework then “provides a clear element of knowledge content often missing in peace education conceptions, and addresses values often missing from citizenship education”, and integrates the latter with human rights education (Cunningham, 2014, p. 182).

The framework is developed based on three key concepts: truth-seeking, reconciliation, and inclusive citizenship. These concepts are articulated through a structure of knowledge, skills, and values. In Cunningham’s (2014) logic, “knowledge and skills that are promoted without values of equal respect, tolerance and fairness” could explain situations where for instance, “well-educated people and groups have perpetrated terrible atrocities and rights violations” (p. 183). Likewise, “values are insufficient for conflict transformation if people have little understanding of the root causes of war”, and/or if people “lack the skills needed to participate in their society” (p. 183). Finally, to materialize knowledge and understanding it is necessary to develop intellectual skills. In this case, for instance, someone can have knowledge about “war origins, the current situation, and possibilities for action” but can be “powerless to act without the necessary skills” (p. 184).

In addition, Cunningham’s (2014) framework is appropriate to analyse recent educational perspectives, where education systems are measured in terms of learning outcomes, which in
turn refer to “skills, attitudes and values as well as factual knowledge (communication skills, the ability to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate conflicting evidence, the development of media literacy, critical thinking)” (Smith, 2005, p. 380).

Cunningham’s key concepts and their relationship with McCully’s dimensions

3.1.1 Truth-seeking: Critical thinking and a discursive and constructivist process

Paulson & Bellino (2017) consider that truth-seeking “has emerged as a vital mechanism of transitional justice and an important element of peacebuilding” (p. 353). In Cunningham's model (2014) truth-seeking should be addressed in schools in order to understand the root causes of violent conflict and “provide a platform for people’s narratives”. But, for understanding root causes of conflict, it is necessary to analyse critically diverse sources and perspectives “with the aim of creating individuals capable of making rational judgments”. Thus “history teaching should develop skills and dispositions that promote critical analysis” (McCully, 2012, p. 151).

According to Padilla & Bermudez (2016) there is consensus in regard to the relationship between history teaching, peace education and the development of critical thinking. The main reason is that critical thinking allows “students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the causes, dynamics and consequences of social conflicts, to empathically recognize diverse actors’ experiences and to build independent positions regarding options for addressing conflicts” (p. 193). Moreover, critical thinking provides analysis perspectives to addresses “the victims’ perception, the structural roots that cause conflict and violence and the capacity for transformative agency in individuals and communities”, as well as “developing interpersonal skills for conflict resolution, and the recognition and appreciation of diversity (Bajaj, 2008; Bastida, 1994; Bastida, Lugo & Rocasalbas, 2008; Etxeberria, 2013; Galtung, 1996; Galtung, 1998; Reardon, 1988 as cited in Padilla & Bermudez, 2016, p. 193).

Additionally, when McCully (2012) refers to “a discursive and constructivist process” meaning that students must be comfortable with complexity and debate utilizing a multi-perspective
approach in which, for instance, students might discuss and interpret controversial material when studying the history of conflict (Paulson, 2015).

Furthermore, this approach requires a student-centred pedagogy “that stimulates participation and interaction turning the classroom into a democratic space where the teacher transmits nuanced views that encourage student agency, debate and critical thinking” (Guerra-Sua, 2019; Bush & Saltarelli 2000; Freedman et al. 2008; Davies 2010; Fitzdu and Jean 2011; Lopes Cardozo and Hoeks 2014; Ramírez-Barat and Duthie 2015 as cited in Kuppens & Langer, 2016, p. 156).

3.1.2 Reconciliation: Caring

According to Horner et al. (2015) reconciliation is crucial for post-conflict societies to prevent revival into conflict. Thus, education has a role “in dealing with the past and historical memory, truth” (Hamber, 2007 as cited in Horner et al., 2015, p. 65). Similarly, other authors suggest that education can facilitate the reconciliation process “by addressing the legacies of conflict”, through for instance, “the rebuilding of fractured individual and communal relationships after conflict”; “remembrance and commemoration”; "debates about forgiveness, expressions of regret, apology, and symbolic events"; and "understanding the role of amnesties, prisoner releases, alongside concepts of restorative and transitional justice”, amongst others (Clark, 2008 as cited in Schelfout & Bücking, 2018, p. 235; Smith, 2005, p. 386).

In contrast, authors such as Paulson (2015) acknowledge that history teaching can also have the opposite effect in terms of reconciliation. For instance, in Rwanda a strong “official historical narrative” created by the post-genocide Rwandan Patriotic Front government did not contribute to the reconciliatory process due to the fact that this narrative selectively emphasized "some civilian memories of violence" while repressing other memories. Thus, the official narrative did not enable dialogue and the productive confrontation of difference (King, 2010 as cited in Paulson, 2015, p. 22).

In addition, Cunningham’s model (2014) establishes that sympathy is “a closely-related value for reconciliation education” (p, 189). The author defines sympathy as “the disposition to experience sorrow at the other’s serious misfortune, to be disturbed by injustice, to intrinsically care for another” (Yarnall, 2001 as cited in Cunningham, 2014). This term is preferred over “empathy” as it includes “caring” (a key dimension in McCully’s model). In fact, McCully
(2012) adopts the term ‘empathy as caring’, defined by Barton and Levstik (2004 as cited in McCully, 2012, p. 153) who identifies two perspectives: recognition and caring. Recognition allows “students understanding of why people thought and acted the way they did in the circumstances of the time”; caring “invites us to care with, and about, people in the past, to be concerned with what happened to them and how they experienced their lives”, which could lead “to change our beliefs or behaviours in the present based on what we have learned from our study of the past” (Barton and Levstik, 2004: 207–208 as cited in McCully, 2012. p. 153).

3.1.3 Inclusive citizenship: Democratic values

According to Cunningham (2014) conflict transformation demands the repair of the relationship between people and the government, because after violent conflicts people can experience “feelings of exclusion from national politics, marginalisation”. Moreover, feelings of "anger over economic losses and displacement may create conditions for new insurgencies in the future”. Here, the author mentions as an alternative the role of schools in promoting inclusive citizenship “through teaching people about their own legal and political system, in the context of global human rights architecture” and through “imparting the skills of discussion, debate and sensitisation, and the value of procedural fairness” (p. 186). To expand more on this idea, other authors have emphasized that when teaching about the violent past, human rights and civic skills are crucial elements toward shaping a democratic citizen that can contribute to peace and violence prevention (Cole 2007; Murphy and Gallagher 2009; Davies 2015 as cited in Bellino, 2016). The question that remains is how in practice democratic values can prevent future conflicts.

Gellman (2016) can offer some insights. This author suggests for instance that as “citizenship signifies the status of a person with duties, rights, and privileges that are connected to a specific, state-governed territory” (p. 143), people could perform their role as citizens “hoping that their participation in the state will improve their lives”. It implies to engage in political participation. Likewise, if student-centred pedagogies are used it could encourage “young people to become aware of their own agency as social, moral, and political actors”. To achieve this, it would be necessary to utilize an approach that promotes critical thinking and facilitates transformative dialogue in a way that students can be able to understand the complexities of history, “reflect on the choices they confront today and consider how they can make a difference” (Clarke-Habibi, 2018, p. 177).
In addition, other authors point out that education can engage especially the younger generations to address the impact of recent conflicts from a perspective informed by a respect for human rights and the democratic rule of law, and thus contribute to make citizens open-minded, aware of diversity, and willing to accept difference and to respect people of other cultures (McCully, 2012; Duthie & Ramirez, 2018).

However, Bellino (2016a) argues that the modern curriculum approach focused on rights and civic skills is still lacking discussions about causes of conflict. The author mentions, for instance, Guatemala’s case, where “aspects of citizenship education are fleshed out through discussions of justice and equality as ideals”, which marginalises Guatemala’s experience with injustice and inequity. Thus “this trend toward positive rather than negative rights, along with the inclination to disassociate citizenship from histories of exclusion, are representative of broader patterns of avoidance” (p. 184).

Moreover, in many cases “values-based approaches to teaching about peace and democracy” can be "disconnected from the daily experiences of youth", in the sense that many of them are taught about "democracy’s civic commitments through its broken promises” (Bellino, 2016, p. 59). Another case that illustrates Bellino’s argument is South Africa, where the curriculum promotes the idea of a universal “ideal citizen”, which means South Africa’s young citizens are encouraged “to be self-sufficient, economically productive, and to make few demands on the state” despite the continued “social and spatial segregation and profound inequalities” that, in turn, limit the youths’ opportunities (Staeheli and Hammett, 2013 as cited in Paulson, 2015, p. 20). In the same way, Paulson (2015) also debates the engagement of young people as citizens in cases where “forward-looking” democratic oriented approaches are used to present conflict “as an exceptional moment” or “an aberration overcome thanks to democracy, an active citizenship, and a culture of peace”; despite the fact that “injustices and inequalities tied to past conflict" still persist (p. 21).

Table 3.1 displays the integration of main categories combining the approaches of the "enquiry based, multi-perspective history teaching" by McCully (2012), and the conceptual framework for conflict transformation developed by Cunningham (2014).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enquiry-based and multiple-perspective approach</th>
<th>(Cunningham, 2014) Dimension</th>
<th>(McCully, 2012) Sub-dimension</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills (e.g.)</th>
<th>Values (e.g.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth seeking</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Understanding of the past (perspectives and interpretations)</td>
<td>Critical analysis</td>
<td>Tolerance of different interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discursive and constructivist process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>Caring (empathetic understanding)</td>
<td>Understanding of the past (victims and actors’ perspectives)</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Equal respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary events and issues</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive citizenship</td>
<td>Democratic values</td>
<td>Local, national and international political/legal systems</td>
<td>Democratic participation</td>
<td>Human rights sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Deliberative discussion</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic debate</td>
<td>Equal respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitization</td>
<td>Tolerance of different interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Enquiry-based multiple-perspective history teaching in a conceptual framework for conflict transformation. Adapted from Schooling for Conflict Transformation: a case study from northern Uganda by J. Cunningham, 2014, Research in Comparative and International Education, 9(1), p. 185.

**Youth agency and conflict transformation**

The final part of the theoretical framework for the study attempts to understand how in practice the model explained earlier can contribute to the conflict transformation process. For this purpose, I used the lens of conflict transformation approach (Lederach, 1995) and youth agency in order to understand young people as social and political actors who are able to transform their realities.

**3.1.4 Conflict transformation**

Lederach (1995) in his transformational approach understands social conflict “to be a natural, common experience present in all relationships and cultures” (p. 9). But conflict is also socially constructed, which means that *people are active participants* in creating conflicts. It also
implies that conflict brings the potential for constructive change. This approach does not imply elimination or control of conflict, but rather its transformation in terms of relationship, system and structure (p. 22). Conflict transformation is “a comprehensive approach that addresses personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for conflict as a catalyst for positive change in all of these areas” (Shailor, 2015). In Miall’s (2014) words, conflict transformation is “a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict” (as cited in Smith, 2010, p. 1).

Thus, conflict transformation has been defined as a set of actions and processes which seek to transform “the various characteristics and manifestations of conflict by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term” (Austin et al. 2004 as cited in Bloomfield, Fischer & Schmelzle, 2006, p. 5), and within this process of transformation, youth are particularly significant. As Smith & Smith (2012) mention, they are the ones who “inherit the consequences of conflict or the benefits of peace agreements”. “If social inequalities remain unaddressed, while economic and political power relations remain unchanged, then youth themselves will continue to be divided along similar lines” (p. 2).

3.1.5 Youth agency

The concept of agency could be understood as “the capacity of individuals to think and act independently, make choices and impose or operationalise these choices in their everyday lives” (Podder, 2015, p. 41). This can involve “attempts to modify, reform or retain aspects of the existing social order” (White & Wyn, 1998 as cited in Podder, 2015, p. 41). Although, the agency concept, and in particular youth agency, can also be related with Freire’s (2005) approach of conscientization where young people’s awareness of the “social, political, and economic contradictions” leads them “to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 35). Moreover, agency depends on young people’s conviction that their actions can and will make a difference, “however small the scale, and however broad the timeline for change” (Bellino, 2018, p. 384).

Youth agency as “conscientization” allows one to think in terms of conflict transformation. In this regard, Gill & Niens (2014) state that in Freire’s approach conflict transformation involves an integral process of “critical reflection, dialogue, and action” (p. 22). In the same way, an effective agency involves "the consciousness of the potential to take action, the willingness to
engage in collective action (in the interests of the group) and the knowledge and willingness to challenge existing structures” (White & Wyn, 1998 as cited in Podder, 2015, p. 41).

Youth civic engagement can be determined by political participation (joining political parties, voting), political activism, volunteering, amongst others.

Nevertheless, Bellino (2018), who analyses the concept of “youth civic agency”, argues that if youth agency is limited to “expressions of resistance to dominant structures”, there is a risk to overlook “a complex set of negotiations underlying youth decision-making”, and in the same way it is possible to miss “more subtle expressions of resistance” if the analysis is limited to actions that are public and collective (p. 385).

Specifically, post-war or in transition societies need active and engaged young people, who develop “a sense of obligation to contribute to democratisation, social cohesion, and violence prevention” (Bellino, 2018, p. 384). Thus, schools have a key role in “fostering youth conceptions of civic agency”. However, it does not mean an agency in practice, particularly (?) in contexts where people have experienced injustice, inequality, and corruption from governments. As Bellino (2018) states, it is not possible to “transform civic attitudes that have strategic value by simply insisting that young people learn more about the functioning of their democratic systems, or that they find ways to trust in governments displaying high levels of corruption” (p. 393). In the end, youth agency can be determined by their sense of efficacy or in other words, “their capacity for meaningful action and the idea that democracy is shaped and reshaped through the everyday actions of ordinary citizens like them”, in a determined context (Bellino, 2018, p. 393).
Methodology and research design

A researcher’s choice of research paradigm can also be determined by the kind of questions that help them to investigate problems or issues they find intriguing

Tuli (2011)

The research question determines the research methodology and design of this study. In order to understand to what extent Teaching the History of Colombian conflict can contribute to the conflict transformation process, I treat the teaching about the history of the conflict as a product of social interactions (David & Sutton, 2011). In that sense, this research assumes a constructionist ontology position, where social reality (phenomena) and their meanings “are considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman, 2012, p. 32), actors that are represented by participants such as teachers, students, policymakers, among others. However, subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Chia, 2002 as cited in Gray, 2017).

