

Unfortunate effects on rural public education in ecuador



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Educator George Washington Carver once stated, " Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom" (State University 2002). Such key will never be held by the hand of Ecuadorians as the country of Ecuador struggles to provide a satisfactory education system to children in rural areas. The poor education system is a key contributor to Ecuador's state as a developing country. This limiting factor has created a vicious cycle of child laborers and inequality among children in rural and urban communities (Salazar and Glashinovich 1996). This paper will provide an in depth analysis of the education systems in Ecuador and the reform required to provide children with a better future. Ecuador's substandard education system is a consequence of the lack of government funding towards infrastructure and accessibility. With the lack of money towards education, problems such as inconsistent teaching, poor attendance, and inequalities between rural and urban scho

ols arise. Attempted progress has been made by reformists such as President Rafael Correa who works with government funding to better school systems (Belletini 2004). It is people like President Rafael Correa who are undoubtedly the greatest source of hope to the education system of Ecuador.

Last April, I travelled to Ecuador with Canada World Youth. The purpose of the trip was to form a partnership between the Canadian and Ecuadorian students. The trip provided me with a cross-cultural experience as I learnt the necessity of foreign for rural education. Our group of fourteen students raised \$10, 000 which was used to sponsor the education of 4 students in Ecuador including their high school fees.

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The failing education system instated in rural Ecuadorian communities is faced with numerous issues involving, inconsistent teaching, and poor attendance. These issues are presented due to the lack of government support and funding for education. The problems currently present in Ecuador make it difficult for Ecuadorians to become prosperous and contribute to society. Political instability within the country's own borders have invited violent protests concerning the previous three democratically elected presidents (Lopez and Valdes 2000). Political issues as well as the economic crisis have proved to further the potential of restoring proper and effective education practices in rural Ecuador.

Many social institutions demand governmental support, but it is the education system in Ecuador that is the most desperate. Researchers have highlighted that the education system has slowly been improving since the 1990's (Vos and Ponce 2004). Although, in comparison to previous decades, the educational development has decreased in effectiveness while educational inequalities has drastically grown between the urban and rural communities. The Ecuadorian government has set aside insufficient funds for their social programs as they solely contribute four percent of the countries Gross Domestic Product, compared to the average twelve percent that the general Latin American country invested (Ibid 2004). Not only has the Ecuadorian government neglected funds for the necessary social programs but they have also transferred their focus to social protection programs. This transfer of priorities has cut the funding for education programs by fifty percent (Cibilis, Giugale and Lopez-Calix 2003). The budget cut has affected all school systems across Ecuador, especially the ru

2ral communities. The limited support has caused a decrease in school infrastructure, teacher salary, and teacher training programs. The school systems are suffering and need more investment and greater reform strategies. The government must increase their investment to at least five percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product in order to be successful (Schiefelbein 1992).

In 2007, President Correa was elected to office in Ecuador. He created a platform that believed in education excellence and education reform (Economist 2009). Since 2007, Correa has spent approximately \$280 million on school infrastructure and maintenance (Ibid 2009). In addition the President has introduced logic tests which teachers must pass in order to educate the youth. These logic tests are designed to increase a teacher's credibility and ability to instruct young students (Ibid 2009). Those who do not pass the logic tests are required to take a year long training course which will help to develop their teaching strategies and knowledge. The logic tests benefit the school systems as teachers become more prepared and have more effective teaching methods. These tests will be a mandatory measure for all teachers, and will soon increase the quality of Ecuador's public education system.

The lack of government investment towards social programs, specifically education systems has greatly inf

fluenced accessibility, teaching methods, and school infrastructure. The rural communities are far more underprivileged than the urban public schools in Ecuador. In rural regions and in most parts of Latin America,

teachers are likely to be under qualified and ineffective at instructing. Similarly to Ecuador, forty to fifty of Latin American teachers have no professional training or qualifications (Schiefelbein 1992). The lack of training and qualifications is a result of poor funding and investment by the government. Training programs and workshops are not available to all teachers especially those in the rural communities. In Latin America, people who graduate with higher levels of educations tend to move to the urbanized cities and obtain prosperous jobs (Schiefelbein 1995). Sadly, those who have poor levels of education, become teachers. Teacher's with no training and limited knowledge dictate the quality of a school. Furthermore, the teaching population in Ecuador earn low salaries as the government does not believe that teachers merit higher salaries (Schiefelbein 1992). A typical public school instructor in rural Ecuador generally earns \$350 per month (Torres 2005). Teachers make an insufficient salary because there is limited funding. Without funding and low salaries, most instructors at the public school level have two or more jobs to pay for their finances. Multiple jobs on the go, means that teachers sometimes neglect to show up to instruct. The Foundation for Sustainable Development claims that there is a high rate of absenteeism among teachers (sixteen percent)"(FSD 2003). With teachers absent from classes sixteen percent of the time during the scholastic year, students are missing crucial learning opportunities. Most of the teachers absent for that time would be working at other jobs trying to gain a greater income. The quality of teaching in rural Ecuador and in the public system is very low as the teachers are under qualified and mostly disinterested in teaching.

Although some teachers are effective, the vast majority of those effective teachers are accepted to teach at private schools. Private schools in Ecuador have the money unlike public schools to afford exemplarily teachers.

Unfortunately for the public system, qualified teachers escape to the private schools wh

ere their salaries are often five to ten times higher than the public system (Schiefelbein 1995)“ The typical school is unable to hire highly skilled teachers and will find it difficult to implement innovations to improve its educational quality” (Schiefelbein 1992: 36). The methods of instruction are inadequate in countries like Ecuador. Unfortunately due to budget restraints, teachers do not have access to a curriculum to help improve their lesson plans. Without a common curriculum to be followed by all public schools, the learning becomes inconsistent and unequal between different schools and regions (Schiefelbein 1992). Simple skills that involve reading, writing, comprehension are difficult to achieve in rural Ecuador (Ibid 1992). Teacher’s do not possess the necessary credentials and materials to teach these children, as the government neglects them of the necessary resources.

