

Analysis of Indigenous and Intercultural Public Education in Mexico

Felipe González

Professor of Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of Autonomous University of the State of Mexico

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3923-2987>

Abstract

This article analyzes the processes of indigenous and intercultural education in Mexico as components for the ideological construction of national identity. An important question arises: why do we Mexicans have so much trouble identifying with our cultural differences? From a historical and contemporary perspective, it is analyzed the articulation between two historical moments: a) The basic level indigenous education, implemented throughout the 20th century and b) The intercultural higher education, which began at the beginning of the 21st century. Although each one has its nuances, they are analyzed as part of a historical continuum that stands as a project that, in its integrative intention, ends up being disruptive and colonial. This work is done with a participant observation methodology as the author was a central actor in the implementation of the intercultural higher education model, so the anecdotes will always be presented to generate reflections and provide elements for the revitalization of cultures and their acceptance within the framework of the national culture of Mexico. The output product of this model it faces a society whose colonialist cultural devices do not value original cultures, subjugating their epistemology and their knowledge.

Keywords: Indigenous education, integrationist education, intercultural education, indigenous epistemology and community bonding.

Introduction

During the 3rd Summit of the Americas that took place in the city of Québec in the month of April 2001, the idea of supporting the indigenous education was discussed, (OAS, 2001) and the government Mexico took it very seriously. Since the end of the 70s, some scholars had already begun to think about the education of the marginalized classes, which are mostly indigenous (Guzman y Casillas, 1979). In 1992 it was accepted that Mexico was a multicultural country, and this was included in the modification of the constitution of 1992. One of the modifications took place on article 2 regarding the Indigenous reform (Carrillo-Nieto, 2010). Another event that conducted to the Intercultural education was the Zapatista uprising of 1994 (Khasnabish, 2005).

For this, the interculturality was necessary. Interculturality refers to the relationship between members of different cultures and qualifies their relationship, maintaining that this is the one that occurs from positions of equality, is based on respect and is mutually enriching (Schemelkes, 2008).

In 2001, the so-called Indigenous Law was promulgated, which, among other guarantees, establishes that indigenous communities have the right to learn in their own language at all levels of the educational system of Mexico (Castillo, 2022). In Mexico the education is a matter of the federal ministry of education (Tuiran, 2012). The Ministry of Public Education until 2002 has the following higher education subsystems: 1) Autonomous universities, 2) Polytechnic universities, 3) Technological universities and 4) Technological institutes (Jimenez-Naranjo and Mendoza-Zuany, 2016). But in 2002, the government of Mexico decided to create a fifth system in the higher education system called the Intercultural University (Dietz y Mateos, 2019). In 2003 the Federal government and the State of Mexico decided to joint efforts in creating the General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education and the first project of this coordination was the creation of the Intercultural University (Schmelkes, 2009). In 2004, the first Intercultural University in Mexico was officially opened. The mission of this university was to train professionals and intellectuals committed to rescuing their languages and cultures, capable of implementing development actions in their communities of origin (Decreto de Creación, 2003; Rojas and others, 2018). The geographical region where the intercultural university was built was in a confluence zone of five indigenous groups of the State of Mexico in the center of the Mexican Republic. These are the ethnic groups: Mazahuas, Otomís, Nahuas, Matlatzincas and Tlahuicas (Gobierno del Estado de México, 2022). From this first Project, a general model was designed to be able to create other universities that cover the same objective in various geographical regions of the Country (Casillas y Santini, 2006).

The next table shows that:

