

## **Opportunities to Study Abroad In Ecuador**

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### **Abstract**

Fifty years ago, studying abroad for Ecuadorian people was something completely unrealistic. This could be due to the fact that learning another language was unattainable for the generation of our grandparents and parents (forty to sixty years old) and the need to expand knowledge of other cultures was not considered important. Today, the trend is different. The objective of this research is to show the different opportunities that Ecuador offers to students for study abroad, and to let the students who want to study in universities worldwide know about these opportunities.

### **Introduction**

Approximately fifty years ago, studying abroad for Ecuadorian people was unthinkable and something that probably didn't appear realistic, like a dream that would never be fulfilled. Even just the thought of learning another language was illogical and difficult to understand for the generation of our parents and grandparents (approximately generations starting from the 40s). Their parents simply considered it unnecessary and this is because education was limited and the need to broaden their horizons was not considered important. Nowadays, that situation has changed because globalization has allowed the world to relate to each other by providing more opportunities to anyone who wants to know and learn. This is a great option used by many Ecuadorians. Beforehand, similar to the rest of the world, only people with vast economic resources had access to quality education outside of Ecuador. Only a few people had the opportunity to travel abroad and meet people, expose themselves to new experiences and learn different cultures.

Ecuador was considered an underdeveloped country, not only because of the lack of advanced technology that the developed world enjoyed, but also by the very limited education opportunities and the lack of resources to acquire them. There were no networks between Ecuador and the world. Ecuador was not on the “radar” of many countries although there were economic agreements with other countries like the United States but they never set up cultural exchange agreements. There were agencies to assist with the ease of scholarships, especially for students from low, lower-middle and middle socioeconomic status although everything was very hierarchical. Now everything has changed.

## History and Education

Eight years ago, when the government of current President Rafael Correa began, he amended the Ecuadorian Constitution by including the need to improve education by broadening horizons and social justice where everyone is entitled to all, regardless of race, ethnicity or economic status and that's how Ecuador began to wake up, to improve, and be known to the world. There was a specific goal: to improve the production model. His reasoning was that if Ecuadorians acquired and used their improved knowledge within the country, the production model would change almost entirely. This would allow Ecuador to no longer be an underdeveloped country and to become a developing country. As a result, teachers enhanced their knowledge inside as well as outside the country, new schools were created, assessed the level of universities, new organizations helped students to get scholarships and 4 universities of technology were created. The President Rafael Correa began with the implementation of social justice, then proceeded with the creation of two institutions that would evaluate educational institutions such as SENESCYT institutions and IECE were created to annually grant scholarships to students twice a year according to their needs.

**SENESCYT** (Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation): SENESCYT is a government organization that is responsible for evaluating the academic progress of students and educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) (<http://www.senescyt.gob.ec/>). They are personally responsible to assess knowledge and apply full funding scholarships abroad.

**IECE** (Ecuadorian Institute of Educational Credit): IECE is a government enterprise that provides loans and grants to students who wish to study abroad and do not have money for it (<http://www.iece.fin.ec>). Depending on the scholarship and the country where they want to travel to, they will provide funding, whether partial or total, and even award scholarships to study at language schools both within and outside the country.

## Millennium Schools

The creation of millennium universities (<http://educacion.gob.ec/unidades-educativas-del-milenio/>) allows the study of technological sciences for the country's development, e.g., sciences as Nanotechnology, Petrochemical, Biosciences, Software Engineering, among others, which are the disciplines that have been well received. The investment in them is great in order to change the production matrix in the country. Within the Millennium Schools, there are 2 classes.

## Colleges

With the help of foreign countries, nowadays the "millennium schools" are schools with technology, equipped laboratories of chemistry, physics, computers, classrooms with smart boards, synthetic pitches, canteens, among others (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Classroom at a millennium school (skyscrapercity.com)



Figure 2. Millennium school (skyscrapercity.com)

## Universities

Universities where Research, Science, Technology and Innovation are present. These universities are: **YACHAY**: Known as the “City of knowledge”, its purpose is to research new technologies including the generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge (<http://www.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/yachay/>). It includes the construction of a

university model as a city - the first university town in Ecuador- with its own research laboratory and attracting foreign investors in high technology (Figure 3).



