

## Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru: Principles of Educational Thinking

Mgs. Rosa Ildaura Troya Vásquez<sup>1</sup>, Yuri Karyme Cabezas Troya<sup>2</sup>, Karina Fernanda Bueno Sucuzhañay<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

*The article presents a comparative study between General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru, focusing on how the principles of educational thinking are reflected in their structures and organizations. Both systems share an integral conception of the student, promoting their cognitive, emotional and social development, and fostering values such as justice and solidarity. Educational inclusion is a fundamental principle in both contexts, guaranteeing equitable access to education and attending to the cultural and linguistic diversity of students. In addition, secularism is highlighted as a key element that allows for a neutral approach to education. The study also highlights the importance of developing life skills, which transcend the mere acquisition of academic knowledge. Despite the similarities, differences in curricular organization and duration of educational levels are identified, suggesting the need for continuous improvement of educational quality in both countries. The implementation of good practices and mutual learning between the systems is recommended to strengthen education. In conclusion, the analysis reveals that, although there are differences, both General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru share fundamental principles that seek the comprehensive development of students and the promotion of inclusive and quality education.*

**Keywords:** Basic Education, Primary Education, Ecuador, Peru, Educational Thinking.

### INTRODUCTION

General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru are two educational systems that, although they share some fundamental principles, also present significant differences in their structure, organization and pedagogical approach. This comparative study seeks to analyze both systems from the perspective of the principles of educational thinking in order to identify similarities, differences and possible areas for improvement.

In Ecuador, according to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (MinEduc, 2016), EGB covers from the first to the tenth grade, being divided into four sub-levels: Preparatory (1st year of EGB), Elementary Basic (2nd to 4th year of General Basic Education), Middle Basic (5th to 7th year of General Basic Education) and Higher Basic (8th to 10th year of General Basic Education). The curriculum is organized by areas of knowledge, including subjects such as Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Foreign Language, Physical Education and Cultural and Artistic Education (MinEduc, 2016).

On the other hand, in Peru, Primary Education covers six grades, from 1st to 6th. It is divided into two cycles: Cycle I (1st and 2nd grades) and Cycle II (3rd to 6th grades), according to the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MINEDU, 2020). In addition, the curriculum is structured in curricular areas, such as Communication, Mathematics, Social Personal, Science and Technology, and Physical Education.

Both education systems share principles such as free education, compulsory education and the search to develop skills and competencies in students. However, there are differences in aspects such as duration, curricular organization and pedagogical approaches.

This comparative study focuses on analyzing how the principles of educational thinking are reflected in the structure and organization of General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru. Aspects such as integral student development, inclusion, interculturality and educational quality, among others, will be

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail: [rosa.troya@unae.edu.ec](mailto:rosa.troya@unae.edu.ec)

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: [ykcabezas@unae.edu.ec](mailto:ykcabezas@unae.edu.ec)

<sup>3</sup> E-mail: [kfbueno@unae.edu.ec](mailto:kfbueno@unae.edu.ec)

examined. In addition, good practices and areas of opportunity in both systems will be identified, with the objective of generating recommendations to improve the quality of primary education in the region.

However, it is first necessary to understand what is meant by educational thinking. According to Gómez (2010), educational thinking is defined as the set of ideas and reflections on various aspects of education, such as the conception of the school, teaching practice, teaching-learning processes and student training. While, Jiménez (2017), points out that pedagogical thinking refers to the set of concepts and reflections that revolve around education, in which diverse representations of a group of educators are manifested about what the school implies, the teaching and learning processes, the role of the teacher, the vision of the child as an educational agent, as well as the political impact that pedagogy has had in our country. These ideas are framed in a given historical, social and cultural context, and evolve over time.

For their part, Fraga et al. (2019), indicate that the fundamental principles of educational thinking include several key aspects:

The conception of the world and of life, since, the worldviews that underlie the educational ideal.

The conception of education, because, the objectives of education, its nature, and the rights related to the freedom to educate.

The conception of the human being, where the vision of the type of person to be educated, as well as the role of the family and the educator, prevails.

The educational contents and strategies, that is to say, those subjects and teaching methods used.

Values and education, in other words, the relationship between ethics, religiosity and secularism in the educational field.

Cultural educational integration based on the fusion of different cultural contexts in education.

