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‘Intercultural education should move from discourse to practice’.
New perspectives and old claims in the Bolivian process
of educational change

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Abstract

This article¹ aims to analyze the current process of educational change in Bolivia, dealing with discourses of stakeholders in the Education Revolution in process in the country since 2006, after Evo Morales became President. These discourses point out previous experiences, some of which are considered failures since they were not able to incorporate the indigenous peoples’ demands for intercultural education. The intention is to carry out an analysis with a twofold perspective: on one hand, a historical perspective will be used to analyze past projects and laws, which are significant in defining the current process of the Education Revolution; on the other hand, an ethnographic perspective will be used, focusing on the discourses of key persons, people who are responsible for designing and implementing education policy at the Ministry of Education and the leaders of the Original Peoples Education Councils (*Consejos Educativos de los Pueblos Originarios*), whose role is to manage, negotiate, coordinate, and keep watch over the reflection of indigenous demands in the definition of new education policies.

1. Introduction

In his presidential investiture speech, Evo Morales referred to the subject of education in relation to indigenous peoples with the following words:

The first Aymaras and Quechuas who learned to read and write, they cut out their eyes, they cut off their hands, so that they would never again learn to read, to write. We have been subjugated, and now we are seeking a way to resolve this historical problem (Ministerio de la Presidencia de Bolivia, 2006).

This is how he announced a process known as the Education Revolution (*Revolución Educativa*) whose purpose is “to respond to the people’s hope for an education

that will improve the quality of life of all the citizens” (OEI, 2011) and that seeks to guarantee “respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of Bolivia” (Education Law 070, Art. 69)². In this sense, interculturality is one of the main pillars supporting the new educational orientation and upholding the Sixth Chapter of the Political Constitution of the State regarding ‘Education, Interculturality, and Cultural Rights’.

However, interculturality is not a new component. Throughout this article and in the three sections that divide the explanation into temporal phases, it is proposed to analyze the path that intercultural education has taken in Bolivia from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. The material used comes from the fieldwork in Bolivia (2008–2010) for the doctoral dissertation of the author. Research interest was to discover and analyze the ideas linked to intercultural education in the new context of the Education Revolution in two spheres of action: on the level of public policies, on one hand, and on the level of educational practice in the classroom, on the other (Osuna, 2011a). Focus will be on the first sphere related to public policies, by looking at the discourse of different groups of social actors, some of whom are the indigenous leaders of different organizations and the people responsible for planning the new educational orientations. Legislative sources and other official documents also will be analyzed.

In one interview, the Director of the Department of Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Policies told that “intercultural education should move from discourse to practice” (interview, December 2009). Let us, then, see what kind of discourse is rejected, what kind is defended, the terms that are being considered for moving on to concrete practices, and the challenges that this presents.

2. Bilingual intercultural education: The beginning

Establishing the beginnings of bilingual intercultural education in Bolivia is not a simple task. Officially, the first project in which it was promoted with government support was in 1973. However, there were earlier experiences which neither can nor should be left out. In the decade of the fifties, the Summer Linguistics Institute (*Instituto Lingüístico de Verano*) had begun to implant bilingual education in eastern Bolivia. In the thirties, the Warisata School-Ayllu (*Escuela-Ayllu de Warisata*) worked following orientations that today, in the 21st century and in the framework of the Education Revolution, are becoming fundamental. The ‘indigenous education’ of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century is the source of important historiographic debates regarding the instrumentalization of this education as a weapon for acculturation and/or for the Indians’ struggle against acculturation (Martínez, 1998, 1999; Choque, 2005; Choque & Quisbert, 2006).

All of these experiences influence the present-day debate and the discourses of indigenous intellectuals and leaders who are immersed in today's process of change. In this first section, in which the focus will be on the beginnings of bilingual intercultural education, it is intended to provide a brief review of these first historical and educational steps and milestones.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, in a context of power struggles among the different fractions of the élite, the Bolivian state undertook school unification in its search for national emergence and takeoff (Irurozqui, 1994; Martínez, 1998). It is in this period that the so-called 'travelling schools' (*escuelas ambulantes*) appeared. These schools worked in the indigenous communities and were often directed by the indigenous peoples themselves, who took the reins of their children's education, facing the greatest obstacles: harassment, obstruction, and the local authorities' lack of interest in the teachers and the population in general (Brienen, 2005a). Many of these schools are known as 'clandestine' schools because they worked thanks to the initiative of the families and on the margins of the established order (Conde, 1994; as cited in López, 2005).

