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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
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**Master's Thesis**

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# **The effects of the structural inequalities in the tertiary educational system in the rural area in Ecuador.**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defense: 2024

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. I hereby declare that the thesis has not been used to obtain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree with this work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 29th of July 2024

Veronica Armendariz

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**Abstract:**

The inequality of education keeps being a challenge for the Ecuadorian government and for the teenagers who live in the rural areas. While the government has made efforts to improve the infrastructure and quality of teachers and universities, poverty and the lack of financial support diminish the chances of improvement. With the help of the social marginalization theory this research will explain why social and economic conditions can discriminate and exclude teenagers from getting proper education. By presenting the main challenges that the educational system of Ecuador has, this thesis intends to prove that social marginalization can make education unequal for the Ecuadorians. It concludes that when there is discrimination and a lack of economic resources, the chance of an Ecuadorian getting into university is very low. It also presumes that the governments have not tried to improve the quality of education and making it more accessible.

**Keywords:** Education, inequality, social marginalization, Ecuador.

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### **List of abbreviations**

- (ECLAC)-Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- (CONESUP)-National Council of Higher Education
- (OLHE)-Organic Law on Higher Education
- (SENESCYT)-The National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation
- (ESPOCH)- Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo
- (UAN) - Admission and Leveling Unit
- (HEC)-the Higher Education Council
- (ESPOL)- Polytechnic School of the Litoral
- (NEU)-National Educators Union
- (SIIES)-SECRETARIAT FOR RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
- INEC (National institute of statistics and census)

## **Introduction**

This thesis will target the field of education policy. The inequality in education in Ecuador is a problem because many students are left with no education and their job opportunities and ability to perform well are reduced. Also, some talented students are left without the chance of getting their knowledge in a higher education institution.

Many factors influence the quality of education such as dropouts and illiteracy problems in Ecuador. The restricted access to education makes teenagers from rural areas remain in poverty and are unable to develop themselves professionally. Many challenges characterize this inequality such as lack of infrastructure, the lack of trained teachers, and aligned curricula that are aligned with the rural context, with the main fields in which the labor market is focused.

This thesis will emphasize the factors and context that make education unequal. The measures taken by the government and a current description of what is the situation of the establishments, students, and teachers. With the help of a theory about social marginalization which will explain the connection between inequality and education in terms of structural disadvantages. Social marginalization intersects with other resources such as the lack of services and goods that are part of social marginalization.

The educational system will be explained on how it is composed and the reasons for the inequality in education will be exposed with the use of statistics and other document recompilation from other sources, along with the data given by the interviews done to experts in the educational system of Ecuador.

The following objectives will be exposed to develop an insight into what this thesis will explain. The main goal of this thesis is to gain insight into the factors, causes, consequences, and the theory that is related to the inequality of tertiary education in the rural area in Ecuador and develop policy recommendations according to the problem mentioned below. The benefits

of this work are that there is a clear explanation of the inequality of education in Ecuador and that there has been qualitative and quantitative research done to gather data and evidence about the problem proposed for this thesis.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Objectives and research questions**

The main goal of this thesis is to discover the factors that damage the quality of tertiary education in rural areas in Ecuador. The sub-goals will be to gather updated data about the educational system and to map the current situation of educational inequality in Ecuador.

As for the objectives I will:

- Identify the causes of educational inequality in Ecuador.
- Propose concrete changes to decrease educational inequality.
- To map the educational public policies that the previous governments have done in the last years to reduce inequality in education.

I started 3 research questions:

- What are the key factors influencing the low participation of students in tertiary education?
- In which aspects the last two governmental changes affected the quality of the tertiary educational system in Ecuador?
- How does the political and economic management of the Ecuadorian government relate to the social marginalization theory?



## Chapter 2

### **Contemporary challenges of the Ecuadorian educational system.**

There is a low participation of students in the rural areas and the access to tertiary education is poor. This is due to a geographical barrier that deters students from pursuing tertiary education due to the associated costs and inconvenience. Additionally, the opportunity cost of attending college, including foregone income from employment, may outweigh the perceived benefits of education for some families. In rural areas, there is limited information and awareness about the benefits of tertiary education and available opportunities for higher learning. Rural areas often have fewer job opportunities compared to urban areas, leading some individuals to prioritize entering the workforce immediately after completing secondary education rather than pursuing tertiary education. The perceived lack of demand for higher education graduates in rural areas may further discourage participation in tertiary education (Diaz et al, 2017)

Ecuador is where we find the highest poverty rates in the rural youth group at 63.6%. Looking at years of schooling in Ecuador, we find that rural youth in Ecuador average 9.8 years of schooling, while urban youth average 12.9 years. In Ecuador, unfortunately, there is no specific information on the branches of work in which rural youth are inserted, so the professional figures offered by the technical baccalaureate are taken as a reference, given that it has a priority presence in rural areas. Among them, "Agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishing" (21%), "Wholesale and retail trade" (20%) and "Others" (20%) stand out as branches of employment. In Ecuador, figures on those who neither work nor study are scarce; however, the Ecuadorian Institution of Statistics and Census states that by 2022, 18,5% of the youth, between 15 and 24 years don't study or work.

The cause is the lack of financial resources in most cases. In the case of women, the reasons for not studying or working are that they must stay home to do the housework or take care of their kids and grandparents. This group of people is also forced to migrate to other countries or in other cases join drug trafficking (Orozco,2022) Regarding the group of young people between 15 and 17 years of age, it is noteworthy that men have similar percentages in urban

and rural areas (8.3% vs. 8.8%). However, more young women are in this situation, reaching 24.4% in rural areas and 15% in urban areas (Diaz et al,2017).

## 2.1 Illiteracy

According to the data of the OECD in terms of reading and numeracy, adult Ecuadorians fare far worse than the OECD average. Their performance is comparable to that of other survey-taking Latin American nations. Additionally, the percentage of individuals in tech-rich workplaces who excel at problem-solving is lower than the OECD average (OECD,2019).

Ecuador has a higher percentage of low-performing adults than the OECD average when it comes to reading, numeracy, and problem-solving in technologically advanced surroundings. The difference in reading and numeracy skills between the adults who perform at the top and bottom of the OECD is greater in Ecuador than it is in other OECD nations. The reading and numeracy performance gaps between adults with high and low levels of education are less than Ecuador's OECD average (OECD,2019).

According to data from the Ministry of Education, the illiteracy rate for 2004 was 9.3% (5.1% urban, 18.5% rural), for 2007 it was 7.9% (4% urban, 16.3% rural), for 2010 it was 8.1% (4.3% urban, 16.2% rural) of the total population of Ecuador. For the year 2013, the illiteracy rate at the country level was 6.7%, which disaggregated at the urban level means 3.9% and at the rural level 12.9%(Calderon,2015)

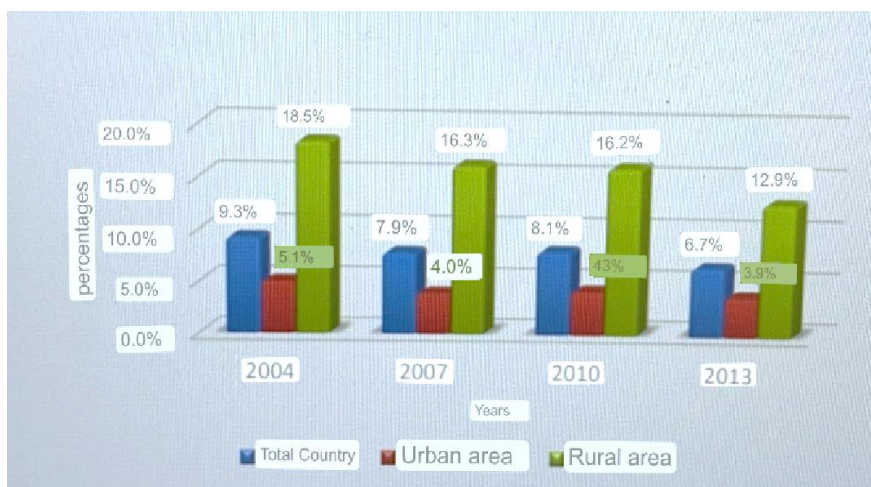


Figure 1. Illiteracy Rates in rural areas.2015.

Source: Calderon,2015.

## 2.2. School dropout

School dropout is measured by the percentage of students who drop out of a grade or year of school before completing a grade or school year before finishing it. Lack of financial resources, followed by labor market insertion, labor market resources, and thirdly, a lack of enthusiasm in education, are the biggest barriers to attending school. According to information from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for the year 2011, Ecuador's population between the ages of 15 and 24 spent an average of 10.8 years in urban regions and 8.7 years in rural areas studying. The issues are described here to put the policy changes being made in rural education into perspective. The country's programs and initiatives are being used to implement its policies, as well as what is still missing and tasks, as well as what still must be completed.

<b>Reasons of no attendance year 2010</b>	<b>Total national</b>	<b>By gender</b>	<b>Colum n1</b>	<b>By geographical area</b>	<b>Colum n2</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
lack of economic resources	40,88	39,6	42,42	33,02	46,75
Age	0,77	0,72	0,83	0,29	1,12
Not interested in studying	12,46	15,14	9,24	13,84	11,42
lack of place	3,33	3,15	3,55	5,02	2,07
Work	18,94	24,72	12,01	20,78	17,56

Sickness of disability	7,67	9,15	5,91	9,49	6,82
No educational establishments	0,7	0,6	0,83	0,7	1,18
School failure	3,38	3,91	2,73	3,19	3,52
Household chores	7,26	0,33	15,57	8,68	6,2
Family doesn't let the student study	1,01	0,6	1,52	0,63	1,29
Finished studies	1,33	1,48	1,14	2,13	0,72
Pregnancy	1,75	0	3,84	2,1	1,36
Fear of teachers	0,52	0,61	0,42	0,58	0,49
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 2. School Dropout Disaggregated by Gender and Geographic Area.2015

Source: Ministry of education,2015

## **Chapter 3**

### **Ecuadorian education system**

#### **3.1 Description of the educational system**

The Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, promulgated in August 1998, and the Higher Education Law of May 2000, are the norms that define higher education in Ecuador: The National System of Higher Education is made up of universities and polytechnic schools, created by law; and, by higher technical and technological institutes, created by the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). The mission of the institutions of the Ecuadorian National System of Higher Education is the search for truth, the development of the universal and ancestral Ecuadorian cultures, science, and technology, through teaching, research, and the link with the community (Senescyt, 2021).

The institutions of the Ecuadorian National System of Higher Education are essentially pluralistic, open to all currents and forms of universal thought exposed scientifically. They direct their activity to the integral formation of human beings to contribute to the development of the country and the achievement of social justice, to the strengthening of the Ecuadorian identity and to the development of the country, the affirmation of democracy, peace, human rights, Latin American integration and the defense and protection of the environment (Senescyt,2021).

Higher education institutions are communities of authorities, academic staff, students, employees, and workers, and universities and polytechnic schools are non-profit legal entities. The Political Constitution of the Republic guarantees the autonomy of the universities and polytechnic schools, but they are subject to the control mechanisms established by the Constitution and the law. They have the responsibility to be accountable to society for the proper use of their autonomy and the fulfillment of their mission, goals and objectives.

Education in universities, polytechnic schools, and public technical and technological institutes of higher education is secular and financed by the State (Senescyt,2021).

In Ecuador, higher education is regulated by the Organic Law on Higher Education (OLHE), enacted in 2010. The National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (SENESCYT) is the governing body for public policy on higher education. The State recognizes the academic, financial, administrative, and organizational autonomy of polytechnic schools and universities. It guarantees a budget allocation for the financing of public institutions of higher education. The higher education service is made up of technical or technological institutes and universities. Higher technical or technological education is oriented to the development of skills and abilities that allow students to enhance their know-how. Third-level education - bachelor's degrees, professional university degrees, and polytechnic degrees - is oriented to basic training in a discipline or to training for the exercise of a profession. Fourth-level education - specializations, master's degrees, and doctorates - is oriented towards advanced professional training or scientific and research specialization.

### **3.2 Enrollment**

University and polytechnic enrollment grew cumulatively between 2015 and 2018 by 12.3% percentage points from 563,030 enrollment records in 2015 to 632,541 in 2018. For the year in enrollment records 53% corresponded to females while 47% was represented by males out of a total of 563,030 records (Senescyt,2021).

As we can visualize in graph 3, these are distributed on average, by ethnicity as follows: I) Afro-Ecuadorians are 4%; II) Indigenous 4%; and III) 7% Montubio. Most of the population is mestizo with 79%; there is also 2% of the population that recognizes itself as white and 4% of the population that chooses the other option. In this graph, we can visualize that the percentage of mestizos that join tertiary education is the highest while the other ethnicities don't make it to 50%. This shows that there is discrimination and exclusion from the educational system for other ethnicities. Actions have been generated to a public policy that tends to the inclusion of people belonging to peoples and nationalities. (Senescyt,2021).

Graph 9: Applicants who have accepted a quota by ethnicity 2020-2021



Source: SAES administrative records, 2021

Prepared by: SAES, 2021

Note: Ethnicity was obtained from the base of registered and migrated people from previous periods

Figure 3. Source: SAES administrative records, 2021

Prepared by: SAES, 2021

### 3.3 Scholarships and programs

In this regard, the establishment of scholarship programs serves as a mechanism for efficient access to high-quality higher education, the removal of social and economic obstacles, and the facilitation of social mobility. It becomes a crucial component in the accomplishment of these goals. Thus, from 2011 to 2019, scholarship schemes were put into place through which a total of 40,631 scholarships were given out for third- and fourth-level training, economic assistance, and study abroad. Since 2011, the components of these various programs have been considered in the project to standardize the criterion for awarding scholarships within the parameters of the current public policy. The scholarships contemplated in this project are open to the public, the selection of awardees is based on criteria of academic excellence, relevance, progressiveness, and institutional excellence (Calderon, 2015).

A general examination of the operations of the former grant-making organizations, Science and Technology, as previously described. In the years 1995 to 2006, there was a lack of emphasis placed on education as a pillar of growth, as evidenced by the fact that, in those 13 years, only 380 scholarships were given out. It is significant to mention that from 2011 to 2019, the Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation funded 1,474 doctorate scholarships and awarded 5,368 scholarships to students pursuing master's degree programs (Calderon,2015).

