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**Report on Production, Distribution and Textbook
Provision Policies in Four Latin American Countries**

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Introduction

This document presents an overview of policies on school textbooks in four Latin American countries: Chile, Colombia, Argentina and Mexico. Based on a documentary analysis, it reports on the most important aspects of school textbook policy in these countries in terms of policy types, major changes in the last 20 years, production, purchasing, distribution and funding. One of the limitations of this document is that it does not report information regarding the use of school textbooks as teaching materials, although it recognizes the specific importance of this topic in the appropriate contexts.

Throughout the report, the concept ‘school textbooks’ is used to refer to books which condense the content of curricular courses taught in schools and which correspond, for the most part, to a curriculum approved by educational institutions at national level. As Moya (2008) points out, textbooks are the ‘printed material used in a course, as a [didactic] base around which [...] [classes] are developed’ (137).

In Latin America, textbook purchasing usually proceeds via one of two processes. The first is purchasing without state mediation: families use their own resources to buy school books from publishing houses. The choice of textbooks for purchase, in turn, can occur in several ways: one way is for schools to organize the selection and purchase of books from commercial publishing houses; another may be that class teachers choose the textbooks and families are directly responsible for buying them. In many cases, parents have established arrangements for reducing the cost burden, such as buying good-quality used textbooks or exchanging books. In the countries analyzed, students attending private schools usually acquire their textbooks without any state involvement.

In the second typical form of purchasing of textbooks in Latin America, the state intervenes through national policies which distribute the books to the population, usually to those who attend public or state-subsidized schools, but not necessarily to all of that population. The programs that have been devised for textbook provision have different characteristics according to the context of each country; they might vary, for example, in the target population of the programs, the ways in which books are selected and distributed, the degree of centralization in the approval process, and the proportion of students who benefit from these programs, among other issues.

In most cases, the type of textbook distribution program in use is subject to the influence of the economic, political and social context. Of the countries analyzed, perhaps the most striking case is Argentina, where several economic crises and political changes over the last two decades have prevented textbook distribution programs from being

consistent and systematic; from 1999 to 2002, for example, there was no such program at national level.

A recent and interesting debate revolves around the role of textbooks in classrooms now that the implementation of new technologies as educational resources is increasing. The discussion has given rise to important questions: What is the place of textbooks in an educational context increasingly challenged by technology? How are educational practices reconfigured in a context in which textbooks and technology coexist as didactic means? Could technologies eventually replace textbooks in the educational process?

According to Uribe (2005), there is a common belief that technological media have replaced textbooks. However, this belief loses ground when we consider the fact that the number of textbooks produced, purchased and distributed in Latin American countries has continued to grow significantly. It suffices in this context to note that the cost of provision of technological resources, absorbed by families or by the government, exponentially exceeds that of the provision of textbooks.

Moreover, Uribe acknowledges that management processes with relation to innovative educational media are complex and require sophisticated organization; it is not only a question of providing books, but also of looking for ways in which such materials have a beneficial impact on the education of the students, that is, identifying particular properties that justify their use in terms of the added value or quality they can supply. In this sense, one of the most important challenges faced by any textbook provision program is the achievement of adequate coordination between the various actors involved: commercial publishing houses, educational organizations, authors, state agencies and international agencies. Accordingly, the most frequent problems that arise in relation to such programs are connected to a lack of continuity, the neglect of some of the components of the process, poor institutional coordination, and the inability of institutions to address the main deficiencies of the process (Uribe 2005). In the case of private purchasing of textbooks, the main challenges for families are obtaining the lowest possible price for the books and participating in close dialogue with teachers and the administrative departments of schools in order to identify find the most appropriate books at the lowest price.

This report presents the textbook supply and purchasing situation in Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Mexico, in that order. There are two main sections for each country. The first of these discusses in each case the production of textbooks and their purchas-

ing by schools or parents where this takes place without state intervention. The second and most extensive section explains national textbook provision policies. This second section is divided in each case into two parts, the first giving an account of the normative situation and the principal changes it has seen since the 1990s, while the second reports on the characteristics of the production, purchase, approval, and distribution of textbooks in the relevant country and raises problems and criticisms relating to the policies currently in force.

1 Argentina

1.1 Purchasing of textbooks by families

In Argentina, according to information published in a newspaper portal, families obtain textbooks after being provided with a list previously selected by schools or individual teachers (García, March 2016). The textbooks that the publishing houses offer for selection to schools are supposed to meet the requirements dictated by the Ministry of Education of Argentina, which include, *inter alia*, coverage of the content prescribed in the curriculum and the employment of didactic methodologies suited to students' educational level.

Families spend an average of 1,500 Argentine pesos per child and school year at junior high school level (equivalent to USD 94.00 according to the current exchange rate); at elementary school level the average is 600.00 Argentine pesos (equivalent to USD 38.00). Many families struggle to afford the required books, a situation further exacerbated in families with more than one school-age child (García, March 2016).

In 2016, the average cost of textbooks increased by between 15% and 35% year on year. Of textbook purchases made by families, 40% are made in cash, while the remaining 60% are completed through credit cards, which effectively enable parents to pay in several instalments without interest (García, March 2016).

Strategies employed by families to save on textbook expenses can include treating them carefully so as not to damage them and using only a pencil to fill in exercises so that answers can be erased and the book reused. However, commercial publishing houses have established mechanisms that force families to purchase books annually; in particular, they have begun to include superficial changes in annually issued textbook editions, such as the addition of a booklet, minor modifications to content, or aesthetic changes. Alterations of this type render the previous editions obsolete insofar as they modify the structure of the activities and topics in the book, although they do not effect

significant changes in content. These mechanisms prevent families from passing books on to others or down to younger siblings.

1.2 The state and the provision of textbooks: intervention programs and major changes since 1990

In Argentina, the National Education Law 26.206 (sanctioned 2006) mandates state distribution of textbooks to those schools and students situated in unfavorable socio-economic conditions (DNPS, 2016). The body in charge of such programs is the National Directorate of Socio-Educational Policies (DNPS). The educational levels to which it is targeted are early-years, elementary and junior high schooling. Table 1 summarizes the arrangements for different stages of education: More advanced students receive books on loan, usually with the obligation to return them to the school, whose property they are, at the end of the academic year. Younger ones, generally up to and including the first year of elementary school, are given them to keep; some provinces and jurisdictions provide books free of charge to students up to sixth or seventh grade. Reference works are also distributed to school libraries. There are no regional variations in the content of the books delivered, although, as we will discuss below, provinces have some scope for choosing their books of preference

Table 1. Distribution of books by educational levels

Educational level	Books received by	Type of delivery
Preschool	Schools	Given to keep
Elementary	Students	Given to first graders to keep, on loan for other grades
Junior high	Schools and students	On loan

Source: Information obtained from the Ministry of Education and Sports (2016).

The Education Law enacted in 2006 created Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB), the first system to exist in Argentina for the purpose of formally serving the indigenous population within the national education system. The law requires that the indigenous population be guaranteed the constitutional right to access an education that ‘contributes to preserving their ethnic identity, their language, their worldview and their culture’ (Ministerio de Educación y Deportes, undated). It follows that one of its lines of action is the generation and delivery of texts in the language of the indigenous population,

even though the programs for textbook distribution in Argentina are discontinuous. Indeed, between 1992 and 2007, indigenous speakers of *qom*, *wichí* and *moqoit*, working alone or in co-authorship with non-indigenous people, produced or edited a total of 23 bilingual and monolingual titles (Artieda, Liva and Almidón, 2011). These editions were intended exclusively for the indigenous population.

Policies on the distribution of textbooks in Argentina have been inconsistent. Operationally, textbook distribution programs, which have generally focused on addressing inequality, have had varying duration and content, meaning that not all public-school students have been able to access textbooks. Two programs are considered to be the most important insofar as they represent the current basis of the book delivery process: the Social Education Plan (*Plan Social Educativo*, PSE) that was in place from 1993 to 1999 and the Management Program (*Programa Gestión*, PG) of 2004-2005 (Llinás, 2005).¹

The Social Education Plan (PSE) was carried out by the National Directorate of Compensatory Programs of the Argentinian ministry of education. Its principal function was to address inequality in the educational system, so it distributed books only among the most disadvantaged sections of the population. Funding and implementation regulations were determined at national level. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Education, between its beginnings and 1999 almost half of Argentine schools (48%) received textbooks from the PSE (cited in Llinás, 2005).

Under the PSE, the actors involved the process of selection, purchase and distribution of texts were the National Coordination of the PSE, which was in charge of carrying out the process and making final decisions on book selection; the Provincial Coordinations, which were responsible for selecting a set of eligible titles; and the publishing houses, convened by the Argentine Chamber of Books (CAL), which submitted books for consideration.

