



Education for Sustainable Development: an approach to encourage linguistic diversity in urban and rural contexts: case studies in Guerrero and Campeche

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Abstract

This paper presents the strategies of the teachers' collectives in the construction of school environments that promote linguistic diversity in urban and rural environments, in Acapulco, Guerrero, and Hopelchén, Campeche, respectively, contexts crossed by processes of migration and discrimination, in particular, towards the speaking population of indigenous languages. It is argued that, because the focus of intercultural bilingual education is limited to rural areas, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) can be a guide that complements the efforts of teachers in promoting inclusive environments. In turn, the limits of the discourse of sustainability are pointed out, given that it makes subjects such as indigenous peoples as "vulnerable", which requires qualifying them as subjects of rights. As the teaching groups are the first line of intervention in dealing with these dimensions of exclusion, integration efforts from the school contribute to make visible the dimensions that discriminate against the indigenous language speaker population. Not only do they contribute to their integration but also to the exercise of their right to a quality education with equity, according to the Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Keywords

Intercultural education, education for diversity, sustainable development, migration, racial discrimination.



Bird and cornfield. By Maricela Gómez López (Yanhuitlán, Oaxaca, 1974) Modeled and painted clay on wood

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Introduction

The following research is part of the study carried out between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), and the Secretariat of Public Education, "Building School Management Capacities. The experience of the Educational Communities in Improving Quality ", aimed at documenting good practices in the framework of the implementation of management autonomy, derived from the General Education Law and the 717 Agreement, which issues the guidelines for the programs of school management.

The objective of this research is to highlight the contribution of education for sustainable development as a resource for educators immersed in multilingual contexts to foster an inclusive perspective in society from the school. Given the overwhelming effects of a homogenizing globalization, indigenous languages, relegated to their use in domestic contexts, in a historical framework of cultural domination, face the challenge of surviving generational change. Due to the discrimination suffered by speakers of indigenous languages, the transmission and use of these languages is inhibited among younger generations. Therefore, the efforts that are promoted from the school to build a bilingual intercultural environment, while conserving and promoting the use and valorization of indigenous languages within their communities, can be boosted from the 2030 Agenda driven by the United Nations (UN), based on the approach of education for sustainable development, in particular, the strategies derived from the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, "guarantee an

inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all "(Unesco, 2017: 13), specifically goal 4.5, which aims to guarantee equal access for vulnerable people, including indigenous peoples, to all the levels of education and professional training.

The articulation of the vulnerable population relating the situation of the indigenous peoples in matter of access to an inclusive, equitable and quality education, from a sustainability perspective, is justified in terms of the different contexts of exclusion faced by children in school age to integrate into the education system. The research carried out in the states of Guerrero and Campeche, in the southern and southeastern regions of the country, showed particular dimensions of the discrimination faced by indigenous languages. In the state of Guerrero, immigration from mountainous areas to coastal tourist spots, such as Acapulco, throws a wave of indigenous languages speaking population, mainly Mixtec (tu'un Sávi), which requires an adequate integration to urban and cosmopolitan dynamics in which they are inserted as a work force dependent on tourism.

In this case, general-purpose schools, such as the secondary one where the research was carried out, face the challenge of including a monolingual enrollment, without having a qualification suitable for a bilingual modality. This situation also demands the teaching group to develop strategies to include monolingual children. In this case, the group has used a work modality that refers to the model of mutual teaching, introduced during the nineteenth century in Mexico and Latin America, also



known as Lancasterian method (Jiménez, 2002), since it enables bilingual students to play a role similar to that of the monitors of the mutual teaching model, since they are mediators so that the teaching staff can communicate with the monolingual students. While, in the municipality of Hopelchén in Campeche, in the southeastern region of the country, the generational discrimination suffered by Mayan speakers has inhibited their use outside of domestic contexts. This demanded from teachers groups the development of strategies to revalue the use of Maya within the school and in the community space, as in the indigenous preschool that was investigated. Through a work of awareness with parents about the importance of the revaluation of Maya and the systematic use of didactic materials in that language, greater integration and participation of students was achieved.

