

**Peru: Inequality of Education for Indigenous Groups, the Neglected Class**

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**Peru: Ch'ullayayqa yachachina qoto kaqtayukunapaq, qonqasqa runakuna (Quechua)**

**Abstract**

The culture of the indigenous people of Peru, descendants of the Incas, and the creators of an important cultural and social heritage, has been eroded by the politics of exclusion and disintegration. Not only did the colonialization of the Spanish disintegrate the indigenous culture, but Peruvians themselves are neglecting their native roots, excluding them from the educational system. In this paper, I will review the literature on the social inequalities that Peruvian indigenous groups experience in the Andes, and will identify missing gaps that need further study. I begin my analysis with the origins of inequality of the indigenous people and address the definition of “Indian.” Then, the following thematic issues are examined: social discrimination, poverty, access to education, analphabetism, language, gender, economic gaps, political unrest, government representation and dissatisfaction. I conclude this literature review with reflections on the inequality of education for the neglected class of Peru.

The canon for this paper is the scenario that anthropologist María Elena García poses from her studies at the Andes. In the wake of a fifteen-year civil war in the late 1990s that left thousands dead, most of whom were Quechua-speaking highlanders, Peruvian government and civil society began supporting reforms that recognized the nation's cultural diversity. One such reform required that indigenous school children receive instruction in Quechua as well as Spanish. The idea sounded quite progressive to the country's multicultural advocates. Surprisingly, the bilingual reforms were soundly rejected by Quechua-speaking parents throughout the Peruvian highlands.

During the Fifth Latin American Conference of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Lima in August 2002, the document “Multilingual Reality and Intercultural Challenge: Citizenship, Politics, and Education,” was presented and states:

Democracy and citizenship in Latin America are aspirations for us all; however, they are still more of a promise than a reality, especially of indigenous peoples. Our societies have not stopped discriminating against certain categories of individuals and peoples ... and they continue to allow intolerance, inequality, and authoritarianism. Broad sectors of the population have no rights; other sectors do not respect the rights of others. Our societies are fragmented and still suffer modes of domination and exclusion. It is for this reason that indigenous people are more vulnerable to injustice, corruption, confrontation, and poverty ... Despite educational reform ... there still have been no adequate responses ... that might allow for a more visible role for indigenous leaders in their own development. The education offered ... to indigenous women and girls, is devoid of quality and of linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical relevance (2002, cited in García, 2005, p. 107).

Hence, I will touch upon the aforementioned terms: promise, reality, discrimination, inequality, authoritarianism, exclusion, injustice, corruption, poverty, gender issues and so forth. These will be intertwined with Andean testimonies, an interview with a Peruvian miner, and the evaluation of the centre-periphery theory.

### **Origins of Inequality**

Peru was the site of the civilization of the Inca Empire which flourished from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Quechua was the official language of administration in the empire. In order to promote culture homogenization, the empire sent groups to colonize new territories. Quechua groups were sent toward the periphery of the empire and non-Quechua groups were transported to the centre. This assimilation plus the imposition of both religion and taxes were used as vehicles for the empire's integration. For many, this integration was seen as a political and economic motive (van den Berghe, 1977, pp. 35-36). In terms of social development, the Inca civilization was advanced. The empire was wealthy and had the ability to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It possessed a sophisticated knowledge in a number of fields, including medicine. By 1532, the empire was already vulnerable to Spanish conquest because of the civil wars from within. At this time, the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro arrived and marked the beginning of Spanish rule. Lima was founded in 1535 and became the center of the Spanish colonizers, serving as the Spanish's political and administrative hub for nearly two centuries. Inca resistance to Spanish domination ended with the execution of Tupac Amarú (the last Inca emperor) in 1571. A combination of European-borne epidemics, warfare, and forced labour devastated the Indian population of the region. Letters and reports from the Viceroy to Spain

lamented that “se están acabando los indios” [“Indians are being finished off”] (van den Berghe, 1977, p. 37). Spaniards accumulated wealth at the cost of the Indians. “Indian miners went down into primitive, unsafe, dark, ill-ventilated shafts to work for six-day shift underground, sustained by roasted corn and working by the light of tallow candles. Mortality through disease, exhaustion, and accidents was frightful” (van den Berghe, p. 41). At the same time, the Church, individual monasteries, and convents became large landowners. They became the biggest exploiters of Indians. The upsurge of many different ethnicities and social classes, led the Spaniards to divide the population of Peru by race and social status. At this instant, the nomenclature of indigenous people began (van den Berghe, p. 43).

