

of adapting diversity to mainstream education programmes (creating new inequalities) in order to pursue the 'equality of differences' and the 'differentiation of inequalities' where there are different 'talents' and different 'merit criteria' for an inclusive sustainable education for all, and for building sustainable democratic knowledge societies in the region.

6. Universities and higher institutions will play a central role in knowledge production, dissemination and professional training and development towards the sustainable endogenous development paradigm, and for supporting local and regional economic, social and environmental development.

Although progress has been made, it is uneven and without a major push forward, many of the Millennium Development Goals' targets for 2015 are likely to be missed in many countries in the LAC region. Old and new challenges threaten further progress in some areas or even to undo the success achieved so far.

Economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of governments, institutions and international organizations directed to enhance endogenous sustainable development with inclusion and equity cannot be focused solely on economic growth. They should be guided by principles for reducing poverty and inequality, and increasing social justice, self-sufficiency and effectiveness both in the short and the long term.

To meet this challenge, it will be necessary to reorient plans of study and programmes in basic education and higher education in order to address the need for more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

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Spotlight Issues II.9

Contributions of intercultural higher education to sustainable development and well-being: Experiences in Latin America

Daniel Mato

This paper provides an overview of the main intercultural forms of higher education (HE) developed in recent decades in Latin America in response to the needs, demands and proposals of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. There are currently

more than 100 intercultural experiences of HE in the region, each with its own unique characteristics. Nonetheless, they all are guided by concepts related to sustainable development or community well-being. These intercultural initiatives provide

contextualized training for professionals and specialists, give value to the knowledge and languages of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and aim to improve the quality of life of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

HIGHER EDUCATION, INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

The belief that knowledge production corresponds to two worlds, one in possession of supposedly 'universal' truths and the other in possession of merely 'local' truths, underlies the claim to superiority of Western civilization, whose knowledge is claimed to be 'universal'. Encounters, conflicts and negotiations between 'universal' and 'local' kinds of knowledge have become more frequent in recent decades due to the expansion and deepening of relations between social actors who operate on a global level, in contrast to those who operate at a more local level. In this context, an analysis of the limitations and consequences of belief in the existence of 'universal' and 'local' kinds of knowledge is increasingly feasible and necessary – and indeed, increasingly urgent, given the environmental disasters resulting from the prevalence of the contemporary Western model.

These circumstances require a review of HE in terms of the prevailing institutional models, content, teaching-learning methods and the relationship between conventional higher education institutions (HEIs)¹ and society. Valuable contributions have been made by intercultural HE experiences in the past couple of decades in Latin America, where both conventional HEIs and other openly intercultural HEIs (IHEIs) have developed novel institutional models, curricula and teaching and learning methods. The starting point for these institutions is to acknowledge the existence of unequal intercultural relations in their societies and to seek to establish equitable intercultural relations in which all sides cooperate in mutual recognition of the value of the other and accept world views different to the prevailing contemporary Western vision. This has significant implications for the production of knowledge and the kind of education offered by HEIs.

The recognition of these other world views suggests, among other things, adopting a perspective on the future of our societies in terms of 'well-being', rather than in terms of 'development', which is still considered – for all that it is qualified by the adjective 'sustainable' – as synonymous with progress and economic growth. Well-being is used as an

alternative term to sustainable development because it represents social transformation horizons that are more consistent with the world views of many American indigenous peoples. These other world views understand humans to be part of what modern Western societies call 'nature' – and not as a superior species that views and manages the planet as a source of natural resources.

The intercultural HE experiences being developed in Latin America should be appreciated not only for their role in training people from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities but also for their ability to foster critical reflection on contemporary societies and their future, higher education types, HEI models, curricula and learning styles.

INTERCULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

In 2007, the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO-IESALC) launched the Cultural Diversity, Interculturality and Higher Education Project (hereinafter, the Project). With the participation of over 50 researchers from 11 Latin American countries, the Project has published three books, which contain, in addition to a number of thematic chapters, some 40 studies on intercultural higher education experiences (Mato, 2008, 2009, 2010). The description below is based on these studies and on information on 80 other experiences in a register compiled from responses to a questionnaire to representatives of HEIs in 2009. The Project currently holds information on about 120 experiences, although it is estimated that another 50 remain undocumented.

