

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN
GRADUATE EDUCATION IN ECUADOR



UNIVERSIDAD DE ESPECIALIDADES ESPÍRITU SANTO

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS EMPRESARIALES – ICP

TÍTULO

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN
GRADUATE EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

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REQUISITO PREVIO A OPTAR EL GRADO DE:**

**INGENIERO EN CIENCIAS EMPRESARIALES CON
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EXTERIOR**

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DEDICATION:

First and foremost, I am very grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to receive a high level education and for His unconditional love and support throughout my life. He has strengthened me throughout this journey and has been my source of inspiration and motivation during my years of studies at UEES. I am very thankful to Him each day for allowing me to develop a more profound construction of my faith and for guiding me in each of the stages of my life.

I also dedicate this work to my parents; but most especially my mom, who has been a fundamental pillar of support in all stages of my educational pursuit. I am blessed with her life; it is thanks to her efforts and sacrifices that I am able to be here today. She continually demonstrates her incomparable love and care towards me.

To my brother, who I love and care so much; I want to give him a good example.

Finally, I express my sincere thanks to my friends and family for their encouragement and faith in me.

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RECOGNITION:

As a student and human being, I am very thankful to my tutor, Tatiana Macias, for her words of encouragement in times that I did not believe in myself and was in doubt. Additionally, I am thankful for my Dean Isidro Fierro, academic advisor Maria Isabel Armijo as well as other professors who have assisted and guided me many times during my academic years in the International Studies Faculty (ICP) in UEES. In general, I appreciate the support of every person who was part of my academic experience and has helped me become a better professional and leader.

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Opportunities and Limitations of the Public Investment in Graduate Education in Ecuador

Karina S. León Jiménez

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze the effectiveness of scholarship programs¹ sponsored by Ecuadorian government. Later on, the project examines actions taken by the government on improving the higher education system in Ecuador through the provision of international scholarships to fulfill people's third-level studies, rather than allocating those funds for local universities that could have an exponential impact. Mainly, the current administration has been involved in the implementation of new reforms to boost the quality of higher education with the mission of training Ecuadorians to become leaders and innovators. Nonetheless, there are some inconsistencies since upon the return to the country grant holders take jobs as professors and not so much other fields. Therefore, the study shows the benefits and limitations in the government's intervention in those areas. In exchange, it is recommended to strengthen local necessities and higher education.

Key words: scholarships, Ecuador, higher education, grantees, inefficiency

Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar la efectividad del programa de becas del gobierno Ecuatoriano. Más adelante, el documento examina los métodos que el gobierno toma en mejorar la educación superior como el de financiar becas internacionales a estudiantes en vez de designar esos fondos para mejorar la calidad de educación en universidades locales que puede resultar en un impacto exponencial. Principalmente, la presente administración ha implementado cambios que impulsen la calidad de educación superior con la misión de convertir a ecuatorianos en líderes e innovadores. Sin embargo, existen muchas inconsistencias debido que en su retorno al país, becarios aceptan trabajos de profesores y no en sus especialidades. Por esa razón, este documento muestra los beneficios y limitaciones de la intervención del en dichas áreas. A cambio es recomendado reforzar las necesidades del país y sus universidades.

Palabras claves: becas, Ecuador, educación superior, subsidio, gobierno

The scholarship programs are abroad in well-known universities.

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Introduction

“Education is the key to success.”

Solomon Ortiz

In most cases, people strive hard to fulfill their studies and aspirations in order to one day obtain stable and well-paid jobs. Individuals continue their studies into higher education with the intention of becoming effective managers, business owners, or employees; in general, people look for ways to gain confidence and skills with the interest of achieving a high level of success and becoming proficient professionals (Morem, 2005).

Having access to high-quality education allows everyone to envision themselves as doctors, ambassadors, scientists, or even the president of their country (Watkins, 2012). All this can be possible with the participation of the government safeguarding the quality of higher education for its residents. Ecuador does this by encouraging its people to pursue their studies until they graduate from college. Ecuadorian government prefers that students obtain their PHD as well, or at least their masters, both of which are attainable through intergovernmental programs in the fields of science and research (OEI, 2015). Ecuador’s government efforts in this will be discussed in this paper.

Concerning Ecuador’s higher education, private and state owned universities have been under a lot of pressure to renovate their infrastructure in order to become a well structured academic institution that is suitable for students to succeed as well-known universities abroad do (Borja, Feijoo, Gutierréz, Jaramillo, & Orellana, 2014). The reason can be linked to the discomfort shown by President Correa on the first years of his administration back on 2009; in an interview in the Carondelet Palace, he referred to universities in Ecuador as “Garage Universities,” and added

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“Ecuador probably has the worst universities in South America” (NEUMAN, 2012).

Truthfully, state universities in Ecuador are equipped with limited resources and do not have the academic elements to assure achievement. They lack technology, structure, and more, but this is currently slowly changing and has been prioritized since 2009 in Correa’s administration (British Council, 2015). Unfortunately, universities countrywide do not serve their full purpose of preparing students of higher education compared to other education systems overseas. Nonetheless, regardless of how poor superior education system is perceived by the government and its Ecuadorian people, citizens will still pursue getting a bachelor’s degree as a means to have a better future.

First, the degree a person obtains is highly recognized in Ecuador since it traditionally provides a sense of superiority among society. In fact, as shown by the Hofstede onion model, Ecuador has a power distance of 78, which is one of the higher rankings of PDI (Hofstede, 2012). PDI stands for power distance indicator, which is one of the 6th dimensions in the Hofstede model that deals with the cultural response of inequality and is linked to race and social class.

Another reason why people pursue their higher level studies in Ecuador is to better their chances of getting a privileged job and consequently an enhanced quality of life. Employers are very strict on this; they put a lot of pressure on their workers to have a post-high school education. Since there is higher demand than supply for jobs, businesses are extra meticulous in choosing the best candidate for the job-offer, leaving those that do not have a higher education behind (Esteves, 2006). In Ecuador, without a higher education degree, many applicants are instantly excluded from accessing the workplace they want. This makes people feel that the bar to get a stable contract in Ecuador is set very high and few are able to reach.

