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Diversity in Intercultural Educational Reforms

La diversidad en las reformas educativas interculturales

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Abstract

This study analyzes the implications of contemporary linguistic and cultural diversity concerning educational theory from three different perspectives: intercultural bilingual-education proposals; the demographical view in relation to language distribution and functionality; and the analysis of diversity within the framework of linguistic and cultural conflict.

In recent searches for the meanings of diversity, sociolinguistic investigations have postulated that the consequences of the loss of diversity and its replacement by uniformity will be reflected in three important dimensions of social life: first, changes in communicative function and in cultural continuity; second, a more intense concentration of rationality or reflection on dominant linguistic and cultural models; and third, an

intensification of the processes of diversification and specialization of subjects' cultural skills pertaining to the needs of global projects.

Multiculturalism and inequalities have erupted with such an impact on the sociopolitical platforms of global, national and ethnic projects that they have changed diversity and multidirectionality into fascinating but conflictive disclosures. Little by little these notions are giving support to a citizenship parameter for the society of the near future, when new national problems will arise, and new solutions, charged with participation and democratic meaning, will have to be devised. At the moment, the phenomena of interculturality, bilingualism and ethnodiversity are creating new parameters for the discussion of educational reform.

Key words: Linguistic and cultural diversity, intercultural approaches, bilingual indigenous education.

Resumen

En este trabajo se analizan implicaciones del entorno contemporáneo de la diversidad lingüística y cultural en la teoría educativa desde tres perspectivas: las propuestas de educación intercultural bilingüe, el enfoque demográfico sobre funcionalidad-distribución de las lenguas y el análisis de la diversidad en el marco del conflicto lingüístico e intercultural.

En la búsqueda de significados recientes de la diversidad, investigaciones sociolingüísticas han postulado que las consecuencias de la pérdida y de la transformación de la diversidad hacia parámetros de uniformidad se reflejarán en tres importantes dimensiones de la vida social: primero, cambios en la funcionalidad y la reproducción en la comunicación y en la continuidad cultural; segundo, focalización más intensa de la racionalidad o reflexividad en torno a modelos lingüísticos y culturales dominantes, y tercero, profundización de los procesos de diversificación y especialización de las capacidades socioculturales de los sujetos en torno a las necesidades de los proyectos globales.

El multiculturalismo y las desigualdades han irrumpido con tal impacto en las plataformas sociopolíticas de los proyectos globales, nacionales y étnicos, que convirtieron la diversidad y multidireccionalidad en fascinantes, pero conflictivos, descubrimientos. Poco a poco estas categorías van dando sustento a un parámetro de ciudadanía para la sociedad del futuro próximo, donde se establecen nuevos problemas nacionales y se crean soluciones recargadas de valor democrático y participativo. Por el momento, los fenómenos de interculturalidad, bilingüismo y etnodiversidad están sirviendo para crear nuevos parámetros para discutir la reforma de la educación.

Palabras clave: Diversidad lingüística y cultural, enfoques interculturales, educación bilingüe indígena.

[...] we must flee the extreme solutions: the disappearance of the differences in a mass society or the direct confrontation of differences and communities.

(Alain Touraine, cited in UNESCO, 1999).

Introduction

Social recognition, documentation and scientific research on the heterogeneity of societies, subjects, and their respective indicators have gradually increased during the last few years, both on a global and a national and local level. The new information has permitted the *discovery* of linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity with tinges of surprise, fascination and conflict. One effect of this experience is that multiculturalism and inequalities have erupted with an unheard-of visibility in the sociopolitical platforms of global, national and ethnic projects. We can rightly say that diversity and multi-directionality are two substantive factors of the current multicultural reality abundant in poverty, inequity and exclusion.

The vast process of assimilation and loss of cultural and intellectual diversity evident at all latitudes of the planet has played a great part in mobilizing organizations, social leaders and scientists to assess the phenomenon adequately and halt its advance. One of the most visible dimensions is the oppression and displacement produced by the politically dominant languages and cultures on the local indigenous languages and cultures. In fact, this process of domination has been the principal definition of diversity as understood in contemporary life.

However, the meaning of this phenomenon is much more complex. A good demonstration of the difficulty of establishing a definition lies in the multiplicity of senses which the expressions *diversity* or *ethnodiversity* have in linguistics. Indeed, these refer to five processes of the existence of languages: (1) change or evolution of the linguistic systems and structures; (2) concurrent variability of languages on the levels of time, space, socioeconomic strata and communicative systems; (3) contact between different languages within specific speech communities; (4) historical results of conflictive interculturality such as loss, vulnerability displacement, minorization; and (5) policies and ideologies related to languages and cultures within contemporary states. Because of this, I propose that the nature, and above all, the consequences of otherness exceed almost equally the popular imagination and the most rigorous investigative attempts. Even so, in this work I attempt to propose some implications of the contemporary setting of linguistic and cultural diversity in educational theory.

