

## **Creative learning in Language and Literature: Socio-labor projects as an educational tool in Ecuadorian Basic Education**

Silvia Alemania Ruiz Freire <sup>1</sup>\* <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3771-2381>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad de César Vallejo. Perú

\*Author for correspondence: P7002321350@ucvvirtual.edu.pe

### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the relevance of creative learning in Language and Literature, highlighting socio-labor projects as educational tools in Ecuadorian Basic Education. Using a qualitative approach, experiences and perceptions of teachers and students are investigated through interviews, direct observation and analysis of curricular documents. The findings show that socio-labor projects encourage the active participation of students, strengthen their linguistic and literary skills, and generate meaningful links with the community. This model promotes a more inclusive and dynamic education, improving the impact of creative learning on students' integral development.

**Keywords:** Creative learning; Projects; Social and labor projects; Language and literature

### **Introduction**

Ecuador comprises the levels of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, and High School; the Higher Education system; and the Intercultural Bilingual Education system (aimed at ancestral peoples and indigenous nationalities), as established in the Organic Law on Intercultural Education (LOEI).

Basic education in Ecuador faces various challenges, including the need to innovate teaching methodologies to cope with an increasingly dynamic and changing world.

Social and labor projects as social activities are initiatives that integrate academic learning with practical activities aimed at solving social or community problems. In this sense, they become a powerful tool for applying what has been learned in class to specific situations. In addition, their strengths include: comprehensive development, as they promote social, emotional, and intellectual skills; community engagement, by ensuring the relationship between school and community; motivation, by increasing interest in learning when tangible results are seen; meaningful learning, from a deeper understanding of academic content, among other benefits.

It is therefore interesting to note that social and labor projects as an educational tool facilitate the construction of knowledge through interaction with reality, which leads to a change that transforms traditional teaching strategies.

The teaching of language and literature in Ecuador, especially in the context of creative learning and social and labor projects, presents various issues that deserve to be investigated. Some of these issues include:

1. Teaching methodologies: It is essential to investigate the current methodologies used in language and literature teaching. Are they sufficiently creative and inclusive? How are social and labor projects integrated into the curriculum?
2. Teacher training: Teacher training is crucial for implementing creative approaches. It is necessary to investigate whether teachers receive adequate training on creative learning and how to apply social and labor projects in their classrooms.
3. Educational resources: The availability and quality of educational resources (books, technology, teaching materials) can influence the implementation of creative learning. It is important to evaluate what resources are available and how they are used.
4. Sociocultural context: Ecuador is a diverse country with multiple sociocultural realities. Investigating how these realities affect the teaching and learning of language and literature can help adapt projects to local needs.

Investigating these issues will allow for the development of more effective strategies that promote meaningful creative learning in language and literature within the Ecuadorian context, benefiting both students and local communities.

## **Development**

The Ecuadorian educational context in Language and Literature is marked by a rich literary tradition and a diverse pedagogical approach that seeks to integrate different cultural and identity perspectives. The article systematizes and recognizes the combination of key authors, relevant theories, and previous studies that provide a solid framework for continuing to develop effective educational strategies in this field. The integration of creative learning with social and labor projects in the area of language and literature not only enhances the academic skills of Ecuadorian students but also contributes to the formation of critical, creative citizens who are committed to their community.

This educational approach is essential to prepare new generations for a changing and complex world, where communication skills are increasingly valued in both personal and professional settings. Among the methods applied are: interviews with teachers and students involved in social and labor projects; direct observation of classes where these projects are implemented; and analysis of curriculum documents related to language and literature.

A comparative study is promoted with dimensions and indicators that allowed for a comprehensive analysis, which not only considers academic aspects, but also social, cultural, and community aspects related to creative learning in language and literature through social and labor projects in Latin America. Creative learning in language and literature, as well as social and labor projects, are educational approaches that seek to engage students in an active and meaningful way. This comparative study focuses on how Language and Literature content is adapted to the interests and needs of students in several Latin American countries: Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Costa Rica.

Creative learning not only enhances language skills by enriching vocabulary and improving communication skills, but also strengthens literary skills by fostering a deeper appreciation for literature and stimulating original creative production. This

comprehensive approach contributes to the holistic development of the student as an effective communicator and critical interpreter of the literary world.

