



ROLE OF COLOMBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN PEACEBUILDING¹

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Abstract: This is a reflection that attempts to analyze the role of universities in Colombia during the peacebuilding process. It is necessary to state out the relevant practices that the educational community has been used to empower education during war times. Moreover, it is critical to understand several facts that Colombian higher education has faced during the conflict and the post-conflict. The circumstances that the education in Colombian has been exposed to is just a sign that interventions and improvements are necessary to achieve a sustainable peace were minorities, students who have been victims of the conflict, and individuals that need support through education opportunities need to be a priority. It is important to know how instructional practices have become key tools that contribute to peacebuilding by the teaching of moral values, principles, concepts about the importance of the family, knowledge about good aspects of citizenship, and culture, and leadership strategies which enhance learners' attitudes towards becoming citizens able to build a strong society that guarantees a positive future to its generations. This article shows that peace education is an essential element in achieving a sustainable peace around Colombia, where thousands of learners have been affected by the war that has frustrated their dreams and has hypnotized their hopes of living in a secure country where the possibilities to achieve a successful future turn each time further. This reflection is a resource for students and teachers to dig in their daily practices and interiorize the manners in which they can contribute positively to peacebuilding from the academy.

Key Words: Education, peace, university (Thesaurus); Colombia conflict, higher education (Author's keywords)

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Papel de la educación superior colombiana en la construcción de paz

Resumen: Esta es una reflexión que intenta analizar el papel de las universidades en Colombia durante el proceso de construcción de paz. Es necesario indicar las prácticas relevantes que la comunidad educativa ha utilizado para potenciar la educación durante los tiempos de guerra. Además, es fundamental comprender varios hechos que la educación superior colombiana ha enfrentado durante el conflicto y el postconflicto. Las circunstancias a las que se ha expuesto la educación en Colombia son solo una señal de que las intervenciones y las mejoras son necesarias para lograr una paz sostenible donde las minorías, los estudiantes que han sido víctimas del conflicto y las personas que necesitan apoyo, aunque las oportunidades educativas deben ser prioritarias. Es importante saber cómo las prácticas de instrucción se han convertido en herramientas clave que contribuyen a la construcción de la paz mediante la enseñanza de valores morales, principios, conceptos sobre la importancia de la familia, conocimiento sobre los buenos aspectos de la ciudadanía y la cultura, y estrategias de liderazgo que mejoren las actitudes de los estudiantes para convertirse en ciudadanos capaces de construir una sociedad fuerte que garantice un futuro positivo para sus generaciones. Este artículo muestra que la educación para la paz es un elemento esencial para lograr una paz sostenible en Colombia, donde miles de estudiantes se han visto afectados por una larga guerra que ha frustrado sus sueños y ha hipnotizado sus esperanzas de vivir en un país seguro en donde la posibilidad de lograr un futuro exitoso gira cada vez más. Esta reflexión es una herramienta para que los estudiantes y los maestros profundicen en sus prácticas diarias e interioricen las maneras en que pueden contribuir positivamente a la construcción de la paz desde la academia.

Palabras Claves: Educación, paz, universidad (Tesauros); Colombia, conflicto, educación superior (Palabras clave del autor)

Papel da educação superior colombiana na construção da paz

Resumo: Esta é uma reflexão que tenta analisar o papel das universidades na Colômbia durante o processo de construção da paz. É necessário indicar as práticas relevantes que a comunidade educativa tem utilizado para aprimorar a educação durante os tempos de guerra. Além disso, é essencial entender vários fatos que a educação superior colombiana enfrentou durante o conflito e o pós-conflito. As circunstâncias às quais a educação na Colômbia tem sido exposta são apenas um sinal de que intervenções e as melhorias são necessárias para alcançar uma paz sustentável, onde minorias, estudantes que tem sido vítimas do conflito e pessoas que precisam de apoio, embora as oportunidades educativas devam ser uma prioridade. É importante saber como as práticas de instrução se tornaram ferramentas-chave que contribuem para a construção da paz por meio do ensino de valores morais, princípios, conceitos sobre a importância da família, conhecimento sobre os bons aspectos da cidadania e da cultura e estratégias de liderança que melhoram as atitudes dos estudantes para se tornarem cidadãos capazes de construir uma sociedade forte que garanta um futuro positivo para suas gerações. Este artigo mostra que a educação para a paz é um elemento essencial para alcançar uma paz sustentável na Colômbia, onde milhares de estudantes foram afetados por uma longa guerra que frustrou seus sonhos e hipnotizou suas esperanças de viver em um país seguro, onde a possibilidade de alcançar um futuro bem-sucedido se transforma cada vez mais. Essa reflexão é uma ferramenta para alunos e professores aprofundarem suas práticas cotidianas e internalizarem as maneiras pelas quais podem contribuir positivamente para a construção da paz desde a academia.

