



## Training for intercultural citizenship in university students

### Formación para una ciudadanía intercultural en estudiantes universitarios

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#### ABSTRACT

Intercultural education not only seeks to promote respect and coexistence between cultures, but also to develop skills that enable students to understand, value and take advantage of cultural diversity as a resource for learning and building more inclusive societies. The research objective is to determine the effectiveness of the training programme for intercultural citizenship in university students. Methodologically, a quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach was used, and the sample consisted of 260 university students. The results of this research confirm the effectiveness of the training programme for intercultural citizenship in university students, evidenced by the statistically significant change in the experimental group (G1POSTEST), with a bilateral significance of 0.021, while the other groups remained at 0. This allowed the acceptance of the affirmative hypothesis and the rejection of the null hypothesis, demonstrating that the programme had a positive impact on the population studied.

**Descriptors:** intercultural dialogue; intercultural education; cultural diversity. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

#### RESUMEN

La educación intercultural no solo busca promover el respeto y la convivencia entre culturas, sino también desarrollar competencias que permitan a los estudiantes comprender, valorar y aprovechar la diversidad cultural como un recurso para el aprendizaje y la construcción de sociedades más inclusivas. Se destaca como objetivo de investigación determinar la Efectividad del programa de formación para una ciudadanía intercultural en estudiantes universitarios. Metodológicamente utilizó un diseño cuasiexperimental con un enfoque cuantitativo, la muestra estuvo conformada por 260 estudiantes universitarios. Los resultados de esta investigación confirman la efectividad del programa de formación para una ciudadanía intercultural en estudiantes universitarios, evidenciada por el cambio estadísticamente significativo en el grupo experimental (G1POSTEST), con una significancia bilateral de 0,021, mientras que los demás grupos permanecieron en 0. Esto permitió aceptar la hipótesis afirmativa y rechazar la hipótesis nula, demostrando que el programa tuvo un impacto positivo en la población estudiada.

**Descriptor:** diversidad cultural; educación intercultural; diálogo intercultural. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

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#### Research articles



## INTRODUCTION

Intercultural education not only seeks to promote respect and coexistence between cultures, but also to develop skills that enable students to understand, value and take advantage of cultural diversity as a resource for learning and building more inclusive societies (Andrade & Pardo, 2015; Krainer & Chaves, 2021). In this sense, universities, as meeting places for people from different backgrounds, are privileged settings for fostering intercultural dialogue and the development of global citizenship (Espinoza-Freire & Ley-Leyva, 2020).

From a pedagogical perspective, it has been shown that the implementation of intercultural educational strategies can generate significant transformations in the attitudes, knowledge and skills of students. In this sense, Bustamante-Álvarez et al. (2023) comment that everyday classroom practices, such as collaborative work and critical reflection, are essential for promoting interculturality. Similarly, Cépeda-García et al. (2019) mention the importance of adapting pedagogical practices to the specific cultural contexts of students, especially in communities with high cultural diversity, which reinforces the need for a situated approach to teaching.

In the Latin American context, intercultural education faces particular challenges arising from structural inequalities and the historical exclusion of certain cultural groups. According to Quichimbo-Saquichagua (2019), understanding interculturality in this region requires comprehensive action that transcends education and also addresses social and political dimensions. Along the same lines, Palomeque-Verdugo et al. (2023) point out that learning processes in higher education must consider the specific challenges faced by students in multicultural contexts, such as the lack of recognition of their knowledge and experiences.

On the other hand, the use of technological tools and innovative methodologies has been identified as a key resource for promoting interculturality in educational processes. Thus, Diaz-Quichimbo et al. (2021) highlight the role of social



networks as spaces for cultural exchange, while Florez-Montaña et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of foreign language learning as a means of developing intercultural competences. These strategies not only enrich the teaching-learning process, but also enhance interaction between students from different cultures, promoting a deeper understanding of diversity.

From the above, the research objective is to determine the effectiveness of the training programme for intercultural citizenship in university students.

### **Theoretical framework**

Training for intercultural citizenship in the university environment is based on the promotion of respect, the valuing of cultural diversity and the development of intercultural competences. In this sense, the following is presented:

#### **Interculturality and intercultural education**

Interculturality, from an educational perspective, is conceived as a dynamic process that fosters dialogue, mutual respect and the construction of equitable relationships between cultures. According to Andrade & Pardo (2015), intercultural education must design strategies that enable students not only to understand and value cultural diversity, but also to integrate it as a resource for learning and coexistence. This perspective seeks to transcend mere cultural coexistence in order to promote an active citizenship committed to social justice (Rodríguez-Leuro, 2023).