Within the PSE, the provincial level was in charge of selecting schools for receipt of books and handling the administration of the program's resources. Educational institutions administered the material or financial resources received directly and developed projects in accordance with the guidelines given by the National Coordination of the plan. This policy was conceived of as a "decentralized" management policy, giving autonomy to the provinces to select the books. However, this autonomy was always lim-

¹ We have drawn considerably in our description of these two schemes on the 2005 report by Llinás on Argentinian textbook policy until 2005.

ited by decisions at national level. For example, the National Coordination determined the guidelines under which the book proposals were elaborated or there was a pre-approval process of options to be subsequently put forward for selection by the provinces, and the National Coordination maintained the final decision on the purchase of the books.

Between 1993 and 1995, the PSE process commenced with the request by the National Coordination to the Argentinian Book Chamber (CAL) to inform the publishing houses about the opening of the bidding program for the purchase of books. Each publishing house took samples of its books to the provincial education authorities for evaluation. After this stage, the Provincial Coordination selected some titles for each grade level of what back then was called Basic General Education (EGB) 1 and 2, that is, the first three and the second three years of primary schools, which were then sent to the National Coordination. Provincial Coordinators were limited to three selected suggestions for books. If the National Coordination detected monopolistic practices or noted that a majority of titles came from a particular publishing house, the book in question was rejected and the selection was made from the two remaining proposals.

From 1996 to 1999 the Ministry of Education held a 'book fair' of samples submitted by publishing houses through the CAL. Representatives of the provinces attended this event in order to familiarize themselves with the material before embarking on the selection stage. The books selected were no more varied than in previous years; the jurisdictions chose three proposals each and the National Coordination made the final decisions.

The purchasing process began once the National Coordination had received the books chosen by the Provincial Commissions. Purchases were made based on a registry of beneficiary schools and the titles chosen by the jurisdictions. Textbooks were acquired by direct purchase from publishing houses for half of market price.

The National Coordination distributed the books purchased, making use of a number of different procedures across the duration of the PSE. From 1993 to 1995 the jurisdictions were in charge of organizing and funding the transportation of books from Buenos Aires; later a team from the National Coordination traveled to organize the delivery of the books to the schools once they were available in the provincial capitals. At the end of 1995, distribution was put out to tender; however, as the cost of this represented 10% of the value of the books, this practice was discontinued. In 1996, the national army car-

ried out book delivery. Finally, between 1997 and 1999, the process was subject to a new competitive tender that included direct delivery to schools.

From 1995 onward, the program also provided books for school libraries, which were selected directly by the National Coordination.

The PSE ended in 1999 and there was no national textbook delivery program until 2002, when a book purchasing process began with resources from a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and a small proportion of Argentinian funding. The project involved a relaunch of the process that had previously been followed: publishing houses were invited to present their textbook proposals through the CAL and the books submitted were pre-evaluated by the National Coordination and later by the Province Commissions. Publishing houses', specialists' and local jurisdictions' objections to evaluation practices led to the overturning of the process (since the BID regulations stated that any contestation should lead to that) and the generation of new mechanisms that separated the selection of textbooks from their purchasing (Llinás, 2005)

The Management Program (PG) was then implemented from 2004 to 2005. Like the PSE, it distributed textbooks among students from schools struggling with socio-economic disadvantage. The educational levels included were primary, junior, and senior high school (EGB1, EGB2, EGB3, and *Polimodal*). In 2004, coverage was 37% of all students in public schools, including 57% in high school level (Llinás, 2005). The PG aimed at greater transparency and participation of several actors in the various stages of the acquisition and distribution process of textbooks. An "integrity pact" (*Pacto de Integridad*) was signed between the Ministry of Education and the textbook publishing houses, whereby the mediator was the Foundation *Poder Ciudadano* (Citizenship Power), the Argentine chapter of the NGO Transparency International.

The selection procedure consisted of two stages. The first involved evaluation of textbook samples provided to the Ministry by publishing houses by a National Advisory Commission (CAN) composed of specialists selected by the Executive Unit of the National Direction of Curricular Management and Teacher Training. The Commission issued a positive or negative assessment and recommendation on each of the samples submitted. The second stage involved assessment of the options approved by the CAN by the Provincial Advisory Commissions (CAP). The focus here was on the extent to which the textbooks' content and pedagogical approach met the curricular guidelines of each jurisdiction. After the conclusion of the evaluation process, the CAPs issued a recommendation to the highest provincial educational authority, which in turn referred it

to the national ministry of education for a final decision on purchasing of the books. In the case of EGB1, each province selected three titles and three regions, each of which received one title. In EGB3 and *Polimodal*, CAPs chose 3 titles for each of the subject areas and, unlike in EGB1, the three titles were sent to each school.

At the end of the selection stage began the process of buying the textbooks by direct contracting. The state bought the books at 50% of market price. The army distributed the books in 2004, and in 2005 the responsibility for this passed to publishing houses.

In spite of major re-structuring of the Argentine educational system effected by the 2006 National Law of Education, current textbook purchasing and distribution programs generally follow the model generated in the 2004-2005 PG. The year 2015 saw the launch of the *Textos Escolares 2015* program, whose main distinctive feature was the distribution of textbooks to all public schools in Argentina at elementary and junior high school levels. In the following years the state intervention in the distribution of textbooks has diminished even though the 2006 National Law of Education has remained unchanged.

1.3 Production, purchase and distribution of textbooks

Argentina does not have a state-run textbook production infrastructure, so purchasing of books is carried out through a bidding process. Until 2015 the textbook production process largely followed the guidelines set forth by the 2004-2005 Management Program (PG). According to information obtained from the National Directorate of Socio-Educational Policies (DNPS, undated), these programs are funded using National Treasury resources. The National Advisory Commission (CAN) and the Provincial Advisory Commissions (CAP) are the authorities responsible for textbook selection. Both these commissions are made up of specialists or teachers assigned by the provincial authorities and are responsible for issuing the guidelines under which publishing houses can submit proposals for textbooks, which are then evaluated by these same bodies. The selection criteria are as follows:

- Whether the textbook meets the stipulations set out in federal agreements
- Quality of the educational tenets underlying the textbook: content appropriate to students' age and stage; didactic methods appropriate to the subject-specific nature of the content; up-to-date content; sufficient pupil activities.

- The Provincial Advisory Commissions additionally assess whether the textbook meets the provincial guidelines of educational policy for the relevant educational level or cycle

As it was established in the 2004-2005 PG, a commission of experts preselects a number of textbook proposals which then undergo evaluation by the Provincial Advisory Commissions (CAP), formed of specialists and teachers appointed by the highest educational authority in each jurisdiction, but the final decision is in the hands of the National Advisory Commission (CAN). Schools take part in the process only through their representation in the Provincial Advisory Chambers.

Although this textbook selection program is considered to be ‘decentralized’, and even though the decisions are not the sole responsibility of the CAN, the level of participation of the various authorities involved differs. Whereas schools, parents, students, teachers and principals are the final recipients of the program, they do not participate directly in the textbook selection.

One of the main criticisms leveled at textbook provision programs in Argentina is their lack of continuity. Although textbook provision is enshrined in state policy recognized in the country's own education laws, the programs that serve this area have been fragmented and even suspended in some years. This is a reflection of the various economic and political crises that the Argentine context has experienced. There have in some instances been drastic declines in numbers of textbooks delivered year on year. For example, in 2011, 5.8 million books were purchased, while the following year the figure dropped to 4.4 million books. A similar pattern was observed when in 2014 purchasing levels reached 9.4 million books and in the ensuing year fell to 8.3 million. Publishing houses have also criticized the ‘discretionary management of funds’ by state authorities to benefit particular publishers (Viéitez, August, 2016).

2 Colombia

2.1 Purchasing of textbooks by families

In Colombia the production and distribution of textbooks is mainly in the hands of private publishers. Schools, whether public or private, have a very active role in the selection of textbooks. Parents of pupils at private schools must purchase themselves the textbooks that their children will use throughout the school year. The Colombian Ministry of Education regulates the requirement upon private schools to in their turn require parents to purchase textbooks (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). These regulations set

out penalties or fines for those schools that fail to comply with the standards for the purchase of textbooks. Parents may report any irregularities they detect for evaluation to the Colombian Ministry of Education.

In accordance with legislation enacted in 2008, private schools must provide parents with the list of textbooks that students will use, with sufficient time for their acquisition and with a schedule that indicates when in the school year the materials will be used, thus enabling parents to make purchases periodically when the books are required and therefore spread the cost through the year. This list of books must be approved by the school's board of directors.

This legislation also prohibits schools requiring students to surrender books purchased by their families to the school, as they are the property of the students. Likewise, textbooks approved for use by a school's board of directors of the schools may not be replaced by other works until at least three years after their selection. Private schools may request parents to purchase the editions of books that they consider suitable for the development of their classes and advise that books from a particular publishing house be purchased. However, they may not determine a specific establishment in which the parents must purchase the books, although they are at liberty to issue recommendations.

According to Graffe & Orrego (2013), textbook purchasing in Colombia is regulated by Law 80 of Administrative Contracting. Within this overarching legal framework, each territory conducts somewhat modified programs. For example, Bogotá, Antioquia and Pitalito run so-called 'pedagogical showcases', that is, discussion spaces for teachers providing advice on the works available and how to choose the most suitable options. The intention is to implement processes of participation and discussion between teachers and educational authorities.