Name of the University	Founded on	Place	Ethnic groups
Universidad Intercultural del Estado de México	2004	San Felipe del Progreso	Matlazinca, Tlahuica, Mazahuas, Otomís and Nahuas
Estado de Chiapas	2005	San Cristóbal de las Casas	Tzoltziles, Tzeltales, Choles, Tojolabales, Zoques y Mames
Estado de Tabasco	2005	Oxolotán/Tacotalpa	Choles
Estado de Sinaloa	2005	El Fuerte	Yaquis
Estado de Puebla	2006	Huehuetla	Nahuas y Totonacos
Estado de Michoacán	2006	Pátzcuaro	Purépechas
Estado de Quintana Roo	2007	Presumida/J-M Morelos	Mayas
Estado de Guerrero	2007	Ciénega/Malinaltepec	Nahuas, Mixtecos y Tlapanecos
Estado de Nayarit	2010	Guadalupe Ocotlán	Coras, Huicholes
Estado de San Luis Potosí	2011	San Luis Potosí	Tenek, Pame y Nahuas
Estado de Hidalgo	2012	Tenango de Doria	Nahuas, Otomís, Tepehua, Totonaco
Estado de Baja California	2021	Valle de San Quintín	Mixteco Bajo
Estado de Guanajuato	2022	Juan Mendoza	Chichimecos, Otomís
Estado de Sonora	2022	Guaymas	Yaquis
Estado de Campeche	2023	Dzitbalché	Mayas
Estado de Colima	2023	Colima	Nahuas
Estado de Tlaxcala	2023	Ixtenco	Nahuas
Estado de Oaxaca	2023	Río Grande	Zapotecas, Mixtecos, Triquis

Estado de Jalisco	2024	Barranca del Tule	Coras, Huicholes
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Own elaboration based on Salmeron (2019).

After the creation of the first Intercultural University in the State of Mexico, 18 more universities were created over the course of 20 years. The territorial extension of the universities covers practically the country (18 federal entities out of 32) and the 56 ethnic groups that inhabit it and its 356 spoken linguistic variants (Gonzalez, 2011).

The careers offered by these universities are varied and their mission is to create new skills in students who belong to the communities of aboriginal peoples that translate into benefits for their regions and communities (Dietz y Mateos, 2019). The challenge is very interesting to the extent that indigenous cultures are subsumed in the dominant culture, of Western type, from which the current indigenous culture has been shaped.

The first careers that were offered from the Intercultural of the State of Mexico were those of Language and Culture, Intercultural Communication and Sustainable Development; After these careers, those of Intercultural Health, Alternative Tourism, Indigenous Law and others were opened (Gonzalez, 2011). These professions were intended to generate skills to create development projects in the communities, in addition to forming professional profiles likely to enter the labor market. The idea was to empower graduates with new capabilities to combine the knowledge of their people with scientific knowledge.

In this article I will focus on the creation of the first Intercultural University in the country, of which I was a central actor in its creation. I will problematize and describe this experience to discuss other things, for example, indigenist and intercultural politics as a project for the construction of national identities in two historical moments, the nationalism of the 20th century and the globalism of the 21st. I will clarify the nuances that make indigenous politics somewhat different from intercultural politics. The reader will find how we built this model of higher education from unique events from which we incorporated academic inspiration for the realization of this project that always sought to value and rescue the languages and culture of the indigenous peoples. Thus, this work describe like the intercultural model of higher education aims to revitalize the indigenous culture that the Mexican State always tried to integrate into the national society, westernizing its cultures.

Background

Mexico is a postcolonial social product built from nuances that derive from an asymmetric relationship between the aboriginal peoples (called indigenous during the 20th century) and those who arrived from Spain. During the 300 years of colony, mixed race and miscegenation between Europeans, native peoples and, to a lesser extent, enslaved Africans, formed the basis for imagining the most diverse categories and nomenclatures of the different mixtures. This imagery gave way to the formation of a general social system, which privileged mixing races or miscegenation as a specific mark of being colonial. However, the lower classes were the ones that mixed the most, since the upper classes, represented by European phenotypes, maintained their lineage and skin color, without seeking to mix with others, outside their lines of descent.

This quality allowed two phenomena: 1) that European whites maintained their phenotype without any mixture, naming those born in America, and children of Spaniards, as Creoles and 2) the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a culture based on lineages. These two elements would gradually define the power relations between the different social types (phenotypically speaking) and the social classes, and, at the same time, it would remain a long-lasting structure, capable of delineating the mentalities and symbolizations around the relations between groups and classes, which can still be seen today. From my point of view, these lineages, and the ideology of greater privilege over others, are a subsistent and powerful colonial residue that currently delineates power relations towards indigenous peoples.

The next historical block after the Colony came with the Independence, which assembled in the Creole project of La Colonia, it is explained as a project placed on the shoulders of the descendants of the lineages who wanted access to public power.

