

# Misalignments and Incoherencies within Ecuador's Education System: How Well Are Key Actors and Public Efforts Aligned towards Better Learning Outcomes?

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify the main critical misalignments and inconsistencies nested in the Ecuadorian education system, which inhibit and limit its capacity to transform efforts, resources, and reforms into better learning outcomes for all students. To do so, it uses an innovative methodology developed by the RISE (Research on Improving Systems of Education) programme based on a 'Systems Thinking' perspective. This approach allows the analysis of key actors, their incentives, and interactions, to assess the overall alignment of the system and the existence of barriers that might prevent the system transitioning towards better learning outcomes. This study is based mainly on qualitative methods and information collected in the field through interviews, focus groups and surveys held in the first semester of 2022 in three cities in Ecuador: Quito, Tena, and Guayaquil. In total, more than 50 stakeholders from different regions and levels of the education system actively participated in this effort, targeted towards the identification and discussion of the inconsistencies and critical issues described in this study. The report has five sections that offer a detailed account of the implementation of the RISE diagnostic framework in the Ecuadorian educational system.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, Ecuador has gone through different political, social, and economic transformations. This is manifested in its significant advancement in various indicators of well-being, such as the reduction of inequality where the Gini index decreased from 0,53 to 0,45 between 2003 and 2019; the reduction in poverty<sup>6</sup> from 14,9% in 2003 to 3,6% in 2019; the increase in school enrolment in secondary education where the proportion of students went from 45% in 2000 to 85% in 2018 and a sharp increase in internet access<sup>7</sup> going from a 5% in 2005 to 59% in 2019 (World Bank, 2022). These positive trends do not contradict the existence of important gaps and challenges to be addressed by the country in main social areas such as living and working conditions, health care, and education (Acevedo & Valenti, 2017; Ruiz, et al. 2018). The factors behind this progress are diverse and complex to analyze, being a relevant one the enactment of the new constitution in 2008, which has undoubtedly meant the promotion of social rights, and the recognition of indigenous peoples and their culture to make Ecuador a more inclusive, equitable and democratic society.

The right to education has been especially prioritized on government agendas, especially in the 2008 constitution, which mandates the State to allocate 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to expand access and improve the quality of education. At the same time, the organization of the State and its administrative levels (national, zonal, district) have been reformed to achieve greater deconcentration<sup>8</sup>. Various programmes to improve teachers' career, their initial and continuous training, accompanied by better and more transparent teacher selection and appointment processes, as well as better salary conditions, have sought to strengthen the teaching profession and their pedagogical capacities (SUMMA, 2022). The national curriculum has also been updated to be more flexible, and the educational evaluation system carried out by INEVAL (National Institute for Evaluation) has been consolidated. On the other hand, investments have been made in infrastructure and equipment for schools. Also, the recognition of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, and the valuing of their culture has led to the promotion of intercultural bilingual education across the country (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Despite these and other efforts, and the progress achieved in increasing school access and enrolment (especially in secondary school), the quality of education continues to be an urgent and major challenge, due to the low achieved results and the profound existing social gaps. In this sense, the expansion of education access has not been translated directly into better learning outcomes and the improvement of foundational literacy and maths skills (UNESCO, 2022).

In view of this situation, this first exploratory study aims to identify the main critical misalignments and inconsistencies nested in the Ecuadorian education system, which inhibit and limit its capacity to transform these efforts, resources, and reforms into better learning outcomes for all students. To do so, it uses an innovative methodology, developed by the RISE (Research on Improving Systems of Education) programme based on a Systems Thinking perspective. This approach,

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank indicator: Poverty headcount ratio at \$2.15 a day is the percentage of the population living on less than \$2.15 a day at 2017 purchasing power adjusted prices.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank indicator: "Internet users are individuals who have used the Internet (from any location) in the last 3 months. The Internet can be used via a computer, mobile phone, personal digital assistant, games machine, digital TV etc.

<sup>8</sup> The difference between the processes of deconcentration and decentralization is related to the fact that in the former local and subnational entities gain legal personality without full autonomy as in the latter. In deconcentration the central body continues to exercise hierarchical control over the deconcentrated entity (Mora, 2006: 69).

materialised in a diagnostic toolkit (Spivack, 2022), allows analysing key actors, their incentives and interactions to assess their overall alignment, and the existence of barriers that might prevent the system transiting towards better learning outcomes. In this view, the diagnostic tool “facilitate and support governments and organisations in selecting high-level strategic reform priorities to improve learning, based on the latest education systems research” (Spivack et al., 2023: 11).

This study is based mainly on qualitative methods and information collected in the field through interviews, focus groups and surveys held in the first semester of 2022 in three cities in Ecuador: Quito, Tena, and Guayaquil. In total, more than 50 stakeholders from different regions and levels of the education system actively participated in this effort, targeted towards the identification and discussion of the inconsistencies and critical issues described in this study.

It is hoped that this exploratory exercise will serve as a starting point for new conversations and debates, from a systems perspective, to address old and persistent problems in the Ecuadorian educational system; specifically, to identify critical issues associated with misalignments that hinder learning improvement. Furthermore, this diagnostic study allows us to visualize a rich research agenda focused on the relationships of the actors in the Ecuadorian system, how these relationships are structured, how they have evolved historically, or what effect these relationships and alignments have on the performance of the educational system.

The report has five sections that offer a detailed account of the implementation of the RISE diagnostic framework in the Ecuadorian educational system. In addition to this introduction, the second part summarizes the conceptual approach developed by RISE. The third section details the methodology used in the study. The fourth part presents a brief description of the Ecuadorian system, especially for readers and researchers from other latitudes. The fifth section describes the main alignments of the Ecuadorian system and exposes its misalignments in terms of the relationships between actors, influenced by mandates, resources and incentives. Finally, the main recommendations that emerge from the analysis of the data and the rich discussions held with the Advisory Committee are presented.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

The Systems Thinking approach for analysing education systems developed by the RISE Programme<sup>9</sup> seeks to identify the lack of alignment and incoherencies in the relationships and incentives of the actors that make up the education system. It also attempts to understand how these incoherencies hinder learning outcomes and improvement. The identification of these misalignments is meant to allow for guiding and prioritizing reforms to the system.

