

Identity Policies of Education: Struggles for Inclusion *and* Exclusion in Peru and Colombia¹

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Abstract

Policy initiatives that seek to account for ethno-cultural differences in education and schooling have become increasingly popular over the past few decades. These include affirmative action measures and bilingual education models. The rationale for the implementation of these policies focuses on their potential to rectify historical discrimination by both levelling horizontal inequalities and granting equal value to different cultures and languages in the schooling process. In this framework, however, ethnic communities are often treated as discrete and static social aggregates, and social heterogeneity and spillover effects between groups are disregarded. This paper draws on empirical case studies from Colombia and Peru to show how identity policies of education can increase inter-ethnic competition, leading to protracted social conflicts. These outcomes, beyond negatively impacting local communities, raise important dilemmas surrounding the theoretical and operational foundations of these popular policy measures.

Keywords: Education Policies; Identity; Conflict; Ethnicity; Intercultural Bilingual Education; Affirmative Action

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Introduction

Education can either promote or hinder equality and inclusion. National governments and international agencies have indeed devoted longstanding effort to the improvement of education quality and accessibility for marginalized social groups (Popkewitz and Lindblad 2000; Riffel, Levin, and Young 1996; Alexiadou 2002). Since the 1970s, the rise of identity politics has had a crucial impact on debates around the relationship between education and cultural and linguistic differences. These differences started to be associated with discriminatory practices in the school environment, as a result of social and cultural hierarchisation embedded in power relations, while they became at the same time indispensable components of multicultural curricula (Vavrus 2015). In normative terms, this perspective contributed to popularize two major policy initiatives: intercultural (bilingual) education (IBE) and race-focused affirmative action (AA) measures. I will refer to these

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initiatives that, in different ways, seek to account for ethno-cultural differences in education, as ‘identity policies of education’.

More than three decades after these initiatives were launched, IBE and AA remain popular policies across the world for ethno-cultural management in education. Advocates of these policies focus on their potential to redress historical discrimination by levelling horizontal inequalities (inequalities between groups) and by granting equal value to different cultures and languages in the schooling process (Hasan and Nussbaum 2012; Hecht 2014; López 2009; Lambert 2012). This potential, however, is considerably weakened if one of the main assumptions of this framework is lost: i.e. that social groups are relatively homogeneous and segregated from each other. Although it is certainly true that highly unequal and diverse societies are often characterized by limited social mobility and constrained inter-ethnic relationships, a closer look at local realities can in fact reveal that communities are often more heterogeneous and interconnected than what we might think. A growing body of critical literature has pointed out theoretical and empirical inconsistencies linked to the tendency to disregard historical and contextual variation in the practices of inclusion and exclusion (McCarthy 1998; McCarthy and Crichlow 1993; Greene 2007). Empirically grounded assessments of the impact of identity policies of education on heterogeneous communities, particularly in areas characterized by multiple conditions of vulnerability (precarious livelihoods, endemic violence, geographical remoteness, migration inflows and weak state presence) are still limited. Yet, these contexts are relatively common in many countries of the Global South, particularly post-conflict lower and middle income countries, where identity policies of education are being implemented.

Relying on case studies from Colombia and Peru, this article argues that social heterogeneity and spillover effects between groups are key and overlooked factors that can complicate the implementation of identity policies of education. In fragile social contexts, changes to educational arrangements can trigger inter-group competition and new claims for inclusion *and* exclusion that can become entrenched in protracted social conflicts². These scenarios deserve closer attention in the debate on education in diverse and highly unequal societies, since they reveal some widely unnoticed consequences of the implementation of identity policies of education on local communities, and raise important dilemmas around their theoretical and operational foundations. In particular, these policies present trade-offs between social inclusion and cultural empowerment that can be appreciated only by looking at the broader social aggregate beyond the specific ethnic communities that they target, and that do not have obvious practical solutions.

Education policies are understood here not only as the reflection of ideological trends and elite decision-making, but as critical moulders of social relationships whose outcomes should be the object of careful empirical evaluation. This empirical approach is indeed crucial

² In this context, I adopt a narrow definition of inclusion and exclusion implying the possibility for communities to either be granted access or to be allowed to opt out from a given policy measure, while I do not consider more complex assessments of inclusiveness (considering access but also actual representatively, participation rights and school achievements). This is consistent with the focus of the paper on claim-making processes of groups that have opposite aspirations with respect to their engagement with a specific policy. By juxtaposing claims for inclusion to claims for exclusion, I also consciously try to bring back the latter into the discussion on identity policies of education, where the attention is overwhelmingly devoted to those that are excluded and claim access rather than to those that are included and want to opt out.

to challenging mainstream assumptions of policy effects on the social fabric (Wiseman 2010). In order to examine the micro-politics of intercultural education³ as a field of conflict for inclusion and exclusion, this paper relies on cases of inter-group competition triggered by the implementation of IBE and AA. The first case is a conflict between indigenous and peasant groups in the Colombian region of Cauca following an administrative decision that incorporated the local, public school into the autonomous indigenous education system and assigned its control to local indigenous authorities. The decision triggered a *struggle for exclusion* of peasant residents and sectors of the indigenous community opposing the indigenous education model. The second case is a *struggle for inclusion* within a national AA scholarship program by migrant students of indigenous origin that are settled in the Selva Central region of Peru. The government's refusal to include these students among the program's beneficiaries generated a process of self-organization and identity-revitalization and triggered new tensions with the local 'autochthonous' indigenous population.

Both of these conflicts are very recent and still ongoing at the time of writing. They both take place in remote rural areas of Colombia and Peru, two countries that are global and Latin American pioneers in the implementation of identity (indigenous) politics. Both of these regions – the Selva Central and Cauca - are also considered particularly vulnerable, not only for their high levels of poverty, but also because they have been the epicentres, until very recently, of guerrilla insurgencies. Remoteness and violent conflict are two factors known for significantly reducing access to basic services such as education (UNESCO 2017). The challenges of implementing education reforms in these contexts are therefore of strategic importance for local and national development in these countries.

