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**Characterising the challenges and
responses of Ecuadorian universities to
recent EFL language policy changes: A
mixed methods study**

by

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degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

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Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Scope and delimitation of the study	11
1.3 Background to the study	12
1.3.1 The Ecuadorian Educational Sector	12
1.3.2 The Higher Education Sector.....	13
1.3.3 Foreign-language Teaching in Ecuadorian Higher Education	17
1.3.4 The Status of English in the World	21
1.4 Research Questions	26
1.4.1 Research questions.....	27
Chapter 2	28
Literature Review	28
2.1 Defining language policy.....	28
2.1.1 History of language policy and planning	32
2.1.2 Critical Theory in language policy	34
2.1.3 Understanding language policy	37
2.2 Language policy in higher education.....	43
2.2.1 English language policy for globalisation, internationalisation, and regionalisation in higher education	43
2.3 Language Policy in Ecuadorian Higher Education	49
2.3.1 The issue of the inclusion of EFL tuition in university curricula	52
2.3.2 The requirement for a CEFR B1 level of English	53
2.4 CEFR and its use in Ecuador.....	57
2.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of adopting the CEFR within Ecuadorian language policy	59
2.5 Agency in language policy	61
2.5.1 Exercise of agency at the macro, meso and micro levels of language policy.....	62
2.6 A proposed approach to EFL policy in higher education	65

2.6.1 A principle-based approach	70
2.7 Research gap	85
Chapter 3	88
Research methodology	88
3.1 Methodology	89
3.1.1 The ontological basis of the study	90
3.2 The selection of an appropriate research design	91
3.3 Mixed methods research	92
3.3.1 Purposes of combining quantitative and qualitative methods.....	96
3.3.2 Types of mixed methods research.....	97
3.4 Survey (quantitative phase)	100
3.4.1 Survey sampling.....	100
3.5 Sampling and selection of universities.....	102
3.6 Administration of the survey.....	106
3.6.1 Design of the questionnaire	108
3.7 Quantitative data collection process	112
3.7.1 The universities surveyed.....	112
3.7.2 Key challenges (quantitative phase)	113
3.8 Qualitative data collection process	115
3.9 Research ethics.....	123
Chapter 4	127
Quantitative data analysis.....	127
4.1 Quantitative data analysis (survey)	127
4.1.2 Reasons to learn English in higher education	132
4.1.3 Support of a university's senior management figures for EFL programmes.....	143
4.1.4 Ecuadorian universities' responses to Article 124: The case of EFL	147
4.1.5 Limitations of the survey	149
4.1.6 Conclusion	151

Chapter 5	153
The Coding process and the development of themes	153
5.1 The coding process	153
5.2 Development of themes	163
5.3 Conclusion.....	170
Chapter 6	171
Challenges faced in the reform effort	171
6.1 Infrastructure-focused responses and challenges.....	171
6.2 Pedagogy-focused responses and challenges.....	177
6.3 Management-focused responses and challenges	190
6.4 Extent of the use of a B1 level of English within universities	202
6.5 Conclusion.....	209
Chapter 7	211
Responses to challenges faced in the reform effort	211
7.1 Responses to challenges in the area of infrastructure	211
7.2 Responses to challenges in the area of pedagogy.....	213
7.3 Responses to challenges in the area of management	217
7.4 Conclusion.....	220
Chapter 8	222
Tensions faced in the reform effort	222
8.1 Teachers' ability to implement institutional changes in response to Article 124	223
8.2 EFL teachers' access to resources	227
8.3 Access to SENESCYT scholarships	230
8.4 Conclusion.....	233
Chapter 9	235

The extent to which language policy implementation reflects the Principle-Based Approach	235
9.1 The principle of collaboration	237
9.2 The principle of alignment.....	240
9.3 The principle of transparency.....	244
9.4 The principle of relevance.....	246
9.5 The principle of evidence	247
9.6 The principle of empowerment.....	249
9.7 Conclusion.....	249
Chapter 10	254
Conclusions	254
10.1 Key findings and contribution of the study.....	254
10.2 Limitations of the study	262
10.3 Implications for future research.....	263
10.4 Recommendations for EFL policy implementation in Ecuadorian Universities.....	264
10.5 Personal gains.....	266
References	269
Appendices	287
Appendix I, Questionnaire for Directors	287
Appendix II, Questionnaire for EFL teachers	296
Appendix III, Questionnaire for EFL students	304
Appendix IV, Interview Guide	312
Appendix V, Endorsement letters	313
Appendix VI, Authorisation letter to collect data.....	316

List of tables

Table 1. Number of universities per category in 2009 and 2013	10
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Table 2. Comparison of ELT policies in Latin America	26
Table 3. Ecuadorian higher education foreign-language policy	51
Table 4. RANI's (2015) description of suggested EFL programme.....	56
Table 5. Collaboration of policymakers and stakeholders	72
Table 6. Distribution of universities according to category, location and type ..	103
Table 7. Universities' strata based on category, location and type	105
Table 8. Sections of the Directors' questionnaire	111
Table 9. Description of the surveyed universities per type, category.....	129
Table 10. Distribution of respondents who participated in the survey	130
Table 11. The relative importance of ELT in Ecuadorian universities	135
Table 12. The relative importance of ELT in Ecuadorian universities as perceived by respondents	136
Table 13. The relative perception of considering English as a gateway to overseas education	137
Table 14. The relative perception of considering English as a gateway to overseas education as perceived by respondents	139
Table 15. The relative perception of considering English as an aid for everyday academic work as perceived by respondents	140
Table 16. The relative perception of considering English as an aid to improve employment prospects	141
Table 17. The relative perception of considering English as an aid to improve employment prospects as perceived by respondents	142
Table 18. Institutional senior management figures' support for ELT	145
Table 19. Institutional senior management figures' support as perceived by Directors, EFL teachers and students	146
Table 20. Universities' responses to the implementation of Article 104	149
Table 21. Discarded codes	159
Table 22. Description of codes.....	162
Table 23. Description of overarching themes one, two and three with their themes and sub-themes.....	165

Table 24. Description of overarching theme 1 with its themes, sub-themes and codes	167
Table 25. Description of overarching theme 2 with its themes, sub-themes and codes	167
Table 26. Description of overarching theme 3 with its themes, sub-themes and codes	168

List of figures

Figure 1. The use of English for the processes of the internationalisation, globalisation and regionalisation of the higher education.....	48
Figure 2. Schematic flow of an explanatory sequential mixed methods study ...	99
Figure 3. Flow of the interview process.....	121
Figure 4. Senior management figures' support for ELT programmes	144
Figure 5. Organisation of data sets	154
Figure 6. Framework for the construction of codes	156
Figure 7 Process for the construction of codes	156
Figure 8. Process of the identification of overarching themes, themes and sub-themes	164
Figure 9. Identification of participants for the qualitative analysis	169

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My love and appreciation to my supportive wife, who put her career in a stand-by in Ecuador to travel with me to the UK, and to my daughter who is my constant inspiration to continuously strive for excellence in all my undertakings.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and all authors and information cited in this thesis have been duly and properly acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted to any other university for any degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diego Cajas', written in a cursive style.

Diego Cajas
September 2017

Abstract

In 2010, Article 124 of the new Ecuadorian Higher Education Law stipulated that university students need to master a foreign language as a requirement for graduation. Subsequent regulations specified that this requirement had to be a B1 level, based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

To identify the responses, challenges and tensions that universities experienced in complying with the requirements of Article 124, an explanatory sequential mixed methods study was conducted. This comprised a survey that was administered to language centre Directors, EFL teachers and EFL students in 14 universities located in 10 different cities in the country, in-depth interviews conducted with teachers, and focus group interviews with students from 3 universities.

Results of this research showed that responses of participating universities focused mainly on their physical and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure development, and less on pedagogy and management due to dependence on the use of overseas textbooks and the adoption of the Common European Framework language indicators as the proposed EFL outcomes for ELT programmes. Challenges faced by university stakeholders included lack of budget for infrastructure and ICT improvement, effective ICT integration, identification of a target EFL language level, and a lack of status of English in the participating universities. Out of these responses and challenges, tensions emerged related to teaching qualifications and access to appropriate institutional resources for teachers.

Using Mahboob and Tilakaratna's (2012) Principles-Based Approach for English Language Teaching Policies and Practices as a lens through which to analyse EFL language policy, the study found that the principles of collaboration, alignment and transparency were not sufficiently realised and there was a lack of evidence and empowerment among Ecuadorian universities. Thus, the study proposes a more contextualised and consensual approach to formulating EFL

language policy, in which English can be integrated into institutional processes that promote globalisation and the internationalisation of universities.

Abbreviations

CONEA: National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation

CEAACES: Board of Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

CAE: Certificate in Advanced English

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

ELT: English Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FCE: First Certificate in English

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

KET: Key English Test

PET: Preliminary English Test

RANI: National Academic Network of Languages

SENESCYT: National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

My main motivation for conducting this study was my personal experience of teaching EFL in different Ecuadorian universities. By 2013, the year I commenced my PhD programme, I had been teaching EFL in the tertiary education sector for more than ten years. During this time, I worked in three different universities teaching EFL to students from different undergraduate programmes. Each university where I worked had a different way of organising their EFL programme. In one university, all students, regardless of their undergraduate programmes, had to successfully complete eight English language courses in order to graduate, each of which comprised 80 contact hours. In the other two universities, the English language requirement depended on the undergraduate programme they were studying; for example, students in Business or Administration undergraduate programmes had to successfully complete up to nine English courses, whilst those studying in the sciences only had to complete three. The number of hours that made up each English course also varied according to academic department and ranged between 30 and 80 contact hours. It was, generally, the Deans of each department who decided on the number of EFL courses and contact hours that students were required to take.

However, despite these differences in the requirements around English language tuition in the three universities where I worked, the methodology used in the teaching of English was similar and was largely dictated by the textbooks that EFL teachers were strictly required to follow, using the accompanying teacher guides. Evaluations of EFL teacher performance were, consequently, largely based on the extent to which they had completed the set textbooks and implemented the

activities suggested in the teacher guides. I have always questioned this way of planning EFL programmes and considered whether there were alternative and innovative ways of designing these programmes. I have always believed that in order to influence ELT in Ecuadorian universities it is important to present different approaches to language policy planning and implementation to those responsible for formulating such policies in universities.

In 2010, a new higher education law was enacted in Ecuador which included Article 124. This Article, described in more detail later in this section, referred to the requirement to teach foreign languages in higher education. It stipulated that all students had to achieve a B1 level in a foreign language according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and stated that it was the responsibility of universities to design foreign language programmes that would help students achieve this.

In response to Article 124, and in order to meet their legal responsibilities, Vice Chancellors and Deans of universities started to put pressure on language centre Directors and foreign language teachers. Because English was taught in all universities, efforts to improve English were particularly evident compared to other foreign languages.

Before starting my PhD studies, I was one of the many Ecuadorian university teachers who felt the pressure to improve our EFL classes in order to meet the national requirement and to produce students who have achieved a CEFR B1 level. However, I felt powerless to influence the type of EFL language policy that was in effect in my institution, and at the same time I felt the constraints that this policy placed on EFL teachers. For example, I had to deal with the lack of status that English had in my former university. My colleagues and I had to struggle with the little time students were able to devote to learning English, particularly where faculty members from other departments such as Engineering and Marketing required their students to devote more time to their professional courses than their EFL classes.

Article 124 challenged the existing common practices of universities in the sense that the foreign language proficiency requirement it stipulated was the same for everybody (CEFR B1) regardless of their undergraduate programmes. This meant that universities had to modify their foreign language tuition and design EFL programmes that comprised the same number of courses and contact hours for all students.

In order to comply with the requirements of Article 124, Directors of the different language centres focused their efforts on four common practices, namely:

1. The use of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) descriptors in specifying the different EFL outcomes for each EFL course.
2. The selection of different CEFR language indicator levels as the overall goal of university EFL programmes, namely A2, B1 or B2.
3. The use of overseas textbooks aligned with the CEFR.
4. The common use of internationally recognised English exams such as the First Certificate of English exam (FCE) as the final means of assessment for students completing EFL programmes. The tests used, however, were not official tests, and were even abridged in order to enable students to successfully complete them.

To help universities implement Article 124, the state, via the Academic Regimen Regulation and influenced by the RANI (National Academic Network of Languages), selected the CEFR B1 level as the target foreign language proficiency level required of university students. I personally experienced the difficulty of designing EFL language programmes in accordance with the requirements of Article 124. I observed the presence of the four aforementioned ELT practices in the three universities in which I had the pleasure to work in the last 10 years. While Article 124 encouraged changes in the area of foreign-language teaching in the Ecuadorian higher education sector, universities focused more on other areas of improvement such as infrastructure, procurement of ICT equipment, and the acquisition of higher education teaching qualifications among

EFL teachers, instead of focusing more on central aspects of language policy in higher education such as the teaching of foreign languages and 'general university policies and practices' (Brumfit, 2004: 172). These two aspects are interrelated and need to be promoted equally. Foreign-language policies cannot effect change in higher education if foreign-language teaching is poor. In the same way, effective language teaching cannot be promoted without appropriate university policies and practices.

I was also motivated to embark on this PhD research as a result of my professional teaching experience and the notable lack of current research in Ecuador that investigates in detail language policy in general, English language policy, English language teaching, and the various ways in which universities have responded to Article 124. For example, based on the website of Scimago Journal & Country Rank, between 1996 and 2015 Ecuador published only 11 articles in the areas of language and linguistics (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 2017). On the Scopus data base, the results surprisingly tell a similar story, with 4 articles on language policy, 1 on English-language teaching and 1 on applied linguistics between 1908 to 2017 ('Scopus', 2017). The limited number of articles published in high impact journals highlights the need to conduct and publish research in this area in order to inform the community about the Ecuadorian context regarding language policy, and particularly ELT policy; hence the importance of this study.

In particular, I felt there was a need to document the challenges universities faced in their attempts to implement the law and to record the ways in which universities have addressed those challenges, as well as to identify the tensions that have emerged in this process in order to inform policy makers in the country about the impact of their policies on ELT in universities.

My premise in this study is as follows: An EFL language policy and its implementation should not be prescriptive but discretionary; it should serve as a guide to assist universities in planning and innovating their own EFL courses and institutional practices to promote the use of English in the university. Mahboob

and Tilakaratna (2012) provide six main principles that seek to assist institutions to design their EFL policies: collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency, and empowerment (CREATE). Using these principles as a lens through which to view EFL language policy in Ecuadorian universities, this research aims to analyse, identify and understand the challenges and tensions that universities experienced during the process of attempting to comply with the requirements of Article 124.

My research highlights the nature of institutional responses to Article 124 and the challenges and tensions that confronted Ecuadorian universities striving to implement it. It then progresses to an analysis of the current situation regarding EFL language policy in higher education in Ecuador, using Mahboob and Tilakaratna's six principles. This is done in order to facilitate future processes relating to the design and implementation of EFL language policies in universities, drawing on data collected via two phases: a quantitative phase comprising a survey of 14 universities, and a qualitative phase conducted in three selected institutions and drawing on interview data elicited from language centre Directors, EFL teachers, and EFL students within each of the three institutions.

This study, then, focuses on the area of higher education, and specifically EFL language policy in higher education and its implementation. However, before providing a more detailed description of its focus, it is important to discuss the noticeable changes that the higher education sector experienced following the enactment of the new national constitution in 2008, and the subsequent Higher Education Law of 2010.

In the past decade, Dr Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador, has sought to instil dramatic changes into public policy in the country. To pave the way for these changes, Dr Correa amended the Ecuadorian constitution. On January 15, 2007, following his swearing-in ceremony, the then newly elected President signed Presidential Decree No. 1, which aimed to organise a referendum to create a

National Constitutional Assembly, the members of which would implement the amendments to the constitution that was in effect at that time. The amendments to the new national constitution included areas such as rights and obligations, multiculturalism and education, among others (“Ecuador swears in a new president”, 2007). A year later, the members of the National Constitutional Assembly had finalised the new constitution. However, for it to attain its full legal effect, a further referendum had to be conducted. Hence, on September the 28th, 2008, Ecuador held a second referendum at which the Ecuadorian people affirmed their support for the new national constitution.

In 2008, the National Constitutional Assembly issued Constitutional Mandate No. 14, which sought to examine and evaluate the current state of Ecuadorian universities. This process of evaluation started to examine universities’ academic and legal performance according to their status and category. To perform the evaluation process, the government appointed the National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEA), a body which subsequently conducted a three-month national evaluation of the country’s 68 universities between June and October 2009. In accordance with Constitutional Mandate No. 14, CONEA’s evaluation provided not only a detailed description of the current situation of universities, but also their individual rankings based on their academic and legal performance. An ‘A’ ranking represented the best performing institutions and an ‘E’ ranking the least performing institution.

When the evaluation exercise was complete, CONEA published its results in November 2009 (CONEA Report, 2009). In this report, a number of chronic problems were identified, including the following:

1. Lack of proper academic preparation for staff who were teaching in tertiary-level education.
2. Lack of a proper grade scale for promotion and salaries among teaching staff.

3. A weak track record of research in some universities and a complete absence of research in others.
4. A deficient infrastructure in some universities.
5. Inappropriate degree title nomenclature; for example, Tourism Engineering, Gastronomy Engineering, and Optometry Engineering.
6. Low levels of community integration via social projects.

Some of these chronic problems were evident specifically in relation to ELT. For example, regarding point 1, some of the EFL teachers working in universities did not hold a degree in ELT or in education. Some of them were hired because they had lived in English speaking countries and were thus were very proficient in English; however, they frequently lacked the methodological training needed to teach the language effectively. Concerning point 2, in most universities EFL teachers were hired on an hourly basis and their salaries depended on the number of actual teaching hours they taught in a month. For example, if there was a national holiday or English classes were suspended for any other reason, teachers were not paid for these hours. This scheme of payment resulted in teachers not receiving any holiday payment and being paid different amounts of money each month rather than a fixed monthly salary. In addition, EFL teachers did not have fixed contracts for a defined period of time, and this affected their work stability since they could be fired at any time and without any notice. This manner of hiring and paying EFL teachers negatively affected their commitment to students' learning. Teachers went to their universities only to teach their assigned EFL courses and would leave the university afterwards. They generally did not involve themselves in any other academic activities such as research or social projects (points 3 and 6).

The deficient infrastructure (point 4) that characterised most universities also affected their ELT provision. Some universities did not have a language centre and EFL teachers were, therefore, scattered across different departments. Also, there were not enough classrooms for teaching EFL, so EFL teachers had to share classrooms with teachers from other academic subjects; for example,

Maths or History. This resulted in double-booking, and when it happened, preference was, most of the time, given to teachers from other academic subjects, meaning that EFL teachers had to continue looking for alternative classrooms. The time they took doing so reduced the actual teaching time and affected the motivation of students.

ELT in most universities was not well organised and there was marked variation in English tuition between departments even within the same university; for example, the duration of an English course and the number of courses that students needed to complete successfully in order to graduate was different between Business and Tourism undergraduate programmes and engineering programmes, with the latter requiring their students to successfully complete fewer courses. In the same line, English courses in business or tourism undergraduate programmes tended to comprise more contact hours than in other undergraduate programmes. As a result of this practice, students finished their tertiary studies with different levels of English language proficiency.

Following the enactment of the 2010 Higher Education Law, this way of conceiving ELT in higher education was challenged since all students, irrespective of their undergraduate programmes, were now required to achieve the same level of language proficiency in a foreign language (CEFR B1 level). This move towards greater standardisation necessitated modifications to institutions' ELT policies.

In addition to the identification of the aforementioned chronic problems, all 68 universities were ranked and categorised according to their level of performance, as follows:

Category 'A' – 11 universities

Category 'B' – 9 universities

Category 'C' – 13 universities

Category 'D' – 9 universities

Category 'E' – 26 universities

Based on these results, CONEA recommended the permanent closure of the 26 Category-‘E’ universities.

Although evaluation and ranking of universities is not new in other countries, it was the first time that a national evaluation exercise had been conducted in Ecuador, thus, the tendency of universities was to believe that institutional evaluation was new. However, while there has never been an evaluation exercise in Ecuador, according to Ursin, Huusko, Aittola, Kiviniemi and Muhonen (2008: 110) ‘[e]valuation has always existed in universities, although the form it has taken has changed over recent decades’. In Ecuador for instance, this evaluation which was a diagnostic evaluation aimed to present a detailed picture of the actual state of Ecuadorian higher education and a subsequent ranking of institutions. The results of this evaluation caused a great deal of commotion, mainly among ‘E’ universities. Stakeholders such as vice-chancellors, teaching personnel and students from these universities wholly opposed CONEA’s report and tried to find fault with the system used to evaluate and categorise universities. One vice-chancellor of an ‘E’ university claimed that CONEA used electronic mail as a means to collect data and that, when the evaluators conducted the in-situ evaluation, they did not spend sufficient time on proper observations (“Rectores rechazan informe”, 2009). In line with the rejection of CONEA’s report, a few universities pursued legal action against this office through the courts, and many students claimed they had suffered psychologically as a result of disruption to their studies.

In line with ‘E’ universities’ complaints, and despite CONEA’s recommendation that universities that were ‘E’-ranked be closed permanently, the Ecuadorian government delayed implementation of the recommendation and allowed these institutions to operate until April 2012, thereby giving them the opportunity to improve their performance by at least one category – that is to at least a ‘D’ ranking. In April 2012, the Board of Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEAACES), the institution that replaced CONEA, conducted a second evaluation exercise, focusing specifically on those 26

universities that had previously been ranked as category 'E'. The results of this second evaluation led to the permanent closure of 14 of the 26 institutions.

It is important to note that no university evaluation and ranking exercise is perfect (there are always aspects that can be improved). Furthermore, it is rare that such an exercise will be universally positively received by all stakeholders. Altbach (2015: 7) highlights this fact in stating that '[n]o one has figured out how to rank universities internationally, or even within countries in ways that are acceptable to the academic community or that can withstand serious critiques'. In the case of Ecuador, and as mentioned before, the first evaluation process was heavily criticised and rejected. However, these critiques and rejections did not prevent CONEA from conducting a second national evaluation and re-ranking exercise of the remaining 54 universities in April 2013. The results of this second exercise showed a change in categories from those of 2009 (see Table 1).

Category	Number of universities in 2009	Number of universities in 2013
A	11	5
B	9	23
C	13	18
D	9	8
E	26	0
Total	68	54

Table 1. Number of universities per category in 2009 and 2013

As Table 1 indicates, the closure of 14 institutions in 2012 decreased the number of universities from 68 in 2009 to 54 in 2013. There was an increase in the number of institutions in Category 'B', from 9 in 2009 to 23 in 2013, as well as an increase in the number of universities in Category 'C', from 13 in 2009 to 18 in 2013.

However, there was a decrease in the number of institutions ranked Category 'A', from 11 in 2009 to 5 in 2013; similarly, in Category 'D', 1 university was re-ranked in 2013. Furthermore, CONEA took the decision to do away with Category 'E' in its second evaluation exercise; hence, no institution was listed in this category. Although there was a reduction in the number of 'A'-ranked universities, the overall results of this second evaluation seem to show that the quality of Ecuadorian universities had improved as a result of the evaluation exercises.

In 2010, in conjunction with the first university evaluation exercise, the National Assembly (formerly the Congress of Ecuador) passed the Higher Education Law. Article 124 of this law, which is the focus of this study, stipulates that all university students are mandated to master a foreign language by the time they graduate from their degree programmes, and that universities are responsible for the effective fulfilment of this requirement. However, the provisions of Article 124 do not provide a rationale for the requirement to teach a foreign language in universities; nor do they specify which foreign language(s) universities should include in their curricula, and they do not provide clear-cut guidelines for effective implementation. This lack of clarity resulted in universities focusing mainly on the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), for two reasons: Firstly, universities consider English to be particularly important in the many international interactions that take place in an increasingly global society; and secondly, universities had been teaching EFL prior to the enactment of the law and it was therefore seen as easier to continue this practice. The lack of guidelines for language policy implementation also resulted in universities responding in different ways.

1.2 Scope and delimitation of the study

Even though Article 124 refers to the teaching of foreign languages in higher education *in general*, EFL continues to be the preferred language adopted by the majority of universities and university students. Due to the privileged status English enjoys among stakeholders in higher education, the current study focuses

specifically on EFL policy design and implementation. It is not the intention of this study to evaluate EFL programmes in the different universities, nor the students' levels of English proficiency.

Although the sample size of the study limits the generalisability of insights that emerge from the data, the intention is that the data should shed light on language policy by providing a detailed description and analysis of how universities responded to Article 124. It is my hope that in doing so the findings of this study will assist Ecuadorian language policy makers to design and implement more contextualised foreign language policies in general – and EFL language policies in particular – in the higher education sector.

1.3 Background to the study

The status of Ecuadorian higher education has changed in the last few years, mainly as a result of the enactment and implementation of the new Higher Education Law in 2010. Within this new direction of Ecuadorian higher education, Article 124 has also influenced foreign-language teaching, particularly English Language Teaching (ELT), in the sector.

The next section provides a detailed description of the background to the current study in order to help contextualise it. It presents an account of the Ecuadorian higher education sector and Higher Education Law, with a particular focus on Article 124.

1.3.1 The Ecuadorian Educational Sector

Education in Ecuador comprises three main levels: basic education, secondary education and higher education. In basic and secondary education, there are three types of institutions: public, partially funded and private. The government fully funds public education, students' fees and NGOs or municipalities support partially funded education, and students' fees fund private education. Basic education consists of 10 years of study and pupils start school at the age of five.

Secondary education (or 'Bachillerato') comprises three years of study. Once the students finish their Bachillerato, they proceed to higher education.

Higher education in Ecuador involves two tracks: technological superior institutes (or technical colleges) and universities. The first track offers mainly technical programmes such as mechanics, electronics-related courses, graphic design and textile courses. After three years of study, the students earn a diploma, which certifies them as qualified technicians. Universities, on the other hand, award undergraduate degrees following a study period of four or five years, and postgraduate degrees following study of at least two years. Most universities in Ecuador, however, do not offer doctoral programmes.

Universities are classified into three types: public, private co-funded and private self-funded. Public universities are financed entirely by the state and students do not pay any fees; private co-funded universities receive funds from both the state and student fees, and private self-funded institutions rely entirely on students' fees.

1.3.2 The Higher Education Sector

The results of the first evaluation of the entire higher education sector in 2009 brought to the fore the real status of higher education in Ecuador. The results indicated that the situation within higher education was problematic and necessitated a change. However, for the government to intervene legally, a new Higher Education Law had to be enacted. Thus, the government proposed a bill to the National Assembly (Ecuadorian Congress) that sought to replace the former Higher Education Law. After some debate in the Ecuadorian National Assembly, the law was finally enacted in 2010 and implemented thereafter. Some of the major changes it proposed included the following:

1. Declaring public higher education to be free of charge.
2. Aligning programmes offered by universities to the national development plan.
3. Regulating, evaluating and categorising universities.
4. Including a new scheme for the selection and promotion of academic staff.

5. Designing an admission test for all applicants seeking entrance to public and private universities.
6. Periodic evaluation and subsequent ranking of universities every five years.

These changes provoked two kinds of response: support and opposition. Some supported the idea of free education, while others opposed the major changes the new law entailed. Those who openly opposed the provisions were mainly university vice-chancellors, deans, some academicians, and a number of student organisations such as the Federation of Ecuadorian University Students (FEUE) and the Confederation of University and Polytechnic Students of Ecuador (CEUPE). Their major dispute with the new Higher Education Law concerned the regulation, evaluation and ranking of universities which, according to some stakeholders, would reduce the autonomy of universities. FEUE and CEUPE claimed that by imposing an admission test the opportunities for students to enter the universities of their choice would be reduced dramatically.

The new Higher Education Law contained a number of provisions that addressed the general problems identified in the first evaluation conducted of universities. For example, Article 149 enumerated the different types of teaching personnel (professors, teaching fellows and researchers) and the types of employment contracts (full time and part time), while Article 150 stated that a doctoral degree was mandatory for professorial positions. These articles provided an answer to the concerns raised regarding teachers' lack of academic preparation and a proper ranking scale for promotion and salaries. A later regulation, *Reglamento de Régimen Académico* (Academic Regimen Regulation), contained a clear national path for professorial promotion and pay scales, the adoption of which was mandatory for universities.

The new academic qualification requirements for academic staff in universities stipulated that all lecturers needed to hold a master's degree in a relevant discipline and a doctoral degree for subsequent promotions. This resulted in some universities terminating the services of teachers who did not hold a Master's

degree in their disciplines and hiring teachers with the required degrees (Master's and PhDs). However, due to a lack of academic personnel holding doctoral degrees in Ecuador, some universities and even the government offered teaching posts to foreign academicians, particularly from Spain ("Ecuador ofrece 5500 puestos de trabajo", 2013). Other universities offered some form of economic support for their teaching personnel to encourage them to pursue postgraduate studies at foreign universities. SENESCYT (the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation), for instance, has been offering scholarships to academic personnel from public and private universities since 2012 in order to fund their doctoral studies in selected overseas universities.

The Higher Education Law also established a national nomenclature for degrees, as well as a national credit system. Before 2010, universities offering similar undergraduate programmes had different nomenclatures for their academic degrees. For instance, in an undergraduate programme in accountancy offered by two different universities, the students from the first institution were awarded a Bachelor of Arts in Accountancy (BA in Accountancy), while the students from the second institution were given a Bachelor of Engineering with a major in Accountancy (BEng in Accountancy). The difference in the nomenclatures of academic degrees also defined the number of credits needed in each programme and the number of years of study. In a Bachelor of Arts programme, students studied for four years, whilst a Bachelor of Engineering programme required five years of study. Hence, the students found it difficult to transfer from one university to another because the transfer affected the continuity of their studies in the same programmes. There were cases, for instance, in which students who transferred to a different university discovered that the academic credits acquired in their former institution were not recognised in the receiving university. Consequently, the students had to re-take their entire undergraduate programmes in the receiving university despite having studied the same academic programme for two years in their previous institution. In order to avoid these practices, the law regulated the nomenclature for degrees and the duration of study for its

programmes. Thus, an academic degree related to accountancy was henceforth to be termed a BA in Accountancy; furthermore, in all universities, the degree would be granted to students after their successful completion of nine academic semesters. Engineering degrees (BEng), on the other hand, would be awarded after ten semesters, with the course of study limited to hard-core sciences such as mechanics.

Article 8 of the new education law mandated that all universities were required to conduct research and to engage with the research agenda via social projects more visibly, both locally and nationally. With regard to research, the academic production of Ecuadorian teaching personnel in universities was limited in general but it was more evident in the area of ELT. Earlier in this introduction, I referred to this aspect by highlighting the small number of articles published in the areas of language and applied linguistics as an example. Before the introduction of the new Higher Education Law, doing research was optional among teaching personnel in universities, meaning that those who engaged in research projects were typically only those academicians who were motivated to do so. Concerning academicians' personal motivation for doing research, Bentley and Kyvik (2013: 344), in a study conducted in 13 countries, noticed that research activities among teaching personnel in universities was a highly personal activity, meaning that academicians who were interested in research devoted more of their time to this activity without needing to be forced to do it. Unfortunately, in Ecuador academicians who were motivated to do research were scarce, thus, in order to improve in this area, the state used the law to oblige universities to conduct more research.

Following the requirements of the law, universities designed and required applicants to take admission tests. Private universities created their own admission tests; conversely, students seeking admission to public universities took the test administered by the National System of Admission, an office attached to SENESCYT. Previously, applicants to the majority of universities were not required to take an admission test; instead, the universities used a quota system

whereby there was a pre-determined number of available slots for each programme and, once these were filled, the university closed the admission process.

The new law required all universities to provide bridging programmes for students who failed to reach the minimum score in the admission test. These bridging programmes, which lasted for one semester, provided the necessary scaffolding of knowledge and skills that students needed for successful academic navigation throughout their tertiary education.

The continuous process of evaluation and accreditation of universities encouraged them to improve their infrastructure, institutional administration, instruction and research. However, to facilitate the implementation of the law, proper institutional guidance was necessary if significant institutional challenges were to be avoided.

1.3.3 Foreign-language Teaching in Ecuadorian Higher Education

Prior to the 2008 and 2010 categorisation processes, neither the government nor any other institutions were able to interfere with or regulate universities, as they were largely autonomous. In the Ecuadorian context, university autonomy refers to the internal self-regulatory power of universities and the non-interference of external institutions in internal matters. Under the principle of university autonomy, universities had the sole responsibility to organise and conduct academic programmes at the undergraduate and/or postgraduate level. This particular way of functioning resulted in idiosyncratic curricular designs tailored to fit individual universities' interests. This was true of foreign-language programmes in universities which, consequently, were often not transparent or familiar to those outside the institutions concerned. As with their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, universities isolated and varied their language programmes. This variation resulted in universities offering foreign-language programmes that lacked any kind of standardisation and which were frequently dissimilar in both the mode of teaching and in the number of contact hours of instruction.

Commonly, depending on their size and number of students, universities offered different foreign-language courses to their students, such as English, French, Chinese, Italian or Russian. The number of languages offered was directly proportional to the number of students enrolled; hence, the greater the student population, the greater the range of courses offered by the institutions. Depending on the university, these language courses were delivered via different modes: face-to-face, on-line or blended learning. In the absence of any regulation, universities had the discretion to select the modes of language teaching they adopted. The number of contact hours that students received in these language programmes ranged from three to ten hours per week.

Within this diverse offering of foreign-language programmes, EFL was taught at all universities. This fact reflected universities' and students' interest in English in Ecuador, their recognition of its status as one of the major global languages and its international importance. Universities taught EFL as part of their core curriculum or as an extracurricular subject. If EFL was part of the core curriculum, students took the course within the first two years of their undergraduate programmes, alongside other academic subjects. If it was offered as an extracurricular subject, the university's institutional language centres delivered it.

Language centres are legally constituted according to the internal regulations of universities. They function independently from other departments and have their own regulations and policies. Each language centre has a Director who is the visible head and, depending on the size of the language centres, there is usually a coordinator who is responsible for the curriculum, evaluation and extension (social projects) of the foreign-language course.

The main goal of these language centres is to teach English or other foreign languages to students who are officially enrolled at the university or, in some cases, to the general public. Usually, big universities offer language programmes to the general public while small universities offer these only to their officially enrolled students. Following the general policy among universities, all students

have to complete a full-length language programme as one of their requirements for graduation. However, there is no common requirement among universities in relation to the number of EFL courses that students are required to take. In some institutions, the number of EFL courses depends on the extent to which the students' degree programmes require a knowledge of English. For example, in business-oriented (international trade) and tourism programmes, students take more EFL courses, while they take fewer EFL courses in engineering and science programmes. This contrasts with the policies of other universities at which an institutional policy mandates that all students complete the same number of EFL courses regardless of their undergraduate programmes, as well as the national policy that requires all students to achieve a CEFR B1 level.

With regard to the qualifications needed by teachers of EFL in universities, a Master's degree in the teaching of foreign languages or ELT is a requirement of SENESCYT. However, due to the shortage of teachers holding a Master's degree in this area, universities continued to retain their EFL teachers even if they held Master's degrees in other areas. These teachers were ordered to successfully complete a Master's degree in teaching foreign languages or ELT by the end of 2015.

In addition to a master's degree in ELT, and depending on the universities concerned, EFL teachers are required to take and pass language-proficiency requirements measured by high-currency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the First Certificate in English (FCE) or the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). The level of proficiency among EFL teachers has greatly influenced EFL language policy in the country, as well as the subsequent selection of a CEFR B1 level as the foreign language target proficiency requirement for students graduating from a university. How it influenced language policy and ELT in general will be discussed in detail later in the data analysis chapter.

1.3.3.1 EFL Pedagogy in Ecuadorian Universities

Initially, to assess students' levels of English proficiency before the start of their EFL tuition, universities administer placement tests. Based on their results, students are assigned to a specific EFL course. However, universities do not administer placement tests to new students unless the new students formally require it via a formal letter addressed to the Director of the language centre. It is notable that there are no standard placement tests for all universities offering an EFL programme; the tests differ considerably between institutions.

In relation to pedagogical considerations, universities' use of the Communicative Approach in English language teaching and the CEFR language indicators are common practices in language centres. The use of the CEFR indicators are largely the result of the state's requirement for a B1 level of English language proficiency for all graduating students.

With regard to EFL instructional materials, most universities use foreign textbooks such as those published by Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Pearson. These publishers offer on-line support for students via ELT platforms as part of their agreements with universities.

Universities employ a variety of assessment tools to evaluate their students for the purpose of promoting them to higher-level EFL courses. These tools include quizzes, in-class activities, assignments, tests taken from EFL course books, periodic exams, and standard tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or tests from the Cambridge suite such as Key English Test (KET), the Preliminary English Test (PET) and the First Certificate in English (FCE). The weight given to each component depends on the particular university.

ELT practice remains variable among Ecuadorian universities despite efforts to standardise it. Nevertheless, all university stakeholders agree on the necessity for their students to acquire a good command of English.

1.3.4 The Status of English in the World

As mentioned previously, EFL programmes are offered by all universities in Ecuador. This preference for English among institutions in the country is mainly due to its status as a global language. Crystal (2003: 7) stated that, for a language to be global, the quantity of speakers using it is not as important as 'who the speakers are'. In the case of English, it is clear that people in all corners of the world use the language and that it is used in multifarious domains, including work and education. According to Crystal (2003: 59), the spread of English is due to two factors that occurred at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century: firstly, 'the expansion of British colonial power' and secondly, the growing 'leading economic power' of the United States of America. During the 19th century, Great Britain had colonies on almost all continents. After their independence from Great Britain, most of these former colonies retained English as their official language. Secondly, the growing economic power of the United States of America further promoted the dispersion of English. The United States of America influenced other countries around the world where other languages are spoken as the native tongues to use English as a lingua franca for the facilitation of communication in economic transactions as well as for other purposes.

In this era of globalisation, English has, then, become the primary means of communication worldwide. Kachru and Smith (2008:1) stated that around a quarter of the world's inhabitants use English for some purpose in their lives and that an acceptable knowledge of this language facilitates people's communication, regardless of their nationalities and mother tongues. In 2013, the English Effect Technical Report produced by the British Council commented that English is the language used for global communication in science, information technology (IT), business, entertainment and diplomacy.

The use of English continues to expand across the world and appears to be limitless, particularly as it is the dominant language used on the communication superhighway (Internet World Stats 2013). The British Council (2013:7) reports

that, at present, people are interconnected and that the Internet 'is the vehicle they have chosen and English is the fuel on which it will run'. This highlights the fact that a good command of English is a pre-requisite to functioning properly in the virtual world by enabling its users to surf, locate and share information and thereby engage in transactions such as shopping locally or internationally and making payments, and studying on-line degree programmes and training courses.

As Ecuador continues to embrace the effects of globalisation, more Ecuadorians are showing interest in learning English as a foreign language. In this country, the ability to speak English is highly valued and is an asset when seeking work and exploring further opportunities. In 2003, Alm conducted a study that examined perceptions of English among Ecuadorians, and found that English is 'considered very important for social and professional success' (2003: 144). Adding to the perception that English increases employability, Ecuadorians have found an academic incentive to learn English in the form of the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT) offering full scholarships to anyone interested in pursuing a postgraduate degree at an overseas university. In other words, English proficiency is seen as a powerful vehicle for social mobility.

However, despite this high regard for English, the general level of English proficiency among Ecuadorians remains low among both students and EFL teachers. In 2012, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education required all EFL teachers teaching in public schools to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to gauge their proficiency levels. The TOEFL results showed that 74% of EFL teachers in public schools had an A1 or A2 level of English, based on the Common European Framework of Reference ('El 26% de maestros tiene estándar mínimo para enseñar inglés', 2014). It seems that EFL teachers' weak knowledge of English hinders the students' acquisition of high levels of proficiency in the language. However, this remains mere conjecture due to a lack of research concerning the teaching of ELT in Ecuador, which makes it difficult to establish a

causal relationship between the teachers' language competency and the students' proficiency in English.

Unlike students at public schools, students who attend elite private schools, such as the British School, the American School and the Alliance Academy International, frequently demonstrate more advanced levels of proficiency in English. Unfortunately, access to these schools is restricted to those who belong to the upper and upper-middle social classes since they have the economic capacity to pay the high fees that these schools charge. Alm's (2003) research showed the relationship between socioeconomic class and English proficiency among Ecuadorians. She noted that those from lower socioeconomic groups show 'a very rudimentary knowledge of English - or even none at all' (2003: 144). Hence, wealthy people have the opportunity to attain a good level of proficiency in English while the poor do not. Again, more research is needed to establish whether there is a significant correlation between the kinds of schools that students attend and their levels of English proficiency, as well as the extent to which socioeconomic background affects English proficiency levels among Ecuadorians.

The importance of English in today's globalised era has also influenced the education sector. Currently, a number of countries are reforming their educational policies and practices in order for schools and universities to produce graduates who can communicate effectively in English. In South Korea, for instance, the 2007 Revised South Korean Curriculum states that, in order for primary and secondary students to survive in the world in the future, the ability to communicate in English is an essential skill that should be learned at school (National Curriculum Information Centre Website, n.d.). In Hong Kong, 25% of the total weekly hours are spent on teaching English in secondary schools (McClatchey, BBC News 2013) and, in Europe, '94% of upper secondary students learn English as a Foreign Language' (EurActiv.com, 2013). Similarly, in Latin American countries, curricula have also undergone a process of modification in order to improve the teaching of English. Costa Rica forged an agreement with Intel

Technology and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to implement a project designed to develop English in schools through the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) (Bassi and Álvarez, 2013). Furthermore, Colombia's response to a CEFR assessment, which indicated that only 6% of Colombian students who finished secondary school had achieved a CEFR B1 level of English, was to urge its Ministry of Education to formulate a project, Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2018 (Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018), to increase the percentage of secondary students who attained a B1 level from 2% to 8% by 2018. The programme focuses on four main strategies: The first is teacher training, the second is the design of a national EFL curriculum, the third is the distribution of EFL instructional materials in primary and secondary education, and the fourth is an emphasis on the use of ICT in ELT (Colombia Bilingüe, 2014). These two countries, Costa Rica and Colombia, were not the only states that modified their national policy concerning ELT; a study by the British Council from 2014 to 2015 (English in Latin America, n.d.) concerning ELT in 'Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru' showed the countries' interest in and support for ELT as reflected in policy formulation. However, according to this research, ELT policies differed from one country to another (English in Latin America, p. 2). These differences are shown in Table 2 below.

Country	Type of policy
Argentina	Teaching languages is mandatory in primary and secondary schools. Although the specific foreign languages to be taught are not stated in the federal law, provinces have opted for English as the foreign language to be studied in schools. The central government provides guidelines in the form of general objectives and suggested content and methodologies for foreign-language teaching, in order that the provinces can develop their own curricula.

Brazil	There is not an exclusive ELT policy; instead, the government advocates the teaching of different foreign languages.
Chile	The ELT policy is called the <i>English Opens Doors Programme</i> . Its aim is to have bilingual students with a CEFR B1 level at the end of the 12 th grade. In order to meet this goal, ELT is mandatory in all public schools from grades 5 to 12 and for three hours per week. This policy requires EFL teachers to have a C1 CEFR level. Training is provided for teachers in order to help ensure that they meet this language proficiency requirement.
Colombia	English is mandatory in all schools and the ELT policy includes a CEFR B1 for secondary graduating students, a B2 CEFR for graduating undergraduate students, and a C1 CEFR level for English teachers. the projected deadline for achieving the goal is 2019.
Ecuador	English is mandatory in primary and secondary schools and the expected level to be achieved by students leaving secondary school is CEFR B1.
Mexico	The emphasis is on teaching English in the early years of primary school and training EFL teachers. A CEFR B1 level is expected of students finishing 9 th grade.
Peru	The ELT policy is called the <i>National English Plan</i> . It includes national guidelines for ELT in secondary and primary education, EFL teacher training and an agreement with the UK government to facilitate the implementation of this policy.

Information sourced from: *English in Latin America an examination of policy and priorities in seven countries* (British Council 2015).

Table 2. Comparison of ELT policies in Latin America

Table 2 shows that, with the exception of Argentina and Brazil, the governments of the listed countries place a particular emphasis on ELT. In Argentina, however, while not making an exclusive reference to ELT in the national policy, provinces prefer ELT to other foreign languages. Despite the different language policies in these countries, common aspects of policy that can be identified are the selection of a target language proficiency level for students (usually stated as a CEFR level), efforts to increasing the number of teaching hours for English, the commencement of English language tuition in the early years of primary education, and the promotion of EFL teacher training.

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education is in charge of formulating policies exclusively for primary and secondary education, while SENESCYT regulates higher education. These offices have implemented two different EFL policies, one for primary and secondary education and another for higher education. In order to explore the changes in universities resulting from the implementation of the Ecuadorian Higher Education Law, and specifically of Article 124, the following section specifies the research questions that form the basis of the current study.

1.4 Research Questions

Earlier in this chapter, it was shown how the higher education sector changed after 2010 as the result of the implementation of the Higher Education Law and the university evaluation and ranking exercises that followed.

It is important to note that in Ecuador, after laws are enacted they are accompanied by a document referred to as a 'reglamento' (regulation). This regulation contains a series of norms through which the law is applied. In the Higher Education Law, this regulation is called the Academic Regimen Regulation. In tandem with Article 124 of the Higher Education Law, Article 31 of Academic Regimen Regulation, in order to facilitate the application of Article 124, stipulates that all students need to attain a CEFR B1 level as the required level of

foreign-language proficiency by the time they finish their undergraduate programmes. However, the lack of standardisation among universities in the delivery of foreign languages, and particularly ELT, emphasises the need for greater guidance in the form of a more detailed and transparent language policy. For this to occur, there needs to be a far greater understanding of the different ways in which Article 124 has impacted on EFL programmes by eliciting the opinions and needs of the different university stakeholders. This prompted the following primary and secondary research questions.

1.4.1 Research questions

1. How have higher education institutions in Ecuador responded to recent changes in government language policy and regulation as articulated in the Higher Education Law (Article 124)?
2. What challenges have universities encountered in the process of planning their EFL programmes in accordance with the changes in government language policy and regulation specified in Article 124?
3. How effectively have universities overcome the key challenges to implementing change in their EFL programmes according to the requirements stipulated in Article 124?
4. What tensions can be identified between government goals, as articulated in Article 124, and their implementation by universities?

These questions also frame my discussion of the existing literature in the field of EFL language policy and the role of English in the higher education sector in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to provide a theoretical basis for understanding language policy and the role of English in higher education, this chapter presents a discussion of the different definitions of language policy. It then focuses on EFL policy in the higher education sector, and proceeds to examine EFL policy in the higher education sector within the Ecuadorian context in particular. Inasmuch as CEFR is widely used in Ecuador, this chapter also presents an account of CEFR, its use in Ecuadorian universities, and its advantages and disadvantages. Since the success of any EFL language policy depends on the teachers, there is also a discussion about agency in language policy. Finally, the chapter concludes with a proposed approach to EFL policy in higher education, and an accompanying rationale.

2.1 Defining language policy

The literature does not provide a uniform definition of the term 'language policy'. This may be due to the nature of language and 'the complexity of the issues which involve language in society' (Ricento, 2006:10). These issues may include the acceptance or rejection of an intended language to be promoted in a community; the resources available to promote that language; the organisation that promotes the policy, be it the government or an institution such as a school or an indigenous organisation; and the intention of the language policy – for example, the promotion of an indigenous language in order to maintain indigenous culture, or to facilitate students' access to foreign scholarships. Languages are dynamic and are co-constructed, modified and given value by their users in everyday communication, and it is within this constantly changing context that language policies operate. Spolsky (2004:41) stated that 'the concepts of language policy are fuzzy and

observer dependent'; they are fuzzy because of the intricacy of the language and observer dependent because there is no formula that can dictate the steps that need to be followed by all policymakers in order to implement a policy effectively.

Language policies need to adapt to language communities and, in this process of adaptation, people perceive policies in different ways. A student who sees a language promoted by a policy as a key to postgraduate education is unlikely to view that policy negatively. Conversely, members of a community who see the promotion of a language as a threat to their native or local languages may well feel differently. Therefore, establishing a single and commonly accepted concept of what language policy is becomes difficult. Nonetheless, language policy, in general terms, can be defined as 'the development of public policies that aim to use the authority of the state to affect various aspects of the status and use of languages by people under the state's jurisdiction' (Schmidt, 2006: 97). Although Schmidt's concept of language policy highlights the role of the state as the main agent of language policy design and implementation, it can be added that, apart from the government, any institution that has power or influence over a community can also promote language policies in specific locations; for example, the Director of a school. The difference between the state and other type of institutions is the extent of the policy. The state has the legal power to 'establish a policy by constitution, law, or regulation, and has the means to enforce or implement that policy' (Spolsky 2004: 40), whereas other institutions can only exert influence on their premises; for instance, a language policy designed to promote EFL in a particular school only applies inside that institution and only to people who belong to that school. The constitution is the foundation of a country, and all laws spring from it. Laws have a normative aspect but, between the constitution and the law, it is the former that prevails. Regulations are part of the law and they also have a normative function. By using any of these legal mechanisms, the state demonstrates the scope of its language policies. For instance, the inclusion of a particular language or languages in the constitution of a country elevates those to national or official status. From a national perspective, a language policy can

target a specific domain, such as education. For instance, through a specific education law, the state can promote a language in the entire basic or higher education sector.

From a policy-making point of view, the state has the legal power to influence the trajectory of the use and promotion of a particular language in its territory; however, the state is not the sole agent and determiner of the results of a given language policy, for society also plays a role in shaping language preferences and practices.

Peled (2014: 302) observed that language policy is a process of ranking languages based on their relevance and 'certain criteria such as efficiency or symbolic value'. Efficiency concerns the degree of usefulness that a language has in facilitating communication among people; for instance, as a lingua franca among people with different languages. For a language to manifest efficiency, it needs to serve a practical use, for example in the workplace or in educational contexts. Symbolic value, on the other hand, can be associated with what it represents for people, such as national identity, patriotism, self-identification and culture. In the case of foreign languages, symbolic value may be related to global communication, access to technology or education, work opportunities or economic growth.

As mentioned earlier, languages are modified and co-constructed by the community and in daily interactions. Therefore, policymakers need to reflect on the nature of language. Pennycook (2000: 63) emphasised that policymakers need to expand the notion of languages and to avoid seeing them 'as if they were nothing but neutral media for the conveyance of knowledge and culture'. If policymakers see languages as mere means for the transmission of 'knowledge and culture', they may conceive of languages as objects that perform specific functions without any external influence. Therefore, policymakers may design policies that focus only on the normative aspect and expect that people will modify their language practices because they have been told or mandated to do so.

Language means different things to different people. For instance, an indigenous language may represent the culture and the pride of an indigenous group. A language that is used in education may represent social and economic mobility for people who work and study within the education sector, as well as accessibility to education for those who do not.

To minimise the subjectivity of language policy design, policymakers need to consider carefully the context and the future implications of enacted regulations. They also need to understand that their policies are not isolated activities detached from the communities to which they apply. Spolsky (2004: 6) stated that '[l]anguage and language policy... exist in ... highly complex interacting and dynamic contexts', the modification of which may have a correlation with 'non-linguistic factors, such as political, demographic, social, or religious'. It is important, therefore, to consider these factors if language policy objectives are to be met.

