

From Universal to Pluriversal: Transforming Human Rights Education Policies in Colombia

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This paper examines Colombia's National Plan for Human Rights Education (Plan Nacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos, PLANEDH) as a case study to discuss how positivistic, Eurocentric, and Western constructions have influenced a hegemonic understanding of human rights education. While the PLANEDH policy aligns with the United Nations human rights education mandates, its implementation remains largely symbolic, with minimal territorial impact and limited community participation. This paper encourages a shift of perspectives applying the Pluriversal Rights Education framework. It discusses the importance of integrating diverse ways of knowing into human rights education dialogues and fostering participatory, community-driven policy design. The analysis offers recommendations to reenvision a more plural implementation of the PLANEDH policy in the Colombian education system.

Keywords: Human Rights Education, Pluriversal Rights Education, policies, Colombia.

Introduction

Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), the United Nations (UN) has worked toward advancing human rights education (HRE). HRE is seen as a tool to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to foster human development (Russell & Suárez, 2017). In 1993, the UN reaffirmed the significance of HRE in promoting mutual understanding and harmonious relations among communities through the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) (1993). This international framework specifically recommended that all member states develop national plans for human rights education (NPHRE) to integrate HRE into national education policies. The UN has developed an international approach to HRE establishing guidelines and priorities for countries to implement policies at the country level.

Colombia's National Plan for Human Rights Education (*Plan Nacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos* [PLANEDH]) was adopted in 2009 and updated for 2021-2034. It represents an ambitious effort by this conflict-affected country to embed human rights principles and HRE international mandates into a national educational policy framework. PLANEDH has remained a legal declarative document that has not been fully executed and implemented across all Colombian territories. PLANEDH's organizational mechanisms have not been established, specifically the National

Council and the Technical Regional Committees. This situation impedes an effective policy implementation.

Despite the relevant influence of civil society in Colombia through peace and popular education, there was limited participation by local communities, ethnic and vulnerable communities when enacting and implementing the most recent national HRE policy. For the previous PLANEDH version, the International Center for Human Rights Education studied more than 150 experiences (Velásquez Villate, 2020). The PLANEDH was developed following a top-down model approach that prioritizes normative frameworks of international human rights law over co-creation processes of HRE policies involving local experiences and community voices. Applying the case of Colombia, this paper calls for a shift from a standardized, top-down legalistic model toward a participatory, community-driven approach that integrates local practices and decolonial pedagogies.

Critical HRE scholars have highlighted how HRE policies often remain tied to legalistic human rights regime approaches, presenting challenges to engaging with its content (Zembylas, 2023). Mainstream HRE frameworks have been mostly developed at the international level by international organizations such as the UN and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As a result, there is a dominant universal human rights discourse rooted in Western and Eurocentric values. While the universalization of HRE represents a milestone in human rights globally, it also exposes a 'one-size-fits-all' universalism and Eurocentric model (Zembylas, 2017). Other ways of knowing can contribute to mutual understanding, peace, and sustainability, such as Indigenous and Afro-Descent knowledge and cosmovision. These ways of knowing have been omitted and silenced from HRE international frameworks (Becker, 2021). Uncritical adoption of the UN global discourse may narrow and manufacture a single HRE discourse that validates certain types of knowledge while ignoring others (cultural, Indigenous, and civil society knowledge) (Coysh, 2014).

The analysis of Colombia's national HRE policy is highly relevant to the field of Comparative and International Education for several reasons. It is a country where Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been systematically excluded from dialogue and participation for more than three centuries as a consequence of colonization. Most recently, Colombia has emerged in the global arena as a leading example in the recognition of ancestral knowledge. The country has made significant steps in establishing decolonial educational programs, such as the Pedagogy of Mother Earth (*Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra*) at the *Universidad de Antioquia*, which integrates Indigenous worldviews and ancestral knowledge into a formal education program. Two pioneering decolonial universities have been founded: the *Universidad de Saberes Ancestrales* (UDSA), associated with the United Nations of the Spirit, and the *Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural* (UAIIN), a higher education public institution created by and for the Indigenous community of Cauca. Colombia's Ministry of Education accredited UAIIN in 2020. Colombia has actively pursued initiatives to integrate diverse ways of knowing and worldviews into its educational

landscape despite persistent structural discrimination. These efforts reflect a growing commitment to decolonizing education and fostering inclusive spaces that honor knowledge systems and cosmovisions of historically marginalized communities.

