Understanding Ecuador’s Education Reform: A Case Study of 2006-2015

Jenna Harvey

Concordia University
Abstract

Education has not always been a government priority in Ecuador, but over the last ten years, four important legal documents have been produced placing education as a main priority of the state. These documents have guided policy change and implementation focusing on improving the quality of, and access to, education. Because of these changes, Ecuador has seen visible improvement in its education system. The following research is a case study of the education reform that took place in Ecuador from 2006-2015. An analysis of the Ten Year Education Plan as a policy document, and as contributing to quality education, is included.

Keywords: education reform, education policy, Ecuador, Ten Year Education Plan, National Plan for Good Living, Plan Decenal de Educación, Buen Vivir
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Educación con la Participación de la Comunidad</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EGB</td>
<td>Educación General Básica (basic general education, 5-14 years old)</td>
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<td>EI</td>
<td>Educación Inicial (initial education, birth-4 years old)</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>IADB</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
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<td>IBE</td>
<td>Intercultural Bilingual Education</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>INEC</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Countries</td>
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<td>LLECE</td>
<td>Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación</td>
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<td>LOEI</td>
<td>Ley Organica de Educación Intercultural (Intercultural Education Act)</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MEU</td>
<td>Millennium Education Units</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PDE</td>
<td>Plan Decenal de Educación (Ten Year Education Plan)</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SERCE</td>
<td>Segundo Estudio Comparativo y Explicativo de la Calidad de la Educación</td>
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<td>TERCE</td>
<td>Tercer Estudio Comparativo y Explicativo de la Calidad de la Educación</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

From 2006 to 2015, Ecuador went through a large-scale education reform. The reform started in 2006 with a new education plan, the Ten Year Education Plan (Plan Decenal de Educación [PDE]), which outlined eight specific policies aimed at improving education. Two years later, the 2008 Constitution passed, and a new national development plan, the National Plan for Good Living (Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir, henceforth Buen Vivir), shortly followed. Although not exclusively focused on education, both the Constitution and Buen Vivir gave education a central role. Then in 2011, a new legal framework for education, the Intercultural Education Act (Ley Organica de Educación Intercultural [LOEI]), was approved. Several national changes to increase both the access to and quality of education have taken place due to these documents. Education has become a government priority, and this is reflected in the significant increase in government funding towards education.

During this same time, there was significant improvement in Ecuador’s regional test scores in reading and math. Ecuador’s student achievement test scores currently rank around average, compared to other countries in Latin America (UNESCO, 2015b). However, less than ten years ago, Ecuador’s scores fell into the low range in every category (UNESCO, 2008). In 2006, Ecuador participated for the first time in regional tests administered jointly by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación [LLECE]) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (UNESCO, 2008). This test evaluates the knowledge of third and sixth grade students in the areas of reading and mathematics. Although it was Ecuador’s first time participating, it was the second time that the test had been administered regionally, thus the test was called the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
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(Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo [SERCE]). In reading, Ecuador ranked twelfth in third grade and thirteenth in sixth grade out of fourteen countries that took part (UNESCO, 2014). Ecuador’s average scores were 39 and 47 points below the regional average. Scores in math were a little better, but Ecuador still ranked tenth out of fourteen in both third and sixth grades. Scores were 18 and 33 points below the regional country average (UNESCO, 2014).

Seven years later, when Ecuador participated in the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo [TERCE]) in 2013, scores improved on average by 50 points compare to the regional average improvement of 20 points (UNESCO, 2014). While the majority of countries did show improvement in scores, overall Ecuador’s scores improved the most (UNESCO, 2014). Whereas in the SERCE, Ecuador scored below average in every test, in the TERCE, Ecuador scored in the average range on all tests (including the natural sciences which was added that year) except the sixth grade reading test where it still fell below the average score by 15 points, despite improving the average score by 43 points (UNESCO, 2014). Although test scores are only one indicator as to the quality of education, Ecuador’s improvement is both significant and positive. To gain a better understanding of the context of Ecuador and its education system, a brief background follows.

Background of Ecuador

Brief Overview of Ecuador

Understanding Ecuador’s geographic, historical, political, economic, and cultural situation will set the stage for understanding the context in which the recent education reform took place. Each of these factors has contributed to how education has been, and continues to be,
shaped. In some cases, the context has influenced education positively, yet in other cases the context has hindered the development of education in Ecuador.

**Geography.** Ecuador is a small country located on the northwest coast of Latin America. It straddles the equator, from where the name Ecuador is derived, and is bordered by Colombia to the north, Peru to the south and east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Despite its small size, Ecuador is extremely geographically diverse. It can be divided into four distinct regions: the Sierra, the Oriente, the Costa, and the Galapagos Islands.

The Andes Mountains run down the middle of Ecuador from the north to the south creating the high, dry region known as the Sierra. The rugged mountain range divides the country not only physically, but in the past it has also made the movement of people, ideas, and information from east to west difficult (Gerlach, 2003). Within this region is the country’s capital, Quito. The largest group of indigenous people in Ecuador, the Quichuas, live throughout the Sierra. They speak Quichua, a variety of the Quechua language brought by the Incas. However, even among the Quichuas, their traditions vary by region due to the isolation caused by the Andes (Gerlach, 2003).

To the east of the Sierra lays the tropical region known as the Oriente, which is home to the Amazon Rainforest and a wealth of biodiversity. It is here where Ecuador’s wealth of oil resides. In addition to oil, there are several smaller populations of indigenous groups that reside in the Oriente including the Shuar, Huaorani, Achuar, Cofán, and Záparos, each with their own language (Gerlach, 2003). Due to the dense rainforest and isolation, many of these groups were not contacted until recently.

To the west of the Andes is the tropical coastal region known as the Costa. The coast is famous for its banana, cocoa, and shrimp production. It is also home to Ecuador’s largest city,
Guayaquil. Guayaquil has influenced the ideals of the Costa and has typically been much more liberal compared to the more conservative city of Quito and the surrounding Sierra. The coast is home to the smallest population of indigenous groups, but it is here where the majority of the Afro-Ecuadorians and Montubios reside (Gerlach, 2003).

The fourth region lies six hundred miles off the coast of Ecuador: the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos, which were first made famous by the research of Charles Darwin, are home to several endemic species such as the giant tortoises, marine iguanas, and Galapagos penguins. There is no true indigenous population on the Galapagos because they were not inhabited until the early nineteenth century. Today, their main economy is tourism (Kricher, 2006). Each region of Ecuador is distinct geographically and has varying people groups with different cultures and traditions. This diversity of peoples plays an important role in the shaping of Ecuador’s history.

History. The native people of Ecuador were first conquered when the Incas invaded in the 1450s. The Incas spread the use of the Quichua language throughout the country, but their rule did not last long. Shortly after the Incas had conquered the territory that is now called Ecuador, the Spaniards took control and began to colonize the country. Spaniards spread the use of the Spanish language and established large estates in the Sierra, called haciendas, on which they employed indigenous people to work the land (Gerlach, 2003). They also brought Africans to the coastal region to work on the sugar plantations.

It was not until 1822 that Ecuador was freed from the rule of the Spanish empire; in that year, it became part of a new nation called Colombia, which included the present-day countries of Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela (Knapp, 2014). Eight years later, in 1830, Ecuador seceded and became its own separate and independent republic (Gerlach, 2003). Although
unified as a country, ideals were very different between the liberal coast with its main port city of Guayaquil and the high Sierra region with its conservative capital of Quito (Maier, 1971).

Because of the constant disagreements between the two opposing regions and political views, Gabriel García Moreno saw the need to unify the nation. He did so through his heavy-handed dictatorship (1861-1875) and by making the Roman Catholic Church the state religion (Henderson, 2008). Not only did he make the Catholic Church the state religion, but he also put the Church in charge of the school system. The church was in charge of education for almost 40 years, until the liberal dictator, Eloy Alfaro, removed the church from its role in state education just before the turn of the 20th century (Knapp, 2014). During the early 20th century, the economy was fueled by the cacao crop (Henderson, 1997). In the late 1920s through the 1930s, Ecuador faced an economic depression and continued political instability. These circumstances made it difficult to modernize or invest in education during that time period (Knapp, 2014). Then, in the late 1940s, growth in banana production and exportation restored prosperity and brought a semblance of stability for the next ten years (Gerlach, 2003). Ecuador went through two stages of military rules (1963-1966 & 1972-1979), but in 1979 democracy returned to the country (Gerlach, 2003).

In 1967, oil was discovered in Ecuador, and it quickly became the number one export, contributing to the growth in size and wealth of the middle and upper class (Gerlach, 2003). During the early 1970s to late 1980s, Ecuador experienced increased enrollment in education and literacy rates largely because of increased investments in education due to the discovery and exportation of oil in the country. Unfortunately, the oil revenues mainly benefited the Spanish-descended elite and did little to change the economic or education situation of the indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorians. In the 1980s, as oil prices fell, unemployment soared, and education
spending plummeted (Whitman, 2004). Economic problems continued until the turn of the century (Gerlach, 2003).

In 2000, due to high rates of inflation, Ecuador adopted the U.S. dollar as its currency in order to help stabilize the economy (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014). In 2006, Rafael Correa was elected president, the seventh one since 1996. Under Correa, a new constitution was approved in 2008, and government spending focused on social projects (healthcare, education, and social security) in an effort to reduce poverty. Correa was re-elected in 2009 and again in 2013 (Knapp, 2014).

**Ecuador today.** Gerlach (2003) points out that “Ecuador’s people and culture are as diverse as its geography” (p. 6). Today, Ecuador is not only a biologically diverse country, but it is also a plurinational country including mestizos (71.9%) (combined European and indigenous decent), Montubios (7.4%), indigenous peoples (7%), Afro-Ecuadorians (4.3%), and white (6.1%) (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2015). Within these broad groups, there are a variety of cultures and languages spoken. Spanish is the official language of business and government in the country. Quichua is spoken by 4.1% of the population and nine other indigenous languages are spoken throughout Ecuador as well (CIA, 2015).

According to the World Bank, per capita gross national income stands just barely above 6,000 USD, classifying Ecuador as a middle-income country (The World Bank Group, 2015). Oil, bananas, and cocoa continue to fuel the main economy (CIA, 2015). Since Correa’s election in 2006, Ecuador has experienced nearly a decade of relative political and economic stability. Both the geographical diversity and history of Ecuador can help to understand the situation of education in Ecuador.

**History of Education in Ecuador**
As mentioned above, the state of education in Ecuador has fluctuated with the growth and recession of the economy and with the change in political leaders. For much of Ecuador’s history, the education system made little headway due to unstable political leaderships and unstable sources of funding. Until recently, education was only available for the Spanish elites (mestizos and whites). Indigenous children in Ecuador were, for the most part, ignored or heavily discriminated against in the national education system until the 1980s when a government decree mandated bilingual, intercultural primary and secondary education to areas that were predominately indigenous (Robinette, 2015).

Ecuador has had numerous education plans, but they have lacked a needed focus on quality in the classroom (Belletini, Arellano & Espín, 2015). In the early 1990s, while Ecuador’s economy was still struggling, the country turned to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) for help with education. The two organizations proposed three separate plans which sought to improve the basic quality of education through improving physical infrastructure, providing materials, and training teachers (Whitman, 2004). The plans hoped to decentralize education through the use of several school networks. Whitman (2004) argues that although there were visible physical changes (new schools, books, and curriculum) there was actually a backwards slide in student scores between 1996 and 2000. Although improving teaching and learning may have been the goal on paper, in reality, all that really improved was infrastructure. In addition, the three plans were all run separately from the Ministry of Education until funding ran out, and only then were the projects dumped onto the Ministry (Whitman, 2004).

At the same time that the World Bank and the IADB were implementing their education plans, the first national policy on education was passed by the Ecuadorian government in April

**Snapshot of Education in 2006.** By 2006, Ecuador’s education system was severely lacking and the government had minimal control of education policies (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). The net enrollment rate of students in general basic education stood at 91.2%, but percentages dropped significantly for Afro-Ecuadorians and the indigenous populations (Singh, 2013). The indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations have faced severe inequality to access of education since Ecuador’s independence; these statistics show that discrimination continued. Forty-two percent of the population had not finished the ten years of basic general education, and only 12.1% of the population had finished the complete studies for a high school diploma (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Additionally, there was a disparity in quality of education between urban and rural schools. Spending on education was not a government priority, which resulted in poor physical conditions of school buildings, materials, and equipment. Perhaps of greatest concern, the quality of education that students were receiving was low (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). By 2006, Ecuador was in serious need of education reform.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an in depth understanding of the education reform that took place in Ecuador between 2006 and 2015. Although the PDE first brought an educational focus to the country, several other documents and laws were passed that made the reform a reality. Because the PDE ended at the end of 2015, now is a crucial time to take a
holistic look at the complete reform that took place during its existence. An in depth analysis of the reform can help identify strengths as well as lessons learned. An analysis can also help bring to light gaps that still remain in the education system of Ecuador. Having a better understanding of the reform can guide future reform in Ecuador in addition to guiding other countries looking for a model from which to base their own reform.

**Theoretical Framework and Research Questions**

The government has led education reform in Ecuador over the past ten years. Education is made a priority in both the national constitution and in the national development plan. According to Ecuador’s concept of development, education plays a key role in shaping citizens and building their capabilities (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). Because of the way the government of Ecuador conceives development and education, this study was framed through the human development theory lens. Human development theory is a post-development theory that sees holistic development of human capabilities and freedoms as more important than a narrow focus on income and wealth (Sen, 1999). A more complete review of development theories can be found in the literature review.