We can classify the experiences identified by the Project in five different groups:

1. PROGRAMMES FOR THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-DESCENDANT STUDENTS IN CONVENTIONAL HEIs

Scholarship programmes, quotas and academic and psychosocial support for indigenous and Afro-descendant students in conventional HEIs are 'inclusion of individuals' approaches about which there are conflicting views. One view is that they foster inclusion and help to train indigenous and Afro-descendant experts

who, in one way or another, serve their communities; these programmes also constitute a first step in the transformation of conventional HEIs. However, an alternative view is that such programmes offer limited possibilities for intercultural cooperation in research and learning, lead to brain-drain from remote communities to large cities and result in the loss of values, languages and knowledge to communities. Although there are numerous programmes aimed at the inclusion of individuals in Latin America, they are not a focus of the Project, which is more concerned with exploring experiences that integrate the knowledge of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

2. INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION IN EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN CONVENTIONAL HEIs

This group includes a wide variety of experiences, some with little intercultural cooperation and others in which the teachers, languages, knowledge and modes of knowledge production and learning of indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations and communities are well represented. Many of the experiences are geared to training teachers for bilingual intercultural education programmes offered at various educational levels.

Of the many such experiences, 15 have been studied by the Project. Examples include the Insikiran Indigenous Teacher Training Programme at the Federal University of Roraima (Brazil); the degree in Ethnic Education at the University of Cauca (Colombia); the Teaching Qualification Programme in Afro-Colombian Ethno-Education at the University of the Pacific (Colombia); the Advanced Community Justice Programme at the University of San Andrés (Bolivia); the Cotopaxi Programme for Bilingual Intercultural Education at the Salesian Polytechnic University (Ecuador); and the Training Programme for Bilingual Intercultural Education in Andean Countries, with the participation of indigenous organizations and universities from several Andean countries and the support of some of the Andean governments.

3. INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION IN RESEARCH OR IN DEVELOPING LINKS WITH COMMUNITIES BY CONVENTIONAL HEIS

The Register of Experiences compiled basic information on dozens of these experiences, very different from each other. So far only six of them have been studied, and, due to limitations of space, just two are described here. Through the Traditional Medicine Teaching and Research Programme of the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico, an interdisciplinary team recruited from this institution works with primary teachers and children, traditional healers and farmers in the state of Oaxaca. Also in Mexico, community members and academics, researchers and students from different departments participate in the Human Development Interdisciplinary Research Programme of the Metropolitan Autonomous University, which combines research with vocational training and community service.

4. INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN HEIS AND INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-DESCENDANT ORGANIZATIONS IN JOINT TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Only four experiences of this type have been identified, all offering degrees recognized by national education authorities. The Indigenous Education Institute of the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia in Colombia, in cooperation with the Pontifical Bolivarian University and the University of Antioquia in Colombia offers a degree in Ethno-Education, a degree in Mother Earth Education and a diploma in Indigenous Government and Administration. Two other initiatives are co-sponsored by the Interethnic Association for Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP), based in Peru. One is the Peruvian-Amazon Bilingual Teachers' Programme, developed in cooperation with the Loreto Higher Teaching Institute; the other is the Intercultural Health Nurse Training Programme developed in cooperation with the Public Higher Technological Institute in Atalaya. Finally, the Manuel Zapata Olivella Education and Research Institute and the University of La Guajira in Colombia offer degrees in Afro-Colombian Ethno-Education.

5. INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION IN IHEIS

IHEIS in Latin America are characterized by their goal of integrating the knowledge, knowledge production modes and learning modes from a range of cultural traditions. Although these IHEIS were created to respond to the demands and proposals of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, they also include a smaller proportion of representatives from other cultural traditions, including those generally referred to as 'white' or 'mestizo'. Examples of some such institutions created by indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations include the Kawsay Indigenous Intercultural University, the initiative of a network of indigenous organizations in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador; the Amazon Centre for Indigenous Education, an initiative of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon; the Intercultural, Indigenous and Autonomous University, an initiative of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca in Colombia; the Amawtay Wasi Intercultural University of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples, created by sections of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador; and the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua and the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University, created in Nicaragua on the initiative of indigenous and Afro-descendant community leaders.

IHEIS have also been created by state agencies. For example, the Research and Training Centre for Aboriginal Teachers was created by the Chaco provincial government in Argentina. Mexico has ten intercultural universities, all members of the Intercultural university network of the Secretariat of Public Education, some founded by the Secretariat itself (for example the Intercultural University of Chiapas), others created by agreement with a conventional university (for example the Intercultural University of Veracruz) and yet others created by previous state governments and subsequently assimilated into the national system (for example the Indigenous Autonomous University of Mexico). Two other IHEIS are the Intercultural Indigenous University, established by the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (a multilateral body representing

governments and indigenous organizations) and the Intercultural Ayuk University in Mexico, created by the Ibero-American University, a Jesuit university.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The main achievements of intercultural educational experiences as studied by the Project are as follows:

- They improve the possibilities for indigenous and Afro-descendant people to access higher education and successfully complete their studies.
- They are adapted to the needs, demands and projects of communities and to regional and local opportunities for employment, productive initiatives and community service.
- They develop participatory approaches to learning, often focused on applied research.
- They integrate learning, research and service to communities.
- They include and combine different types of knowledge and knowledge production modes.
- They promote and foster the valorization of the languages and knowledge of peoples and communities and conduct research and contribute proactively to strengthening these languages and knowledge.
- They undertake teaching and research guided by criteria based on cultural diversity, interculturality, equity, inclusion, democratic governance, sustainable development and well-being.
- They train graduates who contribute to local and regional sustainable development and to improving the quality of life of their communities.