Respectively, this study reveals an interpretivist epistemological position where a phenomenon is understood from an actors’ perspectives and interpretations but also from their experiences, values, beliefs, and meanings (Tuli, 2011). Thus, the objective of the study is to explore the role of history teaching in the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Colombia through the perceptions, motivations, feelings, beliefs, values of teachers and students. This approach implies to know for instance how the conflict is understood by teachers and students; what are the teachers’ perceptions and motivations for teaching about the conflict’s history; and how this affects the curriculum design.

David & Sutton (2011) suggest that ontology and epistemology influence the type of research methodology chosen, and this, in turn, guides the choice of research design and instruments. Thus, this research is based on a qualitative approach, inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist (Bryman, 2012). It means that one assumes an in-depth exploratory stance about the history of Colombian conflict in public schools in Bogotá.

To carry out this inquiry, I chose a case study research design which allows to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18) and involves “the detailed exploration of a specific case” (Bryman, 2012, p. 45) which in this
instance are public educational institutions in Bogotá. Here, it is relevant to mention that although this is a single case study, it has subunits of analysis and hence I conducted data collection in four public schools from three districts in Bogotá. This provided me with significant opportunities to minimize the chances of misrepresentation; to collect the case study evidence with more flexibility, and to do a more extensive analysis (Yin, 2009).

Data collection

4.1.1 Methods

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) suggest that in a typical case study, a researcher collects extensive data which includes observations, interviews, documents, amongst others. The methods selected for this study include semi-structured interviews; focus groups; and document analyses of schools’ curricula.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data related to teachers’ perceptions, experiences, motivations, and beliefs. I employed an interview guide (see Appendix 1) which led the interview, starting with general questions to get to know the participants, then gradually moving on towards their experiences, perceptions, and beliefs, with enough flexibility to ask new questions that follow up interviewees’ replies (Bryman, 2012).

I managed to conduct 16 interviews. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish (mother tongue of researcher and participants) and recorded on audio for analysis purposes. Each of the interviewees gave their oral and written consent. The interviews were conducted in educational institutions.

Focus groups

There are two main reasons for using focus groups in this research. Firstly, to explore students’ experience, perceptions and values in “ways in which individuals discuss the phenomena as members of a group” where they can interact, “respond to each other’s views” and “build up a view out of the interaction” (Bryman, 2012, p. 501); and secondly, to triangulate the data collected from the semi-structured interviews.
To facilitate the focus groups, I designed a “focus group instrument” (see Appendix 2), which contained very general questions to guide the session. As with the interviews, the focus groups were conducted in Spanish and recorded on audio for which each one of the interviewees conceded oral and written consent. The focus groups were facilitated in the educational institutions.

In addition, while I carried out the interviews with teachers, I realized that even though students were quite young (age range between 14 and 18 years old) they were not that open to talking. Thus, I decided to use photographs related to the armed conflict (see Appendix 4) as stimulus materials to encourage the discussion (Nind & Vinha, 2016). According to Harper (2002), this has a physical basis because the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus, images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than words (p. 13). Additionally, photo elicitation may add validity and reliability to research (Harper, 2002).

After the first round of focus groups, I noticed that even with the photographs as stimulation, the participation was still not satisfactory. Later, I decided to include another visual method as a supportive strategy: drawing. Participants should try to represent their feelings, thoughts, emotions regarding the photographs, and then explain their drawings. As Literat (2013) mentions, letting the research participants interpret their own drawings and encouraging them to talk about them puts the researcher in the position of the listener, which could be very enlightening in terms of the research findings (p. 94). Thus, participatory drawing was the first step to encourage the discussion about the photographs and subsequently the research topic. This allowed me to facilitate the expression of perspectives and narratives of the participants that were previously “overlooked, rejected, or silenced” but also to make it a more engaging and “enjoyable experience for those involved and help maintain the participants’ attention”, which could be an issue in research with young people (Literat, 2013).

**Documentary research**

Another source of analysis is documentary information (Yin, 2009). Particularly, for this study accessing the individual curriculum from each school was relevant in order to contrast and triangulate data from other sources. Although obtaining permission to use
documentary data can be challenging (Yin, 2009, p. 59), I was able to access the curricula without any problems while I was conducting my fieldwork.

4.1.2 Sampling

**Schools**

Sampling of schools depends on the research design. As this research is based on a representative or typical case, a convenience sample was used for selecting schools. The process for gaining access to this setting will be explained further. However, I was aware that within my sample I was interested in collecting data in schools of localities with IDPs present. Finally, I collected data in four schools from 3 different localities in Bogotá.

**Participants**

Participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique because of their relevance to my research questions (Bryman, 2012). Specifically, I used criterion sampling strategies (Patton, 1990) for different participants:

- Teaching staff. All of the teachers of social sciences of upper secondary level (10th and 11th grade). I did not choose a specific sample, I interviewed all of the teachers who expressed interest in participating.
- Students. According to Morgan (1998 as cited in Bryman, 2012), a typical group size in focus groups is six to ten members. For this study, I selected –in most of the cases- samples of eight participants (randomly) per grade of upper secondary (10th and 11th grade). However, in a few cases (when teachers helped me out with the sample selection), larger samples were selected of ten people.

All in all, I managed to work with 90 participants, 16 teachers and 74 students (Table 4.1). In the following a descriptive analysis of the participants is provided.
Table 4.1

Number of Participants per School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Participants)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive analysis of participants

Teachers

The distribution in terms of gender is almost equitable. In the sample, 56% of the participants were women and 44% men (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2.

Gender distribution teachers, %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to age, most of the teachers in the sample are older than 40 years (63%), while just 13% are younger than 30 years (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3.

Age distribution teachers, %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the teachers have between 10 and 30 years of experience (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

*Years of experience Teachers, %*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>&lt;10 years</th>
<th>10-20 years</th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>31-40 years</th>
<th>&gt;40 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Table 4.5 shows that 94% of teachers have a higher education level at postgraduate level.

Table 4.5.

*Education level teachers, %*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate (Es)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate (Master)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Students*

Initially, I tried to select an equitable sample by gender, however as the pupils' participation was voluntary, in the end, most of the participants ended up being female students. Thus, for the students’ sample, 55% of participants were young girls while 45% were young boys.

Table 4.6. displays the distribution of participants by gender
Table 4.6.

*Students sample by gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Participants)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, 47% of students were in 10th grade and 53%; in 11th grade (last years of school) where the participation of young girls was 12% larger than young boys (Table 4.7). The range of age of students was between 14 and 18 years old.

Table 4.7.

*Students sample by grade and gender, %*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10º</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11º</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fieldwork**

**4.2.1 Research site: Bogotá**

Bogotá is the capital of Colombia and with more than 8 million people the largest city in the country. It encompasses close to 17% of the total population and is subdivided into 20 administrative divisions, localities, or districts (*localidades*). The city is also the main economic centre in Colombia which has influenced the historical migration of people from other regions in pursuit of ways to improve their quality of life. Moreover, the city has played a crucial role in the Colombian armed conflict, as one of the main cities where the largest number of victims and ex-combatants reside (Alta Consejería, 2018).
In fact, in Colombia, internal displacement is one of the consequences of the armed conflict, “which has primarily forced rural populations to search for cities in search of safety and assistance” (HDRI, 2018, p.2). However, due to the lack of displacement camps, internally displaced people (IDPs) tend to migrate to informal settlements in the outskirts of cities where most of them reside in impoverished metropolitan areas, thoroughly intermingled with other types of victims of armed conflict and the urban poor (Shultz et. al, 2014). Consequently, those informal settlements are characterized by extreme poverty (over 63% of IDPs live below the poverty line and 33% live in extreme poverty), limited access to public services, scarce employment opportunities, gender-based violence, and inadequate infrastructure (HDRI, 2018). In addition, IDPs have suffered historically “discrimination and stigmatization, as well as further violence and persecution from urban factions of the armed groups that displaced them” (Shultz et. al, 2014, p. 75).

According to the Alta Consejeria (2018), the number of IDPs residing in Bogotá is 571,207, representing 8.4% of all victims in the country. Most of them (59.04%) are concentrated in five (5) localities: Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa, Kennedy, Suba and San Cristóbal (between 13,000 and 42,000 people). The four schools of my sample (fieldwork settings) are located in three of these districts.

4.2.2. Gaining access to the field settings

The fieldwork was conducted from 25 October 2018 to 22 February 2019. During 2018 I worked on gaining access to field settings mostly through calls and exploratory interviews with experts (researchers, faculty professors, officials). In February 2019 I was able to collect data. This represented a challenge because interviews and focus groups were conducted within three weeks. For my initial plan, I had structured at least two months for data collection. However, as Yin (2011) suggests, it is important for fieldworkers to be adaptive and flexible because we cannot define our own working conditions or scheduling to our convenience or time, in the end, “the field is a real-life environment with people carrying out their everyday routines” (p. 110).

Acknowledging the need to carefully prepare for the fieldwork (Yin, 2011), I made contact with some relevant actors (officials from the Ministry of Education and The National Centre for Historical Memory) since August 2018. However, after a couple of explorative interviews with them, I decided to stress that I was an independent master’s student to avoid misconceptions regarding my interests and possible interest in these institutions. This, however, also meant...
starting the process of gaining access all over again.

Upon my arrival in Colombia (by the end of October 2018), I began to make contact with experts in the education and history fields (most of them independent researchers and faculty professors) with the aim of getting a better understanding of the research problem’s context and building a network to gain access to field settings. According to Feldman et al. (2003), fieldwork requires that the researcher talks to many people and learns from them.

At the same time, I tried to make contact with some schools on my own but I did not get an adequate answer from any of them. I called more than 20 schools and sent emails directly, yet none of them answered me. Then, advised by someone, I decided to contact a researcher who had worked with some principals before. This person became my “gatekeeper” (Yin, 2011) and helped me out although I had to wait until mid-January 2019 because the academic year was finishing in all public schools.

In the end, I had to be flexible regarding my sample and purposes. Originally, I had planned to do fieldwork in public and private schools of urban and rural areas. However, gaining access to private and rural schools was exceedingly difficult.

Accessing private schools can sometimes be more difficult than accessing public schools. Through a relative I could contact the first and only - private school. After a meeting with the principal, I had gained access by November 2018. I planned a schedule with the principal for starting fieldwork in January 2019. However, when I tried to contact this person again, they did not respond to me. Indeed, after gaining access, there is still a threat of losing it (Yin, 2011). As a consequence, I decided not to collect data in private schools, especially due to time restrictions.

In relation to schools in rural areas, physical access was the main issue, due to time and cost limits. Taking into account the time and resources that I had, I considered that it was not feasible to work with schools in the rural area.

Finally, by mid-January after contacting the researcher again, I got the phone numbers of four principals of public schools in Bogotá. I called them and all accepted to give me a date in order to explain to them my research and negotiate access to the field. Even when they were at the beginning of the academic year, they gave me appointments for the following week. I was
surprised to see how all of a sudden, I had meetings with four principals of schools, because, of course, I had the good fortune to know someone, this” gatekeeper”, who was a friend of them. As Johl & Renganathan (2010) affirm, gaining access requires some combination of strategic planning, hard work, and luck.

I had meetings with all of the principals where I introduced myself and explained my research, the purpose, and objectives within the fieldwork. After that – with principals’ permission- I had met social sciences area chiefs and finally social sciences teachers. It took almost three weeks where I had to explain this study to teachers and to establish schedules and timelines for collecting data. Here, I would like to reflect on two aspects. First, the value of getting “assistance from others who may know more about the setting”, in other words, a collaborator who “can help to identify and get a fieldworker in touch with the key persons in the setting” (Yin, 2011, p. 114). In my case, my collaborator was the researcher, but also the principals:

*Then the principal of S2 introduced me to the academic coordinator and told him: “she is a friend of a very good friend of mine (the researcher), please help her with anything that she needs for her study”. I talked with the coordinator, and we agreed to meet with the teachers for next week to explain the project and to establish a timeline to work with them and the students. (Fieldwork Learning diary, 2019)*

Secondly, regarding my identity. As a Colombian, I did not have issues regarding culture or language. Moreover, as I had some work experience in the education field, I had already gained some general knowledge about the relevant actors.

Additionally, I was aware of some situations which could affect my process. For instance, the fact that in some contexts it can still be difficult to gain credibility being a young woman. I utilized my identity as a master’s student of foreign universities, but also, I showed my background (bachelor, specialization, years of work experience) in order to offer more information about myself. In this regard, Yin (2011) states that the identity as someone who is “doing a research study” can be attractive because it connotes a serious and professional commitment rather than a casual curiosity into other people’s lives (p. 115).

In addition, I prepared a robust presentation to explain my study to principals and teachers. Especially the presentations with teachers were more challenging because they were in groups of 6-10 people, where I was not just observing them, they were simultaneously reading me (Yin,
4.2.3. Doing fieldwork

In general, the fieldwork was carried out without difficulties. Nevertheless, because I collected data in several field settings, I faced some challenges especially related to the field time and mobility within a large city like Bogotá. I had to pre-establish schedules with each school and in some cases, conduct up to 3 interviews per day in different settings. Thus, conducting fieldwork in four public schools located in three different localities, where travel times between schools are between 1-2 hours, was very demanding (physically and mentally).

**Semi-structured interviews**

I conducted sixteen (16) interviews with the teachers of 40-60 minutes each. Most of them took place in available empty classrooms where I was alone with the interviewee which could help the participants to talk openly. In a few cases, I had to conduct interviews in teachers’ common rooms while other teachers were around. However, I tried to make sure that the teacher could feel comfortable. In every interview, before starting to record, I informed the participants about the purpose of the interview, duration, and ethical considerations. Afterward, I collected signed informant consents (Appendix 3).