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There is a tendency that employers would rather choose someone with years of experience and a professional degree in their resume than someone with no superior education (Espinosa & Esteves, 2006). This situation is unfortunate for the many people who are not able to start a career. Nevertheless, that is the reality; many businesses would not hire employees without the academic prerequisites in spite of their will and capacities. Academic preparation is required and non-negotiable for high status jobs, but it is problematic because there are a lot of constraints in becoming a professional in Ecuador. Even worse, due to the high need of jobs, businesses are not paying fair wages even with a bachelor's degree (Esteves, 2006).

Furthermore, the objective of this paper is to analyze the efficiency of the government spending in terms of scholarships sponsorship as means to improve the development of the country in technology, sciences, health, innovation, commerce and more. In exchange, it is better to consider other alternatives for improving superior education, like starting first and foremost within borders, instead of having high expenditures in financing expensive universities for a percentage of the population.

Literature review

Superior Education in Ecuador

The public higher education system in Ecuador is not known to be the best nor of finest quality (Borja, Feijoo, Gutierréz, Jaramillo, & Orellana, 2014). In fact, one of Ecuador's main state universities *Universidad de Guayaquil*² is positioned at number 4,121 in the global ranking of Latin America universities, and other public universities go as far as number 21,471 (Webometrics, 2016). Ecuador is not fully developed in many industrial, technological, and other professional areas. Therefore, the

² *Universidad de Guayaquil is a public university in Ecuador*

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teachings in most public institutions are very limited and are not suited for forming high-level scholars.

As a result of the low academic level of universities in Ecuador, the administration of President Correa has recently interfered in changing the value of superior education in Ecuador. This change will not be overnight nor will it rise to the level of many excellent universities abroad, but it will slowly impact the country and its students. Ever since the president declared that the university campuses were “Garage Universities”, which was mentioned earlier in this paper, there have been some reforms in Ecuador’s universities and its teachings (Just Landed, 2016).

For example: in 2013, the President, together with the collaboration of the CEAACCESS³, took on the challenge of categorizing the country’s universities as a way to rectify the terrible academic conditions that many campuses had due to the lack of regulations in the past (CEAACES, 2015). The rating goes from A to D, and the grade obtained symbolizes the effort and excellence of the university.

Consequently, the universities with the lowest marking faced the risk of being closed down. Additionally, those with a bad score work hard to regain their status so as to not be perceived as less worth. This regulation helps highlight the better universities of the country, as well as diminishing the merit of those colleges that receive the lower grade. The purpose of this policy is for Ecuadorians to have access to real quality higher education based on merit and not class eminence. Nonetheless, there are also some side effects on these modifications, one of them being that the better-rated universities become more expensive than the less rated.

³ Consejo de Evaluación, Acreditación y Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior is an organization that measures how proper is a higher education institution based on some parameters

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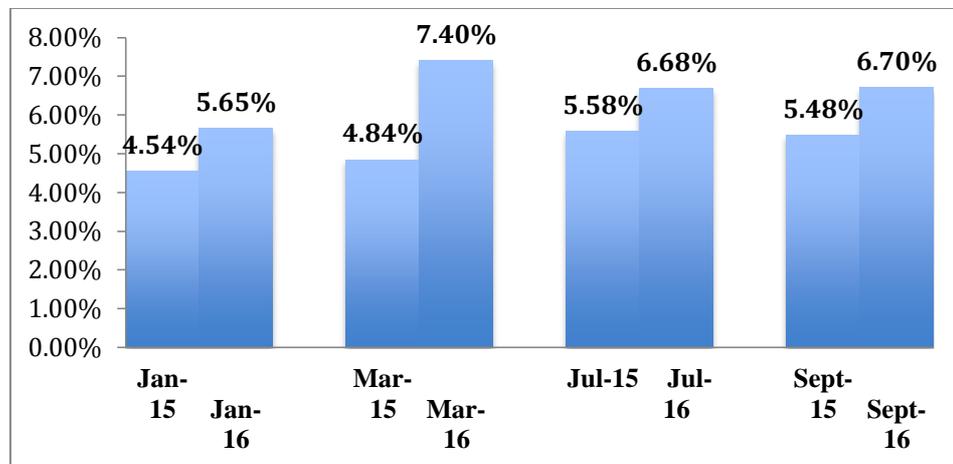
Furthermore, having a superior education is perceived as fortunate. Low-income Ecuadorian families with the desire to complete their careers are discouraged in attending school due to the fact that they need to provide for their families and work full time (Espinosa & Esteves, 2006). Similarly, youths often cannot afford a higher education so they have no other option than to work and study at the same time, resulting in discouragement and draining them (Esteves, 2006).

An example is Belén Montalvo who is a 24 years-old student from Guayaquil, Ecuador who is unable to pay for her university. This is because earlier this year she was sadly discharged from her job, and her mom does not have the income to pay for her school, which limits her from finishing her career (El Comercio, 2016). This is the reality of many Ecuadorians, especially young people, who feel incompetent, rejected, and unstable in the labor market (Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil, n.d). Even if some decided to make sacrifices, in the end, students are convinced that is not worth it since the education system is not ideal, and there is high unemployment in various work fields, even with a college degree.

Most recently, based on the results of the statistics of September 2016, the unemployment rate of Ecuador has augmented to 5.2%. This shows a significant increase of 0.9 percentage points compared to the results of last year's unemployment rate, which was 4.3%. Also in urban areas the unemployment rate for 2016 is 6.7%, showing a significant variation of 1.2 percentage points compared to last year's rate, and is argued to be the same rate as in 2007, which shows a serious setback (Martín, 2016). Hence, many people feel frustrated and hopeless while searching for a job. So as time passes more people feel it's too late to enter college, leaving them no other option than to find low status jobs that would consider hiring them without completing their superior education. The next graph

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shows the fluctuations of unemployment rate in Ecuador, demonstrating the rise in unemployment on 2016 (Trading Economics , 2016).