I visited the Cauca region in November 2015 and the Selva Central in April 2016. I conducted 80 semi-structured interviews in Spanish with a variety of actors in both countries. A first round of interviews was conducted in the capital city with civil servants from the Ministry of Education, the Ombudsman Office, and other governmental bodies directly involved in the implementation of education policies, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on education issues, national leaders and advisors of indigenous groups, migrant organizations, and peasant associations. These interviews provided information on the trajectories of education policies in both countries, especially concerning intercultural education and affirmative action, the degree of engagement of civil society in policy formulation and implementation, and the actors' assessment of different policy measures. It also allowed to identify relevant case studies where these policies have triggered inter-group tensions.

³ It might be worth clarifying here the difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism since it is mostly specific to the Latin American context. In Latin America, over the last twenty years, the concept of interculturality or interculturalism (*interculturalidad*) replaced the one of multiculturalism, prevalent throughout the 1990s, as an ethic and political principle to orient the construction and maintenance of difference within heterogeneous societies. Multiculturalism was indeed strongly associated with the neoliberal project and with a narrow focus on the improvement of social competition through tolerance. Interculturalism, on the contrary, stresses the need for cultural articulation that overcomes simple coexistence and emphasizes the interaction among differences (Giarracca 2005). Beyond Latin America, however, the word multiculturalism has a plurality of meanings that would encompass also the one highlighted by interculturalism. Throughout the paper, I tend to use the term interculturalism when referring to Latin American policy measures in order to reflect the original conceptualization that has become prevalent across the region.

Contacts were then made with local authorities and representatives of social organizations in the regions (Selva Central and Cauca) and field trips arranged. The visits to local communities offered the possibility to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with local actors directly involved in the conflicts. This second round of interviews (about twenty per each case) included informants from local indigenous, peasant and migrant organizations, as well as local civil servants. Interviews were conducted mainly with elected representatives and technical personnel that had been directly involved in managing the conflict situation. Interviews were also conducted with former authorities to gather information on the earlier stages of the conflict, particularly in the case of Inzá. These interviews had the main objective of tracing the origin and evolution of the conflicts, identifying the most important episodes and the changes in the daily co-existence of local groups, understanding the relationship between the parties involved, and discussing their respective claims, strategies and motives.

A questionnaire was used as a guideline during the interviews to make sure the main issues were covered and to help consistency. However, certain degree of flexibility was considered preferable in order to allow interviewees to highlight issue they recognised as important and to elaborate on topics that might not have been identified in advance. The vast majority of interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees. This empirical material was complemented with a review of both news articles on the two case studies and official documentation on relevant policy measures. These documents allowed to cross-reference the recollection of interviewees on specific events and policies with alternative sources of information. The most important challenge encountered during fieldwork was the access to remote regions where safety for foreigner travellers remains an issue due to the presence of armed guerrilla groups. While it was possible to reach the main towns and villages, access to more isolated communities was limited.

The two-stage field work design reflected the need to move across different 'sites' of policy production (McCarthy 1998), namely the national arena of norm-making and the local schooling experience. This double perspective seemed indeed crucial to capture the tensions between policy and reality. Education politics are generally produced at the national and sometimes international level (Sellar and Lingard 2013) and are meant to generate broad social outcomes. The range of changes in the social fabric, however, can be better appreciated by looking at local schooling experiences. In the case of education policies with a strong cultural dimension, it is indeed the micro-level that offers a more contextual and relational understanding of changes in terms of identities and inter and intra-group dynamics. It is here that the social implications of policy measures become evident through the redefinition of relations of inclusion and exclusion.

The paper is organized as follows: the first section provides a conceptual framework on the links between education and ethno-cultural differences. Firstly I offer an overview of the historical trajectory that led to the formation of an international consensus on identity policies of education and their popularization across the Global South. I then provide a definition of both IBE and AA and an overview of the major criticisms and theoretical controversies that they have generated. In particular, I focus on recent scholarly works that have highlighted the tensions surrounding identity policies of education in complex multi-cultural and conflictive scenarios. In section 3, I review the genesis of these policies in Latin America, and particularly in Colombia and Peru. This information is meant to provide some

important background to understand the policy context in which the two conflicts take place. Section 4 and 5 are dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the two case studies, reconstructing the origins and trajectories of the two conflicts and the claims and positions of the parties involved. I conclude by summarizing the contributions this research makes to the broader discussion on the incorporation of ethnic differences in education policies and its impact in local settings.

Education and Ethno-cultural Differences

In most industrialized countries, the 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of education politics as a field of struggle over social inclusion and class formation (Dietz 2009). From the 1980s onward, globalization forces and the neoliberal imperative significantly constrained the impact of socio-economic and class claims on education policymaking (Marginson 1999). At the same time, however, the debate on multiculturalism that stemmed out of the civil rights movements (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006) thrived during this phase (Wieviorka 1998; Inglis 1996; Joppke 2004). Identity and ethnolinguistic differences were, for the first time, included as key components of education policies while assimilationist models started to be questioned (Rodriguez-Gómez and Alcántara 2001). The politics of differences in education also travelled to Latin America as part of cooperation and international aid programs, and they entered the agenda of new social movements (especially indigenous movements) starting to mobilize for recognition and social inclusion (Gustafson 2009). Thanks to the joint efforts of ethnic and social organizations, intellectual networks and foreign donors (Cortina 2014), these policies have proliferated over the last thirty years as key approaches to fight cultural and ethnic discrimination and social marginalization. In 2010, the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report entitled ‘Reaching the Marginalized’ identifies intercultural and bilingual education as a key strategy to create a learning environment that overcomes marginalization through teaching in minorities’ languages (UNESCO 2010; Aikman 2012). As part of the same efforts to make schooling more accessible and diverse, a recent UNESCO policy paper on higher education states the need to ‘develop effective affirmative action policies that put equity front and centre in the admissions process’ (UNESCO 2017, 10). Over the last few decades, both IBE and AA have become key and often complementary tools for the implementation of identity policies of education across the globe.

IBE refers to pedagogical models aimed at improving education for ethnic groups and tackling discrimination within society through teaching different cultures and languages on an equal footing (Cortina 2014). Learning different languages also encourages increased receptiveness toward different cultures and greater respect for ethnic and cultural differences (López 2014). In practice, what intercultural education means and how it is implemented vary significantly depending on the country and time period. I adopt here a broad definition of IBE, which includes measures ranging from minimalist interventions such as the incorporation of intercultural concepts in nationwide curricula to substantial reforms that grant an autonomous administration of education and schooling to ethnic groups.