The decade of the thirties witnessed the Warisata School-Ayllu, an experiment that lasted only ten years but that survives in the collective educational imaginary of Bolivia. Even today, it persists in national thinking, as one of the best experiences in indigenous education that arose and was put into practice "from the bottom up" (López, 2005, p. 77). It is presented as the personification of indigenous education from the indigenous perspective (Brienen, 2005b, p. 139). The creators and founders of Warisata, Avelino Siñani and Elizardo Pérez, developed a curriculum and an organizational structure that served and was in concordance with the community; this is why Claire (1989) crystallizes the idea of resistance to the instrumentalization of state schools in this experience. One of the teachers explains it as the space in which "the peasants began to be the builders of their own destiny" (Salazar, 1943/1992, p. 20). Even though there are authors who give more critical readings of the experience (López, 2005; Brienen, 2005b), the truth is that the Warisata School-Ayllu has become one of the theoretical foundations of the present-day Education Revolution. One of the planners of the new curricular orientations at the Department of Pluricultural Secondary School Curriculum, expressed this as follows:

Our curriculum has three foundations, the theoretical support of our proposals: the first is the educational experiences of our original peoples, the second is the Warisata experience, and the third are the socio-critical theories that have been generated at the world-wide level Freire and Vigotsky (interview, December 2009).

At the end of the forties, different events led the Indian movement to undergo a process of union formation and conversion into a peasant movement (Rivera, 1986;

Platt, 1982). In 1952, the culmination of the ‘National Revolution’ involved an education reform with the Code of Bolivian Education (*Código de la Educación Boliviana*) that was passed in 1955. In its articles, the Code set down the bases of the division of regular education into the urban school system and the peasant school system, seeking to give preferential attention to the peasant population “which has, up to the present, been deprived of the benefits of teaching” (Code of Education, Art. 118). This process and its education reform have been strongly criticized by Felix Patzi, former Minister of Education and promoter of the Education Revolution; to his understanding, it recreates the colonial model by restricting certain spaces and contents to the dominant class (Patzi, 2007 p. 72).

In 1964, after twelve years of ‘National Revolution’, a coup d’état put Bolivia under fourteen almost uninterrupted years of military dictatorships. In the early seventies, the *katarismo* movement appeared, an Aymara movement that demanded the recovery and re-elaboration of historical knowledge of the Indian past (Hurtado, 1986). In this environment of ethnic vindication and focusing on the educational sphere, the Bolivian government began two bilingual intercultural education projects that were developed, not too successfully, in Aymara and Quechua schools (Albó & Anaya, 2004).

From the decade of the eighties until 1994, the year in which bilingual intercultural education was acknowledged as public policy, a series of experiences and initiatives stand out due to their link with postulates of today’s Education Revolution. These experiences are:

1. The *SENALEP* (National Service of Literacy and Popular Education ‘Elizardo Pérez’, *Servicio Nacional de Alfabetización y Educación Popular ‘Elizardo Pérez’*) laid the foundations for popular participation in state education (Choque, 1997; Albó & Anaya, 2004, p. 35).
2. *Proposal of the CONMERB* (Bolivian Confederation of Rural Education Teachers, *Confederación de Maestros de Educación Rural de Bolivia*), which presented the need to adopt differentiated approaches depending on the country’s sociolinguistic situations. This idea has been recovered in the present-day process of educational change in the ‘regionalized curricula’, whose contents will be related to the specific aspects of each ‘sociolinguistic region’ of Bolivia and will complement the National Basic Curriculum (*Currículo Base Nacional*, Education Law 070, Art. 69, 70).
3. Government proposals: the White Book (*Libro Blanco*) (MEyC, 1987) and the Pink Book (*Libro Rosado*) (MEyC, 1988) which announce, among other things, the need to improve the infrastructure and raise the quality of education in Bolivia.