The RISE model analyses the relationships between the actors from the principal-agent paradigm, in other words, it assesses "responsibility" relationships between an actor, called the "principal", who delegates a task with certain objectives to another actor, called the "agent". According to Silberstein and Spivack (2022: 7): "...the principal-agent relationship is a model used to describe a situation in which one actor (the principal) wants a task to be performed, so he/she delegates to another actor (the agent) to carry it out. The principal sets out what is expected of the agent and how the agent will be rewarded for completing the task(s) the principal sets out,

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<sup>9</sup> <https://riseprogrammeme.org/tools/rise-system-diagnostic>

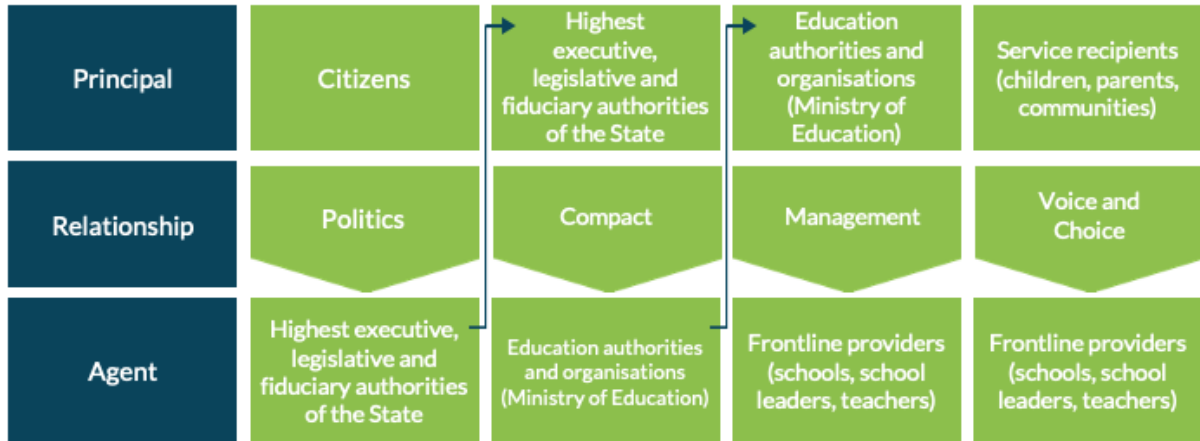
i.e., how the principal will hold the agent accountable. [Thus] the principal equips the agent to perform the task(s) by monitoring and incentivizing the agent's performance."

The principal-agent problem, widely studied in the economic discipline (e.g. Laffont and Martimont, 2002), arises from the fact that the principal does not have complete information or adequate control mechanisms to monitor the effort made by the agent to achieve the objectives entrusted to him. Moreover, the achievement of objectives depends not only on the agent's effort, but also on other unobservable contextual variables that are often beyond the control of both the agent and the principal. Therefore, when the achievements attained by the agent are lower than those initially agreed with the principal, the question arises as to whether the cause of the poorer performance is to be found in the agent's insufficient effort or in contextual variables not controlled by the agent. In turn, the question may also arise as to whether the support and resources provided by the principal to the agent are adequate and sufficient to accomplish the task. However, taking into account its limitations, the added value of this approach is to focus on the level of coherence in the relation between two actors: putting attention to the guidelines given by the principal and received by the agent; the incentives that the agent has to make an effort and carry out the assigned task; the support given by the principal to the agent to achieve the objectives; and the information used by the principal to adequately and fully evaluate the results obtained by the agent.

Taking these concepts to the education context, we can think that the ministry of education (acting as principal) delegates to the schools and teachers (agent) that children and teenagers reach certain learning outcomes. In case these are not achieved under this model, it is difficult for the ministry to know exactly what proportion of lower performance is due, for example, to a lack of effort on the part of the schools or how much the socioeconomic vulnerability of the school community affects that performance. The ministry will also not be able to know whether the cause is due to the lack of suitability of the agent, and his or her abilities to carry out the educational action adequately, or other uncontrolled aspects. For these reasons, and as a starting point, this model seeks to inquire about the alignment of the shared objectives and incentives of the principal and agent. If these are not aligned, even if the other factors are in favour, it is unlikely that the agent will achieve the desired objectives.

From the principal-agent perspective, as shown in Figure 1, the RISE model establishes and analyses four relationships between the actors in the education system to assess their alignment and coherence: (1) Policy relationship (between citizens and high authorities); (2) Compact relationship (between high authorities and sectoral public agencies such as the ministry of education); (3) Management relationship (between the ministry of education and educational agents such as schools and teachers); and (4) Voice and Choice relationship (between parents, proxies, community and educational agents such as schools and teachers).

### **Figure 1: Four key principal-agent relationships**



Source: based on Spivack (2022).

As shown in Table 1, the model specifies five elements or dimensions that characterize each of these relationships: (1) delegation (the principal delegates a task to be executed by the agent); (2) financing (the principal provides monetary resources for the agent's performance); (3) information (the principal evaluates the agent's activities); (4) motivation (the principal provides incentives and encourages the agent); and (5) support (the principal offers assistance and support to the agent for the achievement of his or her task).

**Table 1: 5x4 matrix of principal-agent relationships**

Relationship	POLITICS Citizens Highest authorities	COMPACT Highest authorities Education authorities	MANAGEMENT Educational authorities Schools, teachers	VOICE AND CHOICE Service recipients and providers of service
<b>Delegation:</b> What the principal wants the agent to do.				
<b>Finance:</b> The resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve assigned task.				
<b>Information:</b> how the principal assesses the agent's performance.				
<b>Support:</b> Preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task.				
<b>Motivation:</b> How the principal motivates the agent, including the ways in which agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives.				

Source: based on Spivack (2022).

From a systems perspective, the aim is to reveal the type of alignment that predominates in a relationship. In this sense, it helps to identify the orientation of the actors towards the type of ends they pursue in their activities. Therefore, it observes the degree of consensus and coherence in the goals of the different actors that make up a relationship. Desirable alignments, from this perspective, are those that favour learning, i.e., that articulate actions where students develop relevant competencies, attitudes, skills, and knowledge. Also relevant, in certain stages of system

development, is the alignment to access, which focuses on the expansion of enrolment and the capacity of systems to integrate and retain all students.

On the other hand, there may be other alignments that are detrimental to promoting learning, and therefore a quality, inclusive and equitable education. Alignment to selection may end up segmenting and stratifying the system, placing too much emphasis on the academic performance of students, or opening better possibilities only to those with better school results, making invisible the fact that this may be the result of underlying variables linked to social inequalities. In turn, among the undesirable alignments is the alignment to clientelism, which seeks the defence of specific short-term personal or corporate interests (generally other than those related to learning). Furthermore, an alignment of the system towards process compliance can also be observed. This puts the focus on bureaucratic and logistical tasks, administrative activities, and the fulfilment of reports, losing the focus on the substantive tasks of educational actors, which is the improvement of learning.

The following part of report shows the results of the application, adapted and contextualized, of the systems thinking methodology developed by RISE to understand the problems and critical issues of the Ecuadorian educational system.

### **3. Methodology**

This research makes use of qualitative and participatory methods of social research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). In addition, it uses secondary information, but mainly it relies on primary sources obtained from field work carried out in different regions of Ecuador during the first semester of 2022.

