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## Teaching English Language in Ecuador: A Review from the Inclusive Educational Approach

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### ABSTRACT

The inclusive education in Ecuador presents relevant advances during the century XXI. However, the information available regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching-learning process in students with Special Educational Need (SEN) suggest the revision of the government policy from the inclusive approach for contributing to the improvement of the current teaching practice. The research aims analyzing government policy for education with an emphasis on instruction of EFL in students with disabilities for the period 1912 to 2020. This work begins with the identification of the current Ecuadorian inclusive education policy, besides the revision of previous laws regarding to the instruction of English as a Foreign Language in this country. The information obtained through the documental analysis contrasts the data emerging through contextualized observation process and semi-structured interviews applied to stakeholders from two public universities located in the province of Manabi during 2019. As a result it is exposed a chronologically systematization chart regarding the evolution of Ecuadorian education policy in which is possible to identify the key inclusive education advances and setbacks in the area of EFL. The conclusions ratified the necessity to strengthen from the inclusive approach the Ecuadorian government policies for the instruction of English as a Foreign Language of learner's with Special Educational Needs.

**Keywords:** Ecuador, English as a foreign language, inclusive education, government policies.

**JEL Classification:** I21, I24, I28, O3, Z13.

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## 1. Introduction

The presence of students with physical and sensory disabilities in the regular educational system has been increased around the world as a result of promoting the principle “school for all”. Actions aimed at the work of inclusion mark a milestone on a global level in 2008, the year when UNESCO presented the definition of the term “educational inclusion” to refer to the strategy for responding to the needs that any student could have (UNESCO, 2008a). It refers to a process that promotes the participation of all people as an active part of a culture and community, free of any kind of restrictions, prejudices, and forms of exclusion. However, Varela (2010) sustains, the implementation of educational standards for improving the quality and equality of education in Latin American and Caribbean countries have demanded high exigencies to public and private educational institutions, teachers, parents, and students.

At the beginning of the 21st century, educational processes in Ecuador were characterized by the function of “integration” and the priority was increasing the access to educational services to the greatest number of people (Bravo, Villafuerte, and Ormaza (2013). However, there were no exact figures regarding the number of students with disabilities in this country until 2006, because parents preferred to hide their family members with a disability as a form of protection.

The Constitution of the Republic self-recognized to Ecuador as a multicultural and inclusive nation in 2008. Thus, the Organic Law for Higher Education (LOES), the Organic Law for Intercultural Education (LOEI), and the Organic Law of disabilities (CONADIS) are the most important laws related to social and economic inclusion in this country. The net of national institutions in charge of the administration of these government policies are the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) and the Ministry of Education (ME). However, researchers as Villafuerte, Bravo, and Corral (2015); and Andrews, Walton, and Osman (2019), agree government policies have allowed the improvement of the access of students with special educational needs (SEN) from elementary to university classrooms around the world. However, teaching practices and local inclusive culture still require the support of the educational research for analyzing the advances and implications of the inclusive education in this context (Corral, Bravo, Villafuerte, 2015; Villafuerte, Luzardo, Bravo, and Romero, 2017).

It is extremely important to study in depth the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language in students who have special educational needs (SEN) linked to the visual or the auditory disability besides, those who have special educational needs not linked to disability such as Dyslectic, Asperger, autism, etc. Thus, foreign language centers and institutes have not enough experience in the administration of adaptations for teaching to learners with SEN but, the first step for the improvement begins at the revision of the government policy for education but, from the inclusive approach.

The motivations of the authors are: (1) To contribute on the improvement of the quality of education system in Ecuador; and (2) To propose the revision of the governmental policies related to the instruction of English as a foreign language to students with SEN.

This research manages documentary research techniques to analyze the evolution of government policy in concern to the education in Ecuador. As a result, this work presents the main aspects that characterize the educational policies respect to English as a foreign language teaching and learning for the period 1900 to 2020. The results confirm that it is necessary to review the government policy to advance in the construction of a more equality, inclusive and progressive society.

## 2. Methodology

This study articulates the critical and the right approaches to the analysis of the Ecuadorian laws related to EFL instruction of students in a condition of disability. This research applies the documentary review techniques and the qualitative research approach to determine the current situation of EFL teaching and the learning of students in disability conditions in Manabí-Ecuador in 2020.

### 2.1 The participants

Participants are the director of a university Foreign Language center, three Manabi university professors, five elementary and five secondary EFL teachers. All of them accepted voluntarily the invitation to participate in this research. They are key informants because of their work experience and their present and past knowledge about EFL teaching in Ecuador.

