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### Current overview of the Ecuadorian cultural wealth: a seed of talents and traditions

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#### Abstract

In recent times there has been a lot of discussion about interculturality. This is good news, because it means that people are interested in the subject; however, it seems that there are still some points that must be clarified and certain aspects that can be better treated. This work aims to offer a contribution to the knowledge of interculturality and its validity in Ecuador. With a simple vocabulary, it faces the global problem in several of its most complex dimensions, so that readers, especially those who are participating in social organizations, have greater elements of judgment to understand the reality of our country. As its central issue cannot be treated in isolation, this work also addresses issues such as the Ecuadorian nation, ethnic and regional diversities, traditions, collective rights, and multinationality. He also makes some references to the international situation. It concludes with a consideration of national unity and the future of our country.

#### Introduction

Ecuador is a multiethnic and multicultural nation. Its population exceeds 14 million inhabitants. Of it, more than 5 and a half million live in the Sierra. On the Coast the figure is close to 6.5 million. In the Amazon there are more than 600,000 inhabitants and in Galapagos about 17,000.

The culture of Ecuador is a mixture of different traditions that originated in the Andes, the Ecuadorian and the coast. After the arrival of the Spanish, the Ecuadorian identity incorporated Catholic traditions, which took deep roots in

the national culture. Approximately 40 to 60 percent of the population is *half Blood* (Arias, Herrera, & González, 2016), a mixture of indigenous and Spanish descent. On the other hand, 20-25 percent of Ecuadorians identify themselves as indigenous; while four percent of the Ecuadorian population inhabits the Amazon Basin (also known as the Oriente).

Likewise, the culinary traditions in the Ecuadorian Culture (Macias, Garcia, Mera, & Munoz, 2019) vary greatly according to the region: coastal gastronomic elements are often fish and legumes, while Andean cuisine prefers meat, rice and ground corn. Visitors to Ecuador can enjoy exotic fruits, tasty seafood such as spicy lemon-marinated shrimp, and a surprising variety of potatoes among other distinctive flavors.

In the coastal region, they make use of honey for different diseases, which is why there are people dedicated to this trade providing breeding in different places and evaluating the possibilities of implementing different varieties and qualities of honey (Macías, Rodríguez, Moreira, & Mera, 2020).

Music has been an important cultural aspect in Ecuador since long before the rise of the Inca Empire. Instruments such as flutes, drums, and trumpets have been found in ancient tombs. El Pasillo is a popular genre of Ecuadorian music that is associated with indigenous communities, while marimba and bombs music are associated with Afro-Ecuadorian communities (Ibarra, 2004).

This fact presents favorable advantages such as the opportunity for Ecuador to exploit cultural and community tourism, allowing foreign or local tourists to share a direct coexistence with the modus vivendi of a particular community or town, or, to have countless cultural heritages (material or immaterial) that undoubtedly represent strength and cultural wealth; It has been this same variety that in social practice has generated several conflicts.

Mestizos, indigenous people, Montubios, blacks, among others, all these ethnic groups that make up the majority of the population in Ecuador, have historical antecedents, customs, traditions, physical traits, in themselves, their own characteristics that when manifested socially have created great distinctions and differentiations, thus also achieving distinctions and differentiations in behavior and social treatment towards these population groups. In this sense, those who are most vulnerable to any "differentiation" are the population groups that appear as minorities (indigenous, black, Montubios) compared to the dominant group in Ecuador made up of mestizos.

Contemporary Ecuadorian culture has diverse and deep roots in a history as rich as it is multi-ethnic. At the time of research for this article, the population of Ecuador was estimated at according to the National Institute of Statistics (INEC), Ecuador reaches 17.3 million inhabitants (INEC, 2020), with an annual growth of 1.4%. It is an ethnically very diverse population, where 65% are mestizo (a mixture of indigenous and Caucasian); 25%, indigenous; 10% Caucasian; 7%, Afro-descendants.