Affirmative action is a broad term that includes different measures used to ‘give members of traditionally disadvantaged groups a better shot at social advantage’ (Hasan and Nussbaum 2012). Within the education sector, affirmative action has been implemented mainly through positive discrimination mechanisms that give an extra boost to members of

disadvantaged groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, women) in competitive contexts. These measures typically concern increasing access to higher education through quota systems and differentiated entry requirements. AA measures usually target exclusively racial minorities, although in certain cases, class-based and caste groups are also included (e.g. India). Their implementation is generally motivated by ‘compensatory justice’ arguments (notably, the need to remedy past discriminations), although they have also been used as conflict-management tools aimed at reducing political instability and violent outbreaks (Brown, Langer and Stewart 1990).

Despite the recent popularity of identity policies of education, both IBE and AA have generated heated political debates and theoretical controversies. Objections against AA include the following: that these measures violate principles of merit and desert; that they generate economic inefficiencies by allowing less qualified students to access key places in higher education; that they encourage stigmatization of minorities and reinforce identity boundaries; and that they fail to account for both horizontal and vertical socio-economic differences (excluding non-ethnic poor and favouring ethnic elites) (Hasan and Nussbaum 2012; Appelbaum 2002; Delgado 1991; Augoustinos, Tuffin, and Every 2005). Criticism against IBE is concentrated around implementation issues such as how to deliver quality bilingual education without a sufficient number of adequately trained bilingual teachers or in contexts where more than two languages are spoken; or how to go beyond a ‘one-way model’ where only indigenous children are exposed to a second language while the rest of the population is not (López 2009; Katz and Chumpi Nantip 2014). Risks were also identified around the possibility that IBE would strengthen rather than reduce educational (and cultural) fragmentation, while weakening a shared sense of belonging and ‘social objectives underpinning the ideal of the common school’ (Riffel, Levin, and Young 1996, 113).

Scholars have also focused on the challenges of implementing identity policies of education in complex multi-cultural and conflictive scenarios, exploring the tensions between international discourses and local realities. In her book on education policies in former Yugoslavia, Jana Bacevic challenges the conceptualization, particularly widespread in international development circles, of education as a ‘magic ingredient’ that would enable economic growth and mitigate social cleavages and tensions (Bacevic 2014, 1). Through a detailed historical recount of education projects and reforms since the 1970s, Bacevic shows how those policies played an active role in defining and channelling political subjectivities and group identities. The book focuses in particular on the transition from class-based to identity policies, which emerged in parallel with strengthening ethnic boundaries and social fragmentation across the region. Similarly, María Elena García’s work on intercultural education in Peru (García 2005) also challenges perspectives that consider identity policies of education automatic ‘solutions’ to marginalization and exclusion for ethnic minorities. Her ethnography in the Cuzco region of Peru documents the opposition of Quechua communities to NGO-sponsored educational reforms because of mismatches between how indigenous groups and external actors understand language rights, indigenous rights and the right to education. García found that indigenous parents associate indigeneity with low socio-economic status and consider traditional schooling in Spanish a means to achieve social mobility, as opposed to the abstract discourses on social and cultural equality of international actors. Sheila Aikman’s (2012) work in the Southern Peruvian Amazon also documents the

related failure of IBE programs among Arakmbut Kirazwe communities. These studies highlight how intercultural education programs are in fact embedded in sets of complex relationships and historical processes. These context-specific dynamics mean that in certain cases these programs can be experienced as active processes of marginalization and exclusion rather than emancipatory and inclusive initiatives. This article expands on this literature by offering additional evidence and theoretical elaboration on why identity policies of education generate unexpected consequences on local realities.

I will now offer some background on identity policies of education in Latin America, focusing in particular on the implementation of IBE in Colombia and AA in Peru, before presenting the two case studies.

Identity Politics of Education in Latin America

Latin America and the Andean region in particular provide a very rich context to explore the impact of identity policies of education on the social fabric. Latin America is one of the most ethno-culturally diverse regions of the world counting around 42 million indigenous inhabitants (World Bank Group 2015), over 650 indigenous peoples and more than 550 different languages (López 2014). More importantly, Latin American countries have pioneered the implementation of a variety of identity policies of education over the past 30 years.

Since the 1980s, these countries have steadily shifted away from their long-term nation-building strategies grounded on the elimination of cultural and ethnic differences through forceful assimilation, to become laboratories for the design and implementation of ‘liberal culturalist policies’ (Van Cott 2005), including territorial rights, autonomous regimes, affirmative action and intercultural education (Greene 2006; López 2014). These changes were the result of both the top-down pressure of international organizations such as the World Bank as well as of the bottom-up claims of indigenous movements that, with the support of NGOs and international cooperation agencies, mobilized to demand recognition for their cultures as well as their rights as citizens (García 2005; Laurie, Andolina and Radcliffe 2003; Yashar 1998; Postero 2007). Education became a key component of the contemporary recognition of ethno-cultural differences. Under this renewed orientation, laws and regulations were passed recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to education in their own languages (López 2009) and IBE was embraced by indigenous movements as part of their self-determination agendas (Gustafson 2014). Within this context, different policy measures were implemented to address the education gap and to acknowledge cultural specificities in education. IBE includes a wide range of interventions, from curriculum reforms and mainly technocratic solutions to improve recognition of cultural differences in schooling, to the implementation of endogenous education models, such as the Guatemalan Maya schools, the autonomous municipal schools in Chiapas, Mexico, or the autonomous indigenous education system in Colombia (López 2014).