Several journalistic portals cite the generally relatively high cost of textbooks as one of the main problems besetting textbook distribution in Colombia (Romero, January 15, 2016; Vélez, 2014). In 2014, the average price of textbooks was 60,000 to 80,000 Colombian pesos (between USD 19 and USD 25) each. By 2016, the cost of textbooks in mathematics, biology, and social studies was ranging from 70,000 to 90,000 Colombian pesos (equivalent to USD 22.40 and USD 28.80 respectively), while English books cost between 110,000 and 160,000 Colombian pesos (USD 35.20 to USD 51.20).

In 2010, in order to expand access to textbooks at the lowest possible cost, the Ministry of Education signed an agreement with the Colombian Chamber of Books and the commercial publishing houses (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2010). This agree-

ment stipulated that publishing houses must present diversified portfolios including the prices and specifications of textbooks, with the intention of enabling all students to obtain the textbooks necessary for their education. In relation to the cost of books, commercial publishing houses have committed not to increase their prices by more than 2% annually. Further, it mandates the promotion of access to textbooks via ‘pedagogical showcases’, which offer significant discounts and allow teachers and parents greater participation in selecting what is generally the principal teaching material for a given subject.

As in the case of Argentina, parents whose children attend private schools in Colombia wish to limit the expense of textbooks. To this end, they employ strategies for the careful use of books, including using pencil to write in them so that answers can be erased. Parents exchange books, sell them, or pass them on to other children (Vélez, 2014). These strategies are relatively feasible in the case of Colombia due to the regulations that stipulate a minimum three-year tenure for textbooks. Vélez (2014) notes that the main publishing houses that control the school textbook market in Colombia are Santillana, SM, Norma, and Editorial Educar, which cover 70% of the demand.

For public schools there is a program via which the Colombian government allocates resources to the federal entities to buy books for students. This funding is complemented by other state contributions, as shown below. However, an important criticism of this program is that the funds it provides are insufficient to buy books for all students, and public school teachers are prohibited from requiring students to purchase any textbook for their classes. No information was found to indicate what happens in these cases, but students are likely to recycle books as much as possible, or schools may purchase textbooks or prevent students from taking them home so that they can be used by other students. The following section explains in greater depth the operation of Colombia’s national textbook provision programs, which cover the majority of elementary and junior high school students.

2.2 The state and the provision of textbooks: intervention programs and major changes since 1990

According to Toledo, Botero, and Guzmán (2014), as well as Uribe (2006), Colombia does not have a state policy that establishes a basis for the development and acquisition of educational resources, including textbooks. However, the Ministry of Education (ME), along with other authorities, allocates resources which are managed in a decen-

tralized manner by the autonomous territorial entities. Therefore, there is no general procedure as regards purchase and distribution mechanisms for textbooks. The Ministry of Education does not even keep statistical records on the purchase or distribution of books. In this sense, the changes in the mechanisms of acquisition and purchase follow the preference of local governments.

Uribe (2006) states that the Colombian educational sector has seen increasing progress toward marked decentralization. Thus, Law 715 of 2001 establishes that the nation has a responsibility to transfer financial resources to the territorial entities through the General System of Participations (SGP, as is its abbreviation in Spanish). Textbooks, among other issues related to education, are funded via monies provided to the SGP. As we will see later, the problem with these funds is that they are not subject to checks, which is why in many cases the funds available are insufficient for the territorial entities to provide textbooks to students at public schools.

In the absence of a centralized textbook selection program, each state, province or territory has funds provided by the central and the federal state governments, as well as by international bodies, and is permitted to choose the texts they wish to use, adhering in so doing to the guidelines generated by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry distributes a Catalog of Textbooks (available in electronic format) so that schools have an idea of the range of textbooks on offer commercially and can choose. This decentralized selection procedure means the variations in textbook use are not necessarily strictly regional in nature.

Although the Law of Inclusion which was issued as part of the 2016 education reform specifies that each student should be the owner of their school textbook, the lack of homogeneous procedures at national level precludes us from establishing whether books are given to students on loan or to keep (Tele13, February 2016).

In 2005, the Department of Intersectoral Populations and Projects designed the Project for Indigenous Population of School Age (Altablero, 2005). The financial resources for the project came from a Japanese fund, the World Bank and the national government. The project's aim was to support educational practices based on bilingualism in the education of indigenous populations through teaching in the language of each town and an introduction to Spanish. However, no textbooks in indigenous languages have been published so far.

One of the few initiatives that has intervened in the distribution of textbooks is *todos a aprender* ('everybody is going to learn'), which is a program aimed at improving the

quality of education (Ministerio de Educación, undated). According to Toledo, Botero, and Guzmán (2014, 40), this program, launched in 2010, aims at ‘improving learning conditions in educational establishments selected after their identification as institutions facing greater difficulties [than others] and further away from the administrative center’. The program’s target population is students from schools serving economically and socially disadvantaged areas. The same authors point out that up to 2014, in terms of textbooks, the program was successful, the Ministry having ‘distributed a total of 9 million texts in 4,327 educational establishments, exceeding the initial goal of covering 3,000 schools" (40).

Another important initiative at national level is the delivery of English textbooks for students in grades nine through eleven (Colombia Aprende, undated). The intent of this strategy, which is part of the *Colombia Bilingüe* (Bilingual Colombia) program, is to help strengthen the quality of education in public schools in Colombia.

2.3 Production, approval, and purchase of textbooks

Graffe and Orrego (2013) and Uribe (2006) record three mechanisms of textbook acquisition in Colombian entities:

1. Centralized purchasing takes place for official establishments such as libraries. The books are selected from the range commercially available nationally or internationally through bidding processes. The intent of this type of acquisition is to support elementary education. The budget for this modality of book purchasing comes from ordinary national funds or international credit.
2. The Ministry of Education has set up teams to provide textbooks to rural institutions incorporated into the New School Program, a special program that promotes education for peace in post-conflict zones through a model of progressive school. Most of the process takes place via bidding.
3. For all other institutions; that is, the bulk of public schools, the Ministry of Education has established a funding system with monies from the nation, the federal entities and international credit. The resources for this fund are consolidated in a Social Investment Fund (FIS). The teachers select the books from the range commercially available and publishing houses distribute them.

Publishing houses design and write textbooks and, as we have observed, selection procedures are completely decentralized. The Colombian Ministry of Education, in Association with the Colombian Chamber of Books, has made available a ‘Catalog of

Textbooks' through the 'Colombia Aprende' portal (Altablero, 2007), which obtains information from textbook publishers and contains details of textbook characteristics, prices and complementary materials. The portal's purpose is to improve textbooks' social accessibility and to enable parents, the community and educational authorities to inform themselves about them, and about their selection, adoption and purchase, as thoroughly as possible.

According to Graffe and Orrego (2013), the Ministry of Education allocates budget for textbooks, which, consolidated in a Social Investment Fund (FIS), includes regular national budgets, international credit and budget from the federal entities. Teachers select the books and institutions order the books from the publishing houses. Uribe (2006) notes that in some instances, private distributors have delivered the books. In any case, it is difficult to provide a blanket explanation for the textbook distribution process, as the decentralized policy model in this area means regional governments can make independent decisions.

Textbook policy (or the absence of it) in Colombia is the most decentralized among the four Latin American countries studied for this report. Although there is significant participation in decision-making by teachers and schools, there seems to be no full accountability at national level for textbook distribution to the majority of students attending public schools. According to Enrique González Villa, president of the Colombian Chamber of Books, in 2016 there were around 11 million school pupils in Colombia, but total textbook sales do not exceed 10 million annually (quoted in Romero, January 15, 2016). In that year, González Villa mentioned the possibility of increasing value-added tax (VAT) by 5% on the purchase of textbooks by individuals in view of the economic crisis that the country was experiencing. In sum, there is a severe problem of textbook coverage, and the central state seems to be passing the responsibility to the federal entities.

Some textbooks provided in print to Colombian pupils can also be used electronically, or at least some of their content can. This 'allows teachers and students to overcome the limitation of traditional textbooks and teaching materials' (Colombia Aprende, undated). Electronic teaching materials in the areas of natural sciences, mathematics and languages are available to teachers and students for use both inside and outside the classroom. These types of resources are relevant in a context in which, although textbooks are often not available in sufficient numbers, teachers, principals, and coordinators of public schools cannot request the purchase of supplementary materials (such as

textbooks) from parents. Teachers fear prosecution because the Colombian government's rules prohibit schools from asking parents to contribute to complementary expenses, even if such expenses relate to a material as important to classes as books.