Decolonizing HRE in Colombia entails moving beyond UN frameworks' universalist assumptions and embracing a transformative pluriversal perspective of human rights and education—one that recognizes diverse worldviews and ways of knowing. This approach is critical to amplify voices and perspectives from the Global South. This paper invites policymakers and human rights scholars to approach national human rights policies through a transformative paradigm that can contribute to reimagining HRE's role in fostering equity, sustainability, human rights, and peace. The paper presents examples of how these concepts could be integrated into educational policies or practices that can also inspire policy reforms in other countries.

To this end, I propose the Pluriversal Rights Education framework (Williams & Bermeo, 2020), which challenges Western-centric dominant ideas of human rights to integrate other ways of knowledge that have been excluded from the construction of the international education field of HRE. Pluriversal Rights Education invites scholars and practitioners to re-imagine education and de-center the humans. It entails shifting from anthropocentric human rights to a more expansive, pluriversal model in which both sentient and non-sentient beings and our shared connection with Mother Earth are recognized. This framework urges moving beyond a singular, universalized Western approach to human rights and instead incorporating diverse epistemologies while maintaining openness for future transformation.

This paper starts by contextualizing Colombia's educational system and its national laws and policies related to HRE, focusing on the historical evolution of the *Plan Nacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos* from 2009 to the updated version in 2021. Next, I examine the development of HRE as a global framework and the UN influence in the international institutionalization of HRE (Hafner-Burton & Tsutsu, 2005; Russell & Suárez, 2017). Then, I detail the alternative transformative paradigm of Pluriversal Rights Education (Williams & Bermeo, 2020), outlining its core principles and pedagogical goals, which serve as the foundation for a critical analysis of Colombia's PLANEDH. The fifth section analyzes the national HRE plan in Colombia, focusing on its main declaratory and legalistic nature, the policy's lack of impact nationally, and the participation of diverse communities, especially those historically marginalized by colonial powers. Finally, I propose concrete recommendations to broaden the HRE framework in Colombia. Such expansion can contribute to transformative perspectives in HRE. This includes examples for re-indigenizing pedagogies and existing local practices that can inspire policymakers to build national policies that reflect diverse ways of knowing and being.

Background: HRE in Colombia

National Laws Involving HRE

The Colombian Constitution embeds International Human Rights and Human Rights Education. Article 67 of the Colombian Political Constitution (1991) positions education as an essential element of human dignity. It mandates that education in Colombia should promote citizen awareness of human rights, peace, and democracy (para. 2). Besides the constitutional mandate, several laws and national policies are related in one way or another to education for human rights. In 1994, Colombia's legislative body adopted the General Law of Education (Law 115), which defines education as a personal, cultural, and social process of training grounded in the integral conception of the human being, the dignity of its rights, and its duties (Article 1, Number 16). It establishes respect for human rights, peace, democratic values, and pluralism (Article 5) as one of the main aims of education. Some dispositions in the 2013 School Coexistence Law (*Ley de Convivencia Escolar*, Law 1620) state the importance of creating a National System of School Coexistence to promote citizenship and the exercise of human rights, as well as to prevent and mitigate school violence. In 2015, the President of Colombia incorporated all the regulations related to education into the Unique Regulatory Decree of the Education Sector (*Decreto Único Reglamentario del Sector Educación*, Decree 1075). This decree unified primary and secondary education regulations, covering aspects such as school governance, ethno-education, the National System of School Coexistence, HRE, and school violence mitigation.

National Policies for HRE

Following UN HRE mandates, Colombia implemented a National Plan of Human Rights Education in 2009, adopting the UN HRE international policies as its conceptual framework (see OHCHR, 2024). The President of Colombia, through the Vice President and the Presidential Program for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (*Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario*, now the Presidential Advisory Office for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (*Consejería Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos y el Derecho Internacional Humanitario*) decided to create a strategic framework to integrate HRE into the national educational system. The decision was made in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and with the technical support of the National Human Rights Institution of Colombia or Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). The PLANEDH aims to foster a culture of human rights and democratic values, formulating guidelines and strategies and developing educational programs and materials on human rights through education—as mandated by the UN after the Decade of Human Rights Education.