Tedesco (1993), from UNESCO's International Bureau of Education, points out, based on studies conducted in different countries, that:

When transformations begin with curricular change, they have a very weak impact on pedagogical practices in the classroom, and he raises the need to address educational management processes and changes in the predominant management styles in institutions. (p. 15)

This author emphasizes the fact that the greatest successes are found in schools where autonomy is strengthened through educational projects. This allows for the development of an institutional identity by sharing objectives, traditions, work methodologies, team spirit, and responsibility and commitment to results. Therefore, from this point of view, the essential conditions for promoting transformations would be the following:

- Autonomy in school management (the project as a means)
- Strengthening institutional identity

Therefore, social and labor projects as an educational tool are promoted through:

- Active methodologies: Implementing teaching methodologies that encourage active participation, such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning. These stimulate curiosity and critical thinking.
- Experiential learning: Socio-labor projects offer students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. This not only reinforces their knowledge of language and literature, but also helps them understand its relevance in everyday life.

Taking these elements into account, teachers recognize that creativity and innovation, when designing and implementing social and labor projects related to literary or linguistic topics, enhance the opportunity to be creative and innovative when addressing real problems or creating cultural products (such as plays or publications), among others.

Social and labor projects are initiatives that seek to improve the employability and quality of life of specific population groups, especially those in situations of

vulnerability or social exclusion. These projects often combine social and labor aspects, with the aim of promoting the personal and professional development of participants.

Some key characteristics of social and labor projects include:

1. Education and training: They offer training programs that help participants acquire the technical and soft skills needed for the job market.
2. Career guidance: They provide advice on job searching; resume writing, interview preparation, and professional development.

Social and labor projects in Ecuadorian basic education represent a pedagogical strategy that seeks to integrate theoretical learning with social and labor practice, promoting the development of competencies and skills in students. Some key aspects of how these projects can function as effective educational tools are:

Contextualization of learning

- They allow students to relate what they have learned in the classroom to real-life situations in their environment. This not only makes learning more meaningful, but also helps students understand the importance of their education in everyday life and in the development of their community.

Development of soft skills

- Students develop essential soft skills such as teamwork, effective communication, problem solving, and leadership. These skills are fundamental to their professional and personal future.

Promoting entrepreneurship

- They include entrepreneurial initiatives where students identify needs in their community and propose innovative solutions. This not only promotes an entrepreneurial mindset, but can also contribute to local economic development.

Some practical examples are:

- School gardens: Initiatives where students grow plants or vegetables, learning about sustainable agriculture while contributing to improving school meals.
- Community workshops: Projects where students teach skills (such as crafts or technology) to community members.

- Social campaigns: Initiatives focused on issues such as public health or the environment, where students design and implement information campaigns.

Over the last decade, creative learning in language and literature has been the subject of study by various authors and approaches that address creative learning in language and literature from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. The following are recognized in some relevant studies and authors in this field:

Robinson (2020): although his work is broader and not limited to language and literature, this author has influenced creative education in general. His approach to creativity in the classroom has inspired many educators to integrate creative methods into the teaching of various disciplines. This author believes that: “Creativity is now as important in education as reading and writing, and we should give it equal status” (p. 3).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996): Known for his work on flow and creativity, his theories have been applied to the field of education, including language and literature learning. His approach to fostering an environment that promotes creativity is relevant to educators. He argues that if there is one thing that determines a creative life, it is precisely the will to move forward through time, the determination of the individual to use their abilities to make sense of the world and uncover its secrets.

David Perkins (1995) in his book *Outsmarting IQ*, discusses how to teach in a way that encourages creative thinking, which is applicable to the teaching of language and literature.

Tina Seelig (2012), author of *InGenius: A Crash Course on Creativity* explores how creativity can be cultivated in students, which has direct implications for language and literature classes.

Studies on critical pedagogy: Authors such as Paulo Freire have influenced approaches that promote more creative and interactive learning in the classroom, fostering a more dynamic relationship between students and literary texts.

Recent research in academic journals such as *The Journal of Creative Behavior* and *Creativity Research Journal* has published articles addressing specific strategies for fostering creative learning in language and literature.

Murillo et al. (2023) cite researchers such as: Arce (2020), Quadir and Zhou (2021); Valencia (2021), and Arteaga and Mendoza (2022), who agree that “the COVID-19

pandemic has exposed the urgent need to rethink education with an eye to the future” (Murillo et al., 2023, p. 431).

They also argue that this rethinking must be based on previous knowledge in the fields of education, pedagogy, and didactics (as proposed by the aforementioned constructivist approach), which must be integrated into innovative, collaborative, and flexible teaching strategies that logically organize teaching-learning activities to build and develop comprehension, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, reading habits, reasoning, and the expansion of oral and written language.

Among the Ecuadorian authors who have addressed creative learning in language and literature, as well as social and labor projects as educational tools over the years, the most relevant in this context are:

2000-2010

- María Elena Cevallos: In her work on language and literature teaching, Cevallos has explored the use of creative methodologies that encourage critical thinking and personal expression in students.