4. The proposal of the COB (Bolivian Working People's Central Organization, *Central Obrera Boliviana*), which highlighted the need to overcome *colonizing* education and pointed toward a "Bilingual Intercultural Education destined to rescue, revalue, and develop native languages and cultures, to consolidate ethnic identity" (COB, 1989).

3. Bilingual intercultural education: Consolidation

In 1990, two events occurred that would mark the transformation of public education policies in Bolivia: on the one hand, the Indigenous March for Territory and Dignity (*Marcha Indígena por el Territorio y la Dignidad*, Bolivia) and, on the other, the World Conference on Education for All (Thailand). The Indigenous March was an initiative of the indigenous peoples of northern Amazonia, but it was supported by the rest of the country's indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples asked for their territories to be acknowledged and their rights as citizens, education being one of them, respected. This event marked a turning point in indigenous peoples' participation in the political panorama, achieving the acknowledgement of their collective territorial rights, the ratification of laws such as Collective Agreement 169 of the International Labor Organization, and the passing of the education reform (Sichra, Guzmán, Teran & García, 2007). At the World Conference, the following stipulation was made: "that traditional knowledge and the autochthonous cultural heritage are useful and valid in themselves and the capacity to define and promote development comes from them" (World Conference of Education for All, 1991, p. 180). "Bolivian authorities" attended this conference, taking note of "some reform initiatives that were underway" (López, 2005, p. 197).

In this context of cultural reaffirmation from both national and international politics and social movements,³ the Project of Bilingual Intercultural Education (*Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, PEIB) was developed. At present, in the midst of the Education Revolution, this project is acknowledged by indigenous leaders and intellectuals as one of the most successful experiments, even more successful than the later Education Reform (1994) that consolidated intercultural and bilingual education as public policy.

The Project of Bilingual Intercultural Education (PEIB) was applied between 1988 and 1994 in "114 Quechua, Aymara, and Guaraní schools" (Nucinkis 2006, p. 26) and had three objectives: an educational objective, a linguistic one, and, finally, an *intercultural* objective. The educational objective sought to turn the child into a "subject of her or his learning process". The linguistic objective arose from the "need to confront linguistic conflict in a diglossic society", proposing "the egalitarian treatment of languages in the education process". The third objective,

the intercultural one, arose from the “need to acknowledge and take advantage of the country’s pluriculturality” and became a “contra-hegemonic proposal ... as opposed to the westernizing tendency toward unification” (Annual Report on PEIB Activities, 1992; as cited in López, 2005, p. 138). To summarize, in this project, intercultural education was understood in the following way:

- Intercultural education is addressed to the indigenous population for the purpose of empowerment and cultural revaluation.
- It adopts a constructivist pedagogy, making the (indigenous) child the focus of learning, encouraging critical reflection.
- It is a participative education insofar as the school is understood to be an extension of life in the community (thus reinforcing ‘cultural identity’).

Technical teams and a broad range of activities were provided to carry out the PEIB. López (2005, p. 129) recounts the celebration of several training workshops with rural teachers (almost all of whom spoke an original language) and that some of them were given scholarships for specialized studies in Andean linguistics and in bilingual education in the city of Puno, Peru. Some of the people who were interviewed in the fieldwork and who are, today, the fundamental agents of the new public education policies, were central characters in this process, having been rural teachers selected to participate in the implementation of the PEIB. One of them explained his experience as follows:

I had the opportunity to do graduate work in intercultural education in Puno, Peru, and after that I returned to my area for a while, working. After that, I was called here to the national level and, in this process, we prepared the materials for teaching Aymara as the mother tongue and Spanish as a second language ... This process has been interesting: we went to visit the education units, see what was going on, training in each vacation period, in the middle of the year, an intensive week of training and, at the end, an evaluation and planning for the next step, that’s what we did every year, you could say. These evaluations were done ... with a consultant. The results were positive, we saw that the children were writing in Aymara, they were writing in Spanish, too, but not always everywhere, right? There were difficulties, too, right? ... It was interesting to go to the schools and see the children writing in their language and that was happening in all the regions. This occurred in three languages, Aymara, Quechua, and Guaraní. Then, finally, there is an external evaluation ... and he writes his text ‘from the project to state policy’⁴ and that is interesting, too, the mistakes that we made were criticized ... So that was the first stage, right?