Although the PLANEDH 2009 marked a significant step toward integrating HRE across all levels in Colombia, its implementation faced several challenges. The policy did not have public funding or the institutional structure to oversee its implementation and evaluation. The absence of an HRE Operational Plan made it difficult to translate the policies into strategies and programs for human rights. Twelve years later, Colombian policymakers decided to update the PLANEDH 2009

through the *Actualización y Fortalecimiento del Plan Nacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos* (PLANEDH, 2021-2034). This updated policy evidenced Colombia's effort to strengthen and renew its commitment to HRE and emphasized integrating HRE across all educational levels, formal, non-formal, and informal education while addressing diverse social, cultural, and territorial challenges. The updated PLANEDH recognized new national peace and HRE challenges after the 2016 Peace Agreement and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PLANEDH 2021-2034 emphasizes the importance of integrating human rights across all education spaces, respect for human rights, peaceful coexistence, and harmony. It considers inclusivity for vulnerable and systematically excluded populations, participation, and dialogue to enhance collaboration among public institutions and civil society for effective HRE implementation. It recognizes the challenges and realities of diverse groups and communities in achieving human rights. The current HRE policy has five central values articulated in Table 1. Table 1 describes each value, providing a description and an example of its application. The values show how PLANEDH 2021-2034 invited more inclusive and participatory education practices.

Table 1

Core values of the PLANEDH 2021-2034

PLANEDH Value	Description	Application
Universality and Indivisibility of Human Rights	Recognizes that all human rights apply to humans considering their human dignity. Identifies the struggles of diverse groups to secure fundamental guarantees.	Incorporates a multidimensional view of rights, ensuring inclusivity for all vulnerable and marginalized populations.
Participation and Dialogue	Fosters active engagement and spaces of dialogue with diverse civil society and public institutions.	Creates participatory educational forums to cultivate empowerment and mutual respect.
Critical Consciousness	Develops awareness to understand the challenges and realities of diverse groups and communities in achieving human rights. Promotes critical thinking and awareness to challenge structural and systemic injustices.	Encourages critical thinking to address social inequalities and systemic barriers to rights. Encourages the training of citizens mediated by a critical pedagogy that has human rights as an imperative.
Peace and Reconciliation - Positive Response	Focuses on guiding students in their learning process with an optimistic and proactive approach.	Promotes positive behavioral change and empowerment in

		students while recognizing the efforts for peacebuilding.
Recognizing the Context	Acknowledges the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that shape the interactions of individuals within their communities.	Adapts educational strategies to local realities to ensure relevance and cultural sensitivity.

Despite the formal commitment to advancing HRE in Colombia, the national plan continues to be a legal document with limited implementation and tangible outcomes. The policy has not been able to advance or impact actions, strategies, and plans at the national level. Since its recent adoption, the national government has not provided budgetary support for this policy. The inter-institutional coordination mechanisms intended to monitor the implementation of the PLANEDH have not been established.

Methodology

This paper employs a conceptual and critical policy analysis approach to examine Colombia’s PLANEDH policy (2021-2034), acknowledging that it remains largely a legal document without substantial implementation. The choice of this methodology is grounded in the absence of empirical data on the PLANEDH’s execution and one institutional report from the Ombudsman Office of Colombia (2024). The policy analysis is based on a two-level exploration of the PLANEDH legal and discursive construction. First, this approach allows for a critical examination of the policy’s legal foundations, values, premises, and understandings of human rights. Second, this study examines the UN HRE framework, including soft law documents, legal instruments, and international organization education guidelines, such as the World Programmes on HRE, to situate the PLANEDH within a global framework. The latter will contribute to analyzing the extent to which the national policy focuses on universalized and Western-centric notions of human rights and the international educational framework for human rights.

After situating the PLANEDH within this framework and its main values, I examine the national policy through the theoretical lens of Pluriversal Rights Education to evaluate to what extent new paradigms and perspectives can be incorporated into the HRE policy, bringing an innovative vision of education. My analysis through the lens of Pluriversal Rights Education seeks to critically explore how integrating pluriversal and decolonial education approaches can contribute to the evolution of Colombia’s human rights educational policies.