By means of three known analytical perspectives, I propose to demonstrate that the principal meaning—and the global objective emanating from them—attributed to linguistic and cultural diversity in the educational reforms have a very close relationship with the transverse principles of interculturality, additive bilingualism and relevance.¹

1. Inclusive education and critique of the conformist interpretation regarding the loss of diversity

A very transformative case, potentially, as a first analytical perspective to consider, is the pioneer Latin American discussions of the late twentieth century, including social development, political plurality and intercultural basic education. This has to

do with alternative proposals for indigenous people, which put a very clear emphasis on the connection of sociocultural otherness and ethno-linguistic particularities with democratization and rights, transformation to the quality and relevance of national education, and the struggle against poverty and inequality.

In defining educational policies in indigenous regions, international agencies and managers or researchers in intercultural bilingual education often disagree on the subject of the weight that must be assigned to diversity. In this regard, Luis Enrique Lopez says:

“It is surprising that neither the language itself nor the use of contents from the minority cultures are considered as factors or variables involved in effective schools in the Third World, which, as everyone knows, is a predominantly multilingual and multicultural context” (1995, p. 3).

In these times of educational changes and, therefore, of evaluations for consolidating the advances, indigenous schools can see an increase in inequalities, if, for the interpretation of their results, the dramatic and unique conditions of rural education are not taken into account. Sociolinguistic and cultural diversities are overly simplified and are interpreted through competitions with an unequivocal reductionist sense, such as urban vs. rural world; Spanish-speaking community vs. Indian community. The institutional views seek above all, parameters which can be generalized in the broadest possible spectrum of cases, thus producing a de facto denial of the differentiated experiences of education (p. 9).

In the same vein, Guillermina Herrera says:

A knowledge of different cultures, an openness to the outside world and the universal, a respect for diversity, and an appreciation of what is different—these are fundamental components of intercultural education, and have the same value for the indigenous and the non-indigenous in a shared world (1995, p. 14).

Moreover, in 1992, Ken Hale (MIT) and researchers of the endangered languages of Australia and Central America roused the most recent controversy among linguists about the nature of diversity and its impact on language loss or maintenance in a situation of high vulnerability. The so-called “Hale vs. Ladefoge debate” has great importance with regard to research on minority languages, for which reason I feel it important to give a summary of it.

Ken Hale has said that the loss of languages is an important issue that has been misrepresented by two unacceptable attitudes. The first suggests that the loss of diversity is inevitable, an old problem that has no solution, repeated many times throughout history. The other attitude postulates that the loss of a language does not represent anything special either for science or for intellectual life.

The loss of languages in the pre-modern and contemporary history of nomadic hunters, gatherers and farmers has been preceded by a period of grammatical fusion in situations of multilingualism, in geographically-isolated areas and among very small communities (Australia; Sumo and Miskito Indians in Central America.)

In contrast, the loss of languages in the modern period has a different character, both in its dimensions and in its implications. It is part of a vast process of loss of cultural and intellectual diversity, where the politically dominant languages and cultures smother and oppress the local indigenous languages and cultures, placing them in a condition equivalent to a state of war. This process is not related to the simultaneous loss of diversity in the biological and botanical worlds. However, an ecological analogy is not entirely inappropriate. It is necessary to imagine the dangers involved in the loss of biodiversity on the planet. A fortiori, we must try to understand the dangers inherent in the loss of linguistic diversity (Hale, 1992, pp. 1-2).

One of the greatest dangers in this regard is the development of a type of rationality that misrepresents the situation which threatens the minoritized languages. To counter this distortion, it would be necessary: (1) to understand the contemporary factors of the loss of languages, rejecting the concept that it is a "normal" condition of the modern world, and (2) to unleash the process of language reinforcement in the communities directly affected by the loss of their mother tongue.

Peter Ladefoged, from a different angle, warns that the preservation and maintenance of languages is a multifaceted topic on which different views are possible. The views expressed by Hale and his supporters could turn out to be contrary to those of many responsible linguists, and may not be appropriate for some African countries. Tanzania, for example, is a country which prioritizes unity, in pursuit of which the development or promotion of Swahili has become a major task. Tribalism is seen as a threat to the nation's development, and could result in irresponsible action if nothing is done to aid in the preservation and reinforcement of this language.

