

## Responsabilidad Social Universitaria con Enfoque Intercultural: Perspectiva Comunidad Afrocolombiana de San Basilio de Palenque

### University Social Responsibility with an Intercultural Approach: Afro-Colombian Community Perspective of San Basilio de Palenque

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#### Resumen

La Responsabilidad Social de las Universidades, se revitaliza en esa relación dinámica y transformadora de las universidades con las realidades propias de los contextos universitarios. Se buscó diseñar un programa RSU con enfoque intercultural. El estudio es el cualitativo y la posición epistemológica es el crítico. La metodología adoptada es la Investigación-Acción, se contó con la participación de 61 familias de San Basilio de Palenque. El instrumento utilizado fue la guía multidimensional, permitió ahondar en las problemáticas de las comunidades donde realizo su Práctica en Responsabilidad Social y la posterior relación multidimensional a nivel local, nacional y de la Latinoamérica para comprender las realidades sociales desde perspectivas más amplias. se requieren acciones prontas de compromiso tácito y efectivo por parte de las universidades presentes en la región, la institucionalidad pública y privada, para que desde un enfoque ético, intercultural, integrador e incluyente en el desarrollo, atiendan y acompañen a la comunidad palenquera mediante programas, proyectos y el desarrollo de políticas que realmente transformen las actuales condiciones de vida.

**Palabras claves:** Compromiso Social, Extensión, Investigación Cualitativa, Responsabilidad Social, Vinculación Universidad-Entorno Social.



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La revisión por pares es responsabilidad de la Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña

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## **Abstract**

The Social Responsibility of Universities is revitalized in that dynamic and transformative relationship of universities with the realities of university contexts. We sought to design an RSU program with an intercultural approach. The study is qualitative and the epistemological position is critical. The methodology adopted is Action Research, with the participation of 61 families from San Basilio de Palenque. The instrument used was the multidimensional guide, which allowed delving into the problems of the communities where he carried out his Practice in Social Responsibility and the subsequent multidimensional relationship at the local, national and Latin American levels to understand social realities from broader perspectives. Prompt actions of tacit and effective commitment are required on the part of the universities present in the region, the public and private institutions, so that from an ethical, intercultural, integrative and inclusive approach in development, they serve and accompany the Palenque community through programs, projects and the development of policies that truly transform current living conditions.

**Key words:** Social Commitment, Extension, Qualitative Research, Social Responsibility, University-Social Environment Linkage.

## **1. Introducción**

The Social Responsibility of Universities is revitalized in that dynamic and transformative relationship of universities with the realities of university contexts. Regarding this, in Latin America it has been leading as an emerging movement (Rubio, & Blandón, 2021; Fernández et al., 2020), based on an entire theoretical construct of what Social Responsibility in Universities means and implies, taking it to review the impacts of their actions. As a Social Business Movement (CSR), that States and universities assume University Social Responsibility (RSU) as a quality management policy; in order to guarantee the expected impacts and social transformations (Gaete & Álvarez, 2019). This conception is the most recent to which many universities in the Region have joined. In order to overcome the conception of a RSU limited to university extension activities, volunteering and philanthropic actions (Nova et al., 2023; Bastidas, 2018).

In Colombia, like other countries in the Region, they have been generating different guidelines that guide the social projection of their organizations. Presenting the debate between mandatory and voluntary (Forero, 2019). For its part, the standardization of RSU in Colombia is aligned with the requirements of

Decree 1330 of 2019, by which the public service of Higher Education in the country is organized (Giudice & González, 2023). The call is to respond to the “expectations and needs of local, global and regional contexts.” The perspectives and strategies of University Social Responsibility are defined by each university as a fundamental axis from the plausible Social Projection in each strategic plan (Duque & Cervantes, 2019). This is how the multiple perspectives that articulate the RSU range from ethics, the articulation of the university to society, inclusion, social cohesion; the creation of tools such as social observatories, development centers, social and business laboratories; the generation of knowledge with social meaning (Rubio et al., 2020). The creation of local, regional and national alliances. Study and address the causes and effects of social inequality, among others (Ravelo et al., 2018).

