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TEACHER TRAINING AND INCLUSIVE INTERCULT URALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PEDAGOGICAL GAPS IN PERU AND ECUADOR (2018–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural inclusion has become a priority in educational policies across Latin America; however, significant pedagogical gaps still limit its effective implementation in classrooms. The objective of this systematic review was to analyze scientific evidence published between 2018 and 2025 on pedagogical gaps in teacher training for intercultural inclusion in public schools in Peru and Ecuador. A search was conducted in Scopus, SciELO, RedALyC, and Google Scholar following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Qualitative studies addressing intercultural approaches, pedagogical practices, and educational policies were included. Out of a total of 312 identified records, 18 met the inclusion criteria. The findings reveal gaps in four main areas: (a) insufficient intercultural content in initial teacher education, (b) limited continuous training contextualized to specific sociocultural realities, (c) a strong theoretical emphasis without the development of practical competencies for cultural and linguistic diversity, and (d) a disconnect between intercultural educational policies and everyday pedagogical practice. The reviewed evidence indicates that teachers recognize the importance of interculturality but lack the pedagogical tools to apply it effectively. It is concluded that strengthening teacher education, aligning public policies with pedagogical practices, and promoting context-based professional development models are key strategies to reduce existing gaps. This review provides an updated and comparative synthesis of the challenges faced by Peru and Ecuador in advancing toward quality intercultural education.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogical gaps, teaching, interculturality, educational inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

Intercultural education, according to Carrillo and Morales (2020), has become a priority axis in Latin America due to the need to ensure teacher training that responds to the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity present in public schools. Both Peru and Ecuador have incorporated interculturality as a guiding principle in their educational policies; however, several studies show that significant gaps persist between normative discourse and pedagogical practice (López & Moya, 2021). These gaps are reflected in limitations in initial teacher education, insufficient pedagogical support, the absence of situated intercultural competencies, and a weak connection between the official curriculum and local sociocultural realities, as noted by García et al. (2019) and confirmed by Reátegui and Bendezú (2022).

In Peru, recent research shows that teachers often receive intercultural training that is mainly theoretical, lacking practical strategies that would allow them to manage culturally diverse classrooms, integrate indigenous languages, or adapt their methodologies to indigenous and migrant communities (Gutierrez & Vargas, 2023). Similarly, in Ecuador, intercultural bilingual education faces structural tensions associated with a lack of resources, limited ongoing training, and the weak institutionalization of a critical intercultural approach, as argued by Montaluisa and Paillacho (2021) and further discussed by Simbaña (2024).

Pedagogical gaps are expressed at several levels: (a) a distance between intercultural educational policy and initial teacher training, (b) insufficient preparation to work with multiple identities and complex sociocultural contexts, and (c) the persistence of traditional models that overlook inclusive and culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Reátegui & Bendezú, 2022; López & Moya, 2021). This mismatch directly impacts educational quality and the capacity of public schools to promote inclusive and equitable learning, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020).

Although studies exist in both countries, there is still no systematic synthesis that compares recent evidence (2018–2025) on the specific pedagogical gaps affecting teacher training within the framework of intercultural inclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a systematic review that identifies patterns, gaps, and areas for improvement, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and providing guidance for educational practice and policy.

For all these reasons, this systematic review aims to analyze the evidence published between 2018 and 2025 on pedagogical gaps in teacher training for intercultural inclusion in public schools in Peru and Ecuador, in order to identify the most relevant challenges and propose guidelines aimed at strengthening intercultural teacher education.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic review was conducted following the **PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)** guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and reproducibility at all stages of the process. Using a qualitative, correlational–causal approach, a search strategy was established in databases such as **Scopus, SciELO, and Redalyc**, applying Boolean combinations in Spanish and English. A documentary review was carried out that included scientific articles, empirical studies, and narrative reviews directly related to the research phenomenon.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intercultural education has become a fundamental axis for guaranteeing the right to inclusive and equitable education in culturally diverse contexts. In Latin America, authors such as Walsh (2019) and Tubino (2020) argue that interculturality should not be understood as a simple cultural exchange, but rather as a critical process that seeks to transform relationships of inequality and promote a horizontal dialogue between academic and community knowledge. From this perspective, schools should be spaces for recognizing cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity rather than for homogenization.