These principles guide pedagogical practice and seek to form critical, reflective citizens committed to social transformation. Therefore, they are considered in this study as the dimensions that allow us to analyze how the principles of educational thinking are reflected in the structure and organization of General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru.

On the other hand, the Information System on Educational Trends in Latin America (SITEAL) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) in Ecuador indicates that the education system is made up of the initial, basic and high school levels; the higher education system and the intercultural bilingual education system. All these levels of education are free in Ecuador, however, only up to the high school level education is compulsory according to the provisions of Article 6(g) of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education.

Meanwhile, in Peru, the levels of education include Initial, Primary and Secondary Education according to Article 36 of the General Law of Education (2003). In addition, Article 4 of this same Law establishes that Education “[...] is free at all levels and modalities, in accordance with the provisions of the Political Constitution and the present law [...]”. On the other hand, the level equivalent to General Basic Education in Ecuador is Primary Education. Therefore, this study will focus on the level of General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru, in order to analyze the principles that govern the level of education in which students have an average age between 6 and 14 years old, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2022).

Now, it is important to carry out a comparative study from the principles of educational thinking on the General Basic Education level in Ecuador and the Primary Education level in Peru for a number of reasons. For example, these educational levels provide students with the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills needed to succeed in everyday life and to advance in their education (ECLAC, 2020). It therefore establishes a solid foundation on which students can build more advanced knowledge in later stages of their education.

In addition to basic academic skills, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020), the General Basic Education level in Ecuador and the Primary Education level in Peru also focus on the

comprehensive development of students, addressing aspects such as education in values, social skills, digital competencies and environmental awareness. Because of this, it is important to conduct this study, since the levels of education studied contribute to form responsible and ethical citizens who can contribute positively to society.

Similarly, both the General Basic Education level in Ecuador and the Primary Education level in Peru play a very relevant role in promoting educational inclusion and equity by providing access to quality education for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background, gender, ethnicity or geographic location (Arcos et al., 2023 and Marchesi et al., 2021). Since, Ecuador's General Basic Education level and Peru's Primary Education level help reduce educational disparities and provide equal opportunities for all students.

On the other hand, these educational levels contribute to the social and economic development of each country. Because a well-educated workforce is fundamental for the economic and social development of a country. Thus, both General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru prepare students for future roles in the labor market, fostering skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, which are essential in the modern world (ECLAC, 2020).

Likewise, these levels of education contribute to the promotion of well-being. By virtue of the fact that, these educational levels also play an important role in promoting individual and community well-being by providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary to make healthy decisions and lead fulfilling lives (ECLAC, 2020). Therefore, it is important to understand the principles of educational thinking on which the educational levels that are the focus of this comparative study are based in order to know how they contribute directly to the education of children and adolescents in Ecuador and Peru.

According to the Curriculum of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (MinEduc, 2016), General Basic Education is based on a series of principles and theoretical approaches that guide its development and educational practice. For example, General Basic Education in Ecuador is based on a humanistic approach that emphasizes the integral development of the person. This approach recognizes the dignity and rights of students, promoting their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development (Sesento, 2021). In this way, a comprehensive education that places the student at the center is achieved.

On the other hand, Ecuadorian General Basic Education is also based on the theory of constructivism, which postulates that students actively construct their own knowledge through interaction with the environment and reflection on their experiences (Tigse, 2019). In this sense, meaningful learning and knowledge construction by students is encouraged. However, further progress has been sought in this sense, for this reason, in addition to individual constructivism, General Basic Education in Ecuador adopts a socioconstructivist approach that recognizes the importance of the social and cultural context in the learning process (Castellaro and Peralta, 2021). Therefore, collaborative work, intercultural dialogue and the valuing of diversity are promoted as enriching elements of the educational process.

It should be noted that Ecuadorian General Basic Education is framed within an intercultural perspective that recognizes and values the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country (Espinoza and Ley, 2020). Therefore, the Ecuadorian education system seeks to promote respect for different identities and worldviews, as well as intercultural dialogue as a means to build a more inclusive and equitable society.

On the other hand, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that struck the entire world, General Basic Education is also oriented towards a competency-based approach, which emphasizes the importance of developing skills, knowledge, attitudes and values necessary to face the challenges of the 21st century (Ramirez, 2020). Therefore, at this level of education in Ecuador, it is proposed that students acquire competencies for life, work and active citizen participation.