Figure 3. “City of knowledge” (SOURCE: Ministry Coordinator of Production, Employment and Competitiveness)

**IKIAM:** Its main objective is to generate knowledge, research and information for use in the development of technological alternatives for the responsible use of natural resources fulfilling two expectations: strengthening the human talent and preserve the nature (<http://www.amazoniactual.com/inicio/>) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. IKIAM (SOURCE: [www.andes.info.ec](http://www.andes.info.ec))

**UNAE:** College for teachers, their purpose is to get the best teachers in the country ([http://www.unae.edu.ec/La\\_Instit](http://www.unae.edu.ec/La_Instit)) (Figure 5). Its main goal is to contribute to the preparation of human resources in relation to the education system to build a just, free and democratic society.



Figure 5. UNAE (SOURCE: [www.educacion.gob.ec](http://www.educacion.gob.ec))

**UNIARTES:** University of the Arts, the purpose is to promote the construction of dialogues, identities and intercultural artistic production (<http://www.culturaypatrimonio.gob.ec/uniartes/>) (Figure 6). UniArtes was created for Ecuadorians to hone their talents in painting, etc. and can benefit from the art to make significant changes in society.



Figure 6. UniArtes (SOURCE: [www.culturaypatrimonio.gob.ec](http://www.culturaypatrimonio.gob.ec))

## Agreements Between Countries

Ecuador has educational agreements with over 70 countries worldwide (<http://redbecarios.senescyt.gob.ec/>) (Table 1), funding scholarships offered between Ecuador and other countries depending on the career, the duration and the university type. Previously, almost all scholarships were offered to the USA, but eventually Ecuador has opened ways to study all around the world. Scholarships are most applicable for Science and Technology to countries like China, Korea and many parts of Europe. There are different types of scholarships.

### Scholarships Common Globe

Scholarships for study in higher education with high standards of academic quality at international level, with the aim of strengthening the Ecuadorian talent in various fields of knowledge (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/descripcion-del-programa-8/>).

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TABLE 1  
NETWORKS BETWEEN ECUADOR AND THE WORLD

COUNTRIES	
<b>NORTH AMERICA</b>	Canada United States Mexico Puerto Rico
<b>CENTRAL AMERICA</b>	Guatemala Costa Rica Jamaica Barbados Trinidad and Tobago Panama
<b>LATIN AMERICA</b>	Colombia Peru Bolivia Argentina Chile Uruguay Brazil
<b>EUROPE</b>	Germany Austria Belgium

	Spain Switzerland Russia Italy Macedonia England Poland Hungary Finland Holland
<b>ASIA AND OCEANIA</b>	Turkey Singapore Malaysia Japan Israel India Egypt Korea China Indonesia Thailand Australia
<b>AFRICA</b>	Kenya Zimbabwe

SOURCE: SENESCYT

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## Universities of Excellence

The Ministry of Education aims to provide scholarships to those who wish to study the upper level in the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the world, and best of all, this program does not have an age limit (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/descripcion-del-programa-universidades-de-excelencia-2015/>).

## Researchers Scholarships

Finances fourth level studies in foreign universities that are part of research projects in universities, public polytechnics and research institutes in Ecuador (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/descripcion-investigadores-2015/>). The goal is to train Ecuadorian researchers.

## Teach English

This scholarship was created for all Ecuadorians who want to be teachers of English or related to the improvement of English teaching activities (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/ensena-ingles/>). The aim is to improve knowledge of the teacher and he learns new teaching methodologies.

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## Scholarships University Teachers

It aims to improve the professional skills of teachers and increase the academic level in universities, and thus transform the higher education system of the country with research centers (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/becas-para-docentes-universitarios/>). For main headline teacher, university teachers are obliged to get the PHD postgraduate degree in order to practice their profession and be dean of faculties or Rector as appropriate.

## Postdoctoral Scholarships

This scholarship program allows all PHDs to strengthen its research capacity (<http://programasbecas.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/becas-para-posdoctorado/>). Usually, these scholarships are offered to PhDs who are contributing to the development of research and scientific production.