Now, with regard to the Intercultural Approach, Culture is that from which we attribute value to things or not. Culture is a system of meanings and senses that conditions the possibility, for individuals and human groups, of understanding and organizing life (Ambrosio & Luna, 2023; Florez et al., 2023). Therefore, interculturality consists of “Breaking with ethnocentric prejudice then means entering into a process of cultural exchange with the other

on equal terms, and whose dynamic of reciprocal learning totals the participants as unique collaborators in the company “truth” (Collado et al., 2023). It consists of finding in differences not complementarity, but reciprocity, one's own possibilities at the service of the growth opportunities of others. Such dynamics in relationships begin with the recognition of the other, as an enabler and not as an antagonist (González et al., 2023; Gómez, 2023).

Finally, this work focused efforts on the community of San Basilio de Palenque, Becerra (2023), establishes that it is a Colombian town located sixty kilometers from Cartagena de Indias, one of the three large slave ports in Spanish America, together with Havana and Veracruz. Its inhabitants are descendants of maroons—men and women who fled slavery and founded fortified free villages called palenques—between 1529 and 1799. It has preserved many Caribbean traditions, unlike the other palenques in Colombia, which merged into the Colombian peasantry after the abolition of slavery, in 1851. 80% of the population has unsatisfied basic needs, 60% is in a situation of critical poverty, per capita income is 500/600 dollars a year, life expectancy is only 55 years, the infant mortality rate is 130/thousand live births, 70% of the population does not have access to public services, educational coverage is only 77% in primary and 36% in secondary, there is poor infrastructure and provision in health, education, etc.

The intercultural mediator is one who helps to understand the other's point of view. Being an intercultural mediator means assuming from the outset an ethical point of view, whose central element is the criticism of cultural domination (Guerrero, 2023). In practice, the mediator places his or her subjectivity or conceptions of life, values, meanings and senses in the cultural bases (Moreira & Montes, 2023). Taking as reference everything stated up to this point, the

objective of the research was to design a university social responsibility program with an intercultural approach in the community of San Basilio de Palenque in the Colombian Caribbean.

## **2. Methodology**

The present research responds to an educational research design from the perspective of the critical tradition. Therefore, the approach in which the study is framed is qualitative and the epistemological position or paradigm is critical. The methodology adopted is Action Research. Within their RSU scheme, they consider four areas of the university from which Social Responsibility is made effective: Organizational Management, Training, Cognition and Social Participation. Therefore, this work will address the research problem from the areas of Training and Social Participation.

The techniques or instruments, Firstly, the theoretical and conceptual review; then, the collection and description of the information through the implementation of AI techniques: interviews, audio and video records, questionnaires; We rely on participant observation. The information will be categorized, analyzed, interpreted and theorized, as will be set out in the methodological strategy.

Participating population, For the development of the characterization activity, 61 families from the La Bonguita sector of San Basilio de Palenque participated, one (1) ethno-educator leader who acted as interlocutor in the social practice. 31 students of the IV Semester of Administration in Safety and Health at Work, who will implement the characterization instrument. In turn, at least 20 students in training participated in the implementation of training actions; and the palenquero community summoned to the sessions planned by the students.

Participant observation, the goal is to get closer to the community of San Basilio de Palenque, and let yourself be led without the greatest prejudices through its streets and cultural places, as well as vulnerable areas with the guiding hand of the community interlocutors. The purpose of participant observation is to activate looking and listening as fundamental senses, to connect with the Palenque cultural community.

Between some informal interviews, taking notes, and photographic records, we present the experience and learnings. The exercise was carried out during the visit to the La Loma neighborhood of the San Basilio de Palenque district. Participant observation is oriented with questions that address four areas: historical area, sociocultural area, institutional political area, political area, environmental area. Table 1 presents the areas and guiding questions.

