

ACCESS COLOMBIA

Phase 1 Research Brief

April 2022

What is the ACCESS?

Accelerating Change for Children's and Youths' Education for Systems Strengthening (ACCESS) is a 4-year research partnership between the University of Auckland, the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), and Dubai Cares.

ACCESS Objectives

- Understand the wider political economy of Flexible Education Models (FEM), and how it influences how they are embedded in education systems
- Establish a platform to bring together key stakeholders to work together to address challenges for better institutionalization of FEMs
- Identify factors which enable or constrain integration of FEMs into national education systems

What did we do in ACCESS Phase 1?

From March 2021 to March 2022, ACCESS explored the gaps and opportunities for better institutionalisation of FEMs to meet the needs of over-age out-of-school children and youth in five countries—Uganda, Nigeria, Jordan, Pakistan, and Colombia. ACCESS researchers spoke with key government officials, donors, implementing partners, UN agencies, civil society organisations, and others to understand:

- The need and demand for FEMs
- What programmes currently exist
- How/by whom they are funded, regulated, and implemented
- How much they are available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to meet learners' needs
- Opportunities to better embed FEMs in national education systems
- Who needs to be involved in this process

What's next in ACCESS?

From April 2022 to July 2024, ACCESS will convene key stakeholders in Jordan, Nigeria, and Colombia to:

- Support collaboration
- Prioritise a key challenge
- Develop an action plan
- Make changes in policy and practice
- Reflect and revise the strategy