Although it is true that there are actors of the popular order, most of the heroes of Independence were part of the Creole sectors. It is at this time that the progressive and conservative positions of the Mexican elites who seek power are defined; on the one hand, those who direct their actions towards the interests of the people and, on the other, those who do so towards the country's economic elites.

In this framework, the aboriginal peoples were reduced to subjects always represented to objects of social interest or subject to public subsidies, but never active subjects for decision-making. This marginalization of power, since the days of Independence, translates into the continuation of the structure of lineage as a component of Mexican political culture, but is now accompanied by a permanent struggle between conservatives and progressives (Vasconcelos, 2021).

The most obvious historical mark of this new structure will be the emergence of a Zapotec Indian (Benito Juárez) who fought against the conservatism that brought a European emperor (Austro-Hungarian) to govern Mexico in the time known as La Reforma (Gerson, 1991). At the beginning of the 20th century, as result of a social Revolution, Mexico was born with a refunding drive in which the people would leave their mark on the new constitution.

Product of a Revolution, the Mexican Constitution is eminently social, raising land rights to peasant communities and generating a free public education project for the entire population that inhabited the country. It is in this period that the modern institutions of Mexico are founded, among them the education office, which will establish a series of actions aimed at the full integration of Mexicans through educational practice (Zepeda, 2021).

The national educational project considered education as a panacea for Mexico's integration and development, always oriented towards Western values. Thus, in the hands of the descendants of those colonial elites, but under the imprint of a supposed refoundation, the elites set in motion the machinery of indigenous education, whose goal was to castellanize (that everyone speak Spanish) the children of the aboriginal peoples and orient their values towards the called development, always based on the model of Western society or, to put it more clearly, of Spanish society. Once the Revolution was over, the Indigenous Education Department

opened the Indigenous Student Houses in 1926; later, in 1933, the Indigenous Education Centers were created and, in 1978, the General Directorate of Indigenous Education. All these projects of the 20th century attended to Mexican indigenous children and the goal was the Castilianization and the change of orientation of their life projects towards the values of the West.

The key indicator of this cultural transformation was the social construction of the mestizo, that is, a person with an indigenous phenotype but who was not ascribed to any indigenous culture but was named Mexican, that is, the cosmic or bronze race (Vasconcelos, 1998: 2021), in the voice of Mexico's first secretary of education, José Vasconcelos. The author and official himself affirmed that this unborn race would build its own philosophical body, that is, it would be capable of structuring its own ideas as new civilizations do, this being a product of the mixture.

This goal left intact the white project of the Mexican lineages (distributed throughout the regions of the country), but with the advantage that they could now communicate in Spanish with the mestized Indians. This process of integration of the Indian into the national society involved subjugating the native languages to adopt Spanish as the lingua franca. Ideologically, he used the metaphor of miscegenation to build the idea of harmonious national integration, when reality this meant that the Indian would leave his ancestral customs in two ways: Castilianizing their language and orienting values towards Western culture. Thus, the key indicator of this achievement would be the cosmic or bronze race, that is, the realized mestizo. Their phenotype continued to belong to that of the original peoples, but their customs and culture were modern, that is, they were oriented towards the West.

In the same period it was considered that in Mexico there were two social sectors, one of them oriented to progress and modernity and the other submerged in traditionalism, so that, in the construction of national identity, all efforts should be made to change traditional orientations towards modern western ones, thus, the indigenous is treated as someone who does not know the path of modernity, so it must be transformed for the benefit of the country (Gamio, 1987: 1992: 1996).

Eighty years later, the 21st century arrived mounted on economic globalization. Indigenous peoples began to be called original peoples. The most felt quality was that most of them had linguistic skills in Spanish (some also had relative skills in their Amerindian languages). There was a youth that had passed through the indigenous education system of the 20th century. Somehow the bronze race, the full mestizo, was achieved, it was the time in which the intercultural higher education system was created. That is to say, there is a very westernized indigenous profile, but in this new context of global economy, there is an attempt to recover indigenous culture, since multiculturalism represents the contemporary cultural form.

The rhetoric of this new higher education system could not remain that of national integration, since the times of globalization rather opened the discourse of multiculturalism as the formula for integration, but now global, transcending the national. In the same way, if the national integration of the indigenous had been achieved with the realization of miscegenation (Castilianization and cultural orientation towards the West), the conditions of possibility for

the opening of a model that tried to reconcile the ancestral and community knowledge of the student were fulfilled, with universal science, paradigm of public education in Mexico.