With limited funding invested in education, many consequences arise with improper teaching methods between schools in rural Ecuador. The greatest consequence of poor teaching is the rate of student repetition. In Latin America, only nineteen percent of nine year olds attend schools, but nearly fifty percent of the first grade students repeat as they are unable to fulfill the teacher’s requirements (Schiefelbein 1992). The country of Ecuador would drastically benefit if more money was invested into increasing the quality of teaching as it would decrease the rate of student repetition. Repeating a <https://assignbuster.com/unfortunate-effects-on-rural-public-education-in-ecuador-essay-samples/>

grade is not only staggering the student's ability to learn and involve themselves in the work force but it also poses massive affects on the educational system financially. In rural Ecuador, repetition is two times higher than the countries average (Ibid 1992). If the ecuadorian g

5overnment were to invest more money in to developing an accessible curriculum for all teachers, repetition rates would decrease.

The Ecuadorian public school system poses many problems for people in rural communities. The inconsistency in teaching methods are followed by widespread truancy as parents would rather send their child to work as opposed to enrolling them in a rural school. Limited access to schools and extra student costs for those in rural Ecuador are some of the major factors that affect enrollment rates and attendance. There are vast differences and inequities that are noticeable when comparing urban and rural education systems. Although public education is free for children ages five to fifteen years old, enrollment rates suffer drastically in rural communities. In urban developed areas, children have an average of twelve years of schooling while children from rural Ecuador only have an average of four years (Cibilis et al. 2003). Of those children who had four years of schooling, only nineteen percent of the total rural population is enrolled in school compared to eighty percent of the total urban population (Ibid 2003). Education inequities are also affecting those children who wish to attend higher education levels as only two percent of the poorest quantile attend higher education (Ibid 2003). The Ecuadorian government must learn how to disperse their funding equally among communities so that education practices and accessibility is the same for every child.

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One of the most common reasons for the lack of enrollment, is due to school accessibility. Although the Correo government is starting to invest more in school infrastructure and maintenance there are still minimal public schools available for children in rural areas(Economist 2009). “ Only 42% of children among those in the poorest quantile have access to preschool education” (Cibilis et al. 2003: 271). There is noticeably more opportunity for preschool education in urban communities as they are given a higher priority over rural public education. Coincidentally there are more children in rural Ecuador who need public education than urban areas.

The inadequate financing and poor accessibility to public schools for those living in rural Ecuador posse major decisions on parents. They often have to decide whether or not to enroll their children due to financial limitations. Although Ecuador promises to serve the public with free education there are still extra costs that are not covered by the government. With restricted funds, families have difficulty paying for uniforms, school supplies, and transportation (Vos and Ponce 2004). The indirect costs linked to the lack of government investment are a considerable reduction in family income because the child is no longer working (Ibid 2004). Many families in rural Ecuador are faced with the difficult decision on whether to send their 6 child to school or have them work. With more government funding towards public education, parents would not have to pay extra costs for school. Therefore, parents would be more inclined to enroll their children to become educated.

Although it is evident that the rural education system in Ecuador is desperate for money and seems somewhat helpless, there are reform practices taking place that are proven to be effective. Currently in Mexico, education reform is taking place that could be implemented in to Ecuador's education system. Education reform known as " Telesecondary" would be transferable and an effective means of reform in rural Ecuador.

Telesecondary is a teaching strategy that delivers greater education through new technologies. It consists of using computers, internet and mass media (Cibilis et al. 2003). The students learning from this innovative teaching method distance themselves from the instructor. The main purpose of th

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7is reform is to give all children the ability to learn at their own pace with a structured and reliable source of information (Cibilis et al. 2003). Another recommendation and applicable education reform strategy would be following the model of the " Escuela Nueva". The Escuela Nueva project is currently being practiced in Mexico. Escuela Nueva is community based which focuses primarily on active participation, and cooperative learning (Schiefelbein 1992). The project helps children learn vital life skills by applying their knowledge learnt in class to the outside community. This model of education responds directly to the education challenges that are currently present in Ecuador. It helps to eliminate poor educational infrastructure, repetition rates, and under qualified teachers. The Escuela Nueva programs help schools to achieve a standardized curriculum, better teacher training and greater community involvement.

Once part of the Northern Inca Empire, Ecuador has suffered a disruptive past. Such is exemplified as the country has faced poor governance and instability of constitutions as they have just recently imposed their twentieth constitution since 1830 (State University 2002). However, the greatest problem to face the country is that of education. The poor education system is a key contributor to Ecuador's state as a developing country. Ecuador's substandard education system is a consequence of inconsistent teaching, poor attendance, and the nonobservance of minority groups. Progress has been attempted by reformist President Correa who has concentrated millions of dollars on bettering education in Ecuador. Undeniably, it is he w

8ho serves as the greatest source of hope to the education system of Ecuador. Although the President and his government have made much progress during his two-term reign, there are many steps to be taken to reach resolution, including the elimination of child labor. Subsequently such extensive education problems are followed by the constant battle with child labor in addition to poor economic practices. It is educational reform which will lead to the evolution of Ecuador as its citizens become literate and receive additional opportunities, such as jobs, thereby diminishing poverty (Bellettini 2004). Education may be the problem, but it is also the solution to increase Ecuador's progression to become a developed country.