Hale (1992) argues, as does Ladefoged, from the perspective of a linguist who has worked in particular cultures whose native-language speakers have attitudes that cannot be considered either general or universal. In many communities, to mention one aspect, the language is considered sacred, literally a divine gift. Linguists working in such communities should obviously respect those views and collaborate in support of such desires. In these cases, speakers allow access to something sacred to them; this should be reflected in language work. But not all communities assume this point of view. Speakers of Angami (Tibet-Burman) have a different attitude. They consider the researcher's interest in their language as having a valid intellectual purpose, something akin to many college students interest in learning English. Thesis writers should be considered part of an elite, and their points of view involve exclusively those who are part of that elite. The profane, as opposed to the sacred, is a widely shared vision of language. In many

regions of India and Africa, the position of the language consultant is considered to be similar to other job—as having a certain status. These people have no problem in satisfying the curiosity of the linguist; they do not see him/her as levying an attack against everything in their original culture. They even look well upon the teacher of their languages (Ladefoged, 1992, p. 809). This decision and many other decisions made by speakers are clearly their prerogatives.

Generally unacceptable is the assumption that different languages and even different cultures should always be preserved, says Ladefoged. Only a paternalistic attitude that would explain the notion that linguists should assume that they know and decide what is best for a community. One can be a responsible linguist and even consider the loss of a particular language or, indeed, a group of languages, as a “catastrophic destruction” (Hale, 1992, p. 7). Such statements as “just as the extinction of some animal species diminishes our world, so does the extinction of a language” are appeals to our emotions, rather than to our reason. The case study of endangered languages has become central in certain fields of linguistics, and often, is very strong in humanitarian fields, but the linguist might use this, warns Ladefoged, to pretend that all cases always epitomize the same situation.

In this concept, human societies are not like animal species. Humanity is considerably more flexible with regard to the preservation of diversity. While some cultures die, others are always emerging, a fact that is not strictly correlated with ethnicity or language (Ladefoged, 1992, p. 810).

In sum, we need an ethical priority orientation, a real pluralistic vocation, to know and value the role of diversity in the interdependent multiculturalism which has already reached every latitude of the planet.

2. Demographic reading of diversity

A second perspective of analysis is the interpretation of the trends of diversity, on the basis of general population censuses. Xavier Albo published in 1995 the monumental work *Plurilingual Bolivia. A Guide for Planners and Educators. Guide for planners and educators*,² in which diversity is unraveled (perhaps demystified) by demographics, for educational purposes. We will take the evolutionary current to portray the situation of some American Indian languages.

Table I. Linguistic evolution in Bolivia 1976-92

Category	1976 (thousands)	%	1992	%	Relative increase
Speak Spanish	3.210	78.8	4.594	87.4	8.6
Speak Quechua	1.594	39.7	1.806	34.3	-5.4
Speak Aymara	1.156	28.8	1.238	23.0	-5.8
Speak other indigenous languages	56	1.1	70	1.6	.5
Speak only Spanish	1.508	36.3	2.203	41.7	
Speak indigenous language only	944	20.4	608	11.5	

(Albo, 1995, p. 23)

From 1976 to 1992, a period of 16 years, there was very noticeable population trend towards greater distribution and learning of the Castilian language as a result of various factors, among which can be noted the expansion of the education system and the migration to urban areas.

But it may be that the decline in the knowledge of indigenous languages is in part exaggerated (like the rise of Castilian), due to the lack of data on children under 6 years of age in the 1992 census, and the poorer coverage of the census precisely in the most remote rural areas, where the original languages most strongly continue (Albo, 1995, p. 23).

We should take advantage of many other aspects of the work of Xavier Albo. I simply want to draw our attention to his attempt to establish general tendencies concerning the quantitative development of the population who speak American Indian tongues, as this can allow us to formulate predictions on a continental scale:

- a) The percentage of Spanish speakers will increase, both in absolute and relative numbers.
- b) The percentage of all languages will increase, at least slightly.
- c) The absolute numbers of all languages will increase in a proportion higher than the overall population growth in the case of Spanish, and below it in the case of the dominant indigenous languages (Quechua or Aymara).
- d) There will be a significant increase in bilingual speakers of Castilian and some indigenous languages.
- e) The number of persons who speak only native languages will decrease, even in absolute terms.
- f) In the capital cities, all these advantages in favor of Castilian will be much more pronounced (Albo, 1995, p. 24).

The comparison of all these trends with those of previous studies reveals that language communities exhibit an enormous flexibility upon integrating multidirectional communications systems which, more than replacing minority and minoritized languages, opt for new strategies of functional distribution and reproduction. According to Albo:

There is an evident advance of Castilian, but its impact on the indigenous languages is less clear: it continues to lead more to bilingualism than to monolingual Castilian. However, this is happening slowly in the principal cities and in some rural areas that were already very bilingual, above all near the borders with Chile and Argentina (p. 28).³

How can we make a specific projection of these demographic explanations in the situation of Mexico? Within the limited research on this topic in the country, Maria Teresa Pardo, a Oaxaca CIESAS researcher, has formulated reflections and results convergent with the Andean context: "The data seem to reveal that Oaxaca has been one of the regions able to maintain with more energy the vitality of the pre-Columbian languages" (Pardo, 1995, pp. 1-2). This situation, however, is threatened more each day by the expanding presence of the Spanish language and by the socioeconomic marginality in which the indigenous languages of this entity are reproduced.