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NOTE

- 1 The term 'conventional' is used to refer to HEIs that were not specifically founded to respond to the needs, demands and proposals of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

Network Experience II.6

Higher education institutions' efforts towards sustainability: experiences in Mexico

M. Laura Ortiz Hernández

INTRODUCTION

Today, we cannot deny the process of environmental degradation caused by the activity of the Earth's nearly 7 billion inhabitants. The efforts being made in various sectors to counteract this process are therefore very important. Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in promoting sustainable human development and in changing society's attitudes towards the environmental crisis, because, in addition to educating citizens, their main responsibilities include generating knowledge and developing technologies that have an impact on various sectors.

If HEIs are to comprehensively educate students in the principles of sustainability, they should – in addition to imparting discipline-specific information – practise what they preach. The activities of university campuses have undeniable environmental impacts, such as the generation of hazardous waste and sewage, as well as energy use and other impacts. Universities should therefore aim to minimize the negative effects of resource consumption in the fulfilment of their primary and secondary functions, so that they are able to support society in a transition towards more sustainable lifestyles.

In Mexico, HEIs have made significant contributions by developing proposals to solve environmental problems in the areas of teaching, research and extension. Traditionally, these proposals have materialized independently or through strategic alliances formed to promote positive results and impacts.

One important experience has been the work of various universities – both public and private – under the umbrella of the Mexican Consortium of University Environmental Programs for Sustainable Development (Complexus). These universities share an interest in influencing educational programmes, research, services and non-formal education,

as well as the goal of integrating, organizing and coordinating the efforts of each of the participating institutions to address problems at the local, regional and national levels.

The Consortium's abbreviated name was chosen for how it encapsulates and reflects the spirit of the network from educational, organizational and environmental perspectives. Derived from the Latin word meaning 'to weave together', *Complexus* conveys the idea of adopting the perspective of complexity, as in woven fabric. Complexity is the fabric of events, actions, interactions, feedback, determinations and vicissitudes that make up our world (Morin, 1990).

Complexus was created in 2000 when a group of HEIs joined forces with the Centre for Education and Training for Sustainable Development (CECADESU), which is a unit of Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), and with the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) (Bravo-Mercado,

2003). As part of the creation of Complexus, an agreement was signed by the presidents of the participating universities. Another agreement was signed by ANUIES and SEMARNAT, and yet another established the Action Plan for Sustainable Development in Higher Education Institutions. As of August 2010, Complexus was made up of 17 Mexican HEIs, each with its own environmental plans or programmes (<http://www.complexus.org.mx>).

The mission of Complexus is to improve the quality of academic processes related to the environment and sustainable development by enabling the institutional directors of environmental programmes and offices to collaborate with one another. By working together, universities enjoy advantages such as the opportunity to share experiences and optimize the available human and physical infrastructure at HEIs, as well as the possibility of implementing integration and cooperation strategies (Figure 1). The HEIs that belong

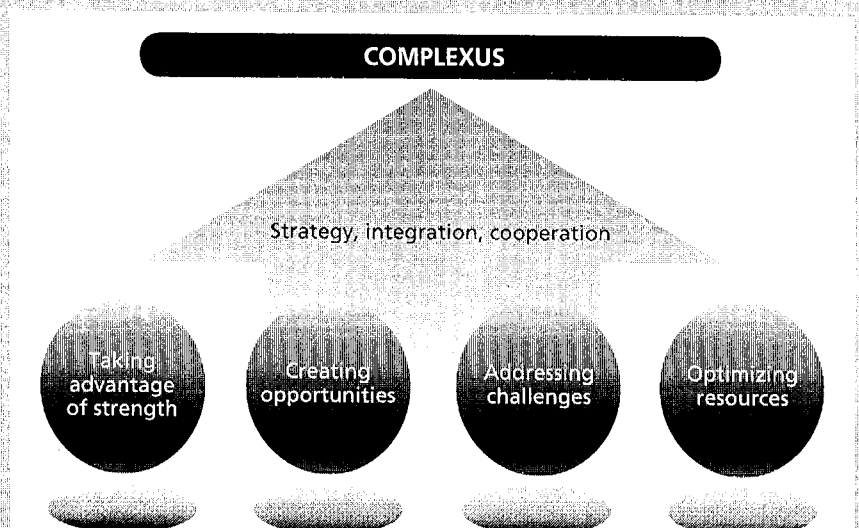


FIGURE 1 Strategies for cooperation among the HEIs belonging to Complexus