

Public Policies, SDGs and Early Education in Ecuador

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Abstract

Public policies promote relevant actions at all levels of education, especially in early childhood education, which promotes the comprehensive development of children through the fulfillment of children's rights. The present research aims to identify the implementation of Public Policies at the early childhood level and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research is based on a longitudinal quantitative-descriptive study of the matrices of the Master File of Educational Institutions (AMIE) granted by the Ministry of Education. The findings show that with respect to quality education there is inequality between students and teachers according to district zones, discrimination within the profession against males and a very slight majority of enrollment between girls versus boys, thus evidencing the welfarism in which the State has fallen and the need to update public policies in favor of early childhood.

Keywords: Child Development Center, Children's Rights, Early Childhood Education, Sustainable Development Goals, Public Policies.

Resumen

Las Políticas Públicas promueven las acciones pertinentes en todos los niveles de educación, en especial, en Educación Inicial fomenta el desarrollo integral de la infancia a través del cumplimiento de los derechos de la niñez. La presente investigación tiene como objetivo identificar la aplicación de Políticas Públicas en el nivel inicial y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS). La investigación se basa en un estudio longitudinal de tipo cuantitativo – descriptivo de las matrices del Archivo Maestro de Instituciones Educativas (AMIE) otorgadas por el Ministerio de Educación. Los hallazgos demuestran que respecto a la educación de calidad existe desigualdad según las zonas distritales entre alumno - docente, discriminación dentro de la profesión al género masculino y muy ligera mayoría de matriculación entre niñas versus niños, evidenciando así el asistencialismo en que el Estado decae y la necesidad de la actualización de Políticas Públicas en pro de la primera infancia.

Palabras clave: Centro de Desarrollo Infantil, Derechos de la Infancia, Educación Inicial, Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, Políticas públicas.

1. Introduction

The importance of the integral development of children is consolidated in the endorsement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), which recognizes for the first time the importance of the well-being of children worldwide. This international instrument resulted after a technical process carried out by Francisco Pilotti, a specialist in the Unit of social development and education of the American States (OAS), the same that unified their efforts allying with the UN and UNICEF, making countries worldwide unite for the fight, preservation and improvement of the quality of life of children, considering that they belong to the socially forgotten human groups globally.

Subsequently and to this day, child development continues to be a matter of debate and concern both worldwide and within each country, in addition to considering the application of laws referring to children's rights and proposing and implementing public policies to guarantee these principles in practice. Currently, terminology related to the comprehensive development of childhood has been adopted to refer to a greater movement of human resources, involved agencies and economic funds in the function of childhood that procure an appropriate quality of life and comprehensive training (Santos & Vaca, 2018).

The development of the child does not depend only on the socio-cultural, economic and political context of the parents but on a set of complex factors that, if they are not linked together, infants could be left unprotected in some areas of life, hence the importance of good health of both mother and child, in their first thousand days from gestation, The same that consider breastfeeding up to two years and from that a good and varied feeding, upbringing with foundations based on good practices, solid social support and stimulation of interaction with individuals who do not belong to the nucleus of the home, all this is combined to achieve optimal conditions for child development.

Several authors conceptualize comprehensive child development as a phenomenon influenced by the quality of education, the quality of health, and the quality of the environment where the child develops and grows; in other words, the comprehensive development of the child is dependent on the participation of the different socioeconomic sectors of a nation and the no less important satisfaction of other needs such as the feeling of protection that a child needs, nutrition, affectivity, identity, recreation; which implies having millionaire infrastructures for the fulfillment of the same (Vaca & Santos, 2018).

Public policies are defined by Laswell (1992) as strategies focused on solving public problems, i.e., it has a perspective to make political analysis and determine the organization of the government. On the other hand, Mendoza (2006) mentions that politics will depend on the State, and the public brings together social actors, an approach that allows us to know how a government makes decisions to solve problems taking into account the laws of the State and its society.

According to Roth (2019), the origin of Public Policies is given through the development of modern states, used as an instrument to transform and govern society, i.e., a public problem is determined through the mobilization of the State and the application of laws, social behavior is acted upon. The modern State emerged between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as mentioned in 8a (2018), through a process of centralization of land,

taking advantage of the crisis of feudalism and the emergence of the Renaissance, transforming the structure of a government supported by the bourgeoisie, thus further strengthening the power, organization and structure.