The possible impact of language policy can be addressed through the identification of three components: 'language practices', 'language beliefs or ideology', and 'specific efforts to modify or influence that practice' (Spolsky 2004: 5). It is important to consider the current language practices of communities in order to facilitate the promotion or introduction of specific languages. For instance, in a community that tends to favour oral language exchanges to the written form, policymakers may design policies with a strong emphasis on oral communication. Language beliefs or ideology cannot be seen as the sole means of communication. The value that languages have is not the same for everybody; it depends on the worldview of the communities. Thus, understanding how a group of people has assigned a set of attributes to a particular language can help to pre-empt the extent of its acceptance or rejection in a community. A language policy with a target language that is not particularly endorsed by a group of people may encounter significant resistance.

Ultimately, policymakers aiming to introduce or promote a different language have to map out the possible or existing uses within the target communities, as well as the communities' perceptions of a given language. A detailed description of these aspects can provide policymakers with valuable background information, which can, in turn, facilitate policy implementation; hence, policymakers need to have a clear and well-grounded picture of the community in which the policy is going to be implemented. Once a detailed description of the context and the language attributes is mapped out, policymakers need to begin conceptualising the design of the policy (including its theoretical underpinnings) and considering its implementation.

2.1.1 History of language policy and planning

The focus of language policy and the way it promotes language use have changed since it was first studied formally (mainly after World War 2). Johnson and Ricento (2013: 8) described the focus of early language policy, based on the works of Haugen, in terms of four main types of language planning, namely:

- a) '[S]election of a norm': The selection of a variety of a language that would be applied in a specific locale;
- b) '[C]odification': The elaboration of grammar systems and norms for writing;
- c) '[I]mplementation': The promotion and popularisation of the use of a selected language; and
- d) '[E]laboration': The continuous adaptation of the language to the new global demands.

These four types of language planning conceive of languages as objects and do not consider other aspects that may influence language policy; for instance, as mentioned earlier, the role of the community in accepting or rejecting a language policy and the value that this language has within a specific community. If a

language policy were to begin with the selection of a specific variety of a language, key questions would be: Who could be in the right position to judge what language variety is correct in order to adopt it as a norm? How would those who use language varieties not accounted for by the policy be affected? This may result in language discrimination against those who use the non-preferred language variety; therefore, these people are likely to reject the policy. In the same way, the other two activities (implementation and elaboration) do not consider the community and rely on the ability of the policymakers to plan activities they deem appropriate. Codification, compared to the other three types, may be less complicated to carry out, and can be done by linguists since they have an in-depth knowledge of morphology and syntax.

Ricento (2000: 199 - 200) identified four main characteristics of language policy associated with the early phase of language policy thought:

- a) The intention of language policy is to consolidate groups of people; namely, states or communities. It also promotes modernisation, efficiency and democratisation.
- b) Language is conceived of as something with value; thus, planning is desirable.
- c) Status and corpus planning are conceived of as different activities free from ideologies.
- d) Languages are understood in isolation without reference to their socio-historical and ecological contexts.

The characteristics of the language policies are connected directly to their focus. For instance, in order to select a norm (particular variety of a language) to be promoted in a locale, policymakers need to consider language as something with value (one variety is more valuable than another), hence its prioritisation. In order to see language as being free from ideologies, policymakers need to decontextualise it. This means that policymakers do not consider the socio-

historical and ecological contexts. If a language is seen in isolation, the design of activities for its promotion and popularisation, as well as corpus planning, may become easier. However, this does not imply effectiveness, since the community and the context are not taken into consideration.

This way of conceptualising language policy at its early stage clearly indicates that languages are seen as objects free from external influences and which can be promoted via a series of planned activities without being affected by external influences. In opposition to this way of conceiving of language policy and planning, a new school of thought emerged – critical theory in language planning.

2.1.2 Critical Theory in language policy

Critical theory in language policy ‘entails an implicit critique of traditional, mainstream approaches’ (Tollefson, 2006:42). Traditionally, policymakers selected a specific language and formulated a set of regulations that people had to follow within a particular location. Often, the designs of these policies were not informed by the opinions of those people who would ultimately be affected by them. Shohamy (2006: 79) emphasises this practice, particularly in education, by stating that ‘most decisions ... are made at the political level with no teachers involved’. These practices indicate a traditional way of designing language policies regardless of their area of application, either in education or in civil society.

Tollefson (ibid.) criticised such traditional language policy design and argued that ‘policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policymakers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups’. Therefore, in order prevent inequalities, it is important to identify the ways in which languages and language policies marginalise people. Equally important is the policymakers’ perpetuation of this practice. Only through such identification will people, especially those who are excluded, be more aware of what is happening and demand a more participatory role in the process of policy design. It is also

necessary to identify the language or languages that can help excluded people to have more opportunities to grow socially and economically, and to promote their active participation in language policy design. As Tonkin (2015: 193) highlighted, 'Language policy and planning are increasingly seen as more local and less official, and occasionally more international and cosmopolitan'. More 'local' means that policies are not intended to cover an entire state or a major part of it, but smaller locales such as cities, towns or institutions. Within an institution, for example, it is not the government that designs the language policy, but someone with authority; for instance, the Director of a school. Although it may seem contradictory that policies are more local on one hand while more international on the other, the actual situation is not as contradictory as it may appear. International or cosmopolitan language policies refer more to the promotion of foreign languages, for instance English. The use of English is not limited to a small locale, but has a more global reach. One can travel to a different country and find a person who speaks English. In education, for instance, an English language policy in higher education can facilitate students' mobility by enabling them to study in overseas universities.

The context of education provides an example of how social inequality can be a consequence of language policy. The introduction of a particular language into the mainstream educational sector without a comprehensive analysis of its use, promotion and acquisition/learning practices, can privilege some groups over others. The privileged groups may include those who have more access to the target language. This access can be facilitated through additional instructional materials over and above those used in class, extracurricular language classes, or activities that promote language use and practice beyond the classrooms. Since the majority of these activities entail additional expenses, this poses barriers to those who are financially challenged and whose access to extracurricular language experiences is limited. Therefore, people with wider access to the target language through curricular and extracurricular activities

stand to benefit more from the opportunities that the educational sectors offer; for instance, access to international scholarships.

These practices benefit a limited group of people and perpetuate their control over less-privileged people. It is important to consider that it is not just the inclusion of a language in mainstream education or the implementation of language policies that have been designed without the participation of the community that can help to reduce the inequalities, but also the way in which these policies have been designed, together with good policy implementation and inclusive language practices. Excluded people need to have access to the language in the same way that privileged people do; otherwise, there may be little change and a common, traditional means of societal control will continue to make itself felt – language and literacy having ‘always been used as means for social control’ (Wiley 2000: 85).

We have seen that languages are dynamic and that they are modified by members of the communities they serve. Unfortunately, these communities do not have much power and influence in policy-making. Those who have traditionally had the power to make policies, according to Shohamy (2006:137), are the ‘government agencies and big corporations’. From a critical perspective, a policy designed entirely by governments or big corporations may tend to promote their self-interests rather than benefit the communities. For instance, governments may promote their political agenda through language policies, while big corporations such as book publishers are interested in generating profit, typically through policies that favour the commercialisation of their ELT materials. Thus, to expect that these big corporations will influence the development of language policies that do not favour them economically is far-fetched. It is the role of policymakers and stakeholders to reflect on common language policy practices and their effects on the society. This reflection, together with an identification of where power lies and whose interests these language policies represent and serve, is necessary in order to design alternative, more socially inclusive policies that help to mitigate inequality.

A critical language policy analyses its function 'in social, political, and economic inequality aimed at developing policies that reduce various forms of inequality' (Tollefson, 2006:43). Hence, policymakers need to see language policy from a broader perspective. They need to aim for a policy formulation in which the goals extend beyond promoting language proficiency. Ultimately, language policies need to be geared towards 'addressing social problems which often involve language, to one degree or another, and in proposing realistic remedies' (Ricento 2006: 11), as well as promoting the inclusion of excluded groups.

In proposing pragmatic alternatives to social inequalities, language policymakers need to consider the stakeholders' needs, opinions, struggles and challenges; otherwise, 'we may be missing the point if we limit our discussions of language policy simply to the use of certain codes called "language"' (Pennycook, 2006:67). In other words, language policy, from a critical theory perspective, does not need to focus only on the promotion of language use or proficiency, but also on its implications and the power relations among the community. For instance, the practical use of languages in promoting social equality and equalising people's access to privileges through languages, as well as a fair distribution of power of influence in policy-making among all members of the community, should be considered.

2.1.3 Understanding language policy

The previous section examined how language policies have typically been designed and how, in response to these common practices, a different approach emerged, namely critical theory, which offers a more inclusive and participatory model of policy design. It also seeks to reduce the gap between social groups, and particularly between the socioeconomically privileged and the socioeconomically deprived groups. Similarly, in order to understand how language policy is designed, it is also necessary to understand the positive and negative aspects associated with different languages or language varieties. In order to map these associations, ethnographic studies can shed light on how communities assign attributes to languages. This defines the direction that

policies may adopt in order to promote or introduce a language into the community or into the education sector.

It is important to consider that the success or failure of language policies lies, in part, in the hands of those at whom the policies are directed. Therefore, policymakers need to consider the community as the main agent of policy implementation. This constitutes the basis for policy design and implementation, and becomes an essential part of the process since people's reactions towards policies can be shaped by their language beliefs and assumptions. People's language beliefs and assumptions can, for instance, be related to 'the accumulation of circulating discourses around language, immigration, globalization, and nation-state formation' (Combs, González, and Moll, 2011:185). In addition, access to education and job opportunities can also define people's attitudes towards languages.

Another feature to consider in language policy is the context in which the policies will be implemented. How people perceive different languages is highly dependent on the context in which communities are located, As Canagarajah observed, 'We have to understand the aspirations and attitudes of diverse communities in a context-specific manner' (201:95). Context is defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008: 87) as the 'structural conditions that shape the nature of situations, circumstance, or problems to which individuals respond by means of action/interaction/emotions'. Concerning people's attitudes to languages, it is important to note that these attitudes are the result of different conditions that people may have experienced (*situations, circumstances, or problems*). When a language policy is introduced into a community, different people's responses to that policy are to be expected. Negative reactions are likely to manifest themselves in actions, interactions and emotions that may ultimately result in policy failure through unsuccessful implementation. Conversely, positivity will result in action that is likely to bring about effective implementation. It is of paramount importance, therefore, to consider the context in which a language policy is to be implemented.

Part of the context in which language policy is to be implemented concerns people's perceptions of languages, and these may not always be favourable. For example, indigenous languages may be associated with 'rural, agricultural, and "traditional" indigenous practices', which are often linked to 'small fields and herds of animals' (King and Haboud, 2011: 152). This myopic association of indigenous languages with agriculture and the countryside is a negative and racist conception that suggests that indigenous societies are somehow limited in their ability to function in other contexts – scientific or medical, for example – and that they are more suited to rural life than to other more 'sophisticated' lifestyles. These negative associations may stem from people who disregard indigenous groups and who may reside in big cities, or who may belong to aristocratic groups. Positive associations, on the other hand, can be constructed in relation to indigenous languages within different contexts, namely in the rural areas in which people may consider indigenous languages as a way of maintaining their traditions or pride in their indigenous cultures. These two opposing associations regarding indigenous languages are a clear example of how the same language can produce two different responses. However, it does not mean that, because there is a negative view of a particular language, language policymakers must refrain from designing policies for that language; instead, it means that policymakers need to be flexible in their approach based on to the particular ecologies in which their policies will be implemented.

Ethnographic studies map out the construction of relationships between language perceptions and context. 'Ethnography enjoins the study of specific behaviours and their significance for those involved in given language programmes, whether they be involved in or aware of official policies or not' (Collins 2011: 18). Regardless of the level of people's involvement in and awareness of language policies, they are all actors who shape the policy responses in that particular context. Furthermore, understanding people's world views facilitates a link of 'the macro to the micro and allows the actions and voices of the central actors involved ... to be seen and heard' (Hill and May, 2011:180). The macro view can be related

to the official policies, while the micro view is seen in attitudes toward language. Part of this link is the need for an iterative process of continuous communication between policy makers and the community throughout the process of policy design and implementation. An example of how ethnographic studies can shed light on policy design is reported in research conducted with the Zaragueros (an indigenous Ecuadorian community), which has reported the effect that overseas migration had on the use of Quichua (an indigenous language in Ecuador). The use of Quichua within this community 'can be simply overwhelmed by large-scale global forces such as destabilization of local currency, changing visa requirements and an international market place of labour' and these 'are much more powerful forces than whatever stated government policy' (King and Haboud 2011:55). Despite the government's efforts to introduce the use of Quichua within the educational sector in the indigenous communities, the Zaragueros favour English over Quichua because they need English in order to be able to work overseas (ibid.). English as a tool for working overseas has become a powerful force that motivates Zaragueros to prioritise this foreign language over their own language, and this has rendered ineffective a government policy that was designed to promote the use of Quichua.

Another specific external force that shapes people's reactions to language policies, and especially to foreign language policies, is change in the migration policies of foreign countries. For example, changes in visa requirements, especially when they facilitate migration to developed countries, can motivate people to learn particular languages. For people who intend to migrate, knowing the language of the destination country is an advantage in finding a job and is often necessary for meeting immigration requirements. Language learning can also be related to migration and to economic growth. Furthermore, the reasons for these associations are forged within the core of the individual societies and are context dependant.

This example of seeing English as an aid to migration exemplifies how the context shapes people's language attitudes. However, the same interest (foreign

language for migration) cannot be replicated in different contexts. For instance, what happens in the case of those people who do not associate language with migration? How are their language associations constructed? Canagarajah (2011: 77) observed that 'Communities that do not migrate live in the context zones of language and cultural interaction, open to new influences, and construct new imaginaries of community and identity'. This means that any form of contact with a language eventually frames the way that people perceive that language. For example, if people in a given community see some of their members obtaining scholarships to study overseas and one of the requirements for receiving these scholarships is a good level of English, people from this community will begin to imagine that, through English, they will have access to an overseas education. This is the association that is forged.

Policymakers need to refrain from assigning individual attributes to languages without considering people's beliefs and identities. Their role needs to be that of a mediator who, in cooperation with the community, maps out the community's language associations. Once these associations are identified, policymakers, together with the community, can begin to design language policies. In this way, language policies can 'effectively serve the needs of a particular community' and at the same time be 'responsive to local context, to the lives, histories, and goals of the population' (Utakis and Pita, 2005: 148).

To encourage the communities to participate in the process of policy design, it is necessary to create spaces for interaction in which policymakers and the members of the community 'sit at the same table' (Canagarajah 2005: 20) and begin to draw up the future language policy blueprints. Ultimately, the aim needs to be the construction of 'networks of multiple centres that develop diversity as a universal project and encourage an actively negotiated epistemological tradition' (n.d. 20). Only through integration and consultation will it be possible to explain policies that communities see as relevant and with which they are able to identify. Accordingly, the communities are more likely to accept these policies as being

partly their own creation, with the result that their implementation will be likely to be a smoother and more effective process.

Thus, there is an argument for shifting away from the traditional language policy paradigms in which policies are designed by a limited and restricted group (policymakers), to a more participative paradigm. Furthermore, it is also important for policymakers to reconceptualise the formulation of policy objectives so that they extend beyond the simple use or promotion of a language or languages. Furthermore, they need to reduce inequality between the advantaged and disadvantaged members of society. Critical theory in language policy suggests that targeted languages have to become an important mechanism for wider social participation and socioeconomic mobility. The promotion of languages needs to be realised through policy that is rooted in the context and in the community. This process of understanding the world view – or cosmovision – of the communities can be facilitated with the aid of ethnographic studies. Ethnographic studies in language policy have helped shape its understanding in the twenty-first century. Johnson and Ricento (2013: 15) emphasised that ethnographic studies, done in different countries, have helped us comprehend the relationship of community, policy and context, as well as the identification of ‘policy power and interpretative agency’. Agency can be defined as the actions that people perform when creation of language policies. An in-depth discussion agency and its role will be presented later in this chapter.

Critical theory, together with a deep understanding of context via of ethnographic studies, can be also used in the formulation of language policies in higher education. For instance, a language policy which promotes the use of a foreign language such as English can help universities and their students to reduce existing inequalities and promote growth in this sector. One example of inequality among universities may be related to international funding for research or internationalisation processes: in order to apply for research funding, some applications completed in English. In the same vein, a good level of proficiency in English can facilitate students’ and teachers’ mobility as part of institutional efforts

to become international universities. Those universities where English is spoken to a higher degree of proficiency will therefore be at an advantage, while those where proficiency levels are lower may struggle to obtain research funding, internationalise, and provide opportunities for mobility.

With regard to the role of foreign-language teaching and universities, the following section presents an account of language policy in higher education.

2.2 Language policy in higher education

The conception of modern higher education hinges on 'supra-national bases', which relate to globalisation, internationalisation, and, in Europe, 'Europeanisation'. In broader terms, 'Europeanisation' refers to regionalisation. These concepts show that there is a tendency for universities to look beyond their 'closed national system of higher education' (Teichler, 2004:6-7) and this has motivated them to develop a series of activities and policies aimed at integrating students into the global arena.

Communication is the basis of all human activity, and smooth interaction among universities, regardless of their nationalities, helps to promote greater integration on a global scale. In order to facilitate international communication processes among universities, there needs to be a common language. In this regard, and as the result of the internationalisation of universities, English has become 'the language of higher education' (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, 2014: 345), it's lingua franca.

2.2.1 English language policy for globalisation, internationalisation, and regionalisation in higher education

The terms globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation have become part of the everyday discourse of universities. Teichler's work (2004) provides a definition of globalisation and internationalisation: Globalisation, as a concept, 'focuses on marketization, competition, and management in higher education'; internationalisation refers to modifications of the nature of tertiary education and

is related to 'physical mobility, academic cooperation and academic knowledge transfer', while regionalisation refers to the 'development of regional level frameworks for academic credit systems, quality assurance, and qualifications frameworks within a specific region' (Teichler 2004: 23- 7) (Knight, 2013: 106). These three aspects diverge in their scope but converge in their goal of achieving cohesiveness through the use of a common language that the majority of universities can use regardless of their geographic location. However, in terms of regionalisation, universities in Latin America (with the exception of those in Brazil) do not use English extensively because of the widespread use of their first language, Spanish. Despite this, their interest in English remains high. Coleman (2006:10) also added that the marketisation and globalisation of higher education are the main factors in the promotion of the use of English in the sector and Dearden's insights emphasised that EMI is a reality that cannot be ignored.

English is the language of globalisation, and the number of universities that use it as the medium of instruction in teaching continues to grow, despite their ideologies (see, for example, Dearden, 2014). For instance, in the Czech Republic, there are two simple ideological positions with regard to the use of English in higher education, namely 'Czech is enough' and 'Czech is not enough'. The first relates to nationalism and the preservation of the local culture, and the second to 'internationalization, scientific growth and the influx of foreign students and employees' (Sherman, 2015: 50). This is a clear example of opposing language beliefs. The first view opposes English, while the second accepts it entirely and supports its use. This opposition illustrates how contentious the issue of English can be.

The use of English in higher education is also a growing phenomenon in European universities, and is mainly the result of the globalisation of higher education. Coleman (2006: 3) observed that '[s]tudents and academics are more mobile than ever before, and competition for both is becoming fiercer'. Through different processes, such as university fairs, universities aim to capture paying students and recognise academicians internationally in a more marketised higher

education world. In this competition for international students and academicians, English is the language that facilitates communication in a multicultural environment in universities.

Increasingly, governments and university management are encouraging the use of English as medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education. In South Korea, for example, the government has been highly influential in shaping policy on the use of English as the medium of instruction in the classroom. In 2004, the Korean government developed an (EMI) policy and provided financial support to universities adopting an EMI policy. Various universities opted to use English in the areas of administration, research and education (Kim, Tatar and Choi, 2014: 442). In Denmark, the Danish official document 'Universiteternes sprogstrategier, 2009:5' encouraged the use of English as the means of instruction. This document states that 'the universities ought to define relevant aims for programmes offered in English in order to be able to attract the best students and researchers nationally and internationally' (Haberland and Preisler, 2014:26).

In line with the global trend towards using English as a vehicle for internationalisation in higher education, some universities are designing specific activities in order to promote or popularise the use of this language. In a study conducted at a Czech university, Sherman (2015: 51-58) identified four areas that promote the use of English, namely:

1. Departmental websites: The languages used on the websites are Czech and English.
2. Competence of teaching staff: Academic job offers are advertised internationally, and preference is given to English speaking applicants.
3. Written work: Abstracts of theses for degree programmes are written in English and Czech, apart from other specific departmental language requirements.

4. Research: Academics are encouraged to publish in English, and some grant applications are written in English.

One of the results of globalisation is competition among universities as an international phenomenon to a degree that is unprecedented. Some Danish universities, for example, have opted to offer postgraduate level courses with English as the medium of instruction, the motivation being the desire to attract more international students whose high fees will help to fund the universities and their developmental plans (Haberland and Preisler 2014: 25-26). Ljosland (2015: 622) has noted that 'In terms of attracting foreign students, the English-only language policy seemed to be effective', with international students stating that 'language was one of their reasons for choosing the programme'. The preference for English as the language of instruction has extended to Asia, as was evident in a study conducted in a private university in Macau. Using English for instruction has created 'an impression of global competitiveness' (Botha 2013: 462-463); that is, University competitiveness is a symbolic value associated with English although, in reality, competitiveness involves other aspects such as quality of teaching, student satisfaction levels and research. This association of the use of English with global competitiveness in Macau is a clear indicator of how, again, the context influences people's language perceptions. In the same way as Macau, 'Korean higher education has responded with changes in educational policies to improve its global competitiveness' (Kim, Tatar, and Choi, 2014: 442), and one of these responses is also a promotion of English use in higher education. These practices show two more attributes associated with the use of English among universities. The first is that English as a medium of instruction facilitates the generation of income, and the second that English is a tool that facilitates the globalisation of universities.

Internationalisation is another concern, as shown in many universities' efforts to prepare activities and programmes geared towards the achievement of an international platform of learning and engagement. Internationalisation, unlike globalisation, 'touches all areas of study and research to a certain extent' and is

related to 'physical mobility, academic cooperation and academic knowledge transfer as well as international education' (Teichler, 2004:7, 9). The physical mobility of academics and students through exchange programmes and graduate programmes has increased the demand for a common language, and English has become the default medium of instruction and the language of research and extension.

Some non-English speaking countries around the world have developed different activities in order to promote the internationalisation of their universities. Among these activities, English seems to be a fundamental part of their institutional and/or governmental thinking and decision-making. In a study about the process of internationalisation of higher education in Asia, Chan (2013) looked at the cases of Japan and Taiwan. In Japan, the government implemented a new Global 30 Project in 2009, which aimed to attract 300,000 international students by 2020. Thirty select universities were chosen to meet this objective and a series of strategies implemented including overseas cooperation, Japanese cultural experiences for foreign students, and the option to earn a degree 'through English-only classes'. Meanwhile, Taiwan sought to create 'a friendly environment for international students, such as by offering full English courses' as one of the main strategies for internationalisation (p 321).

Regionalisation differs from internationalisation in its scope, and refers to limited geographic regions or areas such as Europe, Asia or Latin America. The role of English in promoting the processes of the globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation of higher education is presented in Figure 1.

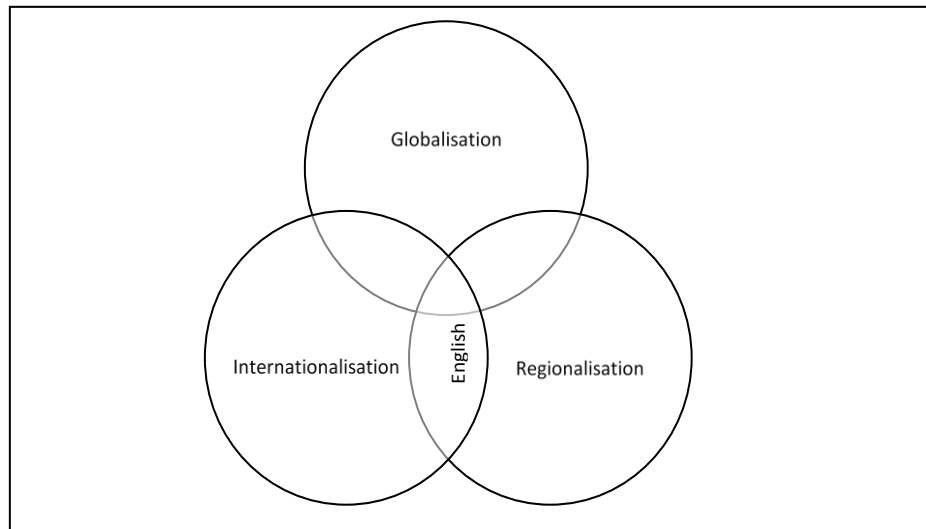


Figure 1. The use of English for the processes of the internationalisation, globalisation and regionalisation of the higher education

Figure 1 shows how English serves as the foundation for institutional strategies aimed at responding to the demands and challenges that have arisen as a result of the globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation of higher education. In Latin America, despite having Spanish as the regional language, the use of English is promoted through governmental or institutional initiatives, and this is certainly the case in Ecuador, where the government is working to reinforce the teaching of foreign languages in the higher education sector (see section 2.3 below).

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) seems to be an appropriate tool for promoting the globalisation and internationalisation of universities; however, it has been subject to criticism. In a study by Dearden (2014: 2) concerning EMI in 55 countries, she concluded that:

- 1) EMI is a growing tendency among countries and is supported by governments through policies

2) In general, people support EMI policies.

3) There are two major concerns regarding EMI. Firstly, it is exclusively for people from the upper socioeconomic strata, since they have the means to access this type of education, while low-income people are excluded because they do not have the economic capacity to access this this type of education (generally, this education is offered by private institutions). Secondly, there is a belief that, by promoting an EMI education, national languages and 'national identity' will be affected.

As such, policymakers need to make EMI policies more inclusive in order to allow both rich and poor to have access to the same EMI education. In tandem with the design of activities to promote EMI, policymakers need to encourage the development and use of the mother tongue and identity in order to ensure that the national identity and first languages are not lost.

This section contained a discussion of how English language policies have been designed in different countries in order to promote their processes of globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation. In the next section, I focus specifically on language policy in higher education in Ecuador.

2.3 Language Policy in Ecuadorian Higher Education

The implementation of Article 124 by universities is outlined in Article 31 of the Academic Regimen Regulation. This Academic Regimen Regulation is a post-law document that includes a set of articles that serve as guidelines to help universities implement the Higher Education Law. Originally, Article 31 included three broad guidelines:

1. Foreign-language tuition could be taught as a core curriculum or extracurricular course. In the case of the latter, it could not be credit bearing.

2. Students were expected to achieve a 'sufficient' level of proficiency in a foreign language by the end of their undergraduate programmes.
3. Universities could outsource foreign-language tuition to private language schools.

As a result of a proposal from the National Academic Network of Languages (otherwise known as RANI), an amendment was made to Article 31 of the Academic Regimen Regulations in December 2014. RANI is a group of university language centres with the main objective of improving the teaching of foreign languages in the Ecuadorian higher education sector, particularly the teaching of English. The modification of Article 31 included the removal of the phrase 'sufficiency in a foreign language' and the inclusion of the term 'CEFR B1 level', and a time frame within which students must complete their foreign-language tuition. The current guidelines contained in Article 31 are described in Table 3 (Reglamento de Régimen Académico, 2014).

Governmental guidelines	Explanation
1. It is within universities' discretion to include the teaching of foreign languages as part of the core curriculum.	Universities can decide whether foreign languages are taught together with the core subjects of the curriculum (as a credit-bearing subject) or as an extracurricular subject facilitated by a language centre (as a non-credit-bearing subject).
2. Students must achieve a B1 level based the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).	Universities have to ensure that students attain a B1 level. However, the mechanisms to be used in verifying this proficiency level are not indicated.
3. Universities can outsource their foreign language teaching.	Universities can outsource the teaching of foreign languages to their students via agreements forged with private language schools according to which they offer their services to their students.
4. All students must complete their foreign-language tuition successfully by the time they have completed 60% of their degree programmes. Failure to demonstrate a CEFR B1 level within this period will bar students from continuing their studies.	Universities should plan language programmes, the completion of which should not be longer than 60% of any undergraduate programme. In Ecuador, the average duration of an undergraduate programme is nine semesters. Thus, the duration of a complete language programme should not be longer than 5.4 semesters.

Table 3. Ecuadorian higher education foreign-language policy

Table 3 shows that the aspect on which the language policy focuses is the management of foreign-language tuition, rather than on curricular planning and delivery (teaching). As explained previously, Article 124 does not refer to any particular foreign language; however, since English is the favoured language of the majority of Ecuadorian universities, and because the focus of this study is therefore on ELT, the following discussion is centred on the teaching of English as a foreign language.

2.3.1 The issue of the inclusion of EFL tuition in university curricula

The majority of EFL programmes in Ecuadorian universities are comprised of a specific number of EFL courses, the level of which increases as students progress through the programmes. However, EFL programmes vary from one institution to another, especially in terms of the duration and number of EFL courses. Duration refers to the total number of face-to-face teaching hours that comprise an EFL course. In Ecuadorian universities, that number ranges from 40 to 120 depending on the university. The variation in the total number of courses that comprise an EFL programme means that institutions may offer anywhere between four and eight EFL courses per programme. Despite the option, provided for within the official language policy, to include ELT as part of the core curriculum, universities tend to treat ELT as an extracurricular subject, which means that English is not taught together with the core subjects in a specific undergraduate degree programme, and it is not a credit-bearing subject. In universities in which English is an extracurricular subject, language centres are completely in charge of ELT. In these centres, students study general English regardless of their undergraduate degree programmes. Usually, these language centres offer EFL courses throughout the day, and students can choose to register for and attend the EFL schedule that is most convenient for them. Once students complete their EFL tuition successfully, they are awarded a certificate of completion, which should be submitted to their academic departments as proof that they have met the CEFR B1 English language requirement. As illustrated in Table 3, the students' programme of foreign-language tuition has to be completed by the time they have completed 60% of their undergraduate degree programmes.

The inclusion of ELT in the core curriculum means that EFL courses have to be credit-bearing, which means that these EFL courses become part of the overall academic credit system. There is a specific legal number of credits of which an undergraduate degree programme must be comprised, which means that making EFL programmes credit-bearing effectively reduces the number of credits that can be awarded for other subjects in the students' curricula. As a result, universities

that opt to include ELT in the core curriculum reduce the number of credits awarded for EFL courses and reduce the number of contact hours in order to minimise the effect on other curriculum subjects. The problem with this is that fewer contact hours means that students struggle to achieve a CEFR B1 level of English. When universities treat ELT as an extracurricular rather than as a core subject, universities can provide whatever number of contact hours they deem necessary to ensure that the students will achieve a CEFR B1 level of English.

2.3.2 The requirement for a CEFR B1 level of English

The majority of Ecuadorian educational institutions are familiar with the CEFR descriptors. They have been used in primary, secondary and higher education. In the case of secondary and tertiary education, both educational sectors have chosen the CEFR B1 level as the objective to be achieved. CEFR defines a B1 level as the level possessed by someone who is an 'independent user' and can use the language on a global scale. Specifically, an individual with a CEFR B1 level of proficiency is someone who

[c]an understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans' (Council of Europe, 2001: 24)

At secondary level, it is expected that students should have a B1 level by the time they have completed their secondary education. This requirement is the same for university students, as they are also required to have a CEFR B1 level by the time they have completed 60% of their undergraduate programmes. This is anomalous as it means that the expected level of English is the same in both sectors.

In secondary public education, the use of CEFR levels as indicators of English language proficiency were included in the EFL National Language Policy in 2012. In that year, the Ministry of Education designed the 'Fortalecimiento del Inglés' (English Enhancement Programme), aimed at equipping Ecuadorian secondary school students with the enabling mechanisms necessary to achieve a functional level of English. The English Enhancement Programme complemented this main objective with a series of other initiatives, namely the updating of the national EFL curriculum, the distribution among secondary students of free books aligned with the new EFL curriculum, teacher training, and in-service professional development for EFL teachers (Fortalecimiento del Inglés, 2012). The updated curriculum contained a detailed and an unmodified description of the different levels of language competency aligned with the CEFR as the language objectives for each of the secondary years; in this regard, the levels A1, A2 and B1 were used. These level descriptors were each divided into two, and were distributed across the six years that comprise secondary education. The following list shows the year and corresponding CEFR level that students are expected to achieve by the end of that academic year:

Year 1: A1.1

Year 2: A1.2

Year 3: A2.1,

Year 4: A2.2

Year 5: B1.1

Year 6: B1.2

Based on the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum, in order to achieve a CEFR B1 level at the end of the sixth year of secondary education, students will have had at least 480 face-to-face teaching hours. Furthermore, it is expected that EFL should be taught using a communicative approach (National Curriculum Guidelines, 2014). However, no recent studies have been designed to measure the efficacy of this

programme; nor have there been country-level evaluations that demonstrate the actual EFL proficiency levels being achieved by secondary students across the country. This is important given that the Academic Regimen Regulation did not provide additional information concerning how foreign-language programmes should be planned in order to achieve a CEFR B1 level of English. It merely states that students should successfully demonstrate a B1 level before they complete 60% of their programmes.

To date, RANI has produced one academic document that provides guidance to universities that are planning their EFL programmes. This document explains EFL programme design in terms of the number of hours and courses. It explains that EFL programmes in universities need to comprise five mandatory courses, each of 120 hours' duration, resulting in a total of 600 hours of EFL instruction. At the end of these five mandatory courses, students are required to take an EFL language proficiency exam. Although there is no direct reference to the nature of the exam that students need to pass, universities set their own exams at present and there is no standard exam for all institutions, the document shows that successful performance in an exam will allow students to continue their academic undergraduate programmes. In addition to these five mandatory EFL courses, universities are also advised to offer two extra courses of 120 hours each. These courses are structured as follows: one course that RANI calls 'level 0' (or 'Intro') is intended for students who do not have any knowledge of English, and an extra course taken after the five mandatory courses for students who failed the English proficiency exam, called the 'Exam Prep Course'. The structure of the proposed EFL programme planned by RANI is presented in Table 4.

EFL Courses	0 intro	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th (exam preparation)
N. of hours	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
CEFR correlation		A1 a-b	A2 a	A2 b	B1 a	B1 b	additional preparation
	optional	mandatory	mandatory	mandatory	mandatory	mandatory	Optional

Table 4. RANI's (2015) description of suggested EFL programme

Table 4 presents the proposed structure of Ecuadorian universities' EFL programmes. It comprises seven EFL courses, each with 120 face-to-face teaching hours. As shown at the bottom of Table 4, courses '0 Intro' and '6 Exam Preparation' are not mandatory. The third row of Table 4 includes the alignment of each course with CEFR levels. Levels A1 to B1 are aligned only with mandatory courses 1 to 5. The other two courses, '0 Intro' and '6 Exam Preparation', also comprise 120 hours each, but they are not aligned with CEFR levels. The first '0 Intro' focuses on students' first encounters with EFL, and the latter focuses on preparation for the final language proficiency exam. However, how these courses will prepare students for these two levels is not explained. All mandatory courses comprise a total of 600 teaching hours.

RANI proposed to the SENESCYT a CEFR B1 level, as the expected language proficiency for Ecuadorian students. It was accepted and included in the Academic Regimen Regulation. The structure of the EFL programmes, on the other hand, is not mandatory, and universities have the power to decide whether they accept this proposal or not. However, among the documents created by RANI, it has been difficult to identify the rationale behind RANI's selection of CEFR B1 level as its target; nor is there a description of the relationship between students' academic development in their undergraduate programmes and their CEFR B1 level of English. While the official inclusion of a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language in the higher education sector is an important step towards

effective EFL language policy, the fact that this is the target proficiency level for students in both the secondary and higher education sectors is an anomaly, and means that students in Ecuadorian universities are unlikely to experience significant English-language proficiency gains when they move from secondary to higher education.

2.4 CEFR and its use in Ecuador

It is difficult to understand how the popularity of CEFR grew in Ecuador due to a lack of pertinent data; however, since ELT in the country is mainly book-oriented and Ecuadorian institutions have a preference for British and American EFL textbooks, it is likely that publishers are largely responsible for the initial introduction of the CEFR to Ecuador. The impact that CEFR has had in the country is enormous, to the point that the use of its levels has been incorporated in international policy in both the secondary and higher education sectors, as I have shown. In order to understand why CEFR appeals to Ecuadorian educational institutions, it is important to understand what CEFR is.

It is difficult to deconstruct or atomise language and to describe it in a progressive way from basic to advanced level for the purpose of language learning. In particular, for educational purposes, there has been a need for a schematic representation that maps out students' language progress. The definition and description of 'what students should learn' and its presentation in 'a way that it is useful and understandable for all parties involved has been for many decades the Holy Grail for educators and for policymakers' (Figueras 2012: 477), and CEFR appears to serve this purpose. It 'defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis" (Council of Europe, 2001: 1).

Clearly, educational authorities have made the process of the identification and description of language proficiency levels evident, as exemplified in the foreign language policy for universities in Ecuador. This policy underwent three different stages of modification. The first was the requirement for 'mastery in a foreign

language'; the term 'sufficiency' then replaced the word 'mastery' in the Academic Regimen Regulation; and, finally, a 'B1' CEFR proficiency level replaced the term 'sufficiency' in the Academic Regimen Regulation after 2014. These modifications demonstrate that policymakers had sought ways to define the desired language proficiency level but, following the introduction of CEFR levels, any further attempts at modification ceased. Following the selection of a CEFR B1 level as the ultimate goal among students at the end of their secondary and tertiary education, the educational institutions in Ecuador became significantly more familiar with the CEFR levels and their descriptors. Supportive discourse among EFL teachers and education authorities regarding the use and advantages of CEFR descriptors took place, as they believe they can use these as the basis for planning EFL programmes. However, how knowledgeable these groups are about the appropriate use of these levels and descriptors is unclear, due to a lack of relevant research.

According to Little (2006: 167), knowledge of the CEFR among those immersed in language teaching is quite 'limited'. This may result in a misuse of the CEFR or an inappropriate understanding of how its levels and language descriptors can be used when designing EFL programmes, as well as its application in EFL classes. The limited knowledge of CEFR among people immersed in foreign-language teaching is evidenced by the results of a survey administered to 39 member countries of the Council of Europe in 2005. These results underscore that 'the knowledge and use of CEFR is confined to a minority of specialists' (p 25). In addition, the survey showed that the 'most frequently used parts of the CEFR are the... global scale and self-assessment grid. The first refers to a summary of the CEFR levels in single holistic paragraphs while the latter is a self-assessment orientation tool based on the six levels in the form of a checklist to facilitate self-assessment' (Council of Europe 2001: 25).

The use of CEFR descriptors without any consideration of the particular learning context can be very tempting for policymakers due to the simplicity, clarity and apparent ease of use. However, policymakers need to consider the CEFR's

suggestion that careful consideration should be given to the environments in which the teaching of a language takes place, along with its recommendation that domains shape the 'situations, purposes, tasks, themes, and texts for teaching and testing materials and activities'. CEFR refers to environments as domains and defines them as 'spheres of action or areas of concern' (Council of Europe, 2001: 45).

2.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of adopting the CEFR within Ecuadorian language policy

One main advantage of CEFR is that it allows for a degree of standardisation. By providing a clear definition of each level of proficiency, it enables 'comparisons between different systems of qualifications' to be made (Council of Europe, 2001: 21). It provides 'common reference levels to facilitate communication, comparison of courses and qualifications, plus, eventually, personal mobility as a result' (North 2014: 228). In relation to the current study and the Ecuadorian context, CEFR descriptors allow users to gauge the extent to which students at different universities have been able to acquire a pre-determined proficiency level in a target language (CEFR B1). In so doing, it provides insight into the state of ELT in Ecuador and the efficacy of ELT policy. With regard to students' mobility, although international student mobility is comparatively rare in Ecuador, students do nevertheless transfer from one university to another and, therefore, a set of language descriptors of the kind offered by the CEFR can facilitate a more objective assessment of the students and the continuity of their EFL tuition in the receiving university. In order to attain a common English level according to the CEFR descriptors among students transferring from one university to another, it is important that their English tuition is more or less standard in terms of the number of teaching hours. Otherwise, the value of the CEFR descriptors is partly undermined by the fact that there is variation in the structure and number of teaching hours that different universities require of their EFL programmes.

Figueras (2012: 481) has stated that ‘CEFR level descriptors are not objectives or outcomes’; instead, they describe ‘what is observable in a learner at a certain level’. Thus, based on these descriptors, ELT specialists in the country need to focus on the pedagogical processes required to facilitate the acquisition of such language competencies among university students. By doing so, more realistic educational objectives can be formulated.

The extent of the impact that CEFR can have on ELT in Ecuadorian higher education depends on an understanding of the fact that ‘CEFR cannot just be applied; it must be interpreted in a manner appropriate to the context and further elaborated into a specification for teaching or testing’ (North 2014: 230). Such interpretation needs to be done by those who possess knowledge of the Ecuadorian context and of ELT, and who have a comprehensive understanding of CEFR.

A proper understanding and use of CEFR can assist language planners in the construction of EFL programmes in which the learner is at the centre of all teaching activities. Little (2006: 167) suggested four uses of CEFR with regard to second language (L2) learning. These are:

1. To analyse L2 learners’ needs.
2. To specify L2 learning goals.
3. To guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities.
4. To provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes.

The disadvantage of using CEFR without considering the uses suggested by Little is that it can lead to a blind dependence on instructional materials that are claimed to be aligned with the CEFR levels, when in reality there may be no such alignment. For instance, ELT in Ecuador is book-oriented under the assumption that these textbooks are aligned with CEFR; yet those textbooks ‘include tables of contents’ that have been the same for a decade, and which are ‘organized by topics or by language functions’ (Figueras 2012: 481), therefore, the need to carefully evaluate whether these textbooks are actually aligned to the CEFR or

not. Neff-van Aertselaer (2013: 202) added to Figueras' statement by observing that '[t]he use of global commercial materials with their repetitive treatment of the topics of friendship and famous people does not address the academic needs of EFL students in many parts of the world'. Figueras and Neff-van's views invite university senior management figures (vice-chancellors and deans), language centre Directors and EFL teachers to reduce the use of internationally targeted materials and to focus more on the development and use of contextualised instructional materials that target the needs of local students. Considering the needs of local students may motivate students to learn English since they may find meaning in their EFL learning. For example, relating the English topics to their future professions such as different types of houses for architecture students.

While CEFR can facilitate EFL language policy in higher education, CEFR levels and descriptors cannot be the sole guide for policy planning, nor the sole specification of achievement of a particular level - namely a CEFR B1 level in the case in Ecuador. There is a need to develop a more elaborate EFL language policy in which the acquisition of English serves as a tool through which to achieve other objectives, such as the globalisation and internationalisation of Ecuadorian higher education and the students it serves, in the way it is doing in other countries, for example Japan or Czech Republic. Also of paramount importance is an understanding of the role of stakeholders in the process of language policy development and how their actions facilitate or impede policy implementation. That is, stakeholders exercising their agency is a fundamental part of policy implementation. The following section provides a discussion of teachers' agency in policy implementation.

2.5 Agency in language policy

There is no doubt that the success or failure of any policy depends largely on the people immersed in the process of its implementation. Generally, national authorities or institutions design policies. From these higher levels, the policies

cascade to those at lower levels who are responsible for their implementation and who are therefore invested with 'agency'.

As Liddicoat has noted, there are three levels of language policy: 'the macro level, the level of governments and governmental agencies, the meso-level of sub-national institutions, and the micro-level of local agents whose decision-making influences local practices' (Liddicoat 2014: 118). For instance, regulations are formulated at the macro level and communicated to the meso level, a level assumed to be a notch lower than the macro level. At the meso level, institutional authorities are in charge of the interpretation and application of regulations. In this top-down directional flow, the responsibility for the actual materialisation of these regulations lies in the hands of the language teachers. Contrary to this approach is the bottom-up flow, whereby policies are generated or developed at the micro level. However, regardless of how a language policy is designed and implemented – whether top-down or bottom-up – stakeholders always exercise their agency.

2.5.1 Exercise of agency at the macro, meso and micro levels of language policy

Agency, in general terms, refers to the actions that people perform as responses to language policies (in this case). By definition, agency is not passive, it acts 'toward something', which exemplifies dynamicity whereby 'actors enter into a relationship with surrounding persons, places, meanings, and events' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 973). Although the concept of 'toward something' can facilitate an understanding of agency, it is important to take into account that it does not always have a positive direction or a positive effect. Robinson (2012: 232) made a distinction regarding the belief that agency always has a positive effect, and stated that, despite agency being commonly understood as good practice in education, this is not always the case. According to Robinson, people sometimes use their agency to 'resist change' and impede the introduction of different practices. Emirbayer et al. and Robinson's concepts enrich the notion of agency by denoting the idea of positivity or negativity without losing its temporal and

contextual essence. This means that previous experiences and specific places can define how people act towards a language policy. Hence, agency is likely to be manifested differently at each of the levels of language policy. Its manifestation depends on the extent of influence and the position that individuals maintain at each level.

At each of the different levels of language policy (macro, meso and micro), authority and power of influence is wielded differently. In a national policy, for instance, people who are part of the macro level enjoy more authority and power than do those at the micro level. According to Cleaver (2007: 227), these different positions among people may result in different ways of exercising agency because how agency is manifested may in large part be a product of 'power and authority'. For instance, people who feel powerless are unlikely to exert a positive agency as they are likely to assume that their actions will have little impact on policy implementation.

In a top-down model, policies are conceived of at the macro level, where the official authorities are the decision-makers. Policymakers' motivations are driven by the different factors that inevitably influence any policy they formulate. For instance, Baldauf (2006: 155) emphasised that language policies in countries such as 'China ... Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam' have mostly been influenced by 'economic, political and social factors, with the syllabi, the methodology and the textbooks created centrally to meet these demands'.

At the macro level, policymakers exercising a positive agency may seek different innovations in language planning, such as innovations that are more contextually appropriate and responsive to national and international needs. Once different considerations are factored in and policies are ready for implementation, policymakers have to reflect on how their policies may enable or constrain agency at the lower levels. Furthermore, if language policies are accompanied by the introduction of certain instructional materials and methodology, it is also necessary to consider the impact on agency that those materials and

methodology will have at the lower levels. On the other hand, if policymakers do not include activities that give EFL teachers a certain degree of freedom in the design of EFL policies, promoting a positive agency among EFL teachers can be difficult. As a result of being constrained by a policy, teachers may develop a negative agency and, instead of working towards the effective implementation of the policy, may obstruct it.

At the meso level, institutional authorities are not as powerful as official authorities such as the government, especially in relation to the extent to which they can exert their power and draw on legal support to plan and design official language policies. The area of influence that institutional authorities have is confined solely to the institution they represent, unlike national authorities, whose power is broader and at the state level. The interpretation of policy at the meso level takes place in relation to a particular institution and, perhaps inevitably, '[p]olicy mutates as it migrates from one setting to the next' (Priestly, Edwards, Priestly and Miller, 2013: 193). It is important to note that migration does not necessarily mean change. Migration is related to how general policies are adapted to specific contexts. Thus, agency at this level can be related to policy interpretation and the generation of enabling mechanisms that facilitate its institutional implementation.

The role of agency at the meso level is dissimilar to its role at the macro level because the functions and the power that actors have differ. However, this does not mean that people at this level cannot promote change in their institutions, provided they exercise positive agency and are pro-active.

The micro level is constituted by teachers who are the ultimate implementers of language policy. Agency at this level is related to how teachers respond to and operationalise the policy and its curricular requirements in the classroom. Although the micro level can be associated with policy implementation, this is not always the case; agency at this point can also act to resist 'macro-level policy' (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014: 239), and therefore make implementation difficult or ineffective.

The degree of agency is also dependent on the kind and amount of power held by those immersed in the formulation of a language policy. Furthermore, Fenton-Smith and Gurney (2015: 3) suggested that it is necessary to 'profile the extent and the nature of their power' in order to examine how agency is being exercised. It is evident that the kind of power needed to influence any language policy decreases as it moves down to the lower levels of the institutional hierarchy; however, this certainly does not mean that each actor within his or her own level cannot do something to facilitate or obstruct policy implementation. Using a matrix of possible responsibilities, activities and the area of influence that each person has at each level may facilitate the formulation of policies that can encourage positive agency. This can also lead to the formulation of policies that do not constrain creativity among people immersed in ELT, and which therefore ultimately promote curricular innovation.

2.6 A proposed approach to EFL policy in higher education

In the current climate, the goal of English in higher education has to transcend the mere acquisition of a certain level of proficiency and extend to the globalisation, internationalisation, and regionalisation of the higher education sector and the students it serves; consequently, new approaches to English language policy need to be considered. The process of internationalisation in universities involves multiple activities; for instance, and as mentioned previously, teachers' and students' mobility, knowledge transfer and research. English plays an important role in paving the way for these processes to take place; therefore, it is important to plan ELT programmes that aim to facilitate these processes as well as innovation instead of teaching EFL in isolation and with only a single goal in mind – in the case of Ecuador, the attainment of a CEFR B1 level.

Adhering to a single pre-established and rigid model of EFL language policy design which in most of the cases has been conceived in foreign countries without considering the local context is not be an appropriate solution for improving ELT in Ecuadorian universities. This because the needs, uses and roles of English

may vary depending on the level of education, be it primary, secondary or tertiary education, and particularly the role that English assumes among its users. In the case of universities for example, the role of English can be one of a tool for facilitating their processes of globalisation and internationalisation, as we have seen.

In considering the role of English in EFL language policy design, Liu and Berger (2015: 20) state that '[p]olicy and standards will be governed by an evolving redefinition of the role of English'. This means that the role of English is neither static nor universal in all parts of the world and all levels of education. These roles primarily depend on the place and the context where the policy will be implemented and who the learners are. In the case of Ecuadorian education, EFL language policymakers seemed not to have considered the context, the role of English and the learners for, as explained previously, the national EFL language policy is the same for the both the secondary and tertiary sectors; namely, students attaining a CEFR B1 level of proficiency. This suggests a need to develop new approaches for policy design in the higher education sector.

Any national EFL language policy needs to consider institutional variation and avoid binding universities to a set of prescriptive practices such as standardised methodologies or number of contact hours. Instead, an EFL policy should aim to guide universities throughout the entire process of policy design and implementation. It needs to highlight the role of teachers and students in the implementation of policies and encourage them to move from being the sole policy implementers to agents of its development.

It is important to note that language policy implementation in higher education, especially where it emanates from the state and at a national level, may, in most of the cases, produce change or innovation in the way languages are taught. Waters (2009: 422) suggests that the terms 'change' and 'innovation' 'can be used as equivalents, both referring, somewhat indeterminately, to ideas such as "difference" or "novelty"'. Though, Waters does not make a clear distinction

between change and innovation, Levin and Fullan (2008: 292) say of change that it is something which is not difficult to do and which can be done by 'changing funding or policies or information or governance structures', although it may not always result in educational development. On the other hand, innovation, they state, means trying something new in order to promote more effective practices. Through innovative practices the participation and creativity of EFL teachers can be increased. Furthermore, innovation can facilitate the design of bottom-up policies and increase teachers' involvement in the implementation of policies.

