

Theoretical approaches underlying Primary Education curricula in Peru from 1972 to 2011

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Since the 60s, education in Peru has undergone several curricular changes as a result of educational reforms and the passage of new legislation. In general these changes have proceeded according to political and technical criteria with no satisfactory results. In this regard, there are studies describing these curricular changes but they do not focus on the theoretical approaches that support official curricula¹. The chapter is such a descriptive investigation; it analyzes the way the official curriculum is conceptualized, the curricular elements it comprises, and the supporting pedagogical grounds. Additionally, it recognizes the underlying approaches in the primary curricula in the period from the 70s to 2011..In this way, the theoretical approaches of curriculum (Academicist, Technological, Cognitive, Humanist and Socio-Critical) are analyzed; the main elements of curriculum (purposes, contents and evaluation) and the pedagogical grounds (the concept of curriculum, teaching and learning) are described.

We undertook a qualitative analysis of documents, mainly primary sources such as: the General Acts of Education N° 19326, N° 23384 and N° 28044, the Report on curricular diagnoses, Reports on curricular policies, and the official curricula of primary education in the period studied. It is important to mention the difficulty in accessing all primary official curricula. In some periods a representative group of them were analyzed,. This chapter is organized in four sections. The first one situates the official curricula in the different governmental periods and within the

¹ The official curriculum is the regulatory curricular proposal issued by the country's Ministry of Education.

frameworks of the Education Acts. The second outlines the theoretical framework of analysis of the curricula. The third describes the official curricula and analyzes the underlying theoretical approaches.

1. The official curricula in educational reforms and Education Acts between 1972 and 2011

Since the second half of the XX century, educational reform movements in Latin America wanted the educational system to support and consolidate economic modernization. In these educational reforms, a central axis is the official curriculum as it regulates what students learn to respond to the needs and demands of society. Ferrer points out that in Latin America, the changes introduced in national curricula, as well as in managerial mechanisms to implement them “respond to policy trends and legal provisions on the administration of the sector that occurred gradually since the 80s and 90s, but which became stronger and more formal in the reforms promoted in the past decades” (2004, p.161). This suggests the need to understand curriculum within the framework of curricular reform proposals, e.g. the specific curricular policies and the Education Act.

In Peru, within the period from 1970 to 2011 three General Education Acts were enacted, two educational reforms (1972, 1993) were introduced and eight governments were elected.

Table 1. Acts, governments and educational reforms between 1972 and 2011

General Education Act N° 19326 Enacted on March 21, 1972		General Education Act N° 23384 Enacted on May 18, 1982				General Education Act N° 28044 Enacted on July 28, 2003	
Juan Velasco Military Government Alvarado October 1968 – 1979	Francisco Morales Bermudez Military Government 1979-1980	Fernando Belaunde Terry Government 1980 - 1985	Alan Garcia Pérez Government 1985-1990	Alberto Fujimori Government 1990-1995 and 1995 to October 2000	Valentin Paniagua Transition Government November 2000 to July 2001	Alejandro Toledo Manrique Government 2001-2006	Alan Garcia Pérez Government 2006 - 2011
1973 Educational Reform		1993 Educational Reform					

Each one of the Acts expresses the concept of education, defines the structure of the Peruvian educational system and orients educational and curricular policies, among other aspects. See table 2:

Table 2 . General Education Acts in Peru from 1972 to 2011

General Education Act N° 19326	General Education Act N° 23384	General Education Act N° 28044
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is a comprehensive, aware raising process; a process to liberate the learner. Its objective is the comprehensive education of the human person in the immanent and transcendent projections. The educational work of the society as a whole is acknowledged, not only school educates. • New humanist and democratic educational system; recognizes the dignity of all people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is a permanent process for the full development of the personality. It is inspired in the principles of social democracy. It promotes the knowledge and practice of humanities, art, science and technique. It considers ethical and civic education, as well as family education, as mandatory in the entire process. Besides, religious education is freely determined by the parents. • Educational system comprising four levels and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is a process of learning and teaching that develops throughout life and contributes to a comprehensive formation. It is a basic right of the person and the society to receive a comprehensive and quality education for everyone. • Universalization of basic education. • Educational system which comprises two stages basic education and higher education. Basic education with these modalities:

<p>Relates education to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three educational levels: early childhood education, basic education and higher education. • Basic education with two modalities: regular and labor. • Regular basic education (RBE) with three cycles and nine grades. 	<p>five modalities².</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary education is the second level and develops in six grades. It comprises two modalities: minors and adults: It is offered in the classroom and out of the classroom modalities. • Primary Education is mandatory in all its modalities. It is destined for six-year old children and older. 	<p>Regular; Alternative and Especial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular basic education with three levels. Primary is still the second level, organized in three cycles and lasts six years.
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The characteristics of the social, economic and political context conditioned the educational policy and the Acts generated in the country. During Velasco military government, General Education Act N° 19326 was enacted. This act enshrined the 1972 Educational Reform and introduced several changes in the educational system based on a national educational diagnosis.

Act 19326 understood Education as a comprehensive process for liberation, development and affirmation of the nation, inspired by a humanist perspective and with a democratic call, as it does not discriminate among people according to their social and economic condition. This Act institutes basic education that replaces primary education and part of secondary education that existed before 1972. Basic education is general and mandatory and has two modalities: regular and labor education. The purpose of Regular Basic Education (RBE) was to ensure the comprehensive development of the learner and train them for work, promoting their active participation in the process of social transformation (Act 19326, art. 91). For this purpose, students were to be provided scientific, technical and humanistic knowledge; a critical awareness was to be built; a sense of family life and solidarity spirit was to be developed. RBE comprises three cycles and nine grades of study:

² The modalities of the system are ways of applying the second and third levels and to execute the respective educational actions. Children, adults, special, vocational and distance modalities. (Art. 35 of the Act)

first cycle (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades), second cycle (5th and 6th grades) and third cycle (7th, 8th, 9th) (Act 19326, art. 95).

The 1972 educational reform carried on during the government of Francisco Morales in 1979. His government enabled democratic elections where Mr. Fernando Belaunde was elected president. Mr. Belaunde called his government “The five-year period of Education”. He kept the 1972 educational reform in his first two years of government and then enacted the Education Act N° 23384. Education was defined as a permanent process for the full development of personality; it affirmed the principles of social democracy through a comprehensive education.. It proposed a four-level educational system: early childhood, primary, secondary and higher education, setting aside the organization of the Regular Basic Education in the previous Act. In this way, primary education goes back to be considered the second level with six grades, with two modalities: minors and adults and is offered in the classroom and out of the classroom modalities. Goals included: the command of basic learning, the development of cognitive, the volitive and physical faculties, the promotion of habits, values and vocational development. General Education Act N° 23384 remained during four governments and was in force until 2003 (see table 1). However, the curriculum underwent continual amendments (Sánchez, Saco, Canales, Lovera, 1993).

