The Curriculum Development Process: An Overview of the Educational System in Ecuador

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Abstract
The conceptual framework of the study is based on a brief overview of the history of curriculum in the educational system in Ecuador over the years, and a general outline for providing guidelines and specifications in the curriculum development process. During the last century and until the present date, there have been several important curricular changes that have impacted the educational system, but none of these changes have occurred in primary level of education. It is also shown the lack of a standard curricular design for the teaching of English as a foreign language in Ecuadorian public schools. The study aims to understand the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are being recognized by the curriculum and associated guidelines. Finally, this outline provides the necessary steps for the curriculum development process in a public school: selecting the model, establishing educational aims and needs, creating curriculum goals and objectives, organizing and implementing the Curriculum, stating instructional goals and objectives, and selecting and implementing strategies. However, to formulate objectives can generate much limitation on the activities that can be applied as a way to achieve those stated goals. So, the most important is to discuss about how to make informed decisions and to reflect upon curriculum in Basic General Education in Ecuadorian schools.

Keywords: Curriculum; Education; English; School; Process

Introduction

When we think about education, the first thoughts that come to mind may refer to the aims and purposes that we seek to attain for constructing an organized society. But for education to achieve such aims it requires a major structure that needs to be carefully planned, shaped, and sequenced. The result of this planning is what Straughan and Wilson (1983) refer to as the curriculum, which expresses and embodies the decisions for developing the educational structure, because as the authors mentioned, education does not just happen.

There have also been other definitions in which educational experts have described the overall structure that embodies the aims of education and the means to attain those. For instance, Tanner and Tanner (1995) described the curriculum as the reconstruction of knowledge and experience that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience. Similarly, Doll (1996) defined the curriculum as the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and
understanding, develop skills and attitudes, appreciations and values under the auspices of the school.

In order to provide a broader vision of what is referred to as curriculum, Eisner (1979) defined curriculum as the to the set of procedures, policies, or guidelines that a particular school or educational institution offers to a community. He called this the explicit curriculum, the one that is advertised to the public. However, he also identified two other types of curriculum that it is necessary to mention: the implicit curriculum and the null curriculum. These two types of curriculum will be described later in the section of educational forces that should impact the curriculum.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the history of curriculum in the educational system in Ecuador over the years, and a general outline for providing guidelines in the curriculum development process.

1. Forces that have an impact in the Curriculum

Benjamin (1939) in The Saber-Tooth Curriculum described how a community in the Palaeolithic Era commenced to establish certain patterns of what education is today. In the story, the leader of the tribe was thoughtful for his community and believed that he could guide it to a safer a more prosperous way of life. He found the necessity of learning new skills and wanted to apply it to the other members of the tribe. This necessity was raised by the environment, in which the community was, and the skills needed to be learned were the ones appropriate to survive in that place. However, the community faced different problems when the skills that all members have learnt were no longer useful. These changes occurred in the environment, so the needs for survival also changed.

This reading helps us to understand how certain forces in society can affect what is important or what is needed in order to attain prosperity. Those changes impacted the curriculum of that era. Similarly, there are new and more forces in this new age that still affect the way we see and carry out education in the schools. We believe that some educators still tend to maintain the same patterns of old education. When we recognize the need to add new content to the curriculum, we are still resistant to change our methods or strategies of teaching or to remove outdated information from the curriculum. The Saber-Tooth Curriculum demonstrates the importance of continually reviewing, revising, and improving our pedagogical practices based upon the current needs of the environment. Sometimes what we have learnt in the past is still valuable and can be applicable to the current needs, but we need to constantly analyse and evaluate the content to make sure that it has not become vulnerable or ineffective. We believe that The Saber-Tooth Curriculum provides the idea that a curriculum should preserve the past, but it should not be limited by it.

1.1 Social forces that have impacted the Curriculum in Ecuador

When it comes to analyzing some forces that might have impacted the educational system in Ecuador, it is imperative to indicate certain facts about the country. For instance, Ecuador is still a developing country, in which some critical
political and economic events have occurred along the years, shaping the country and influencing the different aspects of the Ecuadorian society to the nature it is now. Despite the fact that Ecuador is relatively a small country, it has four different regions, the Galápagos Islands, the coastal, the highlands, and the Amazon. These represent the cultural diversity that can be found in the country, mainly, the diverse culture that can be found in the Amazon region. This place is where most of the indigenous communities are settled. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (2010) a census in 1950, Ecuador had a population of 3,202,757 distributed as follows: whites, 8 percent; indigenous, 27 percent; mestizos (mixture of white and indigenous) 54 percent; others 11 percent. The last census carried out in 2010 by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) reported a population of 14,483,499 distributed as it follows: Mestizos, 71.9 percent; Afro-Ecuadorian, 7.9 percent; indigenous, 7 percent; white, 6.1 percent; others, 0.4 percent.