**Focus groups**

I managed to facilitate eight focus groups. The group sizes were eight to ten students. When the sample was ten students I found it a bit challenging because of time issues for listening and responding to all participants’ remarks (Bryman, 2012). I could also notice that when teachers selected the sample of students, they could introduce some bias towards hardworking students (usually more politically engaged and critical than the average).

As stated before, to explore the understanding that students could have about the history of the recent conflict, I decided to use visual methods as a complementary strategy within the focus group method. In the first part, I showed to the students three photographs related with historical facts of the conflict (see Appendix 4). Photographs attempted to visualise the victims’ perspective and the complexity of actors who took part in the conflict. However, I tried to avoid
exposing students to very violent images, as I did not want to cause any harm to them in any way.

In the beginning, I did not give any context about the photos to the students. Subsequently, I asked them to describe the pictures verbally and through participatory drawing; I also asked them to describe their feelings. Although I did not expect that the students could recognize exactly the history behind the pictures, this exercise allowed me to understand the general perception of students.

Finally, using visual methods as a supportive strategy was a good decision. Indeed, photo-elicitation and participatory drawing technics encouraged young participants to express their feelings, emotions, beliefs, perceptions, and ideas related to the armed conflict and about learning its history (see Figure 4.1).

Photo 4.1 Photos of participants during focus groups in different schools
Leaving the field.

Throughout the process of doing fieldwork (gaining access and collecting information), I was confronted with the fact that I was not the first person doing research in those schools. For some of the participants, previous experiences had been positive but for others "those studies" had not contributed or benefited schools at all. They also expressed that in some cases they even did not know the final output. So, before leaving the field, my promise to them was to share my final writing.

Data analysis

The method selected for the analysis was a mixed approach for qualitative thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) that integrates an inductive coding process, where codes are generated directly from the data to capture new themes; and a deductive thematic analysis, where codes are derived theoretically.

The recordings of interviews and focus groups discussions were transcribed in their original language (Spanish) and imported into computer software program N-vivo for the coding process. Within the coding process, during a careful reading of all the transcripts, a provisional list of codes was developed (derived from the research questions). Subsequently, the transcripts were coded to “pre-defined” codes, but also an open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was carried out.

After that, the second level of coding was introduced to identify connections, patterns, hierarchies (Phillips & de Wet, 2017) within the data, generating categories and subcategories; finally, the third stage of coding analysts was developed with “the process of integrating and redefining categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143 cited in Yin, 2011, p. 187).

4.3.1. Trustworthiness

In the same way, that reliability and validity are the most common criteria for evaluating the quality of quantitative inquiry, trustworthiness criteria are used for assessing rigor in qualitative studies. The best-known criteria were developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which have an equivalent criterion in quantitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Bryman, 2002).
4.3.2. Credibility (internal validity)

Korstjens & Moser (2018) define credibility as “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views” (p. 121).

Triangulation is a strategy for ensuring credibility. Data source triangulation (teachers’, students’ and school’s curriculum) and method triangulation (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, document analysis) we used in this study.

4.3.3. Transferability (external validity)

Although the findings of this research are not generalizable (due to the inquiry’s nature and purpose), a thorough description of the research process is provided to enable others to determine whether the findings can be transferable to other specific settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

4.3.4. Dependability (reliability)

Dependability implies that researchers can ensure that “complete records are kept of all phases of the research process— problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, and so on—in an accessible manner” (Bryman, 2012, p. 392).

4.3.5. Confirmability (objectivity) and reflexivity

Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the researcher does not allow “their personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it” (Bryman, 2012, p. 393). Ensuring confirmability implies a “transparent (?) description” throughout the research process because it is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In the same way, reflexivity also ensures the transparency of qualitative research. It implies to acknowledge “the importance of being self-aware and reflexive” about oneself as researcher and be able to identify biases (personal, social, political, or philosophical) or preconceptions
that could affect the research process at any stage but also be able to make decisions about it (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Leedy and Ormrod, 2015).

**Ethical considerations**

4.4.1. **Harm to participants**

At first, I did not identify potential risks for the participants, however, to minimize any threat of harm (Yin, 2011), I ensured confidentiality during and after fieldwork. Within the recording, transcripts, notes and physical informed consents, there is no personal information that allows identifying the participants.

4.4.2. **Informed participation**

All the participants received an informed consent with the information about the researcher, master’s program, study (purposes, objectives, methods), description of the activities, potential risks and confidentiality. I also made explicit the voluntary character of their participation as well as the option to interrupt their participation at any time.

After a careful reading of the information, participants should sign a written statement where they accepted to participate (voluntarily) in the study. For students younger than 18 years old, I had to send the consent to their parents to be signed (Appendix 3).

4.4.3. **Confidentiality and anonymity.**

The informed consent also contained information about the recording and transcription of the interviews and discussions for research’s purposes; and about the confidential character of the data (used just for academic purposes). Individual and/or personal data was protected through anonymity for which I used a combination of letters and numbers as a way to identify participants during the analysis (e.g. S1T1M; S1G10F). Likewise, transcriptions and audio tapes were saved on a personal computer with a password so that I am the only one who can access them.
5  Findings: Whether and how? History education about armed conflict

In this section I present the findings from the documentary analysis of the schools’ curricula and from the data obtained during the fieldwork through the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussion. The data is analysed according to the conceptual categories proposed in the framework (truth-seeking, reconciliation, inclusive citizenship, critical thinking, caring, democratic values and human rights, youth agency and conflict transformation) and other categories unveiled in the coding process, the most important being: content, students’ knowledge of the conflict, collective memory, pedagogy, peacebuilding attitudes, apathy, political participation, and consciousness.

In the first part I expose findings regarding whether the history of the armed conflict is taught in schools with an emphasis on curricular content and students perceptions.

In the second part I discuss how it is being taught with an emphasis the analytical framework that combines the enquiry based, multi-perspective approach" for history teaching (McCully 2012), and the conceptual framework for conflict transformation (Cunningham, 2014) with youth agency for conflict transformation is used for the analysis.

Is the history about armed conflict being taught?

5.1.1 Curriculum

As mentioned above, in Colombia there is not a national curriculum, thus schools have the autonomy to design their own curricula. Thereby, the structure and content of curricula are different within schools analysed. In most of the schools, the topic is taught in the last three years of secondary school (ninth, tenth and eleventh grades).

However, as Rocha (2018) mentions, the space to study armed conflict is limited because of the time, which is on average a period of two to three months, where students must learn about recent conflict together with a large number of other topics. Likewise, for example, in the

28 This subtitle was inspired by Paulson’s (2015) paper entitled “‘Whether and how?’ History education about recent and ongoing conflict: A review of research.
curriculum of one school, in ninth grade the topic “Colombia, second half of the 20th century” appears at the end of one period known as “Colombia 19th, 20th and 21st centuries”, which includes a large variety of topics like geography, hydrography, climate of Colombia, regions in Colombia and Colombian economy, amongst others.

According to a tenth-grade teacher, S1T1M:

Last year, there was a lot about the history of Colombia and one of the elements that we took into account was precisely the conflict (…) We taught about important conflicts in the world, First World War, Second World War, and then here in Colombia what we know as the era of La Violencia and all about this last part (the conflict), where there has been such a mess and that it is related to the signature of the Peace Agreements.

Besides this, standardised tests also limit the scope of topics. In this regard, teacher S3T4M mentioned:

Social sciences in some grades have a lot of themes and the time allocated is not enough to cover all of them. Sometimes one knows that time is scarce and prioritizes some topics that we have to work on because we know that children will be asked about it in the Saber Tests (standardized test). For example, in the case of citizen competences, we know that they are mandatory topics in ninth and eleventh grades.

However, in other school curricula analysed, a complete period within the year is allocated just to the study of recent violence, which includes topics such as "antecedents of the Colombian armed conflict (peasant struggles and bipartisan violence); historical context of the guerrillas' emergence; conflict’s factors of transformation (paramilitaries and drug trafficking); and consequences of the armed conflict". In addition, topics related to peace processes and reintegration policies are included.

Although the topic is included (apparently) in a very integral way, the main limitation is the time. A period of two months is not enough to cover all of the themes related to the recent conflict. This, as I will show later, could have an impact on the learning process of students.

There are also cases where the recent conflict does not appear explicitly as a topic in the curriculum, but it could be included in other topics such as "political and economic history of Colombia". Furthermore, some teachers even perceived the topic as a “new trend” because of the recent peace agreements. As teacher S1T5M expresses:
This, the armed conflict, became trendy in recent years, and honestly the curriculum does not define armed conflict as a topic explicitly. Something like “we are going to dedicate these two months to the issue of armed conflict”, [would] never [happen].

Furthermore, some curricula structures include guidelines, such as “basic learning rights” (DBAs) provided by the Ministry of Education (MEN), despite the schools' curricular autonomy. This means that some schools follow to some extent national guidelines. In this regard, for instance, teacher S2T4M commented:

Formally, in the basic standards of the MEN, we found issues associated with the conflict in 9th grade, and at the end of the year, for example, one has to teach the emergence of guerrilla groups in Colombia, previously violence in Colombia.

However, some teachers considered the guidelines more of an imposition than a guide, questioning the real autonomy of schools in terms of designing their curricula, especially since they are measured through the national standardized test (Pruebas SABER). According to teacher S3T4M:

It is said that the curriculum is autonomous, that is, the school from the legal point of view has the autonomy to design its curriculum. But in reality, it is the opposite because if I am going to send a child to do the Pruebas SABER that student should have a very precise knowledge of what they are going to ask them. Then, they (the MEN) determines what knowledge children should develop, that is to say that one should obey those guidelines. Then, where is the autonomy? Autonomy is not reflected above all in those decisions of the curriculum or the themes.

Nevertheless, for other teachers interviewed, even when the Ministry’s guidelines are relevant, it is essential to adjust the curriculum to the needs of the population, to the specific context. For instance, teacher S2T2M mentioned that even when they (the group of teachers of social sciences) “recognize the importance of curricular guidelines, curricular standards, and basic learning rights” and they “use them to structure the program”, they do not consider them “a straitjacket at all, or a revealed truth either”.

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29 Despite the references to the DBAs in the curricula, the Ministry explained to me in a personal communication of September 2018 (See Appendix 5) that Social Sciences DBAs “are still being developed (…) so it cannot be used in the country to update area and classroom plans”.
Moreover, for some teachers the autonomy allows them to design and transform the curriculum according to their interests, independently of the Ministry’s standards. As teacher S2T3F stated:

As we are the ones who build the curriculum, it represents the personal interests of the teachers to a certain extent, and because it is not an imposed curriculum it does not correspond specifically to the national standards. It is a curriculum that allows us flexibility in the content.

5.1.2 Students perceptions about the recent conflict

As a complement to the focus group discussion with students, I asked them to say what they knew about Colombian history. Most of the students identified historical facts related to the 19th and to the first half of the 20th century, especially related to Colombian Independence, “El Bogotazo”, The Banana Massacre, the assassination of political leaders Jorge Eliecer Gaitán and Luis Carlos Galán, and the Palace of Justice siege. Drug trafficking was also very present in most of the students’ minds, especially the influence of the drug trafficker Pablo Escobar and they displayed a “general knowledge” about terrorist attacks committed by guerrilla groups.

Furthermore, I used three photographs related to the conflict (see Appendix 4) in order to visualise the victims’ perspective and to show the complexity of actors who took part in the conflict. The students were asked to describe the photos verbally and through participatory drawing and to describe their feelings.

Most students had a dominant narrative about the role of left-wing illegal groups (guerrillas) as the source of the problems in Colombia history. For instance, an eleventh-grade female student mentioned “the problems with the FARC” and another eleventh-grade male student pointed to “the emergence of armed groups like the M19, FARC”.

A few students identified more recent facts such as social leader murders and the recent peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla (despite the fact that most of the teachers affirmed to work on the topic at least during the last two years). Only one male student referred to “massacres, I have heard about massacres but I do not remember the names of the people”.

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Although this study does not attempt to generalize its findings, it shows that at least in the particular schools there is no significant understanding of civilians as the main victims of the conflict.

According to the students, they had few memories about the recent history in Colombia for four main reasons: 1) what they know has been particularly discussed in the public sphere; 2) what happened did not affect them directly; 3) some actors have an interest in hiding the recent history; and 4) talking about the truth is dangerous.

Regarding the first reason, some students mentioned that what they remembered affected the nation more and “in the news, they always (every year) mention those facts” e.g. the Palace of Justice siege, thus, “teachers and also families emphasize those facts a lot”. Some students also mentioned the influence of the media and TV shows. According to a tenth-grade female student:

There are facts that have been talked about a lot, for example, Pablo Escobar. He may be a bad person but he also helped many people in Medellin and those are things that one always remembers because they mention him a lot.

With respect to the second issue, some students expressed that their reality (living in cities) keep them away from the conflict that “happened especially in rural villages”. For instance, a tenth-grade student said:

Often, it (the conflict) is ignored because it does not affect us directly, or clearly if it affects us, then indirectly, not directly. And also, maybe we overlooked it because we do not want to accept it.

Likewise, an eleventh-grade student mentioned:

Well, sometimes we are not aware of that, we think that in the cities it (the conflict) almost never happens. It happens more than anything in the villages and places that are related to the jungle or something like that because the violence has more of a presence.

With regard to the third issue, some students argued that the media and the Colombian government did not want to show the truth to the people, because they could be “involved” in some events; but also, because the government did not want to recognize its responsibility in the conflict, “the State has not been able to avoid those events”. Thus, some students showed distrust regarding the media.
According to a tenth-grade students’ discussion:

M210G: Many times, they hide it. Let's say the television channels want to hide it and cover it, and it's also like a benefit for them, knowing that they are involved. I mean, it is not convenient for them to show it.

F110G: As he says (M2) I've noticed that in the news there are journalists that one cannot see anymore because what we see in the news is what the owner wants, so many journalists have left because they cannot tell the truth to the people. Then it is difficult because you do not know what to believe, you do not know what to trust, that's why we are not well informed.

F210G: And if they (the media) show it, they will show it in a very different way so that people do not know what happened.