Graph N° 1: Ecuador Unemployment Rate 2016

Source: Banco Central del Ecuador (Trading Economics, 2016)

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Elaborated by: author

Overall, Ecuadorians feel it is unreachable for them to get the jobs they want due to their insufficient academic preparation, lack of professional experience, and poor status (Espinosa & Esteves, 2006). This is a social cycle that interferes with the economic growth of the country as well as the development of human talent.

Ecuador's Take on Superior Education

One of the organizations that speak very rigorously about education and advocates for it is the UNESCO and defends: “*Education is empowering, and it enables all persons to participate effectively in a free society, and promotes understanding tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups*” (Power, 2015). Undeniably, education serves as a stool for people to rise above and be knowledgeable leaders. Likewise, education is a necessity, benefit, and a human right that everyone should have access to. It is beneficial for the country to have knowledgeable and prepared citizens. Educated people undoubtedly

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contribute a lot in the stability, development and democracy of the country (Tamm, 2008).

In Ecuador, for instance, the government contributes to superior education through the provision of loans and grants for citizens to complete their careers abroad as a mean to transfer knowledge into the country. This is believed to improve the advancement of the country's education and market sectors (Senescyt , 2016). Indisputably, education serves as a basis for the prosperity of a nation and is a big part in the economy because it provides evolution and stability. Furthermore, a country can build a strong foundation through proper investment on education, which results in the creation of more jobs (Fisher, 2013). Nonetheless, there should be boundaries on the participation of the government regarding superior education, one being the extreme expenditures (Tamm, 2008).

The matter of higher education is serious business that requires much planning and research in order to accurately spend public funds. For that reason, it is important to look into the changes and improvements in the higher education system. Ecuador's government emphasizes a lot in the provision of grants and scholarships, but it is essential to see how this program is beneficial for the economy and residents.

Further along it will be discussed the amounts of money the government spends in scholarships for financing expensive careers overseas in exchange for the people to become professionals. This proposal was presented by the president, but the aim of this paper is to analyze if it is correct for the Ecuadorian government to distribute these high costs into scholarships.

Methodology

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The methodological boarding of this paper is a qualitative approach that leads to the analysis of the efficiency of the government interfering in higher education through the provision of grants. The objective of this qualitative analysis involves examining data from specified documents and government records in order to dissect the information provided and arrive at a more complete understanding of the government's participation in higher education and provision of scholarships.

More particularly, the projects aims to examine Ecuadorian approaches in recovering higher education during the administration of President Correa and express the benefits and limitations in having the government sponsoring students to complete their higher-level studies overseas. Later on in the paper there would be a comparison with the management held by the United Kingdom and South Korea towards this field and how their tactics have succeeded for improving higher education. Lastly, the gathered information will give the outlook of Ecuador's take in higher education and scholarship. Plus, in recommendations there will be feedback for improving the perception of Ecuadorians on higher education.

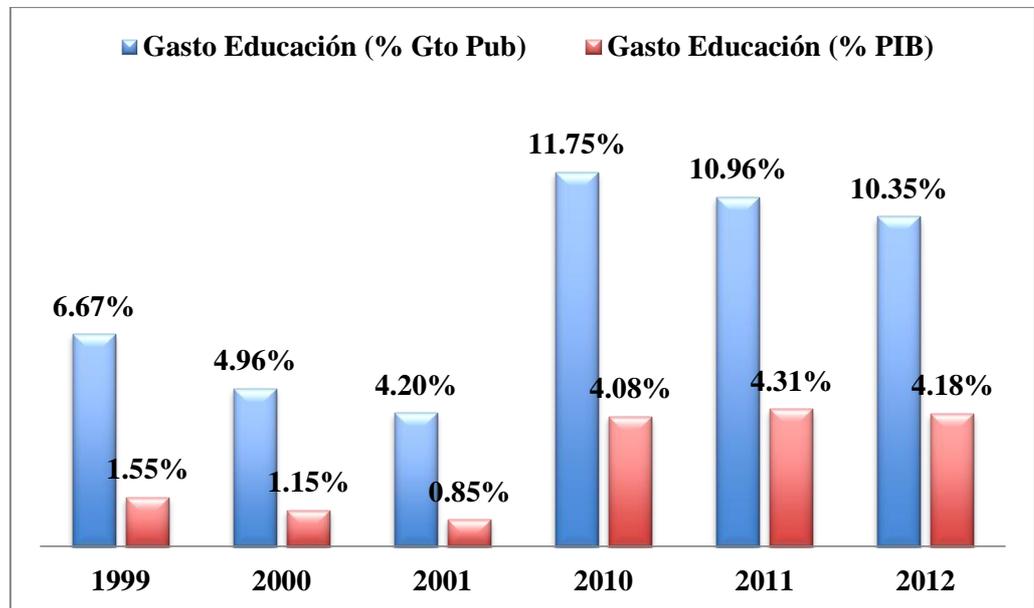
Results

The intervention of the government on higher education has been praised and recognized. According to the Senescyt⁴, Ecuador invests the greatest amount of money towards superior education in all of Latin America (Senescyt , 2016). On January 15th 2016, president Rafael Correa reached 9 years in power; during this time milestones were reached and higher education was strengthened, giving much awareness on the transfer of knowledge, technology and innovation (DW, 2016). In fact, Ecuador went from place 59 on 2011 to 60 on 2012 in the country's ranking in education investment (Datosmacro, n/d). The following graphs show a

⁴ Secretary of Higher Education, Sciences, Technology and Innovation in Ecuador

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comparison in public expenditures in education before the administration of Rafael Correa and after, presenting significant advancements.