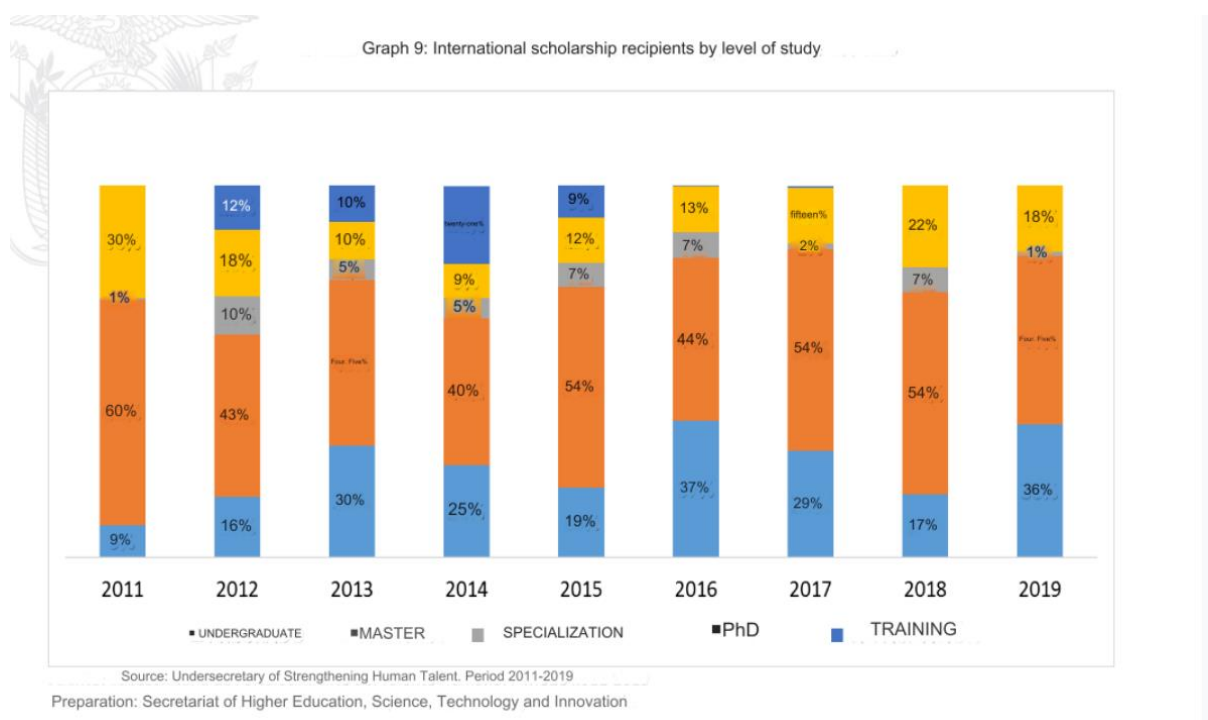


Figure 4. Percentage of scholarship recipients.2015.

Made by the Ministry of Education

The Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, however, reports that a total of 19,541 national scholarship holders with national studies are registered when the graph of national scholarship holders from 2012 to 2019 is examined. These individuals are distributed among training (2,075), third level (bachelor's degree, technical and technological - 17,162), master's degrees (190), doctorates (12), and medical specialties (53). With 88% of the overall winners of national scholarships during this time, third-level scholarships had the largest concentration.



### 3.4 Financing

In figure 5 it can be observed that the majority of the institutions for tertiary education are financed by the state and some institutions are self-financed or co-financed but the percentage of them is really small, the province of Pichincha pointed as the most important since a great number of universities are concentrated in this province where the capital of Ecuador is located and where an important amount of the budget to education is allocated. Tungurahua province is the least favorable province with a lack of budget. For 2018, 59,8% of the enrollment is registered in public institutions, while 26,6% corresponds to co-financed private institutions and the remaining 13.5% are self-financed private institutions (Calderon,2015).

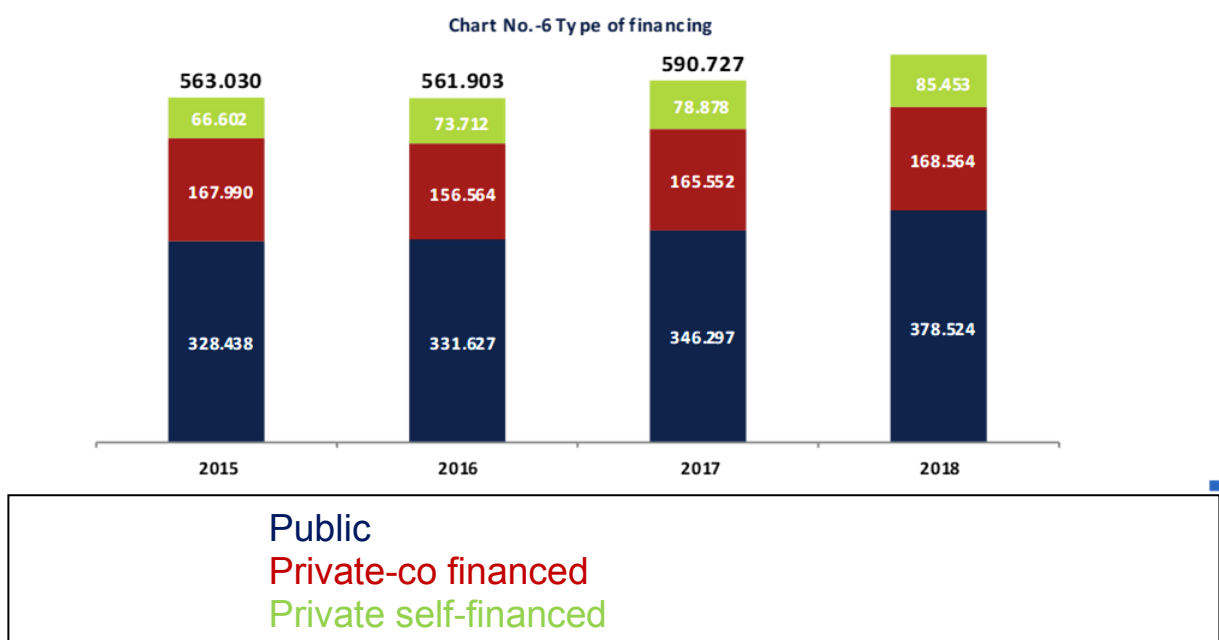


Figure 5. Type of institutions.2015

Source: Ministry of Education

In this graph, the important provinces of Ecuador in which tertiary education can be visualized. There are four main provinces for 2018 according to figures obtained from SIIES (Secretariat for Research, innovation and Higher Education) records. This figure shows that the rural students migrate to these four main provinces for their studies where Pichincha is the province that receives most of the students since it is the province that has more universities. Enrollment

in universities and polytechnic schools is concentrated in the provinces of Pichincha, Guayas, Loja, and Manabi, with a share of 25,3%,20,8%,10,2%, and 8,9% respectively.

Table N.- 4 Provincial distribution

Province	2017	2018	Part.%Var	.% 16/12
<b>Total</b>	<b>590.727</b>	<b>632.541</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>.38%</b>
PICHINCHA	139.513	160.114	25.31%	.79%
GUAYAS	135.141	131.602	20.81%	-0.53%
LOJA	62.492	64.547	10.20%	.65%
MANABI	49.655	56.687	8.96%	.68%
AZUAY	42.990	41.772	6.60%	-0.57%
CHIMBO RAZO	28.107	28.142	4,45%	0,02%
TUNGURAHUA	25.534	27.877	4,41%	1,77%
REST OF THE	107.295	121.800	19,3%	2,57%

Source: Sistema Integral de Información de Educación Superior (SIIES) - cutoff as of October 29, 2019 - 2016.  
Prepared by: National Directorate of Information Management (DNIG) - Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT).

Graph 6. Provincial distribution.2019-2016

Source: Senescyt

Likewise, the concentration of enrollment in the provinces of Pichincha, Loja, Manabi, and Tungurahua which is the Sierra region showed growth in enrollment records while the rest of the county showed an annual growth of 2,57% during the period of analysis. This is evidence that the rural students are in the percentage of these 4 provinces since there is not a significant percentage of student enrollment in the other provinces (Calderon,2015).

### 3.5 The contemporary Ecuadorian system in comparison within the region.

To understand more of the situation this thesis will explain how it differentiates the Ecuadorian educational system from the Colombian educational system along with the Mexican educational system 3% of rural Colombian youth are illiterate, a situation that occurs in only 1% of the urban youth population. In Ecuador, there are also differences between rural and

urban young people, although smaller, with 2.2 and 1.3% respectively. This shows there is a similarity in the region of the percentage of illiterate students. (Diaz et al,2017).

In the case of Colombia, 24.5% of rural youth do not study or work, which exceeds the average of urban youth by 6 percentage points (18.3%). As in the case of Mexico, the trend is a deep gap between men and women, with the proportion of women being 5 times higher than men, with figures of 42% and 8% respectively. However, the figures in this matter are more discouraging in the case of Colombia, since both the average number of young people and young rural women who are not working or studying are higher. In Ecuador, figures on the matter are scarce, there is no information on the group between 18 and 29 years old. Regarding the group of young people between 15 and 17 years old, the fact that men have similar percentages in urban and rural areas stands out (8.3% vs 8.8%). However, more young women find themselves in this situation, reaching 24.4% in the case of rural women and 15% in urban women. This means that women are more vulnerable when searching for a job in the rural or urban areas of these two countries (Diaz et al,2017).

### **3.6 Impact of the last reform -categorization**

This chapter will talk about what is the composition of the educational system and what measures have taken place. The recategorization of the universities and the status of the students and teachers will be explained. There will be an explanation of how the introduction of the exam Ser Bachiller impacted the migration of the students from the rural area to the urban area.

The nation experienced a restructuring of higher education in October 2010 by deconcentrating institutions in major cities and moving students to regional universities in the regions. This changed trends in how economic and educational activities were distributed geographically. This has resulted in the migration of students from other provinces who have migrated for academic objectives to specific places of higher education where they were recognized through the "SER BACHILLER" test due to the diversity of cultures and expertise. Due to this

circumstance, the main economic operations of trade and small businesses have moved to university centers (Gallegos,2013).

One example of a deconcentrating institution was the state university in Riobamba, also referred to as "the university city," which is home to 74% of students from other cities who were designated through the admissions process as "Ser Bachiller," who registered and applied tests to measure their skills and abilities, and who apply in the race with a score higher than 700 points to be placed in various universities across the country. These kids, who range in age from 18 to 20, come from different cities and were chosen through the applications process (Gallegos,2013).

At the undergraduate level, The **National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation** (SENECYT) introduced, and the country adopted the "Ser Bachiller" placement examinations. Due to this, there has been a migratory process that has had an impact on families, including the dissolution of the family core. For instance, a family with three children over the age of 18 who are all enrolled in school in a separate city has financial and emotional repercussions that demand the parents to spend more money, which eventually causes more emotional stress (Gallegos,2013).

This is a problem for Ecuadorian families since it has emotional and financial repercussions that force parents to invest more time and money in their kids. Data from the university called Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH) and Admission and Leveling Unit (UAN) shows that there is now a dropout rate of 37% for rural students in each period of study (semester) throughout the 7 faculties and 37 available occupations. Education is therefore only available to a small number of people (Gallegos,2013).

On the other hand, ECHE, the Ecuadorian Council of Higher Education, categorizes universities in Ecuador based on their quality and performance. The categorization system consists of four categories: A, B, C, and D. Category A includes universities that have demonstrated excellence in various aspects such as teaching, research, infrastructure, and

governance. Category B comprises universities that meet the minimum quality standards set by ECHE. Category C includes universities that need improvement in certain areas and are subject to follow-up evaluations. Category D includes universities that do not meet the minimum quality standards and are required to take corrective actions. The categorization aims to provide transparency and guidance to students, ensuring they choose universities that meet the desired standards of quality education in Ecuador.

In compliance with the provision of the new Constitution, in 2013 the Council for Quality Assurance in higher education (ECHE) completed the external evaluation process for all High Education Institutions, this time with a much more reliable procedure, with specific actions such as a review of documentary evidence, on-site verifications, reports, rectifications, appeals and hearings. The institutional evaluation is carried out on five evaluation criteria such as Academia, which outlines the working conditions for the exercise of teaching in its different internal and external criteria; Academic efficiency, which is reflected in the retention rate and terminal efficiency of students throughout their studies; Research, to establish the level achieved in the generation of scientific knowledge; Organization, which measures the level of interaction of the higher education institutions with the community; Infrastructure, which measures the conditions of the environment and the facilities where academic activities are developed through an exhaustive accreditation process that represents a certification valid for five years granted by ECHE to all higher education institutions that exceed the required quality standards.

This process is permanent and allows us to appreciate logically through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data the result of the work of the university system and it is carried out both in the higher education Institutions and in the different faculties and careers that comprise it. This laborious activity resulted in a classification of the universities into four categories A, B, C, and D, which are still in force today. Which means A is excellent while the other categories are less qualified since they don't fulfill all the required criteria.

For example, in the case of the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo which has 19,000 students that come from across the country. It falls under category B and has 230 academics

who have been appointed and 420 professors who have been recruited from throughout the country. With only 230 employees, its financing is less than that of the institutions. This cash will not enable improving the caliber and circumstances of the labs and facilities for a later inspection by the Higher Education Council (HEC) of the universities. Its categorization will thus remain the same or maybe even decrease as a result. For a subsequent HEC assessment of the institutions, increasing the infrastructure and lab quality will not be possible within this budget (Calderon,2015).

The universities' budgets will subsequently rise because of maintaining or maybe decreasing their category and/or possibly being impacted by the challenge of being promoted to category A. Like another Polytechnic School of the Litoral (ESPOL), ESPOL claims in the newspaper "El Telegrafo" that its authorized budget was \$ 60 million per year, which does not even cover fixed employment expenses, according to the institution's rector. This disparity between the high student enrollment and the poor funding prevents the growth of research and linkages, technological advancements, and implementation (Calderon,2015).

ESPOL calculates that it would cost \$8,550 to teach one professional if there were 10,000 students, thus their budget should be more than what they receive. As of 2015, the budget must be at least \$85 million more than what is provided. They think that because there is a \$25 million financing imbalance, raising the university's standards will be challenging. To evaluate the caliber of the university, find out the percentage of students enrolled in each public and private institution. In line with the percentage of students enrolled in each public university and the professions most sought after by university students, whether they are in the fields of education, health sciences, or social-administrative sciences, more money is available per vocation and student body (Calderon,2015).

In 2009, there were 71 universities and polytechnic schools, 41% of which were public, 13% private co-financed, and 46% private self-financed. There were 293 technical, technological, and pedagogical institutes and music conservatories. As of 2015, there are 59 universities and polytechnic schools, 282 technical, technological, and pedagogical institutes, and music and art conservatories. 51% of the universities and schools are publicly funded, 14% are private co-financed, and 35% are private self-financed. There are two emblematic universities, IKIAM and YACHAY in the rural area of Ecuador (Calderon,2015).