3 Chile

3.1 Purchasing of textbooks by families

In Chile, all textbooks are purchased directly from commercial publishing houses, whether for public or private schools. Most textbook provision to public schools takes place via government-funded programs at national level which include a bidding process for commercial publishing houses. Private schools generate a list of texts that parents must purchase. No information was found to indicate whether in Chile, as in Colombia, the Ministry of Education regulates the acquisition of books by families whose children attend private schools. However, monopolistic practices are prohibited, so parents are not required to buy books in specific establishments.

A controversial issue regarding the acquisition of textbooks relates to those private schools that are subsidized by the government. These schools are beneficiaries of the government's textbook provision programs; however, some of these schools opt to reject the books provided by the government and ask parents to purchase others, arguing that they are of poor quality (Rojas, March 2015 and Rivas, March 2015, *El Dinamo*, 2016). Subsidized private schools are obliged to justify in writing rejection of the Ministry-selected textbooks, as well as informing students and parents (Rivas, March 2015).

In some cases, schools' decision to reject textbooks distributed by the government is justified by specific projects, as in the case of bilingual schools (Rivas, March 2015). Most schools taking this course of action assert that their principal motivation is quality. However, according to some critics, there is no great difference between the books delivered by the government and those bought by parents. This is not the case as regards cost; those bought privately by parents are much more expensive, although they frequently come from the same publishing houses that distribute to the Ministry of Education. The books purchased by the Ministry each cost an average of 1,500 Chilean pesos (USD 2.50), while those bought by parents have an average value of 30,000 Chilean pesos each (USD 50) (Villa, March 2014).

Ximena Azúa, director of the Postgraduate School of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Chile, has stated that the textbooks acquired by the Ministry of Education and those purchased by parents have the same content and the same curricular

design. The main difference is that the editions acquired by the Ministry are produced in large volumes at the lowest possible price, so that their print quality is simpler than that of books produced by publishing houses for sale to parents. In Azúa's view, buying books directly from publishing houses does not mean a real improvement in educational terms, but rather represents in effect a status symbol (Villa, March 2014).

There seems to be a certain degree of corruption in the purchase of textbooks by the families of pupils at subsidized private schools; the publishing houses that supply most of the textbooks in Chile (Santillana and SM, which together share 70% of the market) offer 'incentives' to schools to reject government books and acquire their editions outside mass distribution programs. These incentives might be tablet computers, trips abroad, or training courses for teachers, to name a few examples (Villa, March 2014).

As in the cases of Colombia and Argentina, publishing houses leave little scope for the reuse of textbooks purchased by parents. This is so because schools ask for recent editions on an annual basis, which include changes in format that do not represent substantial differences. In addition, editions purchased directly from publishing houses include cut-out material that in some cases does not allow the reuse of the book.

3.2 The state and the provision of textbooks: intervention programs and major changes since 1990

The Chilean state's public policy on school textbooks enshrines the systematic and free delivery of quality textbooks for the priority sectors of the curriculum to all students and teachers at municipal and subsidized educational establishments in the country (Ministerio de Educación, 2015). This also includes books that are appropriate to the language of the indigenous population where a school has a high proportion of such students, and, since 2007, books for students with special needs (for example Braille or in large print for people with visual difficulties) (Ministerio de Educación, undated).

The delivery of books by the Chilean government takes place in both elementary and junior high schools and covers all courses and levels of the current curriculum (Ministry of Education, undated). By 2015, the Ministry of Education delivered more than 17 million books, which meant that each student received an average of 6 textbooks in a student population made up of 3,200,000 beneficiaries (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). In 2016, the president Michelle Bachelet directed that textbooks should be handed over as property to students. In previous years, textbooks had been given to students on loan and were to be returned after two years.

The budget granted for the purchase and distribution of textbooks comes from the federal government (Ministerio de Educación, undated). Chile does not have a state-run textbook production infrastructure, so the selection and purchase of these texts is carried out through bidding processes involving commercial publishing houses which generate textbook proposals based on guidelines issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education.

Chilean textbook policy is characterized by its sustained and systematic nature as well as its relatively recent inception, in the 1990s. Table 2 shows the improvement in textbook delivery to schools across the years 1990, 2000 and 2010. By the year 2000 the program had achieved 100% coverage of textbooks at basic and intermediate levels, a rate extended to preschool level by 2010. The total number of books delivered by the program and the number of titles also increased considerably in this time period; the 14 titles delivered in 1990 had increased to 66 by 2010. By 2015, more than 17 million textbooks were being delivered. Each student, of a population of 3,200,000 school attendees, received an average of 6 books (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2016).

Table 2. Textbook provision program, 1990, 2000 and 2010.

	1990	2000	2010
Number of books	1,920,000	7,500,000	15,253,396
Coverage	Elementary 85%	Elementary and junior high school 100%	Preschool, elementary and junior high school 100%
Number of titles distributed	15	26	66

Source: Ministerio de Educación (2011).

Since 1990, Chile's textbook delivery program has featured two major phases of emphasis (Leyva et al, 2000). In the first, from 1990 to 1994, the priority has been on coverage and there has been particular emphasis on the principle of equity in the shape of expressions such as 'Textbooks for all'. This program was born in the context of the significant transformations and political changes which took place during Chile's transition to democracy. The main objective of reforms in the educational field was to 'improve the quality of the pedagogical processes and the results obtained, together with equality in the distribution of knowledge and skills transmitted by schools'. This led to a program titled 'Improving the efficiency and coverage of assistance programs for stu-

dents attending basic education', which aimed to deliver textbooks and guides in four main subjects to all students of basic education (Leyva et al, 2000).

According to Leyva et al (2000), it was not possible at this time to deliver the textbooks to all students. In 1990 the government distributed 1,920,000 textbooks, prioritizing the most economically disadvantaged population. These books were given to students on loan and had to be used continuously for 3 or 4 years. At the end of each year the students had to give their books back to the school, in order for them to be re-assigned to new students the following year. Due to the books being given on loan, students could not write in them.

In 1992 the World Bank granted a loan to support the distribution of textbooks; this eventually developed into the Basic Education Quality and Equality Improvement Program (MECE-Basic) (Leyva et al, 2000). Over time, the distribution of textbooks increased considerably. As a result, as early as 2000, all state-subsidized basic education students benefited from textbooks in four different areas of knowledge.

The second period of the textbook provision program, from 1994 to the present day, prioritized quality, placing special emphasis on the improvement of textbooks as well as their use. This emphasis is evident in the principal criticisms leveled today at the distribution of textbooks, which relate to their content and the way in which they are selected.

Quality in textbooks has generally been understood as modification to conform to the regulations of bidding processes (Leyva et al, 2000). One change has been an increase in didactic requirements of textbook content, which resulted in the development of guidelines for publishing houses. Since 1998, regulations have been implemented to make it possible for teachers to select the books they consider most appropriate for their classes. Likewise, modifications to the bidding process have made it more participatory in nature, so that teachers and school administrators are involved in the selection of textbooks.

One of the main outcomes of these attempts to improve the quality of textbooks has been the decentralization of educational management (Vidal, 2009). Decentralization, in this context, is understood as 'the elaboration of an institutional educational project and of a curricular design linked to the specific teaching-learning contexts in which schools are situated', whereby schools are encouraged to select the texts according to those contexts (Leyva, Cardemil, Rittershausen, Latorre y Rodríguez, 2000, 21). It is important to emphasize here that decentralization is limited to the options preselected by the Min-

istry of Education. This means that schools can choose from three textbooks. This ‘decentralized’ management structure therefore takes place within the limits imposed by authorities at national level.

3.3 Production, approval, and purchase of textbooks

The production of textbooks in Chile is carried out through bidding processes held annually in which commercial publishing houses participate under guidelines established by the Ministry of Education and (Ortúzar, 2014). As noted, Chile does not have state-run infrastructure for textbook production, so that the purchase price is at commercial levels.

The bidding process has the objective of purchasing educational materials from the range on offer from publishers in an objective, equitable, transparent and effective way (Toledo, Botero, and Guzmán, 2014). It uses an open purchase procedure that operates through the bidding platform of the Purchasing and Public Procurement Department - *ChileCompra*. Textbooks taking part in the bidding process must be in accordance with current curricular regulations. Their evaluation has two focal issues: educational and subject-specific content, assessed by Evaluation Centers external to the Ministry of Education, and economic issues, examined by Ministry specialists (Ortúzar, 2014). The textbooks most highly rated in this assessment are selected and passed to the schools to choose from.

According to the Chilean Ministry of Education, the specific process for the acquisition of textbooks involves the preparation of bidding regulations and administrative procedures, the development of bids by publishing houses, their evaluation and selection, the purchase of the books and their delivery to the Ministry by the suppliers, and their subsequent delivery to schools. The books acquired must comply with the requirements established for their content, which, in general, must conform to current curricular regulations (Ministerio de Educación, 2015).

Ortúzar (2014) points out that the system via which textbooks are, *de facto*, approved consists of directives and of teachers choosing between two options preselected by the Chilean Ministry of Education. Schools that do not participate in this process receive the textbooks assigned by the Ministry of Education directly. Schools voluntarily assume the commitment to use the books that are assigned to them.