Graph N° 03: Public Spending on Education in Ecuador from 1999-2001 and 2010-2012

Source: Expansion Datos Macro, (Datosmacro, n/d)

Elaborated by: author

In 2008, president Correa decided to amend the *Carta Magna* in order to improve many areas that according to the legislators had been ignored for a while in past parliaments, one being higher education (Presidencia República del Ecuador, 2014). Ever since, aspects on human rights were greatly broadened and, more specifically, the right to a free higher education was enforced (Acosta & Moreano, 2008). This date initiated a change in higher education, giving citizens the opportunity for higher education and thus, more career opportunities. Forming great professionals is a fundamental in each country, and Ecuador's government in recent years is a believer of that. Likewise, as seen in previous graphs the investment allocated to education during the administration of Rafael Correa is significant and has raised up to millions of dollars when before only reached out to thousand of dollars. Moreover public spending as a

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percentage of Ecuador's GDP in recent years represents more than 10%, rather than before when it was less than 5%. This demonstrates the high attention given to education during the administration of Rafael Correa.

For instance, Correa's administration runs a developmental political project called "*Revolución Ciudadana*"⁵. This project is a state-run program led by Correa's activists and advocates of education and knowledge (Stoen, 2015). This program is similar to one of an Urban Revolution system whose mission is quantitative and promotes the growth of cities as well as urban centers, driven by transformation and progress (Tonon, 2015). Apparently, this *Revolución Ciudadana* concept is the main motive for Correa to be inspired on improving higher education.

One of the methods he finds more accurate is to offer grants and loans to Ecuadorians in order to allow them have access to centers of studies that because of their current circumstances, it is thought that without the government aid, it would be unattainable. The idea is to enable them to become more knowledgeable and proficient professionals, so afterwards they can bring their knowledge on their fields of expertise back to the country (British Council, 2015). The aim of the developmental political project, guided by President Correa and his administration, is to improve the education system in order to have more qualified human talent (Borja, Feijoo, Gutierrez, Jaramillo, & Orellana, 2014).

The scholarship program (abroad) is not the only tool they are proposing. In fact, they are many other works from the Ecuadorian government for improving higher education system. First, the classification of universities, another is the aforementioned as well as, potential plan for provision of free superior education for Ecuadorians. This progress in higher education has helped enforce more respect in the

⁵ For further information, visit: <http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/gabinete-de-la-revolucion-ciudadana/>

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quality of higher education, especially with the communication between the government and universities (Senescyt , 2016). Now, universities in Ecuador demand more from teachers by asking them to obtain a masters or PhD in order for them to continue teaching, and in return the university gets a higher rate in the ranking of universities (Senescyt , 2016). Due to this positive intervention of the Ecuadorian government, universities can now have more attention in guaranteeing excellence and quality to their students (CEAACES, 2015).

In total, the *Revolución Ciudadana* works for an economic transformation through the model of “Good Living” (Buen Vivir⁶), which desires to change the country’s education system with different approaches, and form more professionals, improving the decisions in the country (Stoen, 2015). It is to safe to say that in the past decade there has been a distinguished difference in the country’s progress relating to academic opportunities and an equal chance to attend university. This is due to the support of the government, which greatly benefits the future of Ecuadorian citizens (Borja, Feijoo, Gutierréz, Jaramillo, & Orellana, 2014).

Education development is key for the future of Ecuadorians since it helps the country to form more doers and seekers of achievement, allowing them to have the opportunity of starting new businesses and innovations through a well-established education system that looks after their preparation and skills. In all, Ecuador aims to become a global player with global responsibilities.

Nevertheless, there are also restraints and disadvantages in having the government be too involved in the future and professions of Ecuadorians. For example, in Ecuador, in order to be admitted into a public university,

⁶ http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/07/Plan_Nacional_para_el_Buen_Vivir.pdf

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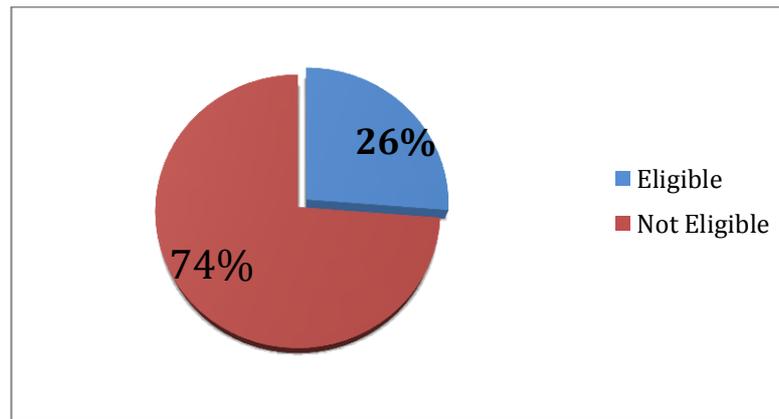
students require to pass an aptitude test that decides if the student is eligible or not for their selected career, and in most cases, only students with very good skills can manage to get the preferred career (Sistema Nacional de Nivelación y Admisión, 2015). This is part of the enrollment process for getting into college. Regardless of their career preference, the SNNA is the channel in charge for listing the best profession alternatives for students to pick from, and this is based on their test results and not appeals (Subsecretaría de Información - SENPLADES, 2015).

Consequently, according to *INEC*⁷, on 2011, the entrance of students into university reduced to 30.1%, which is the year that this law was implemented, and later reduced to 26.6% on 2013 (CÁRDENAS, 2015). As stated, this resulted a reduction of students getting into college, showing that they would rather not enter college than study something they do not desire (El Universo, 2014). Unfortunately, students are discouraged in choosing their preferred profession, and instead are enforced to choose the given alternative in order to have the probability of finding a decent job in the future.

