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# **Culture, Citizenship, Participation**

*Comparative Perspectives  
from Latin America on  
Inclusive Education*

*editors:*

Anna Bon, Mónica Pini, Hans Akkermans

**Pangea**

Culture, citizenship, participation



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**Comparative perspectives from Latin America  
on inclusive education**

edited by

**Anna Bon, Mónica Pini, and Hans Akkermans**



**Pangea**

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## FOREWORD

This publication is the result of collaboration between people and institutions of the project From Tradition to Innovation in Teacher-Training Institutions (TO INN), with reference number 573685-EPP-2016-1-ES-EPP KA2-CBHE-JP, funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Capacity Building programme. It is an initiative coordinated by the University of Barcelona in which 21 Higher Education institutions and one training centre from seven Latin American countries (Colombia, Argentina, Honduras, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay) and five EU countries (Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, France and Portugal) participate.

The project is based on a systemic approach to Higher Education and aims to promote quality in universities where future teachers and other professionals from the world of education are trained. It aims to strengthen the social dimension, curricular relevance and teacher innovation in the unique formative contexts in order to have an impact on policies and institutional governance. The dimensions involved are articulated in terms of the following axes: culture, citizenship and participation, social cohesion and digital culture.

This book is a polyphonic work that responds to complex realities, diverse contexts, academic interests and project objectives, but, above all, it is an example of collaboration and interest in inclusive education, equity and the just development of Higher Education. Its texts are by authors from different institutions and countries who unite their knowledge and interests and provide the encouragement and strength to continue on the path laid out in this international collaboration.

*Alejandra Montané, Coordinator of the TO-INN project, University of Barcelona*



# INTRODUCTION: QUALITY EDUCATION INCLUSIVE FOR ALL

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*Inclusive education* means quality education for *all*, regardless of social and economic status, geographical location, ethnicity, gender, age, culture or language. Inclusive Education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), as set out by the United Nations; it is a shared responsibility of all countries.

This book presents a wealth of experiences and reflections on Inclusive Education from the Latin American perspective. As a result of intense collaboration<sup>1</sup> within a network of twenty-two universities in Latin America and Europe, it provides a documented testimony from different contexts, about different aspects of education and teacher training. It covers a broad spectrum of aspects, topics, insights and reflections on the current state of inclusive education and how this can be improved. It aims to critically reflect and inform the debate about inclusive education, linking the global aspects of globalization with local culture and practices.

Written by authors from different countries and continents, the book addresses different dimensions in inclusive education, including educational inclusion, pedagogical innovation, information and communication technologies in education and the social dimensions. Its central question is how social inclusion can be really achieved and how coverage of education can be extended to reach the least favored social sectors.

Each chapter corresponds to a particular historical, political, social, or cultural context. It presents cases, policies, levels of analysis, and contrasting views. What runs through the whole book is the concern for education as a fundamental right. This right is being threatened by the growing commodification of all sectors of life, and conditioned by structural and systemic social inequality. This calls into question the organizational structures within Higher Education

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<sup>1</sup> TO-INN project: From Tradition to Innovation in Teacher Training Institutions, supported by the European Union in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, Action K2 Capacity Building in Higher Education (573685-EPP-2016-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP); <https://www.toinn.org>.

that are often taken for granted. Do they really cater for inclusiveness? Do they link education to practice and responsibility in which citizenship and participation are placed at the center?

In this age of digital culture and social media interference in everyday life, universities are challenged to reflect on their role as educators of a new generation of responsible citizens. How can we learn to critically reflect, analyze, understand and cope with the multiple realities to which we are constantly being exposed? What is the role of Higher Education in creating conditions to cater for inclusiveness, also beyond the traditional walls of the institutions?

The book is structured into five parts: (1) Inclusion as a goal in education; (2) Innovation in education; (3) Dimensions of inclusive education; (4) Information and communication technologies in education; and (5) Language: key or obstacle to inclusive education.

The first part, with four chapters, focuses on inclusion in education.

In *Chapter 1, "Uncovering the roots of educational inequality in Honduras"*, Ricardo Morales, Carla Leticia Paz, Mario Alas Solís, German Moncada and Russbel Hernández Rodríguez present the case of Honduras, one of the countries with the highest social inequality in the world. Positioning social inequality as the central concept, based on empirical data, the main factors of educational inequality are analyzed: difficulties of access, permanence and graduation of students, the influence of socioeconomic conditions on educational achievement, regional asymmetries, gaps between urban and rural areas, gender inequalities, and the particular difficulties of indigenous peoples, in view of understanding educational inequality as a path towards a better society.

*Chapter 2, "Inclusive Education in Higher Education in Bolivia"* by María Luz Mardesich, Cristian Torrez and Noemí Uriarte presents the legal and conceptual framework for the educational system in Bolivia, and how this influences the practice of inclusiveness at the operational levels.

*Chapter 3, "Inclusive education: policy contexts in Italy and Chile"*, by Fausto Presutti and Pablo Castillo Armijo, compares educational policies on inclusiveness between Italy and Chile. This chapter describes the characteristics and functions of Educational Inclusion in a social perspective, presenting the historical facts and political trends that have shaped the policy over the years in two different continents and contexts.

*Chapter 4, "Bullying: A Threat to Educational Inclusion in Students with Special Educational Needs"*, by Anabel Alcívar from Ecuador and Antonio J. Rodríguez-Hidalgo from Spain, analyses the characteristics of bullying as a violent phenomenon that attacks the inclusive

processes of students with special educational needs. It provides insights on how this phenomenon can be addressed through policy and practice, depending on contextual differences.

Part 2 of the book is dedicated to innovation in education and consists of three chapters. Rocío Polanía Farfán from Colombia, presents in *Chapter 5, "Enfoque: education through art as an alternative way of learning in indigenous sites in the South of Colombia"*, an alternative method of learning, using artistic expression to link meaning and context to learning in a context-sensitive way with children between the ages of 6 and 15 of the "Potreritos indigenous reservation" of the Nasa people, located in the Colombian Andes, in order to contribute to the strengthening of the concept of identity. The proposal aims to establish a series of questions, discussions and concerns regarding current educational policies that allow for the staging, in an equitable relationship, of logics, practices and diverse cultural ways of thinking, acting, feeling and creating meaning.

Next, Karina Lastra and Ana Cambours de Donini discuss bimodal education in *Chapter 6, "Bimodality in Higher Education in Argentina: Achieving inclusion with quality"*. The advances of the research project "New Scenarios and Demands on Inclusive Institutional Policies in the Universities of the Greater Buenos Aires Area", developed at the National University of San Martín, Argentina is presented. It describes and analyzes the process of institutionalization of a proposal for bimodal teaching in a degree course of the School of Humanities. Special attention is paid both to the critical analysis of pedagogical assumptions and the study of training innovation, that bimodality can bring.

Part 2 concludes with a comparative study: *Chapter 7, "E-Learning in education: Collaboration between three universities in Paraguay and Bolivia"*, by Javier Numan Caballero Merlo, Blanca Duarte Servián, Clara Almada and Noemí Uriarte Sánchez. It is a case study of the Universidad Autónoma de Asunción (UAA, Paraguay), the Universidad del Cono Sur de las Américas (UCSA, Paraguay) and the Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola (USIL, Bolivia). It addresses the development of digital competence in postgraduate educational practice, both as an innovation and as a good institutional practice. It is considered an adequate tool to democratize the educational system, expanding its coverage, achieving greater retention, with low costs, and overcoming distances and inequalities.

Part 3 addresses Dimensions of inclusive education and includes two chapters. First, *Chapter 8, "The social dimension in Higher Education: Design and implementation of an instrument for student analytics in a Latin American context"*, is written by Alejandra Montané, Juan Llanes, Isaac Calduch, Gabriel Hervás, Jordi Méndez and Judith Muñoz, from the University of

Barcelona, Spain. It sets out the objective of conceptually situating the relevance of the social dimension, pointing out the need to study the barriers that students encounter in order to successfully complete their journey through Higher Education and to describe the process of designing and elaborating a useful instrument for the analysis of students' social situations. To this end a questionnaire has been created, tested and validated for the study of living conditions, participation, socio-demographic characteristics and motivation of education students from teacher training universities or other universities that offer studies related to education.

*Chapter 9, "Rethinking educational experiences in Latin America: Between echoes and encounters"*, by Alejandra Manena Vilanova, Christian Mendieta, Verónica Tacuri, Silverio González Téllez (Universidad Nacional de Educación, Azogues, Ecuador), reflects on the experiences, as effects of a collaborative project through analysis and internal discussions, which have allowed us to go through and listen to the way in which the different Latin American universities have been constituted. Through documentary analysis, but also taking historical aspects that have shaped its view on curriculum, governance, innovation and participation, it seeks to conceptualize how the educational experience is constituted, under a critical perspective, within the universities that have participated in this project, so that this analysis allows those who read, to recognize paths, limits, possibilities, drifts and fissures in the path from tradition to innovation.

Two texts make up Part 4, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education. The first is *Chapter 10, "Digital Technologies and Education: Public Funds and Private Policies in Argentina"*, whose author is Mónica Pini (UNSAM, Argentina). As part of a research project, the text analyzes the educational proposals of foundations and non-governmental organizations, which are linked to large business corporations in the global market of digital technologies. These actions are characterized as instituting the senses and functions that correspond to and replace the State, Against the background of growing commercialization of education, these private entities are taking over many tasks that belong to the State, while engaging in the debate about the role of the State vis-à-vis companies and private sectors in terms of the fulfillment of the universal right to education. Although the study is carried out in Argentina, it reveals a much broader phenomenon of neoliberal trends that are unfolding in the globalized world.

*Chapter 11, "Community Service Learning as an inclusive educational model in the light of complex realities"*, by Anna Bon, Hans Akkermans, Victor de Boer, Jaap Gordijn, Aron van Groningen (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands), and Cheah Wai Shiang (UNIMAS, Sarawak, Malaysia) discusses Community Service Learning as an inclusive

educational approach. It presents a course specifically designed with the principles and methodology of community service learning, for students of Computer Science, Information Science and Artificial Intelligence. In this educational model students actively participate in innovation projects, and collaborate with communities, with the goal of satisfying their needs within the complex reality of their environments. The design of the course, its theoretical framework, the experiences of the course and its results and evaluation are discussed.

The last part, Part 5, of the book addresses the issue of language as a key or obstacle to inclusive education. *Chapter 12, "Teaching and learning English at the university: challenges from the Ecuadorian context"* is written by Eder Intriago, Jhonny Villafuerte, Johanna Bello and Doris Cevallos, from the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador. In this chapter public policy issues are explored, the curriculum and challenges of teaching English in Ecuador in bridging the gap that it creates between those who do have the opportunity to learn English and those who do not.

The book closes with a study on Colombia in *Chapter 13, "Learning English: a goal for inclusive and equitable education in Colombia?"* by Marco Tulio Artunduaga Cuellar (Universidad Surcolombiana). This study investigates the feasibility of national bilingualism plans in the Colombian national context, and reflects on whether the goal of achieving a truly bilingual country is achievable or utopian. A case study at the Universidad Surcolombiana analyses the weakness of current strategies for the design and implementation of English language teaching-learning processes in higher education, showing that without an improvement strategy, this situation will continue to offer opportunities only for some groups and individuals, while at the same time continuing to generate processes of inequality, exclusion and social stratification.





# PART 1

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*Inclusive education as a goal*

*Uncovering the roots of Educational Inequality in Honduras*

CHAPTER 1

**UNCOVERING ROOTS OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY  
IN HONDURAS**

Ricardo Morales-Ulloa, Mario Alas Solís, Russbel Hernández Rodríguez, German Moncada

Godoy Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, Honduras

**Key words:** Social inequalities, educational inequalities, access to education, educational gap, quality of education.

**Abstract**

Inequality is a topic of wide debate in the sociology of education, which began in the 1960s when education as a factor of upward social mobility was first debated. The Coleman Report published in the United States in 1966, for example, affirmed that the social origin of students is a determinant of educational achievement, and Bourdieu (1979) in France investigated how schooling is a means of reproducing social inequalities based on the cultural handicaps of the poor classes. From this perspective, this article addresses the case of Honduras, the poorest country in Latin America and one of the most unequal in the world. Acknowledging that Honduran society is built on structures of inequality, this article uses empirical data to analyze the main factors that characterize educational inequality and its close relationship with prevailing social inequalities. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial for thinking about a more just society.

**Introduction: The socio-political context of inequality**

Honduras is a small country located in the center of the American continent and divided administratively into 18 departments. Despite its size (118,472 square kilometers) it has a great variety of climates and geographical conditions, with hot and dry lands in the south, mountains in the center, plains and tropical forests in the north (D'Ans, 2007). In the year 2018, according

to the National Institute of Statistics, the country has a population of 9.1 million inhabitants of which 53% live in urban areas and 47% in rural areas, with a density of 81 inhabitants per square kilometer. The population of Honduras is composed of 90% mestizos, 2% Afro-Honduran (Garifunas and Islanders), 7% indigenous peoples, so at least 9% of the population has a mother tongue other than Spanish, which is the official language of the country (INE, 2019).

The high birth rate and annual population growth of 1.9% doubled the population in the last 25 years and modified settlement patterns, shifting from a rural majority to a mainly urban one concentrated in the country's most developed corridor, especially in Tegucigalpa, the capital, and in the Sula Valley, the most industrialized and economically dynamic region (INE, 2019). In terms of socio-economic indicators, Honduras is the second poorest country in Latin America after Haiti and ranks 133rd in the World Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019) out of a list of 189, considered as medium-low human development.

According to the World Bank (2019), 63% of Honduras' population lives below the poverty line, a situation that particularly affects the rural population, where subsistence agriculture predominates and whose households are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and related events such as climate change. Using the ECLAC measure – based on a basket of basic needs – 82% of the population in rural areas is in a situation of poverty, while in urban areas this indicator reaches two thirds. The most vulnerable groups are children who suffer higher levels of poverty than adults. In 2017 83% of children under 15 lived in households that did not meet their basic needs. This problem is accentuated in areas in which the majority of the population is indigenous.

Honduras is not only a poor country, it is also one of the most unequal in the world. With a GINI indicator of 58.7% and a concentration of 60% of wealth in hands of 20% of the richest (ECLAC, 2017), a deep gap between rich and poor is evident. This inequality leads to exclusion from fundamental rights such as education. Access to education and progress are, to a large extent, determined by the social origin of people. Data from the INE (2018) show that the income of households whose heads of household have completed higher education may be eight times higher than that of households whose heads of household do not have any level of education.

With regard to gender equality, the 2011 Human Development Report (UNDP, 2012) highlights that, in terms of access to human development opportunities, women are more

excluded than men. This report emphasizes that while women have greater potential than men in terms of knowledge measured by literacy rates and attendance at all levels of education, there are clear gaps in income, access to decision-making positions in the economic field and opportunities for political participation.

Since independence from Spain in 1821, Honduras has been governed mainly by *de facto* governments. This has retarded its social and economic development and limited citizen empowerment and fundamental freedom. The constitutional order was broken by the 2009 coup d'état, provoked by conservative sectors who were inconvenienced by President Zelaya's initiation of social reforms and his friendship with other progressive governments of South America. Since then, social indicators have further deteriorated. There is a strong social polarisation in which new political parties have emerged. This crisis has turned Honduras into one of the most violent countries in the world and has forced the population to migrate massively to the United States.

Inequalities are being reinforced by neoliberal dispositions, which have influenced public policies since the 1990s, through economic reform processes with the private sector playing a leading role and a public sector conception based on the minimum functions of the State (Morales, 2013). And in the case of education, there are cuts in public budgets with the consequent loosening of the State as guarantor of rights and collective welfare; furthermore, they introduce the idea of individual responsibility for education that ends up affecting the most socially vulnerable sectors. A recent study (Edwards, Moschetti and Caravaca, 2019) points out subtle but diverse forms of privatization that involve, among others, increasing economic contributions of families in public education for the education of their children.

As López (2005) points out, starting in the 1990s, economic growth in Latin America produces a strong concentration of wealth; the key to social analysis is no longer poverty but inequality. Starting from the above context and using empirical data, this article delves into the analysis of the keys to inequality in Honduras from three perspectives: first, in relation to access to and coverage of the education system, which are basic to the exercise of the right to education enshrined in the National Constitution; second, it addresses the factors that produce the educational backwardness; and third, it approaches the relationship between educational attainment and prevailing social inequalities.

## **Inequality in school coverage and attendance by gender, geographical area and income level**

Information Sheet No. 48 of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, reports that in 2016 one out of five children, adolescents and young people (CAYP onwards) were out of school worldwide; in other words, 20%, comprising 263 million people, is excluded. In the case of Latin America it is reported that there were 12.7 million young people out of school, the most serious problem being among those of middle or upper secondary school age (UNESCO–Institute For Statistics (UIS), 2018).

As mentioned above, Honduras is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America and the world. In the field of education, the problem of exclusion of these CAYP is generating acute social problems, without showing a reduction in the numbers of children in recent years, but rather, for some age groups, an increase. In the case of Honduras, various reports have highlighted the problem of the exclusion of CAYP from the country's educational institutions. Differences in exclusion rates can be observed according to gender, geographical area and income level.

In both pre-primary and basic education (mainly in the I-II Cycle traditionally known as "primary", which includes grades 1-6), the country has shown almost equal gross coverage of CAYP within the education system. There are slight differences in favour of the female gender of less than 1% in the period 1970-2017, while according to World Bank data in secondary education the differences increase in favour of the female gender. In 1980, equity was found in gross coverage, but the gap began to widen in 1982 and reached almost 15% in the period 2006-2013, without any significant reduction in inequality in subsequent years. This is depicted in Figures 1-3 below.

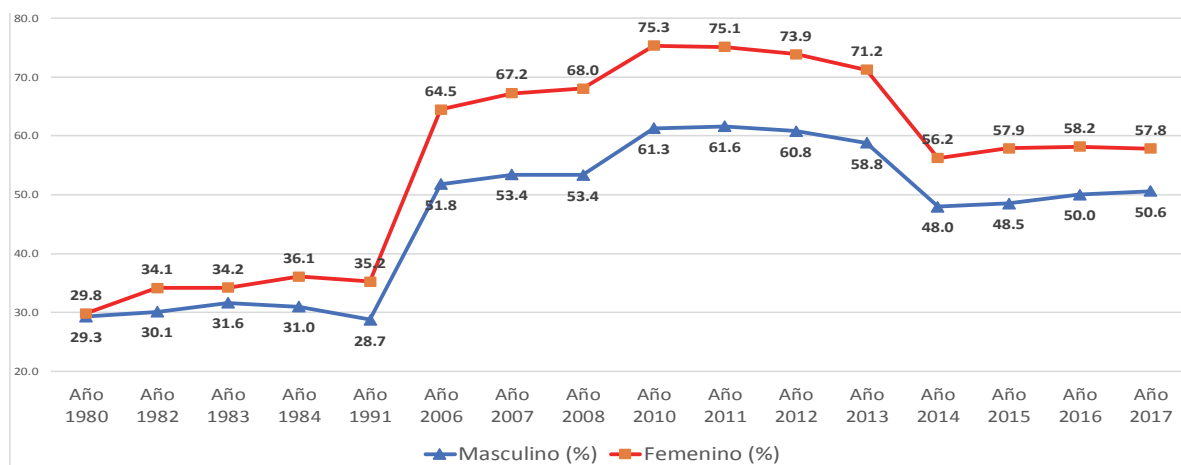


Figure 1. Gross Coverage in Secondary Education by Gender. Honduras 1980-2017 (expressed in %).<sup>2</sup>

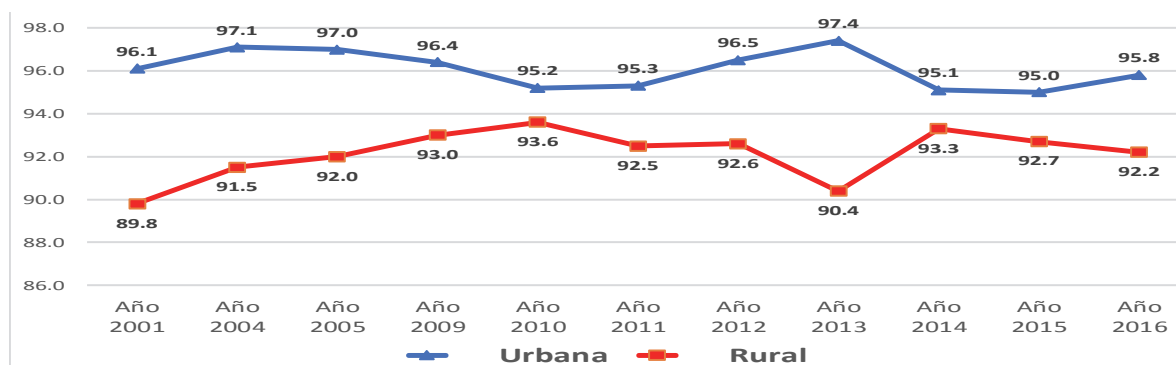


Figure 2. School attendance for boys and girls in urban and rural regions for age: 7 to 12 years (%). Source *ibidem*, see footnote 1.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Compilation based on information from the World Bank, <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador> and UNESCO-IEU: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics – Online database – <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/>. Note: Years not shown are because no information was available.

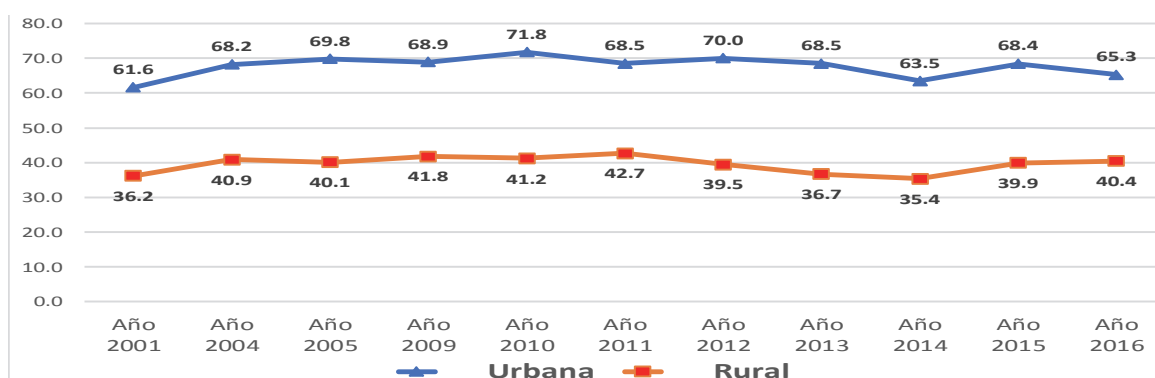


Figure 3. School attendance for boys and girls in urban and rural regions for age 13 to 19 years (%). The inequality gap between urban and rural regions becomes wider with age.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the country has had better socioeconomic conditions and also better educational services in urban areas, which makes it difficult for CAYP in rural areas to receive the educational attention corresponding to their ages, with attendance at educational centers being more difficult in rural areas, according to data from the World Bank and UNESCO. In the attendance of CAYP of 7-12 years of age that hypothetically should be in the educational centers receiving the basic education of I-II cycle, that is to say, 1 to 6 graders, there are marked gaps to the disadvantage of the CAYP of the rural areas compared to those of the urban areas, with differences that go from 1.6% (year 2011) up to 7% (year 2013), as depicted in Figures 2 and 3.

Inequality worsens in the following age groups, 13-19 years old, which should be in schools receiving basic education in the III Cycle or secondary education, with very large differences in favour of urban areas. These are greater than 20% and reached almost 32% in 2013, which merits important actions to reduce the gaps.

The poor have less access to education, making it difficult to reduce social gaps in the near future. In Honduras, income levels considerably determine access to the education system in different age groups, with the exception of CAYP between 7-12 years of age, where there is almost no difference in school attendance between boys-girls of Quintile 1 (poorest) and boys-

<sup>3</sup> Source: World Bank: <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador> and CEPALSTAT: [https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/WEB\\_CEPALSTAT/estadisticasIndicadores.asp](https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/WEB_CEPALSTAT/estadisticasIndicadores.asp) (accessed 1 August 2019)



girls of Quintile 5 (richest). In the 13-19 year old CAYP, who hypothetically should be in the III Cycle of Basic Education (7th-9th grade), and in secondary education, the differences according to level of family income are critical, reaching values between 22.9% and 38.7%, as observed in Table 1. The school attendance of the CAYP of the first income quintile has only reached 40% in 2015, while that of the fifth quintile is between 66.4% and 74.1% (year 2004).

Table 1. School attendance of both sexes by household per capita income quintile, age 13-19. Percentage of the population of both sexes of the same age.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Año</b>	<b>Quintil 1</b>	<b>Quintil 2</b>	<b>Quintil 3</b>	<b>Quintil 4</b>	<b>Quintil 5</b>	<b>Dif Q5-Q1</b>
Año 2001	32.6	37.6	47.1	55.2	66.4	33.8
Año 2004	39.2	42.9	51.2	60.6	73.7	34.5
Año 2005	35.4	43.5	52.0	62.1	74.1	38.7
Año 2009	38.5	45.1	53.6	60.9	72.3	33.8
Año 2010	37.2	45.9	56.5	64.8	71.9	34.7
Año 2011	44.2	49.2	51.7	59.6	67.1	22.9
Año 2012	37.5	45.7	52.1	61.6	70.5	33.0
Año 2013	32.7	44.1	52.1	58.7	68.9	36.2
Año 2014	36.1	42.4	50.2	57.6	67.4	31.3
Año 2015	40.4	45.8	54.8	65.6	69.6	29.2
Año 2016	38.5	45.5	55.8	60.1	69.4	30.9

In the 20-24 years of age group, which hypothetically should be at university level, attendance is already low in the highest income quintile (Quintile 5), and considerably lower in the lowest income quintile (Quintile 1). For the latter, access in 2014 and 2015 has not even reached 4%. As can be seen in Figure 4, the gaps are high with respect to the highest income quintile, 28.2% (2011) and 38.5% (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Source: CEPAL: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe - Banco de Datos de Encuestas de Hogares (BADEHOG). NB: Quintile 1 corresponds with the poorest households and quintile 5 with the wealthiest households.

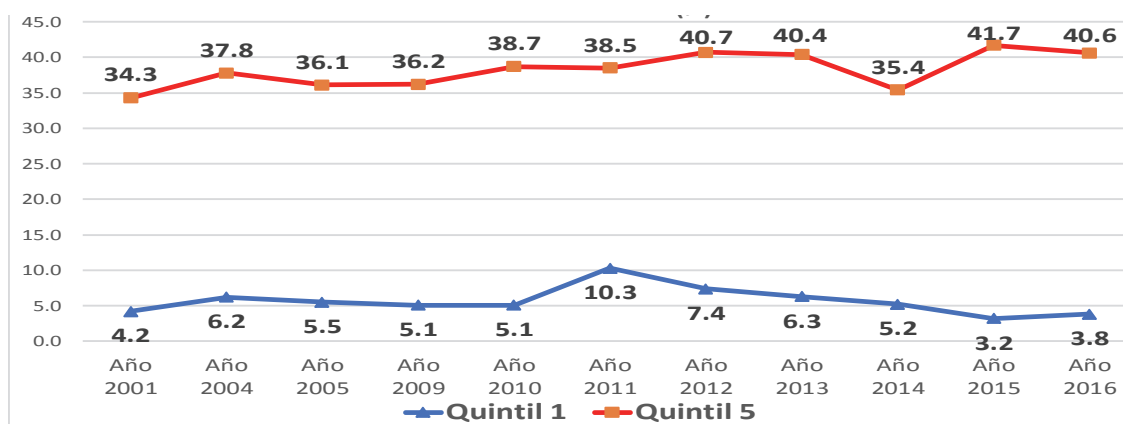


Figure 4. School attendance of both sexes by household per capita income quintiles, age 20-24 (%) <sup>5</sup>

## The educational gap and social inequalities

In addition to inequalities in access to educational services, the backwardness of schools in Honduras also shows a close relationship with social inequalities. In a context of accentuated socio-economic inequalities, the provision of educational services does not guarantee that low-income students from rural areas of the country will be able to attend and remain in the system. The following data show how in the Honduran educational system there are operating factors such as reprobation, repetition and desertion, which systematically exclude students with lower socioeconomic conditions.

Moving from a grade to the next higher grade always implies a selective process, and as progress is made in the education system, these processes are accentuated and the exclusion criteria are not always based on aptitudes and attitudes, but, as in the Honduran case, on the socioeconomic conditions of the families of origin. These processes of exclusion translate into low levels of schooling that characterize the population with the lowest socioeconomic level, typically coming from rural areas. In this regard, the schooling rate according to family income quintile is presented below, an indicator that has a great deal of synthetic power and helps to

<sup>5</sup> Source: Elaboración propia en base a información de CEPAL: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe - Sobre la base de encuestas de hogares de los países. Banco de Datos de Encuestas de Hogares (BADEHOG). Quintile 1 corresponds with the poorest groups, quintile 5 with the most wealthy.

show the inequalities to which reference has been made. The gap in the time period presented continues to be almost double between the highest and lowest income quintiles, which shows that this trend is not improving (see Table 2).

Table 2. Inequalities in the schooling rate by socioeconomic level (2012-2017) <sup>6</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Quintile 1</b>	<b>Quintile 5</b>	<b>Schooling gap in years</b>
2012	5.5	10.2	4.70
2013	5.5	10.5	4.96
2014	5.6	11.0	5.37
2015	5.6	10.8	5.17
2016	5.7	11.1	5.40
2017	5.5	10.7	5.26

According to the Strategic Plan for the Education Sector 2017-2030 of Honduras (2017), at least 12 years of schooling are required to make people less vulnerable to poverty. But in the national context, even the highest income quintile is below the indicated schooling, but the poorest quintile is much further behind, at less than half of the established standard. This analysis should consider that other conditions of vulnerability, such as spatial location in rural areas, can be added to socioeconomic inequalities. Data on the geographical distribution of schooling are presented below.

Table 3. Inequalities in average schooling by geographical area (2012-2017) <sup>7</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>School gap in years</b>
2012	8.8	5.9	2.90
2013	8.9	6.0	2.81
2014	9.0	6.1	2.88
2015	8.9	6.1	2.81
2016	9.1	6.3	2.80
2017	8.9	5.9	2.95

<sup>6</sup> Source: INE (2012-2017). Permanent household questionnaire.

<sup>7</sup> Source: INE (2012-2017). Encuesta Permanente de Hogares y Propósitos Múltiples.

When comparing by area the average schooling of the population over 15 years of age, in 2012 the rural area had reached 5.9 years, which corresponds to 67% of the schooling of the urban population (8.8 years). By 2017, the rural population still had an average of 5.9 years of schooling, which represents 66% of the urban population (8.9). The gap shows a tendency to remain in time. There is a long list of factors that explain low schooling, generally exogenous to the education system. But there are some that are especially notable because they are sensitive to interventions by education policies, such as failure, repetition, and dropout - factors that are consistently affecting education in Honduras.

**Reprobation:** Reprobation has been considered a solution when the learning objectives for a grade have not been achieved. However, it often happens that the decision who fails is based on unclear and systematic criteria, so that the same student can be promoted in one context and be reprobated in another context (Moncada, 2016). In some schools there may also be a "culture of repetition" in which teachers tend to fail a proportion of their lowest achieving students every year, regardless of their level of learning (Martínez, 2004). In addition, the criteria for failure are not only based on the learning achieved, but may include an insufficient level of physical or social maturity. These criteria become forms of discrimination and social exclusion that tend to affect the poorest, with less cultural capital for their families of origin.

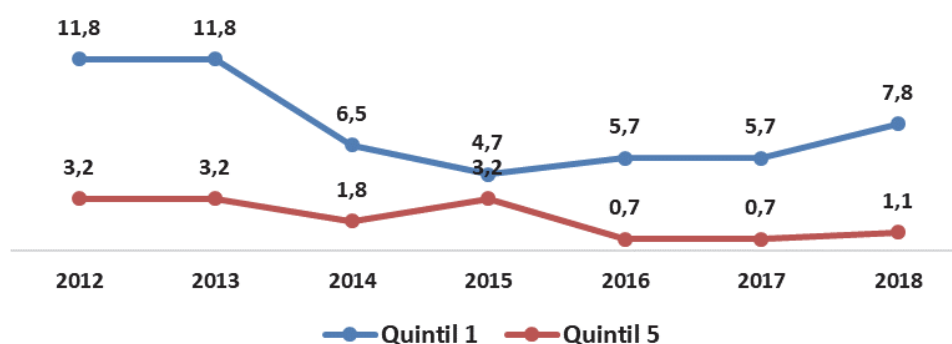


Figure 5. Reprobation rate by socio-economic level 2011-2018 <sup>8</sup>

Figure 5 shows that in the poorest population group, the levels of failure are higher than in the richest quintile. In 2012, the gap between the poorest quintile and the richest quintile is 8.6 percentage points, which means that there is four times the probability of being failed if it is

<sup>8</sup> Source: INE. (2011-2018) Encuesta permanente de Hogares y Propósitos Múltiples.

from the poorest quintile. This trend improved for 2014 and 2015, but widens again in more recent years. It should be noted that failure normally leads to repetition. The experience of repeating grade increases the probability of repeating in the future, decreases the opportunity to reach higher grades and finally increases the probability of desertion. Evidence suggests that repetition does not help improve educational quality and that children who repeat are more likely to fail; data indicate that children from rural areas repeat the most (McGuinn, 1992).

**Dropout:** dropout from school is a recurrent phenomenon in the context of underdeveloped countries, and experience shows that, in the medium term, a bad academic record ends up inducing the most backward students in the school cycle to drop out of basic education before completing it (Espíndola and León, 2002). Dropout is a sign of social exclusion. Boys and girls who stop attending reduce their expectations of bettering themselves. It is known that this is a phenomenon linked to socioeconomic status, since according to the INE (2015) almost 60% of dropouts correspond to the first and second income quintiles. Additionally, a World Vision study (2015) established that of the total number of working children, 72% of them do not study, so it is possibly an additional socio-economic reason why these children stop attending school.

In Honduras, the dropout rate throughout the academic year in basic education is very low, around 1% by 2017, but the inter-annual dropout rate (which refers to students who, having completed the school year regardless of whether they pass or not, do not enroll the following year), is very high and is strongly associated with conditions of poverty (IAD-FEREMA, 2017:17). In a cohort of students who began their first grade in 2003, it was detected that for every 100 students who entered that year, only 55 were finishing their sixth grade five years later. Three years later only 41 were finishing ninth grade, and by 2014 there were 24 remaining finishing high school/middle school (IAD-FEREMA, 2017: 17).

In summary, satisfactory completion of the second and third cycle of basic education, as well as that of the intermediate level, at the appropriate time, is an indicator of the efficiency with which the system manages to make students move; it is a sign of success, therefore, that failure, repetition or school abandonment has not occurred. The final evaluation of the EFA Plan (2016) showed that it was one of the goals that had not been achieved. The data below reveal that this reality is still persistent, affecting more students from the most unfavourable socio-economic conditions, as shown in Figure 6.

On this particular subject, it can be concluded that educational inequality is a lasting phenomenon that has its roots in school factors, such as failure, but also in extracurricular factors, such as socioeconomic level and geographical area of origin, which are clearly associated with the rate of completion of cycles and also with low schooling. The implication of these findings is that differentiated educational policies are required that focus attention on the groups with the most unfavorable socioeconomic conditions.

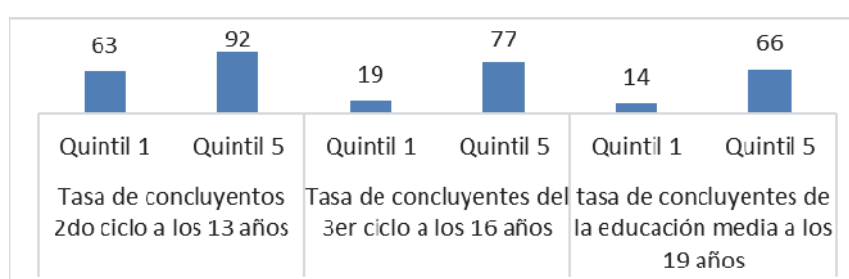


Figure 6. Rate of school study success at appropriate age by Level of Education and by Socio-Economic Level (2017).

## Inequalities in educational attainment associated with social inequalities

When analyzing educational inequalities, two fundamental aspects of the problem are usually considered: access to and quality of educational services. With respect to the latter, the quality of education has been a category that has been widely resisted, discussed and analyzed, largely due to its origins in the business world. However, a certain consensus has been built that, even though the definition of the quality of education is not limited to the learning that students develop in the context of schooling, this is one of its main components.

Coinciding with this approach, UNESCO has stated that the definition of quality in education includes at least two basic principles, and that "... the first considers that the cognitive development of the learner is the most important explicit objective of any educational system and, therefore, his success in this field constitutes an indicator of the quality of the education he has received...". (2005, p. 6). Thus, if learning levels are the most important outcome of educational quality, the differences between groups in this area are particularly relevant when studying educational inequalities.

As mentioned above, the Honduran education system shows differences in access to educational services, depending on the socioeconomic level of the family. This is observed for the pre-basic level (3 to 5 years), yet the difference is aggravated for the intermediate level (15 to 17 years). Along this path, students with the most unfavourable socio-economic conditions leave the system (for every 100 children who entered first grade in 2003, only 24 graduate from middle school eleven years later, without dropping out or repeating grade; IAD-FEREMA; 2017:17). And of those that remain, the differences in educational attainment expressed in the academic aptitudes developed by the students after 12 years of formal education refer to the quality of the educational services they have received in that period. And these differences are also associated with the marked social inequalities suffered by Honduran society, a situation that, far from being reduced, has tended to increase during the last decade (Alas and Moncada, 2010).

Evidence of this problem can be found in the results of the admission exam administered by the country's main and largest higher education institution. The test measures aptitudes related to the Spanish language and to Mathematics, as indicators of their capacity to learn for university studies. The National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) has been applying this international academic aptitude test as an entrance requirement for a decade, during which time almost 300,000 students have been evaluated, of which approximately 3 out of 4 are admitted.

When analyzing who shows the greatest academic aptitude to earn university admission, one finds that the family income level of the applicants is strongly related with the averages of the scores reached in the admission test. Thus, higher-income students average more than 150 standardized points above lower-income students, as shown in Figure 7. Thus, a student at the highest income level has more than a 90% chance of be admitted, while for at the lowest income groups this is only 70% (Moncada, 2012:28).

When comparing the results of academic aptitude according to the types of educational centers, these clearly confirm the strong association between socioeconomic level and academic performance. The data show that there are accentuated differences between the levels of academic aptitude reached by the graduates of secondary schools of private administration of "bilingual" type (considered as elite in the country, with good physical facilities, very good endowment of educational materials, good part of their curriculum developed in English, they even have their own school calendar from August to June), as compared to the graduates of

public educational centers. A student from these bilingual schools has a 97% chance of winning admission through the test referred to above (Moncada, 2012:33).

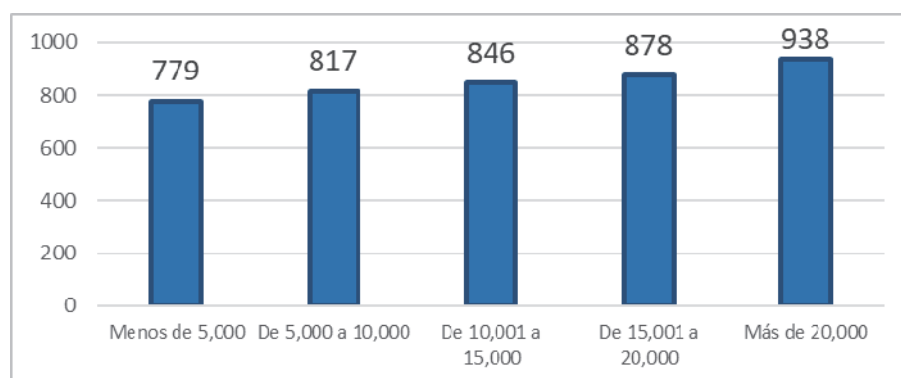


Figure 7. Average scores in the Academic Aptitude Test (PAA) according to family income level (Lempiras) <sup>9</sup>

When ordering educational centers according to the average scores of the participating students at the national level, one observes that of the first 25 places, 24 correspond to "elite bilingual schools" and only one is public, occupying position 14. And this unique case is the application center associated with the Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University in its headquarters in Tegucigalpa, which trains the country's teachers, and therefore has conditions of infrastructure, furniture, teaching resources and teaching staff, different from the rest of public centers. These differences correspond not only to the socioeconomic level of the applicants' families, but also to important differences in the conditions of infrastructure and equipment of the educational centers in which they attended their basic and secondary education, between private and public administration centers. And within the set of public centers, between those located in the main cities and those located in small rural communities.

