

Crisis in Venezuela in Terms of Education

Crisis en Venezuela en Términos de Educación

Eliana Edith Roberto Flórez²⁸
Luz Adriana Chaparro Becerra²⁹

Received: October 15th, 2018.

Accepted: April 16th, 2019.

Abstract

This article aims at describing the way Venezuelan people struggle in terms of education, advantages and disadvantages immigrants receive and consequences of having teenagers without education. Besides, to reflect about the political and economic crisis that Venezuela has been battling during the last years, which began to affect schools in the country, where teachers abandoned their jobs because of their low salaries they received from the Ministry of Education. In addition, how parents became parent-teachers in order to keep their children receiving education despite the hard situation that country is facing. Likewise, the way that quality education is decreasing and how people try to motivate student not to abandon school.

²⁸ She holds a M.A. in Language Teaching from Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia. Currently, she is a full time teacher at Universidad Santo Tomás. She is a research teacher who has been working in different areas and she belongs to Expedicionarios Humanistas Research Group. eliana.roberto@usantoto.edu.co Universidad Santo Tomás, Tunja, Colombia.

²⁹ She is a Law student at Universidad Santo Tomás - Tunja. luz.chaparronb@usantoto.edu.co. Universidad Santo Tomás, Tunja, Colombia.

Key Words. *Social crisis, education, schools, Venezuela.*

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo describir la forma en que las personas de Venezuela enfrentan la educación. Las ventajas y desventajas que reciben los inmigrantes. Además, se hace una reflexión sobre la crisis política y económica que Venezuela ha estado luchando durante los últimos años, y que inició a afectar a los colegios en el país, en donde los maestros abandonaron sus empleos debido a los bajos salarios recibidos por parte del Ministerio de Educación y cómo los padres se convirtieron en padres y maestros para mantener a sus hijos recibiendo educación a pesar de la difícil situación que enfrenta este país. Del mismo modo, la forma en que la calidad de educación está disminuyendo y la forma en que las personas intentan motivar a los estudiantes a no abandonar la escuela.

Palabras claves. *Colegios, crisis social, educación, Venezuela.*

Nowadays, a lot of people from Venezuela are facing a difficult situation in many areas, specially, social and economic features, which has caused that many of them look for other alternatives or places in order to find new opportunities that contribute to improve aspects in terms of education, social status and family, among others.

Bearing in mind the previous statements, Venezuelans are moving to new destinies such as Colombia, where they hope to search a better quality life and job opportunities to improve their lifestyle in general.

One of the cases can be observed in a report by the Colombian newspaper “El Tiempo” (2017), about the mobility of Venezuelans people on the border with Colombia. Two women were interviewed: Noelia Ramírez and Wendy Rodríguez.

Noelia Ramírez expressed, with great sadness, that the situation in her country was very painful and that it was very sad to leave her family due to this situation, in order to find a good job and send money to her family support; she emphasized saying that she would like to return someday and find Venezuela in other conditions.

On the other hand, Wendy Rodríguez expressed her pain because she had to leave her family in Venezuela. She related that she could have a good salary but when she went to the supermarket, it was evident the shortage of food or everything had a very high price, thus, the money was only enough for a couple of things that do not supply all the list of necessary basic elements.

These two women are destined for the city of Aguachica in Cesar - Colombia.

Based on a study found on the website www.yoemigro.com about Venezuela’s immigrants, the countries where a lot of Venezuelans arrive are: The United States, Canada, Italy, Portugal, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Holland, Australia, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Chile, Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Brazil, Bolivia and Uruguay. Torres (2017) states three migration advantages and three disadvantages; the first ones are:

- *Better life quality:* Most immigrants look for an increase in standard living conditions and more opportunities about employment in many aspects.
- *New personal and professional experiences:* Immigrants need to adopt new challenges related to modern time people's relationships.
- *Contact with new cultures and expansion of knowledge which includes* gastronomy, means of transport, traditions, and even, learn a new language.

Living in another country opens the doors of knowledge through the native history of nations, and even, through tours of museums or historical sites with the most representative architecture.

On the other hand, some disadvantages are:

- *Xenophobia and cultural barriers*
- *Different language*
- *Shortage of labor supply*

When someone lives in another country, and lives the experience of multiculturalism, education, cultural precepts and values, this person applies the positive things learned at home.

While international organizations, politicians, heads of state, and citizens in general do not agree with the Venezuelan political situation, through this

article, there is an analysis about the academic influences that migration caused by the situation in the neighboring country.

Many years ago, many Colombian citizens migrated to Venezuela due the armed conflict in their country. Nowadays, those same Colombian people had the necessity to come back to the country with their relatives because of the economic and political situation Venezuela is having during the last years. The migrant inhabitants who are coming from Venezuela do not have high educational levels, according to a study carried out by researchers from Universidad del Rosario in Colombia. This condition brings a variety of difficulties to be solved. It is important to see what have done Colombian government about Venezuelan migration. This situation needs a lot of attention in order to help Venezuelans to stabilize their employment, political, health situation and others.

About health, problems have arisen because many Venezuelans arrive to hospitals and these places do not have enough money to attend all people. Thus, they requested for economic resources to national government for this situation. With respect to employment, labor informality increased.

“In search of eradicating underemployment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Migration Colombia created the Special Permit of Permanence (PEP) last week. With this document, they try to regularize the migratory situation of more than 230,000 Venezuelans. The idea is that those who formally entered but are now - or may soon be - in an irregular situation may remain in Colombia,

work formally and contribute to health and pension” (Semana Magazine, May 2017).

This license is a great help for immigrants in order to improve their economic situation because they have the chance to get more employment opportunities.