To guide an investigation of the full education reform over the past ten years as well as create a foundation from which to continue forward in improving education in Ecuador, this study will seek to answer three main questions: *How was education reformed in Ecuador between 2006 and 2015? How can future education plans build and improve upon the current policy? How can future education plans better align with Ecuador’s new concept of development?*

The findings will not only be helpful for future education legislation in Ecuador, but they will also be of value for other countries in the midst of reform or considering a reform in their
own education sector. For purposes of this study, educational reform will be defined as policy, law, or constitution which specifically impact education. In the case of this study, education reform took place mainly through the PDE, 2008 Constitution, *Buen Vivir*, and LOEI. Only reform that has taken place between November 2006 and December 2015 will be considered.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

To fully understand Ecuador’s education reform between 2006 and 2015, the following literature review will cover the conceptualization of education and development. The intersection of education and development will be discussed, and current trends in the definition of quality education will be covered. A brief overview of current education policies in Latin America is included, and the review will close with a summary of the education reform that took place in Ecuador between 2006 and 2015 and the implementation that followed.

Education and Development

Education

The word education, for many, brings about images of children sitting at desks in classrooms and teachers standing at the front of the room; however, the definition of education has a much broader scope. Craft (1984) first noted, and later Bass and Good (2004) expanded on the idea that the word education actually comes from two different Latin roots: educare and educere. Educare means to train or to mold. This etymology places the role of education as passing down knowledge, skills, and values; the emphasis is on memorizing facts and creating citizens who think and act in a specific way. Using this root of education, knowledge is most often passed through direct instruction. On the other hand, educere means to bring out or draw forth. This places the emphasis of education on preparing children to solve problems for changes that are yet to come (Craft, 1984). It encourages students to question and think for themselves. Schools with a pedagogy heavily focused on educere often learn through discovery and are child-centered. Instead of one or the other, both root meanings are essential to creating a balanced and complete view of education. Oakeshott, a philosopher of education in the mid-1900s, likened this balance to a conversation between student and teacher in which the teacher
instructs students how to participate in the dialogue and fills students in on previous voices of the conversation while also preparing students to contribute their own unique voices and ideas to the conversation (Thomas, 2013). In this view, *educare* and *educere* are both incorporated so that knowledge from the past is imparted while, at the same time, the learner is encouraged to construct new knowledge of their own through questioning, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Cremin (1977) defined education as “the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort” (p. 135). Often times, *education* is used synonymously with *schooling*, but as Thomas (2013) points out, there does not have to be a connection. This transmission can occur anywhere: school, home, church, libraries, museums, or on-the-job, to name a few. Likewise, it can be transmitted by anyone, not just teachers. Education begins long before a child ever enters a school building and continues long after they leave. Therefore, while education may take place during schooling, it also occurs frequently outside of school. Even though education is a lifelong process, for purposes of this paper, the word *education* will be used to refer specifically to education that takes place within a formal school setting.

If education can occur both within and outside of schools, is schooling even necessary? One may question, does formal schooling have a purpose if education can be achieved outside of schools? According to Bennett and LeCompte (1990), the purposes of schooling are fourfold: intellectual, political, social, and economic. Depending on one’s philosophy of education, different purposes can be emphasized more than others. Intellectual purposes are to teach basic cognitive (reading, writing, math, science) and higher order thinking skills. Political purposes are to teach children how to participate in a society’s political system (for example, democracy).
Social purposes are to teach children to work cooperatively within groups and instill values of the society, and economic purposes are to prepare students to contribute to the workforce (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990). Human capital theory, which views education as imparting skills valuable in the labor market, is a key example of an economic purpose of schooling (Riddell, 2005). UNESCO (1997) summarized the purpose of education as learning to know, to do, to be, and to live together. Although access to schooling is still an issue today, all countries do provide some system of formal education to the citizens in order to accomplish one or more of these purposes of education. In fact, a brief look at almost any country’s education policy will show schooling is compulsory for a set number of years.

Despite the fact that schooling is compulsory in almost every nation, there are several criticisms of formal compulsory education. Unschooling, a theory made popular by Ivan Illich, states that children should have the ability to choose when, where, and how they learn, and compulsory schooling takes away this right (Illich, 1971). Marsh (2011) argues that the vast amounts of money spent on education do little to alter the opportunities for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds in the first place. Decades before, Illich (1971) maintained that school failure had more to do with poverty than problems within the child or school.

Although, as Marsh and Illich point out, education through formal schooling may be far from perfect, there have also been several studies on the benefits of education. In 1842, Horace Mann said that education was the “great equalizer of all men” (Walker, Kozma, & Green, 1989, p. 133). Numerous studies have shown the benefits of education (Gakidou, Cowling, Lozano, & Murray, 2010; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2013; UNESCO, 2011; Vila, 2000; World Bank, 2007). Although Riddell (2005) asserted that “distinguishing between correlation and causation has been a major challenge in education” (p.
it would be naïve to conclude that all benefits are merely correlation and that education has caused little of the change. Comparable to the purposes of schooling, benefits can be intellectual, political, social, or economic. Education benefits both the person directly receiving the education (internal benefits) and society as a whole (external benefits). Those with higher levels of education are more likely to read, take part in politics and community life, and have higher paying and higher status jobs (Riddell, 2005; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2001). Educated people are also more likely to save higher portions of their income and spend their income on technology, literature, music, arts, and travel, which, in turn, contributes to the economy (Vila, 2000).

Much attention has been given to the increased income and economic growth that may be related to education, but benefits go beyond the monetary. Studies have linked longer life expectancy, less criminal behavior, and greater political participation to higher levels of education (Riddell, 2005; Vila, 2000). Volunteering, community involvement, and charitable donations are also more likely among those with higher levels of education (Vila, 2000). Studies by UNESCO (2011) have pointed to improving women’s rights, fostering peace, reducing poverty, strengthening democracy, and raising crop yields as additional benefits.

Education has been proven to have a trickle-down effect. Benefits are enjoyed not only by the person receiving the education but the family of that person will benefit, too. Higher parental education is linked to lower child mortality, improved child health, better performance in school, fewer teenage pregnancies, and lower criminal behavior in children (Riddell, 2005; UNESCO, 2011). Apart from impacting families, education has the potential to impact entire communities. Communities with a more educated population are more socially cohesive and less likely to experience violent conflicts than less educated communities (Vila, 2000). Because of
the powerful impact that education can have on an individual, a community, a nation, and even the world, it needs to stay a priority from the local to global levels.

Although school is compulsory in almost every country in the world, it can be public, private, or even supplied by the parents (homeschooling). Friedman, an American economist in the late twentieth century, was a major proponent of government-funded schools (Thomas, 2013). He believed that because the whole of society benefited from a child being educated (neighborhood effect) that schools should be state-funded and available to all (Thomas, 2013). Some countries have centralized schooling with a top-down approach (Greece) in which the ministry of education is in charge of making all decisions having to do with education such as structure, standards, and curriculum. Others have required schooling but employ a decentralized approach in which the details are left up to local districts and schools (Netherlands). Although decentralized education allows for more diversity within schools, education that is centralized within the government seeks to ensure that all students have access to the same educational opportunities.

Education is a broad and highly debated topic; this paper will look specifically at education that takes place within schools. Education needs to be both the acquiring of knowledge from past generations and also the equipping of students to question and think critically. Schools should provide the opportunity to acquire both of these aspects of education. After reviewing education, the paper will now review how development has been defined in the past and is currently conceptualized.

**Development**

*Development* is an ambiguous word, as it can refer to several types of development, such as biological development or psychological development. However, henceforth, I will use the
term development specifically referring to societal development. Many scholars point to the beginning of the use and idea of the need to develop a society to Truman’s inaugural speech in 1949 stating, “We must embark on a bold new program for…improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, 2015, para. 44). Since then, there have been several development theories trying to pinpoint how desirable societal change is best achieved. The next paragraphs will review some of the main theories of societal development.

One of the first theories of development was the modernization theory. Rostow (1960), the most well-known modernization theorist, came up with five stages of economic growth that a country should go through in order to achieve the ideal developed status. His theory is largely based upon European or western societies that have moved from a traditional society (stage 1) to the age of mass production and consumption (stage 5). It assumes that traditional societies must move beyond their traditional ways of life in order to develop. The only factor of development that the theory takes into consideration is economic growth. In the final stage incomes surpass basic needs. The majority of the population is working in offices or skilled factory jobs, and there is a presence of modern technology and science (Rostow, 1960). Today the way the economic growth is generally measured is with the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP represents the monetary value of goods and services produced within a specific country over a specific time period. Although GDP measures economic growth, many have cautioned, including Costanza, Hart, Posner, and Talberth (2009), economic growth is not the same as economic or social well-being. In reality, development needs to look beyond a simple GDP number. Although it measures income, it does not take into account equality (or inequalities). It
measures growth, but fails to take into consideration the destruction that is caused by the growth. GDP alone is inadequate to measure development.

Instead of pointing to stages of economic growth, like modernization theory, structuralism points to structures in society that impede economic growth. In short, structuralists believe that in order for an underdeveloped country to grow, it must switch from an agricultural society and focus its efforts on industrialization, minimizing reliance on trade with advanced economies. Prebisch and Singer were two structuralist thinkers from Latin America who promoted the idea of moving from an agricultural society to a more industrialized one (O’Toole, 2013). However, like modernization theory, structuralism looks at development in a largely economic light.

Continuing with an economic focus of development, the dependency theory, from which grew the World Systems theory, asserts that mainly raw resources pass from “periphery” or poor countries to “core” or developed countries (Wallerstein, 1976). Because periphery countries are busy producing raw resources, they depend on the core countries for industrialized goods, which, in turn, discourage them from developing their own sector of industrialization. Dependency theory states that classes will always exist; therefore, even if a periphery country manages to transition to a semi-periphery or core country, another country will take its place as a periphery country (O’Toole, 2013).

Because economic growth was not leading to the reduction of poverty in the previous development theories, the basic needs approach outlined a minimum necessary to survive instead of focusing solely on economic growth. According to the International Labor Organization, that developed the theory in the 1970s, the five basic needs are food, clothing, housing, education, and public transportation, but others have also included health, water,
sanitation, and employment into the basic needs (Szal, 1980). The minimum amount of money
necessary to meet these basic needs later became defined as the poverty line, which as of
October 2015 is 1.90 USD per day (Cruz, Foster, Quillin, & Schellekens, 2015).

In the 1980s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) began
implementing structural adjustment programs (SAPs). SAPs were loans given out by the World
Bank and IMF to least developed countries (LDCs) with certain conditions attached to them such
as the obligation to have controlled interest rates, to reduce trade barriers, and to privatize state
services. These loans were intended to help lift the LDCs out of poverty, but the SAPs have
received much criticism including the lack of attention to social aspects and institutional
weakness of developing countries (Heidhues & Obare, 2011).

Out of a response to SAPs and previous development theories came postdevelopment
theory. This theory proposes that the idea of societal development is merely a construct of
academia and the North, and that it is not realistic or even desirable for all countries to conform
to Western standards (Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 2010). Instead of placing countries on an
undeveloped to developed scale, postdevelopment highlights local culture and knowledge.
Arturo Escobar (1995) and Wolfgang Sachs (2010) are among the most well-known
postdevelopment theorists. A caution with postdevelopment is that a rejection of all
development has the potential to reject opportunities for advancement and transformation that
may be labeled as development.

Currently, a popular development theory is sustainable development. It is from this
theory that the United Nations produced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which
replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. The focus of sustainable
development is threefold: economic development, environmental sustainability, and social
inclusion (Sachs, 2012). The Bruntland Commission (1987) established and defined sustainable
development as “development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability
of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 41).

Similar to the sustainable development’s attempt at a holistic approach, *human
development theory* focuses on overall well-being rather than just income or goods (Sen, 1999).
The difference between the two is that sustainable development emphasizes societal
development, and human development theory emphasizes individual development. Both theories
address the individual and societal levels; the emphasis is merely altered. One of the more
famous human development theorists is Amartya Sen, who came up with the idea of
development as freedom. Sen (1999) believed that instead of being concerned with income and
wealth, “development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the
freedoms we enjoy” (p. 14). According to Sen (1999), development is “an integrated process of
expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another” (p. 8). He outlines five types
of freedoms: (1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4)
transparency guarantees, and (5) protective security. Out of the human development theory
came the human development index (HDI), used by the United Nations Development Program
(UNDP), which ranks countries based on life expectancy, education, and GDP combined
(UNDP, 2015).

Since 1950, the idea of development has progressed from purely economic to a more
holistic view. Despite the shift, many still think of development in purely economic terms.
However, Ecuador is challenging this view. The country, through its legislation, is trying to
make a shift from neoliberal economic development to a more holistic view of development
(National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). The way that education is outlined
can either reinforce the view of development as purely economic, or it can shift the view. In the recent decades, education has come to global attention as a tool for development.

**Education for Development**

Education has long been linked to improved social, political, and economic conditions. Over the last two decades, education has played a prominent role in the global development agenda as the main topic of many global summits. Today, education is widely accepted as the foundation for the development of a society (Abiogu, 2014; UNESCO, 2000). The World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 (often referred to as the Jomtien Convention) was the first pivotal summit bringing together leaders from around the world to place education at the top of the global agenda. Not only did it present education as a fundamental right, but it also presented it as a tool to societal change, stating that “education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance, and international cooperation” (UNESCO, 1990, p. 2). The commitment to education for all (EFA) was renewed in 2000 with the Dakar Framework for Action. It established six goals and 12 strategies providing a framework for realizing EFA by 2015. That same year, the MDGs were published by the United Nations (UN). Two of the eight development goals focused on education: Goal 2 – Achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015; Goal 3 – Target 3.A Eliminate gender disparity in primary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by 2015 (UN, 2015a).