We succeeded with first to fifth-year schoolchildren and then the 1565 education reform came, unfortunately our work as technicians in the Ministry of Education ended there ... They no longer took into account the experience that had taken place, see? And since we were there for a while, too, many of us have had the chance to return and demand that the 1565 authorities maintain the continuity of these centers, right? ... but they didn’t see it that way and bilingual education ended up only being for five years of school (from first to

fifth grade), and then the children study everything in Spanish ... The authorities of that time did not understand and that provoked a reaction from the communities: "so why have they brought (bilingual intercultural education) to us, if they're not going to give it continuity?" (interview with a technician of the Ministry of Education, Department of Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Policies, March 2010).

Both in this discourse and in the work by Muñoz Cruz (1997, p. 165), one element is mentioned that is interesting to be analyzed in light of the present-day process of change and identity issues stands out: the language component. Thus, the bilingual element stands out above the intercultural element and the two are considered to be inseparable. This approach leads to ask if the association of intercultural education with indigenous populations means, then, that there is no intercultural education without a bilingual component. A person who is closely related, both on the personal and professional level, to bilingual intercultural education in Bolivia, responded as follows:

You can't avoid the bilingual branch to understand interculturality alone insofar as the majority of the population is indigenous ... it is still hard to separate one from the other, even though I confess that whenever I think about this issue more, I think that they are inseparable, because the language continues to be the highest reference of the culture and it can allow you to enter into the world of the culture more easily (interview, September 2010).

But if language is held to be necessary for the development of intercultural education, does this mean that intercultural education cannot be developed in monolingual contexts? The delicate balance between these two components is one of the challenges of the new educational orientations. One of the main criticisms leveled at the 1994 Education Reform and its implementation, according to the comments the president of an Education Council made to me, is that bilingual intercultural education only emphasized bilingual education:

B[ilingual] I[ntercultural] E[ducation] fell into just bilingual education, but intercultural education, how they had to recover their identity, never happened (interview, president of a First Nations' Educational Council, November 2008).

The new Education Law stipulated that learning an original language in school was obligatory and, in the case of endangered languages, it established that "policies of recovery and development" (Education Law 070, Art. 7) would be implemented. According to Romero, four languages are already extinct and ten are in a critical state (Romero, 2010; as cited in Carvajal s/a). The issue of the recovery and revitalization of original languages is one of the main concerns of the Multiethnic Amazonic Education Council (*Consejo Educativo Amazónico Multiétnico*) because it faces processes of the disappearance of languages, the duplication of alphabets, and the lack of educational and linguistic training (Osuna, 2011b). At a meeting of the leaders of indigenous Amazonian peoples, some of them, whose languages are be-

coming extinct, expressed their concern about two issues: first, about the political situation in which this linguistic weakness placed them in relation to other peoples and, second, about the criteria for selecting one language or another when it was time to learn an indigenous language at school. Regarding the first point, it should be indicated that one of the criteria used to become a leader of an indigenous organization that unites several peoples was to speak an original language (field diary, November 2008). As for the second point, the new Education Law (070) establishes that, in areas where different original languages coexist, learning one or another in school will depend on “criteria of territoriality and trans-territoriality defined by the community councils” (Education Law 070, Art. 7.3). Taking both issues into account, it is not surprising that certain frictions occur between the leaders of different peoples, and that there are even lawsuits against the central government for a lack of educational attention to the indigenous peoples who are most isolated geographically and politically. As one of these leaders said in an informal conversation: The government thinks that we lowlanders live right around the corner, but we don’t (leader of an Amazonian indigenous organization, November 2008).

According to the new Education Law (070), interculturality indicates the “development of the inter-relation and interaction of the knowledge, wisdom, science, and technology that belong to each culture with other cultures, which strengthens their own identity and the interaction in conditions of equality of all Bolivian cultures with the rest of the world” (Education Law 070, Art. 6). What role should languages play in this process of strengthening identity? How can the learning of an original language be guaranteed to foster respect and valuing other ‘cultures’? How can language, interculturality, and identity be united without falling into the essentialization of identities?