The country is divided in three regions: the western coastal plain (La Costa), the high and rugged Andes in central area (La Sierra), and the eastern lowland jungle of the Amazon Basin (La Selva). The state distinguished between the highland or Andes populations as *campesinos* [peasants] or Indian peasants, and the lowland or Amazon (rain forest) populations as *nativos* [natives], who were presumed to be more authentically Indian. In the Amazon <sup>1</sup> similar patterns of inequality of education were experienced by the indigenous communities but cannot be discussed here due to the scope of this paper. The distinction between peasant and natives was especially marked during the government of Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975), in light of his prohibition of the use of the term *indio* for highland peoples, as the term *campesino* was perceived to be more appropriate for being part of the land (García, 2005). The term *Indian* has two translations in Spanish: *indio* and *indígena* [indigenous]. At present *indio* is most often considered and used as a racial slur. While in some cases this term is appropriated by groups advocating Indian empowerment, it remains mainly a derogatory label. Similarly, terms such as *serrano* (literally “from the sierra” or “from the mountains”) and *cholo* (usually referring to a dark-skinned individual with Andean origins, no matter how nebulous those origins may be, in transition to an urban/mestizo lifestyle) are still used as insults by most Peruvians (García, 2005). All of these definitions are used as a yardstick for discrimination.

Almost half (47%) of Peru’s population is indigenous, and their level of educational participation is low (Inter-American Development Bank, 2006). According to the 2006 statistics, the population of Peru is 28,302,603 with ethnic groups of 45% Indians, 37% Mestizo (Indian and White), 15% White, Black, Japanese, Chinese, and 3% other (The World Fact Book, 2006). The official languages are Castellano <sup>2</sup> and Quechua. The full extent of Peru’s linguistic diversity is still a debate. It is argued that there are 59 languages including Spanish, which belong to 11 or 12 distinct linguistic groups. Quechua and Aymara are the most commonly spoken languages within indigenous groups (Freeland, 1996). Since the 1940s there has been “a shift from monolingualism in indigenous languages toward bilingualism or even monolingualism in Castellano” (Freeland, 1996, p. 170). Quechua became the dominant culture and *lingua franca* during two historical events: during the Inca Empire of XIV century, and the indoctrination of the Catholic Church that used the language to predicate religion to the indigenous communities. Religion, economics and political activities fostered the use of Quechua and Aymara in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina (Varcárcel, 1999).

### **Social discrimination**

In Peru everyone accepts that social discrimination is pervasive, and almost everybody would explain or even justify such practices in terms of cultural differences. It is argued that “cultural fundamentalism” is the rhetoric of exclusion that is different from racism. Peruvians (intellectuals and nonintellectuals) think their discriminatory practices are not racist because they

do not connote innate biological differences, but cultural ones (de la Cadena, 2000). The country is rooted in a dichotomous view, where *indigenous* is associated with a primitive, rural condition, poverty, and illiteracy, and *non-indigenous* with urban manners, economic success, and education. *Mestizaje*, presupposes the cultural passage from rural to urban, from Quechua to Spanish, from illiterate to literate, from poverty to affluence, thus from Indian to non-Indian (de la Cadena). Quechua language is also “associated with inferior social status, ignorance and barbarity, Spanish ... as the language of the world beyond community... associated with progress and escape from marginalization, but also with cruelty and oppression” (Freeland, 1996, p. 178). Not surprisingly, if an indigenous person achieved higher education and learned English or a computer-literate peasant worked in Lima, they would be called *mestizo(a)* and *ex-indigenous*, which would erode their personal identity (García, 2005).