Literature Review

Human Rights Education International Framework

Several empirical studies in education have examined how global human rights discourses, particularly those promoted by international organizations, have influenced the institutionalization of the field of HRE internationally. HRE has

emerged as a global framework that diverse global actors mainstream, in particular intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the UN (Suárez, 2006; Suárez & Ramirez, 2007; Russell & Suárez, 2017). The significant growth in HRE can be attributed to the expansion of UN initiatives encouraging states to fulfill their international human rights legal obligations. In this context, HRE has become an emerging global institution that influences political dynamics and national educational policies (Russell & Suárez, 2017).

The literature on comparative and international education strongly suggests that the adoption of national plans and the spread of HRE are highly influenced by a global model promoted by the UN, which is disseminated through globalization (Robertson, 1994). Russell (2015) emphasizes how national education policy increasingly responds to the global environment and international actors. The institutionalization of HRE began expanding in the mid-1970s under the influence of the UN (Suárez & Ramirez, 2007). This expansion was accelerated during the 1990s with the Program Action for Human Rights, which marked international organizations' definite involvement in HRE through the UN and UNESCO. By adopting various HRE instruments and policies, the UN reaffirmed that all countries are duty-bound to introduce education for human rights into national policies, plans, and strategies. One year later, the UN proclaimed the Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), encouraging states to build and strengthen programs and capacities for HRE (GA Res. 49/184, 1994). In 2005, the UN implemented the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and countries were encouraged to develop education policies related to human rights in separate phases (GA. Res. 59/113, 2004).

These international policies were invigorated by adopting the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (GA. Res. 66/137, 2011). This international instrument determined that HRE is a human right and that countries have the primary responsibility to promote HRE (Article 7.1). It also mandated that all UN state parties must develop policies, action plans, and programs to implement HRE (Article 8). The 2011 international soft law document provides the latest definition of HRE by the UN. This definition entails educational efforts to prevent human rights violations and empower citizens to build and promote a universal culture of human rights. Article 2, paragraph 2, outlines the three dimensions of HRE:

- (a) Education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them, and the mechanisms for their protection;
- (b) Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
- (c) Education for human rights, which includes empowering individuals to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7, adopted in 2015, requires nation-states to ensure learners acquire knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development. This includes education for human rights, gender equality, and peace.

These antecedents highlight the major UN influence in the evolution of HRE at the international and national levels. Within this context, several countries in Latin America and globally have implemented National Human Rights Action Plans in line with the UN human rights framework. In some cases, this includes a specific National Plan for HRE. Most Latin American countries have implemented and updated diverse National Plans: Brazil (2003-2018), Bolivia with the *Plan Plurinacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos* (Plurinational Plan on Human Rights Education) (2012), Mexico (2002), Peru (2021), Uruguay (2016), Colombia (2009, updated in 2021), and Paraguay (2012).

Pluriversal Rights Education Framework

International and national HRE policies have been created in public institutional spheres by multilateral organizations where, inevitably, some individuals, groups, and communities lack the privilege to have a seat and voice. This has influenced having a universalized discourse on human rights that has excluded other ways of knowing which can also align with human rights goals and values. Modern and northern epistemologies have influenced how societies perceive and understand human rights, the idea of humans, and our relationship with other living beings on this planet, invalidating any alternative cosmovision. Zembylas (2023) critically assesses how the concepts of 'human' and 'rights' are deeply rooted in European intellectual traditions. The idea of human rights is mainly based on the Western idea of self, which emphasizes the separation between entities, humans, and non-humans, as well as the differentiation between humans and the environment.

In response, recent comparative and international education scholars have called for implementing decolonial approaches to HRE (Zembylas, 2017; Becker, 2021; Zembylas, 2023). These different approaches offer an opportunity to radically re-imagine or re-indigenize how the field thinks about education, pedagogies, beings, and humans' interactions and connections with the world. Williams and Bermeo (2020) propose a decolonial HRE and peace education framework that reimagines HRE as a Pluriversal Rights Education. Rooted in the minds of two educators from the Global South, these scholars propose a paradigm for a holistic understanding of HRE. It invites to approach HRE colonial-modernity structures critically and to question the colonial inheritance from which human rights notions have been constructed (Williams & Bermeo, 2020).