In 1991, in parallel with the development of the Project of Bilingual Intercultural Education (PEIB), the Technical Advisory Team for the Education Reform (*Equipo Técnico de Asesoramiento a la Reforma Educativa*, ETARE) was created and put in charge of designing a program of Education Reform that was reflected in Law 1565, passed in 1994 and in force until December 20, 2010, the day that the Education Law 070 was passed. This team was created at the instigation of different international organisms such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Anaya, 1995, p. 12), an interesting piece of data in light of the fact that one of the main criticisms of the 1994 Reform today is the excessive participation of external consultants and its ‘world-bank’ spirit (interview with a technician from the Ministry of Education, Department of Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Policies, November 2009). In the section that follows, the main axes of this law (1565) that turned bilingual intercultural education into state policy (Muñoz Cruz, 1997) will briefly be reviewed.

This law (1565) made interculturality and popular participation its two backbones. Along the axis of interculturality, while López believes that the law promoted intercultural education “not just for the indigenous schoolchildren” but for all of the population in general (López, 2005, p. 203) Albó & Anaya argue that the weakest point of the Reform was to nourish “the unintended image that the EIB is something ‘just for the Indians’” (Albó & Anaya, 2004, p. 193). A technician of the Ministry of Education was much more critical of it and explained this apparent weakness in terms of intentionality and animosity toward the indigenous peoples and nations:

So what the Reform does is present ... an interculturality that goes directly against the indigenous cultures ... there are Normal Bilingual Schools for the Indians and monolingual schools for the city dwellers ... but in the bilingual schools for the Indians that are in rural areas, there it is obligatory, that's discrimination because if we say that bilingual education is for everyone, then that totally distorts it, right? It should be for everyone, not just for indigenous concepts. It was planned by lots of experts with scientific training, etcetera, ... They haven't given us these theoretical, psychopedagogical, pedagogical, linguistic instruments ... Now, if they haven't given us these theories ... How can you explain the need for bilingual education to the head of a family? ... It was even meant to make our languages disappear, see? It was even like a justification (interview, technician of the Ministry of Education, Department of Pluricultural Secondary School Curriculum, December 2009).

The ETARE understood interculturality to be a fundamental part of the curriculum and defended the importance of all students recognizing themselves in the school contents and pedagogical resources, in order to promote knowledge about different ways of life, tolerance, and respect. The professionals of this technical team concluded that “what the peasants and indigenous peoples need is knowledge that is adequate to their conditions of life and production” and promoted the development of research on “different aspects of the social and cultural life of the indigenous peoples” to “nourish the definition of programs of study of an intercultural nature, especially regarding patterns of child-raising and socialization, local and regional histories, indigenous wisdom, knowledge, and technology” (ETARE, 1993, pp. 58–66). This pattern has, in part, been taken on by the Education Revolution through the “regionalized curricula” (Education Law 070, Art. 69 and 70; CNC & CEPOs, 2008).

The Education Councils of the Original Peoples (*Consejos Educativos de los Pueblos Originarios*, CEPOs), key institutions in the present-day process of the Education Revolution, were created based on the axis of Popular Participation of Law 1565 in 1994, with the purpose of taking part in the formulation of educational policies and watching out for their proper execution, especially in relation to inter-

culturality and bilingualism (Law 1565, Art. 6.5). The president of the Aymara Education Council explained his present functions with the following words:

There are three objectives according to the annual operational plan, following the objectives, they are “to manage, negotiate, agree upon, and follow up on the definition of the education policies and norms” that are developed in the Aymara linguistic area ... we are going to have a lot of activity because the idea is to transform the new education system (interview, September 2010).

4. Intracultural, intercultural, and plurilingual education:

The transformation

In October 2003, a social uprising that would go down in history with the name of Black October (*Octubre Negro*) was unleashed. It indicated a turning point in Bolivian history, inaugurating a new period marked by the opening of a social forum with the objective of generating a debate on the new project of the country and of designing the structural changes that should outline it. This forum was named the ‘Constituent Assembly’ (*Asamblea Constituyente*) and its purpose was the *refoundation of the country* (Orellana, 2005). The Constituent Assembly shaped into the government of Evo Morales who stated the following in his investiture speech:

The clamorous petition of the Bolivian people, which is the Constituent Assembly, is a re-founding of Bolivia that the indigenous brothers of the entire country, the popular movement, demand (Evo Morales Ayma, January 2, 2006).