Table II. Linguistic evolution of Oaxaca 1970-1990 (COESPO, 1994:49)

Indigenous language	1970	1990
Zapotec	246,138	341,583
Mixtec	168,725	239,451
Mazatec	93,376	146,928
Chinantec	52,313	90,322
Mixe	51,636	88,863
Zoque	3,309	4,849
Chontal	4,907	4,671
Amuzgo	2,195	4,217
Chocho	11,488	1,202
Popoloc	195	191

The first phenomenon that springs into view is that, from 1940 to date, the indigenous-speaking population, although it has maintained its growth in absolute terms, has registered a considerable drop in terms of percentage (Brown, 1995).

This investigation on the linguistic groups of the state of Oaxaca confirms the principle that there is a strong determination of the socioeconomic aspects of the functionality and the status of the vernacular languages, and that the indigenous speakers consider socio-economic activities as one of the main causes of diversity.

The processes of displacement which the indigenous languages of the area are experiencing are closely linked to the sociodemographic and economic issues facing each of the regions. La Mixteca, La Cañada and the Sierra Norte today constitute areas of expulsion of the native population, and consequently, attract few members of the Spanish-speaking mestizo population to settle there... (p. 45).

The reading of population censuses, in sum, reinforces the hypothesis that in contemporary multilingual contexts here is produced in the various speech communities an unexpected physical and electronic approach to each other, for reasons of market, employment, migration, information and miscellaneous

services, generating an enormous wide variety of community and individual bilingualisms. The impossible alliance of divergent and antagonistic sectors, said Slavoj Žižek (2001), has been made possible by the need for survival and for making life simpler.

The whole picture shows that our overall system of internal colonialism favors the Castilian tongue and culture at the expense of the native languages. Thus, the repositories of the latter lack incentives and tools for developing their own language, and from every angle, feel pushed to abandon their traditional ways (Albo, 1995, p. 220).

3. Diversity and intercultural conflict: cause or consequence?

The third perspective is the analysis of the difference in the context of contact or conflict between ethnic communities within national states, perhaps one of the most dramatic currents of the contemporary meaning of diversity. Concerning this subject, we use Zimmermann (1995) for support:

For centuries, Latin America has been an area where the languages come into contact with each other in the most varied manner. From the multiplicity of cultures existing on that continent there have come contacts between the Indian and Ibero-Romance languages, Spanish and Portuguese, Spanish/Portuguese and other Indo-European languages; as well as contacts between different varieties of one language. The socio-political and economic situation, in which these processes have occurred and continue to occur, is also multiple. It includes economic domination for centuries, the immigration of small groups (religious, in some cases) and internal migration. In this situation, the Spanish and Portuguese languages are often dominant, but also, in part, as in the case of the Chicanos, they are in a subjugated position (p. 7).

A new feature has appeared in these approaches, one that characterizes current theories about diversity. Up to now, investigations of language contact in Latin America have been limited almost exclusively to the meanings of the linguistics signs. The semantic, pragmatic, textual and prosodic aspects of language contact in Latin America, with few exceptions, have been left out (p.14). That is, a theory of language contact without an adequate concept of language reduces and distorts the meaning of the empirical results.

Most of the “explanatory preferences” proposed are the product of a structuralist view of linguistic change. The languages are considered as self-regulatory linguistic *systems*, and the question of change in a given language system determined under external influence⁴ is expressed as a question posed by the structural conditions that facilitate or inhibit the assimilation of foreign elements in the receptor system. From this perspective, the integration of new elements causes the restructuring of the entire system; for this reason, languages tend to reject them and allow only influences where these are relatively compatible with the system and do not require dramatic structural rearrangements (p. 24).

Studies to date scrutinize the strategies and results of the major sociolinguistic and cultural activities of peoples facing new political and economic situations. Among these activities, outstanding are migration; policies for preserving the languages, cultures and identities of indigenous populations, together with the promotion of intercultural and multilingual communication; and the overthrow of social and educational backwardness. However, the impact of these investigations has been negligible if we consider the governmental practices of implementing educational and cultural policies. In fact, there presently exist no harmonious solutions for the recognition and reconciliation of cultural and linguistic particularities within the new national structures. The best-known government proposals to date seem well reflected in the expressions *Lebanonization*, *Balkanization*, *Stalinization* and *Decentralization* (The Philosophy and Structure of the ML-ETH Programme, 1990, p. 1). Some of these policies have been implemented in countries or regions in which have seen a worsening of radical nationalism, a resurgence of neo-Nazism, anti-Semitic terrorism and various other forms of racism. Or, tragically, it has not been possible to eliminate states of war, such as that of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Clearly observable, on the other hand, is the effect of visibility achieved by the revival of ethnic movements and the increase in institutional measures in favor of the ethnic communities during the latter part of the twentieth century.⁵