In both cases, the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral learning objectives derived from the approach to education for sustainable development represent an affordable agenda for the teaching collectives in order to promote inclusive practices in their school environments. From these assumptions, we pose the following questions: what difficulties and dimensions of exclusion face the teachers' groups immersed in plurilingual contexts to promote an inclusive education, in particular for the indigenous languages speaking students? What strategies do they develop and what bilingual intercultural education policies can they count on, in order to face these challenges? What contributions can the education approach to sustainable development make to foster inclusive environments, particularly in contexts

marked by cultural diversity? We hypothesize that the vulnerability approach in which public policies and supranational agreements, such as the UN 2030 Agenda, categorize the indigenous population, is a provisional approach, since it is necessary to promote a horizon of self-determination for women and men. speakers of indigenous languages, in order to advance in the construction of a flexible and adaptable educational system to the situation of said subjects, which conserves and promotes their culture within the educational system.

Theoretical-methodological budgets around cultural diversity in school environments from sustainability.

The theoretical approach to address the integration of diverse cultures crossed by power relations and colonization processes is part of the debate on the interculturalization of educational systems in Latin America. Likewise, it seeks to explore the articulation between the intercultural approach with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), a strategy that seeks to generate citizens of sustainability, in the construction of inclusive spaces, that encourage cultural diversity. Below, the mentioned budgets are broken down.

Socialization processes, particularly educational ones, have gone through a process of cultural negation that has its antecedent in the colonization of Latin American countries. Within the nation state, the culture of the subaltern sectors, among them the indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, is part of the "null curriculum" (Johnson, 2015); what is



excluded from the national curriculum. Under the assumption that the curriculum part of a cultural selection, the device of schooling has operated as a homogenizing institution. Consequently, the denial of otherness ends up hindering intercultural dialogue.

From this problematic, consensus has been reached on the transition to a paradigm of interculturality, which, unlike multiculturalism, based on an essentialist notion of cultures that reproduces power relations within them, interculturality fosters dialogue between different cultures and knowledge. This approach is relevant to the historical configuration of multilingual and pluricultural countries, since it endows them with "sociocultural identity" (Abarca, 2015: 1). From this paradigm it is viable to promote a "repair curriculum", claiming the identity of the subaltern groups. In a second moment, this repair curriculum allows us to transition to an "identity enrichment" (Johnson, 2015: 12). Along the same route, critical interculturality (Canen, 2000) has been postulated as a way to reclaim the value of non-Western knowledge beyond a folkloric vision.

These proposals are viable alternatives to a monocultural and racializing pedagogy, derived from cultural imperialism that permeates the curriculum and shapes practices that ignore the identity and contributions of indigenous peoples. This subordination is expressed, for example, in the invisibility of oral culture, in the face of the western paradigm of reading and writing. This monocultural pedagogy is what configures "excluding, racist and Eurocentric" school practices (Meneses-Copete, 2014: 259). In turn, other

proposals have emerged, such as anti-racist pedagogy (Berman and Paradies, 2008), whose horizon is social justice and its programmatic agenda the transformation of the imaginary that legitimizes discriminatory treatment. These proposals are characterized by seeking recognition in the midst of diversity.

These debates have guided the consolidation of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE), which assumes diversity as a constituent of societies crossed by assimilationist processes, where diversity was seen as an obstacle (Zúñiga, 1989: 7; Abarca, 2015: 4). Through the EIB, progress is also being made on the path of making cataloged populations vulnerable as subjects of law, since their objective is to "educate them in their own languages and cultures". In this regard, it should be noted that the IBE as a particular mode of education responds to a specific demand for school enrollment of indigenous and Afro-descendent populations, while interculturality is assumed as a paradigm that aims to permeate the educational system transversally (Corbetta, et al. al., 2018: 9-12). The latter is the approach that guides this research, due to the need to build environments that promote linguistic diversity in both general and indigenous school modalities, and in urban environments such as Acapulco, Guerrero, and rural and indigenous as Hopelchén, Campeche.