The quality of Early Education provision in some regions of the world is a critical issue: evidence shows that poor quality can harm children more than no quality. Because of this, there is a considerable philosophical disagreement about what is ultimately meant by quality, although there is agreement on some common measures of quality about the provision of early childhood services and care (Hasan, 2007).

Notions of quality differ from country to country, and to understand this issue, it is important to look at the underlying vision of the child according to the different societies and organizations concerned within them. For example, some countries emphasize childhood as important, seeing the child as “present,” and others take the image of the child as a “future citizen.”

In the first case, the understanding of the child as “the present” in terms of development allows in countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden the comprehensive care and education aimed at the development and well-being of the child; under this perspective, quality is equal to the holistic formation of the infant, giving rise to the construction of goals and objectives for the protection and education of early childhood, both locally and globally through the participation of various actors of society interested in childhood Hasan (2007).

The second case concerning the child’s conception as a “future citizen” identifies infants as an “empty vessel” to be prepared for the school of tomorrow. This identification is emphasized in the skills they must master before their immersion in elementary school; these cases are found in countries such as Italy, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the United States. An approach that joins efforts in production based on quality measures and leads to evaluation based on preschool curricular models and as a guide for teacher preparation Hasan (2007).

Eurydice (2022) indicates that in the case of Spain, in order to improve the quality of education, the Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE) was modified and among the reforms are improvements in educational offerings, attention to the emotional sphere, health, gender equality, child development, inequality, evaluation and relevant guidance, planned for implementation from the 2023-2024 school period.

On the other hand, Finland is a world reference on education since it has built its foundations since the '70s, resulting in 95% of its population completing Basic, Secondary and Higher Education levels. Moreover, the Finnish State bases its educational policies on the formation of human capital with high-quality standards for creating a collective with competitive capacity in any area since they have all the relevant tools for education, such as access to technology and cutting-edge knowledge (Flores, 2019).

In the Asian continent, mentioning China, South Korea and Japan, William (2014) describes early childhood education as the first contact with a society that infants have outside the family nucleus, entering the school system at six years old. The ideology that forges education since 1990 is “Education for an integral development of children physically, intellectually, morally and artistically,” classifying teaching contents into Health, society, science, languages and art, the same that is contemplated in the 1986 curriculum within the

obligatory nature being the same, the basis for all the reforms that have been carried out until today.

In Singapore, Blanco (2021) states that the political regime on which its Public Policies are based was inspired by the English Parliament, which established the compulsory nature of early childhood education with children entering the education system from the age of 6. At the end of school, an evaluation called “Primary School Leaving Examination” is carried out, which focuses on analyzing individual capabilities later to access different arts, sports or university entrance programs (Playedu, 2022).

It is known that early childhood development and education have been linked to colonization in the African continent. For example, Kenya was at the forefront of the evolution regarding Early Childhood Education in its continent, being the first country to establish Nairobi in 1942, a school for European children when the nation country was under the administration of Great Britain, Romera Calvo (2016). Likewise, from preschool education, teacher training and curriculum development was circumscribed, prioritizing trying to eradicate everything that affected early education and prevent school failure. In Kenya in 1990, about 74% of children aged 3-5 years were enrolled in early childhood education.

It is important to mention that in Kenya and also in Senegal, early education programs have been created, similar to the predominant European model, giving rise to a nursery program for children under three years of age and a program with preschool characteristics for infants between the ages of 3 and 7 years, who are covered until the beginning of compulsory schooling.

Another aspect to consider is that African programs and actions on early childhood care and education must emerge from the African nations and impact family and community development. This pattern has been followed since 2001, as established in the Pan-African Forum, held in Cairo: “Africa Fit For Children”, where priority is given to early childhood from a common African action Romera Calvo (2016).

Early Education in Africa is focused on improving its quality and incorporating alternative comprehensive models where education, health and nutrition are closely linked, with informed families who count on the community to form bridges and coordination networks. Therefore, the idea is to create Early Education programs of community ideology where there is training for families Romera Calvo (2016). These programs must be of high quality, based on the cultural context. Furthermore, they must be based on children’s rights, focusing on the transition between Early Education and Basic Education, which guarantees this transition in the educational system and social and personal progress.