This disadvantageous situation of educational centers of public administration that offer basic education is illustrated by data such as the fact that 40% of them lack electricity, more than 60% do not have school library facilities, 15% do not have water supply services, 40% of the centers are of the "single-teacher" type and 19% are "two-teacher" type (one or two teachers attend the

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Moncada (2012) EL PROCESO DE ADMISIÓN DE LA UNAH: Caracterización y Trayectoria de Aspirantes Admitidos y No Admitidos. p.28.



six grades of the first two cycles of basic education). In the vast majority of these single-teacher and two-teacher centres, there is a lack of textbooks and workbooks for the students, so the teacher must distribute his or her attention among the three, four or six grades s/he is in charge of during a short day of five work hours a day. These centres with the worst infrastructure and equipment are located in rural communities, where the population with the lowest socioeconomic conditions, including ethnic minority groups, lives (SE/UNESCO/IPE, 2017:121-123).

Studies of factors associated with academic performance conducted in the last 20 years in Honduras (2003, 2011, 2015 and 2017) confirm that it is precisely factors such as the management of the school principal, classroom processes and the availability of educational materials that have the greatest impact on the results that students obtain in the standardized external end-of-grade evaluation. These are factors in which schools in rural areas have clear deficiencies (SE/MIDEH, 2016:92 and 93). It is precisely to this type of school that the great majority of students from ethnic minority groups go, representing around 9% of the total population of the country and distributed in 8 main groups. For this reason, their results in the academic aptitudes test applied by the country's main university are clearly lower than those of the rest of the population, as can be seen in Figure 8.

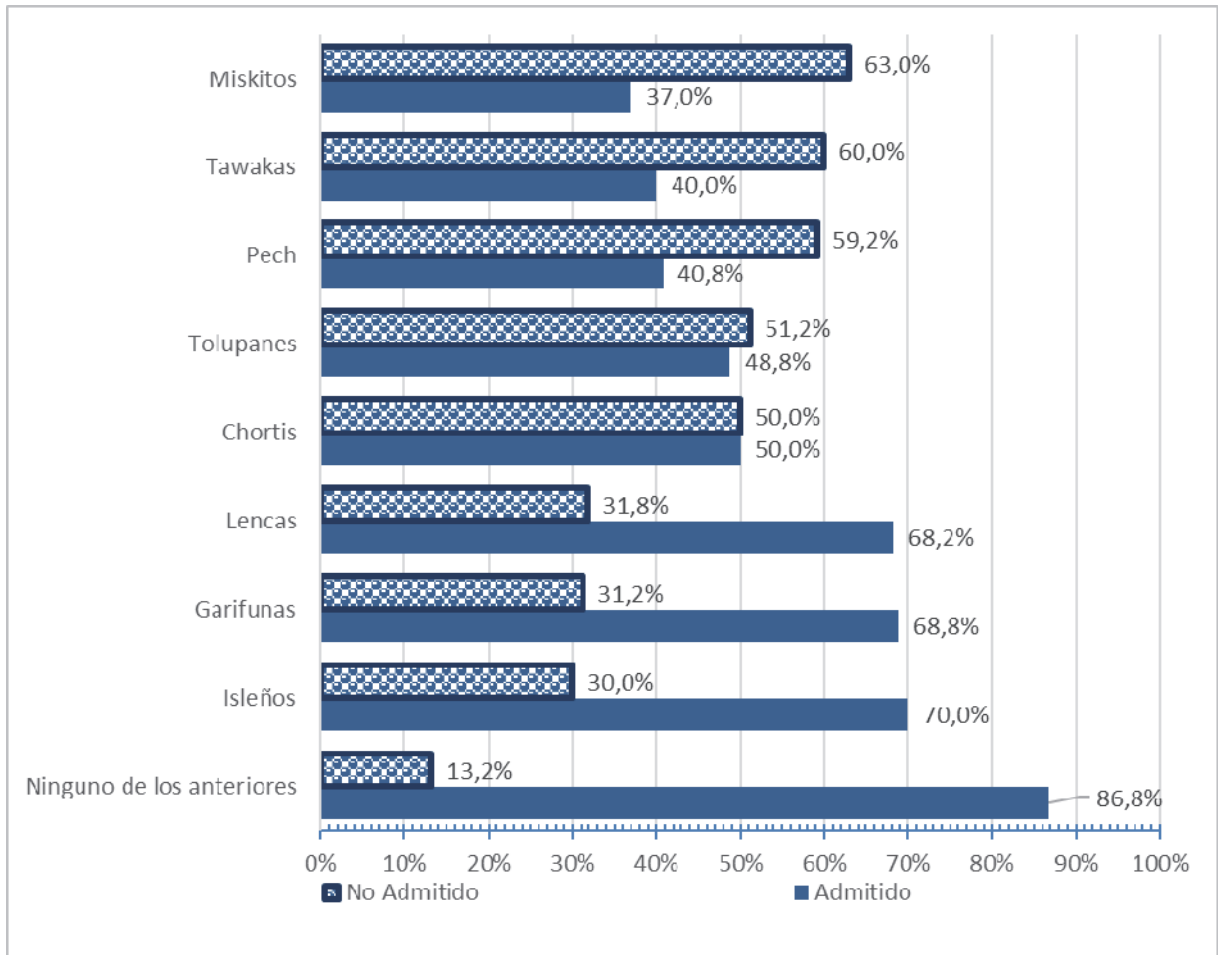


Figure 8. Proportion of students admitted by ethnic group <sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Source: Moncada (2012) EL PROCESO DE ADMISIÓN DE LA UNAH: Caracterización y Trayectoriade Aspirantes Admitidos y No Admitidos, p. 29

## **Concluding remarks**

There is consensus that the future of nations depends on their education systems, which are indispensable for building a democratic and supportive citizenship. However, in the Honduran society of the early 21st century, characterized as one of the most unequal in the world today, with more than 60% of its population subsisting in conditions of poverty (and more than 40% in conditions of extreme poverty), its education system appears to be reflecting and reproducing these critical social conditions, condemning its children and young people from low-income families to reproduce and even aggravate the cycle of poverty. The Honduran education system seems to be fully complying with Bourdieu's hypothesis regarding the reproduction of social inequalities.

The education indicators reviewed, both in terms of access (such as coverage at different levels, school backwardness and years of schooling attained) and quality (expressed in the levels of learning attained according to standardized tests), clearly correlate to the income quintiles of the students' families of origin. And these socio-economic inequalities are also associated with accentuated differences in the operating conditions of the schools they attend, in terms of infrastructure and basic services, furniture, educational resources and teaching staff. Thus, even for the few low-income young people who manage to complete their secondary/medium education, they find that the low quality of the education they receive prevents them from earning entry to higher education.

In this social and educational context, the future of Honduran society looks very deteriorated if action is not taken in the short term to correct the cycle of reproduction of poverty through education. In this scheme of deep social inequalities deepened by an authoritarian political model, it is urgent to implement education policies oriented to equity. Today, more than ever, "it is necessary to initiate real affirmative action policies, of positive discrimination, that seek to effectively equal or give more resources and attention to students from lower income groups" (Reimers, 2002:44).

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CHAPTER 2  
**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN BOLIVIA**

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**Key words:** Bolivia, inclusion, Higher Education, diversity, barriers, intraculturality, interculturality, Educational Policies, planning, practices, context

### **Abstract**

This chapter aims to highlight the scope of Inclusive Education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Bolivia, based on a framework of current regulations and conceptual aspects to be considered when implementing inclusive education. The current reality regarding the development and application of inclusive education in higher education institutions is addressed and the strategies adopted by these institutions to face and improve inclusion in their classrooms are analyzed. Likewise, the curricular structure of the Universities is analyzed in terms of those administrative actions and others protected by recent laws that were promulgated in order to improve the conditions of segments of the population affected by discrimination, racism, ignorance and those intransigent, unhuman and rational positions that severely affect the sense of inclusion in the classrooms at any level of the country's educational system. Our literature review provides important data allowing one to envisage a reality that brings improvement in spaces previously denied to and even prohibited for many.

### **Introduction**

Inclusive education constitutes a challenge of the present, which is how to achieve inclusion in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and how these should respond to diversity in the classroom under current curricular conditions. There is a need to understand educational

processes from this perspective, the initial questions for our reflection being: how is inclusive education understood in the Bolivian context, how can the application of the inclusive education approach be achieved in HEIs, how can the inclusive education approach be incorporated into curriculum design and development, what role do educational actors play in this purpose? To answer such questions, this article begins with an overview of the legal and conceptual framework of the subject matter that serves as a point of reference to then show from practice how it is possible to approach inclusive education in HEIs and finally how it is projected in the current context in Bolivia.

## **Background**

**Legal framework.** After the refoundation of Bolivia, as a Plurinational State, on January 22, 2005, the republican life was left behind and a new period began; a Constituent Assembly became in charge of drafting the new Political Constitution of the State (from now on CPE), that emphasizes the decolonization assuming a new State, respectful of its origins and of the indigenous and original peoples that lived in the territory before the time of the colony.

In order to address the legal framework for inclusive education, we observe that it was born in the CPE of the year 2009 whose Art. 8, number II, establishes the following:

"The State is based on the values of unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, freedom, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, complementarity, harmony, transparency, balance, equality of opportunities, social and gender equity in participation, common welfare, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of social products and goods, in order to live well."  
(p.12)

In addition, Art. 9, paragraphs 2 and 5 of the Principles, Values and Purposes of the State, states as its mandate: "To guarantee the well-being, development, security, protection and equal dignity of individuals, nations, peoples and communities, and to promote mutual respect and intracultural, intercultural and multilingual dialogue;" and "To guarantee people's access to education, health and work," respectively. (p. 13)

In accordance with the Political Constitution of the State (2009), the Education Law Avelino Siñani - Elizardo Pérez (2010), in Chapter II referred to Bases, Aims and Objectives of Education, in its Art. 3, numeral 7, establishes that (education):



“It is inclusive, assuming the diversity of the population groups and people that inhabit the country, it offers a timely education that is in keeping with the needs, expectations and interests of all the inhabitants of the Plurinational State, with equal opportunities and equal conditions, without any discrimination [...]” (p. 4).

And it points out in the same article, numeral 8, that:

“It is intracultural, intercultural and multilingual throughout the educational system. Through the strengthening of the knowledge, knowledge and languages of the native indigenous campesino nations and peoples, the intercultural and Afro-Bolivian communities, it promotes interrelation and coexistence in equality of opportunities for all, through the valuation and reciprocal respect between cultures.” (p. 5)

Both intraculturality and interculturality are destined to recover, strengthen and develop attitudes of appreciation, coexistence and dialogue between different world views in order to project and universalize one's own wisdom. (Law N° 070, 2010, p. 12 -13)

Art. 7 also refers to the use of official languages and foreign language. Education must be initiated in the mother tongue, and its use is a pedagogical necessity in all aspects of its formation. Due to the linguistic diversity existing in the Plurinational State, obligatory principles of the use of languages are adopted as they constitute instruments of communication, development and production of knowledge and knowledge in the Plurinational Educational System:

The teaching of the foreign language begins gradually and compulsorily from the first years of schooling, with pertinent methodology and specialized personnel, continuing at all levels of the Plurinational Educational System. (Law No. 070, 2010, p. 13)

As the norm expresses, both intraculturality and interculturality delineate a way of seeing reality and constitute substantial aspects to concretize inclusive education.

As Mardesich (2014, p.7) points out, it is the responsibility of national, local and institutional authorities to create communication mechanisms that favor the sensitization of society for the awareness of what constitutes inclusion in the educational sphere, which affects a part of the community, making sure that the established norm is not limited by lack of knowledge or by lack of strategies that impede its implementation.

It is therefore necessary that the Plurinational Educational System in all its components requires that the inclusive education approach be made explicit and that its concretization be facilitated through theoretical-methodological orientations that contribute to ensuring that educational processes at all levels are permeated by this approach.

**Considerations of Diversity in the National Context.** A first element to be understood is the need to assimilate the fact that students with some type of disability are incorporated into the classrooms of HEIs, which, however, is not the only way to understand inclusion, since in general terms students respond with their individual characteristics to diversity, diversity that must be attended to according to the particular needs of each and as we pointed out above is supported by the norm.

In the national context, the initial idea of diversity leads us to visualize, in everyday reality, situations of discrimination from the school that the Observatory of Educational Quality (OPCE) presents in a very graphic way in the document "Prevention against racism and all forms of discrimination in the Regular Education Subsystem". It refers to Denunciations due to racism and other forms of discrimination in the educational sphere, establishing the following as common situations of discrimination:

- a. By origin
  - b. By family surname
  - c. For the economic condition
  - d. Physical appearance or clothing
  - e. Due to the student's pregnancy situation
  - f. For having failed
  - g. For having a single mother or father
  - h. By the profession, occupation or degree of instruction of the father or mother
  - i. Belonging to a particular religion
  - j. For presenting a physical, intellectual or sensory disability
- (Observatory for the quality of education, 2013, p.14)

The following statements are added to this typology of cases: the LGBT (Transsexual, Transformist, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual) population, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, people deprived of liberty and domestic workers, where it is argued that some of their rights are violated in the educational sphere, a phenomenon that is sustained by

stereotypes and prejudices towards these groups and that becomes visible when their access is restricted in some educational institutions.

Girls, boys, adolescents and young people state that they have no guarantees to exercise their right to education, with economic and administrative factors being the main obstacles to access to education. Likewise, they consider that their potentialities and capacities are truncated by discriminatory acts exercised by some educational institutions, thus forcing them to drop out of school. (Observatory for Educational Quality, 2013, p.15)

This reveals how contradictory the reality is since, on the one hand, the State pretends, through the norm, to guarantee the rights of all citizens, but on the other hand, the violation of these rights becomes evident in the daily life of educational centers, the basis of the formation of citizens. This crude reality is both a wake-up call for society in general and for educational actors in particular, who must take up the challenge of counteracting such evidence through alternative educational processes that counter all forms of discrimination and give appropriate responses to such diversity.

The timely and pertinent attention to the diversity of students with needs, expectations, interests and educational potentialities, in equal opportunities, supposes referring to the different curricular components, in order to show to what extent the incorporation of the inclusive education approach is viable. To this end, teachers must have fully understood each one of these components, as well as the methodological process to be followed that makes its real concretion possible.

**How can conditions be created for an inclusive education approach?** Hamre-Nietupski (1999, p. 236) summarizes the critical elements for successful inclusion in regular schools that could be transposed to Higher Education considering the particularities of each one. He argues that research on inclusion has suggested at least seven critical elements that contribute to successful inclusion in classroom activities.

- Shared Vision: Shared commitment among teachers, administrators, parents, students and community members promotes inclusion.
- Administrative support and commitment, especially that of the principal, has been cited as an important factor in achieving inclusion.
- The training and formation of personnel who will participate in inclusion processes is crucial.

- Time for communication and cooperation among staff members is one of the most frequently mentioned important elements of inclusion.
- A structured planning process that provides specific advice for student inclusion promotes successful transition and maintenance in inclusive classrooms.
- Permanent availability of direct services, advice and resources for inclusive school staff.
- The support of non-disabled peers can be a powerful force for promoting inclusion. When staff encourage, provide opportunities and assist non-disabled peers in interacting with and supporting their disabled peers, all students benefit.

All these factors are necessary conditions to generate processes of inclusion that must be assumed by all members of the educational community, as well as by the authorities in charge of designing national policies that allow an adequate appropriation of what the implementation of inclusive education implies. In function of these elements of the Bolivian reality, it is important to assimilate a new form of language, so much so that it is necessary to know some key concepts that allow us to understand the subject of inclusion in its totality.

### **What are barriers to inclusive education?**

The concept of exclusion implies a process of separation between different groups that are supposedly homogeneous within themselves. But this separation is not so simple: exclusion also incorporates a differential assessment between these groups since one is considered better than the other and this leads to differential behaviour with one or the other group, which leads to differences in access to opportunities and benefits.

In the area of inclusive education, it is necessary to identify and make visible the factors of exclusion experienced by people in relation to education. As José Alfredo Espinosa (2010) says, a barrier is something that prevents a person from performing a task or achieving something. For example, a ladder is a barrier for a person who has difficulty walking. A television news broadcast without the use of sign language is a barrier to people who cannot hear. Traffic lights that do not emit sounds that warn pedestrians to cross the street are a barrier for people who cannot see. Laws written in complex legal language are barriers to people who have difficulty reading and understanding (Espinosa, 2010).

The concept of "barriers to learning and participation" was developed by Booth, Ainscow, and Kingston (2006). It is a core concept in relation to how teachers should approach their

educational work with students who are disadvantaged or more vulnerable to exclusionary processes. This concept emphasizes a contextual or social perspective on learning difficulties or disability. It makes it possible to analyse that such difficulties arise from the interaction between students and their contexts: the social and economic circumstances that affect their lives, people, educational policy, the culture of the centres, teaching methods.

According to the document *Inclusive Education, Equal in Diversity*, of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain (2011), the barriers that can coexist in three dimensions:

- At the level or dimension of educational culture (shared values, beliefs and attitudes).
- In the processes of planning, coordination and operation of the centre (educational and curricular projects, commissions and teams, school management and council, timetables, groupings, distribution of resources, etc.).
- In specific classroom practices: teaching methodology, type of interdependence among students, evaluated practices, resources, etc.

Likewise, many of the barriers are outside the educational contexts. They are found at the level of national policies, education systems, teacher training systems, budgets and resources. In other words, many of the resources needed to develop inclusive education are outside educational institutions and the classroom. They are, for example, in families and communities.

It is also necessary to remember that the barriers that we must analyze are not only those that may limit the learning and participation of students in the classroom, but also those that affect the teaching staff and the rest of the people who live together and participate in the life of an educational institution. We could even say that if they do not feel welcome, valued and respected by others, it will be difficult for them to carry out their work in conditions favourable to promoting learning and the participation of their students. The absence of a policy of welcoming new members of a teaching team, the lack of coordination at work, relations of hostility or isolation, the absence of internal or external incentives are, among others, obstacles or barriers that negatively condition teaching work. These are aspects to which we do not always pay due attention (MECyDE, 2011). It is therefore necessary to eliminate all forms of exclusion, which are part of everyday life in general, but of institutional life in particular.

## **What is inclusive education?**

Under the premise that education is a right, not a privilege, this section will allude to what constitutes inclusive education through some theoretical references from a global perspective, to arrive at what constitutes the focus in the framework of Bolivia's productive sociocommunitarian model.

**Some general references.** The purpose of inclusive education is to provide educational attention that favors the maximum possible development of all students and the cohesion of all members of the community made up of students, teachers, parents, families, other professionals working in the institution, educational administration, local administration, institutions and social organizations. All sectors of the educational community collaborate to offer a quality education and guarantee equal opportunities to all students to participate in a permanent learning process. Inclusive education is based on the following principles:

- (i) The educational institution must educate in the respect of Human Rights and, in order to do so, organize itself and function according to democratic values and principles.
- (ii) all members of the community collaborate to facilitate individual personal and professional growth and development, as well as development and cohesion among equals and with other members of the community;
- (iii) the diversity of all the people who compose the educational community is considered a valuable fact that contributes to enriching the whole group as well as favouring interdependence and social cohesion;
- (iv) it seeks equity and excellence for all students and recognizes their right to share a common educational environment in which each person is valued equally with the capabilities and personal talents they have;
- (v) educational attention is aimed at improving the learning of all students, so it must be adapted to individual characteristics;
- (vi) educational need occurs when the educational offer does not satisfy individual needs (Cf. MECyDE:2011).

Thus, inclusion implies identifying and minimizing learning difficulties and implies participation, as well as maximizing the resources of educational attention in both processes. Inclusion is seen as the process of identifying and responding to the diverse needs of all students through greater participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing

exclusion in education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that includes all children regardless of age range, appropriateness and the conviction that the State as such must assume responsibility for the regular system, educating all children.

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization<sup>11</sup>.** The UNESCO view is based on the principle that each learner has different characteristics, interests, capacities and learning needs, and that education systems should be designed to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.

Inclusive education starts from the recognition of our diversity and refers to the right that all people have to access education, regardless of their situation or condition. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate successful learning for all students. It promotes the elimination of all barriers to learning and facilitates the participation of all students who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. This means that all students receive the support they need to have the opportunity to participate as members of a classroom, of an educational community and of society.

In the field of Special Education, inclusive education is the exercise of the right to education of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and extraordinary talent, with relevance and opportunity, on an equal opportunity basis with equal conditions throughout the Plurinational Educational System (Cf. Cuaderno para la planificación curricular, PROFOCOM, 2013). It is not only a matter of integrating students with disabilities into regular education, but also how non-discrimination is promoted in the classroom and particular characteristics of some students are considered as an opportunity to develop other types of learning and values.

Inclusion pays special attention to the groups or individuals most at risk of exclusion, but is not limited to them. It considers diversity as a source of wealth and learning in educational processes. Inclusive educational transformation implies a proposal to modify cultures, policies and practices; it means that ways of thinking and talking about diversity, the management systems and routines that guide life in educational institutions and, of course, daily practice, will have to be progressively modified. In short it is (i) based on the recognition of diversity; (ii) it takes an ethical and political position against the various manifestations of inequality,

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<sup>11</sup> See: <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems>

exclusion and discrimination; (iii) it embraces diversity of the population groups and persons that inhabit the country with educational processes in function of criteria of opportunity and pertinence.

Embracing diversity in the educational context requires another way of understanding education that leads us to work for the development of equal opportunities, the elimination of inequalities and the search for new ways of approaching the teaching-learning process. Diversity is a source of enrichment of sociocommunitarian relations that generates a broad process of construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

## **Principles of Inclusive Education**

What do the principles of a productive socio-community model in our country, Bolivia, entail?

(a) Attention to diversity - Attention to diversity leads us to consider the need to point out how broad the panorama is when talking about diversity, it does not only refer to the understanding of understanding that there is a lot of difference between one subject and another, but also how these differences between one and the other can constitute an opportunity for personal and collective enrichment.

(b) Equal opportunities - Equal opportunities is related to the need to respond to the needs of each one in the same way, that is to say, not to make a difference between a man and a woman for example, because both as persons are worth the same. In contrast to discrimination, equal opportunities ensure equal treatment between people, regardless of any type of circumstantial characteristic: race, color, sex, origin, marital status, etc.

(c) Equal conditions - The training of teachers is a priority in order to guarantee that conditions are reflected in the treatment given to each person, but this is compounded by the need to provide infrastructure conditions to educational institutions so that they can properly meet all the demands that arise from diversity, which is why the training of teachers is a priority in order to guarantee that such conditions are reflected in the treatment given to each person.

d) Timely and relevant education - It provides the appropriate educational response for the precise moment in function of the characteristics, expectations and interests of the students seeking holistic integrality in their development.



## **Inclusion in Higher Education in Bolivia**

Based on the above outline, this section presents some concrete experiences of how HEIs are implementing inclusion in daily practice.

**Inclusive curriculum: interculturality, indigenism, and national reality.** Within the framework of the Political Constitution of the State and Education Law No. 070, Avelino Siñani- Elizardo Perez, which provides guidelines for education in the new State, on 12 December 2010, Supreme Decree 1433 approved the new General Regulations and Specific Regulations for Private Universities (RGUP), which provides for the redesign of curricula of all previously approved curricula to bring them into line with Plurinational State regulations within 18 months (Transitional Provision I).

As a result of the adaptation of the study plans to the new regulations, the Universities have included, in their study plans, in their different careers, in a transversal way and with obligatory character, subjects oriented to the development of competences for the coexistence in a multicultural society. Some of these are: National Reality, Interculturality, Andean Cosmovision, and Indigenism and Indianism. This exercise denotes an interest on the part of the State and Higher Education Institutions in better understanding their origins, the characteristics of their peoples and the need to recognize them and integrate them into a productive, social and political model.

As Mardesich and García (2017) point out, beyond rational logic, interculturality is not a concept, it is a way of behaving. It is an ethical proposal, a complex and plural one that demands to travel through paths of communication, negotiation, construction, characterized by reciprocal respect between cultures determining a harmonic coexistence and mutual learning to generate a plural conscience. This is what the HEIs should emphasize in this demand of the current context.

**Participation of the Bolivian University in LGBT inclusion.** Public and private universities in the Plurinational State of Bolivia have been spaces calling for tolerance, equity and acceptance of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) communities in Bolivia over the past three decades. The First National Congress of Gay-Lesbian Communities and Supporters of Bolivia was held November 17-20, 1998 at the Universidad Santo Tomás de La Paz. Twelve groups participated in the Congress, represented by sixty-two delegates from La Paz, Sucre, Cochabamba, Oruro, Santa Cruz, Potosí, Yacuiba, Camiri and Montero. The meeting was organized and convened by the Asociación Civil de Desarrollo Social y Promoción Cultural Libertad GLBT (ADESPROC).

The objective was to create the National Gay-Lesbian Association. Another intention was to suggest a law against sex-related discrimination, an objective that, years later, was consolidated in the framework of the Law against Racism and all forms of discrimination (Law No. 045, 2010), which considers these misdemeanors as a criminal offense. (Aruquipa, Estenssoro and Céspedes, 2012).

In the last two decades, it has become permanent, with growing support by Communication and Psychology staff of Bolivian Universities to the LGBT Community through its participation, for example, in the marches known as the "Gay Pride", which have developed in different cities of the country. In the same way, participation of the Universities in congresses, symposiums, meetings related to the topic has become usual.

According to the LGBT Rights Observatory, other universities, such as UDABOL in La Paz, have signed agreements with LGBT Collectives, such as ADESPROC Libertad, through which conferences have been given, spaces for debate and working tables have been opened in relation to this subject.

Universities also show their support for gender diversity through campaigns aimed at respect and equity, which is based on the premise of Law N 045 (2010), but with a much more direct focus on the most vulnerable minorities in their communities.

**Teaching of the native language, foreign language and Spanish in the University, as a communication tool towards the inclusion of indigenous communities, foreign communities and their integration.** As noted in previous paragraphs, the recognition of sociocultural and linguistic diversity throughout the Plurinational Education System is expressed in the Education Act, which puts the Bolivian university in a new context in the area of languages. On the one hand, there is the obligatory use of the official language in education, which obliges foreign students to study Spanish as a foreign language, or demonstrate competence in this language, when their language is not the same. On the other hand, it indicates the obligatory nature of teaching the English language and native languages throughout the plurinational educational system that includes Higher University Education.

Consequently, the Universities have proceeded to redesign curricula for the integration of both the original language and the foreign language. In the first place, the original language is a compulsory subject, which varies according to the region, being mostly Aymara in the west, Quechua in the central area and Guarani in the eastern area of the country. In relation to the foreign language, higher education institutions have included English, due to its global characteristics, in relation to it as a means of commercial, diplomatic, technological and scientific communication.

Another important point in relation to linguistic inclusion is training in Spanish as a foreign language. According to information from the Ministry of Government, between January 2012 and June 2016, the Directorate General of Migration of Bolivia delivered 42,928 residences for reasons of study to foreigners. Where a large group of Brazilian students migrate to the country to study Medicine, in view of the accessibility of the cost of tuition in relation to their country of origin, the Regional Committee for the Integration of Teaching Assistance, Research and Community Interaction (CRIDAIIC) has joined this demand, requiring, since 2018, the Certificate of Spanish for admission to the Evaluated Rotary Internship (IRE), an indispensable requirement for access to the Medical Surgeon Degree.

## **Final reflections**

The process of inclusion, developed in the Institutions of Higher University Education in Bolivia, is recent; it is regulated by laws that have been drafted and approved as a result of mobilizations and protests of segments highly affected by discrimination and intolerance in the country.

Although this process has been harshly criticized and even today is to some still difficult to accept, progress has been made by leaps and bounds. The work of the higher education institutions - some more than others - reflects the cultural advancement and improvement in the attitude of the general population.

There is still a lot of work to be done in this regard, many public policies to be implemented and many barriers to be overcome, however, the positive reflection on this matter that emanates from the classrooms of the universities is crucial in order to meet the challenge.

The student population, as well as academic and administrative staff, must accept inclusion as a postulate and a way of life. Understanding inclusion, living with it on a daily basis and living with those who need it, is a development objective that not all nations achieve.

Thus, at the Universities, awareness and change should be encouraged; they should not turn a blind eye to unacceptable situations. Tolerance, respect, empathy are fundamental values in each human being if what is sought is to achieve a differentiated and developed position in the country.

Bolivia is a State that, as its name "Pluri" says, has marked strata, differentiated by cultural, economic, social and even political aspects, sufficient reason to accelerate the concept of inclusion in all its phases and results, and make the necessary changes in a mature, conscious and human way.

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*CHAPTER 3*

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: POLICY CONTEXTS  
IN ITALY AND CHILE**

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**Key words:** Pedagogy of inclusive education, social dimensions, teacher training, educational policy.

### **Abstract**

The definitions of Inclusive Pedagogy, Inclusive School and Educational Inclusion have different meaning depending on the educational contexts in which they are used. In two perspectives presented in this paper, from Italy and from Chile, the theoretical approaches differ. In the Italian context the social dimension predominates, and in the Chilean context the clinical vision. The main conclusion and recommendation of this chapter is that efforts to concretize inclusive approaches in education are urgent and must go beyond regulations and laws to become consolidated in specific strategies and skills in order to carry out in a dynamic, effective and contextualized way a Personalized Didactic Plan and an Educational Inclusion Plan applying to students without discrimination.

### **Introduction**

This chapter proposes a pedagogical frame of reference on Educational Inclusion of students who come from different cultures within the social-labour community in which they live and act. The need to address this topic at the political, social and educational (school) levels is increased, as a result of socio-economic and cultural changes in 21st century society because of: (i) globalization; (ii) new models of social coexistence at the political, economic, religious and

cultural levels, which conflict with old traditions, practices and behaviours; (iii) pervasive digitization of society, influencing all aspects of human life (Presutti, 1995). In the pedagogical approach presented in this chapter, we define Educational Inclusion as the social dimension of the school system, i.e. the effective-relevant-meaningful relationship of all the actors who contribute to the educational quality of the School: students, teachers, families and socio-economic-cultural communities, not simply the school integration of people with disabilities.

### **Insertion – integration – school inclusion in Italy since 1960**

Italy was the first country in the world to institutionalize innovative pedagogical models in the field of Differential Education. In the 1970s, through national legislation, it inserts disabled students in all Italian public school classes (Italian Law n. 517 of 1977). For this reason in the 1970s in Italy in all public schools there is a profound change ranging from the Pedagogy of Insertion to the Pedagogy of School Integration.

Figures 1,2 and 3<sup>12</sup> offer a framework for studies and research in Pedagogy - Educational Sciences - Training Sciences being carried out in Italy and a perspective for the implementation of a new pedagogical model: the Pedagogy of School Welfare. Figure 1 shows the innovative passages that Italian school legislation, and consequently Pedagogy, Educational Sciences and Educational Sciences, have supported and developed in Italy from the 1960s to the present day. Figures 2 and 3 present the evolutionary lines from the Differential Pedagogy and the Pedagogy of Insertion, modified in the Pedagogy of School Integration to arrive at the Pedagogy of Educational Inclusion, implemented in Italy from 1960 to 2020, with the characteristics and innovative aspects of each model.

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<sup>12</sup> The pedagogical models expressed in the figures presented are based on the legislative regulations of the MPI - Italian Ministry of Education, that later became MIUR, Ministry of Education, University and Research for public schools in Italy from the 1960s to the present day.



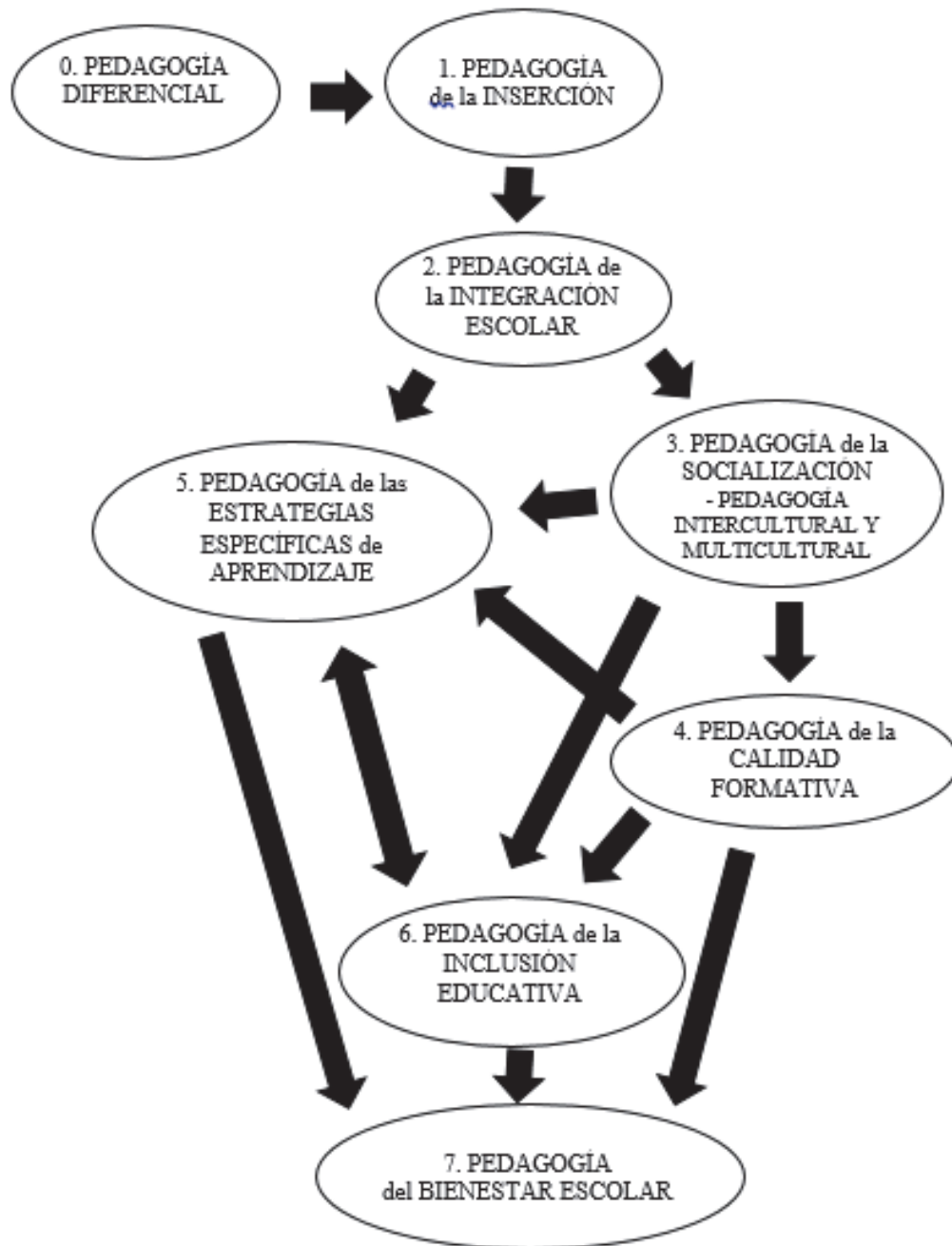


Figure 1: Evolving lines of pedagogical models in Italy from 1960 to today. Prepared by the authors.

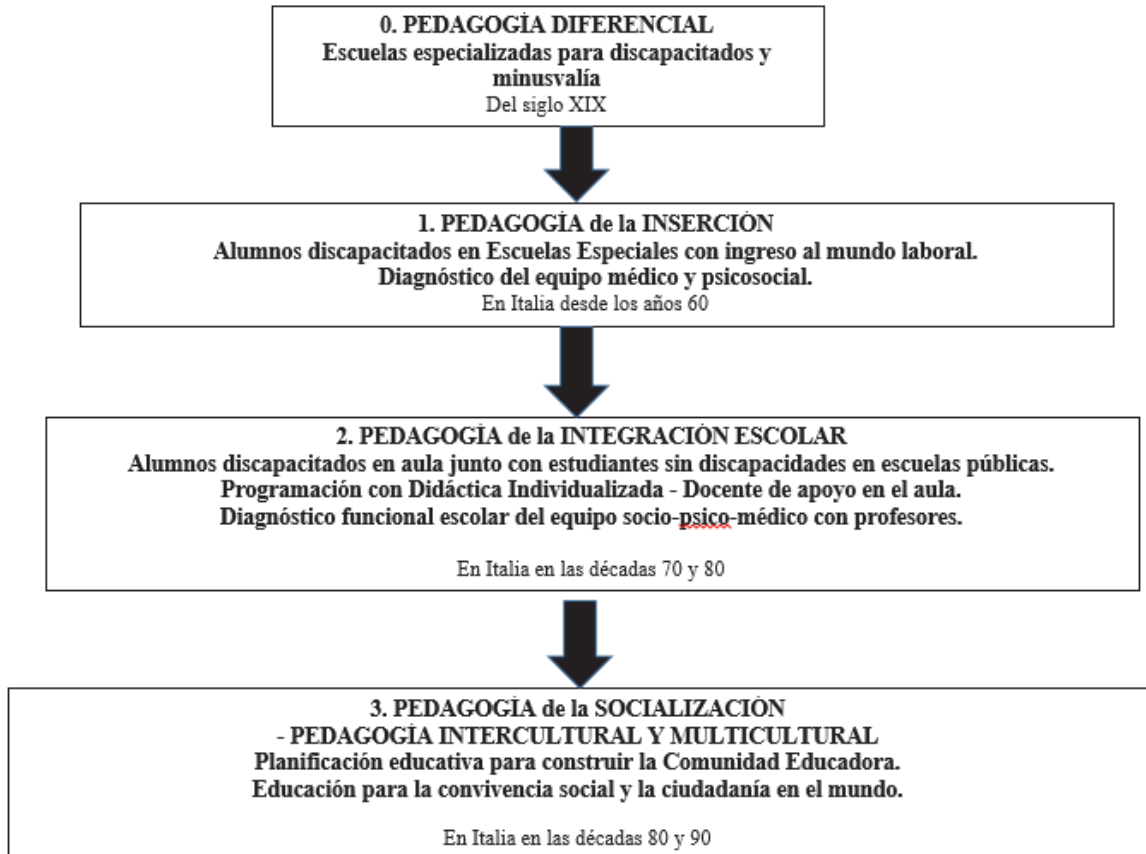


Figure 2: Evolutionary lines of the history of differential pedagogy in Italy from 1960 to 1990.  
Prepared by the authors

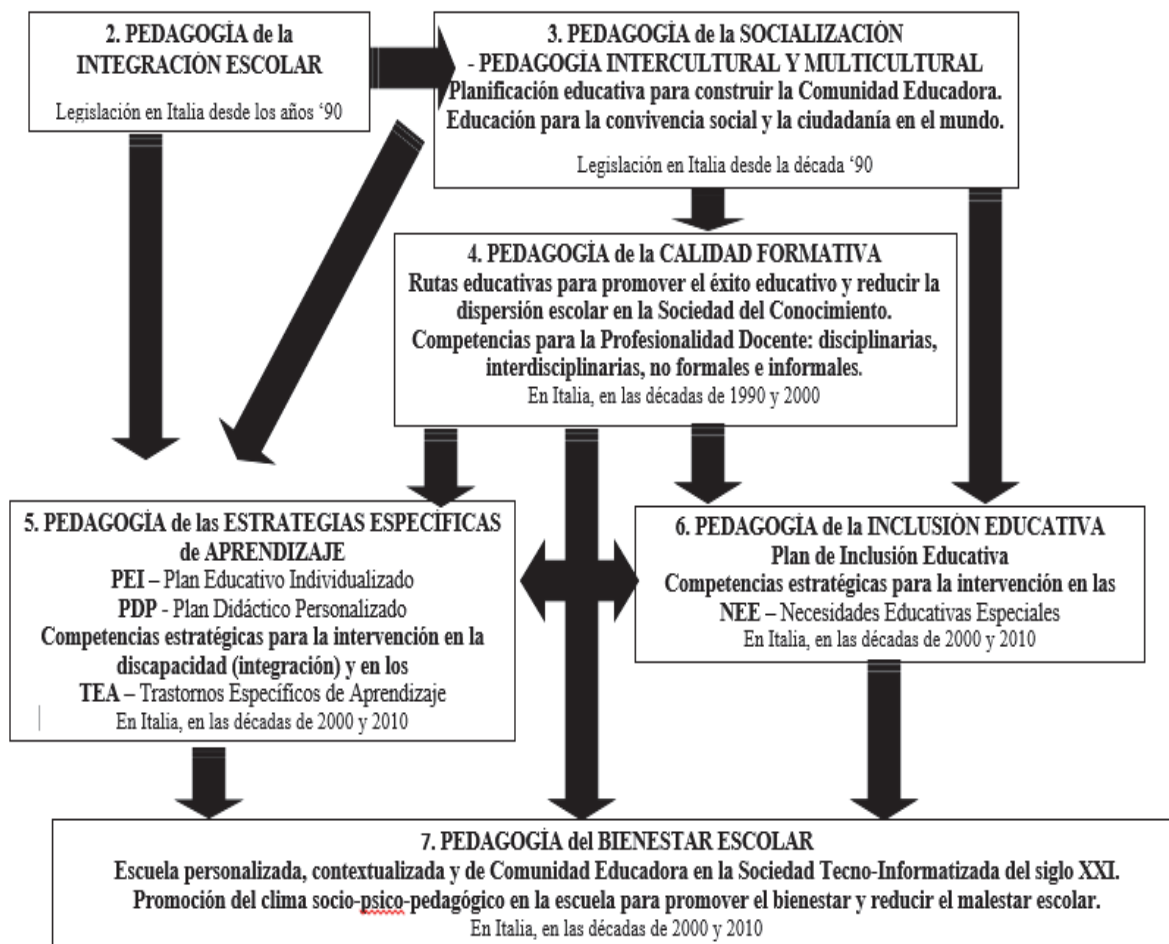


Figure 3: Evolutionary lines of the history of inclusive pedagogy in Italy from 1990 to 2020. Prepared by the authors.