During the government of Mr. Alan Garcia (1985-1990), a diagnosis of Peruvian education was performed, identifying its major technical/pedagogical and administrative problems, which became the basis for the educational policy guidelines and for a *General Education Bill* that was never passed. Although the framework of this government was Act 23384, a new educational policy is proposed as an answer to the needs and challenges that characterized the end of the 20th Century. The fundamental purpose of education was “to shape the national historic conscience and the specific purposes were: to educate for democracy, educate for development and educate for culture” (Sánchez et al, 1993, p. 25). Additionally, the educational policy guidelines were aimed to develop a process of change in the fundamental elements of the Curricular Structure of all the levels and modalities. The Grounds for a New Curricular Concept are formulated, “an education to overcome

the notion of human beings as mere storers of knowledge, and that acknowledges the creative capabilities of the human person as the genetic contributions from their parents and from culture” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1988, p.6).

During Mr. Alberto Fujimori’s government (1990 to 2000) Act 23384 remained in force, but the official curricula and objectives of educational levels were amended. In 1993 another Diagnosis of Peruvian Education was prepared, identifying the problems, deficiencies and limitations of the current curricular structure. This study found that the curriculum did not respond to the demands of the country’s modernization and development, nor to the needs and interests of the students and their parents (Galindo, 2002). From this point, the “1995-2010 Medium- and Long-Term Education Plan” was generated, asserting that education should be ethical, oriented towards human development, should prepare for work, reach everyone and agree with our reality as a multicultural and multiethnic country. The fundamental goal of primary education level is to “contribute with comprehensive education and the construction of a democratic society” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p.6).

After Fujimori vacated the Presidency of the Republic, Mr. Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) was elected. During his period, the education in the country was part of an urgent search to go back to a democratic life and to respect to the rule of law. Toledo favored the change in education generating the new Act N° 28044 (see tables 1 and 2). In this Act, the Peruvian education was understood as a process of learning and teaching that develops throughout the whole life and that contributes to the comprehensive formation of people, to the full development of their potential, to the creation of culture, and to the development of the family and the national, Latin American and the world community. As such, education takes place in schools and in different spheres of society. Education is acknowledged as a fundamental right of the person and the society. The State guarantees the right to a comprehensive and quality education for everyone and the universalization of Basic education.

Education is affirmed by the following principles: ethics, equity, inclusion, quality, democracy, interculturality, environmental awareness, creativity and

innovation, that promote the production of new knowledge in all the fields of knowledge, art and culture (Art. 8). The Act points out the need for a basic curriculum, common to all the country, and articulated among the different levels.

The educational system is organized in several stages, modalities, cycles and programs (Art.28). Primary education constitutes the second level of Regular Basic Education and lasts six years; it is organized in three cycles (first to sixth grade). Its objective is the comprehensive education of boys and girls. It promotes communication in all areas, the operational management of knowledge, the personal, spiritual, physical, emotional, social, vocational and artistic development; logical thinking, creativity, the acquisition of the necessary skills to display their potential, as well as the understanding of the facts near their natural and social environment.

During Garcia's second period (2006-2011), Act 28044 was still valid, the structure of the Peruvian Educational System and the objective of education remained the same: to cultivate the comprehensive development of the student, the display of their potential and the development of their capabilities, knowledge, attitudes and fundamental values a person needs to have to act adequately and efficiently in the several spheres of society. The articulation among these different educational levels of Regular Basic Education consolidates, generating seven cycles: first and second cycle correspond to early childhood education, third to fifth cycles to the primary education and the sixth and seventh cycles to secondary education.

2. Theoretical references of curricular approaches

For this chapter, we are using Roman and Diez (2003), Sánchez (2005), Schiro (2008) proposal. They present a five-approach classification: academicist, technological, cognitive, humanist and critical. To recognize the theoretical approaches underlying in the official curricula which are object of this study, we present the concept of curriculum, its main characteristics, the processes of teaching and learning and the curricular elements (purposes, contents and evaluation) that characterize each approach.

Academicist Curricular Approach

The curriculum is structured around the disciplines (mathematics, history, chemistry, etc.) and is transmitted according to the way knowledge is generated within them. It is conceived as a set of conceptual knowledge organized in disciplines that students need to know to adapt to their society. Curriculum is assigned an instrumental role to play as it contributes to the “student’s adaptation” to society and ensures the “cultural transmission” of whatever is considered valuable and important for society (Schiro, 2008). Therefore, curriculum is equivalent to a study program or plan conceived under the logic of the discipline.

The curriculum does not intend to develop moral values; it emphasizes the power of the mind and the important of what is rational (objective observation, logic, thoroughness, etc.) and does not appreciate learning practical skills. Two models are recognized in this approach: the academicist and New School approaches. In both, the contents are the main curricular elements. In the academicist approach, contents are the study program or plan by discipline; in the progressive education the contents are made by the experiences according to the students’ interests and needs. The other elements, such as the purposes, the strategies and the evaluation, are built around this element.

The objectives of teaching are generally cognitive, depending on the nature of the discipline. Teaching strategies and learning experiences are defined based on the structure and sequence of the contents, which are presented to the students in an organized and coherent way. The function of evaluation is to verify that the contents taught are mastered, favoring cognitive results. Therefore, teaching associated to the academicist model is understood as the presentation and explanation of the contents (Contreras 1994:188). The teacher, rather than generating the creation of new knowledge, must introduce the student into the core of the discipline, in its traditions, its ways of acquiring knowledge, and what can be learnt and in what way. While in the progressive education model, teaching is the task through which the teacher provides ideas, experiences and materials for the students to acquire the knowledge deemed as indispensable, through the induction method (Contreras 1994:189). The student must show the mastery of the discipline based on learning by reception, accumulation and memorization. On the other hand, in the New School model, it is

the “action” of the student over the materials, or the “experience” which will enable learning, that is, collect information and organize them to verify the knowledge planned by the teacher

Technological Curricular Approach

This approach is supported in the means-ends rationality in educational action, that is, what has been called “Education Technology”. Therefore, curriculum is defined as a “means-ends organization, aimed at achieving observable and measurable objectives” (Roman and Diez, 2006, p.151). Another definition describes curriculum as a “structured series of learning objectives intended to be achieved”. The curriculum prescribes (or at least anticipates) the results of instruction (Johnson, 1970, quoted in Sánchez, 2005, p. 20). Curriculum is addressed from a systemic point of view and its elements, processes, and outputs are observed. It is oriented at instruction rather than at education, emphasizes the teaching process, and is more concerned with the way information is delivered without disregarding the contents (what is taught) (Chadwick, 1995 quoted in Obregon, 2002, p.23).

The core curricular elements are the objectives in their different degrees of realization. The task of evaluation is to achieve objectives, to identify mistakes and achievements and compares the initial and end state of the learning process to verify the efficacy achieved. Feedback is indispensable for the continuous reorientation of the processes that will ensure the achievement of learning objectives. Teaching is a technical activity focused on finding the best way to deliver information and to select and design the experiences that will allow students to attain the desired behavior (Chadwick, 1995 quoted in Obregon, 2002, p.23). On the other hand, learning is understood as the active process that takes place within the student and that is verified in the change or acquisition of observable behaviors.

