



## Recognition of otherness from an intercultural perspective: a strategic perspective from university educational environments.

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### Abstract

Contemporary high education faces the urgent challenge to articulate quality, relevance, equity and the recognition of diversity within increasingly multicultural scenarios. This article derived from the thesis: "Intercultural Education from the curricular strengthening from high education", was developed from an empirical approach at Universidad de la Costa, in Barranquilla Colombia. It comes from the recognition of cultural diversity as a structuring value in educational environments. Its main purpose is to characterize the concept of the intercultural education, assumed by the socio-educational actors at this institution for the recognition of otherness, from a pluralistic and dialogical perspective. This research is developed from a recursive and intersubjective reality to interpret the language of isomorphism with an introspective and experiential approach within a socio-critical paradigm, applying the socio-praxis method supported by the tradition of action research (AR), micro ethnographies were used along with interviews structured for key subjects and a comparison with theoretical frameworks. As a result, the socio-educational actors identify the need to recognize the otherness as foundation of social justice in educational contexts, which drives the construction of global citizenship and epistemic justice.

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## Introduction

Humanity is currently going through a period of dizzying transformations that configure new ways of being, inhabiting, as well as living together in a globalized, interconnected and profoundly unequal world. The crisis of contemporary civilization, marked by geopolitical tensions, forced displacement, social fragmentation, and even growing cultural heterogeneity, has highlighted the urgency of rethinking the pillars of education, which, according to (Salazar & Bonilla, 2022), are a tool for cohesion, recognition, and social justice. In this context, higher education acquires a leading role, not only as a reproducer of knowledge, but as they consider (Paredes & Valencia, 2023), a political, ethical and epistemic space that must contribute to the transformation of the conditions of exclusion, marginalization and silencing of subaltern voices, that is, in the words of (García Torres, 2023) & It must be a space where new forms of relationship are fostered between people with differentiated characteristics, interests and needs, making the intercultural not only a mediator in the relationship process, but also retakes the epistemological dimension of the participants. ( Matarranz & Aguado Odine , 2025)

This article is part of that concern. It arises as a result of a doctoral research, whose general purpose is aimed at building a self-regulated system of intercultural education based on curricular management, for the strengthening of quality in higher education. From this purpose, the educational researcher initially proposes to characterize the perspective of intercultural education assumed by the senior management of the Universidad de la Costa for the recognition of otherness, which implies inquiring about the perceptions that socio-educational actors have to recognize the multiple worldviews, narratives and cultural practices of minority populations (Indigenous, Afro-descendants, Roma, Raizal), which according to (González-Moreno, 2020) coexist in training spaces.

The initial characterization with the actors allows us to understand the position of senior management with respect to diversity from an ethnic and intercultural approach, which is not a problem to be solved, but an ontological condition of the human being that enhances by transforming university educational praxis from the social context (Velásquez & Mendoza, 2021), for inclusion as well as the recognition of otherness that has remained invisible. from their ancestral, popular and non-Western knowledge (UNESCO, 2021; Torres Carrillo, 2022).

From this perspective, the concept of *otherness* occupies a central place. Far from conceiving the other as a passive or deficient subject, he is assumed as the bearer of knowledge, practices and memories that enrich the educational horizon and even challenge normalizing discourses. Based on the ethical thought of (Levinas, 1961), reinterpreted from education by authors such as (Luna & Ramos, 2020), the face of the other radically questions the self; not as an object of understanding, but as a subject of relationship. In this order of ideas, recognizing otherness implies, in this sense, moving from a logic of assimilative inclusion to a logic of symmetrical, horizontal as well as transformative intercultural dialogue, which must be based according to (Vallejo, 2023), from respect for cultural patterns, customs, traditions in general and cultural rights, which are concretized in a basic and fundamental right for minority populations, called by its content and scope the fundamental right of cultural identity.