## Policy on Educational Inclusion in Italy

Historically the term "educational inclusion" refers to the inclusion and integration of disabilities, to Differential Pedagogies for students with disabilities, to Special Didactics for students with sensory, physical, motor, psychic and/or mental impairments and/or handicaps.

In Italy, the term "educational inclusion" has since the 2000s allowed the implementation of a new socio-psychological-pedagogical model with respect to the term "school integration", established in Italy since 1977, when Law No. 517 of the Italian Ministry of Education

abolished differential classes for pupils with disabilities. Activities characterized by "school integration" are currently structured by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

In Anglo-Saxon culture and in the United States the term "inclusion", "inclusion", has the meaning of identifying the process that leads to the education of students with disabilities in common classes, meaning a disability that can also originate from contextual and environmental motivations; this process in Italy is identified by the term "school integration".

By thus defining the concept of "educational inclusion," Anglo-American culture tends not to consider the social dimension of the school system, but only the behavioral-functional dimension of students with disabilities who are in school. It is this different pedagogical vision between Mediterranean culture (Italian, but also Spanish, Portuguese, French, Greek) and Anglo-American culture that creates confusion in the scientific literature on this subject. Furthermore, in Slavic and Russian countries the term "educational inclusion" assumes the meaning of "socialization" and the Pedagogical model of Socialization; assuming the meaning of "socialization" contains a different vision than those of Italian "educational inclusion" and Anglo-Saxon "school integration".

In Italy, since the 1980s, the Pedagogy of Socialization has been widely developed by educators, teachers, and academics, both in Institutions for Children and in Primary and Secondary Schools, using the following methodologies: animation and dramatization, role play, relational dynamics among students, setting, class structuring, educational communication, psychosocial roles, cognitive styles, training for socialization and learning groups, educational socialization / classroom learning projects (Presutti, 1992a-j). In Italy, the Pedagogy of Socialization was accompanied by the activities of Intercultural and Multicultural Pedagogy (see Figure 3).

On the basis of the pedagogical models presented above, in Italy it is necessary that the School and/or the teachers of that Educational Institution develop new projects, routes and significant strategies at the social level to carry out an Inclusive Pedagogy in the school context, especially including families and the community. If there is no specific attention at the social level by the School, the latter does not implement an Inclusive Pedagogy even though they act positively in the classroom with students who have disabilities and/or learning difficulties: (i) the Individualized Educational Plan - MIUR Law Italy n. 104/92 and the DPR of 24 February 1994) concerning activities with students with disabilities and/or handicap, according to the provisions of the World Health Organization; (ii) In Italy, the Plan for Educational Inclusion is determined by the school legislation of the 1970s and by the model of Pedagogy of School

Integration developed in the following decades; (iii) the Personalized Didactic Plan - MIUR Law Italy n. 70/2010), concerning activities for Specific Learning Disorders (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.).

Currently in Italy, the Individualized Educational Plan and the Personalized Didactic Plan define the educational activities of the educational model that can be defined as "Pedagogy of Specific Learning Strategies" (see Figure 3).

In recent years in Italy the use of Inclusive Pedagogy in Schools is increasingly determined by the experimentation of a Plan for Educational Inclusion - PIE, structured considering the Special Educational Needs (SEN) of the students (see Figure 3).

Therefore, in Italy the fundamental principle to identify whether a School is Inclusive is to analyze and verify if projects, routes and activities are carried out in the Educational Institution: (i) concerning the social dimension, which is the effective, relevant and meaningful relationship between students, teachers, families and the socio-economic-cultural community in which it operates; (ii) based on Inclusive Pedagogy through a Plan for Educational Inclusion (PIE) in the classes and in the School, which is determined by the detection of the Special Educational Needs of the students.

## **Policies towards Educational Inclusion in Chile**

In the Chilean case, the concept of inclusion was, traditionally, due to the origin linked, as in a large part of the world, to special education, assimilation and integration of students with disabilities (López Melero, 2011).

In 2009, Chile issued the Decree 170/09, which sets standards for determining which students with special educational needs (SEN) will benefit from special education subsidies, broadening the spectrum of specialized attention to students with educational needs that are not only derived from disability. However, in order to be a beneficiary of the subsidy with Decree 170/09 and receive specialized support, it is necessary to have a diagnosis that reveals Special Educational Needs (SEN).

In 2010, Chile's Law No. 20,422 came into force, establishing Norms on Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, where for the first time the concept of Inclusion appears in legal matters. However, this law does not provide a definition of the concept of Inclusion and the document again defines a medical diagnosis approach.

It appears difficult to clearly understand that the inclusion process refers to central aspects of social development such as respect, participation and coexistence. These values should be the new pillars in teaching and learning processes (López Melero, 2011).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education of Chile (2015a) promulgated Law No. 20,845 on School Inclusion, which regulates the admission of students, eliminates shared financing, and prohibits profit in educational establishments that receive state contributions.

The 2015 Law has turned out to be a tremendous advance in terms of educational accessibility, as it attempts to eliminate requirements for students to enter educational institutions that receive some type of state subsidy.

Months later, Decree No. 83 (Ministry of Education, 2015b) was issued, approving criteria and guidelines for curricular adaptation for students with special educational needs (SEN) at the pre-school and basic education levels. Decree No. 83 of 2015 is still in the process of implementation and its analysis is interesting, since it focuses on the flexibility of the educational response, suggesting the use of universal learning designs: (i) from co-teaching experiences that favour learning for all students; (ii) to proposing activities characterized by a much more inclusive understanding of education.

However, the Decree also mentions that those students who require it may be beneficiaries of a curricular adaptation plan, without pointing out that personalized education also has to be placed together with inclusive, participatory, effective and performing socializing learning.

Evidently, the Chilean educational paradigm is caught between the integrationist approach and the inclusive approach, whereby pedagogical practices highly focused on the learning deficit still prevail (López Melero, 2012). Clearly, this lack of an effective relationship between the two approaches responds to cultural barriers that make it difficult to understand that this society is increasingly pluralistic and demanding democratic participation in educational decision-making in the country.

It seems that Chile still does not fully understand that all people are capable of learning, the only thing they require is an adequate education, and this can only be achieved by converting classrooms into democratic learning communities (López Melero, 2011).

The inclusive approach challenges the installation in learning communities of a new conception with respect to academic achievement and the cognitive and cultural competencies of students, with concern for those who are most lacking or have been marginalized in their

school and life journeys (Duk and Murillo, 2011); this would allow for a shift in teaching systems and the current conception of learning, school curricula, evaluation systems, etc.

We must demystify negative conceptions that in inclusive schools students do not learn, or they are leveled down to the lowest results; because we must understand that inclusive education entails the concern for high quality learning and school performance that is required given the abilities of each student (Echeita, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Inclusive Education requires active participation of diverse agents of the community in the educational decision-making of a country; it requires an understanding of this in the school institution, as the possibility of contributing that the State, parents, guardians, education assistants, teachers, neighbors, students and directive team have; in the organization and the decisions that reflect the ideology of the country, of the citizens to whom it aspires to contribute.

This theoretical model of educational inclusion led mainly by international organizations (UNESCO, UN/ECLAC), is part of the international movement born in the early 1990s coordinated by (UNESCO, 1990) called Education for All - EFA (EFA - Education For All, UNESCO 2015a).

In the various world conferences held in recent decades, the EFA movement has tried to get countries to commit themselves to the fight against poverty, social inequalities and for an education that respects the participation of learners, their families and their communities, a situation that it currently has not achieved.

The UN/ECLAC (2016) calls for the fulfillment of the multiple agreements (Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, SDG4: Ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all) and this hits the table for a rethinking of what we mean by education in the 21st century, and therefore of what the school and its main actors represent.

We believe that the Italian case is more advanced in the inclusion of other actors in the process of educational inclusion and it is perceived that the social dimension is much clearer in its legislation than for the Chilean case, where despite having an inclusion law, this is reduced to non-exclusion in the selection of students to schools and high schools that receive state subsidy

and has not yet managed to overcome the clinical vision of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

From words one must move on to action, since discourses construct reality and therefore one must bear in mind the meaning and significance of the theoretical and discursive categories that the school constructs (Da Silva, 1999). Through the lens of post-structuralism, this author calls for intensifying the quality and quantity of public policies that curb all forms of exclusion, especially those sectors whose rights are most violated, such as children, women, older adults, migrants and displaced persons, cultural/religious/ethnic/sexual minorities, and the poor.

It is at this critical point that we see the complexity of working today on educational inclusion, since it goes hand in hand with the social, economic, pedagogical, cultural and political. The question to be finally resolved would be: now that we have an education policy, how do we actually realize it?

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## CHAPTER 4

# “BULLYING”: A THREAT FOR INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - PERSPECTIVES FROM LATIN AMERICA

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Key words: Bullying, special educational needs, disability, coexistence, diversity.

### Abstract

One would expect that 25 years after the proposal of an inclusive school as generated in Salamanca, the educational systems could guarantee the effective exercise of access, participation and academic success of all students. In practice, however, there are still many challenges to overcome, such as making the school a safe place for all and particularly for vulnerable groups. Within schools and in the development of interpersonal relationships, there are phenomena of peer discrimination and violence that seriously affect the individual and the school context to which he or she belongs. This paper analyzes and exposes characteristics and descriptions of bullying as a violent phenomenon that attacks the inclusive processes of students with special educational needs, from a global and regional perspective. It also presents references on prevalence, as well as suggestions and reflections to address bullying from inclusive educational practice.

### Introduction

In interpersonal relationships, phenomena of aggression and violence can appear that seriously threaten coexistence as well as harmonious development and health, such as bullying and

cyberbullying, among others (Rodríguez-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2017). Educational spaces are not free of these phenomena, which particularly undermine the possibilities of academic success of vulnerable groups and minorities. Some authors point to greater difficulties for members of minority groups to access and follow formal education in relation to their peers (Booth *et al.*, 2000). Individual attributes, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or having a disability, place certain students at greater risk of involvement in the violent phenomenon (Alexius *et al.*, 2019).

The study of bullying began in the 1970s (Olweus, 1978) and has continued to grow, reaching an important body of theoretical scientific research, developed from different theoretical perspectives that commonly conceptualize it as a specific type of relational aggression (Herrera-López *et al.*, 2018). However, this development is uneven in different regions of the world; when analyzing the historical development of scientific production on the phenomenon, Zych *et al.* (2015) found that more than three quarters of the most cited articles on bullying were published in the United States and Northern Europe, suggesting that Latin American countries are at a marked disadvantage in the study of and approach to bullying.

Also, studies from recent years (*e.g.*, Fink *et al.*, 2015; Rodríguez-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2019) point to the need to investigate the dynamics of bullying in specific subgroups, especially in minority and vulnerable populations in the school context, such as students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Where studies are less exhaustive, the evaluation of particular experiences is still necessary to identify elements that allow a more precise understanding of the association between experiences of bullying and SEN status.

This paper aims to analyse and describe bullying as a violent phenomenon that attacks inclusive processes and particularly affects students with special educational needs, from a global, regional and local perspective. It also presents references on the prevalence, development characteristics of the phenomenon and those involved, as well as suggestions and reflections to address bullying from the inclusive educational practice.

## **Inclusive Education and SEN**

The term Special Educational Needs - hereafter SEN - refers to the difficulties or limitations that a student may have in his/her teaching-learning processes, whether temporary or lasting, and which require specific educational resources and support (Luque, 2009). In this sense, Oldfield *et al.* (2017) mention that a child or young person has SEN if he or she has a learning

disability or a disability that requires special educational services to be provided. There is still considerable debate about how SENs are defined and understood. This is because there are complex issues such as definitions of overlap, comorbidity, variations in assessment criteria, and changes in context- and time-dependent needs (Wigelsworth *et al.*, 2013).

The term SEN is linked to disability, but actually encompasses much more than those needs generated by this condition. Since it is a construct that goes beyond simple conceptualization and carries implicitly an educational philosophy of personalization, normalization, and inclusion (Luque 2009), it covers all those conditions that generate greater and particular demands on the individual and that require more attention than usual in the educational context. SEN is used both in cases associated with disability [*e.g.* physical, sensory, intellectual, social], and in any case of specific learning difficulties [*e.g.* in reading, writing or calculation]; behavior [*e.g.* ADHD or juvenile offenders]; and/or other situations of vulnerability [*e.g.* catastrophic illness, human mobility or adolescent pregnancy].

Inclusion in education of all children is necessary for success, equality and peace among individuals and societies (Llorent *et al.*, 2016). School must be a means of changing attitudes towards difference by educating all children together, and forming the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society (Ainscow *et al.*, 2019, Booth *et al.*, 2000).

Twenty-five years after the Salamanca Declaration<sup>13</sup>, inclusive education still faces great challenges. This is exemplified by the results of a UNESCO global monitoring report which indicates that, despite improvements, there are still 58 million children out of school in the world and around 100 million children who do not complete Primary Education; data that allow the report to conclude that inequality in education has increased and that the poorest and most disadvantaged bear the heaviest burden (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 2015). Access has basically improved, but situations such as deficit labelling and segregation remain predominant practices. In many schools, the goals of inclusive education have not transformed the original object of activity and academic success is pursued above other educational goals (Andrews *et al.*, 2019). While the academic progress of students can be used as an indication of success in attempts to support those with SEN, a truly inclusive practice requires focusing on the full range of school activities (Farrell, 2000).

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<sup>13</sup> Declaration and Framework for Action, approved at the World Conference organized by the United Nations, on special educational needs, access and quality, in Salamanca, Spain, June 7-10, 1994

Inclusive education is approached as a service that provides SEN students with greater access to the general curriculum. However, it carries some risks, such as the emergence of the dynamics of bullying, discrimination and other forms of violence (Holt *et al.*, 2017; Rose and Gage, 2017). The school experience for students with disabilities and other vulnerable groups is often marked by higher levels of bullying, social isolation and peer discrimination (Wigelsworth *et al.*, 2013). It has been documented that in inclusive schools acts of discrimination against SEN students occur frequently (Farmer *et al.*, 2012, 2015). Discrimination is the different and prejudicial treatment, by action or omission, given to a person, group or institution because it is considered different from others or others like it (Rodríguez-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2017). SEN discrimination, then, is posed as that which is directed against individuals or groups for having differences in relation to their peers derived from a physical, emotional, cognitive or functional condition, in the educational context.

## **Bullying, a global phenomenon**

Bullying is recognized as one of the most common manifestations of violence in the context of peers and a phenomenon of school and youth microculture (Ortega-Ruiz *et al.*, 2016). It can occur in multiple settings such as school, community and even virtual spaces (Houchins *et al.*, 2016; Rodríguez-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2018). It is attracting increasing attention in different countries globally (Chatzitheochari *et al.*, 2016). In the dynamics of bullying, some schoolchildren are at greater risk than their peers because any condition or characteristic that differentiates a young person from the group increases the risk of being rejected and consequently intimidated (Juvonen and Graham, 2014). In recent years, bullying victimization research has expanded to specific forms of discriminatory bullying, involving aggressive behavior directed at an individual's personal characteristics that relate to social biases - e.g., offensive comments about race or culture, sexual orientation or gender identity, body shape, size or appearance, among other possible manifestations (Rodríguez-Hidalgo & Alcívar *et al.*, 2019; Rodríguez-Hidalgo and Hurtado-Mellado, 2019; Salmon *et al.*, 2018). The possession of any of these socially stigmatized attributes becomes a risk factor that increases the probability of being bullied (Alexius *et al.*, 2019). Recent research places SEN as a condition of high vulnerability and a significant predictor of direct involvement in bullying (Blake *et al.*, 2016; Blood and Blood, 2016; Farmer *et al.*, 2012; Ratcliff *et al.*, 2017, Wandera *et al.*, 2017, Wigelsworth *et al.*, 2013). Adolescents with SEN are also more likely to report cyberbullying compared to their peers without SEN (Heiman *et al.*, 2015; Wells and Mitchell, 2014; Wright and Wright, 2017).

Those involved in bullying are divided into three categories (Houchins *et al.*, 2016; Olweus, 2013, Rodríguez-Hidalgo & Pantaleón *et al.*, 2019): (1) victims are those who are repeatedly bullied by their peers, experience negative internalization behaviors, including depression, anxiety, social isolation, loneliness, and feelings of helplessness; (2) aggressors, those who constantly cause emotional, physical, or social harm to their peers, use externalization and aggressive behaviors to influence or dominate the peer social system, and often show low social adjustment; and (3) the aggressor-victimized, are those who intimidate and are bullied, are at increased risk of having psychological problems related to limited social skills, externalization of behavior problems, and peer rejection.

Bullying brings serious physical, psychological, personal, vocational and social consequences; the impact of bullying and victimization during school years may persist into adulthood and affect the quality of life of those involved (Oldfield *et al.*, 2015). It may be associated with an increase in social anxiety, isolation, depression, physical problems, suicidal ideation, poor adaptation to adult roles, leading to the detriment of social relationships, of labor integration and to economic adversities (Earnshaw *et al.*, 2018; Mulvey *et al.*, 2018; Salmon *et al.*, 2018). The effects of bullying negatively influence not only the individual development and health of the individual involved, but also the context in which s/he and other members of the educational community coexist. Bullying has a negative impact on the institutional climate and learning processes (de Oliveira *et al.*, 2016).

Bullying can take many forms, direct and indirect. Direct forms include physical aggression - *e.g.* hitting, pushing, kicking - and verbal forms - *e.g.* offenses, teasing, threats, gossip. While indirect ones include other types of physical aggressions - *e.g.* theft and damage to belongings - and relational aggressions - *e.g.* malicious rumours and lies, exclusion and discrimination - (Begotti *et al.*, 2018). And while the latter may seem more subtle, they are equally harmful and detrimental to the participatory goals of inclusive education (Juvonen and Graham, 2014).

## **Bullying towards students with SEN**

Being a victim of bullying is not a random event and can be predicted by individual variables and other factors such as family and contextual. Young people living with socially devalued characteristics - *e.g.*, minority sexual orientation, race and/or ethnicity; disability, obesity - experience frequent harassment (Earnshaw *et al.*, 2018; Rodríguez-Hidalgo & Alcívar *et al.*, 2019). In a study of secondary school perceptions of bullying, young people said that those who

were "different", quiet, or unpopular were more likely to be targeted by bullies (Ybarra *et al.*, 2018). Thus, power imbalances derive from physical strength, social status in the group, or it can also be achieved through knowledge of a person's vulnerabilities and exploiting this knowledge to harm her or him (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017).

Children and youth with disabilities have a significantly increased risk of being harassed by peers (Jackson *et al.*, 2019). Having SEN is a predictor of risk of assuming multiple roles in the bullying continuum, participating as victim, aggressor, victimized aggressor, or spectator (Blake *et al.*, 2016; Oldfield *et al.*, 2017; Rodriguez-Hidalgo & Alcívar *et al.*, 2019). Globally, the prevalence of traditional bullying in children and adolescents ranges from 30% to 50% for students without SEN status (Abdulsalam *et al.*, 2017; Blood and Blood, 2016, Houchins *et al.*, 2016). Several studies indicate that aggression and victimization rates for students with disabilities or SEN are 1 to 1½ times higher than the average of their peers; these rates vary according to different cognitive-behavioral, physical, sensory, social and/or communicative profiles (Blake *et al.*, 2012, Fink *et al.*, 2015, Rose *et al.*, 2012).

Students with SEN may show low social effectiveness. This social vulnerability makes them easy targets for aggressors, who tend to look for weak victims with little ability to defend themselves (Gómez-Ortiz *et al.*, 2017). This greater risk of direct involvement in relation to their peers can be associated not only the type of disability, but also the severity, visibility, school environment, social economic situation and support networks (Rose *et al.*, 2015). For example, the study by Zeedyk *et al.* (2014) that evaluated bullying victimization rates among adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and intellectual disability, versus "typically developing" peers showed that adolescents with ASD were more likely to experience victimization, followed by those with intellectual disabilities and finally typically developing youth. Also, the Chiu *et al.* (2018) study, which purported to investigate the prevalence of various types of bullying victimization in adolescents with ASD and to examine the effects of victimization on the mental health of that group, found that 72.4% of students with ASD experienced bullying in the form of exclusion, and 66% of them experienced verbal bullying. Existing literature suggests that widespread involvement in bullying in students with SEN is associated with developmental deficits in social and communication skills (Espelage *et al.*, 2016; Gage *et al.*, 2016; Lyons *et al.*, 2016; Ratcliff *et al.*, 2017).

The most notable consequences of bullying victimization of children with SEN are difficulties in psychosocial adjustment (Sullivan *et al.*, 2015), difficulties in academic adjustment reflected in forms of poor performance, low school enjoyment, perception of school as unsafe, as well as



higher levels of truancy, flight and absenteeism (Ashburner *et al.*, 2019; Hartley *et al.*, 2015). All of these consequences produce significant negative impacts on their victims that can persist into late adolescence and even adulthood (Wolke *et al.*, 2013).

## **Bullying in Latin America**

In Latin America, since the Salamanca World Conference on SEN in 1994, the main advances have been in access to education for a greater number of students as a result of greater public investment in education. However, there are challenges related to insufficient educational quality, low teacher training, school infrastructure and support systems for SEN students (Marchesi, 2019). Countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Nicaragua have made great budgetary efforts to address these challenges in recent years (Espíndola *et al.*, 2018).

Many factors hinder students' progress in learning and social inclusion in the region (Marchesi, 2019). Among these factors are violent phenomena such as bullying and the educational response to the phenomenon. A bibliometric study indicates that in Latin America the scientific productivity on reported bullying - WoS, Scopus and SciELO databases - is limited to little more than the last decade, which means a low contribution to the scientific theoretical body of the phenomenon, after almost 40 years of global history on its research, standing out in the region countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Mexico (Herrera-López *et al.*, 2018). Another study analyzing the development of scientific production on these phenomena in the world reports that more than three quarters of the most cited articles on bullying were published in the United States and Northern Europe (Zych *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, Latin American countries seem to be at a notable disadvantage in the study and therefore in the approach and development of educational policies based on scientific evidence to confront the phenomena that threaten educational inclusion and coexistence.

Some of the studies carried out allow us to see the prevalence of bullying in some of the countries of the region. According to a study conducted on a sample of 91,000 students between the ages of 10 and 14 in 16 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean based on data collected in the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), more than half of the students (51.1%) were robbed, insulted, threatened or beaten by their classmates in the school during the month prior to the data collection. The most frequent aggression is robbery

(39.4%), followed by verbal violence (26.6%) and finally physical violence (16.5%) (Román and Murillo, 2014; UNESCO, 2006).

Some of the relevant figures in the UNESCO report show that, while in Colombia more than half of the students in the 6th grade of primary school reported having suffered some type of theft in the last month, in Cuba only 1 out of 10 said so. One can conclude from the results that bullying affects at least one out of every three students in the rest of the participating countries, thus reflecting the serious and general nature of the phenomenon. The report highlights figures that indicate that the problem becomes even more acute in Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Peru, where the prevalence is over 45%. The situation is not very different when it comes to insults or threats, although in this case Argentina is the country with the highest figures, followed by Peru, Costa Rica and Uruguay: all of them with more than 30% of the students who claim to have been verbally abused by a colleague in the month prior to data collection. There are also five countries where physical violence between peers stands out for its high degree: Argentina (23.5%), Ecuador (21.9%), Dominican Republic (21.8%), Costa Rica (21.2%) and Nicaragua (21.2%).

Next, a study conducted in Colombia on a sample of secondary school adolescents showed a prevalence of bullying of 41.9%, with 23.4% victims, 4.5% aggressors and 14% aggressors/victims (Herrera-López et al., 2017). In the case of Nicaragua, the prevalence of bullying in the last years of primary school was estimated at 50%, distributed by roles as follows: 25.3% victims, 6% aggressors and 18.7% aggressors/victims (Romera et al., 2011). A recent study in Ecuador (Rodríguez-Hidalgo & Alcívar *et al.*, 2019) validated the EBIPQ - European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire-, an instrument that has demonstrated strength and reliability in different European countries to measure traditional bullying, and possibly providing an instrument also for Ecuador and other Latin American countries. These authors carried out research on a sample of 17,309 students in 44 inclusive schools. Among their results they found that in Ecuador, four out of ten adolescents participate in traditional school bullying, two out of ten are victims, one out of ten as an aggressor, and two out of ten as aggressors/victims; and for discriminatory bullying around SEN, three out of ten adolescents are involved: two out of ten are victims; one out of ten is an aggressor; and between one and two out of ten are victims/aggressors.

## **Protective factors and educational strategies against bullying**

Understanding the precursor and protective factors associated with over-representation of SEN students is critical to establishing effective anti-bullying programmes and policies (Rose et al., 2015). Some research points to investigating social constructs about disability and the resulting asymmetric power relations in the school environment (Chatzitheochari *et al.*, 2016). Other research investigates the risk of functional differences that may be exacerbated by the educational environment and its response to diversity (Ratcliff *et al.*, 2017). The size of the school as a predictor of bullying has also been examined. The study by Oldfield *et al.* (2017) revealed that larger schools may facilitate a degree of anonymity, people feel less valued and supported, whereas in smaller schools there may be greater opportunities for students, especially those with SEN, to develop better relationships with peers and teachers, have more confidence in adults who work in school, and more easily share common expectations about behavior.

Social support from parents and teachers acts as a protective factor in students with disabilities in traditional and cyber-victimization attacks (Wright and Wright, 2017). However, studies identify (Beam and Mueller, 2017) a frequent lack of knowledge among educators - in both general and special education - about practices to prevent and cope with bullying, which is worrying given the trend towards diversification of students in a school that should be for all. It is of great importance that students have an effective way of reporting any situation of peer violence, for these schools must develop multiple ways of reporting bullying and get students to abandon resistance to resorting to teachers or other adult figures in this regard (Ybarra *et al.*, 2018). An alternative might be a "hotline" for reporting bullying or a technological solution through which young people could anonymously report incidents of bullying. Teachers should provide sufficient support to students to succeed in their academic processes, emphasize students' strengths, and ensure that these situations do not stigmatize them and therefore make them more vulnerable to bullying involvement (Turunen *et al.*, 2017).

Social-emotional learning programmes have become one of the main resources for tackling bullying among schoolchildren. Recent research shows that students who receive social-emotional instruction programs - which include the promotion of social skills and/or conflict resolution - report lower levels of bullying as well as a reduction in incidents of occasional aggression (Devlin *et al.*, 2018; Nickerson *et al.*, 2019). In the study by Silva et al. (2018) developed with sixth graders during 12 months of intervention, it was possible to reduce the difficulty that bullying victims had in social skills. Participants in the intervention group,

compared to the control group, began to act with more courtesy, empathy, and emotional self-control, and were able to resolve interpersonal problems with peers in a nonviolent manner.

Socio-emotional and sociocognitive intervention programs focus primarily on risk and protective factors that have been frequently associated with aggression and victimization; since these factors are particularly relevant to students with disabilities, this type of intervention holds promise for reducing bullying in this group (Rose and Monda-Amaya, 2012). In recent years some studies have shown success (e.g., Espelage et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2016]. Learning assertive coping strategies and better emotional control can disrupt the cycle of aggression and thus increase the quality of social interactions and the lives of victims (Silva et al., 2018).

In the case of students with SEN associated with disability, the study by Espelage and colleagues (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of implementing a three-year social-emotional learning program. The goal was to increase prosocial behaviors as a protective factor against peer conflict and bullying among students with disabilities. Direct instruction on factors related to academic and social success was included, including training on empathy, emotion regulation, communication skills, and problem-solving strategies. Its implementation especially favoured willingness to intervene in bullying situations, improved levels of behavioural skills and academic performance, and significantly reduced the perpetration of bullying.

As the tendency to incorporate schoolchildren with disabilities increases, a greater understanding of bullying problems towards the SEN group is urgently needed to prevent and alleviate it (Paul *et al.*, 2018). In recent years, the socio-ecological framework of bullying and victimization has been used to investigate the complexity of bullying; individual factors are directly and indirectly influenced by family, peer group, school, community, and social factors; and while the participation of students with SEN can be attributed in part to these complex social environments and factors, individual factors are especially relevant for young people with disabilities (Rose and Gage, 2017).

Inclusive education can reduce bullying and foster social sensitivity in the school environment (Sunardi *et al.*, 2019). The risk is not in including, but in not tracking the needs of all students. Lines of research on bullying and disability have shown the validity of promoting strategies to support autonomy where it seeks to develop the ability to cope with situations of harassment, programs that support social and emotional learning of people with disabilities can increase their social competence and lead to lower levels of participation in the dynamics of bullying. Therefore, the school must move away from segregation using the argument of academic

excellence. It must strive for academic success, but without neglecting the development of competencies for life, harmonious coexistence and full and effective participation.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Peer violence in schools is one of the most serious threats at a global and regional level. Its consequences affect the personal, social and academic development of those involved and of the system in general. Inclusive schools, in coherence with what has been promoted since the social justification declared in Salamanca in 1994, must be the most effective means to combat discriminatory attitudes and for the construction of a just society. The school must be able to achieve in each of its students a feeling of attachment and belonging to it, so that they feel valued, participate and feel secure (Goodall, 2018).

If the aim is to advance towards a school for all, it is recommended that social and cultural bridges be created that foster attitudes in favour of diversity and inclusion, leading to the elimination of sectarianism and the rejection of disadvantaged groups (Marchesi, 2019). Schools must permanently seek to eliminate all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in the processes and outcomes of access, participation and learning.

Specifically, interventions against bullying must respond to the commitment to create a safe, positive and cooperative school climate where negative attitudes towards all forms of violence are promoted. Policies to prevent, respond to and eradicate bullying must be created, formalized and enforced; they must be developed and implemented with a high sense of pertinence, adapting to the characteristics of the centre and its specific needs in the face of the violent phenomenon.

Programs for the prevention and eradication of school violence are to involve the entire educational community, including students, teachers, administrative and service personnel, parents and authorities, in order to create an environment in which those involved feel safe when seeking help, favouring a climate of trust and support in the face of denunciation. Teachers are encouraged to be trained and supported so that they have quality tools to respond to bullying, without forgetting that the effectiveness of the programmes is also conditioned by the set of beliefs, perceptions and commitment, which is why initial awareness is of the utmost importance. At the student level, the development of intervention and bullying coping skills should be encouraged through pro-social competences, inhibition of prejudices and respect for differences.

It is also necessary to give priority support to groups that are especially vulnerable to harassment, whether because of their race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation. Promoting positive interactions, for example, with children with SEN could positively affect peer perception, as well as promote an atmosphere of acceptance, and thus prevent victimisation and bullying in the peer group (Turunen *et al.*, 2017).

Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform that incorporates changes and modifications in structures, approaches, content, teaching methods and strategies to overcome barriers with a vision that serves to provide all students with an equitable and participatory learning experience and the best environment. Progress is needed in overcoming prejudice, discrimination and peer violence. Promoting a change in attitudes in order to build an open, democratic and multicultural citizenship is one of the great challenges in order to advance a more inclusive society. To this end, educational and social policies must be developed based on the scientific evidence that has emerged in recent years regarding the challenges and difficulties of inclusion in children, adolescents and young people with SEN and/or disability (Rodríguez-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2019).

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*Bullying: a threat for inclusive education*



## PART 2

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### *Innovation in education*

*Education through art: an alternative way of learning*

CHAPTER 5

**“ENFOQUE”: EDUCATION THROUGH ART AS AN ALTERNATIVE  
WAY OF LEARNING IN INDIGENOUS SITES IN THE SOUTH OF  
COLOMBIA**

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**Key words:** Art, education through art, decolonial experience, research-creation, education-creation, indigenous culture.

**Abstract**

This chapter presents a pedagogical study with the aim to explore *education-through-art* as a method to teach children in indigenous contexts to reflect on the surroundings of their daily lives, using audio-visual art. It aims to launch a series of questions and alternative views to open up debate and address concerns related to educational policy. The study aims to re-conceptualize social, existential and epistemological structures, by highlighting and putting into just and equitable relationship the traditions, narratives and cultural meanings from indigenous communities, connecting them to various modes of thinking, acting and feeling. The study is carried out in the Indigenous Resguardo "Potrerito" of the Municipality of La Plata in the department of Huila Colombia and shows how the experience of education-through-art refers to the identity-related wish of the inhabitants to maintain connections with their spaces, memories and narratives. Emerged from the perspective of each inhabitant as a path to escape the rules of the dominant system, this methodology allows a self-construction of new spaces of autonomy and recognition.

**Introduction: education-creation through art**

In various contexts, *education through art* as an alternative pedagogical methodology can make it possible to visualize art as a language that models the senses and transmits meanings that no

other language - discursive or scientific - can communicate. Of all the arts, it is the visual arts, thanks to the use they make of raw materials to create images, which allow us to visualize who we are, where we are and what we feel. When educating through art, the subject can apprehend, capture, rework and adapt the artefact to his or her needs. Creative practice, when carried out or contemplated, is not only essential for the well-being of individuals, but also fundamental for the integration of collectivities.

This paper describes a pedagogical action developed by the name of "Enfoque". The objective of the study is to explore audiovisual media with children from the Resguardo as a strategy of recognition of the place in which they live. From there, we pose a series of questions, views, discussions and concerns about current educational policies that allow to re-conceptualize and re-found social and epistemic structures, which stage and equitably relate the logics, practices and diverse cultural ways of thinking, acting, feeling and living differently that have communities of ancestral origin.

For this project, education through art as a pedagogical proposal is expressed as a space of formation in which aesthetic values, techniques and the use of diverse materials are explored, which allow the subject to develop creative processes from the very understanding of the context. It is a question of constructing with the children new ways of learning through art; in this case photography and audiovisual techniques were used as didactic resources to explore the landscape, document the customs and traditions, record the daily life of the inhabitants of the shelter, but also to free expression, imagination and fantasy through the camera. Using the image was the objective to enhance the imagination and creativity of the children of the place. The results of "Enfoque" are concretized in a photographic series created by the children of the Resguardo where they let see the space that they inhabit with their landscapes, flowers, fruits, animals and other components that inhabit their place, recognition and valuation of the own thing.

This educational project aims at contributing to the strengthening of the concept of identity of the children belonging to the Potrerito Resguardo, from the sensitive exploration of the context where they live, through the experience of the collective senses and meanings that connect the subjects in an autonomous manner. "Enfoque" aims to venture into the world of knowledge and knowledge of the community, listen to their voices that have been silenced throughout history, and document their presence in the world via education through art.

The capture of the image of the children of the Resguardo, through photography, connects imaginaries from the local community towards the outside world. Reference to the local context, history and local wisdom (of the ancestors) allows children to give meaning to their photographic creations and reaffirm their sense of local identity, in the middle of an increasingly globalized world.

The methodology used in our study can be called *creation-research*. Here, the creation of an artefact that materializes from the local context is placed at the centre of the research. This approach to knowledge production, through art, does not necessarily start from a hypothesis or problem, as any object can elicit an idea, intuition, a social problem or desire to explore a certain subject matter.

### **Context: a rural village in South Colombia**

The study area is situated in the South of Colombia. The educational project “Enfoque” targets children from 6 to 15 years from the “Resguardo indígena de Potreritos” of the Nasa people located in the Municipality of La Plata, Department of Huila, Capital of the Southwest of Huila, from 2015 to the present. This place is 122 km from Neiva, the capital of the Department of Huila, 147 km from the city of Popayán-Cauca and 210 km from the town of San Agustín. The town Nasa Yuwe or “people of the water” is also known in a generalized form as the “Town Paez”, it originates in the Colombian Andes, in the high summits and the moors that characterize the mountain ranges where the community is settled. The members of the Potreritos reservation, like most Colombian indigenous communities, have transformed customs or adopted cultural elements from other cultures through various inter-ethnic contacts, the influence of the media, and overwhelming religious groups. This has had a negative impact on the processes of organization and cohesion of the community; however, within the community there is a struggle for the defense and recovery of the territory; for cultural values such as autonomy, language, traditional medicine, spirituality, and their natural, human and spiritual richness; aspects that contribute to the development of the sense of “one's own”, which according to Nasa thought is a great source of social investment.

The Nasa people have experienced a powerful migratory process, involving the development of adaptive strategies in the new environment that, in general, usually coexists with and is accompanied by a process of permanent acculturation. This process usually affects the ethnic-cultural identity of the new generations, which progressively adapt to the urban context and

cultural practices different from the original ones. However, in this process of adaptation, one's own and that of others, the sacred and the profane are fused, and two phenomena may occur: the rediscovery and appreciation of the original cultural manifestations of one's ethnic group may reappear with force, or one may undergo an intense process of acculturation and, consequently, tend to reject "one's own".



Figure 1: Landscape of the Resguardo Indígena Potrerito <sup>14</sup>

## **The approach**

For this study a participatory action research approach was used. The children of the community were taught to collect information for the creation through workshops on photography, sound landscape and audiovisual techniques. This resulted in a photographic series of images of the context and a video that gathers the experience of the children with the cameras. These results were not achieved quickly, given the complexity of the process proposed by the team of researchers; the procedures and methodologies were applied progressively in accordance with: first, the age of the participants, second, as a space that generates environments for creation and reflection, and third, due to the novelty of the artistic practices

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<sup>14</sup>Source. Bahamón, Jorge, Trabajo de Grado, Universidad Surcolombiana. Neiva 2015.

implemented, as is well known, photography and audiovisual media are not learning resources taken into account when working with children in community settings.

By developing research-creation processes, the education-creation action provided the participants with a multiplicity of paths, experiences, interactions and perceptions. The artistic process presented environments and experiences that activate the imagination of the creator and connects to the community at large. The reflectivity of the research team led to rethinking common practices. Here, it is important to note that when a child captures an image, he or she does not do so to make known his or her individuality but that of his or her community in accordance with its cultural logics; it is enough to look at the images to find in them what is visible to the community but invisible to the logics or rationalities of the communities.



Figure 2: Children in the village of Resguardo Potrerito<sup>15</sup>.

### **Art as a form of decolonial education**

From this perspective "the Enfoque project" means recognizing the existence of indigenous individuals, peoples or organizations, constituted as modern social actors (citizenship, being subject of rights capable of participating in political processes of the national society). However,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem. 2015

it is not a question of simply recognizing, tolerating or incorporating what is different within the established structures. Rather, it is to critically bring out from within difference in the colonial structures of power, knowledge, being, seeing and nature as a challenge, proposal, process and project; it is to reconceptualize and refound social, epistemic and existential structures that stage and equitably relate logics, practices and diverse cultural ways of thinking and living (Walsh, 2010). For this reason, educational processes in another space are not a given action but a process in permanent construction.

This world view challenges the hegemony and universality of capitalism, Eurocentric Modernity and Western civilizing logic, through different ways of being, thinking, acting, knowing, feeling, doing and living, in essence I felt-thinking, in relation to the other. It reveals a pedagogy based on the interrelation with nature, the territory and its community. In this sense, those other modes of existence inhabit the borders, the edges, limits or fissures of the modern/colonial order, and resist domestication, they begin to free themselves from eclipsed thoughts; coming from the unique horizon of Modernity, they advocate the construction of decolonial educational processes, undisciplined thoughts, epistemic disobedience; to give way to the construction of scenarios of translation and intercultural dialogues that provide "exchanges of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality that can legitimately claim some universality" (Quijano, 1992, 11-22).

The importance of education through intercultural art is emphasized as a basis to avoid the perennialization of scientific and technological advances, and to promote a dialogue, resignification and constant growth of the same (Ramírez, 2001). It is not enough to understand interculturality as interrelation or communication but as a space to empower, construct and make influence knowledge, thoughts, voices, practices and other social powers, as well as another way of thinking, acting in relation to and against modernity/coloniality (Walsh 2006: 35). In this sense, the "Enfoque" Project provides meaning and relevance to the knowledge, meanings and symbolic constructions found in the imaginary of the children's collective of the Potreritos Resguardo. The images captured by the children through the camera and video are constructions recreated from their own experiences, which seek to focus attention from the place where they are produced.

However, cultural domination has kept indigenous peoples subjected to an education illuminated by a blind light that makes invisible, dilutes and molds the power, knowledge, knowledge and desire that inhabits the unnamed subject. "Enfoque" as a proposal for education through art expresses a desire for self-recognition based on place, landscape, people, daily practices, customs and traditions; it also favors the development of more sensitive subjectivities capable of perceiving and narrating the surrounding world through the materialization of an



image, a sound, a word or a gesture. This presupposes thinking of more significant educational processes, practices and intervention strategies, which could include, among others, the revitalization, revaluation and application of ancestral knowledge; but not as something linked to a locality and temporality of the past, but as knowledge that has contemporaneity to read and critically understand the world, as well as to (re)learn and act in the present. (Walsh, 2010).

From this perspective, *Enfoque* is conceived as a political, social, ethical and epistemic project of knowledge and knowledge, which affirms the need to change not only relations, but also the structures, conditions and devices of power imposed by educational systems. In this regard, C. Walsh proposes critical interculturality as a pedagogical tool, which "continuously questions racialization, subalternization and inferiorization and their patterns of power, making visible different ways of being, living and knowing, and seeks to develop and create understandings and conditions that not only articulate and dialogue differences within a framework of legitimacy, dignity, equality, equity and respect, but also - and at the same time - encourage the creation of "other" ways of thinking, being, being, learning, teaching, dreaming and living that cross borders" (Ibid.).