1.2 Education in the Colonial period

Ebaugh (1947) described the early colonial period in Ecuador and in terms of Education, the social forces at that time were highly influenced by the Catholic religion and the church. At the beginning of 1575, this colonial education in Ecuador was run by the Catholic Church that at the same time had great influence by the kings of Spain. Education was mostly based on the spread of the Christian doctrine, and members of different orders in Europe, Augustinian monks, Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Franciscans, Dominicans and others started to arrive in the country and founded the first schools of elementary instruction. It is because of this influence that school began to hold the attention of the governing and cultured classes during the final years of the Spanish period (Ebaugh, 1947).

After Ecuador became a liberal republic free from the Spanish yoke, education in the country started to shift in several directions according to the political and philosophical views of the people who were governing the republic at that time (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, 2012). For instance, in 1835 the government of Vicente Rocafuerte, public education was viewed as an essential duty of the government. The ideal was to encourage and promote education as a way to make people know their rights, to cultivate intelligence and to instruct it for the fulfillment of their obligations in society.

However, despite the efforts of the government, the educational progress was almost impossible because of the general disorder in the country. For instance, there was a small budget to promote and support education and a lack of trained teachers. The schools already established by the various religious organizations continued to provide education, but under private direction. Education as a means of national enlightenment and progress was not yet recognized until the latter years of government of the presidents Garcia Moreno and Eloy Alfaro (Ebaugh, 1947).

In 1861, with the administration of Garcia Moreno the elementary education started to take definite form, although it began with the religious groups to be in charge of the educational system. The Constitution of 1861 mandated that the religion of the Ecuadorian republic was Catholicism, Apostolic and Roman. It means that all the powers of the State were mandated to protect it and they
provided all means to spread it through the entire republic (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, 2012). The Catholic Church became the main shaft in the education in the country. The aim of the nation at that time was to provide individuals with education and prepare citizens from any social statuses. For attaining such aim, Garcia Moreno brought the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart into the country to organize and direct the Ecuadorian educational system (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, 2012). These religious groups had previous experience with Catholic education from Europe, teaching to individuals from any socio-economic backgrounds (Ebaugh, 1947).

The impact of this organization of the education, with the church as the leader, had several effects in the country. For instance, the number of schools increased from 206 to 582, while the education budget increased from 15,000 to 114,000 pesos. Secondary, technical or vocational schools were also founded. Additionally, the pedagogical practices that were implemented at the time by the religious group were different from the previous ones. This pedagogical model was supposed to be an effective practice, majorly based on memorization. Also, the educational organization had a great impact on how we see school in the present days. For instance, the Catholic education of that time organized the structure of the school in different grades or levels according the students' ages.

Later, with the government of Eloy Alfaro, the Liberal Revolution started in Ecuador bringing radical changes to the educational system in Ecuador. Alfaro’s government brought a new ideal of education: to prepare individuals to a more inclusive society, to educate different citizens to be sensible for their country, and to promote, construct and protect democracy of their homeland (EducaTv, 2014). Furthermore, one of the most transcendental changes in education appeared during the government of Eloy Alfaro. He founded the first free public and secular schools in the country. This means that the Catholic Church was removed from the control of education in the republic, and it now became an issue of the nation (EducaTv, 2014). The government is the authority over the policies and regulation of the educational system. Eloy Alfaro was the founder of free and lay education.

This change of power also had an impact in the Ecuadorian society at that time. Since education was no longer dominated by the Catholic doctrine, in which the aim to promote moral values was predominant, the State gave special attention to the development of technical education in accordance to the agricultural and industrial needs of that time. Specialized schools in preparing citizens to be productive in the agricultural and industrial fields were created.

These changes at the same time had later effects in the society. For instance, the State supported schools to prepare productive individuals for the labor field. After individuals succeeded in school, they instantly became part of the labor force of the country. This implied that they became part of an adult life at the moment they started to be productive. Likewise, these adult citizens started to form families in the society in a more rapid fashion than in the past. Moreover, during this government, some important schools were founded, such as the normal schools. The educational system had no longer the influence of the European practices of the Catholic Church. The State faced the necessity of
preparing new teachers that were aligned with principles and ideals of the governor of the republic, and also with the necessities of the society at that time.

Ebaugh (1947) mentioned that in these normal schools, the curricula and instructional procedures were outlined in detail. For instance, they considered the curricular content to be appropriate for each grade according to the age of the students, the difficulty of the materials, and the needs of the particular community. Although this model was adopted in these normal schools, it was not put into general practice. The plans, laboratory, and project methods from Dewey, Thorndike, Froebel, Montessori, and Dalton, among others in most cases were little understood. Moreover, the lack of the materials required for that new education had little potential to generate an immediate improvement. The practices with this new curriculum were mostly undertaken by the normal schools, but not as general practice on the schools of the republic.