The Pluriversal Rights Education framework, successor to HRE and peace education, has four main pedagogical aims or principles: (i) pluriversal sentience, (ii) pluriversal equilibrium, (iii) abolitionism and decoloniality, and (iv) radical hope. The four principles reflect shifts required to change our understanding of humanity, its nature, and its relationship with other beings and nature. It equips learners with knowledge, skills, dispositions, and values to recognize and respect the pluriverse, the rights of all earth beings or sentient entities, and foster peace through planetary equilibrium.

Pluriversal sentience recognizes all sentient beings' interconnectedness and interdependence (human and non-human). This principle challenges colonial,

anthropocentric worldviews and promotes the de-centering of the human. Pluriversal equilibrium recognizes Mother Earth as a living entity that is in “a permanently dynamic condition of growth, evolution, and complementarity” (Williams & Bermeo, 2020, p. 14). Abolitionism and decoloniality call for a deeper understanding of structures of marginalization and oppression causing social injustices. Radical hope refers to the integrative and proactive support to orient the other three principles. It values the future without losing sight of the past and recognizes the resources embedded in each of us. “It sees and treats communities as possibilities and not as things or problems to be solved” (Williams & Bermeo, 2020, p. 14).

Together, these four principles offer a transformative way of re-imagining HRE. They challenge the dominance of Western-centric paradigms and open space for other perspectives that include more ways of knowing to achieve peace, harmony, and well-being. Table 2 illustrates the Pluriversal Right Education framework:

Table 2
Pluriversal Rights Education Framework

Pillar	Description
Pluriversal Sentience	Recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings, decenters human beings, and questions anthropocentrism.
	Goes beyond the pedagogical principle of <i>mutual vulnerability</i> by recognizing all beings, not just humans (Keet et al., 2009; Zembylas, 2013). There are sentient and non-sentient beings.
Pluriversal Equilibrium	Mother Earth is seen as a vibrant living system in permanent growth.
	Earth’s equilibrium is a dynamic, ever-changing state of growth and balance.
Abolitionism and Decoloniality	The need to recognize the patriarchal and colonial structures and systems as a consequence of our history.
	It is necessary to decolonize our minds (Williams & Bermeo, 2020). It involves unlearning harmful structures that separate us and give priority to one way of thinking or knowing.
	It is essential to have a critical awareness of the self and have transformative competencies to understand the world’s different thinking systems.
Radical Hope	A future-oriented hope that acknowledges the past.
	Actively works toward a better future even if it is beyond our full understanding (Lear, 2006).
	Recognizes the potential of human beings and the resources of each community on this planet.

Applying the Pluriversal Rights Education pillars requires a profound and significant shift in how we think, feel, and experience the world and ourselves (Williams & Bermeo, 2020). Those who decide to engage in pluralist rights education require paradigmatic shifts in our modes of thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Learners should engage in border thinking, which requires navigating the unknown world and understanding different cosmologies. It requires engaging in the process of conscientization (*consciência crítica*) (Freire, 2018/1970), in which learners actively recognize socio-political and economic structures, but also a spatial conscientization. Learners should develop transformational competencies that enable them to read the world's interrelation and dynamics as well as understand diverse knowledge systems, including Indigenous knowledge.

Recognizing pluriversal knowledge within HRE can contribute to pluricultural understanding and honoring multiple ways of being and diverse perspectives of seeing the other, the earth, and the cosmos (Hardbarger, 2019). The Pluriversal Rights Education conceptual framework questions the idea that knowledge comes from one unique source. It affirms that knowledge is rooted in lived experiences, diverse cultures, and world conceptions. The goal is to foster skills that enable learners to perceive a more interconnected whole within themselves and other sentient and non-sentient beings.

Policy Discussion

This section presents an analysis of the PLANEDH focusing on three main aspects: the influence of the international HRE framework on the national policy, the exclusions of alternative ways of knowing despite the policy core values and premises, and the lack of operational and institutional mechanisms to implement the national document. These limitations have hindered the implementation of the PLANEDH at the territorial level and have resulted in limited community participation and involvement.