The opening of the first Intercultural University in Mexico, continuity of indigenism or rupture?

The analysis that I will present in this article is mediated by my active participation in the first intercultural university in Mexico. Methodologically, I start from participant observation, since my position in the first University was from the rectory, a political position that, combined with my vocation in social research, gave rise to two key components: 1) build, together with other colleagues and officials from different levels of government, the intercultural higher education model through the opening of the first University of its kind in Mexico and 2) systematize the experience, problematizing the event as a social phenomenon of public interest to the extent that this project touches a very important social base in the country's history, precisely that of national identity.

The historical component dictates that the ideology of the white lineage combined with the ideological production of the mestizo, gave way to thinking that the basic indigenous education project of the 20th century could open the possibility of continuing with the higher education of that mestizo already carried out. Thus, a model was built that sought to rescue the culture of the communities of the aboriginal peoples in order to later position it through its professionals, either in the labor market or in the implementation of projects in the communities.

Is it possible to identify interculturality as a new indigenism? It may be, but the nuances count. The integrationist indigenous education of the 20th century focused on indigenous children, while intercultural higher education focuses on youth, that is, on a young person with indigenous belonging but already Castilianized and who has already valued Western culture. That is an important difference.

In the same way, world contexts generate another nuance, since indigenism responded to the construction of the nation state, while interculturality is found in the debate of global multicultural struggles.

A mark of this change, from the paradigm of interculturality, is the emergence of political correctness that does not allow the integrationist discourse that displaces belongings, but rather builds an official discourse that supports the rescue of languages and cultures, the assessment of local knowledge for problem solving and even the right to self-determination based on international law and national constitutional law (Stavenhagen, 2010; Casillas y Santini, 2006).

Thus, this continuity of education towards the towns can also manifest itself as an official discursive rupture that had effects on the people of the communities. For example, when the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (an institution created in 2003) recognized indigenous languages as national languages, many speakers of these languages were happy because their languages were recognized as languages, leaving behind the idea that they were dialects, something less than languages, a name assigned to them from colonial positions.

Another example, on one occasion when I went out to promote the University among the Tlahuica inhabitants of the town of San Juan Atzingo, we were received not only by the youth

of the community (possible candidates to enter the University) but also by the elderly, since it was following an interaction protocol based on respect for listening. Before speaking, a ritual opening was made in which copal was burned in an incense and we all received permission to launch our word, our intention, the grandparents said. Thus, I exposed the model of the University, I emphasized the importance of native languages for our teaching practice, I spoke of the importance of rescuing and recovering languages and cultures, I highlighted the importance of ritual protocols to request permission from the land, to ask for rain, to clean people with fire, to remove the air from the body and recover health, all of them practices of the ancestral peoples of Mexico.

The people, especially the old ones, listened to me attentively, keeping their heads lowered as if my words echoed in their heads like thoughtful echoes of intense depth. I didn't know what was going to happen when I finished speaking, it was then that an old man took the floor and with a sense that mixed happiness and sadness at the same time, said that he was happy because in these times the languages of the people are valued, then he remembered how his basic education teacher, when he was a child, hit him and pulled his hair when she heard him speak in his mother tongue Tlahuica, there was a silence and the external slits of his eyes were wet with tears that fought not to come out. This contradiction made sadness and happiness merge inside him, since he was one of the last 80 speakers of his language. This anecdote helps to problematize the relationship of the State with the native peoples in education policy. The old man experienced the Castilianizing force of the 20th century in basic education, and then the State, already in the 21st century, returned to tell him that it now valued his language and wanted to rescue it.

A kind of institutional repentance, although apparent, because in reality the object of attention of higher education is not towards the indigenous, but rather towards the residues of the indigenous that integrationist basic education, throughout the 20th century, failed to achieve as a complete mestizo.

It is now a public action that builds the indigenous youth as a graduate of the indigenous basic education system, but who already has skills in Spanish and already values the Western world in terms of progress and modernity. As if it were an evangelizing enterprise, the Mexican elite continues with its westernizing and modernizing project.

