

# Special Educational Needs In The Santa Elena Canton: Situational And Prospective Analysis

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## Abstract

This research aims to characterize the increase of students with special educational needs (SEN) in the Santa Elena canton of the province of the same name in the pre-pandemic school years. For this purpose, a quantitative approach of exploratory type was applied. The data collection instrument was the survey of the directors of the public educational units of the canton. This research arises from the concern about the lack of statistical and academic information on an increasingly worrisome issue, such as the increase of students with specific educational needs in the canton of Santa Elena and the lack of actions that contribute to eliminating barriers to access to regular education. The importance of this research is based on the presentation of reliable statistical information that allows making visible the issue of the number of students with these conditions both at the canton and parish level, becoming a tool for decision making

## RESUMEN

El presente trabajo investigativo tiene como finalidad la caracterización del aumento de los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales (NEE) en el cantón Santa Elena de la provincia del mismo nombre en los años escolares pre pandemia, para su cumplimiento se aplicó un enfoque cuantitativo de tipo exploratorio, el instrumento de recolección de datos fue la encuesta a los directores (as) de las unidades educativas públicas del cantón, esta investigación surge de la preocupación por la falta de información estadística y académica sobre un tema cada vez más preocupante como lo es el aumento de estudiantes con necesidades educativas específicas en el cantón Santa Elena y la falta de acciones que contribuyan a eliminar las barreras para el acceso a la educación regular. La importancia de esta investigación se fundamenta en la presentación de información estadística confiable que permita visibilizar el tema del número de estudiantes que presentan estas condiciones tanto a nivel cantonal como a nivel parroquial constituyéndose en una herramienta para la toma de decisiones.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the National Council for the Equality of Disabilities (CONADIS) Ecuador has about 470,000 people with disabilities; this institution classifies disabilities into Physical, intellectual, visual, auditory and psychosocial, and it is evident that more than 50% are presented in the male gender compared to the female gender with physical and intellectual disabilities being the most relevant (45% and 23% respectively).

The Santa Elena canton belonging to the province of the same name has about 5,600 people with disabilities, more than 60% are male compared to female, with physical and intellectual disabilities being the most relevant (50% and 21%, respectively). This situation is not alien to the education system, where the presence of students with special educational needs is increasingly evident, and the development of this article

identifies it as SEN in the classroom. The Santa Elena canton is composed of the parishes of Colonche, Chanduy, San José de Ancón, Manglaralto, Simón Bolívar and Atahualpa; this research also includes data from Santa Elena, as the cantonal capital.

In response to this problem and the special educational needs of students in public educational institutions in this canton, Ministry of Education has recently sought to provide greater coverage through the Undersecretary of Specialized and Inclusive Education and the National Directorate of Specialized and Inclusive Education to achieve the inclusion of children, girls, adolescents and young people who are in and out of the education system, through various offerings according to the needs of this population, in order to achieve the highest levels of access, retention, promotion and completion in the system. In order to achieve the inclusion of children, adolescents and young people who are in and out of the educational system, through different offers according to the needs of this population, to achieve the highest levels of access, permanence, promotion and completion in the system; thus simultaneously guaranteeing their right to education.

The District Support Unit for Inclusion (UDAI) of the Santa Elena canton has no statistical information that shows the presence of the ENEE in the public educational institutions of the province or the canton, so this research is presented as an alternative for academic information and decision-making.

The objective of the present research is to compare the presence of students with special educational needs in public educational institutions in the canton of Santa Elena in the school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

## 2. FRAME OF REFERENCE

According to López & Valenzuela (2015) and Vasquez et al. (2022), a student is considered to have SEN when for “a wide variety of reasons,” he/she shows more significant difficulties in comparison to the rest of his/her peers to access the learning that corresponds to his/her age or course and requires extraordinary and specialized support to compensate for such difficulties, which if not provided limits his/her learning and development opportunities.

According to the Manual of Pedagogical Strategies to address Special Educational Needs as a contribution to the public policy of inclusive education from the Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador, these are classified as “not associated with a disability and associated with a disability,” as follows their type and classification.

**Table 1. Special educational needs not associated with a disability**

Type	Ranking
Learning Disorder	Dyslexia “Dysorthography” Dysgraphia” Dyscalculia
Intellectual endowment	Giftedness “High Abilities” Talents
Behavioral disorders	Attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD) “Dissocial disorder” and other behavioral disorders.
Others	Catastrophic diseases “Human mobility

	“Adolescent offenders “Migration and/or refugee status
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Author: Manual of pedagogical strategies to address special educational needs in the education of the Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador.

Source: Manual de estrategias pedagógicas para atender a las necesidades educativas especiales en la educación de la Vicepresidencia de la República del Ecuador.

