Decolonization: historical challenge in the globalized world

Igor Ampuero Morales

The seminar *New Technologies of Communication* held in June 2013 in Mexico City, allowed us to gather different pedagogical experiences and reflections and to recognize the reality of education in the different participating countries. Participants concluded that civilization’s crisis of capitalism has cornered education into a technological contest that forces us to reproduce its logic, thus ending cultural diversity and replacing it with a globalizing, mono-cultural world view.

In our region, education systems see modernization and models of “development of capitalist domination” as the sole alternative. In these education systems there are homogenous models of education being created that attempt to eliminate the diverse forms of education that up until now have co-existed. In the case of Bolivia, this process acquired a strong colonial aspect (until recently) where the model of domination was to completely eradicate certain forms of education through modernization: to erase the knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples, through neoliberal governments which promoted a mono-cultural educational project under the premise of “civilizing the Indians”, although in their mystified discourses they deny it.

This article questions those mono-cultural models of education, taking into account: (i) the historical basis for building and consolidating the new plurinational state of Bolivia. In this point we argue the institutionalization of the nation-state to transform it from state to a plurinational state, and its legitimate competencies that allow (ii) for the consolidation of a process of changes that requires policies and practices to decolonize in the current context and history of humanity. And finally (iii) decolonization as a contemporary challenge in the face of new technologies of information and its relation and complementary use with the process of change present in the context, especially of Andean nations.

**Historical basis for the construction and consolidation of a New Plurinational State in Bolivia**

There are many combinations and forms of struggle that peoples have used to transform and achieve victories in order to break down models of domination (political, social, economic, and religious). In the past century we have experienced the triumph of the Soviet revolution, the Cuban revolution, the Sandinista revolution, etc. At the beginning of this new century, forms of revolution or transformations acquire are different in character to those involving action of the masses. In some cases, armed struggle is still a real option for achieving changes for the peoples; while new forms of action of the masses are also born that allow us to see new realities.

For these revolutionary processes that eventually take on new forms in the “combination of forms of struggle,” one of the fundamental objectives is for people to have dignified living conditions, to be able to “live well,” and in equality of conditions, living side by side in equality which can only be achieved when the concentration of wealth lies in the hands of the majority of the people. Each revolutionary process has to have a historical class that takes the vanguard of action of the masses and these masses must have political, ideological and programmatic clarity. This historic

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1 Igor Ampuero Morales, Sociologist, Coordinator of the Labor and Political Training School – Bolivia.
revolutionary process would not be if it had no capacity to adhere and move social classes, especially those historically subjugated.

In the Bolivian case and process of revolutionary transformation there are historic subjects who determine the advent of a plurinational identity and the community horizon. This plurinational identity consolidates the indigenous cultural nations in Bolivia, as well as strengthening the “indianization” of the Bolivian state nation through the key role played by social movements, indigenous movements and the working class, as represented in Bolivian Workers Central, in building that State.

**Consolidating change needs decolonizing policies and practices**

“After a rebellion, a revolution, the hardest thing was decolonization” (Evo Morales: August 2013). With these words, the Bolivian president clearly presents the challenge of true transformation that the revolutionary process has ahead of it. He observes that decolonization must be the main focus of the state’s vision and sees difficulties in the revolutionary project as far as building the state and especially the process of decolonization.

The concept of “decolonization” as a process of change generates intense debates. Those lacking theoretical content try to divert the attention of analysis off the central problem. Within the state there are varied experiences, from symbolic actions to transformations inherited from the bureaucratic system. In practice, the plurinational state has been able to transform the institutions of the old republic, creating new, decolonizing institutions such as the Ministry for Decolonization in the Executive, the plurinational judicial body, the plurinational electoral organization etc. In any ways possible, the state must remove the old vices of the mono-cultural republican state and transform it into a diverse and true plurinational state. Let’s not forget that such process implies a change of system and not a change in the system.

Decolonization is more than just adding concepts and theories. It goes further than a temporary process in society, or an intellectual tendency or fad (as in clothing, music, new technologies and forms of behavior influenced by foreign contexts which only make sense for a limited time).

The process of decolonization has been confused with a vague idea of believing that “now we have to walk around in ponchos again, go back to pijchea’ coca leaves, and abandon what we have learned to go back and be indigenous or farmers”. Gabriel Benavente, ethnologist and researcher, presented a lecture at an ethnology symposium at the University Mayor of San Simon which the organizing committee did not wish to accept, because his presentation did not include bibliographic references. Gabriel’s argument was that his investigation involved a narrative on the topic of space in the Bolivian Andes, for which a bibliography was not necessary, “why do I need to read many researchers, why do I need to read authors from abroad to say what I feel and to express what our grandparents have told me or commented regarding the work.” Such questioning by the organizing committee reflects the colonial attitude to “scientific” investigation, while Gabriel is challenging the perspective of hegemonic research and presents a new paradigm of decolonizing research.

The university system in Bolivia has not yet assimilated the need to transform the academic reality or to promote research based on a plurinational state perspective on education. The state had to create four Indigenous Universities, in response to the growing need to apply the social-community-production model of educational transformation, with its four fundamental principles: (a) decolonizing, liberating, revolutionary, anti-imperialist and transformative education, (b)
community, democratic, participatory and consensus-based education, (c) productive, scientific, technological and artistic education. These indigenous universities should be called pluriversities since there is a plural vision of life which coexists in the Bolivian territory. Breaking down the traditional colonial framework of universities, is yet another challenge for the revolutionary process.

**Decolonization as a contemporary challenge in the face of new technologies of information: its relation to and complementary use with processes of change.**

The process of decolonization does not mean throwing away the western knowledge accumulated from models of colonial capitalist domination, but rather recognizing that our nation states were built from those concepts which articulate our reality.

We cannot be indifferent to the production of knowledge and the tools of the globalized world and the information society. In education, the incorporation of NTICs into the process of training, appropriation and learning is an example. We take up these technologies as a technical and instrumental complement to universal knowledge.

Neo-liberal philosophy aims to create individualistic subjects determined by capital while the philosophy of the Andean peoples is based on solidarity, community values and complementarity with nature. The ideal would be to find a balance and complementarity between Andean knowledge and western knowledge.

**Revised Bibliography**

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<i>Expression in the Quechua language for chewing coca leaves.</i>

<i>Base Curriculum of the Plurinational Educative System.</i>