



## **Press information**

### **Cambridge ESOL and Colombian President both stress importance of nation's education policy at major conference**

**Issue date:** 22 October

An important national educational conference has taken place in Colombia where the nation's president Álvaro Uribe Vélez stressed the importance of government and educationalists working together.

This view was reflected in one of the plenary speeches delivered by Nick Saville, Director of Research and Validation of Cambridge ESOL at Colombia's National Education Forum attended by about 2,000 participants. This year the Forum focused on assessment and was entitled "*Evaluar es valorar*" (To Evaluate is to Value). The event was held in Bogotá, but was also broadcast live on a national educational channel and featured online video forums and chat rooms for people who could not participate in person.

Cambridge ESOL is working with the government to help them achieve their ambitions for English language education and was invited by the Ministry of Education to participate in the Forum.

Nick Saville's speech focused on Impact, examining it as both a positive and a negative force within learning and language assessment.

He said the emphasis on impact reflected the growing importance of an *evidence-based* approach to educational assessment. He recommended that educators work with governments and education authorities towards an 'impact for design' approach, where data about impact is used to determine strategy and influence both policy and practical outcomes.

President Uribe delivered the closing speech and spent time talking with and listening to educationalists. He emphasised the need for learning, not only to support economic development, but also for citizenship.

After the conference, Nick Saville said: "It was very gratifying, having focused on closer working between the government and educationalists in my own speech, that the President himself took time to appear at the Forum and to endorse a commitment to doing exactly that. The government of Colombia views education, including learning foreign languages as a key way to change the way that Colombia has been perceived in the past and to create an environment to attract inward investment.

“Colombia has an ambitious programme to raise English language standards by 2019 and we have worked closely with the *Ministerio de Educación Nacional* (MEN) to develop a system of assessments for that. We have also carried out a project for Colombia’s Ministry of Tourism to determine English proficiency within Colombia’s tourism and hospitality sector, and create new standards for English within the country’s vocational training sector.

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