


# Chapter 16

## Academic Migration From Scientist Networks in the Global Environment: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

*Academic migrations have been a constant throughout history. Nowadays, due to the complexity of the global situation, many teachers and researchers have been expelled from their countries, being unable to develop their professional careers. On the contrary, Ecuador has attracted human capital from 2008 to 2018 through public policies aimed at changing the productive matrix and improving its academic results. With this, the hiring of teachers and researchers at a national level was constant and resulted in an exchange of knowledge. To this end, the Network of Researchers in Ecuador (@redcientificos) in the Higher Education system and its interrelationships are analyzed. To demonstrate the fullness of academic possibilities offered intrinsically in its beginnings and the inherent decrease in working conditions for its teachers and researchers since 2018. A circumstance that limits the prospects of its researchers based in Ecuador and introduces temporality and uncertainty both in its processes of academic linkage and production, as well as in its public policies.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Spaniards have found Latin America to be a welcoming place when seeking greater opportunities and better working conditions. This has caused regular waves of migratory processes (Azcona 2015; Rodríguez-Fariñas, Romero-Valiente and Hidalgo-Capitán 2017). In the eighties and mainly in the nineties, Spanish emigration was associated with highly qualified professionals who traveled abroad to work and study postgraduate degrees (Alaminos et al., 2010). In this context, two mobility patterns were established: the European one, related to the opportunities within the Schengen area; and the Latin American one, characterized by international cooperation and large transnational companies (Sallé, 2009). Despite this, Ecuador has not been a significant destination for Spanish investment and consequently for its migratory processes (Pérez et al., Medrano 2019). With the Great Recession, new migratory processes emerged between 2008 - 2018. In these years 726,717 professionals left Spain, of which 54,640 chose Ecuador as their destination. In the first quarter of 2013, unemployment in Spain affected at least 6.2 million people (INE, 2020) and perhaps peaked at 7 million (Vega et al., 2016). The reality was that many qualified people were jobless and lacked prospects, so the idea of being a valued professional in another country materialized as the crisis in Spain deepened. Pérez-Gañán & Moreno (2018) assert that the departure of professionals with high-level qualifications represents the externalization of previously unused or underused capital and from this, uptake in professional opportunities in teaching and research outside Spain developed as a geostrategic plan. The destination countries also reflect this, since the companies that hire more highly qualified foreigners with university studies also create a higher number of new products (International Organization for Migration, 2019).

Due to these circumstances, starting in 2008, Ecuador became an attractive country for qualified Spanish emigration. In the framework of the new Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, approved that same year, and of the public policies that encouraged the improvement of Higher Education and research, academic migration became a priority issue (Quiloango, 2011). At the same time, the tourist visa requirement was canceled, which allowed visa-free entry for all short-term visits, increasing the migratory flow. Up to 2010, the number of Spaniards who had arrived in the country was 31,876, reaching 49,292 within six years. Most of this migration can be classified as skilled since many were professionals in the areas of education and research (Valle, 2017). These educational policies were supported by Spanish institutions, as demonstrated by the Country Association Framework (MAP), which contributed to the improvement of primary and technical education. Based on these developments, scientific networks emerged, notably that of the Spanish community in Ecuador known as @redcientificos, which was originally established informally and later became a tool built on a set of synergies and cross-disciplinary interests. The network was based on academia, as well as on all its surrounding areas such as research, teaching, opportunities, problems, and leisure. The network also acts as an intermediary between public policies and the needs of the community located in different universities. The analysis of this network is of vital importance to understanding these existing interrelations, as well as being able to predict future developments.

The structure of this research document is based on, (i) a review of the literature that incorporates an analysis of the structural causes that lead to the establishment and promotion of research networks and their relationship with the processes of academic migration, together with the analysis of the existing academic and social dilemmas, such as the commodification of education; (ii) an analysis of Ecuador and its relationship with academic variables including the establishment of research networks; (iii) the methodology and data collection of all members of the network of scientists through a questionnaire, together with an interview with the president of the Council For Higher Education (CES) and the Chancellor of

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