After the evaluation process of the universities carried out by the Higher Educational Council which is now (HEC), where a technical report was delivered on the level of institutional performance of the higher education institutions to guarantee their quality by promoting their purification and improvement the process of suspension of 14 universities and the categorization of the existing ones took place; for the year 2009, 25% were categorized as A, 17% category B, 21% category C, and 37% category D . According to the Organic Law of Higher Education, the Higher Education entities must undergo mandatory periodic evaluations, so for the year 2015 there was a new 9% belonging to category A, 43% to category B, 33% to category C and 15% to category D(Calderon,2015).

Ecuador's universities were classified in 2015, and this was significant for several reasons. First, it gave a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness and caliber of the nation's higher education institutions. As a result of this categorization, policymakers and stakeholders are better able to comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of each university, which helps them plan effectively and allocate resources (Garofalo et al,2018).

Second, classification promoted accountability and openness within the higher education industry. Universities were publicly ranked according to predetermined standards, which promoted a culture of continual development and encouraged institutions to pursue greater standards. Finally, the categorization made it easier to recognize and validate credentials and degrees. It made sure that both students and companies could use the classification as a benchmark for judging the validity and caliber of educational offerings from various colleges. Overall, Ecuador's classification of institutions in 2015 was crucial in fostering accountability, enhancing quality, and enabling well-informed decision-making within the higher education sector (Garofalo et al,2018).

In 2018 in universities and polytechnic schools there were 35,324 teachers (40% women); self-identified as mestizos 78%, Afro-Ecuadorians 1.7%, indigenous 0.3%. In the same year there were 632,541 students enrolled (53% women) in higher education; 71% self-identified as mestizos, 5% Afro-Ecuadorian, 2.6% indigenous. 60% of the enrolment is to public institutions. In 2017 the net enrollment rate in all higher education (university and technical) was 22.2% and the gross rate was 30%; and only in university higher education the net rate

was 20% and the gross rate was 27% (SENESCYT, 2019). Compared to General Basic Education and the Unified General Baccalaureate, access to higher education is low (Lopez Calle et al,2022).

Figure 24. Percentage of population with an urban-rural university degree

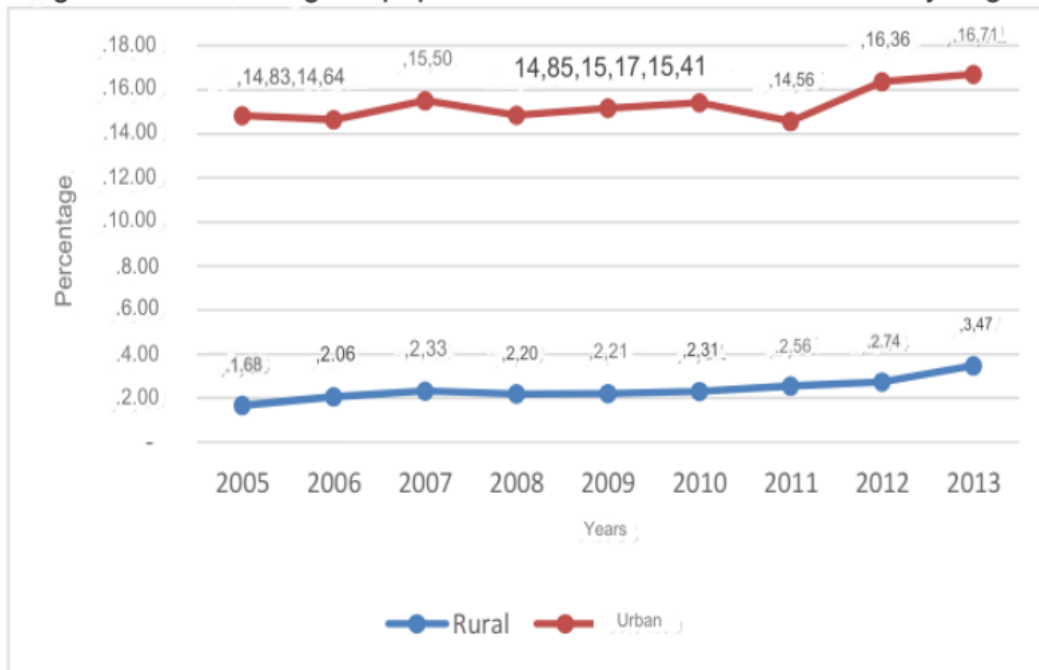


Figure 7. Percentage of population with third level degree in the urban and rural area.2015

Made by: Alejandra Calderon

There are no updated data on breakdowns by geographic area; however, there is a historical series on the percentage of the population that owns. However, there is a historical series on the percentage of the population that holds higher education and rural levels, as shown in Figure 7, demonstrating once again the large gaps that exist (Calderon,2015).

How rural issues, especially rural education, are handled is still not entirely clear. In other words, even while the cross-cutting policies and programs of the numerous ten-year plans and programs have been statistically able to expand the access of rural populations to education, they have not yet addressed the particular and structural challenges that still exist in these places. These discrepancies persist because of policies that have been forcing the country's urbanization for decades and because individuals in rural areas lack the same political pressure-



generating capacity as the upper and middle classes present in metropolitan areas. (Calderon,2015).

According to the facts, there are fewer enterprises in rural areas, which stimulates migration to metropolitan areas and creates another barrier to education for the rural people. At the higher education level, where most institutions are in metropolitan regions, the depopulation of rural areas and the decoupling of young people's creative traditions with their territory are particularly apparent. It might be difficult for students to return to the countryside once they have lived in cities. There is still the idea that employing texts, curricula, and methods, universalizing education may have an equivalent impact on rural settings as it does on urban ones (Calderon,2015).

The programs and curricula created by the Ecuadorian Educational System are exclusively inclusive for the urban sector. They are faithfully coupled to their context (nothing different is expected because the curriculum is taught primarily by professionals who were born or have lived their entire lives in urban areas), making the rural environment exclusive because its content was established by the organization many years ago. The purpose of tying educational systems to different environments or contexts is to reduce the migration of peasants to large cities. These migrants are drawn by the desire for progress and by some implicit propaganda displayed by those who have already migrated, abandoning the fields, crops, and animals. They come to the city to increase the number of people with a low quality of life, who become part of the people with limited economic resources, oftentimes the number of peasants (Garofalo et al,2018).

## Chapter 4

### Theoretical framework

For my thesis I will choose social marginalization theory, this part will focus on relating it to education in rural areas in Ecuador, there will be explanations on why this theory helps us to understand the reasons why the economic background of a family depends on the level of education they have. Inequality will be explained from the perspective that spatial marginalization does make a society unequal, in these cases in terms of education.

To clarify the widespread inequality in Ecuador's tertiary education system—particularly in rural areas—the social marginalization theory provides a convincing foundation. According to this theory, some groups, like people living in rural areas, are systematically excluded from educational opportunities because of persistent socioeconomic disparities and geographic isolation. When compared to their urban counterparts, Ecuador's rural communities frequently face issues such as insufficient infrastructure, insufficient funding for schools, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Furthermore, as indigenous populations and other marginalized groups face obstacles such as language barriers, discrimination, and a lack of representation in educational policies, sociocultural factors perpetuate this marginalization. By applying the social marginalization theory, policymakers and educators can better understand and address these systemic inequalities, fostering more equitable access to tertiary education across Ecuador's diverse landscapes.

#### 4.1 Social Marginalization

A process of social exclusion in which people or groups are forced to the periphery of a society denied access to resources, influence, or status, and encouraged to become "outsiders," is known as social marginalization. This process may be seen as a geographical metaphor.

According to the social marginalization idea, people or groups may be prevented from fully participating in society because of their social, economic, or political circumstances. Reduced

access to resources, fewer economic possibilities, and decreased social mobility are just a few detrimental effects that might result from this exclusion. According to social marginalization theory, marginalization is influenced by larger social and economic variables as well as human decisions and personal responsibility. These elements might include prejudice, unequal access to resources, and unequal power distribution. (Howitt,1993).

The idea contends that marginalized people and groups may encounter social exclusion in a variety of contexts, including exclusion from housing, healthcare, work, and education. This exclusion may result in a lack of agency and a sense of helplessness, which may serve to further entrench social marginalization. (Howitt,1993). The underlying structural causes of exclusion must be addressed to solve social marginalization. To do this, it may be necessary to address structural prejudice and inequality, improve access to opportunities and resources, and offer assistance and resources to underprivileged people and communities. The quality of education for both people and communities may be significantly impacted by social marginalization. Minorities, people of color, and those with disabilities are among those who frequently encounter difficulties in obtaining a high-quality education. (Howitt,1993).

Social marginalization significantly impacts the quality of education in several ways. Firstly, marginalized communities often lack access to crucial educational resources like books, technology, and qualified teachers, resulting in inadequate educational experience. Discrimination and bias against marginalized individuals within classrooms create negative learning environments that hinder academic success. Additionally, marginalized students may receive poor academic preparation due to factors such as insufficient funding, limited access to preschool education, and lower-quality educational programs. Moreover, mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, further impair academic performance and learning ability. Finally, social isolation experienced by marginalized students affects their connections with peers and teachers, leading to disengagement and apathy towards education. These factors collectively underscore the urgent need to address social marginalization to ensure equitable access to quality education for all individuals (Howitt,1993).

A society cannot flourish inclusively, peacefully, or sustainably without education. Social inequality may be decreased by ensuring marginalized groups participate in the development process on a larger scale through equitable and high-quality education. Education has the power to reinforce societal injustices if fair access, meaningful learning opportunities, and high-quality learning outcomes are not prioritized. Therefore, leaving no one behind in education is essential to fostering more inclusive and just communities. (Thompson et al,2019).

A thorough contextual evaluation of who is currently excluded and who is in danger of marginalization is necessary to ensure that no one is left behind in their education. Since achieving other goals is closely linked to education, these evaluations are essential to the creation of inclusive and sound education policies within the framework of larger sustainable development goals. Schools are crucial to development because they serve as the hub for social awareness campaigns, immunization programs, and the diagnosis and treatment of diseases like malnutrition. So, those who are not in school are at a twofold disadvantage (Thompson et al,2019).

Whilst education is perceived as one of the routes out of marginalization, schools can inadvertently act as agents of marginalization: an inappropriate curriculum that fails to take account of individual pupil needs; inflexible and inappropriate systems and structures that fail to recognize the gap between the standards set for pupil behavior and pupils' capacity to meet such standards; the adoption of mindsets which lead ultimately towards the path of exclusion (Munn and Lloyd, 2005); and the pursuit of a 'standards agenda' which creates winners and losers can all serve to marginalize pupils(Mowat,2015).

#### **4.2 Indicators that marginalize society.**

For marginalized people, structural disadvantages relate to how social structures, regulations, and practices limit their possibilities and erect obstacles to their achievement. These obstacles may be of an economic, social, political, or cultural character and take many different forms, such as unequal access to chances for work, housing, and healthcare. Because the latter frequently results from the former, structural disadvantages and social marginalization are

intimately related. The resources and chances necessary for success are frequently unavailable to marginalized people and groups when they are excluded from mainstream society. As a result, individuals can encounter deprivation, a lack of employment opportunities, subpar health results, and other types of social and economic disadvantage. (Vandenkinderen,2018).

The factors that define the inequality of education are Poverty, the location of residence, disability, and special needs, group-level exclusion factors like girls being excluded ethnic and linguistic minorities, and nomadic and Indigenous peoples. There are also conflict disaster and displacement factors where illiteracy and drop-out rates increase in these circumstances. Financing education factors and lack of data can also be indicators of low quality of education, such as insufficient funds for education with unqualified teachers and a curriculum not aligned with the rural context. Another factor is that there are no reliable national statistics and data to identify inequity and assess the particular bottlenecks of marginalized groups are missing(Thompson et al,2019).

The lack of investment in education poses significant challenges to the quality and equity of education systems worldwide. This issue manifests in various ways, including inadequate resources such as textbooks, technology, and qualified teachers in underfunded schools. Additionally, unequal distribution of educational funding exacerbates educational disparities, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities (Berckman,2007). Limited access to education further perpetuates inequality, as socioeconomic barriers prevent some families from accessing quality education.

Moreover, the lack of investment results in reduced educational quality, leading to challenges in retaining qualified educators and maintaining infrastructure. Consequently, educational inequalities manifest in limited opportunities for students, such as access to advanced courses and extracurricular activities, which hinder their academic advancement and preparation for higher education. Addressing the lack of investment in education is imperative to ensure equitable access to quality education for all individuals (Castro et al,2017).

The lack of investment in education can have a significant impact on the quality of education and contribute to educational inequality. When governments or institutions fail to invest in education, schools that lack funding may not have the necessary resources, such as textbooks, technology, and qualified teachers, to provide a high-quality education. When educational funding is not distributed equitably, schools in low-income areas or marginalized communities may receive less funding than schools in more affluent areas. This can result in educational inequalities based on geography (Berckman,2007).

The lack of investment in education can also lead to limited access to education. For example, families that cannot afford to pay for tuition or transportation may be unable to access quality education, leading to educational inequalities based on income. Educational inequality can also manifest in the form of limited opportunities for students. For example, students from low-income backgrounds may not have access to advanced placement courses or extracurricular activities that can help them develop skills and prepare for higher education (Castro et al,2017).

The limited geographical accessibility of universities in rural areas of Ecuador profoundly impacts young people residing in these regions. Hindered by distance and often inadequate transportation infrastructure, aspiring students face significant barriers to pursuing higher education. For many, the nearest university may be in urban centers far from their homes, necessitating costly and time-consuming travel arrangements. Consequently, this geographical disparity exacerbates existing socioeconomic inequalities, as access to education becomes a privilege predominantly available to those residing in urban areas. Moreover, the absence of nearby educational institutions deprives rural youth of opportunities for personal and professional growth, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting their potential for upward mobility. The resulting lack of access to higher education not only stifles individual aspirations but also hampers the socio-economic development of rural communities, further entrenching their marginalization within the broader societal landscape of Ecuador (Thompson et al,2019).

The struggle to achieve equity is a constant need for educational systems, as well as to establish mechanisms and criteria that operate at the root of educational inequity. Although it is true that in the educational field, there is great evidence of educational inequalities at different

levels, these do not originate in the educational system. On this subject, authors such as Marchesi (2000) consider that they are aggravated in the system; the roots of inequalities lie in social, cultural, and family differences. In Latin America, educational systems have been unable to reduce inequalities; on the contrary, they tend to reinforce and maintain social stratification (Vargas,2007).

#### **4.3 Relation between social marginalization and inequality in education.**

Education disparity and social exclusion are closely connected. Disparity in education can result from social marginalization, and social marginalization can be made worse by disparity in education. People who are socially marginalized because of things like poverty, race, ethnicity, or gender may have a difficult time getting access to high-quality education. For instance, children's academic success may be hampered by marginalized populations' restricted access to educational resources including textbooks, technology, and skilled teachers. (Vandenkinderen,2018).

