

ICHEM Seminar

Higher Education and Peacebuilding: The Case of Colombia

Jose Restrepo

5 October 2016 14.00 - 16.00

The Edge Room 2.1

Abstract

For more than half a century, Colombia has experienced internal armed conflict between State forces and illegal organizations. In many respects, the situation has been depicted in terms of disorder and instability. However, the hostilities have not affected all regions equally and it is important to remember that Colombia is considered one of the oldest democracies in Latin America.

While the war has evolved over the decades, peace initiatives have flourished leading to the (partial) reintegration of combatants into civilian life. A few weeks ago, the Colombian government reached an accord with the most powerful insurgent group: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). If the agreement is approved by referendum, the country will enter a post-conflict environment on an unprecedented scale.

In this context, it is important to analyse the recent trends of Colombia's higher education system which offers a hybrid configuration between public and private institutions. Far from collapsing in the midst of violence, the universities have undergone dramatic transformations in particular since the 1990s. The changes have been motivated by complex considerations which tend to towards inclusive development and responsible citizenship. As a consequence, significant improvements have been registered in different spheres – including access, pedagogical standards of teaching and learning, academic mobility, research and publications and services to community. Specifically, the presentation seeks to address the coming challenges faced by higher education in the light of a post-conflict era in Colombia. What is at stake is an understanding as to how Colombian universities can contribute to sustainable peace.

Biography

José Manuel Restrepo is currently President of Universidad del Rosario, a university that has first place in Colombia in the Scimago ranking of research according to publications, impact and social relevance of research and is ranked 26 in Latin America. An economist, he holds a Master's Degree in Economics from the London School of Economics, a Postgraduate Degree in Finance and Executive Management from Universidad del Rosario, and a DBA in Higher

Education Management from the University of Bath. He worked at the Colombian National Congress Economic Commission, and was elected member of the Local Administrative Assembly of Bogotá District Capital. Later he was appointed Budget and Financial Planning Director of the Financial Fund for Development Planning in Colombia. He was appointed President of the “Business University Foundation” of the Bogota Chamber of Commerce, and afterwards of the School of Business CESA. He was also an advisor to the Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES) and of the National Council of Accreditation (CNA). He researches higher education management and economics of higher education, and writes and participates as an expert on issues relating to economics of education. He is a member of the board of various public and private education institutions such as Icetex (National Institute of Finance for Higher Education Abroad), Colsubsidio, Gimnasio Vermont, ICP (Institute of Political Science). He has received awards by Gimnasio Campestre and by the Junior Chamber of Colombia, and he recently received the Order of Military Merit José María Córdova.

All Welcome. Please email Jeanette Magson at JM232@bath.ac.uk to register your attendance.