In order to properly implement innovation in ELT, Waters (2009: 433-436) summarises the work of different authors into five implementation models as follows:

1. Centre-periphery
2. Research, development and diffusion
3. Problem-solving
4. Social interaction
5. Linkage

Waters (ibid) further explains that the Centre-periphery and the Research, development and diffusion models are both top-down models planned by a selective group (government, policy planners) and later disseminated in a top-down manner among implementers. The difference between these two models is that the latter has a more 'scientific' and 'systematic' way of planning. The Problem-solving model, according to Waters, does not target wide-ranging areas; it is exclusive to focalised places and this is mainly because it centres its attention on the 'problem-owner' and aims to solve the problem from within and without the control of external forces such as the government. This model, Waters suggests, can be implemented in a bottom-up manner. The Social interaction model, brings the 'social dimension' into the process of implementing innovations and promotes communication between planners and implementers. However, Waters adds that

it can be highly influenced by 'dominant social groups'. Though these three models are different, Water emphasises that these models can be 'one-way' orientation models, in other words, top-down models.

Finally, the Linkage model is regarded by Waters as the best model in comparison with the other four. This is because this model of innovation can be applied to big populations and, at the same time, this model attempts to solve the problems of the people to whom the innovation is applied. This model is based on two main components that work in tandem. One is the 'Internal Problem Solving Cycle' and the other is the 'Simulation of User's situation'. Waters explains that the end-users' problems are determined in the 'Internal Problem Solving Cycle' and then, analysed in the 'Simulation of User's situation'. It is in the 'Simulation of User's situation' where these problems are diagnosed and, with the help of experts, possible solutions are created. Once the innovations are developed, they are sent back to the 'Internal Problem Solving Cycle' to be tested. This is a constant double-way process in which innovations can be perfected. In line with this model, Wedell (2009: 173) adds that implementing innovations can be seen 'as an ongoing series of trying out/implementing-monitoring-adapting-trying out/re-implementing-monitoring adapting . . . cycles'. This means that the implementation of innovations is an ongoing process which does not occur in a short span of time. Many years are needed until innovative practices are fully adopted in everyday classroom practices (Wedell, 2009: 123). Therefore, there is a need for all stakeholders – for example, Vice-chancellors, Deans, EFL teachers and students – to be committed to the entire duration of the process of implementation of innovations. In order to maintain a sufficient level of engagement among stakeholders, proposed innovations need 'to offer the promise of improving their experience as educators and/or the student experience; only then does it have the potential at least to create the commitment, enthusiasm and thus traction necessary for successful implementation' (Murray, 2015: 153).

For effective EFL language policy implementation, particularly large-scale policy implementation, it is necessary to consider two aspects: First, all institutions need to gear their practices towards the achievement of the policy goals; second, institutions (universities as the case of the current study) have their own individual missions, visions, pedagogical models and practices, and this can make it unlikely that all institutions will strictly follow the implementation guidelines provided by policy makers.

In order to facilitate the implementation of national EFL language policies, and contrast to an inflexible, prescriptive approach that it is imposed from above, national policies need to assist universities in the creation of their own local policies which respond most appropriately to their individual contexts. Universities require a set of general principles that can provide them with a broad basis for language policy design and which can be adapted and modified as necessary according to their particular circumstances.

Models of implementation need to be reconsidered not in terms of prescriptions, which present a series of steps to be followed by institutions, but in terms of principles – principles that guide universities in the process of creating their own policies which are pertinent to their own contexts, missions, visions and ethos.

An important aspect to consider in all innovation and policy implementation is the role that policy implementers – in in this case EFL teachers – have and how their behaviours and practices facilitate (or not) effective implementation. In this respect, teachers' positive agency plays a fundamental role, as explained earlier in section 2.5, *Agency in language policy*.

Teacher agency is not something that occurs automatically as an effect of the design and implementation of a policy; it is facilitated by 'the contexts or conditions by means of which teachers practise' (Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson, 2015: 127). In other words, agency cannot be achieved through regulatory or mandatory processes. It is developed as the result of providing proper opportunities for teachers to exert their agency.

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012) provide a different model for an EFL language policy design and implementation. This model is based on five principles, namely, collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency, and empowerment (CREATE) which aim not to be regulatory but to facilitate the development and implementation of EFL language policies. These principles generally elicit the participation of all stakeholders in the process of policy design. This is very important since when policies are implemented most of the stakeholders have a sense of ownership of this policy and may eventually work together for an effective implementation. All these five principles are discussed in detail below.

2.6.1 A principle-based approach

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 9-10) stated that policymakers favour Western ELT theories which, in most cases, have been theorised and researched in Western countries; thus, their results cannot be generalised to other parts of the world. Despite the lack of local data regarding the effectiveness of such approaches, policymakers in different countries tend to endorse these decontextualised practices and produce mixed outcomes as a result. As I have discussed, what is required are general principles that are interpreted according to local circumstances, rather than specific and rigid prescriptions regarding things such as the number of contact hours and the instructional materials to be adopted. Policy needs to guide universities without constraining them. In this regard, the principles of collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency and empowerment (CREATE) can be useful. These principles represent an 'initial set of ideas' regarding the conceptualisation of a principle-based approach (PBA), and encourage further discussion in this area. These principles are not 'prescriptive or unchangeable'; universities can adopt and modify them according to their needs (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 13).

2.6.1.1 The principle of collaboration

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 13) state that policymakers need to consider the different stakeholders' points of view in the process of policy design. These

stakeholders, be they teachers, students, senior managers etc., need to 'be given power to influence the design of policy, curriculum, and textbooks so that these policies are understood, accepted, and translated into appropriate practice'. The principle of collaboration can have a more visible impact on a bottom-up policy that is conceptualised and designed with the help of teachers and students, rather than a top-down policy imposed by authorities or policymakers. In a bottom-up policy all stakeholders can have the opportunity to express their ideas about language policy and together with language policy makers design language policies. The principle of collaboration can be understood as all stakeholders working together and expressing and debating their ideas towards the construction of language policies which are pertinent to the people involved and their context, for example, an EFL language policy for the higher education sector.

With regard to the collaboration of stakeholders and policymakers, Mahboob and Tilakaratna (ibid.) identified the stakeholders as 'local teachers, experts, students' and others. The importance of such collaboration is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Collaboration of policymakers and stakeholders

Stakeholders	Reasons for collaboration
Local teachers	They have an empirical knowledge of the community that the policy aims to target; thus, this knowledge can help policymakers determine which practices may or may not be accepted in a particular community, as well as which classroom practices are more effective.
Experts	Collaboration needs to include a wide variety of experts in different areas that extend beyond the educational dimension; for instance, economics, sociology and anthropology can inform policymakers about how language policy can be related to broader language functions. Experts can also advise policymakers from a scientific perspective.
Other stakeholders	Dialogues need to be extended to the community, industry, publishers and people who are in contact with the language policy. This will inform the community about the extent of the language policy and, at the same time, the stakeholders' feedback can enrich the conceptualisation of an EFL language policy.

Table 5 shows the importance of the principle of collaboration in addressing concerns and issues that involve different actors. It is important to consider that language policy, at a macro level, deals with different kinds of people and in different contexts, despite it being targeted at a particular educational sector, such as the secondary or tertiary sector. Therefore, wider collaboration with different groups of people within the relevant sector may promote the design of more context-pertinent EFL policies. Through collaboration, stakeholders also acquire

a sense of ownership with regard to policies they have helped to formulate, and this is likely to translate into a positive attitude towards the implementation of these policies. Collaboration for the purpose of policy design can and should extend to other sectors and can shed light on the different language perceptions of the community that the policy will affect. To ensure a more effective collaboration, Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006: 44) suggested 'cross sector collaboration'; that is, 'partnerships involving government, business, non-profits and philanthropies, communities, and/or the public as a whole'. This helps to ensure that desired outcomes will be achieved. In the case of an EFL language policy, for example, seeking collaboration with philanthropists can help universities with the acquisition of English books in order to promote reading among students. Collaborative activities can also serve to help establish lasting partnerships between universities and other institutions.

Collaboration, therefore, needs to happen at multiple levels: that of the individual, the institution, the sector and cross-sector. It also needs to be long-lasting and not solely for the purpose of gathering information necessary for design of policy. It needs to be long-lasting because policy implementation is not a quick process but rather an iterative one in which policymakers, other sectors and the community interact until policy goals are achieved. This can facilitate the identification of problems that affect policy implementation, and propose solutions to these problems in an attempt to meet the proposed goals. Seeking collaboration with different sectors in the formulation of EFL policy also implies that the policy goals and outcomes transcend the mere achievement of a specific level of language proficiency, such as the achievement of a CEFR B1 level of English. Collaborating with institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism, for example, can shed light on the level of EFL proficiency that foreign tourists expect locals to have in order to avoid communication problems. In other words, collaboration across sectors can provide important insights into real-world language needs which, in turn, can and should have some impact on universities' EFL policies.

To facilitate the process of successful collaboration, it is necessary to have a clear formulation of objectives, a high level of commitment, appropriate leadership among the people involved in the collaboration process, 'trust-building activities', and the delegation of responsibilities, accountabilities and 'conflict' management (Bryson, Cosby, and Stone, 2006: 47-52). Since different sectors work together in language policy formulation, the existence of clear objectives is important for such collaboration to be effective because clear objectives can help collaborators to maintain their focus and commitment. Without clear objectives, it can become difficult to incorporate the work of different sectors into an effective policy design. Therefore, it is important that policymakers become the leaders and the facilitators of the process of collaboration. Policymakers also need to ensure that, once collaboration with other sectors has been established, agreements resulting from this collaboration are observed and respected. This can cultivate trust among all collaborators. Collaboration means that all parties involved are in a position to influence policy design and, therefore, that responsibilities should be assigned to each party. Language policymakers should not be the only party able to decide on language policy matters. They need to delegate responsibilities to their collaborators, and with that delegation should come accountability. Finally, as in all processes human interaction, conflicts may emerge; consequently, policymakers need to be sensitive to these and able to manage such conflicts effectively in order to maintain a productive collaborative spirit.

Collaboration can also occur through social platforms and activities. In Zimbabwe, for example, collaborative activities such as 'awareness-raising campaigns, school development committees and cultural festivals' and the involvement of 'traditional leaders and chiefs' facilitated acceptance of the minority languages in the educational mainstream in the country (Nyika, 1998: 7). This shows that collaboration can extend beyond simple meetings and debates to organised activities that have visible impact on other groups of people and institutions.

Collaboration can also be achieved via the formation of social networks. Skyrms and Pemantle (2009: 233) observed that social networks are composed of people;

therefore, the nature of their operation is not static. The 'interaction structures are fluid and evolve in tandem with strategy' (p. 233); thus, successful interactions and collaboration depend strongly on the types of activities that policymakers develop for this purpose. These social networks involve people who represent different institutions and are from different backgrounds. Through social networks, policymakers can capture different points of view that are instrumental in their efforts to enrich policy design and promote joint activities. Once social networks are formed, policymakers can design and plan interactive strategies that promote active participation among the members of the networks concerned. It is important that policymakers evaluate these strategies by monitoring them on a regular and ongoing basis in order to assess whether or not they are proving useful and effective.

2.6.1.2 The principle of relevance

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 15) defined this principle as a context-relevant process of goal formulation, policy, practice and the production of materials. Context refers to the 'structural conditions that shape the nature of situations, circumstance, or problems to which individuals respond by means of action/interaction/emotions' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 87). Goals, on the other hand, refer to 'ideals, major accomplishments, ends, or states of affairs to be achieved' (Barber and Taylor, 1990: 365). Relevant practice is the alignment of teaching practices and instructional materials with the goals of the language policy in question (Mahboob and Tilakaratna 2012: 15). The intention and goals of the EFL policy need to be outlined clearly and diffused appropriately among EFL teachers, otherwise EFL teachers may 'create goals that are not aligned with policy' and may promote their individual goals instead (ibid).

Apart from disseminating EFL policy goals among EFL teachers and following the principle of collaboration, all stakeholders and institutions that have participated in the process of the formulation of the policy must be fully informed regarding the influence of their insights in shaping the goals and the intentions of the policy. The

moment that the completed policy is disseminated among the stakeholders and institutions, this can create a sense of ownership because they can see how their contribution has made itself felt through the goals and outcomes of the policy. As a result of this process of policy design, the implementation of the policy can be more effective since it is the product of an inclusive process.

The last aspect to be considered in the principle of relevance is the production of materials. Instructional materials should observe 'sensitivity to the religious and cultural practices' (Mahboob and Tilakaratna 2012: 15) of learners, as well as the broader institutional context. The principle of relevance suggests that materials need to be consistent with the context and goals of the policy.

Policymakers need to be aware that ELT has turned into a profitable business and that international publishers, primarily British or American, are constantly providing a variety of textbooks, multimedia materials, story books and activity books. Manufacturers of ICT equipment work closely with these publishers in order to offer the technological means required for their materials to function, thus generating greater economic returns for publishing houses (Kaplan, Baldauf Jr, and Kamwangamalu, 2011: 109-110). As these materials are frequently produced by American and British publishers and written by British and American authors, learners are likely to be exposed to language and contexts that may be completely foreign to them and detached from their familiar environment, thus affecting their meaningful learning. Hence, a reconceptualisation of materials selection and production that incorporates the local culture is required. The use of ICT in ELT in some ways decreases dependency on foreign printed materials. The popularisation of and access to free ELT materials on the Internet in the form of videos, podcasts, worksheets or storybooks, as well as authentic on-line materials (i.e. materials that have not been modified for ELT; for example, newspapers, magazines or videos) provide EFL teachers with a vast source of instructional materials that can be used in their EFL classes. These on-line materials are not tied to a particular publishing house, nor are they limited to a

book structure. This gives the EFL teachers sufficient freedom to plan their classes and to design context-based class activities.

An example of the use of ICT in a classroom was reported by Dang, Nguyen and Le (2013), who conducted a study at a Vietnamese university in which the use of the Internet in a pre-service teacher course where English was the medium of instruction allowed them to construct materials that were tailor-made for their needs. They concluded that, by having the freedom to select and construct their own materials, teachers' 'autonomous agency' was improved (Dang et al., 2013: 59, 65). This indicates that there can be different and economical ways to construct instructional materials that do not depend on published materials. However, teachers need to be trained in and possess sufficient knowledge about the area of instructional materials design and enough freedom to produce and use any materials they develop if those materials are to engage students and generate learning. This means that if it is to be relevant and effective, English language policy for higher education needs to make reference to teachers' professional development so that they have the ability to shape their own materials in a way that is most suitable and effective for their own particular learners.

The principle of relevance promotes the integration of policy goals, outcomes, practice and instructional materials in a context-based manner. Key to achieving this integration is the adequate dissemination of the policy. Policy information that is widely disseminated among all stakeholders and institutions involved in the process of policy design can facilitate their commitment to the implementation of the policy. Regular and wide dissemination can function as a reminder of the policy goals and outcomes and can help to encourage stakeholders to direct their professional and academic development and effort towards their successful implementation.

2.6.1.3 The principle of evidence

The principle of evidence refers to the need to use contextual data as a basis for designing EFL policy. Pertinent data have two uses: Firstly, they prevent the

implementation of policies 'based on best practices from a variety of contexts and implemented as a one-size-fits-all'. Secondly, such data can assist in the identification and development of appropriate instructional materials (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 15). These uses support Alton-Lee's observation that '[f]inding what works in one setting does not in itself demonstrate what is needed to spread such reform more widely' (2011: 305).

The tendency to use overseas language policies without proper analysis of the advantages and disadvantages that they may have in relation to the local context into which they are being imported is quite a common practice. An example of this practice is the widespread and popular use of the CEFR language indicators as policy goals. Earlier in Chapter 1, I observed that Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico use these language indicators as their policy goals for secondary education. With the exception of Colombia, which requires a CEFR B2 level, the rest of the countries aim for a CEFR B1. Furthermore, in the case of Ecuador, these indicators are also used for higher education. There is no modification nor any adaptation of these indicators in different countries. This suggests that policymakers believe that the CEFR language indicators can be achieved regardless of the education sector concerned (secondary or higher) or the countries involved. They also assume that EFL is simplistically reduced to the attainment of these indicators, leaving aside other language issues such as inclusion or access to further education. As was explained in Chapter 1, countries justify the need to teach English in their educational systems due to increased global visibility or competitiveness. However, focusing only on the achievement of language indicators means that global visibility or competitiveness is not included within language policies. Thus, the fact that policy objectives are often the same in different countries results in the formulation of similar policies.

The use of the CEFR language indicators as policy goals has also influenced policymakers to select overseas instructional materials, as well as materials that are claimed to be aligned with the CEFR. These two aspects – language policy

and instructional materials – are expected to generate the same results among students, regardless of the learning context.

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:15) criticised these practices and encouraged policymakers to base their policy planning on pertinent local data. Thus, local research on ELT becomes an important component in the principle of evidence. Without proper evidence ‘there is a risk of policy discourses being almost magical in their assumptions about how change might be brought about’ (Alton-Lee, 2011: 304). In ELT, for instance, the assumption that using textbooks stamped as ‘aligned to CEFR’ will result in students who are proficient in English appears to be unrealistic or an example of ‘magical’ thinking, and will remain as long as these assumptions are not properly justified by using local data. By depending solely on international prescriptions and textbooks, important variables such as local constraints, motivation and teacher performance in the classroom have not been included as factors. Another misleading assumption is the belief that the sole use of English in universities will automatically produce institutions with global or international reach. Regrettably, universities do not complement ELT with wider institutional activities to gain global recognition, such as advising their academics to publish their research in English. These two examples show how inadequate policies, which are not based on empirical data, can be detrimental in terms of achieving EFL policy goals.

Tsoukias, Montibeller, Lucertini and Belton (2013: 127) emphasised that, in addition to data, there is a need to consider the value that policies have; those who are in charge of the analysis of policies need to move ‘from problem structuring methods to quantitative modelling, from learning procedures to justification construction’. Despite being perceived as an important source of data, quantitative data cannot be the only evidence utilised in policy design. For example, the use of proficiency tests as proof or evidence of learning can be misleading. A high IELTS or TOEFL score does not always guarantee that the EFL policy is well designed. High scores in a proficiency tests can be the result of different variables, such as familiarity with the test and the so-called practice

effect. There is a need, therefore, to establish quantitative and qualitative models that help to ensure that ELT policy is well informed.

Determining the value that a policy has among the stakeholders is necessary to inform policymakers about the likely extent of policy acceptance. If a given policy appears to offer stakeholders little value, then policymakers can feed this information into future policy innovation.

The principle of evidence considers research as a fundamental part of language policy design, and this means that attention needs to be paid to the methods of data collection and analysis, as well as to the appropriateness thereof. In a study related to educational policies in South Africa, Nieuwenhuis (1997: 141) concluded that the design of a 'realistic policy' relies on the capacity 'to collect and analyse social and educational data relevant to the educational planning, to integrate the education policy with fiscal and monetary planning, taking into account the priorities and resources available, and to consider external factors impacting on the country and on education'. These considerations, together with the sound interpretation of data, become an important component in the principle of evidence.

2.6.1.4 The principle of alignment

The principle of alignment is related to the principle of relevance in the sense that the goals of the policy need to be pertinent to – align with – the context. Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 16) added that it is necessary for policymakers to set forth the policy outcomes and their relationship to ELT policy. They stated that clear outcomes can facilitate the evaluation of the policy once implemented and inform subsequent policy modifications where necessary. They also suggested that in order to operationalise the goals of the policy, these goals need to reflect a close relationship with the curriculum, textbook materials and classroom practices. In the case of ELT, it can be said that the curriculum in higher education needs to look beyond the mere attainment of language proficiency to how that language proficiency can be used to achieve real-world goals.

Apart from the curriculum, policymakers intending to widen the scope of an EFL language policy must select the instructional materials to be used carefully. Textbooks play a crucial role in the educational sector, particularly in educational contexts such as Ecuador, which are traditionally textbook-oriented. As Pepin, Gueudet, and Trouche have observed, textbooks 'are situated at the interface between the intended and enacted curriculum, and thus are quasi-policy documents' (2013: 685). In other words, textbooks can be considered one of the tools for the operationalisation of policy goals, hence the importance of appropriately aligning textbooks with policy goals. Where existing textbooks cannot be aligned with English language policy goals, it is the responsibility of policymakers to help teachers design their own instructional materials that do align line with those goals.

Ultimately, whatever the extent of alignment, effective teaching practices are required to realise policy aims and this aspect rests mostly in the hands of the EFL teachers themselves and depends in part on professional development opportunities. Teachers represent the front line of policy implementation and it is through their classroom practices that the aims of the curriculum are realised. In one study conducted in Bangladesh, Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman and Khan (2014: 334) discovered that the classroom practices of EFL teachers 'are focused on two areas only: communicative learning environment and the practice and development of four language skills'. These practices are the result of EFL policies that target the attainment of language proficiency and do not consider other uses that English may have, for instance, a tool for the internationalisation of universities. In order to change these practices to more holistic ones that can be related to globalisation or internationalisation of universities, it is necessary for the goals and outcomes of EFL policy to be aligned with current global trends in higher education and flexible policies are needed. Flexibility entails 'taking more account of teacher agency, and especially teachers' proactive and projective engagement with the policy in question' (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, and Miller, 2012: 211). Priestley et al. highlight here the role of teachers as agents in policy design and

implementation and suggest a shift from a prescriptive to a descriptive approach to policymaking. Descriptive policies inform teachers about the policy goals while allowing sufficient room for them to innovate their classroom practices in a way that prescriptive policies do not. Furthermore, in place of rigorous regulations, descriptive policies also need to include clear and detailed guidelines for their implementation.

The principle of alignment considers policy as a system in which each of its components (such as the curriculum and instructional materials), and all stakeholders need to function together in order to achieve the specified goals and outcomes. These outcomes need to be defined clearly. The clear identification of outcomes can, in turn, facilitate a constant monitoring of policy progress, which can then inform any adjustments deemed necessary during the process of implementation.

2.6.1.5 The principle of transparency

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 16) saw the principle of transparency as concerning ease of access to the objectives, goals and outcomes of the policy by stakeholders and by the community in general. They added that, 'as a result of proper information, policy support and input can be obtained' and, simultaneously, it can 'prevent corruption, hidden ideological agendas, and political motivations' that could threaten proper policy implementation. Since transparency occurs in 'communication and in relationships' (Christensen and Cheney, 2015: 86), Mahboob and Tilakaratna (ibid) suggested that clear information regarding EFL policy be made available regularly through 'media and other channels'. This highlights the importance of identifying the means of communication that can best enable this to happen.

Transparency has been described as an 'organizational activity that involves a host of practices such as disclosing, presenting, explaining, accounting, reporting, and auditing' (Christensen and Cheney, 20015: 85). With regard to the disclosure of information, stakeholders need to decide what kind of information is and is not

appropriate for disclosure. Some information may generate negative perceptions amongst the community regarding particular stakeholders. For instance, if increasing working hours has the potential to generate heated debate with the institution's administration, teachers need to be informed about the details of the meeting in advance. Whoever proposes the change needs to be able to defend his or her argument, and the proposals have to rise above personal interests. Finger-pointing and isolating people who propose changes must not prevail in any educational culture. Once the policymakers decide on the type of information they are going to disclose, they need to select the most appropriate communication channels through which to do so as well as a suitable method of presentation. Policymakers need to use simple and clear language that can be understood by the majority of the community; furthermore, they need to understand the 'transparency' not as a legal requirement, but as necessary 'for reasons of institutional integrity and public trust' (Jankowski and Provezis, 2014: 484).

Communication is a crucial aspect of the principle of transparency and Murray (2016: 200) suggested that for policy innovation to be successful it is important to maintain

'good channels of communication with all stakeholders, both with respect to keeping them informed of developments and the sharing of experiences, as well as listening to and, where appropriate, acting on feedback from those implementing the innovation and from its end users – in this case, the students'.

The aims of the principle of transparency are to inform the community about the EFL language policy, including its goals and outcomes, and to track the implementation of the policy. Therefore, accountability becomes of paramount importance. Assigning specific responsibilities to specific stakeholders and continually monitoring their progress can help to obtain a prompt and accurate identification of problems. This, in turn, can help in the design of activities that

specifically tackle any problems identified, without compromising the overall policy.

Aiming for transparency in education seems to be a common practice at present. Governments and society in general demand more access to institutional information, and this demand is reinforced by law in some cases. For instance, in Denmark, transparency and access to information in educational institutions is mandated by law: Andersen (2007: 40, 51) explained that the '[a]ct on Transparency and Openness' mandates that schools have to publish 'a value statement and pedagogical philosophy' on their institutional websites and added that some Danish schools have, optionally and in addition, uploaded 'evaluations of the quality of teaching'. Andersen also reported that in July 2005, the Act on Transparency and Openness was modified regarding the kind of information that schools had to upload on their websites to include 'information on completion rates of students, drop-out rates, and rates of transition to further education or occupation'. This information, according to the Danish government, helps Danish people to 'make a qualified choice among different schools' (Andersen, 2007: 40, 51). The case of Denmark shows that, once processes of transparency are initiated by law, institutions tend to add further information voluntarily, according to what they consider appropriate.

2.6.1.6 The principle of empowerment

The ultimate goal of an EFL policy needs to be 'the empowerment of local communities, teachers, and students' (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012:16-17), through the five principles described above. To facilitate this, it is important that EFL policies are 'sustainable within the socio-political, economic, and cultural environment in which they function' (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 16 - 17). The principle of empowerment needs to be considered as a fundamental part of all language planning. Policymakers have to give a voice to all stakeholders regarding each of the underlying principles by developing scaffolding and inclusive activities that promote thoughtful discussion and visible participation.

Traditionally, policies have been conceptualised and designed at the macro-level and disseminated in a top-down manner. Policymakers, therefore, generally wield the greatest power, as I indicated earlier. When the policy reaches the micro level, the power that EFL teachers have to modify the policy tends to be minimal or even non-existent. This is the case in Ecuador, where policies are designed without the participation of teachers and students; yet it is they who have to address the challenges and constraints surrounding policy implementation – challenges that often arise because these stakeholders were not consulted at the design stage. Shohamy (2009:46-47) argued that the involvement of teachers in language policy design does not always occur, and that policymakers do not usually take teachers' experiences or views concerning language policies and planning into consideration. Not considering teachers in the process of language policy and planning results in ungrounded policies, since policymakers are often unfamiliar in any detailed sense with the context in which the policy will ultimately be implemented.

To prevent the occurrence of this problem, it is important to empower EFL teachers by giving them a more visible role in the process of policy design. Once stakeholders are empowered, they will be able to perform activities that facilitate the implementation of the policy, as those who are empowered are likely to exercise positive agency. Such agency is 'multifaceted and context-dependent'; it is also 'constructed and understood through positioning' (Kayi-Aydar, 2015: 102). For instance, empowering teachers to participate actively in the formulation of policy goals positions them not merely as the implementers of policy, but also as policymakers.

2.7 Research gap

Language policy can be defined as a series of actions and activities promoted by governmental bodies or institutions in order to promote or extend the use of a particular language in a particular locale. Though the actions taken to implement language policies require the active participation of all stakeholders, and

particularly teachers, a general practice, according to Shohamy (2006: 79), is that language policies and 'decisions' concerning these policies 'are made at the political level with no teachers involved'. In order to properly implement language policies, the active participation of teachers throughout the process of language policy implementation is necessary. However, the reality in Ecuador is that the lack of any active involvement of teachers in the process of policy design has resulted in ineffective policy implementation.

In the literature, different models of implementation have been proposed. Waters (2009: 433-436) cites five implementation models: 1) centre-periphery; 2) research, development and diffusion; 3) problem-solving; 4) social interaction and 5) linkage. He explains that the first three models are top-down models and that the weakness of the fourth is that it cannot cover large populations. This fourth model cannot be used to undertake national initiatives, for example. On the other hand, the fifth model, being a combination of the four previous models, is, according to Waters, the most useful model for implementation because it seeks to solve the problem from within the institutions and at the same time can be applied to large populations.

Although these implementation models propose innovation, and models 4 and 5 advocate greater involvement of teachers, they are still prescriptive in nature and as such may be difficult for universities operating in different contexts to implement.

Whereas it is normally the case that large-scale EFL language policies aim to promote particular language outcomes among a large number of educational institutions – for example, a CEFR B1 level among all students graduating from Ecuadorian universities – in the case of the present study, the path to successfully achieving these language outcomes cannot be standardised for all institutions. Each institution needs to have the opportunity to develop its own model of policy implementation according to its particular circumstances; for example, its mission, vision, educational objectives etc. In the case of an English language policy in

higher education, for instance, there is a global trend among universities to design and support English language policies which focus not only on language proficiency attainment (i.e. a CEFR B1 level) but on the use English as a tool to promote their global, international and regional presence.

The research gap that this study addresses concerns the suitability and effectiveness of Mahboob and Tilakaratna's (2012) Principle-Based Approach and its five principles of collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency, and empowerment (CREATE) in serving as a model for guiding the process of large-scale EFL policy implementation in general, but also specifically in relation to the Ecuadorian higher education context.

Further, and in order to shed light on this research gap, this study was carried out in a sample of Ecuadorian universities and framed by the following research questions:

1. How have higher education institutions in Ecuador responded to recent changes in government language policy and regulation as articulated in the Higher Education Law (Article 124)?
2. What challenges have universities encountered in the process of planning their EFL programmes in accordance with the changes in government language policy and regulation specified in Article 124?
3. How effectively have universities overcome the key challenges to implementing change in their EFL programmes according to the requirements stipulated in Article 124?
4. What tensions can be identified between government goals, as articulated in Article 124, and their implementation by universities?

Chapter 3

Research methodology

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that providing a single definition of language policy is challenging and that, according to Ricento (2006:10), this is mainly because of the complex nature of languages. Nonetheless, language policy can be defined as the actions planned to promote the use of a language in a specific place. In the early days of language policy development, Johnson and Ricento (2013: 8) noted a focus on the *selection of a norm*, its *implementation*, and *elaboration*. This way of seeing language policy fails to consider other aspects of language such as communities' language ideologies and the values attributed to particular languages and language varieties. Accordingly, policymaking has often failed to promote the inclusion of excluded groups. In response to this conception of language policy, a critical theory approach emerged. A critical theory approach to language policy proposes a way of planning that runs counter to the established language policy models (Tollefson, 2006:42) and promotes the inclusion of the excluded. In order to identify how the community constructs its perception of languages and the role that context plays in this process, Collins (2011: 18) suggested the use of ethnography. Although the current study was not developed based wholly on critical theory or ethnography, their core principles were taken into consideration. For example, following critical theory, the research aims to present an approach for designing an EFL language policy that goes against the current trend of language policy design in Ecuador, particularly in relation to higher education. EFL language policies here focus primarily on establishing a specific English proficiency target level of attainment and the number of EFL courses and contact hours, and the process of policy design largely excludes key stakeholders such as EFL teachers and students. Meanwhile, an ethnographic approach

serves to facilitate understanding of the challenges and tensions that stakeholders experienced in implementing institutional EFL language policies that aimed to comply with Article 124.

The previous chapter also contained an account of the role of English in promoting the globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation of universities, and how these institutions have developed English language policies in this regard. Concerning EFL language policy for higher education, I argue that these policies, apart from promoting language attainment, need to facilitate the internationalisation, globalisation and regionalisation processes of institutions. I argue, based on the principle-based approach to English-language teaching proposed by Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012), that the state, or any institution or person that has the power to design language policies, needs to adopt a non-prescriptive approach and instead enable all stakeholders to have a voice in the process of policy formulation, and universities the room to innovate and adapt policies, within reason, to suit their own particular requirements and needs.

In order to exemplify how Mahboob and Tilakaratna's principles (collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency and empowerment) can facilitate language policy design and implementation, a sample of representative Ecuadorian universities was considered for this study. This chapter presents the research methodology adopted, beginning with a brief description of the context, and then proceeding to an explanation of the methodological approach, the data collection methods employed and the rationale underlying their selection, and the ethical processes and considerations involved.

3.1 Methodology

The official requirement for the attainment of a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language among university students provided the impetus for this study. Article 124 of the Higher Education Law of 2010 changed the direction of foreign-language teaching in Ecuador, particularly the teaching of EFL. Since its introduction, Article 124 has produced different reactions and responses from

universities. While these responses appear to have resulted in a shift in curriculum development and/or a deviation from certain established norms, there exists a dearth of well-defined guidelines for the effective implementation of Article 124, making it difficult to identify the mechanisms via which the universities might comply with it. The purpose of the current research was to explore universities' experience of article 124, the challenges they faced concerning its implementation, as well as how they responded to it, with a view to producing findings that could be used to inform future higher education English language policy development in Ecuador.

3.1.1 The ontological basis of the study

According to Hall (2003: 374), ontology is 'how we imagine the social world to be'. This refers to the perceptions that we have of reality, or how we see the social relationships that occur in a community. Creswell (2014:5 - 6) adds that our world view affects our research practice; and that, from a philosophical perspective, there are four world views: *postpositivism*, *constructivism*, *transformative* and *pragmatism*. Guba (1990: 21) mentions that the postpositivist world view considers reality to be controlled by 'real natural causes'; however, it is difficult for people to perceive this reality truly and fully due to our imperfections. With regard to constructivism, according to Lincoln (1990: 77), reality is not unique, observable and palpable; instead, it is the result of the interactions of people. Therefore, there are different realities that correspond to different communities. Transformative is defined by Creswell (2014:9-10) as an inclusive world view that advocates the inclusion of excluded people and a criticism of the traditional systems of control and pragmatism. It sees reality as 'a world view [that] arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions' (ibid). In other words, according to pragmatism, reality is not bounded by fixed, singular ontologies; instead, it is the result of different conditions that can be observed or constructed (postpositivism or constructivism).

The ontological position adopted for this research was pragmatism. I believe that reality cannot be framed by a single ontological position. For example, if we frame reality by positivism or postpositivism only, we may lose focus on other aspects that can be explored through a constructivist perspective. Adopting a pragmatic approach in the current study provided the flexibility to combine different 'investigative techniques' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005: 383). Creswell (2014:11) states that pragmatism is an approach that is not strictly tied to a unique philosophical approach. This allows investigators to combine quantitative and qualitative paradigms in an attempt to probe the 'what' and 'how' of the phenomenon being studied.

Adopting a pragmatic approach enabled me to benefit from the strengths each paradigm could provide individually in order to enrich my data and its analysis. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (ibid), 'pragmatic researchers are in a better position to use qualitative research to inform the quantitative portioning of research studies, and vice versa'.

3.2 The selection of an appropriate research design

This study aimed to explore the ways and mechanisms through which universities responded to Article 124 and the challenges they encountered. In the course of the data analysis, causal relationships and treatment variables were not a concern; thus, an experimental design was not deemed appropriate. Furthermore, there was no hypothesis testing at the outset, nor was there a comparative analysis of the two groups (control and treatment) vis-à-vis a set of parameters. Similarly, an action-research design was not considered appropriate for the study, as there was no intention to influence the course of universities' activities regarding the implementation of EFL policy. No evaluation or intervention was intended to alter the behaviour of the participating institutions, since the use of intervention is the hallmark of action research and, in this case, the research objectives did not necessitate the use of such a design. Furthermore, I did not serve as a participant or active player in the research situation. It was not part of my data gathering itinerary to live in the research locales or to engage with the

respondents in order to extract the narratives of their experiences; hence, an entirely ethnographic research approach did not align with the goals established for the study.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of EFL language policy practices among universities was, similarly, not the target of this research, since no clear policy implementation guidelines were provided by the government. An evaluative study was deemed difficult to employ considering the nonexistence of a framework that would have served to direct the actions of universities. Moreover, there was not enough time between the enactment of Article 124 and the commencement of this study to measure the effectiveness of the participating universities' policy implementation. Indeed, at the time this research commenced, the universities did not have a group of students that had completed an entire EFL programme successfully. Although it was the intention of this study to explore concepts and constructs that were generated in the process of responding to Article 124, there was no intention to generate a theory from the universities' responses; thus, grounded theory was also deemed unsuitable.

In order to explore the responses and challenges that universities encountered in responding to Article 124, and in line with the pragmatic research paradigm, this research employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. It sought to provide insights into the current situation regarding EFL language policy in the higher education sector in Ecuador and, specifically, a clear and detailed explanation of the responses and challenges that Ecuadorian universities experienced in implementing Article 124.

3.3 Mixed methods research

Research typically falls within one of two main paradigms: positivist or interpretive. These can be differentiated based on their ontological foundations. The underlying premise of positivism is that 'all phenomena can be reduced to empirical indicators that represent the truth' (Sale, Lohfeld, and Brazil, 2002: 44). Positivist researchers look for the causal relationships between variables and, to

avoid the contamination of data, they refrain from interacting with the participants. Positivist researchers consider reality as objective and as something that can be questioned and tested over time through a series of trials and experiments. Consequently, they advocate the use of quantitative data such as numerical indicators and the use of statistical methods to understand and construct reality.

The interpretive paradigm, by contrast, is based on constructivism, in which 'the characteristics of this social world are determined by people's subjectivities. It is not an objective world that is mind-independent' (Plowright, 2011:178). From a constructivist point of view, reality is not objective but subjective. This means that reality is constructed within the society and is not the same for all people, therefore it needs to be explained. To better understand the phenomenon under study, researchers take an active role and try to interact with the participants to understand the factors and underlying causes of certain behaviours. Interpretative researchers use people's reactions, responses and other qualitative aspects to analyse a phenomenon.

In addition to these two common research paradigms (quantitative and qualitative), there is a third paradigm, mixed methods, which combines the quantitative and qualitative paradigms and which, according to Bergman (2011: 271), 'has infiltrated and influenced many important research fields, particularly in education, health, and evaluation'.

As quantitative and qualitative research are ontologically based on postpositivism and constructivism respectively, mixed methods research is based on pragmatism. Furthermore, as Morgan (2013: 43) states, '[f]rom a pragmatist point of view, research is a form of action to meet goals that are framed in terms of research questions'. This means that more emphasis is placed on how we answer the research questions even if it signifies a combination of methods.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007: 113) state that a mixed methods approach is

‘an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)’.

Mixed methods involve two types of data: ‘quantitative data which usually includes closed-ended responses’ and ‘qualitative data that tends to be open-ended’ (Creswell, 2014:14). Researchers might, for example, employ a survey (quantitative) and interviews and focus group discussions (qualitative).

In recent years, mixed methods research has gained attention because it employs the best of both paradigms. As Feilizer (2010: 8) noted, ‘[p]henomena have different layers’ and, in order to have a better comprehension of each of them, ‘mixed methods research offers to plug this gap by using quantitative methods to measure some aspects of the phenomenon in question and qualitative methods for others’. However, the combination of these methods (quantitative and qualitative) needs to be thoughtfully and carefully done. In this regard, Collins and Evans (2017, 328) state that the ‘[i]ntegration of methods is, of course, not a matter of combining numbers with descriptions’ or vice versa; instead, it is the combination of the ‘best qualities’ (p 238) of quantitative and qualitative research. The use of mixed methods enables the researcher to respond appropriately to the research questions.

Policy implementation studies are generally quantitative in nature. This is related to the fact that they tend to focus on large geographic areas and/or large populations; i.e. the Educational Policy Series (UNESCO) or see for example: Hillman, Tandberg, and Fryar (2015) who used a regression analysis to study the results of the policy called ‘*Student Achievement Initiative*’ which aimed to raise the retention rates and degree productivity in the Community colleges in the State of Washington USA; also Kuteeva and Airey (2014) used a survey to study the use of English in Swedish higher education according to the different disciplines i.e. hard core Sciences or Social Sciences; and Rutherford and

Rabovsky (2014) who using quantitative data from 500 American universities for a period of 18 years and through a correlational analysis studied the effect of performance funding policies on *student's graduation, persistence, and degree attainment*.

A quantitative approach to studying language policy implementation provides a general overview of a situation and is generally conducted via survey-based research. However, due to the often more extensive nature of this approach, insufficient account is taken of the contextual particularities relating to individual institutions. In contrast, qualitative studies generally focus on a reduced number of institutions and, although such an approach often provides a detailed description of the phenomenon in a reduced context, the results of these studies may not represent the majority of the institutions, making generalisation difficult.

In order to provide a clear picture of language policy implementation in universities it is important that studies in this area include a large number of institutions while also capturing the particularities of universities.

A large number of institutions can provide a general overview of how policy was implemented and, in general terms, the challenges that institutions faced. These general results can be further explained and understood through a more fine-grained analysis of policy implementation and the accompanying challenges as these are experienced in particular institutions. In other words, the quantitative results can be better explained and understood by combining them with the qualitative results.

This study aims to bridge the gap between the two types of research (quantitative and qualitative) in the area of policy implementation and present a different way of approaching policy implementation studies by using a mixed methods approach..

3.3.1 Purposes of combining quantitative and qualitative methods

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods needs to be purposeful and goal-oriented. This means that depending on the research questions and the objectives of the study, researchers will need to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in specific ways. Morgan (2013: 67) identifies three basic purposes of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, namely: *convergent findings*, *additional coverage* and *sequential contributions*.

In convergent findings, quantitative and qualitative methods are used to answer the same research question, with objective of probing whether a research study can generate the same results by using two different methodologies. This can help improve the veracity of the study and increase confidence in its findings.

In relation to *additional coverage*, Morgan (pp. 67-74) explains that each method is used to achieve different objectives, and while the methods may be given equal emphasis, one may be given greater emphasis than the other (*QUAL + QUANT*, *qual + QUANT*, *QUAL + quant*). The role that each method plays is well-defined, meaning that quantitative research is employed specifically for certain parts of the study and qualitative for other parts. Morgan refers to these different roles as a 'division of labor'. The results obtained from each method are combined to provide a more holistic description of the phenomenon under study.

Sequential contributions are a combination of research methods in which one method either quantitative or qualitative provides the basis for further development of the other. For example, qualitative research can be developed based on the results of the quantitative research; that is, the two methods complement to each other, and as with *additional coverage*, in sequential contribution emphasis can be placed on both methods or one in particular (*QUAL → QUANT*, *QUANT → QUAL*, *qual → QUANT*, *quant → QUAL*, *QUANT → qual*, *QUAL → quant*).

The sequential contributions model was deemed appropriate for the current study, which employs a survey (quantitative), followed by interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) (qualitative), with an emphasis on the qualitative phase (i.e. quant →QUAL). The survey which was administered to 14 universities aimed to obtain a description of the current situation of EFL language policy in the Ecuadorian higher education sector, to identify the universities' responses to Article 124; to discover whether the characteristics of universities (category, type, geographic location) shaped their responses; and to identify a smaller number of universities (three) at which to conduct the interviews and FGDs that comprised phase 2. The qualitative phase, aimed to further explore the results obtained from the survey, identify the challenges that Directors, EFL teachers and students faced in the process of complying with Article 124, as well as the tensions that emerged as they sought to do so.

3.3.2 Types of mixed methods research

Regarding the establishment of a typology for a mixed methods design, Guest (2013: 141) highlights the importance of identifying and classifying mixed methods research into different types and emphasises that the purpose of classifying is to 'impose order and simplify complex phenomena for didactic, organizational, and communicative purposes'. Therefore, the need to have a clear definition of the types of mixed methods research becomes of paramount importance. Creswell (2014: 219-227) presents an alternative articulation of the most common types of mixed methods research: *convergent parallel, explanatory sequential and exploratory sequential mixed methods design*. In *convergent parallel design*, quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed individually, after which the two data sets are contrasted and compared to find out the convergent or divergent points. In an *explanatory sequential* design, the qualitative phase is preceded by the quantitative, with the qualitative methods being developed, wholly or in part, on the basis of the results obtained in the quantitative phase. The quantitative results can also serve to help explain and interpret the quantitative results. *Exploratory sequential* methodology reverses the process of

the *explanatory sequential* type; that is, the qualitative phase is followed by the quantitative phase, with the quantitative being developed based, wholly or in part, on results obtained in the qualitative phase. The collection and analysis of data, either quantitatively or qualitatively, varies according to the research design. Thus, they can be 'performed simultaneously or sequentially as part of either an a priori design or [as] an adaptive, evolutionary process' (Truscott, Swars, Smith, Thornton-Reid, Zhao, Dooley, and Matthews, 2010: 318).

The type of mixed methods approach employed in this study was explanatory sequential, with the primary emphasis being on the qualitative data, and the quantitative data serving to add explanatory power. Quantitative data was first collected through survey questionnaires, which served to identify the responses of the participating universities in the aftermath of the release of Article 124. Statistical procedures were then used to analyse the survey data. The results obtained from the quantitative phase were used to identify topics that were explored in depth via interviews and FGDs in the qualitative phase. The qualitative phase allowed for an unpacking and a more detailed understanding and analysis of the data that emerged from the survey. Using this process, the results obtained from the universities helped to build a detailed description and understanding of participants' responses, and the challenges and tensions that universities encountered during the process of implementing Article 124. It was intended that the findings from the study should serve as the basis for formulating recommendations for EFL language-policy planning and its implementation in higher education in Ecuador. See figure 2.

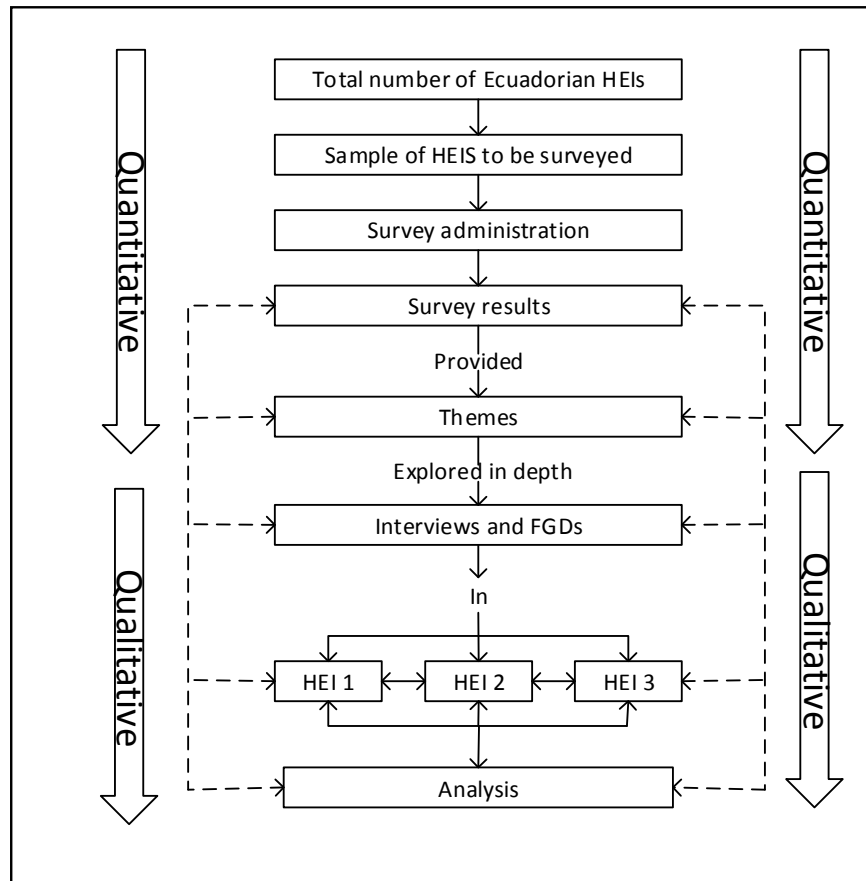


FIGURE 2. SCHEMATIC FLOW OF AN EXPLANATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS STUDY

Figure 2 shows the schematic flow of both the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study. As outlined above, the quantitative phase included a survey questionnaire administered to the sample universities. The survey results assisted in the identification of themes, which were further explored through in-depth interviews and FGDs conducted at three universities during the qualitative phase. In order to provide a richer analysis of the data, the two sets of data were combined in the final stage of the analysis. The following section contains a more detailed explanation of the two phases of the study.

3.4 Survey (quantitative phase)

Surveys 'are information collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behaviour' (Fink, 2013: 2). Surveys have three characteristics: 'versatility, efficiency and generalizability' (Schutt, 2012: 230-231). The versatility and efficiency of surveys lies in their adaptability when collecting different data and accounting for different variables using a single instrument. Since surveys are administered to a sample population, their results can be representative of the attitudes and characteristics of a large population, and this increases their generalisability.

In this study, the use of survey questionnaires explored the reasons why universities taught English and their responses to Article 124. The results were then correlated with the types, categories and geographic locations of the universities.

3.4.1 Survey sampling

There are two different methods of sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Through these two methods, a number of respondents, who represent an entire population, can be selected. In this study, stratified probability sampling was used for selecting the universities and non-probability sampling for selecting the participants within each institution. Selecting universities on the basis of probability sampling was done for two reasons. Firstly, all universities had the same chance of being chosen to minimise biases; and, secondly, stratified probability sampling allowed for the generalisation of the results obtained. Within probability sampling there is another classification called stratified probability sampling which was also used for the selection of universities. Section 3.4.1.1 explains sample selection methods and goes on to describe how the sample for the qualitative phase of this study was selected.

3.4.1.1 Probability sampling

In this type of sampling, 'each member of the target population has a chance – a probability – of being sampled' (Wright, 1997:9). There are a number of methods that involve probability sampling. In random sampling, a small number of participants is drawn randomly from the population through specific statistical methods, such as random sampling, cluster sampling, or stratification sampling, which ensures that all members within a population have the same probability of being selected. In cluster sampling, the population is divided into small groups according to their 'geographic areas or clusters' (Wright, 1997:9). Once these clusters have been identified, participants are selected randomly to form a sample. Stratification sampling operates according to the same principle as cluster sampling, but the population is divided into small groups or strata depending on specific characteristics that are defined according to the needs of the researcher.

3.4.1.2 Stratified random sampling

This sub-classification of probability sampling (see, for example, Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam, 2013: 331) consists of separating the data in small strata or groups based on specific characteristics such as age, sex, or race, and randomly selecting the respondents from each stratum. This method of sample selection helps with comparison of different types of respondents.

3.4.1.3 Nonprobability sampling

In nonprobability sampling, participants do not have an equal chance of being selected from the population; thus, the generalisation of results obtained from this sample is not possible (Rea and Parker, 2005:172). The selection of a sample in nonprobability sampling can be done via quota sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling.

In quota sampling, researchers choose the participants in an equal percentage according to their needs. For instance, in a study of children, researchers may

select 50% of boys and 50% of girls. In snowball sampling, researchers locate a specific person (key informant) to obtain information. This person then informs the researcher of the next possible participant, and this process is repeated until enough data is gathered. In convenience sampling, researchers select their sample according to what they consider convenient; for example, the availability of participants, ease of access, budget or geographic location. According to Wright (1997:10), these methods of selecting samples can be biased since they all depend on the researcher's point of view or convenience. In order to select the sample for this study, the three aforementioned sampling methods were used as described in the following section.

3.5 Sampling and selection of universities

Of a total of 54 Ecuadorian universities, 51 were considered for this study. Three universities were excluded because they were exclusively *postgraduate* universities; therefore, Article 124 did not apply to them.