Finally, it should be noted that General Basic Education in Ecuador is inspired by critical theory, which seeks to promote critical reflection and transformative action in society (Tamayo et al., 2015). By such virtue, critical thinking, social awareness and participation in the construction of a more just and democratic society are encouraged. Therefore, the formation of Ecuadorian educational thinking is transversalized by all these factors.

For its part, Primary Education in Peru is a fundamental component of the national education system, which establishes the basis for the comprehensive development of students and their preparation for higher educational levels (Blancas, 2018). This study seeks to achieve an in-depth understanding of the principles and approaches that underpin primary education in the Peruvian context, based on relevant research and theories.

In this sense, it can be indicated that primary education in Peru is based on an inclusive educational approach that recognizes the diversity of students and seeks to ensure equitable access to education for all children in the country. As pointed out by Acho et al. (2021), educational inclusion in Peru seeks to promote equal opportunities in the educational sphere, taking into account the cultural and linguistic diversity and educational needs of students.

Similarly, a key aspect of primary education in Peru is the development of life skills, which goes beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge. According to the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MINEDU, 2020), primary education aims to develop fundamental competencies that enable students to function autonomously, reflectively, critically, creatively and ethically in society.

In addition, primary education in Peru is based on an approach centered on the rights of children and adolescents, as established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to Acho et al. (2021), primary education in Peru is conceived as a fundamental right of all children, guaranteeing their access to quality, inclusive and equitable education.

As in Ecuador, Peru's cultural and linguistic diversity is recognized and valued in the educational sphere, especially in primary education. As ECLAC (2018) indicates, primary education in Peru promotes respect and appreciation of the diverse cultures and languages present in the country, fostering interculturalism and multilingualism as part of the school curriculum. Nevertheless, more work is needed in this direction in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

It should also be noted that the participation of the educational community, including teachers, parents and local authorities, is fundamental in Peruvian primary education. According to Mendoza and Cárdenas (2022), the active participation of the educational community in school management contributes to strengthening the quality of primary education in Peru, promoting the commitment and co-responsibility of all actors involved in the educational process. Therefore, the Peruvian educational system seeks to promote the active participation of the community and the family in the education of the country's children and adolescents.

This brief literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the principles and approaches that underpin Ecuador's General Basic Education and Peru's Primary Education, highlighting the commitment of both countries to inclusion, competency development, children's rights, cultural and linguistic diversity, and the participation of the educational community, among others.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present comparative study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, due to the fact that, according to Sánchez (2019), qualitative studies are characterized by their comprehensive approach, which seeks to understand the object of study in depth, including its fundamental aspects and its essential elements. This allows a deeper understanding of the meanings, the contexts in which they develop and the processes involved. Therefore, this approach allowed a deep understanding of the similarities and differences between Ecuador's General Basic Education and Peru's Primary Education based on their principles.

On the other hand, a research design using the comparative method was applied. According to Piovani and KrawczykII (2017), the comparative method focuses on finding similarities and differences between objects of study, given that this comparison is based on homogeneity, where similarity of category is fundamental, that which shares the same nature or category is compared. Whereas, discrepancies are identified as what distinguishes an object within its category, which is not equivalent to pointing out internal variations within the same category. Therefore, a systematic and meticulous approach is required that includes defining in advance the properties and attributes that can be compared.

Thus, in this study, the comparative method was used to establish similarities and differences between Ecuador's General Basic Education and Peru's PE. Therefore, the documentary analysis technique was used to analyze documents such as the national curricula of Ecuador and Peru, educational evaluation reports and research on General Basic Education and PE. Since according to Casasempere-Satorres and Vercher-Ferrándiz (2020), this technique contributes by supporting the advancement of the research objective by defining the boundaries of the research, fosters the creation of a conceptual framework by enabling the connection of concept-based indicators, and facilitates the progression of the study discussion or theoretical exchange. Therefore, a documentary analysis guide was designed that considered as questions:

What is the conception of the world and of life in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?

What is the conception of education in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?

How is man conceived in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?

What educational content and strategies are applied in teaching and learning in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?