The competency-based curriculum is associated to this approach. This curriculum is supported on the cognitive and constructivist psychology, and its goal is to prepare a person able to solve new problems, take decisions, have initiative, take risks, work in a team, and learn to learn, to be able to interact with the environment and respond to its demands effectively and efficiently. Within this perspective,

learning integrates skills, knowledge, attitudes and becomes evident with the capacity of performing in specific problematic situations. Therefore, the student is at the center of learning, and the teacher adapts to the advance and performance of students to provide them with activities through active methodologies, playing the role of mediators in such process.

Cognitive Curricular Approach

This approach does not address the concept of curriculum but its purpose. It concerns directly the development of the student internal cognitive structures to develop in the learner the necessary skills to learn, in terms of cognitive strategies, intellectual skills, knowledge structures and capabilities to learn how to learn. The purposes of learning are expressed through objectives or capacities that indicate the intellectual skills that the student will acquire or put in practice. This approach emphasized those contents that are related to the development of internal cognitive processes, without neglecting subject contents. Learning evaluation is formative and therefore its purpose is to improve the students' cognitive processes and their learning.

Here learning is an internal process that modifies mental structures and that entails a reformulation of previous structures. This approach provides the student with a very active role in the process. Learners need to keep testing their ideas and strategies, discovering, integrating, doing, interacting with their peers and the teachers. The teacher plays the role of facilitator, of leader, and helps the student without affecting the process of discovery. The teacher is concerned with the way the student learns, and once this is known, for the best way to teach. In this sense, this approach is superior to the teaching-learning model and generates a new student-centered learning model: "learning-teaching". Teaching is oriented toward teaching how to learn, facilitating the adequate use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Humanist Curricular Approach

The curriculum is focused on the students, cultivating their development and meeting their personal needs. As such, this curriculum is founded on respect for the

person's dignity and creates an educational environment that favors their self-knowledge and their personal development. From this point of view, the curriculum is flexible and tends to individualization in the curricular development. It is also oriented towards the development of human or spiritual values (Palladino, 1995).

The purposes of learning tend to favor the development of the student as a person; the contents are wide and may refer to a discipline or not, insofar they meet the students' interests and needs. The learning evaluation fosters introspection through self-evaluation to favor self-awareness and the responsibility over their personal evolution process. The teacher plays a role of counselor, facilitating experiences and guiding the student growing and learning process. It is similar to discovery learning.

Socio-Critical Curricular Approach

In general, the socio-critical approach propounds that the curriculum no is not a technical or professional matter, but a cultural, political and ideological matter. As expressed by Moral and Pérez (2009,p.48) curriculum is defined as a social subsystem in which processes and contents, relations and methods work, which need to be questioned in its ideological assumptions to be understood. Therefore, curriculum is a social construct, open and flexible, in which political interests, control and pressure instruments exerted by different groups, the historical contexts, hierarchies and social stratification underlie. It is aimed at achieving a deep educational change that will collaborate with social transformation. It propounds that education has a liberating function. This liberation comprises those who are responsible for teachings, and those who learn within this process and who co-participate actively in it. It tries to achieve emancipation by the appropriation of knowledge and the access to the culture that is shared (Alvarez, 2001 p.259-260).

This approach is interested in emancipation and therefore it is dialectic, offering problems to be solved, "contextualized, negotiated, agreed among everyone participating in the school; its main function is to contribute with liberation" (Roman and Diez, 2006, p. 186). In this approach, the relation between curriculum theory and practice cannot be separated and are linked dialectically. Practice is theory in action

(Castro et al 2004: 26). The purposes of learning are established through dialog and discussion processes among the directly involved educational stakeholders. In this sense, the objectives of learning transcend interest for the disciplines, the development of skills or capabilities and aim at the student's liberation and social transformation. Curricular contents are chosen based on their social significance and the values to be developed are shared, cooperative, solidary and liberating, from a review of underlying ideologies (Castro et al. 2004: 16). The approach to the contents is interdisciplinary, in groups, participative, through research-action projects, where critical thinking and analysis on the context, the reality of the classroom, the school and the community are central. Evaluation is qualitative; case study models (ethnographic techniques) and information triangulation are used to analyze learning as the classroom dynamics.

Teaching is a critical activity. It represents an emancipating and awareness raising practice; therefore it is a moral and political activity. Teaching is not only describing the world, but also transforming it (Ruiz, 2005). The teacher must organize critical and collaborative projects and activities, becoming a classroom researcher, working to guide the students to question theories and practices considered repressive (including even those in the same school), encouraging the generation of liberating responses, both at a personal and as a collective level, which may produce changes in their current life conditions. For this reason, the teacher and student dialog is so important. Learning is a knowledge-building process through social interaction, a shared process that emerges from critical thinking, discussion critical and transforming analysis. "The learning process is oriented towards problem formulation and solution planning, and makes it possible to analyze practice critically" (Anton, 2003: 8). The purpose of this learning process must be to achieve the moral and intellectual autonomy, in order to face ethical questions.

3. Analysis of Primary Education Official Curricula

In this chapter, the official curricula are described and the underlying theoretical curricular approaches are analyzed. Eight governments are identified and as much as six changes of official curricula took place. Table 3 lists the curricula analyzed.

Table 3. *Official curricula analyzed between 1972 and 2011*

General Education Act N° 19326		General Education Act N° 23384				General Education Act N° 28044	
<p>Adapted Programs of primary education. 1973: Adapted Programs from Transition (last year of Preschool) to 3rd year 1974: Adapted 4th and 5th year programs.</p> <p>Reformed programs of the new educational system. 1973: Regular Basic Education Curriculum. Cycle I: first and second grade. 1977: Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure (RBE). Cycle I: first to fourth grade.</p>		<p>1982: Curricular Program or Study Programs for each one of the grades of Primary Education, from first to sixth grade.</p>	<p>1990: Basic curricular programs for 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade.</p> <p>1991: Fourth grade program.</p> <p>1992: 5th and 6th grade programs.</p>	<p>1997: Basic curricular structure of primary education for minors. First Cycle, 1st and 2nd grade</p> <p>1998: Basic curricular structure of primary education for minors. Second cycle, 3rd and 4th grade.</p> <p>1999: Basic curricular structure of primary education for minors. Third cycle, 5th and 6th grade.</p>	<p>2003: Basic curricular programs for the I, II and III cycles of primary education.</p>	<p>2005: National Curriculum Design for Regular Basic Education. Articulation process.</p> <p>2008: National Curriculum Design for Regular Basic Education.</p>	
Velasco Military Government 1968 – 1979	Francisco Morales Government 1979- 1980	Fernando Belaunde Government 1980-1985	Alan Garcia Government 1985- 1990	Alberto Fujimori Government 1990- October 2000	Paniagua Governme nt 2000 a July 2001	Toledo Government Alejandro 2001- 2006	Government Alan Garcia 2006-2011

3.1 1973, 1974 and 1977 Official Curriculum

Within the framework of the Peruvian Educational System Reform, two types of official curricula appear in the education scenario: Primary Education adapted programs and Regular Basic Education curricular structure.