1.3 A more Culturally Diverse Education: Indigenous people and Bilingual Education

Historically, indigenous people have demanded from the Ecuadorean state the right to be educated and to be allowed to enroll in Hispanic schools. However, later, indigenous people came to consider that this type of school did not meet their cultural aspirations (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008). In the middle of the 20th century, in 1945, there were three indigenous schools that started to function in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, under the leadership of Dolores Cacuango, an indigenous leader that defended the Kichwa language of her community (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008). However, the government at that time saw a communist threat in these schools, and the education for indigenous people was rejected (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008). In 1963, the military government closed these schools and prohibited the use of Kichwa for the instruction in the schools.

However, from 1960, new educational experiences have been developed that have impacted education in indigenous communities, not only in Ecuador, but also in other Latin American countries (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008). These intercultural educational programs in some Latin American countries were set up in such a way to develop bilingual and bicultural experiments on indigenous populations. The program in Ecuador was The Research Centre for Indigenous Education (CIEI), which had 724 adult education centers and 300 schools for children. It was also one of the first to produce reading materials in indigenous languages (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008).

Over the years, indigenous people have wanted to obtain from the Ecuadorean government the right to have an education with both, in their own native language, and in accordance with their philosophy and knowledge base. It was The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) that has sought and struggled to complete a proposal for intercultural bilingual education. It was in 1993 that the Ecuadorian Intercultural Bilingual Education Model (MOSEIB) was legally and officially recognized by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador as a global curricular proposal for the model. It contains principles, aims, objectives, strategies of implementation, a curricular basis (general principles, methodology, chronology, educative levels, modalities, teaching, monitoring and evaluation) and study programs (Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008).
1.4 Educational forces that should impact the Curriculum

Every school that attempts to educate individuals has outlined educational goals of their curriculum. Those are clearly stated, seeking to attain effective aims to enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will allow them to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens of their society (Straughan & Wilson, 1983). This is the curriculum that comprises a set of procedures, policies, or guidelines that a particular school or educational institution offers to a community. However, Eisner (1979) in his book the Educational Imagination identified two other types of curriculum that schools teach. The author referred to the implicit curriculum, also called hidden curriculum, as the type of education that was taught unintentionally by the school. He exemplified implicit curriculum with compliance and competitiveness that can be taught not necessarily directly from the explicit curriculum. There are more social and intellectual virtues implicitly taught like punctuality, and willingness to work hard in class. It is the school structure and the educational personnel that define the kind of place it is, and in which the implicit curriculum describes itself. In other words, the type of school it is, will define what is being taught implicitly.

Eisner (1979) also mentioned the null curriculum and referred to it as those subjects like communication, economics, law, anthropology and arts that are undervalued and not taught as in the explicit curriculum. He believed that neglecting such fields of expertise in schooling leaves students without the skills to have access to the world of knowledge. This type of curriculum refers to all the content that is not provided during the schooling years. It is the opposite of the explicit curriculum. The options, the concepts, the skills that are not taught in schools can be then called null curriculum.

The rationalization of the null curriculum is of critical importance that leads us to reflect on the present education in Ecuador. For instance, not only at the school or district level but also at the country level, the educational system in Ecuador has neglected to provide a formal instruction of English language during the first years of schooling. In other words, there are not educational policies or a curricular structure that provides students from first to seventh grade of basic general education of public schools with a constant instruction of English as a foreign language (EFL). This lack of curricular structure has impacted students' academic development over the years. It is one of the author’s experience that has observed students to be unprepared and unready when they go to English classes in secondary school. Likewise, the effects of not having a standardized English curriculum for primary school, is that it has created a huge gap in learning a language when students go into the transition to secondary school and beyond.

1.5 Needs of the Curriculum

Moving from traditional to progressive education, there have been different philosophical views to approach the problems and necessities of education. Much debate and contradictory points of view were seen in the early twentieth century. Just to mention a few, these educational philosophies include: progressivism, essentialism, and the sociologist philosophy. The progressive philosophy refers to the ideological thinking that highlights the interests, the needs and the
purposes a child might have during the life. The essentialist philosophy refers to the ideological thinking that emphasizes the cultural heritage, the large collection of knowledge through the years, as the primary source for a continuum and perpetuity of this knowledge. The sociologist philosophy refers to the ideological thinking that looks for the ways in which might help young people be prepared and to deal with the issues of society (Tyler, 1949). It seeks to attain the appropriate subject-matter content that will provide individuals the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the contemporary life problems.

John Dewey in his book *Experience and Education* (1938) talked about the needs and problems of education in schools of the early twentieth century. His pedagogical view of education was based upon experience and his philosophy of education encompassed the needs of the child. He stated, “when education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically” (Dewey, 1938, p. 59). Moreover, he stated that the subject matter, if only seen as mere scientific content, has no direct relationship to the child’s present experience (Dewey, 1990). Instead he suggests a continuous reconstruction of instruction, moving from the child’s present experience into what has been organized as content or theory. He concluded that it is necessary to recognize theory and practice must be integrated into closer connection because the child and the curriculum are related to each other (Dewey, 1990).