## 2.2 Instruments and process applied

- The documentary review: It includes the review of (a) Ecuadorian organic laws; and (b) academic articles specialized in EFL teaching, in which the evolution of government policy is a key factor. This information is analyzed with the informatics program Atlas.ti. Version 07.
- The observation procedure: The observation includes five public and three private schools, and a private and two public universities, located in Manabí, Ecuador. The instrument administered belongs to Aguado and Real (2011). This instrument collects information about physical, didactic and social factors for inclusive education in higher education.
- The interview: A semi-structured interview format was designed by the research team ad hoc., to collect the perceptions of EFL center directors and university teachers about the progress and limitation of the application of the governmental policies for EFL teaching and learning since the educational inclusion.

The original version of the interview instrument consisted of 12 questions. After the experts' judgment, the final version of the questionnaire included 10 questions to address the categories (i) Access to the EFL instruction; (ii) Governmental policies applied in the centers; (iii) Teaching methodologies; and (iv) adaptations. The experts invited to this instrument validation work in the Faculty of Education of the ULEAM university in Manta, Ecuador. They are researchers in EFL instruction, curriculum design, and educational inclusion.

## 2.3 Study phases

Phase 1. Documentary analysis of the Ecuadorian current governmental policy for inclusive education.

Phase 2. Revision of the governmental policy for EFL evolution applying the inclusive approach for the period 1912 to 2020.

Phase 3. The description of the current situation of EFL teaching and learning process for the inclusive education in higher education in Manabí, Ecuador.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Phase 1. The documentary analysis of the Ecuadorian current governmental policy for inclusive education

The documents considered in the analysis of the Ecuadorian government policy for the Education with inclusive approach are: (a) The constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (CRE, 2008); (b) The Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES) (2010); (c) The Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI) (2011); and (d) The academic regime of higher education in Ecuador (reformulation 2019).

(a) The constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (CRE, 2008): In 2008, it is writing the new Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador. The chapters 47, 48 and 49 indicate regulations aimed at the protection of persons with disabilities. These laws propose the promotion of an inclusive society that facilitates access to development opportunities, especially to populations considered vulnerable. The main issues to attend are access to health, education, and employment as basic aspects of human development (Pinoargote, 2019).

From the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), the title II. Citizenship rights, the article 11th. is considered essential to be translated to the English language for this analysis:

Art. 11th. All people are equal and will enjoy the same rights and opportunities. No one may be discriminated against because their ethnicity, place of birth, age, sex, gender identity, cultural identity, marital status, language, religion, ideology, political affiliation, judicial past, socio-economic status, immigration status, sexual orientation, status health, carrying HIV, disability, physical difference, or any other distinction, personal or collective, temporary or permanent, whose purpose or result is to impair or cancel the recognition or exercise of rights. (translation of the authors, 2020).

(b) The Organic Law of Higher Education (2010)

Regarding access to higher education, the LOES determines the obligation to facilitate access for students with disabilities to strengthen professional skills and promote their successful entry into the labor market (Pinoargote, 2019). It insists on responding to the need to improve equipment,

infrastructure, and quality in educational services and extend these conditions to learning and work environments.

In the Organic Law of Higher Education (2010) is established every university student must accredit level B2 of the CEFR before completing higher studies. However, in the LOES reform of 2019, the level to accredit at the end of higher studies should be minimum B1 according to CEFR. At this point, Villafuerte, Pérez, Boyes, Mena, Pinoargote, Riera, Soledispa, and Delgado (2018) sustain that, adaptations are still a challenge to improve in the whole educational system in Ecuador.

(c) The Organic Law of Intercultural Education (2011): In 2011, it is approved the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI). This law seeks integration and educational inclusion, and it is centered on the right of access to quality education (Pinoargote, 2019). Article 47th. is considered essential to be translated to the English language for this analysis:

In the reforms submitted to the LOEI in 2015, to guarantee the quality of elementary and secondary education in Ecuador, among the current requirements for entering as a teacher of EFL appear: the presentation of an international certification that guarantees mastery of English language communication skills at level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference of the Language (CEFR, 2002).

Other requirements according to article 94 and literals a, b, c, d, e, f of the LOEI appear: teacher must (a) Be an Ecuadorian citizen or foreigner legally resident in the Republic of Ecuador; (b) Have citizenship rights, possess one of the titles indicated in the LOEI; (c) Have completed the year of rural service compulsory teacher, in the pertinent cases; (d) Be in the registry of eligible candidates; (e) Participate and win in the corresponding merits and opposition contests to fill the vacancies of the tax system.

(d) The academic regime of higher education in Ecuador (2019).

It was reformulated in 2019. In the article 5th., The focus on rights in higher education is the foundation that guides the policies, programs, and plans in the process of specific and preferential affirmative actions towards the priority attention of vulnerable groups of the students' population.

Article 5th., The rights with equity approach prioritizes such care for vulnerable people and groups: women, peoples and nationalities, children and youth, older adults, people with disabilities, diverse people due to identity by sex, gender, and sexual orientation, the approach of populations at risk of health, among others (Translated by the authors, 2020).

In the article number 85th. about the evaluation of the learning in students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, norm:

Article No. 85th. The Higher Education Institutions should develop affirmative actions, programs, and plans for educational inclusion; in which methodologies, teaching-learning environments must be considered; evaluation methods and instruments that favor universal access. (Translated by the authors, 2020).