Geographically, Ecuador has four regions: the Highlands, the Coast, Amazonia and the Galapagos Islands. Universities are located in three of these regions, with the exception of the Galapagos Islands in which there is only satellite university campus. The number of universities differed from region to region as follows: 27 universities in the Highlands, 23 in the Coast and only one in Amazonia. The capital city, Quito (Highlands region), has 13 universities, and the economic capital, Guayaquil (Coast region), has 11 universities. Both cities have the highest number of universities in the country, with a total of 47% of Ecuadorian universities being located there.

With regard to category, universities are ranked from 'A' to 'D', where 'A' represents the best universities and 'D' the lowest ranking. As shown in Table 6, the distribution of universities based on their category varies across regions.

In terms of their funding, Ecuadorian universities can be categorised according to three types:

- (1) Public, which are fully funded by the state
- (2) Co-funded, which are partly funded by the state and students' fees
- (3) Private, which are entirely funded by students' fees

Category	Highlands		Coast		Amazonia		Total
A	1	***	1	***	0	***	2***
	0	**	0	**	0	**	0**
	1	*	0	*	0	*	1*
Total	2		1		0		3
B	7	***	2	***	1	***	10***
	5	**	1	**	0	**	6**
	4	*	2	*	0	*	6*
Total	16		5		1		22
C	3	***	4	***	0	***	7***
	0	**	1	**	0	**	1**
	4	*	6	*	0	*	10*
Total	7		11		0		18
D	0	***	6	***	0	***	6***
	1	**	0	**	0	**	1**
	1	*	0	*	0	*	1*
Total	2		6		0		8
Total	27		23		1		51

*** = Public HEIs

** = Co-funded HEIs

* = Private HEIs

Numbers in bold represent the highest numbers

Table 6. Distribution of universities according to category, location and type

Table 6 shows the distribution of universities according to category, location and type. Only one university is located in Amazonia while the rest of the universities are located in the Highlands. The highest number of universities belong to Category 'B' (22 universities), and the majority of these are public and located in

the Highlands. The majority of universities from category 'C' are found in the Coast, which also has the highest number of universities in the public category 'D'. The Highlands and Coast regions have three types of universities. The highest number of public universities are located in the Coast region, while the majority of private universities and co-funded universities are located in the Highlands.

In Table 7, universities are grouped according to category, geographic location and type. Once the universities were organised according to these different strata (see Table 7), stratified random sampling was used to select one university per stratum. Stratified random sampling means that a 'sampling frame can be partitioned into groups or strata' and, through random sampling, a 'sample within each of the strata' can be chosen (Levy and Lemeshow, 2008:121).

In this study, one university was selected per stratum. In strata with more than one university, an on-line tool (randomizer, <http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm>) was used for the selection of universities. In the strata with only one university, that institution was selected. Based on universities' characteristics, there were 18 different strata; hence, the selected sample for this study consisted of 18 universities (see Table 7).

N. of universities	Category	Geographic location			Type			Strata
		Coast	Highlands	Amazonia	Public	Co-funded	Private	
1	A	X			X			1
1	A		X		X			2
1	A		X				X	3
7	B		X		X			4
2	B	X			X			5
1	B			X	X			6
4	B		X				X	7
2	B	X					X	8
5	B		X			X		9
1	B	X				X		10
3	C		X		X			11
4	C	X			X			12
5	C		X				X	13
5	C	X				X		14
1	C	X					X	15
6	D	X			X			16
1	D		X			X		17
1	D		X				X	18

Table 7. Universities' strata based on category, location and type

Table 7 shows the distribution of 51 universities from three Ecuadorian regions, including category and type. The number of universities refers to the number of institutions within each stratum (there is a total of 18 strata). The geographic location and type of universities are marked 'X' within each stratum. The number of universities in each stratum varies, with the highest number being seven public universities located in the Highlands region, and the lowest number being one, which is located in Amazonia.

Once the universities were selected, the next step was to administer the survey questionnaires. In order to identify the respondents for the survey questionnaires, I employed a non-probability sampling. This means that the respondents were intentionally selected from each of the sample universities. This sampling method

was selected because EFL teachers and students needed to comply with certain criteria in order to be able to answer the questionnaires. For example, EFL teachers needed to have been working in the selected university for at least 3 years and students needed to have been studying in the language centres for at least 18 months. It was felt that this length of time would have allowed the participants to experience any changes regarding EFL language policy in their institutions. Had probability sampling been used, there would have been the possibility that respondents would have been selected who did not possess sufficient experience and information to accurately respond to the survey questions regarding institutional responses to Article 124 and its implementation, due to their having spent inadequate time in their universities' language centres.

Once the universities to be surveyed were identified, the intention was to secure the collaboration of 18 universities, and within each university the participation of all Directors, 15 EFL teachers and 15 students. In practice, however, it proved impossible to achieve 100% participation among the 18 universities or the EFL teachers and students. Further description of the respondents to the survey is provided in the quantitative data analysis section.

3.6 Administration of the survey

This research employed an in-person survey to collect data from participants working in the EFL programmes at the selected universities. This was because Ecuadorians are culturally more inclined to participate in face-to-face rather than web-based or telephone interactions. A questionnaire was designed as the instrument for data collection. In order to obtain accurate answers and for purposes of triangulation, three sets of questionnaires were used. Each set targeted three different groups of respondents, namely

- (1) language centre Directors,
- (2) EFL teachers, and
- (3) students attending the final course of their English tuition.

The student group was selected on the basis that they had spent a minimum period of at least 18 months at their institutions and had experienced their universities' responses to Article 124. It was felt that their responses would therefore be more accurate and better informed than those of students who had just started their EFL programmes. Due to the variation in the number of students and teachers in the sample universities, respondents from each university were selected purposefully, as follows: one language centre Director, ten EFL teachers and fifteen students.

Although the three sets of questionnaires targeted different respondents, the nature of the questions was the same. In other words, the text was slightly modified in each set of questionnaires in order to facilitate a better understanding of each group of respondents. Some sections of the questionnaires were removed based on the respondents' profiles. The questionnaire that was constructed for language centre Directors served as the basis for developing the subsequent sets (Appendices I, II and III) in order to keep the same focus despite modifications to language and sections of the questionnaires. For instance, the section that referred to the profile of the institution was not included in the questionnaire for students, who were not usually familiar with the detailed structure of EFL courses in their institutions. To see how the different sections of the questionnaire were modified according to the respondents, see Appendices I, II and III.

When administering the questionnaires, three key steps directed the process of data collection. First, a letter was sent to the vice-chancellors of the sample universities. This letter contained a brief personal introduction to the researcher followed by a short description of the research project, the data gathering procedure and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. Supporting documents were also attached. These were an endorsement letter from the Higher Education Office (SENECYT) and an endorsement letter from the Centre for Applied Linguistics of the University of Warwick (see Appendix V). Once permission had been obtained, I personally administered the survey questionnaires to the language centre Directors, EFL teachers, and students in the EFL programmes.

3.6.1 Design of the questionnaire

In order to construct meaningful questions, informal questionnaires containing two open-ended questions were initially administered via e-mail with three language centre Directors of EFL programmes, three EFL teachers and three students in January 2014. The two questions asked were:

1. Have you perceived any changes in the way of how the institute is managed after enactment of Article 124?
2. Have you perceived any changes in the way of how EFL is taught in the language centre after enactment of Article 124?

The above questions, however, were asked in a different form to Directors since they are the ones expected to initiate changes, For example:

1. Have you promoted/initiated any changes in the way of how the institute is managed after enactment of Article 124?
2. Have you promoted/initiated any changes in the way of how EFL is taught in the language centre after enactment of Article 124?

The information obtained from these questionnaires, together with the literature review, served as baseline information for developing the actual questionnaires.

Of the three Directors, one was a personal acquaintance who was the Director of the language centre of the university where I worked before commencing my PhD programme. The other two Directors, who were previously unknown to me, were contacted via email. Their email addresses were obtained from the websites of their respective institutions. In the first mail sent to them, I introduced myself and explained to them my study and its purpose and invited them to respond to a set of questions which would be sent to their emails. The questions were designed to elicit descriptions of their EFL programmes and how their institutions had responded to Article 124. All three Directors were from different universities and agreed to participate. Their responses were clear and very informative.

The three EFL teacher participants were colleagues who were working in three different universities. They were chosen from different universities on the basis that different institutions might have responded differently to Article 124.

The three student participants were identified with the help of the three teacher participants each of whom was asked to identify one student. These students were emailed the same questions as the EFL teachers the Directors, with the exception of one question which sought to elicit whether they had perceived any changes regarding the functioning of their language centre and the way how EFL had been taught in these centres in response to Article 124.

Each of the teachers and Directors who took part in this initial exercise were from different universities and, therefore, provided a general overview of how these six universities treated ELT in their institutions. The most salient points that emerged were: the diversity that existed in the universities' EFL course offerings in terms of their number and duration, and the way in which English was treated within the curriculum. For example, English was considered a credit-bearing subject in one university but as non-credit bearing in the other five.

Concerning the operational responses of the six universities to Article 124, those most commonly cited were: laying off EFL teachers who did not have a Master's degree; changing EFL textbooks; improving the infrastructure of the language centres; and increasing ICT resources for EFL classes. To the questions sent to the emails of Directors, EFL teachers and EFL students, what most respondents included in their answers was the importance of teaching English in universities. Although, they were not asked about the importance of teaching English to university students, the inclusion of this aspect in their responses led to its inclusion in the questionnaires designed for the main study.

Based on the responses to the informal interviews, the questionnaires were structured according to the following sections: The questionnaire for the language centre Directors, which served as the basis for the subsequent questionnaires, contained four main sections: Section I detailed the respondent's profile, Section

II the institutional profile, Section III the importance of English, and Section IV, the institutional responses to Article 124 (See Appendixes I, II and III). See Table 8 for the description of each of these sections. Chapter 4 presents a detailed account of the way in which each of these sections was analysed.

The purpose in having three sets of questionnaires was: to capture a managerial view of policy implementation (in the case of Directors), and to capture their views as policy implementers and end-users respectively (in the case of EFL teachers and students).

Section I: Respondent's profile	Section II: Institutional profile
<p>This section profiled the academic background of the language centre Directors and EFL teachers in order to establish whether their academic profiles had influenced their views regarding the importance of EFL and their responses to Article 124. The profile showed (1) respondents' degrees, specialisations, and years of experience, and (2) respondents' studies undertaken at overseas institutions and the nature of those studies.</p>	<p>This section showed how EFL was taught in each university, specifically (1) the mode of EFL teaching (face-to-face or on-line), (2) programme duration, (3) the number of contact hours, and (4) the number of EFL courses that students needed to complete successfully according to institutional requirements. It contained three multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions.</p>
Section III: The importance of English	Section IV: Institutional responses to Article 124
<p>This section measured three variables: (1) the use of English in the universities and the people who used it, (2) respondents' perceptions of the reasons for learning EFL in higher education, and (3) the degree of senior administrators' support of ELT. The first variable was measured using multiple-choice questions and the second and third variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale designed to measure participants' levels of agreement with each item – or statement – as follows: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly agree (SA) and Not applicable (NA). The first Likert scale comprised 18 items, and the second 15 items. A Likert scale measured the third variable (senior administrators' support of ELT). The options included were Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Most of the time, and Always.</p>	<p>In this section, two variables were measured: (1) the level of agreement with Article 124 and (2) the university's responses to Article 124. The level of agreement with Article 124 contained two points: (1) respondents' knowledge of Article 124, which was measured via a yes or no response, and (2) the level of agreement with Article 124, which was measured using a Likert scale with four options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly agree. To measure the universities' responses, three categories were presented: (1) Management-focused responses, (2) Infrastructure-focused responses, and (3) Pedagogically focused responses. Under each of these categories, the respondents selected from a set of statements what their universities had implemented in response to Article 12.</p>

Table 8. Sections of the Directors' questionnaire

Table 8 shows describes the four parts of the questionnaire that was administered to the language centre Directors. The questionnaires for EFL teachers and students were developed from this first questionnaire. These two subsequent questionnaires included the following parts: Parts I, III and IV for EFL teachers, and Parts III and IV for students. The estimated questionnaire completion times

were: 25 minutes for the Directors and EFL teachers' questionnaires and 15 minutes for the students' questionnaire. These times were based on Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2009:12) recommendation that a questionnaire should not exceed 30 minutes if it is to secure good completion rates and sufficient engagement. Since Spanish was the respondents' mother tongue, all questionnaires were translated into and administered in Spanish to prevent the respondents from misinterpreting the questions. The translations were done by the researcher but checked for their accuracy by two colleagues with advanced levels of English language proficiency.

Once the first drafts of the three sets of questionnaires were constructed, I piloted them with two language centre Directors, ten teachers and ten students. These respondents were my acquaintances from different Ecuadorian universities, and they received the questionnaires via e-mail. In order to avoid possible bias due to familiarity with the questions, the respondents who took part in this piloting phase did not belong to any of the universities at which I administered the actual questionnaires for the purpose of the main study. The aim of piloting the questionnaires was to identify any problems in the way the questions were constructed and to check how much time was required to complete the questionnaires. Most of the feedback received from respondents consisted of suggestions for rephrasing in order to make certain questions more comprehensible.

3.7 Quantitative data collection process

I flew from the United Kingdom to Ecuador on Wednesday, September 3 2014, and arrived in Quito on Thursday, September 4 2014 for the purpose of data collection. After 10 weeks in Ecuador, I returned to the United Kingdom on November 18, 2014.

3.7.1 The universities surveyed

Although the intention was to survey a sample of 18 universities, due to logistical problems during the data collection and a lack of participation on the part of some

universities, this number decreased to 14 universities located in three different regions of the country (Coast, the Highlands and Amazonia) and scattered across 10 different cities. The logistical problems encountered were:

- (1) A lack of student respondents to the survey.
- (2) A conflict with teachers' schedules: some teachers were lecturing at the time I was permitted to administer the questionnaire.
- (3) Insufficient administrative support in providing venues to gather respondents together in a specific place in order for them to complete the survey.
- (4) A reluctance on the part of four universities to participate in the study, or a failure to inform me of their decision of not to taking part in this study.

3.7.2 Key challenges (quantitative phase)

Administering the questionnaires at the 14 universities from which I had received permission to do so was not a simple process. Particular challenges that presented themselves were:

- (1) High levels of institutional bureaucracy.
- (2) Apprehension about sharing data.
- (3) The (incorrect) belief that I was a government employee.
- (4) The degree of university autonomy.

These challenges are discussed in more detail below.

3.7.2.1 University bureaucracy

In most Ecuadorian universities, my letter had to pass through different departments just to obtain the final authorisation for the survey to be administered. This process was time-consuming, and typically took three months or more. Since I was aware of this high degree of bureaucracy, I began contacting the universities from the United Kingdom in July 2014, two months prior to flying to Ecuador. While

some universities responded to my request, I had to visit others in person in order to get them to begin the approval process.

3.7.2.2 Apprehension about sharing data

When I visited Ecuador in September 2014, the universities had undergone an institutional categorisation process that placed them in different categories from A (the best) to D (the least performing) (see Chapter 1). This evaluation process created a certain level of apprehension on the part of universities with regard to sharing data. When I explained the purpose of my research, a number of language centre Directors and EFL teachers were reluctant to take part in the survey as they suspected that I would use the data as part of an evaluation of their institutions. This (false) belief was reinforced by the fact that I held a scholarship from the state and had the endorsement of SENESCYT (the National Secretary of Higher Education).

3.7.2.3 Incorrect belief that I was a government employee

As I was a recipient of a scholarship from the Ecuadorian government, people believed that I was an active member of the government party or work for the government. This incorrect belief had two effects. On one hand, it helped me, since some university authorities supported the government; thus, I received comments such as 'It is good you are doing this study as a part of the government'. On the other hand, some university administrators who did not agree with the policies and regulations of the government tended to be highly opinionated and showed their annoyance with the government by declining to participate in the study, stating, for example, that 'We don't like the President [of Ecuador] and you are part of the government' or 'The government gives scholarships only to members of its political party'. Respondents who believed in the policies of the government were cooperative and provided the necessary logistical support during the administering of the questionnaires. They were organised and efficient in gathering the respondents, and they facilitated the easy retrieval of the questionnaires. Conversely, respondents who did not endorse or support the

policies of the government offered little support in most cases. For example, they did not help in the recruitment of participants and there was a lack of coordination in their efforts to help maximise the time spent administering the questionnaires. Unfounded biases and perceived notions of respondents about the objectives of the research impeded the speed of data collection.

3.7.2.4 University autonomy

University autonomy in Ecuadorian higher education means that universities function according to their own regulations rather than to those of external bodies. While there are some national general principles that govern all universities, the implementation and interpretation of these principles varies among institutions. Having an endorsement letter from the SENESCYT did not, therefore, automatically entitle me to administer the survey, for that would have meant a violation of the universities' autonomy. The private and co-founded universities generally felt under less obligation to accede to my request than public universities.

Once the quantitative phase of the data collection was complete, I returned to the United Kingdom on November 18, 2014, to begin the analysis of the quantitative data and to plan the second phase of the study. An account of the qualitative phase is presented in the next section.

3.8 Qualitative data collection process

Qualitative data were collected via focus group discussions (FGDs) with students and in-depth interviews with Directors of language centres, EFL teachers, the President of RANI, and the Deputy Secretary of SENESCYT. The advantage of FGDs, according to Rubin and Rubin (2012: 4), is that they allow the researcher 'to explore complex, contradictory, or counter-intuitive matters'. Each FGD in this study consisted of five students. Since there were different people with different points of view, this interaction allowed me to elicit different kinds of responses from students regarding EFL language policy. In addition, since the students were

in groups, they felt freer to participate without worrying about being identified, and their peer support decreased shyness and helped enable them to express their opinions. Data were from students participating in the FGDs through a set of open-ended questions to which they responded to and exchanged views. I facilitated the conversations and kept the discussion focused following the suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2012: 30) regarding how to conduct an FGD.

In-depth qualitative interviews differ from survey interviews in terms of their philosophical foundations. Survey interviews are mostly based on positivism, and data obtained from these interviews 'give access to facts about the world' (Silverman, 2011: 170). They are usually administered to a sample population and seek a unique and measurable truth. The researcher has a passive role and avoids personal interactions that can influence the respondents' answers. These interviews are usually structured, and the interviewer has a set of predetermined questions to ask the respondents.

On the other hand, in-depth qualitative interviews allow researchers to 'reconstruct events the researcher has never experienced' (Rubin & Rubin, 2012: 3). The respondents provide insightful narratives and information to understand and explain the phenomenon under study. I believe that there is no single and measurable truth; instead, there are different realities and multiple truths. The respondents construct their realities through their context. This means not all university stakeholders see language policy in the same way. How they have shaped their ideas on EFL language policy depends on their experiences in their own particular context(s). If, for example, some teachers or students were able to access overseas scholarships because they were proficient in English, they may well favour a language policy that promotes the language. On the other hand, people who have been excluded from certain benefits and upward mobility due to a lack of English proficiency would be more likely to feel negatively towards that same policy. These different attitudes (acceptance or rejection) become the 'true' reality for each group. Therefore, in-depth interviews can elicit different

participant's realities or points of view in order to understand a given phenomenon.

The researcher plays an important role in the process of data gathering through his or her interaction with participants. The researcher's role is to lead participants through the process of constructing of their realities and to maintain focus on the topic. In-depth interviews facilitate this process because they do not have structured, closed questions that prevent participants from expanding on a topic. Instead, researchers encourage participants to provide detailed information concerning the phenomenon being studied.

This study considered the challenges and tensions experienced by universities in the process of responding to Article 124, and to that end in-depth interviews of the kind discussed above were conducted. Based on the results of the survey and the research questions formulated, the interview guide comprised the following questions:

1. How important is the teaching of English to university students?
2. Three categories were presented in the survey in order to measure universities' responses to Article 124. The majority of respondents ranked them as follows: first, infrastructure, pedagogy and management. What changes did you experience in these areas?
3. What challenges did you experience during the process of implement changes in the areas infrastructure, pedagogy and management.
4. What has the university done in order to respond to these challenges?
5. What tensions emerged during the implementation of Article 124?

3.8.1 Participating universities

As will be shown in Chapter 4, results from the survey (quantitative phase) did not show any marked difference between universities' responses Article 124 according to their geographic location, category or type. It was to decide to employ purposive sampling to select three universities in which to carry out the qualitative phase of the study based on certain criteria; namely, they had to be institutions –

1. with a well-structured language centre,
2. with five EFL teachers who had answered the questionnaire and had been working in the language centre for at least three years, and who had therefore witnessed any institutional changes after the enactment of the Higher Education Law,
3. with five students who had attended EFL courses at the same university for at least 18 months and who had completed the questionnaire,
4. with EFL courses running at the time the interviews were conducted,
5. that were willing to participate in the interview process.

Based on these criteria, three universities were identified for inclusion in Phase 2 of the study (the qualitative phase), conducted between April and June 2015. The characteristics of the three participating universities were as follows:

University 1 was located in the Highlands, was co-funded, and belonged to Category B.

University 2 was located in the Highlands, was public, and belonged to Category C.

University 3 was located in the Coast, was public, and belonged to Category D.

Once the universities had been selected, the next step was to identify the language centre Directors, EFL teachers and students of EFL programmes for the purpose of conducting interviews and FGDs at each institution.

The total number of participants for this phase included three language centre Directors, 14 EFL teachers and 15 students (five students from each university).

In addition to these respondents, I also interviewed the National Deputy-Secretary of SENESCYT and the president of RANI.

In planning the manner of the selection of the respondents for the interviews and FGDs, I had to decide whether I would select them arbitrarily or based on the recommendations of the language centre Directors and EFL teachers. There were two problems with selecting them arbitrarily: firstly, I was liable to select participants who had not been with the universities for the required length of time, and secondly, there was a risk that I would select participants who had not completed the anonymous survey. Therefore, I decided to base the selection of participants for the interviews and FGDs on the recommendations of the language centre Directors and EFL teachers, as the language centre Directors knew the teachers who had taken part in the survey and the teachers knew which students had taken part in the survey. In order to minimise any bias in the selection of respondents, I explained to the language centre Directors and the EFL teachers the importance of impartiality in their selection.

The in-depth interviews conducted with the respondents took place on the premises of their respective universities. I interviewed the language centre Directors in their offices and the EFL teachers in their classrooms. The former assigned specific classrooms for my FGDs with the students. To facilitate the interviews, I contacted the three selected language centre Directors in advance in order to arrange appointments. The interviews subsequently took place on the following dates:

1. University 1: March 31; April 1-3 and 6–7, 2015
2. University 2: April 14–17, 2015
3. University 3: May 19–21, 2015

I interviewed the Assistant-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education on April 24, 2015 and the president of RANI on April 27, 2015. RANI held its national meeting on May 28-29, 2015, in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, this meeting was very important for my research since the participants of this meeting were

generally Directors of the language centres. Therefore, I was able to capture different points of views from different Directors who were not part of the three selected universities for the qualitative phase. Also, in the plenary of this meeting important issues were discussed, for example, the need to have a standardised EFL programme in all participating universities and the lack of status of English in most of the participating universities. On June 10-12, 2015, the representative of the Ministry of Education held her round table talk on 'Pre-service Language Teachers' Formation' as part of the National Convention of Foreign Language Teachers. This meeting was important because I was able to capture the perception of the Ministry of Education represented by its representative towards ELT and EFL teachers. In the meeting of RANI and the round table, I wrote field notes and recorded the interactions of the participants. The field notes and the recordings contained the points of view of language centre Directors most of whom who were not members of the participating universities but attended the RANI meeting. In the same line, the field notes and the recording from the round table captured the interactions of the representative of the Ministry of Education and other attendees concerning EFL language policy design and implementation.

Interviews were conducted at each of the three universities sequentially. The language centre Director of University 1 was first interviewed and then asked to recommend five EFL teachers for interview. Finally, the EFL teachers was asked to recommend five students to participate in the FGD. This process was replicated at all three universities. Once the data collection process was completed in the first two universities, interviews were conducted with the president of RANI and the Assistant Secretary of the SENESCYT. It was decided to interview these two officials *after* collecting data from the first two universities because it was felt that that data would provide valuable information from the policy implementers (Directors and EFL teachers) and end-users (students) that could be used in the interviews with the president of RANI and the Assistance Secretary of the SENESCYT, with a view to eliciting their perspectives as policymakers. Then, once data had been collected from the policymakers, policy implementers and

end-users I would have a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied and could draw on that understanding to prepare for my interviews to be conducted in the third participating university. This process of data collection ceased when saturation was attained. ‘Saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is added’ (Bowen: 2008:140). Below, in Figure 3, is a schematic representation of the interview process.

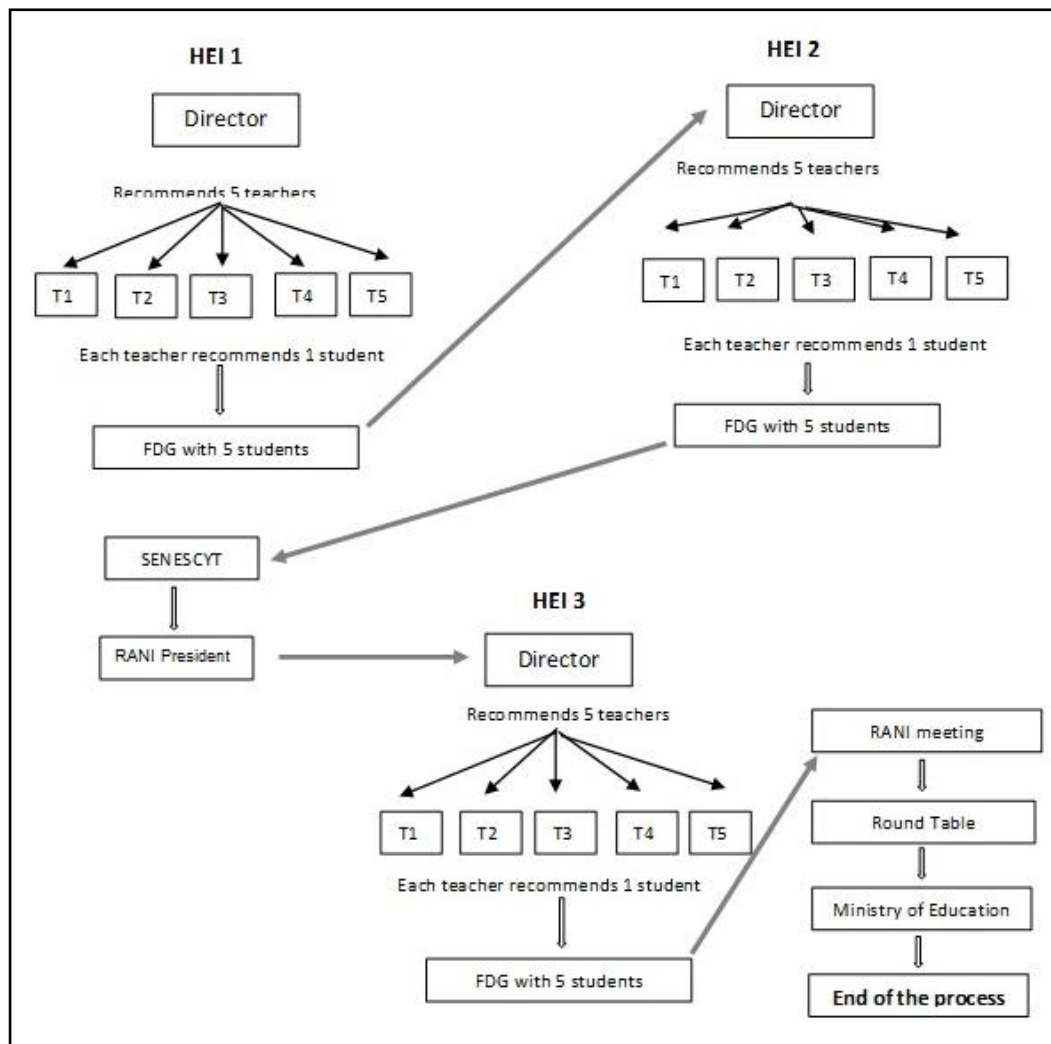


Figure 3. Flow of the interview process

Interviews were conducted first at University 1, followed by University 2. Representatives of the two national authorities were then interviewed: the Assistant Secretary of Higher Education and

the president of RANI, an EFL network. Following the interviews with these two authorities, I proceeded to University 3 and concluded the data collection with the data I collected from a meeting and a round table discussion during the 11th Foreign Language Teaching Convention in Quito on 10 -12 June 2015

3.8.2 Key challenges (qualitative phase)

Compared to the challenges experienced in gathering the quantitative data, the collection of qualitative data posed fewer challenges mainly because one of the criteria for selecting the respondents was their willingness to participate. Nonetheless, a few problems emerged when conducting the interviews. Particularly in the case of the Language Centre Directors, the interviews were frequently delayed by approximately two hours due to unplanned meetings, or were interrupted due to administrative matters.

There were three teachers at two different universities whose comments led to concerns of bias. They praised their foreign-language programmes and stated that they had not experienced any challenges in their institutional' response to Article 124. They also praised their language centre Directors and the foreign-language programmes excessively, claiming that the former had not encountered any challenges in running the latter. They claimed that the EFL teachers and students were satisfied with both the Directors and the programmes.

The evidence of bias lay in the fact that the language centre Directors, whom I interviewed initially, and a group of teachers who were interviewed after the Directors, mentioned a number of challenges that the three teachers later denied, such as a need to improve the level of English proficiency or ELT methodology among EFL teachers . Conversely, these three teachers stated that all EFL teachers in the language centre, without exception, had a very good level of English proficiency, equivalent to CEFR C1 and C2 and that EFL teachers did not have any problems regarding EFL methodology. Although these contradictory responses between the Directors and the three teachers were suggested of possible bias, the decision was made not to end the interviews immediately as a courtesy to the respondents. Instead, the interviews were continued but their

duration reduced to a maximum of 10 minutes. The decision was taken, however, to disregard these particular data and the language centre Director asked to nominate alternative EFL teachers.

3.9 Research ethics

Guillemin and Gillam (2004: 263) suggested that there are two dimensions that need to be considered when conducting research: '*procedural ethics*', which usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans, and '*ethics in practice*' or the everyday ethical issues that arise when conducting research. With regard to procedural ethics, I conducted the current research in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of Warwick after having first sought and obtained approval from the relevant research ethics committee.

On my ethics application form, I detailed the procedures to be adopted in the two phases of my study in order to ensure participants' anonymity and the confidentiality and security of the stored data. In the quantitative phase, in order to protect their identities, respondents were not required to write their names on their questionnaires, while in the qualitative phase, pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names in the recording and analysis of data to ensure anonymity.

Following approval by the University's Ethics Committee, the Vice-Chancellors of the participating universities were contacted in order to obtain their approval to administer the questionnaire at their institutions. The rationale for first seeking the approval of the Vice-Chancellors rather than each individual respondent was that, in Ecuador, any research that takes place in any department of a university needs to be approved by the Vice-Chancellor of the institution. Without such approval, it would not even have been possible to enter the premises of the universities concerned, let alone administer any questionnaires or conduct any interviews. The authorisation to collect data in the universities was given in writing either on the appropriate approval form (see Appendix VI) or orally, when I visited the

universities. In Ecuador, both types of approval, written and oral, have the same value and are considered equally acceptable.

Once I had the authorisation of the Vice-Chancellors to collect data from their language centres, the next step was to seek authorisation and approval from language centre Directors, EFL teachers and students. In both phases of data collection, prior to distributing the questionnaires and to beginning the interviews, it was made clear to participants, orally, that their participation was optional rather than mandatory and that, if they chose not to participate, they would not be disadvantaged in any way. Assurances were also given that their data would not be shared with third parties and would be used exclusively for purpose of this specific research. It was also made clear on the ethics application form, and to the participants orally, that the data files would be stored on the researcher's personal computer and on an external hard drive, both of which require access passwords. The paper-based questionnaires were to be stored in a locked cabinet in Ecuador, and participants were assured that both soft and hard data would be destroyed within five years.

The second ethical dimension considered was 'ethics in practice'; that is, those ethical situations encountered in the field. Once the approval of the Vice-Chancellors of the relevant universities had been secured, the Directors of the language centres were approached. Having already obtained the necessary authorisation from their Vice-Chancellors, it was not necessary to write another letter to the Directors of the language centres requesting their permission to collect data in their centres; instead, the nature of my research was explained in detail to the Directors, along with the assistance required from them, their teachers and their students.

The Directors, EFL teachers and students were not asked to sign an informed letter of consent because, in Ecuador, the general belief is that if people sign something they will be easily identified; they will therefore be reluctant to express their true views when responding to questionnaires or participating in interviews.

This would have resulted in respondents' answers favouring the institution rather than giving a true account of their experiences and perceptions regarding their universities, thereby compromising the quality of the data. Consequently, consent was obtained orally, as is common practice in Ecuador.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004: 272) described informed consent as the

'interpersonal process between researcher and participant, where the prospective participant comes to an understanding of what the research project is about and what participation would involve and makes his or her own free decision about whether, and on what terms, to participate'.

In relation to the idea of a 'free decision', Shaw (2003: 18) stated that 'the principle of consent includes an assumption of voluntary participation'. As stated above, such consent was obtained orally for the reasons discussed.

With regard to the participants in the quantitative phase of the study, since I administered the questionnaires personally, I informed respondents orally about the nature of the study, what their participation would involve, and the measures taken to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. I also emphasised that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without suffering any penalty or disadvantage. All respondents were of legal age and therefore the authorisation of their parents was not required. Informed consent was, again, obtained orally.

In the qualitative phase, participants who agreed to take part in the interviews were reassured of their anonymity and confidentiality. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time and that they would receive and have the opportunity to approve the entire interview transcript. This meant that all participants had control over what was used in the data. Before commencing the interviews, I also asked permission to record our conversations. All participants agreed to be recorded.

Once the interviews had been transcribed, all participants received a copy of their interview transcripts via email and subsequently gave permission, also via email, to use the transcripts.

An ethical dilemma was encountered in the analysis of the qualitative data collected. This concerned the officers of the two national institutions, the president of RANI and the Assistant Secretary of SENESCYT, both of whom I interviewed. When I quoted excerpts from their interviews in the qualitative analysis, I indicated that these quotes belonged to one of these two authorities. Although I did not use their real names, they could, in theory, be identified by virtue of the positions they occupied at the time; however, if I were not to indicate their positions, my analysis would not be sufficiently informative for the readers and end-users of my research.

I had to choose between two options: one, stating their positions and the institutions they represented, which could have resulted in their being identifiable, and two, not mentioning their positions and the institutions they represented and risking an inadequate and possibly confusing analysis. I opted for the first option on the grounds that these two authorities (RANI and SENESCYT) were public figures and some of their points of view were already quite well known as they had been expressed in various public fora. For instance, the president of RANI, in a meeting with EFL teachers from different universities, explained the process that universities went through when selecting a CEFR B1 level. The process she described was the same as the one she explained in the interview I conducted with her and later used in my analysis.

Chapter 4

Quantitative data analysis

Chapter 1 of this thesis presented the motivations for the study reported here, its background, and the global importance and use of English. In Chapter 2, language policy and the use of English in the higher education sector in general was discussed, and the status of ELT in higher education in Ecuador in particular considered. Chapter 3 described the research methodology employed in the study. The current chapter will explain how the questionnaires used in the study were analysed, and will follow this with a discussion of the quantitative results. Furthermore, since this research used an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach – with the primary emphasis being on the qualitative data, the results of the quantitative phase are combined with those of the qualitative phase in the qualitative analysis presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. This with the aim of shedding further light on the qualitative results and enriching the overall analysis.

4.1 Quantitative data analysis (survey)

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the questionnaires. The questionnaires contained scale, nominal and ordinal variables. Scale variables are represented by numbers or within a number scale; nominal variables refer to those that are related to names, and ordinal variables refer to variables that represent a certain order. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the survey data since the aim of this quantitative phase was to provide a detailed description of the current situation of ELT in Ecuadorian universities and how institutions responded to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law according to their category, type and geographic location.

The discussion of the survey results in this chapter is presented in two forms. One contains the mean of the entire respondents as a whole and grouped by the characteristics of the universities. This with the objective of providing a general overview of the ELT situation and responses to Article 124 in the surveyed universities. And two contains disaggregated data in which the results are presented according to the type of participants, namely Directors, EFL teachers or students. This with the aim of providing further explanations through the lenses of each type of respondent. However, not all variables are explained in both ways (holistic and disaggregated) as this depends on the type of variable and the type of respondents that answered specific questions. For example, variables that refer to the description of ELT in language centres are not disaggregated, nor are variables that were answered by specific respondents. As explained in section 3.6.1, not all types of respondents answered all sections of the questionnaires.

The 14 institutions that ultimately participated in the study were based in 10 different cities located across the three regions of the country: Coast (6 universities), the Highlands (7 universities) and Amazonia (one university). The characteristics of the 14 surveyed institutions are presented in Table 9. Each university was surveyed using three sets of questionnaires administered to language centre Directors, EFL teachers and EFL students. I personally visited the 14 universities and invited their language centre directors, EFL teachers and students enrolled in EFL programmes to respond to the questionnaires. The total number of respondents was 363, made up as follows:

- 13 language centre Directors (one university did not have a language centre Director)
- 140 EFL teachers
- 210 EFL students

Despite having administered the questionnaires in person, some respondents failed to return their questionnaires as they were unable to complete them in the

allotted time. Consequently, only 347 of the expected 363 questionnaires were returned (see Table 10).

COAST			
Number	Type	Category	Status
1	Public	A	Surveyed
-	<i>Private</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Not surveyed</i>
-	<i>Co-funded</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Not surveyed</i>
2	Public	B	Surveyed
3	Private	C	Surveyed
4	Co-funded	C	Surveyed
5	Public	C	Surveyed
6	Public	D	Surveyed
HIGHLANDS			
-	<i>Private</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Not surveyed</i>
7	Public	A	Surveyed
8	Public	B	Surveyed
9	Co-funded	B	Surveyed
10	Private	B	Surveyed
11	Public	C	Surveyed
12	Private	C	Surveyed
13	Co-funded	C	Surveyed
-	<i>Private</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Not surveyed</i>
AMAZONIA			
14	Public	B	Surveyed

Table 9. Description of the surveyed universities per type, category

Participant	Number	Percent (%)
Directors	13	3.7%
EFL teachers	128	36.9 %
EFL students	206	59.4%
Total	347	100%

Table 10. Distribution of respondents who participated in the survey

Table 10 shows the distribution and percentage of respondents. The main criterion for selecting the EFL teachers and students participating in EFL courses was the length of their stay at the same university. For EFL teachers, their length of service was at least three years, and for the students, at least 18 months. These periods of time meant that the respondents had had the opportunity to witness any institutional changes following the enactment of the Higher Education Law. In the case of Directors, these criteria did not apply since there was only one Director per language centre. Had I encountered Directors who did not meet this requirement, it would have resulted in a loss of very important data from these participants. All changes in universities and in this case language centres are always well documented and Directors have access to these files. Therefore, even if Directors were new to their positions, they all had knowledge about changes that had occurred in their language centres in response to Article 124.

With regard to the language centre Directors and EFL teachers, the data indicated that 10 (76.9%) of the 13 language centre Directors and 56 (43.4%) of the EFL teachers had studied English or possessed an academic degree from a country in which English is spoken at the native language. The remaining 72 (56.6%) EFL teachers had learnt English in Ecuador.

The assumption of most participants was that EFL teachers at universities who had studied English or obtained an academic degree in an English-speaking

country would possess a high level of communicative competence in the language. However, this could not be confirmed, since the majority of the EFL teachers had not been required to sit an official proficiency exam such as IELTS or TOEFL.

4.1.1 Profiles of the participating universities

Of the 14 universities surveyed in the study, 12 had language centres via which EFL was delivered as an extracurricular, non-credit-bearing course. The main function of the language centres was to offer mainly EFL language courses to students, although a minority also offered other foreign-language courses. These courses were scheduled throughout the day, allowing students to select the most convenient time for them to attend.

The total number of contact hours of these non-credit-bearing EFL courses varied among the 14 universities. In six universities, the EFL courses comprised a total of 81 contact hours; in five universities, EFL courses comprised between 81 and 70 hours, while three institutions offered either 71-80 hours, 51 – 60 hours, or less than 50 hours. The number of EFL contact hours per week also varied. Three universities allotted 10 hours a week, four universities four hours a week, five universities six hours a week, one university eight hours a week and another university three hours a week. One of the reasons for this variation was the lack of government guidelines provided concerning the implementation of Article 124.

The total number of EFL courses that students needed to complete successfully in order to graduate also varied among universities. In universities in which EFL courses were credit bearing, students needed to pass fewer courses than in those institutions in which English was a non-credit-bearing subject. Two of the 14 universities surveyed offered EFL as a credit-bearing subject within their core curriculum. In the Ecuadorian Higher Education system, credits are measured in terms of contact hours per week during a semester; thus, if a course is taught for two hours a week, it bears two credits. In these institutions, students had to study

three EFL courses on average to graduate, whilst in institutions in which English was a non-credit-bearing subject, students had to take up to eight EFL courses. In three universities, the number of EFL courses that students took depended on their programmes of study. For instance, students studying undergraduate engineering programmes had to complete four EFL courses, whereas those in the tourism programmes had to complete nine EFL courses because they needed to learn more English than did those in engineering, according to the Deans of these departments. These differing quantities of input mean that students would acquire different levels of competence in English, with some struggling to achieve the required CEFR B1 level.

The use of English in university contexts other than EFL classes was limited: 21% of universities used English as the means of instruction in specific academic courses, 6.1% of universities used English for extracurricular activities such as contests and language clubs, and only 1.4% of universities used English for administrative functions within their language centres. Despite variation in the structure of EFL programmes and the limited use of English outside of such programmes, the respondents believed that teaching English in higher education was of paramount importance for a variety of reasons, as discussed in the next section.

4.1.2 Reasons to learn English in higher education

The study revealed that 98% of the respondents believed that Ecuadorians, in general, needed to be proficient in English. The results of the survey, together with the inclusion of Article 124 in the Higher Education Law, indicated that Ecuadorian authorities were interested in developing ELT.

In order to rank the reasons why the teaching of English was seen as important in Ecuadorian universities, a questionnaire comprising 18 items organised into two categories was developed and administered to language centre Directors, EFL teachers and students. The first category, *Communication-related*

advantages, comprised 16 items and the second category, *Compliance with the law* consisted of two items. The difference in the number of items in each category depended on the type of each category. For example, in order to measure communication related advantages, more questions were required whilst for law compliance there are only two possible answers, namely yes or no. How the items were grouped in each category is explained below.

Communication-related advantages

1. Students can gain access to more academic publications
2. Students can get well-paid jobs
3. Students can work with international companies
4. Students can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country
5. Students can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world
6. Students can talk to native speakers of English
7. First-world countries speak English
8. In the era of globalisation, English is the common language of communication
9. Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English
10. More foreigners are visiting Ecuador
11. Students are able to work overseas
12. Students can work in the area of global business
13. English promotes students' international mobility
14. Students have an additional competency
15. English promotes intercultural understanding
16. English expands students' professional network

Compliance with the law

1. The Higher Education Law states that all university students must master a foreign language

2. Authorities in the university say that all university students must master a foreign language

The responses of the participants were recorded on a Likert Scale (see Appendix I). This Likert scale comprised four items that were given numerical values for the purpose of the subsequent analysis as follows:

0 = Not applicable (NA)

1 = Strongly disagree (SD)

2 = Disagree (D)

3 = Agree (A)

4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

The mean of the numerical values (from 1 to 4) generated by the Likert scale and grouped according to the two categories (*Communication-related advantages* and *Compliance with the law*) was then computed. The results are presented in Table 11.

Higher Educational Institutions	Communication-related advantages	Compliance with the law
University category		
A	3.1	2.6
B	3	2.8
C	3.2*	2.9*
D	2.4	2.8
University type		
Public	3.1	2.8
Co-funded	3.2*	2.9*
Private	3.1	2.8
Geographic location		
Coast	3.2*	3*
Highlands	3.1	2.8
Amazonia	2.9	2.8
National average	3.3	2.8

* Indicates the highest value in relation to the other universities (Maximum value 4)

Table 11. The relative importance of reasons for ELT in Ecuadorian universities

Table 11 indicates that respondents from the universities (Directors, EFL teachers and EFL students) agreed that English needs to be studied in universities because it has communication-related advantages and for reasons of compliance with the law. Although compliance with the law was ranked second compared to communication-related advantages, there was not much difference between these two categories. The national level of agreement on teaching EFL in

universities because of its communication-related advantages was 3.3, and compliance with the law 2.8. Considering that the value of 3 represents agreement and 2 represents disagreement, it can be said that the value of 2.8 shows that respondents generally tended to agree that EFL needs to be taught in universities because it is a legal requirement. Conversely, category D university respondents prioritised compliance over communication-related advantages; this is unsurprising in that, being the lowest ranked universities, they are particularly keen to perform better in the next evaluation exercise and thereby improve their category rating.

Data in Table 11 does not show a marked difference in responses according to university characteristics. That is, the category, type or geographic location of universities did not appear to influence respondents' (Directors', EFL teachers' and students') reasons why English needed to be studied in universities.

Type of participant	Communication-related advantages	Compliance with the law
Directors	3.3	3
EFL teachers	3.1	2.7
Students	3.2	2.9

Max value = 4

Table 12. The relative importance of ELT in Ecuadorian universities as perceived by respondents

Table 12 shows Directors', EFL teachers' and students' level of agreement with the statements of why English needs to be studied in universities. The results do not show much variation with those in Table 11. Table 12 for example indicates that participants consider that English needs to be taught in universities due to its communication-related advantages rather than because it is a requirement of the Higher Education Law (i.e. a legal requirement). Although Directors prioritised communicative advantages associated with English, they showed a greater level of with agreement than EFL teachers and students with the need to uphold the

Higher Education Law, perhaps because Directors feel under greatest pressure to ensure that their language centres comply with all regulations stipulated by SENESCYT. This trend was also evident in universities responses to Article 124, where they similarly focused more on complying with what was legally required rather than on innovative practices – something that will be taken up further in the coming chapters.

As with the Directors, students showed a level of agreement value of 2.9 concerning the legal requirement of ELT in universities, a value that is higher than the 2.7 value for EFL teachers. This could be the result of a raised awareness the issue of compliance following the closure of 14 universities as a result of the government university evaluation exercises and the consequent need for students affected to seek different universities where they could continue with their academic preparation.

With regard to the communication-related advantages, the survey data revealed a tendency to consider English as a gateway to overseas education. This is shown in Table 13.

Items related to English as a gateway to overseas education	A (%)	SA (%)	A + SA (%)
Students can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country	17.3	68.8	86.1
Students can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world	22.5	57.6	80.1
English promotes students' international mobility	33.3	53.8	87.1

Agree (A)

Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 13. The relative perception of considering English as a gateway to overseas education

Table 13 shows the results, in percentages, of how the participants of the survey saw English as an aid to accessing postgraduate education overseas. The percentage in the fourth column of table shows the sum of the second and third columns (Agree and Strongly agree). These two columns were combined because they both showed agreement, although to different degrees (Agree and Strongly agree). The combined values show a high percentage of agreement, from 80.1% to 86.1%, regarding the perception of English as a gateway to overseas education, one of the reasons being the substantial overseas scholarship programmes SENESCYT offers for graduate studies. From 2006 to 2015, Ecuador granted 10,500 scholarships to Ecuadorian students, placing Ecuador at the top of all Latin American countries, with an average of 2.27 scholarships for every 10,000 inhabitants. Sixty-eight per cent of the scholars chose non-Spanish speaking countries such as the USA and Canada as their destination for postgraduate studies (La Otra.com, 2015). Table 14 contains the participants' disaggregated data regarding English as an aid to gaining access to overseas postgraduate education.

Items related to English as a gateway to overseas education	A (%)		SA (%)		A + SA (%)	
Students can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country	Directors	15.4	Directors	76.9	Directors	92.3
	EFL Teachers	14.5	EFL Teachers	65.8	EFL Teachers	80.3
	Students	19	Students	68.3	Students	87.3
Students can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world	Directors	38.5	Directors	46.2	Directors	84.7
	EFL Teachers	18	EFL Teachers	62.5	EFL Teachers	80.5
	Students	24.4	Students	55.2	Students	79.6
English promotes students' international mobility	Directors	16.7	Directors	75	Directors	91.7
	EFL Teachers	32	EFL Teachers	53.6	EFL Teachers	85.6
	Students	35	Students	52.7	Students	87.7

Agree (A)

Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 14. The relative perception of considering English as a gateway to overseas education as perceived by respondents

Table 14 shows that, in general, all participants agreed that English is an aid to accessing postgraduate education. However, Directors show the highest percentages of agreement regarding English as an aid to accessing postgraduate education compared to EFL teachers and students. The reason for this may be that most Directors (76.9%) will have had direct experience of English facilitating access to overseas postgraduate education as they themselves studied a postgraduate programme in overseas universities. Conversely, EFL teachers' percentages were the lowest regarding English as an aid to accessing overseas postgraduate education. Unlike the Directors, only a 43.4% of the EFL teachers studied a postgraduate programme in an overseas university in which English was

the medium of instruction. These findings suggest that people who have experienced the advantages of English have a more positive attitude towards it than those who have not, and that EFL policymakers should, therefore, try to facilitate university students having real-world experiences of English through which they can understand the benefits of learning the language.

The data further showed that respondents saw the need to study English at universities because of their everyday academic work; for example, reading academic articles and searching online for scientific information in different English-medium databases. The item that sought to measure this in the questionnaire was *Students can gain access to more academic content*. The results of the questionnaire showed that 18.8% of respondents agreed and 66.7% strongly agreed with this item, resulting in a total percentage of 85.5% general agreement. Table 15 below shows the disaggregated data concerning the variable *Students can gain access to more academic content*.

Item related to students' academic work	A (%)		SA (%)		A + SA (%)	
	Students can gain access to more academic publications	<i>Directors</i>	0	<i>Directors</i>	92.3	<i>Directors</i>
<i>EFL Teachers</i>		15.1	<i>EFL Teachers</i>	66.7	<i>EFL Teachers</i>	81.8
<i>Students</i>		22.3	<i>Students</i>	65.0	<i>Students</i>	87.3

Agree (A)
Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 15. The relative perception of considering English as an aid for everyday academic work as perceived by respondents

Table 15 indicates that Directors showed the highest level of agreement (92.3%) with the statement that English can help students access more academic content that can help students in their academic work. This was followed by 87.3% of students, and 81.8% EFL teachers.

Apart from considering English as a gateway to overseas education and as an aid to academic work at university, respondents also believed that being able to communicate in English could increase their employment prospects, as it gave them an additional advantage over and above their academic degrees. This is shown in Table 16.