This means giving way to the ideological landscape that has been hidden behind the light that emanates from being; therefore, projects and ideals conceived from other places should support the establishment of a series of questions, viewpoints, discussions and concerns in the face of current educational policies that allow re-conceptualizing and refounding social structures, epistemic and existences that they put on stage, and in equitable relation logics, practices and diverse cultural ways of thinking, acting, feeling and living differently. But what is the role of education through art in the construction of inclusion scenarios? "*Enfoque*", far from becoming an exclusive proposal from the other side, is a project seen as a decolonial option, built from the borders, in spaces of confluences, zones of contact and interaction and dialogue, an other space, a space between borders that allows the circulation of knowledge in the middle of interstices, in search of a "mutual creative fertilization".

However, the cultures dominated by trying to objectify their own images, symbols and subjective experiences autonomously through different media feel that they are diluted by the hierarchy marked by conceptual universalisms. In this regard, Aníbal Quijano (1999) affirms that without this freedom of objectivation no cultural experience can develop (Quijano, 1999, 99), which means that as long as the historical egolatriy of European culture and modern reason exist, together with national replicants, artistic practices generated from other cultures will continue to be a pure object meaning as marginalized poetics.

Despite these difficulties, in the images and sound environments captured by the children of the Potreritos Indigenous Reserve, the representations of daily life are expressed and re-created from the combination of the child's curiosity for the world, which filters through the senses and the original forms settled in the collective memory. And it is in this process where the world of life plays an essential role in finding pluralization, problematization and challenges to the notions of totalitarian, unique and universal thought and knowledge that have customarily dominated educational processes in the Colombian context.

Faced with the universalist myth of knowledge, and the homogeneity observed in educational processes and practices in Colombian education, perhaps the decolonial option would be a possibility to make visible those knowledge, knowledge and visual imaginaries produced on the edges, or on the other shores, which have so far been biased, excluded and denied by the matrix of colonial thought.

In this context, the educational practices for groups that have their own culture, language, traditions, and their own and autochthonous privileges, it is through education through art - assumed as a necessary articulation with decoloniality - that should point to the rupture of the bonds of dependence; effected through the dismantling of the patterns of power, knowledge, knowledge and seeing, on which the school conditions of boys and girls that live in the different places of the Colombian landscape have been instituted. Faced with this, the purpose is to give way to the multiplicity of experiences that configure the processes of identity; these, not seen as static processes but as a "liquid identity, flexible and in process of continuous change".

## **Final Reflections**

Education and decoloniality constitute a link that favours the construction of a broad sense of pertinence of pedagogical knowledge, which implies the return to the ethical formation of the human, the cosmic, the vital, the ancestral; understood as comprehensive spheres of the educational processes of this new century. In this direction, it is important to think about redefining curricula that are within a broader and more innovative conception of culture; together with the different and global changing conditions of the world that new ways of learning need.

In this lies the importance of formulating projects such as "Enfoque", since it starts from the context in which the participating subjects live in order to get rid of the theories of the image constructed by the limits of Modernity and open up to an "aesthetic-other", of "other visual cultures", of "technologies of the image-other", and discover in practice with other objects of representation (photography and video) the viso-aesthetic-expressive experience in order to

lead to much more significant and transformative learning. In this way the acts of seeing are articulated with the framework of cultural practices to provide pre-eminence and significance to the knowledge, contents, images and symbols that identify the social group. Therefore, in order for the preceding ideas to be valid, a cultural pedagogy is required that leads people "towards a higher form of culture and conception" (Gramsci, 1975,11), as Gramsci stated. Also "Enfoque" as a research-creation project shortens distances between places, shares creative powers, and provokes scenarios to recognize different ways and places of seeing in order to find inter-epistemic alternatives between differential visual cultures.

In this regard, it is not a question of reinforcing the ethno-centric discourse but, on the contrary, of indicating that both communities and subjects pass through diverse moments of transformation due to extensive processes of migration and modernization. These processes, instead of being antagonistic with the identity of the original peoples, can be considered as part of it, if identity is seen as a process that is carried out through a set of multiple experiences and not as an essence given by nature. The incorporation of Western cultural elements can be considered part of the cultural processes in which cultures change through contact and interrelation with other cultures.

Faced with these other ways of seeing and being in the world, what would be the role of the teacher to make these other ways of being visible and enunciatable? In order to resolve this question, it is important that educators, in addition to learning to recognize the importance of the diversity that exists in our country, explore educational practices that encourage peoples themselves to cultural preservation, to the development of critical, reflective, liberating, creative thinking, and, furthermore, to develop as ethical human beings in a democratic, free, and just world.

Under this approach, Paulo Freire's creative and liberating pedagogy stands out, insisting on the importance and meaning of stimulating creativity in children for the exploration and appropriation of knowledge through processes of inquiry, experimentation and research (Vizcaya, 2010, 94). But what is the role of Education for Art in this new scenario? How to build bridges of meaning for the construction of new paths for the development of creative critical thinking? How to provide the appropriate tools so that these journeys, full of encounters, misunderstandings, interstices, interstices, converge in true educational experiences?

To what extent is the education system prepared to offer the conditions that enable the effective expression of children in the context of diversity, on a plane of equality, respect and equity? The ideal of a liberating and creative educational experience, through education through art, is

that both students and educators coexist together in harmony, with unfinished knowledge, with constant dialogue, open to the search for truth, to scientific curiosity, to meaningful learning, to the cultivation of social and ethical values, virtues and qualities indispensable for a free and democratic society.

In this regard, Freire expresses that education cannot and must not be a context that inhibits the search for, the capacity to think and create, to argue, to ask, to criticize, to doubt, to go beyond pre-established schemes. For this reason, teachers should not cling to a single model of thought, since they run the risk of getting lost in the narrowness of sectarian thought, which is not very creative and innovative. Therefore, when using photography as a didactic resource with children from the Potreritos indigenous reserve, it is possible to overcome the restrictive conception of the curriculum (centered on the specification of a plan of competencies, areas, contents, etc.) to define it from the set of experiences (endogenous and exogenous) that constitute the experiences of the children of the community; which means building a curriculum that helps to represent the cultural realities of the context, and to favor in practice that children can give meaning to their daily life experiences based on the different practices contained in Education through Art.

From this perspective, the relationship between education through art and decoloniality requires reflection on a pedagogy that narrows the links between art and knowledge through "politically conscious aesthetic experimentation, which links with production, the exchange of shared knowledge within the sphere of art, visual culture, participatory democracy, education and everyday life. Education for Art conceived as a critical and creative pedagogical proposal provides a complex set of references that provide knowledge, empathic understandings, creative dispositions, skills that are in tune with how communities approach problem solving, how they address and work with others, and how they critically imagine other opportunities.

But why use photography and audiovisual media as instruments for the construction of a proposal for education through decolonial art? Thinking of photography and video as tools that trigger critical reflections that lead to a decolonial turn of the gaze and, with it, of the visual representation as part of another memory, contributes to bringing into play a significant amount of elements that, finally, determine the gazes of those who portray, portray and portray. Re-thinking the image as a possibility to generate senses from the register of images is important for the community, as long as the image that has been produced incites the gaze that goes through it to ask, in addition to the what, the how and, above all, the why and for what. This translates into an implicit reflection on the sensitive and its distribution, as well as on the potential of sensitive, artistic processes to generate transformation and arrangements from the places of enunciation.

From this perspective, the asymmetry of the existing power relations makes relevant methodologies that imply re-construction, "to unlearn in order to re-learn our teachers, and our interactions, and our didactics, and our academies. This is the decolonizing task of pedagogy in the everyday setting, which happens not in the spectacularity of great changes, but from the epistemic turn attempted in the particular sphere of each social actor of education as a bet of life, dignity and responsibility with the present generations and their immediate future". In this sense, education through art is a pedagogical proposal that, in addition to being innovative, transcends the traditional scenarios of education in order to re-elaborate them.

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CHAPTER 6

**BIMODALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ARGENTINA:  
ACHIEVING INCLUSION WITH QUALITY**

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**Key words:** Higher Education, inclusion, democratization, bimodal education.

**Abstract**

In this chapter the model of bimodal education is analyzed, as a process of institutionalized innovation in Higher Education. This is set against new institutional policies to stimulate inclusion, as formulated at the universities of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. The study consists of a critical analysis of pedagogical conventions and the innovative potential of bimodality. The practices surrounding the implementation of bimodality are analyzed against the university's democratization processes. Despite the preliminary nature of this study, we believe that bimodality demonstrates a strong potential to ensure quality teaching and learning in a collaborative environment, favorable for learning, student retention, and graduation success rates.

**Introduction**

Bimodality is one of the educational models proposed at Argentine public universities as a response to the challenges of massification of education. "Bimodality" can be understood as teaching and learning in a combination of classroom education and virtual learning. The new focus on bimodality raises questions about its potential to ensure quality teaching in a collaborative environment, student retention and graduation success rates. The present research attempts to contribute to a better understanding of this topic. Against the background

of policies towards inclusive education, we analyze the process of implementation of bimodality and its potential impact on the educational process, focusing on the process of institutionalization.

The present research is part of a project named: "New Scenarios and Demands for Inclusive Institutional Policies in the Universities of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area", which has been carried out over the last five years by a group of investigators from the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Education, Culture and Society (CEIECS) at the School of Humanities of the National University of San Martín, Argentina. In this line of research, several projects have been carried out using qualitative methods and research design, with the objective of investigating relevance and effectiveness of inclusive institutional policies in different domains of university life. We focus on the process of institutionalization of bimodality in a degree course of the School of Humanities of the National University of San Martín.

Special attention is given to critical analysis of pedagogical conventions and to innovative aspects of bimodality in improving teaching and learning. In Argentina, this process was expanded in the university system in order to fulfill the objective of inclusion. Even so, there are few studies that account for the institutionalization and incidence of such proposals in academic spaces.

Methodologically and in line with the previous studies, two different registers are used for the construction of empirical evidence: (i) documentary analysis of secondary sources; (ii) in-depth interviews with authorities, students and teachers to identify the assumptions and practices that underlie the bimodal teaching model in relation to the university's democratization processes. In this chapter, the ongoing study results obtained through interviews (ii) are presented.

## **Higher Education Scenarios in Argentina: Challenges and Tensions**

Higher Education in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America, has been characterized in the past decades by a growing massification. In many countries, for example in Brazil, privatization of education has led to increased inequality and diversification of educational trajectories.

In Argentina, Law No. 24,521 of 1995 on Higher Education (LES) established the right to unrestricted admission and free of charge. In 2015, Law No. 27,204, Law for the Effective Implementation of State Responsibility at the Higher Education Level, amending the LES, was



passed. It declares university education as a "public good" and a "personal and social human right". The Argentine university system recognizes equality and gratuity, however, the perspective of higher education as an object of study, through the analysis of "free and unrestricted" admission, shows that in most of the public universities these conditions do not guarantee high rates of student retention and graduation success. On the contrary, it is accompanied by a very low graduation rate; access alone is not sufficient to ensure inclusion in Higher Education (Cambours de Donini and Gorostiaga 2016).

Today there are "second generation demands" that require specific policies and mechanisms to safeguard equity and equality during the study career. These demands must be evaluated against educational policies in terms of student access, retention, and graduation success rates.

Globally it is pointed out that the effective democratization of Higher Education depends, to a large extent, on policies and strategies capable of improving the admission and retention rates of students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds.

Concerns about dropout rates from tertiary and university studies have given rise to research and studies that have a variety of perspectives and foci of interest, recognizing that this is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon associated with diverse factors, both exogenous (profile of the entrant, previous school career, family and social context, cultural capital) and endogenous (institutional policies, programs and strategies). The pioneering studies of Vincent Tinto (1975) focused on students and explained student dropout as the result of lack of integration into an institution with norms, rules, and values that were alien and sometimes hostile to them.

From this first perspective, individual responsibility for integration was emphasized, and persistence was achieved by those students who accepted the norms and values of the institution and were positively related to teachers and peers due to a strong motivation to pursue tertiary or university studies and graduate.

Theoretical perspectives have broadened the gaze to other factors associated with persistence and graduation success, moving from the focus on the student to the institution and to the specific policies and programs to retain students and support their academic performance, graduation, and subsequent insertion into professional life. Without ignoring individual responsibility in this process, institutional responsibility is accentuated. Tinto himself broadens his perspective in his publications since 2012 where he shows a transfer from theory to action. That is, he affirms that it is necessary to rethink and reevaluate the institutional action that

should value diversity and promote a synergy between different initiatives. Policies should be comprehensive and systemic and meet the academic needs of "non-traditional" students, including scholarships, student welfare and participation.

The involvement of all actors: students, teachers and administrators in these policies is fundamental, as is the sense of belonging to the institution that is created through participation (Tinto, 2017). Another line of studies has shifted the focus within the classroom in terms of interactions with teachers and among peers, and different modes of access to knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge, similarities and differences have been assessed in relation to professional fields and implications for retention and graduation (Pogré *et al.*, 2018).

A new focus on the virtual classroom and bimodality raises questions about its potential to ensure quality teaching in a collaborative environment that fosters learning, permanence and study success. This chapter attempts to contribute to this area of vacancy in the set of inclusive institutional policies.

## **Designing innovative and inclusive training**

The incorporation of virtual environments in university teaching requires from the teacher not only proper instrumental management of technological resources, but also an epistemological and pedagogical rethinking of the process of teaching and learning as an active and situated process of access and construction of knowledge. The students develop a personal understanding of a conceptual phenomenon or network, not as a "tabula rasa", but from previous notions and intuitions, biography, cultural capital in interaction with practical and theoretical questions. This challenges and allows the student to access new knowledge, new worlds and experiences. The essence of teaching and learning, in the classroom and in the virtual classroom, is to create enabling conditions for understanding, for meaningful interaction and for communicative action that produces knowledge.

In the process of democratization of the university institution, the transition of a selective policy towards an inclusive policy, crosses the pedagogical dimension and strongly questions the traditional modes of teaching. Today, in the "new youth" classrooms, this can coexist with different starting points from the cognitive and the emotional, with different life and schooling trajectories, with different cultural matrices regarding shared beliefs and values. This requires university teachers to be more flexible, cognitive and affective open to others, and to search for richer and more plural forms of pedagogical work. Bimodality is a model that does not replace

presentiality, but potentially combines the classroom education in convergence with the virtual, based on coordinating and articulating the advantages of both. At the same time, it is seen as a strategy to respond to social demands facilitating processes of greater inclusion.

Let's consider the great influence of multimedia culture on students, the tensions in teaching and learning between reason and subjectivity and the role of the university as the facilitator of intellectual, practical, emotional and ethical dimensions. Establishing new relationships with students and with knowledge so as to promote more significant educational experiences, requires from the university a set of conceptual and technological tools. It is therefore important to understand diverse learning styles and recognize competencies, beliefs and values with which students arrive at the university. Changing the view from deficit to positive allows the construction of connections based on esteem and recognition of the other (Cambours de Donini, 2008). In addition, within the framework of continuous education and the changing demands of the productive world, the university must guarantee an offer that allows permanent professional updating and reconversion. Possibly, no university degree in the future will have lasting legitimacy, but each professional will have to renew the validity of his or her diploma after a certain period of time. The acceleration of these changes means that postgraduate students are now in the majority in many universities around the world.

This requires university teaching to be constantly updated and to investigate the learning processes and the most appropriate devices for teaching. The increasing prolongation of people's life expectancy, together with the exponential growth of knowledge that requires continuing to learn and unlearn concepts and procedures, means that more and more older adults are incorporated into university classrooms, returning to university with different motivations and objectives and, in some cases, entering for the first time to fulfil a postponed dream. Bimodality holds promise in responding to this demand as an effective and pertinent alternative.

### **Virtual and bimodal education in Argentinian public universities**

Among the diversity of institutional policies developed by Argentine public universities in order to respond to the problems of massification of education, are the so-called bimodal proposals, also called semi-presential. As noted above, "bimodality" is understood as a set of concepts and actions at the institutional level, and teaching experiences that use classroom in combination with virtual pedagogical resources.

In this sense, the articulation of modalities, face-to-face and virtual, has been expanding at the local level, but also at the regional level. This is the case with the Open University of Brazil (UAB) established by the Ministry of Education in 2005. It is a system integrated by public universities and aims to reach those sectors of the population with difficulties in accessing Higher Education (Bielschowsky, 2016).

Original experiences can also be found at the Centro Universitario de los Valles at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. In this case, the socio-demographic characteristics of the population associated with territorial distances and deficient public transport, hindered the permanence of the students at the University. In this case, it was decided to offer undergraduate and postgraduate tracks in a semi-presential way, considering half of the hourly load of each subject in presential mode and the other half in virtual form. Even though it provided answers to a social need, this institutionalization process was not exempt from difficulties in its implementation, which are very important to consider when implementing it (Gómez Barajas, Rios Ariza, and Pasillas Banda, 2016).

In Argentina, one of the pioneering experiences was developed by the National University of Quilmes in 1999, with the inauguration of its educational platform and the offer of virtual study tracks. This process expanded significantly and became more complex with the virtual and bimodal course proposals in a diversity of really significant undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The National Universities of La Plata, Rio Cuarto, La Pampa, El Litoral, Patagonia Austral, del Centro and Comahue, among others, have also adopted bimodality as a reference for the teaching of subjects in some cases, undergraduate and graduate tracks in others. In each of these cases a wide range of experiences is observed and the proposals are adjusted to institutional particularities, but always under the common objective of democratization in access to Higher Education.

By the year 2000, the Argentine public university system offered 16 degree courses, and by 2015 the offer had increased to 95 degree courses. Among the public universities with the greatest offer of degree courses are the National University of Quilmes (UNQ), the National University of Tres de Febrero and the National University of Litoral (UNL) (Fernández Lamarra *et al.*, 2018).

In the case of the universities in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area one can observe an offer of virtual education courses in which face-to-face and virtual modalities are combined, in an

original way and according to the resources and possibilities of each institution, with the purpose of fulfilling the objective of inclusion. As mentioned, the National University of Quilmes and the National University of Tres de Febrero concentrate the largest offer in undergraduate and graduate study tracks. The National University of Quilmes has a wide range of undergraduate degrees and programs, mostly of an exclusively virtual character. Likewise, the postgraduate offering incorporates a variety of diplomas, specializations and master's degrees in the different areas of knowledge. Similarly, the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero also offers a varied range of undergraduate, technical and postgraduate tracks, including specializations and master's degrees in a variety of subjects. Both institutions contain the greatest diversity in areas of knowledge and degrees.

On the other hand, one can find institutions that are still in a stage of moderate expansion, as is the case of the National University of Lanús, which has a technical degree, a bachelor's degree curriculum, specializations and a master's degree in its postgraduate area. In all cases, the offer is semi-presential. Another case is that of the National University of Avellaneda, which, although recently created, has undergraduate study tracks, curricula and technical modality programs exclusively at a distance. Further, the National University of San Martín has a Virtual Education area, whose offer is made up of techniques, cycles of curricular complementation and specializations. But it also has complementary virtual classrooms for all university tracks, thus combining exclusively virtual training cycles with digital accompaniment strategies in face-to-face study tracks.

### **Bimodality in teaching and learning: stakeholders' perspectives**

The School of Humanities of the National University of San Martín began teaching of a degree course, Psychopedagogy, in bimodality. It is particular in that the hourly load is distributed equitably between face-to-face and virtual classes, alternating fortnightly.

The implementation of a bimodal educational system implies that the students who are accustomed to presential study strategies, learn to regulate their time and develop other knowledge strategies, which implies the appropriation of a new pedagogical culture. But teaching teams are also undergoing this cultural change.

The authorities responsible for the bimodality proposition explain that it constitutes a response to the massiveness of a study track with a very high number of enrolments, and in which year after year the difficulties in the modality of access and permanence were repeated, mainly

during the first year of the track. On the other hand, at the institutional level, there is an evaluation to expand the semi-presential curricular proposals towards the postgraduate offering.

It is important to point out that the implementation of this bimodal education proposal involves, in addition to teachers and students, other actors who help configure and redefine the curriculum from a pedagogical project designed for face-to-face classes to another that also incorporates virtual classes. Didactic staff is in charge of this "translation" in the contents and activities of bimodal education, working intensively with the teaching teams.

Another role that is incorporated into the coaching of students is the tutor, who articulate and guide them in the face of the difficulties that students may face in any aspect of the bimodal proposition, that is to say, in both face-to-face and virtual classes, as well as in matters of a particular or personal nature.

Undoubtedly, these re-definitions of the conceptual and organizational aspects have a direct impact on the work of the teaching teams of the chairs that participate in the proposal. The tensions around the face-to-face and the virtual manifested themselves repeatedly in the different interviews we conducted with a group of teachers, being able to identify those who in some cases considered that they should have had greater training in the virtual. On the other hand, there are also those who point out that the contents of their subject are not easily adaptable for virtual classes and in this sense, they find it very difficult to make programmatic changes. Beyond the particular issues, it is evident that the training and preparation of teaching teams is one of the dimensions that should be considered as a priority in the implementation of bimodal education.

The analysis proposed by Imperatore (2017, pp. 34), regarding the virtual classroom and variations in teaching practice, is very interesting in this sense and linked to the above. Taking as reference the personal and material setting, the didactic proposal and the use of resources in the virtual classroom, the author considers that it is possible to establish different types of communicational didactic configurations: a) predominantly disciplinary: virtual classrooms with a predominance of disciplinary contents over communicational strategies; b) predominantly communicational: the communicational strategies are imposed on the specific didactic strategies of the discipline; c) integrated communicational didactic: these are virtual classrooms with a high balance between both types of strategies; and finally, d) strategic zero

degree: configuration in which neither didactic nor communicational strategies adapted to the virtual were deployed.

In this stage of our study, we have considered the characteristics of the dynamics between the presential and the virtual around the bimodal didactic proposition and the organization of the available resources. Some dimensions linked to teaching that must be analyzed from new pedagogical and didactic perspectives are: a) communicational aspects, b) activities and tasks, c) evaluation.

**Communicational aspects:** the presence of virtuality in teaching reconfigures the communicational modality typical of face-to-face classes. In face-to-face teaching, the use of the word is mostly at the disposal of teachers, based on certain implicit agreements regarding the development of teaching. On the contrary, virtual classes demand and require, almost as a *sine qua non* condition for their functioning, the active participation of the students. The availability of the platform on a permanent basis, the presence of teachers and tutors guiding and answering queries, seems to provide these teaching proposals with a markedly interactive dynamic. It is very interesting that this characteristic, in turn, has an impact on the participation of students in attendance.

**Activities and tasks:** the didactic offerings produced by the teaching teams are available in the space of the virtual classes. On the one hand, it must contain diverse sources of information, of which the most important and structuring is the presence of the videos in charge of the teachers of the lectures, in which the theoretical development of the content is presented; on the other hand, on the platform there are available both virtual activities, as well as preparatory activities for the face-to-face classes that would be located in the dimension of knowledge practice. In all cases, the multiple possibilities offered by multimedia materials are observed.

**Evaluation processes** are differentiated from traditional evaluation based on the multiple possibilities offered by the resources provided in the platform. The didactic proposals contemplate evaluations that combine traditional aspects such as partial and/or practical works in which the development of expositive-explicative texts is promoted, as well as other evaluative activities in the virtual classroom that fundamentally aim at the interpretation and conceptual construction from the interactive participation.

## **The students' perspective**

Regarding the students' perspective, some dimensions can be identified that include previous experiences in virtual courses, the obstacles and facilitators they perceive in the proposal, the didactic design of activities and forms of evaluation, study times, and the devices used for virtual classes, among others.

A first approximation based on assessment of the first cohort of students indicates that the groups between 18 and 24 years have not had previous experience in virtual education. On the contrary, it is the first contact with this type of experience. The majority of students perceive bimodal education as providing many study facilitating aspects. Among them, they mention more time available for the study. The group of students interviewed agrees that they have more free time for the study since attendance is fortnightly. They value very fundamentally the permanent contact with tutors and teachers in virtual mode; the fortnightly face-to-face classes and having the "real teacher"; the accessibility to the theoretical classes by means of a platform at any time of the day and in their homes, etc.

Other advantages perceived by students include lower expenditure on travel expenses: in all cases, the group of students interviewed manifests as something positive the reduction in expenditure on travel expenses and in the consumption of groceries implied by mobility to the university. Regarding the texts, although they are available in digital form on the platform, there are those who choose to buy photocopies despite the expense involved, as it is difficult for them to read online.

Furthermore, the variety of didactic and multimedia resources offered by the platform are mentioned by the students as very favourable features of the bimodal educational approach. In this sense, the experience of combining videos, reading guides, forums, glossaries and even, in some cases, evaluations stands out as novel. On the other hand, they point out as very positive the articulation between face-to-face and virtual activities.

In the group interviewed by us, most of the observations regarding the proposal are positive. However, there are those who mentioned the issue of internet accessibility as a possible obstacle. There are students who have a very reduced service in their homes, and make use of the 4G cellular network with some difficulties. Also, the presential classrooms in the institution do not have Internet due to connectivity problems, which constitutes a limitation in the deployment of digital resources in the classes.



An interesting aspects is the perceived level of difficulty. The majority of students interviewed show a greater inclination toward bimodality, since the schedule of activities to be carried out are obligatorily of a weekly nature. Although the experience is in full development, and any consideration is very preliminary, it could be anticipated that the reception is favorable on the part of the students.

## **Final reflections**

Our research is based on the hypothesis that processes of democratization of universities are channeled through institutional policies that do not manage to fully materialize, due to the complexity and difficulty of producing changes in traditionally selective structures and mentalities. An effective way to facilitate these processes is to systematically make visible assumptions, achievements and innovations in key areas of university life.

The focus on the institutionalization of bimodal teaching and learning and the possibility of monitoring its development from the stakeholders' perspectives, particularly the students', is currently under-researched with respect to student retention and learning results of university students.

Likewise, the inquiry into some inclusive institutional policies shows the need to continue looking for ways to strengthen their synergy, articulation and effectiveness in order to ensure the right to higher education.

The first advances of an ongoing study on the impact of bimodality on student retention and learning are linked to objectives to promote innovation, participation of the educational community and relevance of teacher training, strengthening their professional capacities and their commitment to social justice.

The diagnoses, reflections, proposals, and exchange of experiences, as well as the studies and publications that may be generated are part of a broader political-educational project that tends to recover the democratizing and emancipatory potentialities of Higher Education in the face of new offensives of neoliberalism.

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CHAPTER 7

**E-LEARNING IN EDUCATION: COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
THREE UNIVERSITIES IN PARAGUAY AND BOLIVIA**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter results from a collaboration of three universities, two Paraguayan and one Bolivian. Common to the institutions is that they teach postgraduate courses in education, whereby they have incorporated e-learning as a good teaching practice in the development of their teaching-learning processes. The three institutions apply distance education and blended learning strategies as innovation in their educational practices. The experiences with this are discussed; it is concluded that the orientation of good innovative practice complies with the development of defined capacities and the achievement of competencies.

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses postgraduate courses developed in two universities in Paraguay (UAA and UCSA) and one in Bolivia (ULB), analyzing the innovations that have been incorporated in the development of their teaching processes, particularly e-learning as a good practice (Montané, 2018; Caballero & Báez, 2018a; To-Inn, 2018a, 2018b), focusing on the innovations that teachers apply in the classroom in their pedagogical practice. We do so in a comparative way, considering whether they go beyond the use of instrumental tools to implement distance education, and whether they improve both the inclusion-retention-degree of students while at

the same time providing quality of learning for the achievement of new skills. Approaching them as processes and strategies that rest on the desire that the spaces of formation in higher education be constituted in spheres of generation of critical knowledge through a series of abilities beyond the digital, as forms of collaborative construction and networks.

The impact that technological changes are producing in our society also affects the field of higher education. New tools for communication and for access to information, phenomena such as open content, MOOCs, virtual reality, etc., together with changes in the profiles and needs of students, force us to reflect on the best way for our institutions to face the new challenges, and envision the changes needed to address these challenges.

The three institutions mentioned above have set out to analyse together what the current situation of our universities is, what challenges we face and how best to tackle them. Incidentally, these three universities are of a private nature, with the characteristics that the virtual modality is used in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses as a tool to support the teaching process.

## **Regulatory background for postgraduate courses in Paraguay**

In the case of universities in Paraguay, first of all, it is the National Constitution that regulates the right to education and its purposes, through Law No. 4995/13 that incorporates higher education as part of the national education system, and defines the types of institutions that integrate it, the regulations, the mechanisms that ensure the quality and relevance of the services they provide, including research. The State recognizes and guarantees the right to higher education as a fundamental human right for all those who want and are in the legal and academic conditions to pursue it. Law No. 4995/13 also establishes the objective of postgraduate education, the types of postgraduate education, its purpose and the requirements for doctorates, master's degrees, specializations and trainings.

On the other hand, article 7 provides that the National Council for Higher Education (CONES) shall be the body responsible for proposing and coordinating policies and programmes for higher education. Resolution No. 700/16 approves the regulation that rules the processes of approval and habilitation of postgraduate programs, which, being governed by a State agency, must be complied with by all universities that issue postgraduate degrees. According to the postgraduate regulations, there are two program orientations: academic and research and professional. The first promotes scientific training, methodology, circulation and transfer of

scientific knowledge, facilitating the exercise of teaching and research. The latter is aimed at strengthening theoretical and practical skills in a particular profession in an area or discipline. It also defines the minimum hourly load that must be 100 hours for training courses, 360 hours for specialization, 700 hours for the master and 1200 hours for the doctorate. Specifically, Distance and Blended Higher Education is regulated by Resolution CONES No. 63/2016.

For its part, the National Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (ANEAES), created by National Law No. 2072/03, is responsible for systematically verifying and certifying the quality of higher education institutions, their affiliates, programs and the study tracks they offer, as well as submitting the report to CONES for treatment.

Another very important space regarding innovation, not dependent on the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC), is the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT) which, through the Paraguayan Program for the Development of Science and Technology Pro-Science has a significant regulatory role since it proposes "to promote activities aimed at increasing the supply of high-level qualified personnel for science and technology" with a view to "increase national capacity for the generation of knowledge and to strengthen the transfer of R&D results to the private and public sectors". The objective is to select Academic Postgraduate Programs that have as their main purpose the training of teacher-researchers with skills to design, manage and develop R&D&I projects and carry out teaching aimed at training human resources at the highest level. Institutions of Higher Education (HEIs), whether public or private, profit or non-profit, legally constituted according to the current regulatory framework of Higher Education in Paraguay and qualified to develop and issue postgraduate degrees in the country, are eligible to participate in the "Teacher Training Program - Researchers".

As regards distance education in particular, the use of ICTs and the development of the e-learning modality, the Ministry of Education and Science, since the beginning of the Educational Reform (1992), has proposed different initiatives to incorporate them into the pedagogical practice of the Educational System. First (1997), through the Program to Improve the Quality of Secondary Education MESES (Availability of ICTs in Educational Institutions of the Official Basic and Secondary School Sector; Diagnóstico; MEC, 2011a), where it proposed to promote teacher training for the pedagogical use of the Internet and to develop collaborative telematics projects that would allow students to integrate into the global village. Later, in 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science designed and attempted to carry out and implement an ICT Policy for Education (MEC, 2010). To this end, the National Education Plan 2024 has

defined the role of ICT as a medium that supports didactic training, which is one of the pedagogical axes of education policy, and as a tool for the management of the system, as well as a pedagogical resource for learning (MEC, 2011b; 2014; 2015).

## **Regulatory background for postgraduate courses in Colombia**

In the case of the Plurinational State of Bolivia's education system, it is based on the bases and aims of Bolivian education as described in Act No. 70 of 20 December 2010, "Avelino Siñani - Elizardo Pérez" (Act No. 70, 2010). The regulations required by the body responsible for education, the Ministry of Education of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, reside in a general framework, under the General and Specific Regulations for Private Universities approved by Supreme Decree 1433 of 12 December 2012 (Supreme Decree No. 1433, 2012).

These regulations are in turn made up of 10 specific regulations: Specific regulations for the opening and operation of private universities, their academic headquarters and study tracks; regulations for the monitoring and evaluation of private universities; methodological guide for the design and evaluation of academic curricula; specific infrastructure regulations; semi-presential, distance and virtual modes; specific postgraduate regulations for private universities in Bolivia; specific regulations for the validation of subjects; specific regulations for undergraduate study scholarships; specific regulations on qualifications for undergraduate defences and processing of professional qualifications; specific regulations on sanctions for private universities. A second chapter refers to the opening of postgraduate programs among which are the requirements for them, while the remaining four following chapters address specific aspects regarding each of the levels of training such as: Diploma, Specialty, Master and Doctorate.

We consider that the specific regulatory framework for postgraduate studies is very fragile since it has concentrated on regulating the degree system. This means that postgraduate courses are regulated along the same lines as undergraduate courses, although in several situations they do not correspond to the specific reality at hand, considering that they fulfill a different purpose and scope of training.

The Curricular Structure of the Plurinational Educational System, like the Educational System, is based on the aforementioned Law. It defines ideological, sociological, epistemological, and psychopedagogical foundations as the pillars for the curricular proposal and structure under which curricular plans and structures are outlined. In addition, it follows the General and

Specific Regulations for Private Universities where it establishes that the University may assume one of the Curricular Approaches described in the Regulations, namely: Curriculum by Competencies; Curriculum by Objectives; Curriculum by Holistic Objectives; Curriculum by Capacity Development; other Curricular Approaches. For all of the above, Loyola University of Bolivia is governed by these laws and regulations.

### **Postgraduates by levels, diversity and numbers: Paraguay**

In relation to the different levels, disciplinary fields and numbers of postgraduate courses offered in the country, based on ANEAES documentation, Table 1 shows that by 2016 there were a total of 882 programs. Although in principle all existing programmes are of interest, particular attention is paid to those that are directly linked to teacher training or higher education. Of the total postgraduate offer, 61.1% correspond to the area of Social Sciences and Humanities, the great majority being in University Didactics or Higher Education Teaching Courses. From the area of Health Sciences a total of 253 programmes representing 28.7% of the mentioned offer, Natural Sciences with 5.3% of the programmes, and finally the area of Engineering with 88 programmes representing 4.9% of the total offer.

Table 1: Postgraduate education in Paraguay. Source: ANEAES (2016).

Level	Health Sciences	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities	Total
Upgrade	15	9	7	19	50
Training	13	3	9	83	108
Specialization	156	9	9	148	322
Master	49	21	19	207	296
Doctorate	20	1	3	82	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>882</b>

Within this universe of postgraduate offerings, in the case of the UAA, one has, independently of the disciplinary field as well as the level, as one of the transversal axes to develop the practical capacity in the use of new teaching-learning methodologies. This includes the development of evaluation instruments, process monitoring and tutorials, applying the tools or technological resources installed in the institution according to the subjects covered. In all cases, access to and/or training in the technological tools and resources provided by the university is a requirement, promoting and disseminating the adequate and intensive use of information technologies in their relationship with education, for the areas of: training and learning (e-Learning); business (e-Business); administration (e-Government); and Mobile Learning (M-Learning) (Caballero *et al.*, 2018; Knight, 2018; Knight and Baez, 2018).

Defined as the central transversal axis of the innovation and inclusion policy of the UAA, the development of classes/courses takes place through the virtual learning platform MOODLE, which provides resources and activities that allow teachers to design their courses integrating those resources with others available on the Internet. The e-learning study modality, as well as b-learning, have been implemented in the UAA for years as a creative pedagogical practice, multiplying space and learning possibilities. It constitutes a fundamental support for the formation of any person without the need to move from their home to the university, at the same time as being interactive and of great help for the teacher and students who also carry out their studies in face-to-face mode. This allows the articulation of two of the central values in the Mission and Vision of the house of studies -inclusion and innovation.

To the good applied practice of innovation with the installed capacity of technological resources, the undergraduate and graduate teaching staff, in the process of developing their own classes, are to add the use of projectors, digital blackboards, inverted classrooms, computer laboratories equipped with state-of-the-art hardware and software, WiFi throughout the building, virtual libraries, research activities, publications (two own journals), etc. In other words, it highlights a strategy and practice that does not neglect other simultaneous ones, sometimes interacting together, complementary, or autonomously. In all cases, resources and tools are available, functional, and a formal part of the practice of the entire academic community (Caballero, J. & Gaona F., K. & Martin G. M., 2018; Caballero, 2018; Caballero y Báez, 2018a; Caballero y Báez, 2018).

According to the Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies (UAA), for the two-year period of 2018-2019, the National Graduate offer reaches 11 programs, being three in Specialization in University Didactics; while the International Graduate offer has been 13, among them, five



Masters in Education, three Doctorates in Education, and a Post-doctorate in Management in Educational Innovation. Thus, the studies offered by the institution related to education are primarily for the tertiary level of teacher training, for teachers at the middle or university level. It is attempted to do so in an integral way: pedagogy, didactics, evaluation, planning, etc., through courses of Master's in Education Sciences, Doctorate in Education Sciences, and Specialization in University Didactics (Caballero, 2018).

According to Resolution No. 139, promulgated on May 2, 2019, the National Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (ANEAES) has convened for the first time HEIs with postgraduate programs to enroll in the process of evaluation and accreditation of postgraduate programs. In this context, the UAA presented 11 postgraduate programs as candidates for national accreditation: Doctorate in Educational Sciences, Master in Educational Sciences, Master in Accounting and Auditing, Master in Marketing and Commercial Management, Master in Business Management, Master in Business Administration, Master in Financial Administration and Management, Master in International Law, Master in Legal Sciences, Master in Computer Systems Management, Master in Child Neuropsychology.

In the postgraduate programs developed by UCSA, virtual spaces are used, witnessing an important change in the relationship between professor and student. Different programs have been implemented which have visualized the advantages of using these spaces in higher education through which students achieve some level of autonomy and independence in their own learning process. In the development of teaching practices, use is made of technological tools, including the use of the MOODLE platform, considered as a resource for processing, managing and sharing information in order to interact with students. The use of virtual education has allowed the teacher's performance to change to roles to which he or she was sometimes not accustomed, developing skills with information and communication technologies and putting into practice individualized learning activities, tasks that favor collaborative work and a problem-based learning methodology.

In the To-Inn Project in which the present universities collaborate, the Twin method (inspired by the EU Twinning) is used, whereby each partner institution is linked to another institution in the country. Relationships are created with other contexts and/or territories, both in the phases of design, data collection, detection of needs, as well as in application and dissemination. The associated institutions have participated in the application of a questionnaire with which data are collected regarding teacher training and the social situation of the student. It has also served in our case to bring teachers from the area of pedagogical

training to train our university teachers in areas of methodologies and evaluation of our degree programs.

In this way, relationships are created that multiply the results, dissemination and impact of the project (To-Inn, 2018a). In the case of UCSA, we have as an associated institution the National Institute of Higher Education Dr. Raúl Peña (INAES), which trains teachers for all levels and gives refresher courses. Currently, its educational work is very broad and diverse: it trains and specializes teachers for the initial, basic, middle and higher education levels. It does so also for the sectors of special education, literacy and adult education, technical education, industrial education and others; specialists in administration, educational evaluation, orientation, educational sciences and bilingual education. In the courses offered, the distance education tool is also applied as a resource for innovation applied in the learning process of students who are being trained as future teachers. The degree courses offered at the INAES are exclusively to train teachers, and courses are offered in Education Sciences, Early Education, Basic School Education, Mathematics Education, Artistic Education, Spanish Language and Literature Education, Social Sciences Education, Physics Education and Chemistry, among others. Postgraduate courses are offered in Didactics, Masters in Educational Management, and Masters in Educational Research.

In this way, the aim is to improve the quality of teacher training so that it responds to the new educational model that requires knowledge and use of information and communication technologies; and to train future teachers who will apply the technological tools in the development of their classes, both at the primary and secondary education levels. It also implies responding to a socio-cultural reality, since society demands increasingly better trained professionals in new technologies for their integration into the labor market.

### **Postgraduates by levels, diversity and numbers: Bolivia**

During 2012, the Ministry of Education of the Plurinational State of Bolivia published a University Guide, a document that gives an account of the list of study tracks, academic degrees awarded, duration of tracks, etc. The objective of this information was to systematically and continuously improve university higher education in Bolivia (Ministry of Education of the Plurinational State of Bolivia [MINEDU], 2012). A typology at the national level of universities is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of university at the national level in Bolivia.

Category	Number
Autonomous public universities	11
Special universities	3
Intercultural and indigenous Universities	3
Private universities	42
<b>Total number of Universities at national level</b>	<b>59</b>

Regarding the areas offered at the Postgraduate level by these Universities, the analysis carried out yields the following results at the national level (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Post-graduate studies in Bolivia at public universities. Source: MINEDU, 2012.