## Agencies Sponsoring Scholarships

- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization): Provides training abroad with partial funding.
- OAS (Organization of American States): offers postgraduate studies and training in these areas (Table 2):
- ONU (United Nations) offers postgraduate courses in different areas; the most common is for teachers, with total and partial funding.
- ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organization). offers postgraduate courses in different areas, with total and partial funding
- CYTED (Science and Technology for Development): offers postgraduate Research partially funded.
- FULBRIGHT: offers postgraduate courses in different areas, the most common is for teachers, with total funding.
- AECID (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development): Provides training in Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Manufacturing and Innovation, Customs, Budgeting, Research and Planning, among others. With partial funding.

- DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst): offers postgraduate and doctoral programs, full and part-financing.
- EU-LAC (EU-LAC Foundation): The type of study is research, with total funding.
- RAE (Royal Spanish Academy): offers training, funding is partial.

TABLE 2  
 TRAINING AND POSTGRADUATES OF OAS

Training	Telecommunications Entrepreneurship ISO Risk management Climate change Water Resources Ecotourism Technology Tourism Environmental impact Value chain Gender equality	Total and partial funding
Postgraduates	FLACSO UNESCO-IHE VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL (VUB) UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES (ISS)	Total and partial funding

SOURCE: SENESCYT, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION “OAS”

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These are the institutions that provide with the sponsor of each scholarship offered; institutions have slowly been part of Ecuador's needs for study abroad is concerned. Each of these institutions offer support to better prepare Ecuadorian students, something important to stand out from all of them is the way in which the institutions can support either a full or partial scholarship. Sometimes, if you going directly to these organizations, you can get a lot faster grant, either by learning languages and cultures, to work or study; and in some cases even allow you to choose the time you want to study. With all these organizations to support education, as personal opinion, I think all those barriers that

bound our parents to study elsewhere are disappearing, and now we have opportunities we can take, just depends on you.

### **International Baccalaureate**

This is a pedagogical-educational approach that seeks to prepare young graduates to live in a globalized and interconnected world (<http://educacion.gob.ec/bachillerato-internacional/>). In other words, its purpose is to prepare students to recognize and understand this reality and have skills and knowledge to meet this challenge. This program takes about 2 years to complete.

Nowadays, 17 schools are enrolled in this program, but so far nine already have the program and another 8 are in process. The International Baccalaureate Organization and their schools are present on five continents with more than 3500 schools.

### **Embassies**

Embassies also provide scholarships with some offering full scholarships for financing either to study languages or higher degree studies. One of them is the Embassy of Taiwan, which provides full scholarships in language and higher degree studies. In addition, there are language schools that are associated with the embassies to provide full scholarships after the sixth level of study and with successful academic performance. One of the language schools in Ecuador is Siyuan, a School of Chinese - Mandarin.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Through research conducted by universities, ministries, language schools and various embassies in Ecuador, it has been considered important to break these types of barriers for Ecuadorians. Since the government under the leadership of Rafael Correa began in 2007, education qualifies as a fundamental aspect for strengthening and developing the country. In Ecuador, it has been through social justice that many organizations as SENESCYT and IECE were created to provide scholarships to good students. They created the International Baccalaureate in order to send high school graduates abroad. Also, embassies and language schools located in Ecuador offer scholarships. The financing depends on the institution and the type of study that students are going to pursue. Finally, the government has built four new universities called "cities of knowledge" in order to generate technological knowledge within the country to change the production model. Even with a small but relevant data set, "Ecuador is the country with comparatively more investment in education in relation to other countries to Latin America, with more than 9 billion dollars invested. In addition, President Rafael Correa continues to support this investment (Gallegos, 2014)."

To conclude, education programs, particularly opportunities for studying abroad, have improved over the years. Ecuador has crossed barriers for further development in order to strengthen human talent. The programs in Ecuador are currently excellent because

these investments in education allow all people of all ages regardless of social stratum to access a scholarship to learn a new language or pursue a college education. In addition, all have the opportunity to access scholarships in the city and the college of choice. Furthermore, even teachers are able to pursue PhDs and that ultimately improves the quality of education and allows for the further development of Ecuador in innovation, science and technology, which will have a significant impact on the production model.

### References

Gallegos, D. (2014). Ecuador es el país de América Latina que más invierte en Educación Superior. *El Ciudadano*.