Items related to English as an aid to improve employment prospects	A (%)	SA (%)	A + SA (%)
Students can get well-paid jobs	25.6	59	84.6
Students can work with international companies	14.6	71.9	86.5
Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English	37.3	31.5	68.8
Students are able to work overseas	27.4	58.5	85.9
Students can work in the area of global business	30.4	55.9	86.3
English expands students' professional network	27.6	59	86.6

Table 16. The relative perception of considering English as an aid to improve employment prospects

Table 16 shows respondents' high level of agreement with the idea that English can improve an individual's employment prospects regarding the perception that English is an aid to improve employment prospects. This was also observed by Alm (2004: 144), who stated that English is 'considered very important for social and professional success by Ecuadorians'. Table 17 below shows the disaggregated data concerning improved employment prospects.

Items related to English as an aid to improve employment prospects	A (%)		SA (%)		A + SA (%)	
Students can get well-paid jobs	Directors	23.1	Directors	69.2	Directors	92.3
	EFL Teachers	26.4	EFL Teachers	52.8	EFL Teachers	79.2
	Students	25.2	Students	62.1	Students	87.3
Students can work with international companies	Directors	15.4	Directors	76.9	Directors	92.3
	EFL Teachers	19.8	EFL Teachers	62.7	EFL Teachers	82.5
	Students	11.3	Students	77.3	Students	88.6
Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English	Directors	33.3	Directors	41.7	Directors	75
	EFL Teachers	38.4	EFL Teachers	27.2	EFL Teachers	65.6
	Students	36.9	Students	33.5	Students	70.4
Students are able to work overseas	Directors	15.4	Directors	76.9	Directors	92.3
	EFL Teachers	28.9	EFL Teachers	54.5	EFL Teachers	83.4
	Students	27.2	Students	59.7	Students	86.9
Students can work in the area of global business	Directors	30.8	Directors	61.5	Directors	92.3
	EFL Teachers	34.6	EFL Teachers	49.6	EFL Teachers	84.2
	Students	27.8	Students	59.5	Students	87.3
English expands students' professional network	Directors	91.7	Directors	0	Directors	91.7
	EFL Teachers	29.9	EFL Teachers	55.9	EFL Teachers	85.8
	Students	27.8	Students	59	Students	86.8

Table 17. The relative perception of considering English as an aid to improve employment prospects as perceived by respondents

Table 17 shows of Directors as having the highest percentage of agreement with the employment prospects statements compared to EFL teachers and students. This is consistent with the findings relating to the previous variables that aimed to measure the need to teach English in universities. The lowest percentage of agreement among all participants related to the statement that Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English.

Although the percentages of participants that agreed with the statements that reflected the need to teach English in universities are, in general, high, it is important to highlight that the percentage differences of between Directors and EFL. This difference, which amounts to an average of 9 points and is in most of the cases lower than that found in the students' responses, may be a result of the absence of EFL teachers' participation in the process of EFL language policy design. Teachers may have not developed a sense of ownership regarding EFL language policy in their institutions – a point that will be taken up again later.

The agreement with the idea EFL needs to be taught at universities due to the communication advantages, and particularly its facilitation of overseas education and improved employment prospects, shows that teaching English in higher education needs to be seen to have utility – real-world benefits; for example, an increased ability to cope with academic studies in contexts where English is the medium of instruction. Such a purpose effectively carries more weight, it seems, than the more general goal of simply achieving a CEFR B1 level of proficiency for its own sake, such as is currently happening in Ecuadorian university context.

4.1.3 Support of a university's senior management figures for EFL programmes

Regrettably, although the rankings of the language centre respondents suggested that they assigned greater importance to the practical use of English in their academic and future professional lives than to the need to be compliant, there was a lack of support for ELT provided by the universities' senior management figures (Vice-Chancellors and Deans - see Table 18).

The support of ELT by senior management was measured using a Likert scale included in section III of the language centre Directors' questionnaire. This section consisted of 15 items (see Appendix I) grouped into three main categories (Support for students, Support for EFL teachers, and Support for EFL programmes), as shown in Figure 4.

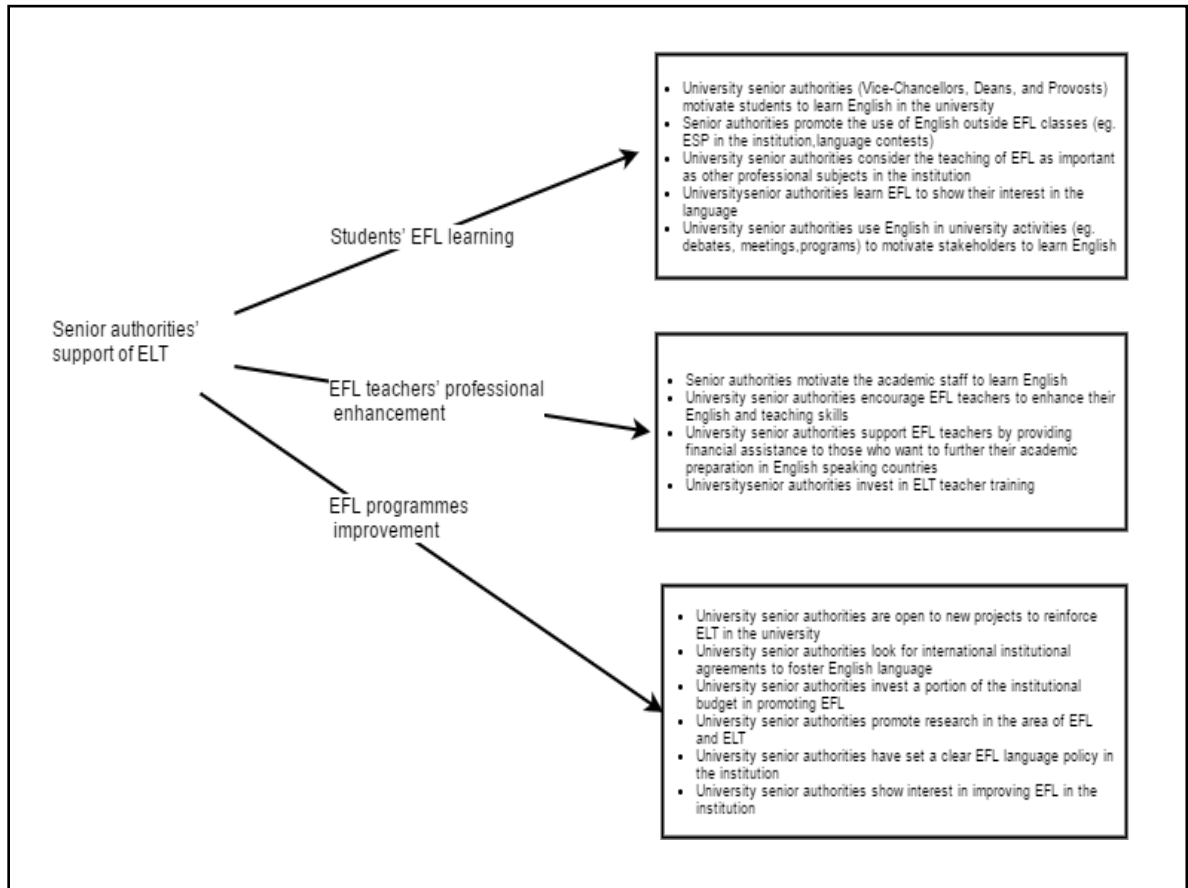


Figure 4. Senior management figures' support for ELT programmes

As with the previous Likert scale, numerical values were assigned to the respondents' answers and the mean of their answers was then computed. The values assigned to the Likert scale options were:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Most of the time
- 5 = Always

The responses of senior management in the participating universities to the question concerning how they supported English language provision are presented according to their institutional characteristics in Table 18.

Higher Educational Institutions	Support for Ss' learning	Support for EFL programmes improvement	Support for Ts' professional development
University category			
A	3.1	3	2.3
B	2.6	2.6	2.3
C	2.6	2.5	2.2
D	2.8	3.4	2.6
University type			
Public	2.8	2.8	2.4
Co-funded	2.4	2.5	2.2
Private	2.7	2.4	1.9
University geographic location			
Coast	2.8	2.8	2.4
Highlands	2.5	2.5	2.1
Amazonia	3	3.1	2.6
National average	2.6	2.6	2.3

Values of 1=never, 5= always

Table 18. Institutional senior management figures' support for ELT

Table 18 shows that, in general, there was not much support offered for ELT (mean values of 2.6 and 2.3). However, of the three categories measured, the least supported area was teachers' professional development, while the most supported was student learning – a finding that corresponded with the high level of students' satisfaction with their EFL programmes recorded in the study. Table

19 shows how Directors, EFL teachers and students perceive the institutional senior authorities' support for ELT in participating universities.

Type of participant	Support for Ss' learning	Support for EFL programmes improvement	Support for Ts' professional development
Directors	3	3.2	3
EFL teachers	2.9	3	2.9
Students	2.5	2.4	1.9

Values of 1=never, 5= always

Table 19. Institutional senior management figures' support as perceived by Directors, EFL teachers and students

Table 19 shows that Directors perceived that senior management figures sometimes supported students EFL learning, EFL programme improvement and teachers' professional development. While EFL teachers' responses did not diverge much from those of the Directors, students perceived the lowest levels of support related to their learning, ELT programme improvement and teachers' professional development. Important to emphasise here is the students' perception of a low level support provided by senior management for teachers' professional development. Given that teachers' professional development translates into better teaching practices and more effective EFL policy implementation, it may be that students' perceptions may be the result of difficulties that EFL teachers had in implementing certain aspects of institutional EFL language policy, and on which they picked up in the process of their learning English. These difficulties will be described in detail in the qualitative analysis.

The lack of support for teachers' development contradicted the generally positive attitude among the surveyed universities towards the need for teaching EFL in higher education, as explained earlier. University senior management need to note that better trained teachers can result in better policy implementation and more visible positive agency. Agency 'has to do with the capacity to shape our responsiveness to the situations we encounter in our lives' (Biesta and Tedder,

2007:147). Therefore, better prepared teachers can respond in more effective ways to challenges that may arise in the process of policy implementation.

4.1.4 Ecuadorian universities' responses to Article 124: The case of EFL

Section IV of the language centre Directors' questionnaire identified and ranked the universities' responses to Article 124 in relation to three categories: (1) management, (2) infrastructure, and (3) pedagogy. Management referred to administrative responses, such as modifying EFL programmes or changing the requirements for EFL teachers seeking jobs in university language centres. Infrastructure referred to modifications in classrooms and to material resources such as media equipment, while pedagogy referred to modifications in the use of teaching resources such as textbooks or ICT in EFL classes. Each of the categories comprised a series of statements to which the participants were asked to respond by selecting those statements that reflected the action taken by their respective institutions. For instance, if a university had added more ICT equipment such as desktops to classrooms in response to Article 124, the respondents ticked this option. A value of 1 was assigned to each option selected.

In order to rank and identify the level of universities' responses as perceived by the respondents, all selected items included in each category were added and the mean value of all respondents' answers was computed. This value was then converted into a percentage. For example, the category 'Infrastructure Responses' contained four statements; thus, had all responses been selected, this would have equated to 100%, while fewer responses would have been manifested as a lower percentage. The same computation was carried out for all of the categories. The results of the items comprising each of these categories will be discussed later when the two data sets (quantitative and qualitative) are combined. It should be emphasised that the intention was to acquire a *holistic* picture of how universities responded to Article 124 rather than how Directors, EFL teachers or students individually perceived institutional responses. Thus, the

data regarding universities' responses to Article 124 was not disaggregated according to type of participant.

In general, respondents indicated that the level of response to Article 124 in the three aforementioned areas (management, infrastructure and pedagogy) was low; however, the data that were elicited showed that almost all universities, except the private institutions, focused mainly on improving their infrastructure (see Table 20). Taking into account the fact that infrastructure was an aspect that was considered by CEAACES when this office evaluated the overall performance of Ecuadorian universities and categorised them from A (the best) to D (the worst), the institutional interest in improving infrastructure could have been a result of this evaluation process rather than a particular desire to respond to Article 124. On the other hand, if infrastructure was not the first response of private universities, this could have been a consequence of the considerable cost involved in modifying infrastructure.

Pedagogy was, according to the respondents, the second area in which almost all universities concentrated in their response to Article 124. Finally, respondents manifested that management-focused responses were the area that universities modified least, probably because changing the established structures presented significant challenges, as will be discussed later in this chapter when the quantitative results are combined with the qualitative results and analysed. Institutional responses to Article 124, and their ranking, are presented in Table 20.

University	Infrastructure-focused responses %	Pedagogically focused responses %	Management-focused responses %
University category			
A	64%	38%	28%
B	38%	33%	24%
C	41%	31%	23%
D	50%	36%	25%
University type			
Public	45%	33%	25%
Co-funded	44%	30%	21%
Private	30%	40%	25%
University Geographic location			
Coast	41%	29%	22%
Highlands	45%	37%	26%
Amazonia	35%	22%	19%
National average	43%	33%	24%

Max value= 100%

Table 20. Universities' responses to the implementation of Article 104

4.1.5 Limitations of the survey

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the survey used in the study, and in particular the fact that the different categories contain different numbers of items. For example, the category 'Infrastructure-focused responses' comprises 4 items, the category 'Pedagogically-focused responses' comprises 22 items, and the category 'Management-focused responses' comprises 20 items. This difference in the number of items in each category means that in order to complete all possible options presented to respondents, every effort was required from the senior management authorities and stakeholders of the participating universities. For example, in order to fulfil the item 'Build more classrooms to be used exclusively by the language centre' in the category 'Infrastructure-focused responses', senior management authorities needed to invest large amounts of

money. However, for the item *'Employ a specific ELT methodology'* in the category 'Pedagogically-focused responses', although money was not involved, in order to fulfil this item, knowledge of pedagogy, leadership and innovation among stakeholders was required. Also, in the item *'Hire foreign teachers who have graduate degrees'* in the category 'Management-focused responses', there was no need for money or the active participation of all stakeholders since decisions concerning the hiring of EFL teachers with graduate degrees rested mainly on the Directors of the language centres.

To fulfil all items in the three categories, different types of actions and the involvement of different people were required. For example, for the category 'Infrastructure-focused responses' money was needed; for the category 'Pedagogically-focused responses' the active participation of all stakeholders was needed; and for 'Management-focused responses' Directors' management skills were needed. This difference in the nature of the items makes difficult a fair comparison among these three categories. However, the results of the survey indicate the areas in which senior management authorities, Directors and EFL teachers concentrated their efforts in implementing Article 124.

Furthermore, while in the case of infrastructure-focused responses it is possible to achieve an outcome of 100% of responses since the four items are totally different, in the case of the other two categories (pedagogically-focused and management-focused responses) achieving a 100% outcome is highly unlikely due to the nature of some items and the fact that some are mutually exclusive. For example, in the case of 'Pedagogically-focused responses' these two items are exclusive: 1) *'Employ a more student-centred approach to teaching'* and 2) *'Employ a more teacher-centred approach to teaching'*. This means that if respondents select the first item, the second is automatically invalidated. Thus 100% response rate becomes impossible.

For this reason, it is important to note that the percentages which refer to the total percentage of universities' responses presented in this section are not precise but

approximates that provide information about what respondents think in relation to the particular options or choices available to them. They are needed to show areas where policy implementation is most evident. However, the items that comprise these responses will be disaggregated and individually enriched and explained with the qualitative data in chapter 6.

4.1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the questionnaires administered to three types of respondents sourced from a sample of universities located in the three different regions of Ecuador: (1) language centre Directors, (2) EFL teachers, and (3) students taking EFL courses. In summary, the data showed the following:

1. The teaching of EFL in the sampled universities was diverse regarding course duration and the number of contact hours per week.
2. The general government regulation requiring universities to put measures in place to help all their students acquire a CEFR B1 proficiency level in a foreign language was not followed by some universities that had internal EFL language policies which specified different English language requirements.
3. The number and length of courses that students needed to complete successfully differed from one university to another, resulting in the acquisition of different levels of English-language proficiency among students.
4. Respondents agreed that the advantages of ELT in higher education were communication-related, for these can help students to pursue postgraduate degrees and improve their employment prospects. Furthermore, participants generally agreed that English should be taught in universities because it was a legal requirement.
5. Despite a general interest in the learning of English in the surveyed universities, senior management figures did not provide appropriate support for ELT programmes that could enable learning to take place. While some support was

given to students of English, support for EFL teachers' development was felt to be inadequate by participants.

6. The universities did not generally respond to Article 124 in significant ways. Infrastructure was the area that universities focused on the most, whereas management was focused on the least. These results will be considered again later in the light of the data elicited in the qualitative phase of the study

Chapter 5

The Coding process and the development of themes

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design which comprised a quantitative and a qualitative phase. This chapter focuses on the qualitative phase and presents a detailed description of the coding process and the way in which the key themes were identified and developed in preparation for the analysis of the data, which will be presented in subsequent chapters.

5.1 The coding process

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted. A thematic analysis is 'a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis' (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006: 82). The themes drawn from the data are references 'to a specific pattern of meaning' (Joffe, 2012: 209 - 210). Joffe also added that the content of the themes can either be manifest or latent. Manifest content refers to more observable content in the data, while the latent content refers to that which is more implicit. In other words, manifest content is more overt and thus requires less inferencing, unlike latent content, which is less overt and requires a greater degree of analysis.

Following the process of thematic analysis, I began by becoming familiar with the data obtained from the in-depth semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Following the suggestions of Braun and Clarke (2006:87), I had to be 'familiar with the depth and breadth of the content' of the data through a process of constant and iterative data reading'. The process of data familiarisation in this study began after my first interview with the first language centre Director. My purpose was twofold: (1) it helped me to become acquainted with the responses of the participants, and (2) it assisted me in the planning of the subsequent interviews.

Once all qualitative data had been collected, the data were transcribed in MS Word and each respondent's data saved in individual Word files. Subsequently, all files were imported into NVivo, after which an initial thorough reading of each file was carried out in order to achieve greater familiarity with the data sets and to begin the initial process of coding (see Figure 5).

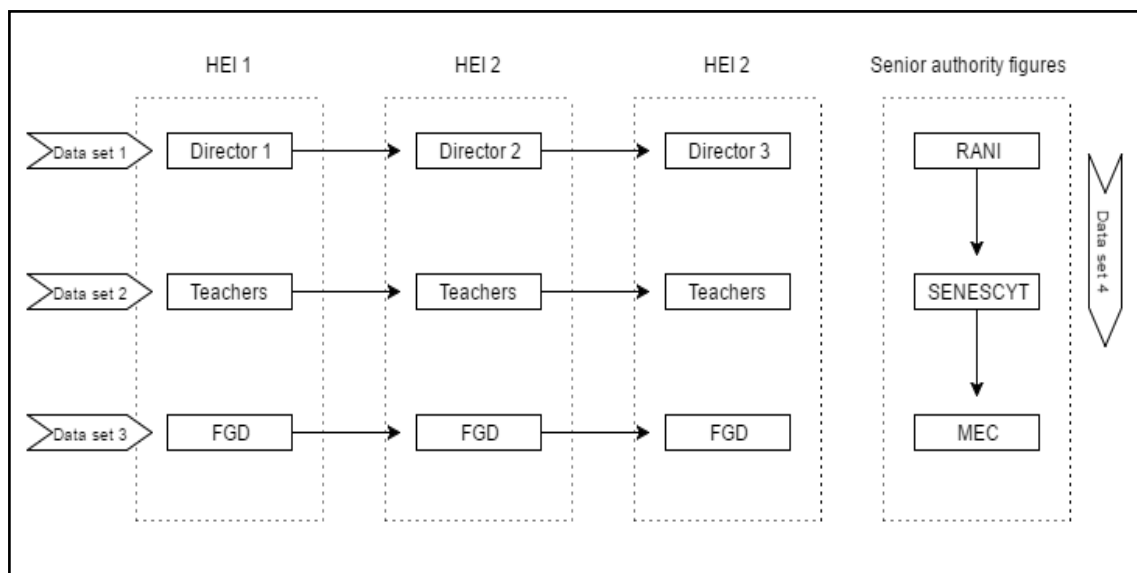


Figure 5. Organisation of data sets

Figure 5 shows how the respondents' transcripts were grouped into four data sets across the three universities. Data set 1 consisted of all interviews held with the language centre Directors; Data set 2 consisted of all interviews conducted with EFL teachers; Data set 3 consisted of all FGDs conducted with the students; and Data set 4 consisted of the interviews with senior authorities from RANI, SENESCYT and MEC (Ministry of Education). Following the organisation of data sets, the process of coding was undertaken. This process was conducted according to a selective coding approach. It required the identification and selection of a 'corpus of instances of the phenomenon' under study in order to have a 'pre-existing theoretical and analytic knowledge' of the phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 206). The result of the survey (Phase 1 of this research project) served as the pre-existing knowledge that framed the construction of the

codes. And the following research questions were later used as the overarching themes:

1. What challenges have universities encountered in the process of planning their EFL programmes in accordance with the changes in government language policy and regulation specified in Article 124?
2. How effectively have universities overcome the key challenges to implementing change in their EFL programmes according to the requirements stipulated in Article 124?
3. What tensions can be identified between government goals, as articulated in Article 124, and their implementation by universities?

Additional to the results of the survey and the above research questions, the interview guide questions also helped me as a framework in the organisation and construction of codes which in turn led to the development of subthemes and themes. The development of themes and how these themes were grouped under each overarching theme will be described later in this section.

Regarding the construction of codes, Figure 6 shows the framework for the construction of codes from each of the data sets. Each data set contains the transcripts of the interviews and the FGDs depending on the type of participants, for example: directors, EFL teachers, students or senior authority figures (see Figure 5). The initial construction of codes started with the Data set 1, then, these codes served to frame the coding process of the subsequent data. As the coding process progressed new codes were constructed (see Figure 7).

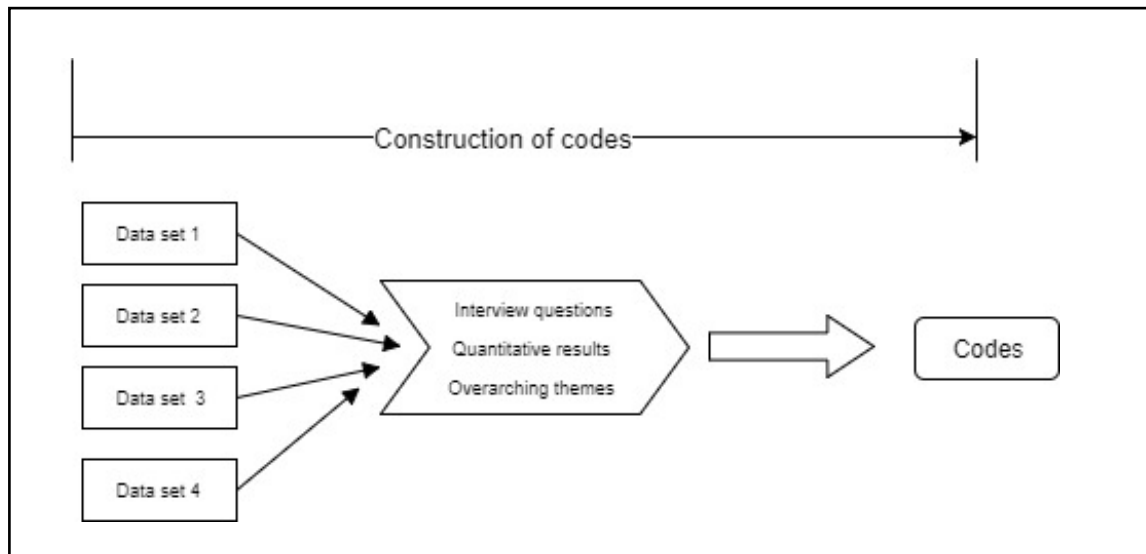
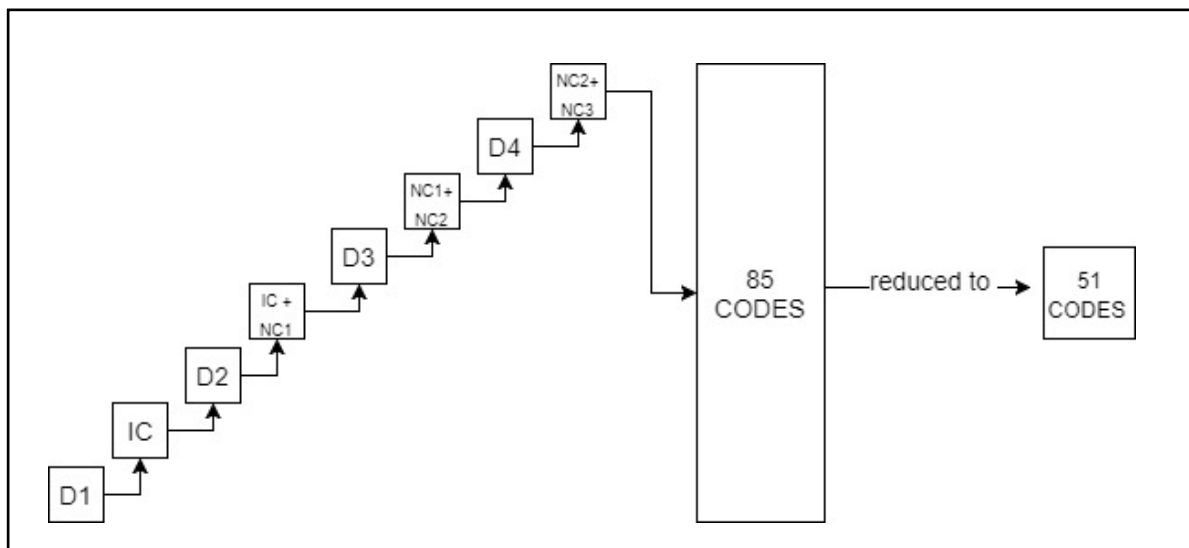


Figure 6. Framework for the construction of codes



*D1 = Data set 1; D2 = Data set 2; D3 = Data set 3; D4 = Data set 4.
 IC = Initial coding; NC1 = New coding 1; NC2 = New coding 2; NC3 = New coding 3*

Figure 7 Process for the construction of codes

Figure 7 shows that the initial construction of codes (IC), starting with Data Set 1 (D1). These initial codes were used to develop the codes for data Set 2 (D2). Apart from the initial codes, new codes were constructed from the data set 2. The initial codes, together with those from data set 2 (D2) resulted in a new set of

codes (NC1). Subsequently, the new codes 1 (NC1) were used in coding Data Set 3 (D3). NC1, together with the codes from data set 3 (D3), resulted in new codes 2 (NC2). This process was repeated with Data Set 4. This process of code construction resulted in 85 codes; however, 35 of these 85 codes (see Table 21) were discarded either because two or more of them were closely related to others and therefore merged to form one code, or because there was only one manifestation of them in the data.

Closely-Related Codes		
No	Codes	Description
1	High English proficiency among teachers is needed	The teacher qualifications seen as necessary to teach English. Respondents do not perceive academic qualifications as more important than language proficiency.
2	Poor level of language proficiency acquired in school	The kind of English that students have acquired during their basic education is not enough to facilitate the acquisition of B1.
3	Poor teaching of English in public schools	The teaching of English in public schools is perceived as low quality. Consequently, the kind of English that students have when they start university is also.
4	Syllabus implementation	Teachers have to design extensive syllabus for the duration of the course.
5	The newly introduced category of 'tutor'	The consideration of teachers as tutors instead of academicians.
6	The need to set a minimum required level of English for teachers	The minimum level of English that a teacher needs to teach in a university.
7	Universities need general pedagogical regulations	A language policy needs to include general regulations that focus mainly on the area of classroom practice.
8	Universities need methodological and management regulations	A language policy does not need to include prescriptive regulations of what universities have to do in ELT. They need regulations that focus on the areas of methodology and management of language centres.
Codes with only a single manifestation		
No	Codes	Description
1	A call for the evaluation of teachers	The perception that teachers' level of English need to be constantly evaluated.

2	Communication	The perception that students need to learn English in order to be able to communicate with other people.
3	Contextual critiques of the CEFR	The idea that the CEFR cannot be used in Ecuador because the framework was conceived in Europe.
4	Denial of teacher's responsibilities for improper use of ICT	The teacher does not recognise their limited knowledge of ICT and blame the ICT resources for their shortcomings.
5	English as the means of instruction is problematic	Using English as a mean of instruction is problematic because there are too few academics who speak sufficient English. Furthermore, the majority of them have little or no interest in learning the language.
6	English is needed for obtaining scholarships	The perception that English is the only requirement to access scholarships.
7	Extent of the use of English outside the English classroom	The extent to which English is used more broadly, outside the classroom in HEIs.
8	Ineffective management of senior authorities	Senior authorities do not facilitate efficient administrative processes.
9	International exams good, national bad	International English language exams are perceived to be better at evaluating students' level of English. They are also considered to be more difficult. Local exams, in contrast, are perceived to be easy and ineffective at measuring a course planned with reference to the CEFR.
10	International language exams as guidelines for planning EFL programmes	The content of international English exams should constitute the main goal of ELT. As such, the entire EFL programme needs to be directed to train students to pass these kinds of exams.
11	Internships	HEIs offer their students internships where they can practice their English.
12	Language framework	The inclusion of a language framework in an EFL language policy is important for standardisation. The framework has to be international.
13	Mismanagement of allotted resources	Senior authorities do not distribute the institutional budget evenly among all academic departments.
14	Motivation	Universities have developed activities to motivate students to learn English.
15	National standardised evaluation for students	A national standardised evaluation is needed to check whether all students have acquired a CEFR B1 level of English.
16	Native speakers are more knowledgeable	Preference for English native speakers in delivering English programmes. Ecuadorian teachers are perceived not to be as knowledgeable as native speakers of English.
17	Perceived type of English needed	The perception that ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and EAP (English for academic purposes) have to be taught to university students.
18	Selection of a CEFR B1 level of English because it allows a basic level of communication	The perception that the CEFR B1 level of English allows people to engage in basic communication.

19	Senescyrt support given to universities	The type of support that the senescyrt gives to universities, particularly ELT programmes.
20	Students' desire to have tailor-made programmes	The demand of students to have programmes that adjust to their individual circumstances/preferences such as their academic timetables.
21	The advantages of standardisation	Standardisation is good because it will improve the teaching of English in universities located in small towns and cities.
22	The need of an entry test for identification and proper placement of students	The need to have an entry test to measure the actual level of English that students have when entering the University.
23	Theses abstracts	Students are required to write the abstracts of their theses in English.
24	The threat to teachers unable to prove demonstrate adequate proficiency in English	Institutions do not support teachers' professional growth. Instead, universities threaten to fire teachers if they do not score high in international language exams.
25	We buy your textbooks, you train us	Textbooks publishers must train teachers because it is a complementary service for buying the books.
26	Which languages are taught and how is decided by the universities	Universities need to select which foreign languages to teach based on the university's necessities and the practical use that students will give to these languages. The state cannot impose the language or languages to be taught within universities.

Table 21. Discarded codes

The codes that were merged into a single code were as follows:

1. The codes *Universities need general pedagogical regulations and Universities need methodological and management regulations* were merged with the code *Need for regulations*.
2. The codes *High English proficiency among teachers is needed and The need to set a minimum required level of English for teachers* were merged with *Perceptions of teachers' qualifications*.
3. The codes *Poor level of language proficiency acquired in school and Poor teaching of English in public schools* were merged with *Selection of a B1 level of English based on students' current knowledge of the language*.
4. The code *Syllabus implementation* was merged with *Extensive syllabus*.

5. The code *The newly introduced category of 'tutor'* was merged with *Tenured teachers have more opportunities*.

After the 34 codes were discarded or merged to other codes, 51 codes were considered for the identification of themes and sub-themes. Table 22 shows the list of the final 51 codes and their descriptors.

No	Codes	Description
1	Abrupt changes	Sudden changes occurring in national policies in the higher education sector.
2	Adjust contact hours according to students' convenience	A new distribution of contact hours in relation to students' time convenience.
3	Assign roles to new textbooks	Textbooks have additional roles apart from that of instructional materials.
4	CEFR considered as a perfect framework	Participants consider CEFR as perfect for language teaching, planning and benchmarking students
5	CEFR for standardisation	Participants believe that, by using the CEFR, English programmes can be standardised in terms of what a student needs to know in each of the different stages of language learning.
6	Change textbook	Changing former textbooks to new ones.
7	Classrooms shared with other academic programmes	Some classrooms are not exclusive for English classes. They are shared with other undergraduate courses
8	Clubs	The creation of clubs where students can practice their English while performing other activities, such as writing or speaking activities.
9	Communication-driven activities	Development of classroom activities to increase communication among students.
10	Conformity with CEFR	Universities adhere to the indicators of CEFR and follow them without any modification.
11	Consideration of students' interests	The different class activities developed by the teachers are planned based on the students' academic interests.
12	Determining teachers' levels of English-language proficiency	The identification of the level of English proficiency among teachers via standardised international exams.
13	Lack of status of English.	English is perceived as a less important subject when compared to the other subjects in the curriculum.
14	English as a core subject in the main curriculum	The idea that students will be forced to learn English if it is considered as a core subject in the curriculum (credit-bearing subject).

15	English as an extra-curricular subject	English is not a credit-bearing subject and its delivery is managed entirely by language centres.
16	Excessive number of students per class	Large classes usually have more than 30 students in one classroom.
17	Extensive syllabus	The syllabus is extensive compared to the time that teachers have to complete it.
18	Hesitation to share information downwards	Information about management processes and their rationale is kept within the more senior levels of administration/management and is not communicated downwards.
19	ICT additions	The kind of ICT resources that universities had incorporated into their language centres.
20	ICT as an aid in teaching English	Increase in the use of ICT-driven activities in the EFL classes.
21	Improve departmental planning and management	Better organisation regarding the distribution of instructional materials, timetables and planning within the language centres.
22	Teachers' Inadequate ICT knowledge	Teachers' inadequate knowledge of how to use the ICT resources in their classes.
23	Justification for using books	The reasons that have prompted participants to use textbooks in their EFL classes.
24	Lack of ICT resources	Classrooms are not equipped with ICT resources such as speakers and LCD projectors.
25	Limit the number of students per class	Language centre regulations in an attempt to limit the class size to less than 30 students per classroom.
26	Limited budget	The economic resources of the universities are limited.
27	Monitoring teachers	The need to constantly monitor teachers to check their performances in their classes.
28	More classrooms, labs and facilities	Universities have increased the number of their classrooms and laboratories.
29	More contact hours, more teachers	The need for universities to increase the number of English teachers to increase the number of contact hours.
30	Need for regulations	Universities need regulations to implement any changes.
31	New textbooks, different pedagogy	Changing textbooks resulted in a modification of the teaching approach.
32	Poor infrastructure, difficult teaching	When there is no proper infrastructure, the teaching of English to students becomes difficult.
33	Perceptions of teachers' qualifications	Teachers' qualifications are necessary to teach English in higher education.
34	Preference for old practices	Teachers prefer to continue with their normal practices. They are reluctant to change.
35	Problems of using on-line platforms	Teachers become passive and do not innovate in their classes. They merely follow the platform exercises.

36	Project presentations	The presentation of different projects developed by students. These projects are presented to different audiences.
37	RANI's encouragement of standardisation	RANI promotes the standardisation of EFL programmes among all its members.
38	Selection of a B1 level of English based on RANI's suggestions	A B1 level should be the target because it is what RANI suggests.
39	Selection of a B1 level of English based on students' current knowledge of the language	The baseline knowledge of English that students have when they start university would determine the extent of English that they can acquire at the university.
40	Selection of a B1 level of English based on teachers' levels of English	The selection of a B1 level was based on the teachers' levels of English language proficiency. Generally, teachers have a B1 level or lower.
41	Setting national regulations	Regulations at a national level were designed and officially instituted via the Academic Regulation Regimen.
42	Small classrooms	The classrooms are small in relation to the number of students in a class.
43	Standardisation of the syllabus	All teachers in the language centres use the same syllabus template and contents.
44	Students are more ICT adept than are teachers	Students are more proficient in the use of ICT than are their teachers.
45	Students' preference for learning	Students show an inclination to learn English based on a more practical activity whereby teachers promoted the use of the language as the means of communication.
46	Syllabus implementation	Teachers have to follow the activities and timetable included in the syllabus strictly throughout the duration of the course.
47	Teachers' access to SENESCYT scholarships	Tensions between teachers and SENESCYT regarding the scholarships offered by the latter institution.
48	Tenured teachers have more opportunities	Teachers with permanent contracts have more access to professional development.
49	Top-level flow in management and regulations	Authorities decide what needs to be done in the area of foreign-language teaching and the universities abide by those decisions.
50	Use of English as a medium of instruction in core academic subjects	Use of English in the core subjects of the students' academic programmes.
51	Youth is a synonym for technology	The perception that all young people learn when ICT is the main teaching resource.

Table 22. Description of codes

Having identified the codes, the next step was to develop the themes.

5.2 Development of themes

Theme identification consisted of two approaches: the first was developed from a theoretical idea and the second from the raw data itself (deductive/inductive) (Joffe, 2012: 210). A theoretical idea refers to a conceptual interpretation of codes, a deductive process in which the researcher interprets the meaning of the codes and groups them into themes. In the second approach, the researcher groups the codes into themes by examining the raw data and using an inductive process.

The themes are related to each other in a top-down and lateral manner (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 231). This means that the themes are all interconnected. Braun and Clarke specified three types of themes: overarching themes, themes and sub-themes. Overarching themes serve as overall organisers for the analysis and do not 'contain codes or data' (p. 231) but summarise a number of themes. In this study, overarching themes were developed from the research questions, resulting in the following:

- Key challenges in the implementation of Article 124
- Universities' strategies for overcoming the key challenges
- The tensions revealed during the process of implementing Article 124.

The sub-themes contained more detailed information that was subordinate to a more holistic idea (main theme). This is captured in Figure 8.

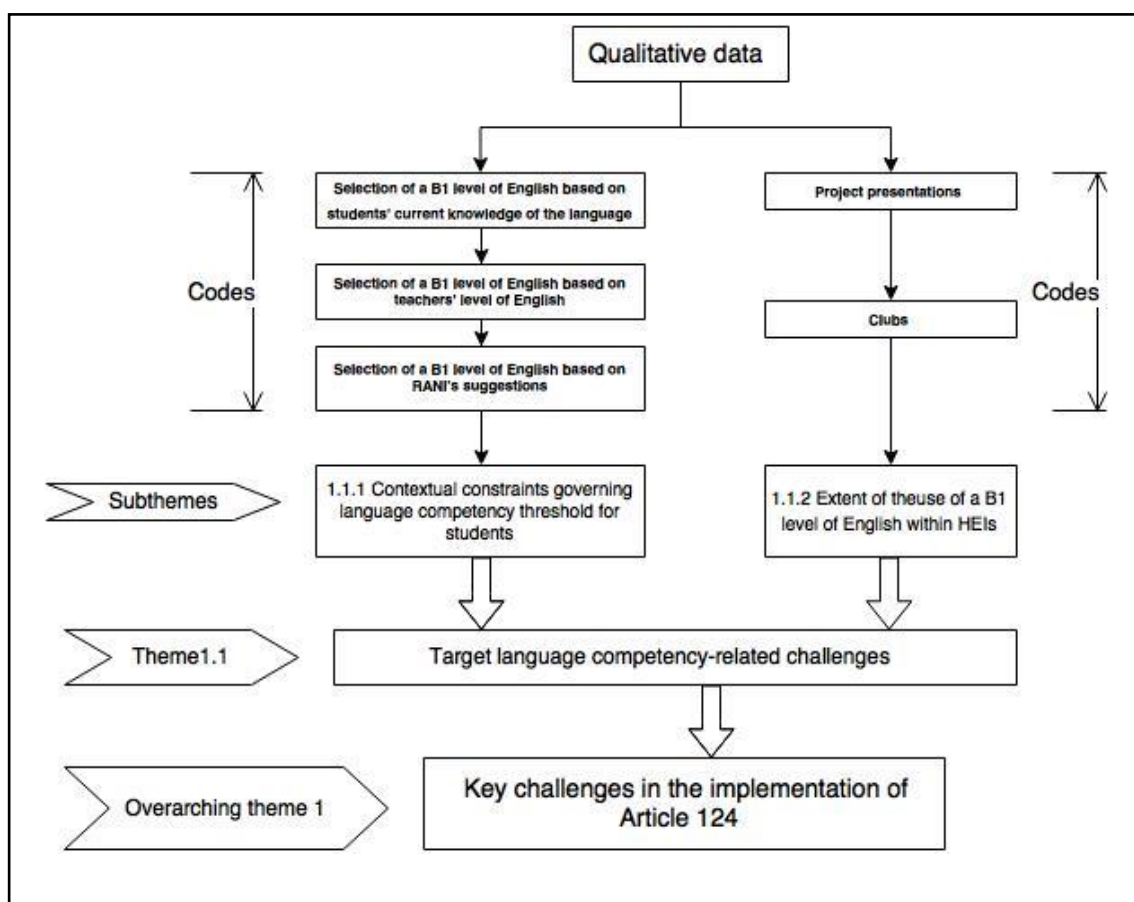


Figure 8. Process of the identification of overarching themes, themes and sub-themes

Figure 8 presents the process of the identification of the overarching themes, themes and sub-themes. This process began with the grouping of codes with the same orientation into sub-themes. The sub-themes were grouped to form themes, which were subsequently organised into overarching theme (see Table 23).

	Overarching theme 1			Overarching theme 2			Overarching theme 3	
	1. Key challenges in the implementation of Article 124			2. universities' ways of overcoming the key challenges			3. Tensions revealed during the process of implementing Article 124	
Themes	1.1 Target language competency-related challenges	1.2 Administrative Challenges	1.3 Pedagogical challenges	2.1 Administrative adjustments	2.2 Pedagogical adjustments	2.3 Language framework adjustments	3.1 Tensions in management	3.2 Tensions among teachers
Sub-themes	1.1.1 Contextual constrains governing the language competency threshold for students 1.1.2 Extent of the use of a B1 level of English within universities	1.2.1 Infrastructure-related challenges 1.2.2 Management-related challenges 1.2.3 Participants' perceived problems in ELT	1.3.1 ICT-based challenges 1.3.2 Curricular challenges	2.1.1 Formulation of regulations at national and institutional levels 2.1.2 Responses in infrastructure 2.1.3 Responses in management	2.2.1 Pedagogically related responses	2.3.1 Adoption of the CEFR as a benchmark standard	3.1.1 Teacher's capability	3.2.1 Access of teachers to privileges

Table 23. Description of overarching themes one, two and three with their themes and sub-themes

While Table 23 shows how the sub-themes were grouped to form themes, and themes organised according to broader overarching themes, it does not contain the codes encapsulated in each sub-theme. These codes are presented in Tables 24, 25 and 26.

Overarching theme 1: Key challenges in the implementation of Article 124

Theme 1.1 Target language competency-related challenges Theme 1.2: Administrative Challenges Theme 1.3: Pedagogical challenges

1.1.1 Contextual constraints governing the language competency threshold for students	1.1.2 Extent of the use of a B1 level of English within universities	1.2.1 Infrastructure-related challenges	1.2.2 Management-related challenges	1.2.3 Participants' perceived problems in ELT	1.3.1 ICT-based challenges	1.3.2 Curricular challenges
Selection of a B1 level of English based on RANI's suggestions	Clubs	Limited budget	Abrupt changes	More contact hours, more teachers	Teachers' Inadequate ICT knowledge	Extensive syllabus
Selection of a B1 level of English Based on teachers' levels of English	Project presentations	Small classrooms	Hesitation to share information downwards	Need for regulations	Problems with using on-line platforms	Syllabus implementation
Selection of a B1 level of English Based on students' current knowledge of the language	Use of English as a medium of instruction in core academic subjects	Classrooms shared with other academic programmes	Preference for old practices	Lack of status of English	Students are more ICT adept than are teachers	Students' preferences for learning
		Poor infrastructure, difficult teaching		Excessive number of students per class	Youth is a synonym for technology	
		Lack of ICT resources				

Table 24. Description of overarching theme 1 with its themes, sub-themes and codes

Overarching theme 2: Universities' ways of overcoming the key challenges

Theme 2.1: Administrative adjustments
Language framework adjustments

Theme 2.2: Pedagogical adjustments

Theme 2.3:

2.1.1 Formulation of regulations at national and institutional levels	2.1.2 Responses in infrastructure	2.1.3 Responses in management	2.2.1 Pedagogically related responses	2.3.1 Adoption of the CEFR as a benchmark standard
Setting national regulations	More classrooms, labs and facilities	Improve departmental planning and management	Consideration of students' interests	Conformity with the CEFR
RANI's encouragement of standardisation	ICT additions	Limit the number of students per class	Communication-driven activities	CEFR for standardisation
English as a core subject in the main curriculum		Adjust contact hours according to students' convenience	New textbooks, different pedagogy	CEFR considered as a perfect framework
English as an extra-curricular subject		Standardisation of syllabus	ICT as an aid in teaching English	
Top-level flow in management and regulations		Change textbooks	Assign roles to new textbooks	
		Determining teachers' levels of English language proficiency	Justification for using books	
		Monitoring teachers		

Table 25. Description of overarching theme 2 with its themes, sub-themes and codes

Overarching theme 3: Tensions revealed during the process of implementing Article 124

Theme 3. 1: Tensions in management

Theme 3.2: Tensions among teachers

3.1.1 Teachers' capability	3.2.1 Access of teachers to privileges
Perceptions of teachers' qualifications	Tenure teachers have more opportunities
	Access to SENESCYT scholarships

Table 26. Description of overarching theme 3 with its themes, sub-themes and codes

Tables 24, 25 and 26 show how codes were grouped to form sub-themes and the subsequent grouping of themes according to each overarching theme. In order to understand and explain these overarching themes, which were developed from the research questions, the following section contains quantitative data from the 14 universities surveyed and qualitative data from the language Centre directors, EFL teachers and students of the three universities that participated in the qualitative phase. In the case of RANI, the data presented refers only to its President. However, since RANI is an organisation that represents all Ecuadorian universities, it was assumed that its President's comments voice ideas and opinions held more generally within the organisation. The other national authorities interviewed also represented national institutions and in this respect their responses tended to provide more general information than that of the language centre Directors, EFL teachers and students, and which reflected their oversight EFL and the sector more broadly.

In identifying the participants' excerpts to be used in the qualitative analysis described Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I used the procedure shown in Figure 9.

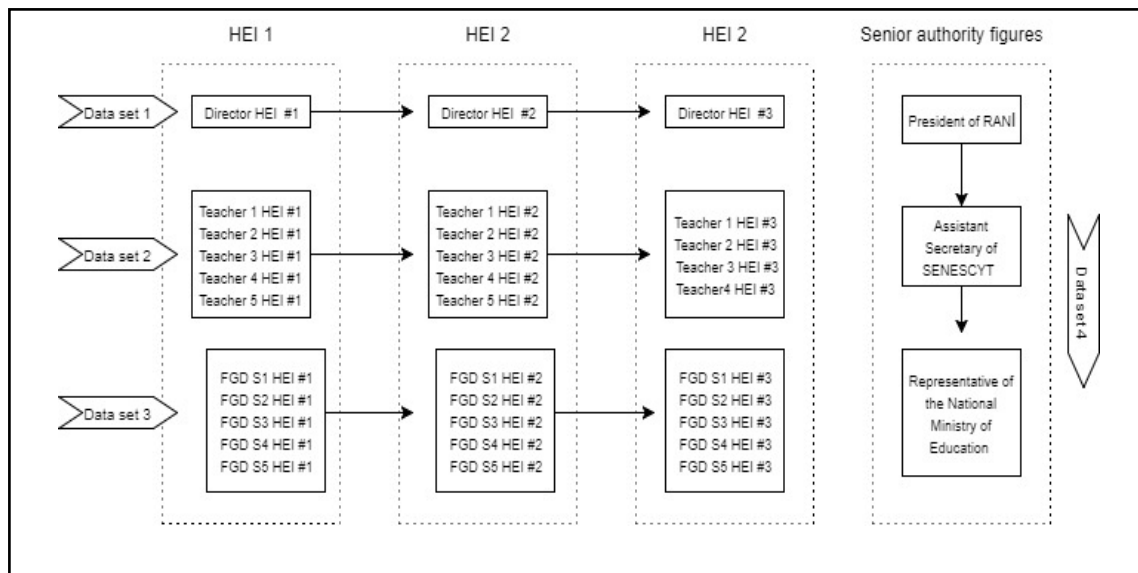


Figure 9. Identification of participants for the qualitative analysis

Figure 9 shows the nomenclature for the identification of participants' excerpts needed for the qualitative analysis in order to show that these excerpts came from a variety of participants. As explained previously, each data set comprises a specific type of participant, for example: Data set 1 comprises all Directors from the three participating universities. Thus, Director HEI #1 means that the Director belongs to university 1, Director HEI #2 belongs to university 2, and Director HEI #3 to university 3. The same nomenclature is used for teachers (Data set 2). Data set 2 comprises five EFL teachers in universities 1 and 2 and 4 teachers in university 3. Teacher 1 HEI #1 refers to the first EFL teacher who belongs to university 1. This same form of identification is used subsequently for the remaining teachers in the other two participating universities. Data set 3 contains the FGDs of 5 students per each university. As with the Directors and EFL teachers, students are identified as FGD S1 HEI #1, meaning student 1 in the FGD conducted in university 1, etc. In Data set 4, the positions held by the relevant officials are used; for example, "President of RANI".

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented an account of the process used to construct the codes generated by qualitative data of the study, and the development of sub-themes, themes, and overarching themes. The overarching themes were developed from the research questions and were as follows:

1. Key challenges in the implementation of Article 124.
2. Universities' ways of overcoming the key challenges.
3. Tensions revealed during the process of implementing Article 124.

86 codes were constructed, and of these, 34 were discarded due to the low frequency of instances of their manifestation in the data or because they could reasonably be merged with other codes. This resulted in a total of 51 codes.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the analysis of the combined data (quantitative/qualitative) in these chapters, using the research questions set forth for this study as headlines under which the overarching themes and themes will be discussed.

Chapter 6

Challenges faced in the reform effort

The respondents to the survey were asked to provide information about their institution's responses to Article 124 in respect of the following areas: (1) infrastructure, (2) pedagogy, and (3) management. Responses in each of these areas had a maximum value of 100% (see the quantitative data analysis for further details of this process). The results of the survey conducted in 14 universities showed that the number of institutions' responses were generally low and were not influenced by their type, geographic location or source of funding. This meant that their characteristics did not appear to have influenced how universities responded to Article 124. As was explained in the quantitative data analysis, a percentage of 100% meant that a university had employed the highest number of possible responses in each category; for instance, infrastructure, pedagogy and management. The limitations with the questionnaire outlined in Chapter 4 notwithstanding, results for these categories showed that universities prioritised their infrastructure (43%) over pedagogy (33%) and management (24%). The responses and the challenges that universities encountered in regard to these areas are discussed in the following section.

In order to systematically refer to participants' views in this qualitative analysis and discussion, I will include in parenthesis at the end of each quote the identification of the participant, for example Director "HEI #2".

6.1 Infrastructure-focused responses and challenges

According to the respondents of the questionnaire, the first area, in which universities focused 43% of their effort (see Chapter 6), was the development of

infrastructure. However, this appeared to be more a response to the entire process of national evaluation and accreditation conducted by CEAACES (the office of the state in charge of evaluating and categorising universities) than to Article 124 in particular. In other words, although modifications in infrastructure occurred in language centres or ELT classrooms, these seemed not to be a response exclusively to Article 124 but also to the process of evaluation and accreditation conducted by CEAACES. CEAACES evaluated universities' infrastructures and other physical resources based on three subcategories: (1) infrastructure; (2) ICT resources; and (3) library facilities.

