

# Advances and challenges in Intercultural Bilingual Education

## Implications for the Peruvian State and society



The Ombudsman Report 163 Advances and challenges in the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education Policy 2012-2013 presented in September has a diligent analysis of the principal achievements in the implementation of this policy by the Ministry of Education and the decentralized offices. This article claims that there are not few the challenges that the State should face in the implementation of IBE policy to guarantee this education modality to the populations demanding it because it is a right supported by different legal and regulatory instruments, national and international.

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# the implementation of tion policy, 2012 - 2013

**W**hen we talk about Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE), many people in our country still believe that we are referring to an education only in indigenous languages, aimed at indigenous populations that live only in the confines of the Andes or the Amazon. There are also people who ignore or have decided to ignore that IBE is a right and a public policy.

However, we have to remember that IBE is more than teaching in an indigenous language but it also in Spanish; it is not only confined to rural areas but comprises urban too; and, it is not a favor that education authorities are doing to a certain Peruvian population (education is a fundamental right). It is supported by different legal instruments, national and international. However, it is helpful to wonder, once again, why intercultural and bilingual matters.

## WE TALK ABOUT INTERCULTURALISM BECAUSE...

...we are not a monolingual country though many would like it to and others act as if it was. The database on indigenous or native populations, published by the Ministry of Culture, claims that there are 52 indigenous populations that have been identified by the Vice Ministry of Interculturalism. And it is clear that in societies with a higher cultural diversity, it is indispensable to guarantee harmonious interaction and willingness to coexist among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities. Therefore, defending cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable to the respect the dignity of a human person. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental rights, particularly those of people

who belong to minority groups and native populations (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity).

Nor should we forget that intercultural education seeks to recognize and respect social and cultural identities; promote cultural pluralism and the abandonment of the concept of assimilation to establish dialogue and exchange, from a position of equality and not superiority, in a cultural diverse society (Ministry of Education, MINEDU 2005).

## WE TALK ABOUT BILINGUALISM BECAUSE...

...we are a multilingual country where, according to the linguist Gustavo Solis, there are 43 languages in total, including 3 in the Andean area (Solis s.a.:12). Those of us with Spanish as a mother tongue have not probably had difficulties in attending schools where learning was in our mother tongue. We could, therefore, understand our teachers, read books and write in Spanish without much trouble, and surely our cultural environment was alluded to. But this is not the case of most of indigenous children and adolescents. If they attend a school, they are taught in a language foreign to them, with books they do not understand, about things far from their culture, and, conscious or unconsciously, being imposed a way of thinking alien to their worldview.

What we are talking about is the right of indigenous peoples to receive quality education (with equity, pertinence and respect to their rights); an education given under equal opportunities which values cultural

diversity and responds to social, cultural and linguistic characteristics.

In that sense, the Ombudsman's office, complying with its constitutional duty, has been supervising the implementation of the Policy of IBE in all education offices as priority issue. In July 2011, the Ombudsman Report 152 *Contributions to a national policy of Intercultural Bilingual Education in favor of indigenous peoples of Peru* presented the results on the supervision to schools, local education authorities (UGEL), regional directories (DRE) and the Ministry's directions. Considered a milestone by experts (Zavala, 2011), this investigation brought to light the appalling management of IBE by the State and the lack of political commitment to provide education to indigenous populations.

Having the Ombudsman Report 152 as a framework, in September of the same year, the Ombudsman's office published a new investigation on Intercultural Bilingual Education that introduces topics such as regional budget on IBE, school coverage and the National Students Assessment. This new Ombudsman Report No. 163 called *Advances and challenges in the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education Policy 2012-2013* shows the principal achievements in the implementation of this important policy by the State but it also points out the challenges to face. Below, the Report's principal conclusions and recommendations are presented.

### PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT 163

The first conclusion is that even though Minister Patricia Salas' administration implemented an IBE Policy with important achievements such as the creation of the National Registry of IBE schools and the Registry of IBE teachers, the elaboration of a Pedagogical Proposal and the IBE Strategic Plan, the organization of the National Commission on IBE (CONEIB), the revival of the IBE Technical Work Group as well as increasing budget on IBE, at regional level, advance is little or no significant.