The Influence of the International HRE Framework in the PLANEDH

After analyzing the educational framework and discourse of Colombia's PLANEDH 2021-2034, it is evident that PLANEDH is legally grounded upon an UN HRE framework. Colombian policymakers adhered to the mandates expressed in the Decennial Plan of Actions for Human Rights and Article 8 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011) for the creation of national plans for HRE.

The PLANEDH discourse emphasizes the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human rights. Consistent with Phase 4 of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education, it invites the implementation of HRE in all instances of education (formal, informal, and non-formal education) and prioritizes the principle of equality and non-discrimination in all actions or strategies. Considering discrimination and the unequal Colombian context, policymakers from PLANEDH decided that the national policy would have a 10-year duration, stressing the importance of different

territorial and ethnic approaches as essential to building a country that respects diversity (PLANEDH, 2021-2034).

The core values of the PLANEDH (see Table 1) include inclusivity of vulnerable and systematically excluded populations and participation and dialogue among public institutions and civil society to cultivate a diversity-based dialogue. However, in practice, the PLANEDH has been maintained mainly as a declarative national policy that has not evolved beyond a legal document aligned with international human rights standards. This legalistic and declarative universal nature of the national policy has resulted in a single idea of 'human' and 'rights' that invalidates any alternative cosmovisions or ways of knowing that resonate with human rights.

The idea of human rights is based on the Western idea of the self, which emphasizes the separation between humans, sentient and non-sentient beings, and between humans and the environment. The latter has led to the separation of other living beings, the planet, and each other, which hinders the development of community feeling, cooperation, and understanding (Lehner, 2023). By neglecting these diverse epistemologies, PLANEDH reinforces a framework prioritizing Western-centric paradigms and universalized understandings of human rights. This approach overlooks local communities' unique cultural, historical, and social contexts, limiting the potential for transformative HRE that resonates with the lived experiences and systems of knowledge of the Colombian population. For instance, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian pedagogies, which often emphasize community-based learning and the interconnectedness of all beings, are notably absent from the PLANEDH framework.

The Top-down Approach Excluding Other Ways of Knowing in the PLANEDH

The top-down approach to create and implement the PLANEDH has limited local communities' active participation and engagement in its policy design and implementation. The PLANEDH recognizes the importance of a territorial approach to education by acknowledging the socio-economic and cultural dynamics that shape the interactions of individuals within their communities. But it fails to integrate perspectives and pedagogies from alternative ways of knowing, including those from Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. This exclusion perpetuates historical patterns of discrimination and marginalization, silencing knowledge and wisdom that have been suppressed since colonization. There were some instances of civil society participation, such as the virtual meetings held in 2021 while updating the latest PLANEDH. However, the policy does not evidence a meaningful impact on the population at the territorial level or sustained engagement with civil society.

Lack of PLANEDH Operational and Institutional Bodies

The absence of territorial institutions, such as the PLANEDH National Council and the Technical Regional Committees initially tasked with translating HRE policies into relevant educational strategies and territorial development plans, resulted in a policy that is disconnected from the experiences of education, pedagogies, and

didactics of local communities. This has driven a disconnection of the national policy from human rights realities in the conflict-affected territory.

Policy Recommendations

The limitations of the PLANEDH have resulted in a passive role for local and ethnic communities and a lack of territorial impact of the national policy at the territorial level. The diversity and unique cultural and historical context and systems of knowledge have been overlooked, as the national policy assumes the knowledge of HRE from one only source, the universal. This assumption limits other possibilities where HRE policies are co-created through community-driven processes. This section provides strategies to transform the policy into a dynamic and inclusive framework that genuinely fosters a culture of human rights. Through the Pluriversal Rights Education lens, it aims to bring new paradigms and perspectives on human rights that can be incorporated into the HRE policy. Challenging the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach can provide transformative insights that question universalism and evidence of how other ways of knowing can be included to foster mutual understanding, achieve peace, and enhance a culture of human rights.

Table 3 presents three key policy recommendations. Colombian HRE policy can move toward a more inclusive, community-centered policy on human rights education. Afterward, I illustrate how the Pluriversal Rights Framework can be integrated into the PLANEDH 2021-2034 core values.