The UN and its various branches are not the only ones that have linked education to development. Since the 1980s the World Bank has viewed education as a tool for economic development. The World Bank (2007) links more and better quality schooling to increased incomes and economic growth. Others, such as Adhikary (2014) and Sen (1989), have criticized
the World Bank for focusing too heavily on education’s role in economic growth and failing to
take into consideration the impact education has on social and political development as well.
Although education may play a role in improved economic opportunities, it would be a
misrepresentation to solely focus on this one benefit when education plays a significant role in
improved social and political development, as well.

Education will not be disappearing from the development agenda anytime soon. With the
end of the MDGs in 2015, the UN has now established 17 SDGs. These SDGs set the global
development agenda for the next 15 years. The goal of the fourth SDG is to “ensure inclusive
and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015b,
p. 14). Unlike the MDGs, which focused heavily on simply creating access to education, the
SDGs have placed equity and quality as the focal point in education. In addition, the most recent
World Education Forum replaced the Dakar Framework with the Incheon Declaration for
Education 2030 with an almost identical goal as the SDG: inclusive and equitable quality
education and lifelong learning for all (UNESCO, 2015a). Both the SDGs and the Incheon
Declaration will keep education as a global priority for at least another fifteen years.

Since 2000, education has been on the forefront of the development agenda, and with the
SDGs and Incheon Declaration, education will continue to play a prominent role. Many
countries have made a concerted effort to improve education and in doing so hope to see
improvement in the overall development of the country. In order to do so, quality of education
must be a priority, and development must be seen as more than economic growth. If used
properly, education can be a powerful tool in development. The next fifteen years have potential
to see significant change if quality education is provided and development is looked at through
the lens of increasing freedoms and capabilities.
Quality Education

Hanushek & Wößmann (2007) assert that educational quality can have positive impacts on individual earnings and economic growth, but that raises the question: how is quality education defined? Hanushek & Wößmann (2007) measure educational quality by what people know, and this is often measured by a country’s rank compared to other countries in regional or national student achievement test such as TERCE or Program for International Assessment (PISA). While these tests may give one glimpse of the education in a country, reading and math scores do not convey the equality of access to education, the quality of the learning environment, competencies or pedagogical practices of teachers, or the effectiveness of administration. Harris, Harris, and Smith (2012) even argue that standardized tests do not effectively measure what they are intended to measure: student achievement. Some of the attributes that standardized tests fail to measure are creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, curiosity, endurance, reliability, enthusiasm, empathy, self-awareness, self-discipline, leadership, civic-mindedness, courage, compassion, resourcefulness, sense of beauty, sense of wonder, honesty and integrity (Bracey as cited in Harris, Harris, & Smith, 2012). Although not measured in standardized tests, these attributes play a crucial role in contributing to quality education and improving quality of life.

Standardized test scores not only fail to measure the full capabilities of a student but there are several contributing factors that can impact standardized test scores (Topping, 2006). These factors can be broken into three categories: classroom factors (assessment, curriculum, and instruction), school factors (management and leadership, structure and resources), and individual, home, and community factors (home environment, socioeconomic status and occupation, and individual characteristics) (Topping, 2006). UNICEF (2000) uses similar factors and breaks
them into four groups: learners, content, environment, and processes. For purposes of this paper, factors will be discussed using the groupings from UNICEF. Taking into consideration recent research and trends in education, these factors will be discussed in the following paragraphs as contributing factors to a holistic look at what makes up quality education.

Standardized tests give one picture of the quality of outcomes in education, but teachers and learners also play a role in quality of education. Teachers are a key ingredient in student learning and have the greatest impact on students after their families (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Woessmann, 2001). The number of years of experience and the quality of teacher education they received influences student outcomes (Woessman, 2001). However, even with appropriate training and years of experience, teachers may continue to use inappropriate teaching methods and remain unmotivated (UNICEF, 2000). Because of this, teachers could benefit from incentives to use new strategies (Woessmann, 2001).

In addition to teachers, learners also play a role in quality education. However, students cannot adequately learn if they are malnourished, in poor health, or lack parental or community support (UNICEF, 2000). No matter the socioeconomic status or background, students perform better in school, have increased attendance, and are more likely to continue their education when their parents are supportive of it (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Factors affecting learners and teachers must be addressed for students to reach their full potential.

Content, such as available curriculum, materials, and standards, impact educational quality. Hanushek & Wößmann (2007) emphasize that centralized testing should be the highest priority. Because centralized testing is a form of accountability, the presence of it has a tendency to increase student scores (Woessmann, 2001). A prerequisite to centralized testing should be the establishment of standards. Griffith (2007) argues that the development of appropriate
standards is necessary before an assessment of quality education is possible. It is from these standards that curriculum can be developed (Griffith, 2007). Although on their own, material resources may not have a significant impact on education; an education system cannot expect to have proficient results without investing some amount of money into adequate materials (Griffith, 2007; Woessmann, 2001). Woessmann (2001) argues that the mere presence of textbooks is insufficient, but instead, materials must be utilized effectively to make an impact.

The environment, including both the physical surroundings and the psychosocial elements that students and teachers are surrounded by, can play a role in quality education. UNICEF (2000) found that availability of toilets affected girls’ attendance and a source of clean water increased attendance for all students. Investments in school facilities are essential to quality learning environments (Griffith, 2007). Other studies, such as the one done by Bowers and Urick (2011) found no correlation between facility quality and student achievement, while Woessmann (2001) found no correlation between per pupil spending and student achievement. Apart from the physical environment, when the psychosocial environment is not safe, learning does not take place (UNICEF, 2000).

The final group of factors that impact quality of education are processes such as teaching strategies, access to language used in school, and supervision and support. Algan, Cahuc, and Shleifer (2013) found that horizontal teaching practices (where students work in groups, collaborate, and ask questions) are more effective at building social capital, the capacity to cooperate with other members of the community, than vertical teaching strategies (teachers lecture and ask the questions while students take notes or read textbooks). Not only are the strategies important, but the language in which content is taught matters as well. Children, especially girls and rural students, are more likely to succeed in school and stay in school longer
when the instruction is taught in the child’s mother tongue (Hovens, 2002; Kosonen, 2005). The freedom or lack of freedom to vary the instructional language and instructional methods in each school comes from the amount of control present in the governance of education. Hanushek & Wößmann (2007) suggest strong accountability from administration but autonomy for individual schools when it comes to personnel, instructional methods, and supplies. Woessmann (2001) also suggests that greater local autonomy allows for schools to respond to the needs and demands of parents and the community.

Quality education cannot be defined by one factor such as standardized test scores or the quality of the teachers. To have a complete understanding of the quality of education offered, whether on a small school scale or large country scale, learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes must all be considered. Understanding the factors behind student outcomes on standardized tests can guide policy makers in how to approach improving education in the future.

**Education in Ecuador 2006-2015**

**Important Legislation on Education**

Ecuador has signed on to all the major international human rights instruments such as the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These instruments make the State responsible for providing education to all persons without discrimination (Singh, 2013). In addition to these international legal frameworks, since 2006, Ecuador produced a series of its own policies and legislation on education. These policies have directly affected how education is controlled, funded, and implemented within Ecuador. The first major policy change for education came before Correa was elected president in 2007, but the majority of changes have come under the

**Ten Year Education Plan (PDE).** Major educational change in Ecuador began in 2006 with the PDE 2006-2015. The PDE is a large-scale education reform that was approved by 66% of votes in November 2006 and expired at the end of 2015 (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The plan was proposed during the presidency of Alfredo Palacio; however, it continued to be pursued and implemented under the presidency of Correa. It is an important piece of legislation on education because it clearly outlined eight policies with goals and lines of action for each policy (Singh, 2013). The eight policies are as follows:

1. Universalize early childhood education (*educación inicial* [EI]) (0-5 years)
2. Universalize basic education (*educación general básica* [EGB]) (5-14 years)
3. Increase high school (*bachillerato*) enrollment to at least 75% of the population for that age group (15-18 years)
4. Eradicate illiteracy and strengthen alternative education
5. Improve the physical infrastructure and equipment of schools
6. Improve quality and equity in education and implement the national evaluation system of assessment and social accountability
7. Reevaluate the teaching profession, professional development, working conditions, and quality of life
8. Increase educational funding by 0.5% annually until it reaches at least 6% of the GDP (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007)
These policies focus on creating access to and improving the quality of education. Since 2006, the Ecuadorian government has been working to make these policies a reality.

**2008 Constitution.** Shortly after Correa’s election, Ecuador adopted a new constitution in October of 2008 superseding the previous constitution from 1998 (Van Damme et al., 2013). Within the new Constitution, the indigenous concept of *sumak kawsay* first appeared in a legal framework. *Sumak kawsay*, or good living, is the promotion of a harmonious life among communities and between human beings and nature (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). The right to education is considered one of the most important requirements for the attainment of good living. However, the idea of education that is promoted is a more holistic and inclusive concept of education than simply viewing education as a tool for economic development or as a commodity to be acquired. The 2008 Constitution addresses education in two main sections: under rights of the good way of living (Articles 26-29), and under inclusion and equity in the good way of living system (Articles 343-357).

The Constitution puts responsibility of education on the state. In Article 26, it guarantees the right to education and guarantees equity and social inclusion within that education. Article 27 points to education as “a key strategy to national development,” and Article 28 guarantees universal access that is compulsory through secondary education and free through the first tertiary degree (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). Additionally, Article 29 guarantees the right of persons to learn in their own language and cultural environment.

As part of the good living system, inclusion and equity are essential in life, and this includes education. Article 343 states that the national education system should be “aimed at developing the population’s individual and collective capabilities and potential…[It] shall incorporate an intercultural vision in line with the country’s geographical, cultural, and linguistic
diversity and respect for the rights of the communities, peoples, and nations” (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). The need for a comprehensive evaluation system to promote the quality of education is outlined in Article 346, and Article 347 lists out the responsibilities of the state having to do with education. Some of these responsibilities include eliminating illiteracy and all forms of violence within the school. Additionally, it guarantees intercultural bilingual education (IBE) and the need for information and communication technologies as part of the education process. Finally, it guarantees the active participation of students, families, and teachers in the education process. Article 349 guarantees the rights of the teaching staff including fair pay, a promotion scale, and the right to access professional development (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). Similar to the PDE, the articles in the Constitution center on ensuring access and providing quality education for all.

National Plan of Good Living (Buen Vivir) 2009-2013, 2013-2017. Buen Vivir 2013-2017 is Ecuador’s third national development plan during the Correa administration. The first National Development Plan was meant for 2007-2010, but was abandoned in 2008 when new elections were summoned. Then a second plan was implemented from 2009-2013, and today Ecuador is in the middle of its third development plan (2013-2017). Good living, or in Spanish buen vivir, is taken from the indigenous concept of sumak kawsay, which first appeared in the 2008 Constitution. Buen Vivir defines good living as “the style of life that enables happiness and the permanency of cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equality, equity and solidarity. It is not the quest for opulence or infinite economic growth” (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 4). Van Damme et al. (2013) describe Buen Vivir as “a conceptual rupture… and a paradigmatic transformation” from previous neoliberal conceptions of development (p.3). It outlines twelve national objectives for good living, which each contain
a number of policies and goals. Although none of the objectives directly mention education, education plays a prominent role in the policies and goals of objectives two, three, and four. Many of these policies and goals, which are explained below, echo what has already been outlined in the PDE and Constitution:

Objective Two: “To foster social and territorial equity, cohesion, inclusion and equality in diversity” (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 55). The importance of this objective is that it guarantees equality in education among all peoples (Policy 2.2). This includes groups placed at a disadvantage due to inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination, such as women, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, rural, poor, and those with disabilities (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). Key goals of the objective are to reach universal attendance in primary education (Goal 2.4) and 80% attendance rate for high school (Goal 2.5). Another area of focus is reduction of illiteracy among the indigenous and Montubio population between the ages of 15-49 to four percent (Goal 2.7).

Objective Three: “To improve people’s quality of life” (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 58). Unlike many conceptualizations of development, Buen Vivir sees development as more than just economic growth. The right to education is an essential part of improving people’s overall quality of life. This correlates directly to the Constitution Article 66, which establishes the same right.

Objective Four: “To build citizen capacities and potential” (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 60). In order to build these capacities, holistic education that is both equitable and quality is of utmost importance. The education system should train people both academically and professionally and include traditional knowledge and culture. Policies include universal access to initial, basic, and high school education (Policy 4.1),
promote completion of studies (Policy 4.2), and improve quality of education (Policy 4.4). Additionally, teachers and other educational professionals need to be empowered as key actors in constructing good living (Policy 4.5). Goals include increasing the percentage of people from age 16-24 who have completed basic schooling to 95% (Goal 4.1) and increasing the percentage of people from age 18-24 who have graduated from high school to 78% (Goal 4.2). In addition to increasing completion, Goal 4.3 aims to decrease dropout rates in the eighth year of basic schooling and the first year of high school to three percent. Finally, in order to assist in building capacities and potential, Internet access in schools should be increased to 90% (Goal 4.4).

**Intercultural Education Act (LOEI).** The LOEI, passed in 2011, provides specific provisions and aims in order to accomplish the goals set out in the Constitution. It includes a legal framework for initial, basic, and secondary education as well as the rights and responsibilities of teachers, students, parents, and the community (Singh, 2013). Within the LOEI, the National Education Authority and National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa) were established. The National Education Authority is in charge of regulating education policy, while the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education is in charge of evaluating the effectiveness of the education system. A framework for IBE was established in order to meet the needs of both the indigenous population and the population as a whole (Singh, 2013). IBE is meant to be rooted in one’s own culture, language, and traditions while at the same time remain open and receptive to other cultures, languages, and traditions (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2014). The LOEI also states that protection from violence is one of the objectives of education. To improve the quality of learning and student achievement, improving the quality of teachers is essential. In effort to provide better-trained teachers, plans for a National University of Education were
outlined (Singh, 2013). The LOEI provides a legal framework for the implementation of previous policies laid out in the PDE, *Buen Vivir*, and Constitution.

