The Politics of Transforming Education in Ecuador 2006-2017
Ben Ross Schneider, Pablo Cevallos Estarellas, and Barbara Bruns

Quito, 2007
Lima, 2012
1. Ecuador’s education transformation in an Andean context
2. What drives learning improvement?
   1. What education economics is telling us: cost-effective interventions
   2. What policymakers are doing: system-wide reform with little evidence base
3. Challenges of reforming teacher policy – technical and political
4. How Andean countries are doing it?
5. What we can learn from Ecuador?
Andean countries on Latin America regional test 2006-2013

Math Scores on Second (SERCE) and Third Regional Test (TERCE)
Andean countries on Latin America regional test 2006-2013

Math Scores on Second (SERCE) and Third Regional Test (TERCE)

- Chile
- LA average*

2006: 492, 517
2013: 511, 581
Andean countries on Latin America regional test
2006-2013

Math Scores on Second (SERCE) and Third Regional Test (TERCE)
Andean countries on Latin America regional test 2006-2013

Math Scores on Second (SERCE) and Third Regional Test (TERCE)

Chile
Ecuador
Peru
LA average*

517 513
460 490
527 511
492 513
480 527
560 581
480 517
440 498
460 460

2006 2013
Andean countries on PISA: 2000-2015

Math scores on PISA

Note: Values for Peru interpolated from 2000-2009
What is driving Andean education progress?

• Cost-effective interventions?
Figure 13. Highly effective practices to increase access and learning outcomes

Mother-tongue / bilingual instruction
Better teaching methods
Providing remedial education
Cut waste – double learning time
Group by ability
Update teachers on student progress
Teacher performance incentives
Preschool (learning effect by grade 5)
Student performance incentives
New school in village
Community-based monitoring
School feeding
Computer-assisted learning and materials
Malaria prevention and control
Washrooms and water
Cash transfers
User fee reduction
Providing instructional materials
Micronutrient intervention
Train school management

Source: Education Commission analysis (2016). Note: The improvements are based on a baseline of 50 percent (of enrollment, completion and learning outcomes).
### Table 17: Variance within versus across McEwan’s (2014) intervention categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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**Source:** Evans and Popova, *What Really Works to Improve Learning in Developing Countries*, 2015
Table 5 – Summary of Impacts on Test Scores of Demand Side Interventions

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<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
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Table 7 – Summary of Impacts on Test Scores of School Inputs

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Table 9 – Summary of Impacts on Test Scores of Pedagogy Interventions

<table>
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<th>Intervention Type</th>
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1. Figures are number of estimates; figures in parentheses are number of papers/studies.

Source: Glewwe and Muralidharan, 2015
What is driving Andean education progress?

- Cost-effective interventions?
- Or comprehensive reform tackling the core issue of teacher quality?
High quality teachers are produced by a System that rewards talent and is selective.

Financial (salaries, benefits, trajectory) and professional incentives (quality of peers, working conditions) attract talented people.

- Secondary school
- Teacher education
- Teaching in a school
- Good school leaders

Screening point 1: Selectivity of entry into teacher education
Screening point 2: Standards for teacher hiring
Periodic Teacher performance evaluation – retain high quality, remove low quality

Effective professional development

How it works in Finland, Singapore, Canada, Japan, Korea, Shanghai
Raising teacher quality requires reforming the System that produces teachers

Financial (salaries, benefits, trajectory) and professional incentives (quality of peers, working conditions) not competitive with other sectors

Academically weak students – bottom half of high school grads

Large number of low quality institutions

Academically weak preparation No emphasis on practice/Delinked from schools

Teaching in a school

No selectivity

No selectivity

Automatic promotion Job stability No performance evaluation

Little or no effective professional development

How it works in low-performing countries...
Teacher reform is technically challenging