It is now understood that for attaining an effective education, two critical things are involved: the content of what is intended to teach (curriculum) and the process of how we are going to make individuals learn (instruction). Both need to be carried out, but no one in isolation. However, with this reflection there are two questions that may arise. For instance, what processes are important? and what content is important?

For the first question, Lee (1960) suggested some processes that schools should teach, the most important are as follows: the process of communicating, of conceptualizing, generalizing, seeing relationships, making applications, problem solving, self-direction, creating, and appreciating. As stated above, the process or instruction plays a critical role in education, but it cannot be developed without content. Therefore, to answer the second question Lee (1960) also suggested that the content should be derived from the society in which we live, both present and future as far as we can predict. This particular content is used then to develop most of the processes stated above.

So far, we can see that curriculum in education has been impacted by several forces in the place it has been developed. Furthermore, the changes that have been applied to the curriculum have created long-term effects in the society. It is inconceivable to think that we should not modify or change the curriculum and expect to fulfill the immediate or potential needs. Instead, it needs to be constantly updated and evaluated according to the progress of the society. Eisner (1982) believed that in order to make changes in the curriculum, it would require a broader view of mind on human ability, and would require a willingness to free oneself from traditional views of the content of the curriculum and the methods of teaching.

Now that we have a knowledge basis about how curriculum in education has been modified and has taken several forms, it is also essential to start
thinking about the curriculum we have now and to evaluate it in relation to the needs of the current society. Noddings (2007) referred to some educational aims of the twenty-first century as the ones that would promote several skills in individuals as follows: ability to communicate effectively, ability to work as a team member, preparedness to face changes and challenges, preparedness to identify and solve problems, capacity and willingness to learn new things, ability to question, challenge and innovate, capacity for self-reflection and self-management. Noddings (2007) finally suggested that since traditional disciplines contribute to the organization of the curriculum, we should stretch and adapt them in a way that promotes these new aims of the twenty-first century.

2. The evolution of the Curriculum in Ecuador

Planning, implementing and evaluating a curriculum is a complex process that has been influenced by social and educational factors. In fact, educational changes have been consistent with history. Furthermore, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum has been developed according to the standards of the Ministry of Education during several periods of time. The curriculum has been modified at different times: 1944, 1996 and 2007-2010.

2.1 The 1944 Curriculum

In 1944, Ecuador had a total of 2.500 public primary schools including 54 kindergartens (Ebaugh, 1947). The studies included in this curriculum of the primary schools were those that provided the students with the knowledge necessary for effective participation in every day life (Ebaugh, 1947). The official courses were the following: Civil education, national language, numbers-arithmetic-geometry, natural science, geography and history, artistic practices, physical education, and manual activities. The primary years of schooling included one year in kindergarten, and other six years in primary level.

The continuation of primary schooling is Ecuador is referred to as secondary education. In 1944 Ecuador had a total of 25 public schools at the secondary level, also referred as colegios (high schools) (Ebaugh, 1947). As shown in figure 1 below, the structure of the secondary level consisted of six years of schooling divided into two cycles: the first, a 4-year cycle of general culture studies; the second, a 2-year cycle of specialization studies in areas such as biological science, and physics and mathematics (Ebaugh, 1947). The official plan of study for students at the secondary level included the course “foreign language” (English), where students attended 3 hours a week through the school year (Ebaugh, 1947).
Figure 1. The 1944 Curricular structure

2.2 The 1996 Curriculum

In 1996, the Ministry of Education made official a new curriculum for Basic General Education (BGE). This new curriculum had as a basis the development of skills among students, and the application of crosscutting objectives, meaning that several academic aims are common among the core courses that include mathematics, science, social studies, and language literature (Ministerio de Educación, 2010). Later in 2006 the Ministry of Education proposed drafting a Ten Year Education Plan to the headquarters of the National Education Council (NEC). The NEC is a consulting body from the educational field. This Council defined the general guidelines for the Ten Year Plan during a meeting in June 2006 (Ministerio de Educación, 2006).

Within this Ten Year Education Plan, the NEC and the ministry of Education proposed eight educational policies to be successfully fulfilled within the next ten years (2006-2015). One of those policies is regarding the structure of the school years in public institutions. This policy states the following: Making Basic General Education (BGE) from first to tenth grades universal (Ministerio de Educación, 2006).

2.3 The 2007-2010 Evaluation and Update of the BGE Curriculum

In 2007 the Curriculum department of the Ministry of Education conducted a national survey and evaluation of the previous curriculum of 1996. This evaluation resulted in the issue of a new educational document for the regulation of BGE in Ecuador for the subsequent, ten-year period (Ministerio de Educación, 2010). This curricular document called Curricular upgrade and strengthening of Basic General Education incorporates curricular guidelines and specifications only for four core studies: mathematics, language and literature, social science, and natural science. Figure 2 illustrates the Curricular structure of the Primary and Secondary years of schooling.
It is important to mention that during the ten years of schooling in BGE, the 1st year is referred as elementary school; 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years are referred as basic elemental years; 5th, 6th, and 7th years are referred as basic intermediate years; 8th, 9th, and 10th years are referred as basic higher years (Ministerio de Educación, 2012a). In order to avoid any confusion with some of the terms used along, we are going to refer as secondary school years to the last grades (8th, 9th, and 10th) of BGE, and I-II-III years of Unified General Baccalaureate (UGB).

