

Comments by Carlos de la Torre

My comments of the document are based on a research on racial discrimination in the Ecuadorian education system which studied urban and rural, and Spanish-speaking and indigenous institutions. I will focus on Afro-descendants and indigenous experiences. Just as other nations in the Americas, Afro-descendant children and adolescents, who account 5 per cent of the population, are categorised as violent. This stigma is reflected in the poor grades they receive, and which sometimes is a cause of expulsion of schools and colleges and that they cannot access to another institution. A first recommendation is recommending parents of afro-descendant families supervising discriminatory practices in education institutions along with organisations. It is important to incorporate organisations in section V of this document in order that these can watch for a learning space without prejudices because sometimes common people have difficulties to recognise racism in a system of power.

Since the late 1980s, indigenous Ecuadorian organisations have controlled the bilingual intercultural education. The bilingual intercultural education was considered as an alternative for indigenous children to have educative experiences free of racism. It was designed as a project to incentivise the re-emergence of indigenous languages and cultures which represent between the 7 and 20 per cent of the population. Our ethnographic work in bilingual schools presented a complex landscape. On the one hand, the bilingual education has incorporated a population located in spaces where there was not education. Besides and overall, this has been a source of ethnic pride in racist society. However, the bilingual education presents a set of issues. To start, most of the leaders of the indigenous movements do not send their children to intercultural bilingual schools. Middle-class indigenous families send their children neither, thus this schools are for people who live in poverty who do not have the resources to send their children to other institutions. The common people, just as those in other Andean countries, are against teaching indigenous languages and they prefer acquiring and learning the language and culture of the dominant culture or English. The lessons are not given in indigenous languages. The teachers do not use available bilingual texts. In many cases, non-indigenous professors taught these courses without having received any training. Thus, neither the indigenous languages nor the culture has re-emerged as it was expected.

This situation is explained, in the one side, for a lack of a budget for bilingual education, low wages and a lack of recognition of indigenous teachers who earned less than other professors, and the lack of proper training in pedagogic skills. However, the problem is even more acute. The bilingual education has been part of a unidirectional strategy to integrate indigenous people with the *mestizo* society. It has been aimed that indigenous people keep their language and culture but not that the indigenous languages be recognised by the *mestizo* and white population. The bilingual education has been a paternalist and racist society for the indigenous which considers indigenous languages as part of the folklore, or a stigma of inferiority. If the indigenous languages are not valued by incorporating them into school's content they will continue to be undervalued. Hence, I agree with the right of indigenous people to control their

education in their own language. Besides, in the last paragraph of the document, it must not be asked only that the dominant population have the opportunity to learn an indigenous language but that this is part of all school's educative plans. Otherwise, the bilingual education could become into a segregation system with an inferior quality against any principle of equality and non-discrimination in which this document is based on. If the indigenous languages are part of all schools, societies could be democratised by not only recognising the indigenous culture, but also, by expanding the job opportunities for indigenous people as professors in non-bilingual schools.

Lastly, in addition of incorporating the history and culture of indigenous and afro-descending people in educational plans and ending racists portrayals of them in educational texts, non-white students studying in the best and predominantly white schools must be incentivised. The Ecuadorian education system, just as any other Latin American country, is highly segregated and middle- and upper-class children rarely have any social contact in equality with afro-descending and indigenous people. It could be incentivised that private schools grant scholarships and implement positive discrimination measures in their education system. I believe that the issue of affirmative action must be emphasised in this document. For example, to say in page two, second to last paragraph: "such measures are mandatory in racially and ethnically segregated systems".