- **Big agenda** – multiple reforms, covering incentives, institutions and processes need to be pursued at the same time and aligned
- **Capacity-intensive** - teacher performance evaluation; institutional accreditation; effective professional development all require expert skill and implementation capacity
- **Hard to monitor** - To affect student learning, reforms must affect teacher practice in the classroom, but this is hard to change
- **Slow and diffused results** – benefits, in terms of education system performance, take years to accrue
... and politically conflictual

- Costs of reform are concentrated on teachers and teacher unions
  - Increased accountability, decreased job stability, more variable pay
  - Threats to union structure (decentralization) or unity (variable compensation)

- Unions have immense political power
  - Largest, most homogeneous, and most powerful union in many countries
  - High disruptive power through strikes and demonstrations
  - Direct political power in funding candidates and voting bloc

- Not just a labor association
  - Leadership often politicized and allied with powerful parties
  - May control significant rents (e.g., appointments)
  - May be part of clientelist, machine politics
  - Multiple layers of interests superimposed on unions

- Quality reforms affect all of these interests
So why – and when – does it happen?

• No satisfying answers from political scientists
• May be lessons from the Andean wave – three politically distinct countries implementing very similar reforms
• Parallel in Washington DC, which has been researched
  • Dee and Wyckoff, 2013 – within 3 years, teacher evaluation program “shifted the entire distribution of teachers in the direction of higher quality”
  • Jacob et al, 2015 – test-based recruitment has produced more effective new teachers
<table>
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<th>Policy goals and instruments</th>
<th>Ecuador 2007-15</th>
<th>Chile 2004-16</th>
<th>Peru 2009-14</th>
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<td>- Close low quality schools</td>
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<td>- Create exit exam</td>
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<td>- Higher salaries for new recruits</td>
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The case of Ecuador’s education reform

<table>
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<th>Unique features</th>
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<td>- Sense of crisis: spending fell to 1 % of GDP; lowest scores in LAC region on SERCE; teachers working only 62 % of contractual hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Political leader with a mandate and personal conviction: Rafael Correa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Resources: oil prices and economic expansion permit 4-fold increase in spending, to 5% in 2013.</td>
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Ecuador: Political strategies

- Key reform opponent (teachers’ union) was defeated by Correa’s communications strategies.
- No other major stakeholders were influential, but parent and student involvement in school-level decisions built support.
- Strong technical team in Ministry and stable leadership only 2 ministers from 2006-2013.
1. More selective, and higher quality, pre-service teacher education

What was done?
• Minimum standards set for teacher education curriculum
• Most teacher training institutes were closed down
• National Education University (UNAE) was created
2. Higher standards for new teachers

What was done?

• Entrance tests to apply for public teacher positions
• Minimum score in ENES test to enter teacher education programs
• Recruitment campaign “I want to be a teacher”
3. Individual teacher performance evaluation

What was done?

• First-time assessment of all in-service teachers & principals
• Economic incentives to those who received better marks
• Creation of Institute of Educational Assessment (INEVAL)
4. High quality in-service professional development

**What was done?**

- National training program for in-service teachers
- Orientation program for new teachers
- Mentorship program
5. Restructure teacher career with promotion based on tested competencies

What was done?

- Entry salary increase
- “Meritocratic” career ladder
- More professional opportunities
Conclusions

What worked?
• Strong political leadership produced overwhelming public support.
• Long tenure of reformers generated continuity of reforms.
• Teachers’ union opposition to reforms was skillfully deactivated.
• Education reform was comprehensive.

What looks problematic?
• Top-down reform failed to build a broader coalition of civil society support and cultivate teacher buy-in.
• Teacher selection mechanisms showed a disconnect between requisites and retribution.
• Limited attention was given to the quality of key actors of the education system other than teachers – e.g., school leaders and supervisors.
• Some substantively important reforms may produce little impact, as they do not address the flaws they were meant to solve.
¡Gracias!
Thank you!

• Ongoing research
• Comments and suggestions welcome:
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  • barbara.bruns@gmail.com;
    bbruns@cgdev.org