## Methodology.

In the aforementioned methodological route, it begins with a phase called Empirical: of a Descriptive-analytical nature, which according to , corresponds to the moment of action and the obtaining of data directly related to the reality that is to be transformed, it begins with the active and even deliberate participation of educational actors and not only with external observation. In the same way, for this first round, the collective memory, local knowledge as well as the own cultural practices are also recognized, from which the data collection is made. In this sense, the author insists that valid knowledge is not born exclusively from academia, but also resides in communities. This stage makes it possible to make visible the knowledge silenced by epistemic colonization. ( Balcazar , 2003) (Fals Borda, 1992)

With this first phase, an approach to reality is made, as well as seeking to obtain a descriptive-analytical perspective of the object of study from the analysis of the ethnographic methodology, in this phase the techniques implemented are micro-ethnographic interviews and as an instrument the interview script built from a matrix of questions and the matrix of inter-theoretical relationships is used. product of the systematic review of documents. Likewise, the qualitative or categorical analysis of the data generated is carried out from the intersubjective point of view from the systematization of the verbatim by the educational researcher, as well as the categorization with the Atlas Ti software (1989), which provides traceability and systematization to the analysis of the discourses, favoring their validity through rigorous coding, emergent categorization and the possibility of triangulation between sources. As he points out, these technological

tools reinforce the interpretative quality in participatory research processes. (Martinez Miguélez , 2006)

For the treatment of the information, the approach proposed by , who consider that, from the information collected through the interviews, the application of processes of reduction, categorization, as well as the structuring of data is facilitated. These authors understand qualitative analysis as a dialectical, reflexive, and constructive procedure, in which the researcher not only organizes the information, but also produces meaning from and with the data. The intersubjective reduction of data implied a first purification of the raw material, selecting those semantic units of relevant meaning for the research objective. Subsequently, the structuring was carried out through a categorical coding system, which allowed the identification of patterns, regularities and tensions within the participants' discourse. ( Yuni & Urbano, 2006)

This process was not limited to a superficial description, but, following the vision of the Spaniards, a deep, situated and contextualized understanding of the phenomena was sought, respecting the complexity of the voices, as well as the experiences of the social actors. In this sense, qualitative analysis is conceived as an interpretative process that is also ethical, coherent with the critical and participatory perspective adopted in this research. In this order of ideas, the results are critically contrasted with previous studies, as well as the input theories, based on the review of existing documents in the institution such as the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), as well as the institutional models, with which a contextual approach is made and information of interest to the social researcher is collected. ( Yuni & Urbano, 2006)

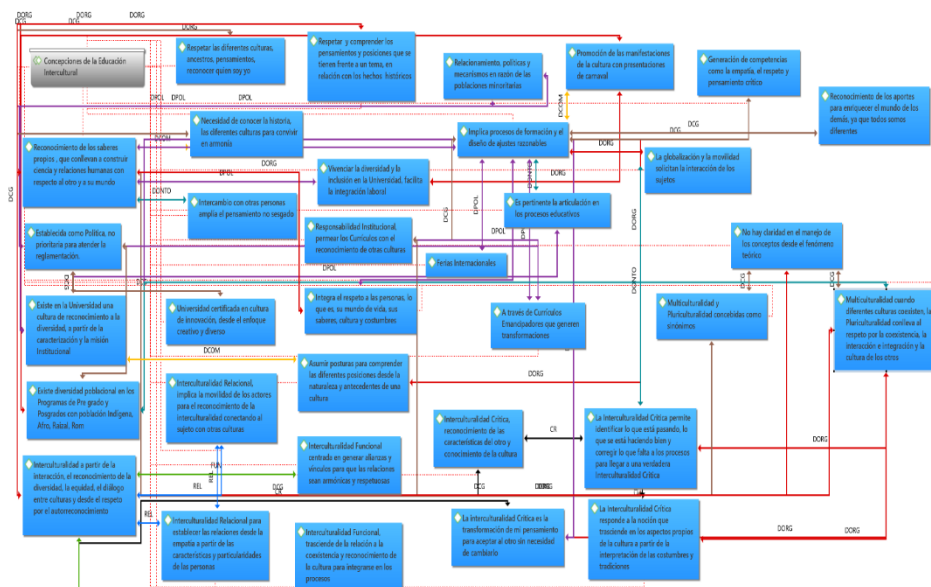
The procedure developed allows the researcher a comprehensive approach to the real context investigated, facilitating the characterization of the institutional environment and the awareness of the social actors involved. In this framework, the characteristics that these actors have around intercultural education are addressed in a reflexive way, for the recognition of otherness within the empirical context of the Universidad de la Costa. This approach was fundamental to identify the perceptions, tensions and gaps existing in the field, which makes it possible to critically read the deficit situation that affects the development of intercultural practices in the university environment.