The Primary Education adapted programs of 1973 and 1974 were transitory and oriented educational work in public and private schools that were not chosen for the application of the New Educational System. As such, they were the primary education programs in place until Act 19326 was enacted, reviewed to adapt them to the demands of the New Educational System and to update them according to the scientific and technologic advances and to the social and economic changes that were happening in the country (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1973, p 9). It is important to mention that the name Program that comes from the Plan and Program reforms started which started in 1964 is maintained, and that the term curriculum does not exist as such.

In the Adapted Programs, the purposes of learning are expressed as Objectives for each year of studies, defined as the experience the learner must have by the end of the school year. There are also Objectives for each subject, defined as specific experiences that are expected to be achieved by the learner as partial goals to attain the study year objectives (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1973: 9). These objectives have an experiential, not a behavioral, connotation.

The organization of the contents in the 1973 Adapted Programs has a globalizing character; it is proposed according to programmatic units. These units present a topic that will be the axis or unifying motif, around which the set of objectives and actions suggested corresponding to the subjects are organized (Peruvian Ministry of Education 1973, p. 9). In turn, 1974 Adapted Programs make a distinction between subjects, but with an integrating overtone, according to the affinity of their contents and respecting the learner's and the community's objectives, interests and needs (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p. 8). Therefore, the term "subject" refers to Social and Historical Sciences, Natural Sciences and Art Education, together with Language, Mathematics, Handicrafts, Physical Education

and Religious Education. However, the name “subject” is confusing, as it really refers to a set of “integrated subjects”.

Evaluation of learning becomes permanent and its purpose is to verify the achievement of the objectives proposed in the programmatic unit. The Adapted Programs introduce new subjects or elements to be evaluated in the educational process, as not only the student is evaluated, but also the teachers evaluate their own teaching practice and the environment built to facilitate learning.

From all the above, underlying the Adapted Programs we can see a concept of curriculum as a Plan of Study organized in subjects, globalized or integrated, in which the objectives for the year and of each subject, as well as the actions suggested to orient the teaching practice, are regulated. The purposes of learning are then the objectives, understanding them as the experiences the learner must achieve by the end of the school year. Each Adapted Program imposes the teacher “what” is to be taught and what must be learnt by the student, in terms of experiential objectives.

This is reinforced by what the 1974 Adapted Programs indicate expressly about the role of the teacher who is not able to remove or suppress the objectives set in each subject as they are basic. However, the teacher is granted a wide margin to organize, dose, apply and evaluate the program according to the biopsychic development of the learner, as well as the characteristics and needs of the community (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1974, p. 7 and 9). In this sense, the role of the teacher regarding the curriculum is that of an official curriculum user, in charge of developing it in the classroom, who may make some curricular adaptations, but no changes in its essential elements.

It is important to point out that the action of the teacher depends on the interest on the learner, in as much as the actions programmed are essentially valid, useful and meaningful for the student, taking also into account that they need the student’s direct participation to be carried out. Furthermore, these actions must be organized in such a way as to achieve the learning objectives proposed. (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1973, p.10).

In this way, the emphasis on an integrated and globalized organization by subjects, oriented towards assuring objectives understood as experiences that the learner must achieve from actions programmed by the teacher; and the importance granted to the student as a person, regarding the evolutionary development as well as the interests of the community, profile the presence of the academicist theory in its New School model. This is because the contents are essential, there is an organization by subjects or disciplines, but it is made of the experiences according to the students' interests and needs. The teaching objectives are cognitive in general according to the nature of the discipline.

Within the framework of the 1972 Educational Reform and improving the Adapted Programs, two curricular structures are issued: the **Regular Basic Education Curriculum in 1973 and the 1977 Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure** (see table 3). Such official curricula would carry the most important changes related to teaching and learning in the new educational system generated by the Reform.

The Ministry of Education Early Childhood and Regular Basic Education General Direction prepared both official documents. For the effects of this article, the characteristics of the 1977 Curricular Structure are presented as it shows an advance compared to that of 1973 and translates the reform education line of thought in a better way.

For the first time the term Curriculum appears and a difference is made from the Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure. The first is the set of experiences the learner lives under the school advisory, while the Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure (RBECS) is the document containing the structure of such Curriculum. Such set of experiences that learners live participating in the actions regulated by the system and foreseen and generated cooperatively by the educational community, contribute to the personal and social development in a given historical moment.

In our terminology, when we call Curriculum to the experiences lived by the learners, we want to point out that the curriculum is neither abstract, nor

merely declarative, but the most concrete of realities: the experience lived by the learners. (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p.19)

The RBECS represents the official curriculum as it is regulatory, and as it is designed at the Headquarters (Ministry of Education), to guarantee the unity of the educational system (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p.13). It is mainly oriented towards the comprehensive education of the learners and towards their commitment with the creative transformation of their reality through communitarian and participating work. It also has a humanist vocation that favors the harmonic development of learners in their biological, psychological and social dimensions to ensure the promotion of their talents and capabilities and to watch over their physical and mental health, as well as their moral sense (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p.14). This curriculum presents for the first time the curricular element called Profile of the Learner. Its concept is not defined, but it is designed based on what are called objective – axis aimed at developing a new human being, essentially transformational, critical, creator and committed with solidarity to transform the social and economic structures prevailing in society.

It is a comprehensive curriculum, in as much as educational actions comprise integrally, the knowledge, (theoretical and practical knowledge), the activities (experience, educational processes and ways to exercise), the training for work (acquisition of symbolic and technical instruments, skills and competences) and advisory for the learner (including methodological, vocational, psychological and assistance support) (Education Act 19326, article 59). Besides, it is a flexible and diversified curriculum, as it is designed keeping in mind the peculiarities and requirements of the learner as an individual and as a member of a social group and according to the social, economic, cultural and geographic variations of the different areas of the country (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p. 13).

Summarizing, the curriculum was conceptualized as a set of experiences lived by learners, within society and within a concrete historic process, oriented mainly towards the comprehensive education of students who are committed to the creative transformation of their reality through work. This definition considers the participation of the community in curricular decisions and of the learner as the main

agent of the educational process, together with the characteristics of integrality, flexibility and diversification of the curriculum, keeping in mind the normative nature of the Curricular Structure.

Due to the intentionality and characteristics of this curriculum that contributes to the comprehensive development of the learner and to social transformation, the influence of both the humanist and the socio-critical approaches. The search of the learner's development in all their immanent and transcendent dimensions locates it within the first approach. The development of the critical thought, the liberating awareness and the transforming action through work for the common benefit with the participation of the educational community is associated to the second approach.

With regard to the purposes of learning, the 1977 Curricular Structure presents an organized body of grade objectives following different Lines of Action; then, learning objectives are proposed for each of the objectives. The learning contents were organized in this official curriculum as Lines of Educational Action, understood as a set of experiences and contents, of similar nature, that enable the student to develop specific skills, capabilities, attitudes, knowledge and value that favor the discovery and transformation of reality (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p. 12). The Lines of Educational Action materialized with different intensity the four aspects of the curriculum: the knowledge, the activities, the training for work, and the learner's advisory become the means to achieve the Learner's Profile (Tincopa, 1993, p.36)³.