The methodology and stages of the study are consistent with the methodological suggestions proposed by RISE (Silberstein and Spivack, 2022), to ensure reliability and comparability of the results with studies conducted in other countries. Specifically, the process of implementing this diagnosis was developed in four phases, which are described below:

The first phase systematized secondary documentation and existing information to preliminary understand the different relationships in the Ecuadorian education system. An Advisory Committee, made up of fourteen education experts (including the Minister of Education of Ecuador), was formed to provide guidance and feedback on the design and implementation of this project.

In the second phase, primary information was collected through three focus groups in three cities in the country: Quito (Andean Region), Guayaquil (Pacific Coast Region) and Tena (Amazon Region). Forty-seven representatives from different areas and levels of the education system participated to deepen the analysis and understanding of each of the relationships of responsibility between principals and agents of the education system. All focus groups were recorded with the consent of the participants and then the material collected was analysed under the systematization matrices proposed by RISE and adapted by the research group. This process was the basis for identifying inconsistencies, misalignments, and the respective recommendations to address the identified issues.



During the third phase, individual interviews were conducted with some members of the educational community to seek additional information to deepen the diagnosis, in relation to topics such as: financing, educational management, pedagogical support for school directors, multigrade-rural teachers, and the system support for teachers.

In the fourth phase, a prioritization exercise was carried out, jointly developed with the project's Advisory Committee, to select the main misalignments and possible solutions.

#### **4. The Ecuadorian education system and its main challenges**

Ecuador's education system is regulated by the 2008 Constitution of the Republic and the 2008 Organic Law of Intercultural Education. This law establishes that citizens should have access to free, quality education as a right that includes all educational levels, from early childhood education to higher education (Ministry of Education, 2021). To guarantee this right, the constitution mandates investing 6% of GDP in education. Unfortunately, despite the efforts, this goal is not currently met. The current budget allocated to education reached 3.98% of GDP in 2021, which represents 13.3% of the total public sector budget (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2022).

The National Education System contemplates both regular schooling and extraordinary education. The school-based modality is coordinated by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, while the non-school-based education is under the responsibility of the Undersecretariat of Professional Qualifications of the Ministry of Labour. The educational system also ensures space for Intercultural Bilingual Education and Ethno-education, which seeks to promote and preserve ancestral knowledge and languages.

Within the legal framework instituted between 2008 and 2012, the Ministry of Education adopted a new organic statute of organizational management by processes, and reorganized the Ecuadorian education system into nine zones, 140 districts and 1,142 educational circuits, through a new deconcentrated management model (Ministry of Education, 2012). A major challenge remains the strengthening of school autonomy and the empowerment of school leaders, with relevant training, so that they develop pedagogical leadership and create a learning environment based on collaboration with focus on learning improvement.

School education (pre-primary, primary and secondary) is divided into public education (fiscal and municipal), fiscomisional (private education subsidized by the State) and private education. It provides education to more than 4.3 million students, distributed among public education, which reaches 78% of the total enrolment; private education with 16%, and fiscal-commissioned education, which serves 6% of students. Out of the total student population, 76% is located in urban areas and 26% in rural areas. Students are served by approximately 203,000 teachers (72% female and 18% male), distributed in more than 16,000 educational institutions.

Despite Ecuador's progress in terms of access, there are still important challenges in terms of quality and equity in learning. According to UNESCO statistics, during the last decade (2012-2020) pre-primary education enrolment has remained constant, going from 52% to 54% with increases and decreases during the period. Primary education has maintained its enrolment at around 92%, which accounts for the existence of a group of children (8%) that the system has

not managed to integrate. In secondary education, on the other hand, significant progress has been made, going from 75% in 2012 to 86% in 2020 in net enrolment. Despite this progress, a significant number of young people need to be integrated into the system to complete secondary education.

The system's challenges are mainly related to education quality. Despite of Ecuador experimenting a significant improvement in learning outcomes between 2006-2013 (Ross-Schneider, et al., 2018), the results of the system have remained steady since 2013 according to the ERCE 2019 - Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (UNESCO, 2022). This means, for example, that a comparatively high percentage of learning poverty persists in relation to the region. Ecuador ranks above the regional average with 63% of students failing to comprehend simple text at age 10 (World Bank, 2019). In mathematics, according to PISA, 71% of students present low performance, which when analysed by socioeconomic level reveals that almost 90% of the poorest students do not achieve the expected learning level, compared to 51% of non-poor students (Bos, et. al., 2019).

At the level of educational investment, Ecuador has reduced investment compared to other sectors of public spending. According to the UNESCO, in 2013 public spending on education reached 5% of GDP, a value that decreases significantly by 2021 to 3.9%. Annual public spending per primary education student in Ecuador reaches US\$ 1,195 (PPP), a value significantly lower, for example, than Chile (US\$ 4,571), Costa Rica (US\$ 4,365) and the OECD average, which reaches US\$ 10,500 (UNESCO-UIS, 2022; OECD, 2021). As the IADB points out, Ecuador is a country with a low investment per student (US\$14,011 adding primary and secondary spending - between 6 and 15 years), compared to countries such as Costa Rica (US\$ 46,531) and Chile (US\$ 40,607) that invest up to three times more than Ecuador. Even lower in relation to the average reported by OECD countries (US\$90,294) (Bos, et. al., 2019).

To this structural reality must be added, at present, the challenges of learning recovery generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges refer to the need to close the learning gap between different socioeconomic groups, reduce school dropout and improve the social and emotional well-being of educational communities (Ministry of Education, 2021). In this context, the question arises as to how it is possible to advance in the improvement of educational quality and to reduce learning gaps.

## **5. Misalignments and Incoherencies using the RISE Systems Diagnostic Tool**

This section presents an overview of the system with higher order tendencies that seem to show a highly disoriented and incoherent educational system. Additionally, the second part of this section draws attention on those critical issues that emerge when using the principal-agent framework in Ecuador.