It is about continuing to train the mestizo, but now in a direction that focuses on valuing what is their own, on building an epistemology from within the culture and on actions that trigger well-being in their community, through processes of integration towards the whole world. Interculturality in higher education can be read as a continuity of indigenous basic education, but the nuance is different, since the entry profile of the Intercultural University is a young person with similar skills to those of other cultural offers to the extent that it is about a mestizo with Indigenous residues. Another nuance refers to the fact that now it is about empowering indigenous peoples through projects that lead to collective and community well-being. That is, intercultural higher education not only seeks Castilianization but also integration through the empowerment of peoples.

The meaning of the project of the white Mexican elites is observed in the fact that despite the fact that the Intercultural University was born within the General Coordination of Intercultural

and Bilingual Education, this did not mean the substitution of the General Directorate of Indigenous Education, both remained with their own missions, one to castellanize and deindianize (the completely indigenous child, to put it in some way), and the other to rescue and mix the cultural knowledge (of the young person with indigenous residue, to put it another way) with which they were They taught at the university. This same phenomenon, with simulating echoes, happened in the regions where the University was being built, since we were neighbors of other educational offerings that did not value or consider ethnic or cultural affiliations in their curricula, such as the Technological Institutes or the Technological Universities, schools belonging to other higher education subsystems but also serving indigenous youth. In this same tenor, it is worth saying that the administrative structure of the Intercultural University was constituted as an exact copy of the administrative structure of those other types of universities, which gave the impression of reinforcing the simulation, since it was not built, from a beginning, an administrative structure typical of this new model of higher education.

We can conclude this section by saying that intercultural higher education is a public policy that has complex continuity with indigenous and integrationist basic education, but with the nuance that it is an alternative that values the ancestral culture of the original peoples, in the arena of a general society that continues, in parallel, with the project of Castilianization, miscegenation and deindianization of the peoples.

Hence, higher education deals with an indigenous youth already Spanishized and oriented to modernity, there lies this subtle connection between these two models of education aimed at indigenous children and youth in the country.

And yet, this singular nuance is very important. The construction of Community Bonding

Once they arrived at the University facilities, at that time still provisional, some young people belonging to the Mixe ethnic group who had studied at the University of Chapingo (belonging to the autonomous subsystem of higher education. The educational model of this university directs its offer to youth, indigenous and non-indigenous, low-income peasants). I explained to them the budding intercultural model of this higher education model and they were positively surprised. They said that they had enrolled at the University of Chapingo with the idea that there they would reinforce their peasant knowledge that their grandparents had passed on to them, but their surprise emerged when the University made them think that their and their grandparents' practices were wrong because they were not based on a productivist model that could guide agricultural products towards the market.

In the reported experience, the students were, to a certain extent, disappointed in the knowledge acquired in their communities of origin, but at the same time they were disenchanted with the knowledge acquired at the University, since it imposed a truth on them, that of orientation towards mercantile productivity, as the only possible rationality.

In this anecdotal experience, the marks of integrationist indigenism are shown, since it is sought that peasant production put aside its character of self-consumption for market agriculture, which means abandoning traditionalism and turning towards modernism, as proposed by Gamio's idea (1992: 1996) at the beginning of the 20th century.

The idea that the peoples are "stuck" within themselves and have not understood development is evident in this educational practice, which ended up disappointing the Mixe students in two ways, on the one hand, in the face of the knowledge inherited from their grandparents and, on the other, by the imposition of a truth based on university knowledge.

In addition to the visible integrationist position, on the part of said university, it also manifested a consecration of university knowledge as if they were the "absolute truth". This approach ends up devaluing and displacing the ancestral knowledge of the communities and at the same time imposes knowledge over other possible ones. Its character is based on the ideology of miscegenation (as "the truth" is on the side of who has ceased to be an Indian) and Creole lineage (as *mestizaje* is a relative and permanent approach to Western white culture).

Combining the related experience of the Mixe students with the mission of the Intercultural University that is defined by the rescue of the knowledge of the native peoples, that is, of that knowledge acquired in the process of primary socialization within their communities and provide scientific skills and knowledge, it was considered that we should establish an academic program, within the Intercultural University, that would result in the confluence of the two types of knowledge: scientific university and traditional community.