**Implementation of the education reform: 2006-2015.**

Creating policy on education is a start, but having a policy does not guarantee implementation. And even implementation does not guarantee successful implementation. This section will recount how the policies on education were put into practice from 2006-2015. To detail everything that has been implemented within the reform would be difficult; instead, this will highlight the main actions that were taken to improve education. Within the first year, a national curriculum for early childhood education was designed and published, the 25 USD voluntary contribution for grades one to seven was eliminated, free textbooks were provided for students in grades one to seven, national plans for inclusive, environmental, and sex education were created, teacher salaries were increased, and a national testing system was developed (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). In addition, during 2007, 73 million USD was invested in school infrastructure, which exceeded total investments during the last seven years combined (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007).

The Ministry of Education has taken full control of educational policies, where before they were just an administrator (Cevallos Estarellas, 2015). New standards were adopted to monitor the quality of education through student test scores, teacher performance, and school management (Singh, 2013). In 2010, a new curriculum for EGB was implemented, and the following year the *bachillerato* was consolidated from five different tracks to a cohesive standard (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). Ecuador’s school systems have been reorganized into nine zones, 140 districts, and 1,142 educational circuits. Instead of a punitive supervision model from the top, Ecuador transitioned to a system of educational support that
enrolls local advisors and auditors to provide the necessary assessment and improvement needed (Van Damme et al., 2013). In addition, the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education has been established and has begun to diagnose strengths and weaknesses within the schools (Van Damme et al., 2013).

In the course of just six years (2006-2012), non-university educational spending tripled (Cevallos Estarellas, 2015). From 2007-2010, 31 million primary education school textbooks were provided free of charge to students (Singh, 2013), and by 2012, 1.2 million uniforms were provided at no cost (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). Both textbooks and uniforms were previously an expense that families had to cover. As of 2015, 56 Millennium Educational Units (MEUs) are in operation, with another 50 in construction and 212 to be built (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015d). These MEUs are public schools that are built in areas where poverty is high and supply of educational services and academic performance are low. Quality, technology, integration with the community, and modern infrastructure are four distinct characteristics of MEUs (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015d).

Improving the teaching profession was a priority in all of the legislation on education. A legal framework was created to outline the criteria for teacher recruitment and a career progression was established. Between 2006 and 2012, teaching salaries increased from 396 to 817 USD per month (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). This not only creates an incentive to stay in the teaching profession, but also makes the profession more attractive to future generations. Further, 17,000 new teaching positions were created from 2011-2013 to match the demand of students attending school (Singh, 2013). Before 2011, the only way a teaching position would become available was if another teacher retired or resigned (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). Today, more teachers than ever are receiving professional development.
Between 2008 and 2013, approximately 108,000 teachers attended some sort of professional development (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). The implementation of policies has done much to improve the state of education in Ecuador.

**Snapshot of Education in 2015**

The PDE, 2008 Constitution, *Buen Vivir*, and LOEI have helped to transform Ecuador’s education system in the last ten years to what it is today. Education is clearly broken into four sections: initial education (0-4 years), basic education (5-14 years), secondary education (baccalaureate or *bachillerato*) (15-17 years), and post-secondary education (university). The secondary education is subdivided into a scientific career track and technical career track, which offers additional technical and vocational education (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). Basic and secondary education are compulsory and education is free of charge through the first university degree (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). Centralized national curriculum and standards make learning and expectations similar throughout the country, but the decentralized management system makes monitoring quality or accessing assistance easier.

**Education Policy in Latin America**

The education reform in Ecuador did not happen in isolation. Several countries in Latin America went through substantial education reform in the 1990s and early 2000s. Many of the trends are similar to the reform in Ecuador, yet others differ. Similar to the two main focuses of Ecuador’s reforms, the two most common goals in education reform in Latin America are to expand coverage and improve quality (UNESCO, 2013). A brief review of trends in education reform throughout Latin America follows.

In a study done by the UNESCO office in Chile, the LLECE found that the majority of primary schools are public (UNESCO, 2013). Chile and Nicaragua are the exception with a high
number of students attending subsidized private schools (Burton, 2012; UNESCO, 2013). In secondary school, private schools are more prevalent. More than half of Guatemala’s secondary schools are private, and Peru and Colombia both have more than a quarter of their students attending private secondary schools (UNESCO, 2013).

Due to the high populations of indigenous peoples in many of the countries in Latin America, the provision of bilingual education has increased (Contreras & Salavera Simoni, 2003; Harris, 2007; Howard, 2009; UNESCO, 2013). Bolivia provides intercultural bilingual education and materials in Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani, in addition to Spanish (Howard, 2009). A 2006 education law in Bolivia gave provisions to meet local needs in education before focusing on generic and universal curriculum (Howard, 2009).

One of the biggest sweeping trends across Latin America is the decentralization of education (Contreras & Talavera Simoni, 2003; Harris, 2007; UNESCO, 2013). Decentralization deals primarily with how schools are managed. Governments are moving many of the functions of management in education from being centralized in the ministry of education to allowing more of the decisions to be made at the local school level. Many countries have autonomous functioning of schools in regard to curriculum, assessment, and management (UNESCO, 2013). However, like Ecuador, Mexico and Costa Rica have centrally set curriculum and assessment with more flexibility for individual schools in pedagogical strategies and support (UNESCO, 2013).

Another regional trend that has grown as education has become more decentralized is an increase in community participation. Due to conditions caused by El Salvador’s civil war in the 1980s, a lack of government focus on education led communities to take the matter upon themselves (Basaninyezi, 2011). From this grew a World Bank financed project called
A globally recognized reform that began in Colombia but has since spread to other countries is *Escuela Nueva*. *Escuela Nueva* is a system, model, program and methodology that began in Colombia in the 1970s (*Fundación Escuela Nueva*, 2016). According to the *Fundación Escuela Nueva* website, *Escuela Nueva* contributes to “improve the quality, relevance and efficiency of education by rethinking the way we learn and promoting active, cooperative and personalized learning centered on the learner” (*Fundación Escuela Nueva*, 2016, para. 1). Often cited as a best practice in rural school reform, students are expected to acquire and construct knowledge independently or in cooperative small groups guided by the teacher as a facilitator (McEwan & Benveniste, 2001). Schools are often multi-grade, and community participation is a key element (McEwan & Benveniste, 2001). It started as a rural school reform, but it has since expanded to urban settings and populations deprived of schools due to distance or emergency (*Fundación Escuela Nueva*, 2016). The *Escuela Nueva* model was recently used as a model in Peru and has been implemented in Guatemala and Chile as well (Kudo, 2016; McEwan, 2008).

A renewed emphasis on the value of teachers can be seen in many of the reforms. All countries have some sort of initial teacher training and either have or are developing a professional development system (UNESCO, 2013). Like in the *Escuela Nueva* model, much of the new initial teacher training and professional development focuses on training teachers in student-centered and active pedagogical strategies (Contreras & Talavera Simoni, 2003; Harris,
Countries like Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Chile have incentive programs for teachers who teach indigenous language or in rural areas (Arellano Marín, 2001; UNESCO, 2013). Like in Ecuador, teachers’ salaries rose in both Bolivia and Colombia (Contreras & Talavera Simoni, 2003; Lowden, 2011).

There are several other reform trends that can be seen across Latin America. All eight countries in the UNESCO study (Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and the Dominica Republic) have some form of student assessment, financial vouchers for families, feeding programs, health programs, and policies for early childhood education (UNESCO, 2013). Two other popular goals are to improve infrastructure and accountability (UNESCO, 2013).

Although education reform has been a common trend across Latin America and great improvements have been made, the quality of education that students are receiving is still not adequate. Chile, the top performing country in Latin America according to the TERCE assessment did not do well when compared to the rest of the world (UNESCO, 2014). Chile falls 71 points below the reading average score and 56 points below the math average score in the PISA test (OECD, 2014). PISA is a triennial assessment in reading, math, and science given to 15-year-olds in 70 participating countries across the globe. Other Latin American participating countries (Mexico, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Peru) fall even further below the global average (OECD, 2014). Even though Peru made one of the largest improvements in student scores between the SERCE and TERCE tests (UNESCO, 2014), it had the worst scores of all participating countries in PISA (OECD, 2014). While access to education is becoming closer to universal across Latin America, there is still a significant need to focus on the quality of education to which the students have access.
Summary

Education has the potential to contribute to the social, political, economic, and cultural development of an individual and as well as a society. Over the last 25 years, there has been a global focus on making primary education universal for all. Countries in Latin America and across the world have reformed education policies to make this a reality. However, increasing access without improving the quality of education only solves half the problem. In 2006, with an underfunded and low quality education system, Ecuador set out on a sizable education reform. Unlike attempts before, the political and economic stability allowed the initial plan to become a reality with the government placing education as a key priority of the country. Although the PDE came to an end at the end of 2015, Ecuador needs to continue with the momentum it started in improving education. The country has seen substantial improvement in its education system, but there is also ample room for growth. Full implementation of several of the goals in the current legislation and plans has yet to be realized. The following research will analyze the main document of the reform, the PDE, as well as give recommendations for ways in which Ecuador can continue to be a model country in education reform.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Over the past ten years, Ecuador has gone through a major education reform. During this same time period, national achievement test scores have improved significantly. This improvement calls for a closer investigation of the reform. The research covered in this study will be a single, intrinsic, qualitative case study of education reform in Ecuador between the years of 2006-2015. The study will examine the main policy and legislative documents that guided the reform. It will not only look at the original documents but will also track what parts of the reform have been implemented. The main education reform document, the PDE, will be analyzed for strengths and weaknesses as a policy and in providing quality education. All data will be unobtrusive and collected from publically available documents. The research was submitted to and approved by the Concordia University Institutional Review Board.

Justification

This research hopes to examine Ecuador’s education reform between 2006 and 2015 in order to analyze its strengths and weaknesses. The proposed research will not only contribute to a better understanding of the specific case of Ecuador’s recent education reform, but it could also help guide other countries looking to improve their education policy. The successes can be used as a model for other countries to implement in their own education policies. Even in finding shortcomings of the reform, these will allow for areas in which policy can be improved. This research is important in understanding the significant role education policy plays in a nation and the potential impact it can have. It will also help to show, with an effective education policy, change can happen within a matter of years instead of decades. Without an effective educational policy, nations will struggle to provide the inclusive and equitable quality education their children need.
Research Question

After surveying the current research, it is evident education has the potential to have a significant impact on national development. The case of Ecuador’s education reform is unique because the country moved from performing near the bottom of other countries in Latin America in standardized tests to performing almost at average with other countries in a six-year time span (UNESCO, 2015b). Ecuador can learn from its own successes and failures in this past education reform to guide future policy and legislation. Additionally, the reform has the potential to guide how other countries outline and implement their own education reform. This study will seek to answer three main questions: How was education reformed in Ecuador between 2006 and 2015? How can future education plans build and improve upon the current policy? and How can future education plans better align with Ecuador’s new concept of development? Despite its relatively unheard of improvement in academic performance according to standardized tests, very little attention has been given to the education reform in Ecuador. Furthermore, the PDE just expired at the end of 2015, so minimal studies have been conducted on the PDE in its entirety.

Design

A case study is a study undertaken to better understand the complexity and uniqueness of a single case (Stake, 1995). Ecuador’s improvement in national education scores in such a short time is unique and deserves closer investigation. For this reason, the case study research method was chosen. This case study will attempt to explain and evaluate the education reform in Ecuador between 2006 and 2015. Like most case studies, this study will be qualitative in nature, seeking to understand the reform as a whole instead of isolating specific facts and numbers. The case study will be both intrinsic (undertaken to gain a deeper understanding of the case) and evaluative (Stake, 1995). It will be both explanatory (explaining the connections between real-
life interventions) and descriptive (describing an intervention in the specific context it occurred) (Yin, 2003). The purpose of this research is, first and foremost, to thoroughly understand the reform in its context but also to interpret in what ways the implementation of the education reform is successfully in alignment with the idea of development set forth in the Constitution and Buen Vivir.

**Data Collection**

This study is non-intrusive, and the data collected came from existing documents, reports, and assessments that were available for public access. The four main documents pertaining to the education policy and reform are the PDE, 2008 Constitution, Buen Vivir, and LOEI. The documents were reviewed and retrieved from corresponding ministry sites of the Ecuadorian government. The PDE and Buen Vivir were available in English from the government sites; however, the 2008 Constitution and LOEI were only available in Spanish on the government site. An English translation of the Constitution was accessed online from the Political Database of the Americas, part of Georgetown University. An English copy of the LOEI was not available. These documents were all publicly available on the Internet. Other reports and articles were taken from online databases such as SAGE, EBSCO, ERIC and JSTOR. Assessment results were taken from the organization conducting the assessment’s website. Official reports and statistics from globally recognized organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, and the World Bank were also utilized.

**Analysis Procedures**

To process and analyze the data collected, the procedure laid out by Neale, Thapa, & Boyce (2006) for conducting and evaluating a case study will be used. The case study will present the problem, steps taken to address the problem, results, challenges and how they were
met, beyond results, and lessons learned. A specific focus will be given to the PDE as it was the first of the key documents published impacting education reform, and it has continued to guide education reform even after the publication of the new constitution and the national development plan. The PDE also recently expired at the close of 2015, so it is the perfect time for a complete analysis. To aid in analyzing the PDE, two different frameworks were used: a policy analysis framework and a quality of education analysis framework.

The first method of analysis is a general framework designed by Cheung, Mirzaei, and Leeder (2010) to analyze any policy document. The framework outlines seven criteria that should be present in all sound policies: accessibility, policy background, goals, resources, monitoring and evaluation, public opportunities, and obligations. See Appendix A for the complete framework. The Cheung et al. (2010) framework will be used to analyze the PDE 2006-2015 in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the document as a policy.