In the topic of the teacher training, although there is a progressive increase in the number of applicants for Pre-school and Primary levels for IBE nationwide (from 4 in 2007 to 695 in 2012) and an increase in the number of teacher colleges (ISP) that offer these specialties (from 5 in 2010 to 19 in 2012), there are still regions with indigenous populations that lack teacher colleges with IBE specialties, while there are teacher colleges without these specialties. Besides, there are not Secondary teachers studying IBE.

Regarding IBE teacher recruitment, there are still cases where indigenous language and knowledge on the culture are not adequately assessed. For example, in 2012, 9 UGEL hired 808 teachers without IBE education or training. Also, several UGEL finish hiring teachers late, that is to say, after school year start.

About IBE curriculum, IBE Preschool and Primary levels have had a curriculum design since 2012. However, 38% of DRE and UGEL supervised reported not having elaborated guidelines for the implementation of curricula principally due to lack of budget, training on intercultural pedagogic processes and lack of knowledge of local language and culture.

Regarding educational material for IBE, its elaboration is under MINEDU responsibility, although it is also DRE and UGEL's responsibility. Only 2 DRE and 6 UGEL admitted to have formed committees for elaboration of educational material. This is a serious drawback for IBE for these offices are the ones that know best local context and necessities on educational materials for students and teachers.

Concerning the topic of specialists, it is clear the existence of a deficit of IBE experts at DRE and UGEL all over the country. On the other hand, MINEDU has not defined competencies, functions and professional profiles of education specialists yet which, in the case of IBE, means appointing teachers who cannot accredit indigenous language and culture knowledge, mastering IBE approach and certifications in the specialty.



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About regional budget for IBE, according to the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), MINEDU allocated 25 million Nuevos Soles for IBE budget in 16 regional governments under the Learning Achievements Strategic Program (PELA) framework during 2013. Up to September 2013, thirteen regions have executed less than 50% of the amount assigned and others less than 1%. On the other hand, when reviewing Public Investment Budgets (PIP) for education, we have seen that regional governments prioritize constructing or improving infrastructure before improving teaching and learning aspects.

Concerning education coverage, it is of great concern that approximately 46% of indigenous boys and girls who were raised with an indigenous language are not attending school, which is a violation of their fundamental right to education.

Finally, Report 163 emphasizes that National Student Assessment is not an adequate reference to determine if a school is offering quality education for it only covers two learning areas. Also, student representation sample is questioned as MINEDU has not clearly differentiated what an IBE school exactly is.

### OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT 163 MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Implementation of IBE Policy

All direction and units of the Ministry of Education must comply with functions regarding intercultural education which would guarantee that this policy follow a consistent direction and finally consolidates a State Policy. In that sense, the Ombudsman recommendation to MINEDU is "[...] to reinforce the imple-

mentation of Intercultural Bilingual Education Policy at Preschool, Primary and Secondary levels, strengthening leadership of the General Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual and Rural Education and mainstreaming Intercultural Bilingual Education in all directions and units of the Ministry of Education” (Recommendation 1 to MINEDU).

It also recommends to all regional governments to implement this policy, guaranteeing financial resources provision and the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples of the region to the participatory regional committees (COPARE) and participatory local committees (COPALE).

### **Intercultural and Bilingual Approach in the National Curricular Framework**

Another challenge for MINEDU is to raise awareness on the fact that interculturality does not involve only indigenous or native populations but all Peruvians. That is why it is stated that intercultural education is for all and it is bilingual. It takes on account students’ characteristics who can be from different native populations with a mother tongue or from other groups that decide to learn a native language as a second language (MINEDU, 2013). In that sense, the Ombudsman’s recommendation consists on “[...] incorporating intercultural bilingual approach to the National Curricular Framework to enable adequate coordination with regional curricula and local development plans” (Recommendation 2 to MINEDU).<sup>1</sup>

### **New teachers for IBE and quality on-service training**

It is necessary to continue creating new and better conditions for IBE teacher education and on-service teacher training. It is useful to remember what Be-

atrice Avalos (2013) said on this matter: “In order to strengthen IBE teacher education, there are two lines to follow: reliable and constant IBE policy and a permanent policy of incentives”. In that sense, there are various recommendations in the Report. We can mention: “[...] promoting the creation and/or reactivation of teacher colleges that offer IBE, including Secondary level, in the regions where indigenous populations live, and offering incentives to teachers who are on service at present and to young people who decide to study IBE (Recommendation 5 to regional governments).