In the event be necessary to make non-significant curricular adaptations to meet the requirements of students with special educational needs, associated or not with disabilities, the mechanisms of adaptation of the teaching-learning and evaluation processes must be: (i) Scheduled before starting the corresponding academic period; (ii) Timely communicated to students; and, (iii) Pedagogical monitoring of students regarding their progress during the training process.

### 3.2 Phase 2. Revision of the governmental policy for EFL evolution applying the inclusive approach for the period 1912 to 2020

From the revision of the Ecuadorian government policies are extracted the key elements that characterizes the evolution of the instruction of English as a foreign language during the period 1912-2020. The analysis is developed applying the inclusive approach. See table 1.

Table 1.

*Government policies evolution for English Language Teaching in Ecuador 2012-2020*

Periods	Outstanding elements about EFL teaching and learning
1912-1929.	English language teaching was introduced in Ecuador in 1912. The training of English teachers begins with the first University Program in languages founded at the Central University of Ecuador in 1928, in Quito city. However, Aurelia Palmieri became the first woman authorized to study Medicine at

- the University of Guayaquil, through a presidential decree, dated July 1, 1895. The main problem detected for EFL instruction during this period was the lack of qualified teachers. It means teachers with the domain of the English language, and didactics for the properly administrating the teaching process. Other problems for EFL instruction were related to the book and didactic material availability, laboratories, and specialized libraries.
- 1930-1969. In the 1930s, laws regarding the administration of education launched a curriculum focused on urban education of a religious nature, even the Laica movement (promotion of the freedom of belief). The expected results for education had a Catholic cessation, and that did not cover the development needs of that time (British Council, 2015). In this period, many laws for the improvement of education were passed, but the English language became an official subject in the national secondary school curriculum after 1950. Reforms to the education system focused on mathematics and reading in the Spanish language began. The government signed many agreements for improving national education that were not finally implemented. However, new language programs were opened in Guayaquil, Cuenca and Portoviejo universities. None of these programs was approved, which caused the graduates of the various universities to have very different professional profiles. Besides, those programs were not articulated (Villafuerte, 2019).
- 1970-1980. Educational programs improved access to public education in Ecuador between the 1970s and 1980s. The expectation in the population regarding education increased. Illiteracy was reduced through adult literacy programs financed by coffee and oil exportation. In the late 1980s, due to the change in the economic model, the government declined the investment in education. The quality of education fell. Dropout rates increased and enrollment stagnated. Rural education was almost eliminated. Teachers in rural areas were scarce, and urban areas often lacked didactic training. However, teachers were protected by the National Union of Educators (UNE). This became the greatest political force of the 80s, which demanded higher salaries and greater job security for teachers.
- 1981-1990. During the early 1980s with the emergence of the Communicative Teaching Approach, EFL in universities throughout the world focused on the development of the four language skills and gave to students the possibility of using the language in different contexts (Richards, 2006). However, EFL teaching in Ecuador ratified the Grammar Focus Methodology or Traditional teaching centered on the grammar and translation process in public education. Such a situation contrasts with the EFL instruction in private schools where 20 hours were taught in English, while public education school used only one or two hours per week. English teaching became one of the prominent elements for the trade of educational services during the 80s in private schools. That circumstance generated important social gaps around the access and knowledge of EFL in this country. In 1990 EFL program was not a mandatory subject in Ecuador. Therefore, the education program in which it is inserted was assumed as a project in the test stage (British council, 2015).
- 1991-2000. The free market economy in the 1990s showed that graduates were not adequate to respond to the industrial and commercial progress of that time. One of the government policies was to improve access to quality education. Educational reforms that again focused on language, mathematics, and technical secondary education were funded and implemented at the beginning of these ten years. However, Bruns and Luque (2015) sustain that the education system in Ecuador reduced the spending dropping from close to 3 percent of GDP to around 1 percent of GDP between 1999 to 2000. Besides, Ecuador declined to participate in the first UNESCO regional learning assessment (LLECE) in 1999.
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From 1993 was executed the project called Curricular Reform for the Development of the Learning English or Curriculum Reform and Development for the Learning of English (CRADLE), promoted for the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the British Council. This project's general purposes were: the implementation of a new English curriculum that responds to the guidelines established in the Common European Framework of Reference for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation of Foreign Languages (CEFR); The national distribution of English free text aligned to the new curriculum. Besides, it included the creation of a six-texts-collection called "Our World Through English". The innovation of those texts was the introduction of social studies centered on Ecuador reality but through the English language (Calle, Argudo, Cabrera, Calle, and Leon, 2015).

In this project participated 1,200,000 students and their teachers from school periods 1993-1994 to 1998-1999 (Villafuerte, 2019). Despite the innovations introduced for the CRADLE project, the performance of English language learners was still poor. However, Calle et al. (2012) argue that the CRADLE project was the first relevant attempt to improve the process of English language learning in Ecuador, during the period 1993-2000.