**Results: Main findings of the review.**

The findings of the results, based on the analysis of the key subjects (the senior management of the Universidad de la Costa), account for the implications of the collective imaginary on intercultural education for the recognition of otherness. The information obtained from the interviews of this group initially yielded 290 codes with 3 categories, of which, for the purposes of the established purpose, one (1) is described in this article:



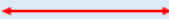



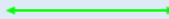

**Category 1. Conceptions of Intercultural Education:** refers to the perceptions that actors have about institutional policies, as well as the recognition of otherness based on ethnic diversity within the University from an innovative, intercultural approach and respect for student diversity. This network yielded 35 related codes according to the following legend:

**FIGURE 1. CATEGORY 1 LEGEND. CONCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURALITY. IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE (SPANISH)**



**FIGURE 2 . CATEGORY 1. CONCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION. IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE (SPANISH)**

Leyenda Categoría 1. Concepciones de la Interculturalidad

Relación	Símbolo
Dimensión Cognitiva: Considera el reconocimiento e identidad cultural en la raza, etnia y etnicidad.	
Dimensión Comunicativa: Considera la historicidad y el patrimonio oral .	
Dimensión Organizacional: Se refiere al sistema de valores, visión del mundo y las representaciones sociales. Así mismo, considera la participación, desigualdad e igualdad. Colonialismo y secuelas de la esclavitud.	
Dimensión Política: Considera las políticas dirigidas a los grupos minoritarios o migrantes. Así como también a las políticas de inclusión y reconocimiento de valores y estilos de vida.	
Dimensión Ontológica: Se refiere al carácter existencial y convivencia entre personas. El diálogo y competencias interculturales.	
Interculturalidad Relacional	
Interculturalidad Funcional	
Interculturalidad Crítica	

**TABLE 1. CULTURE OF RECOGNITION TOWARDS CULTURAL DIVERSITY.**

Table. CONCEP-EDU-INT	
Thematic axis: Conceptions of Intercultural Education.	
<b>Sub-theme:</b> Culture of Recognition towards cultural diversity.	<b>Concepts:</b> Student care programs for minority populations. Institutional accountability to minority populations. University Policy for inclusion and respect for diversity.
MANIFESTATIONS	
<b>Event:</b> Formal conversation. <b>Technique:</b> In-depth interview. <b>Instrument:</b> Interview script to be applied in person or by Teams mediation.	<b>Place:</b> Teams virtual space. <b>Informants:</b> VIC-AC-01, VIC-B-02 DIR-CED-03, DIR-CED-04, DIR-DOC-05, DIR-EM-06, DIR-LEBP-07
VIC-AC-01: 23,1:6. "Yes... I think that yes, there is always respect from our, from our mission, right? When we talk about the principles of freedom, of thought, pluralism..." VIC-B-02: 12, 2:1. "Look, for us it is very important because we have a specific policy of the PEI that is oriented to that recognition of diversity. Let's also say in terms of the policy guidelines for inclusive higher education." DIR-CED-04:18, 4:6 "totally relevant, necessary to include everything that has to do with intercultural competences in educational processes." DIR-DOC-05. 8:5:1 "The fundamental importance is respect for the person and for what he is and his culture..."	

**TABLE 2. PROMOTION OF CULTURES (MULTI/PLURICULTURALITY).**

Table. CONCEP-EDU-INT	
Thematic axis: Conceptions of Intercultural Education.	
<b>Sub-theme:</b> Promotion of cultures (multi/pluriculturality)	<b>Concept:</b> Recognition of the historicity of each ethnic group. Multiculturalism and coexistence. Diversity.
MANIFESTATIONS	
<b>Event:</b> Formal conversation. <b>Technique:</b> In-depth interview. <b>Instrument:</b> Interview script to be applied in person or by Teams mediation.	<b>Place:</b> Teams virtual space. <b>Informants:</b> VIC-AC-01, VIC-B-02 DIR-CED-03, DIR-CED-04, DIR-DOC-05, DIR-EM-06, DIR-LEBP-07

VIC-B-02. 12.2:1 "Look, for us it is very important because we have a specific policy of the PEI that is aimed at this recognition of diversity. Let's also say in terms of the policy guidelines for inclusive higher education."