Colombia was indeed one of the first countries to set up a national policy to address ethnic differences in the education sector. In 1985, the Ministry of Education approved the Ethno-education Program (*Programa de Etno-educación*) (Enciso Patiño 2004). In 1994, the General Law on Education included a chapter on ethnic education (Rojas 2011), while a fund to finance ethno-education actions was created with the support of international aid (DNP,

MEN 2009). The wave of legal reforms throughout the 1990s, however, was followed by a very slow process of policy regulation and implementation. In 2007, a National Working Commission for Indigenous Peoples Education (*Comisión Nacional de Trabajo y Concertación para la Educación de los Pueblos Indígenas*, CONTCEPI), including 21 regional leaders, was eventually set up with the aim of crafting a concrete proposal for an autonomous indigenous education system (*sistema educativo indígena propio*, or *educación propia*). The work of the Commission led to the approval of a National Decree (2500) in 2010 to regulate the administration of local schooling by ‘certified territorial entities,’ including traditional indigenous authorities. The Decree establishes that official schools could become subject to the autonomous regime when they are located in territories where the majority of the population is indigenous and when they have been developing community projects and a full proposal for the implementation of autonomous indigenous education. The Decree also offers indigenous organizations the possibility to recruit teaching personnel directly, based on criteria such as ‘sense of belonging and cultural identity consciousness’ (Art. 5) and proficiency in the indigenous language. As I will illustrate in the Inzá case study, these provisions opened a number of questions surrounding the compatibility of indigenous and standard education, including critical details such as how to deal with the presence of non-indigenous students and teachers within or nearby indigenous territories.

In the framework of multicultural reforms across Latin America, affirmative action measures have also been implemented alongside IBE, in the effort to increase the chances of students from ethnic minorities to access higher education. The most famous program is the Brazil’s national affirmative action program (2002) that established a system of quotas for ethnic and racial minorities in university education and government hiring (Htun 2004; Van Cott 2005; Greene 2007). In Mexico, the National Association of Universities and Schools of Higher Education (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades y Escuelas de Educación Superior*, ANUIES) and the Ford Foundation created the Support Program for Indigenous Students in Higher Education Institutions (*Programa de Apoyo a Estudiantes Indígenas en Instituciones de Educación Superior*) in 2001 to provide additional resources to universities to support the accessibility and academic performance of indigenous undergraduate students (Barrón Pastor 2008). Affirmative action policies have also been implemented in Costa Rica, Colombia and Peru.

Despite its relatively poor record in terms of recognition of indigenous rights compared to the other Andean countries, Peru boasts one of the oldest policy initiatives in the field of education and ethno-cultural differences. Early indigenous bilingual education experiments date back to the first half of the XX century (López 1988; Schmelkes, Águila y and Núñez 2009). Since the 1980s, in line with the rest of the region, the Peruvian government has intensified efforts to account for ethnic differences in education policies. One of the first measures was the creation of a Directorate of IBE and the incorporation of a national IBE policy within the 1992 World Bank-sponsored education reform. This policy was renewed in 2002; in practice, however, not much was achieved throughout the 2000s and mainly during Alan García’s right wing government (Aikman 2012). Recently, after a process of consultation with seven national indigenous and peasant organizations, a new impetus resulted from the approval of a sectorial policy on IBE by the Ministry of Education through the Supreme Decree 006-2016 and of a National IBE Plan 2016-2021. The Plan sets some

ambitious targets by 2021: 67% indigenous students should complete secondary education, 85% of pre-schools and primary schools should implement the IBE pedagogy and 100% of IBE school should count with adequate material. The effort is to move towards a less targeted and more widespread implementation of IBE. A very ambitious goal considering that, according to the school census, in 2008 only 38% of indigenous children attended intercultural bilingual schools; that, so far, IBE schooling has been offered only in rural areas, completely excluding the rising population of indigenous urban residents; and that 46% of teachers working in IBE schools do not have adequate training and often do not speak the local indigenous language (PRONABEC 2014).

In order to address the lack of indigenous teachers, since 2014, a new scholarship program has been put in place that provides financial support to indigenous students pursuing university training to become IBE teachers. The scholarship, called Beca EIB, forms part of a wider National Scholarships and Educational Credit Program (*Programa Nacional de Becas y Crédito Educativo*, PRONABEC), and namely of the Beca 18 program, which specifically targets the most vulnerable sectors of the population⁴. In order to address the higher education gap of indigenous peoples, the Ministry of Education created another scholarship within the Beca 18 program targeted at indigenous students from Amazonian communities (*Beca de Comunidades Nativas Amazónicas*). These students need lower grades than non-indigenous peers, based on the assumption that their schooling experience has been generally worse and on the impact that this has on standardized test scores (Hernandez-Zavala et al. 2006 in Ames 2012). In 2015, 1,223 students received support through this program (PRONABEC 2015).

Affirmative action in higher education is very recent in Peru and still represents a minimal percentage of the total number of scholarships issued by the government: the *Beca de Comunidades Nativas Amazónicas* only represents 3% and the Beca EIB 2% (1,030 in total) of all Beca 18 scholarships (Chaikuni 2016). Moreover, the former has a narrow focus on indigenous peoples from the Amazon, excluding the more numerous highland groups (Quechua and Aymara). This is a relevant difference that is at the origin of local inter-group tensions illustrated by the Pangoa case study.

Struggle for *exclusion* in Inzá, Colombia

It was not long after midnight of 2010 Christmas Eve, when the Cultural Centre of San Andrés Pisimbalá, a small town in the Inzá Municipality, Western Cauca, was converted into a battlefield. Celebrations were interrupted by gunshots that left four people seriously injured, while others reported machete wounds (Semana 2011). This was one of the first violent episodes in a conflict between local indigenous and peasant residents that, eight years later, has yet to find a solution. The main issue in the dispute revolves around the implementation of *educación propia*. A year before the Christmas Eve clashes, on 30 December 2009, the Cauca's Education Secretariat issued a Decree (0591) listing 666 schools across the Department as complying with the *educación propia* requirements. In line with national law, these schools could pass under the control of indigenous authorities. The Decree, however, triggered hostile reactions from communities where part of the population was in

⁴ 73% of the recipients are in conditions of extreme poverty while the remaining 27% are below the poverty threshold (Chaikuni 2016).

disagreement with the implementation of ethnoeducation in local schools. This was the case particularly in those areas bordering indigenous territories (*resguardos*), where indigenous and non-indigenous (mostly peasant) residents had been peacefully coexisting for decades.

In an effort to deescalate tensions, a second Decree (0102) was issued in 2010 that excluded 32 of those schools listed in the previous norm. In San Andrés, however, the provision had the opposite effect, resulting in a new wave of tensions. Indigenous leaders initiated legal actions against local and departmental authorities (CRIC 2010), and, just a few days after the approval of the new Decree, indigenous protestors took over the local high-school buildings, locking out more than 300 students. In the following months, the two opposing groups (those in favour and those against *educación propia*) set up segregated informal schooling services. After two failed negotiation attempts (Universidad Javeriana 2013), the local indigenous authority (*cabildo*) opted to unilaterally go ahead with the implementation of the *educación propia* project. With the support of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC), professors were hired and the buildings were re-occupied by indigenous students (interview with *cabildo* members, San Andrés, November 2015). The rest of the students, in the meanwhile, had been receiving their education in private or rented houses by some of the former teachers of the local school (interview with members of the Peasant Association of Inzá Tierradentro, *Asociación Campesina de Inzá Tierradentro* ACIT, San Andrés, November 2015).