This revival has occurred in the context of conflicting and fragile symbiotic coexistence between the so-called *center project* (globalization or unipolarity) and *ethno-linguistic diversity* (Fishman, 1985, p. 6). In fact, all these manifestations make the panorama of the diversities more complex. However, two negative processes run through any of the resolutions: one, at the level of the modern societies, is the absence of stable and harmonious bilingualisms; and two, the ethnic mother tongues and the regional bilingualisms and communities still exist in conditions of discrimination and marginalization.

In sum, from the perspective of conflictive interculturality, sociolinguistic diversity expresses the complex multifaceted form of human relationships, which clearly follow an adaptive logic⁶ when facing the multidirectional situations which have led to our current globalization. Variability and change are functions of interchange and balance both at an individual level and in the interactions of society as a whole. Analogous strategies or adaptive fictions are also observed in the interactions of native speakers with outsiders, between majority sectors with community minorities. In these case, strategies of belonging versus strategies of separation are established. Both systems of activity (Cole, 1999) constitute the bases for good performance and the affirmation of communicative order, whose principal repertory is made up of the rules of variability and sociolinguistic change. In other words, they provide the means of sharing the communication needs in an available and different manner, according to the changing social conditions (Dittmar and Schlobinski, 1988).⁷

a) Changes in linguistic functionality and reproduction

- Vernacularización of the variants of regional distribution: wider dissemination of certain variants and adoption by new populations, including interethnic ones.
- Minorization of isolated linguistic variants.
- Reproduction of American Indian languages in non-traditional areas (diatopic development by self-integrated networks). We may cite the case of the “mountain” Zapotec language and its different reproductions in three spaces inhabited by Zapotec speakers: Sierra Norte-Oaxaca, Mexico City and Los Angeles (USA).
- Possible convergence of variants with high status as unitary grapholects. A case in point is the initiative to promote alphabetic writing of the Zapotec of the Isthmus as a unitary grapholect of the Zapotec-speaking pan-community.

b) Adjustments in sociolinguistic rationale and reflexivity

- Transition of the monolingual ideal to the ideology of linguistic pluralism in the countries where the ethnic bases of the contemporary nation are “discovered” or restored.
- Utopia of the restoration confronting the Hispanic.
- Community and national acceptance of the functionality of American Indian languages in intercultural bilingual education.
- Social significance of the variant as a marker of a recognized cultural particularity.

c) Diversification and specialization of language skills

- Rising consumption of video-acoustic communications, electronic forms.
- Diversification of the logic of orality.
- Specialization of consumption and production skills of written language.
- Increased availability for the teaching and learning of the languages (greater visibility of the written vernacular).

With the goal of improving the possibilities of involvement or prevention of adverse effects on cultural and linguistic pluralism, in both the educational sector and the community, we must build a better concept of diversity by removing, first, the idea that the loss of diversity is the *normal* condition of the modern world, and developing methodologies to generate the effective advancement of resources and cultural identities of the affected communities. The solutions and strategies are far from universal. The decisions and choices are clearly prerogatives exercised by the people and the speakers. Humanity is remarkably flexible on the subject of the preservation of diversity. While different cultures die, others are always emerging, a fact that is not in strict correlation with ethnicity or language (Ladefoged, 92).

Looking at things this way, diversity is the result of humanity’s rational ability to respond adaptively and creatively to its environment and needs. However, it is not

the goal of human relations nor of education; it constitutes functions of interchange and balance both at an individual level and at that of the interactions of society as a whole.

In the new political and economic situations, these have become a major focus: migration; language-preservation policies; cultures and identities of indigenous populations; together with the promotion of intercultural and multilingual communication and the overturn of social and educational backwardness. From the perspective of government actions, in fact, there are at present, harmonic solutions for the recognition and reconciliation of cultural and linguistic particularities within the new structures.

Consequently, we cannot go on considering that human beings create their technical and economic environment. From now on it is the cultural industries (especially education, health care and information) that create new representations of the human being, and, secondly, we found it possible to make innovations not only with the new...but also with the old (Touraine, 1999, p. 54).⁸

The conflictive situations of multiculturalism deepen the disillusionment and frustration of the communities regarding the will and political orientation of state policy. The demands and actions of otherness can experience a “withdrawal of community and identity” (Gros, 2000) if their own objectives are thwarted”. That is, it is not a sure thing that the population that experiences discrimination will appropriate legal and institutional changes that favor the construction of and participation in a pluralistic, multicultural society. This is because they perceive convergences between the constitutional reforms and neindigenism of the State with the economic adjustment, neoliberal openness and economic and social costs which these provoke.