The different human groups that have settled in Ecuador from Europe, Africa, as well as the many indigenous nationalities of the country, all have

contributed to what we can now call Ecuadorian Culture. From the rich and varied culinary traditions to the customs when it comes to celebrating the various religious festivals, it is a pleasure to explore the Ecuadorian culture.

In this research, it is proposed to offer a contribution to the knowledge of the interculturality of Ecuador as a seed of talents and traditions, through a simple vocabulary, it faces the global problem in several of its most complex dimensions, so that readers, especially those who are participating in social organizations, have elements to understand the reality of the country. The objective is to identify the current panorama of Ecuadorian cultural wealth as a seed of talents and traditions; through a documentation process to show the cultural diversity of the people of Ecuador.

### **Materials and methods**

The inductive method was used, complemented with analytical-synthetic methods, it was necessary to apply these methods, because the universe is made up of a series of cultural factors, which, only understanding them in their particularity will lead to the concept universal, the processes of analysis and synthesis, which will specify in a better way, the characteristics of the whole and its parts.

### **Analysis and discussion of the results**

Until recently, a foreigner who came to Ecuador, when looking at the advertising that appeared in the media, could take the idea that the country was inhabited exclusively by white people, since advertising In his images he showed some European-looking Ecuadorians who could well have come from Switzerland or Italy. School textbooks also reproduced in their graphics this image of a country inhabited by white and Western people. Of course, a brief walk through the streets and markets of any of our towns immediately convinced the visitor that the vision given by advertising and reading manuals was false. Ecuadorian people are diverse. There are mestizos of different characteristics, indigenous, black and groups of other ethnic origins. In figure 1, this multidiversity is observed (Ecuadoria, 2020), as shown in figure 1.



Figure 1. Ethnic multidiversity of Ecuador

Recent years, things have changed, but the image of a country of whites or white -mixed raceis still quite ingrained. For more than a century the idea was cultivated that the Ecuadorian nation was uniform or, in any case, it should become so, it is not possible to deny the presence of indigenous people and blacks, it was thought that everyone should try to approach the stereotype of the Ecuadorian and integrate into the dominant society. For this, it has sought to standardize the customs, language and forms of social organization of all Ecuadorians, something that is not possible because each region has its habits, customs, food (Álvarez, 2017). Indigenous practices and beliefs have been considered "wild," "primitive," or purely folkloric; the languages 13 of the native peoples have been considered "uneducated" and it has been tried to eliminate them. Blacks have been treated with racism, as upstarts and inferiors; but interculturality and plurinationality have been strengthened with SumakKawsay (Rodríguez, 2017).

The human diversity of Ecuador occurs in the midst of a variety of climates, geographical spaces, where the four regions are all with different characteristics (Rodríguez & Vázquez, 2018) and environmental realities. This is not only a uniqueness of the country, but also the basis for the formation of regional identities.

In the diverse geographic and population realities, regional entities with their own cultural and political profiles have been consolidated throughout history. These territorial spaces have populations that have developed identities, with their history, their customs, their way of speaking, their very characteristic food, for example in Pujilí, Cotopaxi province (Sangucho& Calderon, 2014).

This reality does not occur only in the diversity of mountain people and coastal people, but also in configured and strong regional cultures such as the Manabita and the Lojana, just to cite two examples. Many have seen this reality as an obstacle to the consolidation of national unity, as a threat to the country, and the eradication of regional features has been proposed, confusing them with regionalism (Reza, Galindo, Rizzo, &Boni, 2018).

There has also been a tendency to view Ecuador as homogeneous in religious beliefs. For years, this country had the Catholic as the state religion, there was even a constitution that required being a Catholic to be a citizen. But the advent of the secular state allowed freedom of conscience and the right to religious

diversity. Now, in the exercise of that right, people in the country practice their religion without legal limitations, in 2012 the INEC presented for the first time the state of religions in Ecuador (INEC, 2012).