Table 3

Key recommendations and actionable steps

Limitation	Recommendations	Actionable Steps
Legal and universal human rights nature of the national policy	Incorporate other ways of knowing in HRE frameworks and integrate the Pluriversal Rights Education framework, resonating with other ways of knowing in Colombia.	Facilitate dialogues with Afro and Indigenous local communities to identify culturally relevant educational pedagogies and didactic. Include the Pluriversal Rights Framework into the core values of the PLANEDH 2021-2024 (as exposed in Table 4 below).
Top-down approach	Create spaces of intercultural knowledge with decolonial higher education initiatives. Transform the top-down approach design of the	Partner with institutions such as <i>Universidad de Antioquia</i> or <i>Universidad de Saberes Ancestrales</i> to incorporate ancestral wisdom into HRE policy. When updating the policy, create regional advisory councils composed of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders to ensure the incorporation of their ways of thinking and

	PLANEDH to a community-driven approach.	knowing into the policy. Invite excluded groups to participate in the Territorial Technical Bodies of the PLANEDH to create intercultural dialogues among human rights.
Lack of PLANEDH operational and institutional bodies	Strengthen territorial institutions to operationalize HRE strategies effectively.	Develop regional implementation plans for operational and technical mechanisms.

Recommendation 1. Spaces of intercultural knowledge with decolonial higher education initiatives

Initiate a dialogue between ways of knowing that have been historically silenced. A dialogue between Eurocentric views and other ways of knowing as ancestral wisdom from our Indigenous ancestors or communities can be a path to broadening the scope of curricula and instruments for HRE. Including other pedagogies of HRE that create skills, values, and knowledge can help the non-recurrence of violence and embrace human rights values.

In practice, there should be a constant dialogue between Colombian HRE policymakers with communities, groups excluded, leaders, and practitioners to incorporate new epistemological frameworks for specific communities, educators, and teachers. As expressed by Cortina et al. (2019), it is important to listen to each other, as no culture is superior to the other, and nobody knows more than the other. We must converse and strengthen each other. An authentic dialogue of knowledges or an *ecology of knowledge* can change perspectives in HRE. Applying Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2007) notion of the *ecology of knowledge*, it is important to create equal opportunities for various kinds of knowledge to coexist to foster a more democratic, diverse, and just society. Intercultural translation is essential for articulating diverse forms of knowledge.

The concept of intercultural translation can contribute to bridging different knowledge systems and ways of knowing, such as Indigenous knowledge that has been excluded because of coloniality. In that sense, Pluriversal Rights Education can be a framework that helps integrate other forms of knowledge into education and invites people to rethink how they interact with the world. From this perspective, human rights values will be seen from a hegemonic Western perspective and other ways of knowing, often marginalized or silenced. This is a strategy to heal the production of knowledge rather than destroying it.

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been systematically excluded from dialogue and participation for more than three hundred years in Colombia. In this context, it is restorative to start bringing alternative ways of learning and

thinking that can contribute to radical transformations in how human rights are taught in schools. PLANEDH policymakers can start building activities to include other ways of knowing, ancestral wisdom, and community-based education initiatives that exist in the local territory. This can help incarnate intrinsic values of human rights such as dignity, equality, freedom, and diversity and have them be reflected in the national policy.

Cortina and colleagues (2019) have drawn attention to intercultural programs in higher education, particularly intercultural experiences with diverse ways of knowing (epistemic diversity). Colombian HRE policymakers can create new possibilities of dialogue and pluriversal pedagogies. Policymakers can build a dialogue of multiplicities of knowledge that can contribute to finding more peaceful ways to live and create a culture of human rights.

Policymakers can engage in a co-creating process with other higher education initiatives in the Colombian local context. Colombia is a unique case study, as it has several higher education institutions that are developing decolonial methodologies and practices where Indigenous knowledge and other ways of knowing have been translated into pedagogies and formal educational spaces. The *Universidad de Saberes Ancestrales*, *Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural*, and the *Licenciatura en Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra* of the *Universidad de Antioquia* in Medellín are unique examples of decolonial understandings of education in South America. This approach can help HRE policymakers understand how human rights values are taught in these universities. It can aid the process of finding opportunities to establish alliances with these universities and their decolonial pedagogies that can help build programs and curricula celebrating pluriversal ways of knowing and being in the world.