However, in 2004, a series of Bolivian indigenous and peasant organizations had already celebrated the 1st National Congress of Education of the Original Indigenous Peoples (*I Congreso Nacional de Educación de los Pueblos Indígenas Originarios*), in which they prepared an educational document (known as the ‘Green Book’, the *Libro Verde*) that gathered “the thinking, the demands, and the projections of the original indigenous nations for transforming the application, follow-up, and control of education policies in Bolivia” (UNNIOS, 2004, S. 6). This has been indicated as one of the precedents of the Avelino-Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law (*Ley de la Educación 070, Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez*) passed in December 2010:

For example, for the ‘Avelino Siñani’, the peoples who made a ‘Green Book’ (*Libro Verde*) in 2003 with all the contributions of all the social organizations and the CEPOS have led, have gathered proposals (interview, CEPO technician, September 2010).

In the year 2006, the ‘National Committee of the New Bolivian Education Law’ (*Comisión Nacional de la Nueva Ley Educativa Boliviana*) was created and took charge of writing the new education policies (MEyC, 2008, p. 18) that would later

be socialized through different workshops to ensure the process of popular participation in the educational change.

Hand in hand with this process of change, known as the Democratic and Cultural Revolution (*Revolución Democrática y Cultural*), Bolivia entered a period of decolonization that was expressed in the New Political Constitution of the State passed by referendum on January 25, 2009 (Preamble of the CPE). This decolonizing stage and perspective were destined to contribute to the fight against the racism and discrimination that were still strong in many sectors of Bolivian society (López & Murillo, 2006, p. 33) and to contribute to “building more equitable and fair societies” (Walsh, 2007, p. 85). In education, the decolonizing process is understood as a process aiming at decentralizing hegemonic western thinking and to acknowledge other ways of generating knowledge (Mignolo, 2003; Santos, 2010).

The Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law (070), a product of the Education Revolution whose name is a tribute to the founders of the Warisata School-Ayllu, includes interculturality as a constitutional mandate (Art. 1.1) and includes *intracultural, intercultural, and plurilingual education* (Art. 3.8) as the basis of Bolivian education, to substitute the worn-out intercultural and bilingual education.

But what does intracultural education mean? And plurilingualism? According to the Law 070 itself, intraculturality promotes recovery, strengthening, development, and cohesion in the cultures of the nations and the original indigenous peasant cultures (Education Law 070, Art. 6.1). One of the main people responsible for planning the new education policies explains intraculturality as follows:

Some say that what is intracultural is part of what is intercultural, but the thing is that if you do not know who you are, what your origins are, your knowledge, your wisdom, your history, you become easy prey to acculturation (interview, Department of Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Policies, November 2009).

In this new stage, according to intraculturality, with the objective of strengthening the culture of the original indigenous peoples, introducing their knowledge and wisdom in the education curriculum and, thus, recovering their origin and history, the Education Councils of the Original Peoples are immersed in the process of preparing and socializing the regionalized education curricula – according to the socio-demographic regions of the country in relation to the majority indigenous people that reflect “the characteristics of the sociocultural and linguistic context that create their identity” (Education Law 070, Art. 70.1). To take the Aymara case as an example, the Aymara Education Council (*Consejo Educativo Aymara*, CEA) published a book in 2007 that included “a first attempt to systematize the wisdom and knowledge developed from ancestral times to the present”, thanks to 17 workshops in the regions of La Paz and Oruro (CEA, 2007, pp. 10–11). In this same publication, the Aymara Education Council pointed out the need to advance in the urban

area because “due to the social prejudices of the teachers, students, and heads of families in the cities”, intercultural and bilingual education has only been imparted, up to now, in rural areas (*ibid.*, p. 11).

Plurilingualism, on the other hand, as has already been explained, attempts to strengthen and legitimize the indigenous languages that will be obligatory in the schools, together with Spanish and another foreign language (Education Law 070, Art. 7).