As for Oceania, more specifically in Australia, governments have provided low-cost or free part-time education to children in the years prior to school entry (usually children aged 4-5), while subsidized preschool for three-year-olds has not yet been implemented nationwide Raban & Kilderry (2019). However, recognizing the importance of access to early education, the State of Victoria has introduced a subsidized preschool program for children up to three years of age; the same came into effect in 2020.

Australia has policies that directly address the need to invest in education early in life. They have echoed that investing in early childhood, education and care provide a strong return on investment of up to 2-4 times the cost, and even more substantial when programs

focus on families with children in vulnerable status. The term “child care” gave way to “early childhood education” (Raban & Kilderry, 2019).

Regarding Latin American education, analysts take Chile as a reference based on the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which in 2015 reached the fourth position in the areas of science, reading and mathematics because its school curriculum is based on the distribution of class hours of subjects that contribute to humanized education, being Mujica and Inostroza (2020) who indicate this analysis.

The latest results of the PISA tests in 2018 placed Chile in 43rd place worldwide and first at the Latin American level, considering the participation of ten countries, among them (Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Dominican Republic and Panama). The main area evaluated was reading competence, obtaining results similar to those of Slovakia, Greece and Malt. It is important to highlight that school education in all continents worldwide begins at 6 years of age, while Early Education is understood to be from 3 to 6 years of age but is not compulsory.

The second country that stands out is Uruguay, ranking second in the area of science, reading and first in mathematics, published in BBC News World (2019), given that the Educational Connectivity of Basic Informatics for Online Learning (CEIBAL) from 2007 to the present, is responsible for generating educational proposals for the improvement of the academic and technological level, focusing on criticality and reflection, respecting local knowledge for the empowerment of educational processes Rivera Vargas Pablo (2018).

In Ecuador, the legalization and policy on Early Childhood was developed for four years in the period 2009 - 2012 under the responsibility of the Institute for Children and the Family (INFA), aiming at early childhood care. This initiative led to the construction of challenges in constitutional mandates and legislation with the theme of children's rights, proposing the formulation of Public Policies on Comprehensive Child Development from 0 to 3 years of age for girls and boys.

Giving child care a mandatory and universal approach where both public and private investment ensures comprehensive early childhood development throughout the national territory under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES). Public policies are articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador and the objectives of the National Plan for Good Living, together with the transversal and territorial mechanisms of the policy, extracted from the legal document on Public Policy - Comprehensive Child Development (2013).

Within the Ecuadorian context, public policies in early childhood education are established in different legal regulations for early childhood. Among them is the 2008 Magna Carta, updated in 2013:

Art. 26.- Education is people's right 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. Therefore, individuals, families and society have the right and responsibility to participate in the educational process (Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información-LOTAIP, 2013).

As mentioned in the Magna Carta in Art 26, education is highlighted as a lifelong right and a duty for the State as a priority issue, which is inclusive and equitable, a priority for state investment and public policy. This aims at having an optimal condition for good living where the actors that makeup society are responsible for fulfilling the same.

The Republic of Ecuador, in recent decades, has promoted great work regarding children's rights, standing out among the countries that make up the region. The first step taken by Ecuador was to give the family a crucial role in comprehensive human development as a cross-cutting axis of policies related to children's rights, even though the Government's responsibility from 2012 onwards was greater when the MIES in 2013 stated that Comprehensive Child Development as a mandatory and universal priority policy. The National Agenda has strived to achieve gender equity and inclusion approach to its action plans to incorporate girls and boys in all its programs without the social and cultural conditions of families, peoples and community groups having importance. The State tries to intervene in different areas to provide equal rights and guarantees to children Vaca & Santos (2018).

However, the Convention on Human Rights, by admitting the first age range corresponding to Early Childhood Education, obliges the countries involved to assume responsibility for children according to the first definition. Furthermore, studies ratify the importance of the first years of life in terms of the comprehensive development of the minor since it is the period where the infant achieves the first skills that will influence it throughout life. These skills are feeling, thinking, learning and moving Vaca & Santos (2018). That is why social, cognitive, emotional and motor development occurs more rapidly in the first years of life than in later years; for this reason, a greater guarantee should be given at this stage so that the natural process of the integral development of infants is carried out properly.

