

INTERCULTURALITY AT UNIVERSITIES

INTERCULTURALITY AT SOME COLOMBIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This is a research about Colombian cultural diversity of ethnic groups and Afro-descendants in some universities, through research to virtual documents, magazines and newspapers issued by government agencies and some of the public and private university in the country. The result of the data found reflect the different activities in the university student community in which multiculturalism is experienced, in addition to the benefits granted by the government and few universities for educational development and growth of these ethnic communities especially African descent, indigenous or foreign.

Described what would be called some of the activities undertaken within the educational institutions to experience the culture, projects implemented by the Ministry Education and the importance that has come to generate the theme of multiculturalism and cultural experience, not only in the universities but also in society in general, everything beginning with education.

Key words: Interculturality, Ethnicity, Superior Education, Intercultural experience, culture.

Resumen

Esta es una investigación sobre la diversidad cultural colombiana de los grupos étnicos y los afrodescendientes en algunas universidades, a través de consultas a los textos virtuales, revistas y periódicos emitidos por agencias gubernamentales y algunos de la universidad pública y privada del país.

El resultado de los datos encontrados reflejan las diferentes actividades en la comunidad estudiantil universitaria en la que se experimenta la interculturalidad, además de los beneficios otorgados por el gobierno y pocas universidades para el desarrollo y crecimiento educativo de estas comunidades étnicas en especial afrodescendientes, indígenas o extranjeros.

Sé describen lo que se denominarían algunas de las actividades a realizar dentro de los planteles educativos para vivenciar la cultura, proyectos puestos en práctica por el ministerio de educación y la importancia que ha llegado a generar el tema de la interculturalidad y vivencia cultural, no solo en las universidades sino también en la sociedad en general, empezando todo por la educación.

Palabras clave: Interculturalidad, etnia, educación superior, experiencia intercultural, cultura.

INTRODUCTION

The present research is focused on the experience of indigenous and Afro-Colombian descendant's cultures in university scenarios that currently exist, in public and private universities, where the behavior of society is similar but not the same due to the presence of the Ministerio de Educación.

The main feature of these behaviors is based on the idea of preserving some of the languages, thoughts and practices of different cultures mentioned in order to provide a decent higher education to contribute to the educational growth of the younger generation within their tribes without losing its roots.

To analyze this issue has been evident in most universities a degree of acceptance and inclusion of the higher education system of peers, teachers and directives, this is a fundamental part of the university process of indigenous and African descent since this depends on continuity or drop out of the system.

The college dropout of them was quite something because of racial discrimination to which, however faced today and fortunately people are more open-minded and not only accepts but generate ideas and benefits for them.

These benefits are based on certain privileges for entering public universities by developing unique programs for them with applicability in their communities and integrating them in cultural activities and exchanges, both within and outside the country.

Research on this subject came up of cultural exchange and was done in the interest of deepening the experience of these cultures in a citadina society, because they were also interested in acquiring knowledge of us and further as the applicability of knowledge, the main reason for these people belonging to ethnic or Afro-Colombian groups to study and go to teach their people what they learned in college, then the idea of creating an indigenous university where teachers are the beneficiaries of educational aid provided in Ministerio de Educación through universities.

In researching the experience of different cultures in different Colombian universities, this was done through research procedures in the Ministerio de Educación ruled by the constitution of 1991 and the guidelines of public and private universities in Colombia.

In addition we are pleased with the progress of inclusion and acceptance that has taken the society over the years and the way in which people of cultures have excelled not only in their communities but in our society that is often too demanding for the level of life to which they have been accustomed, educational progress have all these cultures in the different scenarios is entirely admirable.

In the following research we will show the importance of higher education in the different ethnic groups and Colombian cultures, as well, we will describe methodologies and cultural survival strategies implemented by the government and some of the main public and private universities

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays in the XXI century , professional education is one of the most important aspects for Colombians, for this reason the government and private entities have contributed and helped to the members of different communities such as Afro-descendants, gypsies, and foreign people, to get access to high education; some decades ago ethnic groups and Afro-descendants were only considered slaves, they were using to work harder than other, but through the time have made some changes which seek improve the quality of life for these people, to be accepted and respected in our cultural environment and work under the same condition than all, but especially to improve their access to higher education, for this reason the government have supported to these communities, through inclusion governmental on the education and by the Mnisterio de Educación.

The access to people from different cultures in privates and publics universities is limited, with a certain amount of available quote and direct access for all the young people of these communities, who make part of Groups such as Afro-descendants, Gypsies and Rom the interculturalism continues they focus in benefit of culture, the inclusion and respect for the other one.