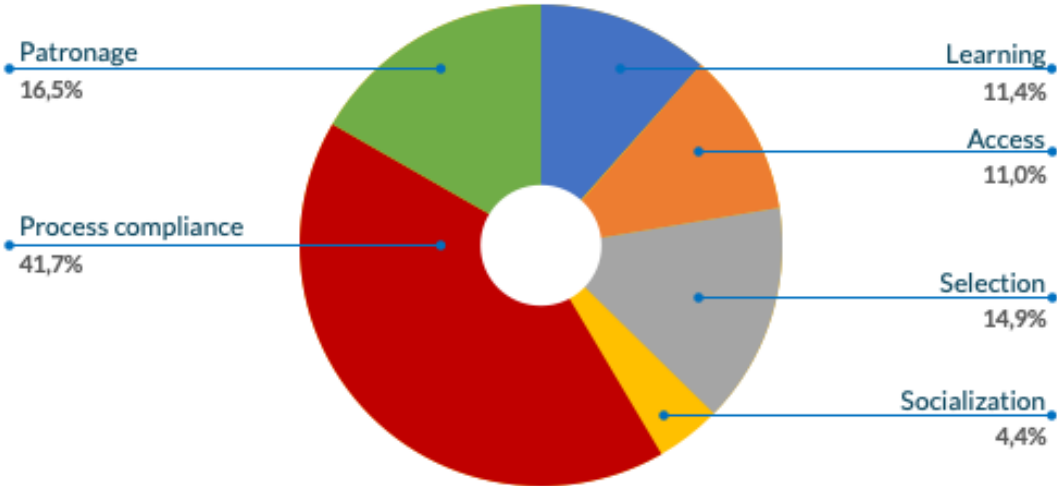
### **5.1 Macro system alignments: a disoriented system**

During the fieldwork carried out in the different regions in the country, a survey was administered to the participants of each focus group. In total, forty-seven respondents from different levels of the educational system contributed with their opinions. The main results obtained from the analysis of the surveys are presented below, as shown in Figure 2.

According to the participants in this study, the Ecuadorian system is primarily aligned with compliance with formal processes and administrative tasks. In fact, 41.7% of the participants highlight this characteristic. According to the RISE framework, "process compliance" refers to alignment focused on completing support tasks, compliance with bureaucratic tasks and compliance with administrative processes in human resources, finance, ICT, among others (Spivack, 2021). In this approach, compliance with formalities and procedural rules is prioritized over the substantive and quality objectives that such tasks seek to ensure.

In the Ecuadorian case, and according to the study participants, although the 2008 Constitution and subsequent laws establish that the actors in the education system (principals and agents) must be aligned with learning outcomes, the various bureaucratic control mechanisms installed in the system reinforce (de facto) an approach of isomorphic mimicry<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 2: General alignment of the educational system<sup>11</sup>.**



Source: Authors, based on survey results.

Under this paradigm, the formal and procedural prevails over the purposes that such procedures are intended to serve. Although various actors state that this logic was designed and promoted with the purpose of increasing control and supervision over the actors, avoiding corruption and misallocation of public resources, in practice it tends to immobilize agents and limit the effectiveness in achieving higher levels of educational quality, since every action or decision is scrutinized by higher levels and penalized in case it does not agree with the criteria, not always clear, of the regulations or authorities in power. Consequently, distrust and fear of the legal implications of not following established procedures predominate. Therefore, this alignment is based on accounting for the management of resources with the respective reports of the

<sup>10</sup> Isomorphic mimicry is a process through which systems adopt the external form of more capable organizations, but without necessarily genuinely developing the respective internal capabilities (Spivack, 2022: 13).

<sup>11</sup> This figure represents a general overview of the alignment of the system. Methodologically, these percentages come from a survey applied to 47 respondents assessing the relationships of compact, management and voice & choice. The participants had the possibility to express their views, selecting what type of alignment (one or none of the six in the graph) characterizes each one of the relationships and its elements.

Comptroller General of the State and its possible observations, rather than on accountability for educational achievements and results.

This approach is not only detected by stakeholders nationally, but also regionally, at district and local levels. According to the participants, district authorities and school principals maintain a predominantly administrative approach aligned with process compliance, preventing teachers from aligning themselves with the learning outcomes of their students. The overload generated by the various reports they must produce prevents them from having the necessary time to adequately plan their classes, improve their pedagogical practices, and provide feedback to their students.

Secondly, stakeholders highlight an alignment consistent with a "clientelist" approach (16.5%). This alignment is "characterized by seeking short-term political objectives, [where] the education system is used as a tool for clientelism" (Spivack, 2021: 10). Instead of focusing on the pursuit of learning, this alignment generates a tacit and vicious coordination of agents, in favour of their particular interests, using the system's resources inefficiently and ineffectively. According to the study participants, in the Ecuadorian case, a high degree of clientelism is observed, especially in the management of teacher professional development; in particular, in the assignment of teachers and in the selection of educational authorities (e.g., school or district director). In many cases, political profiles are selected to the detriment of adequate professional profiles, affecting the quality of learning and teacher motivation.

In third place, the feature of "selectivity" (14.9%) stands out, understood as an alignment that promotes a logic of segmentation within the system, classifying students into schools and/or educational levels, according to their academic performance, which is inevitably also associated with ethnicity or socioeconomic origin. In the Ecuadorian case, high-level officials from the Ministry of Education and experts expressed that the alignment towards selectivity is manifested in the disproportionate emphasis placed on flagship schools, despite serving a reduced proportion of students in the system.

Only in fourth and fifth place, 11.4% and 11% of respondents, respectively, stated that the actors and activities of the system are aimed towards achieving the objectives of "learning" and "access". Both should be the main aim of the education system, understanding that, without ensuring universal access, it is not possible to build a quality system for all. In turn, access does not ensure meaningful learning for life in society.

In the Ecuadorian case, although the participants expressed their desire and motivation to align with learning, they claim that the system does not provide sufficient economic resources, nor does it have adequate funding mechanisms or relevant and contextualized pedagogical support to promote this alignment. In turn, and despite the important efforts to present information through the Open Data portal, the Ministry of Education still does not have a sufficiently consolidated Educational Management Information System (SIGED), with digitized and articulated data, which provides permanent information on the responsibilities in the achievement of educational objectives and results, optimizing administrative work and facilitating the analysis of the effectiveness of public policies.

In conclusion, the analysis of the results reveals that there is a dominant perception that the actors in the system are aligned towards the fulfilment of bureaucratic processes. These results also

show that there is a multiplicity of objectives in the system. These can lead the different actors to perform divergent and contradictory actions, which divert them from the fundamental objective of "learning", as occurs when some agents are aligned with clientelist and selective objectives. In this sense, the need to align the vision of the system towards a common objective, which channels and mobilizes collective efforts, seems critical.

## **5.2 Inconsistencies regarding learning: critical issues in the principal-agent relationships in the educational system.**

This section identifies and discusses the main inconsistencies in the Ecuadorian education system, based on the application of the RISE framework and the information gathered in the interviews, surveys and focus group discussions.

For each of the identified inconsistencies, the problem and inconsistency are described, and concrete examples are presented to support the critical node with evidence. Although the different relationships in the RISE framework are considered, the focus of this section is mainly on the "Management" relationship, which describes the relationship between the Ministry of Education (Principal) and the schools, head teachers (principals), and teachers (agents). The other relationships in the RISE framework, especially the Compact and Voice and Choice relationships, are included based on the negative impact they may have on the management relationship.