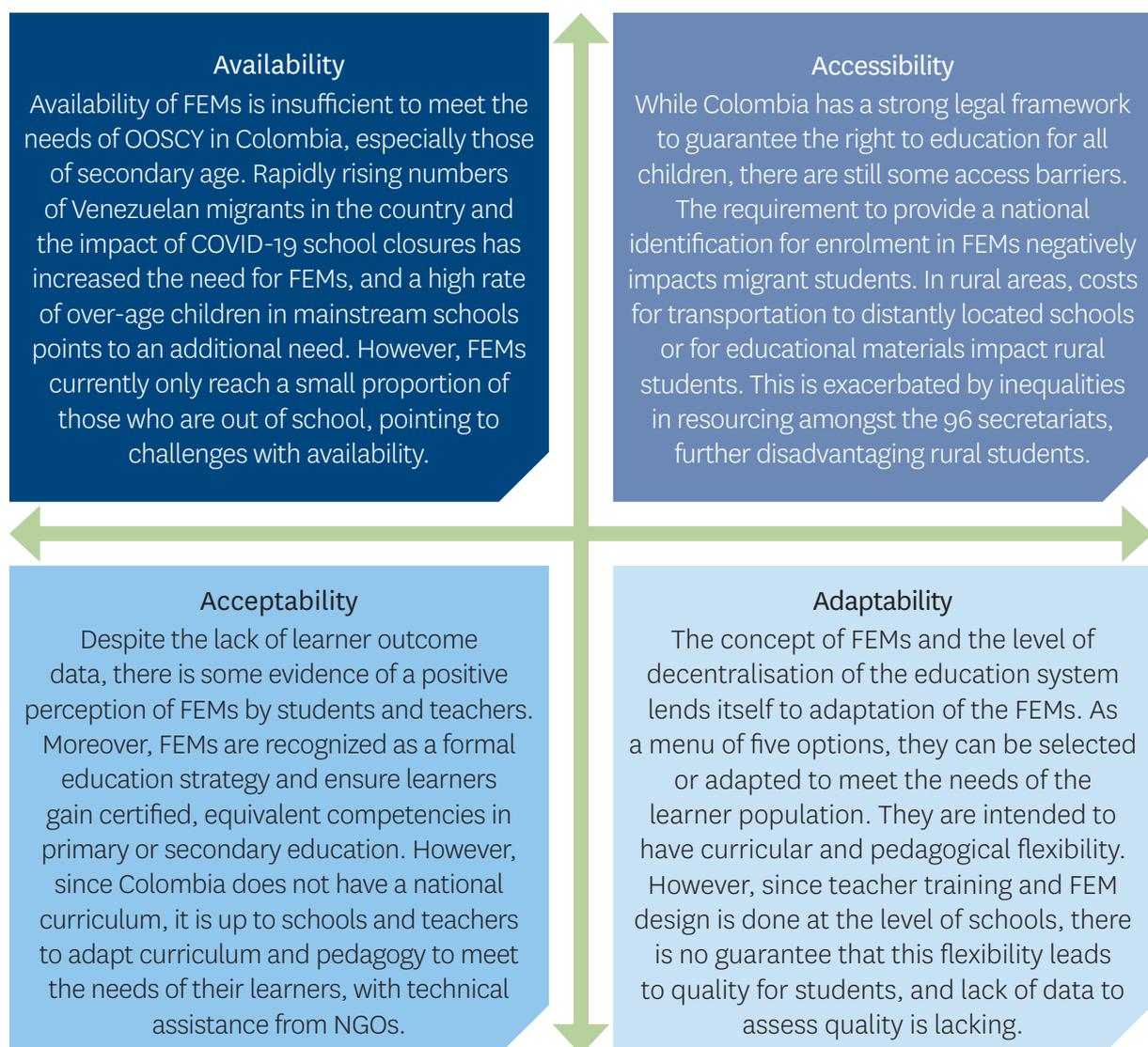


Flexible Education Models in Colombia

There are no official statistics on the number of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) in Colombia, and estimates vary widely. In 2019, according to UNESCO, 35,080 (0.9%) primary age children, 106,186 (3.3%) lower secondary age children, and 358,579 (21%) upper secondary age children were out of school. Boys were out of school at higher rates than girls, poorest at higher rates than richest, and results are mixed between children in urban and rural areas.

FEMs are a formal education strategy to meet the needs of learners whose right to education has been violated. FEMs are a menu of alternative strategies that can be adapted through a range of means, including using acceleration, multigrade classrooms, and distance/self-learning at the primary and secondary levels. FEMs are also flexible in curriculum design and assessment strategies, giving teachers orientation and guidelines, but encouraging them to consider their school context when adapting FEMs.

How much are FEMs available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable?



Political-economic factors influencing FEMs

Three main factors influence the extent to which AEPs are available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to meet the needs of over-age OOSCY in Colombia.

Strong Legal Framework

- There is a strong legal framework around FEMs and the right to education for all. As part of the formal education system, the MOE have guaranteed free public access to five FEM models, and made it possible for schools to adapt and implement them in different territories. However, this characteristic of “flexibility”, while it makes it possible to meet a variety of needs in different contexts, also poses a challenge as to how to monitor, do rigorous follow-up, and ensure quality of FEMs.

Availability of FEMs and Rising Demand from OOSCY

- Given the high numbers of OOSCY due to the pandemic, Venezuelan migration, and internal conflict, among other challenges, there is an apparent lack of institutional support from the MoE and local education secretariats to encourage schools to develop FEMs to meet the needs of OOSCY. Chronic under funding, coordination difficulties, challenges in operation and institutional capacity, lack of opportunity for participation of migrant and refugee populations, and lack of a monitoring system make meeting the rising demand a challenge.

Decentralization and Flexibility

- A high level of decentralization and flexibility allows schools to adapt their educational offerings to meet the needs of the local population. However, this same characteristic presents constraints in terms of funding, regulation, and quality. Likewise, this level of decentralization creates a need for the support of NGOs, particularly around things like curriculum and teacher training. This, however, leads to fragmentation and lack of coordination, with the risk of duplicating efforts and not meeting the needs of OOSCY.

Key Opportunities for Engagement

There are three main opportunities at present to work towards greater institutionalization of FEMs for quality education for OOSCY, as well as several factors which enable and constrain how effective stakeholders' efforts will be.

Opportunity 1: Given the current COVID-19 emergency and the Venezuelan influx, there's a great need to encourage decision makers to flag these as an urgent matter on the national agenda and map already existing working solutions (such as the FEMs) and avoid building brand new programmes that may require more resources, another legal framework, and more time.

Opportunity 2: To solve the lack of information, the creation of a platform to map, monitor and better understand FEMs' impact in diverse contexts is an urgent need.

Opportunity 3: The fact that in mid-2022 a new government will take office in Colombia could help pivot the national priorities and have the AEWG or stakeholders working in accelerated education, or with OOSCY, advocate for FEMs as an already existing solution for OOSCY.



Enablers

- COVID-19 and Venezuelan influx made OOSCY more visible
- Robust legal framework protecting education rights of OOSCY
- Flexibility for FEM creation and implementation due to decentralization and school autonomy
- Local NGOs and INGOs with experience developing FEMs
- Five well-established FEMs in the public domain which have been adapted to diverse populations

Constraints

- COVID-19 and Venezuelan influx have stressed the education system
- Decentralised decision-making processes and lack of coordination among implementers
- Lack of information on FEMs options
- Lack of data on OOSCY numbers and FEMs' impact

For more information on ACCESS and to read the full report, visit <https://access-education.auckland.ac.nz/>.