The school occupation also exacerbated tensions between communities' factions and led to the escalation of a conflict that took the form of a complex, multilayer confrontation for the control of local power and territory. Some residents, both indigenous and non-indigenous, reported that they were told they would lose the public benefits they received (through the *cabildo*) if they decided to withdraw their children from the indigenous school. According to local sources, around 160 were in fact excluded from the Family in Action (*Familia en Acción*) program, which offers financial aid to families with minor children in school. Between 2000 and 2015, 27 claims against the *cabildo* were filed for land invasion, personal injury, damage to third party property and threats (interview with members of ACIT, San Andrés, November 2015). Some peasant families decided to leave the area. Among them were the parents of Alonso Secundino Pancho Tencué, a 21 year-old student killed in May 2011 on his way home from school. Those responsible for the crime were never identified. The guerrilla of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC), very active in the area until the peace talks started in 2012, claimed responsibility⁵ but, according to local residents, the murder is also linked to the school conflict (interview with members of ACIT, San Andrés, November 2015).

Blackmail and threats continued to exacerbate tensions among local residents, particularly peasants, who felt the indigenous authority was preventing them from expressing their opinions. An indigenous woman who decided to leave the *cabildo* and join the peasant organization in protest against the way indigenous authorities managed the education issue, told me: 'education is supposed to be a right and to be free (...) but here they said: "you have

⁵ Children from San Andrés represented an important recruitment basin for the FARC. At least 3 children from the area were killed by the guerrilla between 2012 and 2014, after they abandoned the armed fight and returned to their communities (interview with an indigenous woman whose 14 year-old daughter was killed by the FARC in 2013, San Andrés, November 2015).

to go to the indigenous school”, with teachers without degrees and with a very poor quality education. So they force you to put your children there⁶ (interview, San Andrés, November 2015). The quality of education under the new system was indeed one of the main concerns for some parents. Peasant families felt that an education mostly in Nasa Yuwe (the language of the ethnic majority) with a strong emphasis on Nasa culture, traditions and leadership skills was not appropriate for their children. More broadly, they saw the school dispute as but one manifestation of a conflict for the control of territory and local power. Over the past decade, the *cabildo* has indeed undertaken an expansionistic strategy by advancing new claims on peasant land based on ancestral holdings and directly occupying some of the peasant estates (*fincas*) scattered across the indigenous territory.

Peasants feel increasingly unsafe and unwelcome in a place that they consider their home. Yet, they understand the claims for recognition of indigenous inhabitants and do not oppose the idea of an indigenous school. Rather, they propose to have two local schools: one adopting the *educación propia* model under the authority of the *cabildo* and the other one managed by state institutions offering a standard education curriculum. Departmental authorities were open to discuss this option and potentially fund the construction of a second school. What could seem, for an external eye, a reasonable compromising way out of the conflict was, however, challenged by an entrenched history of colonization and discrimination. The two-school solution was, in fact, completely dismissed by the *cabildo*, which considers it yet another expression of racism against indigenous peoples. With two different schools, ‘the discrimination of us here and them there will continue’⁷ (interview with a former member of the CRIC secretariat, San Andrés, November 2015). As the indigenous governor put it, ‘in such a small community we are not supposed to have such differences, because with that it just means there is racism, there is discrimination, they do not want us to be part of it [school system]’⁸ (interview, San Andrés, November 2015).

Yet, only a few kilometres west of San Andrés, a two-school solution was the way out of a similar conflict between the indigenous *cabildo* of La Gaitana and the peasant community of Guanacas. Like in San Andrés, the local school was first included in the Decree 0591 and then excluded from the list soon after. Indeed, the school was neither on indigenous land, nor was serving a majority of indigenous students. Yet the legal actions of the *cabildo* managed to bring the case in front of the Colombian Constitutional Court, which ruled in favour of the indigenous party, arguing that the right of prior consultation to indigenous peoples (established in international human rights law and incorporated in the Colombian Constitution) had been violated when the school was excluded from the *educación propia* list (Sentence T-116/11). Peasants, on their part, also claimed their right to be consulted. As a result of the bipartisan consultation process, a new indigenous school was built on the *resguardo* land while the old school was downsized to serve the remaining students.

⁶ “Se supone que la educación es un derecho y es libre, pero acá dijeron: ‘Acá tienen que ir al colegio indígena’ con profesores totalmente bachilleres, con una educación de muy mala calidad. Entonces a uno lo obligan a que tiene que poner a su hijo allá”.

⁷ “(...) seguiría esa discriminación de usted allá y nosotros acá”.

⁸ “En una comunidad tan pequeña no tenemos por qué haber diferencias, porque con eso nomás estamos mirando de que realmente pues hay como un racismo, hay como una discriminación, no se quiere que nosotros hagamos parte de ello”.

Before the two-school solution became inevitable, however, negotiation efforts were carried out to implement an experimental intercultural education model (neither indigenous nor standard) that would accommodate the needs of a complex human geography consisting of about half peasant and half indigenous population (including Nasa, Guambiano and Afro-Colombians). Issues surrounding resource management and the hiring of the teaching personnel did not allow the negotiation parties to reach an agreement. Peasants were keen to keep these elements under the control of the state, while indigenous were in favour of shifting towards an autonomous *cabildo*-led administration. Indeed, they considered that:

(...) the appropriation of the school as a political and cultural strategy necessary means that the [indigenous] authorities should control the management and orientation of this educational process, (...) because the state, during all these years, has never guaranteed inclusion or interculturality in education (interview with the education secretary of La Milagrosa indigenous association, La Milagrosa, November 2015)⁹.