Finally, some students mentioned that telling the truth could carry risks such as murder. In a country like Colombia, where political assassinations and the murder of journalists and social leaders are daily news, that perception is understandable. As a tenth-grade student stated:

I believe that people who try to show what really happens are killed, then it is also that people are afraid to know the truth because they know something can happen to them. Then, sometimes not so much out of ignorance, but out of fear, they prefer not to know the truth.

5.1.3 Concluding remarks

Although recent conflict as a topic is included in most of the curricula analysed, it does not ensure that it is adequately taught. The time allocated to the topic is very limited partly because of the total number of topics that teachers need to cover at the upper secondary level. Therefore, even when the topic appears in the curricula it does not mean that it can help promote conflict transformation processes.

Most students do not recognize the term “recent history” and when they are asked about Colombian history, almost all of them identified facts related to the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Thus, even when they have some knowledge about the conflict, they are not able to locate it within the history of the country. Students stated that they remember more “very old” historical facts because those facts have more discussed in the public; the recent conflict did not affect them directly and they are not properly taught about it because of certain actors’ interests in hiding the recent history and because of the danger of talking about the truth.
Finally, regarding the recent history, in most of the cases students do not recognize the multiplicity of causes, actors, and dynamics. The consciousness about the victims is also limited and the collective memory of students is mostly shaped by a "single narrative", namely ….

**How is History about armed conflict being taught?**

The curricula of some schools aim for students to assume a critical position "facing the violent actions of the different armed groups in the country and in the world" and regarding "the peace processes that have taken place in Colombia, taking into account the positions of the parties involved" (REF). However, as Bermúdez (2015) argues even when teachers appreciate the general notion of critical thinking, “they find it hard to translate into a specific pedagogy” (as cited in Rocha, 2018, p. 62).

**5.1.4 Truth seeking**

Teachers interviewed mentioned the importance of talking about a more complex version of the conflict in order to recognize its multiple causes and dynamics of transformation; but also, the multiple actors that took (and new actors that currently take) part in it, understanding the current situation as having the double status of both a post-conflict and an ongoing conflict. As teacher FS2T3 expressed:

What I try to show them is that the conflict has been a constant in Colombia but it has been transformed and because of its transformation different armed actors appeared. So, I have taught it from that historical perspective, because I think it is also important that they do not remain with a single idea of the conflict, when in fact it is much broader today as it continues to be reconfigured. For example, last year at the end of the year we study with the eleventh-grade students about the Autodefensas Gaitanistas (self-defence illegal groups), as an example of new armed actors that have been reconfigured after the peace process.

In addition, some of the teachers mentioned the importance to deconstruct the binary view of the conflict, the simplistic version of “good and bad” actors. According to teacher S1T2F:

The idea is always that they learn to see that things are more complex than for example the idea that there are just good and bad people, because when one sees how things happened, the war dynamics, the spaces where it happened, it resulted in, for instance, some good people behaving horribly and that people once thought to be terrible were in fact good parents. Then,
one tries to humanize those people, showing a nice dad with his son despite all the crazy
things he did. So, I try that they are not going to have that false idea that there are just good
and bad people, because it is not a fairy tale, because it is not a film either, it is our history.

However, some teachers recognised that the transformation of those binary views is not a
straightforward process. According to teacher S2T4M:

Just the day before we were looking at the land conflict I told them to synthesize, and a girl
says, “the landlords were the bad guys and the peasants the good guys”. Then those overly-
simplistic versions of history still have the possibility of emerging even if you try to make it
more complex.

Teachers also insisted on the need to avoid imposing an “absolute” and official truth about the
conflict. Instead, they advocate for an understanding of a truth constructed from several
versions, perspectives, and actors, in contrast with “the official version of the media” which
recognizes a single narrative in which “guerrilla groups appear as the main cause of the
conflict”. In the same way, some teachers claim that there is “disinformation about the origins
and dynamics of the conflict”.

According to S3T3F:

I have found several myths, and one of my main tasks was to break them. For example, after
finding a statement that the only armed actor is the guerrilla, I attempted to demystify it
making other armed actors visible, and understanding that the State to some degree is also part
of the conflict.

Similarly, teacher S2T3F suggests:

Basically, the task is like demystifying because I find that they reproduce a lot of the logic that
is handled in the media that the guerrillas are the bad guys, as if they were the only ones
responsible, as if there were no more actors.

In this regard, Ahonen (2014) states that to materialise the potential of analytical history
education in using history for reconciliation requires a “de-mythicalisation” which means
critical skills to deal with evidence and analyse causes and effects that enable the deconstruction
of myths (p. 77).
Furthermore, most teachers found this official version of the conflict to be an impediment in the learning process of students. This could be explained in part because this official version had become part of the collective memory of the students’ families which in turn shapes their understanding of the conflict.

In this regard, teacher S1T2F stated:

> Of course, there is a lot of misinformation (…) because of the mass media, and because parents also comment “that guerrilla member HH” but “HH” was a paramilitary commander. Then there is a single view: a single actor did harm in the conflict. For me, that is an official narrative: only those against the State did harm. And the State? It never bombed villages, never harmed people because they were supposedly the social base of the guerrilla (sarcasm). Then one says no, that is a difficult thing to dismantle. How do I deconstruct those powerful narratives of that culture that is also reinforced by the media? And then, that is said by the father, the uncle, the grandfather, everyone in the neighbourhood.

In general, students recognise “a single narrative perspective” about the conflict, in which guerrilla groups were the ones who “caused death and terrorist attacks”, as some teachers suggested. For instance, after the activity using visual methods, the students were asked to describe and express their feelings regarding the photographs. Most students mentioned guerrillas as the main perpetrators.

According to two tenth-grade students:

> M6: Those who suffer the consequences of the guerrilla are not the elite but the people, those who fight the war end up being the people’s children, the spouses.

> F1: We wanted to represent the violence and the fear, guerrilla groups and all that”, and the people who have nothing to do with it …that's why we tried to symbolize fear and violence [in the visual methods exercise].

In addition, when students were asked specifically about the recent conflict, some of them described it as a war between guerrillas and the State.

According to an eleventh grade male student:

> At first, we were all taught that the guerrillas were to help the people, but in the end the guerrillas ended up doing more harm to the people than helping them because at the beginning it was
against corruption, but then this tale of drug trafficking began and guerrillas began to earn so much money and that's why they started to hurt [people] and utilize bombs.

In the same way, as some teachers stated, I found that the students’ perceptions about the conflict are influenced by their parents or grandparents’ views. In fact, most students reference their families as an important source of information together with the internet and media. For instance, a male eleventh-grade student commented “what I know about the history is what my dad taught me, he told me what was going on in those times with the guerrilla and everything”. Likewise, another student also expressed “on my part, my parents talk to me a lot about this, as well as from the internet and the teacher who teaches social sciences this year”.

Nevertheless, most teachers also understood education as the main tool for transforming those official narratives from students and even from their families. And in particular, they advocated for fostering critical thinking in students.

According to teacher S2T4M:

The school has to be a space for criticism, not where we reproduce what the media or society tells us, we have to question those narratives, not necessarily for the student to dismiss them but so that they can think about them, ask themselves questions about those constructions, about what is the armed conflict (…) The school is a space of struggle between memories of reconstruction forms of the past of the country. And there may be a hegemonic memory but when it is in the classroom, where there are other memories coming from academia, from the research (that are counter-memories to that hegemonic memory) they come into the discussion. I think that if you do that in a serious and rigorous way, the students can dialogue with that other memory.

Similarly, teacher S3T3F suggested:

It is to make students understand that they really need to analyse information, to question whether what they say (media and other sources) is true or not. I tell them to analyse well whether what the media says is true or to what extent it is questionable, and that questioning and critique makes them to face the reality in a less distorted way.

**Pedagogical strategies**

Despite the fact that an enquiry-based multi-perspective approach requires a student-centred pedagogy, it was not evident that most teachers oriented their classes towards a constructivist
process. A few teachers mentioned that they used strategies of “cooperative learning”, where students guide the learning process.

Most students commented that the topic needs to be addressed more dynamically. They expressed feelings of boredom when teachers “talk to the whole class” or when they have to “listen, take notes and do the homework and come to talk”. They suggested use of audio-visual methods like movies, documentaries, role plays and field trips to museums.

According to a tenth-grade male student:

To make people interested in the topic depends on the way you present it. For instance, our social sciences teacher does it in a didactic way. He gets us into the topic and makes us understand it (…) most of all it is the way of showing a topic.

However, it is also remarkable that some teachers mentioned the use of debates as a pedagogical strategy, which allowed them to foster enquiry skills in students and values such as "tolerance of different perceptions". The use of debate also appears in the curriculum. For instance, one of the specific objectives in one school was to encourage students “to participate in debates and discussions where the student is to assume a position, and confront, defend and modify the position when recognizing better arguments from other people.” Likewise, teacher S1T5M affirmed that “when promoting debates all students have to investigate using reliable sources”.

Similarly, teacher S2T2M mentioned:

Debates should be based on solid, valid arguments, confronting not only the particular point of view of every student because the danger is that it becomes a case of “just my point of view is relevant because I speak louder or because I am older” (…), the key to that exercise (debate) depends a lot on the role that the teacher plays, on the students’ attitude, and it being a collective learning process.

Regarding sources of information, some teachers mentioned an intention to use an enquiry-based approach with students where they encourage them to investigate, to “go to the sources” and to “not believe everything that the media says”. In addition, most teachers stated that they did not work with textbooks because they considered them “biased”. In contrast, they declared using different sources like documentaries, news for analysis, history books, journal articles, literature books, the internet. As teacher S4T2F stated: “when teaching the history of the
conflict to the students I try to find it and reconstruct that memory from unofficial and official documents”.

According to teacher S3T4M:

I use original sources which I myself read and use for my work guides. For any topic, I read different authors and books and I show to my students that (…) what I want to show you is that it is not my thought, I simply show them different positions regarding the conflict, then, they can build their own conclusions, with all the information.

Concluding remarks

Most teachers recognised the relevance of teaching the history of recent conflict from a multi-perspective approach, which allows students to understand multiple causes and dynamics of transformation. Teachers also insisted on the need to avoid imposing an “absolute” and official truth about the conflict. Instead, they advocate for an understanding of a truth constructed from several versions, perspectives, and actors.

However, as most students have deeply rooted collective memories based on an “official narrative”, which in turn is reinforced by the media and their families, teachers found this as an impediment in the aim of constructing different narratives of the conflict.

5.1.5 Reconciliation

Caring or apathy?

In general teachers acknowledged the relevance of fostering reconciliation in students in order to contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes. As Novelli et al. (2017) suggest, reconciliation “is crucial for the promotion of sustainable peace” (p. 22). In fact, most teachers revealed values of forgiveness and sympathy in their answers, a “language of reconciliation” (Cunningham, 2014).

According to teacher S1T2F:

I tell them that we cannot stay in hatred (…). Hatred destroys both sides. I try to make them look at different views, that they do not keep that version of good/bad because in these times it is so easy that they end up hating (…). I tell them all the time that they are the generation called upon to build reconciliation. I recognize that I was part of generations that hated each other, and that we
participated in the war by omission or by action because those who remain silent watching everything that happens also participates in the war. This new generation must learn to solve in peace.

In the same way, teacher S4T1M expressed:

The school has a commitment, it plays an important role in being a peacebuilder able to generate a change. It is not only about adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, it is also about learning how to be a human being, to be more sensitive to others’ problems, to put oneself in the others’ shoes.

However, most teachers identified students’ “lack of empathy” as the main problem to promote reconciliation. According to Meier & Páez (2016) the lack of empathy which may occur “by acts of negation, omission, silence, or shying away for self-protection”, represents an obstacle to reconciliation (p. 108).

The lack of empathy exhibited by students can be explained by their perception of the armed conflict as an external phenomenon that did not affect them directly. For example, some of the eleventh-grade students expressed that they did not know a lot about the recent conflict because “it did not happen in the cities” but rather “in the rural villages”. They used not to think about what had happened there. Other students even recognized that they knew more about world conflicts than the Colombian conflict.

Being honest, I have always felt very far away from the different kinds of conflicts, whether armed, whether social or personal, I always tried to escape from all kinds of conflicts. And for example, about the armed conflict, I learned about it through some presentations last year. I knew more about world wars, wars in other countries and foreign issues. (Eleventh-grade student)

Similarly, teachers related the lack of empathy of students with the fact that they did not recognise conflict as an experience close to their lives because they live in an urban area, the perception that the conflict only happened in rural areas, and because their families also perceive conflict as unrelated to them.

According to teacher S1T3F:

They see that the conflict happened there (far from them), that the killing happened there, but not with them. So that does not affect them. And it does not affect them because in their families they also see it in that way…and since in Bogotá people believe that the war did not have any
relation with them, it is very difficult for them to understand it. For instance, I have read texts in the class where people affected by violence tell their story, and it is impressive that many are not interested in seeing those situations, the girl who says that she was raped, her father was killed. And I decided to work on that (victims' testimonies) with them to move them but it did not affect all of them. And even when some questioned it, it did not go beyond the class, because it does not matter what I tell them, they are not experiencing that, and unfortunately, we are selfish.

Likewise, teacher SIT2F mentioned:

Within the classrooms most students have urban backgrounds, and even though there is also violence in urban contexts, the levels of urban conflict are different than those in the conflict-affected areas. I mean, having a helicopter already on top of your house and knowing that others are shooting bullets from the other side of your house and that they will arrive there… is another story.

However, students were able to reflect on their lack of empathy and recognized the potential of learning about the history of the recent conflict to transform the current situation. This aspect will be analysed later.

**Addressing victims’ experiences within the classroom**

As stated in a previous chapter, Bogotá is one of the cities with more IDPs within the country, and as public schools have to guarantee the right of education for everybody, they have to ensure inclusion and integration of displaced children; children of displaced people; and children of former combatants from different illegal groups. Here, the teachers' opinion regarding students’ experiences with the conflict was divided into two aspects. On one side, some teachers perceived it as an opportunity to sensitize other students; on the other side, it represents a challenge, due to the complexity of dealing with traumatic experiences of students.