The second method of analysis is a framework created by UNICEF (2000). This framework was created using previous research to come up with a definition for quality education. The framework proposes that environments, learners, content, and processes all contribute to produce quality outcomes in education. See Appendix B for the complete framework. The policies and objectives of the PDE will be placed into this framework to see in what areas the policies contribute to quality education and where there might be gaps.

Using these two frameworks to analyze the PDE will give a more complete analysis of the education reform as a whole. These frameworks can guide policy makers in the future in order to improve the next education plan. Together, the finished analysis will provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of the document as a policy and as it relates to quality education. Not only will this feedback be valuable for future education plans in Ecuador, but it can also help
guide other countries who are looking to implement a large scale education reform like Ecuador’s.

**Limitations**

One limitation of single case studies is, because of the specific context in which the case occurs, they are not generalizable. Ecuador’s education reform is a specific case in a specific context; thus, the results are not necessarily generalizable for other countries. The historical, social, political, and economic context will vary and even if another country chooses to implement a similar education reform, there is no guarantee the results would be the same.

Another possible limitation to this research was due to the nature of a case study, the researcher becomes highly involved in one specific case and there is the possibility of bias. To minimize the likelihood of bias, all the research was peer reviewed, and multiple readers read my analysis. A final limitation to acknowledge is the language barrier between myself, the researcher, and the official language of Ecuador, Spanish. At the beginning of the research, I was looking mostly at English sources, as that is my first language, but found there were many holes in the information. I was able to sift through many of the Spanish sources, but not with the same depth that I could have if I was fluent in the language.

There are, however, several strengths to this case study. One of the strengths of looking at Ecuador’s education reform using a case study is it allows the whole story to be told from what brought about the reform and how it was implemented to the results (both positive and negative) that came of it. Another strength is because the education reform in Ecuador is a unique case, a case study allowed for the whole picture to be included in the analysis. A rich amount and variety of information was able to be included in the research. Additionally, the study was unobtrusive, so my participation in the research did not affect any of the data
analyzed. A final strength of this research is it contributed new information to the body of research done on the education reform in Ecuador. A small number of studies have been conducted in the midst of the PDE, but this will be the first study to look at the PDE in its entirety.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research was proposed and submitted to the Concordia University – Portland IRB for approval before beginning the study. Because the proposal did not deal directly with human subjects and there was no risk of physical or emotional harm, it qualified for an expedited review. There was no need to keep any data confidential because all of the data was available for public access. The findings of this research identify outcomes of the education reform and were analyzed as either contributing to or thwarting good living. Shortcomings of the reform are presented constructively as it is evident there are always improvements and changes that can be made. Peer review was necessary to ensure unbiased analysis.

**Summary**

The unique case of Ecuador’s education reform made it a great candidate for a single case study. Original documents were reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of Ecuador’s education reform between 2006 and 2015. All data were documents collected from publically available sources thus making the study unobtrusive. The research was submitted and approved through Concordia University. Data was analyzed using frameworks created by Cheung et al. (2010) and UNICEF (2000). The research will add to and fill gaps in studies done on Ecuador’s education reform. This study has the potential to guide Ecuador in future education policy and legislation through showing areas of strength and areas that need improvement. Additionally,
other countries may benefit from learning about Ecuador’s education reform in order to guide
their own future reforms learning from both the successes and failures.
Chapter Four: Qualitative Analysis of Findings

Large-scale education reform began in Ecuador in 2006 with the PDE. For purposes of this paper, the main analysis will focus on the PDE, but it would be incomplete to fail to mention the continued work that the Ministry has devoted to education after the PDE. Actions that the Ministry took to improve education that were not specifically outlined in the PDE will be included in the analysis as well, but the focus will remain on the PDE.

The PDE expired at the end of 2015, and a new plan is in the process of being constructed. A deeper understanding of the PDE will help to see the specific strengths and shortcomings in order to build upon the strengths and address the shortcomings in the plan to come. In order to have a more holistic understanding of the PDE, it has been analyzed in two distinct ways. First, the PDE was analyzed using a framework for policy analysis, and then it was analyzed using a framework for assessing quality education outcomes. The first analysis will provide an assessment of the general structure of the PDE as a policy document, and the second analysis will provide an evaluation of the components of quality education present in the PDE.

**PDE Policy Analysis**

The PDE was first assessed as a general policy using the criteria suggested by Cheung et al. (2010) and adapted for use with education policy documents by Ellahi and Zaka (2015). In their study, Cheung et al. (2010) provide a framework to assess policy documents. The framework was originally used for a health policy but was created to be used with a variety of policy documents. For example, Ellahi and Zaka (2015) used the original framework from Cheung et al. (2010) and tweaked minimal language to analyze higher education policy frameworks. The criteria provided in the framework are intended to be used to determine the
strengths and weaknesses of the skeletal structure of a specific policy. Cheung et al. (2010) outlined seven criteria: accessibility, policy background, goals, resources, monitoring and evaluation, public opportunities, and obligations. For a full description of the policy analysis framework, refer to Appendix A. This same criteria is used to evaluate the PDE 2006-2015.

**Accessibility**

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador’s website provides a link to the PDE in PDF format. In addition to Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French translations are also available. However, what is available online is not the complete or official Plan. What is published on the Ministry’s website is a summary document from 2007 organized into sections by the eight key policies of the Plan. Under each policy, lines of action, achievements for 2006, and goals for 2007 are outlined (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). A different summarized version (versión resumida) of the PDE put out by the Ministry can be found online through the Organizacion de Estados Iberoamericanos website. This document includes more detail about each policy such as justification, project description, components of the policy, objective, goals, and budget (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador y Cultura [MEC], 2006). The two documents contain a large amount of overlapping information, but some information is unique to a particular document. For this reason, both documents were utilized. It is unknown if hard copies of the PDE are available.

**Policy Background**

The PDE does not go into great detail regarding the background of education in Ecuador. It does mention who originally put the Plan together, and after the initial draft, it was opened up to a national debate in more than 40 forums. It states that the Plan is in alignment with international commitments the country has signed; however the specific commitments are not
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mentioned. It also states it follows the national agreements and work of previous Ministers of Education, but details of the agreements or work of previous Ministers are not included (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The Plan states three crucial reasons that education in Ecuador was in need of reform in 2006: limited and inequitable access, low quality of education, and lack of funding resulting in insufficient infrastructure. A brief sentence of justification is included with each policy for why the policy was chosen, but no sources or studies are cited (MEC, 2006).

Goals

The PDE is broken down into eight policies. Lines of action, an objective, and several specific goals are listed for each policy. Each of the goals provides a time frame and particular action that can be easily measured. The majority of the goals are concrete enough to be evaluated later. An example of this is a goal from Policy One (universalize early childhood education): starting in 2007, increase the number of early childhood educators by 180 and to that base add 15% annually (MEC, 2006, p.18). While most of the goals are quite clear and measurable, a few are a bit vague. For example, one of the goals of Policy 6 (improve the quality and equality of education and implement the National System of Evaluation) is to implement the new management model of the Ministry of Education starting in 2007 (MEC, 2006, p. 38). The goal does not give specifics on how the model will be implemented. “Implement” is too broad to be measured clearly. Although a few goals are unclear, for the most part they are clear and measurable. All eight policies and their goals do focus on working towards the improvement of education for the population.
Resources

Financial resources, human resources, and organizational capacity are key factors to consider in any policy. Financial resources for the implementation of the PDE will come from the education budget. The eighth policy does state financial resources for education will continue to increase annually by 0.5 percent of the GDP until the total reaches six percent of the GDP (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). A rough budget for each policy is available broken down by year and main action taken (MEC, 2006). Numbers showing whether the projected budget fits within the actual budget available were not stated.

The human resources needed to implement the policy start at the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is in charge of providing the legal framework and overseeing the full implementation of the PDE. The first three policies focus on the expansion of access for students from birth through high school. To meet the need of the growing population of students, the PDE includes the expansion of the number of teachers to meet the demand of students (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Family and the community are mentioned briefly as a support role.

Organizational capacity is improved and expanded in the PDE. The Ministry of Education is the broad infrastructure under which each of the policies will be implemented. Within the Plan, smaller groupings of infrastructure are created to help things run more smoothly and efficiently. New infrastructure components include new curriculum for early childhood through high school, a legal framework for early childhood education, a national evaluation system, a decentralized management model, an updated teacher training system, and a new professional development structure (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007; MEC, 2006).
Monitoring and Evaluation

Within the PDE, new mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation are established through the development and implementation of a national testing system (Policy 6) and rejoining regional standardized tests (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). While there is a method for monitoring and evaluating students, no method of monitoring and evaluating teachers or management is included. The PDE does not state a plan for data collection before, during, and after the policy’s implementation, and no specific methods for overall monitoring or evaluation are stated for the PDE in its entirety. Some goals include specific outcomes, but most do not.

Public Opportunities

Multiple stakeholders were involved in the creation of the PDE. The Ministry of Education originally proposed the PDE to the National Education Council. This council is made up of representatives from the National Educators Union, the Confederation of Catholic Education Schools, the Confederation of Private Lay Education Schools, the National Council of Higher Education, and the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The Plan was then opened up for national debate at more than 40 forums, which included members from the social, political and economic sectors of society. When the Plan was voted on in a referendum, it was approved by more than 66% of the votes (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). One of the main principles of the education system is participation. Not only does this mean participation in the education system but also in local and national decision-making about the education system (MEC, 2006).
Obligations

Obligations in terms of who is responsible for what have not been identified. The extent of the role of the Ministry of Education, teachers, administrators, and other actors necessary for the implementation of the PDE is unclear.

**Table 1. Summary of Policy Documents Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Fulfilled</th>
<th>Better but Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Not Fulfilled</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1  Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>2  Policy background</td>
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<td>3  Goals</td>
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<td>4  Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>5  Monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>6  Public opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>7  Obligations</td>
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**PDE Quality of Education Analysis**

The second framework used to analyze the PDE focused on quality education. In 2000, UNICEF surveyed existing research and came up with a definition of quality education. According to UNICEF’s definition, quality education includes:

1. Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;

2. Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;

3. Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
4. Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;

5. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000, p. 3).

Each of the five components (learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes) present in the quality education framework was used to analyze the PDE.

Quality Learners

Quality learners are in good physical and psychological health, regularly attend school, attended early childhood programs, and have supportive families and communities (UNICEF, 2000). One way that the Ministry is ensuring good physical health is through the feeding program (programa de alimentación escolar) which provides breakfast for students in EI and EGB. In 2007, the program reached 1.3 million students, and by 2013, the number had increased to 2.1 million students (UNESCO, 2015c). A National Health Education Plan was established in the PDE, which included a module for prevention of improper drug use. Additionally, sex education was institutionalized to increase knowledge on the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). A health education plan and sex education can contribute to greater physical health for students. Details on how the Ministry is addressing psychological health were not present.

In order to attend school regularly, students must first have access to enroll in school in the first place. The first three policies of the PDE focus on increasing the number of students enrolled in the education system. The Plan addresses access to education in two ways. The first is by increasing infrastructure (Policy 5) through building early education schools, MEUs, and
adding classrooms. The second is through eliminating existing barriers that might prevent students from attending school, such as the 25 USD fee, cost of textbooks, and cost of uniforms (Ministerio de Educación, 2007). During the first year of the PDE, the 25 USD fee was eliminated and textbooks were provided free of charge to first through seventh grades (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). In the 2009-2010 school year, free textbook provision was expanded for all EGB students in the subject areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies (UNESCO, 2015c). Free uniform provision began in 2007 impacting 82,997 students. The program has continued to expand and in 2013, 1,242,760 students received free uniforms (UNESCO, 2015c).

Increasing infrastructure and eliminating barriers did have an impact on attendance. Net enrollment in the ten years of EGB grew from 91.2% in 2006 to 95.6% in 2012 (UNESCO, 2015c). Breaking down the enrollment by different demographics can give even more detailed information on enrollment. When enrollment rate is broken down by income level, the population with the lowest income saw the largest increase in enrollment growing from 86.7% enrollment in EGB in 2006 to 93.7% enrollment in 2012, a seven percent increase in six years. Enrollment for high school is not as high, but improvement has still taken place. When enrollment is broken down by age, students aged 15-17 saw an enrollment increase of more than 18% (Ministerio de Educación, 2013a).

Not only has enrollment increased, but students are also staying in school longer. In 2006, the average number of years of schooling was 9.1 years, and in 2012, it rose by almost five months reaching 9.5 average years of school. Breaking these numbers down by demographics shows that whites average the longest time spent in school at 1.4 years. The indigenous population on average goes to school half as long (5.6 years). Afro-Ecuadorians average 8.5
years of school, and Montubios average 7.2 years of school (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos [INEC], 2012). This data shows that both enrollment and years in school have increased; however, information on regular attendance on a day-to-day basis was not included in the study.

The PDE makes early childhood education a priority by placing it as its first policy. Some of the goals include creating a legal framework, training personnel, and increasing participation in early education (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The number of three- and four-year-olds reached through the early education program grew from 29,813 children in 2006 to 278,654 children in 2014 (UNESCO, 2015c). While this is a significant increase, only 23% of the population of EI aged children were reached in 2012 (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013b).

The last component of quality learners is supportive families and communities. One of the principles laid out in the PDE is participation of the entire Ecuadorian population both in the development process as well as in local and national decision-making. The Ministry hopes to promote active citizen participation in an effort to increase accountability (MEC, 2006). Additionally, solidarity is one of the values of the education system. In solidarity, citizens can face problems or achieve a common goal (MEC, 2006).