Following this, children's rights are outlined in Article 45 of the Carta Maga, which mentions:

Children and adolescents shall enjoy the rights common to human beings and those specific to their age. The State shall recognize and guarantee life, including care and protection from conception. Children and adolescents have the right to physical and psychological integrity; to their identity, name and citizenship; to integral health and nutrition; to education and culture, sports and recreation; to social security; to have a family and enjoy family and community life; to social participation; to respect for their freedom and dignity; to be consulted in matters that affect them; to be educated as a matter of priority in their language and the cultural contexts proper to their peoples and nationalities; and to receive information about their absent parents or relatives, unless it would be detrimental to their well-being. Furthermore, the State shall guarantee their freedom of expression and association, the free functioning of student councils and other associative forms (Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información (LOTAIP), 2013).

The article above evidence the relevance of the importance of child care from the moment of conception, thus covering the responsibility from the beginning of life and its achievement, providing comprehensive support in all areas of development, social development as well as their free expression, related to Article 46 of the LOEI, which mentions:

The State shall adopt, among others, the following measures to ensure that children and adolescents:

1. Attention to children under six years of age, guaranteeing their nutrition, health, education and daily care within a framework of comprehensive protection of their rights.
2. Special protection against any labor or economic exploitation. The work of minors under fifteen years of age is prohibited, and policies for the progressive eradication of child labor shall be implemented. The work of adolescent girls and boys shall be exceptional and may not violate their right to education or be carried out in harmful or dangerous situations to their health or personal development. Their work and other activities shall be respected, recognized and supported as long as they do not harm their education and integral development.
3. Preferential attention for the full social integration of those with disabilities. The State shall guarantee their incorporation into the regular education system and society. Protection against the influence of programs or messages disseminated through media that promote violence or racial or gender discrimination. Public communication policies shall prioritize their education and respect for their image, integrity and other rights specific to their age. Limitations and sanctions will be established to make these rights effective (Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información (LOTAIP), 2013).

Article 46 of the LOEI highlights the care of children under six years of age, that is, early childhood, giving continuity to Article 45 of the Magna Carta, which mentions the importance of protecting the infant from conception; however, the direct responsibility of government entities that are committed and responsible for such compliance is questioned. On the other hand, it includes prohibiting child labor and including children with disabilities in regular education, respecting their integrity and prohibiting abuse in any form.

Regarding the entities, art. 344 of the LOTAIP mentions:

The national education system will comprise the institutions, programs, policies, resources and actors of the educational process, as well as actions at the initial, basic and high school levels, and will be linked to the higher education system. The State will exercise the stewardship of the system through the national education authority, which will formulate the national education policy; it will also regulate and control the activities related to education, as well as the operation of the entities of the system (Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información-LOTAIP, 2013).

The regulation, control and financing of the country's education from the Initial Level to the Baccalaureate Level is governed by the Ministry of Education, while the ages from 0 to 3 years are governed by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) responsible for ensuring the child development of children up to 3 years, managed by the public sector, society and non-governmental organizations both national and international Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (2013).

Complementing the regulations established by the MIES, the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI), in one of its articles regarding Early Education, mentions:

Art. 40.- Early Education Level. - The Early Education level is the process of accompanying the comprehensive development that considers the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social, identity, autonomy and belonging to the community and region of children from three to five years of age, guarantees and respects their rights, cultural and linguistic diversity, own rhythm of growth and learning. It enhances their capacities, abilities

and skills. Early education is articulated with general basic education to achieve an adequate transition between both levels and stages of human development. Early education is a co-responsibility of the family, the community and the State, with the attention of public and private programs related to early childhood protection. The State is responsible for designing and validating educational modalities that respond to the cultural and geographic diversity of children from three to five years of age. The education of children from birth to three years of age is the primary responsibility of the family, although the family may decide to opt for different modalities duly certified by the National Education Authority. The education of children from three to five years of age is an obligation of the State through different modalities certified by the National Education Authority (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural, 2011).

According to the Early Education Curriculum (2014), the curricular level is divided into sublevels which are; Sublevel 1 corresponding to children from 0 to 3 and Sublevel 2 corresponds to children from 3 to 5 years old, determining the areas to be developed specifically for holistic education.