Level	Health Sciences	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities	Total
Bachelor	4	4	2	3	13
Specialized	5	4	5	6	20
Master	7	9	8	9	33
Doctorate	1	2	1	2	6
Post-doctoral					
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>83</b>

Table 4: Post-graduate studies in Bolivia at private universities. Source: MINEDU, 2012

Level	Health Sciences	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities	Total
Bachelor	2	1		12	0
Specialized					0
Master	1	1		4	6
Doctoral	12	11	10	17	50
Post-doctoral				2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>58</b>

Information and communication systems have opened up an enormous possibility; the electronic gap in education may become greater if institutions fail to advance in new technologies. It is not a simple task because in addition to the financial, technological and human resources, it requires capacity for experimentation, innovation and change, characteristics that are scarce in our university environment.

The analysis of the concept of change should be considered incomplete if the resistance generated by such processes in practice is not mentioned. The solidity of teaching bodies is a crucial variable; in the case of postgraduate studies, good tutoring and the involvement of students in research related to that of their tutors have been shown to be practices that favor learning and certification. Experiences of innovative structures are still scarce.

Designing courses, activities, materials, tutorials, forms of evaluation of students and teachers and understanding how the learning process develops are necessary steps to be taken. Distance education offers different spaces for learning and teaching because of the qualities it presents in relation to flexibility, autonomy, self-direction, independence. However, the challenge is in both senses: the student is taught a new way of learning and teachers a new way of teaching, since it is clearly based on the student (Peters, 2002).

The UAA has been innovative in the country in the implementation of virtual courses, firstly, only with subjects corresponding to several tracks, and later complete tracks in this modality. The final exams, despite being a virtual course, are face-to-face (Caballero, Gaona and Martin, 2018). The institution has now seven undergraduate degrees under this innovative e-learning modality. In order to encourage the use of the e-campus by all teachers, an indicator has been incorporated on the use of the e-campus to support the teaching and learning process by teachers, in order to calculate the annual teacher bonus.

Likewise, students can opt for some subjects to study at a distance. The student who is taking a face-to-face modality course can choose which subjects he or she wishes to take virtually in each semester. The directors of the UAA encourage teachers to use the educational platform (e-campus) as support for the learning process of students in presential mode, since it is very useful as a didactic support tool for their classes. The subjects that are developed virtually are appreciated by students, especially by the majority of the student population that works to pay for their studies. They make it possible to study subjects in virtual mode and increase retention

in order to pursue a study track, since it is not necessary to move several days from another city where they have their jobs in addition to attending university, saving time and money as well.

There are several strengths for the student and the teacher, such as the flexibility of time and space that one has, since from any place and space you can access the lessons and carry out the process of teaching and learning. It is a lot of commitment on the part of both the teacher and the student, since the student has the responsibility of taking charge of their studies to read and understand the lessons offered, and on the part of the teacher to be available and to cater for the need for clarification of doubts on the part of the student.

With good technological tools, with an excellent training and good predisposition on the part of the teacher, virtual classrooms become an excellent tool in the learning process. On the other hand, it has been detected as an important weakness that several teachers of the face-to-face modality do not use the platform, or do so in a very limited way, however, it is being achieved that each year a greater number of teachers use it.

At UCSA, a Student Observatory has been developed as one of the activities within the framework of the To-In Project. This web platform is a tool that allows the institution to link virtually through the page with its students, teachers, graduates and other members of the academic community interested in learning about the academic life of the institution. It is worth mentioning that at UCSA there are subjects that are taught virtually, although there are still no courses that are developed completely at a distance. Virtual education is a tool that is used rather as a support to the teaching process, but more and more teachers are joining to implement their subjects in the virtual modality.

## **Teacher digital competence as a good practice**

A first commitment in this sense has been the improvement of didactic-technological equipment, especially with regard to the development of digital teaching competence, articulating three components: instrumental skills; didactic-methodological skills; and cognitive skills. ICTs thus become tools and opportunities to promote and enhance them. Through this tool we can improve the cooperation networks between teachers and innovative students, the collaborative network between students - social environment of innovators, and the collaborative network between teachers - research environment, etc.

Therefore, in Paraguay, and especially in the aforementioned HEIs, the development of courses through the MOODLE or e-learning platform is being used as an innovative didactic tool that favors the teaching-learning conditions with didactic sequences towards innovation. The application and use of the tool is a developing reality, and although it lacks some aspects for its general and effective practice, it is considered extremely useful and is used by several teachers. For some time now, the use of an intranet has been incorporated, which is later replaced by the e-campus. The e-campus is designed on the MOODLE Platform, and by means of it, totally virtual study tracks can be provided, apart from being a very important support for both students and teachers of the face-to-face courses.

In Paraguay, the UAA has since long endeavored to take advantage of the innumerable current technologies incorporating their use in the teaching-learning process. Through the e-campus both students and teachers are in permanent communication. There is a News Forum that is used by the teacher to communicate any news about the development of the subject to their students, and the Help Forum that students use to comment on any doubts they have (Caballero y Báez, 2018a).

At UCSA, apart from using digital tools in postgraduate classrooms, it is also used in undergraduate courses. They facilitate the student's insertion into the learning process, because this resource allows them to approach the possibility of taking their subjects without the need to be present. It is special for those students who work, giving greater access to higher education. There are currently a considerable number of undergraduate students studying virtual subjects.

In Bolivia, the postgraduate academic programs of the Loyola University of Bolivia use interactive tools in the face-to-face classes giving the possibility of feedback between the facilitator and the students. The preparation of slides and supporting videos greatly favors the understanding of the topics that are addressed within the classrooms; each facilitator carefully prepares his or her class with all the resources that will be required to teach it. The implementation of the use of the electronic whiteboard made the practices carried out in the classroom more didactic and allowed the students to better understand cases and applications related to the area of specialization.

Likewise, the use of the MOODLE virtual platform used by the University called "Virtual Classroom", has become the database of all the subjects covered by the postgraduate programs, since each facilitator uploads all the materials and documents necessary for the student to

attend classes with prior knowledge of the topics to be addressed in classrooms. In addition, the platform is used not only as a database, but also as a means of interaction outside the classroom, since it has the option of enabling discussion forums and chat sessions. The platform also gives the option of programming reading controls and exams thanks to its "task" tool, which is under the configurations that each facilitator can program according to the case. We also implemented the use of communication groups (WhatsApp groups) to facilitate communication between administrators, facilitators and students, so that they can interact between them, clarify doubts about classes, or inform them about changes or renewals of programs. The ease with which technologies are now handled through a mobile phone and the proper use of these groups favors communication and interaction that is essential for our network of users to feel comfortable and connected with the university.

## **Conclusion**

The transformation of traditional face-to-face education to virtual modalities is slow, although this applies less so to the bimodal, semi-presential formats that generally go back to the years 2006-2008. In any case, it seems that the online modality has had a greater reception in postgraduate courses and blended learning in degrees.

Considerations of pedagogical practice show that, although an educational platform that is easy to use is made available to teachers and students, it is still opportune to consider the possibility of implementing some face-to-face tutoring practices, in such a way that students and teachers become familiar with the use of this educational platform, and at the same time that students have the opportunity to be in more direct contact with their tutors. This will strengthen them, and therefore they will have the possibility of better results in academic performance, through the gradual development of their skills.

It is important that teachers develop their skills in the management of the platform, to efficiently use the available resources and activities and to follow up regularly the progress of each student. As suggestion for the future in the development of the university's innovation policy and the model of distance e-learning or blended learning as good practice, there is a need to continue to invest with training in the use of the e-campus platform and other technological resources. In this way, they will be able to select those services and tools from both the e-campus and the Internet to design materials for their classes according to the

contents of their study program. In addition, they will be able to contemplate support resources for classes that are more easily understood by participants with disabilities.

Considering the weaknesses found in the three HEIs of this study, training should have as a universe the entire teaching staff and students so that this practice is extended and leads to a common language, which is a fundamental form of inclusion. Among the issues to be overcome is that, when studying a subject, many of the students do not assume the necessary commitment to fulfill the tasks assigned weekly; and a delay in the fulfillment of the tasks results in that many of the students end up deserting, that they do not contemplate all the possibilities of inclusion of the diversity of possible participants, such as the blind, the hearing impaired, the motor impaired, etc. The impersonality of the (digital) student-teacher relationship impedes the affective connection that often makes the development of the process of teaching and learning possible, the constant presence required by this type of systematic distance learning is greater.

Educational innovation in the participating universities is seen as a change in the protagonism of teacher participation, where it is indispensable to virtualize subjects through educational platforms and materials, and seek techniques and didactic tools to attract and maintain the attention of the student. There is still much to be done, and training courses are constantly being held for them. It is important to mention that teacher training, as well as student training, is central because this virtualization cannot be without the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

Finally, we highlight the transversality of the discussed innovative practices to diverse disciplinary fields, beyond the specific one of training for the teaching exercise, making e-learning a didactic-pedagogical present already incorporated in our daily practices.

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## PART 3

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### *Dimensions of inclusive education*

*Designing a context-sensitive instrument for student analytics*

CHAPTER 8

**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DESIGN AND  
IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR STUDENT  
ANALYTICS IN A LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT**

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**Key words:** Social dimensions, inclusion, traditionally excluded groups, student analytics.

**Abstract**

The present chapter focuses on student analytics questions involved in inclusive education. Who are our students? Why have they chosen a certain study? How is their reality? What are their backgrounds? To answer these questions, a quantitative instrument has been developed – as an online questionnaire – with the aim of getting to know the students' reality, their living and study conditions. This instrument for student analytics has been designed specifically for the Latin American context of higher education. This instrument aims to collect, from the social dimension's perspective, four dimensions of analysis: (i) sociodemographic characteristics; (ii) university data; (iii) academic and social life and participation; (iv) motivational scope and future expectations. In this chapter the instrument, its design, implementation and validation are presented, for which more than 50 researchers and 48 educational institutions from more than 20 countries have collaborated<sup>16</sup>.

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## **Introduction: barriers to Higher Education**

Several authors have pointed at the existence of a myriad of barriers to higher education that affect all students, but most severely the vulnerable student groups. As Zavala and Córdova (2010) point out, preferred admission of students from traditionally excluded groups to higher education does not solve the problem of inclusion and does not ensure equal opportunities, but it opens perspectives for analysis of this complex problem. Achieving equality in access to higher education does not reduce inequality. Other challenges remain with respect to student retention and study success, for example economic situation, and institutional mechanisms that may or may not favor the situation of students. Rodríguez (2014) points out that higher education is facing a new crisis of democratization, due to massification which is creating diversity, new needs and non-homogeneous situations. Students who are equal in terms of rights and obligations are often not homogeneous in socioeconomic conditions, family situation, or indigenous background. These factors influence the whole study trajectory.

Many variables that influence exclusion when negatively associated with other existing conditions or with the lack of economic or functional resources, are still unknown with regard to students (Casillas et al. 2010; Lissi et al., 2009; Sebastián). Vulnerable students are often not identified by the university. Hardly any information is available regarding students who drop out of school or those who have to live in problematic personal situations during their university studies. Gray (2013) mentions that universities tend to use the concept of students "at risk" for those who, due to these conditions, *e.g.*, socioeconomic status, family variables and participation difficulties, lack of resources, are singled out as students with little probability of reaching achievement in higher education.

In this context, our work undertakes to "know the reality and the living and study conditions of the students, in their education in the Latin American context". Our approach is based on a conception of the social dimension related to the Sustainable Development Goals, included in the Agenda 2030 by the UN, that have re-emphasized the need to "ensure an inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2018, in particular SDG 4). In the context of Higher Education, this fourth objective is intrinsically linked to the social dimension of university institutions, which is a priority identified by UNESCO at its World Conferences on Higher Education, as well as by European communiqués on the European Higher Education Area and Ibero-American Summits.



Along these lines, there is a commitment to guarantee participatory equity in Higher Education. This refers to the need that "the set of students who enter, participate and complete studies, at all levels, will reflect the diversity of our peoples" (London, 2007). It means understanding the university as a common good within today's knowledge society, which must assume social leadership in reducing social inequalities, promoting social cohesion and democratizing knowledge.

Accordingly, we take a broad vision of the notion of social dimension, which goes beyond the traditional vision focused on the social composition of university enrolment (Ariño, 2014), and conceives it together with the third mission of the university, service to society, and University Social Responsibility. This includes in our view the importance of continuing to study the living conditions and study of university students currently at the university, in order to improve the policies that affect them, with the aim of advancing towards a more equitable and inclusive Higher Education. This is so especially when considering the current global context characterized by an increase in neoliberal and conservative positions of a radical nature which threaten the principle of participatory equity.

Thus, it is necessary to follow up on recent efforts to study the characteristics of life and study of university students in order to understand their evolution and be able to formulate how to improve university policies. The EUROSTUDENT project, a systematic study in which questionnaires have been sent to thousands of university students from different European countries every three years, began to attract attention at the beginning of the 21st century. From this project onwards, we found many other studies that have been concerned to know the living conditions and study of university students.

Even so, it can be said that it has not been a widespread practice yet in the global realm. In the Latin American context, there is a high commitment to promote the social dimension, which has resulted in cutting-edge actions in terms of extension and university social responsibility, but on the other hand one has not carried out a systematic study of the living conditions and study of university students from different Latin American countries. In this sense, the instrument discussed in this chapter responds to the need to compile such data in order to know what the university students of different Latin American countries are like, and to be able to compare this to other countries and continents. Specifically, this chapter presents the design and validation of an instrument in which more than 50 researchers and 48 educational institutions from more than 20 countries have collaborated.

## **The need to collect and analyse student data**

In order to know the reality of the student in the Latin American context, one needs an instrument that is sensitive enough to adjust to and reflect the wide diversity of the contexts to be analyzed. It has not been enough to use instruments already validated in other homologous contexts (with a marked European or Anglo-American bias), so we have built a new one, based on the existing ones, adapted to the transnational nature of Latin America.

In line with the main existing instruments on the subject (EUROSTUDENT – Social and economic conditions of student life in Europe, ECoViPEU – Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida y Participación de los Estudiantes Universitarios, NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement or Via Universitària) and the specialised literature, we decided to structure it around four of the main social dimensions related to the living and study conditions of university students: 1) Sociodemographic characteristics; 2) University data; 3) Academic and social life and participation; and 4) Motivational scope and future expectations.

The research team adapted some of the items from these questionnaires and constructed new ones around these dimensions. From these, a preliminary version of the questionnaire was elaborated and sent to all (*i.e.*, more than twenty) research teams of the other partner universities of the TO-INN project. More than 50 education professionals from 17 different countries participated in this revision process, which allowed reformulating the questions and possible answers of the different items to adjust to the different national structural, cultural and lexical particularities. The result was a questionnaire with international validity.

In the **Annex to this Chapter**, the questionnaire instrument created, tested and validated for the study of the living conditions, participation, socio-demographic characteristics and motivation of the students of education of the universities of teacher training or others that offer studies related to education is presented in full in its final form.

## **Designing an instrument for student analytics**

The four dimensions of living and study conditions that were selected led to a series of questions in the questionnaire as follows:

- Sociodemographic data (made up of 8 categories).
- University data (made up of 6 categories).

- Academic and social life and participation (made up of 17 items of which 3 are scalar and 14 are categorical).
- Motivational scope and future expectations (made up of 3 items, of which 1 is categorical, 1 is scalar and 1 is an open item).

### **Socio-demographic data**

This dimension focuses on knowing who are the students studying education degrees. Items related to their socio-demographic characteristics, such as age or sex, are included, aspects that, in general, inform us about the prevailing university model. For example, an early entry age entails linear and uninterrupted academic itineraries or, in contrast, a late entry age entails interruptions and greater interaction with the world of work, as well as a greater percentage of mature students (over 25 years old).

On the other hand, gender distribution is closely related to selective and gender segregation. In relation to this last aspect, we see an unequal distribution depending on the degree, since some branches of social sciences or health are more feminized than other branches of knowledge (Ariño and Llopís, 2011; Ariño and Síntes, 2016). In any case, the distribution by gender varies greatly depending on the context.

The questions related to the studies and occupation refer to the family background from which the students come who enter the university and who stay successfully. The data obtained in different studies indicate the importance of this factor, both in terms of purchasing power and in terms of educational and cultural capital (EUROSTUDENT IV, 2011; Baraño, Finkel and Rodríguez, 2011). Studies in the European context have shown that there is an over-representation of students from high social class families with higher education and a high occupation profile (Martínez and Pons, 2011; Ariño and Síntes, 2016).

Finally, it includes some items related to elements that may condition persistence positively or negatively in the university, such as belonging to an indigenous people or community, a highly relevant variable of analysis in the Latin American context, or the existence of family burdens.

### **University data**

Through the six items raised in this dimension, the main aim is to show where students are studying their training programmes, to specify their previous experience in Higher Education, to know the programmes they are studying and the stage in which they are and, finally, to characterise the access routes through which they have accessed their university studies.

The three initial questions, related to the country, the university and the programs they are studying, are questions that make it possible to characterize the geographic, institutional and disciplinary origin of the participating sample and, therefore, also serve as items through which, later, it is possible to carry out a more concrete analysis by areas, countries, institutions and programs.

In order to characterise the programmes and find out how close to completion students are, questions are asked regarding the duration of the studies and the time (year) in which they are. Triangulating the academic year with its sociodemographic data makes it possible, for example, to analyse the consequences of combining work and studies and to check whether young people from a given social class are more likely to do so on a regular basis without the studies being affected, as different studies point out (Busso and Pérez, 2015).

Knowing the access routes through which students have accessed the university connects with the results expressed in different studies (Gallardo, Lorca, Morrás and Vergara, 2014; Ustrell, 2012) that relate the itinerary and the access route with their academic success, their feeling of institutional belonging, and their socio-demographic profiles.

### **Academic and social life and participation**

With this social dimension, our questionnaire student analytics instrument seeks to know the conditions in which university students live and their ways of participating and getting involved in university life. This third dimension is composed of different items related to living conditions, such as the type of educational institution of origin (public or private), the place of residence, and the simultaneity between study and paid work.

In accordance with the 2030 agenda of the United Nations, questions related to quality of life provide valuable information to reflect on the challenges of guaranteeing full equality of opportunities in Higher Education. Over the past 15 years, the Latin American region has made

substantial progress in terms of access to higher education institutions (Ferreyra, Avitabile, Botero Álvarez, Haimovich Paz and Urzúa, 2017); however, there are still enormous inequalities related to the dynamics of inequity that impede the success and permanence of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population in the education system (Trucco, 2014). These comprise challenges that, in many cases, are similar to those seen in various European countries. Here, improving the permanence and success of students in Higher Education, from a perspective of equity and social justice, requires knowing, supporting and identifying the needs of different groups of students (Gazeley & Aynsley, 2012).

Along with questions of living conditions, questions referring to the social and academic participation in a student organization are incorporated, considering that associationism and volunteering can favour both social integration and development of different social skills and competencies. The items considered in this dimension include a wide range of possible answers, taking into account the diversity of the population under analysis. These questions make it possible to get to know the interests of the people and, at the same time, provide clues on how to strengthen their involvement in university functioning and social life in general.

### **Motivational scope and future expectations**

The motivational dimension aims to investigate what kind of motives (extrinsic or intrinsic) determine the choice of study tracks in education, as well as to relate these motives to other aspects of the social dimension of the participants.

The study of educational motives is a subject of growing interest in Pedagogy and Psychology of Education, so that there is a significant body of studies that focus on why students from different university study tracks choose their studies (Gámez Marrero, 2000; Mosteiro and Porto, 2000; Verde, Gallardo and Campoán, 2007).

In general, these studies conceive motivation as a function of the postulates of Deci and Ryan (2000), who point to the existence of two major categories of motives that would explain the choice of goals, the beginning of instrumental behavior to reach those goals, the persistence in the face of adversity and the energy dedicated to such effect. In the case of the choice of study tracks in the field of education, several studies have highlighted that in many cases it is the intrinsic motives (the pleasure of teaching, contributing to social improvement, among others) that explain this choice (Yong, 1995). However, extrinsic reasons (such as, for example, constituting a secure source of income) have also revealed their importance when choosing this

type of study tracks (Garduño and Organista, 2006). In this sense, Mercado (1997) observed that, for many students of low socioeconomic background, these studies represent a vehicle for social mobility and economic promotion. In addition, some authors, such as Torres (1996), stress that, in some cases, the Magisterio study track is an alternative choice that arises as a response to a negative admission in other study tracks that were the priority choice.

## **Building the instrument collaboratively: from pilot to roll out**

A preliminary version of the instrument was built which was later reviewed by all participating researchers in this project. On the basis of the different contributions received, the promoter team assessed and validated all the contributions and constructed the final questionnaire. This new version of the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test.

Nine universities participated in the pilot test. A total of 299 students participated in this process (see Table 1). The questionnaire was administered through the Survey Monkey® platform.

An interesting first piece of information about the validity of the questionnaire in this pilot phase is the number of completed responses, a first trigger for the development team for the adjustment of the questionnaire to its objectives. Of the total number of people who initiated the questionnaire, only 9.3% (29 people) abandoned it at some point. In most cases, the abandonment occurred in the first question, corresponding to the university where the studies are being carried out. When assessing the results of the pilot test, it was decided to delay this question and include it in the university data, starting the questionnaire directly with the socio-demographic data.

Table 1: Participating institutions in the pilot phase and number of responses received.

	<b>N° Responses</b>	<b>% Responses</b>
Universitat de Barcelona (España)	96	32,11%
Universidad Surcolombiana (Colombia)	21	7,02%
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (Argentina)	26	8,70%
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (Honduras)	45	15,05%
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (México)	9	3,01%
Universidad Nacional de Educación (Ecuador)	12	4,01%
Universidad Católica Boliviana “San Pablo” (Bolivia)	3	1,00%
Universidad Autónoma de Asunción (Paraguay)	23	7,69%
Universitat de València (España)	64	21,40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the analysis of the pilot test (see Table 2) it was observed that almost all the dichotomous questions or with several answer options did not present difficulties to be answered. Below is a table with a summary of the items. The team decided, in order to guarantee the most accurate information possible, to leave the item "other" in those items in which it was considered that the answer options offered by the question would not be sufficient. Given the diversity of cultures (languages, norms and contexts) in which the questionnaire was to be implemented, it was decided to be as exhaustive as possible in order to collect data, although at the level of questionnaire structure and subsequent analysis – from a technical point of view – it was not the easiest option, as this involved a great deal of effort when it came to emptying and analyzing the database. Only the item "Have you had to change the population while you are currently studying at a university" required a more in-depth analysis, and we concluded that it was better to incorporate three response options rather than a dichotomous approach. The three answers are: a) Yes. From a rural to an urban area; b) Yes. Between two urban areas; c) No.

Table 2: Structure of the questionnaire validation of the questions and adjustments

<i>Gender</i>	Adequate
<i>Date of birth</i>	Adequate
<i>Belongs to an indigenous community or people</i>	Adequate
<i>Dependants</i>	Adequate
<i>Level of education of father and mother</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Occupation of father and mother</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Country of study</i>	Adequate
<i>University</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Current study</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>First study</i>	Adequate
<i>Length of the program</i>	Adequate
<i>Academic year</i>	Adequate
<i>Access path</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Type of educational centr prior to university</i>	Adequate
<i>Change of population</i>	Inadequate
<i>Travel time</i>	Adequate
<i>Home address</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Quality of housing</i>	Adequate
<i>Typology of student</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Difficulties in work-study relationship</i>	Adequate
<i>Sources of income</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	

<i>Disability</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Disability study aid</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Participation in the university</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Reasons for not participating</i>	Adequate
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Reasons fro participation</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Frequency in use of services</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	
<i>Participación in NGO sor other entities</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Motivation to Access study</i>	Adequate
<i>Activities realized</i>	Adequate. The classification is relevant
<i>Consider other options</i>	

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## Psychometric properties of quantitative scales

Three Likert scales were included in the design of the questionnaire: a) motivation to work during studies, b) satisfaction with academic experience and c) motivation to choose studies related to education. Subsequently, an analysis of reliability and factor structure was carried out.

In relation to the scale on the reasons that have led them to work while studying, raised in a Likert scale from 1 to 5, being 1 "very little importance", and 5 "very important", it was determined that their reliability was adequate (Cronbach alpha of 0.85). In addition, the scale showed the expected factorial structure. On the one hand, a factor related to intrinsic motives (Cronbach alpha of 0.81), made up of the four items indicated in blue, and another factor related to extrinsic motives (Cronbach alpha of 0.79), made up of the three items indicated in red. As can be seen, all the items of the scale were highly saturated with the rest of the items of its subscale, with the exception of the item "I need money to finance my studies", which indicated the need to revise this response option to increase the validity of this subscale.



Table 3: Matrix of rotated components of the scale ‘motives to work’

<b>Rotated component matrix<sup>17</sup></b>		
Ítems	Component	
	1	2
I need money to lead an independent life		.703
I need money to finish my study		.087
I need money to help my household		.832
I want to do something practical, to have other professional experiennces	.796	
I am preparing for the future position it implies a contemporary qualificationn	.811	
I establish and/or increase my Network of profesional contacts	.818	
My work enriches my personal life	.778	

In terms of the scale measuring 'satisfaction with the academic experience', with 1 being 'strongly disagree', and 5 'strongly agree', reliability was adequate (Cronbach's alpha of 0.86). In addition, the scale showed to have the desired unifactorial structure indicating that all the questions posed represent and measure the same construct, as can be seen from the factorial saturations presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Rotated component matrix of the scale ‘satisfaction with the academic experience’

<b>Rotated component matrix<sup>18</sup></b>	
Items	Component
	1
I am satisfied with the guidance received by the University througout my study	.820
I am satisfied with the relationship with the faculty	.818
I am satisfied wih the treattmentreceived by the administration	.790
I like what I am learning in class	.781
I am satisfied with my student life	.770
I am satisfied with my classmates and friends	.671

Finally, the scale of 'reasons for choosing studies in Education' was analysed, of the Likert type (from 1 to 5), where 1 was "totally in disagreement", and 5 "totally in agreement". In this case, the reliability of the scale was not adequate (Cronbach's alpha of 0.53). When analysing the components, the scale presented two factors, as we expected: intrinsic motives and extrinsic

<sup>17</sup> Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax normalization with Kaiser.

<sup>18</sup> Extraction method: principal component analysis

motives. In the case of the intrinsic motive subscale - blue - the reliability was acceptable without being excessively high (Cronbach's alpha of 0.70). On the other hand, in the case of the extrinsic motive subscale -red- the reliability was clearly insufficient (Cronbach's alpha of 0.39).

The team's proposal, in anticipation of future revisions of this scale, was to add a question in relation to extrinsic motives in order to equip items in each factor and remove one of the intrinsic motives, specifically the one with the lowest internal reliability for each factor. The results were presented during a project meeting to all participating researchers and project partners. In addition, they were informed of the proposed improvements to the questionnaire. All partners agreed with the proposed modifications.

Table 5: Matrix of rotated components of the scale 'reasons for the choice of studies in Education'

<b>Rotated component matrix<sup>19</sup></b>		
Items	Components	
	1	2
Securing an income and/or achieving a better social position		.754
By family tradition		.806
Cultivate myself and and enrich my knowledge and skills	.769	
To be able to contribute to the improvement of society in general and/or my own community	.734	
Corresponds to my aptitudes	.729	
To be able to fulfill a dream (it was what I liked most)	.633	

## Validation of the instrument, data collection and analysis

Once the instrument had been built and validated, the information was collected and the questionnaire was sent in virtual format and in three languages (Spanish, Portuguese and French) to the different universities participating in the TO-INN project. In addition, it was decided that it would also be interesting to be able to count on all the twin institutions of the different partners attached to the project. Therefore, the questionnaire was finally sent to a total of 48 higher education institutions. After suppressing incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, a total of 13,999 responses were obtained. This represents 94.45% of the total number of

<sup>19</sup> Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax normalization with Kaiser.

responses received (14,820). The low volume of incomplete questionnaires helps to determine the relevance of the questionnaire in terms of the time it takes to complete the questionnaire with ease of response.

Table 6: Structure of the questionnaire and adjustments made

<i>Date of birth</i>	This question, although it seems appropriate, turned out problematic, as it was left as an open question, and various data formats were filled in. It was therefore decided to ask only the year of birth, as this is relevant for the analysis.
<i>Level of study father and mother</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Adequate. No "other options" were filled in.
<i>Occupation of father and mother</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Adequate. No "other options" were filled in.
<i>Current study</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	The "Other options" (although most of it was already included in some of the other questions) has allowed to adjust the profiles of the studies for each country.
<i>Change of population</i>	Adequate.
<i>Travel time</i>	This question, which had been left open, should have been formatted to 2 or 3 digits. At the end the data had to be codified by hand
<i>Residence</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled in that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Sources of income</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Disability</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Disability Study Aid</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Adequate. No "other options" were filled in.
<i>Participation in the university</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Reason for not participating</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Frequency of use of services</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Some new entries have been filled that had not been considered. This has been incorporated into the questionnaire.
<i>Reasons to acces this study</i>	Reliability analysis Not adequate for its intrinsic factors.
<i>Realization of activities</i> <i>Consider "Other options"</i>	Adequate. No "other options" were filled in.

With all the responses now refined, the first thing that was done was an analysis of the relevance and validity of the questionnaire. After the changes made in function of what was obtained in the pilot test, Cronbach's alpha of the scale of 'reasons for choosing studies in education' dropped to 0.50. However, it was achieved that the items that load each factor are compensated. The reliability of factor 1, intrinsic motives (represented in blue), was improved

by achieving a Cronbach alpha of 0.80. Factor 2, extrinsic motives (represented in red), did not improve significantly and its Cronbach Alpha was only 0.51. The results obtained through this subscale of extrinsic motives influencing the choice of these studies were analysed with particular caution by the project team. In this sense, we consider it appropriate that, in the future, some more items be added to this subscale in order to improve its validity and reliability. Next, in the Annex to this Chapter the final instrument for the scientific and educational community is presented in full, so that it can be used in other researches that intend to investigate also the living and study conditions of university students.

Table 7: Scale of ‘reasons to select this study’

<b>Rotated component matrix<sup>20</sup></b>		
Ítems	Componente	
	1	2
Ensure a steady income and achieve a better social position		.528
For family tradition		.781
I have chosen this although it was not my first choice		.787
I want to cultivate and enrich my knowledge and skills	.865	
Be able to contribute to a better society of to my community	.851	
Matches my skills	.786	

## Conclusions and final reflections

In this paper we have briefly presented the framework for social dimensions that supports the need to study the phenomena that affect students once they enter Higher Education institutions. Being aware of the relevance and actuality of the topic of permanence and success in studies after the phase of democratization of access to Higher Education, we consider it necessary to develop validated and reliable instruments to measure dimensions associated with the life of students, their characteristics, motivations and way of participation.

The relevance of the instrument is also related to the possibility of new approaches in the studies related to exclusion, vulnerability and disadvantage of certain groups determined by social and multidimensional processes. In this sense, approaches require coordinated and multidirectional efforts and must bring together a diverse set of actors and political instances, including but not limited to Higher Education. In this sense and context, stereotyped images of

<sup>20</sup> Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax normalization with Kaiser

students should be ignored and studies should be done that do not promote their victimization, but rather propose new visions for new actions in the framework of research and social policies (Didou, 2006). In this sense, the instrument created allows us to neutralize biased visions by obtaining data for an exhaustive analysis transcending subjective aspects.

It is our view that our proposed student analytics questionnaire is very relevant as it aims to correct for the lack of systematic studies on the living conditions, study, motivation and participation of students from the perspective of participatory equity. We want it to be understood as an instrument designed for an exploratory study, that opens up questions and helps to visualize the the student population and its living and study conditions. Students are not a uniform group, but instead have highly diverse needs and characteristics, which vary according to the social, cultural, institutional and economic context from which they come, which is why the student analysis instruments must be powerful and flexible.

In the Annex to this Chapter, the TO-INN student analytics questionnaire instrument is presented in full in its final form.

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## **Annex: The TO-INN student analytics questionnaire instrument**

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### **A. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

**1. Sex:**

- Male
- Woman

**2. Date of birth:**

**3. Do you belong to an indigenous community or people or community or people of origin?**

- No
- Yes (Specify)

**Do you have dependents?**

- Yes
- No

**What is the highest level of education attained by your mother?**

- Doctoral Studies
- Postgraduate Studies (Master, Magister, Master)
- Undergraduate, Undergraduate, Bachelor's, Diploma or Engineering Studies
- Non-university technical or vocational training
- Non-compulsory secondary education (Baccalaureate, Cycle or Degree)
- Secondary education
- Primary education or Basic education
- No Studies
- Doesn't know/ Doesn't answer



**6. What is your mother's current occupation?**

- Entrepreneurs with salaried employees, senior officials, senior executives and self-employed professionals
- Professionals and technicians employed by others, and middle managers
- Traders and small non-agricultural entrepreneurs (without employees)
- Farmers (entrepreneurs without employees and members of cooperatives)
- Administrative, commercial and service staff
- Foremen/girls and skilled workers (non-agrarian)
- Unskilled workers (agricultural and non-agricultural)
- Retirees and pensioners
- Unemployed (who have worked before and in search of their first job)
- Student
- Unpaid domestic work
- Paid domestic work
- Situations not classifiable
- Doesn't know / Doesn't answer

**7. What is the highest level of education attained by your father?**

- Doctoral Studies
- Postgraduate Studies (Master, Magister, Master)
- Undergraduate, Undergraduate, Bachelor's, Diploma or Engineering Studies
- Non-university technical or vocational training
- Non-compulsory secondary education (Baccalaureate, Cycle or Degree)
- Secondary education
- Primary education or Basic education
- No Studies
- Doesn't know/ Doesn't answer

**8. What is your father's current occupation?**

- Entrepreneurs with salaried employees, senior officials, senior executives and self-employed professionals
- Professionals and technicians employed by others, and middle managers
- Traders and small non-agricultural entrepreneurs (without employees)
- Farmers (entrepreneurs without employees and members of cooperatives)
- Administrative, commercial and service staff
- Foremen/girls and skilled workers (non-agrarian)
- Unskilled workers (agricultural and non-agricultural)
- Retirees and pensioners
- Unemployed (who have worked before and in search of their first job)
- Student
- Unpaid domestic work
- Paid domestic work
- Situations not classifiable

- Doesn't know / Doesn't answer

### **B. UNIVERSITY DATA**

**9. In which country are you studying? \***

**10. In which university are you studying?**

**11. What studies are you currently studying?**

**12. Are these studies your first in the field of Higher Education?**

- Yes
- No

**13. What is the duration in years of your training program? From 1 to 6**

**14. What academic year are you currently in? From 1 to 6**

**15. How did you gain access to your university studies?**

- General entrance exam (selectivity or national exam)
- Your own admission test (carried out by the same university you are applying to)
- Leveling course
- Access test for people over 25 years of age
- Access test for people over 40 or 45 years of age
- Vocational Training Qualification
- University Preparation Course
- Accreditation of work experience
- Career change
- Presenting the curriculum vitae
- Application for incorporation
- There was no selection path

### **C. ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE AND PARTICIPATION**

**16. During your pre-university schooling Have you ever studied in a private school? (Multiple Response)**

- No
- Yes, only in infantile, primary or basic cycle education.
- Yes, only in secondary education, post-compulsory secondary education or oriented cycle.
- Yes, both.

**17. Have you had to change your population in order to pursue your current university studies?**

- Yes From a rural to an urban area
- Yes, I do. Between two urban areas
- No

**18. How much time do you spend in minutes on commuting between your place of residence and your university? ..... minutes**

**19. Where do you reside during the academic year? (Single Response)**

- I live with my parents or other relatives
- I live with my partner (and child(ren) if applicable)
- In a house given to me by my family
- In a residence hall or college
- In a rented apartment with several people
- In a dwelling rented only for me
- In a home I own
- I live in my workplace
- Travel (not residing)
- Hotel
- Home of friends of my parents
- Squat
- Special Center
- Residential care
- Military Base
- Clubhouse
- Religious Community
- Concubinage

**20. In relation to the needs derived from your studies, how do you rate your residential situation? On a scale of 1 "very unsatisfied" to 5 "very satisfied".**

**21. During this academic year, which of the following situations would best fit what you are currently doing? (Unique Response)**

- I do not engage in any remunerated activity
- I work for less than 15 hours a week in a field related to my studies.
- I work for less than 15 hours a week in a field unrelated to my studies.
- I work between 15 and 30 hours a week in a field related to my studies.
- I work between 15 and 30 hours a week in a field that is not related to my studies.
- I work more than 30 hours a week in a field related to my studies.
- I work for pay for more than 30 hours a week in a field unrelated to my studies.

**22. How important are the following reasons for working while studying? On a scale of 1 "very little importance" to 5 "very much importance"**

- I need money to lead an independent life
- I need money to finance my studies
- I want to do something practical, to have other professional experiences
- I am preparing for the future profession, it implies a complementary qualification
- I establish and/or increase my network of professional contacts
- My work enriches my personal life
- I need money to help my house

**23. To what extent does working make it difficult for you to pursue your studies? On a scale of 1 "does not make it difficult at all" to 5 "completely".**

**24. Which of the following sources of income contributes most to financing your studies? (Single Response)**

- The income of my parents or other relatives
- My partner's income
- Pension or State aid
- Academic Scholarship
- Working during the course
- Working during the holidays
- Fixed and stable work
- Family aid and work
- I've applied for a credit
- Friends
- Family support and public assistance
- Savings
- Rentier
- NGO
- Church
- Sports scholarship

**25. Do you have a recognized disability or diversity situation?**

- None
- Physical functional diversity or disability
- Diversity or intellectual functional disability
- Diversity or sensory functional disability
- Anxiety and depression
- Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Minority syndromes (rare diseases)
- Special situation (recovery)
- Migraine
- Speech Therapy

**26. If yes, do you receive any support from the University? (Multiple Response)**

- Yes, I do. Free studies
- Yes, I do. Personal supports
- Yes, I do. Travel grants
- Yes, I do. Aids for adapted material and/or resources
- No, I'm not.
- Other (please specify)

**27. Indicate which of the following forms of participation you have been involved in at your university. (Multiple Response)**

- None
- Course delegate or subdelegate
- Student representative in a governing body (or commission) of the Faculty/University School
- Student representative in a general governing body (or commission) of the University
- Students' assembly and/or syndicate
- Student Associations
- Vote in student representative elections
- Demonstrations, strikes
- Volunteering (promoted by the University)
- Research or teaching innovation groups
- Artistic or sports groups
- Congresses
- Debate Contest
- Tuna
- Alumni Network
- Youth group
- Language courses
- Vocational training activities
- Cultural activities
- Subscriptions
- Pupil-mentor
- Learning and service
- University Collaboration Scholarship
- Party Commission

**28. If you answered "none" in the previous question, why haven't you participated in those activities?**

- Lack of interest
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Lack of supply from the university
- I just started
- As a distance learning student I don't get a chance

- Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities
- Lack of money
- The university doesn't promote it.
- Insecurity in participates

**29. What led you to become more involved in college?**

- Having my own voice in the organization of the University
- Develop myself personally and professionally
- Get to know and relate to other people
- Collaborate in the improvement of the University
- Feel useful and help others
- Feeling part of the University
- Get to know the functioning of the University at first hand
- Carry out extracurricular activities with curricular recognition

**30. Based on your college career to date, rate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements regarding your academic experience, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).**

- I am satisfied with my student life
- I like what I'm learning in class.
- I am satisfied with my classmates and friends
- I am satisfied with my relationship with the faculty
- I am satisfied with the treatment received by the administration of my university
- I am satisfied with the guidance received by the university throughout my studies.

**31. During the current academic year, how often have you attended the following services or activities offered by your university (daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, I do not usually use this service, my university does not have this service)?**

- Guidance services on employability or job search
- Cafeteria / faculty restaurant
- University Library
- Study room
- University sports facilities
- Extracurricular activities (conferences, courses, congresses, workshops, etc.)
- Health care
- Computer room
- Language Office
- University Parking
- Research Department
- Photocopier
- Performing Arts Classroom
- Teachers' office

**32. The following is a list of different types of entities and NGOs. Indicate in which of them you have participated. (Multiple Response)**

- None
- Cultural Associations
- Youth organizations
- Political parties
- Professional unions
- Sports clubs or associations
- Religious associations or groups
- Neighbourhood associations
- NGOs and voluntary associations

**D. MOTIVATIONAL SCOPE AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS**

**33. Mark your level of agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with the following statements linked to the choice of studies.**

- Securing an income and/or achieving a better social position
- Cultivate myself and enrich my knowledge or apprenticeships
- To be able to contribute to the improvement of society in general or of my nearest community.
- Corresponds to my aptitudes
- To fulfill a dream (it was what I liked the most)
- By family tradition

**34. During the current academic year How often do you do the following activities (fortnightly, monthly, semi-annually, annually, never)**

- Attend cultural activities such as concerts, plays, shows, dance, visit museums, exhibitions, etc.
- Participate in forums, chats, blogs and Internet networks.
- Read books, as well as magazines or newspapers, not related to my studies
- Go on weekend trips or excursions
- Exercising or playing sports (on or off campus)
- Doing activities as an amateur (painting, playing music, writing, doing theater)
- Watching television and listening to the radio, and/or playing video games

**35. Add, if applicable, any observations or comments about your experience as a university student.**

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*CHAPTER 9*

**RETHINKING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA:  
BETWEEN ECHOES AND ENCOUNTERS**

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**Key words:** Educational experience, teacher training, educational (trans)training.