At the same time, social marginalization may also be a result of educational disparity. Lack of access to high-quality education can result in students having less economic prospects, less social mobility, and less agency and voice in their communities. This may result in more exclusion and marginalization, continuing the vicious cycle of inequity. Additionally, systemic elements like discriminatory laws or practices that consistently penalize underprivileged groups can exacerbate educational disparity. The educational options accessible to underprivileged populations, for instance, may be restricted by educational institutions that are prejudiced against non-dominant languages or cultures. (Vandenkinderen,2018).

It is essential to address the underlying structural reasons that lead to social marginalization and educational disparity if we are to address these problems. This might entail advocating for laws that encourage equitable access to education, giving underprivileged students and

communities more assistance and resources, and tackling structural injustices like prejudice and discrimination. By detailing how people or groups are systematically excluded from the advantages and resources that are accessible to others who hold more privileged positions in society, social marginalization can aid in the explanation of structural disadvantages. Numerous social characteristics, including color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic position, and others, may contribute to this marginalization (Vandenkinderen,2018).

Those who do not acquire the necessary skills for society increase their likelihood of social and economic marginalization. The region has not succeeded in transforming the education system into a powerful mechanism for equalizing opportunities, in part because an important determinant of educational attainment and returns is found in the climate and income available in the households of origin. Most of the time, this inequality is also reflected in a marked segmentation and stratification of the quality and efficiency of the educational supply system itself (Trucco,2014).

The relationship between quality and equity in education is complex because while education can reverse economic, social, and political inequalities, it can also perpetuate them. The expansion of educational opportunities in the region has not significantly reduced inequality, underdevelopment, and poverty, quite possibly because of the poor quality of education. Evidence increasingly shows that quality, and not just quantity, can be responsible for perpetuating income inequality; improving the quality of education for the poorest could thus potentially reduce this inequality (Trucco,2014).

Public higher education demands accessible quality education, to respond with relevance to social demands. Academic and administrative obsolescence is an ostentation that universities cannot afford if their purpose is to survive in a highly competitive world. A university that maintains a balance between quality, efficiency, and equity must always ask itself what educational quality it aspires to (Vargas,2007).



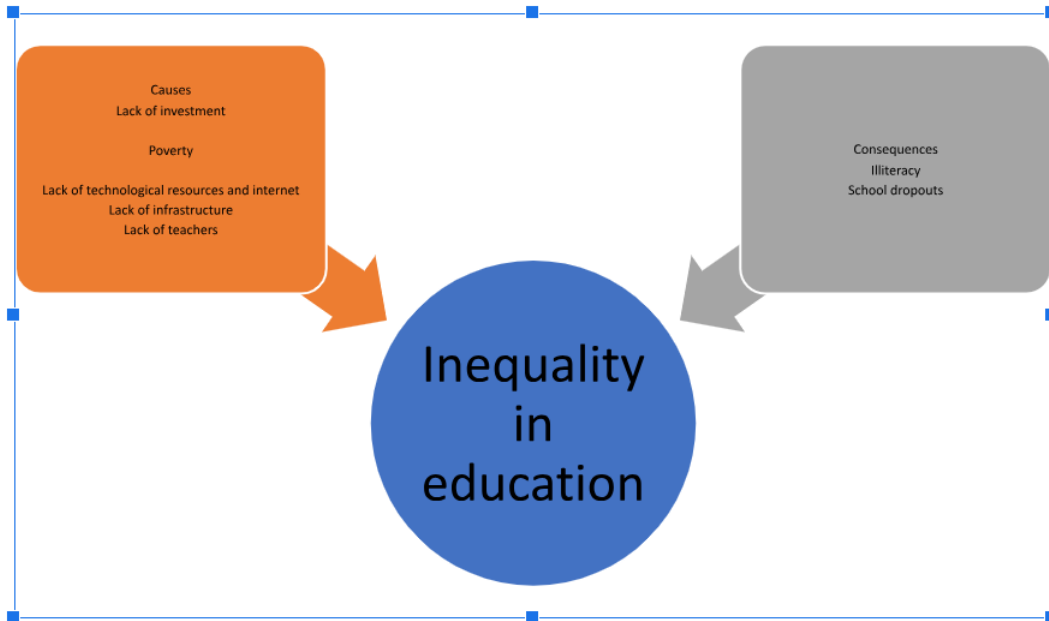


Figure number 8. 2023. Inequality in education. Made by the author.

The figure number 8 was designed by the author of this thesis, to explain the causes and consequences of the inequality of education. The main causes for the designated problem are several factors such as: the lack of investment, poverty, lack of technological resources and internet, lack of infrastructure and lack of teachers. As for the consequences there are the illiteracy and school dropouts.

## Chapter 5

### Methods and sources of data

#### 5.1 Methods

The method that I used in the following thesis was the problem-centered interview by Robert Merton which focuses on a relevant social problem. It is based on a qualitative interview, where I used the conversational entry that consists of talking first with the interviewee about the topic in general. The interview guide that was used in this thesis is designed to support the narrative string developed by the interviewee. Above all, it is used as a basis for giving the interview a new turn in the case of a stagnating conversation or an unproductive topic (Flick,2009).

I used thematic analysis because it's an analytic method. The extracts in the thematic analysis are illustrative of the analytic points the researcher makes about the data and should be used to illustrate/support an analysis that goes beyond their specific content, to make sense of the data, and to tell the reader what it does or might mean. For that reason, the interviews were carefully analyzed, and the collected data illustrated relating it to the literature review that the thesis had. (Braun et al, 2006).

I chose to do interviews because it allows me to gain a deeper and richer understanding of my research topic. They provide an opportunity to explore complex issues, nuances, and personal experiences that may not be captured through other data collection methods. They also help you gather contextual information that helps frame your research and provide background details that are not readily available in existing literature or secondary sources. The interviews provide you with primary data, which is original and unique to your study. This data can be especially valuable if your research involves a specific population or context that hasn't been extensively studied before. For collecting information, they provide an opportunity for participants to clarify their responses or elaborate on their thoughts, reducing the risk of

misinterpretation (Langley et al,2019). In the end of this chapter the six interviews that I conducted (for more details see later).

Interviews can be used to validate or triangulate findings from other data sources, such as surveys or observations, strengthening the overall credibility of your research. We can select interview participants to ensure diversity in terms of demographics, experiences, or viewpoints, which can enhance the richness and applicability of your findings. I used 6 Ecuadorian citizens for my interviews where I suggested some topics for discussion about the Ecuadorian educational quality of education. In some cases, interviews may be the most ethical way to collect data. For sensitive topics or vulnerable populations, interviews can provide a safe and confidential space for participants to share their experiences.

On the other hand, conducting interviews can contribute new insights and perspectives to the existing literature in your field, potentially filling gaps or offering fresh viewpoints. As a researcher, conducting interviews can be a valuable learning experience. It can enhance your communication, interpersonal, and qualitative research skills. Also, interviews can help you establish relationships with participants, which can be beneficial for future research or collaboration.

I focused on the interpretive genre which is a method that stimulates reflexivity and knowledge generation where I was able to reflect on the issues in question with my interviewees (Langley et al,2021). I used the technique of extrinsic motivation which consists of using theoretical research questions for the interview to gather information about the topic. Using purposive sampling with a specific number of participants and their rich insights (Knott et al,2022).

Where the authors explain that the use of qualitative methodologies has been crucial to the study of organizational growth and change and is expected to remain so. With the appreciative inquiry in the interpretive genre, I was able to analyze and discuss the questions for the interview which helped me to focus on the positive aspects of the interview experience. The

material that we gain from the interviews helped me to get a methodological openness in interviews. (Langley et al,2020).

The following table will explain in detail who were the interviewees and more details.

**Table Respondents/Interviewees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Length of interviews</b>
Anita Krainer	PhD professor at FLACSO University	1 hour
Andrea Montalvo	Secretary of tertiary education of the ministry of education	1 hour
Ana Ayala Moreno	Employee at foundation FIDAL	1 hour
Milton Luna	Professor at university	1 hour
Vanessa Nieto	Consultor at a law firm	1 hour
Alejandra Calderon	Employee at the Ministry of Customs	1 hour

Table 1. Interviewees. Made by the author

In the second part there will be an analysis and discussion of the main findings of the paper. Based on 6 interviews the goal is to confirm what has already been found in the thesis with the help of the opinion of experts in the subject. 10 open questions were asked to the interviewees. The interviewees were Ana Krainer representing a professor at FLACSO University, Ana Ayala representing Foundation FIDAL as project coordinator, Milton Luna representing Contrato Social Ecuador, Vanessa Nieto lawyer at a consulting group, Alejandra Calderon economist at the Ministry of Customs and Andrea Montalvo secretary in SENESCYT. There is qualitative research based on the analysis of various documents and papers from different

authors. The context analysis method will be used to analyze all the data and information recovered from the different documents.

For the development of this thesis, I used reports from the Ministry of Education supporting documents and accountability reports. Such as:

The Constitution of Ecuador establishes the fundamental principles regarding education in Ecuador, including free and secular education. It also recognizes education as a fundamental right. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education: This law, also known as LOEI, is one of the most important laws in Ecuadorian education. It establishes the principles, norms, and regulations for education in the country, including the structure of the education system and policies for the inclusion of ethnic groups and minorities (Robalino,2003).

To explain the functioning of the educational system of Ecuador and its characteristics the following article 26 states that the Constitution of Ecuador states that education is a right of individuals throughout their lives and an inescapable and inexcusable duty of the State. It constitutes a priority area of public policy and state investment, a guarantee of equality and social inclusion, and an indispensable condition for a good life. Article 28 of the Constitution of the Republic establishes that education shall respond to the public interest and shall not be at the service of individual and corporate interests(Constitucion,2008)

Another method that was used in this research was the Ten-Year Education Plan which is a strategic document that establishes the goals and objectives for the development of education in Ecuador over ten years. It defines the educational policies, programs, and projects that will be implemented to improve quality and equity in education. The national education curriculum establishes the curricular guidelines for education in Ecuador. It defines the contents, competencies, and standards that must be covered in the different educational levels and modalities (Robalino,2003).

## **5.2. Limits of the research design**

There were some methodological challenges in this thesis because there are not many publications that have studied rural education in Ecuador, and there are not many articles in English or Spanish that explain the main consequences of the inequality of education in Ecuador. There are not many articles that focus specifically on the rural area, and it makes it hard to recover information on this area. Also, the Ministry of education doesn't provide up-to-date information about education in Ecuador. There are not many institutions that study the quality of education in Ecuador. However, with the help of my research I was able to gather updated information from the interviews that were done and from different qualitative and quantitative sources.

## Chapter 6

### Current challenges

As I explained in the theoretical part of chapter 3 the functioning of the educational system in Ecuador and the impact of the last reforms. Now I will introduce the challenges that affect the quality of the educational system. Such as poverty, lack of investment, lack of technological resources, lack of teachers, and other indicators that damage the quality of education.

#### 6.0 Poverty in Ecuador

Poverty is one of the main reasons for inequality in education in Ecuador. Poverty in Ecuador was 25.7% in 2022, above the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) average of 24.1%. Extreme poverty fell from 7.5% in 2016 to 6.9% in 2022, below the LAC average (8.3%) (OECD,2023). As we can visualize in graph 9 from 2020 to 2022 there has been a decline in the percentage of teenagers from 10 and over 13 years old that have had the opportunity to have the minimum years of education.

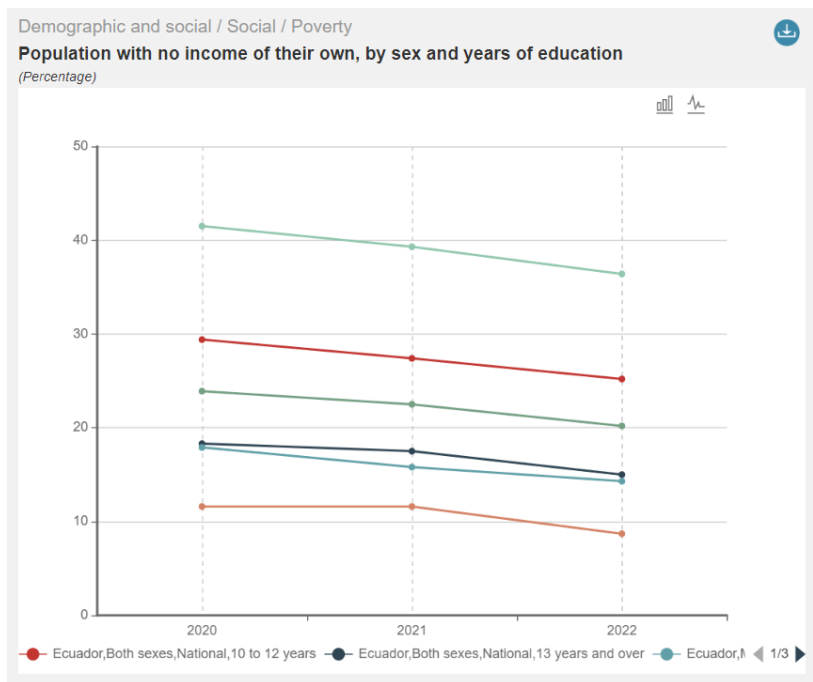


Figure 9. Population with no income of their own, by sex, and years of education. CEPAL.2024

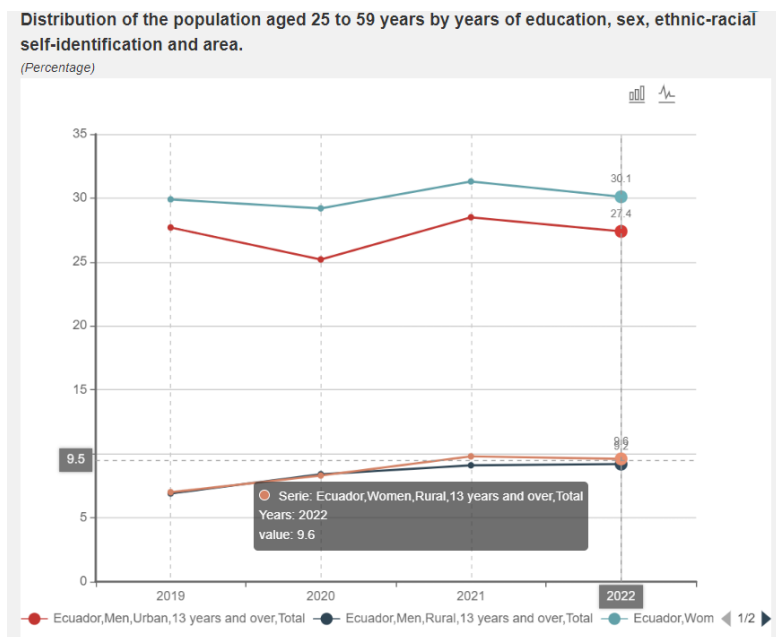


Figure 10. Distribution of the population aged 25 to 59 years of education, sex, ethnic-racial self-identification, and area. CEPAL.2024

As for Figure 10, the population in the urban area shows a decrease in the percentage of the population aged 13 years and older, only 9.5% in 2022 received education in the urban area while in the rural area, it has made a slight increase the population that had education from 2020 to 2022.