To respond to the needs of children aged 3 to 5 years, the body responsible for ensuring the right to education is the Ministry of Education. At the same time, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) is responsible for the protection, care and education of children aged 0 to 3 years; therefore, in 2016, Ministerial Agreement 072 was signed, same that presents the Mission Tenderness program, through which regulations are established for the different modalities of child care, which are: Child Development Centers (CDI), Good Living Children's Centers (CIBV) and the Growing with our Children Program (CNH), to carry out the fulfillment of the desired holistic and comprehensive training of children Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (2019).

The LOEI specifies within this educational framework the following:

Art. 27.- Deconcentrated levels: These are the territorial levels at which the educational policies defined by the central level are managed and executed. They are composed of zonal, district and circuit levels, which are intercultural and bilingual. Specialized instances of the Intercultural and Bilingual Education System will be guaranteed at all levels (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural, 2011).

Article 27 of the LOEI guarantees bilingual education at all levels of education, allowing the fulfillment of quality and warmth within the integral development that facilitates the advancement and preparation necessary for children to be competent inside and outside the country.

Currently, there is a proposal of the educational community framed in the Ten-Year Plan 2016-2025, the same that presented by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), the enrollment rate corresponding to children from 3 to 4 years is 58.70% in the school year 2014-2015, for the year 2016 increases to 62,33%, in 2017 to 65, 96%, in 2018 it was 69.59%, in 2019 it rose to 76.85%, in 2020 it had an increase to 80.48%, in 2021 the figures reached 84.11% and finally in 2022 enrollment reached a total of 87, 74%, aspiring to have 95% by 2025.

On the other hand, in 2015, world leaders met to discuss sustainable development goals as part of the meeting: "Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development”, which was held to eradicate poverty and raise awareness about environmental care and achieving population prosperity.

Ecuador included the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the public policies of the National Government, which the National Assembly developed in a resolution on the commitment to implement and enforce under the premise of achieving common goals ensuring equal opportunities and a dignified life.

There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are: End Poverty; Zero Hunger; Health and Well-being; Gender Equality; Clean Water and Sanitation; Affordable Clean Energy; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Regulating Inequalities; Common and Sustainable Cities; Responsible Production and Consumption; Climate Action; Undersea Life; Life of Terrestrial Ecosystems; Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Partnerships to Achieve the Goals set by the UN in 2022.

Within this framework, Goal 4, which is related to guaranteeing inclusive, equitable quality education and promoting learning opportunities for all throughout life. In Ecuador, the Ecuadorian reality presented according to MINEDUC in 2015, the net enrollment rate in General Basic Education is 96.29% of girls enrolled, 3% of the indigenous population has a university degree, and 6.80% of the Ecuadorian population is illiterate according to INEC 2010, the data presented framed the reality of Ecuador in the meeting: “Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in 2015, the same that will be updated in 2030.

Continuing with objective 5 regarding gender equality, in 2008, a National Council for Equality was created as the body responsible for control, which in 2014 established powers for the council, given that according to figures provided by INEC (2012), women spend 46% of their time in paid or unpaid work, while men only spend 40% of their time in paid or unpaid work, concluding that women spend 22 hours a week in unpaid work. Furthermore, in the context of salary, a woman receives 22% less than a man and 27.2% are heads of household, according to the National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment ENEMDU (2015).

In the labor framework, objective 8: promote sustained, inclusive, sustainable economic growth and full, productive and decent employment for all; ENEMDU (2016) presents 5.2% unemployment, where 19% of underemployed people have incomes below the basic salary. On the other hand, in 2017, the employment rate was 65, 91%, where 3.3% had no level of education, and 19.7% had a higher education degree, which brings to objective 11 regarding the reduction of inequalities where the cost of hiring on behalf of the employee as a proportion of the annual income received in the country of destination. According to INEC, in 2014, the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian population had the indices with the highest poverty; of the indigenous, 18% of the population lives in extreme poverty and 42% in poverty.

2.- Materials And Methods

The present study is a longitudinal study, which, according to Delgado and Llorca (2004), implies the existence of two or more repeated measurements over a follow-up period. Therefore, it is a subtype of a cohort study that allows the analysis of changes in different variables, whether these are exposures and effects, and allows transitions between different development objectives. The present research is descriptive, documentary bibliographic

modality and quantitative approach in charge of the analysis of continuous or repetitive measures to follow up during an established and quantitative period using statistical tools for mathematical analysis to explain and predict a phenomenon through numerical data Qualtrics.xm (2022).