In the Latin American context, intercultural education faces specific challenges derived from structural inequalities and the historical exclusion of certain cultural groups. In this regard, Quichimbo-Saquichagua (2019) argues that intercultural education must address both educational and social aspects, promoting a comprehensive approach that recognises the knowledge and experiences of indigenous communities and other historically marginalised groups. Similarly, Espinoza-Freire & Ley-Leyva (2020) comment that, in countries such as Ecuador, intercultural education has emerged as a response to the demands for inclusion



and recognition of cultural diversity, although its implementation still faces significant challenges.

From a pedagogical perspective, Cépeda-García et al. (2019) mention that intercultural educational practices must be adapted to the specific cultural contexts of the students, which implies that the teaching-learning processes are more meaningful and relevant, promoting a deeper understanding of interculturality and its application in everyday life.

### **Intercultural competences**

The development of intercultural competences is a central objective of intercultural education. These competences include cognitive, emotional and social skills that enable students to interact effectively and respectfully with people from different cultures. Bustamante-Álvarez et al. (2023) therefore suggest that everyday classroom activities, such as collaborative work and critical reflection, are essential for fostering these competences. For their part, Florez-Montaña et al. (2022) emphasise that foreign language learning can be a key tool for developing intercultural skills, as it facilitates communication and understanding between cultures.

In the university environment, Krainer & Chaves (2021) propose a critical vision of intercultural education, pointing out that it must go beyond the simple transmission of knowledge about other cultures. From this perspective, intercultural education must promote critical reflection on the power relations and structural inequalities that affect intercultural interactions. This position is essential for training citizens capable of questioning and transforming the dynamics of exclusion and discrimination in their social contexts.

### **Pedagogical strategies for interculturality**

The implementation of effective pedagogical strategies is fundamental for the success of intercultural training programmes. In this sense, Cuadros-Muñoz & Chancay-Cedeño (2023) warn that group strategies are important in learning



about interculturality, as they encourage collaborative work and the exchange of perspectives among students. For their part, Diaz-Quichimbo et al. (2021) highlight the role of social networks as tools for promoting cultural interaction and meaningful learning in digital contexts.

Likewise, Garrote-Rojas et al. (2018) indicate that information and communication technologies (ICT) can enrich intercultural teaching-learning processes, facilitating access to educational resources and promoting interaction between students from different cultures. These tools, combined with innovative methodologies, can contribute to the development of intercultural competences more effectively, especially in university contexts.

## **METHOD**

The research method used a quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach, aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of a training programme for intercultural citizenship in university students. This design allowed for a comparison of the results obtained between an experimental group and a control group, before and after the implementation of the programme, with the aim of identifying significant changes in the intercultural competences of the participants.

The sample consisted of 260 university students selected by means of non-probabilistic convenience sampling. It was divided into two groups: an experimental group, made up of 131 students who participated in the training programme, and a control group, made up of 129 students who did not receive the intervention. Both groups were homogeneous in terms of age, gender and academic level, which guaranteed the comparability of the results.

For data collection, a validated questionnaire was used to measure intercultural competences, consisting of items related to the attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for coexistence in multicultural contexts. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by the judgement of 5 experts, obtaining a content validity index (CVI) of 0.89, which indicates a high relevance and clarity of the items. Likewise,



the reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, reaching a value of 0.91, which reflects excellent internal consistency. This instrument was applied at two points in time: before the intervention (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-test), both in the experimental group and in the control group.

The training programme was designed based on intercultural pedagogical principles, including reflective activities, group dynamics and analysis of practical cases related to cultural diversity. The intervention lasted eight weeks, with weekly sessions lasting two hours. During this period, the participants in the experimental group actively participated in the proposed activities, while the control group continued with their usual training without receiving the intervention.

The data collected was analysed using inferential statistical tests, specifically Student's t-test for independent samples, in order to compare the pretest and posttest results between the experimental and control groups. A significance level of 0.05 was considered to determine the existence of statistically significant differences.