Regarding the first aspect, some teachers see that the fact of having students who have been victims of violence had the potential to promote values of sympathy, solidarity, forgiveness in students which contribute to reconciliation. Those cases “serve as an example for the other children”, because when they tell their experiences to their classmates, “they begin to build a historical memory on the basis of what people who have lived in conflict zones say” (S3T2M).
In fact, several teachers shared with me some experiences about cases where students, victims of conflict, decided to tell their classmates their experiences and how that represented an opportunity to make other students reflect on them.

Inside the classroom, there are things that break you. When the children narrate their stories, it is very hard. When they narrate the displacement, it is something that breaks you, it is difficult to react. Maybe that is emotionally very hard, but I am interested in these things and I am interested in making them explicit in the classroom because I think we have to understand why they happened… The massacres were terrible, describing the brutality of armed conflict on the people is very hard, but I am interested in understanding how that story can be articulated to historical and social processes in the country, even though it hurts me and one is dismayed by this. (S2T4M)

In another group, a debate (as a class activity) about the peace agreement was carried out inside the classroom. Teacher S2T1F asked students to put themselves in two groups: Those who were supporting the agreement and those who were rejecting it. Most students were located on the “No” side, however, a student whom the teacher did not know was a conflict victim, was the only one located on the “Yes” side.

All the children were next to “No” and only one girl was next to “Yes”. And I asked her about her argument. Then she, who came from Caquetá (a conflict-affected region in Colombia), but I did not know, says: “I'm a victim of violence, I'm here because in fact the armed groups, and I will say specifically which one, the M19 arrived at my house, took my parents out, took my grandparents out, killed my grandparents, killed my dad. Only my mom was left, then we came with my brothers here, looking for possibilities.”

After that, according to the teacher, other students used the young girl’s testimony to ratify their position rejecting peace agreements. They commented: “for the same reason, why do you think those guerrillas should be forgiven? They will have salaries and so on” (S2T1F). But then, the young girl showed them her capacity to forgive, even the Other.

And she starts to cry and says: “why even though I have experienced this I can forgive, and you cannot forgive if they have done nothing to you? It touched me. After that, all of us were silent for a moment thinking about it. Then, I invited them to reflect on the concept of forgiveness, the concept of pardon. (S2T1F)

Then the teacher asked her if she could also forget. The student gave an answer showing the capacity for reconciliation. This also made students reflect on their perceptions and beliefs.
And she said, “I can forgive but possibly I cannot forget it, but I can remember it without resentment”. Then I said, well she has a different view of what the conflict was, and she lived it in the flesh, right? And then a lot of students moved to her side and changed their arguments, and besides that, they went and hugged her. (S2T1F)

McCully (2012) claims that testimonies from those who lived through the time of conflict, be they classified as victims, perpetrators, bystanders or survivors are a very valuable resource in the classroom in generating care and unlocking the emotional barriers that resist the scrutiny of the recent past, thus facilitating recognition, redress, and repair”. Also, it is important that history education can develop a multi-dimensional approach that accommodates "the complexity of bringing together alternative, often conflicting perspectives, and sometimes at variance with wider societal trends" (p. 155). Nevertheless, it was not evident that values of empathy and forgiveness towards personal stories of students (as victims) can transform the binary view of perpetrator/victim. In contrast, schools could reinforce a “one-sided victimization narrative”, in which the victimhood is highlighted by the in-group, and traumatic experiences of the out-group members are silenced. This, in turn, restricts the reconciliatory process (Bekerman & Zembylas 2012 as cited in Zembylas & Karahasan, 2017, p. 323).

Kriesberg (2004) argues that for reconciliation to occur, “conflicting groups should develop shared beliefs about what happened in the past”, a narrative that allows humanizing the adversary (as cited in Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017, p. 88). In this sense, Zembylas & Karahasan (2017) state that reconciliation pedagogies may create spaces for “dangerous memories” to arise.

For Zembylas & Karahasan (2017) “dangerous memories” are those memories that “resist the prevailing historical narratives”, which means that “the patterns of past violence and hatred may be subverted, and solidarity with ‘enemies’ can be inspired through the memory of common suffering with others”. It is to say, “a willingness to recognize our connections to another’s suffering” (p. 324). Then, for instance, this solidarity comes as a dangerous memory when “remembering events of the past, questions our consciences and assumed horizons”. Thus, for the authors “dangerous” means “challenging, critical and hopeful” in the sense that propelling individual and collective consciousness” into a new narrative can facilitate reconciliation and conflict transformation (p. 325).

However, authors such as Meier & Páez (2016) claim that in the reconciliatory process,
empathy may balance “the asymmetric power relations stemming from the victim’s experience and that of the victimizer”. In other words, “empathy cannot afford to be in danger of being morally equidistant between victimizer and victim, nor can it leave either one excluded”, but it has “to allow moments of transition to occur, starting points for reintegration from renewed and restructured relations between the protagonists” (p.108).

In addition, as Zembylas & Karahasan (2017) suggest it is relevant enquiring about how easy it is to raise "dangerous memories" grounded in solidarity with the Other’s suffering. That leads us to the second aspect, how students’ or their families’ experiences with conflict could limit the teachers’ role to address part of the recent history. In this regard, Bentrovato (2016) states that in conflictive settings, educators could avoid or abandon addressing sensitive and controversial historical issues related to intergroup conflict “out of fear of opening fresh wounds in the classroom, of receiving angry reactions by pupils or their parents and, ultimately, for safety reasons” (as cited in Bentrovato, 2017, p. 61).

In fact, some teachers revealed that addressing the recent conflict was a challenge when former demobilized combatants converged in a classroom, children of demobilized combatants (from the guerilla or paramilitary groups), IDPs, and or soldiers’ army/policemen children.

According to teacher S3T3F:

I have seen it several times and it is very complicated because it is very difficult to talk about their personal life when only seen from an academic perspective; and sometimes one tries to be as neutral as possible and it costs a lot, because all those realities come together in the same space and at any moment everything can go out of control.

Likewise, another teacher mentioned:

What has made me think more about my own teaching is when we analyse the phenomena of the guerrillas and paramilitarism and I see in the same classroom a child of reintegrated paramilitaries and a child of demobilized guerrillas. Then one has to be very careful in handling those issues.

In addition, several teachers mention that in some cases students with direct experience with the conflict assumed very radical positions and it was difficult to dialogue with them. The problem identified was that those positions could harm other students (for instance if there are victims of opposite groups) and/or even represent a risk for teachers.
For example, I remember that a student said that in their region guerrillas used to extort and kill, and because of it they said, “I do agree with the paramilitaries” and that was very offensive to many of their classmates who had been victims of paramilitarism (...), this was hard to react to. (Teacher S1T2F)

Some teachers expressed that when trying to show “some polemic things carried out by the state” some students labelled them as “a leftist” or “revolutionary teacher”. In a few cases, students even expressed that “they were not going to believe that ideology”. That was more common when, according to some teachers, “a significant part of the pupils in an institution were children of the police or the army”.

In a country like Colombia, with a bloody history of political violence, to be labelled as “leftist” can be a risk for people’s integrity. Furthermore, historically the left wing has been related to guerrilla groups. As another teacher mentioned, if students are educated in their homes with the official history, then when trying to teach them about other narratives can often result in students labelling teachers as “leftist and revolutionary”, “like "guerrilla". Consequently, some teachers have opted for “talking in a very general way” about the conflict “to not affect any of them”; according to another teacher, “some teachers decided not to address the topic to avoid inconveniences”.

In this regard, Bentrovato (2016) mentions that for instance in Rwanda, the teachers’ fear to be accused of “propagating divisionism and genocide ideology” seemed to justify their hesitance to tackle contested issues within the history (p. 231).

However, few teachers saw these complex contexts as an opportunity to gain a greater understanding about the conflict:

We have to try to understand that before seeing them as the guerrilla's child, as the paramilitary’s child, or as the son of the soldier’s child or the displaced person's child, they are people with particular realities and understandings of the armed conflict, thereby, their points of view are equally valid and valued within the composition of what the armed conflict is. (S2T2M)

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30 For instance, according to Arjona & Chacón (2016) at least 2,400 politicians and local activists were killed between 1988 and 2001. However, as they mentioned, other sources estimate a total of 3,000 assassinations of members of a single left-wing party, the Union Patriotica (UP).

31 Recently, after the peace agreement of 2016, at least 702 social leaders have been killed (El Espectador, May 2019).
Students’ families

Another aspect to analyse is the role that families play in the students’ learning process. As mentioned above, collective memories are reinforced by parents and relatives of students, calling for a need to develop strategies for transforming those imaginaries. Here, some teachers stated that students also shape their thinking through “a process of formation in their homes” which can in several cases “show resistance against some events in the history of Colombia”. Thus, some teachers consider that it is relevant to work with families as well in order to “rebuild” a new narrative about the history of the armed conflict.

Many teachers also pointed out that students’ socio-economic contexts influenced their capacity to learn and change beliefs and behaviours, especially towards conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes. For instance, a teacher claimed that it was difficult to make students change their minds if they did not receive good advice at home. For instance, encouraging violent attitudes in students such as “if you are hit, then you hit back” do not contribute to peacebuilding. Thus, several teachers concluded that the peacebuilding process started with the family and it is necessary “to motivate parents to come to the school, to work with them and make them part of the process”.

However, several teachers also highlighted that when some students lived in poor conditions, in marginalized neighbourhoods, and/or suffered violence in their homes, e.g. “mistreatment or abandonment from one of the parents”, they would not be able to or have the motivation to learn “about more violence”.

Conflict resolution

Curriculum analysis

All of the schools included some objectives and outcomes related to conflict resolution and conflict management in their curricula. Some had integrated the objectives in transversal projects or courses as “democratic education”, while others had them within social sciences subjects in different grades in primary and secondary education (not just tenth and eleventh grade). Aims such as generating “a culture of dialogue” in the students, “encouraging positive communication focused on reducing the practice of violence that subsist in the daily relations of the students” and “propose alternatives to resolve conflicts that arise in the family and friendship relations”.

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Additionally, some schools mentioned the influence of HERMES\(^{32}\) (a school-based initiative, run by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce in Colombia) as a pillar of their school projects in human rights and conflict resolution. Through HERMES, schools attempt to “sensitize the students about the need for conflict resolution in a peaceful manner”, “to encourage their social, individual and collective skills as managers in the conflict mediation or resolution” with the ability “to analyse, argue and dialogue”, with “self-regulation to handle their own points of view in a reflexive and critical way listening to other people's arguments and valuing the differences” and “the ability to generate ideas and creative solutions”.

Only few curricula integrated conflict resolution skills and the teaching of recent history. In fact, the aim of “encouraging peaceful resolution of conflicts based on the analysis of the historical causes of Colombia's war” appeared in just one curriculum.

Conflict resolution in practice

Some teachers address conflict resolution from a perspective which integrates the historical teaching about the conflict and daily life experiences of students to encourage them to manage their own conflicts in their particular contexts. They highlighted the relevance of fostering skills and values like “the ability to dialogue”; “empathy”; “respect the other”, “to be able to recognize differences and diversity”.

Particularly, some teachers mentioned that the teaching of the armed conflict must contribute to the non-repetition of conflict, understanding the students’ role in the future. Thus, students should be able to generate different alternatives to resolve conflict other than violence in order to transform traditional dynamics of violence and intolerance with respect to the different points of view.

Moreover, a few teachers perceived that students must be empowered to be peacebuilders in everyday life, considering that the conflict is present also at the local level in the students’ lives, “in the family, in the neighbourhood” but also on a more general level in “the problem of injustice, social inequality”. Then, education should “promote alternatives and mechanisms that allow students to tackle the resolution of conflicts” or “the treatment of conflicts in an alternative way”.

\(^{32}\) HERMES seeks to disseminate non-violent conflict resolution techniques providing a series of teaching tools to transform conflicts through a return to dialogue and agreement in an atmosphere with respect for others and tolerance of differences (Harber 2019, p. 82).
In addition, most teachers mentioned the relevance to foster values of forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance in students to help them to deal with their daily conflicts in their particular settings, especially at home with their families and at school with their classmates. Moreover, several teachers mentioned the contribution of the HERMES program. According to them, the program has had a very positive impact on students’ conflict resolution.

Regarding students’ opinions, I found that most of them were able to reflect on the relevance of learning about the armed conflict to prevent future conflicts. For instance, a tenth-grade student claimed that “knowing the history and all the facts that have happened in Colombia can generate awareness about what should not be done”. In the same way, other students commented “the conflict has to teach us that behind the weapons there is nothing good”, “the war is not going to take us anywhere”; “consequences of a conflict are important to change current attitudes towards peace”. As an eleventh-grade student’ explained: “I would not like to repeat that, I would take that (the conflict) as a reference so as not to do it again”

Finally, they also acknowledged that “peace depended on each one” and that it was important to “start to build peace with families and friends” by, for example, avoiding violence to resolve any conflict. Some insisted that if they were not taught about the history of their country, they could continue making the same mistakes: “doing things in the same way; creating conflicts; having that mentality that if the other does not like what I like I kill them”. According to some students, they should be taught “that differences cannot divide people because, in the end, we are all human beings who deserve respect”.

**Concluding remarks**

For most of the teachers teaching about the history of recent conflict contributes to reconciliation and conflict transformation processes. However, there are many challenges during the process such as students' lack of empathy regarding the conflict, and the students' collective memory containing deeply rooted “single and official narratives”.

In addition, in a setting like Bogotá, where a vast number of victims and other actors related to the conflict coexist, addressing the history of the recent past represent both a challenge and an opportunity. On one hand, personal stories of victims can help to “sensitize” other student regarding the consequences of conflict and contribute to the creation of multiple narratives.
However, authors such as Bekerman & Zembylas (2011) claim that a “one-sided victimization narrative” should be avoided, and instead one should “humanize” the “enemy”.

On the other hand, addressing the victims’ experiences within the classrooms could be perceived as a barrier by teachers. Fear to reopen wounds in other students that might be directly affected by the conflict, or to be stigmatized as a sympathizer of some of the sides in the conflict are the main concerns.