Rural teachers are also subject to the same prejudice. Female teachers who are sent to the highlands or Andes to teach, experience frustration and anger and believe they cannot secure a position in an urban school because of their gender or status. They believe they need money to bribe the educational authorities or have to sleep with the man in charge. Teachers as well make derogatory comments, pointing to indigenous students as dirty, ignorant and unable to learn (García, 2005). These conditions contribute to the discrimination that the indigenous groups experience.

### **Poverty**

The level of poverty in indigenous groups has deepened and the gaps between the rich and the poor are even more severe than they were a few years ago. A family’s income plays a large role in determining educational opportunities. The level of household expenditures on education varies by income level; the rich spends tremendously more than the poor. This disparity in the ability to pay, has contributed to the disparity in school resources. In the Ministry of Education’s 1994 survey of 400 rural and urban public schools in Lima and Cuzco, it was found that the annual parents’ contribution to very large urban schools amounted to about \$4,200 CAD, in contrast to only about \$100 CAD to rural schools (Bing Wu et al., 2000).

Although, currently Peru is growing economically between 4% and 5% a year, the country is very much a part of the Andes poverty belt (Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], 2006). The gaps between rich and poor are particularly dramatic. Almost 14 million Peruvians live in poverty. Of the five million living in extreme poverty on less than \$1 a day, the majority are women, children, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and people in remote areas (CIDA). High unemployment, a growing population, neglect of the environment, and a shortage of water and arable land are continuing challenges to the country’s economic development (CIDA).

Despite the increased political influence, indigenous peoples have made little economic and social progress. From 1994-2004 little gains were made in income poverty reduction; of all poor households in Peru, 43% were indigenous (The World Bank, 2006). They continue to suffer from greater diseases and discrimination and lower education (The World Bank).

### **Access to education**

Because of the severe level of poverty, access to education, information and services is limited. For instance, lack of transportation affects accessibility of education. Rural children tend to enter late into the school system because they often have to walk to school and only older

children can endure the journey. Even teachers are affected since they walk five to ten hours to get to a meeting (García, 2005). Moreover, many students need to go to work to help their families economically, thus absenteeism, repetitions, and dropouts are common in rural schools. The 1997 statistics show that indigenous people are the most disadvantaged group. For instance, in a fourth-grade achievement, Quechua students, teachers, and school principals were associated with lower achievement (Bing Wu et al., 2000). Furthermore, an academically talented and socially ambitious indigenous person is hindered by the low quality of education in the rural community. Since recognized educational institutions are clustered in urban areas, a talented indigenous person would have to travel to the cities to advance through the educational system (Arnové, Franz, Mollis, & Torres, 2003). Once there, he or she will experience discrimination and occupational segregation. Thus the indigenous students' prospects of advancing through the education pyramid are dim. The scenario just described is one example of a situation that negatively affects the opportunity to break out of the cycle of poverty.

### **Analphabetism**

The Latin American countries with the largest indigenous populations are Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala, and they have the highest illiteracy rates and lowest school attendance rates (Arnové et al., 2003). During the nineteenth century, illiteracy restricted voting rights for the lower classes, including the indigenous population, who had been effectively excluded from national and regional politics (van den Berghe, p. 60). Indigenous people were unable to express abstract concepts due to the limitations of their native language. In Peru, most schools teach in Castellano, a language that many indigenous groups cannot speak, which limits their access and advancement to national education (Barrantes, 1999). In 2003, between a population of 15 to 24 years of age, the illiteracy rates were 1.1% (urban) and 7.5% (rural), between 25 to 39 years of age, the illiteracy rates were 2.3% (urban) and 16.3% (rural), and for 40 years of age or older, the rates were 11.8% (urban) and 42.8% (rural) (Ministerio de Educación del Perú, 2003).

As per the Quechua testimony below, the highland people are aware of their alphabeticism and value education. Knowing how to read and write is considered the only way to empowerment, change and progress:

Because we are Quechua, because we speak our language and live according to our customs, and because we don't know how to read and write, we live in the world of the night. We have no eyes, and we are invalids like the blind. In contrast, those who know how to read and write live in daylight. They have eyes. It is senseless to stay in the world of darkness because we must progress to be like those who go to school and have eyes. Going to school, we open our eyes, we awake (1990, cited in García, 2005, p. 87).