The scarcity of resources hinders access to education in rural areas. The latest National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment (ENEMDU), with national, urban, and rural coverage, prepared by the INEC (National Institute of Statistics and Census) for March 2015, shows that poverty at the national level was 24% in the country. Poverty at the national level was in rural areas at 43.35% and in urban areas at 15.07% (Diaz et al,2017). When individuals or families face unemployment, financial constraints often force them to prioritize immediate needs over investing in education. This can lead to reduced enrollment in schools or higher education institutions, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who already face educational disparities. Moreover, prolonged unemployment can erode skills and qualifications, making it harder for individuals to re-enter the job market and break the cycle of poverty.



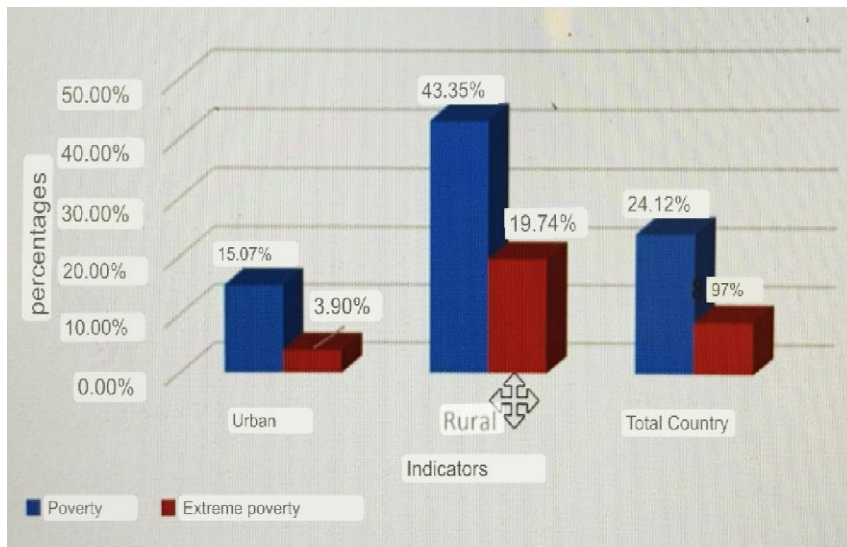


Figure 11. Poverty and extreme poverty in Ecuador by geographic area 2015.

Made by: Vivian Diaz and Juan Fernandez

Along with this, the rates of extreme poverty stand out: 27.1% of rural youth are in this group, an extremely high situation. This is an extremely serious situation since it implies that they do not even have the necessary resources to cover their basic needs, and this represents more than four times the proportion of urban youth (6.5%) (Diaz et al,2017).

Compared to their urban counterparts, rural youth's poverty does not exhibit any appreciable disparities in this pattern. This reflects both the perilous situation in which the young people in rural areas find themselves and the lack of resources required to meet their basic dietary demands. This highlights the precariousness of the rural world in general and the fact that the situation is not improving in the younger generations, which is a picture that is not very promising (Diaz et al,2017).

In Ecuador, we find that rural youths reach an average of 9.8 years of age on average, while urban youths in urban areas reach 12.9 years. In the Ecuadorian context, Montubio and Indigenous youth have a lower average schooling level than rural youth, with 9 years of schooling respectively (Diaz et al,2017).

In line with the trend in Latin America, in this country, the gross enrollment rate by level shows that full coverage has been achieved at the secondary level. In line with the trend in Latin America, the gross enrollment rate by level in this country shows that complete coverage has been achieved in basic education, both in the urban and rural population. However, at the secondary level, we can also see important differences in educational levels between urban and rural youths with the former having more than twice as many people completing high school (55.2% vs. 24.2%) (Diaz et al,2017).

### **6.1 Lack of investment**

The disparity in education in Ecuador is made worse by the absence of investment in the sector. A lack of financing for education leads to several inequities, such as inadequate resources, out-of-date facilities, and a teacher shortage. Marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by these inequalities, which feeds the cycle of inequality. Students from low-income families and those who live in rural regions sometimes have less access to high-quality education, extracurricular activities, and chances for advanced study. They thus have a higher likelihood of having inferior academic success and less prospects for socioeconomic growth. As it facilitates the provision of enough resources, improved facilities, and better educational opportunities for all students in Ecuador, addressing the shortage of investment in education is essential for achieving equality. (Berckman,2007).

The Constitution states that to guarantee the right to education, a gradual increase of the budget in this sector is foreseen until it reaches 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The figures presented in Figure 12 show that the budget of the Ministry of Education has more than doubled between 2007 and 2014, i.e., in the last government period (Coordinating Ministry of Social Development, 2014).

Ecuador - Public Expenditure Education				
Date	Education Expenditure (€M)	Education Expenditure (%Gto Pub)	Education Expenditure (%GDP)	Education Expenditure Per Capita
2022	3,981.4	9.27%	3.65%	€224
2021	3,311.3	9.76%	3.69%	€186
2020	3,579.2	10.59%	4.11%	€204
2019	4,080.3	10.67%	4.23%	€236
2018	4,206.9	14.55%	4.62%	€247
2017	4,261.3	13.87%	4.61%	€254
2016	3,940.3	12.80%	4.36%	€238
2015	4,472.9	11.57%	5.00%	€275
2014	4,027.4	11.33%	5.26%	€251
2013	3,584.7	10.54%	5.00%	€227
2012	3,175.5	10.76%	4.64%	€205

Figure 12. Budget of the ministry of education.2015

Made by: Ministry of Education.

How resources are used, or how money is spent, is a key metric for determining the strategic goals that are the focus of education policy. The information in Figure 13 below demonstrates that current expenditure receives most of the budgetary support in the education sector. This line item, which is made up of personnel costs, social security benefits, consumer goods and services, fiscal contributions, financial expenses, and other current expenses such as transfers, refers to the acquisition of goods and services required for the operational activities of administration and transfer of resources (Coordinating Ministry of Social Development, 2014).

The education sector budget's second-largest item for sectoral budget allocation is investment spending. It refers to expenditures made as part of social programs or institutional initiatives for carrying out public works that are intended to increase the State's assets through operational investment activities. These include spending on investments, public works, investment transfers, and products and services for investment (Coordinating Ministry of Social Development, 2014).

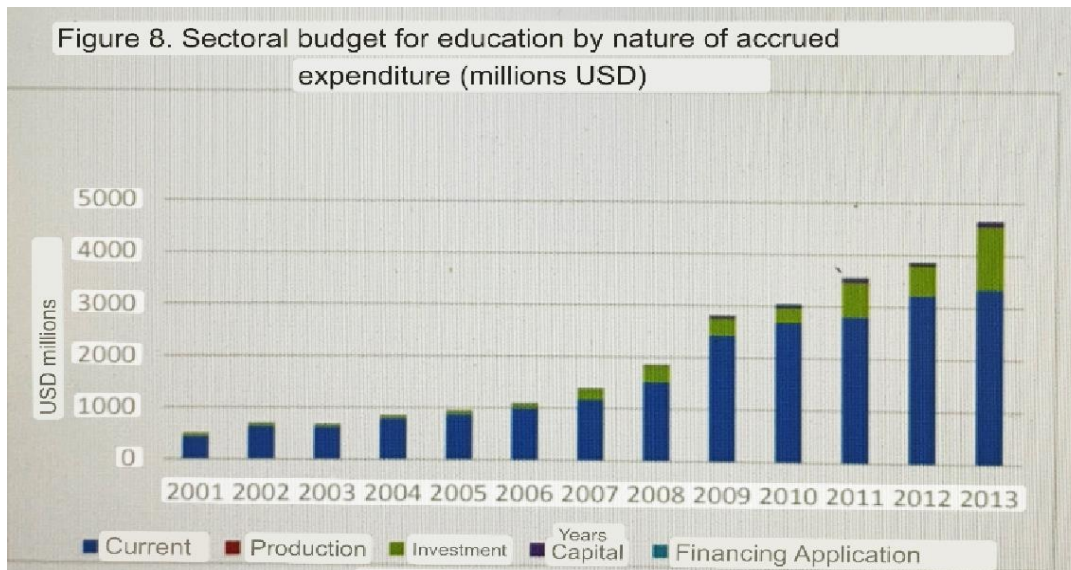


Figure 13. Expenditure in Education.2015

Made by the Ministry of Education

## 6.2 Lack of technological resources and Internet

The quality of education was affected by two main points: the lack of technological resources and trained teachers which made education unequal. These two factors result in the discouragement of the students in joining the universities. Since the conditions are not favorable for them, they choose to stay in their villages and work in other areas such as the agricultural one, which is the most needed in the rural area. From the side of the governments, some policies have affected the access of students to entering university, such as the cut in the budget and the decision to eliminate the state exam and give the autonomy to each university to have their exam and let them decide who can enter university (Berckman,2007).

A few things must come together for technology to show its usefulness, including educated teachers, suitable curricula, suitable applications, and a regular usage schedule. Some study demonstrates that the most effective programs are those that involve more skilled and trained teachers to oversee the instruction of students in the use of technology to increase their performance and their learning. (Uribe, 2015).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) may be a potent and useful instrument for teaching if teachers are well-trained, knowledgeable about the subject matter, adept at didactics, and successful in establishing strong connections in the classroom; otherwise, they

are only an annex that enhances the learning environment. On the other hand, they are a supporting component that enhances their methods rather than an original and useful instrument. (Uribe, 2015).

For several reasons, having internet connectivity and access to technical resources is essential for raising the standard of education in rural regions. It gives access to a huge selection of learning resources and online content that might not be easily accessible locally. Students can use online classes, e-books, digital libraries, and educational websites to increase their learning prospects. Second, having internet access facilitates remote learning and virtual classrooms, which let students in remote regions communicate with lecturers and subject matter experts in other cities. It encourages interactive learning, teamwork, and access to specialty topics or courses that might not be offered locally.

The learning process is improved and made more dynamic and engaging by technology tools like computers, tablets, and instructional software. Students may learn critical thinking, problem-solving, and computer literacy skills that are becoming more and more important in today's digital environment. Finally, having access to the internet creates possibilities for communication, worldwide connectedness, and exposure to many viewpoints. It broadens students' horizons, encourages cross-cultural interaction, and gets them ready for a more linked world. In the end, having internet connectivity and technology tools available in remote places helps close the achievement gap, lessen inequities, and provide kids with the information and skills they need for their development and future success.

The digital divide in Ecuador is large. To summarize: 57% of the population has a computer at home, 12% has a fixed broadband device, 52% has a cell phone or smartphone and 53% of households have internet access. Undoubtedly, during the pandemic, efforts were made by families to provide students with electronic devices and some Internet connection for the students; however, the gap has not diminished (Lopez-Calle et al,2022).

According to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2021) 5,494 public institutions have connectivity (its goal is to have 6,794), but the country has 12,302 public institutions; it claims that 6,789 teachers have devices, but there are 148,156 public sector teachers in the country; states that 2'794,769 students have connectivity, but in the country, there are 4'296,051 students (public sector 3'457,457) (MINEDUC, 2021).

On the other hand, it had been mentioned that access to ICTs was only the first step and that another fundamental aspect was training in their use (MINEDUC, 2021). In 2019 in Ecuador, according to the International Telecommunication Union (2021), only 26% had basic skills, 16% standard skills and 3% advanced skills. It is urgent to close the gap in access and digital literacy (Lopez-Calle et al,2022). Technology is a crucial tool in improving educational outcomes and the way it is used is the determinant of its effectiveness. Internet access using some fixed broadband or cellular device is very disparate (Uribe, 2015). In contrast, internet access via a cell phone was much higher: in the world 75%, the Americas 99%, and in Ecuador 54% (ranked 23rd in the Americas) (ITU, 2021).

However, although the coverage for cellular networks is high, the condition for access is to have an appropriate cell phone and internet connection, therein lies the gap: in 2020 in Ecuador, people who had a cell phone 63% and a cell phone or smartphone 52% (INEC, 2021c). A little more than half of households access the Internet: in 2019 in the world, it was 57% (urban 72% and rural 37%) in the Americas and by 2020, 53% (ITU, 2021).

Internet use in educational institutions in 2019 was very low, just 5.2%; in 2020, already with the pandemic, it fell to 0.2% (ITU, 2021). In Ecuador, digital illiteracy in 2020 was 10.2% (INEC, 2021c). In the context of the period where the pandemic was in development, another essential resource for the continuity of virtual education is Internet access. At the national level, only 37.2% of Ecuadorian households have an Internet connection, which means that 6 out of every 10 children cannot continue their studies through online education. The situation is even worse for children in rural areas, where only 16.1% of households have connectivity. This difference is even more significant if the information is disaggregated by ethnic self-identification and socioeconomic status. Thus, only 57% of mestizo children and adolescents

have this access; 40% of Afro-descendants; 39% of Montubios and 15% of indigenous people (Vivanco et al,2020).

Only 7% of those in rural regions have an Internet connection. Furthermore, just 26% of Ecuador's poor population has access to it, compared to 61% of its non-poor citizens. In this regard, households in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic strata, those of historically excluded and marginalized groups, are at a clear disadvantage since they are unable to continue their children's education because they lack access to the Internet.

In this regard, the 2019 school year began for 2.5 million students in the coastal region through online education; however, one million kids and teenagers do not own a computer, laptop, or smartphone, nor do they have access to the Internet at home or on their cell phones, which obviates their ability to learn. (Vivanco et al,2020).

### **6.3 Current situation of teachers**

Because of the lack of budget, there are many teachers without proper training and low salaries that discourage them from working in the education area. In higher education institutions, there are 36,272 tenured, temporary, and honorary professors. Of them, 3,393 hold third-level degrees, 24,541 hold master's degrees, and 2,776 hold PhDs. According to SENESCYT 1,000 scholarship recipients have returned to the nation and are now employed at institutions where they carry out research and teach. 4,000 scholarship recipients are still enrolled in their master's and doctoral programs overseas (Calderon,2015).

The following PhD requirement to be a senior professor at the institution will become a goal required seven years from the date of the thirteenth transitory provision of the OLHE (Organic Law of Higher Education), which has been in effect since (October 12, 2010). Full professors will no longer be eligible for this benefit if this criterion is not satisfied. According to article 14-OLHE, a higher education institution must have at least 70% of its teaching personnel have PhDs to be regarded as a research center (Calderon,2015).