These two new components accompany ‘interculturality’. What does ‘intercultural’ mean in this new educational perspective? In the interviews with people who are actively involved in formulating and socializing the new education policy, questions about the changes in orientation regarding the intercultural axis were always asked. What changes have been introduced regarding interculturality? What has changed in relation to Law 1565? Because when I arrived in Bolivia, there were a lot of voices that felt that the draft of the new Education Law hardly went any farther than Law 1565 (Miranda, 2006, p. 31). From the analysis of documents, interviews, and fragments of the field diary, the following conclusions regarding the *new* interculturality will be underlined:

- Interculturality is intended to go from being an isolated component in education to permeating the entire Bolivian education system from a more political point of view that affects not only education but the very way the State is conceived, declaring the “plurinationality of the country with cultural identity” (MEyC, 2008, p. 20).
- This interculturality would no longer be a hypothetical harmonious dialogue among equals, but an instrument to achieve the cohesion of a pluricultural country in which the fight against historical discrimination against indigenous peoples will take on a preponderant role in an education that is framed in a context of decolonization.
- This process of decolonization, in relation to interculturality, requires the knowledge of the indigenous and original peoples to be acknowledged in order to be able to establish a dialogue with kinds of knowledge that are considered ‘universal’. Knowledge comprised not only of language, which is seen from a ‘plurilingual’ component, but of philosophical and cosmological aspects that involve understanding ‘that which is intercultural’ as an element that permeates life in productive, economic, and territorial terms.
- These elements, applied to education at the heart of the “new socio-community productive model”, will promote a “sustainable development that will guarantee processes of production, conservation, management, and defense of all the natural resources, strengthening the territorial management of the peoples, of the original indigenous, mestizo, and Afro nations” (MEyC, 2008, p. 23), in such a

way that the specificities of each territory are respected, inserting education into the ‘socio-community productive’ context that is appropriate in each case. This ‘productive and territorial’ education intends to avoid the dependence and economic inequality that only serve to encourage migration to urban areas and to other countries.

In short, the revaluation of *that which is indigenous* or *that which is original* becomes meaningful in a context in which the refounding of the country is understood on the level of the fight against racism, in a country in which discrimination against indigenous peoples is endemic. It is in this context that Law Number 045 against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination (*Ley 045 contra el Racismo y toda forma de Discriminación*) was passed on October 8, 2010, not without great controversy. The first general principle of this law is interculturality (Art. 2.a), and it seeks to promote interculturality in relation to the educational sphere:

The design and implementation of institutional policies to prevent and fight racism and discrimination ... to design and initiate education, culture, communication, and intercultural dialogue policies ... that include the history and the rights of the original indigenous peasant nations and peoples and the Afro-Bolivian peoples in their contents (Law 045, Art. 6.1).

5. To conclude: Reflections from the fieldwork

The Education Revolution, immersed in the present-day Democratic and Cultural Revolution that Bolivia is undergoing, seeks, from a decolonial perspective, to empower the indigenous peoples, making them the architects and main characters of a process that seeks to end the “ethnic, linguistic, and racial stigma and other forms of discrimination” (Patzi, 2007). One of the ways that this objective is pursued is through an education that manages to decentralize hegemonic western thinking and to acknowledge other ways of generating knowledge (Mignolo, 2003; Santos, 2010). Interculturality is a fundamental part of this process and intracultural, intercultural, plurilingual education is one of the key tools. Throughout this article, in which the main milestones of education in Bolivia have briefly been reviewed, it has been shown that many of the new orientations are based on old demands. However, the process of the Education Revolution may have unexpected consequences that could, to a certain extent, undermine the decolonizing horizon. Although the focus has been on analyzing intercultural education through the discourse of leaders and intellectuals in this article, as well as by analyzing bibliographic and legislative sources, the fieldwork, focused on schools and attending meetings and workshops for the socialization of the new orientations, has led to a series of conclusions that point toward a (re)essentialization of the identity of the indigenous peoples (Osuna,

2011a; 2012). In this sense, and based mainly on the issues dealt with in this article, a series of key elements will be highlighted.