The 1977 Curricular Structure presents a new approach to student learning evaluation compared to what is proposed by the Adapted Programs and the 1973 Basic Education Curriculum. Evaluation is a comprehensive, systematic and permanent process, that indicates the extent in which the changes in the learner are achieved, based on the objectives proposed for a given period (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1977, p.199). The information obtained through it makes it possible to

³ The following Educational Actions Lines have been considered when structuring this official curriculum: Social and Historical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Art Education, Psychomotor Education, Religious Education, Education for Work, Language, and Mathematics.

take decisions to adjust or redesign learning processes for the student to achieve the objectives and to improve educational action. In this sense, evaluation is not punitive or punishing but is continuously questioning teachers about the way the student learning context they have created should be adjusted to favor learning in their students.

The concepts of learning and teaching were not addressed in this official document. The main task of teachers is curriculum programming, wherein they create, graduate and organize the experiences the learners will have. Teachers ensure curricular development linked to the learners' interests and needs and to social needs. Teachers' professional work focuses on Experience Units that involve choosing motivating topics and establishing a sequence of actions that will ensure achieving the objectives for the grade (Peruvian Ministry of Education 1977, p.191-193).

The Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure of the Reform was regulatory. In addition, important changes were introduced in its components that supported the presence and use of systemic educational technology: profiles were formulated, objectives are set, contents were organized around Educational Action Lines and a Comprehensive Curriculum, a new approach to evaluate learning is emphasized, the learners as well as the teachers and the community are incorporated as subjects of education. On the other hand, the role of teachers focused on the technical domain as programmer and on the teaching domain as they must make sure objectives are achieved. Therefore, there is a gap in this curriculum because of the role assigned to the teacher. This is not an active, critical, innovative agent, a researcher and negotiator who will apply the principles of the educational and curricular reform in the classroom. Besides, an explicit focus on teaching and learning is lacking in the Curricular Structure to orient the teacher's educational action.

3.2 1982 Official Curriculum

As mentioned before, the *Regular Basic Education Curricular Structure* from the 1972 Educational Reform remained during the first two years in Mr. Fernando

Belaunde's government. With the new General Education Act, starting in 1982 the *Curricular Program* or *Study Programs* are created for each one Primary Education grades. The name Primary Education was reintroduced.

The Ministry of Education, under the Primary and Secondary Education General Direction, was responsible for the Primary Education Plans and Programs nationwide. Additionally, a team of varied specialists, institutions and class teachers from several education regions in the country participated in it.

The axes of the Primary Education Curricular Program were the subjects for each grade, which followed the gradual restructuring process of the Basic Education Curricular Structures implemented in the 70s. The educational purposes of the Reform, of contributing to the social change and to the transformation of structures, were not kept in this curriculum (Sánchez et al 1993, p.22). The new Act proposed that the goal of Education is the full development of the learner's personality and the promotion of knowledge and the practice of humanities, art, science and technique (see table 2) that must be achieved through the different subjects. The profile of the learner was not considered.

The 1982 Curriculum Programs focused on organizing each subject and making it self-sufficient. Therefore, they comprise: the rationale, the subject description, its characteristics, its general objectives and a proposal of the basic contents with examples of learning activities, methodological advice, suggestions of means and materials and they end with a list of evaluation criteria and procedures. Each Curricular Program varies according to the grade and to the subject that has the characteristics of a discipline. According to Tincopa (1993) there was no curriculum doctrinarian and operative theoretical framework to orient the teacher. However, Act 23384 and its regulations rule the learner's evaluation and the work of teachers in the teaching-learning process, who need to carry out certain functions: they program, develop and assess curricular activities, they organize and sets the classroom and prepare educational activities and evaluate the teaching – learning process (Article 86).

During this period, the curriculum was understood as a plan of study focused on the contents of the discipline (subjects). The purpose emphasized the comprehensive education of learners so that they can act within the society. Another purpose was to introduce the student into the humanist and scientific culture as a way to progress. The academicist approach was recognized in this proposal because curriculum plays an instrumental role that contributes to the “student adaptation” to society and ensures “cultural transmission” of what is considered valuable and important for society (Schiro 2008). Therefore, curriculum is equivalent to program or plan of studies that is conceived under the logic of the discipline. Additionally, the influence of the technological approach is found in the way curricular elements are proposed: objectives to achieve knowledge, selection and organization of basic contents and learning activities, determination of criteria and evaluation procedures.

3.3 1990, 1991 and 1992 Official Curricula

Starting in 1988, the Ministry of Education, through the Primary and Secondary Education Direction formulated new Curricular Programs for Primary and Secondary Education, which were tested and applied nationwide progressively from 1990 to 1992. These programs were prepared with the contribution of teachers selected from some schools, with specialists from the Ministry of Education, university teachers and representatives from the public and private sectors. The official curriculum was called Basic Curricular Program corresponding to each grade of studies (from first to sixth grade). This document does not define the meaning of curriculum or Curricular Program, but such definition is found in other educational policy guidelines documents prepared by the Ministry.

Curriculum was defined as the learning system that generates bodies of knowledge, abilities and skills progressively to enable learners, at the end of a grade, level and the system, to understand, explain, interpret and later manage their reality (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1990 a, p.25). The primary education curriculum has to build values, to be flexible, diversified, significant, comprehensive, formative, terminal, participative, experimental, work-oriented and gradual:

It builds values, because it emphasizes building positive attitudes towards coexistence, economic and social democracy, with peace, justice, freedom, cooperation and solidarity.

It is flexible because it considers the different geographic realities in the country and adapts to the particular profiles of the learners, in each of the country regions and micro regions.

It is diversified because it offer several learning options in areas related to production and the development of the regional and/or local culture.

It is meaningful because it responds to the level of development and to the learner's previous experiences. This constitutes the starting point for the discovery and grasping learning in their educational space.

It is integral and formative because it takes into account the cognitive, psychomotor, affective and volitive potential of the learner, and it is aimed at constituting global behavioral rules.

It is terminal because its contents are oriented towards solving problems and achieving objectives in each stage, in order to meet the needs of their life in community and in the world of work during or after their primary and/or secondary education.

It is participative because it promotes and receives the contribution of all educational agents and acknowledges their different components with educational capacity and quality.

It is experimental because it is in constant review and study. It is designed to evaluate the intervening elements and the subjects to feedback the system. Besides, it readjusts based on the classroom and workshop experiences, at all the levels of the curricular administration.

It is work-oriented because it considers besides the general formation component, the technical and vocational component, which enables the student to participate in the educational and social process in the country actively.

It is gradual, in its application, because the curricular change will take place progressively according to the country regionalization, the administrative decentralization and the teacher formation and training processes. (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1990 a, p.5-26)

The curricular elements in the Basic Curricular Programs are: general objectives, specific or grade objectives, contents, methodological advice and evaluation. The Objectives were identified as purposes of learning, making a difference between general and specific objectives for each grade. Additionally, for each specific objective there is a series of contents. Another element was evaluation,

but it was not justified and its purpose is not defined. Only evaluation criteria and procedures are presented. These Curricular Programs did not include the Profile of the Primary Education graduate. However, the Guideline documents mentioned above detail the Profile of Primary Education Student. Teachers, however, did not have this guiding element for their pedagogical work in the official curriculum. Each Curricular Program was not organized in subjects but in Educational Action Lines (EAL) that contribute to the comprehensive formation of the integral of the learner, strengthening their historic awareness (development of Being) through a set of instrumental⁴ contents and other value building contents⁵.