It is also urgent “[...] to implement programs of IBE specialization in regions with IBE schools and/or indigenous populations that have not been addressed by the Direction of Teacher Education (DESP); and, to offer IBE methodology in Second Specialty Programs that MINEDU promotes” (Recommendation 8 to MINEDU). Likewise, “[...] suitable selection of teacher colleges and qualified trainers that guarantee quality education of teachers in charge of indigenous children and adolescents must be guaranteed in all IBE training and specialization programs” (Recommendation 9 to MINEDU).

### **Timely and adequate recruitment**

With the purpose of improving recruitment process, regions should “[...] adequately identify vacant positions for IBE schools allocating L1 vacancies (native language – Spanish) and L2 (Spanish – native language) during recruitment process or reallocation of teachers, and guarantee calling for positions through adequate media” (Recommendation 9 to regional governments). On the other hand, the definition of objective criteria for assessing native language and culture knowledge is still pending (Recommendation 10 to MINEDU).

### **More IBE specialists for DRE and UGEL**

IBE specialists at DRE and UGEL should not only increase but should be “[...] teachers whose IBE training, master of native language and knowledge of indigenous regio-

<sup>1</sup> About this, some experts such as Fidel Tubino, have expressed their concern on the absence of cultural diversity aspect in the 5 competencies of the fundamental learning of citizenship in the National Curricular Framework. However, considering that this proposal is under consultation, MINEDU has the best opportunity to offer a National Curricular Framework that truly promotes the formation of an intercultural citizenship.

nal or local culture have been accredited" (Recommendation 12 to regional governments).

An aspect that arose in the workshops with specialists from different regions was the necessity to start a strong media campaign to promote IBE Pedagogical Proposal and that specialists – not only IBE – take ownership of its fundamentals to improve follow up and pedagogical advisory.

### **Diverse and relevant education material**


We are a country with a great cultural and linguistic diversity; it has been said. However, from 43 existing languages in Peru, MINEDU has standardized 20 until 2012 but has not produced education materials for all of them. It is therefore necessary "[...] to design a plan to elaborate and distribute teaching materials in L1 (native language – Spanish) and in L2 (Spanish – native language) in order to guarantee coverage of all indigenous languages at all levels".

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATE AND SOCIETY**

As it has been shown, there are no few challenges the State has to face in order to implement IBE policy; however, I think that the principal conclusion of the Ombudsman Report 163 for the State is the necessity to continue the route towards IBE for all peoples who demand it but also for an intercultural education for all Peruvians. Therefore, as the IBE Pedagogical Proposal states:

“ [...] in the process of defining and implementing intercultural education policies, it is not enough to strengthen the identity of the discriminated or the minorities; it is necessary, at the same time, to form the majorities for intercultural encounter, to eradicate discrimination and for intercultural dialogue under conditions of equality. This implies developing intercultural education in all fields, in all levels, in all schools, in all forms and levels of education, both in rural as well as in urban areas”.

With this purpose, Peruvian society also has the enormous responsibility to assume itself and develop truly as a multicultural nation, with all that it entails. What

has been done by the Ministry of Education is very good but is insufficient. The strengthening of the General Direction of Intercultural, Bilingual and Rural Education (DIGEIBIR) as well as increasing budget for IBE are correct decisions but we reiterate the imperative and urgent need to “interculturalize”<sup>2</sup> all directions and units at MINEDU in order to ensure that everything already achieved has no chance to go backwards. In this context, certainly favorable for IBE, it is time regional governments start bidding decisively for an education that, without doubt, will contribute to eliminate inequality, discrimination and social, cultural, political and economic inequalities, which unfortunately still exist in our country. 

2 What we want to say with this is that all directions and units at MINEDU should comply with functions regarding intercultural education and IBE that are their responsibility. That is to say, that they assume intercultural bilingual approach in their management and put in action the principle of interculturality established in the General Law of Education.

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