In spite of the highlighted illiteracy issues in the indigenous communities, prominent Peruvian indigenous intellectuals have emerged and gained respect through their writings, articulating in both Quechua and Castellano languages. Some of these accomplished indigenous people are: Clorinda Matto de Turner who wrote *Aves sin nido* (Birds without nest, first published in 1889), which paints a frank picture of the oppression of highland Indians; Luis E. Valcárcel, editor of Cuzco's major newspaper and former minister of education; Luis Felipe Aguilar, a lawyer from Cuzco and representative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Juan Carlos Godenzzi, a linguist; José María Arguedas, a novelist and an anthropologist.

At the present time, there is an initiative lead by the National Program of Mobilizing the Analphabetism (PRONAMA) to help the indigenous community until the year of 2011. The illiterate will be taught first in their vernacular language, and afterwards in Spanish. The bilingual population could choose to learn in their language of preference (Ministerio de Educación, 2006).

### Language

Priests and missionaries used Quechua to teach religion as a process of acculturation. These priests learned the language if they did not already know it, produced dictionaries and translated the Bible; little effort was made on their part to teach in Spanish (van den Berghe, 1977). On the other hand, Quechua-speaking parents would rather have their children taught in Spanish in their schools. Parents are not against preserving Quechua; however, they see Quechua preservation as a process their families practice outside of school and see Spanish acquisition as more vital for their children's future in terms of advancing through the educational system. The following testimony, in a response from a Quechua parent to a non-governmental organization (NGO) representative, attests to the elimination of the Quechua language from rural schools:

They learn Quechua from us, their parents, in their homes with their families. In school they need to learn the skills that will help them become something more than just *campesinos*. Look at you, he said, pointing to the teacher. You are dressed in *misti* [mestizo] clothes, you speak Spanish and probably English and you are in the position of power. Did you learn how to read and write in Quechua or in Spanish? (García, 2005, p. 91).

In the same way, learning Spanish is viewed as a defence mechanism; as stated in many postcolonial settings, to learn the language of the oppressor is to resist that oppression: "You [anthropologists] care about our culture. We, too, care. We will never be able to be mestizos, really. We are campesinos, but by learning how to read and write, our children can defend themselves in the mestizo's world" (García, 2005, p. 94). There was more opposition toward a bilingual education. One example was the director of a school in a community of the Andes and a teacher who argued that learning Quechua was not helpful for the children of the Andes. For him "Education is about teaching children ... they must master Spanish, because everything in this country is a racist political game, and they must learn how to play, and how to win ... teaching children in Spanish is not a denial of their culture, but rather the recognition that to get ahead in Peru, they need to speak and write in Spanish" (García, 2005, p. 131).

Contradictions of intercultural discourses continue, and cynically, non-indigenous activists and teachers promoting indigenous language learning send their own children to foreign language institutes or to non-bilingual schools (García, 2004). Furthermore, the language Quechua itself connotes ambiguity. It is simultaneously the language of an oppressed minority and the legitimated symbol of former national glory with the Incas. The purist discourse of Quechua contributes to the marginalization of other indigenous languages and ultimately of its rural speakers. Also the speech of the peasantry is considered as so decayed and corrupted, thus the teachers (bilingual mestizos) end up defining the language. Then, a question arises of whose Quechua is it? (Marr, 1999).

### **Lack of economic opportunities**

Rural schools in Latin America are falling apart because the teachers lack educational resources, materials and the desire to teach. During García's trip to Cuzco between 1996 and 1999, she noted that many indigenous communities in the highland struggled with the lack of basic educational resources, such as pens, paper, tables or desks on which to write. Not having proper sanitation in the schools was also a concern. Indigenous parents were growing tired of the countless problems and inadequacies of school and education (García, 2005). Besides, rural schools in Peru are overcrowded and teachers are overburdened in terms of student-teacher ratios. In fact, rural teachers' compensation is poor. Generally, rural teachers (mainly females) and those teaching in other difficult areas receive 10% to 30% less than their urban counterparts (Arnove et al., 2003). Although teachers working in a rural area are supposed to receive a bonus, this is frequently excluded from their pay-checks. Any attempt to claim it jeopardizes their employment (García, 2005).