One of the most important public universities "Universidad Nacional de Colombia" in the country has a special program for Afro-Colombians, in which, it gives them the opportunity to access to Professional Programs with excellent quality standards and competitiveness, this

program is approximately 7 years running ;in this Way, youth of the most inhospitable zones of the Pacific region, they have the opportunity to grow intellectually, and acquire specific knowledge in other places outside of their city, for example in the main cities of the country such as Bogota, Medellin, Manizales, Palmira etc. Or sometimes they have the opportunity to make part of an exchange program and study in other country. On the other, hand at the private university (ECCI) grants discounts between 10- 15 % according to the study documentation; However, the interculturality in the public university have a better focus and best opportunities to enter to high education while in the private universities they just have a discount in the tuition and they lack of helpful projects from members of ethnics, but both of them allow the interaction and creation cultural bonds which help members from different cultures to the exchange an intercultural knowledge, depend on the environment university (private or public) for this reason our research is the answer to the question, "how interculturality is evident in some colombian universities ?.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part we going to show some of the methodologies and activities proposed by some of the public and private universities of the country, about the intercultural experience among foreign students, belonging to ethnic groups and students in general, and also present some of the ideas created by the national government and ministry of education, all with the purpose of responding to the question; How Interculturality is evident at some Colombian Universities?.

Interculturality at some Colombian Universities

Interculturalism in higher education is mainly focused on a number of philosophical axiological principles proposed modifying approaches to diversity in different dimensions of social relationships, which in one way or another been affected by the historical conditions and context that determine structural inequalities, interests and sharply polarizing dividing sectors within it, according to Universidad Distrital.

The purpose of this intercultural university is to exploit the differences and complement the knowledge built and shared with others (community, region, organization, nation and world). Thus, differences should be seen as a quality that involves understanding and mutual respect among different cultures; as a relation of exchange of knowledge and values equal, offering a contribution to knowledge development, and relations that are established between the different cultures, in different circumstances.

With this approach institutions that provide this interculturality contribute to the recovery and dissemination of diverse cultural expressions and establish close ties of direct communication between the cultures of the modern world; doing easy that indigenous peoples make relationship and contribution to knowledge and development proposals appropriate to their cultures, traditions, expectations and interests of the country with other cultures, in their country and other countries around the world.

According to Educational projects offering at the country's universities must aim, as mentioned by Universidad Intercultural, the following aspects:

- Recover, reassess and revitalize languages, cultures, knowledge and experiences of indigenous communities.
- Guide the professional training of students to meaningful learning experiences in their context.
- Take action to provide a service to the communities so that there is communication and interaction to encourage their development.

For this reason Paulo Freire says that since education it is possible face exclusive cultural expressions, it can claim the full rights of all people, groups and individuals to the diversity.

We can say that practice interculturality is live it in all aspects of those we can participate in formal and informal, public or private way, and from all possible scenarios, seeking to achieve equal relation and exchange among culturally different and unequal communities in economic and political power. Making it difficult to achieve balanced relations for evaluating, each as a person and as a culture, knowledge, visions of life, the contributions they have made to the history, common purposes that need to address the problems of the country and humanity.

If public or private policies, in special education, they focus on the search of forming an educated population on respect and recognition of their culture, they will have a major impact on the approach to a more just, free and democratic society, be able to share and learn new dialects, myths and traditions coming from ethnic groups and Afro-Colombian groups that are part of our country and who are currently exercising their right to higher education

Ethnic and Afro-descendent Groups

As human beings we all have inviolable rights regardless of race, ethnicity or social group we belong to, must be respected by all without suffering from any form of discrimination; education is one of these fundamental rights that today, members of different ethnic groups and Afro-descendants are accessing.

As Universidad de Antioquia mentioned, and based on the “Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991 & Ley 70, 1993”, which promulgated the multiethnic and multicultural character of the nation; it implies the design and adoption of new legal frameworks to overcome discrimination human groups of Afro- descendant was recognized.

These are some of the universities that have included academic programs or special scholarships for accessing to higher education of people belonging to different ethnic groups:

- The Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana as Universidad Nacional and others ,created a program to benefit young indigenous communities and Afro-descendent groups entitled “BECAS ETNIAS” where young people have the opportunity if they have good academic performance and who belong to ethnic minorities existing in the country.