The sample was determined according to the researcher's criteria, extracting the relevant variables for the research from the Master File of Educational Institutions (AMIE) <https://educacion.gob.ec/base-de-datos/>, provided by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, which contains information on each educational institution related to students, teachers, administrative staff, educational offerings and physical infrastructure of the establishment, as well as the geographical location and organization by modules and chapters. The information was obtained from the AMIE matrices taking initial and final data for the academic periods from 2009 to 2021 and the initial period of the current year.

The data selected and extracted correspond to period, zone, province, province code, level of education (Initial), support, INEC zone, school regime, modality, female teachers, male teachers, female students and male students of the entire Ecuadorian territory, divided by zones, which are distributed as follows Ministry of Education (2022):



Source: Ministry of Education 2022

For the statistical analysis of the data, the R statistical software was used, which is freely distributed and is one of the most widely used in the scientific community. This program consists of a central application and libraries of many topics that can be installed as needed (Botella et al., 2018).

Results And Discussion

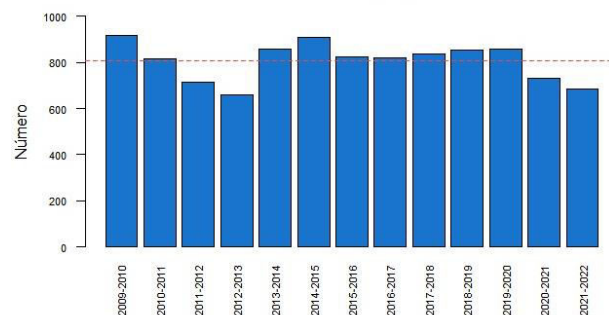


Figure 1. Initial Level Institutions by Academic Period
Source: AMIE

The academic institutions that offer only the Early Education level were significantly reduced in the 2011 - 2012 academic period when President Rafael Correa, through Article 7 of the Organic Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information (LOTAIP) paragraph k on Plans and Programs of the institution in execution, point 60 on Educational Infrastructure, names the National Infrastructure Program for the Universalization of Education with Quality and Equity (PAI).

To increase coverage in Early Education, Plans and Programs in execution (2016), some public institutions were unified, leading to the creation of Educational Units. On the other hand, 1,226 nursery school teachers were appointed, which make up the first phase of this program regarding universalization, in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 elective years.

The 2019 narrative accountability report of the Ministry of Education mentions the project “Early Education with quality and warmth”, which in the year of the report is in a state of closure, being that, within it, there is an evaluation of all teachers as part of the improvement plan for professionals, as well as other actions.

With this, it can be deduced that after this project, institutions and teachers were evaluated more rigorously, and the ministry had greater control based on the improvement vision at that time. As a result, several early education centers could not continue to operate, and many teachers were unable to work.

The MIES presented a June report for the 2020-2021 period. Due to the pandemic, by municipal decree, the Guagua Centers were suspended, giving as options the modality of care at home, in the community or person, opening new CDIs, thus affecting 9,000 children who attended these establishments, resulting in a drop in shown in Figure 1 until the 2021-2022 elective period.