Palavras-chave: Educação, paz, universidade (Tesauro); Colômbia, conflito, ensino Superior (palavras-chave do autor).



INTRODUCTION

In Colombia, the armed conflict has been framed in four historical periods. According to Pacheco (2013), in the first period, governability is evident, and civil wars arise, the second period is characterized by the policy of internal protection, the two-party system, and the state. The next period is characterized by the anti-drug policy, where drug cartels emerge, and the Colombia plan begins to work. Moreover, the last period, which is the one we live in today related to organizations outside the law.

How the armed conflict in Colombia has been installed in the educational entities, and the universities of the country have been a cause of deep dysfunctions. According to Vidal, Atehortúa, & Salcedo (2013), the historical facts during the war in Colombia where the field of education has been affected is a call to re-think in the role of higher education as key entities for the construction of peace.

This analysis aims to identify the role within the educational community, academia and in particular higher education scenarios which are entities called to promote peace alternatives that integrate affective processes and social and educational inclusion of those who have been victims of conflict and the new generations that must achieve an awareness of what Colombia is nowadays.

METHODOLOGY

This article presents a systematic mid-scale literature review of the research of the last 30 years on armed conflict, peacebuilding, and education in Colombia, with a focus on methodological characteristics. The main findings of this document are that few of the previous studies have used the full methodological scope (and therefore theoretical) of the available data, the most cited documents and those that appear in the best classified journals are more likely to use the analysis of the armed conflict in general and there is a recent tendency among influential articles to go beyond a limited application of the analysis of the role of higher education in peace building in Colombia.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

The impacts of the conflict in Colombia have left innumerable fragmentations in society and in its population that has received all kinds of economic, territorial, human, social, and educational violations. According to Fearon & Laitin (2003), the conflict has created a dissection of deep social strata that results in two social groups: poor and rich social strata, the poor one being the group that is most susceptible to all types of crimes and violent acts. Unfortunately, the part of the population that has been particularly affected are young people, adolescents, and children who have suffered all kinds of abuses that go against the International Human Rights. Among the crimes to which they have been exposed are forced participation in criminal groups, sexual abuse, lack of inclusion in educative settings, displacement, among others.



According to Carpenter (1990), the Colombian nation has faced an enormous dysfunctionality. The craving for power has been leading political parties towards corruption and ambiguities that prioritize the personal interests of leaders. The common people have found uncertain feelings towards the hopes of change because those hopes have turned into lies and false dreams denied. All social and economic efforts have not been adequately addressed and have not been focused on the welfare of all communities, respect, social, and family values that, at the same time, have been destroyed.

At the beginning of September 2012, President Juan Manuel Santos announced that his government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed an agreement to continue negotiations on the peace process. On October 2, 2016, the plebiscite on the peace accords was carried out through a referendum between the government of Colombia and the guerrilla of the FARC. The results of the voting resulted in the rejection of the peace agreements between the two parties, leaving the peace process submerged in considerable uncertainty. However, despite the efforts, the conflict will continue until policies sufficiently clear that permit the respect of Human Rights are put forth.

According to Restrepo (1999), thousands of Colombians, including women and children, have suffered an incessant war in the country due to many situations, including forced displacement, resulting in the intensification of violence that integrates all types of abuses against the Human Rights. The right to education has been profoundly violated. Schools and universities are the epicenter where the consequences of war become more evident. The fears shown by teachers, students, and their families are increasing in relation to incessant violence that they never chose, but that they have to live day by day.

Facing the war in Colombia, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights has directed its efforts to build a country led by peace where men, women, and children can grow physically and intellectually safe. In this way, the Ministry of Justice has been working together with other state organizations such as the National Ministry of Education to make some contributions to the consolidation of peace within the educational community. Restrepo (1999) proposed in his book some strategies that according to him should be put into practice in all educational institutes in order to make motivational reflections in relation to education in situations of violence to help apprentices who have been victims of displacement and those who have lived the tragedies of war and find a solution to their situations.

The purpose of his book is to help students affected by violence by providing physical and emotional support so that they can be easily included in society. The academy and especially higher education are the scenarios that may promote peace processes and social inclusion, especially for students that have been victims of the conflict and for the new generations.