### **Gender**

During 1920s in the Andes, women were deemed unqualified to exercise political power or to publicly defend family honour, and elite women risked harsh social sanctions if they challenged any pattern of inequality. Disobedient women acquired the reputation of being *machonas* [mannish] (de la Cadena, 2000). The idea of progress and social mobility devalued and discriminated against women. It was common for girls to stay home and boys to attend school. When girls went to school, they were expected to help with and serve the lunch. Only after the boys had been served, the girls could start eating (García, 2005). Rural girls completed primary school at far lower rates than all other children in the country (Heyman et al., 2002).

At the tertiary level, rural and urban differences in gender enrolment ratios were striking. In the rural areas, only 2% of girls and 6% of boys were enrolled in the first year, but in the urban areas, 16% of girls and 11% of boys were in school (Bing Wu et al., 2000, p. 390). One of the reasons associated with rural girls' inequality of education is linked to parents' lack of understanding about the benefits of schooling for girls as presented in the following words from a 12-year old girl, who lives in the Andes:

My two brothers are studying in Puno, one in secondary and the other in a technical institute. Even after my parents sold many of their belongings, there was not enough money for my sister to study. They said that it is dangerous for girls and that she (my sister) must get married and have someone to take care of her. Why is it that men have more time for everything? They can study more, but we, the girls, cannot. Boys learn faster, but girls have better grades (Heyman et al., 2002, p. 10).

The rural girls who enter school are older and are usually teased by the younger male classmates. This gender discrimination affects their self-esteem, and belittles the importance of girls and women in homes, schools, and communities. Moreover, in many schools, girls are used to hearing from teachers that they cannot learn as easily as boys can as if learning is gender based (Heyman et al., 2002). To mitigate these gender inequalities, initiatives such as conferences held around the world as well as media campaigns have embarked to publicly acknowledge this issue (Heyman et al.). At present, the results of these initiatives are inconclusive.

### **Political unrest**

Indigenous people were the first to be affected by oppression and political disorder. Indigenous people in Peru were tormented by the armed conflict that plagued the country from 1980 to 2000. Many communities lost access to education when they were forced to leave their territories or were captured by the Maoist Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas (Salazar, 2006, p. 3). The Shining Path infiltrated the highlands by deceptively advocating indigenous rights. Sendero demonstrated great hostility toward the indigenous culture and punished entire villages if they refused to be on their side. Bloodshed was part of “every day life for indigenous peasants, who began to identify the guerrillas as supernatural beings who, in the Andean mythology, take human fat and eat flesh” (García, 2005, p. 41). Innocent peasants were persecuted as a result of political violence. Government militants and other security forces equated all Quechua-speaking peasants with terrorism. Thus thousands were killed or disappeared as part of government efforts to eliminate the insurgency. This was an extreme manifestation of the type of discrimination that indigenous communities have always faced (García, 2005). Although, the insurgency movement has diminished in numbers, it still lives on.

### **Government and disappointment**

The political pattern of Peru lacks a strong democratic tradition and coherence of political powers. For instance, from 1821 to 1861, Peru has changed presidents 35 times and developed about 15 different constitutions. Four of the presidents were constitutionally chosen, and the others were military figures. The impact of the government representation toward the indigenous groups has been striking, and will be briefly discussed chronologically.

The government of Belaunde Terry (1963-1968) focused on land innovations and established Peru’s first Agrarian Reform Law, which was difficult to implement due to the diversified and stratified agrarian sector. Belaunde increased the number of schools and attempted to promote the use of vernacular languages as a vehicle for teaching Spanish. His attempts failed for two reasons: the indigenous groups’ rejection of the idea of acculturation to mestizo norms and language and the cries of corruption and internal split in Belaunde’s government (Bourque, 1984).