In sum, educational reforms sensitive to diversity have taken on the utopia of the harmonious and democratic multicultural society with the logic of open economies, which can afford subsidies for poverty and inequities. The objectives of justice and dignity for a large number of Indian and African American peoples and social movements are sustained in categories of participation and linkage with their needs. But the socio-political rhetorics have produced a convergence of form, since they agree on recognizing the rethinking of learning and training based on the cultural styles. All this has begun to materialize in the last decade, in new legal bases and in public school policies, gradually reversing an adverse process in public education that goes back to the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Until the seventeenth century people had always believed that diversity was the cause of discord and unrest that led states to ruin. Therefore, it was always held that the health of the state required unanimity (Sartori, 2001, pp. 20-21).

4. Diversity and educational development

Educational transformations always have a socio-historical reference that can boost or block. The situation of training students and teachers in the context of contemporary multiculturalism is no exception. For educators, officials and leaders of social movements, the debate on education sensitive to the cultural diversity of populations targeted by discrimination, revolves around the right and recognition within the nation as a whole—claims that have not been met, and are therefore blocked. It would be interesting to establish and investigate the general panorama of this situation on our continent, as suggested by the report *Our Creative Diversity* (UNESCO, 1997).

Social otherness and its organizations (ethnic, immigrant, genres, languages, religions) contend and negotiate with the central government on measures such as the status of subjects of law, citizenship and public policy relevance. Indeed, the political times in Latin America indicate that these negotiations will be prolonged and will not be devoid of ideological constraints or a fear of assumed differential privileges. Thus, the openness and pluralism of public cultural and educational policies in the short term, will probably depend on political negotiations rather than on educational reasons (quality, equity, relevance).⁹

However, the launch of an educational proposal makes demands that are not satisfied with the ideological positions. The bottom line is that it requires ideas about how a change in education operates, and how we must integrate processes to ensure a reform effective and favorable for the people involved. So far, it has been abused by socio-political and descriptive platforms to *authenticate* the need to transform the system, the academic models and the school practices around diversity. But perhaps the best step would be to open or to democratize the management of plural multicultural education so as to engage the commitment and creativity shown by many teachers.

In school education, it seems to be impossible to construct a project, differentiated from the educational sector, for a coherent development and a plural vision which would discern the sociocultural changes in the scholastic realities of grassroots communities.

We have, rather, new parameters for discussing educational reform, new curricular trends in the education system and institutional actions inclining to offer basic education to those who require it; also new technologies for the development of teaching materials, especially the textbook. In general, the proposals subordinate the traditional objectives of coverage and equity that dominated education for much of this century, and favor the “postmodernist” objectives of efficiency, productivity, cultural diversity and, occasionally, of academic excellence.

For purposes of evaluation and planning, there has arisen a certain interest in sensitizing educational history to cultural and linguistic diversity (indigenous peoples). Coming from technical fields of EIB projects with international support,

and from researchers, especially, there has been an attempt to establish a kind of scientific history of the main orientations or, figuratively, *paradigms of Indian schooling*, to support the progressive and alternative nature of *intercultural bilingual* teaching.

Before that, there should be two caveats. First, there is an uneasiness that stems from the design of innovative and differential educational development activities promoted by international agencies. Indigenous communities have been the objects of these concerns. And second, there are misgivings about facing old problems of Indian education, and in real time, new challenges and issues. The paradigmatic discussions create, to some extent, the illusion that the old problems disappear with the simple act of operating with new categories and new educational models.¹⁰

But we must also recognize a very significant aspect: the various programmatic and methodological orientations reflect the political will to influence the future of society and indigenous identity. The role of education is redefined in today's Latin American countries, in the vast effort to permit the development of the greatest number of individuals of Indian and African American origin (Lesourne, 1993 and Albo, 1995).

In previous works (Muñoz, 1998 and 2001b), I have proposed that the scientific history of indigenous education attempt to represent the progressive development of Indian-ness. I present this historical sequence in the table below.

Table III. Paradigms of Indian education in Latin America

Diversity as a problem (bilingual education)
Diversity as a resource (bicultural bilingual education)
Diversity as a right (intercultural or multicultural bilingual education)

In this graphic proposal we attach great value to three principles: the centrality of culture (ethnicity/identity); the role of education in indigenous development; and management and communication.

According to these principles, the first orientation allows the characterization of the paradigm of diversity as a problem of education and development. That is, both the culture and the indigenous languages are considered obstacles to the incorporation of indigenous peoples in national society. Based on democratizing

concepts, access to education and communication is flexibilized through bilingual strategies for transition to the Hispanic world and languages.