For its part, the design of the Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, signed by 193 member countries of the UN in September 2015, reflects the reflections on the need to harmonize three major dimensions of



development: the social, economic and environmental, which was raised from the 1987 "Our Common Future" Report. This is a goal that is proposed through the articulation of diverse actors, at a local and global level, in order to achieve interrelated goals that carry a notion of what is just and desirable as consensual.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) seeks to contribute in that sense, fostering the capacity for understanding, empathy and action for transformation in the "citizens of sustainability" that Wals (2015: 13) conceives as a critical citizenship, literate in the competences of sustainability without falling into a prescriptive logic that inhibits active commitment. Although the ESD seeks to train citizens who understand the complexity of their environment and who are able to collaborate and act to promote "environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations" (Unesco, 2017: 7), Wals (2015) has warned about its tendency to become prescriptive and mechanistic. However, the breakdown of ESD in the learning objectives at the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral levels is capable of provoking a complex thought, which allows to interrelate the dimensions of the 17 SDGs.

In relation to the construction of educational environments that foster cultural diversity, through SDG 4 it is proposed to train students aware of the inequalities in access to quality education and who recognize the importance of culture to achieve sustainability (Unesco, 2017: 18). However, it is worth asking how the school-age population facing these same exclusions has the means to

reflect and act on this condition. This points to the fact that the learning objectives for sustainability are designed for a subject that has the means to insert themselves into the school system and reflect on these problems. This is the framework of vulnerability that inserts indigenous populations, who suffer from structural exclusions, within the goals of SDG 4. This draws attention to creating the conditions that enable these vulnerable populations to make them subjects of rights. The efforts that are built from the schools are the first line of intervention for them to exercise their right to quality education and equity. The cases that are presented below show the work of the teaching collectives in creating inclusive environments for students who, due to their status as speakers of indigenous languages, face particular dimensions of exclusion.

The research was based on the methodology of simultaneous case studies (Stake, 1999). The testimonies of the informants were recovered under the deontological codes of research with human beings: informed consent, charity, justice and protection of anonymity, in negotiated and agreed terms and under recognition of the autonomy of the informants (Arias and Peñaranda, 2015, Chapela, 2015). The data was collected through four in-depth interviews, two focus groups and the preparation of field diaries with teachers from an indigenous preschool in the municipality of Hopelchén, Campeche and a general secondary school in the municipality of Acapulco, Guerrero. The testimonies were systematized and codified according to the constant comparison method, reaching the saturation of data by grouping into



categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in double entry matrices. Likewise, the testimonies were contrasted with each other and with other bibliographical sources, according to the method of triangulation (Crowson, 1998).

Challenges for the integration of linguistic diversity in urban and rural contexts: the role of teaching collectives in the construction of inclusive environments

One of the main challenges in the implementation of the intercultural approach in the education system is the marked delimitation of projects of this nature to rural environments (Corbetta, 2018: 23). In addition to this, the processes of migration of peripheral populations to tourist enclaves such as Acapulco, put educators in an emergency situation to absorb this enrollment that is also made up of students who speak indigenous languages, both bilingual as monolingual, since general-purpose schools, such as the high school where the research was conducted, open their doors to these students despite not having a qualification in the teaching of indigenous languages or a bilingual intercultural approach. According to a report by the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), since the 1980s the immigration of the indigenous population of Guerrero to the port of Acapulco has been massified, reaching 3.23% of the total population of the port (789,971 inhabitants) for 2010. In that period, networks of peasantry have been woven and at least 10 basic-level bilingual schools have been opened. However, it permeates an environment of

discrimination towards these sectors, which causes the segregation of this population in focused redoubts (Sámamo, et al., 2017: 120). Faced with this problem, the teaching staff of the general secondary school visited in Acapulco has been given the task of developing strategies to try to include students who speak indigenous languages:

We receive students who have another kind of language, so when they arrive here, reading comprehension is difficult, because they do not read, and the teachers of the Spanish area support that and because they are working that area every day, it also has to see a lot, are children who come from the mountain, who finished their primary, but without reading and writing correctly (teacher).

The arrival of students speaking indigenous languages to a context alien to their own, whose parents are incorporated into a labor market dependent on tourism, demonstrates the segregationist consequences of the intercultural approach being limited to rural environments: "because they are children who in their places of origin, because now their teachers do nothing else in their language, and when they arrive here there are some who more or less do handle Spanish, but now we try to adapt to them and they to us, but we do take the job forward "(teacher).