The Revolutionary and Military government of General Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) implemented the Agrarian Reform and launched three major educational initiatives as instruments to end the historical inequity of the peasantry. First, he established decentralized educational nuclei, where institutions were organized and run by indigenous groups themselves. Second, a National Policy of Bilingual Education was instituted, and finally, a law was passed to make Quechua an official language co-equal with Castellano at all educational levels. Thus Peru became the first Latin American country to legitimize an indigenous language (García, 2005). Moreover, he changed the “Day of the Indian”<sup>3</sup> to the “Day of the Peasant” as an attempt to corroborate the importance of peasantry. Women’s inequalities of education in the rural arena were addressed but they continued to lag severely behind that of men (Bourque, 1984). Later, revolutionary governments systematically dismantled many of Velasco’s reforms (García, 2005). The Agrarian Reform of 1969 represented the most significant affirmative action of the military government toward the rural Indian sector; however, it failed to take into account women’s contributions to agricultural production. Solely, the male head of the household received title to the land or membership in the cooperative (Bourque, 1984). Most landowners were mestizos.

Therefore, the reform could neither address nor resolve the host of inequities faced by the indigenous population (Bourque).

General Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980) put his emphasis on language. In the constitution of 1979, Quechua was made a language of official use and the law decided where and how Quechua would be used (García, 2004). López said “the aim was still *castellanización*, bilingual Quechua/Spanish education was envisaged for only 4 years of primary schooling, with little concern for the future of indigenous languages beyond that” (1991, cited in Freeland, 1996, p. 175).

The government of Belaunde Terry (1980-1985) was passive and had a more laissez-faire attitude. Recovery of local history and curriculum were counter-reforms by his government (Freeland, 1996).

Alan García (1985-1990) legitimized the Quechua and Aymara alphabets. In 1987 his government reinstated the Department of Bilingual Education and approved the Bilingual Intercultural Education Policy within the framework of the Peru-World Bank Programme and UNESCO (Freeland, 1996). During the debt-induced recession in the Peruvian economy, the Department of Bilingual Education decided to quickly extend from 40 rural schools to 1400 within the year. Inevitably, this impertinent decision resulted in serious deficits in teachers, administrators, and course offerings. The lack of clear administration and little understanding of the political and structural problems, jeopardized the quality and the success of bilingual programme, which became vulnerable to the radical change in the national politics of 1990s (Freeland, 1996).

The government of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) combined authoritarian rule and neoliberalism. Fujimori’s self-coup of Congress suspended the constitution and ruled by concentrated power in the executive backed by a pro-Fujimori legislature. His aggressive militants captured the leader of Sendero Luminoso in 1992. Then, *campesinos* were trained in the highlands and the amazons to form organized groups in order to protect themselves from forthcoming guerrilla attacks. By 1993, with the war supposedly over, the government enacted a new constitution designed to recognize and protect the ethnic and cultural plurality of the country by guaranteeing the right of all people to use their own language. However, when Fujimori approved progressive changes to the constitution, he simultaneously, dissolved the National Office for Bilingual Education because of lack of funds. International pressure and protest led to the reinstatement of this office, but at this time, it was relocated as a small unit within another unit, the National Office of Elementary Education (UNEBI) (García, 2004). Fujimori’s neoliberal agenda negatively affected the indigenous communities. His government initiated programs for the indigenous development, and therefore, sought international support from the World Bank and NGOs (García, 2005). This action resulted in an increased international presence, and thus foreign investments mushroomed, which led to the transfer of millions of hectares of indigenous lands to transnational mining companies, as one example (García). Thus peasant’s lands were expropriated and their living conditions worsened.

Alejandro Toledo (2001- 2006), an Andean-born, Stanford-educated, Quechua speaking former World Bank employee, was the first Indian elected president in Peru's history. Throughout his campaign, he and his supporters publicized his indigenous ancestry, his background of poverty, and his Belgian, Quechua-speaking wife, Eliane Karp. During the campaign, she went so far as to say that Toledo represented the reincarnation of the Pachacuti

(one of the Inca emperors). Karp, as first lady, made indigenous issues part of her official duties, but her initiatives were seen to be backwards (García, 2005). From the indigenous community's perspective, there was an expectation that Toledo's government would bring equalities for his people. But it never occurred. As described: "Toledo's leadership has been flawed ... Whereas Fujimori was regularly photographed inaugurating public works. Toledo is regularly photographed at exclusive beach resorts. He does not seem to understand that poor Peruvians resent the expensive life style. At the same time, wealthy, Caucasian Peruvians resent the expensive lifestyle of a man they consider a *cholo*<sup>4</sup> – an Indian" (McClintock, 2005, p. 454).