The second orientation (bicultural bilingual education) can be characterized as the paradigm of diversity as a *resource*. Based on the concept of allowing the masses access to education and industrial development, we try to potentiate the depiction of human capital, recovering their diversity and identity. For the sake of world politics, there is assumed the principle of dual or polarized interculturalism, which used to circulate in these educational settings as complementary bicultural bilingualism. However, given the limited experience and almost nonexistent research on Indian education at the time, the bilingual component had a central development, with principles and technology of applied linguistics.

The result is that Castilianization and the monoculturality of the curricula and learning prevailed. Indigenous education did not escape the global crisis and the lag in education, perhaps more thoroughly by the unresolved inequities. Basically, the indigenous public school remained unchanged.

The third direction is the utopia or the virtuality we want to construct, and can be characterized as the paradigm of diversity as a right. One of the relevant circumstances of this alternative education is the unfinished negotiation or discrepancy between the educational institutions and indigenous movements and organizations. In sociopolitical terms, the permanence and legitimacy of bilingual indigenous education depends crucially on the social mechanism used to solve the current incompatibility between the institutional policy of following neo-liberal models of human capital in education, and ethnic projects upholding critical models of resistance. Across the continent, there can be seen this contradiction, which is arresting and distorting the development of education in intercultural regions. Two key components in critical models of resistance posed by indigenous communities are autonomy and control of an endogenous, self-managed education. Nicaragua, to cite one example, is the only country which 15 years ago incorporated the statute of autonomy into the Constitution.¹¹

Based on this nonlinear historical horizon, one becomes aware of the importance of working from perspective of the process complex and articulated in various educational dimensions, asymmetrically related, whose convergence or divergence is the cause of success or crisis for education in general. Regarding this, I propose that the transformation of education oriented toward plural multiculturalism will come principally from specific realities and scholastic practices, insofar as there is a democratization of the educational management of the civil society and grassroots communities, through modalities of full participation and community control, "because pluralism affirms that diversity and dissent are values that enrich both the individual and the city where he lives" (Sartori, 2001: 19).

Table IV. Insertion of diversity in educational development

Dimensions of educational development	Goals and processes
Educational policy, Multicultural norms	Multicultural society
Education System	Initial and continuous education in teacher training Flexible system organization
Academic training models (teaching/learning)	Intercultural communication (validity, dissent) Ethic of pluralism Participative cycles
Scholastic practices and processes	Plural actions and ideologies of the schools and communities, regarding diversity

From the perspective of a comprehensive model of educational development, we learned to identify, expand our understanding of, and to relativize the speeches of the various sectors on public policy, which provided us with principles and ideological conditions for promoting a strong educational change. That change would seek to establish new terms with the economic and political development in which “the democracy of our countries will find in intercultural and bilingual education one of the major instruments for strengthening itself” (Cardenas, 1997, p. 29).

Table V. Global educational policy objectives related to diversity

Global objectives	General policies
Equality, sufficiency, access	1. Increased coverage and joint funding 2. Opening of the system to all sectors
Quality	1. Improvement of teacher and student training 2. Development of problem-solving skills
Internal efficiency	Retention and flexible function of the school system
External efficiency	Social development closely linked with culture, identity, work, peace, political responsibility, the rights of all social sectors
Values	Transmission of social qualities compatible with pluralism, reciprocity and cooperative learning

This systemic view of educational development could take us a long way if the scientific and social debates influence the formation of policies and educational programs, whose recipients are Indian and African populations and the sectors targeted by social discrimination. We can know the history, theories and practices of these examples of cultural otherness better known through management and participatory experiences, and also through scientific research, which help us

understand the multi-ethnic and multicultural situation of the country. For their part, government institutions have assimilated and recreated the intercultural proposals that have greater acceptance in international organizations and forums, shaping an advanced socio-cultural policy in the state. However, that does not translate into a consistent government policy, nor into the necessary understanding and acceptance by the nation's society.

We can agree or disagree with this proposed system, but what we cannot avoid is, first, having to view educational development as a multiplex whole, and second, having to define from where there will come the critical trends that will promote a change in education oriented towards plural multiculturalism. "From the formal system? "From the institutions that create the policy? "From social and ethnic movements?

5. By way of conclusion

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of education may be that of giving concrete support to the needs and expectations of ethnic and socio-linguistic otherness in educational practices. It is well known that the strategies and activities of teaching alter the principles of institutional policy, producing academic results and attitudes not always consistent with these principles. In my opinion, one of the main reasons for this gap lies in the lack or in the deficiencies within the levels of curriculum definition. In actual fact, the curriculum are promoted and produced by makers of policies or techniques of the decentralized education system, which traditionally never guaranteed the perspective and needs of the direct actors of education. It is important to note that the term *linguistic and cultural diversity* hides behind it a great lack of precision regarding its scope and theoretical reference. Indeed, it creates the illusion that we are referring to a well-defined field of problems and methods. As to the research done on diversity, we know that the key fundamental results are related both to the theoretical level and to the research techniques and the application of this knowledge—which makes conceptual systematization a necessary task.