Distribution of the textbooks acquired by the Chilean Ministry of Education takes place via external companies contracted to provide the service and coordinated by the

Ministry (Uribe, 2006, and Ortúzar, 2014). The process of textbook delivery progresses as follows:

Commitment: The principal and the president of the Parent and Guardian Center commit themselves to receive and then deliver to students and teachers the texts provided by the Ministry of Education.

Selection: Teachers choose in some levels and sectors between two alternatives, giving preference to the option that, in their view, best suits their students and establishment.

Assignment: The Ministry of Education projects and estimates numbers of pupils on the school's roll, while the school provides information on its previous enrolment in order to calculate the number of textbooks for delivery to the school.

Distribution and Adjustment: The texts are distributed according to the numbers reported by each educational establishment. In the adjustment phase, establishments return superfluous copies and/or request more where numbers are insufficient (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

In 2012, the Chilean Ministry of Education delivered 17,410,000 textbooks to 3,000,000 students, investing 22 billion pesos. As of 2008, the publishing houses most frequently successful in the bids within this process were Santillana (28% of all the books distributed), Cal y Canto (14%) and Norma de Chile (12%). The latter two belong to Empresas Carvajal S.A. (see Table 3). Of the publishing houses that participated in the process in that year, 47% are based in Spain and 38% in Chile (see Table 4).

Table 3. Main publishing houses of texts in Chile in 2008.

Publishing houses	State purchase percentage
Santillana	22%
Cal y Canto	16%
Arrayán	14%
Mare Nostrum	9%
Norma	7%
SM Chile	7%
Galileo-Pearson	7%
Richmond	6%
Lom	3%
Other	9%

Source: Toledo, A., Botero, C., and Guzmán, L. (2014). Gasto público en la educación de América Latina ¿Puede servir a los propósitos de la Declaración de París sobre los Recursos Humanos Abiertos? París-Montevideo: Fundación Karisma-UNESCO.
<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Montevideo/pdf/CDCI1-Karisma-ES.pdf> (Accessed September 17, 2016)

Table 4. Countries of origin of the main publishing houses distributing textbooks in Chile in 2008.

Country	State purchase percentage
Spain	47%
Chile	38%
Colombia	7%
England	7%
USA	1%

Source: Toledo, A., Botero, C., & Guzmán, L. (2014). Gasto público en la educación de América Latina ¿Puede servir a los propósitos de la Declaración de París sobre los Recursos Humanos Abiertos? París-Montevideo: Fundación Karisma-UNESCO.
<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Montevideo/pdf/CDCI1-Karisma-ES.pdf> (Accessed September 17, 2016)

In Toledo, Botero, and Guzmán (2014) we find information on Chilean textbook policy that is not available to us for the other countries discussed in this report: of the resources allocated to textbook policy in Chile, 85% goes to the purchasing process, 8% for the complex process of textbook distribution, and 7% for administrative expenses.

Rojas (2015) states that the average cost per book to the government was about 1,400 Chilean pesos, which is equivalent to approximately USD 2.00 at current exchange rates. The provision of textbooks to students enables families to make substantial savings. It is estimated that by means of this textbook subsidy, families can save an estimated 1,198,840 Chilean pesos per child over the course of his or her schooling, which is equivalent to approximately USD 1,775 (Ministerio de Educación, undated).

Ortúzar (2014) summarizes some criticism leveled at Chilean book delivery policy. One factor here is that, as we have discussed above, some schools opt out of receiving textbooks on grounds of quality. However, it appears that the books provided by the Chilean Ministry of Education are very similar to those acquired privately, although the purchase price in these cases is 10 to 20 times greater (Rojas, 2015; El Dinamo, 2016).

Another criticism is that the way in which the publishing market operates in Chile, and the bidding processes used for the acquisition of textbooks, do not generate competition or improve the quality of books' content (Ortúzar, 2014). At state level, the evaluation process focuses primarily on reducing production costs, consequently neglecting the importance of improving textbooks' content. In the private sector, publishing houses generate incentives for private schools to require their students to purchase different books every year, although these books rarely evince significant changes and their content tends to be the same in a different format.

In both the public and private sectors, proposals have been generated with the aim of addressing the persistent shortcomings of the textbooks used in Chile (Ortúzar, 2014). On the one hand, proposals have been made to prohibit private schools from requesting 'textbooks of the year'; these proposals suggest instead that textbooks are chosen for a period of five years, so that families of students do not have to buy books with essentially the same content as previous editions. The idea behind this proposal is to end publishing houses' practice of essentially 'recycling' books with a new presentation format and selling them as 'textbooks of the year' to students in private schools and to encourage publishing houses to improve their textbooks' content in order to be selected by schools as the best option (Ortúzar, 2014).

In the case of state purchasing of textbooks, proposals have suggested that the bidding process be carried out with separation between the process of content design and that of printing. Currently, as discussed above, the criteria for the evaluation of textbook proposals encompass adherence to the bidding rules and an assessment of cost. This means that the main concern of publishing houses is not to improve their books' con-

tent, because it is sufficient for them to comply with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, but rather to attempt to lower the cost of production, which gives them a greater advantage in the bidding processes. Separating the evaluation of textbooks' content and printing costs, while it might make for a more complex logistical and administrative process, may also have the effect of improving textbook quality.

Another suggestion for the longer term is the use of technologies as a means of back-up or support for textbooks (Ortúzar, 2014). The author suggests that dispensing with printed textbooks could give rise to economic, ecological, cultural, political and educational advantages. The inference here is that copyright in an electronic format would be passed to the state, which would allow for more open scrutiny and hence discussion of the contents of textbooks. The conduction of bidding processes for electronic-format books would also represent an attack on the monopoly held by the publishing houses on the basis of their power in the market; the end or weakening of this monopoly, and discussion of textbook content among a broad range of stakeholders such as teachers, academics, parents, authorities and educationalists, may also lead to the improvement of textbooks. However, the acquisition, use and updating of technology for educational media is a much broader topic for a debate which has only just begun. Along with its advantages go drawbacks, including the cost of distributing technology to enable access to electronic textbooks.

4 Mexico

4.1 Purchasing of textbooks by families

Most of the textbooks used in Mexico are produced and distributed through the state, which delivers free textbooks to elementary school pupils in all schools in the country, both public and private, and a proportion of junior high school students. In the case of private schools, the purchase of books supplementary to the official ones, selected by schools or individual teachers, is the responsibility of parents. Private schools are not allowed to stipulate particular establishments for parents to purchase textbooks nor can they oblige parents to purchase the books from the school itself. The Federal Office of the Consumer (Profeco) is responsible for ensuring that schools comply with regulations against monopolistic practices (Profeco, undated). Parents who become aware of inappropriate practices in schools may report them to Profeco.

4.2 The state and the provision of textbooks: intervention programs and major changes since 1990

Of the four Latin American countries analyzed in this report, Mexico has the most clearly centralized state policy for the production and delivery of textbooks, which has been in uninterrupted annual operation for more than 50 years. The National Commission of Free Textbooks (Conaliteg) is the agency responsible for the production and distribution of books. Conaliteg works together with the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), which participates in discussion on the books' content and the generation of proposals for educational materials. It is interesting that Mexico is the only country in the four analyzed for this report that uses the term 'free textbooks' in its textbook program titles, while documents on policy in the other three countries usually refer simply to textbooks or schoolbooks. This is because, since the creation of Conaliteg, the intention of the Mexican government has been to distribute free and standard books to students - that is, all students from the same grade in the entire country should use the same textbook. The program originally intended to exclude any other textbooks from primary schools other than the one official one. However, protests in the early 1960s resulted in the authorization of schools to use other books of their choice published by private publishing houses in addition to the official ones. In reality, only private schools use books additional to those provided by the government, as public schools cannot require book purchases from parents.

Free textbooks (*Libros de Texto Gratuitos*, LTGs) are distributed among elementary school students (six grades) and junior high school (three grades). Since the program's inception, LTGs have been given to students and teachers to keep. This requires the SEP, acting through Conaliteg, to produce enough books to cover all pupils enrolled in schools each school year (Anzures 2011, 375). Fundamentally, LTGs are delivered in all areas of study at elementary and junior high school level. The distribution of LTGs includes books in approximately 42 indigenous languages from preschool to junior high school level. Conaliteg also produces and distributes books for students with special needs, such as Braille books for blind students or macro-type books for students with vision problems.

According to Anzures (2011), a student in Mexico who continuously attended preschool, elementary, and junior high school (10 grades) should have received an approximate total of 70 LTGs over the course of his or her school career. In the 2016/2017 school year, a total of 183,134,297 LTGs were distributed across educational levels and

modalities, including preschool, elementary, tele-secondary, junior high school, indigenous education and high school by audiovisual distance learning (Conaliteg, undated).

Elementary LTGs are funded with federal budget. The purchase of textbooks for junior high schools, 33 million of which are distributed annually, is shared by Conaliteg, which contributes 75%, and the federal states (Conaliteg 2016a).