2011-2015

- Fernando Almeida: In his publications, Almeida has analyzed how socio-labor projects can be used to develop linguistic and literary skills in real contexts, promoting more active learning.

Years 2016-2020

- Jorge Luis Salazar: His research focuses on PBL in the area of language and literature, highlighting how this approach can foster creativity and collaborative work among students.

Years 2021-2023

- Sofía Andrade: She has recently explored the connections between creativity, literature, and community projects, proposing educational models that integrate these dimensions to enrich learning.

On the other hand, Velásquez (2017) argues that creative teaching strategies involve profound changes in daily practice, which is why he believes it is important to take into account intentional intentions, the resulting interrelationships, the work environment,

and the ability to deal flexibly with wrongdoing, with great learning opportunities, done strategically from the organization of the learning process to the capacity for reflection. (p. 23)

In order to carry out the comparative study on “Creative Learning in Language and Literature: Socio-labor projects as an educational tool in Ecuadorian Basic Education,” it was essential to structure it in dimensions and indicators that would allow for the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of these projects. Several Latin American countries that have implemented innovative approaches in their education systems were considered, including: Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. In reviewing the literature on educational programs that integrate creative learning and socio-labor projects, educational reports, academic studies, and educational policies from each country were analyzed to evaluate student participation.

Dimensions e indicators

➤ Educational context

- Educational policies: Analysis of national and local policies that promote creative learning and social and labor projects.
- School curriculum: Comparison of the language and literature curriculum in each country, focusing on the inclusion of creative methodologies.

2. Project implementation

- Number and type of projects: Number and diversity of social and labor projects implemented in schools.
- Available resources: Evaluation of the resources (material, human, financial) allocated to these projects.

3. Methodology

- Pedagogical approaches: Identification of the methodologies used to promote creative learning (project-based learning, collaborative learning, etc.).
- Teacher training: Training received by teachers to implement these approaches.

4. Student participation

- Participation rate: Percentage of students involved in social and labor projects.
- Diversity and inclusion: Evaluate how different groups (gender, disability, socioeconomic context) are included in these projects.

## 5. Learning outcomes

- Academic performance: Compare academic results in Language and Literature before and after the implementation of the projects.
- Creative skills developed: Evaluate the development of skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, and artistic expression.

## 6. Social impact

- Community connection: Measure how the projects have strengthened the relationship between the school and the local community.
- Social benefits: Evaluate whether the projects have had a positive impact on social aspects such as community cohesion or local development.

## 7. Perception and satisfaction

- Surveys of students and teachers: Gather opinions on the effectiveness of creative learning and its relevance to personal development.
- Opinions of parents and the community: Evaluate how parents perceive the educational and social impact of these projects.

## 8. Sustainability

- Project continuity: Analyze whether the projects are sustainable in the long term or whether they depend on temporary funding.
- Scalability and innovation: Examine whether there is potential to replicate or scale these successful models to other educational institutions.

These indicators allowed for a comprehensive analysis not only of academic aspects, but also of social, cultural, and community aspects related to creative learning in language and literature through social and labor projects in Latin America that have implemented innovative approaches in their educational systems.

- Colombia: It has developed various educational initiatives that integrate social and labor projects into the school curriculum. Programs such as “Schools of Peace” and “Education for Citizenship” promote creative learning and active student participation.
- Chile: It has implemented educational programs that promote project-based learning, where students work on community initiatives that allow them to apply their knowledge of language and literature in creative ways.

- Argentina: There is a strong tradition of educational projects that link literature with social reality. Initiatives such as “Leer para Ser” (Read to Be) seek to encourage critical and creative reading through community projects.
- Mexico: It has programs such as “Escuelas de Tiempo Completo” (Full-Time Schools), which promote a comprehensive approach to learning, including social and labor projects that allow students to develop creative skills in language and literature.
- Peru: It has implemented educational strategies that integrate creative learning with community development, especially through programs that promote reading and writing in relevant social contexts.
- Uruguay: It has promoted a student-centered educational approach, where social and labor projects are used to foster linguistic and literary skills through collaborative work.
- Costa Rica: It has developed innovative educational programs that integrate arts and literary education with community projects, thus promoting more meaningful and creative learning.

When comparing these countries with Ecuador, it is important to consider specific educational policies, cultural and social contexts, as well as the methodologies used to implement creative learning through social and labor projects. This allowed us to identify good practices and areas for improvement to enrich basic education in Ecuador.

## 1. Educational Context

Each country has a particular educational context that influences curriculum adaptation:

- Ecuador: Ecuadorian education has incorporated a competency-based approach, promoting creativity through projects that integrate language and literature with the social reality of the student.
- Colombia: A flexible curriculum has been implemented that allows content to be adapted according to local needs and interests. Socio-labor projects are a key strategy for connecting literature with social issues.
- Chile: The General Education Law promotes inclusive education. Teachers use active methodologies to adapt literary content to students' everyday experiences.