What values are established for education in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

How is the principle of secularism manifested in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

How is the principle of cultural educational integration developed in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In addition to the guide applied, the following results were obtained for each question posed:

### **What is the conception of the world and life in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?**

In Ecuador, General Basic Education is based on a holistic vision of the world and life, promoting the integral development of the student in the cognitive, emotional, social and physical spheres. It emphasizes the formation of citizens aware of their role in society and committed to values such as justice, innovation and solidarity (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016). Similarly, Primary Education in Peru seeks to form students with a broad vision of the world, able to function in different contexts and contribute to the sustainable development of their community (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021).

### **What is the conception of education in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?**

In both Ecuador and Peru, education is conceived as a fundamental right and a public good, guaranteed by the State. General Basic Education in Ecuador aims to consolidate, expand and develop the skills and competencies acquired in the previous stage, also introducing basic disciplines (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016). For its part, Primary Education in Peru seeks to develop fundamental skills and knowledge in students, laying the foundations for their comprehensive education (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021).

### **How is man conceived in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?**

General Basic Education in Ecuador views the student as a unique being, with potential and specific needs, who must be attended to in an individualized manner. It promotes respect for diversity and the inclusion of students with different abilities and cultural contexts (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, n.d.). Similarly, Primary Education in Peru seeks to educate students with their own identity, capable of developing in a multicultural and globalized world, valuing their cultural heritage and respecting diversity (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021).

## What educational content and strategies are applied in teaching and learning in the context of General Basic Education and Primary Education?

In Ecuador, the General Basic Education curriculum is organized by knowledge areas, including subjects such as Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Foreign Language, Physical Education, and Cultural and Artistic Education (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016). In Peru, the Primary Education curriculum is structured in curricular areas such as Communication, Mathematics, Social Personal, Science and Technology, and Physical Education (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021). Both systems promote the use of innovative pedagogical strategies and the development of life skills.

## What values are established for education in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

In both Ecuador and Peru, education is conceived as a means for the formation of values. In Ecuador, General Basic Education seeks to develop values such as justice, innovation and solidarity, fostering the formation of ethical citizens committed to the common good (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016). In Peru, Primary Education also emphasizes training in values such as respect, responsibility and solidarity, seeking to form students with a solid ethical foundation (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021).

## How the principle of secularism is manifested in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

Ecuador and Peru share the principle of secularism in education, guaranteeing freedom of worship and non-discrimination on religious grounds. Both countries promote cultural educational integration, respecting and valuing the linguistic and ethnic diversity of their populations.

## How the principle of cultural educational integration is developed in General Basic Education and Primary Education?

In Ecuador, Intercultural Bilingual Education seeks to serve indigenous communities, while in Peru, educational programs adapted to the needs of different regions and cultural groups are developed (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016; Ministry of Education of Peru, 2021).

At this point, it is important to present the characteristics of the main pedagogical approaches applied in each country:

**Tabla 1 Pedagogical approaches to Basic General Education and Primary Education.**

Pedagogical approach	Characteristics	General Basic Education	Primary Education
<b>Constructivism</b>	Knowledge is constructed through experience and interaction with the environment.	Knowledge construction is promoted through experience and interaction with the environment.	Active participation of students in the learning process is encouraged.
<b>Sociocognitivism</b>	Learning occurs through social interaction.	The importance of social interaction in learning is emphasized.	The role of the teacher as a mediator of learning is recognized.
<b>Competency-based approach</b>	Students are expected to develop competencies to function in society.	Students are expected to develop competencies to function in society.	Emphasis is placed on the development of life skills.

**Note:** Troya, Cabezas and Bueno (2024)

## DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru reveals that both systems share fundamental principles of educational thought, such as the conception of the student as an integral being, values formation, secularism and cultural educational integration. However, there are also differences in aspects such as curricular organization and the duration of the educational levels. These findings suggest the need to continue strengthening the quality of education in both countries, through the implementation of educational policies that are adapted to the needs and realities of each context, always in line with the principles of educational thinking.

Likewise, based on the results of the documentary analysis carried out, it was determined that General Basic Education and Primary Education share similar objectives, such as the integral formation of students and the development of their capacities, which is consistent with the study carried out by UNICEF (2020) cited in the introduction of this article. In addition, both educational systems use pedagogical approaches centered on the student and on the construction of knowledge, which coincides with what is stated by MinEduc (2016) in its Ecuadorian curriculum and with Blancas (2018) regarding Peru.