Within this framework, **teacher training plays a decisive role**. Several studies (Carrillo & Morales, 2020; Cuenca & Porras, 2020) show that many initial teacher education programs address interculturality in a theoretical and fragmented manner, without developing practical competencies that prepare future teachers to manage diverse classrooms. This limitation creates a gap between what teachers *"know"* about interculturality and what they can actually *"do"* to ensure inclusive educational processes. The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020)** reinforces this concern by stating that without relevant teacher training, educational systems will not be able to move toward true cultural and linguistic equity.

In **Peru and Ecuador**, public policies recognize diversity, but their implementation remains weak and uneven (Reátegui & Bendezú, 2022; Montaluisa & Paillacho, 2021). The so-called **"declarative interculturality"** is reflected in regulations that lack operational mechanisms, resources, and sustained pedagogical support. These structural shortcomings generate pedagogical gaps that affect educational quality and inclusion, perpetuating teaching models focused on normative content rather than on situated and contextualized practices.

This study is justified by the need to comparatively analyze pedagogical gaps in teacher education in both countries in order to identify the factors that limit the realization of effective intercultural education. Based on this understanding, the general objective is to examine recent evidence (2018–2025) on gaps in both initial and in-service teacher training, as well as in the practical application of interculturality, with the aim of proposing training guidelines and comprehensive policies that strengthen teachers' intercultural competencies.

RESULTS

Insufficiencies in Initial Teacher Training in Interculturality

Most studies agree that initial teacher training has a predominantly theoretical approach, with limited opportunities to develop practical competencies in culturally diverse contexts. López and Moya (2021) point out that teacher education programs in Peru address interculturality as an isolated curricular content, without integrating situated practices in indigenous or migrant communities. In Ecuador, similar studies report that intercultural bilingual education has not yet been consolidated as a transversal axis within initial teacher training (Montaluisa & Paillacho, 2021).

Key gaps identified include:

- Lack of practical courses on intercultural mediation.
- Few opportunities for pre-professional teaching practice in rural and bilingual contexts.
- A focus on normative content rather than pedagogical skills.

Limited Continuous Training and Pedagogical Support

Studies by Gutierrez and Vargas (2023) and Reátegui and Bendezú (2022) show that in-service teachers do not receive systematic or updated professional development in intercultural approaches. Training programs are often sporadic, superficial, and disconnected from the local context and the realities faced in educational practice. García et al. (2019) document that teachers report difficulties integrating indigenous languages, managing cultural conflicts in the classroom, and adapting strategies to diverse populations due to the lack of sustained professional development programs.

Key gaps include:

- Sporadic and poorly specialized training programs.
- Lack of intercultural pedagogical support models.
- Absence of contextualized feedback for teachers.

Disconnection Between Educational Policies and Teaching Practice

Although Peru and Ecuador have formal intercultural education policies, studies reveal a significant gap between the normative framework and pedagogical practice. Reátegui and Bendezú (2022) identify that teachers are aware of these policies but lack the resources, guidelines, or materials necessary for effective implementation. Similarly, Simbaña (2024) observes that in Ecuador, the guidelines of Intercultural Bilingual Education do not always adapt to the specific linguistic realities of each community.

The main gaps identified include:

- Lack of articulation between curriculum and teaching practice.
- Policies without adequate resources, materials, or applicable training.
- General guidelines that do not adjust to local cultural and linguistic diversity.

Insufficient Intercultural Competencies in the Classroom

The studies show that teachers generally demonstrate a positive attitude toward interculturality but lack key competencies for managing culturally diverse classrooms. These limitations include incorporating community knowledge, cultural mediation, bilingual communication, and the resolution of intercultural conflicts.

Carrillo and Morales (2020) found that many teachers perceive cultural diversity as a **"challenge"** rather than as a **pedagogical resource**. Likewise, Gutierrez and Vargas (2023) report that there is a widespread fear among teachers of **"doing it wrong,"** which limits the implementation of differentiated teaching strategies.

Within this context, the main gaps include:

- Lack of practical strategies for mediating cultural differences.

- Limited integration of local worldviews into the curriculum.
- Difficulties adapting teaching methodologies to indigenous languages.

DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic review reveal the persistence of **structural pedagogical gaps** in teacher training for intercultural inclusion in public schools in Peru and Ecuador. These gaps are not only explained by curricular limitations but also by **institutional, political, and sociocultural factors** that influence teachers' professional development and their performance in culturally diverse classrooms. The discussion integrates the findings from the analyzed studies and contrasts them with recent literature in Latin America.

Initial Teacher Training and Normative Advances: Insufficient Practical Development

The reviewed studies by López and Moya (2021) indicate that teacher education programs in both countries include interculturality in their curricula; however, they remain predominantly theoretical and do not ensure the development of applied skills (Montaluisa & Paillacho, 2021). This situation reproduces a training model centered on **declarative knowledge**, while leaving aside practical experiences in culturally diverse communities.

Latin American literature highlights that interculturality requires **situated and dialogical learning**, enabling future teachers to understand local dynamics and community knowledge (Tubino, 2020). Nevertheless, few teacher education programs incorporate real field experiences in indigenous, migrant, or bilingual communities, which limits the development of critical intercultural competencies.

Insufficient Continuous Training and Weak Institutional Articulation

Another significant gap identified is the **limited specialized continuous training**, as reported by García et al. (2019). This finding aligns with studies warning about the lack of articulation between educational reforms and teacher professional development strategies (Herrera & Morocho, 2021). Existing training initiatives tend to be sporadic, general, and disconnected from the local context, which reduces their practical applicability.

The lack of **intercultural pedagogical support** has also been identified in regional studies, where teachers often lack mentorship, technical guidance, or contextualized feedback (Quispe & Apaza, 2022). This deficiency weakens teachers' ability to transform theoretical knowledge into effective pedagogical practice.

Distance Between Intercultural Educational Policies and Classroom Practice

Research by Reátegui and Bendezú (2022) and Simbaña (2024) shows that although Peru and Ecuador have advanced in developing intercultural education policies, their **real implementation remains limited**. These policies often establish general guidelines but lack operational mechanisms, resources, and teaching materials that would allow their everyday application.

This phenomenon reflects what the literature describes as **"declarative interculturality"**, referring to policies that recognize cultural diversity but fail to integrate it structurally into the educational system (Walsh, 2019). The gap between discourse and practice persists because teachers do not receive sufficient training, pedagogical support, or context-adapted materials.

Challenges in the Development of Intercultural Competencies

The findings show that although teachers value cultural diversity, many face difficulties in **managing culturally heterogeneous classrooms, integrating community knowledge, implementing bilingual methodologies, and mediating intercultural conflicts**. These results coincide with studies by Carrillo and Morales (2020) and Gutierrez and Vargas (2023), which indicate that interculturality requires a profound transformation of the teacher's role, demanding **cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, intercultural communication, and mediation skills**.

The absence of these competencies is not due to a lack of teacher motivation but rather to **insufficient training and an educational system that does not provide adequate conditions for intercultural practice**.

Comparison Between Peru and Ecuador

The analysis identified several similarities between both countries:

- Initial teacher training with a **predominantly theoretical approach**.
- **Insufficient or poorly contextualized continuous professional development**.
- A **gap between intercultural educational policies and classroom practice**.
- A **deficit in applied intercultural competencies** among teachers.

Relevant Differences:

Topic	Peru	Ecuador
Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)	Present, but not fully institutionalized; it varies by region.	A more established IBE system exists, although it faces several limitations.
Relationship with Communities	Greater institutional distance between schools and communities.	More experiences of community engagement, although still insufficient.
Teacher Training	Curricula include an intercultural approach, but with weak practical implementation.	A longer historical presence of intercultural education, yet similar shortcomings in teacher training remain.

Source: Prepared by the author

In both countries, interculturality continues to be more of a **normative ideal** than a consolidated practice. This systematic review compiles recent evidence (2018–2025) on pedagogical gaps in Peru and Ecuador, countries with different intercultural trajectories. It identifies key problems such as insufficient initial teacher training, the lack of continuous professional development, and the distance between educational policies and their real implementation. In addition, it offers a comparative perspective that allows the recognition of common patterns and national particularities, providing guidance for the design of policies and teacher education programs that are better aligned with the cultural realities of each context.

The results highlight the need for a **profound transformation in the way interculturality is understood and taught in teacher education**. It is necessary to move beyond traditional academic approaches and integrate learning experiences in culturally diverse territories, strengthen context-based training models, and promote dialogue between academic knowledge and community knowledge. The importance of ensuring resources and continuous support is also emphasized; otherwise, educational gaps in Peru and Ecuador will continue to hinder the development of truly inclusive education.