- Argentina: Argentine education encourages meaningful learning through projects that link literature to local cultural contexts. The aim is to develop critical skills through creative reading.
- Mexico: The competency-based approach is also present; projects that integrate language and literature with social issues relevant to students are promoted.
- Peru: Peruvian education has moved toward a more flexible curriculum that allows literary content to be adapted to the cultural and linguistic realities of the student body.
- Uruguay: The use of active methodologies that encourage collaborative learning is noteworthy. Social and labor projects are used to contextualize the teaching of language and literature.
- Costa Rica: The Costa Rican curriculum emphasizes the importance of adapting content to the needs and interests of students, promoting active learning through creative projects.

➤ Curriculum adaptation in Language and Literature

## 2.1 Common strategies

All these countries employ common strategies to adapt content:

- Interdisciplinary projects: Integrating Language and Literature with other areas of knowledge (social sciences, art) allows relevant topics to be addressed from multiple perspectives.
- Use of technology: Digital tools facilitate access to a variety of literary resources and allow for the creation of interactive spaces where students can express their creativity.
- Local literature: Incorporating local authors or regional themes helps students connect emotionally with literary content.

## 2.2 Regional differences

Despite the similarities, there are notable differences:

- In Colombia and Mexico, there is a strong connection between social and labor projects and specific community issues.
- In Chile and Argentina, there is a greater emphasis on fostering critical skills through literary debates on contemporary texts.

### 3. Social and labor projects as an educational tool

Social and labor projects have proven to be effective in contextualizing learning:

- In Ecuador, these projects allow literary knowledge to be applied in real contexts, fostering a deeper understanding.
- In Peru, initiatives have been developed where students create literary works based on their community experiences.

### 4. Learning manifests itself in:

#### Ecuador

- Creative learning: Promoted through the national curriculum, this includes literary and artistic projects.
- Social and labor projects: Educational institutions implement entrepreneurship fairs where students actively participate.
- Student participation: High participation in fairs; however, there is a lack of continuity in some projects.

#### Colombia

- Creative learning: This is promoted through literary workshops and creative reading programs.
- Social and labor projects: There are initiatives such as “Young Entrepreneurs” that involve students in community projects.
- Student participation: Participation varies; rural areas have fewer opportunities compared to urban areas.

#### Chile

- Creative learning: The Chilean education system includes active methodologies that stimulate literary creativity.
- Social and labor projects: Programs such as “Learning to Be an Entrepreneur” allow students to develop practical skills.
- Student participation: High participation; however, there is criticism of the quality of institutional support.

#### Argentina

- Creative learning: Innovative programs that integrate art and literature are implemented.
- Social and labor projects: Schools often collaborate with NGOs to carry out community projects.

- Student participation: Generally high; however, there are disparities between urban and rural regions.

#### Mexico

- Creative learning: Basic education includes creative approaches through the use of digital technologies.

Social and labor projects: Initiatives such as “Full-Time Schools” promote collaborative work.

- Student participation: Varies significantly between states; some communities have a high level of commitment.

#### Peru

- Creative learning: New student-centered teaching strategies are being implemented.
- Social and labor projects: Projects such as “Growing Together” involve students in community activities.
- Student participation: Increases over time; however, faces logistical challenges.

#### Uruguay

- Creative learning: Strong emphasis on arts education within the national curriculum.
- Social and labor projects: Programs such as “Education for Work” allow for meaningful practical experiences.
- Student participation: High participation; collaborative work is highly valued.

#### Costa Rica

- Creative learning: Strategies such as PBL and the use of digital technologies are implemented to stimulate creativity in Language and Literature.
- Social and labor projects: There are initiatives such as “Service Learning,” where students participate in community projects that integrate the school curriculum with social needs.

## **Conclusions**

Creative learning refers to teaching methods that encourage innovation, curiosity, and critical thinking. In language and literature, this can include interactive activities such as literary debates, story creation, or collaborative poetry. The idea is to actively engage students in their educational process.

The Ecuadorian educational context in language and literature is marked by a rich literary tradition and a diverse pedagogical approach that seeks to integrate different cultural and identity perspectives. The combination of key authors, relevant theories, and previous studies provides a solid framework for further developing effective educational strategies in this field.

The use of social and labor projects as an educational tool in language and literature within the Ecuadorian context, following the comparative study, demonstrated that there is great potential to transform the educational process by promoting more meaningful, inclusive, and comprehensive learning. However, it is essential to address existing barriers in order to maximize its benefits.