### **5.2.1 Funding inconsistencies: challenges in Compact and Management relationships.**

#### **a) Public spending on education: De jure vs de facto.**

The 2008 constitutional reform established that Ecuador must annually increase public spending on education by 0.5% of GDP, until reaching a minimum expenditure of 6% of GDP. While there was a historic increase reaching a maximum of 5.3% in 2014, by 2021 the budget had decreased to 3.98% of GDP (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2022). This shows the inconsistency at the level of the compact relationship between what is declared in the constitution (de jure) and what the country and its highest authorities actually allocate to the education sector, decreasing (de facto) the resources available to the Ministry of Education to achieve its objectives.

#### **b) Contradictions and conflicts between principals.**

There are inconsistencies at the funding level in the compact relationship. These are observed when two top national authorities (both acting as principal), request contradictory actions from the Ministry of Education (as agent), involving national budget items. For example, in 2020 the National Assembly approved a salary increase for teachers, equivalent to a 22% increase in the budget, which implied expanding the government's fiscal deficit by over US\$ 6 billion (Gómez, 2021). This increase obliged the Ministry of Education to make salary adjustments when the Ministry of Finance did not have the provisions in the national budget to allocate these resources to education. Given this contradiction, the intervention of a third actor, such as the Constitutional Court, was necessary to impose the modification of the budget line to comply with the salary increase and the allocation of resources to the Ministry of Education. According to several interviewees, this type of situation is not exceptional.

### **5.2.2. Inconsistencies between (1) the mandate received by schools from the ministry to deliver quality education, and (2) the insufficient support and resources for continuous pedagogical improvement provided to schools.**

#### **c) Inconsistency between the demand for quality and the lack of autonomy of schools, in a context of deconcentration.**

Decision-making is centralized in the ministerial bodies (principal), despite having a management system that declares and seeks deconcentration, so that schools (agents) do not have autonomy over how resources are invested to achieve educational goals. Indeed, the budget execution of the Ministry of Education was restructured with the 2010 legal reform and the 2011 process-based organic statute, giving way to a model of deconcentration of budget execution. Under this new scheme, each of the country's nine territorial zones carries out the budget assigned to it by the central office. These zones, in turn, pass on the mission to the district directorates, which manage resources to supply the schools with the inputs and personnel necessary for their operation. The local stakeholders interviewed stated that this allocation often lacks coherence and clear criteria. This budget execution model does not contemplate a specific budget at school level, only at district level.

The objective of this measure was to relieve school administrators of administrative tasks so that they could focus more on pedagogical issues (Modelo de Gestión Educativa, 2012). However, although this reform seeks to promote a greater transfer of decisions from central to local level, in practice it means that schools do not have control over their budget (since it is decided at district level), restricting their autonomy and flexibility to meet their local needs.

The essential difference between the processes of deconcentration and decentralization would be given by "the granting of legal personality, of its own individuality, which would be lacking in the first case and would exist in the second" (Rojas, et. al. 2021: 95). In other words, in deconcentration, the central body continues to exercise hierarchical control over the deconcentrated body (Mora, 2006: 69). This difference is key when rethinking the challenges of decentralization in the Ecuadorian educational system.

#### **d) The resources provided for educational improvement are insufficient.**

A historical analysis of the budget execution items shows that, in the current budget, approximately 87% is allocated to salaries for civil servants (teachers and administrative personnel), while only the remaining 13% is allocated to school resources (textbooks, uniforms and school breakfasts) (Ministry of Education, 2022). In other words, there is a much smaller proportion of "free" resources earmarked for pedagogical improvement.

Although the Ministry of Education (the principal in the management relationship) delegates to schools the provision of quality education, it does not provide the financial support necessary for the school to receive advice or cover the implementation of its own pedagogical improvement plans. In fact, there is no adequate funding to respond to the quality demands coming from the central plant and districts such as: the implementation of the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), the Annual Operational Plan (POA), the Institutional Plan for Educational Continuity (PICE), the pedagogical improvement plans identified by advisors of the Support and Monitoring Plan, or the support required by the Student Counselling Department (DECE). As one participant states, "they ask for management quality from the central plant and districts, while the schools ask for

the necessary resources" (principal, Tena workshop, 2022). This tension and incoherence are evident in the discourses of different actors.

This lack of support is particularly serious in schools with greater socio-educational needs and those located in rural areas. In these cases, schools often end up relying on the financial support that families are able to provide, despite their own social vulnerability. For example, parents who participated in the workshops stated that, despite the claim that education is free, schools continually pressure them to make contributions (for continuous improvement, educational materials, maintenance, infrastructure), because the government does not provide sufficient resources to cover these needs.

There is also a problem in the "timeliness" of the transfer of resources for improvement from the central to local level. This is due to the fact that the process of approving requests for district needs, and the respective budget allocation begins at the beginning of each year and reaches the school four or five months later, when the school year is already well underway and needs have increased or have already been met through actions, locally referred to as "self-management". For example, through partnerships with local companies or donations made by families.

### **5.2.3 Inconsistencies between mandate to provide quality education and insufficient provision of support, autonomy and training to principals and teachers.**

#### **e) Weakness in the ministry's systems and technical teams for pedagogical support and supervision at schools.**

"How much and how is the school supported? What is really happening is that the school is under pressure from both fronts: the government and society," concludes an academic at a workshop in Guayaquil (2022).

The National Model of Support and Monitoring of Educational Management (MNASGE) was approved in 2013, after the creation of the Mentoring Programme (2010), within the framework of the New Constitution of 2008 and the consequent reorganization of the structure of the State; the New Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI-2011); the General Regulations to the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (2012); and Ministerial Agreement 020-12 in which the Organic Statute of Organizational Management by Processes of the Ministry of Education is found.

The Ministry of Education's support and follow-up model currently has 116 advisors, forty-six educational auditors and 217 teachers who were in training as mentors. Among these, 154 are no longer on the programme and the rest only dedicate 20% of their working day to mentoring in their educational institutions. Therefore, the staff assigned to pedagogical support and follow-up is not able to supply the entire educational system (Mineduc, 2022). In fact, several participants in the study referred to the insufficient pedagogical support received. For example, in Tena it was argued that there were "less than ten mentors to pedagogically support approximately 1,500 schools" (local ministerial authority, Tena 2022 workshop).

This shortage is due to the lack of strengthening of the Mentoring Programme, which aims to provide pedagogical accompaniment in the classroom to teachers in public schools, especially those with low performance in the national evaluation and in rural areas. These mentors should

fulfil "a formative role, transmitting their knowledge to classroom teachers through training workshops, observation and feedback on their practice" (Vezub, 2011: 13).

Furthermore, the psychoemotional support system is underfunded and, consequently, the Counselling Department (DECE) has a shortage of professionals for psychological support. This situation has been modified with the recent Law (LOEI reformed, 2021) that seeks to strengthen the axis of quality and student welfare. Therefore, it is a challenge for the executive (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Education) to implement the legal provisions.