It was desired to overcome the extensionist position that takes university knowledge to the communities without rescuing local knowledge. Rather, it was about building a teaching activity that would work in this sense of reciprocity, that is, that while bringing university knowledge, would also take advantage of and put local knowledge into operation. In this activity, research was highlighted as an input for the teaching and training of our students. In this way, it was about combining community knowledge with university knowledge to apply it for the well-being of the community. This teaching program was named Community Bonding and its general spirit was based on a value of the communities of the native peoples, such as reciprocity, in this case, of knowledge. Thus, the Linking program sought the reciprocity of knowledge in the field, that is, in the community. This implied that students and teachers went to a community and inserted themselves into the protocols of dialogue and ritual actions to start, develop and finish the works.

Three questions guided the linking actions: 1) What was this community like? The period of time that the inhabitants of the communities wanted was established. Emphasis was placed on the ways of work, family relationships, ceremonial acts, etc. 2) What is this community like now? A diagnosis was made focusing on factors of change such as migration or monoculture agriculture and 3) How would I like this community to be? A debate began among the inhabitants of the community, since it was a moment of intense imagination (González, 2011). This substantive activity generates the possibility of studying oneself and empowering the culture of the people as something significant, overcoming the idea of archaism. With these three questions, students and teachers obtained a diagnosis and a prospective. This field research input gave students and teachers material with which to plan the development of the community, in this act they had to incorporate university and community knowledge, but also the prospective imagined by the community, always oriented towards empowerment projects.

The questions that were opened in this stage of the Linking program ranged from those that evaluated the disposition of the communities towards development and the ways in which

community knowledge could be linked with university knowledge, to achieve that prospective. Academically, the Community Liaison program is important to the extent that it achieves contact between the university and the community without vertical extensionism; The questions are based on the assumption of a horizontality and reciprocity of both knowledge, hence they can be applied creatively for the development of communities, whose cognitive map is already traced by the prospective diagnosis itself that teachers, students and members of the community made.

The program is relatively successful despite the fact the administrative structure is not made for this, since a teaching profile with researcher qualities is required, something that the university did not have from the beginning, since, copying the model of the universities and institutes technology, he concentrated on teaching. In other words, while the model required making research a training resource, the inherited administrative structure reduced activities to teaching. Notwithstanding this obstacle, the Community Liaison program had and still has a relative success that does not detract from it and that to a great extent can contribute to the discovery or creation of an Indigenous epistemology and direct actions towards projects for the production of goods that translate into benefits and profits for the indigenous communities.

Towards the construction of an indigenous epistemology

An aspiration of whites at the beginning of the 20th century was to see indigenous people transformed into people who valued progressive Western culture and who spoke Spanish. It was about changing traditional agricultural practices (generally self-consumption and linked to festive ceremonies), for practices oriented to modernity, that is, to the market. It was affirmed that once this was achieved, and that the totality spoke Spanish, it was possible to speak of a renewed Mexico where the mestizo, that is, the Mexican, could raise the human consciousness of the world, through his own philosophy. This approach captivated the Mexican intellectuals of the 20th century. To his utopian imagination came the image of an enlightened mestizo with his own original ideas that would derive from the virtuous mixture of the native peoples and Spain, even if they spoke in Spanish. The Community Linkage program maintains some residues of that dream of the 20th century, but with different nuances, because now the consensual participation between university and community knowledge becomes the basis of its imagination and construction, that is, it is not about change to stop being Indians, but to change to integrate being Indians. This question of nuance is very important to take into account because it supposes the inevitability of modernity, only that, unlike that indigenism that forced the displacement of one's own culture to adopt that of miscegenation, it is, in the intercultural model of higher education, of a cultural transfiguration that implies continuing to be (Bartolomé, 2006) within the inevitable modernity. With regard to their own philosophy, the intellectuals of the 20th century imagined that a new way of thinking that would be characteristic of this region would come out of the miscegenation, would suddenly sprout. The ideology of miscegenation placed hope in what was yet to be born, however, the permanence of white lineages would maintain an insurmountable border, a dam that would result in inequality of opportunities based on belongings, generally linked to skin color and the valuations by the West. But before entering this topic, let's return to the Indigenous epistemology that is proposed in the intercultural model.