The current government of Alan García (2006), again, is concerned with rebuilding relationships with International NGOs and the United States. Preoccupation about indigenous groups is not visible and Peruvians are sceptical and suspicious about his agenda. His legacy is still to be seen.

### Discussion

Peru is a diglossic society. From colonial times, the Spanish language has been considered one of high prestige and indigenous language one of low prestige, and also the periphery. "Centre-periphery theory makes it clear that those in the centre want their local knowledge to be thought to be universal, while the local knowledge of peripheral people is disregarded as marginal" (Masemann, 2000, p. xxiii). Quechua in the Andes is the periphery of Spanish in the centre. In other words, the centre is the dominant culture with high prestige, and it is the colonizer. A question arises as to whether being in the centre makes a language prestigious and superior. Quechua speakers feel that this is true. The need of reading and writing in Spanish to help them through the educational system is crucial; however, once the indigenous peoples become educated and literate in Spanish, they will realize that Spanish is no longer the centre. It is now peripheral to English, since Latin American nations have come to occupy an increasingly peripheral and dependent position on Western culture. As a Peruvian in an urban community, I was taught that English was an important language and Quechua was an inferior one. As a personal example, at four years old, I was taught to sing "Jingle Bells" in English. As well, in the fifteen years of schooling in Lima, I was never encouraged to learn a single word in Quechua. Therefore, it appears that there is a gap of misrepresentation and misinformation toward the importance and position of the language, and the cultural maintenance of their grass-roots. It is not what a language can do for the indigenous communities, but what they can do with their mother tongue.

"The principal of equality can be seen in terms of access to political decision-makers and lack of access to diversify power also undermines principles of equality" (Aikman, 1997, p. 472). The dominant classes of Peru have always turned their sights outwards for economic reasons yet they are incapable of looking within, and still depend very much on the international metropolis to give them a hand. "Not only have they created a multinational organization ... they also take their demands directly to international bodies, such as the World Bank, IMF and Inter-American Development Bank, or to the United States, rather than addressing only regional states" (1991, cited in Freeland, 1996, p. 187). The Peruvian government neglects the root of the nation's problems, and as a result, ignores the full potential and participation of the indigenous communities. Peruvian politicians address indigenous groups in terms of economics not culture. In order to gain votes and power, they target indigenous communities with promises. Once in power, politicians do not follow through on their promises and if they do, the next government dismantled them. Consequently, indigenous communities remain marginalized.

The ideal equality model has been debated by anthropologists, social activists, and politicians for centuries but little has been done about it. International organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, UNESCO, the World Bank and NGOs are trying once more to tackle the inequality of education for the indigenous communities by developing strategies and injecting a great deal of funds. Yet, to further the study of the inequalities of education for indigenous groups in Peru, and to evaluate the outcomes of organizations' initiatives, more updated and relevant statistical information is vital. In most instances, the available data was outdated, which dated back to 1993. This was the case for The National Institute of Statistics and Information and the Ministry of Education in Peru. The Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada website, has an idle link to indigenous information. The Latin American Educational Information and Documentation Network (Red Latino-americana de información y Documentación de Educación- REDUC), which produces education abstracts on microfiche and on-line, does not yet collect specific references to bilingual education (Freeland, 1996).