According to SENESCYT, in 2008, there were 482 professors with PhDs; in 2012, there were 1,056 teachers with PhDs out of 33,720 professors; and in 2016, there were 2,776 teachers with PhDs out of a total of 36,272; therefore, by 2017 the deadline of the OLHE (Organic Law of higher education), i.e., at the deadline date (October-2017), there should have been 70% of teachers with PhDs and 7.65% is the result of teachers till this date, which means the objective has not been met till this day (Calderon,2015).

#### **6.4 Other indicators that damage the equality of education.**

This is made worse by the degradation and lack of educational infrastructure, which causes the school facilities to operate poorly because of the large percentage of classrooms in subpar condition, the high student-to-classroom ratios, and the absence of places for labs and workshops. The quality and preparation of teachers is frequently lacking; their pay is frequently late; there are little incentives for all instructors, especially those in rural regions; there are also few incentives for study and educational research. Despite the revisions they have undergone, the research plans and programs have not been able to fully adjust to the actual reality or the stated aims (Robalino,2003).

To get to some of the institutions, which are difficult to access, teachers and students must walk several kilometers and traverse rivers. This implies that school attendance is not at all regular during some seasons, notably wet ones. Many of these educational institutions are still considered unidocentes, which means that just one instructor. There is just one teacher in charge of educating students in all subject areas from elementary through high school. (Caicedo et al,2021).

Since many teachers are high school grads or technicians and there is a dearth of ongoing training, this presents another challenge for the schools. Many of the instructional procedures used are not well thought out or adhere to conventional teaching principles (Caicedo et al ,2021). Intercultural discrimination towards various ethnic groups can have a significant influence on the gap in tertiary education in Ecuador. When ethnic groups are subjected to prejudice and discrimination, they encounter several barriers that limit their access to high-



quality education and their potential as learners. Here are a few ways that bias contributes to educational inequality (Garcia et al,2019).

Discrimination in the educational system has the potential to promote stereotypes and prejudice. Unintentionally, teachers and administrators may have lower expectations for students of color, which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophesy in which students are not given the support they need to achieve academically.

Underrepresentation of ethnic groups among faculty and staff at educational institutions might help to maintain bias and foster an unwelcoming environment for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The lack of chances for agriculture or tourism in Ecuador's rural areas may have a significant impact on students' willingness to pursue other careers. This situation gives rise to a complex dynamic that affects students' perceptions of their future career opportunities and guides their choice of academic subjects (Garcia et al,2019).

## **6.5 Comparison of reforms of the government of Rafael Correa and Lenin Moreno**

In the following text I will compare the reforms of the government from 2007 till 2020. For ten years, Rafael Correa's educational policy achieved important changes. Some indicators offer a positive outlook regarding the expansion of coverage and quality of the system. This is mainly due to political will, a long-term project (the Ten-Year Education Plan) and a growing allocation of resources to the sector. In this sense, enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools were increased, the teaching profession was revalued with increased salaries, and new institutions were built that, according to the government, responded to national demands and international “quality standards”. The goals of Rafael Correa's education policy during his administration (2007–2017) were centered on granting lower socioeconomic classes access to education. His administration promoted the idea that education should not only be the cornerstone of economic growth but also an agent of social opportunity expansion, and to accomplish this, funding for this sector was significantly increased (Guayasamin,2017).

The truth is that Ecuador demanded a change in its educational system that was characterized by serious quality problems, inequity, and partial compliance with free service. To achieve this, Correa's presidency had to defeat a powerful union, the NEU (National Educators Union), which despite its recognized historical struggle for the improvement of education, in government speech and its propaganda instruments, came to be remembered for politicization, low results and paralysis of the system (Guayasamin,2017).

Although the Correa administration has received greater support and recognition for the increase in the education budget, the challenge of educational investment in any country is to optimize the distribution of resources, especially at a time when money is limited. According to the authorities, public expenditures resulting from the investment in education included the construction and conservation of educational facilities, the increase in the number of teachers and their salaries, training programs, and free distribution of textbooks, uniforms, and school breakfast. (Guayasamin,2017).

On the other hand, in this part the objective is to explain what the last administrations did to improve the quality of education that is based from 2017 to 2020. To explain the reasons why the educational system is so weak at this time. The administration of Lenin Moreno presented serious problems in the economic field, since according to the president he had received a country full of debts generated by Rafael's government belt. For this reason, during the first years of the Moreno government, an attempt was made to stabilize the State budget for some sectors such as health, work, education, and well-being. But in 2020, because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent drop in oil prices in the international market, it significantly affected the central government budget.

From 2017 to 2020 there is a reduction in the budget in education, health, and work; Not so, in the social welfare sector there was an increase because within it there are social aid programs through solidarity bonuses for people in vulnerable conditions, which became much more acute with the appearance of the pandemic. In this sense, in 2020 the government had to make some

adjustments to the budget, which affected different sectors of society with a reduction in their economic resources; while other sectors had an increase to solve the problems that arose during that year (Isch,2011).

Therefore, according to these figures, the educational sector saw the need to cut expenses by laying off teachers in different educational institutions, they were also left in the financing of educational projects was void, since due to the cutback and the pandemic, a change had to be implemented in Ecuadorian education. Furthermore, it should be noted that the budget reduction had the greatest impact within higher education, since according to President Lenin Moreno, universities and polytechnic schools did not use their designated budget, which is why the decision was made to cut the resources assigned to these institutions, this caused consumer goods and services, teacher salaries, resources allocated to scholarships, among others unable to be financed(Isch,2011).

The only aspect that could be fulfilled during the Moreno administration was free education, although with the emergence of the pandemic the education sector went through several difficulties. In addition, there were proposals that were only half fulfilled, such as increasing the coverage of basic education and high school, and it was not possible to ensure the permanence of students in the education system, since the economic crisis and the pandemic forced many of them to drop out of continuing their studies. Finally, some proposals such as the transformation of higher education to be a power in knowledge, and thus form a more stable economy for society, this on paper was extraordinary, but the great reality is that it could not meet that aspiration (Isch,2011).

## Chapter 7

### 7.1 Analysis

The interviews confirmed the current challenges that contribute to the inequality in tertiary education in Ecuador. “At a fourth-level university the educational level is lower in the rural areas than in the urban areas and there is a lack of proper preparation and training for teachers in rural areas, most of the time it’s difficult for them to manage the number of students they have per class.” (Professor Anita Krainer). This thesis confirms that there is a poor investment in education by the government which enables the opportunity to have good salaries for teachers and appropriate infrastructure. “The grassroots of the problem in education in Ecuador is it’s quality and access to it. It is quite restricted and discriminatory towards the different ethnicities and social classes that comprise the whole country” (Vanesa Nieto).

The interviewees also confirmed the key factors that contribute to inequality. “There are no new reforms or budget allocations that have taken place to improve the quality of education, and in some cases, the state exams have been discriminatory towards the rural population which has lower levels of education and makes it harder for them to access tertiary education” (Milton Luna). This confirms that there is a lack of investment in the educational system.

” There are many teenagers that decide to work with the drug gangs or are drawn into international crime. Since they don’t see a way of moving forward in their careers or getting a good job opportunity”. “(Alejandra Calderon). The security situation now in Ecuador makes it difficult for teenagers to be able to arrive safely at their universities since there have been more cases of kidnapping and homicides in the rural part of the country. Ecuador's homicide rate rose from 13.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021 to 25.9 in 2022(HRW,2024).

“There is a crisis also in the technical education regarding agricultural education and how has this affected to the formation of the students with the new answers that are been executed in

those cities such as Riobamba, Chimborazo, and Cotopaxi and how it affects negatively or positively these areas of production” (Milton Luna). The unemployment now is the highest it has ever been in Ecuador in the rural and urban areas. This sector has been forgotten and the research into the actual situation in this area is almost unknown. Ecuador's unemployment rate for 2022 was 3.76% which is a considerable percentage of the population that has no opportunities (CEIC,2024).

“The grassroots of the problem in education in Ecuador is its quality and access to it. It is quite restricted and discriminatory towards the different ethnicities and social classes that comprise the whole country. There is still a gender bias, women are used to staying at home doing the house chores, taking care of their kids and parents in some cases” (Vanessa Nieto). According to the figures in the Household Satellite Account of the UN, in 2014 unpaid work performed by women in Ecuador represented 15% of GDP. They support the community but not as leaders of the community instead provide food and take care of other things. In the rural area of Ecuador, there is still a patriarchy where the woman is submissive to what the man must order.

On the other hand, rural students when they study in the urban part, usually don't want to return to the fields to do productive work. There is a generational handover where only mothers around 45 to 50 years old that take care of their children and are housewives who want to participate in the workshops”(Vanessa Nieto)For the year 2017 86.26% of students enrolled in universities in Ecuador live in urban areas and 13.74% in rural areas; 89.39% consider themselves mestizos, 3.35% indigenous, 4.25% Afro-Ecuadorian, black or mulatto, 1.67% consider themselves montubios and 1.29% white; 66.60% of undergraduate students in Ecuador study in public universities and 32.54% in private universities; 8.27% consider themselves poor(INEC,2017). This acknowledges that there is discrimination against women and the percentage of women that study is low.

“The access to tertiary education is poor since there are not many scholarships or institutions where you can study in the rural area. Another problem is the state exams where the application

to them is quite exclusive. The topics of the exam usually are not reviewed in high school and that makes the process more difficult since the students need to apply for some extra classes to learn the topics of the exam” (Vanessa Nieto). However, with the lack technological resources it is hard for students to have the proper preparation for the exams and have access to tertiary education. In terms of budget allocation, the 2022 proforma shows a reduction of over \$100 million from the 2021 proforma for universities, polytechnics, and technical and technological institutes of higher education (Ministry of Finance, 2022).

“There are no policies for improving the education in the rural area, the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of education create inorganic programs. There was also a change in the law of education where each university gets the power to do an exam to get into that specific university. There will no longer be a state exam to apply for any of the universities available in the educational system” (Vanessa Nieto).

This show that there was no interest of the government in changing the reforms and make a more equal educational system. On July 14, 2022, President Guillermo Lasso announced that, as of 2023, the public university entrance exam implemented by Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia y Tecnología (Senescyt) will be eliminated. This decision is made based on his campaign promises made in 2017 and 2021 regarding the elimination of Senescyt and the entrance exam, formerly known as the Higher Education Access Exam (EAES) and now Transformar(Andrade,2022).

About the disparity in the educational resources and the effect that it can cause to quality of Education. “The preparation of the teachers is also not specialized and in most of the rural areas people work in their fields and depend on agriculture for a living. Many tertiary institutions in rural Ecuador lack modern facilities, up-to-date technology, and well-equipped libraries, restricting students' access to vital educational resources and hindering their academic progress” (Andrea Montalvo).In Ecuador, only "37% of households have internet access, which means that 6 out of 10 children cannot continue their studies through digital platforms(UNICEF,2020). This factor of technology is crucial for the development of the educational system in Ecuador ,without it will be difficult to have high quality education.

“There are also new technologies such as robots, drones and artificial intelligence which make fieldwork in the rural area easier for the people that work there. For example, there is a private university of Zamorano that is focused on agriculture in Nicaragua. Students there learn how to work in the fields and it’s just mainly practical work. They should focus on the reality of the country and the status of the labor market” (Vanessa Nieto). These could be special tools for rural teenagers that want to work in an specific field.

About the initiatives and ways of improving the quality of education. “Without a proper internet signal it would be very difficult to keep the students up to date and be able to teach them online if it was the case. There was also a shortage of resources this last year in terms of education, many projects and programs have been cut due to the different situations that have passed such as the Pandemic and then the Paro Nacional (National strike) which froze the country for a couple of months and affected the economic and productive situation of the country.”(Ana Ayala). According to surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 70% of households in Ecuador that remained in virtual education said that they were learning less than before (UNICEF,2022). There should also be some international cooperations with other universities around the world in order to bring programs related to agriculture and that this negotiations are dealt with transparency

“We could follow the model like in Austria where it’s not compulsory to go to university or even finish high schools. A dual formation is called where the student decides if he/she decides to work in a specific place for 10 months related to your preferences and 2 months you go to an institute to learn the theory, which lasts 3 years overall and after an exam you become a professional. You are an apprentice, but you earn some money already.” (Anita Krainer). The dual system of VET, widely practiced and popular in Germany, serves as a model for the European Union. The effectiveness of such training, successfully combining the development of theoretical knowledge. (Pleshakova,2019). It’s an excellent opportunity that she highly recommends letting the teenagers from the rural areas become specialized in a specific field and be able to have a profession with the proper preparation and work experience.

The intercultural university which was in the rural area such as the Intercultural University of Nationalities and Indigenous Peoples Amawtay Wasi after the re categorization of the universities, was forced to close because it got category E which is the worst because the professors didn't have a PHD, sufficient resources and good infrastructure. This means it's still bureaucratic and occidentalized since the government isn't interested in keeping this type of university and just sticks to the parameters that the occidental side tells us to do. (Anita Krainer). The most worrisome situation concerns the Amawtay Wasi Intercultural University, which is facing a drastic 40.2% cut in its financial allocation. Its budget drops from USD 7.7 million in 2023 to USD 4.6 million this year (Soto,2024). This is evidence of the bad administration of the educational system and the ways the university is affected by lack of investment.

About the partnerships between the government, academia and civil society to reduce inequality. "Not much attention has been paid to improving the quality of education in Ecuador, the entities that oversee doing it have a process that it is too autoregulatory and not focused on innovation. Public policy must work with the students and the universities"(Milton Luna). For equality of opportunities and access to education a new mechanism with the help of technology must be created to make it easier for students to apply for university and be able to register themselves in an institution.

There needs to be an agreement with the companies that work in the rural area and ask them what type of careers they need, to change the study plan on the universities in the rural area. In the schools there can be guidance along with the teachers with the students for what career to choose based on the preferences of the student" (Andrea Montalvo). Ecuador proposes a quality education based on equity criteria that refers to equal opportunities and the possibility that all people have access to educational services that guarantee the necessary learning for each individual, that there is permanence of these services and that they allow the completion of the educational process (Ministry of Education, 2014).This suggests that both students and government should communicate in order to understand the requirements of each counterpart.

About the initiatives to improve access to tertiary education. "I am working in the teacher training in the rural area of the near the capital, parishes such as Nanegalito, Pachijal, Rio



Mashpi. It works in cooperation with the University of Otavalo, Panamerican Foundation for development, Boeing and the International University of La Rioja in Ecuador. It has benefited around a thousand students, and it's based on topics such as engineering, mathematics, science and technology and ethics. It's called E-STEM the initiative. The teachers receive a certificate validated by the Ministry of Education and they must have a background in the fields mentioned above" (Ana Ayala). These type of projects can be a good idea to decrease the number of people without education and train them in specific topics, where they could potentially work in the future.