2000-2010.

EFL learning gave people access to different cultures, value systems, and businesses through educational technology. Ecuador had problems to sustain the educational system during this period. 14% of teachers were absent from school on an average day. Besides, teachers were present in schools only 62% of the expected time in early 2003 (Bruns and Luque 2015).

In 2005, it was already possible to carry out post-degree studies in the field of EFL in private universities in Ecuador, but there were still few opportunities for practicing with native-speaking people. Also, the absence of underutilization of language laboratories in some universities was evident, while in other centers there were no specialized libraries or classrooms to receive the entire student body. Ecuador reported some of the lowest scores in Latin America in the second regional assessment (SERCE) in 2006 (Cevallos and Bramwell 2015). The Plan Decenal de Educación (PDE) The Ten-year Educational Plan was approved by referendum in November 2006 (Araujo and Bramwell 2015). The main policy goals tent to expand the equalitarian access to education: (1) Universal early childhood education; (2) Universal basic education; (3) Increasing upper secondary enrollment to 75 percent; and (4) Eradicating illiteracy and improving adult education. Besides. Three measures focused on quality: (5) improve infrastructure and equipment; (6) Improve education quality and equity, and (7) Enhance the prestige of the teaching career and the quality of teacher training. The final goal was (8) commitment to raise spending on K-12 education by 0.5 percent of GDP annually until it reached 6 percent of GDP" (Ross, Cevallos, & Bruns, 2017, p.7). In 2006, more than 1 billion people around the world were employed for the business that uses the English language in their communication is a reason to include EFL command as a factor to increase the population competitiveness. The English language is officially taught in private and public educational establishments in Ecuadorian nationwide (Tuiran and Avila, 2012). The teaching methodologies differ from one country to another, and even within the same country, depending on the learners' interests. UNESCO (2008b) warn that learning a foreign language is part of an intercultural education promoting the understanding between worldwide communities and nations. According to Agreement No. 00001504 of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture and Education, Article 2nd., in 2000 the EFL instruction became an elective subject from the first to seventh years of primary school having the facilities and staff to teach the language. However, the national curricular framework of primary schools was not modified immediately (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000).

In December 2009, the Ministry of Education launched a new curricular framework for primary schools. Its structure included the aforementioned elective subject (UNESCO, 2011).

In conclusion, during the period 2000 and 2010, EFL was an elective subject and, based on the available resources, school authorities decided whether to include English in their schools or not (Soto, Intriago, Vargas, Cajamarca, Cardenas, Fabre, Bravo, Morales, Villafuerte, 2017).

Public schools increase EFL teaching from 3 to 5 hours/week. During this period the educational system has been largely privatized however, teachers qualification remains as a problem (Calle, Argudo, Cabrera, Calle, and Leon, 2015). The government implements the quality controls of education and the private educational institution reporting problems are closed; the same process is implemented for higher education institutions that not meet accreditation standards (Ramirez, 2013).

2011-2020.

In August 2011 the Ministry of Education of Ecuador presented the Agreement 306-11. This agreement added to the 3 hours week for EFL classes, two more periods to the elective subject in primary schools. As complementary subjects, teachers could choose among EFL instruction and Computer use (Ministry of Education, 2011).

These new regulations demanded to incorporate qualified teachers that were not available in the public primary education system (Soto et al., 2017).

In March 2014 the Ministry of Education of Ecuador presented the Agreement 0041-14. This agreement caused a national controversy because it established a new curricular framework for elementary education which did not include EFL teaching in primary schools.

Those academic hours/classes assigned for complementary subjects included EFL were excluded from second to the seventh grade of Elementary education. Thus, the academic hours for *Clubs* were included. Students could use those extracurricular activities concerning cultural, artistic, sporting, scientific, and social interaction matters (Ministry of education, 2014a).

In the same year 2014, the Ministry of Education presented the Agreement 0052-14. This agreement attended the Regulations Exploitation of the Transitory Disposition Included which stated that EFL teaching would be mandatory for public, religion-driven, and private institutions from the second grade of primary school to the last year of high school (Ministry of education, 2014b).

This agreement was implemented from the 2016-2017 school year for the *Sierra* and *Amazon* regions, and from 2017-2018 school year for the coast region (Ministry of education, 2014c) Principals of public elementary schools appealed to their district administrators to assign qualified English teachers, but they were not available (Ramírez, 2013).

To cover the qualifies teacher demand was run the project “It is time to teach in Ecuador”. This project recruited volunteer professionals who hold a B2 accreditation to teach in public schools (Ministry of education, 2016).

The university programs for training EFL teachers have been submitted to the process of evaluation and accreditation of universities and polytechnic schools implemented by CEAACES in 2011 and after 2019 by CACES in Ecuador.