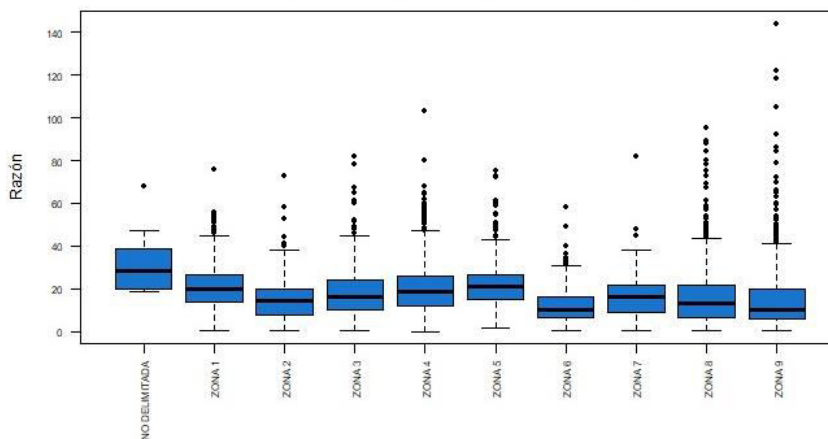


Figure 2. Ratio of students/student by geographical zone
Source: AMIE

According to the regulations of the Ministry of Education (2014), within the general directions arranged for the Early Education level, in points 2 and 3, it is mentioned that there should be a maximum of 25 students and a minimum of 15 students per teacher, counting with a classroom of 50 m². However, according to what can be seen in the figure, it can be affirmed that the minimum number of students in the schools is 60 students per teacher in zone 6 and a maximum of more than 140 students per teacher in zone 9, which shows the non-compliance with the provisions issued by the Ministry of Education and, on the other hand, it is necessary to review and evaluate the administrative structure and possible solutions for these situations.

Regarding the fourth objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the UN-UNICEF, which guarantees quality education, it is not achieved because exceeding the number of students per teacher does not provide a personalized education that responds to the individual needs of students. Rather, this leads to generalization processes both in the methodologies and in the strategies involved in the teaching-learning process, resulting in a decadent education that has been evidenced much more in the areas that frame the Coastal School Regime as shown in Figure 2, adding to this the low academic performance presented as a consequence.

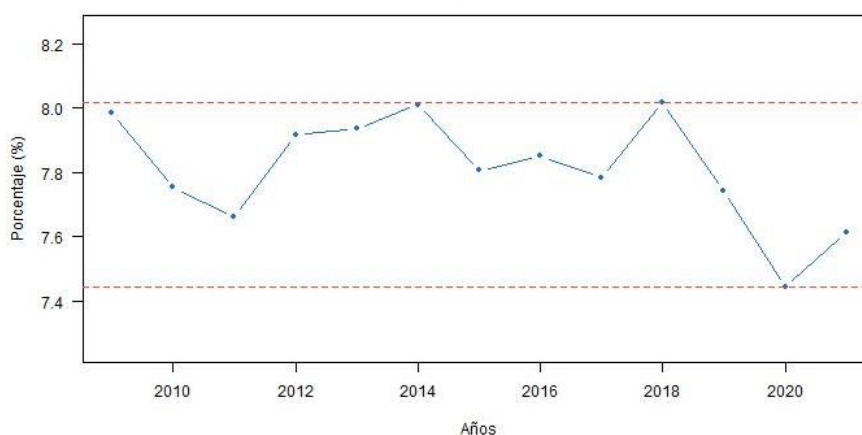


Figure 3. Ratio of Males vs. Females
Source: AMIE

In the report published by the Central Bank of Ecuador (2019), it is evident that in 2018 and 2019, there was a drop in full employment in all economic sectors of the country, being that from 40.6% it dropped to 38.8% in 2019, which is statistically significant. With this, it can be evidenced that the employment crisis was general, but Figure 3 reveals that employment for Early Childhood Education teachers had a significant drop between 2018 and 2020. It is also important to mention that according to the document presented by INEC on Population and Housing and Economic Censuses 2010, in the area of teaching, women work in this field with 8.2% and men with 3.3% thus indicating that men do not have a significant presence in education as Early Level teachers.

Based on goals 5 and 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) referring to gender inequality and the reduction of inequalities, respectively, Figure 3 shows the preference for a female teacher for the position of an early childhood teacher, while Cabrera Johana (2020) in her research using AMIE data, demonstrates the lack of male teachers in Early Childhood Education, demonstrating inequality at the labor and social level, thus leading to oppression that plant social stereotypes and stigmas where performance in this career is not allowed, demonstrates the lack of male teachers in Early Childhood Education evidencing inequality at the labor and social level, thus leading to oppression that plant social stereotypes and stigmas where male teachers are not allowed to perform in this career, discriminating and leading to a shortage of male teachers and job opportunities.

Failing to comply with Goal 8 of the SDG focused on full, productive and decent employment for all, due to the imminent problem in the area of hiring and preference explicitly given in the career of Early Childhood Education. This functionality allows men to follow such a career if they want to practice most will be denied a job and must seek a related job where they will be accepted.

