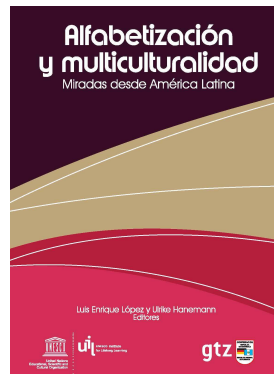


Alfabetización y multiculturalidad: Miradas desde América Latina

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Preface/ Prefacio

In his introductory remarks, the Director of UIL, Adama Ouane, emphasises the crucial role that languages play in the achievement of EFA and the MDGs and in the creation of inclusive learning societies. The publication provides research evidence on the current state of literacy and adult education for indigenous populations in seven Latin American countries as well as examples of effective programmes which use intercultural and bilingual/multilingual approaches to literacy and adult learning. It thus contributes to debate and reflection on how to better address the specific learning needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Introduction/ Introducción In the introduction, the editors of the publication frame the seven country studies in the broader contexts of the literacy challenge in the Region and the international commitments made by the General Conference of the United Nations and the OIT. The instrumental role of languages for communication, learning, cultural identity and empowerment is highlighted. Multilingualism – today a global phenomenon – is to be seen not as a problem but a way of life, and must therefore be viewed both as potential and resource. The introduction also some background on the research concepts, methodologies and processes that paved the way for this publication. The main focus, key findings, lessons learned and recommendations from each country study are summarised. The publication resulted from the CONFINTEA V process and aims to feed into the debates relating to CONFINTEA VI, which will be held in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009.

Chapter I/ Capítulo I

Literacy of indigenous youth and adults in Bolivia/ *Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en Bolivia*

In Bolivia, 91.62% of the population identifies itself as indigenous. The study, which was carried out by a team of indigenous researchers coordinated by Giovanna Carrarini, provides evidence that literacy programmes that take into account the communities'

culture, needs and interests achieve effective and sustainable results. From this derives the need to involve beneficiaries from the planning phase of such programmes and offer them opportunities to shape them according to their vision of the future. This makes it more likely that learning results will mirror and strengthen what beneficiaries consider to be “their own” (intraculturality), which in turn will facilitate the establishment of equitable relationships among people with different cultures, visions and languages (interculturality). This double perspective extends beyond literacy learning to reaffirm ethnic self-confidence and develop dialogical skills in and between the world’s complex societies.

Chapter II/ Capítulo II

Report on differentiating, intercultural and bilingual indigenous education in Brazil/ *Relatório sobre Educação Indígena Diferenciada, Inter-cultural e Bilingüe no Brasil*

The Brazilian case was researched by Lynn Mario Meneses de Souza, a specialist on multimodal literacy practices of Brazilian indigenous peoples. Although Brazil has only around 500,000 indigenous people (1% of the total population), these belong to 180 different linguistic groups. Illiteracy is much higher among the indigenous population (18%) than among the white population (7.1%). Although the 2006 Indigenous School Census educational policies have achieved promising results, there are still major challenges to address, such as the small number of members per community, which are geographically dispersed and difficult to reach. Dealing with 180 native languages requires educational responses which are highly contextualised, and tailor-made to fit each local situation and ethnic specificity. One crucial aspect has been the joint participation of stakeholders from government and civil society in the design of learning programmes. Related activities must be based on the learners’ needs and demands if they are to be relevant and involving for those learners. This in turn prevents the process from becoming de-contextualized and alienating learners from their situation.

Chapter III/ Capítulo III

Literacy of indigenous youth and adults in Ecuador/ *Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en el Ecuador*

Fernando Yáñez analysed the literacy situation in Ecuador, where the highest rate of illiteracy – 40% - is to be found among indigenous rural women (compared to the national average of 9%). The study found that literacy as a standalone does not necessarily generate development and prosperity. Consequently, literacy learning must be embedded in community enterprise, so that it can genuinely improve the socio-economic situation of communities. In other words, literacy needs to be linked to work, production, local development and opportunities for further education. The migration of indigenous people to urban areas often serves to devalue indigenous culture, leading to a loss of identity. In some cases, indigenous populations have Spanish as their mother tongue because of strategies of cultural survival adopted by those who have settled in urban centres. In addition, consideration must be given to the important role of orality in indigenous cultures as a traditional means of conserving and transmitting knowledge. In

contexts like these, literacy learning must adopt a different methodology and seek to trigger a revalorization of indigenous culture and identity.