Study Limitations

This review presents several limitations that should be acknowledged:

Limited geographic and thematic scope.

The focus was restricted to public schools in Peru and Ecuador and to studies directly addressing pedagogical gaps in teacher training for intercultural inclusion. Relevant research that addresses the topic indirectly (for example, studies on citizenship, coexistence, or curriculum with a strong intercultural component) may have been excluded.

Temporal restriction (2018–2025).

Although this timeframe allowed for an updated perspective, earlier studies that could provide a broader historical understanding of intercultural education and teacher training in both countries were excluded.

Publication and access bias.

The review primarily included articles published in indexed scientific journals and open-access documents. Theses, technical reports, and other forms of gray literature with valuable findings may not have been retrieved or did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Methodological heterogeneity.

The selected studies used qualitative designs with different theoretical approaches and instruments. This heterogeneity made quantitative synthesis difficult and required prioritizing a narrative synthesis, consistent with PRISMA 2020 recommendations for reviews integrating diverse results.

Dependence on the quality of the included studies.

Although methodological quality criteria were applied, the conclusions of this review are conditioned by the rigor and limitations of the original studies (sample size, regional scope, depth of analysis, etc.).

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice
Based on the findings and the identified limitations, several important implications emerge:

For Initial Teacher Education

- Incorporate modules and professional practice experiences in **concrete intercultural contexts** (rural, indigenous, and urban areas with high diversity), with reflective and supervised support.
- Review teacher education curricula to ensure that **interculturality becomes a transversal axis** rather than an isolated course.

For Continuing Professional Development

- Design teacher training programs in **interculturality and intercultural bilingual education** that are sustained, context-based, and aligned with the needs of each territory.
- Strengthen mentorship programs, pedagogical support mechanisms, and **professional learning communities with an intercultural focus**.

For Public Policy

- Ensure that intercultural education policies are accompanied by **adequate resources, teaching materials, institutional time, and teacher support mechanisms**.
- Align national and regional teacher training strategies with **specific goals related to intercultural inclusion**, in accordance with regional and international agendas on teacher development.

CONCLUSIONS

The systematic review shows that, despite normative advances in intercultural education in Peru and Ecuador, **structural gaps persist that hinder its effective implementation in classrooms**. Initial teacher education continues to address interculturality in a **theoretical and fragmented manner**, without promoting real experiences in diverse cultural contexts or developing applied competencies. This gap between conceptual knowledge and pedagogical practice produces professionals who understand diversity but lack the tools to manage it pedagogically.

Likewise, **continuous professional development and pedagogical support remain insufficient**, with short, poorly coordinated, and weakly contextualized initiatives. Although teacher training programs exist, their impact is limited due to the lack of follow-up, resources, and alignment with local needs. This is compounded by the distance between intercultural policies and everyday teaching practice: laws recognize diversity, but teachers lack the institutional conditions, materials, and technical guidance needed to translate these policies into concrete actions. As a result, what emerges is a form of **"declarative interculturality"** that is more symbolic than transformative.

Finally, the comparison between Peru and Ecuador reveals both **common patterns**—deficits in initial teacher education, weak continuous professional development, and gaps between discourse and practice—and **differences** related to the historical trajectory and level of institutionalization of intercultural bilingual education in each country. These findings highlight the need for **comprehensive, sustained, and context-based teacher training policies** that promote a genuine dialogue of knowledge and ensure educational inclusion, in line with international standards and the cultural realities of both contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that future research deepen **case studies of schools and teacher training programs** that have achieved significant progress in intercultural inclusion, in order to identify **good practices that can be transferred to other educational contexts**. Likewise, it is important to incorporate the **voices of students, families, and communities**, not only those of teachers and teacher educators, to broaden the understanding of how pedagogical gaps and intercultural experiences are lived and perceived within schools.

It is also suggested to explore **participatory and intercultural research methodologies** such as action research and collaborative research with Indigenous peoples and local communities that allow for the **co-construction of knowledge and training proposals**. Finally, developing **comparative studies that include other countries in the Andean and Latin American regions** would help situate the cases of Peru and Ecuador within a broader regional framework and contribute to strengthening the development of **truly intercultural educational systems**.

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