**Abstract**

In the journey from tradition to innovation in teacher training for basic education, shared educational experiences offer a wealth of possibilities for reflective encounters. This chapter presents and critically analyses case study materials of significant experiences from a collaborative project between 22 universities in Latin America and Europe. It addresses the administrative and governance aspects as well as the educational experience from the practices of teacher training at the participating universities. In this way, the educational practice is conceptually recreated as a shared possibility to generate collective encounters about pedagogy. The discussion allows us to rethink and reflect on the echoes and encounters of professional development of teachers and university teacher training.

**Introduction**

This research seeks to conceptualize educational experience within the Latin American university context. It does so, based on case studies, which are the source of information, and the place of reference of the research. This has enabled us to count on the educational experience of several Latin American and European universities with respect to their pedagogical trajectory, under reflection, analysis and projection that has been generated in their search for a transition from traditional to innovation. In this way, we have recovered from

the documents generated in our collaborative project<sup>21</sup> the richness of what has happened and the way in which educational experience has been collectively generated.

This chapter investigates the educational experience in Latin American universities and seeks to conceptualize how it is constituted under a critical perspective, using a discussion under essay style to give more relevance to the paths, limits, possibilities, drifts and fissures that, along the way, are generated and constitute educational institutions.

To write this chapter, several documents of Díaz, O.C., Torres, R.M, Muñoz J. (Eds.) (2019) have been analyzed: Characterization of initial formation models in universities in Colombia, Argentina, Honduras, Mexico, Ecuador, Spain, the Netherlands, and France N8, and, Cordero, G., Cevallos, D., Rivera, K. Compiladoras (2019): Good Practices in Initial Teacher Training N11, both integrated by chapters written by each university.

The information has descriptive material, narrated from the experience of each of the universities, but also with historical aspects that have shaped their view on curricula, governance, innovation and participation. For this reason, the experience as a place of education is deepened, taking into account the current characteristics of our society, where training, and especially teacher training, must attend to what is happening, and information is a flexible content to be used.

The importance of experience as an action and effect is tied to training rather than to expertise. In this way, we seek to address the difficulties and challenges involved in contemporary teacher training from the pedagogical position on educational experience indicated by Contreras (2010, 2017), Larrosa (2006, 2010) and Ghiso (2010).

## **Defining the problem**

Based on the concern that we have developed, as teachers, administrators and students, within the processes of consolidating the educational experience as a referential axis in the work of the university, different elements can be detected, that have consolidated the problems of this research.

One of the main difficulties encountered in the field of higher education is the way in which programs have to conform to norms that have stiffened the academic world, separating it from

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<sup>21</sup> See <http://toinn.org> for a full description of the TO-INN project, referred to in this Chapter.

daily life and practical field. The problem is not that conceptual fields are created that allow us to think about education, but that they distance themselves from reality and become empty bodies of popular experience and material encounter with life.

In some way, the problems that a teacher-researcher encounters in a community are often trapped by the academic fence, from which one thinks and where the life of those of whom one speaks does not take place. It generates a discourse *about* communities, instead of an *interaction* with them. Communities can be understood as collectives of people, e.g. peasants, villages etc. but it also refers to communities of teachers, schools, childhood, youth.

The foregoing is intertwined with the need that in the processes of education, especially those of train the trainers, it is important to rethink practice. In academia the complex reality is often simplified to conceptualizations, didactic strategies, educational discourses, which are detached, in many occasions from the real sense and context of the students, and ourselves, where we live, where we are confronted with difficulties, and where we generate joint and shared experiences.

In this way, our team of researchers made up of different agents immersed in the processes of the university to which they belong, is concerned with the study of how the educational experience in university teacher training in Latin America constitutes educational experience in the referential framework of universities of teacher training.

To achieve our research objective, we want to identify the characteristics of approach to the educational experience in different collaborating universities. This is here done through their own reflective documents and discussions. We link the relevant aspects of their experiences to generate a conceptualization from what has been produced and discussed

This qualitative research is based on the analysis of the two documents in which the institutions present their training models and some good educational practices. This is linked and matched with the discussions during face-to-face workshops and meetings. In this way, the ones who generate the documents are also part of the analysis and reflection.

## **A critical reflection**

Our discussion is presented from a critical perspective based on an analytical approach to the documented narrative of the educational experience of the Latin American universities that belonged to. The essay style of the article focuses on the following relevant points that arise

from the contrast: (i) the administrative aspects of the academic environment (ii) teacher training practices, (iii) participation as governance in the classroom.

On the one hand, the conceptualization of educational experience is addressed, but on the other, the sense of educational experience as a formative and investigative effect within higher education; an open field by Contreras and Pérez de Lara (2010), Contreras (2013 and 2016). In this regard it is worth highlighting what Contreras and Quiles-Fernandez (2017) point out regarding experience in training:

*...education must be seen in the tension between what we live and what moves us as a search, as an aspiration. An aspiration that is not always present in a conscious and clear way, as if it were a previous orientation that leads us, but that on many occasions we try to discover and elucidate in our own work. Education always has this tension, which wants to find an orientation by maintaining a relationship of thought and questioning with experience, with the question we are awakened by the presence of the other and the other (p.21).*

To conceptualise educational experience is to investigate it, so that writing recovers the nuances that have constituted what happens in each one of them as a (trans)formative effect.

Concerning the administrative discourse of the academy and the educational experience in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), recovering the educational experience makes it possible to rethink the university as a place where professors, administrators and students are the owners and creators of the problems and academic questions. Instead, we want to address the importance of the relationship with the communities and their "experiential culture" (Pérez and Sacristán, 1996) and the links that could be generated between the university and these communities.

We refer to this practice from Latin America as the "link with society". The action itself must be part of the curriculum, and not only as a detached object of study. This implies social responsibility – which is not the same as the corporate social responsibility in business – but a real participatory and citizen responsibility in programs that include the diversity of the social field to which they belong.

The documentary review provided by each of the participating universities, shows that the training model of the participating institutions tends to be similar. The discourse focuses on

teaching innovation linked to the emphasis on the achievement of training in competencies, significant learning and the relevant role of tutoring.

Some institutions recall the European slogans of the four pillars of Delors (1996), learning to know, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be, in order to lead students to learn to learn (Torres *et al.*, 2019). Their formative proposals rest on the practicum from which they declare themselves explicitly or implicitly constructivists. Contextual-research is also emphasized as a key aspect of training, through a pluralism and diversity of methodological paths.

It is worth asking if the way in which institutions declare themselves is the one that prevails as an educational experience. For this reason, it is important to move towards the conception of universities as organic systems, with interconnections where their flexibility lies, from different realities constituted outside the pre-established structures and frames of reference.

The conception of higher education as a system supposes recognizing a structure and an endless number of norms, regulations and processes, in order to reach microstructures such as career programs, syllabus, evidence of work in the classroom, etc. In other words, both teachers and students must be overloaded with information before the start of the training experience.

But is so much information necessary? According to Larrosa (2006), "information leaves no room for experience, it is almost the opposite of experience, almost an anti-experience" (p. 105). And if it is impossible for us to live the experience, how could we connect the concept with reality? In the same way, if we have everything so predefined (schedules-places-assignments-teachers), when and how do we expose ourselves to a new event?

It is necessary to reflect on the space of (re)encounter between student-teacher and community. The National Pedagogical University (UPN-Colombia), where "academic practices constitute a suitable scenario for analyzing the relationship of the University with the environment and for reviewing and reorienting programs and projects...", is highlighted here. (Díaz *et al.*, 2019: p. 20).

It is interesting to see how the formation processes in the undergraduate programs in the UPN of Colombia are structured in two phases or moments: of foundation and of deepening. The first one contemplates the appropriation of the pedagogical, didactic, political, scientific, ethical foundations of a professional of education. It focuses on the recognition of students as members of the professional community of education with the seal of the University. The

second phase includes the expansion of specific references of the field, area, level or population in which the training is centered in each program and the strengthening of the integral formation.

In the two phases or moments raised by the UPN-Colombia we can not miss the way to see the student in the community, from which he is part. To integrate is to be part of, which allows the student to be in a position of listening and sensitivity that will facilitate the student to live in the experience of their training.

Therefore, the student's own context should be the place of experience and not the place of the programme given. Because educational practice is an essential aspect in the training of every educator. In the initial formation programs of the UPN-Colombia the practice is constituted by the different experiences and spaces of formation in which knowledge and practices linked to the areas of the professional work of the educator are appropriated and articulated, in consonance with the nature of each program.

The purposes of educational practice in relation to educators in training are: a) To base, analyze and interpret educational contexts and their diverse relationships; b) To enrich the processes of recontextualization of the structure of disciplines and their articulation with other fields of knowledge and with educational and pedagogical research; c) It generates spaces for recognition and understanding of the problems of the specific educational contexts in which it participates; d) Contribute to the formation of integral educators based on participation in educational contexts; e) Problematize and understand the different dynamics and relationships established in practice and in the diverse spheres in which subjects construct knowledge; and f) Promote permanent reflection on their being educators, in relation to the processes and activities proper to educational practice (Díaz et al 2019: p. 27).

The teacher or student who does not expose himself/herself to the community builds an detached reality upon which he/she will provide a series of explanations and solutions for something he/she does not know. The UPN of Colombia, as well as the National University of Education of Ecuador UNAE, develop theoretical and practical activities from the beginning of their training process, and according to their cycles they gain levels of dedication and complexity throughout the curriculum. In UPN-Colombia, the development of full-time educational practices can be completed if the program so establishes; as in UNAE-Ecuador, in the final cycles, the time allocated to the practices can be full time.

In the face of these forms of organization, it is worth considering how pedagogical training as an educational experience comes into conflict with the structures of academic administration that skew the transition to the constitution of experience marked by actions that are generated within the community itself, the innovative capacity of students and the impulse of their teachers.

Therefore, it is interesting to think about the above from the point of view of the planning-organization of UPN-Colombia practices. This is the responsibility of an Educational Practice Committee, which determines its academic and administrative organization. It could be interpreted in a certain way as being very similar to that of other universities. However, it should be noted that the recognition and presence of the student within the committee is enhanced as part of the decisions and of the educator's integral formation, where the meaning and place assumed by the student in decisions regarding his or her formation is perceived.

In this way, it could be said that the educational experience in higher education requires a connection with the student's own formative decisions, where the academic committees listen outside their administrative format and thus be able to give place to the events that arise in the community, that is, to make flexible thinking effective, not as a curricular discourse, but as a social and curricular pertinence that germinates from the community.

It is from there that the social and civic dimension of curricular relevance arises, raised within the internal discussions between the collaborating Latin American universities, in search of what is described in the following way.

Social and citizenship dimension refers to the design of a curriculum that goes beyond responding to the needs of the economic and productive system to emphasize the existing connections between higher education and current ethical and social problems such as inequality and justice (p. 2).

From this basic positioning, the experience of the National University of San Martín (UNSAM-Argentina) stands out, which organizes its teacher training in three cycles: a general knowledge cycle (university preparation), a specific training cycle (training in core disciplines) and a teaching cycle (specific curricular units in the field of education).

It would seem to be a common structure, but it is the way in which the three moments are put into practice that generates a different type of experience. The cycle of general knowledge gives the student the possibility of moving through different careers, and it is the student who

determines what to experience, determining what type of experience to live. The meaning of specific training is where the training is rooted to derive to the specific field. The conception of educational skills is not the transversal axis that stiffens the formation, but a heart that brings many experiences from which the specific interest will be derived.

All of the above is complemented by a curriculum that is organized into different types of curricular units: subjects, seminars, workshops, field work and teaching practices. This allows the student to live different formative modalities where the base that sustains it is an organic and flexible composition, which offers different forms and spaces of learning to the students.

These experiences seek to deepen the ways of thinking of the educational community, where students and social reality need fertile ground to melt and germinate together and where the link with the community implies a recognition of their knowledge and formative decision making, and not only as part of the formulation of projects. Where their ways of thinking are a form of conceptualization that does not require going through a *logical framework* or a *problem tree*, because the logic of the communities, of the students, of the teachers and of the very life of education grow among people through a network of relationships that does not attend to *key performance indicators*, but must allow for unexpected results, which are what truly give meaning to research and innovation. These challenges are pending both from a social and political dimension as well as from a pedagogical and didactic dimension.

A sample of this instrumental temptation of the technical-bureaucratic rationality of the traditional model of teaching and learning and its tension with innovative tendencies is appreciated when universities frequently state that they adopt a didactic methodology characterized by its methodological diversity, but which seems to disfigure the established or declared model of training.

The Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University (UNPFM) of Honduras puts it this way: "the methodological and evaluation variability are of low grade on the part of the students in the evaluation of the teaching performance that is carried out in each academic period" (Lea, Morales, Parrales y Paz, 2019: p. 128.). Such diversity of teaching methodologies is also recognized by the University of Barcelona in Spain and many other participating universities reported in the documentary analysis. And although didactic methodologies depend on what they are used for, establishing a list of methodologies, together with critical working conditions for the academic staff of the HEIs, can create conditions that are counterproductive to the realization of the formative norms.



In the absence of an evaluation of the learning outcomes of the graduates and a participative institutional self-evaluation of the HEIs that could offer a balance of the trajectory, it remains to reflect on the way in which the formative search is presented. In the documents analyzed, for example, the language used, the approach emphasized, and the educational experiences highlighted say a lot. From this perspective, the National Pedagogical University of Mexico (UPN-Mexico) shows a guiding conception of teaching methodology that avoids falling into the technical list:

"Organizationally, it is assumed that there is no fixed method in the process of training education professionals. Training takes place because there is a wide range of processes of influence in which the subjects are immersed, either in their receiving side or in their active pole; both are two moments of a continuous process. Training takes place because we are related to others. The others accompany us along the way in multiple ways, either because the context provides them or because the subject who wishes to assume a trajectory chooses them". (Torres, et al., 2019: p. 203).

The UPN of Mexico also points out that the teaching methodology deals with various forms of mediation where: "...all social interaction is based on difference, variety, uncertainty, singularity and conflict". To emphasize not the techniques, but the processes that sustain educational action, which are "counseling, tutoring and mentoring" (Torres et al., 2019: p. 204). A guiding emphasis that safeguards the training model from its deviations in practice.

## **Universities and their teacher training practices**

If we think of *practice* as a way in which students, teachers, researchers can share formation, it is important that we address the relationships and connections that the university needs to make at the time when it is proposed to privilege experience as a place of formation. Professional practices should not be seen only as instructive, but as social practices in dispute, controversy, not sedimented or solidified.

A practice that generates concerns for students, but at the same time helps us to think about what the work of the academy is, is to reflect on what privileged place it is occupying and how it can change its role and position. To think of experience, not as expertise, but as a shared possibility to generate encounters around collective experiences, implies the intention of listening to all those involved.

The experience is thought from the place where the events are generated, that is to say, where things happen to us, where what happens to us (trans)forms. For this reason, the approach presented by the National University of San Martín UNSAM (Argentina) must be highlighted through its field work, where "they try to recover the practical dimension of knowledge inasmuch as they consider that the problems of practice are complex and indeterminate and are not solved with the application of mechanical procedures" (Pini *et al.*, 2019: p. 85). Field work allows the student to work in the territory, maintain contact with reality, study situations and generate knowledge. Another variety presented by UNSAM-Argentina are the pedagogical formats, among which we would like to highlight its structure and development of practices, the training program of the tutorial action plans and the teaching methodology.

The design of the curriculum was based on the assumption that future teachers should be linked to educational institutions and teaching practice from the beginning of their studies. In this way, the proposed training foresees two modalities of practice from the very beginning of the career, as is also the case of other HEIs such as the Universidad Surcolombiana USCO (Colombia), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras UNAH, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán UPNFM (Honduras), Universidad Autónoma Baja California UABC (Mexico), UPN de México, UNP de Colombia, and UNAE (Ecuador), as already mentioned. Now, in the case of UNSAM-Argentina, there is also a practice instance for each area of knowledge. This means that certain curricular spaces contain hours devoted to fieldwork in educational institutions (for observations, interviews, and other types of activities involving practice and research).

On the other hand, UNSAM-Argentina has what is commonly known as "residence", that is, "practices centered on teaching-learning activities that are carried out in secondary schools and tertiary institutes of the educational system of the Partido de San Martín" (Pini, *et al.* p. 86).

These educational experiences of practices have been highlighted, because it is found that their organizational model is not timely, which is what usually marks the organizational processes of university practices, nor their temporal extension as they progress through the period or cycle, nor the level of responsibility determined for the practitioner. In the UNSAM experience, the practice has as an organizational model focuses related to types of teaching-learning and are interconnected with the time and practices that other subjects must carry out, in this way the integrating sense is part of the experience.

In the case of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU-Netherlands) the mediation of the mentor in the practice of the school, which is not part of the university, is relevant: "The teachers of the institutes visit the schools at least twice a year, with the aim of co-evaluating the student, discussing his progress with the mentor in the school and suggesting adaptations when necessary. The role of the mentor in the school is essential in terms of training and evaluation. Most universities offer a mentoring preparation program. (Kool, 2019: p. 336). It can be noted that the student's relationship with the community is organic through the mentor.

### **Participation as governance created from the classroom**

Following the above, the experience is not what has happened in higher education institutions, but what happens to (us)others when we fight for an experience from and for the educational, so the innovation derives more from the actions than from the publications, i.e. not to generate a new discourse on innovation, but a meeting of multiple experiences that interact and are called by practices from and for the community, from and for teaching, ie where it makes sense the participation and governance of those who converge in the educational.

Next, there are experiences and teaching practices that enable interaction with students and communities, which derive from collective knowledge, from the interaction of diverse groups, students, teachers and non-teachers, educational institutions and the community. Where the student plays a formative role, but at the same time creative, forger of knowledge that breaks down those reproductive schemes that have been installed in our daily lives.

The experiences that are narrated reflect on how participation, based on interaction in the classroom, forges new spaces for teaching innovation, which comes from educational practice. Teacher participation in the different learning communities implies a process of sensitization that takes place through dialogue and personal experience from experience. Therefore, when we speak of good educational practices, the place from which we speak is the place that recognizes what is happening, as the knowledge that emerges from the group that produces it. Knowledge is innovation in the classroom, not because there are better strategies to carry out teaching, but because they are art and part of the deconstructive process to which the teacher is confronted when asked about the action of knowing. The starting point, then, is innovation based on classroom experiences.

The transformation of initial teacher training implies the function of participation with all members of the educational community. An important aspect is the teacher's acting as a

constant researcher from his or her own practice, in this sense it is shown that the teaching experience starts from his or her research attitude within the classroom. This is how the Universidad Surcolombiana USCO from Colombia, through research on the relationships between "process and gender", the students are linked to the methodology of the project and, in addition, to improve writing skills through the creation of short stories, generate contents that give a new meaning to gender positioning. The role of the teacher is to be always attentive to the processes that students are developing according to the educational moments of the experience. This, in turn, enhances the knowledge and rescue of teaching skills in a collective participation with the entire community.

In this case, the teacher presents an active profile of follow-up, guide and mediator of the class and its students. This means that the methodology also "involves the teacher as a researcher of his or her own practice and professional exercise, while requiring a great capacity for reflection and analysis in order to implement changes in order to achieve better performance both for himself and for his or her students" (Uribe and Tulio, 2019, in N11, p. 15). That is to say, there is a constant and significant participation that starts from teamwork, collaboration, dialogue and joint and planned actions, where the shared knowledge among students is revitalized.

In the innovative practice of the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro ULEAM in Ecuador, literary circles are offered for learning the English language, these are presented as an integrating strategy that allows linking diverse components of the developing language. Teacher participation is framed from the first process of action; that is, by involving students in reading, encouraging and preparing each other's actions through roles and interaction among the entire group for the socialization of what has been learned. Through these actions, it can be evidenced that the teacher is a guide, facilitator and researcher, since it allows students to build their own learning from the possibilities that each one has.

Another aspect that is considered fundamental in the process of teacher participation are the dialogical processes that take place in classroom sharing; that is, those that allow us to find "other" forms of relationships, breaking with the vertical barrier between student and teacher. The Universidad Autónoma de Baja California de México UABC shares with us an experience in which a learning community is created from the participation of teachers and students, this was possible since a collaborative work was generated from a dynamic cycle "of inquiry, reciprocal teaching and puzzle method" (Gutiérrez, Vásquez, Núñez y Rivera, 2019, in N11, p. 69). Each process resulted in an act of communication and reciprocal teaching where dialogue allowed listening encounters and links of interaction.

The experience also highlights how "the students learned another work methodology that can derive in their teaching practice. On the one hand, they developed skills of collaborative work and of autonomy and personal initiative. On the other hand, they observed the co-teaching work of their teachers" (Gutiérrez, et al., in N11, p. 75). In other words, the process led them to rediscover new ways of getting involved, to build and share knowledge in community from an active participation of all members. It should be noted that this experience is also framed within the aspect of replicability; its results favored repeating the experience in other school cycles.

It is well known that the teacher must be the guide and facilitator of knowledge; however, these characteristics are not always taken from the classroom as an unpublished part of initial teacher training. As a result of the experience given in the National Pedagogical University of Argentina (UNIPE), it can be observed how teachers in their training are ready to be a guide in constant development. In this good practice is presented the proposal that involves a "network between the University and associated schools where school principals and teachers have an active participation in the (field training) in which students of teachers have their first professional experiences. (Hisse, Haller, Misirlis, Nin, Oses, García, Muñoz, Juvenal, Del Campo, López y Buscemi, 2019, in N11, p. 95)

Participation that goes beyond the classroom is important to highlight because it innovates the traditional; that is, it changes the fact of sharing learning moments surrounded only by closed walls. In this aspect, the ULEAM of Ecuador once again expresses itself through its innovative practice with the experience of empowerment and participation of the new citizenry, through the use of social networks. In this way, the creation of virtual scenarios is strengthened as a means of meeting, exchange and reflections on social problems. Declaring that, "this type of practices generates legitimate and efficient spaces for the social construction of knowledge. The key to the permanent participation of students in this type of practice continues to be the motivations for learning" (Villafuerte, Pérez, Hormaza, Mendoza, Mosquera and Santana, 2019, in N11, p. 87). That is to say, the interaction between teachers and students allows us to construct an approach towards a shared education.

On the other hand, we reflect on the participation of teachers in a rethinking the educational practice, and on the importance of strengthening spaces for feedback, where moments, doubts, thoughts and opportunities to create knowledge are shared. Because these types of actions are generally not well founded and valued.

The National University of Education (UNAE) of Ecuador presents an experience that shows this type of practice, documenting a process of textual reproduction of different stories transcribed from a Story Chest. The process of writing, revising, producing and redesigning the new, different and traditional stories of the area signify the importance of teachers being in constant reflection and feedback of the teaching-learning process. Through this experience, future teachers "produce texts, improve their writing, design learning activities for the classroom, reflect on cultural diversity and generate products for an online community in terms of a participatory culture" (Martínez, Tur y Vásquez, 2019, in N11, p. 27). In other words, teacher participation goes beyond what is pre-established by the teacher, where one learns by doing and expands interests in writing.

A substantial aspect is the awareness of the importance of participation as a process that helps to contribute to society, from a diverse approach where everyone has the possibilities of learning and teaching. It is teacher training for basic education as an active process that invites interaction, reflection and coexistence in a going and becoming of social relations from daily practice in the classroom and in multiple learning spaces.

This type of experience seeks to live the process of participation of teachers, students and the educational community in general as a state of significant action that becomes in terms of professional development and in diverse school contexts, which are formed and transcend beyond the traditional classroom of classes.

### **To conclude: to open ourselves to the educational experience**

Getting universities to walk on the event and experiences is not an effect that is going to come from the administrative policies of the academy, but from a constant struggle for innovative acts that (re)positions us more equitably in relation to how, where and by whom knowledge is generated. The paths that have been highlighted are not past actions but marks in the ways of doing, so we cannot make a linear reading of them, since they reflect the footprints that others have left at different times, and before something new reappear and make effect. Therefore, in the journeys it is confirmed that there is no past but rather a tense presence between what we live and what we seek. They are alive by the intensity more than by the time, by the imprint they leave, even in the mark of the absences.

The educational experience studied manages to have a space within the educational institutions since they collect and deepen their educational rather than their normative proposals. That is

why it is interesting to discover the fluidity and naturalness of the practices connected to daily transformations of teacher training and their reflective effects in the documents analyzed, unlike those that maintain discourses formulated with excessive precision, but with less incidence in the formative and contextual processes.

Conceptualizing the educational experience in higher education, speaking from Latin America, but echoing the contexts of confrontation in different university contexts, implies thinking about what happens in the very life of the university, which sometimes warns of its marginal condition, by positioning itself outside the structures and generalized and generalizing formats established by the national and international scales of evaluation, because in them one cannot glimpse the educational experience, but rather the interests and objectives of a globalized educational policy.

Reading the educational experience of other universities implies reflecting on one's own experience; thinking, first of all, of the actions that "affect" the ones we teach, but also, to think about the role of the teacher who teaches. Can we ask for transformation, while continuing to maintain a purely discursive relationship with education, instead of an experiential relationship that fractures not only the didactic structures of knowledge, but also the relationships that are generated in an academic setting and discourse?

To assume (trans)formations that allow us to pass from a traditional formation to an innovative formation implies that the university teaching can approach its experience from a daily, practical perspective, of collective participation, where what is lived in it is recovered in order to embody in the pedagogical living actions that overflow the pedagogical discourse. This implies that teachers, beyond updating themselves in didactic proposals and strategies and curricular perspectives, pay more attention to the *meaning* of what happens in the act of teaching, and do this in a *collective* way and in *interaction* with peers and other educators, as the experiences of this study point out.

In order to recover the real educational experience, it is important for the university to accept the actions and links with practice as powerful systemic and organic pedagogical approaches, and make sure that they are not silenced by the structures of administration, bureaucratic information, and academic discursiveness.

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## PART 4

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### *Information and communication technologies and education*



*CHAPTER 10*

**DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND EDUCATION:  
PUBLIC FUNDS AND PRIVATE POLICIES IN ARGENTINA**

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**Key words:** Education policy, privatization, ICTs, foundations, corporate businesses, private sector.

**Abstract**

In the context of the increasing privatization of education, which is taking a variety of forms, in this chapter we intend to contribute to the Debate about the role of the State vis-à-vis companies and private sector, in terms of the fulfillment of the universal right to education. Particularly with regard to digital technologies, a myriad of "free" educational products and services is offered by foundations and non-governmental organizations – often linked to large business corporations – as a market responses to the pressures and tensions faced by teachers in the classroom. These educational propositions and their underlying organizational structures operate as and take over responsibilities and functions from the State, while at the same time marketing their corporate brands. Although the study is carried out in Argentina, this study points at a much broader phenomenon, which is unfolding in the international context.

**Introduction: ongoing privatization of education**

In the context of increasing privatization of education, in this chapter we intend to contribute to the debate about the role of the State vis-à-vis companies and private sector, in terms of the fulfillment of the right to education. Concerned about neoliberal policies that favor private interests over public ones, contrary to the State as gatekeeper of the fundamental right to public

education, we propose to broaden this debate, including the discussion about policy on educational technologies.

Ball and Yourdell (2007) provide definitions of two main types of privatization: endogenous and exogenous. The endogenous corresponds to the installation of ideas, methods and practices of the private sector in the public sector. The former is less visible and often paves the way for the exogenous. Exogenous privatization implies "the opening of public education services to the participation of the private sector, through modalities based on economic benefit, and the use of the private sector in the design, management or provision of different aspects of public education" (9). We can observe that the actions of NGOs and private business foundations in education, in accordance to what was stated by Verger, Zancajo and Fondevila (2016) for the case of school vouchers or charter schools, involve both endogenous and exogenous forms of privatization.

With regard to digital technologies, as a market response to the pressures and tensions faced by teachers in the classroom, a myriad of "free" educational products and services is offered by foundations and NGOs, which, in many cases, are linked to large business corporations. We observe private organizational structures taking over tasks and functions from the State, while at the same time, marketing their corporate brands. Although this study is carried out in Argentina, it reveals a much broader phenomenon that unfolds in the international context.

In the United States, "advertising" (advertising in education) is spoken of from a critical perspective, with reference to large companies that for years have been sponsors in public education, bringing their brands to schools, thanks to mercantilist policies (Dimartino and Jessen, 2018). As corporations increase their power in the world, so does their influence in all spheres, particularly public education.

Within the framework of a study<sup>22</sup> of educational policies and strategies from different fields, levels and sectors with respect to digital literacy in relation to inclusion, this work is based on the following premises and relationships:

- Digital literacy policies as we understand them encompass much more than the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and media in schools, as they involve social, economic and cultural dimensions embedded in educational policies.
- The trend towards the privatization of education is particularly visible and growing in terms of digital technologies because they are part of the commercial activities of large

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<sup>22</sup> This research project was initiated in 2015: PICT 2015-0373 IDB Loan: "Innovation in educational policies: discourses and strategies around digital literacy in the framework of inclusion", Plan Argentina Innovadora 2020, FONCYT, under Resolution N° 240-16 ANPCYT.

multinational and national corporations, with high penetration among young people because they include social media, video games and almost all technological development related to sound and vision.

- As *meaning* is increasingly linked to instrumental use of technology, it is necessary to broaden the debate, scrutinizing the idea of *technological neutrality*, and educational benefits related to the access and use of digital technologies from a historical and cultural perspective. Particularly so, because of the ongoing neoliberalism construction of subjectivity through digital media.

### **Context: National and Educational policies in Argentina**

The period of 2003-2015 in Argentina, which is marked by a recovery of politics as a dynamic of citizen life, the opposition to the Washington Consensus, the reforms of the nineties based on a single (neoliberal) discourse, and the recovery of the centrality of the State in public policies, can be essentially characterized as a period of post-neoliberalism. A significant number of laws enacted came together to enable the effective expansion of rights in social, educational and cultural fields (Pini, 2011; Pini and Mihal, 2017).

Between 2003 and 2015, the Government of Argentina issued policies and programmes to combat inequality and to promote greater social and educational justice. The National Education Law (LEN 26206/2006) was enacted to reverse the deterioration and fragmentation of public education, that had occurred during the last decades of the twentieth century, thus affirming the responsibility of the State as the gatekeeper of the right to education.

In 2010 a milestone was reached in the initiatives of the LEN, with respect to the introduction of ICTs in secondary education. In that year the *Programa Conectar Igualdad.com.ar* (Connecting Equality) was launched<sup>23</sup> that enabled the incorporation of new technologies in student and teacher education. The goal of this program was to provide a computer for each student and teacher in public secondary schools, in special education and in teacher training institutes. It also aimed to train teachers in the educational use of ICTs. This was one of the educational policies in the processes of restitution of the State, the public and the political subject in our country. The initiatives and programs, centralizing state policy around ICTs converged in these policies (Huergo, 2011; Llimós et al., 2011). Although some companies –

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<sup>23</sup> *Program to Connect Equality*: PCI, Decree No. 459/10

such as Microsoft – had a role in providing inputs, the overall policy project was oriented and led by an active State.

As from 2015, the new Government of Argentina resumed the neoliberal period of the 1990s, without modifying many of the existing regulations. The main characteristics of new politics were: financialization of the economy, an enormous transfer of income to concentrated sectors, a rapid increase in inequality and unemployment, and with respect to previous neoliberal experiences, a pronounced conjunction of media, judicial and economic power. This reduces institutionality to corporate interests, limits the legal security of all citizens, and regresses in regional integration processes in favor of alignment with the United States. This is what García Delgado and Gradin (2017) refer to as *late neoliberalism*.

For the domain of Education, the new Administration placed emphasis on an approach centered on external negative diagnoses. This was accompanied by budget cuts and low level of investments in new activities. Priority was given to external evaluations of education, justifying improbable solutions without the participation of the teaching profession. Its preferred instruments to achieve this are in fact advertising slogans – under the guise of a scientific and social imperative – referring to technology, robotics, innovation and entrepreneurship, with a suggested positive value. Referring to the 2006 National Education Act, new policies were launched towards liberalizing education.

In 2016 the government created the Integral National Plan for Digital Education (PLANIED) and developed the "Learning Connected" Plan (*Aprender Conectados*), whose description on the Ministry's website is a good example of what is stated above:

*"Aprender Conectados is a comprehensive policy of educational innovation, which seeks to ensure digital literacy for the learning of skills and knowledge necessary for integration into the digital culture and society of the future. Aprender Conectados implements digital education, programming and robotics for all compulsory levels – initial, primary and secondary – and for Teacher Training Institutes, reaching more than 10 million people. The objective of this plan is to comply with the guidelines of the National Education Law, which establishes the need to develop the skills necessary for students to master the new languages produced by information and communication technologies"* <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/aprender-conectados>, accessed 17-8-2019.

## **Education and privatization**

The conflicts of interest that characterize the crossings between the public and the private in the government of education from 2016, dilute the responsibility of the State, for example, through the extraction of private rents, the *disresponsibility* of the educative role of the State, forms of discrimination that can derive from the dynamics of market segmentation, or the violation of democratic principles such as secularism and equality (CLADE, 2014), in addition to the lowering of workers' salaries and the under-financing of public education.

Recent investigations (CTERA, 2016; Becerra, 2017; Canelo and Castellani, n/f; Castellani 2019) indicate numerous cases of managers from the private companies, NGOs and private foundations, directly linked to the government of Mauricio Macri, and with privileged access to government management, entering the educational domain. Many of these managers moved into public office in areas that are linked to the organizations to which they belong. The consequences are in the benefit of sectoral interests and to the detriment of the autonomy of the State. Over the last thirty years there have been entrepreneurs and corporate leaders entering the national cabinets, particularly in the areas of economic and financial management. However, the corporate penetration into the government has never been as widespread and influential as in the Macri Administration.

According to Ball and Youdell (2007), the increased importance of New Public Management (NPM) and the role of educational managers are some of the basic features of hidden, endogenous privatization. A privatizing trend is opening up that has diversified its ways of concretion, via different forms of management, partnerships, concessions and involvement of NGOs and foundations that come to fulfill functions of the State, which are then presented as services to the community, satisfaction of needs or symbols of social status, thus hiding profit purposes and tax exemptions.

This phenomenon involves complex processes constituted by different ways of constructing a favorable market ideology, the establishment of the educational business agenda by the press and the mass media in general, enhanced by the Internet, the symbolic colonization of the educational discourse by economic categories and criteria, and private appropriations of the public sphere, often through apparent philanthropy. Thus, results-based management, the total quality model, the primacy of the efficiency criterion, the competitive and punitive use of quality evaluation and attempts to reform remuneration systems and working conditions have

once again been installed. This is also done using cutting-edge approaches such as emotion education, neuroscience and project work.

## **Education, technologies and corporate agendas**

Without denying the importance of digital technologies and their use in the classroom, it is essential to discuss the role assigned to ICTs in the transformation of education. For many people, the idea the *digitization* of many aspects of life also applies to education, and particularly to its institutionalization. In different circles it is common to hear that public education is in crisis, or obsolete, or far from reality, or economically unsustainable. But these diagnoses are generally carried out from interests outside the educational sphere that seek to promote alternative forms of education.

Selwyn (2016) asserts that the groups behind educational reforms range from free market advocates, libertarians, home learning advocates, student-centered, etc. With very varied logics, they promote external interventions, which basically imply that teachers can no longer be trusted, and they manipulate public opinion with this idea. The search for solutions often focuses on profit-related alternatives. It is not a novel strategy to use the "crisis" of education to attack public education and impose sector-interest agendas, such as business agendas. Berliner & Biddle (1995), in the book *The Manufactured Crisis*, warned for manipulation using statistical data to demonstrate the deficiencies of the public system. The education system thus is made into an attractive commercial "market" for technology companies, most of which are corporate business.

The idea put forward by many that digital technology in education is a superior alternative to other investments, hides the reality that the vendors of ICTs are corporations and business organizations whose priority is to increase profits (Burch and Good, 2014). Given the fact that digital education alone does not ensure an equitable distribution of resources, this links to the debate about educational inequality, democratic participation, and public education as a right. Progress on these issues is very slow compared to the thrust and energy of commercial initiatives.



## **Corporate educational policies regarding Argentina**

A selection has been made of the foundations of the most important companies and companies linked to technology and the media, which offer online training for teachers, students and parents: Fundación Telefónica/Speedy/Movistar; Fundación Noble/Grupo Clarín; Microsoft Argentina Educación/Alianza por la Educación; Intel; Bunge y Born. From the survey of the institutional information contained in their websites, a series of common elements can be observed.

**A manifest interest in intervening in the systemic improvement of education.** This is also in relation to development and is expressed in the foundation and development of broad and detailed educational programs and proposals:

- Collaborative projects for schools: Eureka Lab, a laboratory of ideas – "entrepreneurship" network (entrepreneurship + learning), and Proyecto Eutopía, the school reinvents itself. (Telefónica Foundation);
- Since 1966, the Noble Foundation was constituted as a non-profit civil organization that considers education as a fundamental pillar for the development of the country. In order to contribute to the work developed by educational institutions, it has implemented programs focused on the various challenges faced by schools in recent decades: teacher training, improving the quality of teaching, media literacy among young people, school dropout rates, and inequality of opportunities. (Noble Foundation);
- At Cablevisión (quote) we seek to make a significant and genuine contribution to the development of our country. We believe in the capacity of telecommunications to dynamize local economies, promote technological development and foster social innovation. Transforming Connections, our 2020 Sustainability Strategy embodies the commitments we have been working towards and the challenges ahead. Focuses on the ability of individuals, organizations and networks to leverage the creation of shared value through robust, dynamic and sustainable connections (Cablevisión);
- The motto is: Create a thriving learning environment. Driven by a holistic approach to change, innovative technology for education helps delineate the solutions, tools and resources to transform teaching and learning around the world. An effective technology framework for education. A holistic approach to student success. Intel® Education offers a holistic approach to creating successful learning environments (Intel);

- Alliance for Education: Empowering teaching. Teaching sets people's abilities in motion. And in this the undisputed protagonists are the masters. (Microsoft Argentina Education);
- We promote education through the design and implementation of projects that provide tools to all actors in the system (students, teachers, principals, supervisors), both through scholarships and material donations, as well as through proposals for professional training, always considering as a priority the management of change and consequent improvement in the quality of education, with special emphasis on rural areas (Bunge and Born)<sup>25</sup>.

**The offer of teacher training, online, in several cases continuous or of a certain duration.**

- Educational innovation workshops for teachers. (Telefónica Foundation);
- Develops, free of charge, various training spaces for teachers and students (Noble Foundation);
- In Alliance for Education we want to help you so that you can strengthen and improve your work in class. (Microsoft Argentina Education);
- Complete sequences for teacher training in technologies. *Starting level*: Introducing teachers in the use of new technologies. *Intermediate level*: Online teacher training in ICTs. *Advanced level*: Self-study courses to deepen the level of knowledge. *Collaborate*: The Peer-to-Peer Program training senior teachers to become advisors to their peers, helping them identify how technology can strengthen the curriculum and improve the academic performance of their students. *Innovate*: Proposal of specialization carried out with Educ.ar in the areas of Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Language, Literature, History and Geography (Microsoft Argentina Education);
- Professional development. Exhibition of teaching ideas. Class plans and units by age groups. (Intel);
- Educational and cultural projects, cooperation between Spain and America, forums for intellectual exchange: a commitment to the cultural formation of citizens. The Blog "Educational Leadership and Knowledge", is part of the new strategy of the Foundation with the aim of providing the Latin American educational community, through its educational leaders, an updated, specialized and relevant information, innovative experiences that help in the formulation and implementation of educational policies

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that Bunge & Born is one of the largest corporations specializing in the marketing and export of grain. Their interest in rural education cannot be separated from the "manpower" it requires.

that serve to improve the quality of education for all. (Santillana-Commitment to Education and Culture);

**Virtual courses.**

The Sembrador (Sower) Program offers, through its own virtual classroom, permanent training courses on the teaching of mathematics, language and natural sciences, which are complemented by a day of face-to-face work in a locality in the area of supervision. In this way, since 2009 we have tried to overcome the barriers of time and distance traditionally associated with rurality (Bunge and Born).

**Innovation projects in relation to media and digital culture.**

- Smart School. The "Educational Innovation" workshops will bring practical educators closer with interactive technology (Telefónica Foundation);
- Intel Teaching Courses and Intel Learning Transformation Courses;
- Innovative experiences to assist in the formulation and implementation of educational policies that serve to improve the quality of education for all. The Santillana-Commitment to Education and Culture is divided into two sections: (i) selected five topics considered innovative, priority in the educational agenda of the region, and that make a decisive contribution to improving the quality of education (ii) technology and education, assessment as a quality requirement, improving reading and writing skills, extending and improving the teaching of English and improving the administration and management of education. The activity of the blog will begin with one of them, specifically the one dedicated to technology and education (Santillana-Commitment to Education and Culture).

**Trained specialists who generate ideas coherent with the state of the art.** This can be seen in the general wording of the proposals and the reference authors they use.

- The aim is to encourage young people to experience reading on different platforms and supports, to articulate current content with school content, to contribute to the formation of a critical view when analysing media content and to contribute from the expertise of the media, in their training as producers of their own content. With regard to teacher training, the aim is to provide didactic guidelines that take into account the current teaching and learning models, thus broadening the set of devices, tools and resources for the enrichment of their classes (Noble Foundation);
- Secondly, within the framework of this strategy, it will organize high-level seminars that will be permanent forums for generating relevant and useful information for the

programme, as well as outstanding annual events in different parts of Spain and Latin America. Each seminar will be led by an outstanding specialist in the subject who, in turn, will have experts and associated entities that will collaborate in the selection and dissemination of information and experiences that appear in the Ibero-American and international panorama (Santillana-Commitment to Education and Culture).