The 90, 91 and 92 curricula were not understood as a plan of studies, or as a set of experiences. Now the emphasis is placed on a curriculum as the organized set of learning experiences lived by the student. The interest is placed on developing abilities, skills and knowledge, as well as a set of values on the learners, to enable them to analyze, interpret and then manage their reality, to contribute in building a democratic, fair and solidary society. The contents of the curriculum were instrumental, as well as value building, which makes it a flexible instrument, adjustable to the regional and/or local characteristics, diversified and suitable for the country's economic and productive development (Ministry of Education in Peru, 1990 a, p.25).

Since these Curricular Programs were focused on the human person, their integrality and creative capacity, they are oriented towards the students' personal development, promoting respect to their dignity, the building of values and their insertion in society, a humanist curricular approach is recognized. On the other hand, for the design of curricular elements, the technological approach contributions are still used.

⁴ Language and Intercultural Bilingual Education, Mathematics, Artistic Education, Education for Work and Physical Education

⁵ Nature and Community, Historic and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Religious Education

3.4 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2003 Official Curricula

Almost at the end of Fujimori's government, the Basic Curricular Structure of the primary education for minors (PEM- BCS) was published, for the First cycle (1st and 2nd grade, 1997), the Second cycle (3rd and 4th grade, 1998) and the Third cycle (5th and 6th cycle, 1999), prepared by the Ministry of Education National Directorate of Early Childhood and Primary Education –DINEIP. On the other hand, during Toledo's Government Toledo the Basic Curricular Programs of Primary Education, are published for the I, II and III cycle (2003). As in the previous cases, the Ministry of Education was in charge of designing such basic curricula, particularly the National Directorate of Early Childhood and Primary Education. The responsibility and participation of regional, locals and institutional educational authorities in the program diversification processes was emphasized.

The PEM-BCS (1997, 1998 and 1999) was designed in line with the educational principles stated in the "1995-2010 Medium- and Long-Term Education Plan" that can be summarized as follows: education must be ethical, oriented towards human development, prepare for work, reach everyone and agree with our reality as a multicultural and multiethnic country. Additionally, it derived from the Curricular Matrix defined as the "structure of curricular components of an educational process and their functional interrelations" (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p.122).

In turn, the 2003 Curricular Programs are governed by the new General Education Act 28044 (see table 2), that did not affect the organization and content of the curriculum and the Basic Curricular Structure substantially. For this reason, what is described below is valid for the four official curricula. Unlike the 90 to 92 Curricular Programs, the teacher was offered the theoretical, technical and operative foundations that support the curriculum, in an organized manner and with extensive information.

The Curricular structure contains the **Conceptual Theoretical Framework** which presents the concept of education, the educational and psychopedagogical principles, the social demands of education, the boys' and girls' needs, as well as the objective and mission of primary education. As mentioned before, the Primary

Education contributes to a comprehensive formation and to building a democratic society. Additionally, it promotes the development of the personal and cultural identity, the knowledge and understanding of the natural and sociocultural environment, development of the democratic and civic awareness, and the development of a productive and creative culture. On the other hand, it pointed out that primary education continues and strengthens the basic competences that were started in the Early Childhood Education and were the basis for the Secondary Education (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998).

In turn, the **Curricular Framework** presented the notion of curriculum, its characteristics, the organization of the Curricular Structure, the curricular axes, the cross-cutting contents, the boys and girls Education Profile, and the Basic Curricular Program. The **Operative Framework** describes the levels in the curriculum construction, and gives advice on the development of educational actions.

A distinction is made between the Basic Curricular Structure and the Curriculum. PEM-BCS refers to “the document proposed to the country by the Peruvian Ministry of Education and that is organized in areas of curricular development, objectives, competences required for the development of skills, procedures, concepts and attitudes, to achieve the basic learning in primary students” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p.9). The 1998 Official curriculum also points out that the ECB serves two functions “ensure the unity of the system (student geographic mobility) and to be the basis for building the school curricular projects, which will, eventually, be applied” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 3)

Curriculum is understood as an instrument to regulate school life that defines the educational intentions of formal education and orients the teaching practice:

The curriculum constitutes the formal education instrument and its essential function is to specify and define in terms of objectives and learning contents, the educational goals and purposes, and to orient the teacher educational practice (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 9).

The curriculum orients the educational action, guides the choice and development of the activities, engages the action of all the members of the school and regulates the organization of time, the use of materials and spaces.

Finally, the curriculum is also the central instrument for evaluation (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 15 and 1999, p.15)

The curriculum is an instrument of formal education; it specifies and defines goals and purposes in terms of competences, responds to social and cultural demands and the students' needs, orients the teaching practice (Peruvian Ministry of Education 1999, p.16).

The concept of curriculum emphasized differently the objectives and contents (1997), the orientation and regulation of the different curricular elements (1998, 1999) and the competences that define the educational goals and purposes (1999) therefore it is recognized as a competency-based curriculum, "centered on the child and not on the contents, on learning and not on teaching" (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p.118).

There is a clear reference to cognitive approaches: "At the early childhood education (5 years) and at Primary Education, curricular decisions were taken based on the contributions of cognitive psychology which support psychopedagogical principles" (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p.8) and even learning contextual ecological contributions are considered. The outstanding characteristics of the curriculum are the following:

Humanist and value building; it favors the practice and experience of values to contribute with the construction of a humanist society. It fosters attributing value to the persons, and stimulates democratic and civic behaviors.

It is open and reconceptualist; it allows the incorporation of elements to make it more suitable to reality and us subject to a continuous process of reelaboration, attentive to diversity.

It is flexible and diversifiable; it allows the introduction of the necessary amendments according to the boys and girls characteristics and learning paces, and according to the socioeconomic, geographic and cultural characteristics of the community where it is applied.

It is comprehensive and interdisciplinary. It promotes the comprehensive development of boys and girls trying to offer them a comprehensive vision of reality. Therefore, it is designed to approach the same aspect of the social and natural reality from different perspectives. It favors multiple relations among the contents for the students to build learning more and more integrated, globalized and meaningful (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p.15-16)

Teachers may “adapt, adopt and/or propose achievements regarding the demands of boys and girls according to their sociocultural environment” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, presentation). It insists that “the idea is not to customize or adapt official programs”, but to build their own programs” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p.4), which calls for a diversified curriculum.

Within the ECB we can find the Curricular Matrix, an instrument that established the main elements of curriculum: curricular axes, cross-cutting contents, and Curricular Programs with five areas of personal development. This matrix is the key to understand the organization of the curricular proposal. Additionally, the ECB considers the methodological guidelines for each area and the guides for diversification, curricular planning and evaluation following as complementary elements. The curricular axes⁶ act as guiding lines that translate the intention of the educational system at a specific historical moment. They guide curricular work, and later, the education tasks in the school. The cross-cutting contents deal with the relevant problems of the Peruvian society.