Finally, the conflicting experiences of multiculturalism, bilingualism and the integration of cultural otherness have become topics of great current interest in formal institutions in communities and social organizations. On these bases there are being constructed parameters of citizenship for the society of the near future, in which there will be identified new national goals and needs, and in which there will be created value-charged solutions and participatory democratic values.

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¹ This operation surely implies a more radical argument about the validity, scope and usefulness of linguistic descriptions, statistical studies on the use of languages and the different types of linguistic patterns and functions of languages in schooling, especially in the teaching and learning of languages. In any case, it allows us to visualize the applications and the relationships of language theory to educational theory.

² We have consulted only Volumes 1 and 2 of this work, published by the Center for Research and Promotion of the Rural Population (CIPCA) and UNICEF Bolivia, with the support of the Swedish Government. There exists, as well, a statistical annex available in five volumes and on diskettes, as well as a collection of maps. Xavier Albo (1995) says: "If you want only a very global view of the theme, go directly to Chapter 10 for conclusions and recommendations. It will also be useful to look at the overall panorama of situations presented in the short Chapter 3" (pg. V). The recommendation to jump the development, as the approach suggests, does not seem appropriate.

³ What seems questionable in this statement is the historical significance, given the persistence of the conditions of inequality and discrimination against the Indian cultures. Perhaps only in the immediate term, the result seems to be convincing.

⁴ Whose most classic and complete expression is the work of Uriel Weinreich (1953, p.15).

⁵ In many countries, this is clearly observable in the following facts: 1) Today many more community demands are expressed in native languages, even when they have to do with illegal migrant populations. 2) The functionality of American Indian languages in public and external domains has increased. 3) The quantity of publications in the native languages of ethnic communities has increased. 4) The number of schools working with the mother tongue of ethnic communities is increasing. 5) The number of religious institutions that use the original languages rather than the "national" language (English, German, Spanish) has increased. 6) The presence of languages and native cultures on radio and television has also increased. 7) Particularly since the seventies, the amount of research, courses and academic publications about American Indian languages and cultures has grown tremendously. 8) More public coverage is given more frequently to the celebrations and practices of ethnic traditions. 9) And finally, the non-indigenous population is more sensitive to the situation of minorities.

⁶ In a similar sense, we can employ here M. Cole's system of activity (1999), understood as strategic fictions to denote understanding and reciprocity in the communication of subjects and communities in asymmetric, hegemonous schematics.

⁷ In a previous work, we stated that, as a third result of sociolinguism in Mexico, this means the qualitative development of discipline, in the following terms: 1) enrichment of the sources of information about the ethnic languages and the particularities of Mexican linguistic diversity; 2) more knowledge about the history of social communication within the ethnic whole and the country in general; and 3) better identification of the successful or negative aspects of the research (see Muñoz, 1987).

⁸ UNESCO has also helped bring attention to this phenomenon. It warns that there is insufficient compliance with the commitment of national governments to the policy of Education for All (Jomtien), in the following aspects: 1) informal learning has been neglected; 2) there is lethargy in the redefinition of educational needs, particularly with regard to educational content reflecting

cultural diversity; 3) inequalities increase within education systems: the poor, minority groups and the disabled have hardly been considered; 4) there has been little development of early childhood education in rural areas; there has been a widening of the technological gap that would reduce the chances that information and communication technologies would serve the specific needs; and 5) finally, there is a continuation of the deficit financing of basic education (SEP, 2000a and 2000b).

⁹ Today's crisis in education has encouraged deep disagreement about the role of the school in society. There is a strong need to adjust the function of education to the requirements of society, and especially, to abandon the design and content of the traditional public school. Thus, over the progressive schools looms the social consensus that their role is not only to teach children and to provide them with the basic skills required in a complex technological society, but also to solve the dilemma of social discrimination and violence, to provide opportunities for women and ethnic peoples, to socialize generations of rural-urban migrants and to act as a channel for change in social policies.

¹⁰ Difficulties of the stage of bilingual education, such as teaching Spanish as a second language and standardization of the spelling of indigenous languages, remain pending and are handled by old teaching practices, typical of the bilingual paradigm. In some ways, in the teaching of the indigenous schools of 2001, conceptions and practices of 50 years ago still hold sway.

¹¹ Muñoz (2001a) points out that it has been impossible to implant this public policy in community and scholastic processes, because of the lack of an integrated project of educational development.