**Totally "free" offers that include diverse resources, digital and materials.**

- The educational program offers activities aimed at elementary, primary and secondary schools, families, teachers and the general public. All activities are free with prior registration. Aula 365 has APP for Google and Apple (Telefónica Foundation);
- With the conviction that media play a formative role in society, Fundación Noble develops, free of charge, various training spaces for teachers and students (Noble Foundation);
- Free online materials: Clarín goes to school, Narrating in Social Sciences, Growing Up in Media, Learning to Live Together, Digital Education, Studying in Digital Culture, Information and Communication. On the site there are videos and virtual classrooms with activities and experiences (Noble Foundation);
- Puente (Bridge) Digital connects public educational establishments, hospitals and health centers, and civil society organizations in different parts of the country, free of charge, with the Internet and Cable Television service. Currently more than 20,000 institutions have different services free of charge depending on the needs of each organization. (Cablevision);
- After a survey of the Argentine labor market in IT (Information Technology), conducted by Cablevisión-Fibertel together with ComunidadIT, free programming courses were designed to meet the demands of those localities with the highest unsatisfied demand in this field. (Cablevision);
- All proposals are open and free of charge. (Microsoft Argentina Education);
- Free resources for educators. Resources for learner-centred learning. Featured resources. Complete manuals and guides in English. Environmental and social CSR (Intel).

It is difficult, especially in the most impoverished and deprived areas, to refuse free offers of equipment and materials, as well as training or connectivity. However, the educational proposals of large business corporations, especially through their foundations, are taking over tasks and functions that correspond to and replace the State. The niche of intervention in

education - whose "free" actions are presented as philanthropy or corporate social responsibility (CSR) - is of interest to companies for several reasons: social image, tax savings, customer acquisition, branding and influencing of educational policies. The importance of the million dollar contracts that the ICT private sector establishes with the State, for the provision of equipment, software, and educational services<sup>26</sup> should not be underestimated. In addition, it provides them with a considerable consumer base of young age.

## **Senses in dispute**

The above examples reveal how the advertising discourse is oriented to build an ideal model of education that is the corporate solution. Rhetorical allusions to the commitment to learning of all students, through innovative teaching practices, regardless of social inequalities and cultural differences, contribute to the construction of a good business image in order to generate empathy and more customers. The enthusiasm for the quality of the initiatives would be convincing, if we do not take into account that corporate personnel are obliged by law to "act primarily in the economic interest of the shareholders" (Mander, 1997). The participation of business in education implies the autocratic authority of designated officials who have not been elected by anyone and are not accountable to the public. A system called democracy is constituted, which however severely restricts the opportunities for public deliberation, dissent and the struggle for social equality.

Digital literacy has taken a place on the national educational agenda, not only in our country, but as a global trend in the field of education. It is one of the relevant axes in relation to the use of digital technologies in education systems, both because of their demand in education in

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Cablevisión/Fibertel contracts with the City's Ministry of Education. For example, for the "Sarmiento Plan (Connections transforming 2016). Prima S.A., a subsidiary of Cablevisión since 2011, accompanies the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires, through a technical plan for the implementation of technologies, connectivity, support and maintenance, and in the management of equipment deliveries, to students and teachers of primary schools of state and social management of the City."

In 2016, the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires, through Public Bidding N° 550- 0814-LPU16, contracted for 4,680,075 dollars the integral digital services of educational application for teachers and other pedagogical actors of the initial level schools of the Buenos Aires area. Primera Red Interactiva de Medios Argentinos S.A. was awarded the contract. (PRIMA S.A). In 2017 Resolution No. 2062/MEGC/17 was published, with the signature of Minister Soledad Acuña, which transferred the bid to Cablevisión, the company that absorbed the first company.

Within the framework of the Education Lab of Fibertel, and the Digital Inclusion Plan of the Municipality of San Martín, the company connected 95 schools free of charge.

general, and because of the challenges presented by their development from the perspective of educational inclusion. However, ICTs are not neutral, but are related to relations of power and social order. In practice, this is evident in the unequal access to the distribution of goods and services, in the predominant use of proprietary software, and in the conception of ICTs as consumer goods and not as tools for the production and construction of rights.

In the circulating discourses on digital literacy we find fundamentally instrumental conceptions, and those that, from a sociocultural perspective, emphasize the cognitive, emotional and contextual aspects that are at stake in a digital environment. Corporations currently promote educational agendas in which they use both concepts in their goal of selling, both by generating needs for technological devices and their permanent renewal, and through the promotion of models of behavior and existence.

From the perspective of curricular justice (Connell, 1997; Calvo, 2009), it is necessary to place at the center of the debate on public education the historical production of inequality, and to consider that digital inclusion (Mihal, 2014) is also an important element of educational inclusion. This implies, from the perspective of education policy, recognizing the different actors of the school system as interlocutors in a dialogue, not as mere executors of programs conceived in other organizations. Children and young people should not be viewed from the perspective of a user, client or consumer, but rather as integral social subjects crossed by a series of social, communicational and technological mediations in a process of constant change. It is important to analyze the strategies, contents and programs that companies deploy, since the strategies that are developed in educational institutions can generate inclusion or exclusion mechanisms also through ICTs.

In a context of budgetary restriction and deregulation of private businesses, it is unlikely that the State will guarantee that company foundations respect pedagogical prescriptions and put the objectives of expanding the rights of national laws before their particular marketing interests.

It is not a novelty that neoliberalism "produces subjectivities" according to an individualistic and competitive ideology functional to an excluding political economy, which entails profound consequences, not only in the material, as in the acceptance of external debts, but also in intangible aspects such as values, preferences, choices and prejudices. Education is a privileged tool in this symbolic production.

The establishment of business agendas has problematic implications insofar as they commodify education to the detriment of the most impoverished groups, whose interests are ignored or suppressed, even in terms of their capacity for demand and expression, since these companies control the media. Its market logic installs models of competition and individualism versus community, of the undervaluation of one's own identity in terms of results versus learning, and finally of the segregation of less valued identities.

From the point of view of a democratic State, the advance of these forms of private intervention turns public policies into corporate policies that do not seek to secure rights, but rather to adapt the educational agenda to the needs and demands of companies. It turns tax savings and investment in brand advertising into supposed benefits for which society should be grateful.

Behind this growth of private educational proposals hides the government's inability to manage public policies, and at the same time "technology and information are assumed as part of a depoliticizing paradigm of public administration" (García Delgado and Gradin, 2017: 24) in general and the teaching community in particular. But above all, the functions of the state slowly slide from principality to subsidiarity in terms of the fulfillment of the right to education.

The action of business foundations is aimed at replacing functions that by law belong to the State, as well as at influencing common sense, and it is invisibilizing strategies that affect rights and increase inequality. It deploys the objective of neoliberalism to thoroughly reorganize society, companies and institutions - and here technologies play a fundamental role - through the multiplication and intensification of mechanisms, relations and market behavior, which cannot be achieved without a transformation of the subjects around the figure of the company (Laval and Dardot, 2009: 326). How this logic is changed is the greatest challenge for a collective project aimed at social justice.

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CHAPTER 11

**COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING AS AN INCLUSIVE  
EDUCATIONAL MODEL IN THE LIGHT OF COMPLEX REALITIES**

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**Key words:** Community Service Learning, information systems engineering, ICT for development, local context user-centred approach, sustainability.

**Abstract**

An educational method that prepares the student to face the real-world complex realities in solidarity and equity is found in the pedagogy and is known as Community Service Learning (CSL). This pedagogy combines academic learning with real-world community service tasks. In CSL students actively participate in innovation projects, collaborating with communities in order to meet their needs within the complex reality of their multi-faceted environment. In this article, we discuss CSL as a pedagogical model for inclusive education in the academic curriculum in information and communication technologies. This model has two objectives: (i) to train students in socio-technical development methods, making them aware of their social and civic responsibility to face complex realities of the real world; (ii) to develop inclusive technologies that serve the needs of underprivileged communities and connect them to the computerized society. We exemplify this by discussing the design, experiences, results and evaluation of CSL postgraduate courses in Information Sciences ("ICT4D In The Field") in rural areas of Sarawak, Malaysia.

## **Community Service Learning and ICTs**

The inclusion of people and communities from less privileged regions to the digitally connected and computerized world is a social responsibility that touches higher education in order to move towards a more inclusive and equitable society. One way to realize this responsibility is in the training of professionals and academics in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such that they are capable of developing technologies that are properly adapted to the needs of underprivileged communities and their low-resource contexts. For this type of education, Community Service Learning (CSL) is a pedagogy that offers an appropriate methodology (Duffy *et al.*, 2000). In the CSL pedagogical model, students actively collaborate with local communities in social innovation projects in order to respond to some aspect of their needs.

We discuss a novel type of teaching based on the CSL idea, in the area of education in Computer Science and ICTs, in particular Information Systems (IS) engineering. In this type of education, students at the postgraduate level learn and develop through co-creation, design and implementation of ICT services focused on providing value to less privileged communities in a thoroughly collaborative fashion.

As a real-life case we present a course organized jointly by the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA) and the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in Sarawak, Malaysia, for students of computer science, information science and artificial intelligence (case materials coming from Bon *et al.*, 2019). The design of this course, its theoretical framework, the experiences of the courses organized in Sarawak, Malaysia, in June 2018 and 2019, student results and evaluation are discussed in this Chapter.

## **Technologies for inclusion**

In recent years a large number of projects, usually financed by states or international agencies, in the field of ICT for socio-economic development, have been considered failures (Group, 2011). The failure of these projects is generally attributed to a lack of adaptation of these technologies to the real needs of local users and their context (*e.g.*, Bon, 2019). In terms of social inclusion, the design of adapted technologies is essential for their success (Waugaman, 2016). In communities with low levels of education and limited resources in terms of economic development and infrastructure, adapted ICTs may lead to greater inclusion. For this reason, attention must be given to the collaborative design and development of ICTs so that they are

relevant and meaningful to their users in those communities in low-resource contexts (Bon *et al.*, 2016).

However, the design and development of ICTs in low-resource environments is a challenge, for several reasons (de Boer *et al.*, 2012): low-resource contexts may be variously characterized by lack of infrastructure (physical, digital, energy), high illiteracy rates, low purchasing power or a variety of complex adverse social, economic, cultural and environmental factors (Gyan, 2016).

In the area of innovative ICT systems engineering (in the connected and highly computerized world), new socio-technical methodologies have been developed in recent years, with greater focus on the user and his needs (*e.g.*, Doerflinger *et al.*, 2013). These methodologies allow the development of information systems more adapted to local needs and environments (Ferrario *et al.*, 2014), thus respecting the autonomy of their users.

However, in order to bring these methodologies to the service of underprivileged communities in low-resource environments, a new generation of professionals with socio-technical skills and knowledge and an active citizenship attitude is needed. Technical curricula in higher education need to train professionals with these skills (Lago and de Boer, 2019). Engineering technical training such as computer science, artificial intelligence and information science is traditionally focused on the developed and "connected" world (the Global North or more precisely North-West). In the Netherlands, for example, active citizenship and social awareness are not yet part of these education spaces. Social inclusion policies demand an innovative education, combining the technological with the social, and training professionals with a reflective attitude. This is a practical and reflective education, centred on the users, their objectives and community, in ICTs for Community Development.

## **Reflective social theoretical frameworks**

For the design and implementation of a practical and reflective education in the area of ICTs for Development, focused on the users and their community, a framework is presented that combines service learning (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996) with a theoretical framework that comes from socio-technical action research, called "ICT4D 3.0". (Bon *et al.*, 2016; Bon, 2019). ICT4D 3.0 is based on the participatory action research (PAR) methodology and philosophy, see for example (Freire, 1970/2005; Fals Borda, 1979). To guide the course design, we have formulated some principles that support an inclusive approach to teaching, learning, and research, see Table 1.

Table 1: Principles guiding Participatory Action Research (Bon and Akkermans, 2019)

No.	Principle
1.	Principle of <b>Critical Investigation</b> of Concrete Situations (field, professional practice);
2.	Principle of <b>Value</b> : Developing/Taking a Value Position (democracy, emancipation, autonomy, social and economic betterment)
3.	Principle of stakeholder <b>Collaboration</b> (involving Co-Investigation, Co-Design, Co-Creation, whereby goals and interests as seen by stakeholders themselves are central)
4.	Principle of <b>Dialogue</b> (between multiple actors and stakeholders (to be) involved)
5.	Principle of <b>Action</b> : Discovery and subsequent Realizing Change for the Better
6.	Principle of <b>Reflection</b> and continuous Learning in Action

## Community service learning as educational theoretical framework

Community service learning (CSL) is an educational model designed to connect theory and practice in order to solve challenging social problems by training students for a life as responsible citizens (Duffy et al., 2000; Bringle and Hatcher, 1996)). CSL uses an experiential learning methodology that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, assume civic responsibility, foster civic engagement, and strengthen communities for the common good (Lopez et al., 2015). CSL combines two interrelated objectives: (i) an educational objective based on learning through practice and reflection (ii) a social objective set in the service of the community.

## ICT4D 3.0 as a theoretical framework for socio-technical design

For the sociotechnical education, a theoretical framework has been developed, called ICT4D 3.0 (Bon et al., 2016; Bon, 2019). This framework has similarities with CSL, offering methods that contribute to inclusion, innovation (Von Hippel, 2005), and socio-technical development. These include agile and user-centred methods (Gottesdiener, 2003; Dingsøyr et al., 2012). The ICT4D 3.0 framework consists of five cyclic stages that cover the full life cycle of information systems development: (i) context analysis, (ii) needs assessment, (iii) analysis of use cases and requirements, (iv) sustainability assessment, (v) engineering, development, evaluation (Bon, 2019).

**Context analysis.** Consists of obtaining knowledge about a real-world environment. Socio-technical engineers (in this case students) must dedicate sufficient time to familiarize

themselves with less privileged environments, of low resources, with their limitations and their demands. Conversely, potential users need to achieve a certain level of knowledge of what ICTs can bring them in terms of benefits.

**Analysis of community objectives and needs.** The ultimate goal of any socio-technical engineering is to develop services that meet the needs of its users. Therefore, explicit attention has to be paid to local needs. In general, users with little ICT experience are not aware of what kind of needs can be met by ICT-enabled services. Demonstrations of successful ICT prototype services can contribute to this knowledge.

**Requirements analysis.** Once the needs of the users in terms of information and communication have been identified, and the most viable ideas have been selected, the requirements analysis must be carried out. In order to validate the requirements, prototypes or designs are prepared and tested to the users.

**The construction and development of the ICT system.** The results of the requirements assessment are used to develop technically, but iteratively and adaptively an ICT system. In this phase there is also intensive collaboration with users representing the community. A prototype is considered ready, when it has been accepted for development and production, according to the users.

**The sustainability of ICTs in the local ecosystem.** Many services enabled for less privileged environments fail due to the lack of an economic model. Maintaining ICT systems involves costs and resource use. The question is always: who will be responsible for the costs at the end of the construction process? In ICT projects for social development, there is usually a donor (e.g. national government, World Bank, etc.) that pays for the initial investment. However, at a certain point in time, the funding ends and then the service loses its financial basis. There are different economic models that merit consideration, but in any case this analysis should be carried out in the initial phase of the process, preferably during the context analysis. ICT4D 3.0 employs the e<sup>3</sup>value business network methodology for analysis of economic sustainability (Gordijn and Akkermans, 2003; Bon, 2019).

## **Designing a postgraduate course: ICTs at the service of the community**

Based on the above considerations, the course objectives are formulated as (i) to make the next generation of information scientists aware of the potential role of ICTs for the developing and

emerging world, with appreciation for the highly diverse and complex contexts (in contrast to a one-size-fits-all approach), social-cultural factors and human needs that must be addressed; (ii) to equip the students with relevant field research and development methods and skills to develop technologies in a (poor) rural/suburban community/developing region; (iii) to acquire and reflect on the experience of carrying out a full life-cycle of a real-world software development project in the field, thereby learning to be able to deal with unfamiliar and complex contexts, and engage with communities with their specific contextual constraints, needs and goals.

Admission to the course is subject to a selection procedure based on motivation and skills. To be admitted students must submit a motivation letter and have an interview. They are admitted based on a combination of technical (programming, modeling, requirements engineering) skills and social/communication skills. Moreover, a specific attitude is required as well: openness to other cultures and contexts, willingness to collaborate in an interdisciplinary team, a hands-on mentality, a social orientation and a reflective nature.

During the course students conduct context analysis, problem identification, problem conceptual design, technical design, information system engineering, testing and development. The whole process takes 4 weeks, on location, and is conducted in a way that meets the needs of the community.

The course includes lectures, field visits to communities (rural or suburban) where users live and work. Interviews and focus group discussions, user tests and feedback sessions are also part of the course. The formal process begins with lectures reviewing important topics: (i) use and context, use case and requirements analysis; (ii) conceptual design of information systems; (iii) selected technical aspects of ICT projects; (iv) values design and economic sustainability analysis; (v) guidelines and protocols for interviews and focus group discussions with local communities.

After the user group meetings and initial context analysis, students form teams of 4-6 people. Each team selects a relevant case for prototyping, testing with users, evaluation, improvement and development. Sustainability analysis and *value network* design are part of the task. Real-world context constraints and opportunities are taken into consideration. Students work in self-organizing (so-called *scrum*) teams, dividing tasks and working closely together. Users must be involved to make sure their needs and (business) requirements are met. The course involves reflection and open dialogue. The constraints and opportunities of the real world



context are taken into consideration. The students interact and receive daily feedback from the teachers. At the end of the course period, the student teams present their project results to users, local experts, the academic community and other interested parties during an official closing event and social ceremony.

Assessment of the student's result is based on four course deliverables, one of which is individual and three consist of group work: (i) a personal (individual) reflection about the course and the student's role in the process, and what he/she learned from it; each team delivers (ii) a working information system/app, tested and validated by key users, documented and available as Open Source (group work); (iii) a group presentation/pitch during the end conference; (iv) a full field report containing the following items:

- Context analysis;
- A justification of the project (short), in terms of social responsibility and user needs; why are we doing this? Who is the beneficiary? What is the real world problem context?
- Interviews with local stakeholders, typed out (not necessarily literal), containing all relevant information necessary to understand the information problem and stakeholders' operational goals at hand. This document must contain all user and business requirements, key points, important details etc.); it must be structured in such a way as to allow modeling the information in a formal or semi-formal way;
- A use case and information analysis report including a stakeholder analysis, a system architecture, information concepts (activity diagram, class diagram, user interaction diagram, deployment diagram), and a summary of all requirements;
- High level system design and user scenario;
- A sustainable value model with multiple scenarios (Gordijn & Akkermans 2003) for quantitative and qualitative assessment of sustainability of the proposed ICT solution;
- Report of user tests (of minimal two cycles of iterative testing and improvement);
- Results of test sessions; users evaluation reports.
- Pointers to the actual software and its documentation.

## **"Co-creation of Inclusive ICTs" - a collaborative, inclusive course**

The design of the course is adjusted and improved interactively, implementing it and evaluating it in the real situation. The course was run twice: first in June 2018 and again in 2019 at UNIMAS, in Sarawak, Malaysia. The initiative to establish a postgraduate course on "ICT for Community Development" between VU Amsterdam and UNIMAS started in 2015. In the same year, VU started the implementation of Community Service Learning in its curricula. Since 2013 an optional course (6 ECTS = one month full-time) of ICT for development is offered in the postgraduate curriculum at VU, in the masters of computer science, information science and artificial intelligence, but still without field work. Since 2009, VU has carried out an ICT4D research program, named W4RA (Web alliance for Regreening in Africa).

Since 1999 UNIMAS has been implementing ICT4D research through the eBario and Long Lamai projects: projects that aim to connect poor communities in remote areas of Sarawak (Songan et al., 2006). CSL was already part of UNIMAS' educational curriculum before the experience addressed in this article. In June 2018, a group of eleven graduate students in Computer Science, Information Science and Artificial Intelligence from the VU joined another group of ten UNIMAS Computer Science students in Sarawak, Malaysia, for a one-month field course based on the ICT4D project, coordinated by a joint team of VU/UNIMAS teachers. The course was held on the UNIMAS campus in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Students attended classes and did group work daily. Several field visits were made to a local community. The course was organized according to the ICT4D 3.0 framework, starting with a general context analysis. This then led to the definition of three student projects. In 2019 the course was repeated with a group of 15 students. Some of the projects are presented in this article.

**Context analysis:** The project started with a context analysis by the students in the presence of the teachers, in order to familiarize themselves with the local environment, the inhabitants of the community and try to understand their professional objectives and the existing ecosystems in this context. The group visited a banana plantation and a small banana processing factory, talked with the inhabitants of the suburban community (Kampung PJ, in the local language) and visited the local primary school. Focus group discussions and interviews with community members led to a list of possible project ideas. Three ICT projects were selected, based on the following criteria: (i) relevance to the community and (ii) technical feasibility for an ICT student project. Two student projects, EDUCOMX and Monkey Math Sarawak, are briefly described in the following paragraphs. Full field reports by the students are available on the W4RA website <https://w4ra.org/student-papers/>.

**Collaborative objective building:** Although the course consists of implementing an ICT project for the benefit of a community in a less privileged environment, at the start of the course, the project objective is not defined and not known to the students. The goal definition must be done in collaboration with the community. One of the biggest challenges for the students is to know how to analyze the new, unfamiliar context, how to detect real problems and to invent and build a solution together with the users, that it has to be acceptable to them. Students make field visits, interviews and focus group discussions with users within the community context, in order to understand the local situation from the users' perspective.

### **Student projects to design and build ICTs for basic education**

During interviews with parents, teachers, and community children in June 2018 and again in June 2019, the ICT4D students learned that although English is a lingua franca in urban areas of Malaysia, in less privileged rural areas, English education in primary schools is of lower quality than in urban (private) schools. Since subjects such as science and mathematics are taught in English, the limited knowledge of this language makes it difficult to educate children in this rural community. The Malaysian government has decreed that the teaching of mathematics at the basic level should be in English. This is a disadvantage for children in rural communities, who will learn even less, when English becomes the language of instruction also for Math and Science.

**User needs analysis:** According to parents and teachers in a poor community, who were interviewed by the students, learning English is of key importance for children in this community. Since educational resources in public schools are not sufficient, alternative learning methods are sought. The students propose a mobile application (accessible by Smartphone) since most families in the kampung have a Smartphone, despite the lack of Internet connection).

**Analysis of technical requirements:** The students decided to build a game for children to learn English, as a pilot mobile application to analyze if this would be useful and appealing for children. For the analysis of usage cases and requirements, students met a group of community children and ask them to draw their favorite superheroes and write down their hobbies and aspirations, as inspiration for the artwork to be used in the application reading material. The application was made attractive by adding gamification elements. For its educational elements the regular English learning methods from school were used. This process of use case and

requirements analysis is a key element of the context analysis and use case analysis, according to the ICT4D 3.0 framework. User interviews and stories are often decisive factors for the success of an application implemented in the community, and have to be collected and well analyzed by the students or developers.

**Construction, development, evaluation:** For the EDUCOMX application, existing gamification methods were used, to improve the children's English language proficiency, while playing. The design is playful and includes animations, sounds, funny colors and images. A scoring system is implemented. Users (children) can continue through chapters that look and feel like levels of play, which must be completed to continue to the next level. Status bars show each user's progress and scores.

**Evaluation:** The children's evaluation of the system was a central activity in this project. After a week of construction and laboratory testing, the first prototype tests were conducted at Kampung PJ with a group of 21 children between the ages of 10 and 12. The children were invited to play freely with the application, in the style of a Living Lab.

The children liked the concept of comics and began reading the texts aloud so that their English reading skills were audible. The questions at the end were a bit difficult for them. The students realized that there were too many pages before the test began, so after a few pages they had trouble concentrating on reading. The children seemed to enjoy unlocking new chapters and were motivated to answer the questions correctly. The process was such that they also began sharing answers with other children to help them unlock new chapters. Sound effects were also a motivating factor in answering the questions. In the process it was also noticed that the back button and logout button were in the wrong place on the screen and had to be moved to another place.

**Sustainability and reflection:** Two contextual issues influence design decisions: (i) connectivity and (ii) specificity. First, in rural areas there is no (consistent) Internet access, which makes online content not a design option. Second, existing digital learning platforms are not adapted to the local culture or to the specific wishes of end users (children). User testing was the core activity of this project and provided many new perspectives. Students learned how to make design decisions based on context and user requirements. Sustainability analysis revealed the need for further exploration of the use case. This will be followed up by UNIMAS, as this university has an educational systems development program to serve rural communities in this region.

**Second cycle of the student project in 2019.** In Sarawak, in the year 2019, a government decreed that primary education in mathematics and science would be changed to English, starting in January 2020. The teachers, interviewed by the students, explained the difficulties involved in this change, especially for schools in rural areas, where children and teachers have limited English proficiency. Interest in the prototype of the English learning game application, developed in the first year in 2018, has led to further development of the educational software project, by a student group in 2019. Five students (three from Amsterdam and two from Malaysia) resumed the development project, based on the knowledge and feedback obtained in 2018. An initial design was made for an educational game with which you learn to do basic calculations in English. The idea is that the children, playing with a playful application, learn the mathematical vocabulary in the English language. The second educational game was developed by one of the master students from VU during the April-June 2019 period, in which he did a more thorough context study in the local area.

**Project results:** At the end of the course the students presented their results in an informal ceremony in the Kampung Pinggan Jaya community and the following day in a formal conference at the university. In addition, personal reflection reports were presented, describing their own role during the project implementation process. The game was considered attractive by the children. Since children are not allowed to use Smartphone at school, the game was aimed to be used outside school hours. A (common) problem encountered was: how to keep the app alive after the end of the course. This problem was not solved. There was no responsible entity to keep the game alive.

**Second educational project: April 2019.** In 2019 the CSL project has been continued in the same environment in Sarawak. One of the students returned to the community to build a (second cycle) educational game for children in the community. He focused on the design of a game to teach children Math, in a game-like environment. While playing the game they also learn the English vocabulary for Math. The idea was to build on top of the experiences of the previous year, and make a system that is more robust, and that can be sustained after the project is finished.

**Challenges encountered during the project:** The development met with several challenges, based on three view-points: the user interface, the educational ecosystem, and the technical infrastructure. As it became clear to the students that telephones are prohibited in elementary schools, the educational game was designed to be used by the children as an (extracurricular) educational activity, i.e. outside official school hours. The application has been tested in several

sessions with students from two schools and evaluated by teachers. The difference of this game with other games is that it is Open Source. It can be found for free on the Internet. It has been specifically designed according to the local requirements of a community school in Sarawak.

**User interface:** Design of the game interface requires special care. Information (visual, written text, spoken text) is interpreted in different ways across cultures. For example, icons used in the Netherlands may be interpreted differently in Malaysia. Different cultural values and standards can hinder communication between the (Dutch) developer/student and the user (child, teacher, parent). For example a game background environment, or a cute animal in the game may be interpreted differently by the children or the parents. These cultural differences can affect acceptance of a game. It is the task of the student to design a game interface that is culturally accepted.

**Assessing the local education ecosystem:** Gamification for educational purposes is a challenge to make the game really interesting for children. Gamification is a powerful strategy when implemented correctly. It can enhance an education program, and positively influence the behavior of students to achieve learning objectives. The challenge of the design is to make the game fit the educational requirements according to and mathematical learning methods. Moreover, embedding the project in an organizational context of primary education in Sarawak is also a considerable challenge. Teachers are not always convinced that a mathematical game will help the primary children to learn mathematics. Interviews with teachers are aimed to discuss their openness to this type of education support.

**Resources and infrastructure constraints:** For the development of a sustainable system, it must be taken into account that the technical environment in a poor rural community is less developed than in urban areas. Most rural areas in Sarawak do not have an internet connection and access to multiple digital devices. Selecting a proper device and environment to host the game which will fit in these constraints is important for the sustainability of the game.

**Designing, developing and testing:** During designing, developing, and testing of the application, several cycles (usually three) will be used to improve the application.

**Creating the gaming story iteratively, in cycles:** The first cycle is about understanding the target group as well as the context. Moreover, in this cycle, the student looks into which learning objectives are needed for the children and how these mathematical subjects can be structured in the game.

**Understanding the target audience and the context:** To fully adopt the content and technology to the local context, first research is carried out to understand the level of mathematics and the problems the children face during learning of mathematics. Moreover, it is investigated how the local technical environment is functioning. This is done during visits to the local community school. The main question regarding technical infrastructure is: which device fits the best for hosting the application, and how can this be maintained and kept available in a sustainable way.

**Defining learning objectives:** To define the learning objectives, the results of the focus groups is used to understand with which subject the children have difficulties. Moreover, interview(s) with teachers and literature study of mathematics help to define the learning objectives.

**Structuring the experience:** To test gaming experience two gaming designs are created to find out which type of game is most interesting for the children. Learning objectives and learning methods are discussed with a primary school teacher to understand how learning subjects are interrelated. Both games are tested as prototypes. The best method is chosen based on test sessions with the children and evaluation by the teachers.

**Identifying gamification elements with children:** To investigate which gaming elements are useful and interesting to keep the attention of the children, observation test sessions with a group of children are done at school, in which they can freely play with the game prototypes. This is done in group sessions, so that children can also interact with each other and learn from each other, as a social interaction event. During these gaming sessions, the student observes how the children use the apps, which gaming elements the children prefer or miss in the game, what goes well and what should be improved. These test sessions yield a large number of new requirements and essential gaming elements. This can also be discussed with primary school teacher for further fine tuning of the game design.

## **Discussion**

The discussed ICT4D In The Field course is to be evaluated in view of the CSL principles and those of participatory action research (PAR) that have been laid out in the beginning of this Chapter, and that underlie the ICT4D 3.0 framework (Bon, 2019) which has been used as the basis of the course.

The main questions regarding the educational goals of the course then are:

(i) Does the course achieve its goals of training students in socio-technical software development methodology, while making them aware of their social and civic responsibility to address the complex issues, needs and practical realities of the real world?

(ii) Did students learn how to develop inclusive technologies that serve the needs of underprivileged communities and that help connect them to the networked computerized society, in for them appropriate ways?

To find out whether (i) the educational objectives were met, we assessed whether this course has helped deliver adequately trained professionals who are aware of the potential role of ICTs for the developing world, with a clear appreciation for diversity, complexity, specific context, socio-cultural factors and human needs.

Another important point is to evaluate (ii) whether the project is truly community-oriented and sensitive to the local context, assessed in terms of how it serves real local needs, and this requires that continuous evaluation must be done by students with the users, throughout the project period, to find out whether the proposed ICT solution really serves the locally defined needs. The opinion of the local stakeholders (teachers, parents, school children in this case) is central to this type of user-centred design. Students have to take into account that the whole ICT4D project might fail, if it is not perceived as useful by the community. And project failure in the course is a real possibility to be taken into account. There are no easy answers in this type of education.

Based on the student assessments, reflection reports and group results, carried out by and received from the students by the course teachers (the authors of this Chapter) it can be said that the course "ICT4D in the Field" met its educational and social objectives in a way that fits the Principle of professional practice (No. 1 in Table 1). Students extensively collaborated with users, learned about the context, and worked collaboratively and interactively, testing and improving the technological solution according to user requirements, according the Principle of value (No. 2 in Table 1: democracy, emancipation, autonomy and socio-economic development). In terms of the Principles of action and of collaboration with the stakeholders (Nos. 3 and 4 in Table 1), the students had the opportunity to exchange ideas extensively with local users, and take action to design and build a system that offers some progress or betterment, although within the confines of severely limited time and other resources.



With respect to the principles of open dialogue and reflection and continuous learning (Nos. 5 and 6 in Table 1), the short period of four course weeks is not enough for a really satisfactory deep reflection. As a student complained (quite rightly), there was not enough time, within such a short course, to reflect and think things properly over, as the deadline to finish the project was very short, driving out time for deliberation and open dialogue.

Also with regard to the effectiveness and project results, it is clear that, in terms of community service, one month is short for a full iterative software development lifecycle, aimed at resulting in a production-ready system. In terms of the ICT4D 3.0 socio-technical methodology, it can be said that this student project represents only a first cycle development, of a working, and fully documented and tested prototype. An ICT project usually includes more iterations. Therefore it is important to continue the project, for example by transferring it to the local students of UNIMAS, in the next years, meanwhile fostering long-term relationships and continuing working with the partner university and local community partners. The good relationship, commitment and trust between the VU, UNIMAS and local communities is key to the continuity and sustainability of this course and the long-term service to the communities.

The first results of the courses given in 2018 and 2019 show, in terms of community orientation, a first step towards the development of sustainable solutions. Student reflection reports showed that participating in a collaborative project, and designing, building and developing ICT solutions in collaboration with people in underprivileged communities in low-resource settings is an intense personal experience (some students even called it a life-changing experience). One of the main challenges for the sustainability of the course and of the project in the long term is the financing of this type of education. For the very intensive supervision by teachers as well as for the additional out-of-pocket costs of field work by students, institutional support is necessary. This depends in the first instance on the commitment of the two participating universities and the concretization in actions of its promise to support community service learning, which must be shown and effectuated beyond mere words.

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## PART 5

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*Language: key or obstacle to inclusive education?*



## CHAPTER 12

# TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY: CHALLENGES FROM THE ECUADORIAN CONTEXT

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### Abstract

English language teaching has produced controversial results in Ecuador's higher education system in the recent decade, due to the fact that it has been almost impossible to reach the level of proficiency in English B2 according to the Common European Framework for Languages, which is a prerequisite for completion of undergraduate studies, and the persistence of unequal access to quality processes for English language learning in basic and secondary education. The objective of this chapter is to explore, through documentary analysis, those aspects concerning public policy, the curriculum, and the challenges faced by English teaching in Ecuador with respect to bridging the gap that has arisen between those who speak English and those who do not. The chapter ends with examples of educational interventions that have been implemented in the areas mentioned above with positive and negative effects at the university level.

### Introduction

In Ecuador there are 27 dialects spoken by different ethnic groups that are located especially in the natural regions Sierra and Amazonia. It is recognized that not all its population is Spanish-speaking, therefore, there are bilingual communities that use one of the 14 different languages, of which only three have been categorized as official: Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar (INEC, 2010). However, members of these ethnicities make use of Spanish on a regular basis when outside their communities (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censo, 2011).

Despite Ecuador's self-declaration as a Multicultural Nation, situations of ethnic segregation and regionalism are still perceived, which is why working with education in diversity is a relevant task in the hidden curriculum of initial teacher training. Within this wealth of ancestral languages, English is taught as a foreign language at all levels of education in the education system beginning in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2016). Vega (2008) and Villafuerte, Intriago and Romero (2018) maintain that in this country it is necessary to work intensively and extensively on those values, ideas, and conceptions of inclusive culture. In addition, adjusting organizational processes and reviewing priorities in schools has been promoted because life in diversity is latent, but in reality, this has been little accepted by the majority of citizens (Bravo, Villafuerte and Ormaza, 2013).

It can be speculated that Ecuador is in the line followed by dozens of nations around the world, regarding that knowledge of the English language could guarantee access to better opportunities for employment, studies or business. Around this, educational initiatives have been carried out aimed at ensuring their teaching and learning for more than three decades. However, students entering universities still have limited knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon language. Faced with this situation, the questions arise: Why do students entering Ecuadorian universities have such a low level of English? How necessary is it for an Ecuadorian student to know English? Since when is English considered necessary in Ecuador?

This chapter seeks to provide answers to these questions, from what the authors call the social gap of access to the opportunity to learn English. This has as its beginning the approval of unwise public policies, which have negatively affected the quality of teachers' work and have not improved the availability of material resources for their administration and application.

According to Education First (Gordon, 2014), Ecuadorians have a low level of English, ranking 65th out of 88 countries evaluated worldwide. In a journalistic investigation of 2014, it was published that students who enter the higher education system in Ecuador do not have the required level of English. In this sense, the English placement tests given to leveling students at the University of Guayaquil (2019) revealed that students enter the first semester with the promised knowledge of English at level A1- according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This data contrasts negatively with the expectation raised in the Foreign Language Curriculum (2016) that sets as a goal the level B1 of the CEFR upon completion of secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2016). Thus, the general description of this level according to the Council of Europe (2001):



*[the student] is able to understand the main points of clear texts and in standard language if they deal with matters that are known to him, whether in his work, study or leisure situations. They know how to deal with most of the situations that can arise during a journey through areas where the language is used. Can produce simple, coherent texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences, events, wishes and aspirations, as well as briefly justify opinions or explain plans (p. 26).*

As a result of the incorporation of English as a foreign language into the national primary school curriculum in early 2017 (Larrea, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2016), the expected level of proficiency by the end of the seventh grade is A2. This level is generally defined in the following way:

*[The student] is able to understand frequently used phrases and expressions related to areas of experience that are especially relevant to him/her (basic information about him/herself and his/her family, shopping, places of interest, occupations, etc.). Can communicate when carrying out simple, everyday tasks requiring nothing more than simple, direct exchanges of information on familiar or routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her past and environment, as well as issues related to his/her immediate needs (p. 26).*

In the university context, there was a requirement for the graduation of professionals for all fields of knowledge, to reach level B2 of the CEFR. However, the generations of students who will have to meet this goal are still halfway through their careers by the year 2019, in which this analysis is carried out. This level of domain is known as independent user and its description is:

*[the student] can understand the main ideas of complex texts dealing with both concrete and abstract subjects, even if they are of a technical nature as long as they are within his/her field of specialization. Is able to interact with native speakers with a sufficient degree of fluency and naturalness so that communication is effortless on the part of any of the interlocutors. Can produce clear and detailed text on a variety of subjects, as well as defend a point of view on general subjects indicating the pros and cons of the different options (Council of Europe, 2001).*

In the recent reform of the Academic Regime Regulations (2019) there was an important change in the expectation of English language proficiency of students from Ecuador. The expected level is lowered from B2 to B1 for all university study tracks, except for pedagogical training programs in language teaching or foreign language linguistics programs. This change arises as a result of the incoherence that existed when considering a level of English, which, given the conditions of foreign language teaching, made it very difficult for English learners to

reach it without having abundant contact with the target language, contrary to what is recommended by authors such as Krashen (1981); and to make use of the foreign language in genuine communicative activities so that classroom learning can be consolidated outside it (Council of Europe, 2001).

Although English language teaching officially gained strength more than 30 years ago in Ecuador (Nordquist, 2017), in practice progress has not yet been able to overcome the social gaps that have historically emerged from unequal access to quality services in public education compared to private education (Villafuerte, 2019).

At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that education is one of the most influential factors in the construction of the life trajectories of individuals and social groups. According to Jiménez, Luengo and Taberner (2009), educational exclusion is suffered by those people who have been forced, for various reasons, to leave the formal education system. They do so without having developed the professional skills to enter the labour market. Training determines to a great extent the position that people will reach in the labour market. This reaches other spheres of family and community type; since the levels of education of a person can influence the delimitation of the quality of life of their families (Benito, 2010).

For Tuirán and Ávila (2012), job exclusion may be the result of educational exclusion. This delicate situation can generate limitations for the social development of individuals, since they run the risk of becoming statisticians of a social and public health problem (González and Restrepo, 2010).

The Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of the English CRADLE program aimed to support the teaching of English in secondary school for almost 20 years and was led by the British Consulate and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (Calle, Argudo, Cabrera, Moscoso, Smith y Cabrera, 2012). One might think that after this time of implementation the results would be outstanding, especially due to the involvement of high ranking state institutions. However, means of verification of impacts, such as the results of English exams applied to students in the last grades of high school during 2011, were 13 over 20 points on average (Ministry of Education, 2011).

In 2013, educational clubs were introduced with the hope that teaching English had a practical touch, but this idea did not get off the ground. The problem was perhaps the lack of qualified English teachers who could guide the activities in a more didactic way. Recently, in 2017, Ecuador's education system began with the implementation of Ministerial Agreement 0052-14,

which ordered the incorporation of the English subject into the general basic education curriculum, i.e. from the second grade to the seventh grade.

Although it is too early to reach conclusions on the effectiveness of the implementation of this educational policy, the preliminary monitoring results carried out by research teams from the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí (Villafuerte and Intriago, 2018) showed very serious difficulties for its application. This is due to the fact that a relevant element is that "educators offer learners the opportunity to interact with the new language in situations similar to those they experienced when developing their mother tongue" (Matamoros, Rojas, Pizarro, Vera y Soto, 2017, p. 968), and that is possible through student-centered teaching (Intriago, Morales and Soto, 2015), a situation that has not been achieved, among other reasons, due to the persistence of overcrowded classrooms in public education, and the little importance that students and their families give to the acquisition of English.

Among the deficiencies of the Ecuadorian education system in general, there is a lack of specialized teachers, including seriously those of English as a foreign language (Constante, 2016). In basic education schools, it is the same generalist teachers who, without the necessary methodological-didactic training or mastery of the language, try to teach English. The situation worsens in rural education. Faced with this scenario, and as an explanation of this reality, it is necessary to mention that the English teacher training programs recently completed the redesign of their new curricula between 2017 and 2018 (Faculty of Education Sciences, 2017) in accordance with the new model and vision of Higher Education implemented in 2015 (Higher Education Council, 2015).