Figure 2. Current Curricular Structure of Education in Ecuador

2.4 But, what about the EFL Curriculum?

Ebaugh (1947) evidenced that within the Curriculum of 1944, the secondary level (I – II – III – IV – V – VI) (see figure 1) of education in Ecuador included three hours of English per week in the classrooms. It was later in 1992 that The Foreign Language Administration was established under an agreement signed between the Ministry of Education and the British Council (Haboud, 2009). This project was named CRADLE (Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of English), and it was the result of a bilateral technical cooperation agreement between the governments of Ecuador and the United Kingdom, for a curricular reform in EFL teaching in Ecuadorian public schools (Haboud, 2009).

The main purpose of the CRADLE project was to offer secondary students a strong foundation for English acquisition, and thus offer them a starting point for their future (Haboud, 2009). Development of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing communicatively were attempted through a series of books adapted to the Ecuadorian reality. In 1993 with the implementation of the series of books (Our World through English) the ministry of education incremented two hours per week of the English classes (División Nacional de Idiomas Extranjerros, 2008). After CRADLE, there were no longer three hours but five hours per week at the secondary level.

It was in 2008 when the Ministry of Education along with the Foreign Language Administration issued a curricular document called National English
Program – A curricular design. Within this document, it provides philosophical foundations, pedagogical and curricular guidelines for the teaching of English among the 8th 9th and 10th grades of BGE, or as we also refer as secondary school.

In 2012, the Foreign Language Administration launched a new national English project called Advance English Project as a way to provide support and guidance towards English teaching and learning processes in the public schools in Ecuador (Ministerio de Educación, 2012b). Along with the curricular guidelines and specifications that this project issued, it also published the English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) in 2012. The ELLS establishes the outcomes that students are expected to achieve at the end of a proficiency level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The proficiency levels set by the CEFR and established for the English Language Learning Standards in Ecuador are A1, A2, and B1 (Proyecto de Inglés, 2012). The National Curriculum Specifications and the ELLS establishes that students at the end of 8th grade attain a A1.1 level; students at the end of 9th grade attain a A1.2 level; students at the end of 10th year attain a A2.1 level; students at the end of 1st year of baccalaureate attain a A2.2 level; students at the end of 2nd year of baccalaureate attain a B1.1 level; students at the end of 3rd year of baccalaureate attain a B1.2 level (Ministerio de Educación, 2012b; Proyecto de Inglés, 2012).

Accordingly, there have been major and historical changes to the structure and organization of the Ecuadorian Curriculum. Considering the English Language Curriculum, attending English classes has been mandatory only for the secondary level of schooling in the beginning of 1944. When the organization of the Curriculum changed into BGE in 1996, the English syllabus remained the same, mandatory only at the beginning of secondary school years (8th grade of BGE). The English Curricular standards, guidelines, and specifications issued by the Ministry of Education and the Foreign Language Administration until the present date, have only provided support and regulation for the last years of secondary school (8th, 9th, 10th) and the three years of baccalaureate. It means that in the last 73 years there has not been any kind of educational support for the English language teaching during the primary years of schooling, or what we know as the 1st to 7th grades of BGE.

2.5 Current Approaches: Curriculum guidelines and specifications

The National Curriculum Guidelines for the teaching of English as a foreign language in Ecuador was also issued in 2012 among with the curriculum specifications, planning guidelines, assessment suggestions, and other documents that the Advance English Project developed to support English teachers of secondary school level. As mentioned above, the curriculum guidelines document issued by the ministry of education for the most part indicate the CEFR reference levels of English Language proficiency for the Ecuadorian educational system (Ministerio de Educación, 2012c). In figure 3 we can see the specific levels that students need to attain at the end of each secondary school year.
Focusing on the first year of secondary school, which is 8th grade of BGE, the English curriculum emphasizes that the exit profile of the 8th grade student should be an A1.1 level of proficiency. As the Ministerio de Educación (2012c) indicates that at this grade, the level A1 language competence is being developed, or also called A1 in progress. Only at the end of the 9th grade of BGE a truly A1 level according to the CEFR is likely to be attained. So, as we can see on figure 3 starting from 8th grade moving forward to the next higher levels of proficiency might not seem a hard task for the teacher or the student. Nevertheless, as we stated before, until this date there has not been any official Curriculum Standards for the previous years of secondary school. During primary school (1st to 7th grade of BGE) the ministry of education has not designed yet a curricular basis for the teaching of English as a foreign language among these critical years of schooling. Public schools in Ecuador are not required to provide English in the elementary years as a core subject within the Curriculum. The newest educational document issued by the ministry of education states the required class hours per week that students need to attend for every core subject, including English, during the ten years of BGE (Ministerio de Educación, 2014). In the following table we can see how these class hours are distributed along the years of Basic General Education.