However, authors such as Kuppens & Langer (2016) and Bentrovato (2017) mention as alternatives training teachers on how to deal with traumatized children in the classroom, as well as psychological support within schools. Moreover, Bilali & Mahmoud (2017) state that “confronting, acknowledging, and sharing the traumatic experiences under empathetic and supportive conditions can contribute to recovery”.

Another aspect which schools could help address is how to reconstruct the “single narrative” present in the collective memory of the parents’ and relatives’ students.

Finally, it is interesting that even when students do not have a deep understanding about the history of the conflict, they are able to reflect on using different alternatives for avoiding violence in order to resolve conflicts in their daily lives and "to not make the same mistakes that were made in the past".

5.1.6 Inclusive citizenship

According to Guerra-Sua (2019) the violence in Colombia and young citizens’ frequent disengagement from constructive civic and political action prompted the government to launch a National Program of Citizenship Competencies in 2004. In 2012, the standardized test included a section to evaluate citizenship competences.

Democratic values

The influence of the Program of Citizenship Competencies was evident in the schools’ curriculum. Democratic values like “dialogue, participation, knowledge, and recognition of pluri-ethnic and multicultural identity, tolerance, solidarity, equity, cooperation, respect for others” are part of the objectives and outcomes. The main outcome in most of the cases is “to
support democratic participation, respect for diversity and coexistence (convivencia) (Ruiz Silva & Chaux Torres, 2005 as cited in Guerra-Sua, 2018, p. 173).

For instance, in one school’s curriculum the main objective is “to determine the behaviours that are favourable to citizen coexistence and lead to self-regulation”. This coincides with the focus of the Citizenship Competencies’ program on “reducing individual aggressive behaviour by teaching students to self-regulate their behaviour and emotions to support peaceful relationships and convivencia” (Diazgranados & Noonan, 2015 as cited in Guerra-Sua, 2018, p. 173).

Thus, schools have integrated the program into their transversal projects, area objectives and specific content topics from primary school. In addition, curricula include topics related to the structure of the Colombian State as branches of public power and territorial organization and without exception topics related to school government and elections in order to “sensitize students regarding democracy and the value of participating in it”. In a teacher’s opinion, the idea is “to prepare students as citizens for coexistence where they respect the rights of others”.

**Human rights**

Human rights were also included in all curricula analysed. The knowledge related to them included content ranging from the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, the Political Constitution of Colombia, protection of Human Rights in the Colombian judicial system and international institutions for the defence of Human Rights. In addition, “duties of citizenship or citizen coexistence” and social responsibility aspects were also included.

Some of the objectives were related to the “identification of mechanisms and constitutional institutions that protect the fundamental rights of citizens” and the recognized principles of “equality of human beings, regardless of who they are, the way they express themselves and live differently” as based on rights.

Moreover, some teachers stated that they worked on human rights topics in their classes and that the topic was also integrated at every level of the curriculum.
**Democratic Participation**

Democratic participation is especially related to democratic values. In fact, one of the main outcomes for inclusive citizenship approaches is to encourage students’ participation. The main mechanism for this at school level is school elections.

Within the curricula analysed “school government” was included as a topic in every grade, since the first grade of primary school until the last grade of secondary school, during the first period of the Year. The establishment of the school government is mandatory according to the General Law of Education. In addition, the Decree 1860 of 1994 determines that school government should be elected “within the first sixty calendar days following the start of classes for each annual school term”.

As a consequence, most of the curricula were oriented to encourage the participation of students in the school government as “democratic expression” to strengthen their future role as citizens. This implies a “democratic responsibility” oriented towards students “decision-making processes in different contexts” which consider “the fundamental rights of individuals, as well as, the agreements, norms, laws and the Constitution that govern life in the community”. Thus, democratic participation integrates the knowledge, values, and skills regarding human rights, democratic values, and the political system. Moreover, in one school the curriculum includes as the main outcome that students could assume “a critical and participatory attitude towards the Colombian reality and the electoral processes”.

Some teachers also pointed out that it was relevant that “children could understand that in order to make a change they needed to participate politically”, that they “have the possibility of demanding the guarantee of their rights. However, other teachers also mentioned that even when they have tried to strengthen the political profile of the students, they have perceived “apathy” towards these topics in students.

Finally, regarding students’ perceptions, although some of them recognised the political system they also questioned its problems such as clientelism and abstentionism. However, in general, they expressed positive attitudes towards their future participation. None of them made reference to the school government (even when the fieldwork was carried out during the elective period).

For instance, a male eleventh-grade student commented that they could make a change if “they know how to choose the future presidents”. In the same way, another student expressed that
because they were more “open-minded and used to investigate” they could vote better in the future. Nevertheless, a few students pointed out that currently they “could not vote or do anything according to the government and everybody” because they are minors.

**Concluding remarks**

The program of Citizenship Competencies has been integrated into the social sciences curriculum in order to promote democratic values and "a peaceful *convivencia*" in students and to encourage them towards democratic participation. However, this citizenship approach is not articulated with the teaching of the history of the conflict, thus as Guerra-Sua (2019) states, the citizenship curriculum needs to move from an educative practice of a "gentle" form of peacekeeping, to a more analytical peacebuilding one.

Regarding human rights, even when the related content is very extensive within the curricula (based on national and international legal frameworks), it was not possible to identify a human rights approach to analyse and understand the armed conflict either. Thus, knowledge and skills based on human rights contribution in a little to the understanding of the conflict.

Encouraging the democratic participation of students through the school government was a transversal topic in every grade at different levels of primary and secondary school. However, the relevance of the topic for students seemed limited. Nevertheless, most students valued voting as a relevant mechanism for them as future citizens.

According to Guerra-Sua (2019) Colombia’s Citizenship Competencies program limits opportunities for facilitating peacebuilding learning, meaning that “the possibility for young citizens, especially those with the fewest privileges" for learning about "challenging social injustices, enhancing democratic dialogue, and transforming Colombian violence" is very restricted. (p. 179). Thus, it is necessary to integrate inclusive citizenship topics with an inquiry-based multi-perspective approach of history teaching of recent conflict.
Youth Agency for Conflict Transformation

5.1.7 Youth Agency

Schools’ role and students’ agency

The schools’ curricula without exception understood a students’ transforming role in society. Thus, they also highlighted the need to “empower” students for acting as “change agents”. Some curricula even included that vision of students’ role as the main contribution “of the social sciences area to the Institutional Education Project”\(^{33}\) (PEI).

Other curricula encouraged teachers “to promote the development of intellectual and social skills and competences in students” that allow them to develop skills and values “in such a way that students assume the challenge of transforming or bring positive changes to their reality”.

With respect to the teachers’ perceptions, most of them identified the connection of teaching about recent conflict and the future decisions of students. Thus, through learning about conflict causes, dynamics and consequences, students might reflect to “critically make decisions” that transform the current situation in a positive way.

According to teacher S2T2M:

> It would be a very futile exercise to teach about armed conflict and at the same time indicate that there are no alternatives other than violence or not being able to make students understand what their role is facing that reality (…). They are those who will have to face the country later, they are the ones who will have to recognize all those problems from their point of view and from their own reality, and will have to generate different alternatives to violence.

In addition, a few teachers understood the relevance of schools and in particular classrooms to generate student agency. Students have to see the possibility “to transform spaces where they interact”. Thus, “to empower students the student-teacher relationship needs to change”, “to democratize the classroom”, which means that students have the possibility “to say if the teacher is unfair with the grades, or to express their opinion in class”.

\(^{33}\) The Institutional Education Project (PEI) establishes the school goals and objectives, the pedagogical strategy, study plan, school community handbook, resources required and school’s governing board (OCDE, 2018).
In a related way, some students showed awareness of their role in transforming some aspects of society. They identified themselves as the “generation of the future of Colombia”, which, according to them, had also been mentioned by their teachers. They demonstrated consciousness to “change the current situation, contributing with much to ensure that it (the conflict) does not happen again”.

Consequently, they acknowledge the relevance of “learning about what happened” because in the future they “already have a little more knowledge to not return to the same thing”, avoiding making “the same mistakes”; and “to do a different kind of revolution”, “trying to change things in a different way”. An eleventh-grade student commented: “I think it is good to know these facts, what it has caused because in that way we really can unite and make a radical change so we do not continue generating more conflict in the future”.

**Making “the change”**

Students who were aware of their potential to act mentioned four alternatives to make the change: i) political participation in the form of voting; ii) changing their own attitudes; iii) educating their relatives and friends about the conflict, and iv) political activism through mobilization. None of them mentioned intentions of joining civil society organizations or promoting some kind of political activism.

Regarding the first alternative, some students acknowledged that if they knew about the recent conflict, then they could have the knowledge "to not be convinced so easily” and “have their own criteria” to make better decisions and avoiding “the same mistakes, continuing to vote for the same politicians”. The general perception for most of the students is that bad politicians had also caused conflict and other problems in the country. Thus, for changing that it was necessary “to elect good politicians”. However, a few students exhibited doubt regarding voting. For instance, a tenth-grade student expressed: “democracy can serve in some way, but it is easy to falsify the votes and manipulate, I believe that democracy can serve, but not so much”.

Secondly, some students reflected about contributing through their personal actions by, for example, “respecting other people, because when other people see our attitudes, they will try to do the same with everyone”. Others mentioned positive attitudes towards values such as dialogue and tolerance: “things (differences) can be arranged through dialogue, there is no need
of using weapons, killing or taking people's lives”, also they expressed that as new generations “they must encourage others to live together (convivir) in one place, promoting tolerance”.

According to an eleventh-grade student:

Before we did not have much knowledge about what happened, but since last year we started to see it as a reality, that makes us wake up that we are living and I think that our own actions can generate a change, certainly not globally, but if you can start with small things, for ourselves, what we want and can do for society.

In third place, several students mentioned that they could help others to be “conscious” about the conflict, their parents, grandparents, nephews, and nieces, but also their future children. As a student mentioned, “as young people we must make people aware and create awareness of everything that happened because there are many people who do not know and can make the same mistakes, so we all should know this”.

According to an eleventh-grade student:

I would like to be a person who can really bring about change in Colombia, especially in my house, because my mom and my grandmother say things showing that still do not know and I get mad at them and then I tell them “no! we must stop being so violent, that is, if others do something to me, then I do the same to them [an eye for an eye], no!”. It is like being able to have consciousness about what is bad and what is good.

Likewise, other students said:

We can instil a different mindset. Maybe the change is not going to be now, but I can instil a very different thought in my niece than my mother or my grandfathers. I can give a different idea to my niece, and then one can do the same with their children, and little by little change this country.

Finally, a few students claimed that in order to improve the country it is necessary “to wake up” and for instance, “organize marches” to change the status quo.

**Concluding remarks**

The perception of the "students’ transforming role in society" was highlighted in the curricula, but also in the teachers' mindset. However, as some of them stated, it requires a change in school and classroom dynamics towards a more balanced relationship between students and teachers.
A student-centred pedagogy, with emphasis on dialogue and a “democratization of classrooms” may have a role to play here.

Students were able to make connections between learning about the recent past and their role in transforming the current situation “as the future generation”. Most of them showed positive attitudes regarding the possibility to “make the change”. Four alternatives were emphasised: i) political participation in the form of voting; ii) changing their own attitudes; iii) educating their relatives and friends about the conflict, and iv) political activism in the form of mobilizations. None of them mentioned intentions of joining civil society organizations or promoting some kind of political activism.
6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore whether and how the teaching of the history of the Colombian armed conflict can contribute to the conflict transformation process and in consequence to peacebuilding. To do so, I selected four public schools in Bogotá and discussed with teachers and students how history was taught, their perceptions of the armed conflict, and the extent to which the teaching of history interrelated with other relevant topics in the curriculum. The findings were interpreted using an analytical framework that combines the "enquiry based, multi-perspective approach" for history teaching (McCully 2012), and the conceptual framework for conflict transformation (Cunningham, 2014) with youth agency for conflict transformation. The underlying understanding is that when youth are taught about the history of recent conflict using a comprehensive "enquiry based, multi-perspective approach", they acquire tools for conflict transformation through their agency.

Below, the most important findings and challenges are discussed. This is followed by recommendations for improvement of the use of history teaching in the conflict transformation process. The chapter finishes by explaining the major limitation of the research and its personal bearing on me.

Teaching of the history of the Colombian armed conflict

The study shows that although recent conflict as a topic is included in most of the curricula analysed, it does not ensure a critical understanding of it. The limited time allocated can be explained mainly by the huge number of other topics that teachers need to address at the upper secondary level. As Clarke-Habibi (2018, p. 175) suggests, “limited time and resources can lead teachers to make instructional choices on the basis of expediency rather than meaning” (p. 175).

Therefore, even when the topic appears in the curricula it does not ensure that it can assist the conflict transformation processes. This was also evident in students’ understanding and acknowledgement of the armed conflict. Issues, such as the limited knowledge of the armed conflict with respect to historical facts and the perception of the conflict as an external phenomenon were identified. Specifically related to the latter, Riomalo (2016) found that “people living in conflict-afflicted areas do think differently from those in the rest of the country, at least insofar as their attitudes are less likely to be determined by ideological factors”
and that this difference “may be the result of the fact that the security and economic interests of individuals in these municipalities are more directly affected by the conflict than those of people in other parts of the country” (p. 105).

Most teachers recognised the relevance of using a multi-perspective approach for students to understand multiple causes, dynamics of transformation of the armed conflict and the multiple actors. Teachers also insisted on the need to avoid imposing an “absolute” and official truth about the conflict. Instead, they advocated for an understanding of a truth constructed from several versions, perspectives, and actors. However, most students still have deeply rooted collective memories based on an “official and single narrative”, which does not recognize the multiplicity of causes, actors, and dynamics. This single narrative (where the main perpetrators are guerrilla groups) in turn is reinforced by the media and their families. As a consequence, this represents an impediment to the aim of constructing different narratives of the conflict.