**Quality Learning Environments**

Quality learning environments include quality physical, psychosocial, and service delivery elements (UNICEF, 2000). The fifth policy of the PDE focuses solely on improving physical infrastructure and equipment. In the first year alone, 73 million USD was invested in school infrastructure, which exceeded total investments over the seven previous years (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Construction of new early education schools, MEUs, and classrooms in both rural and urban areas has taken place. In addition, monies were
put towards preventative and corrective maintenance of school buildings, and provision and replacement of furniture. Adequate instruction materials and textbooks also contribute to quality learning environments. Part of the objective of the fifth policy is to provide technological resources, and as mentioned above, the Ministry supplies all students in EGB with textbooks. To ensure that physical infrastructure stays in adequate condition in the future, norms and development of standards for equipment, furniture and teaching materials in both EI and EGB were created (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007).

Psychosocial elements of a quality environment include peaceful, safe environments, teachers’ behaviors that affect safety, and effective school discipline policies (UNICEF, 2000). Part of the goal of the first policy of the PDE is to provide early education that respects the rights, diversity and national rhythm of growth and learning for children birth to age five (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Several times throughout the Plan, the idea of inclusion is mentioned. Under Policy Three, a National Plan for Education Inclusion was established. Although little detail was provided in the PDE, the Ministry of Education website has an entire section detailing Inclusive and Special Education. Violence of any form is not mentioned in the PDE; however, the Ministry of Education does address bullying on its website, and it is also addressed in the Constitution (Article 347) and LOEI (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008; Gobierno del Ecuador, 2011; Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016).

The PDE does not mention the inclusion of any specific types of service delivery such as provision of health services, nutrition supplements (other than the feeding program), counseling services, or extra-curricular activities.

Quality Content
Quality content encompasses the curriculum of schools. National goals for education should include outcome statements that translate broad goals into measurable objectives (UNICEF, 2000). Curriculum should be student-centered and include content unique to the local and national context. Literacy, numeracy, life skills, and peace education should be encompassed in the curriculum (UNICEF, 2000). Before the PDE, a standard curriculum for EI did not exist, but included in the first policy is the creation of a national early education curriculum. Curricula for EGB and bachillerato were redesigned and aligned across all three levels of schooling (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Curriculum with goals and objectives for each year and subject is available on the Ministry’s website. Literacy, numeracy, and life skills are all included in the curriculum; however, peace education is not specifically addressed. In 2010, the Ministry bought the publishing rights to national textbooks, which forced publishers to develop new materials that aligned with curriculum updates (UNESCO, 2015c). Before this time, the Ministry did not have control over the content. In addition to the Ministry having control of the content in textbooks, another way that the PDE addresses learning in the local context is through literacy teaching in native languages for all populations and nationalities in the first through third grades (Policy Four) (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Textbooks are available in Quichua, but materials are limited in other indigenous languages (UNESCO, 2015c). There is also an IBE system, which is designed to meet the cultural, linguistic, and environmental relevance of the students it serves. The IBE system meets the right to education in one’s own language which was established in the Constitution. Finally, the Ministry has seen the need to improve initial teacher training equipping teachers with more relevant content knowledge and pedagogy (Policy Seven) (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007).
Quality Processes

Quality processes are the methods and strategies that students, teachers, and administrators use to utilize the inputs (infrastructure, curriculum) available to them in order to create meaningful learning experiences (UNICEF, 2000). Having a model curriculum does little if students do not understand the language in which they are being taught or teachers do not have the content knowledge and teaching strategies to convey the information clearly. New technology is of little use if administrators have not provided support for teachers in how to use it. When students, teachers, and administrators utilize quality processes, meaningful learning experiences are more likely to take place.

Quality processes for students include having access to intervention and services for special needs, the language used at school, and relevant, student-centered active learning (UNICEF, 2000). One intervention to meet student needs was established in Policy Four. In an effort to meet the needs of students unable to finish school, alternative education methods were established for students in EGB and bachillerato (Ministerio de Educación, 2007). In addition, plans were established for inclusive education and training workshops on gifted children and communication systems for the deaf and blind were provided (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). As mentioned above, literacy teaching in native languages is outlined for students in their first through third years (Policy Four), and IBE is available through secondary school despite the fact that it is not mentioned at all in the PDE. One of the lines of action of Policy Six is a model of teaching that evolves to meet the socio-cultural and national development needs (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). This focuses on broad socio-cultural and development needs, but whether or not it takes into account individual student needs is unclear. However, it does move in the direction of keeping teaching methods relevant.
Quality processes for teachers include competence in subject matter, ongoing professional development, positive student/teacher relationships, frequent feedback to students targeted at learning needs, and positive living and working conditions (UNICEF, 2000). Policy Seven of the PDE focuses solely on teachers. It aims to improve initial teacher training, provide continuous professional development, and advance the working conditions (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The Ministry acknowledged that teacher training before 2006 was weak and outdated without a system for sustained professional development (MEC, 2006). Emphasis in the PDE on improved initial training and continuous professional development better equips teachers on current curriculum and pedagogic practices. The LOEI later established the National University of Education (Article 76) specifically to ensure training of all teachers under the same standard (Gobierno del Ecuador, 2011). Although much focus is paid to improving teacher training and professional development, little is mentioned as to whether new training supports student-centered and active learning or student/teacher relationships. Part of Policy Seven is improving teaching living and working conditions. This is done through increasing the number of teachers to match the demand by the number of students, increasing teacher salaries in accordance with the job market, and providing housing subsidies (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). The PDE projected the incorporation of 23,000 new teachers to cover teachers retiring and increased education coverage (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Teachers’ salaries increased from 396 USD in 2006 to 817 USD in 2012, more than doubling (Cevallos Estarellas, 2015), and a salary scale was established (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2012).

Finally, quality processes for supervision and support include governments that are supportive of education systems, financial resources for education systems, administrative
support and leadership, using technology to decrease disparities, and adjustment in school hours and calendars to support student learning (UNICEF, 2000). Ecuador has done much to make education a national priority. The focus on education started with the PDE, and education plays an important role in the Constitution and *Buen Vivir*. Additionally, the LOEI was created as a legal framework specifically for education. The Constitution clearly defines the responsibility of providing education as a role of the State in Article 26 and reinforces the commitment established in the PDE to increase spending on education by 0.5% of the GDP until it reaches six percent (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008; Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Ecuador is also making an effort to change the hierarchy of supervision in the education system from highly centralized to more decentralized. Provision of education and setting of the curriculum are highly centralized at the state level, yet much of the planning, such as professional development provision and teacher monitoring and support, takes place through districts and circuits on a more local level as set out in *Buen Vivir* (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). In each circuit and district, an advisor and auditor, both of which replaced supervisors, support the schools within the district (Van Damme et al., 2013). Advisors offer support to individual schools in the areas of capacity building and supporting mentor teachers. Auditors, on the other hand, assess the extent to which schools are meeting the outcomes proposed by the State and provide feedback for improvement (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). This more localized form of supervision was established to ensure that teachers and administrators receive the individual support and feedback they need to succeed. Provision of technologies and technological support is provided for in Policy Five of the PDE as part of the effort to improve physical infrastructure and equipment (Ministerio de Educación del
Ecuador, 2007). There is a lack of information on whether school hours and calendars were taken into consideration to meet the needs of students and their communities.

**Quality Outcomes**

The environment, content, and processes that students and teachers encounter in school lead to diverse outcomes. Quality outcomes result from quality environments, content, and processes and include what children know and can do, as well as the attitudes they have about themselves and society (UNICEF, 2000). Students who have participated in quality education systems have a solid foundation of knowledge and are healthy and free from violence or exploitation. They are aware of their rights and have opportunities to realize them. Finally, they are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives and able to respect diversity (UNICEF, 2000).

In order to assess what children know and can do, the PDE established the development of a national testing system. This testing system helps to evaluate student learning across the country. Ecuador also rejoined the LLECE, which is a partner of UNESCO, and administers education tests to countries within Latin America (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Ecuador first participated in these tests (SERCE) in 2006 and scored in the low category for every subject in both third and sixth grades (UNESCO, 2008). Ecuador participated again in 2013 (TERCE). This time, scores had moved to the average category in every area except sixth grade reading, where scores remained low (UNESCO, 2015b). These scores show that academic achievement has improved significantly over the course of just seven years.

Quality outcomes are more than just test scores. The Ministry also aims at providing education that respects students’ rights and diversity (Policy One). Part of the goal of Policy Two is to create citizens who are proud of their multicultural and multiethnic identity. Policy
Three adds to this stating that the goal is for students to lead a life conscious of their national identity and one which focuses on respect for human and collective rights, nature, and life. (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007).

Conclusion

Quality education begins with a quality education policy. Within that policy, components of quality education must be present. Quality learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes all must be analyzed when assessing the overall quality of a system of education. Ecuador has done much to improve education over the last ten years, and evidence of quality education and improvement is visible. There are many things that Ecuador has done to improve overall education quality, yet there are still gaps in providing quality education for all. The next chapter will discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses found during the analysis of the education policy and the quality of education within the PDE.
Chapter Five: Qualitative Discussion of Results and Limitations

Since the PDE was first approved at the end of 2006, numerous steps have been taken to improve education. The policies and goals set out in the PDE are in large part responsible for many of these changes. However, several other plans and legislation have been passed that further contribute to and support the reform such as the 2008 Constitution, Buen Vivir, and LOEI. The results and limitations will first be discussed through the two frameworks (policy analysis and quality analysis) used to better understand the PDE. The discussion will then analyze how changes in the Constitution and Buen Vivir can be better reflected in the next PDE.

Policy Analysis Discussion

The policy analysis, done using the framework proposed by Cheung et al. (2010), revealed some areas of strength as well as some areas that can be improved upon. All the information presented in the policy analysis is subject to the fact that the version of the PDE available to the public is not the official document, and thus, some of the missing components may be present in the formal policy document. In general, the Ministry of Education is quite transparent making a majority of the standards, legal documents, and even student textbooks available for download on its website. In the case of the PDE, although the original document is not posted, the copy that is available is presented in user-friendly language and format. Because this is the only copy publicly available, analysis was done using this copy.

A brief mention of background information and the state of education in Ecuador before 2006 are included, yet citing research and data would make the case for why each of the main eight policies were chosen stronger. The policies of the PDE specifically addressed some of the largest needs in education at the time, but one would not automatically make this connection. At the very minimum, each of the eight policies should be backed with research supporting why the
policy was chosen, and data of current state of that situation in Ecuador. For example, the first policy of the PDE is to universalize early education for children birth to age five. Supporting research could be stated as “Schweinhart et al. (2005) found that quality preschool contributes to intellectual and social development, school and economic success, and reduced crime in adulthood.” Following research, current data on Ecuador should be stated to show the need for the new or updated policy such as “In 2006, only 5.5% of three- and four-year-olds attended early education (UNESCO, 2015c).” Including relevant research and current country statistics would strengthen the validity of the overall plan. In addition, initial data can be easily reflected upon at the completion of the plan to see the growth or lack thereof.

The version of the PDE available from the Ministry of Education website specifically outlines goals for 2007, but does not go beyond that. The majority of these goals are quantitative and reasonable within one-year time frame. The goals outlined in the document found on the Organizacion de Estados Iberoamericanos website span the length of the Plan, are quantitative, and include a time frame for implementation. These goals guide how accomplishing each of the eight policies will be met. The goals can also serve as a checklist as to what has been accomplished and what still needs to be met. Future plans should take the time to come up with goals in a similar fashion that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

Resources fall into three categories in the PDE: financial resources, human resources, and organizational capacity. Financial resources are increased for education spending due to the eighth policy of the PDE. However, a clear estimate of where and how that money is being spent is lacking. A total budget and budget breakdown increases accountability of implementation and spending. Financial resources should be better addressed in future plans.
The mention of human resources in the PDE focuses mainly on teachers. While teachers are a vital part of any education system, there are countless other groups of people that are needed to make an education system successful. Additional actors would be needed such as students, parents, families, communities, principals, administrators, teacher trainers, construction workers, and publication companies, to name a few. While their participation may be implied, there is no mention of the role of these actors in the PDE document.

A real strength of the PDE was how it addressed, increased, and improved organizational capacities. Within the PDE, several new guiding frameworks were created such as new EI curriculum, legal framework for EI, standards for furniture, construction of a National Plan for Education Inclusion, redesigning alternative education curriculum, rejoining the LLECE and SERCE, develop national achievement tests, drafting of a new teaching model, creation of a professional development system, and formation of a new salary policy (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). These frameworks all improve organizational capacities within the education system.

No plan for monitoring and evaluation of the PDE as a whole was mentioned. This is a serious concern as significant amounts of money are being used to implement the Plan. Goals are trivial if there is no follow up to see if goals have been met. Mechanisms for evaluating student achievement and teacher and administrator performance have been established since the PDE, but these do not address the PDE as a whole. Future plans should include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, an outside body to perform the evaluation, data collection before, during, and after the policy, and clear outcome measures. When a protocol for monitoring and evaluation is present, it holds the Ministry accountable for the success or shortcomings of implementation.
The Ministry of Education provided opportunities for the public to participate in the formulation of the PDE. Two thirds of the population approved the PDE in a public vote (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents, administrators, and communities, should continue to be involved in the process of creating future plans. Construction of the PDE 2016-2025 is already under way. In September 2015, 3,000 teachers along with the Ministry of Education participated in workshops to create policies to improve and strengthen the quality of education (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015a). Parents, students, and authorities were also included in earlier discussions (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015b). Because research supports that parent and community involvement in education impact student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), continued opportunities for public participation in education should be made available.

The final section of the policy analysis is obligations. This is the only area in the analysis that received a “not fulfilled” mark. While it is perhaps assumed that the Ministry of Education will be in charge of implementing the PDE, no specifics are outlined. After the initial publishing of the PDE, different aspects have been delegated. For example, the National Education Authority was created to monitor policymaking and standard setting, and the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education was created to monitor student achievement and teacher performance (Gobierno del Ecuador, 2011). Following plans should better specify who is in charge of implementing different parts of the policies.