Moreover, another limitation, and the main focus of this paper, is the intervention of the Ecuadorian government sponsoring expensive careers for some students to complete their studies abroad. In 2013 alone, the government invested 100 million dollars for more than 821 scholarships (Andes, 2013). Additionally, between 2007 and 2015, there has been a total 402.32 million USD invested in scholarships (SENESCYT, 2015). This shows the high public expenditure assigned to scholarships. Bear in mind that there are several phases during the year for granting scholarships. In the first phase of 2013, there were a total of, 3130 applicants, out of whom only 821 people were eligible (Andes, 2013).

⁷ National Statistics and Census Institute does Ecuador's demographic, economical, health and other ratios (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*)

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Graph N° 04: Applicants Approved for a Scholarship from the Senescyt on 2013

Note: The chart shows the percentage of students qualified for a scholarship in 2013 based on the numbers given above.

Source: Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica (Andes, 2013)

Elaborated by: author

This demonstrates the unbalanced proportion of students admitted to start their higher education. Plus, this also shows the numerous amounts of people interested to become a professional but the few that were actually qualified, which is a disadvantage. Moreover, the 2,309 people that did not obtain a scholarship are left out due to the inequality of the scholarship program that only supports a segment of the population (Andes, 2013).

Moreover, the students that received scholarships from the Senescyt are expected to come back to work in Ecuador for at least double the time of the duration of their career in order to pay off their grants (Senescyt , 2016). Meaning that once settled in Ecuador, grantees need to be employed in order to accrue the whole time spent studying overseas, and then be allowed to leave the country. Furthermore, based on the Senescyt site, supposedly the grantee will have no trouble finding an adequate job promptly, but this is not the case (Senescyt , 2016). Again, this shows the restrictions and limitations imposed on Ecuadorian people for the chance of having a higher education and being competent in the labor market.

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In addition, there is no actual prognosis from the government explaining how these funds will provide for development in the near future. There are only assumptions from the president and statistics of the amount invested yearly on scholarships, but no actual record of how it will contribute to the country in a few years.

Likewise, grant holders are unaware of their status once they return to the country, and on top, deal with feelings of insecurity in their professional future since the government does not do a follow up with them. This is shown in a forum that the grantees created where they discuss their inconveniences and negative feelings towards the scholarships and their return to the country. In this post, ex-grant holders and current grantees share their difficult experiences of finding a job, as well as their discontentment of not earning a fair wage regardless of their high level studies (Discusión General de Becarios, 2013). Others give recommendations on working for universities since there are no private companies willing to pay a decent salary with the knowledge they have acquired from overseas. Overall, this space of discussion shows that grantees do not have job options, especially in their field, and therefore need to accept a less remunerated job in order to not accrue more time in the country.

An example is Fernando Landines, ex-grantee with masters in Food Science Engineering from Valencia, Spain, who returned to the country in February 2015 and is working as a teacher in Espol University. He expresses his experience with rejection from private companies that would not hire him without professional experience. Due to his time abroad, this results impossible to have (Discusión General de Becarios, 2013). Originally he wanted to work as a general manager, but soon his dream faded because a company requires 5 years of professional experience for the job. Besides, if he accepted a job as an analyst in another company than he would be earning less than the standard, which is not justifiable

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with his academic preparation. Therefore, his last alternative was accepting a job as a professor, even though is not his specialty (Landines, 2016).

This reveals that there is no pledge that grant-holders would find a proper job upon their return, unless it is given by the government, which again shows negative aspects on the allocation of these funds for scholarships. The purpose of these scholarships is for the recipients to complete their studies in order to contribute to the country and reboot the economy through employment and innovation. However, coming to work for the state just means that their salaries continue to be financed by the government's funds in job areas that are not their specialty.

Moreover, according to Rene Ramirez, Secretary of State for Higher Education, out of the 98% returned grantees only 20% claim to be working in the private sector. As a result, 20% are in the health system, 35%-40% are in universities and the remaining 43% are in the public sector, with a salary above average than the standard professional (Andes, 2016). The President claims that proficient human talent can make a desert blossom and without it causes desertification, thus according to him these grants will be the rescue of the country's low-academic levels and future employment (Pichincha Universal EC, 2016). However, ideally grantees need to return to work in their field and be tracked upon, but like aforesaid, this has not been done. The government should prepare a forecast that justifies the distribution of these funds in scholarships, but has not and for now the return of investment is ambiguous.

This program has had some errors and limitations (Vallejo, 2016). For example, President Rafael Correa admitted that there are mistakes in the process of granting a scholarship that need to be adjusted. One such mistake is that there are scholarships granted to students whose career plan is not associated to the necessities of the country (Pichincha Universal EC,

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2016). This is evidently a bad judgment since their experience and knowledge is not exploitable in Ecuador so there is a low impact on the country's progress, and, on top of this, the grant holder will not find a fitting job offer related to his or her specialty.

Again, this confirms that the excessive intervention of the government can cause setbacks in the development of the country's education and labor force because by receiving a grantee into the country, after many years of studying abroad, with a career that is not demanded in the workforce, only triggers the unemployment rate to go higher. Consequently, he or she will not be able to perform any activity related to their profession. In fact, according to Hayek, the state should have a limit for subsidizing education, even more when the benefits for the community are not apparent. For that reason, if the benefits for the country are less than the sacrifices and costs it represents, than is better for the student to look for their own means to finance an expensive career abroad (Hayek, 2008).

This does not connote that the government should be a bystander and should not take part of enhancing of superior education. By all means, the state should be responsible for caring, forming, and aiding citizens but like Friedman says, "...this should not be reason for excessive state involvement" (Friedman, 2008). The attention put into subsidizing expensive higher education scholarships for students must be equally balanced with the need of creating more jobs and spaces for entrepreneurs to innovate, and at the same time improving the education system within the country.

Analysis

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The capacity of effectiveness and analysis of the government's choices in granting of scholarships⁸

As mentioned above, there are good accomplishments in Correa's administration in regards to looking after the superior education of Ecuadorians, but now the attempt is to show the efficacy of the government in funding grants for citizens to culminate their third-level studies abroad.