Infrastructure referred to good quality classrooms, ample space for students, and sufficient office space for teachers. ICT referred to Internet access and the use of a management system or platform that stored students' academic data and managed institutional information (CEAACES, 2015: 33-38). Following the requirements of CEAACES, and based on their individual economic capacities, all universities improved their general infrastructure and ICT resources. These improvements also extended to their language centres. The improvement in this area started in 2008, after the first university evaluation and accreditation exercise, and continued in preparation for subsequent evaluation and accreditation exercises, which are conducted every five years.

The survey results from respondents of 14 universities around the country showed that in the 39.9% of the surveyed universities new classrooms were built exclusively for the use of language centres whilst in the 37.8% of universities existing EFL classrooms were refurbished in response to the CEAACES requirement of having good quality classrooms, including, for example, new classroom furniture such as desks and chairs. However, despite institutional efforts to increase the number of classrooms, it was not possible for universities to solve the issue of crowded EFL classrooms. The majority of EFL teacher who participated in the study believed that the excessive number of students per class was a limiting factor in improving the quality of ELT in their respective institutions:

Ideally, we should have 15 students per class. Here, we have some ICT resources namely, a computer, an overhead projector and the Internet. Though these resources are very useful, limiting the number of students in class would be more significant for learning English (Teacher 4 HEI #3).

Some EFL teacher participants deemed class size to be more important than ICT resources, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Personally, I think that, in teaching English, it is not very important to have the latest technology. What is necessary to achieve good results is to limit the number of students per class. EFL classes should not be big (Teacher 2 HEI #2).

Directors in two universities also pointed out that another challenge for these universities was that EFL classrooms were not for the exclusive use of language centres; undergraduate programmes were given priority when it came to classroom space, leaving ELT as the poorer cousin (Director HEI #2). A number of EFL teachers from these universities explained that this problematic situation often resulted in relocating classes and the double-booking of classrooms (Teacher 5 HEI #2).

Relegating ICT resources to second place seemed to indicate that teachers prioritised the number of students per class over improving ICT resources. However, it is important to consider that reducing the number of students per class might not necessarily produce effective results 'if teachers do not seek to exploit the advantages of a smaller class size through an alternative pedagogy' (Harfitt 2013: 330). Thus, in addition to reducing the number of students per class, teachers need to adapt their ELT pedagogy to take advantage of this reduction if they are to truly facilitate more effective learning. This, in turn, may require EFL teachers to undergo further professional development around teaching methodology.

It is for this reason that any change or innovation that an EFL language policy proposes needs to be accompanied by appropriate teacher development. In line with Harfitt's suggestion, a language policy that aims to have reduced class sizes without first considering EFL teachers' development needs is unlikely to benefit from effective implementation in terms of improved learning outcomes.

With regard to technology, 58% of the respondents from the surveyed universities indicated that their institutions improved the audio-visual resources available in their EFL classrooms, and 40.1% of respondents noticed that EFL teachers utilised more ICT resources in their classes. These ICT resources resulted in the wider use of online EFL platforms as a teaching resource in EFL classes. In most of the cases, however, these platforms were a complementary teaching aid provided by publishers via access codes, and which accompanied the purchase of their EFL textbooks. This meant that students who did not purchase a textbook would not have access to online platforms. The following excerpt captures the majority of EFL teachers' opinions concerning the use of on-line platforms:

We do not use CD players for audio materials as before. Now the EFL textbook we use includes software, which contains audio, videos and extra activities that complement the textbook content. We do not need CD players, TVs or DVD players anymore; we just need a computer, access to the Internet, an overhead projector and the access code (Teacher 4 HEI #1).

In this excerpt, the EFL teacher concerned explained the advantages of using the extra on-line support and how, by using these on-line platforms, they did not need to design extra instructional materials since all the teacher needed was already included in the online textbook support.

A language centre Director had a broader opinion of the use of ICT in EFL classes and referred to ICT and multimedia in general, not just to the on-line textbook support, as important teaching and learning aids that scaffold students' language learning. Furthermore, this director considered the lack of these aids as the main

constraint to achieving learning objectives. This Director discussed this in the following terms:

Not having a proper ICT infrastructure is a limiting factor, which needs to be considered as responsible for not achieving the 100% of that for which we aim. However, we try to achieve our objectives as best as we can with these limitations, and we are also aware that we will not meet the required and necessary 100% completion of our targets because of these limitations in ELT (Director HEI #2).

Undoubtedly, ICT and multimedia could help teachers to prepare more engaging classes; however, the success or failure of meeting language objectives cannot simply be put down to the availability or lack of these resources. Therefore, the challenge for administrators is to change these perceptions regarding ICT and to look for alternatives when ICT and multimedia resources are scarce.

With regard to challenges in the development of infrastructure and ICT resources, universities faced economic constraints imposed by tight institutional budgets and the limited – or almost non-existent – influence that language centre Directors and EFL teachers had concerning the allocation of resources available in their departments. In Ecuador, undergraduate programmes at public universities are free of charge and the state assigns a yearly budget to these institutions. Apart from this government budget, public universities receive additional funding from fees charged to students who are enrolled in their postgraduate and lifelong learning programmes. The amount of money generated by these kinds of programmes, however, does not add much to the institutional budgets.

It is important to note that, since Ecuador is a developing country, the amount of funding assigned to the higher education sector is limited – something from which other universities in the region suffer. According to Maldonado (2009: 80), 'economic constraints have been a constant feature of the Latin American higher education system' in general.

Apart from the limited funding that Ecuadorian public institutions receive annually, some public universities have experienced an additional reduction in their yearly budgets due to a regulation enforced by the CES (the Board of Higher Education) in 2014. This regulation draws on a formula relating to how public funds are to be allocated to universities and it stipulates three criteria that need to be met: quality, academic excellence and efficiency (CES, 2014: 5-7). A university that does not perform well on any of the three criteria receives less public funding the following year. Private institutions, on the other hand, depend solely on student fees for their income and, consequently, need to compete with other public and private universities to attract students. These institutions, however, are also tightly regulated by the state and cannot increase their fees without suitable justification. As with public universities, this means operating on a limited budget for many private universities.

Apart from having a limited budget, EFL teachers and language centre Directors did not have much influence over how the institutional budgets were distributed, since senior management, typically including Vice-chancellors and Deans decided these matters. They usually had other priorities other than developing the infrastructure and ICT resources of language centres, as observed by a participating EFL teacher in the following quote:

I think that the university does not have enough money to buy an interactive board or something else for EFL classrooms. I think they have other expenses, which they consider to be more important. For instance, they prefer to spend the budget in refurbishing another building and not in an interactive board to be used in the EFL classes (Teacher 3 HEI #2).

The three language centre Directors in the participating universities were given the opportunity by their universities to identify the resources needed to improve their infrastructure; however, their recommendations were subject to the approval of senior management, the availability of funding and institutional priorities.

Language centre Directors' lack of voice in decision-making and control over resources rendered them virtually impotent in considering infrastructure development as part of policy implementation. This meant that, although infrastructure was the least complex area to address, because it required appropriate funding it was also the most challenging in that funding was in short supply. As a language centre Director explained,

Universities, generally, do not have enough money to invest in infrastructure development. It is an institutional constraint, meaning that it is not a problem for the language centre specifically but for all departments. Once we identify our needs regarding infrastructure, we send our requirements to the administrators of the university. The university administrators do not always respond to our requirements because the university does not have money. They respond to what they consider are their priorities and English does not seem to be one of them (Director HEI #3).

6.2 Pedagogy-focused responses and challenges

Universities' pedagogical responses to Article 124 focused on a tied dependence to overseas textbooks, the provision and use of more ICT in ELT and changes to the EFL syllabus.

The results from the respondents of the universities surveyed showed that 51.9% of these universities changed their previous EFL textbooks in response to Article 124. The interview data corroborated this, and revealed that one of the reasons for this change was the belief that books were the best instructional materials to facilitate a CEFR B1 level of English acquisition among students. The dependency on one single textbook for ELT among EFL teachers in the participating universities resulted in the limited use of additional, authentic instructional materials by 28.8% of the surveyed universities, and the limited use of teacher-designed materials by 35.7%. Furthermore, the interview data indicated that these additional teaching materials were the result of a few ELT

teachers' individual initiatives rather than institutional responses, as manifested by an EFL teacher in the following quote:

In my classes, I try to add new instructional materials and avoid using the textbook as the only teaching aid. For example, the textbook has a reading of the different types of houses. I added to this reading some videos of houses and listening exercises about houses too. These two activities I downloaded from the internet (Teacher 3 HEI #1).

This shows that one of the effects of placing all hopes for EFL learning on only a single textbook constrained creativity and agency among EFL teachers. Thus, policymakers need to reflect on this aspect and, as an important part of EFL language policy implementation, promote a wide variety of instructional materials to be used in the EFL classes. In Vietnam, for example, Dang, Nguyen and Le (2013: 59 - 65) observed that letting teachers construct their own instructional materials led to teachers feeling more committed to their teaching. Perhaps, encouraging EFL teachers to design their own course pack and materials through an EFL language policy may increase their creativity and positive agency.

Based on the results of the respondents from the participating universities, in contrast to diversifying the use of instructional materials, EFL textbooks had set the direction of ELT in these universities under the assumption that these kinds of materials contained everything that was required for ELT. This belief was shared by all Directors and majority of teachers, as one Director observed: 'the book has everything; we don't have to add anything' (Director HEI #1). Consequently, EFL teachers saw little need or had limited time to add any additional activities of their own, including ICT-based activities.

The use of EFL textbooks is, of course, not unique to Ecuadorian institutions; it is a common practice in different countries around the world. In this regard, Macalister (2016: 42) observed that '[t]he course book is accepted as the curriculum, and remains largely unexamined' - unexamined because, in some

cases, as in the case of the participating universities in this study, EFL textbooks are selected simply because they claim to be aligned with the CEFR and because they have been judged to be appropriate for the Ecuadorian context.

The inclusion of a particular textbook as part of an EFL language policy has also influenced the way in which teachers teach in the participating universities, to the point that these teachers have adopted a new ELT methodology, namely that promoted by the books and their authors. This is consistent with Akbari's (2008: 646) observation that 'Even if teachers do not openly subscribe to a method, the textbooks they use provide them with a working plan that defines how languages are taught and learned'.

The use of EFL textbooks is not completely inappropriate; in fact, using EFL textbooks in the class can be helpful because, according to Campbell, Laanemets, Lillepea, Loog, Kammiste, Kartner, and Truus (1998: 344), textbooks can provide 'a methodological support for experienced teachers whose methodological skills need updating and for inexperienced teachers who lack methodological skills'. The problem arises when the textbooks become the sole instructional material and when all teaching activities revolve around them (this latter point will be explained later in this chapter). Directors and EFL teachers need to be aware that the textbook industry is primarily 'driven by commercial and marketing factors' (Allen, 2015: 250) and that it might, therefore, be inappropriate to pin all EFL learning hopes on commercial materials, the primary purpose of which is to make money. Universities need to critically evaluate whether the textbook content, design and activities are appropriate for the institution's language learning context and goals.

With regard to the ICT additions and use in EFL classes, the survey results showed that 44.4 % of the respondents from the surveyed universities mentioned that they were employing a student-centred approach, with respondents explaining that this approach entailed the inclusion of students' learning interests. Later in the interviews, all participating Directors and the majority of EFL teachers

explained the main justification for universities prioritising ICT was the belief that youth are familiar with it and well placed to take advantage of its benefits:

I think that the way we teach English has to change. We have to use more technology in our classes. Our students are immersed in a technological era and they can use the ICT tools naturally, unlike us (the teachers). For instance, for me it is difficult to download a video from the internet, while for students it is easy. Being proficient in the use of ICT tools is natural for them because they are young (Teacher 1 HEI #2).

Based on the assumption that students were generally good at using ICT tools, Directors of the language centres from the participating universities decided to channel much of their energy and reduced allocated budgets into the acquisition of ICT resources. For example, classrooms in the language centres from the participating universities were equipped with overhead projectors, audio-visual equipment, computers, and on-line ELT platforms. The extent of ICT in EFL classes varied among universities, reflecting the capacity of individual institutions to finance the initiative, as well as the stage of development of their ICT infrastructures.

However, ICT resources alone do not automatically improve EFL teaching. Improvements in EFL depend on how the well teachers can integrate ICT resources into their EFL classes. In other words, effective ICT integration depends on the type of ELT activities that teachers plan and the teacher's skill. Unfortunately, according to Wang, Hsu, Reeves and Coster (2014: 101), technology is not always used well in EFL classes because '[t]eachers' classroom technology integration is usually passive, teacher-centred, and treats technology as a 'learn from' tool similar to the way students learn from classroom teachers'. This means that some teachers have not been able to integrate ICT into interactive activities that involve the active participation of students. This results in students assuming a spectator role without being involved in the process. For

example, some EFL teachers used the LCD projector only to project images onto the board for practicing vocabulary, and asked students to repeat the name of the picture many times. One Director observed this practice in a class in her university, and spoke about it in the following terms.

After equipping our classrooms with ICT resources, a big problem emerged. Some teachers did not know what to do with this new technology. They were overwhelmed and did not know what to do. Thus, they ended up using only PowerPoint presentations for their classes and alluded to it as that it was ICT integration (Director HEI #1).

The above excerpt shows that, despite institutional efforts to improve their ICT resources, some teachers' IT literacy made the integration of ICT and ELT challenging, mainly because institutions invested far less effort in the pedagogical aspects of ICT and failed to train EFL teachers properly in how to use and integrate ICT into their teaching. In this regard, one student commented:

Teachers had difficulty in understanding and facilitating the use of the ELT platform that we have here. For example, they don't understand the functions the platform has, such as videos or reading exercises. If the teacher does not understand it, how could we learn? We also observed that teachers had problems combining the content of the syllabus and the EFL platform. It is obvious that this process is difficult for teachers, they need more preparation (FGD S2 HEI #1).

This student's quote highlights two important aspects. The first is the lack of ICT technical knowledge among some EFL teachers, and the second is the difficulty that EFL teachers have in integrating ICT activities into the EFL content. In line with students' comments concerning the deficient IT literacy among some of their EFL teachers, some teachers also realised that ICT alone could not automatically guarantee that students' English-language proficiency would improve. Some EFL

teachers mentioned that, in order to integrate ICT into their everyday classes effectively, ICT resources needed to be complemented by creative activities that kept the teachers and students fully engaged in the process of learning English. In other words, there was a concern that an over-reliance on ICT resources could result in the exclusion of other educational resources, such as teacher-made materials and approaches such as the communicative approach or task-based learning, as the following teacher explained:

In this institution, the use of on-line platforms has led teachers to adopt a passive role in which there was not much interaction with their students. Students interact only with the computer and the teacher does not provide adequate feedback. This role is opposite to what is expected from teachers. Teachers need to create their own teaching materials and they need to be innovative in class (Teacher 4 HEI #3).

In order to integrate ICT into ELT, EFL teachers need to explore and exploit the advantages of ICT resources and undergo suitable training that helps them to do so; particularly the latter, since it has been shown that EFL teachers generally do not have appropriate knowledge of the technical and pedagogical uses of ICT in ELT. Without such training, universities' investments in ICT will not translate into effective ELT practice and the equipment purchased will sit idle and carry no pedagogical benefit (Silviyanti and Yusuf, 2015: 31). A lack of teacher training was manifested in the Ecuadorian universities surveyed. The result of the survey showed that support for EFL teachers' professional development by Vice-chancellors and Deans was very low, eliciting a national average value of 2.3 out of a maximum value of 5. This meant that participating universities made great efforts to equip their EFL classrooms with ICT resources despite their monetary constraints, yet those efforts were not appropriately complemented by suitable EFL teacher development that would help teachers and students to benefit from them.

Although almost all of the participants in the study considered the use of ICT in the EFL classroom as innovative and pertinent to the current time. Yet the integration of technology in ELT is not new; it has been taking place for more than two decades and has evolved from 'word processing and gap-filling exercises to the internet, Web 2.0 tools and platforms' (Dudeney and Hockly, 2012: 533). This means that using technology to facilitate ELT is not exclusive to the younger generations, as some EFL teacher participants believed. What has changed is the type of technological tools that EFL teachers are using in Ecuador. These tools have developed over time and, via the Internet, it is possible to offer a wide range of options for learning English, including free on-line platforms and language-learning activities, such as video-based activities and pronunciation exercises.

The majority of respondents highlighted the amount of ICT hardware located in the classrooms and how this complemented the use of the English textbooks (e.g. Teacher 5 HEI #2). However, there was little reference made to the use of ICT for activities that were not complementary to the textbooks. In fact, only 35.7% of the respondents from the surveyed universities indicated that their institutions required EFL teachers to design additional activities to those suggested by the textbooks.

In this regard, the language centre Directors and EFL teachers need to understand more fully that ICT integration is not just the provision of ICT hardware such as desktops or overhead projectors, nor is it the sole use of a single online platform; instead, ICT integration is a more complex process that requires teachers to innovate their ELT practices and generate a variety of classroom activities that use different ICT tools. ICT in education needs to be an institutional project that involves all stakeholders and seeks to use ICT for a range of purposes such as homework, content delivery, practice and evaluation.

Unfortunately, instead of promoting a wide range of technological tools to promote EFL learning, data from the interviews collected in the participating universities showed that universities were using online resources that could be accessed only

after purchasing the textbooks and receiving the necessary access codes. All of the language centre Directors emphasised this dependency on the online textbook support and justified it on the grounds of an assumption that their online materials must be good because they have been designed by a well-respected publisher:

We have carefully selected this book, which has been developed by one of the most recognised British Universities, the University of Cambridge. It has everything; we just have to follow what they suggest in the book and in the on-line platform. It has what we want; for instance a B1 level, and uses the CEFR. We do not have the knowledge or the capacity to change it (Director HE1 #2).

ICT resources were used by most of the teachers from the participating universities merely as an extension of EFL textbooks, with the result that the potential for innovation was lost. This dependence on textbooks and their accompanying online materials prevented EFL teachers from maximising institutional ICT features and their capacities to enrich teaching and learning.

Participants indicated that another response among participating universities within the area of ELT pedagogy was a modification of their syllabi in terms of content and structure. As indicated previously, EFL programmes are generally heavily dependent on a course book package, which included a series of textbooks and multimedia support materials. Each textbook constituted an entire EFL course and constituted the backbone of the programme; thus, a four-book EFL course package resulted in an EFL programme comprising four EFL courses. The content of each EFL textbook became the content of each EFL course. The majority of EFL teachers rarely complemented textbook content and the suggested activities in the teachers' guide with other content, activities or support materials.

The EFL teachers faced challenges as a result of the introduction of a standardised syllabus in their respective universities. A standardised syllabus

meant that the same template was used in all academic departments within each university; for example, the same syllabus template was used for engineering programmes and for EFL courses. What was changed was the content of the syllabus for specific courses; for example, social sciences or engineering. The prescribed syllabus generally includes a detailed schedule of class activities, English content and assignments for each session, references (books and academic articles), and a list of educational websites.

Traditionally, an EFL syllabus in an Ecuadorian university contained a list of contents and class activities similar to those included in the table of contents and the teaching activities suggested in the selected EFL textbooks. There was seen to be no need to include additional class activities (different from those suggested in the textbooks), references or educational websites. In general, the activities and contents of EFL textbooks covered a specific number of contact hours, typically 40 to 60 hours, and in some cases more hours. The language centre Directors usually followed the textbook's suggestions and planned their EFL courses accordingly. Due to the institutional requirement to include additional activities and references in the EFL syllabus, most EFL teachers found themselves in a challenging situation. They were required to complement textbook activities and topics plus additional extra activities which were not included in the textbooks without any increase in the number of classroom contact hours. Furthermore, the EFL teachers' evaluations, in two universities, depended greatly on syllabus completion. One EFL teacher who represented the participants referred to this challenging situation in the following way:

We cannot make major changes to what is included in the syllabus due to the regulations we have. During the class, I can change little things especially when students do not understand a grammar topic. For us, it is important to follow the syllabus because our evaluation highly depends on its completion. If I do not finish the content of the syllabus my evaluation would be low and the authorities would think that I have not done anything in class. However, in reality, it is

difficult to complete all the activities included in the syllabus. It is too much (Teacher 5 HEI #2).

A great number of participating EFL teachers considered that the EFL syllabus content was too extensive because of the number of activities they had to complete using both textbook activities and teacher-made activities. The textbooks have become a constraint in developing a more realistic syllabus as they are designed to be completed within a specified number of contact hours. Among the participating universities, the contact hours that an EFL course comprised was the same as the number of hours needed to finish the book. Incorporating teachers' own activities and materials into their teaching and learning would have meant, therefore, that EFL teachers had to omit certain parts of the textbook. Unfortunately, despite such adaptations, EFL teaching generally within and outside of Ecuador, among the participating universities, teachers adapting the textbook and substituting their own activities and materials was not common practice. The survey results showed that this is because only 14% of EFL teachers from the universities surveyed were allowed to choose which parts of the textbook they would and would not use, and only 12.4% of the teachers were permitted to stop using the textbook altogether in favour of their own activities and materials.

Most participating EFL teachers from the universities surveyed confirmed that it was difficult to juggle completing the textbook and following the content of their syllabi, since their syllabi contained, apart from the textbook activities and content, additional extra activities and materials. All of this to be completed on specific dates and times according to the schedule of activities proposed in the syllabi. The challenge was that in order to fully complete with all activities stated in the syllabus, EFL teachers needed more contact hours than the ones that they actually had. This challenge was made greater by the fact that EFL teachers were generally evaluated according to the extent to which they had completed the syllabus, which meant that they tended to focus on its completion rather than on their students' learning. This meant that if EFL students did not understand a

particular EFL content, teachers frequently did not feel in a position to take the time to explain it. Only 30.8% of the respondents from the surveyed universities indicated that teachers were allowed to modify their syllabus in order to complete it the allotted time; that is, by the end of the course.

Ecuadorian universities need to re-think the traditional textbook-oriented approach to EFL that has been implemented and seek alternative ways to teach English using a variety of resources rather than depending solely on a single textbook as the backbone of EFL planning and syllabus construction - particularly now, at a time when universities are requiring teachers to diversify their teaching practices.

Some participating students also witnessed the challenge that EFL teachers experienced in their attempts to complete the textbook and to include additional activities in their EFL classes. Students noted that their EFL teachers had to work hard in their EFL classes to cope with the syllabus demands, with one student commenting:

I think that that one of the most difficult requirements that teachers have is the completion of their syllabus. Because this document clearly details contents, class activities, and assignments that teachers need to carry out in each class. Before this requirement, teachers were more relaxed in their classes, unlike now (FGD S4 HEI #1).

At the classroom level, EFL teachers encountered challenges around syllabus implementation, particularly relating to class size and the students' learning styles and interests. The interview data showed that the majority of EFL teachers were concerned at the lack of EFL teaching staff and classrooms they experienced, especially those working in public universities, and the negative affect of this on the ability to teach English effectively. In this regard, one EFL teacher summarised the sentiments expressed by many other participants in the following way:

I do not know why we have so many students in our classes. It is difficult to work in this way. Someone from the administration of the university needs to understand that we cannot handle classes with such an excessive number of students. It has to change (Teacher 1 HEI #3).

This little doubt that class size can have an impact on students learning, not least because smaller class sized facilitate higher levels of teacher-student and student-student interaction. For example, Harfitt (2013:18) observed that in small classes teachers tend to do 'more group work and pair work, different interaction patterns, greater use of open questions, more individualization, lengthier wait-times, different classroom rules and more humour' the reality of most Ecuadorian universities especially public is different. Ecuadorian universities typically exceed 40 students, especially in the public universities. This reality is difficult to change, particularly because fewer students per class would mean more classrooms and EFL teachers, which, in turn, would require universities to invest more money. As explained previously, public, co-funded and private universities face powerful economic constraints; thus, the practicable solution would be better for teachers to explore different ELT methodologies that are especially suited to large classes. Mulryan-Kyne (2010: 178) highlighted the fact that universities need to have 'more focus on ensuring that teachers are competent to instruct in college and university classes rather than on the size of those classes per se'. This suggests that, certainly in Ecuador, EFL language policy should perhaps place greater emphasis on pre- and in-service teacher training so that provides teachers with the skills needed to cope with large class sizes; and, as mentioned previously, the skilful use of ICT can be particularly beneficial in this respect.

In addition to challenges associated with syllabus implementation and large class size, another challenge which emerged concerned students' preferences regarding how they wanted to learn English. Since ELT in Ecuador is primarily classroom-based and students are mostly confined to classroom-driven activities, it was difficult for EFL teachers to experiment with different approaches because

their teaching was gauged according to their capacity to follow and complete the syllabus within the stipulated time. This meant that a considerable number of students felt that this limited their learning and type of teaching approach teachers used. They believed that the main objective of English was to communicate with others and that they therefore needed to experience more practical activities rather than more limited activities that were driven by teachers' need to complete the prescribed syllabus. One student commented:

Students are not the same as before. We now learn languages in different ways. We do not learn inside a classroom where we just sit and work on a textbook activity. The traditional methods have forced us to memorise a book and prevented us from engaging in other activities. Today it's different and teachers have to realise that and promote other activities in which we can get involved in practical activities such as celebrating festivals, reading competitions and exchange programmes. If we cannot do the latter with foreign students, we can try with other Ecuadorian universities or we can even interact with students from other English courses in this university. The idea is to start using English in practical activities (FGD S1 HEI #3).

Similar to this student, many of the other student participants highlighted the importance of developing a variety of activities – some outside of the EFL classroom – in which English can be used as the medium of instruction and for other authentic communicative purposes. They indicated that they preferred to be involved actively with the language rather than receive their entire EFL tuition seated in a classroom following a textbook. It is notable that their views were often dissimilar from those of their teachers. While teachers believed that students demanded technology-rich input, in reality, the latter preferred experiential learning activities that involved the practical use of English. However, it is important to note that the use of ICT in EFL classes and a practical use of the

language are both valuable and a combination of them can facilitate English learning among students.

6.3 Management-focused responses and challenges

Management-focused responses accounted for 24% of the responses of the participants from the surveyed universities. Within this 24%, 46.1% of the respondents indicated that senior management (Vice-Chancellors and Deans) in their universities, in the area of management, responded to Article 124 by hiring teachers with a Master's degree in ELT or a related discipline. Furthermore, senior management in 41.5% of the surveyed universities required their current EFL teachers to pursue a postgraduate degree in ELT or related area. This was not a direct response to Article 124 specifically, but to the Higher Education Law in general, since this states that teaching personnel at universities must have at least a Master's degree in their area of expertise. In terms of implementing Article 124, a low percentage of senior management from the surveyed universities responded to this requirement through policy mechanisms; for instance, 16.1% of senior management implemented new English-language policies and 13.8% modified their existing language policies.

Respondents indicated that, with regard to management-focused responses in 24.2% of surveyed universities, there was an increase in the number of hours that made up EFL courses, while in 19.3% of the surveyed universities there was an increase in the number of courses of which an EFL programme was comprised. The low percentage regarding the increase of the number of courses and hours in EFL programmes among the surveyed universities might be a result of a lack of governmental policy guidelines and regulations, a lack of funds for hiring more EFL teachers (increasing the number of contact hours means increasing the number of EFL teachers as well), and a lack of independence, on the part of the language centre Directors, to formulate and implement language policies.

A lack of government policy guidelines and regulations has resulted in all participating Directors and some EFL teachers advocating more government

direction on how to effect change, rather than relying on their own or initiatives or institutional support. This latter point may be because of the lack of initiative among language centre Directors around designing their own EFL-language policies and regulations – something discussed in greater detail later. The language centre Directors highlighted this need for national direction in the following terms:

The organisation of EFL programmes is the responsibility to the academic departments. For instance, decisions concerning the number of EFL courses or contact hours that students need to study need to be discussed and approved by these academic departments, though they are not always correct. We, as a language centre, cannot decide on these matters internally. Had the state elaborated directions on how to properly implement their language policy, universities would not have had any options but to follow them (Director HEI #2).

Irrespective of language centre Directors' attempts to bring about change, the collective suggestions for language centres made via also RANI failed to produce any significant effect on university management that might have had positive consequences for EFL teaching. The president of RANI elaborated on this as follows:

Some universities do not trust the work that we are doing in RANI. For instance, when we suggested that an English course needs to comprise 120 hours, institutions did not agree. Directors of the language centres asked in which part of the law these changes were stated. They mentioned that their Vice-Chancellors want all changes to be included based on what is stated in the law. Universities focus more on compliance with the demands of the law rather than the process that is required to implement them (President of RANI).

The emphasis placed by the president of RANI on the importance of regulations emanating from the national government (the SENESCYT) reflected the attitude of people towards RANI and its lack of a mandate to influence policy change. RANI was not recognised by some universities as a technical, credible body formed by a group of people knowledgeable about ELT. Some universities did not consider their advice reliable, valid and worthy of implementation. If networks such as RANI are to have a mandate over policy change, their value and influence need to be strengthened. Otherwise, their role will be limited to university discussions that will have little or no impact on education.

Language centre Directors could propose modifications to EFL programmes but, ultimately, the Vice-Chancellors and Deans had the final say on these matters since, in most of the cases, they are the ones who formulated language policy in the participating universities and language centre Directors and EFL teachers were seen merely as policy implementers. For instance, senior management figures such as Vice-chancellors and Deans generally communicated important decisions about policy through memoranda and letters that only discussed the implementation of policies – policies that had been designed without consulting the language centre Directors or EFL teachers. This is, in part, because language centres are not independent and, in general, the administration of universities in Ecuador is highly centralised, meaning that Vice-chancellors and Deans make the final decisions to approve or reject proposals, and they sometimes analyse these proposals without having an in-depth knowledge of the topic or consulting the relevant specialists – in this case the language centre Directors and EFL teachers. Once decisions are made, these senior managers inform Directors of the fact via policy memos and letters, and the Directors then work to ensure that EFL teachers implement them. This kind of policy dissemination was described by one EFL teacher in the following manner:

All regulations are formulated by vice-chancellors and deans; for instance, the number of contact hours and courses that students need to study. I think that some studies must have been carried out

in order to establish the number of courses and contact hours that we have in this university. However, I do not know the rationale that prompted these decisions. I just know that it comes from them and I am obliged to do it (Teacher 3 HEI #2).

In line with the above quote from an EFL teacher, the excerpt below further indicates the feeling of exclusion from the policy-making process experienced by most teachers, and their sense of obligation to implement something without knowing the rationale behind it.

Nobody knows the reasons why we must have such a number of contact hours or the number of EFL courses that students need to successfully pass. We are just told that we have to teach this number of hours, and evaluate students using some given criteria. But nobody tells us why (Teacher 3 HEI #1).

In cases where the implementation of a policy failed, it was the policy designers, usually Vice-chancellors and Deans, who were held responsible rather than other stakeholders who were not part of the decision-making process and therefore did not feel the sense of ownership and responsibility that is vital for the successful implementation of policy.

EFL teachers who have not been actively involved in policy formulation are likely to be resistant to change, whereas those who have been involved are far more likely to become engaged and proactive in the process of implementation. Lefstein and Perath (2014: 35) noted that teachers' active involvement legitimises their ideas and empowers them, and that it is ultimately the students who will benefit from this, because a teacher who feels that his/her ideas are included in a policy feels a sense of ownership and therefore feels responsible for achieving the policy outcomes. Committed teachers may perform better in their institutions and improve their teaching practices. In this way, students will benefit since they will experience EFL classes that are more engaging.

With regard to the implementation of Article 124, universities faced the constant modification of state policies in short periods of time, which became challenging for them. The most notable policy that was modified in this way repeatedly by the state was the target foreign-language competency level. At first, Article 124 demanded that students achieve 'mastery level' in a foreign language. The phrase 'mastery level' was later explained in the Academic Regulation Regimen as 'sufficiency in a foreign language'. This was subsequently replaced by reference to a CEFR B1 level. These three changes occurred over a five-year period from 2010 to 2015.

These major changes in policy implemented by the state in the absence of sufficient time for universities to evaluate their policies or modifications to their EFL programmes resulted in confusion and frustration among institutions. Norris (2016: 184) defined evaluation as 'a means for determining what works, for understanding programme effectiveness and impact'. Regrettably, the absence of a strategic and systematic approach to policy evaluation within a reasonable timeframe appears to have led to universities perceiving the extended change process initiated by Article 124 as lacking in any clear rationale, which participants saw as a manifestation of government policymakers' ignorance and disorganisation. The president of RANI alluded to this in the following excerpt:

I sometimes believe that the state went through a moment of madness in which they decided to make a change. Then, people in charge of policy design proceeded without any direction or organisation. I strongly believe that changes need to be systematically introduced (President of RANI).

Concerning the three major changes to the definition of language proficiency, RANI had a direct influence on the third modification (i.e. adopting a CEFR B1 level as a requirement) over SENESCYT which shows that the Secretary of Higher Education is opened to suggestions, especially if they come from academic networks such as RANI in this case. Unfortunately, RANI has not being

given proper recognition by the senior management of its member universities. The president of RANI alluded to the influence that RANI had in the selection of a CEFR B1 level in the following quote:

When RANI started as an organisation, the state had not provided a clear foreign-language competency target, which was necessary for the students to graduate from the university. When we asked CES about it, they told us that it was a B2 level. We considered that a B2 level was not appropriate for the baseline English knowledge of students and the language competencies of most teachers. So further inquiries were done at CES. CES asserted that they had never specified a specific target competency; instead, they pointed out that it is up to RANI to determine the level we deem is appropriate. Thus, we chose a B1, the SENESCYT approved it and now it is officially included in the Academic Regimen Regulation (President of RANI).

This excerpt shows that the RANI's decision to suggest a CEFR B1 level was based on the actual English-proficiency level of the majority of EFL teachers, as well as on the students' baseline knowledge of English at the point of entry to higher education. The Council of Europe described the CEFR B1 level as follows:

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans (Council of Europe, 2001: 24).

The justification by RANI of the selection of the CEFR B1 level, based on EFL teachers' and students' actual levels of English, entailed a good deal of reflection

on the part of the members of RANI. Universities looked at EFL teachers' actual levels of English and the English-language level of students entering university. Based on the interview data, it was the teachers' actual levels of English that seemed to carry the greatest weight in the decision-making process. The majority of the participating EFL teachers saw themselves as having a CEFR B2 level of English proficiency, and this perception prompted the selection of CEFR B1 as an appropriate target level for students, as explained by a teacher thus:

If students need to have a B1 level to graduate university, I think that a B2 level for teachers is appropriate. With a B2 level we can effectively perform in our classes (Teacher 5 HEI #1).

I refer to teachers' 'perceptions' of their proficiency because the *actual* proficiency level of EFL teachers in the participating universities had not been fully established according to any recognised international English language proficiency test. Survey results showed that only in the 23% of the surveyed universities EFL teachers were required to take an international English proficiency test to demonstrate their level of English; thus, respondents from these institutions had sufficient basis to claim that the majority of EFL teachers working in these universities possessed a B2 level of English, whereas respondents from the remaining 77% of the surveyed universities had to rely on teachers' self-perceptions of their proficiency.

The interview data showed that there was a general belief, not only in RANI but also among language centre Directors and some EFL teachers, in the need to select an English proficiency level for students that reflected the actual language proficiency of the majority of EFL teachers, which was thought to be lower than a CEFR B1. The president of RANI stated:

Teachers are not prepared for teaching a level of English higher than B1. Currently, we are training those teachers. Thus, if we aim to prepare students to achieve a B2 level, this would be unrealistic

and we would fail. We cannot assume we are going to make miracles; we will lie in that sense (President of RANI).

The president of RANI emphasised that it would be difficult to promote a higher level of English than a CEFR B1 among students without first improving EFL teachers' levels of English-language proficiency.

Specific reference to the level of English among EFL teachers, and how it was assessed, was made during the language centre Directors' interviews, in which they corroborated the observation, made by RANI's president, that the actual proficiency level of EFL teachers had influenced the selection of the CEFR B1 level as the target to be achieved by students. One Director remarked on this, stating:

When teachers were evaluated via TOEFL or FCE, it became apparent that they did not have a B2 level competency ... you cannot teach a level which is the same or higher than yours. B1 is an intermediate level to which an Ecuadorian teacher is capable of teaching and students are capable of learning. Thus, I think that the decision was, in that sense, a compromise between the teachers' language competency and the level they can teach (Director HEI #1).

The language centre Directors in general believed that, in light of the current level of English that the majority of EFL teachers possessed, their teachers would not be in a position to teach English courses at a level higher than a CEFR B1, and that there needed to be 'a compromise between the teachers' language competency and the level they can teach'. This was corroborated by an EFL teacher:

It is important that we have a good knowledge of the language, but personally, I believe that with a CEFR B2 level we can perform well

since the requirement for students is a CEFR B1 level. A C1 level is too demanding (Teacher 1 HEI #3).

Not unreasonably, a great number of EFL teachers felt more comfortable teaching students with lower English proficiency than themselves. This is a phenomenon to which Yamao and Sekiguchi (2015) referred in the following terms:

‘Applied linguistics research on foreign language acquisition suggests that self-perceived foreign-language proficiency influences a person’s confidence in coping with an environment in which the foreign language is used’ (p. 169).

In accordance with the selection of a CEFR B1 as the level of English proficiency, the participating universities adjusted their EFL programmes to meet this requirement. Language centre Directors decided to plan their EFL courses in such a way that each course corresponded to a specific CEFR language indicator, ranging from CEFR A1 level to CEFR B1 level, and decided to follow RANI’s suggestion to break each of these CEFR levels down into two: A1.1, A1.2; A2.1, A2.2; B1.1 and B1.2.

Once the CEFR language indicators were matched with EFL courses, the next step was to establish the learning outcomes for each course. In order to do this, the language centre Directors turned to CEFR and used the description of each language indicator, in toto, as the learning outcomes of their respective courses (from A1 to B1).

CEFR was selected unanimously because the stakeholders perceived it to be the ideal framework, as it facilitated the standardisation of EFL programmes. Furthermore, EFL teachers viewed CEFR guidelines as indisputable because they knew its construction was the result of rigorous research. EFL teachers discussed the advantages of CEFR in the following terms:

The CEFR is the result of a scientific study made by experts in languages. The primary aim of the CEFR is to standardise and describe the different language competencies. Trying to do something different from what the CEFR has established is to reinvent the wheel. Therefore, since the language competencies are clearly described in the CEFR, we do not need to do anything else but to adapt and adopt the language indicators as they are. This is the only way in which we can have a clear path of what we want to achieve in the English programme (Teacher 4 HEI #2).

There was a common belief that CEFR was ideal because its guidelines could be applied to all languages:

There is not any other language framework on which we can base our EFL programmes. I think that there is an American framework; however, we have to consider that English is not just America, other countries also speak English. The CEFR is the most complete language analysis that has ever been done; first, because it was made in Europe where there is a wide variety of languages and second, the CEFR's language descriptors can be applied to any language (Teacher 4 HEI #2).

The common notion that CEFR was ideal motivated universities to use it as the framework for English-language planning and programme modification. Its use was also further motivated by the official stipulation of a CEFR B1 level as the target EFL language competency level for university students. Ultimately, the use of CEFR descriptors led to the greater standardisation of EFL programmes, particularly in the formulation of language learning outcomes since universities use the CEFR as their English learning outcomes.

A challenge that the language centre Directors faced when selecting a target English-language proficiency level for students based on their teachers' current level of proficiency, which meant that both students' and teachers' language

development would be constrained. That is, EFL teachers may not improve their current level of English based on the assumption that it is sufficient to teach EFL classes that aim to achieve a lower level of proficiency than they themselves have. On the other hand, if Directors always plan EFL courses on this basis, it will limit students' language development since it will always ultimately depend on their teachers' proficiency level. It may therefore be preferable for Directors to consider planning EFL courses that aim to achieve the same or a higher level of English than that of the teachers, which in turn would have the effect of motivating EFL teachers to improve both their own level of English and that of their students.

Apart from using the actual level of English among EFL teachers for the selection of the CEFR B1 level, universities considered the students' baseline level of English-language proficiency upon entering university. Participating Directors and almost all EFL teachers who took part in the study mentioned that there was a marked difference in English language ability between students who graduated from private secondary schools and those who had done so from public secondary schools. ELT in public education was, they claimed, of generally poor quality, whereas the private education offered stronger ELT programmes. The following excerpt, quoted from a participant EFL teacher, encapsulates this perception.

In public schools, sometimes students do not even have an English teacher. How can we demand from them a high level of English? Some public schools do not even have English as an academic subject. I do not think it is fair that a student from a private school does well in English while one from a public school does not (Teacher 4 HEI #1).

Furthermore, some students believed that this difference in EFL quality between private and public education resulted in differences in students' English language competency when they entered university, making it difficult for the majority of those coming from the public education sector to achieve a level of proficiency higher than CEFR B1 in higher education (FGD S3 HEI #3).

The belief that the English-language development of students in higher education depended solely on students' levels of English upon entry to university ignored the fact that other variables can also play a role in determining students' language development; for example, teacher performance (attitude, pedagogical skills and the like) and the quality of the EFL programmes that universities offer to their students. However, the president of RANI seemed to reaffirm the belief that the development of English among students in the university depends solely on the students' level of proficiency when entering university. The president of RANI manifested this in the following quote: 'as long as the students do not finish high school with a better level of English there is not much we can do' (President of RANI).

The President's point was reaffirmed by all language centre Directors, as captured in this excerpt:

We have an immense diversity of students who come from high school. If students had a B1 level of English, it would be possible for the university to target a B2 level. However, the reality is that, in this university, we have students whose English is not even at A1 level (Director HEI #1).

Undoubtedly, it is challenging for language centre directors and language planners to plan EFL programmes targeting a high level of language proficiency, particularly where there is a range of student proficiency levels. Nonetheless, these directors and language planners need to be equally responsive to the language needs of those students whose English proficiency is weaker than that of their peers. Language policies need to be 'responsive to local context, to the lives, histories, and goals of the population' and, at the same time, they need 'to effectively serve the needs of a particular community' (Utakis and Pita, 2005: 148). Adopting a target language competency based on the current situation regarding students'/teachers' levels of English could be interpreted as being responsive to the local context; however, it is important to consider the personal needs of people

and the institutional aspirations of universities. People need to see meaning and opportunity in learning a foreign language such as English. If achieving proficiency in English means job opportunities and academic and social mobility, then offering ELT at an appropriate level may be justified. Similarly, if universities are to meet their institutional aspirations to be regionally connected and truly international, then having students and teachers who are able to demonstrate a good level of English can also be significant in terms of helping to forge regional ties, to establish international offices and collaborations, and to attract international students and academics.

6.4 Extent of the use of a B1 level of English within universities

The selection of the CEFR B1 level in the Academic Regulation Regimen presented other challenges, particularly regarding the provision of enabling mechanisms that encourage and facilitate the use of English outside of the language centres. Universities developed three activities to encourage the widespread use of English: club-initiated activities, project presentations, and English as the medium of instruction in some academic subjects. Clubs were complementary activities that offered students writing and speaking opportunities to develop their English. Although students were encouraged to participate in clubs established by participating universities, such efforts were largely ineffective, partly because participation was not a required academic exercise but merely optional. A Director commented on the initiative as follows:

We have created, for instance, a speaking club and a writing club in English so students can interact somehow. Regrettably, we have not had much student involvement; we just started last term. We are trying to boost these activities because it will help students be more interested in learning English (Director HEI #1).

EFL programmes in the participating universities were, for the most part, highly structured, meaning that students were accustomed to attending EFL classes at a specific time and for a specific number of hours on specific days, and they

planned their academic timetables for the duration of the semester accordingly. Apart from EFL tuition, students had to comply with the academic demands of their undergraduate programmes and the extra optional activities, which require additional time, therefore resulted in poor student participation. Hence, the language centres needed to re-package or re-format these clubs and plan different activities so that they were coordinated with the students' undergraduate programmes and their other commitments, in order to make the clubs more attractive.

Other activities employed to broaden students' use of English were project presentations or open houses, in which students generally performed in front of their peers and invited students from other universities and high schools to attend these presentations. A language centre Director explained this activity as follows:

Students try to demonstrate their language competency during open events. They explain or present something about their undergraduate programmes, what they do or what they can do with their professions, for instance what they can do with electronics (Director HEI #2).

The aim of project presentations was to develop the students' speaking competence, as well as their confidence in speaking in public, as the following teacher explained:

We have organised open houses. This has helped students talk. They talk about this city, for instance. Some students are not from here (this city), but they have to talk, they have to learn (Teacher 4 HEI #1).

Although these activities provided students with opportunities to speak in front of an audience and developed their confidence when addressing people in English, it seems that the spontaneity of the language use was lost, since much of the

content of students' presentations was assigned by their teachers and subsequently developed and memorised by students:

Different topics are given to different classes and we prepare and memorise it. Different universities and high schools are invited, and we have to talk about previously assigned topics and make the audience understand what we are saying (FGD S1 HEI #2).

With students reciting memorised texts, language interactions between students and the audience were minimal. It would have been more strategic had the universities created more opportunities beyond individual presentations to promote interactive participation between the presenters and the audience, such as quiz nights or trivia questions.

The last strategy that participating universities organised to promote English outside of the language centres was the adoption of English as medium of instruction in certain academic subjects. The majority of respondents, however, revealed that there was an absence of a structured teaching plan concerning the use of EMI. Specifically, there was no coordination between academic departments and language centres regarding the integration of EMI in the teaching of academic subjects such as history or literature. A number of students commented that EMI (English as the medium of instruction) essentially consisted of receiving supporting materials, such as academic articles, in English and then having to read, summarise and write essays about them in English. There were no classes that used English comprehensively as the means of instruction, as stated by a student (FGD S5 HEI #2). In some departments, such as tourism, lectures delivered in English were individual initiatives rather than an official requirement or language centre initiative. Another student described this use of EMI as follows:

Lecturers do not lecture in English but in some academic subjects, for example, since last term the use of resources written in English has increased. For instance, in Electronics, Maths and Physics we

use books, which are written in English. The publishers of these books publish only in this language and there are no translations in Spanish. Thus, we need to learn English, it is complicated, seriously, but it also helps (FGD S5 HEI #1).

Despite the students feeling that it was not easy to cope with the demands of English in academic subjects, they were aware of its importance and role in facilitating their academic progress. Although lecturers' use of EMI was minimal, they encouraged students to use the language through supporting materials written in English. Thus, the challenge that participating universities faced was how to achieve the proper coordination between language centres as policy initiators, and lecturers and academic departments.

EFL language policy needs to be justified appropriately if it is to be used more widely than in EFL lessons – for example, as a medium of instruction for academic subjects. This kind of justification requires the collaboration of all stakeholders and needs to shape language policy. Otherwise, without proper coordination, activities to promote a wider use of English within the institutions and in different academic departments may result in lecturers creating individual and isolated language activities. This means that lecturers, based on their language beliefs, may include specific activities to develop English only for their classes, for example, asking students to read academic articles written in English. Isolated language activities refers to the development of class activities without consultation, support or coordination of other departments.

The main challenge that participants experienced in promoting a wider use of English in their universities was the lack of status of English in their respective institutions. Most respondents highlighted the fact that support for ELT inside their institutions was inadequate and that English was considered less important than other academic subjects. The president of RANI referred to this in the following way:

Generally, there is not much support for ELT in the universities. Vice-chancellors and deans do not consider ELT important. Hence, introducing change is problematic (President of RANI).

Contrary to the survey results in which respondents favoured the teaching of English in universities, the interview data revealed that, in practice, the majority of academics who are not EFL teachers, as well as a few students, considered EFL programmes to be unnecessary and unwelcome because they reduced the time they could devote to their undergraduate programmes. In this regard, one EFL teacher commented:

Apart from the English teachers, other academics are not aware of the importance that it has and do not encourage their students to attend EFL classes. For instance, in the Engineering Department students are told that they are not studying to be English teachers but engineers. And that if they have to devote more time to their undergrad programmes, they have to stop studying EFL. So, students prefer to stop attending English classes (Teacher 3 HEI #2).

This lack of understanding and flexibility on the part of some lecturers, along with poor communication between language centres and academic departments regarding English tuition and its organisation, was further explained by a student in the following statement:

If, due to conflicts in our timetables, we encounter a situation in which we have to choose between attending a core academic subject from our undergrad programmes and English, we will always choose our academic subject. We are here to earn a degree. After all, we can study English in the university or in any language school outside the institution and at any time, unlike our academic subjects which are offered only at a specific time. We can study English anywhere but we cannot study our academic subjects, for

example Physics, in other places but the university (FGD S4 HEI #1).

The above excerpt referred to a provision in the Academic Regulation Regimen about the students' locus of foreign-language study and time of study. Regarding the latter, the Academic Regimen Regulation explained that students had to demonstrate a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language by the time they had completed 60% of their undergraduate programmes. It was the universities' prerogative to design the means via which this level could be evaluated.

The flexibility of this regulation could have contributed to the perceived lack of importance of EFL and/or its lack of status compared to other academic courses. This lack of status has become an obstacle to synergies between academic departments and language centres that could have helped to promote and increase the use of English at universities.

In addition to identifying a level of English for university students and increasing the use of English in the different academic departments, language centre Directors encountered challenges in the form of the attitudes of some EFL teachers who were resistant to change and apprehensive about proposed changes and incorporating them into their practice. Change in the participating universities almost always entailed trying new techniques in teaching (due, in part, to changes in the EFL textbook adopted), revising lesson plans due to the new syllabus requirement, adapting and creating new materials in order to better integrate ICT into ELT, and adjusting the assessments and evaluations necessitated by these changes. These changes meant teachers moving out of their 'comfort zone' and away from their traditional ways of doing things. However, these changes resulted in the teachers rejecting such changes. One Director described EFL teachers' resistance to change in the following terms:

Teachers have been accustomed to utilise the same instructional materials for many years and do not want to change them. For instance, now that we are trying to comply with the indicators of the

Common European Framework, there is the need to use new materials. Teachers do not want to change, and use the students as excuses. They say that students will not adapt to this new system and that they will be reluctant to accept changes. However, the reality is not like what the teacher says, students are always open to changes and more so if it benefits them. The truth is that teachers do not want to move to a different way of teaching (Director HEI #3).

Some EFL teachers justified their resistance to change on the grounds that students would not accept them. However, in reality, most students actually welcomed change and recognised the need for EFL classes that used new approaches. This was evident, for example, in following student's comment:

We cannot deny that there had been changes regarding ELT; however, these changes had not affected the way some teachers have been delivering their EFL classes. In other words, some teachers continue with their rigid class structure following each single activity in the textbook without letting us actively participate in class. I understand that each teacher has his or her own teaching style and changing may be difficult. But they should try to change more if it can benefit us, the students (FGD S1 HEI #1).

Incorrectly anticipating student resistance to change seemed to be more a reflection of the teachers' inability to cope with change than the students' opinions, and this brings to mind Hagenauer and Violet's (2014: 253) observation that '[a]nything that was perceived as 'new' could make teachers feel unsettled, uncomfortable, insecure, anxious or nervous'. This kind of insecurity and anxiety reinforces the need for suitable in-service training for teachers prior to and during the process of policy implementation.