Given the reality of the country, it is evident that this vision of the uniform Ecuadorian nation is not true. Ecuador is heterogeneous, despite being small, especially if we compare it in South America, but it is not simple or straightforward. It is a social entity with a complex politics. In many ways, it is much more so than in most countries in the world, some of them much larger and more populous. In the midst of great geographic diversity, there are not only mestizos here. There are compatriots, individuals and entire indigenous peoples, who, being Ecuadorians, have customs, language, diverse identity, based on resistance to the conquest, the colony and its republican continuity, or arising from the implantation of black communities that have managed to maintain their cultural specificity. Furthermore, it is clear that even among mestizos there is great diversity, this of importance for the sustainable development of the country (Baez, 2019).

Historically, there have always been manifestations of ethnic diversity in Ecuador, but only in recent decades has the idea of a homogeneous mestizo country been surpassed. There are 15 indigenous peoples in Ecuador, described by (Chisaguano, 2006), there has also been a trend towards the vindication of regional values and demands for autonomy have been generated, achieving demands for effective equality. Those of women, for example, here, as elsewhere, are recognized as having a gender difference between human beings; but the difference was not assumed in terms of equality. Men considered themselves superior to women and in this way organized society and the state.

Machismo generated tremendous inequalities and it insisted on maintaining them, an example of this is that it has occurred in the period of the pandemic where women have been subjected to violence in many territories of the country (Navarrete, Rodríguez, & Jiménez, 2020). Gender violence understood as physical, verbal, psychological, patrimonial aggression and taking the life of a woman is a social problem that afflicts the length and breadth of the planet, in some culture's women are considered an object that is acquired. In the 21st century there is a fight for gender equality and especially for the protection of women against aggressors

Women have long fought for equality, but only recently has this dimension of our life begun to be accepted. reality and there is still a long way to go. There is much to be done in terms of tolerance and guarantee of the right to diversity for sexual minorities, persecuted and criminalized even today.

There are also other manifestations of diversity, Ecuador is one of the countries in America with the highest proportion of young people. But this generational diversity has been very little taken into account. The dominant views are of a country of adults, in which young people are seen as small adults to whom the "future" belongs and not the present. But the truth is that youth not only have great values, but have generated a kind of their own cultures that should be considered as values of the country.

Today young people are investigating how to rescue ancestral cultures, examples of them are the work carried out to recover the conservation of cacao (Macias, Garcia, Mera, & Munoz, 2019), Another of the customs that are recovering is the cure of some diseases with the studied properties of the typical tree of the coast, the ceibo (Macias, Gorozabel, Mera, & Munoz, 2019) among other studies.

But in the reality of diversities and differences, not everything is values. Here, as everywhere in the world, physical and health limitations make people different in some ways. The lack of sight, the inability to walk, are realities that differentiate people. This negative side of diversity will never be fully compensated, even if societies develop guarantees and programs for people with disabilities. A good step is to become aware of this reality and start taking measures to remedy it.

Heterogeneity and diversities occur in a reality of underdevelopment and poverty. There are great social class differences in Ecuador and in recent times the gap between rich and poor, far from narrowing, has widened, as has the distance between developed and underdeveloped countries. Although several diseases have been eradicated, there are still others that kill much of our population, especially children.

### **Interculturality**

In Ecuador there is awareness of the need to promote interculturality, but there is still much to do to consolidate itself as intercultural. For this, it must not only renew its laws, but also its institutions, its internal social fabric, where the family plays the essential role educating their children in values, respecting other cultures that coexist within the same geographical environment.

The greatest danger and the greatest challenge for the State and society is that in the regular educational system in which the vast majority of the population lives, the need to make it intercultural has not even been recognized. It has not been proposed that it promote knowledge of indigenous and black cultures, respect for their knowledge, and the legitimacy of differences, while at the same time, recognizing diversity, promoting equality and justice as its fundamental elements.