DIR-CED-03. 12. 3:3 "From well-being, programs are generated where students have the opportunity to recognize from the manifestations..."

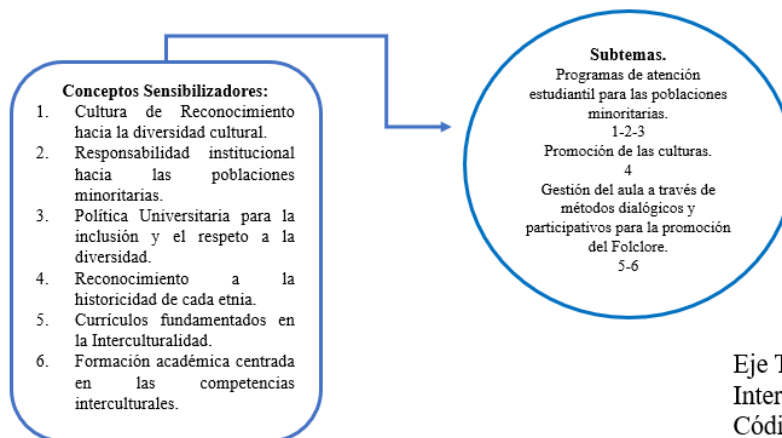
DIR-DOC-05. 8. 5:1 "The fundamental importance is respect for the person and for what he is and his culture..."

VIC-B-02. 12.2:3 "We are diverse in ourselves, we have students from all over the region, we have students from all municipalities, and that means that in the university there is an inclusive culture and a diverse culture..."

DIR. CED-03. 35. 3:12 "Multiculturalism, let's say that it is very much associated with the coincidence, not only of 2,3,4, but of diversity and culture, which may be coexisting in the same scenario..."

**FIGURE 3.** THEMATIC AXIS. CONCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION. IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE (SPANISH)

Eje Temático: Concepciones de la Educación Intercultural.



Eje Temático: Concepciones de la Educación Intercultural.  
Código: CONCEP-EDU-INT

## Discussion.

The educational actors manifest from the organizational dimension the existence of indigenous, Afro, Raizal and Room populations in both undergraduate and graduate students, emphasizing the recognition of their own knowledge from respect, as well as harmonious human relations; however, from institutional policies it is necessary to consider relevant attention programs to promote university diversity and inclusion. On the other hand, from the political dimension, they express the need to know the historicity, traditions of the various ethnic groups through experiential activities that promote the cultural manifestations of the region that generate competencies beyond the disciplinary ones such as empathy, respect, even critical thinking, through the realization of national fairs and cultural activities within the university.

For this reason, they consider relevant the transformation of the context from the political and ontological dimension towards emancipation, where intercultural education facilitates coexistence from respect as well as the recognition of the other. In this sense, it is necessary to consider intercultural education from three aspects: functional conceived as a self-organized system where diverse cultures coexist; relational, in which people can relate to each other from respect and recognition of the other, including their historicity, as well as critical that considers not only multiple cultures, but also the understanding of their lifestyles or ways of life that are relevant aspects for the inclusion of minority groups that live within the institution, which according to (Walsh, 2009; Quezada-Carrasco, 2023; Tubino, 2022), is a transformative approach that transcends mere cultural coexistence and is oriented towards social justice, epistemic equity, and the emancipation of subalternized knowledge.

Based on the above, the category can be conceptualized through the subtopics and concepts as follows:

**Thematic axis: Conceptions of Intercultural Education:** it is a construct that is conceived as a process of permanent and inclusive formation, characterized by a horizontal, open, reciprocal and self-critical dialogue. Its objective is to recognize cultural diversity in all dimensions of the education system,

ensuring the right of the entire population to quality education. This is achieved through the articulation of universal, national, regional, and local knowledge within a framework of respect and equity. In this way, students develop the knowledge, attitudes, competencies, as well as cultural skills necessary for their professional performance in intercultural contexts, promoting the socio-labor integration of cultural minorities.