**Table 2. Special educational needs associated with a disability**

Type	Ranking
Auditory	Deafness Hearing loss
Visual	Total blindness Low vision
Deafblindness	
Intellectual	Dimension I: Intellectual skills Dimension II: Adaptive behavior (conceptual, social and practical) Dimension III: Participation, social interactions and roles. Dimension IV: Health (physical health, mental health, etiology). Dimension V: Context (environments and culture). Dimension IV: Health (physical health, mental health, etiology). Dimension V: Context (environments and culture)
Mental	Mental and psychotic illnesses
Physical -Motor	Injuries to the central nervous system Injuries to the peripheral nervous system Skeletal muscle
Pervasive developmental disorders	Autistic Disorder Asperger’s Disorder Rett’s Disorder Childhood Disintegrative Disorder Pervasive

	Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified
Down Syndrome	
Multiple or multi-disability challenges	Presence of two or more disabilities

**Author:** Manual of pedagogical strategies to address special educational needs in the education of the Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador.

**Source:** Manual de estrategias pedagógicas para atender a las necesidades educativas especiales en la educación de la Vicepresidencia de la República del Ecuador.

For its part, the National Council on Disabilities (CONADIS) keeps statistics only with five types of disabilities: Hearing, intellectual, physical, visual and psychosocial.

The World Health Organization defines EDA as any person whose hearing acuity prevents him/her from learning his/her language, following basic education and participating in everyday activities of his/her age; deafness, hearing loss or hearing impairment are often used as synonyms but are differentiated according to the type and degree of deafness or hearing loss. Therefore, two types of deafness should be distinguished: hearing loss (when the hearing loss is equal to or less than 70-75 dB) and deaf (when the hearing loss is greater than 70-75 dB).

According to WHO, half of the hearing loss suffered could be prevented with early care programs, stating that “about half of all cases of hearing loss can be easily prevented, and many can be treated with early detection and appropriate interventions, such as hearing implants. In addition, people with hearing loss can receive sign language training and social support” (World Health Organization, 2014, p. 14).

Intellectual disability (ID) is increasingly used instead of mental retardation. ID is understood as the slow and incomplete acquisition of cognitive skills during human development, which implies that the person may have difficulties in understanding, learning and remembering new things, which are manifested during development, and which contribute to the level of general intelligence, e.g., cognitive, motor, social and language skills (World Health Organization, 1992).

According to (Xiaoyan Ke & Jing Liu, 2017, p. 3), intellectual disability has three frequent sources of causes: Prenatal (before birth), perinatal (around birth) and postnatal (early and second childhood).

In relation to the prenatal phase, chromosomal disorders (Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome and others), single gene disorders (neurocutaneous syndromes such as tuberous sclerosis and neurofibromatosis, brain malformations such as genetic microcephaly, hydrocephalus and myelomeningocele and others) may occur; in the perinatal phase, especially in the third trimester (late pregnancy), there may be complications of pregnancy, maternal diseases such as heart and kidney disease, diabetes or placental dysfunction. Furthermore, brain infections such as tuberculosis, Japanese encephalitis and bacterial meningitis, cranial trauma, chronic exposure to lead, severe and prolonged malnutrition and low stimulation may be evident in the postnatal phase.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001), there are four levels of visual acuity: normal vision, moderate visual impairment, severe visual impairment and blindness. The WHO estimates about 314 million visually impaired people worldwide, of which 45 million are blind. Of this visually impaired population, 87% live in developing countries.

The World Health Organization -WHO- (2017) states that globally “there are a wide variety of mental disorders, each with distinct manifestations. They are generally characterized by alterations in thinking, perception, emotions, behavior and relationships with others. They include depression, bipolar affective

disorder, schizophrenia and other psychoses, dementia, intellectual disabilities, and developmental disorders such as autism” (para. 1)

According to Villanueva (2013), psychosocial disability can derive from a mental illness involving biochemical and genetic factors, where symptoms usually present in adolescence and are not related to intellectual disability. Therefore, psychosocial disability can be temporary or permanent and becomes a condition of life. This definition makes us reflect that, so far, only mental illness is spoken of in the local context and that it has not been recognized as a formally established disability.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology used was documentary research through collecting and analyzing data provided by the District Support Unit for the inclusion of the Santa Elena canton.