In terms of education, before this crisis, the education in Venezuela was well organized, systematic and it was a right for everyone. The basic education was taught by the primary and secondary schools in Venezuela. Besides, public education since kindergarten until university is still free. The Venezuelan government keeps the idea that all citizens are entitled to a free education. The academic calendar is from September to July. Even if education is free, many kids do not attend to schools because of poverty. Children usually start school when they are six years old. Students in second level of basic education are around 14 or 15 years old. Venezuela has many important and well-known schools and the government invested in the educational sector.

Nowadays, education is different, people from Venezuela struggle many difficulties because of the economic crisis, it means that Venezuelan teachers have abandoned low pay jobs and the consequences are serious because parents are forced to become teachers.

One of the serious consequences about the crisis in Venezuela is the quality education. According to several citizens, they express their worries

because they have been studying to become Engineers, but, as Venezuela's economic and social problems get worse, many schools and universities have been closed. Thus, these students are currently working in different jobs such as being teachers with low payments or selling things. Many teachers from public schools have left their professional positions.

Bearing in mind the previous situation, actually in Venezuela, teachers' wages from the Ministry of Education are very low that going to work for a teacher can cost more than the job brings in, some parents are playing a new role. They are filling the places abandoned by teachers in order to provide education to their children.

According to "Se Educa Venezuela", an educational nonprofit group in this country has calculated that 12 percent of teachers nationwide have quit during the first five months of 2018. Many professionals in education have left the teaching field. Besides, the National Association of Private Educational Institutions stated that at least 30 percent of teachers have not shown up in their classrooms during this year because many of them have left the country and are looking for shelter somewhere. Education in Venezuela is more difficult through the time because the schools could not find anyone to teach. There are many vacant positions without teacher to fill them, it means, the schools feared for the future of Venezuelan students in terms of education. In order to find a possible solution, some schools made the decision to request the parents to play the teachers' role; otherwise, many schools do not have other choices that close them. Thus, the parents who have knowledge in certain areas are the ones who are in

charge of education currently becoming parent-teachers nonetheless of the fact that they are not professional teachers.

This is a serious situation because being a professional teacher is a huge responsibility where teachers are responsible of their own knowledge. Parent-teachers have to face a huge challenge in order to bring their own children a good education.

Besides, having an adequate education implies many aspects to be including such as an optimum infrastructure, good diet, friendly atmosphere, good health, among other. These factors are not possible to fulfill in a real educative context in Venezuela. The students who still have the opportunity to attend to a school complain about the bad conditions of the bathrooms, there is not water to keep the toilets clean neither to drink it from the fountain, also, due to the lack of food, students do not have a balance diet that allow them feel healthy. Despite, some students do not wish to go to school anymore even the ones who are about to graduate.

As consequence, many teenagers are not registered in any school; it means that in the future there will be a big number of citizens without education, with hopeless economic and social conditions.

Although Venezuelan education is governed by the Ministry of Education where all citizens have the right to education, it is in crisis. Crimes, violence, lack of food, unemployment, poverty, among others, has left Venezuelan schools and

universities uninhabited because learners and teachers have to look for food and basic needs instead of being receiving education in schools.

In the following image, reality about schools in Venezuela is shown:



Image taken from: www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-schools/venezuelan-schools-emptying-as-chavez-legacy-under-threat-idUSKBN1HW1KL2019

This view shows a normal classroom in Venezuela on March 2, 2018. It is empty because many students had to go to different countries together with their relatives; it shows the real crisis of the education in that country.

Now, taking into account the context in universities, Pérez and Smilde (2017) stated that a high number of students are dropping out universities in Venezuela, undergraduate students and professors have to research for jobs in other countries. “Profesores Titulares” in Venezuela system, ask for early retirement or sabbatical years. In addition, there were traditional academic activities in which assistant professors from Venezuela were involved in conferences outside the country, but currently, it is not possible for them to participate in these academic events because of the economic crisis this country

is having. They are unable to pay for registration conferences outside. It is a sad situation because when professors participate in these kinds of activities, they have the chance to improve their academic training, which is not possible now and it is a negative aspect in terms of quality education because concerns about academic standards emerged in the schools and universities.

In addition, research universities lost more than 400 professors and administrative staff since 2015. Some managers of private and public universities claimed that the Venezuelan have breached norms, policies and practices in order to suppress academic freedom and have autonomy for universities.

In conclusion, after analyzing and searching information about the situation Venezuelan people are facing nowadays, the increasing crimes and economic disorder are causing a lot of problems related to education because poor students do not have any chance for a better life. In reality, Venezuelan children have missed many classes, teacher cannot give classes because they have to wait in food lines and there are no good conditions to have children in class without food, water, electricity, among others. As serious consequences, there are armed robbers in many places, many people without education. In a few years, all the progress this country had had now has been undone. This country is now among the most violent and lawless around the world. People without values neither education will have a society lacks of respect, tolerant and love.

References

Colegio: el refugio de los niños venezolanos en Colombia. Retrieved from <https://www.semana.com/educacion/articulo/los-ninos-venezolanos-que-entran-al-sistema-educativo-colombiano/568138>.

News from Venezuela. Retrieved from www.yoemigro.com.

No food, No Teachers, Violence if Failing Venezuela Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/no-food-no-teachers-violence-in-failing-venezuela-schools/3380651.html>.

Pérez, Hugo and Smilde, David. (2017). Venezuela's Higher Education Crisis Worsens. Retrieved from <https://www.wola.org/analysis/venezuelas-higher-education-crisis-worsens/>

Se Educa: Venezuela: Educación Bolivariana. Retrieved from: <https://www.juandemariana.org/ijm-actualidad/analisis-diario/venezuela-educacion-bolivariana>.