- The Universidad Nacional de Colombia has "special admissions program" [PAES] created by Decision No. 022 of 1986, and it was further that a simple admission , also providing the opportunity to dorm, loans scholarships and programs for monitoring and evaluating, all seeking greater permanence and academic success. Since the program has achieved to join the indigenous with other students and from there to raise academic and cultural proposals to the university, as the opening of lectures, conducting academic and cultural events on special dates, according to Mayorga, (2009, 17). Although the program and the university have not been focus on the real and effective recognition of the ethnic and cultural diversity to concentrate its efforts they deserve appreciation for having helped the Academic Success of many professionals

indigenous. It is worth mentioning that at the present the university is reducing the program and just focus on admission of students, instead of strengthening. “La universidad pública y la diversidad étnica y cultural”, according to Mayorga, (2009, 18).

- The University of Antioquia was the pioneer in creating special admissions program for indigenous high school and I was made in 1983 by the Supreme Decision No. 013. Equally, by Academic Agreement No. 334 of 2008, the indigenous is recognized as the mother language, in order to comply with the requirement of reading skills in a foreign language, considering the Spanish as a foreign language. This university also has been a pioneer in opening to a concerted university career with the indigenous communities of Antioquia; this is about “Bachelor of pedagogy of Mother Earth”. It has been approved by the university and certified by the MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional) it is an innovative proposal, which promises good results, we hope this will help to build a more democratic, participatory and pluralistic society. Also, that they can continue to be opening spaces within these institutions, so far closed to the recognition and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity of our country; is totally different the "folklore" of ethnic and cultural diversity, which is in all areas of our society, it is explained by La Universidad Pública y la Diversidad Étnica y Cultural (225).

- Additionally Bolaños (2009), say that it is worth nothing the Indigenous University, created in response to the need to train professionals committed to their communities from an intercultural approach and demands of indigenous peoples, factors that conventional university has not been implemented. Based on this, it has created the Intercultural Indigenous University, which is concerned with the production, empowerment, education, conservation and transmission of knowledge and wisdom, and where it does not matter the evaluation. Also it is interested in compression of indigenous and national reality and responds to their needs. Even agrees to contribute to creating a more just and equitable society, strengthening the respect for life and nature (Mother Earth) as a guidance method.

Moreover it is noteworthy that earlier in Colombia people from these ethnic groups were seen in the painful necessity of seeking certification with the Ministry of Interior, with which they were officially recognized as members of these communities and should be presented to the universities get special discounts on their tuition; now, thanks to the policies Anti-paperwork of the government, the Ministerio del Interior eliminated this certification, achieving that the

process of university entrance be faster and less cumbersome for them. Based on El Espectador (2012) in national news.

Nowadays, intercultural education proposals launched in Latin America, particularly in Colombia with the UAI (Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural) are labeled as poor. The concept of quality is taken, as understood by the MEN (Ministerio de Educación), considering the quality or "academic excellence as repetition of certain established models"; moreover, according to Mato (2007, 66), is possible find different opinions that visualize quality "beginning to thinking in how to assess, obtain benefits and respond to the peculiarities of context" This latter view corresponds to what is now known as "calidad con pertenencia" this, must be closely linked to the relevance and is measured with the ability to leverage a (social, cultural, economic, political) space and time, and respond to them appropriately.

Foreign Community

Colombia, considered a country of varied landscapes and cultural diversity, nowadays seeks to become not just a tourist destination but also academic quality destination for the whole foreign community; with the help of Ministerio de Educación and Ministerio del Exterior, the proposal of higher education for foreigners is created, called "academic missions for the Promotion of Colombian Higher Education (Maps)". This proposal consists in to internationalize the university programs of the country, especially postgraduate; and strengthen the educational and cultural exchange. There are approximately 17 universities that are part of this project which, with the slogan "Colombia Challenge your Knowledge" allow the foreign student is it necessary study in institutions of different regions in the country, and incidentally know the culture and gastronomy of the region in which she is.

Another way to generate cultural exchanges or interculturalization between our ethnic groups and the general community with foreigners, it is through the scholarship program offered by several universities, allowing cultural exchange, development of new knowledge, the opportunity to learn new dialects and customs, build new friendships and intercultural experience for us and for them. Universities such as the University of Medellin, Universidad Pontificia Javeriana and Universidad Nacional, have this type of scholarships and provide students the opportunity to experience new cultural experiences, being partakers of such programs supervised

and granted not only by universities but also by the National Government and the Ministry of Education.

Now we will mention some of the benefit programs provided by the government and universities for Afro-descendants, ethnic groups and foreigners, also different activities that generate interaction and cultural experience between people from different cultures.

INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE AT UNIVERSITIES

Public Universities

Through this research, we have demonstrated the great progress that have been indigenous and African descent during the last decades in Colombia and throughout Latin America, now they have been heard, they have managed to improve their lifestyle, mainly in the educational field, because to the Ministerio de Educación has driven growth and cultural development of these communities, implementing scholarship, programs for the inclusion of these ethnic groups and Afro-Colombian in higher education system where they have the possibility of integration with people of all regions of Colombia and also with foreigners.