One time when academic activities were going on in relative calm, a delegate from a community in the Mazahua area arrived at the university. I was surprised by the visit. After introducing himself, he told me that in addition to being the delegate of said community, he was the father of a student at the University and that the reason for his visit was motivated by discontent with what his daughter was being taught. My surprise increased. He told me then that his daughter knew who the national heroes of the different historical processes in Mexico were; he knew who the presidents of the United States and even of Iraq were; that he knew the full names of the presidents of China, Brazil, Russia and Germany, as well as their concrete actions in geopolitical conflicts, my surprise increased, but then, as he suddenly made a u-turn, he told me that knowing this was fine, but that it was a shame that her daughter was not being taught who created her community, who created her ejido, what was the process of fighting to get the lands of her people, when was the church built, when was the school, in what year electricity came to their community, etc.

The importance of this claim was fundamental for the intercultural higher education model, since it generated a narrative that started from the local and later incorporated the national and the global. This procedure opened up the possibility of building knowledge by scales in which people could locate themselves, locate themselves in the space-time coordinates of the world.

Hence, epistemology started by recognizing local existence and then articulating it with the other scales, the national and the world, but the key factor was that students could locate themselves from somewhere on these scales. The same with time, the teaching of history required the same procedure to locate, locate the inhabitants of the community in the historical future, with its different well-defined scales. It was thus that the University began to build these scales starting from the local, from the community. At this point, this episteme was articulated with the academic program of Community Linkage, taking advantage of research as a training practice and rescuing local history through autobiographical accounts, testimony and oral history.

The construction of a different narrative about the future, translated into a rescue of memory, while showing signs of an appreciation of local stories, previously placed in the empty drawers of collective memory and, therefore, positioned that narrative in the public order, assigned importance value, which translated, at the same time, into the rescue and appreciation of local history, key elements to contribute to the self-esteem of the previously silenced peoples.

As I said, adopting this epistemological approach, which implied knowing the local history and gradually articulating it with the other national and world scales, gave way to a general feeling of valuing one's own. On another occasion, for example, a group of elderly Mazahuas came to the University to acknowledge the teachers, because, they said, their grandchildren approached them asking them to tell them stories about their respective towns, which they thought it had been lost.

In this way, incorporating the global scale in the epistemological procedure for the training of the students of the Intercultural University resulted not only in academic training but also in the rescue and appreciation of local history, in an instrument to reactivate the collective memory and, in addition, in the construction of social fabric, by linking grandchildren with

their grandparents to build local narratives, not to mention the collective self-esteem that this overflowed.

Although this is far from the construction of a philosophy of its own, as Vasconcelos' imagination dictated in the 20th century, it turned out to be a positive action aimed at revaluing and revitalizing local memory. The articulation of the university with the communities gave it an interesting nuance, since the results were not defined by the great philosophical corpus but rather by knowledge woven, let us say, in an artisanal way, little by little and with the dedication that it implied, for the students and teachers, be located in the communities. Many of the results of these academic practices can be verified in the students' theses.

The educational institution, an island of diversification and expansion of the educational offer

The educational institution of the intercultural higher education model was a scenario that distilled appreciation for the original peoples of Mexico. To enter its facilities was to enter the debate for difference, the struggles for equality, the debates for the community, the social pact, citizenship, the State, human rights, the market, the rights to be different, the community organization, the festive system and charges, etc., all linked to the debate on cultural diversity. But both students and teachers said that this vibrant world ended precisely there at the entrance and exit doors of the educational institution.

This collective feeling was shared by the actors of the institution. Within it, the teaching of the Mazahua, Otomí, Matlatzinca, Tlahuica and Nahuatl languages absorbed the efforts of the people, but leaving the institution the crushing world was presented with a Castilian key, where in addition the belongings to some of the original peoples were an insignificant data. Outside the school institution, that structural substratum of local white lineages and the strength of the ideology of mestizaje was maintained as an unfinished business, but in persistent action. This border between the interiors of the educational institution and the outside, was manifested precisely when leaving the university facilities. The students of the other institutions, who belonged to other subsystems of higher education, even belonging to the same towns or even to the same communities, criticized the students of the Intercultural because instead of learning English they learned (rescuing and valuing) the languages natives; other times they were told that they should concentrate on speaking Spanish well and not on recovering the ancient languages. In other words, the same young indigenous people used a cultural device of white heritage (speak Spanish well and learn English) to reproach their contemporary countrymen who decided to recover and rescue the languages of their ancestors. These struggles are very important to take into account because they show the difficulty of the Mexican identity as a whole and the rejection of the cultural diversity that exists in the country. The white project that raises miscegenation as an ideology and the lineage of the elites as an aspirational quality, raises this difficulty, because on the one hand it is desired to adjust the aspirations towards the West and on the other the miscegenation company is taken as a redemptive action towards the Indigenous Peoples.