One of the fundamental doctrines of the government is to analyze what should be the economic-efficiency on the allocation of funds. Thus, efficiency is considered a significant and desirable goal for the economy (Buchanan, 2013). Desirably, the heart for improving the higher education system should be in creating more promising jobs in different work fields like technology, sciences, etc. (UK Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011). This should be applied in Ecuador in order for grantees to put in practice their experience and knowledge acquired from well-known universities overseas. However, this is not the case, since some returned scholarship holders have no better option than to involuntarily be full time professors (Discusión General de Becarios, 2013). This knowledge gives a feedback of the probable inefficiencies of the scholarship regime.

Further, the incentive for students to complete their high-level studies, abroad or local, is to learn and work in their field of study upon their return. Subsequently, these professionals can have a well-paid job that, at the same time, contributes to the economy. Nonetheless, Ecuador first invests in expensive scholarships and then face with the reality of having them unemployed or not exploiting their valued skills (Andes, 2016).

⁸ The following topic that will be discussed is the effectiveness of the government intervening on superior education through the funding of expensive scholarships and loans for students to complete their third-level studies abroad.

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Consequently, it is not a reflection of efficiency in the program since not all professionals have an equal employment opportunity.

Moreover, that is a recent problem in Ecuador and is related to what Professor Milton Friedman said regarding investing in higher education, “it is important to keep in mind the problem of having more intellectuals than the government can profitably employ” (Hayek, 2008). He continued saying that people with subsidized higher education should be able to earn a higher income in order to justify the investment. In other words, based on Friedman there should be limits in the provision of grants in higher education at public expense before it is counterproductive to the country’s needs.

Also, according to Pablo Ospina, PHD graduate from University of Amsterdam and professor in *Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar* in Ecuador, it is not fully efficient to take away the funds dedicated for higher-level institutions of the country, *Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar* and *Flacso*, to sponsor students to study abroad. He feels that this does not help promote local development that have done a well job in supporting students, creating academic publications, promoting employment, and more, thus, argues that is not effective or fair to allocate 32 thousand dollars per student to study overseas rather than strengthening local capacities (Peralta, 2016).

Likewise, it can be perceived that the high-costs assigned per student to study in a well-known university overseas is too overpriced and hard to sustain overtime. However, President Correa thinks otherwise; in his usual speeches done on Saturdays with national coverage, he expressed that is more “efficient” to allocate public funds to students, who he refers to them as “the demand”, rather than subsidizing postgraduate universities. According to him is better to meet the needs of students in Ecuador who

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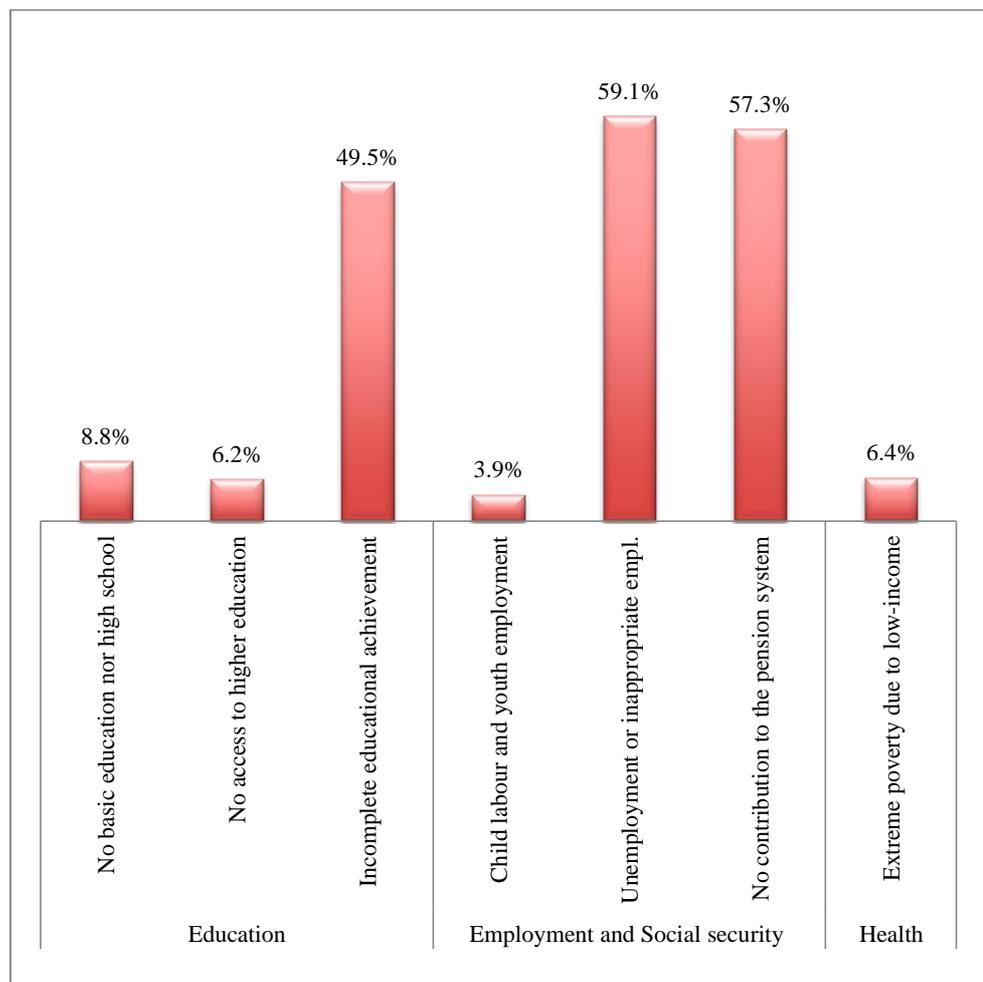
allegedly will transform the condition of the country instead of paying high salaries to bureaucrats in graduate institutions (Andes, 2016).