**Table 1.** Areas of observation and guiding questions

<b>Scopes of observation</b>	<b>Guiding questions</b>
<b>Historical scope</b>	How did the formation of this community arise? Who have been the protagonists in the history of the neighborhood or sector? What moments have been critical or significant for history of this community (neighborhood or sector)?
<b>Ambit sociocultural</b>	What scenarios do the participants have for their healthy recreation? In what way does the organization contributes to the cultural transformation of this community?
<b>Political sphere institutional</b>	How is the organization's work or presence relevant to the community? That Do aspects that you have identified limit the development of this

	community?
<b>Economic scope</b>	What are the socioeconomic characteristics that predominate in the population that participates? How does the economic factor condition or make possible the development opportunity of its participants?
<b>Environmental scope</b>	What type of environmental problems are identified in the community (housing, high-risk areas, pollution, impacts from economic activities)? And how does it affect the life and development of the community? Are there green zones, environmental or conservation reserves environmental (wetlands)? How do its inhabitants take care of them or appropriate them?

Source: self made

Semi-structured interview, through this chosen social research technique, some of the visions of the residents of San Basilio de Palenque were obtained, particularly about their values, which have meaning for their lives in terms of their traditions, orality, forms to relate to their family, social, symbolic environment and to places. Likewise, it has been possible to obtain, from a perspective more typical of the palenquero, the perceptions of the problems that occur to them, as well as which ones and how they are exacerbated within the framework of the pandemic caused by Covid-19. The perspective with which it was oriented is intercultural.

The instrument used was the multidimensional guide, which is available in the students' virtual classroom. This guided the starting point, and in a flexible way, new questions were raised to delve deeper into the desired aspects. This guide will allow you to delve into the problems of the communities where you will carry out your Social Responsibility Practice and the subsequent

multidimensional relationship at the local, national and Latin American levels to understand social realities from broader perspectives.

### 3. Results and discussion

The design of the university social responsibility program with an intercultural approach found its support in a concept of RSU understood as a comprehensive and transversal process that generates positive educational and cognitive impacts within the university and in its relationship with its surroundings and the environment. The positive impact is understood as the collective and systematic effect of the actions carried out in a coordinated manner Vallaey & Álvarez (2022). Humanity is going through a global crisis, which requires responses for change from all citizens, and particularly

empathetic commitment to diverse communities. The program takes from the intercultural approach, the concepts, the perspectives that guide the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum, in the face of the imperative need to encourage and train higher education students in the skills and competencies that lead to the construction of links with local ethnic and cultural communities. It is about learning to enter into a true, ethical dialogue, capable of understanding others from their own perspectives and meanings of life; knowing how to relate to diverse humanity and co-construct solutions that enable better human conditions for everyone. It is about training with social relevance. Table 2 presents the program methodology.

Table 2. P-RSU methodology with an intercultural approach

		Program phases				
Scopes RSU	Components	Phase 1 (F1) Planning	Phase 2 (F2) Link and awareness	Phase 3 (F3) Description and Justification of the problem	Phase 4 (F4) PSF Implementation	Phase 5 (F5) Evaluation and Monitoring
Training and social participation	training	Course design: Practice in social responsibility (PRS).	Conduct virtual visits or meetings of students with the leaders of social organizations (interlocutors) where they develop social practice to recognize	Selection and understanding of the social training project.	Approval of the work plan based on the understanding of the concepts of community, interculturality, participatory work tools and understanding of the PSF.	Through a report, students present a balance of the results obtained with the PSF. It addresses the contributions, achievements and opportunities achieved for the
		Design of Social Training Projects (PSF)		Formulate the plan that will be carried out collaboratively (teams of		
		Importing content and				