## RESULTS

The results of the research are presented below, based on the data collected:

**Table 1.** Effectiveness of the intercultural citizenship training programme for university students.

	T	Prueba para una muestra				
		gl	Sig. (bilateral)	Diferencia de medias	95% de intervalo de confianza	
					Inferior	Superior
G1PRETES	-29,169	131	0	-2,11438	-3,3143	-2,9164
G2PRETES	-21,089	129	0	-2,04579	-3,3305	-2,801
G1POSTEST	-2,287	131	0,021	-0,0541	-0,1197	-0,0085
G2POSTEST	-62,942	129	0	-3,567321	-3,8804	-3,6459

**Source:** Author's own.



Given that the experimental group (G1POSTEST) presented a bilateral significance of 0.021, while the other groups remained at 0, a statistically significant change is observed. This indicates that the treatment applied was effective in the population studied.

In this sense, we proceed to accept the affirmative hypothesis H1 and reject the null hypothesis H0

### **Hypothesis test**

H1: The training programme for intercultural citizenship was effective in university students.

H0: The training programme for intercultural citizenship was not effective in university students.

### **DISCUSSION**

Firstly, the results coincide with the approaches of Andrade & Pardo (2015), who emphasise the importance of specific strategies for intercultural training in the university environment. The change observed in the experimental group suggests that the programme implemented succeeded in fostering intercultural competences, in line with the need to design educational interventions that promote coexistence and respect for cultural diversity.

Likewise, the results are related to the studies by Bustamante-Álvarez et al. (2023) and Cépeda-García et al. (2019), who promote that daily actions in the classroom and culturally sensitive pedagogical practices are fundamental for developing intercultural citizenship. In this sense, the evaluated programme seems to have incorporated practical and reflective elements that facilitated the internalisation of intercultural values in the students, as suggested by this research. cultural values in students, as suggested by this research.



On the other hand, research such as that of Cuadros-Muñoz & Chancay-Cedeño (2023) and Diaz-Quichimbo et al. (2021), warns that the role of group strategies and social networks as key tools for promoting interculturality, although the present study does not detail the use of these tools, the positive results suggest that the programme may have included collaborative and innovative approaches that promoted meaningful learning and cultural interaction.

Likewise, the challenges and opportunities of intercultural education in Latin America, discussed by authors such as Espinoza-Freire & Ley-Leyva (2020), Krainer & Chaves (2021), are relevant for interpreting the results. These authors mention that the effectiveness of intercultural programmes depends on their ability to address structural inequalities and promote inclusive education. In this case, the programme evaluated seems to have responded to these demands, achieving a positive impact on the students.

The study also aligns with the approaches of Florez-Montaña et al. (2022) and Garrote-Rojas et al. (2018), who highlight the importance of integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) and foreign language learning into intercultural teaching processes. Although it is not specified whether the programme included these tools, its effectiveness could be related to the incorporation of innovative methodologies that facilitated cultural interaction.

On the other hand, the results reinforce the ideas of González-Mediel et al. (2021) and Madrid-Peña et al. (2024), who emphasise the need to train teachers in intercultural competences to guarantee the success of educational programmes. Although the present study focuses on students, the success of the programme is likely to be related to the preparation and awareness of the facilitators in charge of implementing it.

Likewise, the studies by Montes et al. (2023) and Palomeque-Verdugo et al. (2023) highlight the importance of experiential learning and challenges in intercultural learning processes. In this case, the programme evaluated seems to





have promoted practical activities that allowed students to reflect on cultural diversity and develop skills for coexistence in multicultural contexts.

Finally, research such as that of Paredes & Carcausto (2022; Pedrero-García et al. 2017) and Quichimbo-Saquichagua (2019), mention the need to understand interculturality as a dynamic process that requires a comprehensive perspective in education. Therefore, the results of the present study confirm that the implemented programme managed to address this complexity, promoting intercultural citizenship in university students. interculturality in university students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research confirm the effectiveness of the training programme for intercultural citizenship in university students, evidenced by the statistically significant change in the experimental group (G1POSTEST), with a bilateral significance of 0.021, while the other groups remained at 0. This allowed us to accept the affirmative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, demonstrating that the programme had a positive impact on the population studied. The programme evaluated proved to be an effective tool for developing intercultural competences, contributing to the formation of a global and equitable citizenry, reinforcing the need to integrate interculturality as a transversal axis in higher education.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest with people or institutions linked to the research.

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