The Curricular Programs are the organic body of competences and guide the design and programming of the educational action in the classroom. Therefore, the purposes of learning are expressed as competences, defined as the constituting units of Curricular Programs. Additionally, competences are “know how, that is, complex abilities, that enable people to act efficiently in the different spheres of their daily life and solve real problem situations. As they are complex abilities, competences comprise or involve certain attitudes and three kinds of contents” Ministry of Education, 1998, p.17-18). Competences as such have a knowledge-related dimension and an emotional dimension. Within the Curricular Programs, competences are broken up into capacities and attitudes, no educational contents are considered. The former would correspond to the knowledge-related dimension and the latter to the emotional dimension of such competences.

⁶ These axes are: personal and cultural identity, democratic and civil awareness, creative and productive culture.

Curricular contents, previously called Educational Action Lines, are replaced by the Personal Development Areas⁷ which are defined as:

units of curricular organization that group together similar competences, corresponding to aspects that need to be addressed especially by the formal education. The areas are different from the subjects because they correspond to personal aspects that need a particular attention from education, and not to disciplines or cultural sciences, and are different from action lines, because areas have a competency-based organization different in many senses from an objective-based organization (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1999, p.20).

The Profile of the Primary Education graduate refers to the “individual features that we expect the boys and the girls to achieve at the end of the educational process” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997, p.123). These features arise when considering the Mission of Primary Education and the curricular axes. The competence-based evaluation model assumed is formative, criterial and continuous. There is no information in the 1998 and 1999 official curriculum regarding how to conduct learning evaluation. However, there are specific indications within the Curricular Programs and by cycle curricular areas.

Teaching is understood as “the help the teacher offers to the boys and girls in their personal process of knowledge building” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1998, p.21). This is not a knowledge explanation and transmission process, but an interactive process, where children build their learning actively according to their context, their classmates, their working materials and the teacher. This process will be efficient to the extent that the teacher’s interventions are opportune and respond to the students’ interests, needs, and developmental level. Therefore, the teacher has to play a guiding role that of an active companion, creating the necessary conditions to favor the learning building process (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1997).

Consequently, the functions the teacher must carry out are the following:

- Plans and organizes meaningful activities with the children.

⁷ Personal development areas: Personal and Social, Comprehensive Communication, Science and the Environment, Logics and Mathematics, and Religious Education.

- Stimulates exploration and experimentation with objects, the exchange of ideas among the classmates, making questions and giving possible answers.

- Applies strategies focuses on the child, based on previous their knowledge and interests, learning styles and developmental characteristics.

- Reinforces positive behaviors in the children.

- Applies stimulating forms of organization within a cooperative work framework.

Learning is understood as “a knowledge-building process” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1999, p.12). That is to say, it is the product of the child’s personal construction interacting with another one, and with the sociocultural and natural environment. The purpose is to achieve and autonomous learner, able to acquire the anticipated competences. Learning is governed under the principle of significance; they have to be connected to each other, connected to other situations or previous learning.

With regard to students’ roles, they are expected to be the main builder of their own knowledge; to be able to recover previous knowledge and connect it with the new one; to participate in experiences, to interact with their partners, teacher, environment and materials. They are also expected to participate in school life, in activities related to the cross-cutting contents that address mainly problems critical to their local reality. Accordingly, the official curriculum is recognized as an instrument that defines the educational intentions of formal education that guides the teaching practice and regulates school life. It is expressed in a Basic Curricular Structure, designed from a curricular matrix, which provides coherence and organizes the curricular logic from its main and complementary elements.

The objective is a curriculum which is articulate, comprehensive, flexible, formative, and coherent with regard to its elements. To make a difference from the curriculum with an academicist approach, it is organized in personal or curricular development areas that stress the importance of the comprehensive formation of the

subject that is to be educated. The curricular approach is that of a competency-based technological curriculum, with a didactic orientation declared in constructivism, cognitive psychology and the ecological context of learning. Its design is based on theoretical, curricular and operative frameworks; it describes the curricular elements organized under a systemic logic where competences are the integrating element.

3.5. 2005 and 2008 Official Curriculum

During Mr. Alan Garcia's second government, two curricular proposals were made: the "Regular Basic Education National Curriculum Design (RBE-NCD)" in 2005 and 2008⁸. The former was also called "Articulation Process". The 2008 edition is considered an improved version of the 2005 proposal that articulates the educational levels of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. Additionally, it points out the "Purposes of Regular Basic Education towards 2021" that educational institutions must guarantee nationwide.

In both cases, the Ministry of Education is in charge of the proposal and called several educational agents in different forums and consulting spaces to help with the review and adjustment. For the effect of this study, the 2008 RBE-NCD is described. Both 2005 and 2008 curricular designs are set within the context of the General Education Act No. 28044 (see table 2). This Act points out the need to have basic curricula, common to the whole country and articulated among the different levels and modalities. In this sense, the Regular Basic Education National Curricular Designs respond to this need.

Neither design offers *the concept of Curriculum* explicitly, but they mention that the National Curriculum Design "constitutes the regulatory and orientation document valid for the whole country, which synthesizes educational intentions and summarizes the anticipated learning" (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2005, p.10). Additionally,

⁸ The 2008 RGE NCD is in force to date.

the Regular Basic Education National Curriculum Design contains the learning that students must develop in each educational level, in every corner of the country, to ensure educational quality and equality (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2008, Introduction).

The RBE-NCD is supported on an approach that competency-based, humanist, intercultural, inclusive and process-based. It assumes a pedagogical approach oriented towards the development of competences that contain the fundamental and basic learning students must develop to respond to their context successfully. It also adopts a humanist and modern perspective, as it considers the person as the center of education, takes into account our country's diversity, the current pedagogical trends, and the endless advances in knowledge, science and technology, with educational quality and equity (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2008, p.12). Additionally, it is supported on a process approach as it articulates the three educational levels. At the same time, it takes into account the human, cultural and linguistic diversity, from an inclusive and intercultural perspective and also incorporates the theoretical contributions of learning cognitive and social currents.

Consequently, the RGE NCD is diversifiable, open, flexible and articulated. This proposal is organized in three parts. The first one contains the goals, objectives and organization of the Regular Basic Education, as well as the educational approach, the grounding and the purposes of RBE towards 2021. The second part presents the curricular areas, the curricular diversification guidelines, and learning evaluation, the study plan and the freely available hours. And, finally, the third part includes the Curricular Programs by educational level: Initial, Primary and Secondary.

The 2008 RGE NCD organizes and explains the curricular elements of the proposal better. In this way, the purpose of education is expressed by competences that manifest at the reflexive, creative and autonomous know how to solve problems or achieve goals in the daily life of the students. **Competences** are proposed along each one of the cycles, and are achieved throughout a continual process by developing duly articulated capacities, knowledge, attitudes and values (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2008, p.16). The three of them favor the student know-how.