The study was complemented with the data obtained from the survey of the directors of the Public Educational Units of Santa Elena canton (Santa Elena 51, Chanduy 27, Colonche 5, Ancón 8, Manglaralto 39 and Simón Bolívar 9), which included Santa Elena as the cantonal capital.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information obtained was as follows

**Table 3. SEN in Cantón Santa Elena by school year**

DISABILITY	SCHOOL YEAR	
	2015-2016	2016-2017
AUDITIVE	14	26
INTELLECTUAL	86	61
PHYSICS	29	67
VISUAL	16	21
PSYCHO SOCIAL	3	1
TOTAL	148	176

**Source:** Surveys conducted and UDAI (Canton Santa Elena).

In Table No. 3 it can be established the comparison of students with special educational needs in the canton of Santa Elena; there was an increase of students with hearing disabilities in the school year 2016-2017 as the previous year, in the same way, it is evident the decrease of students with intellectual disabilities, the considerable increase of students with physical and visual disabilities and finally the decrease of students with psychosocial disabilities. (Maldonado et al., 2022).

**Figure 1: SEN by school year**



ENNES BY YEAR

Source: Surveys conducted and UDAI (Santa Elena Canton).

Table 4. SEN by parishes 2015-2016 school year.

DISABILIT Y	PARISHES						
	C o l o n c h e	C h a n d u y	S a n t a E l e n a	A n c ó n	M a n g l a r a l t o	S i m ó n B o l í v a r	T o t a l
AUDITIVE	3	4	5	1	1	0	14
INTELLEC TUAL	24	16	36	1	9	0	86
PHYSICS	6	8	7	1	7	0	29
VISUAL	4	7	4	0	1	0	16
PSYCHO SOCIAL	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	38	36	53	3	18	0	148

Source: Surveys and UDAI (Cantón Santa Elena)

Table 4 shows the high number of students with intellectual disabilities in the parishes of Colonche, Chanduy and Santa Elena. Likewise, many students with hearing, physical and visual disabilities can be observed in the same parishes.

**Figure 2. SEN by year, parish of Santa Elena canton, the school year 2015-2016**



**Source:** Surveys and UDAI (Cantón Santa Elena)

**Table 5: SEN by parishes 2016-2017 school year.**

DISABILITY	PARISHES						
	Colonche	Chanduy	Santa Elena	Ancón	Manglaralto	Simón Bolívar	Total
AUDITIVE	10	1	9	1	6	0	26
INTELLECTUAL	13	1	27	0	20	0	61
PHYSICS	12	1	27	0	27	0	67
VISUAL	6	3	8	0	4	0	21
PSYCHO	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

SOCIAL							
TOTAL	42	6	71	1	56	0	176

**Source:** Surveys conducted and UDAI (Canton Santa Elena).

Table 5 shows the high number of students with intellectual and physical disabilities in Colonche, Santa Elena and Manglaralto. Likewise, many students with hearing and visual disabilities can be observed in the same parishes.

**Figure 3. SEN by year, parish of Santa Elena canton, the school year 2016-2017**



**Source:** Surveys conducted and UDAI (Canton Santa Elena).

According to the data provided by the UDAI, there are more cases of intellectual disabilities in the cantonal capital, parallel to those of physical disabilities, in relation to the other parishes. From this perspective, the question remains as to the capacity of teachers to address SEN associated with intellectual disabilities and to focus on educational institutions to address physical disabilities with didactic resources and infrastructure.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

A significant increase was evidenced at the cantonal level of students with physical disabilities comparing the school years 2015-2016 (29) and 2016-2017 (67); this means an increase of 131.03 % of students with hearing disabilities from 14 to 26 which represents an increase of 85.71% and in the same way of students with visual disabilities from 16 to 21 which means a 31.25 % increase in one year.

The number of students with intellectual disabilities was reduced comparing the school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 from 86 to 6, which means a decrease of 29% and in the same way, a decrease of students with psychosocial disabilities was observed from 3 to 1, i.e., a decrease of 66.67 %.

At the parish level, it was evident that during the 2015-2016 school year, the cantonal capital of Santa Elena, Colonche and Chanduy had the highest number of students with intellectual disabilities, with 36, 24 and 16 cases, respectively.

During the 2016-2017 school year, Santa Elena and Manglaralto had the highest number of students with physical disabilities, with 27 and 27 cases, respectively.

It is important to link these results with the purpose of this study, which is to make known the evolution of the cases presented in the educational institutions and that are being monitored by the support systems that favor inclusion in the educational system, called UDAI and the DECE Student Counseling departments, therefore, reaffirming the social commitment of all educational actors, including the teacher, who needs to identify potentialities and limitations in their students to guide the learning experiences adequately, either provided through a universal learning design or a curricular adaptation planned on a solid base of

information that becomes timely actions, necessary for the development of the student's personality and above all, to access an education appropriate to the demands of the grade they are studying, thus responding from the micro curriculum to the Ecuadorian inclusive model

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