Pacheco (2013) carried out a research project to analyze the role of universities in the construction of sustainable peace in the same way he identified the direct agents of violence in Colombia, which have severely affected the education of the country. In



his project, Pacheco explored seven historical armed events developed in North, South America, Europe, and Africa. The sample of his study considered several Colombian universities and several members of the same, including rectors, vice-rectors, students, and administrators. He established 23 semi-structured interviews which were decoded using a deductive/inductive method. The use of interviews designed depending on the characteristics of each participant was considered. The results of this research emphasized the appropriate training needed to provide educators with a model of education aimed at building peace in a post-conflict country. This research emphasizes the importance of teaching Human Rights, values, and principles in the construction of peace under the educational role and similar aspects related to the subject in management. On the other hand, the investigation produced important results regarding the lack of economic investment in universities during the post-conflict, aspect that according to Pacheco, has not had enough study and interest on the part of the researchers on the subject. In addition, the project demonstrated different strategies and activities developed by some universities in the country to achieve a tireless effort to contribute to the peace process.

El Tiempo, one of the most important newspapers in Colombia, has referred to the idea of education in the Post-Conflict. Along with this, Camacho (2009), UNICEF education officer, thinks that the success of the peace process in a country like Colombia should start into the classrooms, and the role of academia is thus critical.

Camacho stipulates that, in order to achieve sustainable peace in the country, it is extremely necessary that the victims of the conflict receive accessible and permanent opportunities for training and education. According to Camacho, it is necessary to work on the inclusion of indigenous communities who, according to her, must receive a differentiated education in order to achieve equity, inclusion, and equality. In his conference held at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, within the framework of the "Education for Peace" forum, Camacho highlights the importance of providing a chair for peace in all the academic scenarios.

According to recent reports, developing art activities, culture, and sports around the country's colleges and universities are visible strategies that contribute positively to the construction of peace from the classroom. In the case of the role of higher education, the need was proposed to lead researchers to describe the conflict and post-conflict in a simple way so that it is understandable for the general population and focuses on finding solutions, alternate in the educational field through discussions and debates that include public opinion and victims affected by the internal conflict

Vidal, Atehortúa, & Salcedo (2013) mention some historical events that became popular in Colombia. One of those events took place at the University of Magdalena, where many teachers were killed by the "Clan de Los Rojas", a paramilitary group that operated in the Magdalena Department. The other departments were no exception to this conflict, added Vidal. Another fact that has marked the effect of the conflict in the universities was the murder of the professor of the North University Alfredo Correa de Andreis, murder for which the former director of the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) Jorge Noguera was accused. The University of the Atlantic has also been



one of the institutions of higher education, which has suffered many attacks of the war, among them the death of more than 70 active members of the university between professors and teachers who were syndicalists.

Around Colombia, injustices, crimes, kidnappings, and many other events have affected the civilian population in different ways. However, it is the South of Colombia, particularly Pasto, Nariño, a part of the nation that has lived a difficult situation of war and abandonment from the government during the armed conflict. In the area of education and violence, we can raise relevant facts that have marked its history, for example, according to Vidal, Atehortúa, and, Salcedo, the incidents that took place on March 17, 1976, where the army and the police took the facilities of the University of Nariño in retaliation to a group of students belonging to Liceo de la Universidad de Nariño who protested the trial of war that was being implemented against a young man in the city of Bogotá. Another case of utmost importance that has diminished the efforts of the department of Nariño in the frame of the conflict and its relation with the education was the death of the student of ninth semester of economy of the University of Nariño Adriana Fernanda Benitez who was assassinated by the Self-defenses United of Colombia (AUC) and who had stood out for leading the mobilization of April 14, 2000 in favor of the reduction of urban transport in the city of Pasto. It is in this precise year that the student groups and universities reached their peak in relation to political protests.

These and many other facts in the context of the conflict have broken down education in the department as in our country. It is, therefore, necessary to learn more about the role of universities in the post-conflict context and thus demonstrate the effectiveness of the contribution to the peace process from the educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The education of Colombia has suffered several types of violations against Human Rights. The department of Nariño is one of the scenarios in which the conflict has left traces of pain and despair. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out a study that considers a historical description of the armed conflict in this part of the country. This analysis is relevant since it integrates two components called post-conflict and education which have not been studied by researchers in the department of Nariño, and it is therefore that this study is necessary and prioritizes the actions carried out by the universities in their contribution to the peace process that the country is currently experiencing.

It is believed that higher education is directly related to the peace process. However, research in this regard must be carried out in order to obtain a broader view of the situation. Therefore, this analysis is significant since it tries to contribute to this situation with a regional perspective by providing analysis from a real context and from a current focus, as is the post-conflict scenario.

On the other hand, this report is important due to its relevance for the universities of the department of Nariño, public and private universities may benefit from strategies that address the situation of the country and its influence on the academia.



Finally, carrying out this type of analysis may demonstrate effective policies that can contribute to empowering the peace process in the post-conflict framework, as well as expose actions and practices that may need to be reevaluated or subjected to changes or improvement within the educational field.

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