Forging an intercultural society is a great task and a great challenge that goes far beyond taking State measures or issuing legislation, it is first of all, promoting from the State, on the one hand, and from society on the other, the recognition of differences, overcoming prejudices, appreciation of the other and the construction of that common space that can be seen as belonging to all.

In the national development plan, there are homologated statistical indicators for the year (2017 - 2021), shown in figure 2.

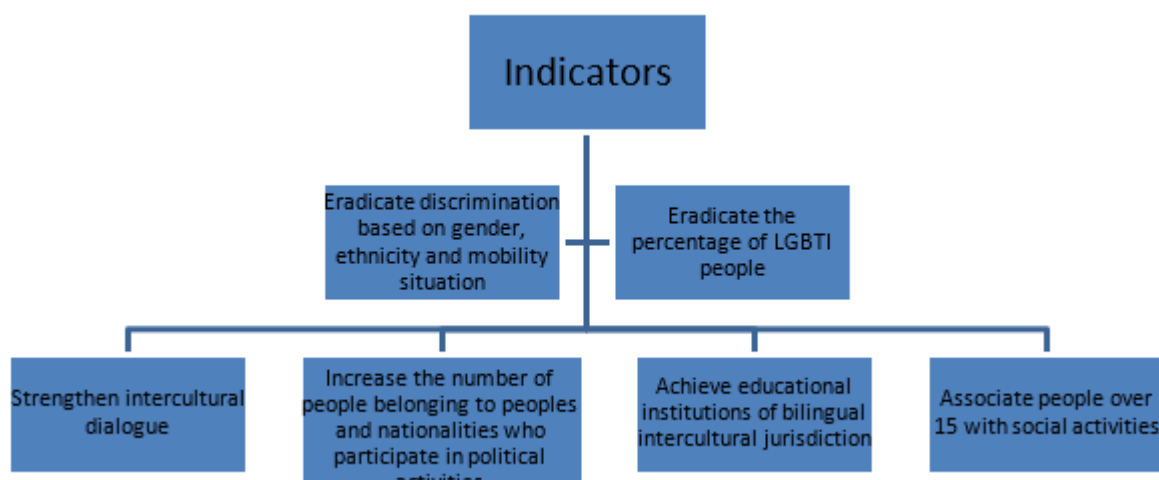


Figure 2. Statistical indicators for 2021

One of the goals is to eradicate discrimination by gender, ethnicity and mobility situation, among the indicators are: Eradicate the percentage of LGBTI people who have experienced some type of discrimination due to their sexual orientation and gender identity; eliminate the percentage of women who have experienced some type of gender discrimination; Reinforce the cultural dialogue; increase the number of people belonging to peoples and nationalities who participate in political activities; achieve educational institutions of bilingual intercultural jurisdiction with the Model of the Intercultural Bilingual Education System; to be able to associate social activities with people over 15 years of age.

There are other indicators such as the improvement of employment for people belonging to peoples and nationalities; to increase the enrollment levels of people by ethnic self-identification (indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio) with access to high school and thereby improve public education services with an intercultural approach, achieving that the proportion of students in the 3rd year of high school (end of secondary education) who are self-identified as Afro-Ecuadorians exceed the minimum level of competence in the matter of Mathematics, a subject that today presents difficulties (Zambrano, Yáñez, & Rodríguez, 2020).

Other challenges are posed that must be met by 2021, if the aforementioned challenges are achieved, education, health levels will be the fundamental basis of the good living of the citizen can become a reality with the multiculturalism and diversity of the Ecuadorian people.

## Conclusions

A sketch is made of the ethnic diversities and regions that exist in the Ecuadorian territory, highlighting the biodiversity of cultures, languages, according to the geographical location of each society.

Interculturality is the basic element of Ecuadorian society, where there are bridges of relationship and institutions that guarantee diversity, but also creative interrelation, understanding the relationship that enriches the entire social conglomerate, creating a space not only of contact but of generation of a new common reality.

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