## **Chapter 8**

### **8.1 Discussion**

In accordance with the interviewees and the research done in this thesis it can be said that the lack of infrastructure, the poor financial aid from the government and the poor quality of education makes the inequality of education in the country a serious problem. Many students don't count on the appropriate resources or guidance into entering tertiary education, there is discrimination among the rural students against the urban students. There is still a lot of research to get done and new policies to implement to improve the quality of education and make it more inclusive. There is financial support from the NGOs and other entities such as the Ministry of Education, in which they could develop projects in favor of the quality of education.

The government has not focused on the national reality of what is the country affronting regarding quality of education, it has made it a very exclude educational system with the state exams not being according with the levels of education of the rural and urban area, which are different. There are many barriers and requirements that rural students must fulfil when applying to a university. There are many conditions that must be met, and it makes it a really long process that is hard to understand. The reforms that made the exams harder and the choice of universities fewer, was a critical decision to make, the students lost the desire to apply for university with all the new rules and it made it more unequal. There is still a lot of bureaucratization and poor investment in education by the Ministry of education. All the interviewees agree that there is still a lot of investment and projects to be made to improve the

quality of education. However, there are initiatives on improving the quality of teachers and helping students with special projects done by several NGOs.

The disparity of education in Ecuador is made worse by the absence of investment in the sector. A lack of financing for education leads to several inequities, such as inadequate resources, out-of-date facilities, and a teacher shortage. Marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by these inequalities, which feeds the cycle of inequality. Students from low-income families and those who live in rural regions sometimes have less access to high-quality education, extracurricular activities, and chances for advanced study. They thus have a higher likelihood of having inferior academic success and less prospects for socioeconomic growth. As it facilitates the provision of enough resources, improved facilities, and better educational opportunities for all students in Ecuador, addressing the shortage of investment in education is essential for achieving equality (Berckman,2007).

As explained before the interviewees made several comments and suggestions to the topic of this thesis and I would recommend the following issues: The universities could also encourage students in the rural area into joining other careers related with agriculture or tourism which are the most important areas. However, companies and other institutions should also count them as important careers and make them useful. Special courses and workshops can be added to the degrees, which should also let the students be apprentices, so they already have some experience, while studying at the same time.

As Diaz et al. (2017) stated promoting diversity and inclusion in educational institutions is crucial to addressing the problem of prejudice and its effects on educational inequality. This entails putting rules against discrimination into place, training teachers and staff members on cultural sensitivity, and expanding the representation of other racial and ethnic groups among professors and administrators. Additionally, notwithstanding a student's ethnic background, affirmative action measures and specialized assistance programs can help level the playing field and promote more egalitarian possibilities.

Students' enthusiasm in pursuing vocations that fit with the requirements of their communities may be rekindled by encouraging rural development through targeted investments, encouraging entrepreneurship, and generating job possibilities in agriculture and tourism. I

agree that students in the rural area should learn something that is aligned with the rural context ,so that there is also an employment opportunity after or while they are doing their studies.Additionally, educational institutions may play a significant role in encouraging vocational training, stressing the significance of rural development, and developing curricula and programs that are tailored to the requirements and advantages of rural regions. Students may be more encouraged to choose careers that contribute to the sustainable prosperity and well-being of rural Ecuador by encouraging a feeling of pride and dedication to their communities.

One effective strategy is to improve the infrastructure and facilities of rural tertiary institutions, including the provision of modern classrooms, libraries, and access to up-to-date technology. By investing in the development of these resources, students in rural areas can benefit from a more conducive learning environment and gain access to essential educational materials and tools.To address the shortage of qualified faculty, the implementation of training and capacity-building programs for local educators can be instrumental. Offering professional development opportunities, workshops, and exchange programs with urban educational institutions can enhance the skills and expertise of rural teachers, enabling them to deliver high-quality education and updated curriculum content to their students. Such initiatives can promote knowledge sharing and foster a culture of continuous learning within rural tertiary institutions.

Financial assistance programs and scholarships specifically tailored for students from rural backgrounds can help mitigate the financial barriers to accessing tertiary education. By providing financial support for tuition fees, textbooks, and other educational expenses, these initiatives can ensure that talented students from rural areas could pursue higher education without being impeded by economic constraints. Additionally, the establishment of affordable student loan programs can enable students to manage their educational expenses more effectively and reduce the burden of upfront costs.

Creating a curriculum that aligns with the needs of the local job market is crucial in equipping students with practical skills that are relevant to their communities. Collaboration between rural educational institutions and local industries can facilitate the development of specialized

programs and vocational training courses that address the specific demands of the regional workforce. By integrating practical training and real-world experiences into the curriculum, students can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to secure employment opportunities within their local communities and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of rural areas.

Furthermore, expanding access to digital infrastructure and promoting the use of technology in education can play a pivotal role in reducing educational disparities. Establishing internet connectivity and providing students with access to digital learning tools and online resources can broaden their educational horizons and enable them to participate in virtual learning environments and global educational networks. This integration of technology can foster a more inclusive and dynamic learning experience for students in rural tertiary institutions, enhancing their educational outcomes and prospects. Overall, the government needs to pay special attention to the budget and increase it gradually to reduce this inequality. Education must be considered as the priority area in their government policies.

To decrease the dropouts in the rural areas a solution is to increase the supply of secondary education in or for rural areas, both in urban and rural areas. By giving them the opportunity to study and have a good educational background, so that they can apply to university and pass the state exams required in the different universities. There should also be some exams to see the level of knowledge that each student has in the rural area to develop an appropriate curriculum according to the reality and educational background that the rural students have.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the factors that I identified as damaging for the quality of education are the lack of proper infrastructure, lack of teachers, poor investment in education, lack of technological resources, lack of investment among other factors. The objective of this thesis was to find out the factors that made the education unequal; to develop some recommendations to improve the quality of education and to explain what the measures were taken by the two last government of Moreno and Correa which showed that the disparity in access to higher education in Ecuador is a serious problem that requires immediate attention and extensive change. Due to the political differences of each president the education plans changed drastically and that affected the evolution of the education system into a better position.

I identified that the two governments didn't focus on the investment needed to sustain a good quality system and there was no optimal distribution of resources. It also shows that the design of the state exams is not aligned with the curricula of the rural area which discriminates students from the rural area. The investigation has shown that marginalized students experience major challenges to obtaining a quality higher education, which feeds a cycle of low social mobility and social exclusion. A multi-pronged strategy is needed to address this imbalance, one that includes fair financial distribution, specific assistance programs for underrepresented groups, investments in technology infrastructure, and encouragement of research and innovation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix no.1: Interview Questions

#### Major questions

1. What are the specific challenges faced by rural students in accessing and pursuing tertiary education in Ecuador?
2. What are some of the key factors contributing to the inequality of tertiary education in rural areas of Ecuador?

3. How does the disparity in educational resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and technology, between urban and rural areas affect the quality of tertiary education in rural regions?
4. What educational policies has the current government implemented to improve the quality of the tertiary education in the rural area in Ecuador?
5. Are there any innovative models or initiatives being explored to improve access to tertiary education in rural areas of Ecuador, if yes which one?
6. How can partnerships between government, academia, and civil society organizations contribute to reducing the inequality of tertiary education in rural areas?

#### Minor questions

7. Are there specific subjects or fields of study that are particularly lacking in tertiary education options in rural areas? How does this impact the overall skill development and employability of rural students?
8. What strategies or approaches have been successful in bridging the gap in tertiary education between urban and rural areas in other countries or regions?
9. How does the cultural and social context of rural areas in Ecuador influence the access and participation of individuals in tertiary education?

## **Appendix no.2**

Interview brief:

Interviewee 1:

What are the specific challenges that rural students face when it comes to accessing tertiary education in Ecuador? Personally, I think that there is still a gender bias, there is still a triple role in the countryside, which was a theory that more or less came out in the 60s, 70s, but unfortunately in Ecuador it is still maintained, that is to say that Ecuadorian rural women basically still have the productive role, the reproductive role and the community role.

The reproductive role is obviously the caretakers of the home, both of the elderly and of the children, they incorporate these activities to their daily life and the third one is the community, to participate in these mingas, but they participate in the issue of providing food for the organization, but not as leaders of the organizations, so we have to start from the fact that there is still a patriarchal element in rural Ecuador. Another important issue is precisely the limited possibilities of staying in the countryside, so there are very few children who can be supported in the city by their parents in order to have access to higher education, and normally the children who leave the countryside do not return to the countryside because they

### Appendix no.3 List of figures

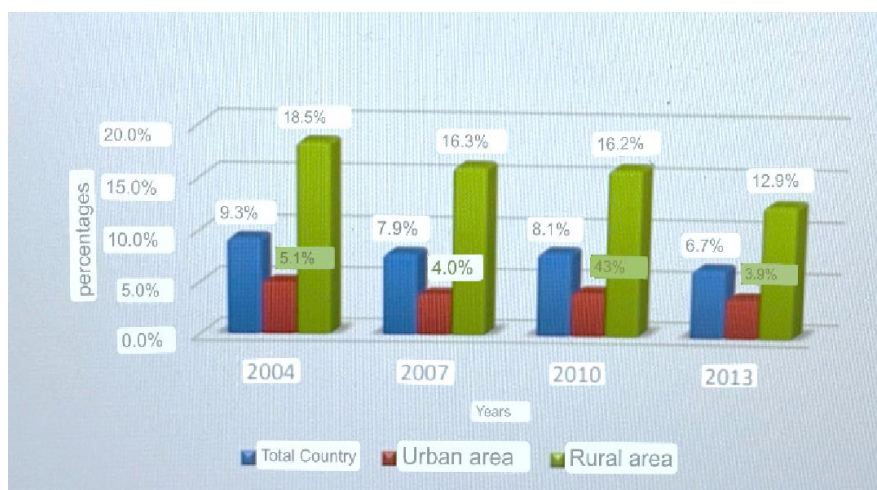


Figure 5. Illiteracy Rates in rural areas.2015.

Source:Calderon,2015.

Reasons of no attendance year 2010	Total national	By gender	Colum n1	By geographical area	Colum n2
	%	Men	Women	Urban	Rural

lack of economic resources	40,88	39,6	42,42	33,02	46,75
Age	0,77	0,72	0,83	0,29	1,12
Not interested in studying	12,46	15,14	9,24	13,84	11,42
lack of place	3,33	3,15	3,55	5,02	2,07
Work	18,94	24,72	12,01	20,78	17,56
Sickness of disability	7,67	9,15	5,91	9,49	6,82
No educational establishments	0,7	0,6	0,83	0,7	1,18
School failure	3,38	3,91	2,73	3,19	3,52
Household chores	7,26	0,33	15,57	8,68	6,2
Family doesn't let the student study	1,01	0,6	1,52	0,63	1,29
Finished studies	1,33	1,48	1,14	2,13	0,72
Pregnancy	1,75	0	3,84	2,1	1,36
Fear of teachers	0,52	0,61	0,42	0,58	0,49
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 2. School Dropout Disaggregated by Gender and Geographic Area.2015

Source:Ministry of education,2015

Graph 9: Applicants who have accepted a quota by ethnicity 2020-2021



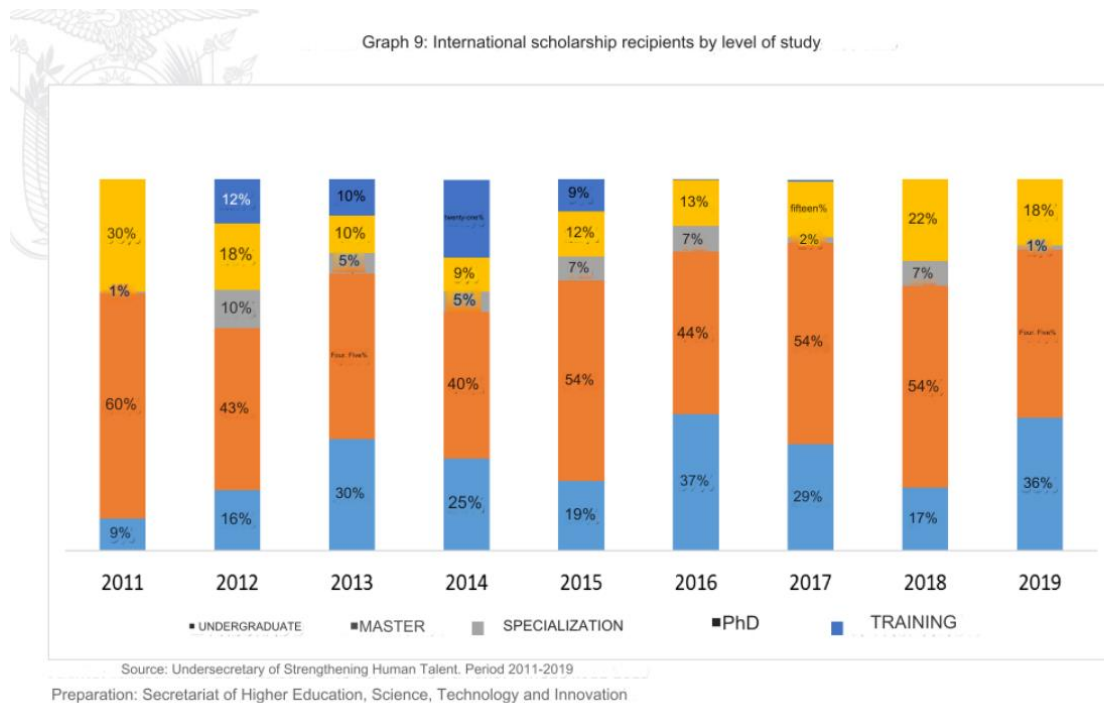
Source: SAES administrative records, 2021

Prepared by: SAES, 2021

Note: Ethnicity was obtained from the base of registered and migrated people from previous periods

Figure 3. Source: SAES administrative records, 2021

Prepared by: SAES, 2021



Source: Undersecretary of Strengthening Human Talent. Period 2011-2019

Preparation: Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

Figure 4. Percentage of scholarship recipients. 2015.