It should be noted that some of the strategies to include these students are addressed through a kind of monitor model, similar to the mutual teaching model. Teachers rely on children who speak some indigenous language who also speak Spanish to support communication



with children who only speak Mixtec (tu'un Sávi): "Inclusion exists in our school, as in all of them, but within of the groups among them, some of them already have a higher percentage of Spanish and they help us to facilitate the work because there are those who cannot really advance with them ... or failing that, they grab a student as a monitor, so that way is supported [the monolingual student]" (teacher). The initiative of the teaching staff to use this type of work to try to integrate monolingual students has been carried out outside the supervision of the Local Education Authorities (LEA). In spite of its limitations, it has been possible to meet this demand of the Tu'un Sávi speaking population, integrating it into the enrollment in a general modality, which promotes the recognition of diversity among the students from the city of Acapulco and whose mother tongue is the Spanish.

In the case of the preschool visited in Hopelchén, Campeche, the importance of reinforcing the implementation of the use of the indigenous language in a school that operates under this modality was essential due to the need to promote the use of Maya in the classroom and combat prejudice on the use of the original languages in the community and encourage the importance of preserving it beyond private or domestic spaces, where the use of it is usually limited:

Although we are an indigenous education system, we rarely do education in a bilingual way because some parents do not consider it important then sometimes, they limit the activities so that we can do it with them. We had

to do a series of training, of awareness with them [parents] so they know that the language is important, we must value it and preserve it in order to work. And the teachers prepared their teaching materials in [Mayan] language, we worked with the children, then the interest of the children towards the activities was seen more, then we realized that maybe they did not understand us when doing the activities in Spanish, we did not they understood the slogans that were given to them, then we said them in language and had a little more participation with them, with the students (teacher).

Unlike the case of Acapulco, the teaching staff of Hopelchén has worked on the approach of promoting native languages with greater systematicity through the Department of Indigenous Education, which supports training through virtual and face-to-face media, in order to empower educators in the oral and written management of the Mayan language. It is remarkable their initiative in training in these tasks because they are optional. In addition, the educators keep track of their learning in the use of Maya and the aspects that must be reinforced. By influencing the use of the Mayan language in the classroom, the teaching group could notice how there was an improvement in the area of language and communication. This has not only been encouraged from the classroom but also in collaboration with the parents, who are made aware of the importance of preserving and exercising the native languages because they represent part of the cultural heritage:



Tell them that now in these moments many languages have been lost, and that they should feel proud of what they have, then through these talks we have worked with them and equally we are part of them, by using their clothes, doing some activities with them because we have already achieved not 100%, because there is that limitation, but we have advanced a little (teacher).

Given that the challenges that teachers face to generate inclusive educational environments that foster linguistic diversity encompass both urban and rural environments, it is clear that this is not limited to a particular context, but is intensified by migratory processes. In addition, they face the challenge of revaluing the use of native languages in generations that have suffered discrimination. Considering that the advice of the LEAs on the implementation of an intercultural bilingual approach varies depending on the educational modalities, the Education for Sustainable Development in its learning objectives can be a guide to orient educators in this regard. The interrelation of diverse problems that converge in the reflection on inclusion is observed with SDG 10, "Reduction of inequalities". In the case of Acapulco, the topic "immigration and mobility of people" that suggests interviewing migrants, would help to make visible the 3% of the immigrant indigenous population living in the port. In the case of Campeche, the theme "the historical roots of current inequalities" (Unesco, 2017: 31) that suggests elaborating an analysis of one's personal history, reflecting on the occasions in which discrimination has been

experienced, would contribute to raising awareness among the parents of the community who restrict the use of Maya to the domestic space, to revalue their culture through their language. The flexibility and interrelation of themes and activities that ESD brings to different contexts does not replace the necessary interculturalization of the education system, but it contributes to the reflection to generate inclusive environments, as in the cases analyzed.

Conclusions

The role of teacher collectives in empowering populations categorized as vulnerable, in the case of indigenous peoples, to exercise their right to a quality and equitable education shows the broad scene in which the need to build inclusive environments that promote linguistic diversity is manifested, either in environments crossed by migratory processes, such as Acapulco, or by the inhibition of the use of indigenous languages, in the case of Campeche. In this sense, education for sustainability can provide strategies to interrelate problems related to cultural diversity that affect the school environment. However, the teacher is the mediating subject to promote reflection on the conditions that generate exclusions and the agent that contributes to the "vulnerable" subjects transiting to a condition of subjects of rights.

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