Between 2014-2016 the students had competed for the scarce quotas in four emblematic national universities: JACHAY University, University of the Arts, National University of Education UNAE and IKIAM University (Ramirez, 2016).

The teacher training programs in foreign languages at the rest of national and private universities in Ecuador restarted the opening of the courses in 2017 with the new curriculum design and with the homologated name: Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages (PINE).

EFL teaching in public primary schools was not a priority. Economic, social, political, and educational forces (Villafuerte, 2019). Thus, EFL has passed from being an elective subject, as it was first introduced in 2000, to become a complementary activity after 2012 and compulsory after 2016.

The Ecuadorian ministry of Education developed proficiency and assessment requirements, training for EFL teachers, the design of a new curriculum, the establishment of learning and teaching standards, among other things. They would occur after a language proficiency evaluation administered to both students and teachers in 2009 (Soto et al., 2017)

The Ministry of Education runs a project for strengthening of the EFL teaching. The aim to improve the language skills of English teachers as well as their teaching practice. Among the general objectives of the project, we can mention the following: the implementation of a new English curriculum that responds to the guidelines established in the Common European Framework of Reference for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation of Foreign Languages (CEFR, 2002), distribution English free text aligned to the new curriculum, the creation and implementation of a new evaluation system based on evidence standardized for English teachers in teaching practice and, also, for those who wish to enter the public education sector, and the organization of a permanent professional development system, which included training abroad called Go Teacher program (Ministry of Education, 2016b).

#### Standard of English Teaching in Ecuador

Ecuador sets the standards of EFL teaching in 2014. These should be worked mainly by the authorities of the schools and teachers of the subject. (1) Language proficiency involves the development of the communicative skills of English teachers at the level of reading, writing, listening and speaking in the target language (2) Mastery of the Anglo-Saxon culture to ensure that teachers know, understand and use in the lessons. (3) Mastery of the curriculum demonstrates that teachers know, understand and use practices and strategies for planning, implementation, and management of standards-based on English and its instructional content. (4) Mastery of the evaluation procedures and the application of the measurement of students' communication skills in English. (5) Mastery and ethical commitment, updating of knowledge for the management of teaching techniques, research results, advances in the field of English as a foreign language and educational policy issues around the teaching of foreign languages (Páez, 2013).

Program: Go teacher. 2016- 2018	<p>Program Go Teacher:</p> <p>This governmental program aims to improve to B2 the teachers' current English language level through an intensive training program; and the organization of a permanent professional development system, which included training at English speaking countries (Ministry of education, 2016).</p> <p>The Ecuadorian Secretary for Science and Technology (SENESCYT) executed this program in anglo speaking countries, but also teachers learned teaching methodologies in one the best universities of the United States and Jamaica.</p> <p>To Ramírez (2010; 2013) this program intends to improve the English language teaching and learning in Ecuadorian public and private schools and colleges, as a national project to improve the educational quality, but also the social inclusion in Ecuador.</p> <p>They are 112 Ecuadorian teachers already benefited from this program.</p>
English Language Teacher's Standards	<p>The Ecuadorian in-Service English Language Teacher Standards are based on the document developed by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) as the organization's K-12 ESL Teacher Standards (2009) which is widely used in countries such as Albania, Paraguay, and the United States. This document</p>



is organized into five domains that fit with those stated for the general curriculum and of some which are related to English language teaching and learning.

Language domain: It includes specific domains for language structure and communication, language acquisition, and development and language fluency.

Multicultural domain: Ecuador is a multicultural country (Republic of Ecuador, 2008). Ecuadorian students speak Spanish, and a certain number speak Kichwa. Therefore, Ecuadorian English teachers should know about different cultures and the possible impact learning a third language can cause.

Curriculum Development domain: Aspects related to planning for standards-based English, implementing and managing standards, and using resources and technology effectively for improving and innovating their classes.

Assessment domain: The gathering and evaluation of information related to English language learning includes the issues involved for learners as well as those related to language proficiency and classroom-based assessment.

Professionalism and Ethical commitment: This intend Teachers keep updated on the new instructional techniques, research results, and advances in the English teaching field for professional development.

New curriculum  
of EFL teaching  
2016.

The English Teaching Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2016) recommends implementing the communicative approach. It proposes to develop the communicative skills (a) listening, (b) speaking, (c) reading, and (d) writing, and the evaluation according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Thus, the EFL teaching begins in the second grade of basic education of the public education system and continues progressively to the university, where learners should reach at least level B1 of the CEFR.

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador and the teacher training institutions work to strengthen the capacities of current teachers to obtain the level of knowledge of English required. From the academy, they work on the design of training processes that expose students as much as possible to the EFL practice.

The curriculum proposal includes the instruction for students in 2nd to 10th grade of Basic General Education and 1st to 3rd of Unified General Baccalaureate or high school. This curriculum considers that the Ecuadorian population is made up of groups of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Thus, there are varying degrees of bilingualism in the Ecuadorian communities.