This growing autonomy also raises concerns about the lack of formal protections for the school personal, including the right to unionize. Many of the peasant leaders are indeed teachers themselves. Originally from the area, they had access to higher education through scholarship programs (some of them have degrees from Colombian elite universities), but decided to return to the region and contribute to its development. They now perceive that the radical take on education of the *cabildo* is preventing them from engaging in an effort towards a better, more inclusive education that they had been pushing for years:

We can transform this region, this country, through education, because knowledge is another form of power; but that knowledge has to be in everyone's hands. That's why we're still here; that is why many of us had opportunities in the city or to continue studying but we preferred to return and stay here because it is the opportunity to transform from the example with our children and contribute to what we believe (interview with high school teacher and peasant leader, Guanacas, November 2015).¹⁰

Struggle for *inclusion* in Pangoa, Peru

San Martín de Pangoa is a typical Amazonian town. A handful of mostly dirt roads form a chessboard of brick buildings and partially unfinished houses around the main square overlooked by a modern version of a colonial church. The town is the capital of the Pangoa district, in the Junín region of central Peru. Its territory forms part of the VRAEM (Valleys of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers), the only area in Peru still formally in state of emergency due to the presence of active guerrilla groups as well as drug trafficking. The district has a population of around 61,000, of which 6,525 are indigenous of two major

⁹“(…) la apropiación de la escuela como una estrategia política y cultural, lo que conlleva es a que sean las autoridades, la comunidad, que tenga el manejo de ese proceso educativo, que tenga el direccionamiento y la orientación de todo ese proceso educativo, (...) porque el estado, durante todos estos años, nunca nos ha garantizado la inclusión, no ha garantizado ningún tipo de interculturalidad en la educación”.

¹⁰“Nosotros podemos transformar esta región, este país, desde la educación, porque el conocimiento es otra forma de poder; pero ese conocimiento tiene que estar en las manos de todos. Por eso seguimos acá; por eso, muchos teníamos oportunidades en la ciudad o de seguir estudiando y preferimos regresar y quedarnos aquí porque es la oportunidad de transformar desde el ejemplo con nuestros hijos y aportarle a lo que creemos”.

Amazon ethnic groups (called ‘native’ as opposed to highland ethnic groups): Ashaninka and Nomatsiguenga (Santos Arana 2017). The rest of the population is formed by peasant settlers, mostly of Quechua origin, who arrived over the last 50 years from coastal or highland regions either through government-led ‘colonization’ programs or in search of land (Newing 2013). Native and migrants live in small villages in close proximity to each other and in certain cases in mixed settlements. This co-existence has led to the emergence of sporadic tensions, mostly around land tenure. Lately, education has also become a contentious issue in Pangoa.

In 2014, the creation of a scholarship for Amazonian ethnic communities (within the Beca 18 program) was applauded as an opportunity to improve the access to higher education for students in the region. Some Quechua students were keen to apply, but soon realized that their application process was not as smooth as for their Ashaninka and Nomatsiguenga colleagues. Alongside their application, students had to submit proof of belonging to an indigenous people and of residence in a native Amazon community (among those included in the Ministry of Culture’s Register of Native Communities), signed by three communal authorities and endorsed by the regional or national indigenous organization. Since Quechua migrants are not organized in ethnic associations and their communities are not among those recognized by the Ministry of Culture, it was practically impossible for Quechua students to comply with the scholarship’s requirements.

Quechua parents were puzzled by this outcome and considered the exclusion of their children an act of discrimination on at least two grounds. Firstly, they argued, migrant children have attended the same local schools as native children (some of which are IBE schools). They also share similar conditions of poverty, marginalization and insecurity. They therefore experience the same social gaps in their education and living conditions. Secondly, migrant families interpreted the Ministry’s decision as an act of denial and misrecognition of their Quechua ethnic identity and culture (interview with a leader of the Quechua association, Satipo, April 2016).

Quechua families started to mobilize and won the support of the mayor of the Pangoa District, who issued an ordinance to grant them recognition as an ethnic group. Yet the action did not succeed in gaining traction at the national level. The Ministry of Education remained strong in its position against the inclusion of Quechua students from the Amazon. The official view is that these students do not meet the ethnic criteria and should therefore compete for the income-based scholarship program available for all Peruvian students. Moreover, their attempt to access the native peoples’ scholarship is perceived as a way of ‘tricking the system’ that is unrelated to recognition and rights. In the words of a manager in the national IBE program:

This [Beca 18 for native communities] is a national affirmative action initiative for some indigenous peoples, not for all indigenous peoples. (...) And beyond that, one thing is a native community and another thing is a peasant community. In the Selva Central there are no Quechua peasant communities; there are Quechua *colonos* (interview Lima, April 2016)¹¹.

¹¹ “Esta es una iniciativa nacional de acción afirmativa, en este caso para los pueblos indígenas, para algunos, porque no es tampoco para todos (...). Además una cosa es comunidad nativa y otra cosa es comunidad campesina. En Selva Central no hay comunidades campesinas Quechuas, hay colonos Quechuas.”

In other words, only those Quechua communities from the highlands recognized by the Ministry of Culture have the right to an ethnic status. Yet, they are still not able to apply for this particular scholarship, which is only for Amazon communities. Quechua people from the Amazon, on their part, cannot apply because their ethnic belonging is not recognized.

To be sure, this is not just a matter of bureaucratic labelling. In practice, these differences (between native and peasant; peasant and *colono*) mark strong social boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, recognition and discrimination, and permeate the discourse, not only of bureaucrats, but of indigenous leaders as well:

The Amazonian indigenous peoples have reacted [to the Quechua mobilization], because that does not proceed: they are not peasant communities, they are groups of individuals that do not represent a people, as in the case of a native community. The native communities have territory, they have their identity, their own language, a whole culture and they have been here for years. They have history here in the jungle. That is not what the *colonos* have, because they have migrated, they have come from over there, their history is elsewhere (interview with indigenous leaders and local representative of the Ministry of Education, Satipo, April 2015).¹²

We [Ashaninka] have been living here for a long time, so we are a native people. The *Quechua-speaking people* migrated to the jungle from the highlands and also from the coast. We call them *colonos*, because they have settled here. (...) The Beca 18 is directed to the indigenous peoples that exist here in the Amazon rainforest¹³ (interview with leader of the native organization Central Ashaninka De Rio Ene, CARE, Satipo, April 2015).¹⁴

This is precisely the discourse that generates resentment among Quechua residents. The very labels commonly used to describe the Quechua are derogatory: the term '*colono*' (not uncommonly coupled with 'invader') is associated with ideas of greed, selfishness and environmental destruction. And for Quechua leaders, also the expression 'Quechua-speaking people' entails a discriminatory connotation:

I am not a Quechua-speaking person. I am a Quechua person. I didn't learn Quechua afterwards, but I was born Quechua from my ancestors and I am still Quechua. (...) This is why we started to

¹² "Los pueblos indígenas amazónicas han reaccionado, porque eso no procede porque no son comunidades campesinas, son grupos de personas no más, que no representa un pueblo como una comunidad nativa. Las comunidades nativas tienen territorio, tienen su identidad, su propia lengua, ahí hay toda una cultura y que están posesionados hace años aquí, tienen historia acá en la selva y eso no tienen los colonos, porque ellos han migrado, han venido de allá, su historia está allá."