Inequality of education affects the impoverished communities. Presently, in order to be academically successful, one needs to attend private institutions or go to school overseas. This is luxury that only the Peruvian elite can afford. In this situational scenario, the poor will continue to be disadvantaged and the rich will continue to be a privileged class. I contemplate whether this is the destiny and socio-economic path of Peru unless reforms of educational equality are able to address the marginalized groups. In a telephone interview, Javier Inri, a mining supervisor in the highlands, who has been in the mines for fifteen years, asserted that indigenous miners had, indeed, limited language skills. Castellano is spoken with limitation, whereas Quechua is not spoken at all. Mr. Inri also observed that miners were all indigenous peoples and their level of education was very low, most of them had only completed primary school; therefore, their communication skills were restricted. He believed that the reason for the lack of equal education in indigenous groups was twofold. First, there is patriarchalism within indigenous groups since highlander fathers send their children to the mines to work at an early age because of poverty, even though they are aware of the perils of the job. Second, indigenous people are exploited and therefore, not being taught to read and write (J. Inri, personal communication, December 15, 2006). Indigenous' exploitation is perpetuating the neglect, the social division of labour and the inequality of education.

The hegemonic efforts of the Spaniards have managed to instill negative opinions of indigenous languages to the point that many speakers are ashamed to use it, and many Peruvians are abashed to be associated with it. Every Peruvian knows that there is a pervasive dislike of the indigenous' languages, as a result these languages are rejected. Quechua is slowly dying out as its speakers shift to Spanish, the dominant language. For indigenous Peruvians, achieving literacy is not only equated with learning how to read, it is equated with learning how to read in Spanish, and is becoming dissociated almost entirely from their indigenous language. Bilingual intercultural education was a clever initiative but as currently implemented, it leaves many gaps with many incomplete tasks. Progress for the indigenous people is an illusion attested by the continual failures of literacy campaigns viewed as the panacea of underdevelopment. Dialogue is seen as the route to foster an intercultural education and understanding among indigenous peoples and Westerners; however, when we talk about indigenous peoples, the word "die" is implied in the dialogue (Sawyer Seminar, 2006; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). The failure of the bilingual programme is also seen due to the lack of one important ingredient "the broad popular support of grass-roots organisations capable of fighting for its survival" (Freeland, 1996, p. 177).

To conclude, the adjective, “indigenous,” for most Peruvians, connotes an idea of ancient, ignorance, and irrelevant; conversely, for academia, indigenous groups are a challenge to a modern world of mobility and innovation. Globalization and technology have created new demands for knowledge and uncovered the taboo of indigenous communities. Indigenous groups, themselves, remain in the primitive state of ignorance. The future of the Peruvian democracy will be influenced by the extent to which poverty and inequality of education are addressed. Class fragmentation, discrimination, social tension and political conflicts are the results of the government’s failure to address the inequalities. Indeed, the rubrics of discrimination, poverty, illiteracy, vulnerability and disparage have defined the indigenous groups of Peru. The rhetoric of visibility and inclusion are still hesitant, and vulnerable to disparagement and violence. There is the need for the support not only from the top-down but also, from the ground up from both the Spanish and Quechua-speaking communities. It can be seen that in the struggle for equality, there is a lack of participation from the indigenous communities themselves. In order to aim toward the equality of education, indigenous people need to be involved. Ultimately, they need to be the protagonists of their own development, their own language and their own future. There is no more neglect than neglecting themselves or neglecting their roots.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on the inequality of indigenous people of the Amazon, both Michael Brown in *War of Shadows* and Sheila Aikman in *Intercultural Education and Literacy* reflect upon this topic.
- <sup>2</sup> Castellano and Quechua are the official languages of Peru. Castellano is one dialect of the Spanish language. It is used to distinguish that form of Spanish language from other forms such as Aragonese, Leonese, Catalan and others. Quechua and Aymara are only spoken by indigenous groups. In most literature, Spanish is used to refer to Castellano, thus I will use both terms interchangeably.
- <sup>3</sup> During the Inca Empire, the Day of the Indian was celebrated, every June 24, to pay tribute and to thank the mother land for the harvest. In the Inti Raymi [sun] celebration, the Inca started the celebrations that lasted nine days. This celebration stopped with the arrival of the Spaniards.
- <sup>4</sup> *Cholo* is an expression commonly used in Peru. It is used to refer to any indigenous person. It has a negative connotation of inferiority and mockery.

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