

NEW DIRECTIONS, MEXICO 2019

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT CAPACITY IN COLOMBIA

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Background to the collaboration

The Colombia National Bilingual Program

- 2004, the Ministry of Education presented the National Bilingual Program 2004–2019.
- In 2005, the Colombian government formally adopted the CEFR for languages
- Ultimate goals of adopting international standards for English language learning targeted at achieving CEFR level B1 for school leavers, level B2 for university graduates, and at least C1 for all English language teachers
- Following the evaluation of student's English language level, the decision was made to develop new fit-for-purpose English language assessments for the final grades of secondary school and final year university students.



Rationale for the collaboration between ICFES and Cambridge Assessment English

Main driver was to enhance ICFES's capacity to produce its own tests linked to the CEFR

Collaboration project consisted of the four phases:

Phase 1 - initial benchmarking of student and teacher levels via test developed by Cambridge English

3,759 students in 8th and 10th grades

3,422 teachers in public schools

Additional study tested pedagogical and content knowledge of 243 teachers via the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) administered by Cambridge





Collaboration stages

Phase 2 – New test development and deployment

- Cambridge English designed the English part of the State school-leaving exam and for the English test for final year university students
- Tests contained items from Pre-A1 level up to B2 level in order to measure performance up to B2 on the CEFR.
- First tests administered between July-September 2006.

Phase 3: Local capacity-building

Step 1 - Cambridge English and ICFES recruited and trained a team of locally based item writers to produce their own materials for the English components of the State exam and ECAES test.



Phase 3: Local capacity-building

How the Item Writing team was trained





Phase 4: Localisation and quality assurance

The importance of support in producing quality test items

Four main elements to the support provided by Cambridge to ICFES:

- Guidance offered to ICFES and item writing team, i.e. providing feedback and editing comments
- Provision of anchor items for inclusion in pretests and live tests
- Assistance developing a successful pretesting system which was crucial to ensuring that test items were at the right level for the live tests
- Assistance with analysis of live results and exam grading to help refine mapping of test items to the CEFR



Outcomes of the collaboration

Today, Colombia has its own capacity and know-how with a team of Colombian item writers to build its own tests following the Cambridge design, totally linked to the CEFR standards.

The Saber 11⁰ and Saber Pro tests are delivered to 900,000 students annually.

Both ICFES and Cambridge view the project as a major learning and development opportunity that has spanned a wide area of activity, enabling ICFES to produce tests with results linked to the CEFR, and Cambridge furthered develop expertise be used in other successive government projects.



Item writers at ICFES





Thank you!

Questions?