Finally, the problem of the support and follow-up model lies not only in the insufficient number of pedagogical advisors and related professionals, but also in the confusion regarding their role, which in practice combines elements of oversight of standards, supervision of processes, and pedagogical support. This last role is identified by the study participants as the weakest and least frequent. For example, in the Systematization Report of the Pedagogical Accompaniment Programme in Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos by UNICEF (2019), it is stated that a major weakness is that the district does not have a pedagogical department.

#### **f) Processes of selection, training and salaries of principals are inadequate to promote school leadership towards learning.**

The legal framework for Education has an organic statute of organizational management by processes, structured in 1,142 educational circuits, the smallest administrative unit of the system. This design seeks to decentralize ministerial tasks, but without ensuring resources and capacities at school level to guarantee efficiency in the management of pedagogical processes. Therefore, school autonomy and the empowerment of principals continue to be a challenge for strengthening the educational system. As Pavo et al. (2021) point out, "there is a bureaucratic conception of institutional educational plans and coexistence codes, which may be evidence of a lack of leadership in educational institutions".

Although there are quality standards for directors (Ministry of Education, 2017), there are still no formal processes for their initial and continuous training. In addition, the position of a head teacher (principal) at a public school can be accessed in different ways: by appointment -through public selection competitions based on merit and opposition-, or by designation -through appointment as head teacher-in-charge- (principal), which has the same workload as the head teacher (principal) with appointment, but without the same salary. Most school head teachers (principals) are teachers appointed to the position. In other words, they are neither trained nor remunerated according to their role and responsibility, which negatively affects their performance and motivation. In fact, only 429 school principals receive a salary equivalent to their functions, while more than 5,000 teachers have managerial functions without managerial remuneration, since due to lack of budget the respective competitions for the selection of managers have not been carried out (Distributivo de Personal, 2022).

Furthermore, interviews with various stakeholders highlight the high levels of politicization in the appointment of authorities at district and school levels, aligning towards process compliance and clientelism, and sometimes deviating from a technical process of selecting principals to ensure and promote learning.



**g) Teacher professional development decoupled from the pedagogical needs of classroom work.**

The Ecuadorian education system has established that the role of teachers is essential to improve the quality of education. However, the teaching career does not have a formative approach that consolidates disciplinary knowledge and develops effective pedagogical competencies; in practice, it is aimed at administrative matters and to the fulfilment of bureaucratic processes and tasks defined at ministerial level. This becomes particularly relevant if we observe the results of the national evaluation "Ser Maestro", which shows a significant percentage of teachers with a low level of performance, for example, at the level of disciplinary knowledge. In fact, more than 50% of the evaluated population is located between the low and standard ranges (Ministry of Education, 2021). Along the same lines, other studies show that "half of the teachers are anchored in a traditional, transmissive pedagogy... [and possess] a lack of professional experience." (Pavo et al., 2021).

On the other hand, in some cases, various stakeholders state that many teachers construct their identity based on their role within the state bureaucracy to the detriment of their role as teachers who promote student learning. For example, as one of the project's advisory committee members mentioned, "public school teachers tend to see themselves more as public servants than as teachers, where administrative tasks are central to compliance with the system." In line with the alignment towards compliance, which characterizes the management relationship between the Ministry of Education and teachers, one participant points out that "the Mineduc sends orders to the zonal, and the zonal to the district, the latter to the manager, and the latter to the teacher. It is a great chain. Each one complies. Compliance for the sake of compliance, but there is no feedback" (Director, Tena workshop, 2022).

Although career entry competitions promote job stability and professional development, evidence in Ecuador shows that the average productivity of teachers remains high during the first five to ten years of career, so a system of promotion and incentives and pedagogical support throughout professional life is a first priority need (Ponce and Drouet, 2018). In turn, according to the testimonies of some participants, the most appropriate professional profiles are not always selected in the competitions, so there is the perception that political and customer considerations operate at the local level that end up affecting the possibilities of educational improvement or teachers' motivation.

This entry and promotion system for the teaching career is based on disciplinary knowledge, obtained degrees and years of experience (LOEI, 2021; MINEDUC Ministerial Agreement 2021-00007-A and 2018-00025-A). However, the developed competencies and skills seem to be insufficient and inadequate to enhance higher levels of effective learning in the classroom. For example, according to one teacher in the focus groups, "teachers do not receive tutoring or support, and have little preparation on special educational needs."

In turn, some teachers state that they do not have enough non-teaching hours to adequately plan their classes, assess learning and provide formative feedback to their students. In fact, as a teacher participating in the study pointed out, "the reduction of teaching hours (from 30 to 25) defined by the reform of the Law is not being implemented. Teachers still have an excessive administrative overload" (Teacher, Tena workshop, 2022).

In addition to the above, there is a perception that the teaching career is not socially valued, and that the system does not recognize teachers who achieve good learning results to be promoted (Ex-manager, Tena workshop, 2022). It is key to learn from the experience of permanent Teacher Training programmes with initiatives such as "SiProfe", which had a sustained investment between 2016-2022, of more than US\$ 40,000,000; or the National Plan for Permanent Training that seeks to strengthen teaching capacities in the medium term (Mineduc, 2022).

It is also a priority to rethink in-service teacher professional development, paying special attention to accompaniment and support processes focused on pedagogical work and teaching practices in the classroom. As pointed out by several ministry officials, teachers currently receive very limited face-to-face training, and the virtual training they receive is asynchronous (i.e., it is online and without tutors to promote reflection and simultaneously accompany the training process).

It should be noted that the Ministry is making efforts in this area, for example, through the creation of the Educational Innovation Laboratory, whose focus is to strengthen teaching practices. It is expected that this initiative will provide information and dissemination of good teaching practices, in order to share them, disseminate them and recognize the innovative efforts of teachers.

#### **5.2.4 Between the standardized and the contextualized: Inconsistencies between national needs and local adaptations.**

##### **h) Intercultural Bilingual Education and Ethno-education: national vs. local.**

Despite the progress made in increasing the autonomy of the Secretariat of Intercultural Bilingual Education - SIEB (LOEI Reform), difficulties still persist in the management relationship between the ministry and the agencies which oversee the provision of intercultural bilingual education in Ecuador. These difficulties are expressed in decisions that are made centrally without considering the needs of the communities and territories. For example, regarding infrastructure, a teacher in Tena points out that "a typical classroom in the Sierra with small windows of 40cm x 40cm does not work in the Amazon because of the climate, they should be bigger" (Teacher, Tena workshop, 2022). Furthermore, it is frequently mentioned that the feeding guidelines provided by the ministry are designed for a general population but are not contextualized. For example, it is pointed out that indigenous children do not drink cow's milk because they are not used to it and therefore discard it. This is detrimental to the nutrition and daily caloric intake of students and is a waste of resources.