According to the above, intercultural education contributes to a respectful, healthy and peaceful coexistence, promoting a stable as well as lasting peace, from which solidarity is demonstrated with the various ethnic, social, cultural, religious and other groups. From this conceptualization emerges the following sub-theme and concepts:

The conception of Intercultural Education considers the **culture of Recognition towards the diversity of the ethnic groups present in the Colombian region from institutional responsibility, programs of attention to minorities and institutional policies**: From this perspective, the foundations of which it includes in addition to critically problematize the sociocultural and political experiences linked to the exclusion of sectors of society, since within the university, cultural inclusion policies are addressed from the aspect of financing through student scholarships. ( Honneth , 1997)

However, intercultural education in educational policy is a more complex aspect, so considering the foundations of those ( Pretceille , 2001) ( Cleminson & Gordó López, 2002) who recognize that ethnic and cultural diversity in a geographical space occurs in conditions of equality, without any point of view predominating over the others. In addition, this conception implies the coexistence of diverse cultures that establish interpersonal relationships, so living together facilitates exchange and sharing between members of different ethnicities and social groups.

On the other hand, **another sub-theme and concepts emerge such as the Promotion of Multi/Pluriculturalities cultures**: it is defined as the recognition of the historicity of each ethnic group from the position of those who emphasize that recognizing a culture is not simply a set of customs or traditions, but an integrated and functional system that allows human beings to satisfy their basic needs and adapt to their environment. (Malinowski, 1931)

At the same time, multiculturalism is defined from the coexistence of diverse cultures in a geographical space that functions as an integrated system where inclusion, respect for traditions, ways of life, manifestations and interpersonal relationships prevail. This can be evidenced in the theory of considering culture as the set of creations of a social group that are represented or expressed in a symbolic way. In this case, it refers to the fairs or cultural activities that are practiced in the various programs of the university to promote intercultural education and respect for diversity. (Geertz, 2001),

## Conclusions.

The recognition of otherness from an intercultural approach is configured as the articulating axis of the transformation of education in the present century, understanding that this is not assumed from assimilative inclusion, but from an ethic of reciprocity and horizontality. Alterity is in this sense according to (Levinas, 1961; Honneth, 2007; Fernández-Morales, 2023) is the key to reconfiguring power relations and modes of knowledge production.

In this sense, interculturality cannot be reduced to a pedagogical strategy or an inclusive policy, but constitutes an ethical-political horizon that challenges the entire educational structure. As he points out (López, 2022), "interculturality is not an add-on, but a starting point that redefines the curriculum, epistemologies, and power relations in school." Likewise, authors such as (Candau, 2020 and Mato, 2023) have stressed that this approach requires a radical transformation of the regulatory frameworks that shape educational institutions. From this perspective, the research reaffirms that intercultural education should not be limited to celebrating diversity, but to recognize it as a disruptive power capable of transforming hegemonic knowledge and promoting a profound reconfiguration of the educational ethos. As they argue (Bonilla & Salazar, 2023), it is a 'pedagogy of recognition', a pedagogy that identifies otherness from its essence, from its worldview, which turns difference into a foundational category of learning and justice.

This perspective is in line with the proposals of (Dietz, 2020), who highlights interculturality as a tool for the decolonization of knowledge, which aims to dismantle the structures of knowledge imposed by Eurocentric, patriarchal, and colonial logic, which have historically silenced, marginalized, or subalternized other ways of producing and validating knowledge. Its central purpose is to revalue ancestral, popular, community and non-Western knowledge, recognizing them as equally legitimate in the construction of scientific, educational and cultural knowledge.

In this sense, authors such as (De Sousa Santos, 2010, 2021) propose the idea of an *ecology of knowledge*, where different epistemic systems coexist without one seeking to hegemonize the other. On the other hand,

(Walsh, 2009) affirms that decolonization is not only a theoretical task, but also a pedagogical, political, and spiritual one, which implies rethinking educational contexts from the formative processes and power structures within the educational field, where senior management has a preponderant role, from a critical and contextualized perspective.

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