Table 1. School workload for the ten years of Basic General Education (BGE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Subjects and Clubs</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Literature</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and Social</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>English as a foreign</td>
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<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs (school projects)</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Ministerio de Educación (2014)
As we can see, at the beginning of secondary school (8th grade) every secondary public school is mandated to implement the English Curriculum, and students are required to attend five class hours per week of English as a foreign language. Therefore, the *Advance English Project* from the ministry of education has published the curriculum guidelines and specifications for providing guidance and support to the English teachers of these grade levels. As stated by this document, the aim of these curriculum guidelines is to support and guide the English teaching and learning processes by providing a set of methodological suggestions to apply the Communicative Language Teaching method and its techniques, so learners can gradually develop their B1 communicative language competence benchmark (Ministerio de Educación, 2012b).

Similarly, another objective of this curricular support is that in order to attain such language proficiency levels, it is necessary to build up learners’ communicative language competence in its linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components through the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ministerio de Educación, 2012c).

Furthermore, it is quite a challenge not only for students but also for teachers that when transitioning to secondary school, students come with no previous English background. The lack of academic exposure to the language has made the 8th grade transition a challenge to students and teachers. In one of the author’s experience as an English teacher of this grade level, he had tangible experience of students struggling with the language. Additionally, due to extraneous reasons, a particular student may or may not have academic exposure to English outside the public school, which makes the 8th grade classroom very diverse in relation to the different levels of language proficiency. Being an English teacher for private and public school in Ecuador, and with years of experience teaching not only in secondary school, but also in primary school level, one author has been able to evidence distinctive levels of English proficiency among the ten years of BGE and the last grades of secondary school. But predominantly during the transition to 8th grade, he has witnessed a significant amount of different English levels in one class, and students struggling with the language in order to acquire the academic competence required by the English curriculum without having previous exposure to the language.

Similarly, Gallardo also claimed that in her teaching experience with secondary school students she observed many students with different level of proficiency in the same classroom. “It is difficult to teach in a class where students with low levels of English struggle with the language, and students with higher levels get bored in class – both students in the same class at the same time” she said (personal communication, November 30, 2016). In other words, the students, as well as the teacher need to make a significant academic effort in order to attain an A1.1 level of proficiency by the end of 8th grade. This means that a student transitioning to secondary school needs to go from level “zero” of proficiency to A1.1 level during one school year.

**3. The Curriculum Development Process**

Developing a curriculum requires a long period of research on the focus of the course and specific educational issues. It is suggested to follow some essential stages according to Tyler’s model for the curriculum development
process such as: selecting the model that will guide the educational action plan, defining learning goals based on an educational philosophy, setting needs regarding learners, society and course, and identifying the most effective educational purposes.

### 3.1 Curriculum Developers

Hlebowitsh (2005) acknowledged two major levels in the design of the curriculum. These are: the macro curriculum and the micro curriculum. The first level refers to the design of all school experience and concerns with building-level design factors that include the organization of the courses across and within grade levels, school-wide mission features, and school-wide experiences. The second level refers to the development and operation of classroom-based activities. It also includes the planning and execution of classroom instructional, pedagogical, and assessment decisions.

Oliva (2005) also suggested different levels that curriculum planners can attain several functions during the curriculum development process. He stated that curriculum planning might occur at different levels, and curriculum developers (teachers, supervisors and other educational stakeholders) might be involved in the curriculum development process at any time as well. Oliva’s levels of curriculum planning and development might look as the following: all teachers are involved in the curriculum process when working at the classroom level, some of them might work at the school level and others at the district level. The next levels refer to the state and region level, and the broader levels refer to the nation and the world. Although the educational system in Ecuador does not necessarily provide opportunities for curriculum developers to work at all levels, for instance neither state, regional or international, the others levels will serve a basis on the fundamental functions that needs to be attained at each stage in the curriculum development process.

### 3.2 Selecting the model

The first step in the curriculum development process is selecting the model that will provide essential patterns to serve as guidelines during the educational action plan. It is important to mention that when selecting a model for application in any educational level, this guideline might be the result of providing a solution for an educational issue. For instance, the model to be implemented might be an attempt to solve a specific problem, or a microcosmic pattern for school-wide replication (Oliva, 2005). For this proposal, the model next described refers to Tyler’s prescriptive model for curriculum and instruction. This model refers itself as prescriptive since it postulates a desired end (objectives), seeks for the means for attaining this end (learning experience) and a process (evaluation) to determine weather the means were attained at the end (Oliva, 2005).