In this curriculum, EFL teaching focus in real-world contexts. It is expected that high school students be independent users of the English language at the end of their studies. The curriculum applies the internationally recognized levels and teaching processes for language learning (CEFR)

It is expected students reach level B1 of the CEFR in English and have developed the 4 language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing in 400 hours.

The curricular proposal is flexible and includes 5 blocks aligned with the output profile and the values of justice, innovation and solidarity that it promotes, as well as with the Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Students must have at least level A2 when entering to graduate after 4 years with a level B1. Those who want to become English teachers must graduate from the university at least with the B2 level.

Develop students' understanding of the world, of other cultures and of their own and their ability to communicate their views through the foreign language.

Develop the personal, social and intellectual skills necessary to reach their potential and participate productively in an increasingly globalized world that operates in other languages.

Create a love for language learning from an early age, through interesting and positive learning experiences, to foster student motivation to continue learning.

Source: authors (2020).

The efforts for introducing EFL as a formal subject in the secondary started in 1992-1993 with the implementation of CRADLE, and later on with the Project Advance (the EFL teaching project that replaced CRADLE in 2012). However, it was not the case for EFL in elementary schools. The previous periods included EFL only in private because, they had the resources and qualified teachers. However the first program for training EFL Teachers was in 1930 in Central University in Quito city and soon other programs were opened in Guayaquil city, Cuenca, and Manabí.

In the past, there was not much support from education stakeholders to include English in public elementary schools. As shown in the curriculum approved in 1996. EFL was not taught in the kindergarten and Elementary school (UNESCO, 2011). During the decade of the 1990s., the educational system in Ecuador collapsed and it was very difficult to sustain the educational programs. Rural schools were abandoned, reopening the differences between urban and rural education, and reducing the access to the opportunities with equality in this country. How to expect EFL teaching to be considered as a priority when even teachers do not attend to schools?

The reform of 2006 established a path to recover the educational institutions, improving the investing in education, and innovation of the Ecuadorian education system. Teachers were supported to be updated, training and accredited for EFL teaching. Besides, the program “Go Teacher” helped EFL teachers from public and private institutions to obtain the EFL teachers certification.

The current EFL curriculum in Ecuador recognizes that not all students in this country are Spanish language speakers, and there are varying degrees of bilingualism because the population linguistic and culturally diversity. This curriculum presents a justification and a framework for learning English while recognizing and facilitating the educational inclusion of students, regardless of their mother tongue.

These are five domains that include the teachers’ standards as English language, curriculum, target language culture, evaluation, and professional ethics; therefore, the training of the English language teachers in Manabí must make adjustments to achieve the required professional profile. This challenge must be accompanied by socio-educational research projects to propose specific and innovative teaching. The application of standardized tests used to assess levels of knowledge of the English language generates anxiety and other forms of stress in students and teachers who must pass them.

### 3.3 Phase 3. The description of the current situation of EFL teaching and learning process for the inclusive education in higher education in Manabí, Ecuador

The stakeholders’ voices in concern to the inclusive education for the instruction of English as a foreign language in Ecuador are exposed in the table 2.

Table 2.

*Government policies evolution for English Language Teaching in Ecuador 2012-2020*

Categories	Questions	Evidences
Government policy	What public policies influence the procedures in your language institute or center?	E1: 0:11. Regarding the English teaching standards, we apply what the Common European Framework of Reference of the language dictates in the English teaching process.
Teaching methodologies	1.2. What teaching methodologies do teachers apply?	E1: 0:39. Methodologies as CLIL, TBP, TBL, are applied by all teachers in this center. It is not considered as public policy, but teachers use the methodology according to the topic to study, groups characteristic with which they work.
English levels knowledge of university students	1.3. What are the levels of English proficiency that university students must reach in your center before completing their	E1: 1:13 “novel B2 was previously required, but, it was changed to level B1 because it was almost utopian to think that it would reach that level, but now there are 5 levels of English with 6 hours per week for 16 weeks gives us 350 hours that empower level B1 ”

Policies on inclusive education	studies? 2.1. What policies on inclusive education does your center have?	EI 2:04. "At least in the group we are in the idea of creating such policies. We take into account when students have a disability and participate in classes. What was done before was that if the student had a disability, it was approved directly. But now they are talking about taking another kind of preparation for them".
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Source: authors (2020).

Interview to stakeholders from two public Ecuadorian universities.

#### 4. Discussion and implications

In concern to the current knowledge of English language of the Ecuadorian population, the Education First agency published in 2019 that, the Ecuadorian citizens' overage has a poor level of English language knowledge and very poor attitudes for learning it. Thus, Ecuador is on position 81 of the 100 countries evaluated in 2019 (EF, 2019). Besides, other EFL evaluations applied in 2012 to high schools students in Cuenca city (Calle, Calle, Argudo, Moscoso, Smith, and Cabrera, 2012), besides, the results showed in the exams applied in the University of Guayaquil in 2019 (Intriago, Villafuerte, Bello, and Cevallos, 2019), All those tests ratify Ecuadorian students reached the average level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) even the expectation according to the national curriculum which sets B1 at the end of the higher education (Ministry of Education, 2016).