Made by the Ministry of Education

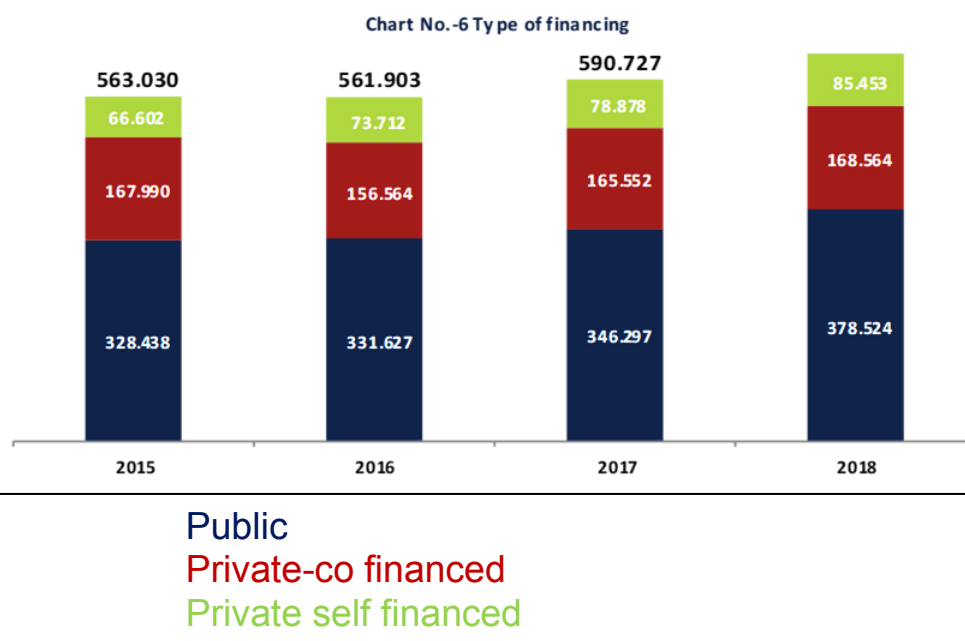


Figure 5. Type of institutions.2015

Source:Ministry of Education

Table N.- 4 Provincial distribution

Province	2017	2018	Part.%Var	.% 16/12
<b>Total</b>	<b>590.727</b>	<b>632.541</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>.38%</b>
PICHINCHA	139.513	160.114	25.31%	.79%
GUAYAS	135.141	131.602	20.81%	-0.53%
LOJA	62.492	64.547	10.20%	.65%
MANABI	49.655	56.687	8.96%	.68%
AZUAY	42.990	41.772	6.60%	-0.57%
CHIMBO RAZO	28.107	28.142	4,45%	0,02%
TUNGURAHUA	25.534	27.877	4,41%	1,77%
REST OF THE	107.295	121.800	19,3%	2,57%

Source: Sistema Integral de Información de Educación Superior (SIIES) - cutoff as of October 29, 2019 - 2016.  
 Prepared by: National Directorate of Information Management (DNIG) - Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT).

Graph 6.Provincial distribution.2019-2016

Source:Senescyt

Figure 24. Percentage of population with an urban-rural university degree

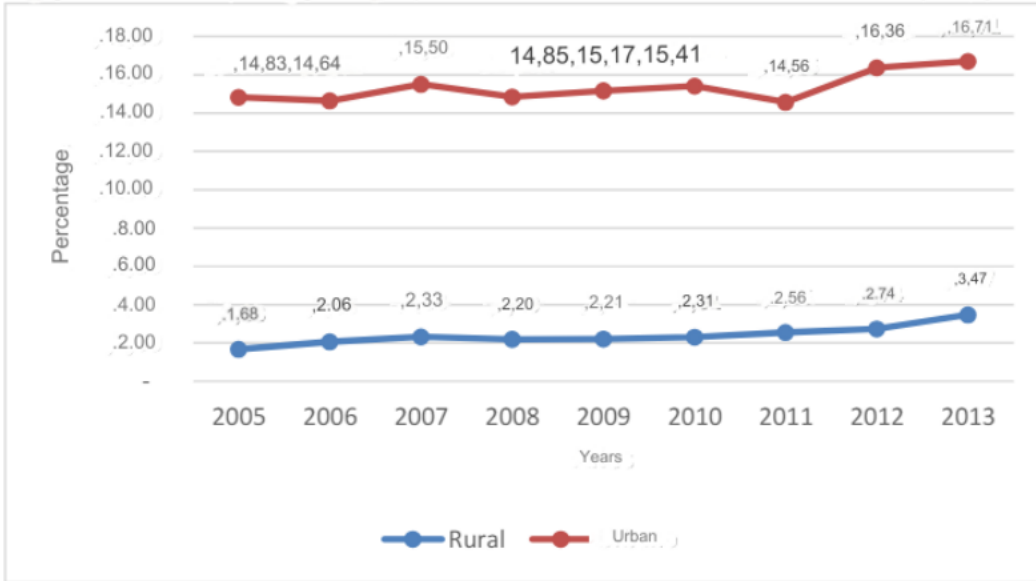
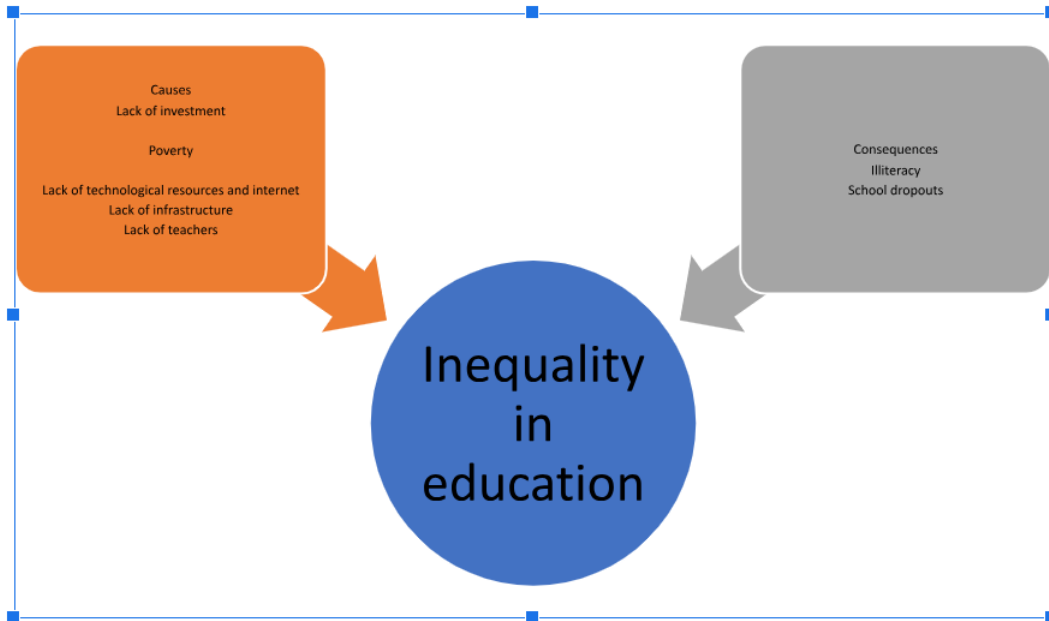


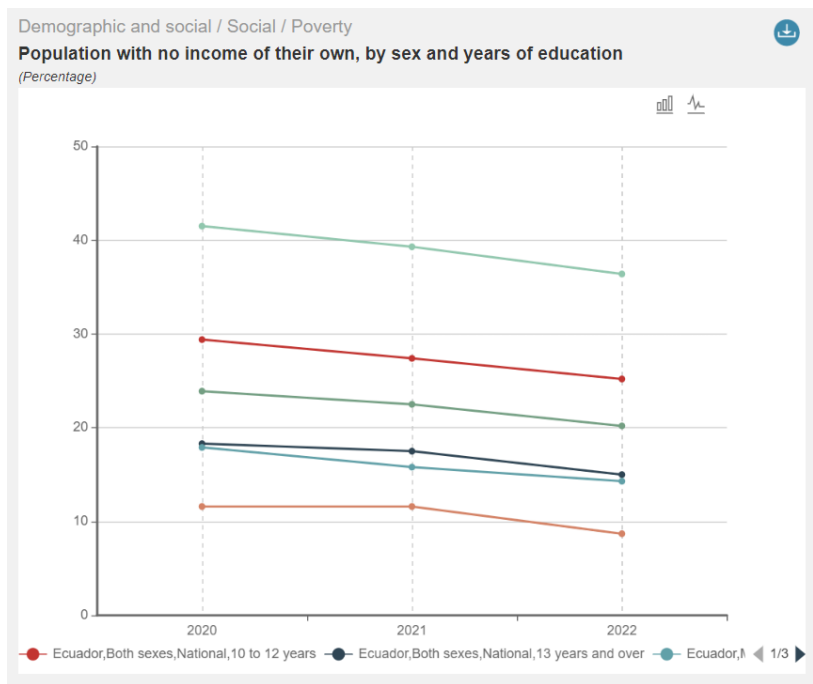
Figure 7. Percentage of population with third level degree in the urban and rural area.2015

Made by: Alejandra Calderon





**Figure number 8. 2023. Inequality in education. Made by the author.**



**Figure 9. CEPAL. 2024**

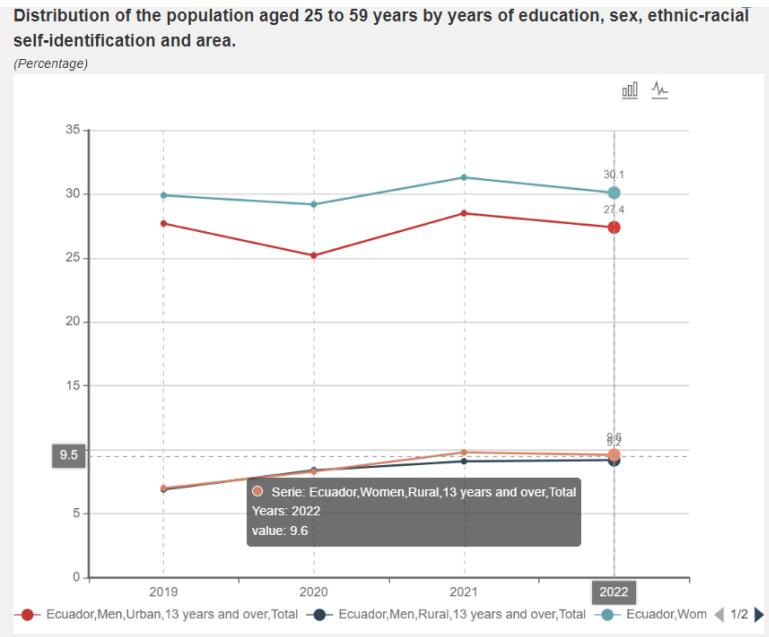


Figure 10..CEPAL.2024

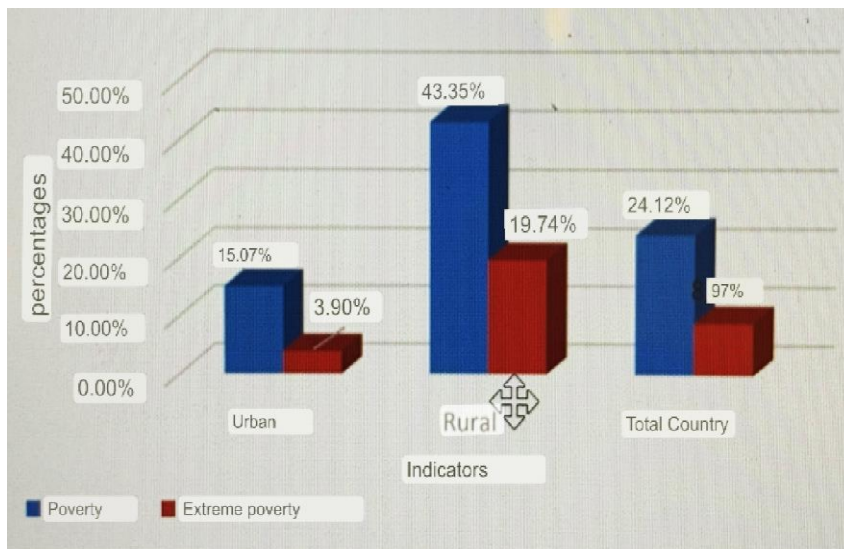


Figure 11. Poverty and extreme poverty in Ecuador by geographic area 2015.

Made by: Vivian Diaz and Juan Fernandez

Year	Budget of the Ministry of Education (Accrued as of December) USD	PIB (BCE)	%
2000	280,147,042.49	18,318,601,000.00	1.53%
2001	488,229,020.77	24,468,324,000.00	2.00%
2002	691,032,218.87	28,548,945,000.00	2.42%
2003	672,654,425.75	32,432,859,000.00	2.07%
2004	854,159,098.77	36,591,661,000.00	2.33%
2005	937,531,761.99	41,507,085,000.00	2.26%
2006	1,083,518,599.95	6,802,044,000.00	2.32%
2007	1,344,669,452.08	31,007,777,000.00	2.64%
2008	1,751,528,820.36	61,762,635,000.00	2.84%
2009	1,894,387,471.75	62,519,686,000.00	3.03%
2010	2,013,155,182.11	69,555,367,000.00	2.89%
2011	2,493,763,432.97	79,276,664,000.00	3.15%
2012	2,674,277,082.93	87,623,411,000.00	3.05%
2013	3,225,490,138.58	94,472,680,000.00	3.41%
2014	3,191,103,776.79	100,543,173,000.00	3.17%

Figure 12. Budget of the ministry of education.2015

Made by: Ministry of education.

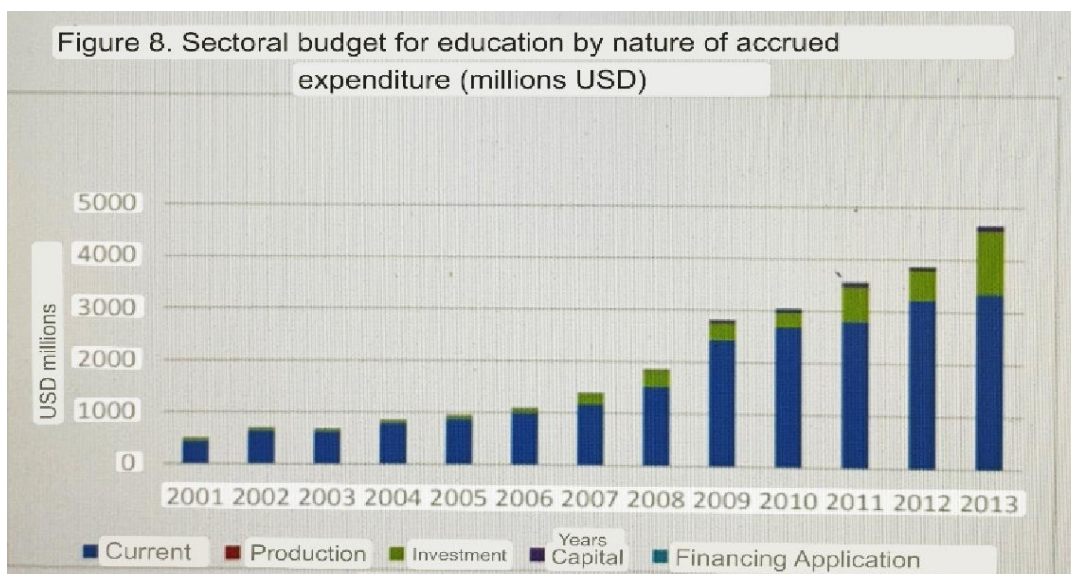


Figure 13. Expenditure in Education.2015

Made by the Ministry of Education