Distribution processes for LTGs in Mexico are characterized by a high level of centralization in decision-making. Schools, teachers, students and their families do not participate in choosing the texts that will be delivered to them. According to information from the Conaliteg webpage, ‘decentralization’ of textbook content is understood to mean the publishing of particular textbooks of regional history and geography for each of the 32 federal states (in addition to the national history and national geography ones, which are standard for all students).

Over the course of its history, the LTG program has undergone diverse variations. Its beginnings go back to 1959, under the presidential mandate of Adolfo López Mateos and, as Secretary of Public Education, Jaime Torres Bodet. Before that, even though elementary education was free in principle, textbooks were excessively expensive, of poor quality and, in most cases, inaccessible to families. Jaime Torres Bodet therefore directed that all children attending elementary school had to do so using textbooks given by the state, to make effective the constitutional principle that primary education should be free of charge. This is how Conaliteg, which was inaugurated on February 12, 1959, came into being.

In 1966, Conaliteg expanded its production by including texts in Braille. By 1972, it was issuing around 43 titles for students and 24 for teachers. In 1982 it distributed monographs about each of the federal states of the Republic, but only twenty years later did the production of regional history and geography textbooks for each of the entities become mandatory.

A series of reforms starting in 1989 included the so-called Education Modernization Program, which meant, *inter alia*, changes in the content of the LTG and increased production of textbooks when the state acquired its own infrastructure for producing the necessary copies. Since 1997 the distribution of LTGs has been expanded to include junior high school level, although selection and purchasing of these textbooks takes place through a bidding process. Initially, junior high school books were given free of charge to students suffering most severely from social deprivation; later, in the 1998-1999 school year, coverage expanded to include two-thirds of students attending

junior high schools, and in the following decade distribution of junior high school LTGs to all students was implemented.

Since 2001, starting with the national reading program “Toward a Country of Readers” (*Hacia un país de lectores*), the Ministry of Public Education has distributed other kinds of school books for free, purchased to the private publishing houses, to school and classroom libraries. In 2005, Conaliteg internationalized its activities through the production of textbooks for students of the Republic of Honduras, funded by the Honduran government and the World Bank.

The LTG distribution policy has been one of the most sustained and continuous programs run by the Mexican government. It has persisted across more than nine six-year presidential terms and fifteen different ministers of education.

4.3 Production, approval, and purchase of textbooks

The production of LTGs varies depending on the educational level for which the books are intended. Books for elementary schools are produced through Conaliteg's own infrastructure and their content is designed by the Ministry of Public Education, which brings together a discussion team composed of experts for their evaluation. The state purchases books for junior high schools after running a bidding process involving commercial publishing houses; in other words, publishing houses pay authors to write the books in accordance with guidelines issued by the SEP on the basis of official curricula. Proposals presented by publishing houses must be approved by the SEP before teachers can select them for use in the classroom.

Unlike in elementary schools, teachers at junior high schools participate in the selection of textbooks. The Ministry of Public Education evaluates the proposals submitted by private publishers for the 17 subjects taught in junior high schools and compiles a catalog from which teachers and the educational authorities of the states select the books that will be used in the classroom. Each year about 400 titles are made available to teachers so they can choose those that they consider the most appropriate for their classes.

The LTGs are produced in a printing press located in the state of Querétaro. It produces about 30 million books annually. Books that cannot be produced in this plant are made by established graphic design companies. In this context, SEP is the largest publishing house in Mexico. Its annual paper consumption is around 60 thousand tons.

The National Free Textbook Commission stores its production in two large warehouses, one in the municipality of Tlalnepantla in Estado de México and another in Marqués in Querétaro. It distributes the textbooks and other educational materials to the education authorities of the federal states, who in turn are responsible for delivering them to each school. Conaliteg delivers the books at least 30 days before the start of the academic year to 360 collection centers in Mexico City and 231 warehouses managed by the remaining 31 states.

The state having the infrastructure to produce the LTGs makes textbooks highly affordable. The average cost per book of the textbooks for elementary schooling is around 9 pesos, which is less than half a dollar according to the current exchange rate, while for junior high school books the average price is around 33 pesos (Conaliteg 2016b; Mayén undated). Of course, the price of books varies depending on the different types of texts that are acquired – the cheapest books are those for preschool level, at an average cost of 6.98 pesos, while the most expensive are books written in Braille, which each cost on average 1,809.87 pesos (approximately USD 84.50). In Chile, by contrast, the cost of elementary-school textbooks is around USD 2.10 per book (Rojas 2015). If we compare only the price of elementary-school textbooks produced in Mexico with those purchased in Chile, it is evident that possession of state-owned infrastructure for textbook production constitutes major long-term cost savings at national level.

Conaliteg (2017) notes that most expenditure on LTGs relates to the purchase of materials and supplies, followed by general services and personal services, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of LTG expenditure in 2016.

Budget	Annual Original (pesos)	Annual Modified (pesos)
Personal services	122,526,561	122,526,561
Materials and supplies	1,930,637,501	2,197,430,616
General services	159,988,022	175,896,097
Real estate acquisitions	0	0
Totals	2,213,152,084	2,495,853,274

Source: Conalitec (2017)

The data we consulted about the main publishing houses from which books are purchased for junior high school level do not give sufficient information on the numbers purchased; however, the following are the publishing houses in which book purchases were made for this level in 2016:

Editorial Trillas S.A. de C.V.,	Méndez Cortés Editores, S.A. de C.V.,
Ediciones Castillo, S.A. de C.V.,	Ríos de Tinta, S.A. de C.V.,
SM de Ediciones, S.A. de C.V.,	Editorial Nuevo México, S.A. de C.V.,
Fernández Educación, S.A. de C.V.,	Editorial Cervantes, S.A. de C.V.,
EK Editores, S.A. de C.V.,	Oxford University Press México, S.A. de C.V.,
Editorial Santillana, S.A. de C.V.,	de C.V.,
Pearson Educación de México, S.A. de C.V.,	Ángeles Editores, S.A. de C.V.,
Ediciones Larousse, S.A. de C.V.,	Macmillan Publishing houses, S.A. de C.V.,
Editorial Esfinge, S. de R.L. de C.V.,	C.V.,
Correo del Maestro, S.A. de C.V.,	Editorial Limusa, S.A. de C.V.,
Grupo Editorial Patria, S.A. de C.V.,	Ediciones Ángeles Hermanos, S.A. de C.V.,
Ediciones de Excelencia, S.A. de C.V.,	C.V.,
Mc Graw Hill Interamericana Editores, S.A. de C.V.,	Siglo XXI Editores, S.A. de C.V.,
Cengage Learning Editores, S.A. de C.V.,	Editorial Progreso, S.A. de C.V.,
	Richmond Publishing, S.A. de C.V.,
	U.D. Publishing, S.A. de C.V.

The approval process is in the hands of the SEP, which discusses the content of each book with universities specializing in the relevant topics, international bodies, and the general public. In the following section we can see how discussion of textbook content and the educational principles underlying it proceeded in one of the most recent reforms: the Comprehensive Reform of Basic Education (RIEB), implemented in a gradual manner between 2004 and 2011 (Ruiz, 2012).

Part of the RIEB entailed seeking broader participation in the definition of new educational materials. These processes involve specialists in different academic disciplines from recognized institutions of higher education, such as: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM),

Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), and Universidad Nacional Pedagógica (UPN). In addition, publishing houses took part and experts consulted in health and environmental issues. At the beginning of the education reform process, Inter-Institutional Advisory Councils were created for deliberation with and among experts. In the review and evaluation of the new materials, educational authorities from countries such as Cuba, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Australia, among others, took part; national seminars were also held to present the materials to teachers and school authorities and to compile and incorporate their observations; and of course the textbooks were revised by groups of specialists throughout the country and by scholars from the Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados del IPN (Cinvestav), UNAM, UAM, UPN (Mayén, undated).

Over the years, several criticisms have been raised relating to the work carried out by Conaliteg. According to Anzures (2011), the main approach at the outset of the program was to consider the books as ‘official’ or ‘doctrinaire’ versions of the subject matter they contained. The current discussion has moved on to the extent to which LTGs address ethnic, cultural, or geographical diversity. Publishing houses, interested in taking part in the business of elementary school textbook production and distribution, claim that official textbooks establish centralist versions of national narratives. However, 82% of Mexican publishing houses are concentrated in the country’s capital, which raises the question of whether publishing houses would be capable of putting together teams able to take account of and represent the various cultural manifestations that occur in the country. If we consider that in the 2009-2010 academic year, the government spent 980 million pesos on the purchase of junior high school textbooks alone, there is a substantial potential business opportunity for commercial publishing houses, which ‘fly the flag of diversity behind [which is] what it really means to them: excellent business’ (Fuentes Molinar, 2009, quoted in Anzures, 2011).

Another interesting debate around the LTG program in Mexico relates to whether books should be issued to keep or on loan. In this context, Anzures (2011) points out that the difference in cost between the two modalities of delivery would not be substantial. The author indicates that even though the price is slightly higher where books are given to keep, distributing them on loan requires a more complex and time-consuming administrative process. He considers it more justifiable to give elementary-school students LTGs to keep.