Competences are distributed for each cycle of the primary education level in terms of educational achievements. The RGE NCD contents are organized in Curricular Areas. These are considered as curriculum organizers that present the basic learning (abilities, knowledge and attitudes) that the students must achieve throughout the country (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.45). Each area presents its bases and the learning main organizers in detail. They are not to be confused with subjects.

Finally, the concept, objective, agents, functions and the grading system of the learning evaluation are explained. Evaluation is acknowledged as a continuous, systematic, participative and flexible pedagogic process that is part of the teaching-learning process. Its purpose is formative and informative. It evaluates “competences from the abilities, knowledge and attitudes anticipated in the Program” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2008, p.39). Learning is understood as constructivist and teaching is “understood as the action generating an eminently active process, where students build their learning interacting with their contexts, with their classmates, with the educational materials, and with their teacher.” (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2005, p.150). The aim is to promote critical thinking, creativity and freedom, active participation, humor and enjoyment; as well as the development of a proactive and entrepreneurial attitude, avoiding simply copying or memorizing information. The mediating role of the teacher is emphasized. In line with this concept, the student is considered to be the center of the educational action, and is expected to have the space to be autonomous in their learning process, that learning is interconnected to real life situations and the social practices in each culture.

The 2005 and 2008 Curricular Designs consolidate a process of articulation and sequentiality of educational levels in Regular Basic Education. This shows a firm interest of offering teachers a unique document expressing the intention of education, called Basic Curricular Design. This document regulates and orients the teaching practice. The pedagogical approach oriented to the competency-based development is maintained. Attention to several perspectives is declared: humanist and modern, inclusive e intercultural to contribute with an education with quality and equity education. It is remarkable that the concept of curriculum is not explicitly defined as in previous versions. The concept of National Curriculum Design is stressed.

The RGE NCD curricular elements are organized and structured from curricular areas that present the basic learning that students in the whole country must achieve. In as much as these curricular designs consider the student as the center of educational action, trying to offer a comprehensive formation, and take into account human, cultural and linguistic diversity from an inclusive and intercultural perspective, a humanist curricular approach is outlined. On the other hand, the intention is to prepare students to be competent in life and at work by developing capacities, values and attitudes that make up the competences the learner must achieve at the end of their educational process. The technological competency-based curricular approach proposed in the 90s is maintained.

Finally, the underlying approaches in official curricula are summarized to follow:

- 1973 and 1974 curricula (Adapted Programs). New School Academicist approach
- 1973 and 1974 Curricula (Reformed programs). Socio-critical approach and objective-based technological curriculum
- 1982 Curriculum. Academicist approach as cultural and discipline transmission; a Humanist approach regarding its purpose. Besides, it is technological as instruction plan.
- 1990, 1991 and 1992 curricula. Humanist curricular approach and objective-based technological design.
- 1997, 1998 1999 and 2003 Curricula. Competency-based technological approach, with a pedagogical and constructivist approach.
- 2005 and 2008 Curricula (in force). Humanist and technologic competency-based approach.

4. Conclusions

a) During the period of this investigation, different names for the official curriculum are recognized, in accordance with the General Education Acts and to the structure of the educational system involving different ways of conceptualizing the curriculum. Towards the end of the 60s, the name given to the curriculum was “Study Plans and Programs”. With the 1972 Educational Reform, the term “curriculum” was introduced. From there onwards, except during Belaunde Government that the name Programs was taken again, a distinction made between curriculum and Curricular Structure. During Toledo and Garcia governments, the term curriculum was disregarded, using only the National Curriculum Design, as a document equivalent to the Curricular Structure. The Curricular Programs were maintained, but as part of the Curricular Structure or Design.

b) During all the periods, the curriculum kept its regulatory character. The Ministry of Education, through the corresponding Directions, designed the official curricular proposal to be applied nationwide, with the participation and consultation of the society, to safe keep the unity of education. However, so that the official curriculum may respond to the learners’ and the community’s needs and interests, it has always been flexible and diversified, to ensure the pertinence and equity of education.

c) The definition of curriculum varied during the period from the 70s to the 90s. The prevailing definition is the curriculum as contents, a set of learning experiences or an organized set of different learnings. From the 90s onwards, curriculum is understood as an instrument that defines the intention of education through competences, and also regulates school life and orients the teaching practice.

d) The intention of these proposals and the characteristics of their elements are analyzed in order to identify the curricular approaches underlying the official curricula. Those curricula focused on cultural transmission, based on subject contents or that are concerned with ensuring learning experiences responding to the learner’s needs and interest without disregarding subject knowledge, are related to the academicist approach such as the 1973 (Adapted Program), 1974 and 1982

curricula. Those curricula that have the person at the center, their self-realization, the affirmation of cultural and transcendent values, that are oriented towards the comprehensive formation of the learner, are associated with the humanist approach, such the 1982, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2005 and 2008 curricula. When the highlight is on the social nationalist intentionality of education, its transformational character, and its orientation to the national development through work, the curriculum corresponds to the characteristics of a socio-critical approach, which is identified in the 1973 (Reform Program) and 1977 curricula. Finally, the curriculum preparing the learner for an adequate and efficient performance in the different spheres in society is recognized as a competency-based technological curriculum, which corresponds to the 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2008 curricula.

e) The contribution of the systemic technological approach is identified in the design and organization of curricular elements, going from an objective-based to a competency-based design. This technological approach is juxtaposed with other theoretical approaches identified in official curricula since 1972.

Reflections

To guarantee the development of the official curriculum, the Ministry of Education, as the governing body of the educational activities in the Peruvian educational system, must make explicit the pedagogical basis that supports it and not only provide regulatory and technical guidelines. This would help teachers to understand the theoretical perspective and the sense of the official curriculum being offered, to enable a pedagogical practice in line with the official curriculum educational intentions. The lack of these bases may cause that that teachers develop the curriculum from their own understanding of the curriculum nature, purposes, contents, and evaluation, and also conceive the sense and dynamics of the teaching and learning process from their particular point of view. A curriculum that is clear in its concepts, intentions and bases may contribute effectively to achieve the expected learnings and empower the teachers to codevelop (to be jointly responsible for) the curriculum in their daily work.

It is important to maintain and guarantee that the official curriculums are flexible and diversifiable as they have been during the last thirty years, as this makes it possible to attend to the different realities in the country and to adequate it to the particular profiles of the learners in each of the regions. Permanent advising mechanisms must be generated and ensured for the teachers to adapt the official curriculum to the characteristics and learning pace of each one of the different groups of learning styles in the classroom.

Curricular sustainability requires certain conditions. One of them is not to be subject to the continual changes of government. Another one is that the official proposal needs to be the product of the participation of the different social stakeholders to ensure a consensually-built proposal. Additionally, its constituting elements, such as objectives or competencies, contents and evaluation, need to have a univocal and clear meaning for the teachers. Finally, the curriculum needs to have a sense of pertinence that will decisively incorporate the perspective of intercultural education, so needed in this country.

The results of this study that explores the different theoretical positions on the official curriculum from the 70s to our days may start a technical and political curricular debate. This may help the transit from an eminently technical but not very clear curriculum to one with explicit intentions, bases and elements to ensure the coherence of the curriculum development in all the educational levels, especially in the classroom.

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