¹³ Indigenous leaders were not satisfied with the scholarship program. They highlighted how many native beneficiaries returned before finishing their programs. They pointed the finger against the local schooling system, arguing that it is not adequate to prepare native students to compete with students from urban areas: "The government says 'I put you in the best university', but that child of the VRAEM cannot compete with a child of the Lima upper class, it is impossible and all those young people come back frustrated" ("El gobierno dice 'te pongo en la mejor universidad', pero que niño del VRAEM puede competir con un niño de la clase alta de Lima, es imposible y todos esos jóvenes regresan frustrados", interview with CART leader, Satipo, April 2016).

¹⁴ "Nosotros hemos vivido acá desde hace mucho tiempo, entonces somos nativos. (...) El pueblo Quechua-hablante ha migrado de los altos andinos, de la costa también. (...) Nosotros les decimos colonos aquí, porque ellos se han asentado aquí. (...) La Beca 18 está dirigida más que nada para los pueblos indígenas que existen acá en la Selva Amazónica".

organize, because they were giving us names that do not correspond to our culture, to our vision (interview with Quechua leader, Satipo, April 2015).¹⁵

An organization of Quechua families was created in 2013. The organization fights racism against migrant communities and supports the revitalization of the Quechua language and culture, ultimately striving for inclusion and recognition of ‘Quechua native people with shades of the jungle’¹⁶ (interview with Quechua leader, Satipo, April 2015). The education field is where Quechua migrants’ struggle began. Aside from the possibility for Quechua children from Amazonian communities to access affirmative action programs for native peoples, their demands include the implementation of a IBE in Quechua to revert the vertiginous drop in the rates of Quechua-speaking children from migrant families. Attempts have also been made to reach out to universities and set up bilateral agreements that already exist with other native groups.

The Quechua organization is struggling to find support and funding. Cooperation agencies and NGOs that have been major sponsors of indigenous movements in Latin America have not shown interest in the Quechua migrants’ cause. One of the main reasons behind their reluctance may be the widely documented impact that internal migration has on the pristine Amazon rainforest (Bierregaard 2001). If Quechua migrants are often considered the ones to blame, from their perspective, there have been instances in which their rights have been violated too. In Pangoa, for example, settlers complain about their exclusion from a consultation process on a hydrocarbon exploration initiative that affected their land but on which only native communities were consulted (interview with Quechua leader, Satipo, April 2015). Although the idea of a Quechua ancestral territory in the Amazon still sounds like oxymoron, the Pangoa organization is in many ways pioneering the struggle for inclusion and recognition of migrant communities in the Peruvian Amazon. It has done so by embracing the transnational discourse of the indigenous rights movement, emphasizing discriminatory practices and referring to international human rights law for legal leverage. As a leader of the organization told me, while proudly displaying the traditional Quechua straps wrapped around her braids:

If you don’t make yourself visible, you are automatically *colono*, synonym of Hispanic. (...) Here in the jungle it would seem that Quechuas have no legality, they should not exist in rights or duties. The whole administrative and political system considers us as Hispanic, from the city and therefore we don’t have any right (...). But the International Labour Organization [Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples] says that all native people have rights, under the political Constitution. Why is it that this part of the jungle can’t have any? (interview, Satipo, April 2015).¹⁷

¹⁵ “No puedo ser Quechua-hablante porque yo no soy Quechua-hablante si no que soy del pueblo Quechua, porque no aprendí el Quechua después, sino que he nacido en el Quechua desde mis ancestros y sigo siendo Quechua. (...) Por todo eso surge la organización, porque nos estaban poniendo nombres que no corresponden a nuestras culturas, a nuestras visiones”.

¹⁶ ‘pueblo originario Quechua con matices de la selva’.

¹⁷ Si no estás visibilizado, automáticamente eres colono, sinónimo de Hispano. (...) Aquí en la selva pareciera que el Quechua no tuviera legalidad, no debe existir ni en derechos ni en deberes. Todo el sistema administrativo, político, te considera como Hispano, como de la ciudad, y por lo tanto no tienes ningún derecho desde ese sistema. (...) Pero la OIT [Organización Internacional del Trabajo] lo menciona, que todos los pueblos originarios tienen derechos bajo la Constitución política. Y porqué esta parte de la selva no puede ser??

Concluding Remarks

Identity policies of education have become increasingly popular over the past thirty years. In the Global South their success has also been the result of the work of international organizations and cooperation agencies that, since the 1990s, fully embraced the indigenous rights agenda, particularly in Latin America. These policies have been designed under the assumption that social groups live in relatively homogeneous or segregated communities. However, in practice, this is rarely the case. How these policies play out in socially heterogeneous contexts has not been fully explored, disregarding the potential ‘unequal material and cultural impacts of specific development policies on rural people’ (García 2005, 14) and the ‘need for a more relational and contextual approach to the operation of racial differences in school settings’ (McCarthy 2000, 389). Complementing the work of critical scholars of identity politics of education, this article has documented how these policies can not only be rejected by certain indigenous groups, but also trigger new competition and conflict between communities that have been peacefully coexisting for decades. These policies also intentionally and unintentionally impact wider social processes by reshaping inter-group relationships, collective identities and power dynamics.