### 3.3 Establishing Educational aims

Straughan and Wilson (1983) made several arguments on education and its aims. They claimed a distinction between empirical, conceptual, and prescriptive arguments that philosophers and other educational stakeholders
have stated about education. For instance, the first might define education as the helpful source to get jobs. For the second it might be defined as an education concerned with the development of knowledge and understanding. The third might imply that education must be in harmony with the nature of the child. These arguments reflect back to the educational philosophies stated above, to mention them these refers to the progressive, the essentialist, and the sociologist philosophical view.

The implications that a philosophical vision adopted by a school or nation can have in the educational setting can be reflected on the different parts of the curriculum development process. For instance, the educational aims based on a particular educational philosophy will become the criteria by which the content is outlined, materials are selected, and instructional procedures are developed (Tyler, 1949).

3.4 Establishing needs

In this section of the curriculum development process, Tyler (1949) recommended that curriculum developers should identify general objectives by gathering data from three sources: (1) the learners, (2) contemporary life outside the school (society), and (3) subject matter.

A study of the first source seeks to identify the needs of the students. Identifying these educational needs are critical to provide a basis for the selection of goals or objectives in a school program. These needs can be classified in three types: physical needs, social needs, and integrative needs. The author also proposed that a study of the learners should provide students opportunities to enter actively in learning with the things that interest them and in which they are deeply involved. A study of the learners should then, broaden and deepen the student's interest.

For the second source, Tyler provided two commonly used arguments in order to identify educational objectives. The first argument is that since life is continually changing, it is necessary to focus educational efforts upon critical aspects on the complex life of today. The second argument is to develop skills on the students. For instance, since life is developing everyday, students can use these acquired skills under whatever conditions in the contemporary life outside school.

Third, the subject matter source refers to the courses of study that represents the conception that a school or nation attempts to teach. Two suggestions can be made from the study of subject matter. The first suggestion is regarding a list of functions or purposes that a particular subject can serve in education. The second suggestion is regarding the particular contributions that this subject can make to other large functions that are not necessarily concerned with the subject. For instance, these large functions may be reflected on different areas such as personal living, personal-social relations, social-civic relations, and economic relations.

3.5 Curriculum goals and objectives

Tyler's model for curriculum development proposed the three sources stated above for selecting effective educational objectives to be achieved in a
particular school or nation. However, before these objectives become educative, Tyler suggested the use of philosophy and psychology of learning as two screens that will serve as the process to identify and select the most effective educational purposes. These are the educational philosophy screen and the educational psychology of learning screen.

The educational philosophy screen refers as the set of principles and beliefs that the school community can adopt. This philosophy may take the form of the set of values that are seemed as essential to a satisfying life, or it may emphasize contemporary values of materialism. Whichever the educational and social philosophy a school implements, it will provide the basis upon the selection and elimination of educational objectives.

The educational psychology of learning screen refers to the psychological knowledge that has been acquired and accepted. This knowledge of child development and learning continually grows and change with time, and it helps us distinguish changes in individual due to a learning process. Additionally, it helps to distinguish goals that are achievable in a certain of time at the appropriate age level. Finally, Tyler suggested that it is necessary to formulate a statement that indicates the fashion of the learning process. He called this formulation a theory of learning, in which it is demonstrated how learning will take place, the conditions for this process, and the instruments necessary for a successful operational process.

4. Organizing and Implementing the Curriculum

Once that the objectives have been determined and carefully selected to be part of the curriculum development process, these educational goals need to be organized in order to be part of a coherent program. Tyler emphasized the importance of organization process since it can greatly influence the efficiency of the instruction. He suggested three main criteria to organize the learning experiences and the units, courses or programs effectively. These are: continuity, sequence, and integration.

Continuity refers to the examination of the relationship between the learning experiences over time. This means that the learning experiences provided in a specific course need a recurring and continuing opportunity to be practiced and developed to achieve a greater depth and breadth of concepts and skills. It is also called vertical organization.

Sequence refers to the importance of providing higher levels of illustration with each learning experience. This means to have each successive learning experience build upon the preceding one but to go more broaden and deepen into the content involved.

Tyler (1949) also considered that is was necessary to provide a structural organization of the elements in which the learning experiences are built on. These structural elements can be integrated at three levels: the largest level, the intermediate level, and the lowest level. In the largest level the organization of the structural element may be made up of specific subjects like geography, or mathematics. It can also be organized into broad fields like social studies, or mathematics. Finally, a core curriculum can be organized combining broad fields
with specific subjects. In the intermediate level the organization of the structures can result in courses organized in sequences. For instance, social science I, social science II, meaning that they are part of a unifying sequence. The organization can also result in a course that is single semester or year unit, meaning that it is not considered as part of a longer time sequence. In the lowest level the organization of the structural element refers to the lesson that is planned in a single day. Another organization refers to the topic, which is planned for several days or weeks. And the last organization structure at this level may refer to the unit, which is a planning covering several weeks.

5. Instructional goals and objectives

The most useful form for stating objectives is to express them in terms that identify two aspects. The first aspect refers to the behavior that is aimed to develop in the student, and the second aspect refers to the content or area in which this behavior is going to take place. These aspects propose an objective formulated in two dimensions, a behavioral and content aspect. Tyler believed that when objectives are formulated in a two-dimension plan, it provides a concise set of specifications to guide the further development of the course.