Chapter IV/ Capítulo IV

Literacy of youth and adult indigenous in Guatemala/ *Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en Guatemala*

In Guatemala, it is estimated that more than half of the population is indigenous. The country has the second highest illiteracy rate in Latin America and the Caribbean (30.9%) after Haiti. The National Literacy Committee (CONALFA), the national entity in charge of literacy, lacks political support and sufficient financial resources to meet a literacy challenge of these proportions. In addition, it currently relies on poorly remunerated volunteers, which has a negative impact on the quality and continuity of literacy training. The research, which was conducted by Lucía Verdugo de Lima and Jorge Raymundo, shows that the official literacy learning programmes are making efforts to be linguistically and culturally pertinent. However, they need to adjust to different forms of existing monolingualism and bilingualism. They must also address the gender issue because of the different expectations and interests of men and women. Literacy programmes for indigenous youth and adults need to integrate work-related and income-generating skills training in order to achieve a major impact on the development of the local economy.

Chapter V/ Capítulo V

Literacy of indigenous youth and adults in Mexico/ *Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en México*

Sylvia Schmelkes headed the study on Mexico, with support from Guadalupe Aguila Moreno and María de los Ángeles Núñez. In Mexico, the illiteracy rate of the indigenous population is 36.1% - almost five times higher than the national average. Lessons learned in the Mexican case indicate that problems arose due to the fact that educational provisions did not take account of the heterogeneity of indigenous languages. In addition, not all educators were proficient in reading and writing in an indigenous language. Hence, the literacy project did not achieve the expected results. In recognition of the fact that literacy needs to be determined by its social function, literacy learning for indigenous peoples needs to be guided by the applicability and adaptability of the acquired knowledge through concrete everyday life activities that involve reading and writing. Recommendations include the need to have educators with in-depth knowledge of the indigenous language and culture, as well as the need for materials that are developed and written in mother tongues. In conclusion, if literacy training is limited to delivering the code of written language – both in indigenous language and in Spanish – no major progress will be made in reducing illiteracy. This is a process which needs to be embedded in culture and identity while providing the tools for socio-economic development at the individual and community levels.

Chapter VI/ Capítulo VI

The experience of Nicaragua/ *La experiencia de Nicaragua*

The case of Nicaragua was analysed by researcher, Mirna Cunningham. The majority of the indigenous peoples (who make up 11% of the total population) live in the South and

North Atlantic Autonomous Regions. In the 1980s, the Sandinista government implemented the first literacy project in the five indigenous languages of the Atlantic Coast. The local populations were proud of their cultural heritage and recognised the importance of conserving their languages. Other indigenous communities that have lost their languages are currently working hard to recuperate them. This process is also adopted for ongoing literacy projects. Indigenous populations appreciate and accept programmes that start literacy training in the mother tongue before transiting to Spanish. They are currently requesting that work-related skills training by indigenous trainers be integrated into the curriculum. Nicaragua has achieved promising results with the implementation of adult education projects that have used leadership approaches, effective communication and good skills development techniques to promote the use of mother tongues and improve community relations.

Chapter VII/ Capítulo VII

Literacy of indigenous youth and adults in Peru/ *Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en el Perú*

The research on Peru was conducted by Madeleine Zúñiga. Peru has 44 living languages; however, it is difficult to say what percentage of the national population is considered indigenous. The study showed that although there is legislation in place to provide education for indigenous populations, its application is not guaranteed due to a lack of political will. In some cases, such legislation has been used more as a political ploy than an active effort to address illiteracy. Literacy training was limited to the (de)codification of written messages, which reduces learning to a mechanical way of reading – a skill that learners will soon lose because of its functional irrelevance in everyday life and its lack of connection to indigenous culture and the world of work.

Colophon/ Colofón

Education of indigenous youth and adults in Latin America: Lessons learned/ *La educación de jóvenes y adultos indígenas en América Latina: lecciones aprendidas*

In his conclusions, Luis Enrique López summarises the prerequisites for empowering and pertinent literacy programmes for indigenous youth and adult learners. These entail taking into account the populations' disadvantaged socio-economic status; their history of oppression and marginalisation; their increased mobility and migration from rural areas to urban centres or other countries; the need to use multiple forms of graphic and symbolic representation; specific patterns of communication and learning in indigenous communities; the element of empowerment; citizenship rights and the effective use of these rights; issues of multilingualism and interculturality; and the pedagogical implications of all of these concerns. The author also presents a synthesis of the lessons learned from the seven country studies. These relate to the conditions in which literacy programmes for indigenous youth and adults are implemented; the presence or absence of political will; the continuity of policies and the sustainability of interventions; literacy practices that reflect learning needs and multilingual and multicultural contexts; and quality issues, such as bilingual approaches to learning and the urgent need to upgrade literacy workers' qualifications. One of the key recommendations resulting from the studies is that literacy programmes be structured around indigenous learners' unique vision and culture. This is best achieved by involving them in the planning,

implementation and monitoring of the programme, which ensures that literacy provisions are more politically appropriate, relevant and culturally responsible.