Education policies are not rational, technocratic solutions to problems in wider society. They are inherently political because they are underpinned by ideas of identity, community, justice and rights and provide powerful systems of social reproduction, inclusion and distribution. The politics of education are mainly about ‘whom (or which groups) can and should be recognized as bearers of rights and claims’, ultimately reflecting ‘the very shape and configuration of society and the power relations it entails’ (Bacevic 2014, 18). Education policy-making is not only responding to the claims of specific groups, but actively contributing to the recreation, strengthening or dismantling of those very groups. As the sociological literature on boundary-making has warned (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2013), institutional and policy reforms are crucial factors that can explain changes in inter-group relationships. Identity policies of education seem indeed to have a strong effect on identity boundaries, increasing the relevance of certain ethno-cultural markers, while encouraging, in certain contexts, stigmatization and social closure. This can result in an increased social fragmentation and the weakening of a shared sense of belonging, which can jeopardize the very ideal of what a schooling environment should look like.

The two case studies analysed in this article are quite different in terms of levels of violence and social disruption as well as in the type of policy measures at the heart of the controversy. Yet Inzá and Pangoa exemplify the kind of tensions and claims that identity policies of education can trigger at the micro-level, particularly in the already fragile, conflict-prone, remote social environments typical of post-colonial societies. These controversies deserve greater attention not only because of the concrete negative effects they have on local communities, but also because they are the symptoms of broader tensions embedded in the design and implementation of popular policy measures. I will discuss here two issues that are at the root of these tensions.

Identity policies of education problematically target ethnic groups in an abstract fashion and as if they exist in isolation from specific social contexts. Indeed, multicultural education approaches often assume the existence of ‘bounded communities solidified through geographic and racialised borders’ (McCarthy 1998, 159). In normative terms, these limitations are reflected in the tendency to treat racial and ethnic definitions as immutable and a priori and to disregard historical variation in the practices of inclusion and exclusion and redefinition of ethnic categories. It can be argued that it would be hard to account for such complexity in national policymaking and that a certain level of generalization is unavoidable. Yet, issues of culture and identity are considerably less stable than what is proposed in the identity politics of education framework. In practice, as I show in this paper, this overly simplistic view of ethnic and cultural differences prevents the assessment of the consequences and impact of these policies in terms of the broader social aggregate. Indeed, as the two case studies exemplify, most communities that are targeted by these policies do not live in isolation but share their environment with other groups, who are also likely to react to the implementation of identity policies. Reactions to the changes in power relationships between groups can lead to the raise of new grievances for inclusion, as in the case of Pangoa, but also for exclusion, as in the case of Inzá. The dichotomous relationship between inclusion and exclusion should not be misleading. In this case, inclusion and exclusion are indeed two aspects of the same problem, and particularly of the inability of identity policies of education to incorporate social heterogeneity and account for spillover effects between groups.

Claims for exclusion are rooted in a narrow understanding of IBE as a distinct schooling model for ethnic communities rather than a broader endeavour to strengthen intercultural exchange across society. As scholars have noted (Aikman 2012; García 2005), the emphasis on the bilingual rather than intercultural aspect of IBE is problematic because it can be perceived as perpetuating the process of differentiation and silencing of ethnic communities. But it also has nothing whatsoever to say to groups who might have needs or feel they have claims but who cannot be defined in ethnic terms. It is not surprising, therefore, that *educación propia* will unlikely be the solution for mixed communities straggling for a truly intercultural education and that the implementation of IBE will hardly be successful if it ends up creating new patterns of exclusion.

Claims for inclusion illustrate how assumptions of ethnic culture and identity as bounded, coherent and static are failing to make sense of the multiplicity of identities that people embrace and the rapid changes in self-identification processes. The Quechua people in Peru are an example of how ethnicity can quickly go from being a derogatory category to an empowering tool. Until very recently, among peasant communities, being ‘indigenous’ was synonymous with backwardness, economic poverty and lack of political power (García 2005; Aikman 2012). Now, it is increasingly common for Quechua people to embrace ethnic labelling to claim for rights and recognition. The Pangoa case is indeed one of the first examples of how the ethnicisation of Peruvian peasants is slowly spreading from mining communities in the highlands to the Amazon lowlands. This case also illustrates how the narrow understanding of identity in education policies is unable to account for contingent social processes, such as migration dynamics and, again, the existence of complex, non-homogenous schooling communities. Indeed, this example is reinforcing what critical scholars have already noted: that we should move towards the overcoming of the very

separation between school and community and towards the creation of spaces for engagement and active social participation in education (Catalán Colque 2007; Zavala et al. 2007).

Issues of inclusion and exclusion are not only grounded in the way the identity policies of education framework conceptualizes how societies work, but also in the way these policies offer their own vision of a social order. At the macro-level, social differentiation criteria are generally justified by the need to tackle horizontal inequalities. Indeed, these politics are based on the idea that we should prioritize reducing inter-group inequalities over vertical inequalities across all identity groups (Brown, Langer and Stewart 1990). The micro-perspective in this paper illustrating how these policies work in multicultural environments contributes to rise new normative dilemmas. For instance, should Quechua migrants in Pangoa be entitled to the same scholarship as their native neighbours? On what grounds can their exclusion be justified? Should peasant students in Inzá have the right to opt out of the *educación propia* system? On what grounds should ethno-education be enforced for peasant students? Is two-school modelling a fair or discriminatory solution?

These questions force us to ask how inclusive identity policies of education are in practice, or more precisely, whether the degree of exclusion that they entail can be justified. On the one hand, an ‘empowering through strong boundaries’ model can strengthen traditionally marginalized ethnic sectors, but can also widen social and inter-cultural gaps and weaken social cohesion. On the other hand, an ‘equalizing through melting boundaries’ model closes social and cultural gaps but also reduces the political power and internal cohesion of ethnic communities. To implement these different models, AA and IBE can take very different shapes. If the first model would be better served by a very demanding definition of ethnicity (e.g. language-based) as entry criterion for AA measures, the second model necessitates a multi-variable framework that considers economic and spatial factors. For IBE, the two main options are a bilingual curriculum model targeted toward specific ethnic groups or the ‘intercultural education for all’ model. Different models will better serve different national and local contexts. Yet, in a general sense, the experiences of Inzá and Pangoa highlight the need for a thorough discussion about the meaning of social justice in education (Gewirtz 1998). Regardless of which policy measures policymakers implement for the management of ethno-cultural differences, education should not lose sight of its fundamental goals, including promoting mutual respect and dialogue and offering guarantees for peaceful coexistence to multicultural communities.

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