On the other hand, the problem of the lack of mastery by some teachers of the ancestral languages of ethnic minorities is particularly relevant. In Ecuador, there are not enough teachers who speak the native languages, which results in the assignment of non-specialized teachers to teach in indigenous communities. One teacher expresses that providing schools in the Amazon with local teachers "should be a priority...the Spanish-speaking teacher does not understand his/her students and vice versa" (retired teacher, Tena workshop, 2022). In addition, this problem is perceived as a risk for the conservation of ancestral knowledge.

The curriculum also appears as another problematic aspect. Despite the SEIB's efforts to contextualize and adapt the content, there is a perception among many actors in the school system that in reality a national curriculum is implemented with little or no adaptation to the

context. This makes schools, teachers and families feel alienated from the learning process. In this line, a teacher points out that "at school we repeat what the central plant says. When faced with any change, the answer is: no, because it is written that way. The regulations say so" (Teacher, Tena workshop, 2022).

The above testimonies contrast with the advances established in the legal regulations. Article 6 of the law (LOEI 2019) establishes that the curriculum will be implemented in the official languages of the various nationalities of Ecuador, respecting a plurinational and intercultural perspective, having to be contextualized according to cultural specificities.

### **i) Curricular complexities: continuous changes, rigidities, and contextualization.**

Despite the delegation coming from the covenant relationship (principal) to promote the contextualization of learning, the curriculum is implemented in the management relationship with standardized guidelines and with little support and training of the teacher (agent) on how to contextualize the contents, especially in rural education with cultural diversity and students with specific needs.

Standardized pedagogical management contradicts the delegation of curricular flexibility and contextualization. In practice, based on the national curriculum, the institution establishes its Institutional Educational Project (PEI) and the Institutional Curriculum Plan (PCI). Despite the monitoring efforts through advisors and educational auditors, and initiatives such as the Learning on Time programme, one teacher states: "teachers do not have the capacity to bring the curriculum down to earth and to adapt it in the context. We have to implement it no matter what. Quality is based on the logic of performance and qualification" (Teacher, Tena workshop, 2022).

On the other hand, the permanent contextualization of the curriculum, this being a slow and complex process, is harmed by the constant curricular changes and adjustments made by the ministry from central level. These are carried out without providing sufficient pedagogical support to directors and teachers to make the adjustments. For example, a union leader expressed his dissatisfaction with the continuous curricular adjustments of the pandemic, with the prioritized emergency curriculum and then the prioritized curriculum with emphasis on competencies (Resolution No. MINEDUC-SFE-2021-00008-R). According to him, "there are two initiatives in less than six months, and when teachers are being trained in one pedagogical initiative, a new one appears" (Leader, Guayaquil workshop, 2022).

Alignment towards learning is hindered because there is a perception that the Ministry of Education often changes guidelines and orientations, which means that schools do not receive information in a timely manner in order to implement changes at local level. According to the interviewees, the Ministry's delegations can be contradictory, repetitive, or untimely when applied across the country (Taller Guayaquil, 2022). In turn, some say that "there are many changes of authority, so there is no consistency with the measures or policies implemented. Each one undoes what the previous one did. There is no continuity, no coherence. Absolute absence of long-term policies" (Taller Tena, 2022).

**j) Evaluations: standardize, contextualize, and provide feedback.**

There is an inconsistency between the general curriculum guidelines and the national assessments. While the official curriculum designed by the central authorities aims to promote a comprehensive learning process, the standardized assessments developed by INEVAL only cover some disciplines, in other words, a minority part of the national curriculum. This generates incoherence and contradictory signals to teachers, who must decide between teaching the comprehensive curriculum or focusing their efforts on the areas evaluated by INEVAL. This process can lead to an undesirable process known as curricular narrowing.

In addition, INEVAL evaluates teachers in a standardized manner, which inhibits contextualized teaching practice. As a result, in regard to curriculum management, there is a gap between the technical document and classroom teaching practice.

In turn, the evaluation of students and teachers does not generate sufficient information on other dimensions, such as socioemotional skills. This mismatch between what is evaluated and what is taught generates long-term planning problems that affect transparency in evaluation and the use of information (Chiriboga, 2021).

On the other hand, the information generated by the national assessments is not effectively used by the Ministry of Education to provide targeted feedback to schools. Nor is it used to establish scaffolding or recognition strategies to improve the performance of principals, teachers, and students. In this context, an education expert states: "The education system does not monitor the school, and only does so through the results achieved by the student in the standardized tests...it is an incomplete and unidirectional monitoring". That is, standardized summative evaluations are not complemented with formative feedback and meaningful information to support contextualized teaching practice.

For their part, INEVAL officials mention that teaching processes do not always sufficiently contemplate the curriculum and standards, which makes their evaluation highly complex. In this sense, the use of evaluation information is limited, among other things because evaluations are sometimes distant from the reality of the classroom, according to stakeholders.

**k) Inconsistencies in the role of the family in the learning process: Limited involvement and binding participation of families at schools.**

According to Article 2, paragraph "o" of the LOEI, families and communities, as an integral part of civil society, have the full right to participate in school decision-making. However, workshop participants affirm that, in practice, this mandate is not fully complied with, as there is a significant gap between what the norm establishes, and the effective role given to parents and/or representatives in the educational process.

The legal framework promotes citizen participation in educational management (Art.85 and 100, Constitution, 2008.Art. 2, LOEI, 2011). However, in practice, families do not have the relevant information from managers and teachers, nor clear and effective mechanisms for participation in school decision-making. For example, during 2014-2015 a large number of schools that were close to rural and indigenous communities were eliminated. Consequently, some students were

forced to travel long distances or even drop out of school (Plan V, 2017). This shows the low incidence of families in this type of educational policy decisions.

This scarce participation is also reflected more clearly in the committees of parents and families, whose contribution to decision-making is mainly focused on day-to-day and formal problems, related to the request for voluntary contributions to maintain the infrastructure, organize events, etc. There is usually no focus on substantive problems, such as the quality of education, nor on how to address them collectively and strategically.

The involvement of parents and/or legal representatives is also limited to identifying learning results, which are mostly reflected in grades, and in the possible access of their children to higher education. In other words, families are evaluating school information based on grades and not on learning, as expressed by a teacher: "The important thing for parents is that their children do not fail and that they succeed; that we give them good grades, that's all" (Teacher, Tena workshop, 2022). According to the testimony of some participants, the above translates, in several cases, into an insufficient interest on the part of families to participate in the educational process of their children (motivation): "Parents have become passive and easy-going. The school requires support from the community, but the system does not motivate them to participate" (Taller Quito, 2022).

## **6. Conclusion: Prioritized Recommendations**

According to the secondary information analysed, and the interviews and surveys carried out to the different actors in the education system, there is a tendency in various areas to establish relationships in which a logic of compliance with bureaucratic and administrative processes predominates. Although the value of a system that seeks to operate with common and clear administrative parameters is recognized, there is a high risk that actors lose sight of the substantive objective of their work and fail to align themselves to promote the improvement of learning. In this framework, and despite being the dominant alignment, tendencies towards clientelism or selectivity seem to play an equally important role in the type of incoherencies that characterize the Ecuadorian education system.