Conclusions

This report has presented information on the production, distribution and provision of textbooks in four Latin American countries: Argentina, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico. In three of these countries, books are written by commercial publishing houses in accordance with the guidelines issued by the authorities at national level. In Argentina, Colombia, and Chile, the Ministries of Education stipulate the criteria for publishing houses' textbook proposals and subsequently evaluated and approve those submitted.

Typically, the requirements made of publishing houses are related, *inter alia*, to adherence to particular didactic models, the inclusion of structured and age-appropriate student activities which reinforce learning and the inclusion or exclusion of specific topics. In Mexico, junior high school books are subject to a similar bidding process, while the SEP is responsible for creating elementary school books with advice from a group of experts; this is the only case in which the writing of textbooks is not entirely a matter for commercial publishing houses.

As shown, the acquisition of textbooks takes place in two ways. The first procedure assigns responsibility for textbook purchasing to families; private schools select the books parents must buy, but in none of the countries revised may they specify particular retail establishments. Only Colombia has developed some regulations governing the purchase of textbooks, such as the requirement for the same books to be used for at least three years. In all countries, books sold by private publishing houses are priced fairly highly relative to the cost of living, so parents have developed strategies for the recycling or selling on of books. For their part, commercial publishing houses try to prevent such reuse by making superficial changes in the organization or format of books; schools are often complicit in requiring parents to purchase the latest editions issued by publishing houses. It is common to all the countries studied that the price families pay when buying schoolbooks exceeds exponentially that paid by governments which purchase them. In some cases, the price of books increases substantially from one annual edition to the next; in Colombia, for instance, price increases in this context can amount to 30%).

The second mode of textbook acquisition in the Latin American region is through programs that use state resources and are implemented by government agencies. In the cases of Colombia and Argentina, private schools do not receive government-distributed textbooks. In Chile, private schools subsidized by the state, although they do in principle receive textbooks from the government, decide on occasion to reject these books and

instead ask parents to buy books directly from publishing houses, citing quality reasons. In Mexico, all schools, public and private, receive free textbooks, but private schools usually require their students to buy texts in addition to the official ones.

There are striking differences in policies and their scope between each of the countries analyzed. The case of Mexico stands out because its textbook policy has been in place without interruption for more than 50 years and currently serves the entire student population of elementary and junior high schools. In Argentina, book distribution programs aimed at the majority of the economically and socially disadvantaged population have been implemented in a discontinuous manner and have only recently expanded to include the entire population attending public schools. In Chile, a sustained and systematic program has been in force since the 1990s, providing textbooks for elementary education; despite its relatively short period of operation thus far, it has reached total coverage throughout the country. Colombia stands out as the only country characterized by the absence of a national textbook policy; it runs a highly decentralized program that allocates resources for the purchase of books which states or provinces use autonomously. However, there is no effective control of the books distributed and no coherent relationship between the budget granted for this program and the achievement of sufficient coverage.

In this report we have included some of the internal discussion in progress around textbook policy in each country. Argentina and Colombia are conducting ongoing conversations about mechanisms for the achievement of greater coverage, while Chile and Mexico, having attained almost universal coverage, are now debating the improvement of textbook quality. One aspect of this issue is, as our report set out, the fact that in Chile, the key criterion in textbook evaluation is cost, with quality assessment reduced to determining conformity with official guidelines. This can mean a lack of competition between publishing houses for improvement of textbook quality and the ‘recycling’ of content from past years. In this context, one proposal is to separate the criterion of cost from that of quality in the bidding process. The hope is that such a measure would motivate publishing houses to improve content.

A potential development of interest in this context is the possibility of introducing electronic-format learning media to replace printed books. This is not a new idea; even in countries such as Chile, Mexico and Colombia, complementary content and, in isolated instances, some electronic-format books are already available to teachers, students and parents. However, to what extent can electronic learning media replace traditional

books? One of the main issues to consider in this respect is that the distribution of technological resources and their constant updating are estimated to generate a substantially higher cost than that of policies aimed at the distribution of paper textbooks.

The information we consulted about the four countries analyzed suggests that all textbook policies described as ‘decentralized’ in terms of decision-making. However, the meaning given in each country to the idea of ‘decentralization’ is very different. In general, the ‘decentralization’ label is applied to selection of textbooks and the participation of teachers, schools or school managers in the selection process. The most extreme case is Colombia, which does not have a process of selection, purchase and distribution of textbooks at national level and where each federal entity is responsible for its own process, yet has limited resources for its successful conduction. Argentina and Chile understand decentralization somewhat similarly, as the selection by schools or teachers of books preselected by national commissions on the basis of specific guidelines. In the case of Mexico, decentralization relates only to books for junior high school level; here, teachers may choose the options that they consider most appropriate depending on their educational practices. This does not happen at primary level, where textbook selection is out of the hands of teachers, schools and school managers.

It is important to emphasize that Mexico is the only one of the four countries analyzed in which the state has its own infrastructure for textbook production. Our analysis of this case allows us to infer certain benefits of possessing such infrastructure, mainly related to lower cost and a less complex management process. It is interesting to note that Mexico has even produced textbooks for another country (Honduras) thanks to this infrastructure. We might suggest on the basis of this information that other countries consider, perhaps in the longer term, identifying production mechanisms that would prevent them from paying inflated prices to commercial publishing houses.

The appendix presented at the end of this document summarizes the key findings of this report in relation to specific aspects of textbook programs in the countries studied. The intention of this table is to provide a clear and feasily comprehensible summary for comparison of the four countries.

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Appendix

1.1 Appendix 1. Comparative Summary Table

<i>Item</i>	<i>Sub item</i>	<i>Chile</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>Colombia</i>
Official policy on textbook provision	Legal regulations	The government systematically provides quality textbooks free of charge for the curriculum priority areas and for all students and teachers at municipal schools and government-supported educational institutions. Textbooks in the language of indigenous populations and textbooks for students with special needs (for example, books in Braille or large print books for visually impaired people) are included.	The National Department of Socio-Educational Policies contributes to supplying textbooks in order to comply with the National Education Law (26.206) which establishes that the Ministry, collaborating with the Federal Education Council, will provide students and schools under unfavorable socio-economic conditions with textbooks (Art. 80). Such policies for distribution of textbooks were laid down in the Social Educational Plan (1993-1999) and the 2004-2005 Administration Plan. Only in 2015 did the textbook distribution program reach students at all public schools. No clear information is available on the distribution of textbooks in indigenous languages. The National Education Law approved in 2006 created the modality of Bilingual Intercultural Education. This law stipulates that early-years, elementary and secondary education must meet the constitutional right to have access to an education that contributes to maintaining the ethnic identity, language, worldview and culture of all indigenous groups living in the national territory.	The National Commission for Free Textbooks (CONALITEG) is the governmental organization in charge of the production of free textbooks for the 6 grades of elementary education and 3 grades of middle school, for all subjects and all students all over the country. Textbooks produced by the CONALITEG include books for preschool, elementary and middle school, <i>telesecundaria</i> (secondary distance education via television), indigenous education (in 42 different languages), and books for children with special needs in Braille and large print books.	The country does not have a state policy that lays the foundations for the development and provision of educational resources, nor does the Ministry of Education have statistics on investment in textbooks and book distribution using resources from the budgetary allocation, due to the fact that book provision is mainly decentralized and carried out by regional and local authorities. Modifications in procurement processes for textbooks depend on the preferences of the government of the day.
	Policy type	Policy developed relatively recently (beginning in 1990) that provides textbooks for all students attending schools subsidized by the government, regardless of their pupils' socioeconomic status.	Discontinuous policy. Distribution of textbooks has taken place under various programs of differing content and duration, mainly focusing on addressing inequality: They are compensatory programs which only distribute textbooks to schools in disadvantaged circumstances. However, in 2015, all students at public schools received textbooks	State policy now in operation more than 50 years. The Mexican government produces textbooks for elementary schools; middle school textbooks are put out to commercial tender.	Discontinuous and decentralized policy. The state and departments jointly participate in a fund, which, alongside other resources, is available for textbook purchasing.
	Degree of centralization	Certain degree of decentralization: The Ministry of Education dictates the guidelines that publishing houses shall comply with; the government approves a number of textbooks, from which schools choose.	Certain degree of decentralization. For the 2004-2005 Administration Process, integrated regional bodies, such as Provincial Advisory Commissions (CAP) that evaluated the appropriateness of textbook content to official curriculum design and the suitability of its educational basis in accordance with current guidelines in the law, took part in the selection of books. The CAP members worked on a voluntary basis, with numbers determined by the relevant province. The CAPs submitted suggestions to the highest provincial education authority, which in turn passed them to the national Ministry of	High degree of centralization: CONALITEG distributes the same textbooks, prepared by the Ministry of Public Education, to all children in the country. In Mexico, 'decentralization' in this context is understood as the preparation of history and geography books in line with the context of each federal state. For middle school textbooks, teachers choose among several proposals approved by the government and prepared by commercial publishing houses.	Highly decentralized policy; each local body defines its own mechanisms or programs and are responsible for funding only a percentage of the costs.