On the other hand, it is concluded that, or there is not a single ideal pedagogical approach, therefore, in General Basic Education and Primary Education various pedagogical approaches are used, the most common being constructivism, socio-cognitive and competency-based approaches (ECLAC, 2018). Because, the choice of pedagogical approach depends on various factors such as context, learning objectives and student characteristics. Hence, it is extremely important, teachers master different pedagogical approaches to be able to adapt them to the needs of their students.

The following similarities were also found between the two educational levels:

Both are compulsory stages in the formation of children.

They seek to provide a comprehensive education that will allow them to develop in society.

They share some principles such as values formation, attention to diversity and inclusion.

However, the following differences were identified:

General Basic Education in Ecuador covers grades 1 to 10 of General Basic Education, while Primary Education in Peru covers grades 1 to 6.

General Basic Education has a more constructivist approach, while Primary Education has a more socio-cognitive approach. This is due to the fact that General Basic Education covers a wider range of ages and school grades.

It should be noted that authors such as Coll and Solé (2009) agree on the importance of educating critical and reflective citizens. However, educational objectives must be clear and concrete strategies must be proposed to achieve them.

On the other hand, the constructivist approach of General Basic Education is similar to the socio-cognitive approach of Primary Education, since both emphasize the active participation of the student in learning. As can be concluded by reviewing authors such as Bruner (1966) and Vigotsky (1978) who have made important contributions to these approaches.

Regarding the curricular contents of General Basic Education and Primary Education, we conclude that they are similar in areas such as Language and Mathematics. However, Primary Education includes areas such as Religion (optional) that are not present in General Basic Education. In addition, the continuous and formative evaluation of General Basic Education is similar to the permanent evaluation of Primary Education, which coincides with authors such as Scriven (1967) and Tyler (1949) who have developed different evaluation models that can be used at both educational levels.

In turn, the role of the teacher as a guide and facilitator of learning in General Basic Education is similar to the role of the teacher as a mediator of learning in Primary Education, which is in agreement with what has been stated by authors such as Perrenoud (2004) and Schön (1983) who have written about the competencies that teachers should have in order to perform these roles.

It is important to emphasize that both educational systems have their own strengths and weaknesses, and that the important thing is to continue working to improve the quality of education in both countries.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Among the conclusions derived from the analysis of the principles of educational thinking in Ecuador's General Basic Education and Peru's Primary Education, we can mention that both Ecuador's General Basic Education and Peru's Primary Education share an integral conception of the student, promoting his or her cognitive,

emotional, social and physical development. Both educational systems seek to form citizens committed to values such as justice, innovation and solidarity, which reflects a humanistic approach to education.

In addition, both systems recognize the importance of educational inclusion. General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru are designed to address the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students, guaranteeing equitable access to education. This translates into policies that seek to promote equal opportunities in education.

On the other hand, the principle of secularism is manifested in both systems, ensuring that education is imparted without religious influences, which allows for a more neutral approach focused on the integral development of the student. This is fundamental to foster an inclusive educational environment that is respectful of the diversity of beliefs.

Similarly, education in both contexts focuses not only on the acquisition of academic knowledge, but also emphasizes the development of life skills. This includes critical skills that prepare students to face the challenges of the contemporary world and contribute to the sustainable development of their communities.

On the other hand, it is understood that despite the similarities, differences are identified in the curricular organization and the duration of the educational levels. This suggests that both countries should continue to strengthen the quality of their education through policies adapted to their specific realities and needs, always aligned with the principles of educational thinking.

All this leads to the conclusion that both education systems should implement good practices and learn from each other's experiences to improve the quality of education. This includes continuous teacher training, updating curricula and promoting a school environment that encourages the active participation of students in their learning process.

In general terms, the study reveals that, although there are differences in the structure and organization of General Basic Education in Ecuador and Primary Education in Peru, both systems share the fundamental principles of educational thinking that seek the integral development of students and the promotion of inclusive and quality education.

## RECOGNITION

The authors are grateful for the support provided to the project “Estudio del Pensamiento Educativo Ecuatoriano en el Currículo de la UNAE: Propuesta Curricular para la Carrera Educación Básica”, CORI-UNAE-2022-223, financed by the Universidad Nacional de Educación, UNAE.

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