6.5 Conclusion

In general, based on the data from the participating universities, it seemed that there were no major changes in EFL programmes in response to Article 124. Senior management authorities (Vice-Chancellors, Deans and language centre Directors) tended, instead, to prioritise the development of infrastructure over pedagogy and management. The improvements in infrastructure consisted of building new EFL classrooms and refurbishing existing ones, and equipping EFL classrooms with ICT and multimedia resources. These improvements, however, seemed to be more in response to the processes of institutional accreditation and evaluation carried out regularly by CEAACES than in response to Article 124.

Regarding the challenges that senior management authorities (Vice-Chancellors, Deans and language centre Directors) faced in making infrastructure changes as a result of Article 124, these were constrained by financial constraints and the fact that language centre Directors did not have any influence on budget distribution. This situation limited what could be done to improve infrastructure.

Concerning pedagogical responses, language centre directors mostly focused on the selection of different EFL textbooks, which were aligned with the CEFR, and complementary ICT-based activities. Most of these ICT-based activities, however, came from on-line support provided by these textbooks rather than being driven by more fundamental institutional change. The challenges in pedagogy were related to syllabus implementation, engaging students by factoring their interests into teaching and learning, and the integration of ICT in ELT.

Finally, in terms of management, changes consisted of laying off of teachers who did not hold a Master's degree and replacing them with teachers who were seen as being suitably qualified. These actions, however, were more a response to Higher Education Law in general, which requires all teaching staff to hold at least a Master's degree. Responses that did relate to Article 124 included extending the duration of EFL courses and programmes, and selecting a CEFR B1 level of English as the target level for students. Only a small percentage of the language

centre Directors from the surveyed universities designed and implemented new EFL policies or modified their existent ones as a response to Article 124. Key challenges faced by language centre Directors revolved around the establishment of a suitable target proficiency level, EFL teachers' resistance to change, continual modifications to the national language policy, and the extent and method of the communicating and disseminating of institutional policies.

Chapter 7

Responses to challenges faced in the reform effort

The previous chapter examined the responses and challenges that respondents experienced during their attempts to implement Article 124, with particular reference to the following:

- a. Infrastructure
- b. Pedagogy
- c. Management

This chapter looks at how universities designed a series of strategies and adjustments in order to respond to the challenges described in Chapter 6. In terms of infrastructure challenges, universities focused on classroom improvements; in relation to pedagogy, the adjustments made focused on the syllabus and in management, universities treated English as a non-credit bearing subject and two out of the three participating universities in the qualitative phase opened language centres.

7.1 Responses to challenges in the area of infrastructure

Despite the financial constraints to improving universities' infrastructures, the creation of language centres in two of the three universities at which the interviews and FGDs were conducted led to the expansion of classrooms and an improvement in their ICT resources. The third participating university already had a language centre; however, improvements were also focused on classroom refurbishment and on the provision of ICT resources.

To provide space for language centres, some existing classrooms being used by other departments were converted to EFL classrooms in the two universities

where language centres were created. An EFL teacher described this development in the following terms:

The creation of a language centre compelled higher senior authorities to assign a physical space in which we can operate. This space consists of four classrooms and a lab. The current space that we have facilitates the teaching of English and, since we teach English in the morning and in the afternoon at different times throughout the day, the four classrooms can accommodate a considerable number of students. The four classrooms are multimedia-equipped and the lab has computers and language platform programmes for students to practice (Teacher 2 HEI #3).

With regard to ICT resources, universities introduced Internet access, interactive EFL software and on-line EFL platforms. Where classrooms had not yet been equipped with these ICT resources, this was to change as a result of continual pressure from EFL teachers, language centre directors and the requirements of the CEAACES' evaluation exercises. This was described by one EFL teacher as follows:

We have been telling our senior management figures that we need to improve our technological infrastructure, first because it facilitates teaching and second because we need to be prepared for the evaluation of the university. Fortunately, the senior authorities had understood our needs and had gradually equipped EFL classrooms with ICT resources (Teacher 4 HEI #2).

Despite the economic constraints that participating universities faced, two responses – opening language centres and constant pressure on senior management – seemed to be effective in improving the physical and technological infrastructure in these institutions.

7.2 Responses to challenges in the area of pedagogy

Challenges that participating universities experienced in the area of pedagogical responses were the lack of ICT knowledge among some EFL teachers, teacher training, a lack of innovation in EFL classes due to a dependency on EFL textbooks, and the completion of extensive syllabi in a reduced period of time.

Concerning the lack of ICT knowledge among some EFL teachers, language centres in the participating universities used mostly software and the online EFL platforms that were part of the course book package. With the exception of some Internet-based activities, EFL teachers refrained from using their own activities and depended almost entirely on the course book packages to teach English. By focusing only on one tool (online support material from the EFL textbooks), teachers with limited knowledge of ICT were able to gain familiarity with this tool and interact more with students in their EFL classes. Furthermore, as this tool was an extension of the textbook used by students, it was easier for EFL teachers to integrate it with the English content being taught. For example, a reading text in the textbook was complemented by a related online video. The majority of students observed that this connection between textbooks and online support helped teachers to familiarise themselves with and employ ICT in almost all classroom activities in classes. One student remarked:

Currently, teachers use technology more than before. They use the textbook platform and project it to the class through an overhead projector. This has resulted in more dynamic and engaging classes since the teacher is not the only person speaking in the class (FGD S3 HEI #3).

This method of integrating technology may work for teachers with limited ICT knowledge; however, their heavy dependence on only one ICT tool may also reduce innovation in ELT since the data suggests that Ecuadorian EFL teachers tend not to experiment with ICT tools other than those provided by the textbook companies. This means that EFL teachers are unlikely to use podcasts or plan

online activities such as web quests.

The effective use of ICT activities in the EFL classroom requires EFL teachers to develop the necessary technical knowledge; for example, how to create blogs or upload videos. It also requires pedagogical knowledge that will allow teachers to plan and design different ICT-based activities that promote English learning among their students. If teachers have not developed this ability in their pre-service training, then their institutions need to provide them with the means to undergo the appropriate in-service professional development. Unfortunately, there was no reference to teachers' ICT training in the participating universities which took part in the qualitative phase of this study.

While the interview data showed that institutions did respond to the challenge of the limited ICT knowledge of some EFL teachers by using online support materials packaged with the EFL textbooks used in their courses, this did not really represent much in the way of innovation in that universities appeared not to encourage their EFL teachers to use different ICT resources and failed to indicate any real interest in developing their ability to do so.

One important change that was evident from the data in response to the sole use of textbooks was the primary consideration given to the students' interests. For example, in order to spark interest and motivate students, a number of EFL teachers in the participating universities assigned writing tasks to their students in which the central topic was to discuss their undergraduate programmes, their future professional lives, or the latest breakthroughs in their areas of degree specialisation. One teacher explained these adjustments as follows:

Students had made us realised that traditional teaching, such as plain and no contextualised grammar writing exercises included in the textbook do not work now. They require another type of motivation. For this reason, we have decided to twist a bit these exercises; for instance, we ask them to write about their future professions such as the advancements or discoveries in that field.

This has a double purpose: one, developing their writing and two, familiarising with academic English (Teacher 2 HEI #2).

These kinds of activities represented a significant departure from the norm of textbook-centred teaching. Participants also noted that the class activities had become more communication-driven, meaning that there were more orally-based activities in the classes than was previously the case. One teacher described this change as follows:

I believe that the old idea that we had about teaching English has changed here (in the language centre). We used to think that ELT was based on the constant repetition of grammar structures included in the textbook and nothing else. Now, our aim is to help students communicate their ideas, feelings and points of view. We do teach them grammar structures, but we spend more time on listening and speaking tasks (Teacher 5 HEI #1).

The above excerpt shows that there was a switch from a textbook-centred approach to a more communicative one. Students also noticed this shift in orientation. One commented:

Today, some teachers reinforce the grammar topics or vocabulary with readings, listening exercises and Internet activities. Then, we talk about it. This way of teaching has helped us speak (FGD S2 HEI #1).

Based on the interview data, it can be said that students responded positively to the inclusion of additional and different activities from those included in the textbooks. Furthermore, by including activities the focus of which was related to topics in the students' undergraduate programmes, it was possible to engage students develop their communication skills more effectively. Unfortunately, these activities were more the result of teachers' individual practices than of institutional policy and there remains a need to promote these practices via an EFL language policy.

With regard to the challenges that were posed by the sole use of a textbook, none of the participating universities respond effectively to this key challenge; instead, they reaffirmed the use of a single textbook based on the justification that they needed materials aligned with the CEFR since a CEFR B1 level was the requirement of the government. These EFL textbooks, in turn, served as the main guide for EFL programmes. One participating EFL teacher stated:

Apart from the activities and the materials from the textbooks, we added new things. However, there were no significant changes in the textbook structure. These textbooks are aligned with the Common European Framework of reference. We do not need to add anything (Teacher 4 HEI #2).

Another teacher explained why she felt there was no need for additional materials:

Textbooks are professional programmes which include scope and sequence of contents. These contents are very organised and well-structured from the basic of the language to the most advance language structures. This helps give us direction in our teaching (Teacher 1 HEI #3).

In the participating universities, the selection of a different textbook provoked changes and adaptations to a different ELT methodology – generally that promoted by the textbook itself. In the words of one teacher:

The moment that a new book was introduced in the language centre we had to change our pedagogy, methodology and objectives. These three changes were necessary in order to align our ELT practices with the book content (Teacher 2 HEI #1).

It emerged from the interview data that the majority of teachers tended to attribute a good EFL programme to the utilisation of a textbook; thus, they saw a good textbook as leading to good results in students' performances, without considering the role that the teachers played in the process of teaching and learning. This

means that the role of teachers in the process of teaching and learning is very important and a good performance in class would result in students' effective English learning. It is therefore that good results in EFL programmes depends on the combination of a good teaching and appropriate instructional materials. Good teaching refers to teachers' class performance and instructional materials to a broader term that includes textbooks and any other materials that can facilitate learning.

7.3 Responses to challenges in the area of management

Responses to administrative challenges refers to the actions taken by university senior management – Vice-Chancellors and Deans, together with language centre Directors –in order to respond to the difficulties their respective institutions experienced in relation to EFL. Those challenges included a lack of independence on the part of language centres to design their own EFL language policies and to plan EFL courses that cater for students with different levels of English proficiency when entering university, as well as increasing the use of EFL in the entire university, and the lack of status of EFL.

In order to have more independence in the formulation of EFL programmes, language centre directors from the participating universities treated EFL as an extracurricular, non-credit bearing course. Being non-credit bearing facilitated the creation of language centres in those universities in which they did not exist. For example, 34% of the 14 universities surveyed opened language centres that became the hub of foreign-language teaching, particularly EFL. Two of the three universities that took part in the qualitative phase of the study had recently opened their language centres. Once the language centres in these two universities assumed the management of EFL tuition, ELT took a different direction. For example, when English was a credit-bearing course, increasing the number of contact hours was difficult since this would have entailed a reduction in the amount of time allocated to other academic courses. However, with the creation of language centres in these two participating universities and the decision to make EFL courses non-credit bearing, the centres were given some authority to

determine the number of contact hours for each EFL course and to schedule them.

The term 'some authority' means that all modifications and changes, however, were still subject to the approval of the Vice-Chancellors and Deans. For example, decisions concerning an increase in the number of EFL courses, or which involved expenditure, were still subject to the final approval of the vice-chancellors or deans, resulting in frustration on the part of EFL teachers because they depended on the authorisation of the senior management. Directors and EFL teachers felt constrained by this arrangement, and this was expressed by one Director in the following terms:

There are some issues that need to be solved; for instance, students who cannot graduate because they have not complied with the requirement of studying English. For this group of students, we have proposed the design of a tailor-made EFL programme which can be completed in less time compared with the regular programme. It could have facilitated the students' graduation. Unfortunately, we cannot do anything because the vice-chancellor and deans do not want to authorise it (Director HEI #1).

Language centre Directors, on the other hand, had more freedom to introduce changes in other aspects concerning ELT, such as in the selection of textbooks and increasing the use of ICT in lessons. One Director commented:

Since we are using CEFR as the framework for our EFL programmes, we needed to seek textbooks aligned with CEFR. We saw different options and selected the one we (the director and EFL teachers) considered was the best for our students (Director HEI #2).

Despite the control that Vice-Chancellors and Deans had over the functioning of the language centres, all EFL teachers from the universities that took part in the

qualitative phase saw the creation of language centres as positive because it paved the way for the introduction of positive changes in the delivery of ELT. This was commented on by one teacher in the following terms:

Now that we have formed a language centre, it is possible to formulate regulations and policies that effectively affect EFL. For instance, we have established a clear pathway for students' evaluation, which in accordance with the university regulations, focuses on the particularities of the language such as speaking. Now students take English more seriously (Teacher 1 HEI #3).

To organise the academic work in the language centres effectively, their Directors focused on the following aspects:

- a. Improving internal organisation
- b. Limiting the number of students per class
- c. Offering EFL courses according to different schedules throughout the day
- d. Standardising textbooks
- e. Evaluating teachers' English proficiency using TOEFL or FCE
- f. Monitoring teachers' proper syllabus implementation

The EFL teachers observed that these adjustments led to improvements to their language centres, which resulted in better timetables, and standardised content and syllabi. Standardising the content of the EFL syllabus allowed students to attend the same course at different times on different days without affecting their EFL progress. This meant that EFL teachers teaching courses corresponding to the same English level, for instance A2, taught the same content throughout the day and students could attend whichever classes suited them best.

This structural change allowed students to have greater flexibility and to attend at times that would not clash with their undergraduate academic courses. As a result, there was an increase in student attendance, as attested to by a high number of EFL teachers:

Some students have told me that they attend their lectures in the morning and EFL in the afternoon, or vice versa, causing them to come to the university twice per day (one time for their lectures and the second time for English). This difference in schedules has resulted in their absence from English classes. In order to tackle this problem, what we have done is to adapt to their convenience. Since we cannot force them to choose a specific schedule, students can study English at different times during the day. For instance, they can attend EFL classes some days in the morning and others in the afternoon. This is possible because the same EFL course is taught throughout the day at different times. This open mode of attendance also aids students when they have other activities in their academic programmes. They can attend classes without being constrained by their schedules and without having to prioritise one activity over the other (Teacher 1 HEI #3).

In line with facilitating students' attendance at EFL classes by offering EFL courses throughout the day, participating universities also allowed their incoming students to take a placement test in order to identify their level of English and place them in a course that best suited their English knowledge, such as CEFR A1, CEFR A2 and so on. These placement tests were designed and administered by each individual university.

With regard to the other two challenges, increasing the use of English in the universities and the lack of status of English in the institutions, the participating universities did not take any action to overcome these challenges.

7.4 Conclusion

One of the challenges that language centre directors experienced was the identification of a target English-language proficiency level for students, and its wider promotion amongst universities. Through RANI, it was possible for language centre directors to influence SENESCYT policy and make CEFR B1 the official target English language proficiency level. In line with this requirement,

language centre Directors used CEFR to plan and design their EFL programmes and to select textbooks aligned with this framework to determine their programmes. To date, however, there have been no evaluation studies to confirm whether and how commonly students achieve this level. Hence, it was difficult to determine the effectiveness of these changes.

Regarding the pedagogical and management challenges, in order to implement Article 124, universities implemented four key strategies. These were: –

- To make EFL courses non-credit bearing;
- To open language centres;
- To adopt new EFL textbooks; and
- To increase the use of ICT.

Treating EFL as a non-credit-bearing course allowed language centre Directors to increase the number of EFL courses per EFL programme and the number of contact hours per course. Opening language centres facilitated the formulation of a number of policies that facilitated the development of ELT in participating universities. These included limiting the number of students per class and increasing the offer of EFL courses. This means that more EFL courses were offered to students throughout the day. For example, before the creation of language centres, an EFL course (A1) was offered only once per day and at a specific time, after the creation of the language centres this same course was offered more than two times and at different times, for instance, once in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Chapter 8

Tensions faced in the reform effort

Article 124 mandated that university students should achieve a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language by the time they had completed 60% of their undergraduate programmes. Since the focus of this research was English, the universities' specific responses and challenges in relation to ELT have been identified and discussed. It was in these responses and challenges that some tensions among EFL teachers emerged. This chapter addresses the secondary research question: What tensions can be identified between government goals, as articulated in Article 124, and their implementation by universities?

During the implementation of Article 124, tensions revolved around the following two areas:

- (1) Teachers' ability to implement institutional changes in response to Article 124; and
- (2) Teachers' access to resources.

A 'teacher's ability' refers to his or her language proficiency level and knowledge of the ELT methodology needed to cope with the modifications made by the participating universities to their EFL programmes. 'Access to resources' includes opportunities, enabling mechanisms and support on which teachers could draw. Tension was evident when it came to greater access to these privileges and greater control over the resources available, such as academic support, scholarship funds and SENESCYT scholarships. Scholarship funding came from two sponsors, namely the universities themselves and SENESCYT.

8.1 Teachers' ability to implement institutional changes in response to Article 124

In those universities that participated in the qualitative phase of the study, the teachers' ability to implement changes resulting from Article 124 revolved around the teachers' English-language proficiency and its relation to ELT methodology, as well as to teachers' effectiveness. In this regard, two groups were identified:

- (1) All language centre Directors and a few EFL teachers who claimed to have a CEFR C1 level of English; and
- (2) EFL teachers, the majority of whom claimed to have a CEFR B2 level of English.

It is noteworthy, however, that only 23.3% of the universities surveyed required their EFL teachers to validate their language proficiency by taking officially recognised tests such as TOEFL, CAE, FCE or IELTS. This meant that the actual level of English among Directors and EFL teachers was generally difficult to ascertain.

What triggered the tension between these two groups was the assumption that an effective teacher of English, capable of implementing change in the participating universities, required both a high level of proficiency in English and a good knowledge of ELT methodology. One language centre Director stated:

It is in higher education that EFL teachers' knowledge of English must be evident. Thus, they definitely need to have a CEFR C1 level of English and need to have it certified via international proficiency exams; for instance, CAE (Certificate in Advanced English). Otherwise, how would they teach, if they do not know English? How can they cope with the changes that resulted from the implementation of Article 124? (Director HEI #2).

According to this Director, in a round-table discussion entitled 'Pre-service Language Teachers' Formation' (which featured in the National Convention of Foreign Language Teachers, held in the city of Quito on June 10-12, 2015), a representative of the Ministry of Education commented, as follows:

There is no doubt that some teachers can be really good with teaching strategies. However, it would not be sensible to even think of incorporating teachers with good teaching strategies who do not have a good level of English into the educational system. How can a teacher without a good level of English teach this language? Some teachers can have very good teaching strategies; regrettably, if they do not know the language, they cannot teach. They cannot transmit something they do not know. For instance, how can a Maths teacher teach Maths without knowing it? It does not matter how good they can be in teaching methodology. The point is they do not know Maths. You cannot teach something you do not know, regardless of how much you try (Representative of the National Ministry of Education).

Contrary to the beliefs of this group, the second group of teachers, who were the majority and had a lower level of English proficiency, believed that a B2 level of English was more appropriate than was a C1 level, and referred to the latter as an unrealistic goal. An EFL teacher belonging to the second group commented:

If we want students to achieve a B1 level of English, it is obvious that we, teachers, need to have a higher level of English. Thus, achieving B2 sounds logical (Teacher 1 HEI #1).

Furthermore, some participating EFL teachers (e.g. Teacher 5 HEI #2) stated that using a B2 level as the benchmark for EFL teachers' level of English was a more realistic goal because it reflected the general ability of Ecuadorian teachers. They also stressed that knowledge of teaching methodology was more important than

language proficiency to implementing Article 124. They added that achieving a B2 level of proficiency was in itself a difficult task. One teacher stated:

We have been pressured into instituting a C1 level, though I consider that in Ecuador it is very difficult for teachers to achieve this. I know that some teachers do have this level but this is because they have studied overseas in English-speaking countries. Unfortunately, the majority of us haven't had this opportunity or the support to study overseas but we know how to teach. Since we know how to teach, I consider that a B2 level is enough (Teacher 1 HEI #1).

Three key themes emerged from the interview data:

1. The demand for a higher level of English-language proficiency (C1) among teachers and the necessity of having this level certified via internationally-recognised exams;
2. Teachers' justifications for maintaining a lower level of English (B2) and a call for more institutional support to achieve this level of proficiency; and
3. Greater value placed on teachers' language proficiency than to their knowledge of ELT methodologies.

The emergence of these themes indicated that the two aforementioned groups had strongly contrasting perspectives. Group 1 considered a high level of English proficiency as being more important than the teachers' pedagogical skills for the effective implementation of Article 124, while Group 2 considered that EFL knowledge and access to resources to develop their teaching methodology was more important than proficiency, and that a B2 level of proficiency was sufficient to facilitate Article 124 implementation.

The tension between proficiency and knowledge of pedagogy emerged because of the difficulty that the majority of EFL teachers have attaining a level of English higher than a CEFR B2:

Generally, teachers do not have a higher level of English than a B2. However, EFL teachers are trying to improve, but it is not easy (President of RANI).

A participating Director similarly commented on the language proficiency of teachers in the following terms:

After administering some proficiency exams to our teachers, we found out that some of them did not have a CEFR B2 level but have lower levels such as CEFR A1 or A2; this level was the same as our students. A low level of English proficiency is a reality among our EFL teachers in the country (Director HEI #2).

The difficulty that some participating EFL teachers experienced when trying to improve their language proficiency and conducting activities that demanded a high level of English may have resulted from their emphasis on knowledge of ELT pedagogy over language proficiency. This is consistent with Ghasemband and Hashim's (2013: 891) observation that a good command of English increases EFL teachers' confidence; conversely, a low level of proficiency in English reduces it. In Ecuador, universities that offer ELT programmes usually have a strong component of ELT pedagogy in their academic formation but lack courses that develop English proficiency among their graduates. Thus, the difficulty to have a CEFR C1 level of English among a great majority of EFL teachers.

Essentially, EFL teachers appeared to be using their perceived strengths – be they language proficiency or knowledge of ELT pedagogy – to justify their ability and right to teach at the university level and to implement Article 124 properly. Using their perceived abilities among these two groups of teachers resulted in a tension regarding who is more capable to teach in the university and implement Article 124. For example, with regard to the first group of teachers which deemed a higher level of language proficiency as more important than knowledge of ELT pedagogy to teach and implement Article 124, Richards (2017: 4) stated that '[t]eachers' perceptions of their language proficiency also contributes to beliefs

about their own effectiveness, known as teacher efficacy – that is their ability to effectively perform in their role as language teachers’. Ecuadorian Directors and EFL teachers with a CEFR C1 level of English certainly exemplified this phenomenon, since they believed that with a high level of English proficiency, EFL teachers are more equipped for teaching and implementing language policy compared to those who do not have a high level of proficiency in English.

It is important to consider that, for any EFL language-policy innovation, EFL teachers require both sufficient English-language proficiency and knowledge of ELT pedagogy since they will, ultimately, most likely be the ones to implement the innovation in their classes. Choi and Lee (2016: 61) observed that ‘teachers’ English use becomes accelerated as teachers have higher levels of both linguistic and pedagogical competences’. It is important, therefore, that for an EFL language policy which aims to increase the use of English across the institution that all EFL teachers possess these two characteristics (a good level of language proficiency and a deep knowledge of ELT pedagogy), a good level of language proficiency because they can model the English language to their students and promote its use both socially and academically and a deep knowledge of ELT pedagogy because it can help plan effective teaching activities that promote English learning among students.

Those directly in charge of policy formulation and implementation need to address issues relating to the development of English language proficiency and ELT pedagogy among the EFL teachers via development programmes and universities need to play an active role in supporting EFL teachers’ development. Unfortunately, the support that some universities provided for EFL teachers was earmarked exclusively for tenured teachers, which created tension between teachers with tenure and those without. These tensions are discussed in the next section.

8.2 EFL teachers’ access to resources

Following the legal requirement to increase the pool of teachers holding PhDs, universities provide scholarships for tenured teachers to study in overseas

postgraduate programmes, in some cases Master's programmes, but with a greater focus on PhD programmes. Universities also support tenured teachers' attendance of training courses overseas, national training courses, and conferences for the purpose of presenting papers. Non-tenured teachers, who account for the majority of teachers in Ecuadorian universities, felt frustrated with this system because they felt excluded. The following quote represents EFL teachers' feelings:

It is easy for the institution to demand that we EFL teachers need to be professionally updated. However, it is not easy for us to do so when the institution does not provide enabling mechanisms to everybody. The institution offers scholarships for on-line or face-to-face teacher training courses or even for graduate studies overseas, but this is only for tenured teachers. Here, the majority are non-tenured teachers and we don't have access to these opportunities. If the requirement is for all, then why is that opportunities are offered only to tenured teachers? (Teacher 1 HEI #1).

Universities' practice of grouping teachers according to their employment status resulted in the formation of two groups; one group that had full access to institutional privileges and another group that did not. Unfortunately, the majority of EFL teachers fell into the second group. Since this practice did not promote academic mobility for non-tenured teachers, their motivation for professional development and institutional engagement was affected negatively; many teachers saw their institutions as little more than places to earn money rather than in which to grow professionally. One EFL teacher commented:

I would be very happy and thankful to the university if they granted me a scholarship to study. Sadly, I know that it will never happen. If I want to prepare more academically, I have to resign and apply for a scholarship in a different funding institution. However, since I need money to support my family, I have to continue working here (Teacher 4 HEI #3).

This way of thinking among non-tenured teachers, together with their restricted access to institutional support, did not promote a sense of positive agency as the schism served to maintain their status quo and heightened their sense of professional stagnation. Therefore the tension, on the one side non-tenured teachers not wanting to exert more effort to improve their teaching performance or involve in extra academic institutional activities which demanded more additional time due to the difficulty to access institutional resources, and on the other side, tenure teachers requiring equal distribution of work among all teaching staff regardless their status (non-tenure/tenure).

This immobility of non-tenure teachers who assumed a passive role and refused to engage in additional teaching activities or professional development training resulted in demotivation felt by staff as a result of the tenured-non-tenured distinction maintained by universities. This was described by one teacher in the following way:

This way of treating teachers (tenured/non-tenured) demotivates us, non-tenure teachers. It has affected the teaching staff's development and motivation. We are not motivated to develop our teaching capability via training courses or further academic preparation (Teacher 2 HEI #1).

From a language policy perspective, non-tenured teachers should be provided with access to the same institutional benefits as their tenured counterparts. This would help to increase their positive agency, which could in turn lead to better classroom practices. Conversely, as Kezar (2013: 589) observed, policies which do not support non-tenured teachers affect their ability to perform effectively in the institution, which in turn may impede policy implementation. Thus, Vice-chancellors and Deans need to strike a balance between facilitating equal access to resources for all teachers irrespective of their status in the university, and jeopardising the implementation of an effective language policy.

In contrast to the restrictive practices surrounding universities' support of their teachers, SENESCYT launched two scholarship programmes in 2012 aimed at promoting academic development among Ecuadorian teachers. The programme, 'Go teachers', was a pilot SENESCYT scholarship programme that comprised two types of courses delivered in the United States. The first was a capability course designed to improve the English-language proficiency of EFL teachers and run by the University of Kansas, New Mexico State University, the University of Kentucky, and Valparaiso University. 'Go teachers' also offered a graduate Masters' level course run by the University of Kansas. Both courses were offered to EFL teachers from all education sectors, primary, secondary and tertiary. Unfortunately, however, SENESCYT no longer offers the 'Go teacher programme' due to a lack of government funding.

The second type of scholarship offered by SENESCYT aimed to fund PhD programmes for all kind of academic fields working in any Ecuadorian universities, for example: lectures from the Engineering or Social Sciences Departments. This scholarship only funds PhDs programmes in selected overseas universities, namely those ranked amongst the first 1000 universities in the world. Although this programme was offered to all teachers irrespective of their status (non-tenure/tenure), some tensions between SENESCYT and EFL teachers working in these institutions emerged. These tensions are explained in the following section.

8.3 Access to SENESCYT scholarships

The nature of these programmes resulted in tensions between SENESCYT and the EFL teachers particularly. From the point of view of SENESCYT, these programmes provided an opportunity for those who wanted to pursue postgraduate studies overseas; however, due to a lack of interest among the Ecuadorian teachers, this opportunity was wasted, according to the Assistant Secretary of SENESCYT.

SENESCYT interpreted the lack of applications to the scholarship schemes as a lack of interest among university teachers, and failed to identify the underlying reasons why teachers were not applying:

It is very sad to see that academics do not apply for the university teacher scholarship programme we offer. We fund all university teachers from all areas, not just English teachers, to study doctoral programmes at overseas universities. However, out of all scholarships that SENESCYT offers, this programme is the least in demand (Assistant Secretary of SENESCYT).

From the most teachers' perspective, they felt apprehensive about studying overseas and viewed leaving Ecuador somewhat negatively. Many felt that it would undermine the economic stability of their families, as they would not be receiving their monthly salaries. Furthermore, as the scholarship allowance was intended for one person only, the monetary support for families who may wish to join them abroad might be insufficient, particularly in developed countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, or other European countries where in which the standard of living is considerably higher than it is in Ecuador (Teacher 1 HEI #2).

The president of the RANI, who is seen as representing the sentiments of most EFL teachers, spoke of these programmes in the following terms:

The scholarships offered by SENESCYT are a manifestation of the good job this office is doing. However, some EFL teachers, myself included, are the sole economic provider for our families. We cannot just accept a scholarship and study overseas for a minimum period of two years. While it is true that the SENESCYT could give us a monthly allowance while we are overseas, who would provide for our families while we are there? I think that this programme should have been organised differently. For instance, instead of sending

five teachers to study overseas, it would be better if this money were used to train five hundred teachers in Ecuador (President of RANI).

The interview data revealed that almost all EFL teachers recognised and valued the support of the state; however, since this scholarship funding was applicable only for postgraduate studies overseas, the opportunity became restrictive instead of facilitative of teachers' mobility and professional development because teachers did not want to risk their economic stability. Teachers were worried about studying overseas because of the accompanying financial insecurity; yet, if they did not go, they risked losing their jobs because they did not have a PhD. The Assistant Secretary of the SENESCYT had a different view of teachers' justifications for not taking advantage of these scholarships:

The professional development of university teachers is not the responsibility of the SENESCYT; it is the responsibility of each university. They need to allocate a portion of their budget to this area. In the case of public universities, the state gives them the economic resources for this. However, the responsibility of the state is to provide scholarships for its people. In this sense, among the scholarship programmes we have, there is one, which is tailor-made for university teachers aiming to earn a PhD degree. Its main objective is to help university teachers obtain a PhD title rather than mere training, for without this they may not be able to continue working in their institutions. It is very sad, though, that despite the support of the state, teachers are not interested. Among all scholarship programmes we have, this one has been the least in demand (Assistant Secretary of SENESCYT).

In this excerpt, the Assistant Secretary provided an explanation of the type of support that SENESCYT offered to teachers in general. This support focused on degree programmes rather than on training because, according to SENESCYT, teachers' professional development is the responsibility of the universities.

Due to differing views on the rationale for state scholarships, EFL teachers were placed in an ambivalent position. Had they pursued a graduate degree overseas they would have had to resign from their jobs, as most of them did not have tenure. Thus, the economic stability of their families would have been put at risk. They preferred professional development courses, such as training and capability building, but these types of courses did not have SENESCYT funding.

These tensions have multiple implications for language policy. Primary among these is the inclusion of an EFL teacher profile that is appropriate given the need to help students to achieve the language outcomes stipulated in the language policy (CEFR B1) and the corresponding support that universities need to provide for EFL teachers to achieve this goal.

8.4 Conclusion

The identified tensions that emerged as a result of the implementation of Article 124 in the participating universities indicated a need for appropriate mechanisms for improving teachers' capabilities in order to help them to cope with the changes resulting from the implementation of Article 124 and their access to institutional resources and SENESCYT scholarships.

Tensions regarding teachers' ability concerned two groups: Group 1 (Directors and EFL teachers claiming to have a CEFR C1 level), and group 2 (EFL teachers with a language proficiency level lower than that of a CEFR B2). Group 1 claimed that what was needed for effective EFL language-policy implementation was a high level of English proficiency among teachers, while group 2 claimed that a high level of proficiency was not important but that a knowledge of ELT pedagogy was. Language proficiency created tension among EFL teachers because those with a lower level of English considered it difficult to improve their level of English proficiency.

In seeking support for academic development from SENESCYT, EFL teachers in general found themselves faced with a dilemma, regardless of their employment status. Applying, and subsequently accepting, a scholarship for a doctoral

programme that would last for at least three years was detrimental to their financial and employment stability. SENESCYT, however, failed to appreciate this and instead believed incorrectly that teachers were simply disinterested in the help of the state and did not wish to study overseas for the purpose of their professional development.

Chapter 9

The extent to which language policy implementation reflects the Principle-Based Approach

In Chapters 1 and 2, I provided an account of the status of English-language policy in higher education globally, after which I focused on the Ecuadorian context in particular. The literature suggest that universities globally are using English and are developing and implementing language policies that do not focus only on the process of learning English, but also on its value as a tool which facilitates the internationalisation, globalisation and regionalisation of universities. This broader perspective involves new approaches to EFL language policy implementation in higher education, namely approaches based on a view of English not only as proficiency attainment but in more holistic terms. In Chapter 4, I presented the quantitative and qualitative data results and offered an analysis. The data showed that senior management authorities from the surveyed universities did not enact major changes in response to Article 124. What changes there were focused mainly on the area of infrastructure, followed by adjustments to ELT pedagogy and, finally, management, in each of these areas they faced challenges. I have described these challenges and discussed universities' responses to them and the tensions that emerged as a result in the process of implementing Article 124.

The current chapter extends my analysis of universities' responses to Article 124 and the challenges they experienced during the process of implementing of this national foreign-language policy, using the lens of the six principles of EFL language policy implementation proposed by Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012); namely, collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency and empowerment. As Mahboob and Tilakaratna point out, these principles, provide general guidelines for EFL language policy implementation and their purpose is not to be prescriptive but facilitative.

In order to design and implement a language policy, it is important to understand what it is. In this sense, Ricento (2006: 10) argued that finding a suitable definition for language policy is difficult because of 'the complexity of the issues which involve language in society'. One definition of language policy proposed by Schmidt (2006: 97), however, is 'the development of public policies that aim to use the authority of the state to affect various aspects of the status and use of languages'. In the words of Sudbeck (2015: 76), it is 'the complex sociocultural processes which influence the function, use, structure, and/or acquisition of language varieties'. Language policy can be said to refer to the different organised and contextualised activities developed by a community and led by the state or educational authorities to promote the use of a language in a specific location and in specific institutions; for example, schools and universities.

Ricento and Hornberger (1996: 402) observed that Hornberger (1994), after having studied different authors in the field of language policy and planning for more than 30 years, identified three different types of language planning: status planning, which concerned the uses of language, acquisition planning, which concerned the users of language and corpus planning, which concerned the language itself. Ricento and Hornberger argued that these three types of language planning should be considered collectively in language policy and not separately. Furthermore, Johnson and Ricento (2013: 16) added:

Empirical research on LPP processes, especially over the past decade, has helped reveal more and more layers of the LPP onion and a variety of theoretical and conceptual perspectives – ecology of language, ethnography of language policy, critical discourse analysis – have proved useful. The ethnography of language policy has been proposed as a method that combines a focus on structure and agency, the macro and the micro, policy and practice. It may be that the next phase of LPP research and scholarship, however, is not characterized by one particular theory or method but by

interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (Johnson and Ricento, 2013: 16).

Johnson and Ricento's statement encouraged alternative approaches to language policy, and Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 9-10) invited us to consider a more contextualised approach to language policy rather than import standard models that have, in most cases, been studied and conceived of elsewhere in the world.

Based on the data collected in this study, the analysis below presents cases in which Mahboob's principles were generally in evidence among participating universities during the implementation of Article 124, and considers their implications for the implementation of an effective English-language policy for use in the Ecuadorian higher education context in particular.

9.1 The principle of collaboration

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:13) explained this principle as an institutional process of cooperation, inclusion, decision making and active participation among all stakeholders in the design of EFL language policies. Bryson et al. (2016: 44) discussed a collaboration that went beyond the institution, and added that it needs to involve other sectors such as 'government, business non-profits and philanthropies, communities, and/or the public as a whole'.

As result of the demands of Article 124, language centre directors from the participant universities began to look beyond their own walls and challenge the individualistic way in which institutions had undertaken their EFL planning. This tendency for universities to work alone regarding language teaching was not unique to Ecuadorian institutions; in a study conducted in 2010, Cañado found that universities generally 'set objectives, reshape curricula and conceptualise methodologies within the short-sighted perspective of our subject area, degree or, at the most, university, remaining oblivious to the broader inter-institutional, cross-country or even transatlantic picture' (2010, p. 408). In the case of the participating universities, this tendency to plan EFL programmes individually was also the

result of the excessive control that language centre directors experienced on the part of their senior management figures - typically their Vice-chancellors and Deans. These authorities had the final say on all EFL language-policy proposals and, in most cases, they were the ones who elaborated and implemented EFL language policies.

The data from the participating universities showed that collaboration manifested itself in the tendency to consider working with other universities, a tendency that resulted in the creation of the National Academic Network of Languages, or RANI. This academic network is not a government institution, even though SENESCYT encouraged its establishment. It is independent from the government and functions according to its own regulations, as reported by the Assistant Secretary of SENESCYT in the following excerpt:

We (SENESCYT) work together with universities in order to facilitate the formation of academic networks in all areas; for instance, engineering or children's education. In the case of foreign languages, we have worked with RANI and accompanied them all through their formation.

The president of RANI explained that this academic network is independent concerning its academic work, meaning that is not part of the government and does not belong to any university.

The focus of RANI cannot only be the EFL curriculum, though it needs to be our primary consideration because it is the standard for ELT. We, according to SENESCYT, can effect change in ELT and shape its direction among RANI's members since it is an organisation with a national representation.

Even though RANI has the power to design language policy and implementation guidelines, its work has focused on the determination of the students' target level of English-language proficiency (CEFR B1) and a proposal for a standard EFL programme that focuses, in particular, on the number of hours and the number

and duration of EFL courses. According to RANI's members, this should be sufficient for students to achieve a CEFR B1 level of English. Unfortunately, beyond the selection of a CEFR B1 level and the proposal of an EFL programme, RANI failed to provide a detailed rationale for these two policy changes in ELT. For example, for the first policy change that referred to the CEFR B1 requirement, RANI based its decision to select a CEFR B1 level as the target proficiency level for students on the current level of English among EFL teachers and students entering university, but failed to justify why students need to have this level of English. In the second proposed change, which concerned the suggested number of hours for EFL programmes, RANI suggested five mandatory and two optional EFL courses, each comprising 120 hours; however, RANI again failed to explain the reasons for its decision. Nor did it justify why English had to be taught in higher education, or explain how it could facilitate other institutional processes such as the internationalisation, globalisation and regionalisation of universities.

To incorporate the two aforementioned changes in EFL language policy, RANI had a series of meetings attended mainly by language centre Directors and without considering the point of view of EFL teachers or other stakeholders. One EFL teacher commented:

All regulations and policies promoted by RANI are designed and discussed at a top level (directors of language centres) and according to their research, which is expected to be done at this level. They claim that this way of EFL planning and the number of hours we have is appropriate to meet our language goal, which is a CEFR B1 level (Teacher 2 HEI #2).

According to Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:13), collaboration, in the context of determining language policy, needs to include all stakeholders. The collaborators have to 'be given power to influence the design of policy, curriculum and textbooks so that these policies are understood, accepted and translated into appropriate practice'. However, the interview data from the participating universities suggested that the language centre Directors failed to include EFL teachers and

other stakeholders in this process. Collaboration also needs to occur within individual institutions prior to it taking place in order to ensure that account is taken of the particular circumstances pertaining to different institutional contexts. Failure to do so can result in language policies being agreed upon but ultimately proving difficult to implement in these contexts because of existing constraints. Policymakers without a proper understanding of the context of implementation might agree to inappropriate policies geared towards 'standardization as reflected in rigid one-size fits all curricular mandates focused on the learning of discrete skills in the national language' (Pease-Alvarez and Thompson, 2014: 166). EFL language policy must work from the inside out; there needs to be an understanding of ELT at an institutional level before collaboration with other institutions can take place. Understanding individual universities' contexts and needs can enrich and ground language policy discussions, and can facilitate the identification of common institutional needs prior to the formulation of a national policy.

In this regard, a national language policy might not be able to take every university's individual circumstances into account during its design and implementation. However, by bringing to the table individual universities' contexts and needs, it might be possible, through a process of collaboration, to design the principles for an EFL language policy that can guarantee equal quality across the higher education sector. Hence, the importance of providing more participatory mechanisms that can facilitate the active involvement of all stakeholders. In other words, collaboration needs to give a participatory voice to all stakeholders in policy design.

9.2 The principle of alignment

Among Ecuadorian universities, cases which make evident the principle of alignment were also identified as well as cases of collaboration. For example, organising universities under a national academic network such as RANI was part of the principle of collaboration. Concerning the principle of alignment, Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:16) stated that, in order to follow the principle of alignment,

it is necessary for policymakers to align ELT policy goals with the context of implementation. That is, it is necessary to set *realistic* goals. For example, the goal of EFL policy was the same in secondary education and higher education in Ecuador; namely, a CEFR B1. This is a clear manifestation of a policy that was not aligned to the contexts to which it was applied. These two sectors of education portray two different contexts that include, for instance, students' ages and goals. Regarding the age of the students, secondary education mostly consists of teenagers and higher education adults. In addition, the goal of most of students' in secondary education is to access higher education, whilst at university, it is to earn a degree which will in turn allow them to have a job.

Furthermore, in order to realise these policy goals, Mahboob and Tilakaratna added that it is important that these goals are also aligned with the EFL curriculum, textbook materials and classroom practices. This means that, once policymakers have defined their policy goals, the curriculum, teaching materials and classroom practices need to be organised in such a way that they all serve to achieve those goals.

In the higher education sector in Ecuador, the achievement of a CEFR B1 level in English has become the goal of the national EFL policy. Thus, in an attempt to achieve this goal, universities used the CEFR language indicators from levels A1 to B1 as language-learning outcomes for each of their EFL courses. In this regard, the CEFR became the backbone of the EFL curriculum and universities began to identify textbooks from the United States and the United Kingdom that publishers claimed were aligned with the CEFR. Once these textbooks were identified and selected for use in the university by the language centre Directors, they used their tables of contents as the content of the EFL syllabus and also the teaching activities that these textbooks included as the planned activities in the textbooks, and the completion of that syllabus became the main objective of every EFL class. In conjunction with this close reliance on EFL textbooks, EFL teachers followed the textbooks' suggested methodology, activities and assessment tools, and used the associated ICT resources.

This way of aligning the achievement of a CEFR B1 level of English with the CEFR language indicators and EFL textbooks resulted in a standardisation of ELT provision, which has come about as a result of Article 124. This standardisation, however, is not unique to Ecuador, but has become widespread in relation to language learning in general over the last thirty years, as Leung and Scarino (2016: 86) have noted:

The goals of language learning in many school and adult education sectors have come to be expressed as levels of achievement or proficiency, as frameworks of standards, or as outcomes. They are generally a part of large-scale state, national or international curriculum and assessment systems and, as such, have become highly influential. At an international level, the most influential example is the CEFR.

In Ecuador, employing CEFR did not come without challenges. For instance, books that were structured according to CEFR indicators specified the number of teaching hours needed to achieve the desired teaching/learning goals and to meet the target level. This presented universities with a number of problems, as discussed in detail in Section 4.2.3 of the qualitative analysis. Firstly, as I have indicated, there were challenges involved in increasing the number of EFL contact hours. Secondly, most students did not have the appropriate English language entry level to perform at the required standard in class. Thirdly, ICT-based teaching proved to be difficult because not all teachers were ICT literate. Fourthly, the teachers' performance was based on the completion of units rather than on the extent to which student learning had taken place. Although there was a close relationship between the CEFR-informed curriculum and classroom practice based on suggestions from the EFL textbook publishers claiming to be aligned with the CEFR, there was a notable lack of consideration of context. Language centre Directors from the participating universities did not fully understand what the CEFR was and its purpose, described by Little (2006: 167) as:

1. to analyse L2 learners' needs;
2. to specify L2 learning goals;
3. to guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities; and
4. to provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes.

The purpose of CEFR as articulated by Little was not considered by the participating universities. There was, for example, no learner needs analysis, nor was there a description of learning goals. Their only justification for including the use of CEFR in the EFL language policy was the perception that this framework was ideal, regardless of the particular characteristics of the Ecuadorian context. Consequently, they simply selected EFL textbooks that they believed would enable students to achieve the CEFR B1 target level without considering the students' baseline knowledge and the EFL teachers' English language proficiency and pedagogical skill.

The language centre Directors appeared to have resorted to online platforms and ICT-based teaching materials without considering the EFL teachers' ICT-literacy skills and their ability to use these tools – tools in the use of which their students were often far more competent than they were themselves.

Finally, one of the results of EFL teachers' strict compliance with CEFR-based textbooks was a loss of flexibility. EFL teachers ultimately ended mechanically implementing predesigned language learning activities rather than themselves facilitating or shaping learning. That is, the requirement that teachers to follow the selected textbook rigidly ignored the importance of 'teacher's agency, and especially teacher's proactive and projective engagement with the policy in question' (Priestly et al, 2012: 211). The teaching of English in the Ecuadorian higher education context needs to give greater consideration to the characteristics of the national context, the need to involve teachers in policy design and implementation, and the importance of moving away from a prescriptive to a more descriptive approach to policy-making.

9.3 The principle of transparency

This principle, according to Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:16), refers to the facility by the stakeholder to access the objectives and goals of the language policy. They added that this is important because it ‘prevents corruption, hidden ideological agendas, and political motivations’ that might have a negative impact on effective policy implementation. In order to facilitate access to objectives and goals, policymakers need to facilitate communication among all stakeholders since, according to Christensen and Cheney (2015:86), transparency is reflected in ‘communication and in relationships’.

Among the surveyed universities, cases that manifested this principle were not entirely evident, for although all stakeholders had access to policy goals and objectives (for example, they knew that the target proficiency level was CEFR B1), not all – and particularly teachers – knew the details of how this EFL policy was formulated. This was reflected among participating universities in the top-down flow of information referred to by the participants in the interviews. Policymaking was generally the work of senior management and policies relating to EFL were communicated via memos and departmental meetings, placing EFL teachers on the receiving end of policies that had already been finalised by the time they became aware of them. Teachers reflected on this as follows:

We, as teachers, have to follow what the authorities ask us to do. If they tell us to do something, we have to do it because that is the requirement to work here. There are academic and pedagogical regulations, which need to be abided by and adopted. We are not in a place from which we can influence the policy-making (Teacher 3 HEI #1).

This excerpt echoes Shohamy’s observation (2006:79) that most language planning decisions do not consider teachers’ views. When Article 124 was enacted, senior management figures, including Vice-chancellors, Deans and language centre Directors at the participating universities, formulated the policies, and teachers were tasked with operationalising these policies in their classrooms.

The top-down manner in which policy is agreed upon, disseminated and implemented in Ecuadorian institutions could be responsible for some of the subsequent challenges that emerged during the course of its implementation because the teachers with potential insights into possible operational difficulties were not consulted during the formulation process. This resulted in abrupt changes having to be made at later stages, which created confusion. Problems in this regard were felt most keenly in relation to the utilisation of teaching materials and on-line platforms. Language centre Directors, for example, might have suddenly resorted to a change of textbook or to the adoption of on-line platforms without providing a clear rationale. Furthermore, such changes were not always communicated, and/or there was hesitation among the universities' Vice-Chancellors, Deans, and language centre Directors to share with EFL teachers' information regarding policy design and implementation.

While the principle of transparency appeared to apply at the level of RANI and the language centre Directors, the lack of participation on the part of EFL teachers and students in policy design or access to the information regarding how policies were formulated suggested that transparency did not extend to all levels of seniority, and that the voices of important stakeholders were not heard or taken into account.

With regard to policy ownership and the commitment of stakeholders to policy implementation, Canagarajah (2005: 20) stated that it is through consultation within the community that it is possible to develop a sense of ownership, responsibility and relevance. The failure of policymakers in Ecuador to consider the opinions of EFL teachers and students in policymaking meant that there was a failure to benefit from their experiences in the shaping of a sound and effective policy. This lack of consultation, in turn, resulted in the lack of a sense of ownership and responsibility, which was crucial to the policy's effective implementation.

9.4 The principle of relevance

The principle of relevance concerns the relevance to context of instructional materials, policy goals, ELT methodologies, beliefs and practices (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 9-15). Context refers to the 'structural conditions that shape the nature of situations, circumstance, or problems to which individuals respond by means of action/interaction/emotions' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 87). Structural conditions in Ecuadorian universities refer to the physical infrastructure, educational provision (books, electronic resources and teacher-support materials), sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced English language teachers, the dominance of the Spanish language, and students' baseline knowledge of English upon entry to higher education. Collectively, these structural conditions have shaped the English language teaching-learning process. For example, EFL teachers' level of language proficiency (mostly CEFR A2 and B1) shaped one of the RANI's responses, which was to suggest that SENESCYT should CEFR B1 as the foreign-language requirement for university students. Although structural conditions shaped the responses of participating universities to Article 124, the formulation of EFL language policies were not particularly relevant to the context, instructional materials, policy goals, methodology and language beliefs in these institutions.

The formulation of non-relevant EFL language policies was also evident at a national level. This was manifested through the absence of specific guidelines from SENESCYT regarding the teaching of foreign languages such as English. This lack of guidelines led universities to formulate language policies on their own, which were based on their beliefs and knowledge. A common and widespread belief in Ecuador was that students would acquire the expected language proficiency through the use of CEFR-based English-language materials. This belief reduced EFL language policy in higher education to the mere achievement of a language competency indicator (B1), and its implementation to the use of foreign instructional materials that claimed to be aligned with CEFR. There was little or no consideration of either the particular characteristics of the Ecuadorian

context in which English language teaching/learning was taking place, or of the broader relevance and significance of the language for universities, particularly in relation to globalisation and the internationalisation agenda.

Article 35 of the Academic Regimen Regulation outlined the implementation of Article 124 of Ecuadorian language policy for tertiary education, and contained the following guidelines:

1. It is within universities' discretion to treat foreign-language teaching as a credit or non-credit-bearing course.
2. Students need to achieve a CEFR B1 level.
3. Students need to acquire a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language before complete 60% of their academic programme.
4. Universities are free to outsource their foreign language teaching.

With the exception of guideline 2, these policy implementation guidelines, focus more on the management aspect of language centres than on promoting English use in the universities. Guideline 2 is the only guideline that relates to the curriculum or teaching, yet the justification for the selection of a CEFR B1 level was not made clear and, without such justification the guideline could be viewed as lacking veracity and relevance. Furthermore, any justification had to consider the Ecuadorian context and, in particular, students' baseline knowledge and the teachers' competency because, as North noted, 'CEFR cannot just be applied; it must be interpreted in a manner appropriate to the context' (North 2014: 230).