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			Education, the institution responsible for the final decision. The most recent program, entitled “Textbooks 2015”, followed the same procedure.		
Variations since the 1980s	Two main periods are recognized: a) 1990-1994, when improving coverage was the priority. b) 1994-2010, with emphasis shifting to the improvement of the quality and use of textbooks and decentralization understood as the selection of textbooks by individual schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1993-1999: Social Educational Plan: Books were distributed only among the socially and economically disadvantaged population. Funding came only from the government. - 1999-2002: There was no textbook distribution program. - 2004-2005: Textbooks were distributed only among the socially and economically disadvantaged population. Funding from the government and the Inter-American Development Bank, as requested by the latter, selection on academic and curricular grounds was separated from textbook purchasing. - For 2015, “Textbook 2015s” program distributed books among all students from public schools offering primary and secondary education. - Since the 1980s, there have been significant changes in the book distribution process. Until 1995, local and regional authorities were in charge of organizing and funding transportation of books from Buenos Aires to the provinces. From 1995 to 1999, the preparation, selection, and distribution of books were carried out through tender processes; in 2004, the army was in charge of distribution. Publishing houses have been responsible for providing or contracting out these services since 2005. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program for distribution of free textbooks for middle schools implemented in 1997. - In 2001, CONALITEG established the foundations for the national reading program “Toward a Country of Readers” by creating the “Classroom Library” and “School Library” programs. The purpose of these programs is to bring high-quality books to children, young people, and adults in all schools in the country. - In 2005, CONALITEG internationalized its offering by producing textbooks for students in the Republic of Honduras, funded by the Honduran government and the World Bank. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The principal documented change is related to the attainment of a higher degree of decentralization. Currently, and in accordance with Law N° 715 of 2001, the government transfers financial resources to regional authorities through the General Participation System (SGP), which is used to fund construction, maintenance and adaptation investments for educational institutions as well as school textbooks, libraries, and educational and audiovisual aids. 	
Educational levels covered by distribution	From elementary to middle school	First to third year of general basic education	Primary (6 grades) and middle (3 grades) school		
Textbook production	Design and editing of textbooks	Textbooks are prepared by commercial publishing houses in line with the National Curriculum Framework. The government selects textbooks through a bidding process.	Books are prepared by commercial publishing houses in accordance with the guidelines issued by the National Advisory Commission and Provincial Advisory Commissions, both composed of specialists and teachers appointed by the highest education authority from each regional administrative authority.	Primary school textbooks are prepared by expert groups from, or appointed by, the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) and are approved by the Ministry itself. On occasion, the Ministry submits book content for consideration to universities specializing in certain subjects, or even to international agencies or to the general public. Middle school books are prepared by publishing houses and chosen by the SEP based on adherence to the curricular psychopedagogical guidelines issued by the Minis-	Publishing houses are responsible for preparing the books and schools select them.

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				try.	
	Selection and purchasing of textbooks by the government	The government purchases books offered by the publishing houses taking part in bidding processes, which is intended to be “impartial, fair, clear, and effective”. An open procurement procedure takes place through the bidding process platform of the Directorate for Public Purchase and Procurement “ChileCompra”. The Ministry of Education, through an expert committee, evaluates the proposals based on the subject-specific educational content and book production cost.	Selection and procurement processes for textbooks are conducted according to the procedures agreed by the Ministry, <i>Fundación Poder Ciudadano</i> and publishing houses. The National Advisory Commission and Provincial Advisory Commissions participate in the selection process; they evaluate the textbooks according to three criteria: - Compliance with federal agreements - Quality of the book’s educational basis - Compliance with the provincial guidelines for education policy The Provincial Advisory Commissions choose the books suitable for the current educational methods.	CONALITEG produces all free textbooks for elementary schools, prepared by the Ministry of Public Education. For middle school books, the Ministry of Public Education evaluates the proposals submitted by private publishers for the 17 subjects in the curriculum and compiles a catalog which is used by teachers and state education authorities to choose the books that they will use in the classroom.	Schoolbooks are purchased within the framework provided by Law no. 80 for Administrative Procurement. Textbooks are chosen by teachers and schools, with guidance from the ‘Textbook Catalog’ that includes all textbooks available on the publishing market. Some cities have developed, on their own initiative, so-called ‘educational showcases’ where teachers can evaluate the books currently available and choose those best suited to their needs.
	Provision of funding and textbook supply	Through federal tax revenues	Funding comes from the National Treasury Department. During the 2004-2005 Administration Program, supplementary funding was provided by the Inter-American Development Bank.	Free Textbook (LTG) production is funded with federal budget. Middle school book procurement is funded largely by CONALITEG (75%) with the remainder coming from the federal states. Classroom library collections are funded similarly.	The Ministry of Education created a funding system with national current budget and additionally funded by international credit distributed among local authorities, with all sources of funding merged into a Social Investment Fund (FIS).
	Production cost of textbooks for the government	Each book costs approximately 1,400 pesos (2 dollars).		The approximate cost of textbooks for primary education is 7 pesos per unit (0.33 dollars) and 33 pesos per book for middle school textbooks (1.61 dollars).	
	Textbook production process	The Ministry of Education does not have a production system; therefore, textbooks are procured using a process of public tender organized annually by the Ministry of Education.	Argentina does not have a state-run infrastructure to produce textbooks; therefore books are procured through tender processes, in which commercial publishing houses may submit proposals.	CONALITEG has its own infrastructure for the production of LTGs for a relatively lower cost than the general cost of textbooks in the other countries analyzed. Books for primary education are produced by the state printing press or by other contracted printers, while CONALITEG purchases middle school books through tender processes. In 2009, approximately 235 million textbooks were printed. Of those books, 35 million were printed by CONALITEG.	
Distribution	Distribution process	The process is coordinated by the General Administration Department and is carried out through contracts with external entities. It proceeds as follows: 1. - Commitment: The school prin-	Publishing houses have been responsible for distribution since 2005, and generally contract out the service.	CONALITEG is responsible for the distribution of textbooks and other educational materials that it produces for state education authorities, which are in charge of delivery to each school. CONALITEG delivers the books at least 30	Schoolbooks are distributed by contracting private distributors.

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		<p>cipal and the chair of the Parents' and Guardians' Association of each school commit to receiving and delivering the textbooks provided by the Ministry to students and teachers.</p> <p>2. - Selection: Teachers choose between two textbooks for some levels and areas.</p> <p>3. - Allocation: The Ministry plans and estimates the number of pupils on each school's roll, then, additionally taking into account information from the institution on its previous student numbers, calculates the number of books to be delivered to the school.</p> <p>4. - Distribution and adjustment: Schools return superfluous textbooks and/or request additional ones where insufficient numbers have arrived.</p>		<p>days before the start of the school year to 360 collecting centers in Mexico City and 231 warehouses under the management of the 31 remaining states.</p>	
	<p>Role of schools in selection of textbooks</p>	<p>Schoolteachers choose the most suitable books for their needs from a number of proposals preselected by the Ministry of Education.</p>	<p>In all recent programs for school textbook supply, involvement of schools in textbook selection is almost nonexistent.</p>	<p>For primary school textbooks, schools are not involved in the selection process. For middle school, teachers or schools are in charge of choosing the books that best suit their teaching practice from the range offered by commercial publishing houses. Private schools may request that students purchase supplementary books in addition to the LTGs provided by the government. There is no governmental control over this practice.</p>	<p>Schools have autonomy to select textbooks according to their cultural and regional needs.</p>
<p>Distribution and use</p>	<p>Book use</p>	<p>Previously, books were given to students for two years on loan. From 2016, thanks to the Inclusion Law, the books provided belong to students and they do not need to return them.</p>	<p>Primary school textbooks are provided to schools and lent for a year to all students from grades 2 to 6 or 7, depending on the local jurisdiction. Books are given to first-grade students.</p> <p>Secondary school textbooks are provided to schools and lent for a year to all students.</p>	<p>Since their implementation, LTGs have been given to students and teachers to keep. Therefore, each school term, the SEP, through CONALITEG, produces enough books to cover the entire relevant population.</p>	
	<p>Cost of textbooks not provided by governments</p>	<p>Approximately 30,000 Chilean pesos (USD 45) per copy</p>	<p>Primary education: Approximately 600 Argentinian pesos (USD 38) in total.</p> <p>Secondary education: Approximately 1500 Argentinian pesos (USD 94) in total.</p>	<p>Books that private schools may request from students in addition to LTGs cost between 200 and 400 pesos each (USD 12-24).</p>	<p>Each book costs between 60,000 and 90,000 Colombian pesos (USD 19-29); books in English cost between 110,000 and 160,000 Colombian pesos (USD 35.20-51.20).</p>