Based on this general diagnosis, this exploratory research has identified several priority areas for reform to make progress in improving learning. Specifically, four types of actions emerge as priorities<sup>12</sup>: (1) materializing the promise of an adequate and equitable funding system to effectively provide the educational system with greater resources and consistency among the tasks and responsibilities delegated to the ministry of education by the high-level authorities; (2) aligning central and local management structures towards pedagogical improvement of schools; (3) strengthening support and pedagogical accompaniment systems to principals and teachers; and (4) balancing in a virtuous way the expectations of common desirable learning outcomes, contained in the national curriculum, with the demand for greater contextualization of contents, textbooks and teaching processes at the local level.

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<sup>12</sup> The recommendations developed in this section come mostly from the inconsistency prioritization workshop that took place in June 2022. The project's Advisory Committee was asked to identify priority reforms based on their perceived impact on learning improvement.

It is a priority to increase the level of financing of the educational system, aiming at the level that the country itself has defined at around 6% of GDP. Public spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP, has fallen in recent years, which means that many of the tasks that society delegates to educational authorities, schools and teachers lack the necessary resources to fulfil the mission entrusted to them. This objective probably requires the construction of a social pact that places the role of education in Ecuador at the centre of the priorities on the public agenda. Such a pact should place at the centre of its concerns not only the universal access of all Ecuadorian children and young people to school, but also the learning that they manage to develop during their schooling process. This requires ensuring the necessary welfare conditions for students, teachers, and educational communities, so that this promise can be effective. A reform to make funding adequate, equitable and efficient is thus most needed.

However, higher levels of funding for the education system alone are unlikely to achieve the proposed goals. Thus, budgetary efforts should respond to the purpose of providing schools with greater capacities and resources for pedagogical improvement. It is therefore necessary to advance in new forms of relationships among the actors of the educational system, so that the school becomes a space for inclusion and learning. To this end, it is a priority to align central and local management structures towards the pedagogical improvement of schools. This implies not only strengthening school management and the provision of human, technical and financial resources, with a view to improving learning, but also, and above all, aligning the various public actors in the management chain, the Decentralized Autonomous Governments and civil society towards educational improvement. This implies rebalancing the tendencies towards the fulfilment of bureaucratic tasks, allowing for more space for the support and improvement of school leadership.

Management processes should not only seek to strengthen the capacities of the school as an institution for inclusion and learning but should also ensure that both school leaders and teachers have opportunities to strengthen their managerial or pedagogical skills. In this sense, it is a priority to strengthen the support and accompaniment systems towards principals and teachers, so that both actors have supporting structures that guarantee their professional development and the social recognition of their function. Effective opportunities for continuous training; implementation of incentives that have an impact on their professional careers; improvement of their pedagogical leadership through the incorporation of effective practices such as collaboration among peers, reflection, inquiry, or networking, among others, especially in vulnerable and rural contexts, seem to be adequate mechanisms for sustained improvements in their professional performance.

Finally, this diagnosis has made it possible to identify an imperative need of the education system, which is related to a virtuous balance between the expected performance, contained in national standards or in the national curriculum, and the demand for greater contextualization of teaching processes at local levels. This need is expressed in different areas; either in the field of curricular contextualization, allowing us to systematically facilitate spaces for teachers to make curricular adaptations to the needs of the context; or in the field of evaluation, which tends to privilege national curricular standards, leaving aside the contextual dimension and local adaptation. Along the same lines, it is necessary to reinforce the pedagogical capacities of the Intercultural Bilingual Education and Ethno-education sector at the local level with spaces for greater incidence in the decision-making processes at the national level. It is therefore a priority to rethink the ways in which central and national decisions make room for the recognition and particularities of local contexts.

From a systems perspective, sustained learning improvement requires aligning at least six important areas of the education system: i) establishing support and monitoring mechanisms capable of attracting, retaining and helping students to successfully graduate from each education level; ii) developing adequate systems to attract, retain, train and develop effective teachers; (iii) develop, update and contextualise the national curriculum and textbooks according to the needs of localities; (iv) develop a comprehensive evaluation systems (formative and summative assessment) for students, teachers and school administrators<sup>13</sup>; (v) strengthen the system of pedagogical support for schools and teachers; (vi) ensure an adequate, equitable and efficient funding system.

Beyond the specific case study of Ecuador analysed in this research, this paper has shown the relevance of using a systems approach to understand the underlying incoherencies and complexities in a given education system, and the existing barriers that hinder the promotion of better learning outcomes. Indeed, the RISE approach is valuable and practical (easy-to-use), although it also has several limitations that should be addressed in future research to further develop this line of work. The most important weakness relates to the limitations of using the principal-agent model as the sole theoretical base of this approach. This neoclassical model tends to omit and ignore the current literature on institutional change developed from political science, institutional economics, and sociology (Thelen, 2003), which highlights the importance of understanding the shape of current institutions (both formal and informal rules of the game) and their impact on social interactions, outcomes, and their distribution (inequalities) as a result of power struggle among actors, cultural changes, and emerging of new solutions to collective problems (González, 2021). The incorporation and complement of additional and more complex theoretical frameworks should be an important challenge.

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<sup>13</sup> This approach would make it possible to strengthen the Educational Information and Management System (SIGED) to develop a culture of information generation, recording and use by the various actors in the education system. This could improve decision-making, the monitoring of the strategies implemented and the analysis of the quality of investment in the education system, according to its impact on learning outcomes.

## 7. Annex 1: Advisory Board Members

Ecuadorian Minister of Education (MINEDUC) - Mrs María Brown Pérez  
Executive Director of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEVAL) - Susana Araujo  
Undersecretary of Support, Monitoring and Regulation of MINEDUC - Doris Guamán  
MINEDUC Administrative Financial Coordinator - María Fernanda Sáenz  
Advisor to the MINEDUC Vice-Ministry - Yolanda Villalba  
Undersecretary of Zone 9, Quito - Enrique Perez  
Quichua Amazonian expert in Intercultural Bilingual Education - Néstor Grefa  
Doctoral Programme Director - Lizbeth Pérez  
Rector of the National University of Education - Rebeca Castellanos  
Leader of the Fiscal Teachers' Union "Frente 13 de Abril" - Cesar Chiriboga  
Citizen Dialogues Consultant - Patricio Crespo  
Education director of Unidos por la Educación - Sergio Carneros  
Rector Colegio La Salle - Eduardo Ramírez  
Inter-American Development Bank Education Officer - Luana Marotta  
CLADE General Coordinator - Nelsy Lizarazo

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