Nonetheless, based on Friedman “*it is important to keep in mind that the people, through taxes and other fees, finance those scholarships, and just a certain benefit from it, thus only a few enjoy that unearned advantage that not all can claim*”. This thought actually contradicts with what the president believes regarding supporting more students than universities. Based on this, it is analyzed that the people are who finance these scholarships and therefore everyone should ideally benefit from it. However, in Ecuador having a bachelors or masters degree is not a right that each citizen can claim.

This is due to the fact that not all applicants are selected to have a scholarship; yet most people need and want it. Moreover he stated, “as far as education at public expense is concerned, the argument for equal treatment for all is strong” (Hayek, 2008). Furthermore, this is certain since, as mentioned before, many Ecuadorians cannot complete their third-level studies overseas nor in the country due to low-income and other responsibilities (Añazco & Pérez, 2015). Thus not everyone can enjoy the privilege of receiving a grant to complete their higher studies demonstrating inconsistencies and inefficiency in the distribution of those reserves.

The next graph clearly illustrates the high percentage of people in Ecuadorian households that have not been able to complete their higher education. There are other indicators that show serious deprivations in areas of education, employment and health. Therefore this demonstrates the inconsistencies of attending a higher-level institution in Ecuador.

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Graph N° 5: Deprivation Rates of Households by Indicator up to December 2015

Source: Instituto Nacional de estadísticas y censos - INEC, (R. Castillo, 2015)

Elaborated by: author

Additionally, it is useful to compare Ecuador's higher education approach with UK's government tactic in assuring efficiency and excellence in their higher education design. Their strategy for financing students is linked with the restoring of university institutions. For them all universities must offer a good student experience to remain competitive, and additionally ensure the creation of job spaces for the high achieving students. Plus, the UK government gives awards to universities nationwide if they combine good quality and value for money, and they are also

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recognized if their tuition charge is below a specific amount (UK Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011).

All these are approaches managed by the UK's government for incentivizing students and universities. They work together with the people and find an equilibrium that makes sure to not create a cost liability for their government. Furthermore, UK's higher education institutions focus on providing quality teaching. For that reason their higher education system is mainly oriented on providing the best education within their country by fixing any errors in their high-level institutions' structure and improving the quality of education.

Moreover, another way to analyze the efficiency of how people are after an imposed law or reform is with the theory of value called "Willingness-to-Pay-Principle" (Buchanan, 2013). For example, the Ecuadorian government takes action to improve the higher education system in Ecuador through a scholarship program like is already known, and this allows people to complete their higher third-level studies overseas. The regime makes the rules of who is likely or not to receive an aid, and people are required to follow and comply with those rules. However, the people are the receivers of such rules, and at times those guidelines are not a win-win situation for them.

In such cases, the "Willingness-to-Pay-Principle" serves to perceive the value or worth of the people towards a law or reform made by the government, and based on the people's reactions have an analysis if it is efficient to have that adjustment (Buchanan, 2013). This reading basically voices that people can have a say on what is imposed on them, and they can petition the government to do as it benefits all and not just a few like in the scholarship program. Therefore, in the forum of the grant holders, aforementioned, are opinions from grantees of their perception of value for the scholarship programs that leads to the conclusion that there are many

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gaps and contingencies with the approach of sending people abroad and having them return to work for less (Discusión General de Becarios, 2013).

The idea as perceived by the President is for the scholarship program boost education and incentivizes people to live in Ecuador. However, the millions of dollars invested and the high unemployment ratios actually show the low performance of the scholarship program. If there are more losses than immediate gains then is important to look at it like signals to find more alternatives. Furthermore, like the article voices, it is important that the changes from the government focus on reflecting the value of the people whilst maximizing the ability to use markets and human talent to achieve a more stable economy (Buchanan, 2013).

In all the scholarship program, as mentioned above, has disadvantages. The same method was also applied in Kazakhstan, and it too had many inaccuracies. In Kazakhstan the government sponsored scholarship programs abroad, as well as in Ecuador, to form profesionas and have them return to the country being more qualified experts in fields of business, trade etc. However, Kazakhstan also presented the same limitations in finding jobs as Ecuadorians. The professional environment and Kazakhstan's culture did not help the grant holders adapt back their old lives upon returning from their studies abroad and that caused many issues of adjustment. (Perna & Jumakulov, 2013).

In total, the reading gives an overview of the challenges and inefficiencies that Kazakhstanis faced like re-adapting to the culture after completing their higher-level studies, finding jobs, accepting low wages, feeling demotivated plus more. Furthermore, the country's universities underwent through hard times due to poor resources, which is similar to the situation in Ecuador (Perna & Jumakulov, 2013). Therefore this example analyzes the need to also take action in investing in domestic

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research universities in order to advance within the country and have more local opportunities (Borja, Feijoo, Gutierréz, Jaramillo, & Orellana, 2014). In exchange of assigning funds to scholarships programs, which is very costly, the reading also promotes that the government strengthen internal capacity.

In addition, South Korea is one of the 10 best countries for education around the world, their citizens dedicate days into studying for a test and even more time when is the valuation to enter college (O'Neill, 2016). Their culture is guided by education and their value for knowledge is very important since it is considered a condition to be successful.

Furthermore, it is an example to follow, and Ecuador should learn from South Korean schools. For instance, Koreans spend 6 years in primary school, 3 in middle school, and then 3 in high school. Besides, parents spend much more money for children to continue studying extra hours after school for preparing them into a high level college. The education system in South Korea is based on the ideal that from young age, each student is responsible for strengthening the backbone of the nation (Asia Society, 2017).

In fact, students in South Korea begin classes at 8am and finish at 4:30pm; after they are in charge of cleaning their classroom. Afterwards, students continues learning in the school library, in private sessions or with a private tutor that keep them studying until 10pm (Asia Society, 2017).