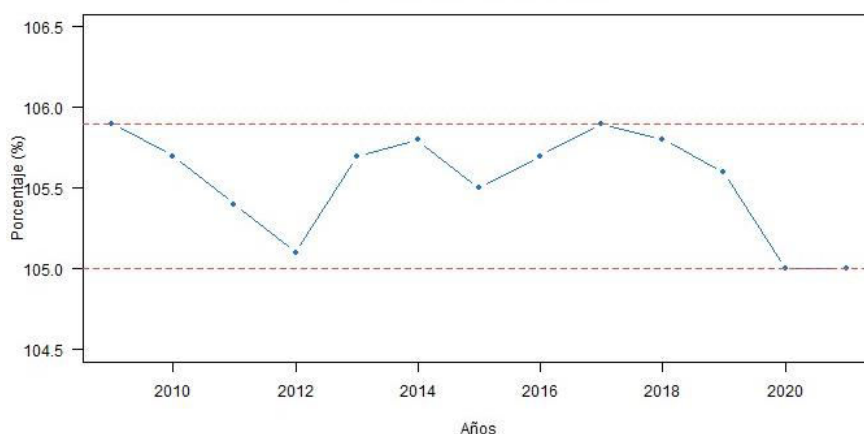


Figure 4. Ratio between girls vs. boys
Source: AMIE

In relation to the level of initial education enrollment, a relevant drop has been observed since 2018, relating the information with the birth rates from 2018 to 2020 according to the Technical Bulletin, prepared by INEC (2015), compared to previous years, the birth rate dropped by 20.43%, thus finding that in that year the number of males born was higher by 5% than the number of female births, the figures being 139,592 males vs. 133,688 females.

Mentioning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal 4 on inclusive education, goal 5 related to gender equality and goal 11 regarding the reduction of inequalities, figure 4 shows a low percentage of existing inequality that exists in the level of enrollment in the Early Level by gender, this is due to the promotion of the importance of Early Education, as well as incentives by the State such as school supplies, school breakfast, uniforms, etc,

Conclusion

With the information observed and the analyses carried out throughout the research, it can be concluded that it is necessary to update public policies in Ecuador that allow for the privileged attention of children, considering a budget that allows for the improvement of conditions at the Early Childhood Level, giving priority not only to assist but also to the promotion of quality and warmth in education.

Ecuador is one of the least attended countries in Latin America in terms of education and health in the context of the pandemic, which neglect was evidenced and worsened, so it was necessary to generate policies for education. However, nothing has been done about it since the last reform was in 2014, and it has been 8 years in which all sectors of the country have seen the need for changes, changes that are grassroots and transformers according to the reality and the context that is lived in each sector and each region of the country. On the other hand, it is essential to mention that the Public Policies in force are not fully complied with, which means many inconsistencies.

In recent decades, Ecuador has promoted different modalities of child care, such as Child Development Centers (CDI), Good Living Children's Centers (CIBV) and the Growing up with our Children Program (CNH), which respond to the 0 to 4 years of age range; in the case of Ecuador, this period is recognized within the curriculum as sub-levels of Early Education.

The State tries to protect the rights of early childhood due to the great importance of the first years of life in terms of the integral development of the child since it is the period where the first skills are achieved that will have transcendence throughout the child's life such as feeling, thinking, moving. Moreover, emotional, motor, social and cognitive development occurs faster than in the following years; the State has directed its efforts to ensure that at this stage, the natural process of the integral development of infants usually occurs.

Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ecuador is on the way to meeting them. However, the context of poverty and extreme poverty that is being unleashed must be considered as a result of the backwardness of the pandemic and the social struggles of the people, considering multiculturalism and national plurality.

For future research, it is pertinent to consider the veracity of the AMIE matrices and the accessibility of certain information provided by INEC without neglecting the importance that should be given to the problems and challenges existing in Early Education, especially in the Coastal Region where it has been observed that they have the highest percentages of students per teacher, with too many students for each professional working in the educational centers. It is important to mention the gender discrimination that is clearly evident in hiring male Early Childhood Education professionals in relation to hiring female teachers, which shows a significant gender gap.

Finally, it is necessary to open lines of educational research that allow for the improvement of the Early Education curriculum considering the characteristics and needs of our nation, as well as the projection of education in the world and the prioritization of teacher training for the optimization of the teaching-learning processes.

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