Inter-institutional alliances between the first public Indigenous university in Colombia, *Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural* (UAIIN), can contribute to encouraging intercultural dialogue between Indigenous knowledge of issues related to human rights and Western understandings of human rights. The *Universidad de Sabiduría Ancestral* was founded in 2012 in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Colombia. Its mission is the following:

Serve ancestral peoples around the world, through the training of leaders who will guide humanity towards a level of consciousness conducive to awakening Universal Love, encouraging actions that favor the well-being of all, life in harmony with Mother Earth, promoting native spirituality and the values of Indigenous peoples. (*Universidad de Sabiduría Ancestral*, n.d.).

Intercultural conversations can help embrace the principles of the Pluriversal Sentient and Pluriversal Equilibrium of the Pluriversal Rights Education framework. Universities and policymakers should form intercultural alliances to complement the national HRE framework. Fostering the presence of diverse educators can contribute to alternative practices in human rights learning experiences.

Recommendation 2. Reconceptualizing the PLANEDH core values with the Pluriversal Rights Education Framework

The PLANEDH 2021-2034 proposes five central values or pillars that integrate HRE practices (see Table 4 below). Although these values are based on a vision of HRE constructed by UN global education mandates, I found similarities with the Pluriversal Rights Education framework. As illustrated in Table 4, the national HRE policy values resonate with the Pluriversal Rights Education framework. Table 4 offers conceptual guidance for policymakers to understand the relationship between pluriversal values and the national HRE policy. The left column outlines the national policy value. The right column elaborates on the Pluriversal Rights Education principle aligned with the PLANEDH value.

Table 4

PLANEDH core values integration with principles of Pluriversal Rights Education

PLANEDH Value	Pluriversal Rights Education Principle Aligned
Universality and indivisibility of Human Rights	Pluriversal Sentience: Recognizing interconnectedness among all beings. There are sentient and non-sentient beings. Pluriversal Equilibrium: Mother Earth is a vibrant living system.
Participation and Dialogue	Radical hope: Work toward active engagement of communities with a future-oriented hope that acknowledges the past but also desires to build a better future.
Critical Consciousness	Abolitionism and Decoloniality: Promote critical thinking and awareness to challenge structural and systemic injustices, including patriarchal and colonial structures.
Peace and Reconciliation - Positive Response	Radical Hope: Envisioning transformative futures grounded in peace and reconciliation.
Recognizing the Context	Abolitionism and Decoloniality: Acknowledge the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that shape the interactions of individuals within their communities.

Conclusion

The global UN model, through international human rights instruments and soft law mandates, has shaped Colombia’s National HRE policy. Consequently, the prevailing HRE model in Colombia is an HRE framework built upon Western perspectives, leaving other ways of knowing aside. I situate this paper in a recent decolonial dialogue about the future of HRE. I aimed at providing a space to reflect on how diverse knowledge systems can interact in HRE. Given Colombia’s colonial history, my key recommendation for policymakers is to start questioning the universalized and legalistic approach sustaining HRE. As Becker (2021) pointed out, “globally

there is a need for otherwise knowledge and conceptualizations of being human, and human rights education is crucial to this” (p. 63). My analysis is an invitation to focus on transforming HRE to create spaces for more epistemologies.

Pluriversal Rights Education emerges as a decolonial approach to expand national education policies, introducing alternative philosophies and pedagogies that can resonate with the Colombian context. Colombia has promising examples of intercultural knowledge production such as Pedagogy of Mother Earth of the *Universidad de Antioquia*, *Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural* (UAIIN) and the *Universidad de Sabiduría Ancestral*. These institutions can be a path for human rights to engage and encourage intercultural conversations about Indigenous knowledge on human rights-related issues. Educational policies can serve as a tool to reimagine human rights and foster a continuous process of critical self-reflection on human’s interconnectedness with Mother Earth. In her 2018 Presidential Address at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), comparative and international education scholar Regina Cortina emphasized the importance of producing knowledge with and from the Global South—particularly in contexts where neoliberal logics dominate educational discourse (Cortina et al., 2019). My paper contributes to South-driven perspectives on HRE. It envisioned generating a policy analysis to reimagine education in alignment “with all of our energy on what is possible, moved by our deepest ethical aspirations for a just and human world” (Cortina et al., 2019, p. 468). I hope it does.

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