Overall, the PDE fulfills, at least partially, five of the six criteria for a main policy document as set out by Cheung et al. (2010). Considering Ecuador’s past in education, it is a great accomplishment that the PDE was seen through to its completion. It endured through a new constitution and a new national development plan. The PDE was a catalyst for large-scale
education reform. The first PDE can be used not only as a guide for the next education plan, but other countries looking to implement a new education reform can look to this plan for guidance. This analysis of the PDE as a policy document can further guide ministries of education in how to improve upon the various components of the PDE in their own education policies, and it can be a blueprint for the next education plan in Ecuador.

**Quality Education Analysis Discussion**

The quality analysis, done using the framework proposed by UNICEF (2000), revealed more areas of strength as well as some areas that can be improved upon in Ecuador’s education system. The five main components of the framework assert that education quality must be measured by more than achievement test scores alone. In Ecuador’s case, test scores have shown improved student performance over the past decade, but to measure the quality of education based solely on these scores would fail to acknowledge the numerous changes that took place contributing to improved scores. Ecuador’s education reform addressed each of the five components (learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes) on some level, and perhaps this is a large contributing factor to why the reform was so successful.

**Quality Learners**

Ecuador increased the number and quality of learners through expansion of educational coverage on all levels giving access to education to more students than previously had access. Not only has enrollment increased, but the greatest growth in enrollment was seen in marginalized groups such as the indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, rural, and students with disabilities. Although marginalized populations showed the most enrollment growth, they continue to have the lowest numbers of enrollment. While whites increased enrollment in EGB from 2006-2011 by 1.4%, indigenous increased enrollment by 6.6%, and Afro-Ecuadorians by
6.2% (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013a). Enrollment increases were even more dramatic in bachillerato. Compared to whites and mestizos who increased enrollment by 15%, indigenous enrollment almost doubled increasing from 24.2% enrollment in 2006 to 46.4% enrollment in 2011 (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013a).

Despite the fact that large improvements have been made, Ecuador still has a long way to go. Forty-six percent enrollment in high school is still an alarmingly low number. This number reflects net enrollment not gross enrollment. Net enrollment is the number of children enrolled who correspond to the age group that corresponds to that level of schooling. For example, data from 2014 shows 58% net enrollment for 15 year olds, yet 89% of 15 year olds attend school (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015c). This means that 31% of students may be in school but they are not in the grade appropriate for their age. This can be due to starting school late, starting and stopping attendance, or grade retention. Another ten percent are not in school.

In 2013, the Ministry gave an example based off of current statistics that of 1000 students starting grade two, only 600 of them would make it to the end of grade seven together due to the number of dropouts and retentions each year (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013a). The gap in urban and rural attendance is only two percent in EGB, but the gap grows to 12.9% for bachillerato (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015a). Although Ecuador can celebrate its improvements in enrollment, the work is not over. Focus now needs to shift to ensuring that even the most marginalized populations have access to education, students are successfully moving onto the next level, and students are completing their studies.

All these numbers focus on overall enrollment, but data on daily attendance seems to be missing. For students who are enrolled, how often are they attending? Quality learners are not just enrolled in school, but they attend school regularly. If high absence rates are an issue,
students miss large amounts of the curriculum making it difficult to move onto the next grade. One way to address retention rates would be to analyze how often students are absent from school and what is the cause of the absence. Absence rates may or may not be a significant factor in retention rates, but it is an area that needs further research.

A large area of growth under quality learners is the expansion of the early childhood education sector. Ecuador reached nine times more three- and four-year-olds in 2014 than it did in 2006 (UNESCO, 2015c). Teachers are being trained, and standards and curriculum have been established. Studies have shown that preschool, especially for children in poverty, contributes to later school success (Schweinhart et al., 2005). With only 23% of the population of three- and four-year-olds reached in 2012, there is still room for continued growth and expansion of this sector of education.

The main achievements under the quality learners component are increased enrollment across all levels of education and students are staying in school longer. With these great achievements come new areas of focus. Now that EGB enrollment has reached more than 96%, attention should focus on improving enrollment rates in EI and bachillerato. Enrollment rates in these two areas remain significantly low. The two main reasons for not attending bachillerato are economic and work (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013b). Many of the initiatives to decrease barriers of access to education, such as free textbooks and uniforms, only impacted students in EGB (UNESCO, 2015c). More must be done to address economic barriers for students wanting to attend bachillerato. Special attention needs to be given to rural, indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian populations as their enrollment and years of schooling are noticeably lower than the national average.
Quality Learning Environments

Quality learning environments encompass the physical, psychosocial, and service delivery elements. Large amounts of money were invested into new school infrastructure and improving old infrastructure. Only 0.4% of students cited lack of an accessible school was a reason for not attending *bachillerato* (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013a). To ensure that school buildings, equipment, and supplies remain in adequate condition, a yearly portion of the budget needs to continue to be invested for general repair, upkeep, and updating of infrastructure. What is more, 212 MEU have still yet to be constructed, so infrastructure will continue to improve in the near future (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2015d).

In addition to the physical environment, quality education systems need quality psychosocial environments, too. Ideas of broad psychosocial concepts are present in the PDE such as diversity, respect of rights, and inclusion, but few concrete examples of providing a quality psychosocial environment are mentioned (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). One of the only concrete examples is a National Plan for Education Inclusion that was established in 2006 (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Singh (2013) found that there had been a 50% increase in the number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools between 2007 and 2012, but many still did not have access due to lack of resources. In the most recent *Buen Vivir*, objective two aims to “foster social and territorial equity, cohesion, inclusion and equality in diversity” (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 54). Policy 2.2 goes on to guarantee true equality in access to quality education for people requiring special consideration (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). The Ministry of Education website now has an entire section on Inclusive Education which includes laws and national policies on inclusive education along with an array of other resources and information,
but concrete data is lacking on how many students are being reached, the extent of implementation, or the quality of services.

Large investment in infrastructure and the creation of an inclusive education plan are two of the biggest achievements in improving quality environments in the PDE. Racial discrimination and violence are two factors still present in the Ecuadorian education system, which negatively impact the psychosocial environment and have yet to be adequately addressed. Novo & Torre (2010) argue that racial discrimination is still a problem in Ecuadorian schools today, and a study done by Román and Murillo (2011) found that 47% of sixth grade students had been robbed by a peer, 28% had been insulted or threatened, 21% had been physically abused, and 56% had witnessed an episode of violence. Future plans need to continue supporting and providing resources for inclusive education as well as address school safety.

**Quality Content**

Quality content has been addressed at all levels of education in the PDE. Curriculum was created for EI and redesigned for both EGB and bachillerato. The Ministry has taken control of content in textbooks, and an effort has been made to provide materials in Quichua. A system of IBE exists, but more attention needs to be paid to providing better-trained teachers, sufficient textbooks, and greater access. All of these actions contribute to making content more relevant to students. Measuring the quality of content present in the curriculum and textbooks was outside the scope of this case study. Further research is needed to determine the extent that these changes have contributed to quality content. Achieving a sector wide redesign of curriculum is a great achievement of the PDE. Future plans should seek to ensure that the curriculum stays relevant and student-centered.
Quality Processes

Quality processes encompass everything that students, teachers, and administrators do to create meaningful learning experiences. Processes for students included access to alternative education, instruction in their own language, inclusive education systems. While these are all mentioned in the PDE, little research is available to measure the extent of implementation. For teachers, the PDE put great emphasis on improving initial teacher training and increasing ongoing professional development. Teacher living conditions were also improved through increased salaries and housing provision (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Administrative processes were improved through restructuring the administrative management and increasing the education budget. Although in some ways the Ecuadorian education system is centralized, administrative management and teacher support has been reorganized so that it can meet the needs on a more localized level (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). The education budget has more than doubled since 2006 allowing for the implementation of many of the changes (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013b).

One of the greatest achievements of the whole education reform has been the priority that education has been given on a national level by the government. The PDE is not the only driving force in education reform; the Constitution and Buen Vivir support and have even added to what the original PDE outlined. Education reform went beyond a goal of the Ministry of Education to encompass the entire Ecuadorian government. Education needs to remain a priority over the next ten years. The budget should continue to be increased until it meets the original goal of 6% of the GDP, and efforts must be made to sustain that percent of spending. Teachers also need to remain a priority.
Quality Outcomes

The changes and improvements that Ecuador has made in learners, environment, content, and processes have improved the quality of outcomes. The most visible outcome is the improvement in regional test scores. Scores in each category and level improved by more than 50 points, and Ecuador’s ranking compared to other countries in Latin America improved (UNESCO, 2014). No other country saw this drastic improvement. Data measuring quality outcomes outside of test scores was not available. One way to measure the quality outcomes of student attitudes about themselves and society would be to conduct student, teacher, and parent surveys. This may be helpful information in giving a more holistic view of quality outcomes.

Overall, the PDE addressed each factor of quality education (learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes) on some level. The Constitution, Buen Vivir, and LOEI additionally improved upon what was set out in the PDE. Although each area in quality education was addressed, the work is not complete. There continue to be gaps in quality in every level of education. This analysis points out many positive actions that have been taken to improve the quality of education in Ecuador, and it also highlights what Ecuador can do in the next ten years to continue on a path of education excellence.

Aligning the PDE with New Conceptions of Development

The PDE was approved in 2006, but since that time, Ecuador has adopted a new constitution and cycled through three national development plans. These documents have reconceptualized Ecuador’s stance on development to align more with the human development and sustainable development theories breaking from the old neoliberal stance on development. It was first in the Constitution, and later reaffirmed by the Buen Vivir, that the idea of sumak kawsay/good living became a national priority. Buen Vivir (2013) states:
Good Living questions the dominant pattern of hegemonic accumulation, i.e., neoliberal models of production, growth and distribution. We propose a transition toward a society in which life is the supreme asset... It is based on the pursuit of the common good and individual happiness, rather than excessive accumulation and consumption. (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013, p. 22)

Like the human development theory, the Constitution and Buen Vivir give priority to investing in generating capacities and narrowing social gaps. In order to create capacities from birth, an educational revolution is needed (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013).

Because the original PDE preceded the Constitution and Buen Vivir, it was not built on the foundational beliefs of sumak kawsay, yet it does not contradict them either. Some of the concepts are present, but a few adjustments need to be made to align future education plans with this newly adapted concept of development. In 2011, a new legal framework for education came into effect (LOEI). This legal framework was able to cover some of the gaps between the PDE and the concept of sumak kawsay. While education is only one part of national development, it does play a pivotal role, and thus, priorities of sumak kawsay should be reflected in the priorities of the education plan of Ecuador. In 2012, the Ministry of Education published a document that detailed 20 ruptures in reconfiguring the education system to ensure quality learning for all Ecuadorians (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2012). The ruptures were broken into four groups: those that conceptualize education as a right of individuals, those that point to a change in structure of the education system, those that seek to overcome the old paradigms of educational quality and equity, and those that contribute to the revalorization of the teaching profession (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2012). A complete list of the 20 ruptures can be found in Appendix C.
Some of these ruptures highlight changes in education that have taken place since the PDE, that were not initially part of the PDE. Some of these major changes include the new educational management model, creation of the National University of Education, and establishment of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation. These establishments filled needed gaps in the education sector and are currently contributing to a more effective education system, but still gaps remain.

Other ruptures highlight areas that may be ideals of the education reform, but have yet to be realized in practice. Some of these remaining needs include strengthening IBE, overcoming racism and discrimination, and changing traditional school practices to student-centered practices. The following paragraphs will highlight how filling these gaps will not only contribute to a more effective education system, but it will also bring the education system into practices that are in line with sumak kawsay.

The first shortcoming to be discussed is IBE and interculturalism for all students. The Constitution claims Ecuador is a plurinational and intercultural country in which all people are equal. It also guarantees the right for persons to learn in their own language and cultural environment (Article 29) (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador del Ecuador, 2008). Even though IBE education predated the PDE, it is not mentioned in the PDE. This could be due to the fact that the IBE system was not under full Ministry control until 2009 (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). However, it is mentioned in the 20 ruptures. Lopez (2009) defines interculturalism as education “rooted in one’s own culture, language, values, worldview, and system of knowledge but which at the same time is receptive, open to and appreciative of other knowledge, values, cultures, and languages” (p. 9). Whether in the IBE system or the traditional one, a focus on interculturalism should be present. The goal of IBE is not to exclusively learn
the indigenous language and culture thus further segregating the indigenous, but also to learn the majority language so that students are still able to fully participate in society gaining better access to higher education, economic opportunities, and the ability to participate in politics and society as a whole (Lopez, 2009). IBE provides indigenous students the opportunity to participate fully in both their local culture and the mainstream society.

The goal of IBE aligns with the idea of building capacities of individuals. It also promotes social equity, social participation, and cultural diversity, three of the six dimensions laid out in *Buen Vivir* in the process of achieving good living. In adding a focus on interculturalism, for all students, whether in IBE or not, future education plans will better echo the concepts outlined in *sumak kawsay*. Resources and funding need to be devoted to better incorporate interculturalism into the education system in the future.