However, Tyler’s suggestion to formulate objectives has been highly criticized that it generates much limitation on the activities that can be applied as a way to achieve those stated goals. Instead, Popham (1972) proposed several characteristics that objectives should meet in order to help educators have a clearer idea of what is going to be accomplished at the end on the instruction. Popham suggested that instructional objectives should be formulated comprising several aspects as follows: measurability, clarity, directionality, and evaluation moment.

Measurability refers that the objective should describe a specific performance or behavior that can be measured at the end of the instruction. Clarity indicates that the objective that is being formulated should clearly specify what learners will be able to do at the end of the instruction. Directionality indicates that objectives need to refer to the learner’s performance rather than the teacher’s activity. Evaluation moment indicates the the instructional objectives should refer to the students’ post instructional performance instead of the performance during the instruction.

6. Selecting and Implementing strategies

Considering what Tyler has determined learning experience as the interaction between the learner and the external condition in which he can react, Tyler (1949) proposed five principles for selecting such learning experiences to be applied in the instruction, which will serve as the strategies implemented in the curriculum development process.

The first principle indicates that students must have meaningful experiences that provide an opportunity to practice the behavior implied in the objective. The second principle states that students should obtain satisfaction from carrying on the behavior implied in the objective. The third principle suggests that the experiences should be appropriate to the students’ present attainments. For instance, if the experience involves behavior that the student is
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not yet able to make, it fails. The fourth principle indicates that the experiences should meet the various criteria for effective learning, so they are useful for attaining the objectives. It is not necessary that the curriculum provide certain limited or prescribed set of learning experiences in order to make sure that the objectives are attained. The fifth principle states every experience will usually bring several outcomes or learning objectives that not necessarily have been specified (Tyler, 1949).

7. Evaluating the Curriculum

Tyler's description of the evaluation stage refers as the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are being realized by the program of curriculum and instruction. He stated two important aspects that need to be considered when the evaluation process will take place. The first aspect implies that evaluation should appraise students’ behavior since it is the changes on that performance that is sought in education. The second aspect implies that evaluation should involve more that a single appraisal. For instance, it is necessary to make an evaluation at an early point and another evaluation at later points to identify changes that might be occurring.

Additionally, since evaluation involves getting evidence about behavior changes in the students, any valid evidence of such changes that are desired as educational objectives provides an appropriate method of evaluation. This implies that there are many ways of getting evidence about behavior changes that goes beyond paper and pencils devices. For instance, he suggested other methods or devices for appraising behavior changes such as observations, interviews, questionnaires, and collection of students’ products.

Finally, the process of evaluation begins with the objectives of the educational program. This implies that it is necessary to have evaluation procedures that will provide evidence about each of the kinds of behavior or performance implied by each of the educational objectives. It then goes back to the two-dimensional plan that helped as the basis to design the learning experiences; it will also serve as the basis for planning the evaluation process.

Conclusions

During the first section there was a general overview of what has been the history of the educational system in Ecuador, and how the curriculum has changed over the years. It is evidenced how much the Ecuadorian curriculum has been impacted by several forces, and the results on education of such impact. Unfortunately, the major changes have occurred on the core courses (mathematics, natural science, etc.) among the primary and secondary levels. This study clearly identifies the lack of a standard curricular design for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in the public primary schools in Ecuador. This examination enables, not only English teachers, but also other educational stakeholders with a perspective of what would be necessary to modify and implement within the educational system. Whether the construction of an English curriculum for primary school is the goal, this study will allow us to critically reflect on what could be the forces that should impact such curriculum
and forces which should not, as a way to seek a more focused-adapted body of knowledge to fulfill the needs of the current society.

Furthermore, in the second section, there was an analysis of Tyler’s model for the curriculum development process. Some different levels of control are suggested in which the curriculum process can be developed. The selection of Tyler’s model for the analysis of the curriculum development provided the necessary steps to take into account at the different stages of the process. For instance, starting from establishing the educational aims that a school or nation seeks to attain, establishing the needs of education, selecting the overall curriculum goals, organizing and implementing a structure for curriculum, establishing more specific objectives that the curriculum pursues to gain, the strategies for attaining those objectives, and an evaluation process to establish some criteria if the curriculum goals were accomplished. This study then provides the necessary guidelines for the curriculum development process that all the participants involved within the educational community can consider when making new modifications and implementations to the curricular structure. Besides, the study leaves us with the competent knowledge to make informed decisions and to reflect upon the English language curriculum of the BGE.

Finally, the identification of no English language teaching during the primary years of schooling suggests that students and teachers involved in the transition between primary and secondary level (from 7th to 8th grade) may face academic and social challenges to successfully accommodate to the new changes. This study will encourage other teachers and researchers to take further exploration and action on this transitional event.

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