Moreover, despite the fact that most teachers perceived the history teaching of conflict as a path towards reconciliation, there are still many challenges, such as students’ lack of empathy, students’ collective memory (deeply rooted in “single and official narratives”), and some students’ direct experiences with conflict. In particular, the last one is seen in a double sense as a barrier. This is due to the fear to reopen wounds in other students affected by the conflict, or to be themselves stigmatized as a sympathizer of some of the sides in the conflict. However, this is also as an opportunity to “sensitize” other student regarding the consequences of the conflict and contribute to the creation of multiple narratives. It was also found that even when there is no deep understanding about the history of the conflict, students are able to reflect about using different alternatives to avoid violence in order to resolve conflicts in their daily lives.

Although the comprehensive program of Citizenship Competencies (which promotes democratic values, human rights and democratic participation) is integrated into the social sciences curricula of the schools, it seems not to be well articulated with the history teaching of the conflict. Thereby, as Guerra-Sua (2019) states, Colombia’s Citizenship Competencies program “limits opportunities for facilitating peacebuilding learning” (p. 179).
Youth agency for conflict transformation

The perception of the "students’ transforming role in society" was highlighted in the curricula, and also in the teachers' mindset. However, as some of them stated, it requires a change in school and classroom dynamics towards a more balanced relationship between students and teachers. A student-centred pedagogy, with emphasis on dialogue and “democratization of classrooms” may have a role to play here.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that even when students do not have deep understanding about the history of the conflict, they were able to reflect on using different alternatives to avoid violence in order to resolve conflicts in their daily lives and "to not make the same mistakes that were made in the past". They were also able to make connections between learning about the recent past and their role in transforming the current situation “as the future generation”. Most of them showed positive attitudes towards the possibility of “making the change”. Four alternatives were emphasised: i) political participation in the form of voting; ii) changing their own attitudes; iii) educating their relatives and friends about the conflict; and iv) political activism in the form of mobilization. None of them mentioned the intentions of joining civil society organizations or promoting some kind of political activism.

Challenges

This research has shown that education can help to deal with the past and promote reconciliation required for conflict transformation. Schools have an important role to the extent that they have "long-term effects, lasting until we individually decide to “de-learn” and later “re-learn.” (Tripathi, 2016, p.136). Teaching the history about the conflict from an enquiry-based, multi-perspective approach was recognised by most of the teachers as the tool for helping students understand multiple causes, dynamics of transformation of the armed conflict and the multiple actors.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain. In the first place, adequate teaching time is needed for teachers in order to address the complexity of teaching the history of the Colombian conflict. In the current situation, despite the curricular autonomy, schools and in particular teachers are subject to guidelines which in turn define standardised tests that include a vast number of topics per grade. According to Rocha (2018), within social sciences guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, topics armed conflict represents “only 4 of the 30 competencies to be
covered” in the tenth and eleventh grades. This means that at the end of these two grades of upper secondary, a total of only two to three months will have been dedicated to studying the Colombian armed conflict. Moreover, the Colombian armed conflict is not taught as a subject in earlier grades. “This means that students aged approximately from 7 to 15 neither hear of nor reflect on, the armed conflict in the classroom at all” (Rocha, 2018, p. 53).

Secondly, as Zembylas & Karahasan (2017) state, one of the most significant tensions in efforts to deal with past historical traumas is what to do with people’s memories (p. 344). This is especially challenging when, as perceived by most of the teachers, students with different direct experiences with the conflict are together in the classrooms. In this context, educators expressed fear to reopen wounds in students affected by conflict or to be stigmatized as a sympathizer of a particular side of the conflict. The main challenge is, as Bentrovato (2017) argues, that teachers can opt to avoid or leave out addressing sensitive and controversial historical issues. Thus, it is necessary to offer alternatives in teacher training courses on how to deal with traumatized children in the classroom and to offer psycho-social support in the schools. Training in using a range of primary and secondary sources representing multiple perspectives is also needed (Clarke-Habibi, 2018).

Thirdly, even when some teachers recognized the relevance of using "student-centre learning" in order to encourage students’ agency, it remains a challenge to put this into practice. Teacher training and more flexible curricula are some of the solutions. This is also relevant if we take into account that several students asked for more “practical” ways to learn about history. In particular audio-visual tools (documentaries, movies, Youtubers/influencers’ videos) are highly valued by both students and teachers. However, it is important to recognize biases in these materials as well.

Fourthly, other ways of action than voting must be encouraged to promote students’ political participation since students expressed no intention of or experiences with alternatives of civic engagement such as political activism, volunteering and others.

Fifthly, the current context of Colombia as a post-accord setting represents itself more challenges. In the first place, there are many strategies that acknowledge education’s role in post-conflict settings for conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes. In September 2014, the Ministry of Education created the ‘Cátedra de la Paz’ (Peace Chair) as the main strategy for peace education. The implementation of the Peace chair is mandatory for schools
and universities. However, the orientations provided by the Ministry (at the end of 2017), in which the relevance of teaching the recent history was not considered by teachers. On top of this, in some schools, the Peace Chair is not integrated into the curriculum and ends up as one teacher stated, as “an activity of one day, where we paint peace doves but it does not have a real impact”. Furthermore, it must include Truth Commission and Transitional Justice reports as a source in education settings. However, teacher training is needed to generate more pedagogical material based on those sources.

Finally, as mentioned in previous chapters, Colombia faces the double status of (post)conflict/ongoing conflict country. This represents a challenge for teaching about the recent (ongoing) conflict.

**Recommendations**

**6.1.1 Teacher Training**

Teachers require professional training in order to be able to address traumatized student experiences in the classroom, as well as providing psycho-social support in the schools (Clarke-Habibi, 2018; Guerra-Sua, 2019). Teachers also need to know how to “collect, synthesise and derive pedagogical value from documentary and supplementary materials” (Clarke-Habibi, 2018, p. 175). In this regard, some teachers mentioned that “they had not received enough training in universities about the Colombian armed conflict", thus “they might have many limitations in their training”. Furthermore, in order to ensure that teachers can facilitate constructive dialogue about conflict issues, it is necessary to have cooperative, open-minded and safe classroom environments (Hess & Avery, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2009 as cited in Clarke-Habibi, 2018, p. 179).

**6.1.2 Teaching about the history of the conflict and the Ministry of Education agenda**

As stated previously, the limited time for teaching the history of the conflict is one of the main challenges. As the main guide of the education policy, the Ministry of Education should ensure more space in the curricula. The general guidelines for the social sciences subject and standardized tests should be revisited in order to achieve that. In addition, interventions, such
as the Citizenship Competencies program and the Peace Chair, should be articulated and teach about the recent conflict since an “enquire-based, multi-perspective” history approach is important to promote conflict transformation as a main stage for peacebuilding.

6.1.3 Institutional articulation

In addition to the Peace Chair orientations and guidelines, there are other powerful initiatives provided by other institutions, such as the National Centre for Historical Memory (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historical) CNMH’s Teacher’s Toolbox which “makes pedagogical use of the reports produced by the CNMH with the aim of fostering empathy, critical thinking, and respect for human rights” (Rocha, 2018, p. 56). Thus, it is critically important that the Ministry of Education and other entities like the CNMH provide integrated guidelines for schools and teachers about how to teach about the recent conflict.

6.1.4 Transitional Justice and Truth commission reports

As Cole & Murphy (2009) mention, transitional justice processes may be implemented to help a country try to construct new historical narratives. These rely on “sufficient resources to implement curricular and pedagogical reforms when these new historical narratives have been formulated and need to be publicized” (p. 2). In the current context in Colombia, this must to include the Truth Commission and Transitional Justice (Special Jurisdiction for Peace- JEP) reports as sources in educational settings.

6.1.5 Non-Formal and informal Education

As Duthie & Ramirez-Barat (2018) suggest, education strategies should not be limited to the formal school system. It is also necessary to recognise the important role played by community and non-governmental organizations (local and international) in the effort to transform conflict and build peace. Education strategies should “collaborate with in-formal initiatives and community-level structures” (p. 30).
Limitations of the study

Due to time restrictions, no observations in classrooms were conducted which limited the exploration of the teaching of history in practice, i.e. the pedagogical approach, the materials used and the interaction between students and teachers. This was instead done by comparing the understandings and perceptions of students and teachers.

The main factor to explain this was that the time to conduct the research did not match with the available school time. As I finished my internship at the end of October 2018, I could not start accessing the field until November which is the last month of the academic school year. Since this was too late for the schools I had to wait until the end of January 2019 which limited my fieldwork to one month since this was also the time when schools had to carry out the school elections run by the social science teachers.

A final word

For me personally this research has been deeply moving and enriching. I feel transformed in many ways and my overall feeling is one of hope. Even if I am frustrated and tired of the continuous killing of people because of the ongoing conflict, I see hope.

Like many other Colombians, I thought the conflict was almost over after the last peace agreement was signed. But this did not happen. This complex conflict still feeds from many unresolved structural causes, such as inequality and poverty, and by the overarching problem of drug trafficking. But I keep my hope because I saw, through this research, that it is possible to transform youth’s minds.

I do not pretend to have generated any kind of awareness about the conflict in students. This was not my aim or my methodological approach in the first place. I was in the field to listen and to try to understand. I realized the power of using visual methods, in particular photographs. At the beginning, most students showed apathy because as they expressed, “the conflict did not happen here”. However, after they saw the photographs, I could see that they were moved. They showed immense empathy towards the victims of the conflict, and they also showed shame. Shame because they did know about it or as they said, “they did not want to know”. They had normalized the violence.
But the most important was their attitude at the end when they expressed desire to learn more about the history of this conflict because they "did not want to repeat the same mistakes of the past". They cared about the future and they cared about being participants in building a better society, a better country. Even those whose contexts are not the best, they who live in deprived areas in the city, they who also suffer daily conflict in their families, in their neighbourhoods. Even they still have the hope to transform the country.

I deeply wish that we shall soon stop hearing about the suffering and the death because of this conflict. I deeply wish we can start to build a nation in peace.
References


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Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia. (2011). Ley de victimas y restitución de tierras. Cartilla, (10 junio), 106. https://doi.org/Por la cual se dictan medidas de atención, asistencia y reparación integral a las víctimas del confl icto armado interno y se dictan otras disposiciones.


Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview of teachers

SAMPLE: Teachers from public schools in Bogotá.

Esta es una guía, y el orden de las preguntas podrá ser modificado. Explicar el alcance, propósito, naturaleza de la entrevista, duración. Que pasará después de la entrevista. Entregar consentimiento. Aclarar que no hay buenas o malas respuestas.

Preguntas.

A. Preguntas generales

1. Edad, lugar de origen, años de enseñanza, profesión
2. Años y nivel de formación
3. ¿Qué materia enseña?
4. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo trabaja en el colegio?
5. ¿Cómo se ha sentido trabajando en el colegio?

B. Enseñando acerca del conflicto (general)

1. ¿Usted toca el tema del conflicto en clase?
2. ¿Puede hablarme del contenido? ¿qué temas enseña? (anime a mencionar que versión de hechos, o qué narrativas sobre el conflicto usa, ¿fuentes oficiales? ¿Otros?)
3. ¿Cómo fue diseñado el contenido? (¿quién?, ¿cuándo? ¿Por qué?)

C. Enseñando acerca de la historia del conflicto

Ud. se ha (no se ha) referido la enseñanza desde una perspectiva histórica

I- ¿Cuáles son las razones principales para enseñar acerca de la historia del conflicto armado? (Curriculum, national guidelines, personal motivation)
1. ¿Qué está enseñando? (habilidades blandas, valores)
2. ¿Puede hablarme acerca de la metodología que usa? (pedagogy and pedagogical tools)
3. ¿La metodología cambia de de acuerdo a un tema (si es complejo de explicar)? ¿Puede darme un ejemplo?
4. ¿Cuál ha sido el tema más difícil? ¿por qué?
5. ¿Cree Ud que el contenido del currículo ha tenido que ser cambiado en algún momento debido a factores externos? ¿Cómo mediar entre esos factores externos y tus
Responsabilidades de enseñanza como un conocimiento esencial?

1. ¿Conoce ud. algunas de los lineamientos curriculares para la enseñanza del conflicto armado desarrollados por el MEN o la SED? ¿cómo tuvo acceso a estos? (¿capacitaciones, foros, conferencias, talleres?) ¿Ha recibido algún tipo de capacitación?
2. ¿Ha implementado alguno de estos lineamientos/orientaciones/herramientas? ¿son fáciles de implementar?

E. Conocimiento acerca del tema, percepciones y opiniones.

En su opinión,
1. ¿Qué ha pasado en Colombia durante los últimos 60 años? (¿Una guerra civil?, ¿un conflicto armado interno?) Expand the answer.
2. ¿Usted considera que es relevante enseñar acerca de la historia del conflicto armado? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Hasta qué punto la enseñanza de la historia del conflicto podría desafiar la memoria colectiva y el entendimiento acerca de las causas estructurales del conflicto?

F. Rol de la escuela.
1. ¿Cuál cree Ud. que debe ser el rol de la escuela en los esfuerzos de construir paz?
2. ¿Ud. cree que a través de la pedagogía y la educación es posible promover la paz? ¿cómo? (via the teaching of soft skills, values, collaborative practices, critical thinking – provide examples if necessary)
3. ¿Ud. cree que tiene las condiciones como docente para contribuir realmente al proceso de construcción de paz? ¿Ud. siente o guarda un sentido de responsabilidad hacia la necesidad de crear las condiciones para construir la paz? ¿Qué impedimentos ve para esto?

G. OTROS
1. ¿Hay alguna cosa en particular que considere que podría cambiar de la realidad de la escuela para contribuir al proceso de construcción de paz?
2. Suggerencias / recomendaciones que deben abordarse tanto para el liderazgo escolar como para los formuladores de políticas locales y nacionales.

Finish with asking them whether they have any questions of you and thanking them.
Appendix 2

Focus Groups

SAMPLE: Students (10º and 11º grade) from public schools in Bogotá.

Este debate es colectivo y está pensada para realizarse en máximo 60 mins. Los 8 jóvenes por pertenecen a la media, comprendida por los grados 10º y 11º. El objetivo de la actividad explorar las ideas, opiniones y percepciones que tienen los estudiantes frente al tema del conflicto armado.