The new standards and changes in initial teacher training programs generate diverse states of anxiety in the future English teacher in Ecuador. This state suggests that it is an emotional symptom whose function is to warn and activate the human organism in the face of a risk situation that may be real or probable (Sierra, Ortega and Zubeidat, 2006). At this point, Baeza, Balaguer, Belchi, Oronas and Guillamón (2008) maintain that the academic performance of university students is notably diminished as a result of processes related to anxiety in the face of standardized tests that must be progressively passed. Anxiety causes discomfort and loss in the personal and academic performance of the students.

## **Expectations and trends in teaching and learning English in Ecuador**

In Ecuador, it is perceived that the command of the English language allows access to better job opportunities, as well as exploring areas of personal and professional development through study opportunities in English-speaking countries (Educación First, 2015). Additionally, knowing English puts people on the spot to access up-to-date information that is shared through many 21st century digital media (Mikanowski, 2018). It is clear that learning English is more than important.

The teaching of the English language in public education in Ecuador has applied the method of Grammar and Translation (Villafuerte, 2019). For their part, Calle et al. (2012) maintain that English teachers in Ecuador have focused on the teaching of grammar in spite of the fact that, in 1993, the communicative model was applied as a contribution of the CRADLE project (Ministry of Education and Cultures of Ecuador, 2009). Consequently, English classes have consisted of the presentation of grammatical structures (Calle et al., 2015) but, during classes, "it was hardly possible to speak a few words in a foreign language" (Galán, 2012, p. 18). The presence of operational and logistical constraints in public education have been able to affect the implementation of personalized education. Classes have focused on the choral repetition of dialogues pre-established by teachers, distancing the learner from the communicative approach.

According to González-Ortiz (2015) one of the first concrete advances in the change of English language teaching in the education system of Ecuador has to do with the increase in the number of class hours per week, which went from 2 to 5. It furthermore has to do with the introduction of the total physical response method in the practice of the English language in the public basic education system, and the reaffirmation of the communicative approach for the teaching of English in all levels of the education system.

Finally, Villafuerte (2019) maintains that "at the beginning of 2019, the traditional approach to teaching English as a foreign language persists in the vast majority of schools, especially in public schools" (p. 45). This is despite the fact that public policy regulated the use of the Content and Foreign Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model from 2016; similarly as in schools and colleges in Europe (Nikula, 2017). Therefore, the challenge posed by the new curriculum must overcome limitations linked to the fact that classes continue to focus on grammar explanations given by the teacher in Spanish.

## **Public policy analysis**

The methodology applied in this chapter is reflective criticism. The public policy analysis techniques proposed by Darling-Hammond (2010) that consider the quality of access to public services, the availability of skills and talents for policy implementation, and relevance to the historical moment and social context are adopted: the analysis of intervention strategies, participatory and/or promotional components, community implementation and insertion, intermediation between the institutional provider and the beneficiaries. Alternative solutions that imply differential strategies are also pointed out.

The analysis of the internal consistency of public policy in education, and specifically the teaching of English in Ecuador, takes as a relevant factor the duration or temporality of the intervention, the stage of the problem in which it intervenes, the intervention methodologies and techniques, and the objectives or expectations of program change. For this reason, the present study is based on a documentary analysis that contrasts what was observed in the real context during the period 2008-2019 in representative centers of public and private basic and secondary schools in the canton of Manta, Ecuador; with the changes and implementation of the public policy implemented in the period 2012-2017 for the teaching of English as a foreign language in Ecuador.

In the following pages we explore the journey that the Ecuadorian student goes through in his/her education in the English foreign language before reaching university. While presenting the educational scenario, we analyze three categories that are the central argument of this chapter: (i) Educational policies implemented; (ii) Teacher professional development; (iii) National policies have impacted opportunities for access to quality.

Inequality is probably the main challenge facing Latin American countries, with education being one of the areas where this imbalance is most often reflected, including the education of a foreign language. (Education First, 2018). The impacts of the gap in access to English language learning are concentrated in the lack of development of citizens' skills to access jobs, mobility, participation, and professional and social development.

Among the effects that public policy decisions generate, according to Darling-Hammond (2010) are: the quality of access to learning experiences, teachers prepared with solid technical knowledge of their field of study and methodological-didactic, and a coherent curriculum that faithfully reflects what society needs according to its historical moment and social context.

These three effects make it possible to analyze the results of the teaching of the English language in the last two decades and to contribute to the discussion on their future.

Thus, public policy with respect to the English subject in Ecuador has had strong strategic shifts; those that link the styles of each government in turn. Thus, the first laws for the management of the Public Education System (SEPU) were passed between 1930 and 1940, but the corresponding curricula did not include the teaching of English as a foreign language (British Council, 2015).

Since the beginning of the 1970s, work has been done to reduce the level of illiteracy in Ecuador, but towards the 1980s, when the problem of foreign debt broke out, public spending on education fell drastically, a situation that led to an increase in student desertion and a profound lack of attention, especially in rural education. Paz and Miño (2010) maintain that the business model of development in Ecuador is implemented due to "the presence of external factors related to the neoliberal model, conditions made by international financial institutions, and the lack of economic regulation that stimulates the domestic productive sector" (p.2).

According to Paz and Miño (2010), it was President Febres Cordero (1984-1988) who initiated the entrepreneurial path of public services. This policy was consolidated by Presidents Durán-Ballén (1992-1996) and Jamil Mahuad (1998-2000). The "bank bailout" and the dollarization in 1999 are to be mentioned: aspects that drove the capitalist modernization of the state that deteriorated public services.

Paz and Miño add that Presidents Gustavo Noboa (2000-2003) and Lucio Gutiérrez (2003-2005) suffocated social security in Ecuador. Circumstances such as the absolute concentration of wealth in a few families led to the migration of the Ecuadorian population to Chile, the United States and Europe between 1995 and 2010. Government instability due to the presence of seven governments in a decade raised country risk indices and affected its competitiveness in the region. In this context, investment in education services was reduced in urban areas and abandoned in rural areas.

Between 2007 and 2016, during the government of President Correa, investment in education was gradually increased, with the goal of allocating 6% of GDP to education in line with the Millennium Development Goals for Latin America. The investment focused on the construction of the "millennium educational units", the accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the implementation of scholarship programs to enhance the skills of

English teachers, and other fields of knowledge prioritized by the socioeconomic development plan and the change of the Productive Matrix.

For Rocío Blanco (2013), the goal is to offer quality education; that is, that it responds to the differences present in the communities, offering the population the opportunity to reach better levels of competitiveness. Likewise, 4 public universities were created called emblematic universities, focused on: technological development, fine arts, bio-development and educational sciences. In these latter projects, English language proficiency is widely promoted. But what has been the reality of English language education?

### **Access to quality English language learning scenarios**

The quality of education traditionally received by English language students in high school is far from referring to the second word of this sentence. Darling-Hammond (2010) introduces the term scenarios of dysfunctional learning to refer to those in which methodological and didactic practices are as old as those of a century ago, and where the educational process is still seen as one that involves the mere transmission of data. These structures hinder several key processes and components for effective learning, especially of a foreign language that invokes lucrative interaction among learners. And he is not mistaken when, for example, the English teacher has classes with up to 60 students in a classroom, and s/he has five of those classes. The reader may ask, can a teacher who teaches 300 students per day? Can the teacher get to know the learning needs of each student? Can the teacher effectively accompany the student's learning under these conditions?

An English class with 45 students means that if each student could participate in the same proportion during 1 minute, for five days of classes. In the best of cases it is equivalent to five minutes of contact or interaction with English per week!

Decades of research, professional practice and reflection from the theoretical and practical have confirmed that acquiring and using a second language involves massive exposure to the second language being studied (Council of Europe, 2001; Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Ellis, 2003; Krashen, 1981; Krashen, Stephen, Long and Scarcella, 1979). Another aspect of English language teaching with dysfunctional characteristics has been the lack of academic rigor that this subject suffered versus subjects traditionally seen as important or necessary for the formation of schoolchildren. In interviews with public school principals and teachers, participants mentioned that it was very rare for students to miss a year in English (Interviews

with principals of fiscales/fiscomisionales schools, 2016). For a father it was inconceivable that his son should stay in English: "not even Spanish is spoken well" is a saying widely used in defense of his children. This hidden feature of the curriculum has been taken advantage of by students who know that in English it is never lost. One route that explains how difficult it is for students to see the relevance is presented by authors Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, and Bryant (2011) as follows:

The reality that the foreign language is not widely spoken in the community has an impact on the adoption of the communicative approach, as its use is reduced to artificial use in the classroom, never used by learners beyond the minimum compendium of topics available in the classroom (p. 213).

### **CRADLE project (secondary education)**

In order to make the English language more accessible, in 1992 the Ministry of Education created the National Division of Foreign Languages. This office was created within the framework of the agreement with the British Council with the purpose of creating the Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of the English (CRADLE) (Haboud, 2009). Thus, the subject of English as a foreign language was integrated into the curriculum of Ecuador's public secondary education between 1992 and 2009. Although this program created a series of texts that took into account the reality of Ecuador, including in its texts cities and pro-vincias, historical figures, politics, sports and so on, of this country (CRADLE, 1993). Its execution put emphasis on the explanation of the grammatical rules and to the filling of the activities that were in the units of the text *Our World Through English*. In addition, these contents were explained by the English teacher mainly in Spanish. On average, students from the first year of secondary school to the third year of high school received between 3 and 5 hours/classes per week (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2006).

The CRADLE programme was implemented until 2008. Its objectives were to "innovate and strengthen the teaching-learning process of the English language, and provide adequate infrastructure for the development of the new curriculum" (López, 2011, p. 41), and its actions focused on Quito, the country's capital city.



## **English in primary school**

Although the English language course was not compulsory until 2016 (Larrea, 2014), many private primary schools have been offering it for many years. In public and private schools, the subject of English as a foreign language has had a different path and evolution, and it is there where one can begin to reflect on the beginning of the route of inequality in access to quality teaching of the English language.

Before the English subject was incorporated into the primary school curriculum, these offered classes through the basic education teacher, who gave short classes, mainly focused on memorizing vocabulary lists by subject (Interview with anonymous English teacher, 2016). The basic education teacher is trained to help the student learn the basic subjects of second through seventh grade basic education. Because of his/her role and greater contact with students, this teacher has traditionally been the one who has taught the subjects: English, music, computers and any other that was added to the curriculum with an extraordinary character. There was no budget to hire specialized teachers.

In March 2000, the Ministry of Education issued the Ministerial Agreement (746), whereby it was agreed that the English language subject would be taught from the first grade to the seventh grade of basic education as an elective subject based on the possibilities of each educational institution in terms of human or economic resources. The same document specifies that apart from the English subject, there were also electives such as music, manual arts and physical education. And it is the principal who decides the subjects that are offered in the school under his charge. Through various dialogues established with directors of public and fiscomissional schools, it is known that the least chosen elective class was English, mainly because the teachers lacked mastery of the language and didactics for their teaching (directors of public and fiscomissional schools, 2016).

In private schools, the teaching of English has been different. Depending on the socioeconomic level of the private school, these offered from 2 hours/week to those allowed by the curriculum as a maximum. Thus, the subject foreign language has generally consisted of 5 hours of class/week from preschool to secondary level. Some bilingual schools have offered 20 hours of classes/week of English, which included subjects taught in that language, mainly: Social Studies, Natural Environment Sciences, Computer science, Contemporary Issues, among others (Villafuerte, 2019).

From 2016 onwards, English language teaching is regulated in all public education establishments in Ecuador from the second year of basic education until the end of the baccalaureate (Larrea, 2014). The ministerial agreement issued aims to provide educational institutions, teachers and students to meet the goal, which is to achieve that students upon completion of secondary education have mastery of the English language at level B1 of the CEFR. Ecuador became part of the long list of countries that in recent years introduced English as a compulsory subject at the primary and secondary levels (Canh and Mai Chi, 2012; Chen, 2013; Chen, 2012; and Kang, 2012).

## **Teachers of English**

Within the educational policies of a nation, the norms concerning the preparation of future teachers in the field of foreign languages appear as an action of vindication and equity, and as a national strategy aimed at increasing the competitiveness of its population (Intriago, Villafuerte, Morales, Lema and Echeverría (2016); Villafuerte, Macías and Mendoza (2018). In order to study the training of teachers of English as a foreign language in Ecuador, it is necessary to review documents such as the Ten-Year Education Plan (2006-2015), whose objective has been to improve the quality of education and strengthen educational institutions at the national level.

For a better understanding of the teacher training process in Ecuador, it is indicated that there are two types of institutions in charge of offering it: (1) the Higher Pedagogical Institutes (ISPED) in charge of training teachers for the levels of Initial Education and Basic General Education, and (2) the Faculties of Philosophy and Education where primary and secondary education teachers are trained (Villafuerte, 2019).

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education evaluated the knowledge of 5,000 English teachers in 2012, the results of which revealed that 2.4% of those evaluated obtained level B2 of the CEFR (2002) through the First Certificate of Cambridge University; and were accredited as teachers of English of the National Magisterium, but the great majority could not be accredited and had to initiate contingency plans (Calle et al., 2012). Among the measures implemented to overcome the lack of trained English teachers, the Go Teacher Scholarship Program was designed and implemented in 2013 (Republic of Ecuador, 2015b). The goal of this program was to facilitate the development of the communicative and didactic methodological skills of teachers through internships and training at universities in the United States and the

Caribbean. In addition, the Go Teacher program offered the opportunity to study a master's degree in curriculum and instruction in English as a second language at the Kansas State University of the United States (Republic of Ecuador, 2015b). These initiatives initially sought to create professionals specialized in curricula, methodologies to act as replicators to the return to the country, either by getting involved in schools and colleges, or in universities with training programs for foreign language teachers.

### **Not enough staff to meet the demand for English teachers in schools**

One problem that arose with the entry into force of Ministerial Agreement 52-14 was the lack of English teachers. Between 2016 and 2017, the Ecuadorian government invited national and foreign teachers with a good command of the English language to fill these vacancies. Many undergraduate graduates from different parts of the world and the country joined this project. However, due to budget and management limitations, the program was cancelled.

In the long term, the solution lies in the teacher training programs that the universities located in the country currently offer or may offer in the future, and the policies to attract applicants to these programs. It is worth pointing out that universities must watch carefully that the programmes really prepare the teaching staff so that they can effectively guide the learning of English from the earliest grades of school training. A review of redesigned programs from three universities in the coastal region of the country revealed that redesigned study tracks have a greater proportion of formative components towards the preparation of a secondary school teacher. For example, all of these universities omit subjects such as teaching reading in English, phonics, relation reading-ortography-phonology, use of play resources, or CLIL in school (ULEAM, UNEMI, UG, 2019).

### **Changes in the curriculum of the English subject in Ecuador**

The fact that students on average enter universities with an English level equivalent to CEFR A1 means that the decisions made have not worked, or that they require a longer period of time for implementation. The question that runs through this entire chapter is: to what is the poor performance of university aspirants attributed, does it allow us to analyze the curriculum and related elements? The answer could be that students entering the higher education system come from different educational realities. Until 2016, the Ecuadorian curriculum established

that Ecuadorian students receive classes from the eighth to the twelfth year of high school, while other students come from bilingual private schools.

The challenge facing the university as an institution that seeks to equip future professionals with competencies, knowledge and skills also involves wearing communicative competence not only in the mother tongue but also in a foreign language. The aim is to guarantee communication beyond local borders, and to materialize the aspiration of countries, so that their citizens can interact and develop economically, linguistically and politically in the great world scenario.

To respond to this challenge, the Higher Education System was revised with new expectations of academic excellence. Consequently, the country's universities and polytechnics began campaigns to redesign their academic programs in order to comply with the new vision of university hosted by the Higher Education Council and the government in office. The redesign of university programs introduced curricular innovations such as the Integrated Knowledge Projects (PIS) between 2016-2018. PIS seeks to articulate faculty at a level that collaboratively integrates training and research activities while students perform their pre-professional internships around a project of a practical nature.

In English teacher training careers, the teacher and his/her students have the opportunity to use the target language to create from reports of information collected through research instruments, according to the final report of the Knowledge Integrator Project (PIS). Thus, in case studies carried out at one university, Villafuerte, Intriago and Romero (2018) maintain that English teachers in training move through different tasks and activities that allow them to get closer to the socio-educational reality, public policy and teaching practices in real time. The future teachers take a process of progressive complexity articulated from qualitative and quantitative educational research practices, but, above all, the students analyze the problem and propose solution routes for their future professional practice. This route includes the use of information and communication technologies as one of the innovations of the initial teacher training process (Villafuerte, 2017).

In the last 4 years, Ecuadorian researchers such as Farfán, Villafuerte, Romero and Intriago (2017), Cevallos *et al.* (2016), among others, have conducted research that contributes to the best use of ICTs in the training processes of foreign language teachers. However, it is necessary to expand the coverage of educational research projects that focus on the teaching and learning of basic education students and the baccalaureate, work with students with disabilities,

the use of ICTs in rural and suburban reality, in coherence with the purposes of the Digital Educational Agenda 2017-2021 of Ecuador. The latter proposes the availability of didactic and technical support mechanisms for the development of educational innovations based on the use of educational technology (Ministry of Education, 2017).

In order for the experience to be more effective, it is necessary to increase the direct and interactive contact of students in the learning processes, from the introductory stages of a subject to the learning evaluation stage (Fernández and Torres, 2015). In this sense, Web 2.0 and 3.0 (chat, wikis, blogs, etc.) can bring learners closer to practice environments similar to the reality of an English-speaking community, an issue that has the potential to motivate students to learn that target language (Cevallos, Intriago, Villafuerte, Molina, and Ortega, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Although the review of the literature indicates important advances in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Ecuador, it is worrying that, upon interviewing and observing current teachers, the data collected reveal that they are unaware of these. Public policy efforts to improve the teaching and learning of English create new challenges around accessibility to quality education services at all levels of Ecuador's public education system.

The implementation of the 2017 English curriculum incorporates adjustments that could help students in basic schools to establish the linguistic bases of reading and writing, the acquisition of vocabulary and pronunciation, among others, in order to acquire concepts and theories, and to carry out more demanding cognitive processes that are seen in secondary education. These improvements include new texts articulated to the teaching of content-based languages, which in the case of Ecuador has materialized in the CLIL model.

With regard to the processes of initial training of English teachers, fundamental changes have been initiated to improve the services of higher education institutions from recognized functions such as teaching, research and links with society. In this sense, there are already programs in place that train future teachers. Although the first cohort will graduate two years after the publication of this text, the fruits of the new policies, curricular changes, and teacher training will soon be applied, with the expectation that they will contribute to the reduction of the access gap that has persisted in access to quality education.

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CHAPTER 13

**LEARNING ENGLISH: A GOAL FOR INCLUSIVE  
AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA?**

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**Key words:** Communicative competence, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), bilingualism, education in English, Colombian bilingualism policy (PNB)

**Abstract**

This chapter presents the results of a study on the impact of English education at Higher Education in Colombia, in the context of national bilingualism policies in Colombia. The research data were obtained through a survey among nine teachers and 256 students, a qualifying language test among 256 students, and interviews of 9 teachers. The study was carried out at the Universidad Surcolombiana, in Neiva, in the south of Colombia. The study revealed lower scores in English among students than the level expected by the Colombian state in its national policies. Furthermore, a list of weaknesses of the institutional English courses in Colombia emerges, which must be taken into account in efforts to improve associated educational processes. Despite the fact that the study was carried out locally, at one Higher Education Institution, the results provide important insights in the situated effectiveness of language education, in the context of bilingualism policies in Colombia.

**Introduction: the landscape of English education in Colombia**

Among the challenges that globalization and expansion of the labor market have brought to Colombia, there is the effort to bring up a workforce proficient in foreign languages, and skilled in information and communication technologies. As English is seen by the Colombian government as the universal language par excellence and the most widely used in different

economic and labor relations, national policies have been launched and various initiatives have been set up to turn the nation into a "bilingual country" (see also Table 1 below).

One of the most controversial initiatives proposed by the Colombian Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN*) is the National Bilingualism Program Colombia 2004-2019 (*Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, PNB*). The main objective of this programme is “to achieve citizens capable of communicating in English, in such a way that they can insert the country in the processes of universal communication, in the global economy, and in cultural openness, with internationally comparable standards” (MEN, 2006, p. 6). This program received support of different international organizations, among others the British Council and various Colombian universities. As its name suggests, the programme was designed to be implemented top-down, between 2004 and 2019 following an English language training policy. That means that teachers are trained such that they in turn train their students. This program caused significant controversy for the following reasons.

First, the goal to turn the country into a bilingual state by 2019 was considered unreachable, among other reasons because of the unequal conditions prevailing between private and public educational institutions. Unlike many private schools, public schools do not have the same economic and technological resources or appropriate spaces necessary to reach this goal. There were not (and still are not) enough teachers trained to teach English, especially for the first cycle of primary education (González, 2007; Usma, 2009).

Second, according to De Mejía (2006) and Fandiño, Bermúdez & Ramírez (2014), bilingual projects that focus on education for ethnic groups (ethno-education) were left out of the policy. González (2007) criticizes the PNB policy for ignoring different types or dialects of English, while favoring the hegemony of British English and its culture, as the plan does not include or promote the use of materials written in “Colombian English”, i.e. by Colombian authors, centered on the national and regional context.

The PNB includes "Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Language" (see Table 2) presenting a series of guidelines – based on the scale of the CEFR<sup>27</sup> – on different levels of proficiency in a foreign language, which have been set as targets for the educational cycles in the country (primary, secondary and university). This plan was criticized by various scholars, for not taking the Colombian reality into account, specifically multilingualism and

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<sup>27</sup> CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: an instrument produced within the Council of Europe.

multiculturalism that is present in this country (Zárate and Álvarez, 2005; Guerrero and Quintero, 2009; Rojas, 2010; Vargas, Tejada and Colmenares, 2011). Moreover, interculturality and the development of intercultural competences are rarely mentioned in the PNB (Barletta 2009; Rojas 2019).

Given this context, in this chapter we present the findings of an academic study, funded by the Universidad Surcolombiana (USCO) and carried out in the context of institutional English education to students of undergraduate programs – other than the Bachelor's degree in English – at USCO. The general purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the four levels of English – which must be taken as a grade – on the development of communicative competence in that language – and to verify to what extent university students were reaching the level as required by the PNB.

Since the launch of this policy and the controversies surrounding it, the Ministry of Education has implemented a series of bilingualism programs and strategies as a national education policy, investing multimillion dollar on resources, teacher training programs and international agreements. Still, the reality evidenced by different academics (González 2007; Usma 2009) and by the present study shows that the goals established by the Ministry of Education are still far from being reached. In the specific case of those who finish their university studies, their level of English proficiency is far below what was expected.

## **Backgrounds: Colombian national policy on bilingualism**

The policies on bilingualism in Colombia are not recent. According to Law 115 from 1994 English education is obligatory in educational institutions starting from primary school. The foundations for bilingualism as an educational policy in Colombia were laid down in Act No. 115 of 1994 (General Education Act) and took shape with the creation of the National Bilingualism Program 2004-2019, through which the State recognized that “to be bilingual is to have more knowledge and opportunities to be more competent and competitive, and to improve the quality of life of all citizens” (Ministry of National Education MEN, 2005). Thus, this programme “seeks to respond to national needs with respect to English, aims to train teachers and students of basic, middle and higher education capable of responding to a new bilingual environment, and promotes and protects the use of other languages in ethnic, racial and border populations” (MEN, 2005).

Table 1: From the "National Bilingualism Programme" towards a "Bilingual Colombia" (National Ministry of Education 2006).

<b>PROGRAM / POLICY</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE</b>
National Bilingualism Program 2004-2019	Enable citizens to communicate in English, as to further the country into universal processes, the global economy achieving cultural opening, according to international standards - MEN, 2006.
Program for Strengthening and Development of Foreign Language Competencies (PFDCLE) 2010-2014	Develop communication skills of English among teachers and learners in the educational system, as to improve the access of human capital to the global knowledge economy - MEN, 2012.
Law 1651, 2013: Colombian Law on Bilingualism	Modify the articles 13, 20, 21, 22, 30 and 38 of the Law 115 of 1994, Law on General Education with relation to foreign languages, giving priority to the English language in official learning institutions.
National Program of English Language Colombia Very Well! 2015-2025	To contribute to the transition of Colombia into the Latin American country with the highest level of competence in English of South America in 2025 - MEN, 2014.
Colombia Bilingual 2014-2018	Contribute to the improvement of English proficiency amongst Colombian teachers and learners in the educational system; this proficiency will improve students' and teachers' access to funding opportunities in other countries, increased mobility and better labor opportunities, including in Colombia - MEN, 2016

The PNB bases its proposal, among other considerations, on the fact that during the six years of Basic and Secondary Education in Colombia, a student takes an average of 720 hours of English, more than enough time to reach a high level of command of the language – between

B2 and C1– according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). For the specific case of higher education, the PNB establishes that all university students must accredit a B2 level of English according to the CEFR upon completion of their professional studies.

It is important to note that, with each change of government, new plans, policies and strategies to promote bilingualism have emerged, which seem to ignore what was being done in previous administrations, thus generating an evident lack of coherence and continuity of such policies with negative results in the achievement of the objectives of bilingualism plans. Table 1 shows the multiple overlapping plans. This raises questions on the usefulness of implementing plans without having completed the previous ones, and without having evaluated earlier outcomes and impacts of previous policies.

Table 2: Levels of English proficiency. Source: Guide No. 22 of Basic Standard Competences in Foreign Languages: English 2006.

<b>Levels according to Common European Framework of Reference</b>	<b>Colombian equivalent reference</b>	<b>Educational level expected to achieve</b>	<b>Goals for the educational system in 2019</b>
A1	Entry-level	Grades 1-3	
A2	Basic	Grades 4-7	
B1	Pre-intermediate	Grades 8-11	Minimal exit level for 100% of secondary education.
B2	Intermediate	Higher Education	Minimal level for teachers of English. Minimal level for graduates of other studies.
C1	Pre-advanced		Minimal level for graduates in language studies.
C2	Advanced		

A study by the British Council in 2015 indicates that all initiatives by the Colombian Ministry of Education symbolize valuable but ambitious efforts, since, although progress has been made

in the process, the goal of achieving a bilingual population by 2019 is certainly unreachable. The document also states, among other things, that *"in 2012, two thirds of the students who entered university had an English level of A1 or less, according to the results of standardized tests.* (2015, p. 7). This points at barriers to achieving the goal as laid down in the PNB and the established standards, according to the guidelines shown in Table 2, by 2019.

### **Case: assessing the level of English proficiency at the Universidad Surcolombiana**

The Universidad Surcolombiana (USCO) is an accredited Institution of Higher Education of high quality that has as part of its institutional purposes “to form competitive professionals at national and international level, for which it is necessary that its students reach levels of communicative competence in a foreign language”, that allows them, among other things, a greater participation in the global labor market and better intercultural communication. In this sense, the Higher University Council, through Agreement 065 of 2009, establishes as one of the requirements to opt for the professional title to "demonstrate competence in a foreign language, certified by the dependency of the University authorized for the purpose", in this case the Degree in English.

Article 4 of the aforementioned agreement empowers the Degree in English so that from the first academic period of 2010 all undergraduate students admitted to the first semester will take a qualifying exam in a foreign language, which places them in one of the four levels of English taught at the university. In addition, article 5 establishes the options for students to obtain the certification of communicative competence in a foreign language, which include "advancing and passing each of the four courses offered, or those required according to the result of the qualifying exam. Article 6 also states that the four levels of English “shall clearly reflect the linguistic competences of levels A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2 of the Common European Framework of Reference”.

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education expects the level of graduating professionals (from other studies than language degrees) to be B2, the University decided autonomously – and realistically – that the exit level of its graduates should be A2.2. This corresponds to a level from the seventh grade of Basic Secondary Education.

Since the degree program in English to which we are attached is responsible for the elaboration of the programming, implementation and evaluation of the language courses as well as to



certification of the communicative competence, we set out to study the impact of this course at USCO. The following two goals were set for our research: (i) To diagnose the level of communicative competence in English reached by the students who carry out the four courses offered in the USCO; (ii) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional English courses according to the perceptions of teachers and students.

## **Communicative competence**

Communicative competence (herein afterwards CC) is a concept coined by Hymes (1972) in the 1970s, as a reaction to traditional approaches such as that of Chomsky (1965), who presented linguistic competence as the ideal model for any speaker. The main criticism made by authors such as Kramsch (2006) to these "traditional" approaches is that they focused on the memorization of grammatical rules and the translation word by word of decontextualized phrases.

Among the best known CC models are Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980) and Van Ek (1986). The Hymes model added textual or sociolinguistic competence to linguistic competence, defined as the ability to discern when and how language was used in specific contexts. Canale and Swain (1980), in North America, developed the idea of CC for the context of second language teaching (Byram, 1997, p. 9). This CC model is composed of three basic competences: sociolinguistics, grammatical, and strategic competence. For Canale and Swain (1980) the teaching of the CC focuses on the development of students' abilities to carry out meaningful communication in concrete situations, in a given language. Its main objective is to achieve effective exchange of information between interlocutors. In the European context, Van Ek's model (1986) adds socio-cultural competence and social competence to the competencies proposed by Canale and Swain. With the growing acceptance of communication-centred foreign language teaching models, other high-impact communicative competence (CC) models emerged such as Bachman (1990); Bachman and Palmer (1996); Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995); among others.

As can be seen over time, CC models have given relevance to socio-cultural aspects of communication. According to Richards and Platt (1992), communicative competence is the ability not only to apply grammatical rules of a language to form grammatically correct phrases, but also to know when and how to use these phrases. Such competence also involves the skills

necessary for an individual to use semiotic systems, which are available as part of a socio-cultural community.

Several researchers have pointed out that the main concern of the CC is the effectiveness of information exchange, i.e. how language is transmitted and understood by interlocutors (Byram, 1997; Zhou, 2011). The exploration of culture, required to make sense of information and appropriately developed in different cultural contexts, continues to be relegated (Corbett, 2003). Authors including Byram (1997), Sercu (2005), Larzén-Östermark (2008), Zhou (2011), Rojas (2018) affirm that the notion of CC must be extended to include that of intercultural competence and to form what is known as *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC).

## **Methodology: evaluative research**

Within the framework of qualitative research (Bisquerra, 2014; Hernández, 2014) the design of evaluative research is defined as a process that gathers information for the purpose of making merit or value judgments about some subject, object or intervention (Mateo, 2000; Bisquerra, 2014). For Bisquerra, “When we speak of evaluation, we refer mainly to the evaluation of educational programs. Although it is also possible to consider the evaluation of students, teachers, schools, among others” (2014, p. 425). Based on this author, our study followed the following steps:

### **First phase**

- Establish the purpose of the evaluation
- Define the object of the evaluation
- Specify the audiences to be attended
- Specify the type of judgments to be issued
- Determine indicators and sources of information
- Choose and adapt if necessary the evaluation model
- Establish the agents who will carry out the evaluation
- Establish a timetable for the entire evaluation process
- Choosing or building information-gathering techniques

### **Second phase**

- Collect information
- Analyze the information
- Formulate judgments

- Prepare the first reports
- Negotiate with audiences
- Make decisions
- Disseminate the results

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following instruments were used: (i) survey of teachers and students; it was designed from a pilot questionnaire applied to students of third and fourth level of English during the semester prior to the development of the research. The application was made to nine teachers and 256 participating students and its objective was to investigate the positive and negative aspects of the institutional English courses, the strengths and weaknesses of each one in terms of language learning and the perception of the level of English achieved in the four courses offered by the university; (ii) interviews with teachers: in order to go deeper into some of the aspects mentioned in the survey, the nine teachers participating in the study were interviewed. Among other aspects, they were asked about the aspects to improve in the English courses, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their students, as well as their perception of the true level of English achieved by taking the courses offered by the Universidad Surcolombiana.

## **Results: test of English proficiency**

To diagnose the level of English of the students taking the four institutional foreign language courses, the PET test (Preliminary English Test) was used. This test was applied in 11 of the 29 level IV groups of English, involving 256 students, which constituted a representative sample of about 38% of the population that was enrolled at that level during the second semester of 2015.

**English Placement Test versus “Saber Pro” Test Results.** The results of the qualifying test can be seen in Figure 1. This shows a very low level of English, both for what the Universidad Surcolombiana expects from students studying the four levels of institutional foreign language (A.2.2) and for what is stated by the Ministry of Education for graduates of careers other than bachelor's degrees in languages (B2). The vast majority of students who took the test are at level A1 – beginner – equivalent to that which a student who finishes the third grade of primary school should have. Meanwhile, 23.4% reached level A2, corresponding to the expected basic level, in students who complete their seventh grade of secondary basic education.

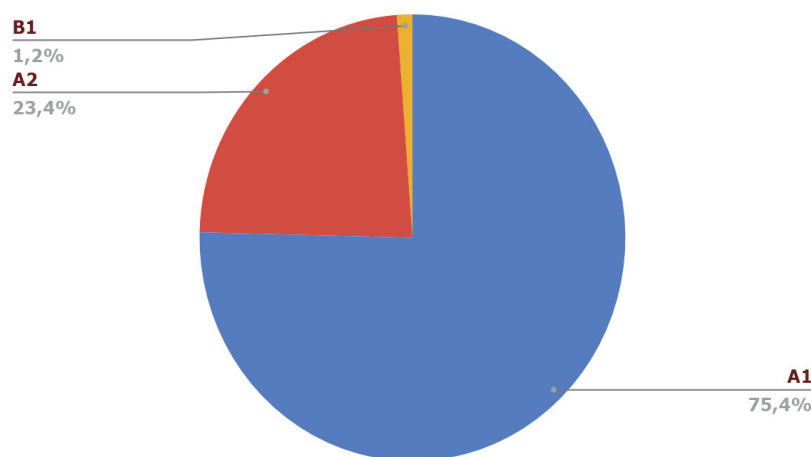


Figure 1: Results from the Preliminary English Test for students of level IV in English: percentage of students from each of the CEFR levels: A1, A2 and B1, see Figure 2.

### **Discussion: strengths and weaknesses of institutional English education**

The analysis of the data offered a series of strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths that – according to the students and teachers participating in the study – institutional English courses have, reading and writing skills are the most well developed, and in which students feel most competent. Grammatical competence is placed second. Since English courses are structured under the guidelines of the CEFR, which promotes the development of communicative competencies, students have an additional gain since they can also access various types of information in their specific fields of knowledge by learning English.

In terms of weaknesses, the greatest flaw in these courses is related to oral production followed by listening skills. This is due to the lack of communicative activities that promote meaningful practice of the language to develop and strengthen these skills and achieve the expected development of communicative skills in English. It should be noted that the foundations acquired in basic and secondary education significantly hinder the development of essential skills in English. It is therefore up to the university to fill the gaps with which one arrives from previous educational cycles.

One aspect that notably affects academic performance of students and becomes a weakness is the lack of autonomous learning habits in addition to the scarce interest in the subject on the part of some of them.

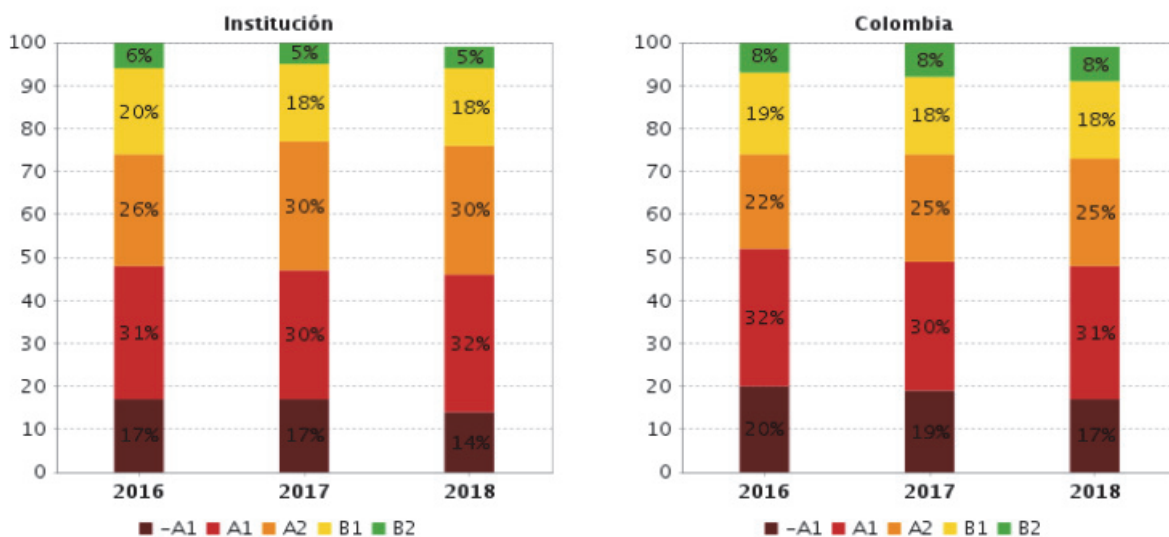


Figure 2: Percentage of students per level of proficiency in English: Universidad Surcolombiana (left) versus National Level (right).

Additionally, the hourly intensity of the courses (4 hours per week) is not sufficient for a significant advance in development of communicative competencies in the language. If we add to this the high number of students per course (up to 50) it is possible to establish two determining reasons that seriously affect the development of communicative competencies in the language. Likewise, the infrastructure, quality and quantity of classrooms are neither adequate nor sufficient to guarantee a productive and comfortable educational process.

The English teacher plays a key role in the process. Poor dynamics in the classroom and emphasis on grammar and vocabulary learning are demotivating for students. Likewise, the lack of deepening and practice in some subjects is an element that negatively affects the interest and attitude of the students towards the learning of the language.

## **Conclusion**

The low level of communicative competence in English evidenced by the participating students is further proof that the critique from various academics on the viability of the national policy in the Colombian context were based on solid arguments. It is evidenced that the low levels of proficiency among students are not only due to the teaching-learning process experienced during the four levels of English at the university, but due to the very low bases and lack of motivation with which the students arrive at their university programs; especially those who have studied in public (state) schools.

The observed strengths and weaknesses of English education at the Universidad Surcolombiana can serve as a basis for the design and implementation of strategies to improve both the teaching-learning processes of English, as well as attitudinal and emotional aspects, involving both teachers and students of English. In terms of national policies, despite the multi-million dollar investments that have historically been made since the creation of bilingualism plans, strategies and policies in Colombia, one can observe a lack of effectiveness, as far as English education is concerned.

The question is whether the goal of achieving a bilingual country is achievable or utopian. Many facts show that the goals proposed for 2019 are not achievable. However, results obtained in private bilingual education show that it is possible to achieve high levels of communicative competence in English in a country like Colombia. In order to achieve this, it would be convenient to know in depth what such bilingual private educational institutions do and why not say it? What can we learn from them?

The billion dollar investments that Colombia is undertaking to promote the English language will not be successful as long as bilingualism policies are not subject to proper plans, strategies, projects and policies where quality processes prevail and where teachers of all levels are actively involved, as well as higher education institutions that know the social and cultural reality of the country. It is vitally important to create the conditions for bilingualism by designing and offering courses with adequate time intensity, with optimal materials and resources, as well as with teachers who are highly competent in the use and teaching of the language. Otherwise, as Usma (2009) emphasizes, bilingualism policy in Colombia will continue to offer opportunities for some groups and individuals while generating processes of inequality and exclusion for others: this will lead to more social stratification.

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*Learning English: a goal for inclusive education in the university context of Colombia?*

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*Inclusive education* is the endeavor to ensure access to quality education for all - independent of social and economic status, family wealth, geographical location, race, ethnicity, gender, age, culture, or language. This is a longstanding but still very pressing concern world-wide, as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) unambiguously point out.

This book brings together a wealth of material on current trends and issues in inclusive education. Many factors and forces are at play here. Some reside inside the local, regional and national educational systems, such as obstacles in availability and quality of teaching staff and education infrastructure, and appropriate ways to cater for them. But there are also factors and forces originating from the outside, leading to an intertwined complex of political, cultural, economic, financial, judicial, legal, and democratic issues and considerations.

This book critically documents this for today's globalizing world. A unique feature is that it does so in particular from a Latin American perspective, thereby covering a wide variety of contexts, peoples and countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay), whose voices are often not well heard in international educational and academic communities and policy circles.

Resulting from a unique collaboration of more than twenty Higher Education Institutions from Latin America with European universities, this volume presents the English companion edition of the book in Spanish entitled *Cultura, Ciudadanía, Participación - Perspectivas de la Educación Inclusiva*, edited by Anna Bon and Mónica Pini, both published simultaneously.

The strong interactions between the local and the global are striking. There is a hard struggle everywhere, locally and nationally, to get needed human and infrastructural resources in place. As it emerges from the various chapters of the book, many local cultural and social specifics are to be taken into account. At the same time, it appears that in many places there is a trend of neoliberal privatization and profit-oriented commercialization of education, which tends to produce and reproduce growing inequalities in society that counteract achieving inclusiveness in education. This is only one of the aspects that make the Latin American experiences and perspectives recognizable and highly relevant globally.