Currently we can see that not only the government is interested in the ethnic, afro-descendants and foreign communities in the country and their relation with national and foreign society, also, public universities have various programs that promote interculturalization or cultural exchange in educational establishments, some of the universities and projects that can be mentioned are the following:

- Students of the Universidad Francisco Jose de Caldas, presented a project called "Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural por Medio de PEN PAL", in which students, using the Pen Pal Web 2.0 tool and asynchronously through writing a foreign language, have contact with people from different places of the world; this in order to promote intercultural communicative competence.

- The Universidad Francisco Jose de Caldas and its cultural development program seeks to establish a rapprochement between universities, related institutions and the local society, regional, national and international, in order to strengthen the cultural and artistic development

through implementation of information workshops and non-formal education as dance, storytelling, literary appreciation and support for cultural and academic events university.

-The Universidad Nacional de Colombia in their welfare policies institutional promotes recreational and cultural activities for their new and old students, in which samples cultural and sports lead to cultural integration of the institution, additionally, incorporated in one of its sports teams (Team Taekwondo), Koreans volunteers as part of the objective of promoting cultural exchange and strengthening inter-institutional relations, "allowing increase the students' knowledge of the Asian country and vice versa," explained Oscar Váquiro, an official of the Academic Board of the institution.

These and other projects implemented in different public universities in Colombia, contributing their bit in building a more educated society, by means of coexistence between students with common people in society, Ethnic and Afro-descendant of our nation and even foreign, exchanging cultural knowledge as new dialects, beliefs, myths and traditions, strengthening the cultural development and intercultural growth in the country.

Private Universities

Equality is one of the strongest premises of interculturality, the state has focused on education to develop guidelines aimed at all types of universities and institutes of higher education, cultural exchange that fortunate indigenous or Afro-Colombian ethnic groups have shown in different universities in the country is a unique and incomparable experience for them and their communities, not only the knowledge of a race but the lifestyle, the exchange helps strengthen your roots.

Private universities, interculturalism and cultural experience are boom topics currently promoting the creation of educational establishment for the development of cultural integration at institutions of higher education nowadays, universities have become promoters and disseminators of cultural activity, not only in infrastructure but also in the country in general By creating cultural events such as concerts, conferences and exhibitions, private universities spread the importance of knowledge national and international of cultures and ethnicities, spreading intercultural interest beyond our borders.

Universities as Universidad del Rosario, Externado and Jorge Tadeo Lozano, are some of which offer cultural exchange programs and search to relive the cultural spirit of the city, on the other hand, as a form of interaction between students provide educational workshops, conducted cultural events, provide an opportunity for students to grow in their careers through different media handled as institutional stations, TV channels or university magazines, all becoming cultural propagation channels.

By creating events such as those mentioned above, the universities become in promoters and managers of culture in the country, mainly in their university facilities creating cultural awareness among students, since one must understand that it is not about multiculturalism but, to evaluate and accept others regardless of their social status, human condition or ethnic group to which they belongs, it is coexistence and acquisition of knowledge, to create intercultural environments through music, dance and all these folk groups and workshops offered by Student Wellness area, setting aside the rejection or discrimination.

In conclusion, public and private universities in the country are the pioneers in promoting development and cultural growth inside and outside of their campuses, by creating cultural spaces, cultural exchange programs with other countries, the development of recreational activities and other tools of integration which encourage institutional coexistence among Afro-Colombian communities, ethnic groups and other foreign students. In addition, the contribution of the Ministerio de Educaciòn and the benefits granted to these communities contribute to strengthening the national cultural development and social construction, making possible the coexistence and respect between people and making of Citizen improve university culture, the construction of national identity and therefore to improve the quality of life and fellowship of these groups in Colombian society today.

CONCLUSIONS

After relevant research concerning how experience interculturality in some public and private universities in Colombia is, we can conclude that:

The Government, the Ministerio de Educación and also some Colombian universities seek to rescue and disseminate diverse cultural expressions of the country by creating helpful projects to improve the educational quality of Afro-descendants people, foreigners or members of ethnic groups in different cultures.

Multiculturalism has become an issue of fundamental study in some public and private universities of Colombia, leading to the creation of many activities in which members of different cultures can transmit and exchange knowledge between them and society.

In the last years the community African descendants and ethnic groups in Colombia have achieved big changes, mainly in the educational area, due to most of them had limited access to higher education, but today we show acceptance, inclusion and respect to them.

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