9.5 The principle of evidence

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 15) stated that an evidence-based language policy uses 'contextual data as the basis in designing an EFL policy'. This helps to ensure that policy does not take a one-size-fits-all approach, but uses relevant data for the formulation of well-informed policies. Alton-Lee (2011: 305) reinforced the need to base EFL policy formulation on pertinent local data by emphasising that '[f]inding what works in one setting does not in itself demonstrate what is needed to spread such reform more widely'. For example, in Ecuador, the popular

use of CEFR has shaped the way in which EFL language programmes are planned, especially in secondary and higher education sectors, as both use the same method for ELT planning. The same method of ELT planning in these two different sectors (secondary and higher education) is an indication that policymakers believe that what works for teenagers in secondary education will also work for university students. For instance, the governmental requirement of a CEFR B1 proficiency level in both sectors (secondary and higher education) has resulted in Ecuadorian institutions in these two sectors gearing their EFL practices and the selection of instructional materials towards the CEFR B1 proficiency required, without using local data to design their EFL language policies. Thus, it was not possible, based on the data, to identify cases in which the principle of evidence was manifested.

Before any policy design and implementation, universities need to produce evidence of good practices that facilitate a new approach to EFL language policy. Unfortunately, based on the interview data, the two main outcomes of Article 124 (the adoption of CEFR as framework for EFL programme design and the use of CEFR-based textbooks) were not adopted as a result of research or local data. Nor has there been any evidence of teachers' practices or programme evaluation forthcoming since the implementation of Article 124.

Constructing EFL language policies that are not based on local data has been a common practice among universities in Ecuador, and deviating from this practice may be difficult due its possible effect on personal or group interests. For example, if policymakers do not use local data to design EFL language policies, it will be easy for them to insist on the use of certain instructional materials (which are generally expensive for students to purchase), and in this way, favour a particular publishing company. If local data are used as the main source from which policies are constructed, it will be difficult for policymakers to favour particular groups. Thus, some opposition to this mode of EFL policy design may emerge, and change would be difficult to instil. In this regard, Marsh and McConnell (2000: 576) explained that people or groups who might be affected by the change that a new

policy may bring can manifest a form of resistance due to a desire to safeguard their interests.

Another example of the failure to draw on evidence in the form of appropriate data in EFL policymaking was the difficulty for participating universities in terms of harmonising the expected language learning outcome (i.e. a CEFR B1 proficiency level) with the number of contact hours needed to achieve it. In the absence of supporting data and irrespective of their circumstances, universities believed that students would be able to achieve a CEFR B1 level as a result solely of the use of CEFR instructional materials.

9.6 The principle of empowerment

It was not possible to identify from the data any case in which this principle was evident in Ecuadorian EFL language policy implementation. The principle of empowerment is the 'ultimate goal when all other five principles are observed: collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, and transparency' (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 16-17). Through the realisation of these five principles, empowerment would most likely be achieved. However, it emerged from the data that empowerment was difficult to achieve because not all five principles were in place. Furthermore, the design of language policy did not include all stakeholders, but relied mainly on the voices of universities' language centre Directors. Lack of empowerment of EFL teachers and a clear demarcation between tenured and non-tenured teachers in respect of access to resources for professional development resulted in tensions between these two groups and a lack of institutional commitment that would facilitate effective policy implementation among non-tenured EFL teachers.

9.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented an account of the current situation regarding EFL language-policy design and implementation in Ecuadorian higher education and, through the lens of Mahboob and Tilakaratna' s principles of collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency and empowerment, explained how

participating universities responded to Article 124. In doing so, I highlighted the lack of consideration given to Ecuadorian context, insufficient understanding of the CEFR framework, the absence of evidence in the form of research data in policy formulation, and the limited involvement of all relevant stakeholders in policy formulation.

Furthermore, a rigid adherence to textbooks precluded opportunities for EFL teachers to exercise agency in the planning of lessons and the development and application of innovative pedagogy. Nor were the interests of the students taken into account when reviewing lessons and teaching materials that were relevant to them. In light of Clever's (2007:227) statement that degree of agency has to do with 'power and authority', the lack of teacher and student involvement in EFL policymaking in Ecuador says much about the power hierarchy that exists there: EFL teachers and students were seen by senior management merely as implementers and end-users respectively, rather than collaborators and co-creators. It is a top-down model that is generally adopted when conceiving of and formulating policies, and while decisions that govern how language policy is to be implemented are formulated at the macro-level, the implementation itself is enacted at the micro-level by language centre Directors and teachers, and ultimately the effectiveness with which teachers do so depends on their creativity, common sense and knowledge. However, although teachers who support the policy are likely to exert a positive agency towards its successful implementation, the exercise of negative agency can, according to Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech (2014:23), be a manifestation of resistance to macro-level policymaking.

The principle of empowerment is associated with the concept of agency. Empowerment in language policy entails the 'giving of voice to all stakeholders' (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012:16-17), particularly teachers, as a way of getting buy-in from them in terms of both the formulation and the implementation of policy. Giving a voice to teachers may promote their sense of agency because they are given opportunities to share their knowledge and to assert their beliefs, opinions and views (Lefstein and Perath, 2014: 35). Moreover, giving a voice to teachers

means giving them a role and responsibilities in the process of policy design; that is, their agency 'is constructed and understood through positioning' (Kayi-Aydar 2015:102) and they feel are an active part of policy formulation.

Promoting empowerment, according to Mahboob and Tilakaratna, is achieved as the result of an appropriate observance of the five principles of collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment and transparency. In relation to the participating universities, there were no cases that made evident each of the five principles, and it was clear that policy design and implementation were conducted in a top-down manner. This means that EFL policies were conceived of by high-level management (normally Vice-Chancellors and Deans), without the participation of EFL teachers and students. Yet empowering EFL teachers is important as it develops their commitment to and ownership of the process of policy implementation. Unfortunately, designing inclusive EFL policies did not appear to be a practice adopted by the universities that participated in this study. What is needed, in order to start promoting inclusive policy planning in Ecuador are inclusive activities that systematically invite all stakeholders to share their views and debate ideas, and the provision of open fora through which they can freely do so.

This study, which used a mixed methods approach, was done on a national scale in order to fill the research gap identified in section 2.7 of this thesis. This research gap referred to the lack of policy implementation models which are not prescriptive or top-down and consider an active involvement of EFL teachers; first, during the process of policy design and second in the process of policy implementation; also, models that do not constrain universities but facilitate the design of their own policy implementation models. This research gap also concerned the lack of large-scale policy implementation studies which employ a mixed methods design.

It is important to note that in order for the Principle Based Approach to be effective in the EFL policy implementation process, there need to exist the necessary contextual conditions that facilitate the application of these principles. For

example, for the principle of evidence, it is necessary that policy makers base their EFL policies on pertinent data. If there is no contextual data available, policy makers need to carry out properly designed studies in those contexts where the policies will be implemented before embarking on any policy design. In the Ecuadorian ELT context, policy makers, generally, do not construct their EFL policies based on pertinent data but simply on the suggestions of book publishers who supply the textbooks used by institutions, or adopt EFL language policies which have been designed and implemented in other countries without any adaptation to the Ecuadorian context.

Although Article 124 prompted some changes to ELT in Ecuadorian higher education, certain pre-existing conditions and practices in the participating universities made difficult the application of the Principle Based Approach. I discuss some of these pre-existing conditions below.

There was a marked variation between ELT programmes in terms of the number of contact hours and their duration. In some universities, EFL courses comprise 80 contact hours while in others the figure is 40. Depending on the university, EFL courses last for one full semester or two months regardless of the number of contact hours. In some universities students have to study an 80-hour EFL course in two months whereas in other universities a 40-hour EFL course lasts for one semester. In addition to differences in the in number of hours and duration of courses, the total number of EFL courses that students need to successfully complete to fulfil the English language requirement is also variable. In some universities, students need to successfully complete 4 EFL courses and in other universities up to 8 EFL courses. However, despite this variation, most Directors and EFL teachers from the participating universities claimed that their students achieved a CEFR B1 level when they finished their English tuition.

ELT in most universities is very structured and EFL teachers do not have much freedom to innovate due to a high dependency on textbooks that they are required to follow religiously. Teachers are typically evaluated according to the extent of

their coverage of textbook content. This practice does not empower teachers or respond to the context and needs of students, making it difficult to apply the principle of empowerment. In line with this practice, Directors and policy makers in most universities use the content of the textbook and the accompanying teacher's guide as the bases for policy and content design. Sometimes, they will import policies from elsewhere, applying them in the absence of any modifications that might make them more suitable to the local context. This practice makes difficult the application of the principles of alignment, relevance and evidence. The principle of evidence becomes the most important principle among the three since it is through pertinent data that the needs, goals and aspirations of students can be identified.

EFL policy design and implementation in Ecuadorian higher education tends to be a top-down process, where senior authorities and Directors are the only ones who design policies. Although, through Article 124, policy makers sought collaboration with other universities which resulted in the creation of RANI, this collaboration has been between the Directors of language centres and excludes the participation of EFL teachers or students.

Given the current ELT context in Ecuadorian higher education a Principle Based Approach can have a dual purpose in ELT Ecuadorian higher education: first, it can help organise EFL language policy implementation; and second, it can change the current context of EFL policy implementation. It would appear, then, that the fact that there is little evidence of the principles proposed by the PBA approach in ELT policy implementation among the participant universities has more to do with the pre-existing context than with the limitations of PBA.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

I embarked on this study with the aim of understanding how EFL language policy was designed and implemented in the participating universities in Ecuador in response to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law. In order to do this, I used the lens of the Principles-Based Approach to English-language teaching proposed by Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012). This chapter briefly summarises the key findings and the conclusions of this study and presents the implications of these results for EFL language policy design and implementation in higher education in general and particularly in Ecuadorian universities.

10.1 Key findings and contribution of the study

The most notable finding of this study was that in all participating universities, the method of policy formulation was a top-down model, according to which EFL policies were conceived and approved by senior management (Vice-Chancellors, Deans and, to a lesser extent, language centre Directors). EFL teachers and students were not given the opportunity to voice their views and there was no participation on their part during the conceptualisation of EFL policy.

EFL teachers in the participating universities were not empowered to participate in policy formulation; instead, they were seen merely as policy implementers and adopted that role accordingly. The problem with limiting EFL teachers' involvement to that of policy implementers is that there is no sense of ownership on their part and this may lead to limited commitment in carrying out the activities necessary for the successful implementation of the policy. Although teachers may carry out all of the activities required by the Directors of the language centres in order to implement the language policy, the quality of their work may be compromised since teachers may not always agree with the activities they are required to carry out and on which they have not been consulted at the level of policy design nor in the implementation. Furthermore, their lack of participation

early on in the process can lead to resentment and therefore lack of commitment, even though they may agree with elements of the policy or even the policy in its entirety.

Failure to consider, during the process of EFL policy formulation, those students who its end users of may also result in students failing to understanding the reasons why particular EFL policies are being implemented in their universities. They may see these policies as a waste of time because they are not aware of the goals and purposes of these policies. Students who do not recognise the importance of English may not devote time and effort to learning and achieving the desired proficiency level and to take part in activities promoted in the policy.

It is important that stakeholders feel that language policies at least take account of their views, even if they do not ultimately incorporate them. If policies are developed in a bottom-up manner and all relevant stakeholders given the space and opportunity to express their views, this will promote active engagement in and commitment to policy formation and implementation. This will also result in empowerment among all stakeholders which according Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012:16-17) is a fundamental part of EFL language policy.

The government's selection of the CEFR B1 as the EFL language policy target was developed without the active participation of students. Policymakers seemed to ignore the fact that secondary students are expected to have B1 level upon completion of their secondary education, with the result that secondary and university students have the same proficiency target. This means that students are unlikely to show significant proficiency gains between the time they leave secondary school to the time they complete their university studies. Furthermore, the achievement of the CEFR B1 level as the sole language objective fails to acknowledge other English language benefits associated with the globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation of universities. Teichler (2004:7) explains globalisation as the process of 'marketization, competition, and management in higher education' whilst internationalisation as the 'physical mobility, academic

cooperation and academic knowledge transfer' among universities located in different countries.

According to Spolsky (2004: 5), language policies need to take account of three elements, namely 'language practices', 'language beliefs or ideology' and 'efforts to modify or influence that practice'. For example, language beliefs among the participants of this study referred to the importance of English for communication which, according to them, could help students to access academic information, scholarships and postgraduate education, thus increasing their opportunities to secure better paid jobs. Therefore, it is the responsibility of language policymakers to identify language practices and language beliefs concerning English by having multi-sectorial consultation with, for example, stakeholders in basic and secondary education sectors and in industry.

Language policy implementation needs to be inclusive. This means that students, especially the disadvantaged, need to have equal access to EFL learning opportunities. Formulating policies by factoring in perspectives of different groups and stakeholders reinforces the critical theory approach in language policy which, according to Tollefson (2006: 42), 'entails an implicit critique of traditional, mainstream approaches' and promotes inclusion of the excluded.

Among participating universities, and particularly the public universities, an example of an EFL policy that excluded disadvantaged students was the use of imported textbooks. In Ecuador, these textbooks are generally expensive; therefore, it was difficult for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to purchase them. In addition, students' access to publishers' complementary online practical activities was dependent on the code that came with the textbook. Students who were unable to purchase the textbook were also unable to access the online support. This type of exclusive access to learning materials was reinforced by the fact that teachers used the textbook and the online support accompanying the textbook as the sole teaching resource. Basing ELT on the use of expensive teaching materials meant that those who could purchase the textbooks had greater opportunity to develop and practice their English in class

than those who were unable to do so. It is the responsibility of policymakers to design EFL language policies that are inclusive. Inequities in education happen when provision, such as learning materials in English, fails to take of learners' individual as well collective circumstances. Language policies need to promote the use of a range of resources by teachers that enable all learners to engage and to benefit from a similar quality of learning experience This can have implications for teachers' pedagogical skills, and particularly for their ability to understand different students' needs; to locate and design diverse, relevant and suitable materials; to compare and differentiate materials and know what levels of proficiency they represent and target; and to be able to use those materials effectively in their English language teaching. These things, in turn, may entail capacity building through professional development activities, and EFL language policies need, therefore, to have a detailed teacher professional development strategy. Without such a strategy, it may be difficult to instil change if teachers who are in the frontline of policy implementation but do not have the necessary tools to do what is required of them. No matter how well-formulated an EFL language policy, it is likely to end in vain unless those tasked with implementing it and not sufficiently qualified to do so.

In cases where universities are highly regulated by the state, as is the case in Ecuador, it is the responsibility of the government offices in charge of higher education to help universities construct their own EFL language policies and to provide continual support and advice to those involved in its implementation.

The requirements of Article 124 prompted cooperation among Ecuadorian universities which led to the creation of RANI. Initially, RANI was conceptualised as an academic organisation whose aim was to influence national foreign language policy and advise universities in the development of their individual foreign language programmes, particularly ELT programmes. However, this aim was not strictly followed and RANI ended up promoting the standardisation of EFL programmes, recommending, for example, that all of its member universities have the same number of EFL courses of similar duration. This standardisation was

problematic because the individual context of each university was not taken into consideration.

RANI does not have the capacity to create regulations that apply to all universities since it is an academic network of universities but does not have legal power to regulate universities, only government offices can create regulations. In the case of higher education SENESCYT is the office authorise to do so. However, RANI may influence SENESCYT in order to effect change in EFL language policy.

RANI has the potential to become the pivotal organisation that advises universities how to implement and develop their individual policies and to promote new approaches to ELT and innovation. However, if it is to do so, it needs to be a more inclusive organisation to seek collaboration from different sectors such as public schools and industries to identify and understand the needs and possible uses of English, and to use the understanding to shape universities' EFL programmes. This may help develop more nuanced, contextualised EFL language policies.

There is no doubt that the enactment of Article 124 motivated Ecuadorian university EFL policy makers to design and implement EFL policies to change ELT practices in higher education. However, unfortunately, these changes did not bring with them a visible improvement or innovation in ELT. As Levin and Fullan (2008: 292) observe, changes in education are not difficult to implement since they can be done by 'changing funding or policies or information or governance structures'. However, they add that changes may not always promote development. Some examples of such changes to ELT in Ecuadorian higher education presented in this study include: an increase in the number of classrooms equipped with ICT resources; changes in teaching personnel – namely those not holding a Master's degree in ELT or a related area being made redundant, and those with a relevant Master's degree being hired; the creation of language centres in universities where, previously, they did not exist; an increase in the number of contact hours in EFL courses that students are required to take (in some cases from 40 to 60 contact hours); and requiring students to

successfully complete a larger number of EFL courses in order to graduate (in some cases, up to 8 EFL courses, regardless of students' degree programmes). However, these changes did not promote innovation. In the case of equipping EFL classrooms with ICT resources, the results of this study showed that this did not impact significantly on students' learning. Instead, it was difficult for some teachers to work with these new ICT resources and students felt that these ICT resources did not add much to their learning. Furthermore, despite the modifications to EFL courses in terms of the number of contact hours and duration, the problem of variation in EFL programmes between different universities continued to make it difficult to achieve a CEFR B1 level among all university students.

The results of this study also demonstrated that EFL policies which had not been designed with an active participation of all stakeholders, particularly EFL teachers and students, do not empower stakeholders and, therefore, their positive agency to effectively implement EFL policies is reduced. Apart from empowering stakeholders, EFL policy implementation needs to lead to innovation in universities' ELT provision and to be reflected in classroom practices, for it is in the EFL classroom where students as the end users of policy will benefit from innovation.

Regarding innovation, it is important that EFL policy makers consider that effective classroom innovations do not occur overnight. Implementation of innovation is an ongoing process which, according to Wedell (2009:123), 'take[s] many years to reach a point where it becomes just another part of normal classroom life'. As this study has indicated, constant changes to EFL policy in a short space of time can be detrimental to effective policy implementation. Unfortunately, since the enactment of Article 124 in 2010 until the time of writing, higher education foreign language policy in Ecuador has changed three times, and this, together with a lack of policy implementation guidelines, appears to have affected the effective implementation of ELT innovations in the participating universities.

In relation to the methodology employed in this study, it is notable that, commonly, studies in the area of educational policy implementation are large scale studies that employ a quantitative methodology – often survey-based research. Whereas, these types of study do provide a general overview of the status of policy implementation in education, they often lack the kind of detail that can inform and further explain quantitative results. On the other hand, qualitative studies generally focus on explaining the experiences of participants involved in the process of policy implementation and tend to be small-scale in nature. In order to achieve a balance between generalisability and particularity and ensure sufficient reach (large or small-scale), I employed a mixed method design for this study and collected data from 14 universities in 10 different cities located in three different regions of the country, Highlands, Coast and Amazonia via questionnaires. To administer the questionnaires, I travelled from one city to another over a period of 10 weeks. Personally administering the questionnaires to language centre directors, EFL teachers and EFL students helped me to understand the current situation of EFL policy implementation in higher education in Ecuador. It also helped me interact with the respondents and subsequently create rapport with them. This rapport, in turn, facilitated the identification of universities at which to conduct the qualitative portion of my study and helped me to gain access to potential interview participants. The experiences gained in the process of quantitative and qualitative data collection allowed me to familiarise myself with the respondents, and the context of each participating university.

When planning my methodology, my expectation was that participants would indicate a variety of approaches to and practices in policy implementation, depending on the type and category of university. However, this turned out not to be the case. The quantitative results showed little variation across universities and the qualitative results confirmed these results, thus confirming the value to the study of a mixed methods design.

Given the bureaucratic conditions of universities in Ecuador, using a mixed methods design for this study was not an easy task. Initially, I intended to collect

quantitative and qualitative data for this study in 18 universities but only 14 universities allowed me to carry out my research in their premises. Despite having the authorisation from the office of the Vice-chancellors, in some of these 14 universities, language centre Directors were not that willing to cooperate. The lack of research in the country and the political situation particularly regarding the higher education sector, I believe, influenced some university senior management authorities, some language centre Directors and some EFL teachers to close the doors of their institutions for this study.

As it was mentioned in the introduction of this study there is a lack of research in the area of EFL policy implementation in the country. My assumption is that policy makers or EFL academicians in the Ecuadorian higher education sector have not carried out proper research studies. This lack of involvement in research, I think, has blurred their views and support to other research studies. It is only when one has done and experienced the challenges of research that one becomes more willing to help other colleagues with their own researches. Thus the importance of motivating other people to do research in the country.

People who venture to carry out studies of this type in Ecuador, given the lack of a proper support from university's senior management authorities, need to be constant and patient in persuading them to cooperate and share information that they consider sensitive. I believe that constant visits, clear explanations of the research and assurance of confidentiality can help obtain university's senior management authorities permission to conduct a research in their institutions.

By the time I was collecting data for my study (2014 and 2015) the Ecuadorian government through CEAACES, the adjunct department of SENESCYT in charge of evaluating and ranking universities, had finished the second national university evaluation. This second evaluation exercise was as controversial as the first evaluation in 2008 and it was not free from criticisms. Vice-chancellors especially those whose ranking of universities dropped one or two categories questioned the validity of the evaluation. When I went to the universities to ask authorisation for

administering the questionnaires, and since I was a scholar from the SENESCYT, the natural reaction of Vice-chancellors was to associate my study with an evaluation process which resulted in little cooperation from their end. They believed, I would inform CEAACES about their ELT practices. In cases like this, it is important to strictly follow the ethics of research and assure all participants that their data will be confidential and anonymous. Not following the ethical procedures and sharing the data with third parties will definitely affect future researchers since participants will not trust them anymore.

Apart from a tight adherence to ethical procedures, there is the need of designing and implementing national policies that facilitate carrying out research within and among universities and other institutions. Research needs to be free from political influence and Vice-chancellors or other authorities' moods. It is only when authorisation for conducting research does not lie in the hands of a single person that it will be possible to obtain good and realistic results that can help improve ELT in the Ecuadorian higher education sector.

10.2 Limitations of the study

My research aimed to identify the responses, challenges and tensions that universities experienced during the implementation of Article 124 and to provide a description of the ELT language policy through the lens of the Principles-Based Approach to English-language teaching proposed by Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012). Although, it was a national study and the selected sample of universities represented the three different regions of the country (Coast, Highlands and Amazonia), the results obtained and the analysis and commentary provided cannot automatically be assumed to apply to each and every Ecuadorian university. This sample, however, included institutions which represented most of the characteristics of universities in the country covering 18 different strata. Each stratum contained different characteristics of the universities for example, category, geographical location and type. Stratum 1 is, for instance, comprised of one public university which is category A and is located in the Coast (see Table 7).

It is intended that the results of this study and the insights it has generated should initiate and inform further discussion and debate about Ecuadorian higher education EFL policy and motivate future research in this area.

Article 124, as a foreign language policy for universities, does not include clear and detailed implementation guidelines that can help universities implement this policy or formulate their own language policies. Therefore, it has been difficult to identify whether policies are effective or not using an existing language policy model as a framework. In this study, I used the Principles-Based Approach to English-language teaching to consider the status of EFL policy in Ecuadorian universities. For future research endeavours, there is a need to carry out more scientific inquiry that investigates how different models of EFL language policy design can facilitate ELT in universities.

10.3 Implications for future research

In Ecuador, there is a dearth of research and published work in Applied Linguistics and ELT in general. A clear manifestation of this is the paucity of published work in reputable journals reporting on research conducted in Ecuador. For example, in the data bases of Scimago Journal & Country Rank there are only 11 published articles recorded between 1996 and 2015, and in Scopus a total of 6 articles between 1908 and 2017 (see Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 2017 and 'Scopus', 2017). Research needs to be conducted on all levels of education from primary, secondary and tertiary education if ELT policymakers and practitioners are to have a fuller understanding of the state of ELT in Ecuador and to develop relevant and effective strategies for developing the field.

It is my intention that this study, the first to be conducted on EFL language policy in higher education at a national level, should not only shed light on some of the current problems that exist concerning ELT policy in Ecuador, but also motivate other researchers to carry out further research on ELT in the Ecuadorian higher education context, with a view to promoting more participative approaches to EFL

language policy in which all stakeholders can have an active role and feel that their voices are heard.

10.4 Recommendations for EFL policy implementation in Ecuadorian Universities

In the participating universities, it was clear that there is a very hierarchical structure in which only a selected group of people (mainly Vice-Chancellors and language centre Directors) plan and decide the path for implementation of EFL language policy. It would be very helpful for policy implementation in universities to change this structure and allow EFL teachers and students to play a more active role in the process of policy design and implementation.

Giving EFL teachers an active and more visible role in EFL policy design and implementation can help empower them and also promote their positive agency. Mahboob and Tilakaratna, (2012: 16 – 17) clearly highlight the fact that the principle of empowerment is the most important of the six principles that they propose for EFL language policy design and implementation. This because EFL language policy implementation requires the commitment of all stakeholders in order for the implementation to be more effective.

Based on the results of the data from the participating universities, one aspect that it is important to mention is the positive predisposition that the majority of EFL teachers have to being more involved in the process of policy design and implementation. EFL teachers indicated that they would like to have more opportunities to express their opinions and views on EFL policy implementation. This positive predisposition among the majority of EFL teachers can facilitate the implementation of the principle of empowerment. Therefore the role of policy makers needs to focus more on the promotion of spaces and activities that allow greater agency among those groups traditionally excluded in decision-making; for example: forums, debates or round tables, where the voices of EFL teachers can be heard.

Another aspect that needs improvement is the basing of EFL policy design and implementation on pertinent data. Policy makers need to understand that EFL policies cannot be designed without first identifying and then responding to the needs and aspirations of students. EFL policies that respond to the needs and aspirations of students (end users of policies) and are pertinent to the contexts in which they are being applied will have a greater likelihood of being implemented effectively. This fact underlies the importance of the principle of evidence. In order to have access to appropriate data that can be used to inform policy decisions, university policy makers need to employ a team of people with responsibility for collecting and analysing that data. In other words, there needs to be a group of people in university language centres or cognate departments whose primary role and responsibility is to research, for it is only through research that the principle of evidence can be implemented. In line with the principle of evidence, the principle of alignment cannot be properly implemented if this alignment does not respond to the context and the students' needs. Thus, the principle of evidence becomes a prerequisite for the principle of alignment, which is to align ELT materials with the context and policy goals, according to Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012: 16).

Article 124 requires that all students achieve a CEFR B1 level in a foreign language in order to graduate. In the case of EFL, this legal requirement has resulted in universities using the CEFR language competencies as the language outcomes for the each of their EFL courses, without any reflection or adaptation to the national higher education context. For example, the language competencies for the first EFL course that students need to successfully complete are the language competencies which correspond to the CEFR A1 level, and for the second EFL course, the language competencies corresponding to the CEFR A2. This curriculum organisation is subsequently and mechanically (without a proper analysis) repeated until students take their last EFL course which corresponds to the CEFR B1 level. This type of organisation, particularly the lack of reflection, analysis and contextualisation of policies, does not promote any

participation of all stakeholders in the process of policy design, implementation and innovation. Instead, this rigid model of EFL policy implementation has resulted in policy makers too closely associating the acquisition of the CEFR levels of English with overseas instructional materials such as textbooks that claim to be aligned to the CEFR. This effectively limits ELT innovation.

Policy makers, language centre Directors and others who have the power to influence ELT the universities need to reconsider how ELT has been treated in universities in Ecuador. They need to understand that the use of a single textbook is not the only way to develop the English language competency of students. There are other more innovative ways to facilitate ELT; for example, the use of resources such as worksheets, videos, free online materials and various kinds of authentic materials.

Furthermore, the acquisition of a proper level of proficiency in English by university students cannot be reduced only to the acquisition of a certain CEFR level. It is important that students see the practical use of English in their academic and professional lives. Thus, there is a need for policy makers to conduct a proper student needs analysis before planning their EFL programmes. Only then can they sensibly can design contextualised EFL programmes that respond effectively and relevantly to students needs and interests.

10.5 Personal gains

My main motivation for embarking on this research was the need to find different ways to design and implement EFL language policy in higher education, particularly in relation to the Ecuadorian context. My perception was that innovation in ELT could be achieved only through governmental policies since the government has the power to legally influence ELT in higher education via national regulation. It may be that my idea of top-top down regulation was the result of feeling powerless to influence policy implementation and change the way ELT was dealt with in the institutions where I worked prior to starting my PhD. I believed that only the government would be able to instil change and innovation

in ELT in the country and that the universities, being subject to state regulation, would not have any option but to follow government requirements.

In the course of this research, however, I discovered that I was not the only one who felt powerless to influence ELT in universities; there were other teachers in the participating universities who shared similar sentiments. It made me reflect on my initial beliefs and I have come to understand that innovation and policy implementation in ELT cannot be imposed from above. It also helped me to understand that the effectiveness of policy implementation lies primarily in the hands of EFL teachers, and that EFL teachers need to exert their positive agency in a more visible way. What is necessary for effective EFL policy implementation is to generate appropriate environments and contexts that pave the way for a more participatory model of EFL policy design and implementation – a horizontal model in which all points of view are seriously taken into consideration.

I also learned to be patient, as social science research is something that can rarely be fully controlled by the researcher. Researchers need to be adaptive and open to change if they aim to collect useful and valid data. In my case, there were occasions when I had to wait for many hours outside the office of the Directors of the language centres, and in one case had to return to one university in the Coast three times on three different days. Each time I went to the Director's office to administer the appropriate questionnaire he told me to return because he was busy. On the third day, I decided that I would sit in front of his office and not move until he completed the questionnaire. I stayed sitting in front of his office for around 6 hours. When he came out from his office to go home, I stood in front of him with the questionnaire and asked him to fill it in right there and then.

The process of data collection was a humbling experience for me. When I returned from England to Ecuador to collect data, I believed that all Directors of language centres, EFL teachers and students would cooperate with me; after all, I was studying a PhD in England and I was a scholar funded by SENESCYT. I thought that people in universities would come and ask my advice about ELT. This

expectation never materialised; in fact, what happened was the opposite. Some participants ignored me and instead of them coming to me, it was me who had to approach them and talk to them in order to create rapport so they would cooperate with me for the purposes of the study. This taught me an important lesson, namely not assume that just because one has a different academic background, the rest of the people will acknowledge it and willingly cooperate. As researchers, we need to be humble enough to accept that just because we are doing research people will not – and perhaps should not – necessarily see us as experts in the area and automatically help us. Cooperation in research is like respect, one has to earn it not demand it. In order to earn this cooperation we need first to create rapport among participants in the study, and second to see all participants as equals.

This study is my first rigorous research in the area of EFL policy implementation and it has proven to be very informative and a learning experience. One of the most important lessons I have learned is that ELT policy needs to be designed in a bottom-up manner and with the active participation of all stakeholders; for example, EFL teachers and students. The active participation of stakeholders gives them the opportunity to exert their positive agency and thereby empowers them. Prior to conducting this research, I tended to believe that if EFL policies are well designed and that even without the participation of other stakeholders in the design process, their implementation will be smooth and without complications. I know now that I was mistaken and I can say that policies without the participation of stakeholders and consideration of the context are likely to be difficult to implement in universities.

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Appendices

Appendix I, Questionnaire for Directors

Dear Director,

The aim of this questionnaire is to capture the responses of universities to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law. This Article mandates that students must master a foreign language by the end of their undergraduate programmes. Although, Article 124 does not refer to any language in particular, this questionnaire specifically focuses on English as a Foreign Language.

Your cooperation in this research is pivotal in the identification of challenges and constraints that universities have faced in complying with the aforementioned Article. The results obtained from this questionnaire will, in turn, help address some proposals for an effective language policy implementation in Ecuadorian universities.

Rest assured that the information obtained from this questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be utilised solely for the purpose of this research.

The expected duration of this questionnaire is 25 minutes.

Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation.

,

I. RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

Educational Attainment: _____ Area of Specialization: _____
(Highest degree achieved only)

Years of teaching/working in higher education: _____

Studies Abroad/Overseas: Countries Overseas where

- English Language Courses courses/Training/Degree obtained
- ELT Language Teaching UK US Australia New Zealand
- BA MSA PhD Canada Others, pls. specify _____

II. INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

The aim of this section is to profile your institution. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best describes your institution. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How are foreign languages taught in your institution? Please select the one that applies.

- In a separate department (eg. A language department/centre)
- As a part of the general curriculum together with the other subjects
- Foreign languages are not taught in this institution

2. How many hours of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) face-to-face instruction do students attend per week?

3. How many hours of face-to-face instruction does each English level involve in your institution? Select the one that applies to you.

- Less than 50
- 51 to 60
- 61 to 70
- 71 to 80
- More than 81

4. Are all students in your University required to study the same number of levels of EFL regardless of their careers?

Yes

No

5. In average, how many levels of English does a student need to pass in order to graduate?

6. How many teachers are there in your language centre/institute?

III. Importance of EFL

The aim of this section is to identify the importance of teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) to university students. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best applies to you. There is no a right or wrong answer.

1. Do you think that Ecuadorians should have a high level of proficiency in English? Please select one option.

Yes

No

2. In a University, who do you think should have a high level of proficiency in English? Select one or more items.

Academic staff (eg. lecturers, professors)

Students

English Teachers

Directors

Administrative staff (eg. Secretaries, receptionist)

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

3. In which area or areas is English employed as the medium of instruction in your Institution?

a. Only in EFL programs

b. Curriculum content subjects (other than EFL),

Please specify:

c. Extra-curricular activities

Please specify:

d. Administrative activities

Please specify:

e. Others

Please specify:

4. The statements below refer to possible reasons why is for university students to have a high level of proficiency in English. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? Select the one that applies.

SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), A (agree), SA (strongly agree), NA (not applicable)

University students should have a high level of proficiency in English because:	SD	D	A	SA	NA
Students can gain access to more academic publications					
Students can get well-paid jobs					
Students can work with international companies					
Students can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country					
Students can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world					
The Higher Education Law states that all university students must master a foreign language					
Students can talk to native speakers of English					
First-world countries speak English					
Authorities in the university say that all university students must master a foreign language					
In the era of globalization, English is the common language of communication					
Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English					
More foreigners are visiting Ecuador					
Students are able to work overseas					
Students can work in the area of global business					
English promotes students' international mobility					
Students have an additional competency					
English promotes intercultural understanding					
English expands students' professional network					

5. Below there are some statements that indicate the support from university senior management authorities towards EFL programs. Please select the option that applies to your institution.

Choose, N (Never), R (rarely), S (sometimes), MT (most of the time), A (always)

	N	R	S	MT	A
University senior authorities (Vice-Chancellors, Deans, and Provosts) motivate students to learn English in the university					
University senior authorities are open to new projects to reinforce ELT in the university					
Senior authorities motivate the academic staff to learn English					
Senior authorities promote the use of English outside EFL classes (eg. ESP in the institution, language contests)					
University senior authorities look for international institutional agreements to foster English language					
University senior authorities invest a portion of the institutional budget in promoting EFL					
University senior authorities encourage EFL teachers to enhance their English and teaching skills					
University senior authorities support EFL teachers by providing financial assistance to those who want to further their academic preparation in English speaking countries					
University senior authorities invest in ELT teacher training					
University senior authorities promote research in the area of EFL and ELT					
University senior authorities have set a clear EFL language policy in the institution					
University senior authorities show interest in improving EFL in the institution					
University senior authorities consider the teaching of EFL as important as other professional subjects in the institution					
University senior authorities learn EFL to show their interest in the language					
University senior authorities use English in university activities (eg. debates, meetings, programs) to motivate stakeholders to learn English					

IV. Institutional responses to Article 124.

The aim of this section is to identify the institutional responses to Article 124 in the Higher Education Law. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best applies to you. There is no a right or wrong answer.

1. Do you know that the Higher Education Law Includes an article (Article 124) that states that students must master a foreign language by the end of their careers?

Yes

No

2. To what extent do you agree with Article 124?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What did your institution do in response to Article 124? Select all that apply.

Management-focused response

Lay off teachers who do not have a Master's degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open an institutional language centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in areas different than ELT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in ELT or related discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire foreign teachers who have graduate degrees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase the number of hours for each EFL course (eg. from 40 h. to 60 h.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify the existing EFL curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire foreign ELT experts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Require teachers to take standardized tests (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, etc.),	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lay off teachers who do not meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Require teachers to take a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline to retain their position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in inter-university EFL planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use English as a medium of instruction in professional subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>
English as medium of communication in social activities e.g. language contests	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use English for oral communications in the intuition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase the number of EFL courses EFL program (eg. from 8 to 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify an existing language policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formulate a new language policy	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix II, Questionnaire for EFL teachers

Dear Colleague,

The aim of this questionnaire is to capture the responses of universities to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law. This Article mandates that students must master a foreign language by the end of their undergraduate programmes. Although, Article 124 does not refer to any language in particular, this questionnaire specifically focuses on English as a Foreign Language.

Your cooperation in this research is pivotal in the identification of challenges and constraints that universities have faced in complying with the aforementioned Article. The results obtained from this questionnaire will, in turn, help address some proposals for an effective language policy implementation in Ecuadorian universities.

Rest assured that the information obtained from this questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be utilised solely for the purpose of this research.

The expected duration of this questionnaire is 20 minutes.

Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation.

3. In which area or areas is English employed as the medium of instruction in your Institution?

a. Only in EFL programs

b. Curriculum content subjects (other than EFL),

Please specify:

c. Extra-curricular activities

Please specify:

d. Administrative activities

Please specify:

e. Others

Please specify:

4. The statements below refer to possible reasons why is for university students to have a high level of proficiency in English. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? Select the one that applies.

SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), A (agree), SA (strongly agree), NA (not applicable)

University students should have a high level of proficiency in English because:	SD	D	A	SA	NA
Students can gain access to more academic publications					
Students can get well-paid jobs					
Students can work with international companies					
Students can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country					
Students can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world					
The Higher Education Law states that all university students must master a foreign language					
Students can talk to native speakers of English					
First-world countries speak English					
Authorities in the university say that all university students must master a foreign language					
In the era of globalization, English is the common language of communication					
Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English					
More foreigners are visiting Ecuador					
Students are able to work overseas					
Students can work in the area of global business					
English promotes students' international mobility					
Students have an additional competency					
English promotes intercultural understanding					
English expands students' professional network					

5. Below there are some statements that indicate the support from university senior management authorities towards EFL programs. Please select the option that applies to your institution.

Choose, N (Never), R (rarely), S (sometimes), MT (most of the time), A (always)

	N	R	S	MT	A
University senior authorities (Vice-Chancellors, Deans, and Provosts) motivate students to learn English in the university					
University senior authorities are open to new projects to reinforce ELT in the university					
Senior authorities motivate the academic staff to learn English					
Senior authorities promote the use of English outside EFL classes (eg. ESP in the institution, language contests)					
University senior authorities look for international institutional agreements to foster English language					
University senior authorities invest a portion of the institutional budget in promoting EFL					
University senior authorities encourage EFL teachers to enhance their English and teaching skills					
University senior authorities support EFL teachers by providing financial assistance to those who want to further their academic preparation in English speaking countries					
University senior authorities invest in ELT teacher training					
University senior authorities promote research in the area of EFL and ELT					
University senior authorities have set a clear EFL language policy in the institution					
University senior authorities show interest in improving EFL in the institution					
University senior authorities consider the teaching of EFL as important as other professional subjects in the institution					
University senior authorities learn EFL to show their interest in the language					
University senior authorities use English in university activities (eg. debates, meetings, programs) to motivate stakeholders to learn English					

III. Institutional responses to Article 124.

The aim of this section is to identify the institutional responses to Article 124 in the Higher Education Law. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best applies to you. There is no a right or wrong answer.

1. Do you know that the Higher Education Law includes an article (Article 124) that states that students must master a foreign language by the end of their careers?

Yes

No

2. To what extent do you agree with Article 124?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What did your institution do in response to Article 124? Select all that apply.

Management-focused response

Lay off teachers who do not have a Master's degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open an institutional language centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in areas different than ELT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in ELT or related discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire foreign teachers who have graduate degrees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase the number of hours for each EFL course (eg. from 40 h. to 60 h.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify the existing EFL curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire foreign ELT experts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Require teachers to take standardized tests (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, etc.),	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lay off teachers who do not meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire teachers who meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Require teachers to take a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline to retain their position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in inter-university EFL planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use English as a medium of instruction in professional subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>
English as medium of communication in social activities e.g. language contests	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use English for oral communications in the intuition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase the number of EFL courses EFL program (eg. from 8 to 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify an existing language policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formulate a new language policy	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix III, Questionnaire for EFL students

Dear Student,

The aim of this questionnaire is to capture the responses of universities to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law. This Article mandates that students must master a foreign language by the end of their academic programmes. Although, Article 124 does not refer to any language in particular, this questionnaire specifically focuses on English as a Foreign Language.

Your cooperation in this research is pivotal in the identification of challenges and constraints that universities have faced in complying with the aforementioned Article. The results obtained from this questionnaire will, in turn, help address some proposals for an effective language policy implementation in Ecuadorian universities.

Rest assured that the information obtained from this questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be utilised solely for the purpose of this research.

The expected duration of this questionnaire is 15 minutes.

Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation.

I. Importance of English

The aim of this section is to identify the importance of teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) to university students. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best applies to you. There is no a right or wrong answer.

1. Do you think that Ecuadorians should have a high level of proficiency in English? Please select one option.

Yes

No

2. In a University, who do you think should have a high level of proficiency in English? Select one or more items.

Academic staff (eg. lecturers, professors)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>
English Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrative staff (eg. Secretaries, receptionist)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. In which area or areas is English employed as the medium of instruction in your Institution?

a. Only in EFL programs

b. Curriculum content subjects (other than EFL),

Please specify:

c. Extra-curricular activities

Please specify:

d. Administrative activities

Please specify:

e. Others

Please specify:

4. The statements below refer to possible reasons why is for university students to have a high level of proficiency in English. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? Select the one that applies.

SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), A (agree), SA (strongly agree), NA (not applicable)

University students should have a high level of proficiency in English because:	SD	D	A	SA	NA
We can gain access to more academic publications					
We can get well-paid jobs					
We can work with international companies					
We can study a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country					
We can study a postgraduate degree in any part of the world					
The Higher Education Law states that all university students must master a foreign language					
We can talk to native speakers of English					
First-world countries speak English					
Authorities in the university say that all university students must master a foreign language					
In the era of globalization, English is the common language of communication					
Ecuadorian employers hire professionals who have a high level of proficiency in English					
More foreigners are visiting Ecuador					
We are able to work overseas					
We can work in the area of global business					
English promotes our international mobility					
We have an additional competency					
English promotes intercultural understanding					
English expands our professional network					

5. Below there are some statements that indicate the support from university senior management authorities towards EFL programs. Please select the option that applies to your institution.

Choose, N (Never), R (rarely), S (sometimes), MT (most of the time), A (always)

	N	R	S	MT	A
University senior authorities (Vice-Chancellors, Deans, and Provosts) motivate us to learn English in the university					
University senior authorities are open to new projects to reinforce ELT in the university					
Senior authorities motivate the academic staff to learn English					
Senior authorities promote the use of English outside EFL classes (eg. ESP in the institution, language contests)					
University senior authorities look for international institutional agreements to foster English language					
University senior authorities invest a portion of the institutional budget in promoting EFL					
University senior authorities encourage EFL teachers to enhance their English and teaching skills					
University senior authorities support EFL teachers by providing financial assistance to those who want to further their academic preparation in English speaking countries					
University senior authorities invest in ELT teacher training					
University senior authorities promote research in the area of EFL and ELT					
University senior authorities have set a clear EFL language policy in the institution					
University senior authorities show interest in improving EFL in the institution					
University senior authorities consider the teaching of EFL as important as other professional subjects in the institution					
University senior authorities learn EFL to show their interest in the language					
University senior authorities use English in university activities (eg. debates, meetings, programs) to motivate stakeholders to learn English					

II. Institutional responses to Article 124.

The aim of this section is to identify the institutional responses to Article 124 in the Higher Education Law. Carefully read the questions and select the option that best applies to you. There is no a right or wrong answer.

1. Do you know that the Higher Education Law includes an article (Article 124) that states that students must master a foreign language by the end of their careers?

Yes

No

2. To what extent do you agree with Article 124?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What did your institution do in response to Article 124? Select all that apply.

Management-focused response

Lay off teachers who do not have a Master's degree	
Open an institutional language centre	
Hire teachers who have a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline	
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in areas different than ELT	
Hire teachers who have Phd degrees in ELT or related discipline	
Hire foreign teachers who have graduate degrees	
Increase the number of hours for each EFL course (eg. from 40 h. to 60 h.)	
Modify the existing EFL curriculum	
Hire foreign ELT experts	
Require teachers to take standardized tests (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, etc.),	
Lay off teachers who do not meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	
Hire teachers who meet the minimum score in a standardized test (eg. TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, others)	
Require teachers to take a Master's degree in ELT or related discipline to retain their position	
Engage in inter-university EFL planning	
Use English as a medium of instruction in professional subjects	
English as medium of communication in social activities e.g. language contests	
Use English for oral communications in the intuition	
Increase the number of EFL courses EFL program (eg. from 8 to 10)	
Modify an existing language policy	
Formulate a new language policy	

Appendix IV, Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Dear participant,

The aim of this research is to identify the responses of universities to Article 124 of the Higher Education Law and the challenges that institutions faced during the implementation of this article. At the end of this research, recommendations will be made regarding how Article 124 might be more effectible implemented.

The aim of this interview is to explore further the results obtained from the survey previously administered in your institution.

Rest assured that the information obtained from this interview will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be utilised solely for the purpose of this research.

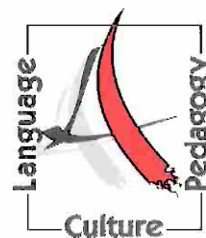
The expected duration of this interview is 45 minutes.

Questions

1. How important is the teaching of English to university students?
2. Three categories were presented in the survey in order to measure universities' responses to Article 124. The majority of respondents ranked them as follows: first, infrastructure, pedagogy and management. What changes did you experience in these areas?
3. What challenges did you experience during the process of implement changes in the areas infrastructure, pedagogy and management.
4. What has the university done in order to respond to these challenges?
5. What tensions emerged during the implementation of Article 124?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix V, Endorsement letters



14 January 2014

To Whom It May Concern

Mr Diego Cajas is currently registered as a full time research student at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, where he is studying for his PhD under my supervision.

Mr Cajas is a government scholarship student who is looking at the way in which higher education institutions in Ecuador are responding to government policy concerning English language provision, in particular the constraints and challenges they face. He hopes that his research will help inform government policy on this issue. The working title of his thesis is:

Characterising and evaluating the perceptions and responses of higher education institutions to recent language policy change: An Ecuadorian case study

I would be most grateful if you would kindly extend to him any assistance you are able in order to ensure that he is in a position to collect the data needed for his study.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Neil Murray
Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK
The Centre for
Applied Linguistics

The Centre for Applied Linguistics

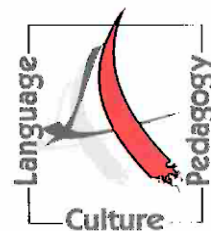
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15 January 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mr Diego Christian Cajas Quishpe (Student Number: 1350218)

MPhil/PhD in Applied Linguistics, 1 October 2013 ~ 30 September 2017

PhD project working title: *Characterising and evaluating the perceptions and responses of higher education institutions to recent language policy change: An Ecuadorian case study*

Mr Diego Cajas Quishpe is currently enrolled in the above research degree programme as a full-time student, working under the supervision of Dr Neil Murray (main supervisor) and Dr Malcolm MacDonald (second supervisor). For his PhD research, Mr Cajas Quishpe is pursuing a case study approach using quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of his study will comprise the administration of survey questionnaires to Ecuadorian universities. This will be followed by qualitative data-gathering involving interviews and focus group discussions.

In my capacity as Director of Graduate Studies in the Centre for Applied Linguistics with primary responsibility for our MPhil/PhD programme, I am writing on behalf of the Centre and of the University of Warwick to give official endorsement to the research that Mr Cajas Quishpe is undertaking, and to request that his efforts to gather data from Ecuadorian universities receive the necessary support. His research is likely to make a valuable and significant contribution to higher education in Ecuador.

Dr Ema Ushioda
Director of Graduate Studies
Associate Professor in FL T and Applied Linguistics

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

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THE UNIVERSITY OF

Oficio Nro. SENESCYT-SGES-2014-1688-CO

Quito, D.M., 18 de junio de 2014

Señores (as)
Rectores (as) de las Universidades y Escuelas Politécnicas del País
En su Despacho

De mi consideración:

Con fecha 24 de marzo se recibió el en esta Cartera de Estado el oficio s/n del señor Diego Cajas Quishpe, Becario de la Secretaría de Educación Superior Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación en el programa universidades de excelencia, mediante el cual el interesado solicita a esta Secretaría una carta de auspicio, a fin de que las instituciones de educación superior IES le faciliten información referente a su tema de investigación en idioma extranjero, esto previo a la obtención de su PhD en Lingüística Aplicada, en la Universidad de Warwick en Inglaterra.

La Secretaría de Educación Superior Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación ha venido acompañando a las universidades, en el proceso de redes de gestión académica, siendo la red de inglés una de las más activas y que más tiempo ha venido trabajando en la generación de un nuevo modelo académico de educación superior.

Por lo antes expuesto y con el objetivo de apoyar y brindar la igualdad de oportunidades a los profesionales que han demostrado una verdadera vocación de superación, aplaudimos a su sensibilidad y colaboración con el pedido del señor Diego Cajas, a fin de que bajo su criterio analicen la posibilidad de prestarle las facilidades necesarias para que pueda realizar su propuesta investigativa.

Con sentimientos de distinguida consideración.

Atentamente,



María del Pilar Troya Fernández
SUBSECRETARIA GENERAL DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

Referencias:
- SENESCYT-DDDC-2014-3625-EX

Copia:
Señor
Diego Christian Cajas Quishpe

lt/jz/mr/mb/ng

Appendix VI, Authorisation letter to collect data



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE CHIMBORAZO SECRETARÍA GENERAL

Nuestro objetivo: **"LA EXCELENCIA"**

Oficio No. **004958** -SG-UNACH-2014
Riobamba, 28 de julio de 2014.

Señor
Diego Cajas Quishpe
BECARIO DE LA SENESCYT.
Presente.-

De mi consideración:

Para los fines consiguientes, en referencia a la comunicación presentada por usted, cumpla en informarle la disposición de la Sra. Rectora, para autorizar la aplicación de las encuestas planteadas en los Centros de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, respecto del tema de investigación: **"Identificar y evaluar las percepciones y las respuestas de las instituciones de educación superior a la reciente regulación de lenguas extranjeras: Un estudio de caso ecuatoriano"**. Información que agradeceremos se proporcione, también, a nuestra institución.

Me suscribo.

Atentamente,

Dr. Arturo Guerrero H.,
SECRETARIO GENERAL.

Anexos:

C.c Coordinadores Centros Idiomas.
Archivo.
Elab: Dr. Arturo Guerrero H.

Para Recepción del Destinatario o representante	
Recibido por (nombres)	Fecha:
Firma	Hora:

Campus Universitario "Ms.C. Edison Riera Rodríguez"
Av. Antonio José de Sucre Km 1 ½ camino a Guano
Teléfonos: (03) 3730880 Ext. 1003 - 1004 - 1005 - 1006
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RIOBAMBA - CHIMBORAZO - ECUADOR