To Education First (2018) inequalities in access to educational services is perhaps the main challenge to overcome in Latin American countries where foreign language instruction is not equal for all. In consequence, most of the Ecuadorian students at the beginning of their higher education do not have the required level of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Thus, this research is centered in the review of the Ecuadorian policies related to the instruction of English as a foreign language but, applying the inclusive approach because, the current normative has no any adaptation to work with students having special educational needs.

The review of the governmental policy for EFL instruction with an inclusive approach allows to sustain that:

The inclusive educational approach involves a process of systemic reforms on the building, institutional organization, communicative principles, content adaptations, teaching methodologies, etc. (Corral et al., 2015). The purpose of inclusive education is to provide all students with the best learning environment which offers equitable and participatory learning experiences (Alcívar and Rodríguez-Hidalgo, 2019). Thus, educational institutions are still the main spaces to promote the attitudes for the creation of the wished, nondiscriminatory, and equitable society in the present and future citizenship (Villafuerte et al, 2017).

Government policy for EFL teaching and learning set new challenges around accessibility to quality education services at all educational levels (Intriago et al., 2019). However, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Pantaleón, and Calmaestra (2019) sustain the appropriate learning environments should achieve the feeling of attachment and belonging in every student. Thus, Information about the ESL performance of Ecuadorian students with sensorial disabilities conditions such as visual and auditive deficits is not visible.

This is the circumstance that motivates this research authors for contributing to the study of the government policies for ESL evolution in Ecuador since the inclusive approach.

##### 4.1 Government policy for education

Between the years 1912-1950 is almost absent the inclusive approach in the educational system in Ecuador. During that period to study in any institution of the public system was a privilege of the urban aristocratic population. The teaching of English as a foreign language was scarce during this period due to the lack of qualified teachers; a situation that had been maintained during the period 1951-1970 when the expansion of educational services to rural communities was arranged. This is

perhaps the second more important evidence of inclusive education in Ecuador, after the right of education for women around 1815.

The decade 1981-1990 was a period in which progress was made in improving the quality of education, especially in the teaching of national language Spanish. and mathematical language. The first level of inclusion appears when the government policy emphasizing access to education in rural sectors. Here, however, there is no talk about the inclusion of students with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities. Nor is the sexual diversity of students addressed.

The period 1991-2000 was a stage of regression in Ecuadorian education, having reduced the investment directed towards education that caused the abandonment of rural education, and the growth of the teachers' union demanding salary improvements and working conditions. However, it is during this decade that the CRADLE project is executed, considered as the main effort made to improve EFL learning teaching. Here, however, it is no clear attention to learners with the condition of disability.

At the beginning of the century and after a popular consultation, the educational reform in Ecuador has begun, which has allowed, from the new Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (CRE, 2008), to generate a legal framework that contemplates the fulfillment of national commitments regarding the care of students with disabilities in Ecuador.

#### **4.2 Inclusive education in Ecuador**

A chronological fact related to the inclusive education in Ecuador reveals that:

Before the decade 1990-2000, the presence of students in a condition of disability in primary and secondary schools was nil. At the beginning of the century XXI, the presence of students with any disability in elementary school was a minority, and almost non-existent at the higher education.

In 2005, the population with disabilities in Ecuador exceeded one million six hundred thousand inhabitants. 23.8% of this group attended to any of the public or private schools of the Ecuadorian educational system, but 37.9% failed to complete the elementary education; and the illiteracy rate reached 56.8% of the population (the Republic of Ecuador, 2005).

In 2010, the Manuela Espejo Foundation presents the results of the census of the population with disabilities in Ecuador. It reported more than 2 million people under any disability conditions. In 2011, the National Disability Council (CONADIS) is created, having a mission to improve the attention of people with disabilities in Ecuador. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI) is quoted as art. 47th which establish that every people without any kind of reason cannot be segregated from the educational services because education is a right. See as follows:

Art. 47th. All establishments are obliged to receive all persons with disabilities and to create the physical, curricular and promotional support and adaptations appropriate to their SEN Special Educational needs.

At this point, scholars as Corral et al., (2015) argue, the relevant changes also require the commitment of the population to assume the challenges that link educational inclusion to communities.

In 2020 students with disabilities and their families are present in almost every public and private educational institution in Ecuador. However, the educational system requires the investment to develop didactics and equipment to improve their attention.