Protocolo de presentación / Firma de consentimiento

*Muy buenos días, mi nombre es Ivonne Castillo. Soy estudiante del Erasmus Máster GLOBED de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y la Universidad de Oslo. Muchas gracias por participar en este estudio que tiene por objetivo investigar sobre la enseñanza de la historia del conflicto armado colombiano en algunas instituciones educativas en Bogotá, buscando entender la estrategia pedagógica y las motivaciones detrás de este proceso.*

El objetivo de esta actividad es conocer sus opiniones y percepciones frente al tema del conflicto armado y su proceso de enseñanza en el colegio. Como esta entrevista es parte de un estudio nuestra conversación será grabada para facilitar el posterior análisis. Pero la información es confidencial y toda la información obtenida se va a anonimizar. En cualquier momento en que no se sienten cómodos, pueden rechazar la actividad y nunca hay que hablar o que contestar si no quieren compartir.

¿Tienen preguntas antes de que empecemos la actividad? ¿Todos y todas están dispuestos a participar y de acuerdo con que se vaya a grabar?

Preguntas.

A. General

1. Edad aproximada
2. Ciudad de origen
3. Lugar de residencia
B. Fotos

1. ¿Han visto alguna de estas fotos antes?
2. ¿Alguien me puede hablar al respecto?
3. ¿Qué ven? (Hechos, época, historia)
4. ¿Qué sienten al ver esas imágenes?

C. ¿Qué conozco del conflicto?

1. ¿Qué hechos de la historia de Colombia recuerda?
2. ¿Donde ubicamos el conflicto armado reciente? ¿Qué saben al respecto?
3. ¿Cómo aprendieron eso? (Colegio, padres, noticieros, etc.)
4. ¿Hay escuchado relatos diferentes a los narrados en los libros de historia o las noticias sobre el conflicto en Colombia?
5. ¿Por qué en la historia de Colombia hay unos hechos que generan mayor recordación que otros?

D. ¿Por qué aprender estos temas?

1. ¿Consideran que es relevante enseñar acerca de la historia del conflicto? ¿Por qué? ¿Cómo se debería enseñar? (pedagogía)
2. ¿El colegio que rol cumple? ¿Hace lo suficiente? ¿Qué cambiarían?
3. ¿Cuál ha sido el tema más difícil? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Qué sentimientos le genera conocer la historia del conflicto del país?
5. ¿De acuerdo con lo aprendido ha cambiado su percepción sobre la realidad del país a partir del abordaje de la historia reciente?

E. Construcción de paz.

4. ¿Ven alguna relación entre enseñar acerca de la historia del conflicto y la construcción de paz? (reconciliación, diferencias, respeto)
5. ¿Siente usted que, con lo aprendido, puede contribuir a la transformación de la realidad del país?
6. ¿Cuál cree Ud. que debe ser el rol de la escuela en los esfuerzos de construir paz? ¿De Uds.? ¿De sus familias?
7. ¿Hay alguna cosa en particular que considere que podría cambiar de la realidad de la escuela para contribuir al proceso de construcción de paz?

F. Otros

3. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta o comentario adicional?

Hemos llegado al final de esta conversación. Muchas gracias por su participación.
Appendix 3

Consentimiento Informado Docentes.

Estimado Docente,

Gracias por su ayuda e interés en mi proyecto de investigación. Para mí es muy importante su confianza y cooperación. En mi proyecto, estoy investigando sobre la enseñanza de la historia del conflicto armado colombiano en algunas instituciones educativas en Bogotá, buscando entender la estrategia pedagógica y las motivaciones detrás de este proceso. Por esta razón, quisiera conocer su experiencia como docente, sus percepciones y puntos de vista acerca del tema que estoy estudiando, lo cual es de suma importancia para el logro de los objetivos propuestos en esta investigación.

Participación: Haremos una entrevista en la que conversaremos acerca del tema en estudio, en la que usted podrá hablarme de sus experiencias y dar sus opiniones libremente acerca de los temas. La entrevista será grabada y luego transcrita en un documento escrito.

La participación es este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria.

Costos: Usted no tiene que asumir ningún costo.

Beneficios: Se entregará a la institución copia del proyecto de investigación que incluirá un aparte dedicado al análisis de la información recolectada, así como las conclusiones y las recomendaciones referentes al proceso analizado.

Riesgos: La información será manejada de manera confidencial y anónima, por tanto, no hay riesgo para usted como entrevistado.

Derechos: Dado el carácter libre y voluntario de la entrevista, puede interrumpir el curso de la misma o responder selectivamente las preguntas planteadas cuando usted encuentre motivo para ello. Aunque decida participar o no, la relación con la institución educativa en la que se encuentre no se verá afectada por este estudio.

Si tiene alguna duda sobre este proyecto, puede hacer preguntas en cualquier momento durante su participación en él. Igualmente, puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento sin que
eso lo perjudique en ninguna forma. Si alguna de las preguntas durante la entrevista le parece
incómoda, tiene usted el derecho de hacérselo saber al investigador o de no responderla.

**Confidencialidad:** Toda la información obtenida en esta entrevista tendrá un manejo
estrictamente confidencial y anónimo. No serán registrados en ningún documento ni su nombre
ni el de la institución para la cual usted trabaja. Sus respuestas a la entrevista serán codificadas
usando un número de identificación y por lo tanto, serán anónimas. Una vez trascritas las
entrevistas, las grabaciones se destruirán. La información será manejada exclusivamente por el
investigador y utilizada para los fines académicos del estudio. No tiene objetivos disciplinarios
ni de auditoría.

**Compensación:** No hay ningún tipo de compensación económica por su participación. Cuando
tenga los resultados lo contactaré para compartirlos con usted.

**Aceptación:** Si tiene alguna duda o si desea mayor información podemos ampliarla en este
momento. La entrevista se iniciará sólo en el momento en que usted considere que las
condiciones están dadas para hacerlo y tendrá una duración aproximada de una hora. Si usted
está de acuerdo en conceder esta entrevista individual, podemos proceder.

Si tiene alguna pregunta puede comunicarse con Ivonne Castillo Beltrán al teléfono
3192212886 o escribir a los correos electrónicos: ivonnejulieth.castillo@e-campus.uab.cat;
ij.castillobeltran@gmail.com.

Le agradezco su confianza y apoyo en este proyecto.
CONSENT FORM

En detalle declaro mi consentimiento a cada uno de los siguientes aspectos:

• Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por __________________________ hasta el punto de una entrevista.

• Antes de comenzar la entrevista, me informaron sobre la investigación y tuve tiempo para pensar sobre mi contribución y mis tareas. También me permitieron hacer cualquier pregunta antes. Me han indicado también que tendré que responder preguntas en una entrevista, lo cual tomará aproximadamente 60 minutos.

• Entiendo completamente que no tengo ninguna obligación de participar en este estudio. Sé que mi participación es totalmente voluntaria.

• Sé que no tengo que hablar sobre nada que no quiera.

• Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento.

• Estoy de acuerdo en que mi participación en este estudio será grabada (audio) y transcrita. Sin embargo, si me siento incómodo en cualquier momento, puedo solicitar que el equipo de grabación esté apagado. Tengo derecho a copias de todas las grabaciones realizadas y estoy completamente informado sobre lo que sucederá con estas grabaciones una vez que se complete el estudio. Sé que serán tratados de forma anónima durante todo el proceso de investigación. Todo el documento (en audio y escrito) se guardará en un gabinete cerrado con llave en las oficinas de la universidad a la que solo tienen acceso los miembros del proyecto.

• Comprendo perfectamente que soy libre de interrumpir la entrevista en cualquier momento y puedo retirar mi consentimiento en cualquier momento, incluso después de que se complete la entrevista, sin explicarlo ni dar ninguna razón.

• Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido

_________________________________  ____________
Firma del Participante                Fecha
¡Hola!

Soy Ivonne Castillo, estudiante de maestría de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y la Universidad de Oslo. Como parte de mi proceso educativo estoy realizando un proyecto de investigación sobre la enseñanza de la historia del conflicto armado colombiano en algunas instituciones educativas en Bogotá. El objetivo es entender la estrategia pedagógica y las motivaciones detrás de este proceso, por esta razón, quisiera explorar tus ideas, opiniones y percepciones al respecto al tema.

**Descripción:** Haremos un grupo focal con otros estudiantes, en donde discutiremos algunas preguntas relacionadas con el tema. La actividad será grabada en audio.

**Participación Voluntaria:** La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Aunque decidas participar o no, la relación con la institución educativa no se verá afectada por este estudio.

**Riesgos:** La información será manejada de manera confidencial y anónima, por tanto, no hay riesgo para ti como participante.

**Confidencialidad:** Todo lo que nos cuentes en este estudio es confidencial. En ningún momento se revelarán a otras personas o entidades tu nombre o tu identidad. La información será manejada exclusivamente por el investigador y utilizada para los fines académicos del estudio.

Si tienes alguna pregunta después de la actividad puedes comunicarte conmigo a los correos electrónicos: ivonnejulieth.castillo@e-campus.uab.cat; ij.castillobeltran@gmail.com.

________________________________________________________________________________

**FIRMA DEL CONSENTIMIENTO**

Atendiendo a la normatividad vigente sobre consentimientos informados, y de forma consciente y voluntaria.

[ ] Acepto participar voluntariamente en el estudio

[ ] No acepto participar en el estudio

FIRMA: ________________________________________________

Lugar y Fecha: _____________________________________________________________
Consentimiento Informado Padres de Familia/Acudientes.

Estimados Padres de Familia/Acudientes,

Soy Ivonne Castillo, estudiante de maestría de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y la Universidad de Oslo. Como parte de mi proceso educativo estoy realizando un proyecto de investigación sobre la enseñanza de la historia del conflicto armado colombiano en algunas instituciones educativas en Bogotá. El objetivo es entender la estrategia pedagógica y las motivaciones detrás de este proceso, por esta razón, quisiera explorar las ideas, opiniones y percepciones de su hijo respecto al tema.

Participación: Haremos un grupo focal con otros estudiantes, en donde discutiremos algunas preguntas relacionadas con el tema. La actividad será grabada en audio. La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Aunque el estudiante decida participar o no, la relación con la institución educativa en la que se encuentra no se verá afectada por este estudio.

Riesgos: La información será manejada de manera confidencial y anónima, por tanto, no hay riesgo para su hijo como participante.

Confidencialidad: Todo lo que nos cuente el estudiante en este estudio es confidencial. En ningún momento se revelarán a otras personas o entidades su nombre o su identidad. La información será manejada exclusivamente por el investigador y utilizada para los fines académicos del estudio.

Si tiene alguna pregunta puede comunicarse con Ivonne Castillo Beltrán al teléfono 3192212886 o escribir a los correos electrónicos: ivonnejulieth.castillo@e-campus.uab.cat; ij.castillobeltran@gmail.com.

Le agradezco su confianza y apoyo en este proyecto.

________________________________________________________________________

FIRMA DEL CONSENTIMIENTO

Atendiendo a la normatividad vigente sobre consentimientos informados, y de forma consciente y voluntaria.

[  ] DOY EL PERMISO  [  ] NO DOY EL PERMISO

Para la participación de mi hijo(a) en esta investigación.

FIRMA PADRES DE FAMILIA/ACUDIENTES: __________________________________________

Lugar y Fecha: _________________________________________________________________
Appendix 4


Appendix 5

Correo  ivonne.casti@gmail.com
Destino:  

Bogotá D.C., 21 de Septiembre de 2018  No. de radicación anterior: 2018-ER-206537

Señora
IVONNE CASTILLO BELTRÁN
Remitente
Particular
ivonne.casti@gmail.com
Bogotá D.C.  Colombia

Asunto  Respuesta a radicado 2018-ER-206537:

Respetada señora Castillo, reciba un cordial saludo
Teniendo en cuenta la solicitud hecha a nuestra entidad en días anteriores, hemos agrupado sus preguntas a través de una serie de temas con los que procedemos a dar respuesta:

I. Referentes de calidad del área de Ciencias Sociales

Los referentes de calidad vigentes con los que cuenta el Ministerio de Educación Nacional en materia de Historia (Colombia, Latinoamérica y el Mundo), están integrados al área de Ciencias Sociales. Cabe decir que de acuerdo con los decretos 1710 de 1963, 080 de 1974 y 1419 de 1978, las Ciencias Sociales mencionaban las asignaturas de Historia, Geografía y Cívica de forma independiente entre sí, y se puntualizaba el contenido para estas, sin embargo, a partir del decreto 1002 de 1984, se integraron las Ciencias Sociales como un intento fuerte del Ministerio de Educación Nacional, de reconocer aquellas relaciones que debían darse entre las diferentes disciplinas y de responder al análisis de la realidad como un todo desde varias perspectivas. Posteriormente, con la promulgación de Ley 115 de 1994 – Ley General de Educación-, empezó a asumirse la enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales como un imperativo de Ley en el marco de la autonomía institucional.

A partir de lo anterior, se desarrollaron en el año 2002 y 2006 respectivamente, los Lineamientos Curriculares (en adelante LC) y los Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Ciencias Sociales (en adelante EBC), los cuales no son de uso exclusivo para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la Historia, sino que permiten mantener el equilibrio disciplinar.

Así pues, los LC para el área de Ciencias Sociales se conciben como una propuesta "abierta, flexible, que integra el conocimiento social disperso y fragmentado, a través de unos ejes generadores que, al implementarlos, promueven la formación de ciudadanos y ciudadanas que comprendan y participen en su comunidad de una manera responsable, justa, solidaria y democrática; mujeres y hombres que se formen para la vida y para vivir en este mundo retador y siempre cambiante”[1]

Por su parte, los EBC plantean referentes comunes que precisan los niveles de calidad a los que tienen derecho todos los niños y adolescentes de nuestro país. En tal sentido, los Estándares son unos referentes que permiten evaluar los niveles de desarrollo de las competencias que van alcanzando los estudiantes en el transcurrir de su vida escolar.

Ahora bien, es importante decir que en el marco de la autonomía institucional que otorga la Ley General de Educación (Ley 115 de 1994), los documentos que eman del Ministerio de Educación Nacional se conciben como referentes para que los establecimientos educativos planeen y organicen su currículo a partir de las necesidades de