On one hand, the author believes that it is fundamental to cast doubt on the concepts of 'that which is indigenous' and 'that which is original'. As it had been pointed out, one of the characteristics of the *new interculturality* is that it establishes a dialogue between indigenous knowledge and the knowledge considered 'universal' which, in the terms used by Klesing-Rempel, translates into a dialogue between 'that which is ours' and 'that which is foreign'. What do 'ours' and 'foreign' mean? Who defines and decides where the frontier is (Hamel, 1999)? When the intellectuals and leaders in charge of preparing and socializing the new law were asked, their discourse about 'that which is indigenous' was normally ambiguous and linked to the rural area. As it has already been pointed out, intercultural education is linked to productive education in an attempt to prevent migration from rural areas to urban areas. Through this and other elements, we can observe how, in one way or another, which is indigenous continues to be associated with that which is rural. In one of the schools where the participant observation was carried out, the team of directors claimed to be applying the postulates of the Education Revolution. In this school, 'Aymara' practice and learning 'what is one's own' in daily contexts was limited to the celebration of rituals that ended up transmitting a stereotyped, essentialist vision of Aymara cultural practices to the students (Osuna, 2011a, b).

Language is, without a doubt, another of the crossroads of the Education Revolution. In a talk to Aymara-speaking rural teachers, a technician from the Ministry of Education spoke of the need to make the use of the indigenous languages official beyond school education. In order for them to be duly acknowledged and valued, original languages should be present in the city halls, ministries, and other governmental institutions. As he said: "The relation between the indigenous person and the non-indigenous person should not become an imposition, but that 'I want to teach him my language because for this reason, and this, and this', you need to be capable of convincing people" (field diary, September 2010). However, this challenge does not only include this 'non-indigenous' population with whom an intercultural dialogue is to be established. As pointed out earlier, the PEIB was abruptly interrupted and the schools in which teaching was being carried out in an original language saw how this project was discontinued, thus generating mistrust on the part of the parents. This mistrust or reticence continues to be present today. A technician of the Aymara Education Council commented on how difficult it is to introduce the bilingual element in the urban schools that children who are identified as Aymara attend:

In this little school in the plaza, they denied us [entry] because of the language, their parents are Aymara-speakers and migrants from the country, some believe that the language is a sign of backwardness, and the teachers, too (interview, September 2010).

Of course, this conception of learning an indigenous language as backwardness is the product of the subalternization and historical discrimination that the indigenous peoples and the original nations have suffered. Nevertheless, the new orientations should pay special attention so that the processes of teaching-learning respond to the interests of the parents who, on occasion, have much more complex reasons for accepting or rejecting this than we might first suppose. Teacher training in the area of anti-racist education is also urgent; it is necessary to begin to work to take apart the stereotypes and to effectively build a landscape of diversity based on removing the make-up from the face of the inequalities that are dressed up as differences. It seems to be fundamental for the Education Revolution to focus on avoiding processes of identity (re)essentialization that could, in the end, lead to a deepening of stereotypes, reinforcing instead of denying the folkloric nature of indigenous *cultures* and peoples (Osuna, 2012).

According to the director of the Unit of Intercultural, Intracultural, and Pluri-lingual Policies of the Ministry of Education, today's Education Revolution intends not only to transform the curriculum but also to transform the institutions. In this transformation, indigenous peoples would cease to be objects and become subjects (interview, December 2009). In this sense, it is fundamental to avoid a discourse of interculturality based on rigid categories of *indigenous* versus *non-indigenous* in order to acknowledge and respect not only the diversity that exists in the interior of these two large groups but also the diversity inherent in each individual.

Notes

1. This article is based on the paper presented at the ICA 54 in Vienna in July 2012. I would like to thank the participants in Symposium 935 'Educación Intercultural en América Latina: Historias, modelos y experiencias de trabajo' who enriched my ideas and perspectives with their comments, reflections, and questions. The study is supported by the research project 'Strategies of participation and prevention of racism in schools II' (FFI2009-08762).
2. In this article the author will refer to three different Education Laws: 1. *Código de la Educación Boliviana de 20 de enero de 1955* (Code of Bolivian Education, passed in January, 1955). 2. *Ley 1565 de la Reforma Educativa de 7 de Julio de 1994* (Law 1565, Education Reform, passed in July, 1994). 3. *Ley 070 de la Educación 'Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez' de 20 de diciembre de 2010* ('Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez' Education Law, passed in December, 2010).
3. For a theoretical approach to this issue, see Dietz (2003).
4. He is referring to the book by Muñoz Cruz (1997).

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