	activities in the virtual learning classroom.	worldviews, perceptions and concerns of the leaders regarding community problems.	students and teachers). Review and feedback by the teacher of the work plan,	Implementation of sessions with focused groups of participants, by the community interlocutor.	student, the community and social organization. The student performs a PRS self-assessment exercise.
<b>Territorial-community</b>	Generation of alliances through inter-institutional content signatures with social and community organizations  Alliance with territorial entities	The community interlocutor welcomes the students and during their visit in which he makes a tour of the territory recognizing the contributions of the organization to the development of the community.  The interlocutor participates in virtual conversation spaces and through interviews makes known the organization's contributions to the development of the community	The community interlocutor offers primary information that helps guide the construction of the work plan, as well as the link with other community leaders who guide and facilitate the action plans.	The community interlocutor motivates and convenes the focused groups to develop plans.  It guarantees the physical spaces, as well as the logistics for the development of the planned spaces.  Accompanies students in the development of work plans.	The institutional or university interlocutor participates in the co-evaluation of the student, taking into account the commitment, the relationship with the community, learning, difficulties, communication, and the student's proactive attitude during the development of the PRS.  The teacher prepares a management report for each PSF.

		and guides social practice.			
<b>Investigation</b>	Data collection through neighborhood mapping characterization exercises, focus groups, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, among others.	The student accesses secondary information, through university databases, to understand problems at a local, national and global level.	Primary information, both qualitative and quantitative, is collected related to the living conditions, health and well-being of the community that allows programs and projects to be managed with other actors.	Systematization of learning and results obtained in the development of work plans.	Socialize to the academic community and social organization a document, audiovisual piece, that accounts for the results obtained.  Publish scientific production.  Participate in events to present results at academic events.

Source: self made

The P-RSU with an intercultural approach is structured around two areas that are those of the RSU in the model proposed by Vallaeys & Álvarez (2022): training, as the space of a mutual learning community; and social participation, in the logic of a university that, from its solidarity, co-constructs solutions to problems with local communities. It is the so-called social relevance.

Following the methodology, these areas are addressed in three components, namely: 1) The training, which addresses everything related to the training of the student body, what is planned from the formal curricula and the hidden curriculum. 2) The territorial-community, referring to the way in which communities participate in generating the required changes, and they do so from their territories as places where they build their lives and their meanings. This component is due to the recognition of the ethical sense, respect for autonomy, worldviews and values that are significant for communities. 3) Research responds to the logic of scientific

publications, based on the production of knowledge with social meaning.

The development of each of the components was carried out through five phases, which in the training and community participation process occurred simultaneously, these are: Planning (F1); Link and Awareness (F2); Description and Justification of the Problem (F3); Implementation of the PSF (F4); Evaluation and monitoring (F5). Each of the phases describes activities. The development of the actions is guided by the assumptions of the intercultural approach.

The main actors who participated in the P-RSU with an intercultural approach are the students whose training was articulated in a comprehensive RSU system of each responsible university campus. Local communities belonging to each university environment are also the repositories of their own ethnic and cultural diversity values: indigenous people,

palenqueros, raizales, blacks, Afro-descendants, among others.

Other actors, refers to public and private companies; the local institutions in charge of guaranteeing the basic and fundamental rights of the communities; universities in the region. The training modality in which this P-RSU with an intercultural approach is proposed is traditional distance or virtual training, as it is that of the Minuto de Dios University Corporation, the institutional context in which this proposal is developed.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Universities must train intercultural mediators, people capable of establishing links and dialogues with the cultural diversity, multiculturalism and pluriculturalism of the country. Capable of eliminating all acts and imaginations of discrimination and underestimation of other human beings. Train supportive, empathetic, understanding people of the changes that today affect cultural communities, a product of global dynamics, which fragment human ties, generate confusion in vital traditional practices locally and daily. As far as the community of San Basilio de Palenque is concerned, prompt actions of tacit and effective commitment are required on the part of the universities present in the region, public and private institutions, so that from an ethical, intercultural, integrative and inclusive approach in development, serve and accompany the palenquera community through programs, projects and the development of policies that truly transform current living conditions.

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