All this highlights the eminence of education in South Korea and the value of having much knowledge and being ahead of others throughout life. This is considered to be essential in order to prepare students for jobs needed in the country. Koreans truly sacrifice their time and social gatherings for their education and a well deserved high grade. In fact, there is no nation with a higher degree of passion for education than South Korea (Asia Society, 2017).

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Overall, South Korea is an example of a country that has advanced and developed considerably through education. From being in ruins after the Korean War, today is a country with less than 2% illiteracy rate and more than 80% of students that continue into college. Thanks to their sacrifices, Koreans can now enjoy a better life and be the third largest economy in Asia (Confucian Times). Today South Korea is a country that has overcome scarcity, and is today a developed and prosperous nation thanks to rigorous education.

Conclusion

In total, there is no doubt that higher education is one of the most important investments that a person can make for themselves, and their country (Executive Office of the President of the United States , 2016). As an individual it is rewarding to accomplish an important academic goal, and know that the knowledge acquired can positively contribute to companies, innovations, and the nation. Through quality higher education, individuals can be better professionals and have bright futures. The path to success is possible through excellent and proper higher education, plus it helps develop confidence and character (India Celebrating , n.d). Additionally, having a quality higher education can help an individual decide what is their path in life and be an excellent professional in the future.

However based on the findings, there are inefficiencies in the government funding scholarships for students to study abroad, and the efforts that undergoes this program many times does not reflect the benefits for the people. The evidence has shown negative consequences upon the return of the grant holders to Ecuador. For instance, the scholarship program has limited opportunities for the grantees to advance in their field of study upon their return to the country. Grant holders, as

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discussed, are constantly facing the frustration of not being able to use their skills acquired overseas, thus impedes them to develop continuously.

There is a reverse culture shock in grantees upon returning to Ecuador that takes them time to re-adapt to local conditions. These difficulties arise from the low employment assistance from the Ecuadorian government to the grant holders, which makes the grant holder be desperate in finding any job due to their lack of professional experience. Similarly, the government's condition need to create a more dynamic environment that spontaneously generates opportunities just as much for private business and public sectors, attracting local and international investment.

Additionally, a challenge that has been analyzed is the efforts of grantees in completing their higher-level studies. The willpower of these grant holders is to return to their country to work in their field, but the reality is otherwise. As time goes by this concern is more perceptible due to the disparities of the scholarship program and the defects of local education that impedes Ecuadorians to find an appropriate job (Vallejo, 2016).

It is a constant and repeated cycle: First the grant holder returns to Ecuador with an excellent academic achievement, but cannot find a high earning wage job due to the reason that he or she lacks professional experience. On the other hand the local citizens that do not have the academic achievements but do have professional experience cannot be considered to have a higher wage job than the standard because they lack valued academic achievements. This is critical since, as aforementioned; there are professionals without a job and experienced workers that cannot progress due to any degree. So as for increasing human talent is a huge concern, it is not suitable since the knowledge acquired from well-known universities can change depending on the industry or field of study.

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Therefore, upon return the grant holders are masters in their area of study, but after some time their expertise will deteriorate since it is not practiced or sometimes simply is not useful with the necessities of the country. For that reason, it is best to create strategies that would open the doors of employment in industries that are not performed in Ecuador, and that can also spark exportation and trade between countries.

Moreover, Ecuador's universities have many faults like overload of professors, over bureaucratization, deficit of resources and installations, inability to investigate and as an effect an insufficiency of publications that reasonably does not push towards skilled teaching (Vallejo, 2016). All this adds up to the things that need to be improved in Ecuador's higher education that people as mentioned above continually perceives. Instead, millions of funds go into funding scholarships that the government is confident will transform the country. Yet, as analyzed so far the process is not fast paced and shows a lot of costs rather than gains.

Moreover, as stated in an essay from *Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil*, in Ecuador it is no surprise to see economists or other graduated professionals working as taxi drivers. In fact, many citizens work as typesetters or in call centers to be able to pay their bachelors degree or even masters (Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil, n.d). Again, this presents the inefficiency of being a professional but not being competent in the workforce. It can be perceived that such sacrifices can only embody to not be more disqualified than the standard citizen that has difficulties to finish his or her career.

This in all concludes that the scholarship program approach is very expensive and exceeds in costs rather than in gains. The aim should be focused in improving human capital in the country through a balanced allocation of funds that promotes the development of universities and research programs in Ecuador in order to have locals receive a quality

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education. It is important to give attention to the local universities and strengthen their capacities.

Recommendations

As an alternative it is important to not fully reject the scholarship program to train Ecuadorians, but to focus on selecting them based on high-academic results from previous institutions and necessities of the country. Also, as part of this program there needs to be a proper follow up that helps them find a job in their selected fields and experience in order for them to perceive value and benefit from their efforts in studying abroad. Moreover, as analyzed there should be some limits on the government's intervention in higher education and perhaps have the students themselves do the procedures to be accepted in a university overseas.

All this ideally is best to be linked with the creation of more jobs and making of research universities in Ecuador in order for the country to be capable to compete with global know-hows and international partners. It is not ideal to divide the population from those that receive grants and those who cannot, demonstrating that studying in Ecuador is not worth it.

Instead, the importance is to incentivize universities to have more accessible tuitions, and perhaps receive awards from the government that encourages them to be better. At the same time, government can help improve higher education by bringing experienced scientists and professors to teach in local universities like it is done with *Prometeo*⁹, but with more force, and with the goal of incentivizing them to innovate in Ecuador in order to increase employment and experience in technology, research, etc. Likewise, Ecuador can become more attractive to international investors and as a result promote them to start a business in

⁹ For further information, visit: <http://prometeo.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/que-es-prometeo/>

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Ecuador. That approach can open up many fields and allow the country advance in technology, etc. whilst employing Ecuadorians in more diversified areas.

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