If the West presents itself as the maximum aspiration, the Indian comes across as "an impertinent matter" that collides with the dominant project, which frustrates its, since their redeeming action is to make every Indian modernize in the type western. From this mental

structure derive the underground devices of racism and classism that are lived in Mexico, but also the desires, of some lineages, that the United States annexes more Mexican territories; and at the same time the longing that some feel for having ceased to be New Spain.

These devices are so powerful that they end up becoming collective traps that perpetuate inequalities (Steward, 2008: Tilly, 2007: González and Valencia, 2019), since indigenous youth find fewer opportunities for social mobility in a world trapped by the project unfinished study of miscegenation and the aspirational structure of white lineages. This ideology is so powerful that even discrimination processes are found between people of the same indigenous phenotype (where some consider themselves more mestizo or less Indian than others). This fact forced the authorities of the first Intercultural University to think about the educational offer that this subsystem should provide, that is, aware of the overwhelming power of white hegemony and its project of untouched lineage and general miscegenation, it was thought that if the University opened professional careers similar to those of other subsystems, graduates were going to run into a dam when applying for work, hence the diversification of the educational offer had the goal of creating new careers that would provide students with new professional skills and intellectuals. Thus, careers in Language and Culture were opened, whose graduate profile consisted of a student who had linguistic skills, but fundamentally those of an analyst of philosophical depth expressed in the general semantics of language; the career in Intercultural Communication was opened, whose goal was that the student could position the products, tangible and intangible, of the local culture in the world, all this taking advantage of existing technologies; and the Sustainable Development race whose goal was to organize communities in alternative, organic and sustainable agriculture projects and link them to the market. With these three academic careers, the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico began. An issue that drew a lot of attention was the presence of young women who came to the University, since 66% of the enrollment were female. This was extremely important to the extent that compared to the other educational offers, mostly made up of men, they did not attract the attention of the women of the towns. In the same way, we thought that it was of great interest for this model, to attend to women since language and culture are maternal, that is, they are fundamentally transmitted by women. These indicators seemed important to us.

Conclusions

The article shows how intercultural higher education is subsumed in a long-term project that consists of the integration of the member of some native people to the national logic considered fundamentally Western. This project is carried out by the non-indigenous population and to that extent constitutes an exercise of power. However, integrationist indigenous education was directed towards indigenous children; while intercultural higher education for indigenous youth. This nuance subtly connects basic indigenous education with intercultural higher education, since the higher education deals with a young person whose trajectory is found in the model of integrationist education, that is, an unfinished mestizo or a bilingual and bicultural Indian.

However, intercultural higher education maintains the mission of rescuing and revaluing the languages and cultures of native peoples. This change of orientation with respect to integrationist education is of the utmost importance because, based on this mission, academic programs are established that attempt to rescue and valorize the culture of the peoples. Among

these programs is the Community Liaison that builds from the reciprocity of community and university knowledge for the well-being of communities and teaching by scales, which allows students to locate or locate themselves in the world arena, according to the different scales.

It seems to me that the higher education model, after 20 years of creation, is beginning to bear fruit that can be seen in its graduates, the construction of its own philosophy will not be achieved by mixing, but precisely by the intellectual and political efforts that the decolonization generates in the mentalities of the youth with ethnic belonging in Mexico. The most important things is that the youth who belong to indigenous communities are being empowered.

Conflict of interest

The author indicates that there are no competing interests to declare. Doctor in Cultural Anthropology. Author of several books on traditional festivals, intercultural education and indigenous social organization. Attached to the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the Universidad Autonomous of State of Mexico, felsus1@yahoo.es, fgonzalezo@uaemex.mx

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