A second need that remains to be addressed sufficiently is equality in education. Lack of equality shows up in two main forms: access and discrimination. Access and enrollment have exceeded 96% in EGB, but the same cannot be said for EI or *bahillerato*. Even in EGB, 96% is net enrollment, but when broken down by demographics, the number for historically marginalized groups drops. The students who are missing out on this access the most are those from marginalized groups such as the rural, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorians, and students with disabilities. Attaining social equality is one of the six dimensions in achieving *sumak kawsay* (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013). Now that EGB is nearly universal, Ecuador can focus efforts on decreasing barriers for students to be able to attend *bachiellerato*, expanding coverage for EI, and continuing to focus on reaching the last four percent who still are not enrolled in EGB.
Discrimination is also an area that needs to be addressed. Until 1979, indigenous people had very limited educational opportunities (Torre, 2000). Although there are no laws banning them from attending, indigenous students still have the lowest enrollment numbers by at least 10% in bachillerato (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013b). Johnson (2011), a former teacher at a private school recalls, “During my time teaching at the school, there was not a single black student among the 2,000 enrolled, and only one indigenous student” (p. 46). She goes on to tell that the indigenous student only lasted a year because those who are different struggled to fit in with their peers. Discrimination may have to do with race, income, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. One way that discrimination is acted out is through violence. A recent study by Román and Murillo (2011) found that more than half of students had witnessed an episode of violence and 20-50% had experienced violence of some kind. Part of Article 347 gives responsibility to the State to eliminate all forms of violence in the education system and to safeguard the bodily, psychological and sexual integrity of students (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador del Ecuador, 2008). Although later included in the Constitution and LOEI, violence and discrimination are not addressed in the original PDE. This is an issue that should be included in future plans so that all students are guaranteed respect for human rights.

A final need that should be addressed in order to bring the PDE in better alignment with sumak kawsay is changing traditional school practices to student-centered practices. Instead of focusing on just knowledge acquisition, a focus on increasing capabilities of the whole child should be emphasized. In the PDE, there was a focus both on quality content and better equipping teachers. Although there have been many positive changes, there is still room for growth. In his report to the UN, Singh (2013) reported that low-quality education is still a challenge that faces the education system in Ecuador. He attributed part of the problem to lack
of qualification and motivation of teachers. Although Policy Seven focused on improving
teacher qualifications and working conditions, a continued focus needs to remain. Initial teacher
training and professional development need to focus on equipping teachers with both content
knowledge and appropriate pedagogical strategies that make learning student-centered and
active. Additionally, content needs to be continually evaluated to ensure it is relevant and
meeting students’ learning needs. Further plans should continue to keep teachers and relevant
content a priority in education.

Ecuador has made significant progress over the past ten years in improving education due
to the large-scale reform. Sizeable growth has been achieved in many areas. The analysis of the
PDE as a policy and for quality education brings up some strengths and gaps in the reform.
Analyzing where the PDE needs to fill gaps due to a switch in the concept of development for
Ecuador also shows where future improvements can be made. The final chapter will summarize
the major accomplishments of the reform and offer some recommendations for further
improvement.
Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

After taking an in-depth analysis of the education reform in Ecuador over the past ten years, there are many lessons to be learned. One of the main lessons is that vast national reform can be accomplished in a short amount of time. Not only did the reform take place but positive results can already be seen. Some actions taken in the reform, like removing financial barriers to education, saw immediate results. Other actions, such as improved teacher training and professional development, will take time to see the full effect. While some change began immediately in 2006, other parts of the reform have only recently been implemented, so continued positive results can be expected. This final chapter will summarize the achievements and remaining gaps of the reform. It will close by offering some recommendations and areas for further research.

Achievements

The education reform in Ecuador could not have been as successful if the government had not given education priority. The work of the Ministry of Education and the PDE alone would likely have been insufficient. However, after the PDE, education was named a key strategy to national development (Article 27) and the responsibility of the State (Article 26) in the new Constitution (Asemblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). A continued focus on education was reiterated in Buen Vivir both in 2009 and again in 2013, and LOEI gave a legal framework to many of the education policies that had previously been outlined. This commitment to education was not only given in word, but also in a commitment to increased funding which was detailed both in the PDE and Buen Vivir (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007; National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2013).
Another significant achievement is the increase in access to education. An increase in enrollment in education was seen in all three pre-university levels (EI, EGB, and bachillerato). Economic barriers that may have been preventing the poorest students from attending EGB, such as the voluntary enrollment fee and cost of textbooks and uniforms, have been eliminated (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). New teachers and classrooms were also added to expand access. Although EI is not compulsory, the government has acknowledged the importance of early childhood education and has taken steps to make it available to all students. As more and more students have access to and are able to complete EGB, they are able to continue on and attend bachillerato. Due to these efforts, enrollment grew across all three levels of education with the greatest increase in enrollment seen by historically marginalized groups (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013a).

A final significant achievement to be mentioned is the improvement in the teaching profession. Teachers were given priority in many ways. First initial teacher training was improved and a National University of Education was established (Gobierno del Ecuador, 2011; Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). This better prepares all new teachers entering the teaching profession. Teacher salaries were also significantly increased making the teaching profession more attractive to potential teachers and providing a decent living wage to those who are already in the profession. In addition to initial teacher training, ongoing professional development was improved (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2007). Ongoing professional development allows teachers to stay relevant with current research and trends in education. When new curriculum, standards, or technology are introduced, professional development will help provide the teachers resources in how to most effectively utilize them.
Remaining Gaps

Despite the large strides that Ecuador has made in its education system, the work is not over yet. Two large areas of concern remain: reaching the most marginalized populations (indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, rural, those with disabilities), and improving the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place. Although the largest enrollment increases were seen for the rural, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorians, and students with disabilities, those remain the demographics with the lowest enrollment numbers. With net enrollment surpassing 96% in EGB, Ecuador must be careful not to think their work is done in providing access to education for all students. As the focus shifts from EGB enrollment to EI and bachillerato enrollment, specific strategies must be employed to ensure that all students have equal access to the education provided. Perhaps one way to better serve the indigenous students is a greater focus on IBE.

The second broad remaining gap to be discussed is a continued lack on quality teaching and learning. Increased enrollment does not translate to increased learning. Even increased test scores are only a partial depiction of student learning. Ecuador’s emphasis on sumak kawsay as their model for development has implications in the education system, too. Instead of a neoliberal idea of development that places the focus of education solely on increasing human capital for economic gain, sumak kawsay focuses on developing the capabilities and increasing freedoms of the whole person. The education system of Ecuador must continue to shift its old way of thinking to a mindset that equips the whole child to participate and contribute to society fully, not just economically but socially, politically, and culturally as well. There has been a lack of fostering a safe psychosocial environment in the classroom. Ecuador has in place a way to
assess through standardized tests, but it needs to find a way to evaluate the other aspects of education.

**Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of the PDE as a policy document and as providing quality education, a summary of the recommendations follows. Some of the main recommendations for improving the PDE as a policy are including a more detailed budget, citing research or rationale for changes, monitoring and evaluation before, during, and after implementation, and more clearly outlining who is responsible for implementing each part of the policy. These changes will make the policy stronger and more clear to both implement and evaluate. Future policies should follow the example of the PDE in being accessible to the public, having clear and measurable goals, and creating public opportunities for participation.

Throughout the reform, Ecuador has focused on holistic change in improving the quality of education instead of simply focusing on student outcomes. While Ecuador addressed each of the components of quality education (learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes), there are still areas for improvement. To improve the quality of learners and environments, psychological health and psychosocial elements of a quality environment should be addressed. This also will help align education with the ideals put forward in *sumak kawsay*. To improve quality content, materials should be made available in more indigenous languages to meet the needs of indigenous students who do not speak Quichua or Spanish as their first language. To improve quality processes, interventions should be made available to all students with special needs, all learning should be student-centered, and support from management should be accessible. Finally, to improve quality outcomes, assessment should be expanded from just what
students know to a more holistic evaluation of what students know, can do, and the attitudes they hold about themselves and the society in which they live.

Further Research

Throughout this study, a few areas were identified that needed further research. Some of the main areas include daily attendance, quality of curriculum and textbooks, implementation of inclusive education, and teaching strategies in the classroom. Although overall enrollment has increased, this does not tell us how often students are actually in school. Students need to attend school regularly in order to enjoy the full benefits that education has to offer. Frequently missing school increases the likelihood of grade retention. Future research should include reasons for missing school. Perhaps the school calendar or school hours conflict with home or community life and priorities such as religious holidays or harvest season. Research in attendance could help to improve overall quality of education provided to all students.

During the past education reform, curriculum was updated and the Ministry took control of publishing textbooks. However, new does not necessarily equate to quality. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of the new curriculum and textbooks. Are there gaps in the content? Is there bias? Is it student and teacher friendly? Do the curriculum and textbooks allow for active learning or do they focus on rote memorization? Does the curriculum leave room for the incorporation of local histories, culture, and knowledge? Although updating the curriculum is the first step, continued research is needed to ensure that the new materials are providing quality learning.

Special education is relatively new in Ecuador. There was some mention of inclusive education in the PDE, and Article 47 of the LOEI states that all children should be schooled whether they have a disability or not (Gobierno del Ecuador, 2011). In 2012, new curriculum for
students with severe disabilities was published, and 171 schools piloted a new model for inclusive education (Cevallos Estarellas & Bramwell, 2015). Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of the new model and curriculum. Additionally, access needs to be expanded beyond a small percentage of schools, so all schools are capable to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Despite the progress that can be seen in improving the teaching profession, it takes time and continued training to make the changes a reality. Further research is needed to see if the changes that have taken place in teacher training and professional development are a reality in the classroom. Often times it is easier to be taught the way that you were taught instead of implementing strategies that you have only heard about but not experienced in an actual classroom setting. Additionally, it can take many times of hearing or receiving training in a certain strategy before a teacher actually feels comfortable implementing it. If research finds a lack of implementation present, then one must analyze why the new strategies are not being implemented. Is it a lack of support? A lack of insufficient time, training, or materials? The vast amount of time and money that has gone into improving the teaching profession would be a waste if change has not been witnessed in the classroom.

**Conclusion**

Ecuador should be proud of the extensive education reform that took place between 2006-2015. An analysis of the complete reform shows that much was accomplished in a short amount of time. Money was invested, and results can be seen; however, the work is far from complete. Although Ecuador’s education reform can serve as a model for other countries looking to improve their own education system, recognizing that the reform took place in a specific political, cultural, social, and economic context is important. If Ecuador continues to
place a high priority on education and funding for education, it can continue to improve education quality and equality for the next generations to come.
References


UNESCO. (2013). Las politicas educativas de America Latina y el Caribe. Santiago, Chile: Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (LLECE).


UNESCO. (2015b). Resume ejecutivo informe de resultados TERCE. Santiago, Chile: UNESCO.


## Appendix A: Evaluation Criteria for Policy Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Criteria for Policy Documents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy document is accessible (hard copy and online)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Policy background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scientific grounds of the policy are established</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goals are drawn from a conclusive review of literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>The source of policy is explicit</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Authority (persons, books, articles, or other sources of information)</td>
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<td>b. Quantitative or qualitative analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Deduction (premises that have been established from authority)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy encompasses some set of feasible alternatives</td>
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<td>3. Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goals/objectives are explicitly stated</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goals are concrete enough to be evaluated later</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goals are clear in intent and in the mechanism with which to achieve the desired goals, yet does not attempt to prescribe what the change must be</td>
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<tr>
<td>The action centers on improving the education of the population</td>
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<td>The outcomes of the goals are clearly stated</td>
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<td>4. Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial resources are addressed (e.g., estimated financial resources and their cost)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human resources are addressed</td>
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<td>Organizational capacity is addressed</td>
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<td>5. Monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy indicated a monitoring and evaluation mechanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy nominated a committee or independent body to perform the evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>The outcome measures are identified for each objective/goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>The data collected for evaluation was collected before, during, and after the introduction of the new policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up takes place after a sufficient period to allow the effects of policy change to become evident</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria for evaluation are adequate or clear</td>
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<td>6. Public opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple stakeholders are involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary concern of stakeholders and acknowledged to obtain long-term support</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The obligations of various implementations are specified – who has to do what</td>
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<tr>
<td>The action is part of educational intuitions’ existing duties</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Cheung, Mirzaei, and Leeder (2010) and Ellahi and Zaka (2015)
Appendix B: A System for Quality Education

UNICEF 2000, Defining Quality in Education
Appendix C: 20 Ruptures to the Educational Status Quo

A. Contributions to the reconceptualization of education as a right of individuals and communities:
   1. Seeing education as a public service, as part of Good Living
   2. Legal prohibition of the suspension of the activities of the educational service
   3. Guarantee free, universal and secular public education
   4. Protection of the rights of students in private schools and fiscomisionales
   5. Promotion of active participation of the educational community and families in the educational processes
   6. Economic resources for the education sector are guaranteed.
   7. Ensures schooling for students in vulnerable situations

B. A profound change in the structure of the national education system
   8. Reinstate the role of the State on the national education system
   9. Organization of a new educational management model to bring services nearer to citizens and provide complete and relevant educational services in each educational circuit
   10. Encourage citizens’ participation in decision-making processes of educational management, as well as in processes of monitoring and accountability
   11. Strengthen interculutural bilingual education to ensure an educational service that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the nationalities and indigenous people

C. Strive to transcend the old paradigm of quality education and equal opportunities, to guarantee better learning for students
   12. Reverse the traditional dynamic of improving the quality of education, to ensure that the schools and actors in system themselves become the main agents of change
   13. Seeks to overcome racism, discrimination and exclusion, through mainstreaming of interculturalism in the entire education system
   14. Introduce significant changes to some traditional school practices
   15. Allow all student access to the same educational opportunities through the Unified General Baccalaureate
   16. Strengthen the national system for education assessment with the creation of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation

D. Revalorization of the teaching profession
   17. Reframe the public teaching career so that the teacher develops as an education professional
   18. Aim at excellence in teachers with a truly meritocratic salary scale that ensures fair and decent pay
   19. Ensures the selection of the best teachers with opposed merit rigorous and transparent competitions based on merits and competences
   20. Creation of the National University of Education (UNAE) to contribute to the initial training of teachers and other education professionals