#### **4.3 The EFL curriculum in Ecuador**

In 2010-2016 relevant elements that contribute to the improvement of EFL instruction had been run. The Ecuadorian EFL curriculum establishes the fulfillment of the English language levels according to the common European framework of reference of the language that must be fulfilled at the end of the basic, secondary and university education; but, there is no an adaptation of these levels for students who have sensory disabilities: auditory, visual, or intellectual. Those Standardized tests in their traditional formats are written in which one of the response options that the evaluated considers as correct is marked on a form. In the first versions of standardized tests applied by a computer, the keyboard was required to enter the answer to the question. In more updated versions, a tutorial is presented that explains with images and sounds the steps to answer the questions. Digital forms are presented in which high accuracy is required to activate the selected response, sometimes it is used in a mouse to drag a locker and place it in the exact place where the response should go.



Disabilities cause many problems in learners who suffer from it and in their family, school, community. It is a pathology of multiple causes, heterogeneous, diagnosis and complex management. In Ecuador school students with disabilities face controversies, misdiagnosis, improper prescription, bullying, even the risk of excessive use of medications.

#### **4.4 Strategies for advancing to the inclusive education**

To improve the inclusive approach in the EFL classes, some routes in the teaching practices could be applied from Elementary to higher education in Ecuador:

To increase the integration and inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) for the development of their social language skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) having as purpose improve their professional and citizenship competencies as productive members of the society.

Strengthen children's education to overcome SEN for improving their learning and concentration abilities. Applying the most appropriate means for more individualized training during daily classes with the support of a teacher, established in the classroom the most suitable planning, organization and conditions to ensure individuals with SEN do develop their comprehension.

To minimize the adverse effects that certain behaviors can have of the children with SEN, derived from their conditions. Impulsivity, self-control, or disruptive behaviors for being exposed to extended periods of discomfort and inappropriate learning environments and develop their self-confidence. Some children have excessive movement or hyperactivity, which directly affects problems to maintain attention. At school, the typical behaviors are: constantly getting up from the chair, squirming or moving when they should be sitting, playing with small toys brought from home, talking out of turn and humming or singing when others are silent.

The introduction of ICT as a teaching tool for teaching to children and young people in a condition of sensorial disabilities (visual, auditive, etc.), improving the learning process using support material available on the Internet like videos, applications, etc.

The ICTs have intrinsic flexibility to adapt the educational activity to different learning rhythms and concentration in students with diverse kinds of deficits as using the screens (digital whiteboard, tablets, computer, etc.) to favor learner's performance. To stimuli learners and getting their attention. TIC also favors the educational development and socio-emotional skills that predispose personal autonomy for the motivation of the student, during the performance of tasks because, they associate it with games. Games help learners to have more security reducing the fear of making mistakes developing their potential.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This research achieved the purposed objective by identifying the inclusive approach in government policy for English as a foreign language teaching in Ecuador.

The results allow concluding that the framework of the current government policy for education in Ecuador presents important advances. However, the dimensions of inclusive teaching practices and inclusive culture still challenge to overcome.

Therefore, the approach to educational inclusion in the field of EFL learning teaching is still at an early stage. To improve this condition is necessary greater participation of English teachers, the application of curricular adaptations, and develop teaching materials that respond more efficiently and effectively to the learners' special educational needs.

Besides, the inclusion of people with disabilities in daily school activities implies the government policy but also, necessary teaching practice to identify and eliminate physical barriers that persist in educational institutions' buildings. It is necessary to avoid in the population those negative prejudices regarding the work with students with disabilities and promote in Teachers and professors the change in attitude to assume their leading role in the inclusive education because, all students with or without disabilities must: (1) Receive fair treatment and have access to opportunities without any kind of discrimination; (2) Have the communication facilities, didactics and physical environments designed for universal education; (3) Be accepted as active part for construction of a more inclusive, fair and progressive society.



This work authors analyze the government policy for education in Ecuador because the current rule requires that all students achieve at least B1 level of English as a foreign language without considering the implications of the sensory disability (visual and auditory) and intellectual disability among other special educational needs. Teacher and students require the didactic material, adaptations and clear procedures to apply efficiently the inclusive education; in this concern, this work is centered on the area of English as a foreign language. However, similar situations still persist in other areas as mathematics, computer science, etc.

There is a general acceptance that a high number of SEN are involved in motor difficulties. Careful evaluation of the learners' basic motor functions may reveal minor deficits, called mild neurological signs, which include: overflowing movements, involuntary movements, dysrhythmias, motor persistence, a deficit in inhibition of responses, dyspraxia or apraxia's, disco ordination or ataxia, among others. They require specific treatments that every teacher can be involved in. All the needed is the teachers' willingness for being part of this process.

The best strategy is the access to early stimulation and initial education because it is in this contact where the identification of learners disabilities makes possible the comprehensive and timely way to overcome the ESN conditions. It is still necessary to face the complex interaction and negotiation processes that involve parents, teachers, and other community members to promote inclusive communities in collective and participative construction.

Finally, EFL Teaching is an opportunity for children with any disability for developing the practice and fluency through daily training. This can become a motivation for strengthening their knowledge to access and enjoy other social, educational and cultural realities around the world reached through the educational technology for universal education.

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